

## Pentagon group to counter UFO threat

By CHAD GARLAND

*Stars and Stripes*

The Defense Department is launching a new body to coordinate investigation of UFO sightings in restricted airspace, amid concerns that the flying objects could threaten flight safety and national security.

In a memo released Tuesday, Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks announced the creation of a group to lead government efforts to “detect, identify and attribute objects of interests,” which are formally known as unidentified aerial phenomena but commonly called UFOs.

The body, known as the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group, will be a successor to the Navy’s UAP task force and its work will be overseen by senior military and intelligence community officials.

Its creation comes after the Office of the Director of National Intelligence released a report in June that said the military could not explain over 140 cases of airborne phenomena sighted since 2004, including some that exhibited unusual flight characteristics.

The report identified challenges to col-

lecting data needed to assess and identify the various objects, including the stigma pilots and others face when reporting UFO sightings, as well as inconsistencies in reporting mechanisms.

Together with DOD’s April 2020 release of several unclassified videos of unidentified phenomena, the report fueled speculation about conspiracies and visits from extraterrestrials. But defense officials believe there are several categories of more likely explanations, including that the objects are technologies deployed by Russia, China or other governments or entities.

Other possible explanations include airborne objects such as birds, balloons or drones, as well as natural atmospheric phenomena and U.S. government or industry developmental programs. However, officials said that some in an “other” category may defy explanation without scientific advances.

The new body will address some of the shortfalls standing in the way of further study of the issue, including a need for standardized reporting across the federal government and increased collection and analysis.

A council headed by the under secretary of defense for intelligence, along with the director of operations for the Joint Staff and senior officials from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence will oversee its work, the report said.

Hicks’ memo said the Navy-led UAP task force would immediately transition to the new group. She directed the oversight council to choose the group’s acting director and submit implementation guidance on membership, responsibilities and authorities to her for approval.

The focus of the group’s effort will be on special use airspace over military facilities or operating areas, firing ranges and other areas designated for national security or other use. It will also coordinate efforts within DOD, the services and other agencies to minimize flight safety risks and national security concerns, Hicks said in the memo.

In addition to streamlining and improving the reporting, collection and analysis of relevant data, it will recommend changes to laws and regulations, doctrine, training, organizations and “other activities as deemed necessary by the Director,” the memo said.

## Navy putting chaplains aboard every destroyer

By ALISON BATH

*Stars and Stripes*

NAPLES, Italy — Chaplains are being assigned to every destroyer in the U.S. Navy in a bid to build and sustain resiliency among sailors, the service said.

Placing a chaplain with a ship across the deployment cycle, typically four months on patrol, four months in port and four months back on patrol, fosters deeper connections with the crew and command, U.S. 6th Fleet said in a statement Wednesday.

The regular contact helps sailors be ready to do their jobs and contributes to their well-being, said Command Master Chief Petty Officer Jan Vadelspou, who serves aboard the destroyer USS Porter.

Chaplains also offer an important outlet

for ship leaders, who sometimes need to find “an avenue to freely speak and express feelings with confidentiality,” Vadelspou said.

Destroyer Squadron 60, based at Naval Station Rota, Spain, has already placed chaplains aboard USS Porter, USS Ross, USS Arleigh Burke and USS Roosevelt, 6th Fleet said.

Deployments can put service members under stress as they cope with being away from friends and family and confront the potential for military action while at sea.

For example, recent tensions in the Black Sea included Russian ships shadowing USS Porter while it was on a routine patrol earlier this month.

Russian maneuvers included a helicopter

flyover near the Porter and the nearby command ship USS Mount Whitney, The Wall Street Journal reported Saturday.

Those circumstances require split-second decisions by sailors in determining if an enemy’s action is a threat to the ship and its crew and, accordingly, how to respond.

Such job-related stress can result in anxiety, depression and other difficulties, states Militaryonesource.mil, which advises service members experiencing stress-related problems to seek help from chaplains as well as other sources.

The chaplains and religious program specialists work with mental health resources onboard ships and shore-based services to help sailors and their families, the 6th Fleet statement said.

# China blasts Taiwan's invite to summit

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

Taiwan is among 110 nations invited by the United States to a "Summit for Democracy" next month, according to a list of participants posted on the State Department's website.

The Dec. 8-10 virtual summit is the first of two events that will bring together leaders from government, civil society and the private sector to set forth an agenda for democratic renewal and to tackle the greatest threats faced by democracies through collective action, the website states.

China's State Council Taiwan Affairs Office on Wednesday

described Taiwan's invitation as "a mistake" and reiterated its opposition to formal interaction between the U.S. and the island.

"We firmly oppose any form of official interaction between the U.S. and the island, which is a clear and consistent stance," office spokeswoman Zhu Fenglian told the state-run Global Times newspaper.

President Joe Biden, during his first foreign policy address in February, declared he would return the U.S. to global leadership to confront authoritarian forces led by China and Russia, also omitted from the list of summit participants.

Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping held their own virtual talk for more than three hours Nov. 15.

