

## NATO commander warns against US military withdrawal from Afghanistan

*Bloomberg*

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg warned Tuesday that withdrawing troops from Afghanistan prematurely risks a resurgence of international terrorism as U.S. President Donald Trump is expected to issue a formal order drawing down American forces.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization currently has about 12,000 multinational troops in Afghanistan to train and assist Afghan security forces, and the organization is committed to funding them through 2024. The United States contributes troops and logistical support.

"The price for leaving too soon or in an uncoordinated way could be very high," Stoltenberg said in an emailed statement. "Afghanistan risks becoming once again a platform for international terrorists to plan and organize attacks on our homelands." He said Islamic State, or ISIS, "could rebuild in Afghanistan the terror caliphate it lost in Syria and Iraq."

Trump is poised to order a drawdown of U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq to 2,500

in each country by Jan. 15, a U.S. defense official said, as the president works to deliver on his longtime pledge to exit from "endless wars."

U.S. Central Command has received an informal warning order, according to the official.

The expected order, reported Monday by CNN, would reduce troops from about 4,500 in Afghanistan and from about 3,000 in Iraq before Trump leaves office.

Trump's deadline would come five days before President-elect Joe Biden takes office. Pentagon officials didn't immediately comment when asked about the drawdowns.

But the planned troop cuts drew sharp criticism from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. The Kentucky Republican, usually a staunch Trump ally, said on the Senate floor Monday that there's little support in Congress for "simply walking away" from the conflicts.

"The consequences of a premature American exit" from Afghanistan "would likely be even worse than President [Barack] Obama's withdrawal from Iraq back in 2011, which fueled the rise of ISIS and a new round of global terrorism," McConnell said. "It would be reminiscent of the humiliating American departure from Saigon in 1975."

Stoltenberg noted that NATO went into Afghanistan to prevent that nation from continuing to harbor international terrorists after the Sept. 11 attacks in the U.S.

"We went into Afghanistan together. And when the time is right, we should leave together in a coordinated and orderly way," Stoltenberg said. "I count on all NATO allies to live up to this commitment, for our own security."

The criticism of Trump's plans marks a change in tone for Stoltenberg as he prepares for Biden to lead the U.S., which dominates the 30-nation NATO. Stoltenberg successfully maintained relations with Trump, offering frequent praise of the president even as Trump blasted NATO members for spending too little on defense and sometimes threatened to quit the alliance.

Stoltenberg has praised Biden as a "strong supporter" of the defense grouping.

## Navy destroys ICBM using new interceptor missile

**CHAD GARLAND**  
*Stars and Stripes*

A Navy ship has for the first time destroyed an intercontinental ballistic missile using a standard missile, providing the United States with a complement to shore-based defenses as it guards against threats from rogue states with developing nuclear missile technology.

The destroyer USS John Finn, equipped with an Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System, shot down the ICBM on Monday northeast of Hawaii with the latest version of the Standard Missile-3, the U.S. Missile Defense Agency said in a statement.

"This was an incredible accomplishment and critical milestone for the Aegis BMD

SM-3 Block IIA program," said Vice Adm. Jon Hill, the agency's director.

The missile, designed to kill midcourse enemy missiles in space, has longer range and higher speed than its predecessors. It could be used to protect Hawaii, Guam and other U.S. interests in the Pacific, as well as Japan, against missile threats from North Korea.

The same interceptor could be used in Romania and Poland against threats.

An animation of the successful intercept shows the missile firing from USS John Finn as the ICBM target launches from the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site on Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands, and arcing through space over the

Hawaiian island chain.

Nearly all Navy cruisers and destroyers have a variant of the Aegis BMD system, which was originally designed to intercept short-, medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, though data collected by its radar systems could be used to help other systems track and destroy ICBMs, the Congressional Research Service said in a recent report.

About three years ago, Congress mandated that the military evaluate by the end of this year the feasibility of using an SM-3 to defeat an ICBM.

Preliminary data show that Monday's test met that objective, the Missile Defense Agency said.

# Pandemic politics stalls DC as virus cases surge

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — With the nation gripped by a resurgent coronavirus and looking to Washington for help, President Donald Trump and lawmakers in Congress have a message for struggling Americans: Just keep waiting.

The urgency of the nationwide surge in virus cases, spiking hospitalizations and increasing death tolls has hardly resonated in the nation's capital as its leaders are vexed by transition politics and trying to capitalize on the promise of a coming vaccine. The virus has killed more than 247,000 Americans this year and infected at least 11.1 million — some 1 million of them in just the past week.

