

DOD mulls penalties for vaccine refusers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As deadlines loom for military and defense civilians to get mandated COVID-19 vaccines, senior leaders must now wrestle with the fate of those who flatly refuse the shots or are seeking exemptions, and how to make sure they are treated fairly and equally.

The vast majority of the active duty force has received at least one shot, but tens of thousands have not. For some, it may be a career-ending decision. Others could face transfers, travel restrictions, limits on deployments and requirements to repay bonuses.

Exemption decisions for medical, religious and administrative reasons will be made by unit commanders around the world, on what the Pentagon says will be a “case-by-case” basis. That raises a vexing issue for military leaders who are pushing a vaccine mandate seen as critical to maintaining a healthy force, but want to avoid a haphazard, inconsistent approach with those who refuse.

Brig. Gen. Darrin Cox, surgeon general at Army Forces Command, said commanders want to ensure they are following the rules.

“Because of some of the sensitivities of this particular vaccine, I think that we just

wanted to ensure that we were consistent and equitable” in meting out a punishment that would be “a repercussion of continuing to refuse a valid order.”

Military vaccination rates are higher than those of the general population in the United States and the reasons for objecting to the shots — often based on misinformation — are similar to those typically heard throughout the country. But unlike most civilians, military personnel are routinely required to get as many as 17 vaccines, and face penalties for refusing.

The military services are reporting that between 1%-7% remain unvaccinated. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has called for compassion in dealings with those troops, which totals nearly 60,000 active duty service members, according to data released last week. Officials have said the numbers change daily, and include those who may have gotten or requested an exemption. They have declined to say how many troops are still seeking an exemption or refused the vaccine.

Asked about possible variations in the treatment of those seeking exemptions or refusing the vaccine, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said it’s up to the services.

“Each case is going to be treated specifi-

cally and individually as it ought to be,” he said.

Kirby said Monday that the secretary doesn’t want to tell commanders how to resolve the punitive measures, and instead trusts that they will do what is best for their units.

“So can we promise you that there will be absolute uniformity across the board? No. And we wouldn’t want to promise that because it wouldn’t be the same way we handle the orders violations for other offenses as well,” said Kirby.

It unclear how widely religious exemptions will be granted. Under military rules, commanders can take into account the potential impact on a unit’s mission, and reject a religious exemption if it puts performance at risk.

Commanders can also move service members into another job, deny them overseas deployment or limit unit access if they get an exemption or while a request is being reviewed. Those steps may be more common in smaller units such as special operations forces, who usually deploy in small numbers.

Unvaccinated troops will also be subject to routine testing, distancing guidelines and possibly travel restrictions.

US warships sail to Black Sea, drawing Putin’s ire

By ALISON BATH

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The arrival of U.S. warships in the Black Sea in support of NATO allies has once again sparked the anger of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who said one of the ships was in the “crosshairs” of the Russian military.

Putin made the comment to military leaders on Monday in emphasizing Russia’s need to bolster its air defenses. He cited the deployment of NATO’s U.S.-led missile defense system in Eastern Europe and missions by alliance ships in the Baltic and Black seas, The Associated Press reported.

“Even now, a U.S. warship has entered the Black Sea and we can see it in binoculars or crosshairs of our defense systems,” Putin said during the meeting in the southern

Russian city of Sochi.

Meanwhile, Russia’s Black Sea Fleet said Tuesday that its warships had practiced destroying enemy targets, Reuters reported.

The destroyer USS Porter entered the Black Sea on Saturday for a routine patrol after participating in NATO exercises in the Aegean Sea, U.S. 6th Fleet said in a statement.

“The crew of USS Porter looks forward to entering the Black Sea to maintain safety and stability throughout the region,” said Cmdr. Christopher Petro, the destroyer’s commanding officer. “Our ability to work alongside our NATO allies and partners enhances our collective readiness and overall maritime security.”

The USS Mount Whitney, the flagship of the U.S. 6th Fleet, arrived Monday for a port

visit in Istanbul and will soon join Porter, U.S. 6th Fleet said in a separate statement.

Mount Whitney remained in port Tuesday, said Lt. Cmdr. Karl Schonberg, a fleet spokesman. The port is considered to be the entrance of the Black Sea.

The destroyer USS Arleigh Burke also recently completed NATO exercises in the Baltic Sea, the Navy said.

Russia has long complained about NATO and U.S. warships in the Black Sea, especially when they sail near the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow annexed in 2014. The international community still considers Crimea a part of Ukraine.

Six nations border the Black Sea, including several that hold training exercises with the United States or participate in patrols in its international waters.

Nuclear sub hit uncharted undersea mountain

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Navy investigators said a nuclear-powered, fast-attack submarine was damaged last month after running into an uncharted undersea mountain.

Monday's findings follow a nearly monthlong investigation into the Oct. 2 incident in which the USS Connecticut struck what the Navy at the time referred to as an "unidentified object."