The pair discussed tensions over Taiwan, which China regards as a rebellious province that must be reunited with the mainland, possibly by force. In recent months, Chinese military jets have made numerous incursions into Taiwanese airspace and troops have drilled for the sort of beach landings that would happen in an invasion.

During their summit, Xi warned Biden that the intention of some Americans to use Taiwan to contain China is

"just like playing with fire" and that "whoever plays with fire will get burnt," according to the Global Times.

The White House said, in a readout issued after the meeting, that Biden reiterated the U.S. will abide by its longstanding "One China" policy that allows informal relations and defense ties with Taipei while recognizing Beijing's view that it has sovereignty over Taiwan.

Biden also made clear the U.S. "strongly opposes unilateral efforts to change the status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," the White House said.

## Cadets try to nab Navy mascot

*Stars and Stripes*

WEST POINT, N.Y. — West Point cadets attempting to nab the U.S. Naval Academy's mascot ahead of the annual Army-Navy football game ended up grabbing a different goat, according to a report.

U.S. Military Academy cadets traveled over the weekend to a farm near Annapolis, Md., that is home to Navy mascot Bill, who belongs to a long line of goat mascots with the same name. Cadets gave chase to the spooked goats. And instead of grabbing Bill No. 37, they came away with Bill No. 34, a one-horned, 14-year-old retiree, according to The New York Times.

West Point officials would not confirm details of the incident Tuesday, but said the animal was returned safely and that they were investigating those responsible.

## Cops: Marine fled crash on Okinawa

*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japanese police say a Marine on Okinawa admitted driving drunk and fleeing a crash scene where two people, including a toddler, were injured Tuesday evening.

Lance Cpl. Austin Lucas, 26, of 3rd Marine Logistics Group at Camp Hansen, was arrested near the Henan bridge in Ogimi village at approximately 10:30 p.m., roughly four hours after the crash, a Nago police spokesman told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday.

Lucas was held on suspicion of negligent driving resulting in injury and failure to provide assistance, the spokesman said.

At his arrest, Lucas' blood-alcohol level, 0.12%, was four times Japan's legal limit of 0.03%, and he likely faces a drunken driving charge, the spokesman said.

By comparison, all 50 U.S. states have set 0.08% as the limit for driving under the in-

fluence or driving while impaired.

"He was claiming that he drank after the accident," the police spokesman said. "But later he admitted that he was driving under the influence of alcohol."

It's customary in Japan for some government officials to speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

Police plan to question Lucas, an equipment operator from 9th Engineer Support Battalion, "to learn more details," the spokesman said.

He said a 54-year-old woman and a 3-year-old boy were injured in the crash; "luckily, they had minor injuries."

Lucas was southbound on Route 58 at 6:38 p.m. when he veered into the other lane and struck an oncoming vehicle, the spokesman said.

Witnesses alerted police to the crash as Lucas fled on foot.

He was spotted not far from the scene four hours later and arrested, the spokesman said.

Lucas was still being held Wednesday at Nago Police Station.

A spokesman for the logistics group said the command is aware of an alleged alcohol-related collision involving one of its Marines.

The command is cooperating with the local investigation, according to an email Wednesday from spokesman 1st Lt. Jonathan Coronel.

"All of our personnel are regularly briefed that driving under the influence is unacceptable behavior," Coronel wrote, "and the vast majority of our Marines and Sailors uphold this standard at all times."

Lucas faces up to 10 years in prison or up to \$8,686 in fines for negligent driving resulting in injury and failure to provide assistance, according to Japanese traffic laws.

He could face a stiffer sentence if convicted of fleeing a crash scene to hide his blood-alcohol content.

# Vaccines help for holiday, but US surges remain

Associated Press

The U.S. is facing its second Thanksgiving of the pandemic in better shape than the first time around, thanks to the vaccine, though some regions are seeing surges of COVID-19 cases that could get worse as families travel the country for gatherings that were impossible a year ago.

Nearly 200 million Americans are fully vaccinated. That leaves tens of millions who have yet to get a shot in the arm, some of them out of defiance. Hospitals in the cold Upper Midwest, especially Michigan and Minnesota, are filled with COVID-19 patients who are mostly unvaccinated.

Michigan hospitals reported about 3,800 coronavirus patients at the start of the week, with 20% in intensive care units, numbers that approach the bleakest days of the pandemic's 2020 start. The state had a seven-day new-

case rate of 572 per 100,000 people Tuesday, the highest in the nation, followed by New Hampshire at 522.

In the West, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah and Montana also ranked high. Some Colorado communities, including Denver, are turning to indoor mask orders to reduce risk, a policy that has also been adopted in the Buffalo, N.Y., area and Santa Cruz County, Calif.

The statistics in Michigan are "horrible," said Dr. Matthew Trunsky, a respiratory specialist at Beaumont Health in suburban Detroit.

"We got cold and moved indoors and have huge pockets of unvaccinated people," he said. "You can't have pockets of unvaccinated people who don't want to be masked and not expect to get outbreaks, not expect to lose parents, not expect to lose teachers."