Yet in Congress, where talks over economic relief bills stalled out months ago, lame-duck approval of aid is hardly front-of-mind. Across town at the White House, Trump is more focused on getting credit for

the vaccine development push and blocking President-elect Joe Biden from getting the information needed to ensure the new administration can smoothly take over the fight against the pandemic.

“Another Vaccine just announced,” Trump tweeted Monday morning after Moderna announced that its candidate appeared in early testing to be 95% effective against the virus. “For those great ‘historians’, please remember that these great discoveries, which will end the China Plague, all took place on my watch!”

On a call Monday with governors, Vice President Mike Pence, who heads the White House coronavirus task force, struck a rosy tone and asked states to give their residents comfort that vaccines are coming and that “America and your state has never been more prepared.”

Biden, who has warned of a “dark winter”

ahead on the virus, called for the Trump administration to share its vaccine distribution plans with his own incoming administration, warning that “more people may die if you don’t coordinate.”

Saying vaccine plans are vital to repairing the nation’s economy, Biden said, “If we have to wait until Jan. 20 to start that planning, it puts us behind.”

There’s no progress in Congress yet, either. The split-decision election — in which Democrats saw sizable losses in House races despite defeating Trump — hasn’t sparked any progress or prodded House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., or Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to move from their pre-election postures.

With the election continuing to be a disruptive factor on Capitol Hill, no deal is possible without Trump’s buy-in, or at least his signature.

## GSA head under pressure to allow presidential transition to proceed

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The head of an obscure federal agency that is holding up the presidential transition knew well before Election Day that she might soon have a messy situation on her hands.

Prior to Nov. 3, Emily Murphy, the head of the General Services Administration, held a Zoom call with Dave Barram, 77, who was in her shoes 20 years earlier.

The conversation, set up by mutual friends, was a chance for Barram to tell Murphy a little about his torturous experience with “ascertainment” — the task of determining the expected winner of the presidential election, which launches the official transition process.

Barram led the GSA during the 2000 White House race between Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore, which was decided by a few hundred votes in Florida after the U.S. Supreme Court weighed in more than a month after Election Day.

“I told her, ‘I’m looking at you and I can

tell you want to do the right thing,’” recalled Barram, who declined to reveal any details of what Murphy told him. “I’ll tell you what my mother told me: ‘If you do the right thing, then all you have to do is live with the consequences of it.’”

It’s been 10 days since President-elect Joe Biden crossed the 270 electoral vote mark to defeat President Donald Trump and win the presidency. Unlike the 2000 election, when the winner of the election was truly unknown for weeks, this time it is clear that Biden won, although Trump is refusing to concede.

But Murphy has yet to certify Biden as the winner, stalling the launch of the official transition process. When she does ascertain that Biden won, it will free up money for the transition and clear the way for Biden’s team to begin placing transition personnel at federal agencies.

Trump administration officials also say they will not give Biden the classified presidential daily briefing on intelligence matters until the GSA makes the ascertainment official.

## Trump campaign suit in Pa. vote heads to court

*Associated Press*

A hearing on the Trump campaign’s federal lawsuit seeking to prevent Pennsylvania officials from certifying the vote results remains on track for Tuesday after a judge quickly denied the campaign’s new lawyer’s request for a delay.

U.S. Middle District Judge Matthew Brann told lawyers for Donald J. Trump for President Inc. and the counties and state election official it has sued that they must show up and “be prepared for argument and questioning” at the Williamsport federal courthouse.

The Trump campaign wants to prevent certification of results that give President-elect Joe Biden the state’s 20 electoral votes, suing over election procedures that were not uniform across the state.

Pennsylvania Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar has asked to have the lawsuit thrown out, calling its allegations in court filings “at best, garden-variety irregularities.”

# Over 300 at wedding to test for virus

*Associated Press*

RITZVILLE, Wash.—Health officials are asking more than 300 attendees of a wedding near Ritzville on Nov. 7 to get tested for COVID-19 after several people tested positive.

The Grant County Health District said in a news release Monday that anyone who attended the wedding is being asked to quarantine through Nov. 21.

County officials said as of Monday, 17 county residents have tested positive and that attendees diagnosed with COVID-19 have also been linked to two subsequent outbreaks. Officials said they were alerting the public because they won't be able to otherwise find every person who attended the event.