The collision injured several crewmembers and damaged the submarine, although the Navy

has not disclosed how many or to what extent.

Navy investigators determined the Connecticut struck an "uncharted seamount," or undersea mountain, while it was operating in international waters in the Indo-Pacific region, according to a U.S. 7th Fleet news release.

The investigation is being referred to 7th Fleet commander Vice Adm. Karl Thomas to determine whether additional action or discipline is warranted.

No additional information regarding the investigation was

immediately available, 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Nicholas Lingo told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday.

The exact location of the incident was not disclosed, but an unnamed defense official said it occurred in the South China Sea, according to an Oct. 8 report from U.S. Naval Institute News.

One of three Seawolf-class submarines, the Connecticut can support a crew of 140. Of those, nine suffered minor injuries and two suffered moderate injuries, according to a Navy official who spoke on condition of

anonymity to the Japan Times. The same official reported that the sub arrived in Guam on Oct. 8.

The collision happened the same weekend an armada of 17 warships, including the aircraft carriers USS Ronald Reagan, USS Carl Vinson and HMS Queen Elizabeth, trained together in the Philippine Sea near Taiwan.

Lingo declined to comment on the Connecticut's current location, although various outlets have continued to report its presence in Guam.

US and S. Korea kick off 'low-key' joint air drills

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — A five-day air exercise between the United States and South Korea kicked off Monday with little fanfare amid increased speculation about the resumption of inter-Korean relations.

The "low-key" joint drills consist of South Korean F-15K Slam Eagle and KF-16 fighter jets, a Korean air force officer told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday on the customary condition of anonymity. About 100 aircraft are involved from both countries, according to a Monday report by the Yonhap News Agency.

A 7th Air Force spokesman at Osan Air Base described the training as "routine" in an email Tuesday. Lt. Col. Kelley Jeter declined to provide further details, including the U.S. aircraft involved, citing the military's policy against commenting on the joint exercises.

Previous air exercises in South Korea, such as 2017's

Vigilant Ace, mobilized more than 230 aircraft, including the fifth-generation F-35 Lightning II stealth fighter. The joint exercise reaffirmed "mutual support procedures" and improved "understanding and trust between the two nations," according to a statement from the 51st Fighter Wing at Osan.

U.S. personnel and aircraft were jointly featured at last month's annual Seoul International Aerospace and Defense Exhibition. Flyovers of U.S. F-16 Fighting Falcons and C-17 Globemaster III airlifters demonstrated their capabilities at the largest military exhibition in Northeast Asia, in addition to aircraft from other countries.

Joint military drills between the allies have been scaled back in recent years and publicizing them has nearly ceased amid the ebb and flow of North Korean relations. The North frequently rails against the drills in propaganda statements that describe them precursors to an invasion of the country.

USAF dismisses 40 recruits, trainees who declined vaccine

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Air Force announced 40 recruits have been kicked out of the service for refusing the coronavirus vaccine ahead of the service's Nov. 2 deadline to get the shots, service spokeswoman Ann Stefanek said Monday.

About 23 of the 40 were in basic training, while the others had completed basic training and were undergoing their technical training when they were separated from the service, Stefanek said. The recruits received entry-level discharges, meaning they may reenlist if they choose to get the vaccine in the future.

Entry-level discharges can be given to troops who have served less than 180 days and typically carry no discharge designations, such as good, bad or other-than-honorable characterizations, according to the service.

The discharges came a day before the vaccination deadline looms for the Air Force and

Space Force. As of Tuesday, all active-duty airmen were required to be fully vaccinated or potentially face separation.

About 94.6% of the active-duty force in the Air Force and Space Force were fully vaccinated as of the Air Force's last update Oct. 26. About 98.2% had received at least one dose of the vaccine. The Pentagon does not consider a person fully vaccinated until two weeks have passed since their final dose.

That means about 1.8% of the active-duty troops in the Air Force and Space Force — or up to about 5,950 airmen and 115 guardians — continue to decline the vaccine. There were 330,678 active-duty troops in the Air Force and 6,434 in the Space Force as of Sept. 30, according to the services.

Chief Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Monday, however, that about 97% of active-duty airmen and guardians are fully vaccinated, which would put the number of unvaccinated troops at about 10,000.

Army to promote NCOs not done with studies

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

Army noncommissioned officers who have yet to complete mandatory pre-promotion education courses but are otherwise qualified will be allowed to advance to their next rank next year in an expansion of the service's temporary promotions policy, the top enlisted soldier said Monday.

The new policy will begin Jan. 1 and applies to all soldiers eligible for promotion to the ranks of sergeant through master sergeant who have been unable to complete required professional military education courses for a variety of reasons, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston said. The soldiers would have to complete the required courses—for example the Basic Leader Course for promotion to sergeant or the Advanced Leader Course for promotion to staff sergeant—within

the next year or they would revert back to their prior rank, he added.