During a recent office visit, he encouraged a patient who uses oxygen to get vaccinated. The patient declined and now is in the hospital with COVID-19, desperately relying on even more oxygen, Trunsky said.

He said he continues to encounter patients and their family members espousing conspiracy theories about the vaccine.

"We've had several people in their 40s die in the last month — 100% unvaccinated," Trunsky said. "It's just so incredibly sad to see a woman die with teenagers. Especially with that age group, it's nearly 100% preventable."

In Detroit, where less than 40% of eligible residents were fully vaccinated, Mayor Mike Duggan said hospitalizations have doubled since early November.

Despite hot spots, the outlook in the U.S. overall is significantly better than it was at Thanksgiving 2020.

## US jobless claims drop to 199,000 – a 52-year low

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits plummeted last week to the lowest level in more than half a century, another sign that the U.S. job market is rebounding rapidly from last year's coronavirus recession.

Jobless claims dropped by 71,000 to 199,000, the lowest since mid-November 1969. But seasonal adjustments around the Thanksgiving holiday contributed significantly to the bigger-than-expected drop. Unadjusted, claims actually ticked up by more than 18,000 to nearly 259,000.

The four-week average of claims, which smooths out weekly ups and downs, also dropped — by 21,000 to just over 252,000, the lowest since mid-March 2020 when the

pandemic slammed the economy.

Since topping 900,000 in early January, the applications have fallen steadily toward and now fallen below their prepandemic level of around 220,000 a week. Claims for jobless aid are a proxy for layoffs.

Overall, 2 million Americans were collecting traditional unemployment checks the week that ended Nov. 13, down slightly from the week before.

"Overall, expect continued volatility in the headline figures, but the trend remains very slowly lower," Contingent Macro Advisors wrote in a research note.

Until Sept. 6, the federal government had supplemented state unemployment insurance programs by paying an extra payment of \$300 a week and extending benefits to gig

workers and to those who were out of work for six months or more.

Including the federal programs, the number of Americans receiving some form of jobless aid peaked at more than 33 million in June 2020.

The job market has staged a remarkable comeback since the spring of 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic forced businesses to close or cut hours and kept many Americans at home as a health precaution. In March and April last year, employers slashed more than 22 million jobs.

But government relief checks, super-low interest rates and the rollout of vaccines combined to give consumers the confidence and financial wherewithal to start spending again.

## US to require vaccines for all who cross its borders

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden will require essential, nonresident travelers crossing U.S. land borders, such as truck drivers, government and emergency response officials, to be fully vaccinated beginning on Jan. 22, the administration planned to announce.

A senior administration official said the requirement, which the White House previewed in October, brings the rules for essential travelers in line with those that took effect earlier this month for leisure trav-

elers, when the U.S. reopened its borders to fully vaccinated individuals.

Essential travelers entering by ferry will also be required to be fully vaccinated by the same date, the official said. The official spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity to preview the announcement.

The rules pertain to non-U.S. nationals. American citizens and permanent residents may still enter the U.S. regardless of their vaccination status, but face additional testing hurdles because officials believe

they more easily contract and spread COVID-19 and in order to encourage them to get a shot.

The Biden administration pushed back the requirement for essential travelers by more than two months from when it went into effect on Nov. 8 for non-essential visitors to prevent disruptions, particularly among truck drivers who are vital to North American trade. While most cross-border traffic was shut down in the earliest days of the pandemic, essential travelers have been able to transit unimpeded.



# All 3 defendants guilty in Arbery murder

Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Ga. — All three white men charged in the death of Ahmaud Arbery were convicted of murder Wednesday in the fatal shooting that became part of a larger national reckoning on racial injustice.

The convictions for Greg McMichael, son Travis McMichael and neighbor William “Roddie” Bryan came after jurors deliberated for about 10 hours. The men face minimum sentences of life in prison. It is up to the judge to decide whether that comes with or without the possibility of parole.

Travis McMichael stood for the verdict, his lawyer’s arm around his shoulder. At one point, McMichael lowered his head to his chest. After the verdicts were read, as he stood to leave, he mouthed “love you” to his mother, who was in the courtroom.

Moments after the verdicts were announced, Arbery’s father, Marcus Arbery Sr., was seen crying and hugging supporters outside the courtroom.

“He didn’t do nothing,” the father said, “but run and dream.”

The McMichaels grabbed guns and jumped in a pickup truck to pursue the 25-year-old Black man after seeing him running in their neighborhood outside the Georgia port city of Brunswick in February 2020. Bryan joined the pursuit in his own pickup and recorded cellphone video of Travis McMichael fatally shooting Arbery.

No one was charged in the killing until Bryan’s video leaked and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation took over the case from local police. Though prosecutors did not argue that racism motivated the killing, federal authorities have charged them with hate

crimes, alleging that they chased and killed Arbery because he was Black. That case is scheduled to go to trial in February.

The jury sent a note to Superior Court Judge Timothy Walmsley soon after returning to court Wednesday morning asking to view two versions of the shooting video — the original and one that investigators enhanced to reduce shadows — three times apiece.