At the time of the wedding, ceremonies had been limited to 30 people. As of Tuesday, Gov. Jay Inslee has prohibited receptions and is putting in place other restrictions in an effort to stem a recent spike in cases of the coronavirus that threatens to overwhelm the health care system.

Additional governors and mayors are also ratcheting up COVID-19 restrictions ahead of Thanksgiving for fear that holiday travel and family gatherings will only worsen the record-breaking, coast-to-coast resurgence of the virus. In Washington, leaders are ordering or imploring residents to stay home and keep their distance from others to help stem a rising tide of infections.

State health officials on Monday reported an additional 1,492 COVID-19 cases and 29 deaths throughout Washington.

The latest update brings the state's totals to more than 131,500 cases and 2,548 deaths, according to the state Department of Health.

## Alaska

JUNEAU — Alaska Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy faces criticism from across the political spectrum for his handling of COVID-19, from those who think he's not doing enough to address rising case counts to those who think he's been overreaching in his approach.

He issued a new disaster declaration, which took effect Monday, despite questions from some lawmakers about its legal underpinnings. He has urged calm in asking Alaskans to take precautions but last week, amid what he called an escalating crisis, issued his call for residents "to sacrifice a little more by changing your daily rou-

tines."

Rep. Zack Fields, an Anchorage Democrat, said if Dunleavy were to issue a statewide face mask mandate it would "depoliticize masks among that fringe group that has been most resistant to wearing them." Masks are to be worn at state facilities, and some communities mandate masks in certain settings.

Eagle River Republican Sen. Lora Reinbold has been a prominent critic of Dunleavy, saying in a recent Facebook post that he "wants us to dramatically change our lives" to help frontline workers who "have supposedly been gearing up to take care of patients all year."

## Illinois

SPRINGFIELD — With more people hospitalized with COVID-19 in Illinois than during the bleakest period of the coronavirus onslaught last spring, Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Monday turned to professionals in the field to make personal pleas for precautions to slow the relentless pandemic.

The state reported 11,632 new infections, down from repeated record-breaking days last week, but November has seen a daily average of approximately 10,500 new COVID-19 cases, compared with about 4,900 per day the last two weeks of October. And those numbers have filled 5,581 hospital beds in the state.

"The nation has been swept by a COVID storm ... and with nearly no mitigations in the states bordering us, and no national strategy to reduce the spread, we're in for a very difficult next few months," Pritzker said at his daily coronavirus briefing in Chicago.

Again, he pleaded with the public to stay home unless necessary to go out, wear face coverings when out in public and limit contact with large groups of people.

Officials are concerned about the coming collision of cold weather, traditional holidays and flu seasons, all which have the capacity to spread or exacerbate the virus.

"It is not too late to rethink your Thanksgiving Day plans," said Dr. Ngozi Ezike, the state public health director. "They need to be more aligned with COVID-19 precautions. We can all see it. Things are getting worse."

## Kentucky

LOUISVILLE — Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear warned Monday that if cases con-

tinued to surge in the next couple of days, his administration will have to take additional steps to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

"We just need more people day in and day out, trying to do the very best for those around them," he said. "I don't want the state to ever see a refrigeration truck coming in because we need it for our lost loved ones."

The Democratic governor added that the specific type of action would not be similar to what occurred in March and April.

"We know too much about the virus now; we won't have to go to those lengths," he said at a virtual news briefing.

Kentucky reported 1,514 new confirmed coronavirus cases Monday, the highest number of cases on a Monday for the state since the pandemic began. There have also been three additional virus-related deaths in the state, raising the total to 1,664. One hundred seventy-three school-aged children have tested positive.

Kentucky's test positivity rate is 8.98%, up 1.5 percentage points from last week.

## North Carolina

CHAPEL HILL — There have been more than 450 reports of students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill violating COVID-19 safety rules set by the school, according to a report released by the university.

The report released Monday said there were about 55 cases of students being removed from campus housing for breaking the university's rules. The majority of the cases resulted in written warnings and other lesser disciplinary actions. In 60 of the cases, a student was not identified or found responsible.

When students began classes at the campus this fall, they had all signed agreements to follow the school's virus safety guidelines that includes wearing masks and social distancing. The report does not provide details on the incidents, but said the complaints were made between Aug. 1 and Oct. 31.

The school closed dorms and moved classes online after spikes in coronavirus cases were reported in residence halls in August. But most students who moved off campus and stayed in the area, said Amy Johnson, the school's vice chancellor for student affairs.