"This is about talent management and promoting the best soldiers available," Grinston said. "Like a highly qualified individual who through no fault of their own ... didn't get a chance to go to that [professional military education] course."

The Army has more eligible soldiers trying to attend such courses than it can accommodate in its schools, Grinston told reporters. That leads to some top performing soldiers missing their promotions for reasons beyond their control. The Army underestimated how many soldiers that it would need to send to those schools during its last planning cycle, roughly four years ago, he said.

Other soldiers have been unable to attend mandatory schooling because of deployments and

other issues.

The Army announced a temporary promotion policy last year that authorized promotions for otherwise qualified soldiers to advance in rank without finishing pre-promotion training because they were deployed in a combat zone or other hostile area. The temporary policy also applied to those who missed education courses because of a pregnancy.

In developing the new policy, Grinston said top service officials were thinking about soldiers deployed to noncombat zones in places such as South Korea or Europe, where they spend months training away from home and cannot attend mandatory schooling.

"We're trying to ensure we get those individuals to school but not disadvantage them for doing those things we ask them to do as a soldier," Grinston said.

For now, the new policy expansion will last for one year, Grinston said, announcing it is set to expire Dec. 31, 2022. However, the Army will revisit the policy in September to determine if it should be extended. The Army will also spend the coming months determining if it should add more instructors and classes to its mandatory schools, he said.

Last month, the Army approved a similar temporary promotion policy for master sergeants to be promoted to sergeants major before completing the required Master Leader Course. Beginning Monday, the Army will not consider whether master sergeants have finished that course before promoting them to sergeant major, however they must then complete the Master Leader Course within one year to retain that top rank, officials said.

Vaccine for younger kids is being packed, shipped

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Anticipating a green light from vaccine advisers, the Biden administration is assembling and shipping millions of COVID-19 shots for children ages 5-11, the White House said Monday. The first could go into kids' arms by midweek.

"We are not waiting on the operations and logistics," said coronavirus coordinator Jeff Zients.

By vaccinating children, the United States hopes to head off another coronavirus wave during the cold-weather months when people spend more time indoors and respiratory illnesses can spread more easily. Cases have been declining for weeks, but the virus has repeatedly shown its ability to stage a comeback and more easily transmissible mutations are a persistent threat.

On Tuesday, a special advisory panel to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will meet

to consider detailed recommendations for administering the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to younger children. The Food and Drug Administration already cleared the shots, which deliver about one-third of the vaccine given to adults. After CDC advisers make their recommendations, agency director Dr. Rochelle Walensky will give the final order.

Zients said the government has enough of the Pfizer vaccine for all 28 million children in the 5-11 age group. "We're in great shape on supply," Zients said during the White House briefing.

The children's vaccination drive is expected to start later this week and go into full swing by next week. Parents will be able to go to [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) and filter on vaccines for children 5-11 to find a location near them that is offering the shot. Pfizer's vaccine already has been authorized for use in older children.

Elections in US showcase security steps, new laws

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Voters began casting ballots across the U.S. early Tuesday in the first wave of elections to test new Republican restrictions on the ballot and give elections officials a chance to counter a year's worth of misinformation about voting security.

Officials said demonstrating secure, consistent and fair practices could help reassure those who still have doubts about last year's presidential election as they begin preparations for next year's midterms.

"It is a great dress rehearsal for 2022," said Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon.

Much of the attention will be on Virginia and New Jersey, where voters are casting ballots for governor and other statewide races. For the rest of the country, voters were making selections on a variety of local races, ranging from mayor and city council to school

board and bond measures. Voters in Maine, New York, Texas and a few other few states were considering ballot initiatives on a wide array of topics.

For some, the voting experience will be different from last year, when officials implemented pandemic-related changes to make it easier for voters to avoid crowded polling places. Some states have made those changes permanent, while others have rolled some of them back.

In a few states, voters were encountering tighter voting rules because of laws enacted in states controlled politically by Republicans. Among them are Florida and Georgia, where voters face new ID requirements for using mail ballots.

Republicans have said their changes were needed to improve security and public confidence following the 2020 presidential election.

Deadly blast rocks hospital in Kabul

From wire reports

KABUL, Afghanistan — Islamic State militants set off an explosion at the entrance to a military hospital in the Afghan capital on Tuesday, killing at least seven people, a senior Taliban official said. It was one of the most brazen ISIS attacks yet since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in the summer.

Among those killed were three women, a child and three Taliban guards, said Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. Five attackers were also killed, he said, adding that Taliban guards prevented them from getting into the hospital. He said the attack was over within 15 minutes.

A doctor at Sardar Mohammad Daud

Khan military hospital, Habib Rahman, said in a Washington Post report that at least 20 people had been killed and more than 37 wounded, but added he expected the toll to rise because the first explosion at the entrance also hit many people.