Jurors returned to the courtroom to see the videos and listen again to the 911 call one of the defendants made from the bed of a pickup truck about 30 seconds before the shooting. The disproportionately white jury received the case around midday Tuesday.

The McMichaels told police they suspected Arbery was a fleeing burglar when they armed themselves and jumped in a pickup truck to chase him.

On the 911 call the jury re-

viewed, Greg McMichael tells an operator: “I’m out here in Satilla Shores. There’s a Black male running down the street.”

He then starts shouting, apparently as Arbery is running toward the McMichaels’ idling truck with Bryan’s truck coming up behind him: “Stop right there! Damn it, stop! Travis!” Gunshots can be heard a few seconds later.

Defense attorneys contend the McMichaels were attempting a legal citizen’s arrest when they set off after Arbery, seeking to detain and question him as a suspected burglar after he was seen running from a nearby home under construction.

Travis McMichael testified that he shot Arbery in self-defense, saying the running man turned and attacked with his fists while running past the idling truck where Travis McMichael stood with his shotgun.

## Child 6th to die in parade crash; suspect charged

Associated Press

An 8-year-old boy became the sixth person to die Tuesday as a result of a man driving his SUV into a suburban Milwaukee Christmas parade, with a criminal complaint alleging that the suspect in the case steered side-to-side with the intent of striking marchers and spectators.

Darrell Brooks Jr., 39, was charged with five counts of first-degree intentional homicide, a charge that carries a mandatory life sentence if convicted. He rocked back and forth in his seat and cried throughout his court hearing on Tuesday, his attorney’s arm on his back, as the charges against him were detailed. His bail was set at \$5 million, and a preliminary hearing was scheduled for Jan. 14.

“The nature of this offense is shocking,” said Waukesha Court Commissioner Kevin Costello.

Additional charges related to

the sixth death and the more than 60 people injured will be coming later this week or next, said Waukesha County District Attorney Susan Oppen. The criminal complaint said 62 people were injured, up from the 48 previously announced by police.

Brooks is accused of speeding away from police and entering the Waukesha Christmas parade Sunday night, refusing to stop even as an officer banged on the hood of his SUV. Another officer fired three shots into the vehicle, but it did not stop.

Five people ranging in age from 52 to 81 were pronounced dead within hours. Jackson Sparks, 8, was the first of many injured children to have died. He was walking in the parade with his 12-year-old brother Tucker, who was injured in the crash and was being discharged from the hospital, according to his GoFundMe page.

## Ethiopia says its leader has gone to the battlefield

Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya — Ethiopia’s Nobel Peace Prize-winning prime minister has gone to the battlefield, his government announced Wednesday, after the leader said martyrdom might be necessary in the yearlong war with rival fighters approaching the capital.

State media showed no images of Abiy Ahmed, a 45-year-old former soldier, and his spokeswoman Billene Seyoum dismissed a request for details on his location as “incredible.” He arrived at the front Tuesday, according to a government spokesman.

Tens of thousands of people have died in the war between Ethiopian federal and allied troops and fighters from the country’s Tigray region. The prospect of the ancient nation breaking apart has alarmed both Ethiopians and observers who fear what would happen to the often turbulent

Horn of Africa at large. Countries including France, Germany and Turkey have told their citizens to leave immediately.

Abiy was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize just two years ago for sweeping political reforms and for making peace with neighboring Eritrea. His trajectory from winning the Nobel to now potentially heading into battle has shocked many.

But a move to the front would follow the tradition of Ethiopian leaders including Emperor Haile Selassie and Emperor Yohannes IV, who was killed in battle in 1889, said Christopher Clapham, a retired professor associated with the University of Cambridge.

“It strikes me as a very traditional Ethiopian exertion of leadership,” Clapham said. “It might be necessary to rescue what looks like a very faltering Ethiopian military response.”

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Sheriff: Four people wounded at turkey shoot

**NC** ROBBINS — Four people, two of them children, were wounded when a gun went off after it fell to the ground at a turkey shoot in North Carolina, a sheriff's office said.

The Moore County Sheriff's Office said in a news release that a loaded shotgun which had been placed on a ledge fell to the ground. The shotgun went off and several people were struck by shotgun pellets, the news release said.

A husband and wife and their 1-year-old son were wounded as well as a 12-year-old girl who was airlifted to a hospital in Chapel Hill with non-life-threatening injuries, the sheriff's office said.

### Man charged in taxidermy thefts from DNR office

**IN** MOROCCO — A northwest Indiana man allegedly broke into a state office at a fish and wildlife area twice in 2018 and stole taxidermy animals, ammunition and other items, authorities said.

Indiana conservation officers arrested Nikola Kutansky, 35, of Munster, last week on two felony counts each of burglary and theft following a three-year long investigation into the break-ins at the Willow Slough Fish & Wildlife Area office in Morocco.

The Willow Slough office was broken into in June and October in 2018 and taxidermy animals, Indiana Department of Natural Resources property signs and ammunition were stolen, The (Northwest Indiana)

Times reported.

A taxidermy deer mount was recovered as one of the stolen items but other taxidermy animals remain missing, said Conservation Officer Alex Neel.