Students are scheduled to move back into their dorms in January for the spring.



## School asks people for most hated words for its list

**M** SAULT STE. MARIE — Is there a word or phrase that really bugs you? A peeve, pique or provocation?

Lake Superior State University is accepting candidates for its 46th annual tongue-in-cheek list of words that should be banished.

"It's our tradition to publish the world-famous banished words list on Dec. 31 so that people don't begin the new year by putting their foot in their mouth," LSSU President Rodney Hanley said. "No-brainer — which also made our list in the past."

The deadline to submit online entries is 8 a.m. EST on Nov. 30.

More than a dozen words or phrases were added last year, including "artisanal," "influencer," "living my best life" and "chirp."

## Firefighter files lawsuit alleging sexual harassment

**I** A DUBUQUE — A Dubuque firefighter is suing the city because she said she has endured sexual harassment on the job since she started in 2011.

Jami Boss cited a number of incidents in her lawsuit including being told by a lieutenant that she was only hired because she was a girl. Boss said male firefighters used the women's restroom and sometimes walked in on Boss while she was in there. And in one incident, a coworker shoved his hand down the back of Boss' pants, according to the lawsuit.

Boss also said in her lawsuit that officials retaliated against her after she filed complaints about the way she was treated. And she says she was passed over for promotion in favor of male colleagues who had less experience than Boss.

## Pilot hospitalized after homemade craft crashes

**FL** MACCLENNY — The Florida Highway Patrol said a 53-year-old Jacksonville pilot was hospitalized with life-threatening injuries after his homemade aircraft crashed in Baker County.

Officials said the pilot was alone when the single-engine red aircraft crashed. Nobody on the ground was injured, state troopers said, and the pilot's name wasn't released.

The pilot was flying east from a hangar the aircraft lost power. When the pilot turned the aircraft to fly west back to the hangar, that's when he started to rapidly descend. The nose of the craft struck the ground and injured the pilot, officials said.

The craft was not registered with the Fed-

eral Aviation Administration, which said it is not investigating the crash because it doesn't handle incidents involving unregistered aircraft.

The Highway Patrol and the Baker County Sheriff's Office are investigating.

## Tribe builds 5-acre memorial to USS Arizona

**AZ** PHOENIX — The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community has built the 5-acre memorial near Scottsdale as a tribute to those who were aboard the USS Arizona when it was attacked and sank at Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

The USS Arizona Memorial Gardens honors each of the ship's 1,512 crew members, including the 1,177 who died in the explosion caused by one torpedo and eight bombs hitting the battleship.

One survivor of the attack was Paul Howard Egan. He died in 1992 at age 71 and his ashes were interred on the USS Arizona in 1993.

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community funded and built the gardens, which opened in February.

The venue honors each of those who were aboard the USS Arizona at the time of the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service's attack with metal monuments of stacked blocks with names and ranks engraved on them, according to the Republic.

## State reports \$285M in September sports bets

**IL** SPRINGFIELD — The latest numbers released by the Illinois Gaming Board show bettors in the state wagered more than \$285 million on sports contests in September.

Gamblers can place bets on sporting events at seven of Illinois' casinos and one horse racing track. The state's most lucrative casino and its first to start taking sports bets, Rivers in Des Plaines, accepted about \$105 million in wagers in September, the most of any Illinois casino, according to the gaming board.

Sports betting has generated about \$3 million in tax revenue for Illinois in its first three full months. Gov. J.B. Pritzker's office has suggested it could eventually generate more than \$100 million in revenues.

## Skydiver dies after parachute failed to deploy

**FL** BOCA RATON — Authorities said a Miami skydiver died in North Florida when his parachute didn't deploy

correctly during a jump.

The Bradford County Sheriff's Office said that a team of skydivers were practicing a jump when the accident happened. The group of seven men, all originally from Cuba, were practicing for a weekend event that honors the families of fallen police officers.

"We just wanted to give back thanks to law enforcement," said Perdomo. "Yuset was very big into what he considered his country and this was a way of giving back — to jump with flags on behalf of all the fallen officers."

Maj. Brad Smith of the Bradford County Sheriff's Office said rescue workers were sent to search a wooded area

## Gettysburg Address to be shown at Lincoln museum

**IL** SPRINGFIELD — A handwritten copy of Abraham Lincoln's most famous speech will be on display for two weeks in a Springfield museum.