The Post report also said a local Taliban commander said that gunmen moved inside the medical facility where clashes broke out as two blasts struck. Another doctor there also said he heard gunfire. Both spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

The Taliban's deputy spokesman, Bilal Karimi, told The Washington Post that two suicide bombs targeted the hospital in central Kabul, but did not comment on reports

of gunmen entering the building.

"No one was killed inside the hospital," the Taliban spokesman said. He said Taliban guards thwarted ISIS plans to target medical staff and patients in the 400-bed facility.

He said Taliban special forces were subsequently deployed and searched the hospital and that a helicopter was used in the operation.

Health officials said 16 people were wounded in the attack on the Sardar Mohammad Dawood Khan hospital in Kabul's 10th district. Mujahid said five Taliban fighters were among the wounded.

Earlier, another Taliban official had said the attack was carried out by six men, and that two of them were captured.

Over 100 countries vow to end deforestation at COP26

Associated Press

GLASGOW, Scotland — More than 100 countries pledged Tuesday to end deforestation in the coming decade — a promise that experts say would be critical to limiting climate change but one that has been made and broken before.

Britain hailed the commitment as the first big achievement of the U.N. climate conference known as COP26 taking place this month in the Scottish city of Glasgow. But campaigners said they need to see the details to understand its full impact.

The U.K. government said it has received commitments from leaders representing more than 85% of the world's forests to halt and reverse deforestation by 2030. Among

them are several countries with massive forests, including Brazil, China, Colombia, Congo, Indonesia, Russia and the United States.

More than \$19 billion in public and private funds have been pledged toward the plan.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that "with today's unprecedented pledges, we will have a chance to end humanity's long history as nature's conqueror, and instead become its custodian."

Forests are important ecosystems and provide a critical way of absorbing carbon dioxide — the main greenhouse gas — from the atmosphere. Trees are one of the world's major so-called carbon sinks, or

places where carbon is stored.

But the value of wood as a commodity and the growing demand for agricultural and pastoral land are leading to widespread and often illegal felling of forests, particularly in developing countries.

"We are delighted to see Indigenous Peoples mentioned in the forest deal announced today," said Joseph Itongwa Mukumo, an Indigenous Walikale and activist from Congo.

He called for governments and businesses to recognize the effective role Indigenous communities play in preventing deforestation.

Experts cautioned that similar agreements in the past have failed to be effective.

Judge rules in favor of drug makers in Calif. opioid lawsuit

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A California judge has ruled for top drug manufacturers as local governments seek billions of dollars to cover their costs from the nation's opioid epidemic.

Orange County Superior Court Judge Peter Wilson issued a tentative ruling on Monday that said the governments hadn't proven the pharmaceutical companies used deceptive marketing to increase unnecessary opioid prescriptions and create a public nuisance.

"There is simply no evidence to show that the rise in prescriptions was not the result of

the medically appropriate provision of pain medications to patients in need," Wilson wrote in a ruling of more than 40 pages.

"Any adverse downstream consequences flowing from medically appropriate prescriptions cannot constitute an actionable public nuisance," the ruling said.

Los Angeles, Orange and Santa Clara counties and the city of Oakland argued that the pharmaceutical companies misled both doctors and patients by downplaying the risks of addictions, overdoses, deaths and other health complications while overstating the benefits for long-term health conditions.

The plaintiffs said they were disappointed

by the ruling but planned to appeal to "ensure no opioid manufacturer can engage in reckless corporate practices that compromise public health in the state for their own profit."

The lawsuit names Johnson & Johnson, along with AbbVie Inc.'s Allergan subsidiary, Endo International, Teva Pharmaceutical Industries and others. The companies had argued in court filings "that opioid medications are an appropriate treatment for many chronic-pain patients" and that much of their marketing mimicked approved warnings by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Court debates status of judge's naked pictures

KS TOPEKA — The Kansas Supreme Court is considering whether a retired judge should be disciplined for sending nude photos of himself to an online site for swingers.

The court heard arguments in the case of former Russell County Magistrate Judge Marty Clark, who retired in May, three days before the Kansas Commission on Judicial Conduct recommended that he be disciplined.

Todd Thompson, who argued for the commission, said Clark sent photos to the Club Foreplay site as well as "salacious" texts to a woman discussing a possible sexual encounter in the judge's chamber, The Wichita Eagle reported.

Thompson argued Clark, who is in his 50s, should be barred from being a judge again unless he receives education on the integrity of the judicial branch.

Clark's attorney, Chris Joseph, said punishing Clark for sending nude photos to a private channel on his own time would be setting dangerous precedent. He said morality should not be a basis for discipline unless there is a direct connection to the job.

Woman, 80, shot in face during drive-by shooting

MI PONTIAC — An 80-year-old woman was shot in the face during an apparent drive-by shooting in southeastern Michigan.

The woman was sitting in the driver's seat of her parked car in Pontiac when she was shot, the Oakland County sheriff's office

said.