### Artifact thief digs holes at historical site

**SC** CHARLESTON — Federal agents in South Carolina are looking for someone who used a metal detector and dug 19 holes earlier this month looking for artifacts at a historic site that was once the Charleston area plantation of a signer of the U.S. Constitution.

Rangers at the Charles Pinckney National Historic Site found the holes all over the park Nov. 13, the National Park Service said in a statement.

Some of them had discarded metal artifacts nearby and some did not, leading rangers to think a thief was using a metal detector to steal artifacts they wanted, investigators said.

The digging also caused damage to resources at the park, said Kate Funk, chief of resource management at the site.

It is both illegal to dig without permission and to have a working metal detector at a national park site, officials said.

### 4 teens charged with ethnic intimidation

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — Four teens are accused of ethnic intimidation and other charges in what police said was a racial attack on a city subway.

The teens, who range in age from 13 to 16, are Black and police said they targeted four

Asian American students from Central High School.

Video posted on social media showed the teens yelling at three students when a fourth stepped in and told them to stop, SEPTA Police Chief Thomas Nestel III said. The suspects attacked her, banging her head against the subway doors and hitting her as she lay on the floor.

Nestel said she did not suffer serious injuries.

The four were charged as juveniles with aggravated assault, ethnic intimidation, criminal conspiracy and disorderly conduct.

### Prison guard says she was assaulted, held in closet

**SD** SIOUX FALLS — A man in jail awaiting a murder trial allegedly assaulted a Minnehaha County prison guard and held her in a closet, according to court documents.

The Argus Leader reported Amir Hasan Beaudion Jr., 22, was charged for assaulting a law enforcement officer on Nov. 14.

Beaudion is awaiting trial for charges including first-degree murder in connection with a 2020 killing of a Sioux Falls woman.

An officer reported hearing a female scream "let me out" multiple times and could hear muffled screams over the radio. A closet was opened where officers found Beaudion.

The female officer later reported that Beaudion asked for her help filling up a spray bottle before he hit her in the side of the head and started to choke

her, authorities said.

### Elk illegally killed on deer hunting opening day

**WI** MILWAUKEE — Authorities said a bull elk was illegally shot and killed on the opening day of the Wisconsin gun deer hunting season.

The state Department of Natural Resources said the shooting happened in Columbia County about 30 minutes after the official start of deer hunting. The elk was seized as evidence.

DNR officials said they have a suspect. The department has not said if that person is from Wisconsin.

Wisconsin has a limited elk hunt in the northern elk range, but elk are protected in the rest of the state, including Columbia County.

### Diners now have to ask for plastic utensils

**CA** LOS ANGELES — Customers at Los Angeles restaurants will only get plastic utensils and napkins if they ask for them, under a new ordinance that aims to reduce waste.

The rule requires all restaurants with more than 26 employees to remove all single-use plastic utensil dispensers, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Businesses must also stop including plastic utensils and napkins with takeout orders or for dine-in meals unless a customer specifically asks for them.

Enforcement won't begin until January.

— From wire reports

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# Lions still chasing first victory of season

Associated Press

DETROIT — Dan Campbell knows he can't be picky.

With his team at 0-9-1 and seven games left, the Detroit Lions coach would happily take a win on any day at any NFL stadium.

Beating the Chicago Bears on Thursday, though, would be even better.

"When we get a win, it is going to be freaking outstanding, but yes, getting it on Thanksgiving in Detroit would make it that much more special," said Campbell, who played on the holiday for both the Lions and Dallas Cowboys.

"We're in the world of social media, where everyone has access to everything, but this is still huge. When I was growing up in Texas, we always watched the Lions and then we watched the Cowboys, and that's what everyone does."

It helps that, for one of the first times this year, the Lions seem to have a serious shot at victory.

Detroit (0-9-1) hosts Chicago (3-7) in the first game, a match-

up between a winless team and another on a five-game losing streak. The Bears and Lions are familiar Thanksgiving foes with this being their 19th meeting, two shy of the record held by Detroit and Green Bay.

All six squads playing on Thursday lost in their lead-up to the Thanksgiving game, marking the first time since 2001 that every team playing on the holiday dropped its previous contest.

That game will be followed by the slumping Raiders (5-5), who have lost three straight, visiting the Cowboys (7-3), who have dropped two of three.

The nightcap features another team on a three-game skid, with New Orleans (5-5) hosting Buffalo (6-4).

After going into their Week 9 bye giving up an average of 30.5 points per game, Detroit held the Steelers to 16 in a Nov. 14 tie, then allowed 13 in a three-point loss in Cleveland on Sunday.

A big part of that improvement has come from forcing five turnovers in Pittsburgh and Cleveland. They had only gotten

seven takeaways in their first eight games.

"That's big, because to play good defense, you have to get turnovers," Campbell said. (Defensive coordinator Aaron Glenn) is a hell of a teacher, a hell of a coach and a hell of a motivator. As young as we are, teaching is a big part of our job, and he's really done a great job of developing our defensive talent."