Officials with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum said it is only one of five surviving handwritten copies. The 1863 speech starts, "Four score and seven years ago ..." Lincoln delivered it at the dedication of a cemetery for soldiers killed in the Battle of Gettysburg.

Most of the time the document is kept in a climate-controlled vault to protect it from light and humidity.

The exhibit opens Wednesday and ends Nov. 30. An actor portraying Lincoln will visit the museum to answer questions about the speech and there'll be an online discussion on Thursday.

## County sees increase in speed camera violations

**MD** BALTIMORE — Drivers have become more aggressive during the pandemic. And the proof is in Baltimore County.

The county has seen a 10% increase in speed camera violations so far in 2020. It issued more than 180,000 citations between January and Oct. 13. The same period last year saw 164,000 citations.

At the same time, revenue from speed cameras rose by nearly 38%. And more than \$4.56 million in speeding fines were collected compared to \$3.31 million.

Baltimore City also saw a rise in citations, although not as high. Citations were up by 7% by more than 500,000 through September.

Those citations generated more than \$12 million in revenue.

# Bucks acquire Holiday from Pelicans

Associated Press

Point guard Jrue Holiday is being traded from New Orleans to Milwaukee, which is aiming to give two-time reigning NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo the improved roster that he seeks with the decision on his supermax contract extension looming, a person with knowledge of the situation said Tuesday.

The Pelicans are getting Eric Bledsoe, George Hill and a package of future first-round draft picks from the Bucks, the person told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because no deal had been finalized.

ESPN, The Athletic and The New York Times first reported details of the Holiday trade. ESPN also said the Bucks were executing a second trade with Sacramento, with Bogdan Bogdanovic and Justin James going to Milwaukee for Donte DiVincenzo, D.J. Wilson and Ersan

Ilyasova.

The trade of Holiday was the second blockbuster involving a point guard since the league allowed transactions to begin again Monday. Chris Paul was traded to the Phoenix Suns by the Oklahoma City Thunder earlier Monday; Paul and Holiday had been mentioned throughout the offseason as point guards who could be moved and were expected to be in high demand.

Hours after the Paul deal got done, Holiday was headed to Milwaukee. The Bucks' message is clear: They want to win a title, and they want to give Antetokounmpo enough incentive to sign his supermax extension — one that will be worth more than \$200 million for five years — before Dec. 21. When Antetokounmpo was announced as the back-to-back MVP in September, he stated his intention openly.

"I'm happy for this, I'm happy for this award," Antetokounmpo

said at the time. "But I want more. ... I've got to keep getting better. I want to be a champion."

Bucks general manager Jon Horst, speaking to reporters earlier Monday about the draft and the free-agent period that starts Friday, seemed to drop hints that the Bucks expected to put together a roster that would be better than the one they had last season — when Milwaukee had the NBA's best regular-season record for the second consecutive season, but fell short of making the NBA Finals anyway. This past season, they were ousted by the Miami Heat in the second round.

"Fun, busy, exciting time of the year," Horst said. "We are heavily focused on continuing to improve the team. ... A lot of action. A lot of activity.."

Holiday will almost certainly make them better. Widely considered one of the best defenders in the NBA, he averaged 19.1 points and 6.7 assists last season and now joins Antetokounmpo

and Khris Middleton on a Milwaukee roster that will obviously look very different than it did this past season.

Holiday is due to earn \$25.4 million this season and holds a \$26.3 million player option for next season. Therein lies the gamble for the Bucks: There's no guarantee that Holiday will stay more than a year, and Antetokounmpo's future in Milwaukee remains in at least some question as well. And it's now almost certain that the Bucks will have to fill out their roster for this season with several minimum-salary players, since they'll owe about \$86 million to just Antetokounmpo, Middleton and Holiday this season.

It is the second consecutive offseason in which New Orleans traded a standout for a haul of players and draft picks. In 2019, it was Anthony Davis to the Lakers in a move that saw reigning Most Improved Player Brandon Ingram and more coming to New Orleans.

## International players expect to impact NBA Draft

Associated Press

Most NBA fans are just now learning the name Killian Hayes, the 19-year-old French-American point guard who could be a top-five pick in Wednesday night's draft.

The shifty 6-foot-5 lefty is among several international prospects, continuing the NBA's global reach. Others include Deni Avdija, Israel; Théo Maledon, France; Leandro Bolmaro, Argentina; and Aleksej Pokusevski, Serbia.