Deputies rushed her to a hospital where she was in critical condition. She was expected to undergo surgery to remove bullet fragments from between her eyes, her relatives told the sheriff's office.

Investigators were reviewing home security cameras in the neighborhood. No arrests have been made.

Coast Guard rescues 2 boaters off state coast

NC MOREHEAD CITY — The Coast Guard said it rescued two boaters after their small boat capsized off the North Carolina coast.

A Coast Guard news release said the rescue occurred near Cedar Island, which is northeast of Morehead City. They had received information from county dispatchers that the boaters needed help after their boat capsized after taking waves over its side.

The Coast Guard used a helicopter and boat along with a local fire department vessel and two civilian boaters to locate the people and assist with the rescue. After the rescue, the two boaters were taken to emergency medical personnel at the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal.

Woman gets \$700 bill despite no ER treatment

GA ATLANTA — A Georgia woman who left an emergency room after waiting for hours without seeing a doctor said she walked away with her injury untreated and a \$700 charge simply for showing up.

Taylor Davis told WAGA-TV

she went to the Emory Decatur Hospital emergency room for a head injury and decided to leave after seeing no end in sight to her seven-hour wait for care.

A couple of weeks later, a surprise arrived in her mailbox: a \$700 bill from the hospital.

An email sent to Davis by an Emory Healthcare patient financial services employee said: "You get charged before you are seen. Not for being seen."

Emory Healthcare told the TV station in a statement that it was "looking into this matter and will follow up directly with the individual."

Police said owner lied about child in stolen car

NY NEW YORK — A Queens man who wanted to get his stolen car back told police falsely that there was a 7-year-old boy with Down syndrome in the car, police said.

The car owner made up the story about the child so that officers would work harder to find his red Ford Mustang, a police spokesperson said.

The car was stolen from in front of a house in the Hollis section. Several news outlets reported on the missing boy, who supposedly was unable to communicate.

The car was located four hours later, and a 17-year-old suspected car thief was arrested, but there was no sign of a young boy.

8 exposed to carbon monoxide, hospitalized

MA BROCKTON — Eight people were taken to the hospital in Massachusetts for carbon monoxide

exposures.

The three incidents south of Boston were all related to operating generators in homes as parts of the state continue to deal with power outages following a recent nor'easter, NBC Boston reported. Three adults and two children from a residence in Brockton were taken to the hospital with signs of carbon monoxide poisoning, the station said.

In nearby Hanson, firefighters responded to two carbon monoxide incidents at separate residences, NBC 10 reported. At one of the homes, firefighters found elevated levels of carbon monoxide and took three residents to the hospital for evaluation.

County to pay \$100K for 4 cars damaged by tree

IN NOBLESVILLE — A central Indiana county's commissioners will pay out \$100,000 to the owners of four vehicles after a tree limb fell on the courthouse square, crushing their vehicles.

The 80-foot-tall red oak split during a storm, causing a large limb to crash atop a row of cars parked outside the Hamilton County courthouse in Noblesville, The Indianapolis Star reported.

A pickup truck was totaled, and three cars were badly damaged. No cars were occupied, and no one was injured when the branch weighing an estimated several thousand pounds fell.

Commissioner Christine Altman said that while the county likely was not legally liable for the accident, they would pay for repairs.

— From wire reports

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Chiefs slip past Giants on late field goal

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Patrick Mahomes lamented two more turnovers and Chiefs coach Andy Reid a multitude of penalties, and just about everyone that stepped out of the Kansas City locker room vowed to turn around what's been a disappointing season.

It almost sounded as if they'd lost to the Giants on Monday night.

Instead, the scuffling Chiefs rallied behind two fourth-quarter field goals from Harrison Butker, including the go-ahead 34-yarder with 1:07 left, and beat downtrodden New York 20-17 to even their record after eight games.

"Listen, everything is not beautiful right now but we're fighting through it," Reid said. "Our guys battled. They didn't give up on each other. They kept working at a time you could have just thrown your hands up and say, 'Man, things are just not working the way they're supposed to work.' So we'll

build on that. Let's keep going."

Mahomes threw for 275 yards with a touchdown and an interception for Kansas City, which along with two turnovers, committed 12 penalties for 103 yards. Tyreek Hill had 12 catches for 94 yards and a score, and Mecole Hardman added five catches for 63 yards, including a 24-yard catch-and-run on the final drive that set Butker up for the go-ahead kick.

"The guys are battling and trying to find ways to win," Mahomes said, "and tonight we did."

Daniel Jones had 222 yards passing with two touchdowns and a pick for the Giants (2-6), but he also was sacked three times, including twice after the Chiefs kicked off with just over a minute left in the game.

It was just the fourth win in 15 meetings for Kansas City and their first since the 2013 season.

"We have to eliminate the mistakes we made down the stretch," New York coach Joe Judge said. "We can't allow a

team like this to have extra opportunities. We can't rob ourselves a chance to have opportunities of our own."