And Thursday's opponent is the reeling Bears, who might have to get by without Justin Fields after the prized rookie quarterback was injured in the loss to the Baltimore Ravens.

The Lions have also discovered a running game, picking up 397 yards in the last two games after struggling to get anything going in the first eight weeks.

D'Andre Swift went over 130 yards against Pittsburgh and Cleveland, much to the delight of one of his key blockers.

"He's doing a fantastic job," fullback Jason Cabinda said. "There's not a whole lot more we can ask from that guy in terms of what he's doing for this

team."

## What's working

Despite limited help from the pass rush — the Lions only have one sack in three games — the secondary held Mason Rudolph (4.8 yards per pass) and Baker Mayfield (6.1) to a combined 5.3 yards per passing attempt. Add in three interceptions, and one of the league's worst pass defenses is finally showing some life.

With Fields dealing with rib injuries, that could be a key to victory on Thursday.

## What needs help

Going with Tim Boyle over banged-up Jared Goff didn't help an anemic passing game. Boyle, making his first NFL start, went 15-for-23 for 77 yards — an average of just 5.1 yards per completion — and threw two interceptions.

Goff (oblique) was able to throw Monday under simulated game conditions, so he could be back against Chicago.

# 'Somber' Bills seek to end recent 2-game skid

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — With things going from bad to worse, the Buffalo Bills don't have much time to regroup ahead of their next game.

In their eyes, that's a good thing.

"I think it's very fortunate that we have a Thursday night game that we have to turn our attention to," quarterback Josh Allen said.

Wiping the slate clean might be a good idea for the Bills, who have gone from an expected Super Bowl contender to a team in crisis in recent weeks. Buffalo (6-4) is coming off its worst performance of the season, a 41-15 loss to Indianapolis, and must quickly move on with a game

against the New Orleans Saints on Thanksgiving night.

Buffalo coach Sean McDermott described the mood as "somber" at the team's facilities on Tuesday. But instead of letting frustration sink in, the Bills say they have an added sense of urgency to steer the ship back on course.

"I'd say focused," Allen said. "You can't feel sorry for yourself, you can't let one week affect another week. ... We've got to go out there, we've got to execute and try to get back to who we are."

The team certainly hasn't looked like itself in recent weeks, which includes a 9-6 loss to the struggling Jacksonville Jaguars in Week 9. And it's not

as simple as fixing one problem area.

The most pressing issue is Buffalo's run defense. The Bills entered the game against the Colts with the league's top-ranked defense but surrendered 264 yards on the ground, the highest total allowed by them since 2017, and had no answers for Indianapolis' smash-mouth attack. Running back Jonathan Taylor had five touchdowns, the most scored by a their opponent in a single game.

Buffalo may get middle linebacker Tremaine Edmunds back against the Saints. Edmunds missed the previous two games with a hamstring injury; he was a full participant at practice on Tuesday. There was no

update on nose tackle Star Lotulelei, who remains on the COVID-19 list. Lotulelei has also missed the past two games.

New Orleans has one of the most potent combinations in the league at running back with Alvin Kamara and Mark Ingram, but both players are question marks for Thursday. Kamara and Ingram are dealing with knee injuries and neither practiced Tuesday.

"We know what we have to get done this week. It's going to be more of the same," defensive coordinator Leslie Frazier said. "It's a copycat league and this team is going to come in and try to run the football, and we're going to have to respond correctly. Otherwise, it will continue."



# Hintz scores twice as Stars top Oilers

Associated Press

DALLAS — Red-hot Roope Hintz scored the first of two Dallas power-play goals in the first period, and the Stars handed the Edmonton Oilers just their fifth loss of the season, 4-1 Tuesday night.

Hintz has scored all six of his goals this season in the last six games, and this was his first on a power play. On Saturday, he had become the first Dallas player to score two short-handed goals in the same game. Hintz added an assist Tuesday, giving him nine points during the six games.

His goal came on a twice-deflected shot by John Klingberg, off Alexander Radulov and Hintz in front of the net at 10:59. It was the first of three assists for Klingberg, equaling the total

in his 12 previous games this season.

"It was good to see (Klingberg) get on the board on the power play," coach Rick Bowness said. "He was outstanding tonight on both sides of the puck."

Jason Robertson, Denis Gurianov and Luke Glendening also scored for the Stars, who have has won four of five.

Dallas goalie Jake Oettinger made 21 saves, improving his record to 3-0 in four games this season. He allowed only a goal by the Oilers' Ryan McLeod in the second period.

"Jake's rock-solid," Bowness said. "He's very calm in the net, there's no rebounds, he reads the plays, swallows the pucks."

**Lightning 4, Flyers 0:** Andrei Vasilevskiy made 34 saves,

Zach Bogosian and Corey Perry both ended lengthy goal droughts, and host Tampa Bay beat Philadelphia.

Vasilevskiy made a nifty first-period glove save on Claude Giroux's left-circle shot. The 2021 Conn Smythe Trophy winner as the playoffs MVP has a 199-86-22 career record. It was his first shutout this season and 27th overall.