There were 108 international players on opening-night rosters for the 2019-20 season. That number could increase this year and Hayes will be one the new faces.

He has the ability to create space for himself or teammates. He'll benefit from the NBA's defensive three-second rule and is

effective running the pick-and-roll. In Europe, defenders can clog the lane.

"When he gets in the paint he's able to find his shooters, he's able to find his big men," said Peyton Siva Jr., who plays for Alba Berlin in the German league. "That's when he's more dangerous, when he's able to create for others."

Playing in Ulm — Albert Einstein's hometown in Germany — Hayes showed he has room to improve. He was inconsistent from three-point range (21.8% in 20 domestic league games; 39% in 10 EuroCup games), but is crafty with the basketball.

"He hit me with a really good move at the top of the key — made me stumble and fall," said Siva, who played one season with the Detroit Pistons. Hayes finished with 20 points and 10

assists in the loss to Siva's team.

Although quiet, Hayes does not lack confidence.

Hayes told the French sports daily L'Équipe about questions NBA teams ask during pre-draft interviews. One asked if he was a "dog" on the court, and Hayes replied yes. What type? He said, "Rottweiler."

Hayes was born in Florida but grew up mostly in his mother's hometown of Cholet in western France where his American father played basketball.

Some other international NBA prospects to keep an eye on:

Deni Avdija

Scouts really like the versatility of the 19-year-old from Israel but they are not as enamored by his poor free-throw shooting. Avdija says not to worry.

At 6-8, he can play several po-

sitions and does a little of everything. His stat line from the 2019 under-20 European Championships final: 23 points, 5 rebounds, 7 assists, 3 blocks and 1 steal. Israel beat Spain for the gold and Avdija was the tournament MVP.

Theo Maledon

The 19-year-old Maledon is a French point guard who draws comparisons to Tony Parker.

Maledon was 17 when he was named "best young player" of the French league in 2018-19. That puts him in good company. Past winners include current and former NBA players Frank Ntilikina, Evan Fournier, Clint Capela, Boris Diaw and Parker.

Maledon and Parker grew up in the same city: Rouen in the Normandy region. And like Parker, Maledon has considerable pro experience.

# Forward progress: Ones to watch in draft

*Associated Press*

Obi Toppin needed one season to go from developmental project to potential NBA lottery pick.

He blossomed last year for Dayton to turn the Flyers into a Final Four contender while becoming a sought-after pro prospect ahead of Wednesday's draft. He's among the headliners of this year forwards, players offering enough size or length to tussle inside or contribute on the perimeter.

The list includes international prospect Deni Avdija and Florida State's Patrick Williams as other potential lottery picks.

Here's a look at some of the top prospects:

## Obi Toppin

Toppin was once a 6-foot-2 high school junior who had never dunked in a game and then a senior lacking Division I offers. Now he's a high lottery prospect as a rangy power forward.

**Strengths:** The 6-9, 220-pound Toppin's development, which included a stop in prep school and a redshirt season, turned him into an efficient scorer and high-flying dunker. He averaged 20 points despite taking 20 shots in a game only once all year. He shot 64.7% from the floor over two seasons and became a more frequent three-point shooting threat last year (39%). The Associated Press men's college basketball player of the year also averaged 1.2 blocks.

**Concerns:** It's unclear how good of a rebounder he will be; he averaged 7.5 rebounds but hit double figures only eight times in 31 games last year despite his explosiveness. It's also unclear how well he'd handle quicker opponents when roving or switching along the perimeter, though Toppin said workouts with other NBA players and draft prospects would help prepare

him for that.

"Playing against those guys has been helping me a lot, especially for defense — having to play some bigs, having to play some guards," Toppin said in a virtual news conference, adding he's working to "prove a lot of people wrong" on defense.

## Deni Avdija

The 19-year-old from Israel is a versatile playmaker with size and a still-developing game.

**Strengths:** The 6-9, 225-pound Avdija helped Israel win the FIBA U-20 European Championships in 2018 and 2019. And despite playing opponents 1 or 2 years older in that second title run, Avdija was most valuable player by averaging 18.4 points, 8.3 rebounds, 5.3 assists, 2.4 blocks and 2.1 steals. He's a good ballhandler with the versatility to lead the break, run the offense in half court or play from the post. He also became the youngest player ever to play for Maccabi Tel Aviv to start his professional career in 2017.

