

US-Marshall Islands feud could be China's win

Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — For decades, the tiny Marshall Islands has been a stalwart American ally. Its location in the middle of the Pacific Ocean has made it a key strategic outpost for the U.S. military.

But that loyalty is being tested amid a dispute with Washington over the terms of its “Compact of Free Association” agreement, which expires soon. The United States is refusing to engage the Marshallese on claims for environmental and health damage caused by dozens of nuclear tests it carried out in the 1940s and ‘50s, including a huge thermonuclear blast on Bikini Atoll.

The dispute has some U.S. lawmakers worried that China might be willing to step into the breach, adding to a bruising competition for geopolitical dominance between the two superpowers.

Since World War II, the U.S. has treated the Marshall Islands, along with Micronesia and Palau, much like territo-

ries. On the Marshall Islands, the U.S. has developed military, intelligence and aerospace facilities in a region where China is particularly active.

In turn, U.S. money and jobs have benefited the Marshall Islands’ economy. And many Marshallese have taken advantage of their ability to live and work in the U.S., moving in the thousands to Arkansas, Hawaii and Oklahoma.

But this month, 10 Democratic and Republican members of the House of Representatives wrote to President Joe Biden’s national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, about the U.S. compact talks with the Marshalls, Micronesia and Palau.

“It is distressing that these negotiations do not appear to be a priority — there have been no formal meetings since this Administration began — even as our international focus continues shifting to the Indo-Pacific,” they wrote.

The lawmakers said the delays were putting the U.S. in a weaker position, and “China is

all too ready to step in and provide the desperately needed infrastructure and climate resiliency investment that is sought by these long-time partners.”

China’s Foreign Ministry said the U.S. should face up to its responsibility to restore the environmental damage it caused with its nuclear tests. It said China was willing to engage with the Marshall Islands and other Pacific island nations on the basis of mutual respect and cooperation under the “One China Principle,” in which Taiwan is viewed as part of China.

“We welcome efforts to boost economic relations and improve the quality of life between the sides,” the ministry said in a statement.

China has steadily poached allies from Taiwan in the Pacific, including Kiribati and the Solomon Islands in 2019.

James Matayoshi, the mayor of Rongelap Atoll on the Marshall Islands, said he and hundreds of others have remained displaced from their atoll since the nuclear tests and want to see

it revitalized. He said officials have been talking with potential investors from Asia, after a previous proposal by a Chinese-Marshallese businessman fell through.

“It would be a business transaction. We don’t advocate for war or any superpower influence,” Matayoshi said. “But we want to be able to live in our backyard, and enjoy life here.”

Like many others on the Marshall Islands, Matayoshi believes a U.S. settlement of \$150 million agreed to in the 1980s fell well short of addressing the nuclear legacy. He said his late mother was pregnant at the time of one massive nuclear blast and got exposed to radiation that was the equivalent of 25,000 X-rays before giving birth to a stillborn baby.

But the U.S. position has remained static for more than 20 years, the last time the compact came up for renegotiation. The U.S. maintains that nuclear compensation was dealt with in a “full and final settlement” and cannot be reopened.

US warship in Black Sea draws Russian consternation

By ALISON BATH

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Another U.S. warship has sailed into the Black Sea, again drawing intense Kremlin scrutiny amid continued concerns about a potential Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The destroyer USS Arleigh Burke entered the sea via the Bosphorus Strait on Thursday for a routine patrol in support of NATO allies and partners, U.S. 6th Fleet said in a statement.

A Russian troop buildup near its shared border with Ukraine is stoking fears that Moscow could be planning to invade and annex more Ukrainian territory, as it did the

Crimean Peninsula in 2014. Most of the international community does not recognize Russia’s claim to Crimea.

“Now, more than ever, we stand firmly alongside our NATO allies and partners in the Black Sea region,” said Cmdr. Patrick Chapman, commanding officer of USS Arleigh Burke.

Russia, which frequently bristles at U.S. ships coming into the Black Sea, described the patrols as destabilizing and provocative. Its military was monitoring the Arleigh Burke’s movements, the Russian state news agency TASS reported Thursday.