Bogosian stopped a 62-game goal drought, dating to a goal against Detroit on Jan. 12, 2020 when he was with Buffalo. Perry got his 387th career goal after going 37 games without one.

Steven Stamkos had a goal and two assists for the Lightning, who have points in 11 of the last 12 games (9-1-2). Alex Barré-Boulet had the other goal and Bogosian added an assist.

**Flames 5, Blackhawks 2:** Matthew Tkachuk broke a tie on a fortunate bounce with 5:35 left and host Calgary beat Chicago for its fourth straight victory.

Tkachuk's centering pass went off the skate of Blackhawks defenseman Seth Jones and over the shoulder of goalie Marc-Andre Fleury to give the Flames a 3-2 lead. Trevor Lewis and Johnny Gaudreau each added an empty-net goal for Calgary (12-3-5), which sits alone atop the Western Conference.

Dillon Dube and Milan Lucic also scored for the Flames. Jacob Markstrom made 19 saves.

Reese Johnson had a goal and an assist — his first two NHL points — to lead the offense for Chicago (6-11-2). Brandon Hagel also scored.

## Group of Five's Cincinnati moves into playoff spot

Associated Press

Cincinnati moved into position to make the College Football Playoff on Tuesday night, climbing a spot to fourth behind Georgia, Ohio State and Alabama.

A team from outside the Power Five conferences has never been selected for the semifinals in the previous seven years of the College Football Playoff.

Ohio State (10-1) moved up to No. 2 from fourth on the strength of a lopsided victory against Michigan State, and Alabama (10-1) slipped back a spot to three. Oregon's loss to Utah cleared space in the top four and Cincinnati took it, moving up one spot.

Heading into the final full weekend of games, one loaded with playoff and conference championship implications, Cincinnati (11-0) has a realistic path to a playoff spot no matter what happens around the Bearcats.

"We keep trying to stress to our guys we have a ways to go,"

Cincinnati coach Luke Fickell said in an interview with ESPN. "The recognition is well-deserved."

The Bearcats play at East Carolina (7-4) on Friday and then meet Houston (10-1), ranked 24th by the committee, in the American Athletic Conference championship game on Dec. 4.

Before this season, no team from a so-called Group of Five conference had ever been ranked better than seventh by the CFP selection committee.

Michigan (10-1) is fifth heading into its game against Ohio State that should produce the Big Ten's best shot to make the playoff.

Notre Dame (10-1) is sixth. The Fighting Irish's only loss is to Cincinnati.

Oklahoma State (10-1) at seventh is the highest-ranked Big 12 team.

Selection committee chairman Gary Barta, who is also Iowa's athletic director, said the Bearcats were compared both

to the three teams above and below them when the group was sorting through this week's top 25.

"The strength of schedule is always a conversation with Cincinnati," Barta said, but added that the Bearcats' 48-14 victory against SMU (8-3) left little to complain about this week.

Oklahoma State's Big 12 rivals Baylor (eighth, 9-2) and Oklahoma (10th, 10-1) round out the top 10 with Mississippi (9-2) in between.

The Sooners play at Oklahoma State on Saturday in a game that will help determine who plays in the Big 12 title game.

The final CFP rankings will be revealed Dec. 5 and the top four teams will play in the semifinals on Dec. 31 in the Orange and Cotton bowls. The national championship game is scheduled for Jan. 10 in Indianapolis.

### Is Cincinnati in control of its playoff hopes?

It certainly looks that way,

but calling it a slam dunk is probably an overstatement. Here is the scenario that makes things most precarious for the Bearcats even if they stay unbeaten.

■ Alabama beats Georgia in the Southeastern Conference championship game, leaving both the Crimson Tide and Bulldogs 12-1 and easy choices to be in the field of four. Alabama with a competitive loss to Georgia will also clearly still be in the mix, though no team with two losses has ever made the playoff.

If any team is going to break that precedent, Alabama is a good bet.

Barta said of the Tide and Ohio State: "Both are considered to be great teams, not just good teams."

■ The winner of Ohio State-Michigan goes on to win the Big Ten, making that team a lock to grab a playoff spot.

■ Oklahoma State — or maybe Oklahoma — wins out to leave the Big 12 champion 12-1.

# Zags turn showdown with UCLA into rout

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Chet Holmgren swatted the ball off the backboard, turned and coolly brought it up the floor like a spider-legged point guard. He lost a defender with a dribble behind his back at the top of the key, took two steps and stretched out his 7-foot-1 frame for a two-handed dunk.

Gonzaga's lanky freshman has an unmatched skill set. His team may not have a rival at this point, either.

Holmgren put on a show with an array of dunks and blocked shots, and top-ranked Gonzaga overwhelmed No. 2 UCLA 83-63 Tuesday night to win the Empire Classic.

"This was not a shock to none of us," Gonzaga forward Drew Timme said. "It's what we expect of him and what he expects from himself. It's just Chet. He's one of a kind."

The Zags (6-0) played like Vegas headliners, showing there's a big gap between No. 1 and the current No. 2 with a dazzling display at both ends. Gonzaga shell-shocked UCLA (5-1) with a huge early blitz and never let up to beat its second top-five team this season.