**Concerns:** Avdija's shooting touch just hasn't been there. Last year, he made just 33% of three-pointers and 59% of free throws in 59 games with Maccabi Tel Aviv in Israeli and Euroleague play. During a predraft virtual news conference, Avdija said he's been working to make his stroke more efficient as he gets stronger, adding: "I'm a guy who likes to improve, who's looking forward to improve."

## Patrick Williams

The 19-year-old freshman offers positional versatility after playing in solely as a reserve.

**Strengths:** The Atlantic Coast Conference's sixth man of the year helped the Semi-

noles win their first league regular-season crown. He brought athleticism and strength in a 6-8, 225-pound frame with a nearly 7-foot wingspan, giving him the ability to defend multiple positions. He averaged 9.2 points and 4.0 rebounds in just 22.6 minutes per game — he played 30-plus minutes only twice — yet had a team-high 30 blocks. He also shot 83.8% from the foul line.

**Concerns:** Williams was a perfect fit as a complementary piece for FSU, but teams will have a limited body of work to evaluate while projecting him for a more extensive role. Williams must continue developing his outside shot after shooting 32% from three-point range and making just 16 in 29 games.

## Others to watch

**Precious Achiuwa:** The 6-9, 234-pound Memphis freshman used this athleticism to become the first player named player of the year and freshman of the year in the American Athletic Conference in the same season.

He averaged 15.8 points and 10.8 rebounds while swatting a team-best 58 shots, two-way production that could land him midway through the first round.

**Saddiq Bey:** The 6-8 sophomore led Villanova in scoring (16.1), shot 45% from three-point range and won the Julius Erving Award for college basketball's top small forward. Bey, who has a 6-11 wingspan, is a first-round prospect who has climbed into the lottery in some mock drafts.

**Jaden McDaniels:** The 6-10 Washington freshman and former McDonald's All-American has the tools to be a first-round pick. But he had a bumpy year with inconsistency — he fouled out eight times and picked up six technicals — while also committing a team-high 100 turnovers.

# Wiseman, Okongwu, Smith lead group of top big men

*Associated Press*

James Wiseman was considered a possible No. 1 overall NBA Draft pick before he ever played in college. Things haven't changed, even after only three games at the college level.

The Memphis freshman headlines the list of big men in Wednesday's draft and he's unlikely to fall out of the top three picks.

His college stint with the Tigers, cut short by NCAA eligibility issues, showcased a tantalizing glimpse at his skillset.

The 19-year-old has a mobile 7-foot-1,

247-pound frame that will make him a presence at both ends of the court, particularly on the glass and in protecting the rim. He ran the floor well and displayed a soft touch in the paint at Memphis. The nation's top-ranked recruit had 28 points and 11 rebounds against South Carolina State in his first game and had a double-double (14 points, 12 rebounds) in his last against a ranked Oregon team.

Southern Cal's Onyeka Okongwu and Maryland's Jalen Smith could also go high in the draft.

Okongwu, a 19-year-old freshman, offers plenty of defensive and rebounding potential. The 6-9, 245-pounder arrived as a top-25 national recruit and immediately became USC's low-post presence. He averaged a team-best 16.2 points while shooting 61.6% from the floor, finishing through contact and at the rim — frequently for dunks.

Smith, a 20-year-old, blossomed as a sophomore for the Terrapins and showed an improving inside-out game.

The 6-10 Smith was a top-20 recruit in 2018 then thrived in his second year.



# How will the Saints fare without Brees?

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — While the Saints are riding a six-game winning streak and sitting atop the NFC South, their resourcefulness and resilience will be tested in the upcoming weeks.

A 27-13 victory over San Francisco on Sunday was a costly one in terms of injuries that affected quarterback Drew Brees, left tackle Terron Armstead, cornerback Marshon Lattimore and others.

While coach Sean Payton declined to comment on any injuries until the first injury report of this week is due out Wednesday afternoon, a person familiar with the situation said Brees has multiple rib fractures and also was diagnosed with a collapsed lung.

Brees is expected to miss several games while his lung and ribs heal, meaning the offense will now be primarily in the hands of Jameis Winston, who was selected first overall by Tampa Bay in the 2015 NFL draft.

During his five seasons with the Bucs, Winston was as mercurial as he was prolific. His statistics last season were a case in point. He passed for 5,109 yards and 33 touchdowns, but also threw 30 interceptions. His lack of consistency and penchant for risky throws led the Buccaneers to pursue former New England QB Tom Brady last offseason and let Winston go.