The Chiefs actually diced up the Giants on their opening drive, but for the fourth time this season, Mahomes had a pass bounce off his intended target for an interception — this time, backup running back Jerick McKinnon. It was the seventh consecutive game Mahomes had thrown a pick and his league-leading 10th of the season.

It also was an ominous sign for an offense that has done little to resemble its high-flying reputation.

Kansas City did score moments later, after Jones threw the ball right back to them, but the Chiefs struggled to get into their familiar offensive rhythm. Mahomes seemed to be in a different playbook than his wide receivers, tight end Travis Kelce was rendered a non-factor by the New York defense and penalties began to pile up.

Kansas City turned almost entirely to the ground when it marched for its second touchdown. It was seldom-used Derrick Gore that carried seven times for 43 yards before breaking the goal line for his first career score.

The Giants — hardly dynamic in their own right — were the ones that often moved the ball at will.

Without running back Saquon Barkley and wide receiver Kenny Golladay, both still sidelined with injuries, Jones was able to lean on Booker and his backup receivers to march 85 yards for an early touchdown — most of it coming when John Ross III beat safety Daniel Sorensen for a 50-yard catch that rendered his pass interference penalty moot.

New York added an 86-yard drive later in the first half that produced a field goal. And early in the fourth quarter, Evan Engram beat Sorensen to the pylon for a touchdown catch that gave the Giants a 17-14 lead.

First CFP rankings should reveal scope of race

Associated Press

The first College Football Playoff rankings of the season were scheduled to be unveiled Tuesday night, revealing the scope of the national championship race while also providing Exhibit A in the case for expanding the field.

The current four-team format is fine for crowning a deserving champion, but it has reduced interest in the rest of the nonplayoff bowl games among fans, players and even coaches while also narrowing the focus during the final month of the season to fewer than 10% of all major college football teams.

Both the CFP selection committee, charged with ranking teams, and the management committee, responsible for put-

ting together a format to determine a national champion, will be in North Texas this week.

The selection committee's work finished Tuesday afternoon. The management committee, comprised of 10 conference commissioners and Notre Dame's athletic director, is scheduled to meet Wednesday and Thursday as it tries to hammer out the future structure of the CFP. There is a lot of support for a proposed 12-team format, but consensus needs to be unanimous and that is not yet the case.

When the 12-team model was made public in June, participation was touted as one of the main reasons for expansion.

"The practical effect of this will be that with four or five weeks to go in the season, there

will be 25 or 30 teams that have a legitimate claim and practical opportunity to participate," Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby said back in June. "That should make for an extraordinarily good October and November."

Without even seeing the committee's rankings, a glance at the AP Top 25 and seven years of CFP selections make it easy to see which teams head into November with a realistic chance to reach the final four.

Unbeaten Power Five conference teams: Georgia, Oklahoma, Michigan State, Wake Forest.

Power Five teams with one loss and a chance to win a conference: Alabama, Ohio State, Oregon, Michigan, Oklahoma State, Baylor.

History suggests that's the

list.

No team from a non-Power Five conference has ever made the playoff. No team with more than one loss has ever made the playoff.

However, the committee has shown some signs of warming up to schools from the so-called Group of Five conferences in recent years, so slide unbeaten Cincinnati onto that pile.

There is a first time for everything, so if you want to stretch the list — and the imagination — a little further, add a couple of SEC teams that are still in position to win the conference with two losses.

Add Notre Dame with one loss, because you never know.

That's, at most, 14 of 130 FBS teams with CFP aspirations and five weeks left to play.

Raptors top Knicks in anniversary game

Associated Press

NEW YORK — OG Anunoby scored a career-high 36 points and the Toronto Raptors won their fourth straight by beating the New York Knicks 113-104 on Monday night in the 75th anniversary of the NBA's first game.

Gary Trent Jr. added 26 points for the Raptors, who surged into the lead by outscoring the Knicks 38-22 in the third quarter. Fred VanVleet finished with 17 points, nine rebounds and seven assists.

The Raptors took the lead for good during the period when Svi Mykhailiuk's three-pointer made it 68-66 — the same score by which the Knicks beat the Toronto Huskies on Nov. 1, 1946, at Maple Leaf Gardens.

Mykhailiuk finished with 15 points in place of Scottie Barnes, who was leading all rookies with 18.1 points and 8.9 rebounds per game. He has a sprained right thumb.

RJ Barrett scored 27 points for the Knicks, who were trying for their first 6-1 start since 2012-13. Julius Randle

had 22 points, nine rebounds and five assists.

Bulls 128, Celtics 114: DeMar DeRozan scored 37 points and visiting Chicago rallied from a 19-point, second-half deficit to beat Boston and improve to 6-1 for the season.