Holmgren stole the show as a soloist at times, denying shots, swooping for dunks and awing

the crowd with his agility. He finished with 15 points, six rebounds and four blocked shots.

Andrew Nembhard was the best player on the floor, according to UCLA coach Mick Cronin, finishing with 24 points. Timme was crafty as usual, scoring 18 points in a raucous environment that felt a bit like March Madness.

"It reminded me of something you'd see in a regional final or regional semifinal," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "It was a great atmosphere and it matched perfectly for the game, what was at stake and the two teams that were out there."

Jaime Jaquez Jr. had 19 points, but had to work for everything he got, and preseason All-American Johnny Juzang was held to 11 points.

UCLA found a bit of a rhythm after an ugly offensive first half but had no chance of stopping the Zags, who shot 56%.

"We're not a good defensive team and we got exposed by a great team," Cronin said.

The Strip's bright lights shined on college hoops luminaries all week, with No. 4 Michigan, No. 5 Duke, No. 12 Houston, Arizona, Oregon and Wisconsin appearing on the marquee.

Top billing went to the first No. 1 vs. No. 2 meeting of teams from

the Pacific Time Zone.

The Zags and Bruins played an all-timer last April in Indianapolis, an epic Final Four game won by Gonzaga on Jalen Suggs' running three-point buzzer beater.

Gonzaga lost Suggs and a few others, but Few filled in the roster holes with transfers and talented freshmen, headlined by Holmgren. The Zags have looked just as good, winning their first six games by an average of 31.3 points.

UCLA has everyone back, though big man Cody Riley has been out since injuring his knee in the season opener. The Bruins didn't look so good against Belarmine on Monday, prompting Cronin to say his team was not ready for Gonzaga after the 75-62 win.

He was right.

Gonzaga was at its free-flowing best on offense, picking apart the Bruins with crisp cuts and passes. The Zags made eight of their first nine shots and used a 19-2 run to go up 29-8. Even after the pace slowed, Gonzaga still led 45-25 at halftime.

**Wisconsin 65, No. 12 Houston 63:** At Las Vegas, Johnny Davis scored a career-high 30 points and the Badgers beat the Cougars in the Maui Invitational semifinals.

Houston erased a 20-point

halftime deficit and cut Wisconsin's lead to two on Kyler Edwards' three-pointer with 40 seconds left. With the final possession, Jamal Sheard drove baseline and passed to Edwards, who wasn't expecting the feed, costing Houston a chance at a final attempt.

**No. 13 Arkansas 73, Cincinnati 67:** At Kansas City, Mo., Australia's Toney scored 19 points, including the go-ahead free throws with 1:23 left, and Chris Lykes was perfect at the foul line down the stretch to help the Razorbacks beat the Bearcats in the title game of the Hall of Fame Classic.

Lykes finished with 15 points and JD Notae overcame another cold-shooting night to finish with 13 for Arkansas (5-0), which made every crucial play in the closing minutes of a game that neither team led by more than six.

**No. 14 Illinois 72, Kansas State 64:** At Kansas City, Mo., Kofi Cockburn had 23 points and 13 rebounds, Alfonso Plummer scored 21 on seven three-pointers and the Illini held off the pesky Wildcats in the consolation game of the Hall of Fame Classic.

Plummer finished 7-for-9 from beyond the arc and Illinois (3-2) went 12-for-26 from three-point range.

# James-less Lakers lose on road to Knicks

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Evan Fournier scored 26 points, Immanuel Quickley had 12 of his 14 in the fourth quarter after New York had blown a 25-point lead, and the Knicks beat a Los Angeles Lakers team missing suspended star LeBron James 106-100 on Tuesday night.

Julius Randle added 20 points, 16 rebounds and five assists for the Knicks, but sat for eight minutes of the fourth quarter after picking up his

fifth foul. Quickley made sure that didn't matter, hitting four three-pointers in the period.

Russell Westbrook had 31 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists, with 18 points in a sensational third quarter that helped the Lakers tie the game. But with James not in the arena, Anthony Davis struggling through an illness and Carmelo Anthony's shot off in his old home, the Lakers never could take the lead.

**Mavericks 112, Clippers 104 (OT):** Kristaps Porzingis

scored 30 points, Luka Donic had 26 in his return to the lineup and visiting Dallas defeated Los Angeles.

The Mavericks were up 102-92 late in the fourth quarter before the Clippers scored 11 of the final 12 points to force overtime. Dallas, though, put up the first seven points of overtime and outscored Los Angeles 9-1 to snap a three-game losing streak.

Porzingis, who has scored 20 or more in a career-high

seven straight games, had six points in overtime.

**Trail Blazers 119, Nuggets 100:** CJ McCollum scored 32 points and host Portland handed banged-up Denver its fifth straight loss.

Damian Lillard had 25 points and five assists to help the Trail Blazers to their fourth consecutive win and ninth in a row at home.

**Heat 100, Pistons 92:** Tyler Herro had 31 points and eight rebounds as visiting Miami rallied to beat Detroit.