When Winston signed a one-year deal with New Orleans, he said he did so with a willingness to serve as a backup and refine his game while learning from Payton and

Brees, who have formed one of the most prolific coach-quarterback tandems in NFL history.

Now Winston is taking a team-first approach to how he talks about his goals when he's under center in place of the injured Brees.

"My main job's to serve my teammates, and help put us in a position to win a football game," Winston said. "We all fight in this thing together."

Winston was 6-of-10 passing for 63 yards and led two scoring drives that resulted in 10 insurance points in the second half of Sunday's victory.

Brees, who watched from the sideline, said after Sunday's game that he thought Winston "did great."

## Cousins gets first win on Monday Night Football

Associated Press

Kirk Cousins will take a victory any day of the week. That he finally got one on a Monday night didn't seem to matter.

Cousins threw for 292 yards and two touchdowns, and the Minnesota Vikings overcame a 104-yard kickoff return by Chicago's Cordarrelle Patterson to beat the Bears 19-13.

Cousins won for the first time in 10 career Monday night starts. He hit Adam Thielen with a 6-yard touchdown early in the fourth quarter to put Minnesota ahead by the final margin, and the Vikings (4-5) held on for their third straight win. They also snapped a four-game losing streak against Chicago (5-5).

"Great to get a win," Cousins said. "We'll try to keep building on it now, and it'll be so important to keep stringing these together if we can. That's really what the rest of the season will be all about."

Bears quarterback Nick Foles got taken from the field on a cart in the game's final minute. Coach Matt Nagy said Foles' leg and hip were being evaluated after he got slammed on his right side by Minnesota's

Ifeadi Odenigbo as he threw the ball away.

Patterson joined Josh Cribbs and Leon Washington as the only players with eight kick returns for touchdowns when he ran back the opening kickoff of the second half to give Chicago a 13-7 lead.

It was the longest kickoff return in franchise history, surpassing Gale Sayers' 103-yarder against Pittsburgh on Sept. 17, 1967.

Patterson had all the room he needed as he sprinted up the sideline and raised two fingers as he closed in on the end zone.

"I don't know what I did, man. I was blacked out at the time," Patterson said.

The record return was the lone bright spot for the Bears as they lost their fourth in a row and matched their longest skid since Nagy was hired in 2018.

Cousins completed 25 of 36 passes with two touchdowns to Thielen, who has nine on the season.

His one-handed TD grab in the first quarter was particularly impressive.

Minnesota's Dalvin Cook ran for 96 yards on 30 attempts. Justin Jefferson caught eight pas-

ses for 135 yards and tied Randy Moss' club rookie record with his fourth 100-yard receiving game.

The defense did not allow an offensive touchdown for the first time in 20 games, including the playoffs, and the Vikings won for just the fourth time in 18 games at Soldier Field since it reopened in 2003 following renovations.

"It's a goofy year for everybody," said Harrison Smith, who had an interception. "We're starting to have a little bit of a feeling of how to make our own energy and our own confidence. I think we're starting to figure it out a little bit."

### Struggling offense

With offensive coordinator Bill Lazor calling the plays after Nagy handed off those duties in an effort to lift a unit that ranks near the bottom of the NFL, the Bears managed 149 yards. It was their lowest total since they had 147 against San Francisco on Dec. 3, 2017.

"We need to make sure that we're really honestly going back now and saying OK, what's going on, where are we at now that we have some time to really

see," Nagy said.

Foles threw for 106 yards and an interception. It was a far cry from his previous start against the Vikings, when he led Philadelphia past them in the NFC championship game on the way to a Super Bowl title in 2018.

Khalil Mack had his first interception since 2018. But the fading Bears came out flat again on a Monday night; they were dominated by the Rams in Los Angeles last month. And to left tackle Charles Leno Jr., that makes it even worse.

"Disappointment," he said. "A lot of emotions, negative emotions right now. We've got to process. We know it's two Monday Nights we didn't perform well. It's just frustrating."

### Return, regroup

The Bears led 13-7 when Chicago's Dwayne Harris muffed a punt. The Vikings' Josh Metellus recovered at the 20, leading to Dan Bailey's 37-yard field goal. Bailey added a tying 43-yarder with just under two minutes left in the third.

### Quotable

"Yes." — Vikings coach Mike Zimmer on whether the struggling specials are aging him.