Zach LaVine scored 26 points and Nikola Vucevic had 11 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists for the Bulls, who outscored Boston 39-11 in the fourth quarter to turn a 14-point lead into a 14-point victory.

Cavaliers 113, Hornets 110: Jarrett Allen had 24 points and 16 rebounds as Cleveland held off a frantic fourth-quarter rally at Charlotte to close out a five-game trip on a positive note.

Lauri Markkanen scored 21 points, Evan Mobley added 15 points and 10 rebounds and Darius Garland had 16 points — including two clutch free throws with 14.9 seconds left — as the Cavaliers went 3-2 on the road.

76ers 113, Trail Blazers 103: Seth Curry stepped up in Joel Embiid's absence, scoring 23 points — including several

key buckets late — to lead short-handed Philadelphia over visiting Portland.

Embiid, the team's leading scorer and four-time All-Star, was out to rest — his first missed game of the season. The 76ers also were without Tobias Harris (health and safety protocols), who was a late scratch, and lost starter Danny Green in the third quarter due to hamstring tightness but not before he scored 11 points.

Grizzlies 106, Nuggets 97: Ja Morant had 26 points, eight assists and seven rebounds and Tyus Jones added 17 points in Memphis' victory over visiting Denver.

Xavier Tillman had 12 points, while Desmond Bane and Jaren Jackson Jr. finished with 11 each as the Grizzlies snapped a three-game losing streak to the Nuggets.

Magic 115, Timberwolves 97: Cole Anthony scored a season-high 31 points and Wendell Carter Jr. chipped in 15 points and 14 rebounds as Orlando came from behind to win at Minnesota.

Rookie Franz Wagner had 28 points for the Magic, who

snapped a four-game losing streak, while Minnesota native Jalen Suggs scored 15 points. Orlando trailed by 11 late in the third quarter before rallying with a strong night from the 3-point line by Anthony.

Hawks 118, Wizards 111: Trae Young scored 26 points and Clint Capela had 16 points and 12 rebounds to help Atlanta beat visiting Washington.

Bradley Beal scored 19 of his 24 points in the first half for the Wizards, who had their three-game win streak halted and lost their fifth in a row at State Farm Arena. A victory would've given 5-2 Washington its best start to a season since the 1974-75 Bullets were 7-0.

Pacers 131, Spurs 118: Domantas Sabonis had 24 points and 13 rebounds, and Myles Turner added 19 points to lead host Indiana past struggling San Antonio.

Clippers 99, Thunder 94: Paul George scored 32 points, Reggie Jackson added 15 and host Los Angeles rallied from a nine-point deficit late in the fourth quarter to beat Oklahoma City.

Longer games bring more calls for pitch clock in MLB

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Late innings means late nights in the World Series, with many fans struggling to stay awake as the Braves and Astros play baseball's most important games of the year.

The first five Series games averaged 3 hours, 41 minutes, up from 3:37 for the Los Angeles Dodgers' six-game win over Tampa Bay last year. The opener took 4:06 and Game 5 lasted exactly 4 hours, both ending after midnight on the East Coast.

This year's overall postseason average of 3:38 is an increase from 3:32 last year.

Sooner or later, Major League Baseball will institute a pitch

clock — with or without an agreement with the players' association.

"I want to be really clear about this," Commissioner Rob Manfred said before the Series opener. "We have rights under the agreement to do certain things with a certain process that's been followed. There's going to come a point in time where the pressure to make change is going to be sufficient. I prefer to do it by reaching an agreement with the players."

MLB has the right to unilaterally change on-field rules with one year of advance notice to the union. During the 2016-17 offseason, MLB proposed a 20-second

timer in many situations, with a second violation resulting in the umpire calling a ball.

As part of a March 2019 agreement that increased active rosters from 25 to 26 players and mandated a pitcher face three batters or finish an inning, MLB agreed not to implement a pitch clock through 2021.

Players have been reluctant to consider a clock. Union head Tony Clark, a former All-Star first baseman, didn't give a direct answer when asked whether he wanted to see a crisper product on the field.

"I'm a former player. I owe everything to the game. So do I watch it? Do I critique it? Do I ana-

lyze it? Am I willing to have a conversation about its well-being?" he said. "Always have and will continue to. That's not going to change. And I'm sure that at the end of the World Series, the dialogue that we've had to this point will continue."

Nine-inning games averaged a record 3:10:07 during the regular season, up from 3:07:46 for the pandemic-shortened 2020 season and 3:05:35 in 2019. The average was 2:49 in 1991 and 2:33 in 1981.

A pitch clock would eliminate much of the dead time caused when hitters step out of the batter's box and pitchers back off the mound and take deep breaths on the infield grass.

After an emotional week, Panthers seek normalcy

Associated Press

CORAL SPRINGS, Fla. — There was a Halloween party for the Florida Panthers players and their significant others on Sunday night, allowing them to spend a few hours enjoying each other's company while dressed up as something or someone else.

Weirdly, it also helped the Panthers to finally be themselves again.

A wild opening stretch — exhilarating because the Panthers strung together one of the longest unbeaten runs to start a season in NHL history, but emotionally exhausting because coach Joel Quenneville had to resign for his role in how the Chicago Blackhawks didn't properly address a player's claims of sexual assault by another coach 11 years ago — is over.

Monday was simply a back-to-work day for Florida, the first real practice under interim coach Andrew Brunette.

"We're just grinding through here right now," Brunette said. "Hopefully, this is a step toward getting to the new normal."

The team's eight-game winning streak to start the season ended with a shootout loss in Boston on Saturday night. At 8-0-1, the Panthers have the most points in the NHL, one ahead of Carolina — which also started 8-0-0 and goes for a ninth straight win Wednesday at Chicago. Should the Hurricanes win that game, they could match the NHL record for consecutive wins to start a season on Saturday when they visit Florida.

The Panthers don't play again until Thursday at home against Washington.

"Good month of October," Panthers defenseman MacKenzie Weegar said. "But like we've been saying the whole time here, game by game, shift by shift. We're all focused on Washington here coming up."

That said, it was simply nice to get a night off.

Last week was daunting in so many ways for the Panthers. Last Tuesday saw Quenneville's name feature prominently in the report summarizing the investigation into the Blackhawks' actions after Kyle Beach made his allegations. On Thursday, Quenneville stepped down. The next day, Brunette made his debut in Detroit and Florida won in overtime. And on Saturday, the Panthers played Boston again and lost in a shootout.

So on Sunday, Weegar dressed up as "Mr. Incredible" for the team party.

"Made me look pretty buff," Weegar said.

But the party was over Monday. Brunette was in the middle of the ice at the Panthers' practice facility, pointing his hockey stick toward the end of the rink where he wanted players to be.

It seemed normal again. The new normal, anyway. Brunette is still the interim, insisting his status remains "day to day," but Weegar likes what he's seen in the short term.

"He's a great leader," Weegar said. "He teaches us a lot of key things, a lot of little things that we didn't know before. I think he's been a great leader, a guy who can step into the room at this tough time and really step up."

Lightning end Capitals' point run at 8 games

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Andrei Vasilevskiy made 31 saves, Anthony Cirelli had a goal and two assists, and the Tampa Bay Lightning beat Washington 3-2 Monday night, ending the Capitals' eight-game season-opening point streak.

Alex Killorn and Brayden Point also scored for Tampa Bay, and Taylor Radtchuk picked up his first NHL point by assisting on Point's goal.

Brett Leason got his first NHL goal and Conor Sheary also scored for Washington, which came in 5-0-3. Vitek Vanecek stopped 23 shots.

Capitals star Alex Ovechkin had his season-opening eight-game point streak (nine goals, six assists) end. He remains two goals away from tying Brett Hull (741) for fourth place all-time.

Blackhawks 5, Senators 1: Patrick Kane had three goals and an assist in his return to the lineup, and host Chicago got its first win of the season.

Marc-Andre Fleury made 29 saves in another solid performance as the Blackhawks improved to 1-7-2 in front of a half-full United Center. Brandon Hagel scored twice and captain Jonathan Toews had three assists.

Kane was sidelined for the previous four games because of the NHL's COVID-19 protocol. His seventh hat trick in the regular season gave him 408 career goals, moving him ahead of Steve Larmer for third on the franchise list. Kane also jumped over Denis Savard for third on the Blackhawks' points list with 1,097.

Matt Murray made 26 stops for Ottawa in his first game since he was kneed in the head during a 3-2 loss to the New York Rangers on Oct. 23. Alex Formenton stopped Fleury's bid for his 68th career shutout with his second of the season 1:41 into the third.

Oilers 5, Kraken 2: Leon Draisaitl had two goals and two assists, and host Edmonton extended its strong start to the season with a victory over Seattle.

Duncan Keith, Kyle Turris and Kailer Yamamoto also scored for the Oilers, who improved to 7-1-0. Mikko Koskinen stopped 27 shots. Jaden Schwartz and Carson Soucy each had a goal for the expansion Kraken (3-6-1), who have lost two straight. Joey Daccord made 18 saves.

Steelers deal LB Ingram to Chiefs

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Pittsburgh Steelers have traded veteran outside linebacker Melvin Ingram to the Kansas City Chiefs for a sixth-round pick in the 2022 draft.

The teams made the announcement Tuesday, hours before the NFL's trade deadline.

The move gives Kansas City's struggling defense some much-needed help, though

Ingram did sit out Pittsburgh's win over Cleveland on Sunday with what the team called a groin injury.

Ingram spent the first nine years of his career with the Los Angeles Chargers before signing a one-year deal with Pittsburgh in July. He played a fair amount early in the season while Steelers star T.J. Watt and second-year outside linebacker Alex Highsmith dealt with injuries.