Arleigh Burke’s patrol in the Black Sea follows that of the destroyer USS Porter,

which left earlier this month after more than two weeks in the region. The command ship USS Mount Whitney also departed mid-month after spending about 11 days in the Black Sea participating in exercises with Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Ukraine.

Both ships drew significant Russian attention and commentary, although the Kremlin likely knew about U.S. intentions at least two weeks before the Navy entered the sea. Warships of non-Black Sea countries that intend to transit via the straits connecting the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea are required to give at least 15 days’ notice to Turkey.

Marine campaign seeks to inspire old, new recruits

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

A one-minute video released on Veterans Day is part of a new push to inspire not only would-be Marines, but also those who have already served, as the Corps looks for ways to bring more veterans back to active duty.

The recruiting spot, titled "Full Circle," is the first part of a Marine Corps Recruiting Command campaign called "Operation Semper Fi." Lt. Col. Rob Dolan, the command's director of advertising, said it is "designed to rekindle the enthusiasm of our Marine veteran population for our Corps."

The new ad begins at a small town parade where a young man watches a formation of Marines pass. It then follows that man through his military career and into civilian life, where he continues to serve his community.

The spot ends with the same man at another parade, this time older and grayer, before the camera pans to a young woman with a gleam in her eye as she watches Marines march past.

Part of the campaign's goal is to "revitalize the pride and purpose" of being a Marine for those veterans whose guidance matters in the lives of the younger generation, Dolan said in an email this week.

Keeping those veterans "in the know" about the service helps keep that spirit alive, building a relationship that leads prospects to join up, Dolan said. Officials are now looking to attend more veterans organization meetings and host more veterans at recruiting events, he added.

A new landing page on Marines.com is also in the works to help veterans connect with their local recruiting stations, Dolan said. The new recruiting video is intended to show prospective Marines and their parents that "even just one enlistment ... can lead to a life of significance and that Marines are a breed apart," he said.

Dolan said the new ad "wasn't myopically focused on recruiting veterans back to the Marine Corps," but the recruiting command is "definitely interested in engaging Marine veterans with a desire to return to service."

US lawmakers traveled to Taiwan unannounced

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

A bipartisan U.S. congressional delegation traveled to Taiwan on Thursday to discuss "U.S.-Taiwan relations, regional security, and other significant issues of mutual interest," the State Department's affiliate in the country said in a statement.

The delegation consisted of Democratic Reps. Mark Takano of California, Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, Colin Allred of Texas, Sara Jacobs of California and Republican Rep. Nancy Mace of South Carolina. Slotkin and Jacobs are members of the House Armed Services Committee; the remaining lawmakers serve on the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

The Associated Press reported that the group met with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen on Friday.

Tsai, who welcomed the lawmakers at the Presidential Office in Taipei, noted the two sides' cooperation in veterans' affairs, economic issues and trade while reiterating the island's close alignment

with the United States.

"Taiwan will continue to step up cooperation with the United States in order to uphold our shared values of freedom and democracy and to ensure peace and stability in the region," she said.

The U.S. does not officially recognize Taiwan as a country and instead has a close, informal relationship that includes defense assurances in the event of a military conflict.

Slotkin, a former CIA analyst, tweeted Thursday night that her office "received a blunt message" from the Chinese embassy "telling me to call off the trip."

"But just as with other stops, we're here to learn about the region and reaffirm the U.S. commitment to our hosts, the Taiwanese," Slotkin continued on Twitter. "I'm looking forward to an informative trip."

The congressional delegation earlier in the week traveled to Okinawa, Japan, and met with U.S. troops and their commanders. On Thursday, they served U.S. troops stationed in South Korea a Thanksgiving meal.

US Navy guided-missile destroyer made rare port call in New Zealand

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer arrived Friday in Wellington, New Zealand, a rare visit by an American warship to the nuclear-free nation that has closed its borders to most of the world during the coronavirus pandemic.

A Navy statement described the visit by the USS Howard as an indication of the depth of the relationship between New Zealand and the United States. The Navy embargoed its statement until the Howard, an Arleigh-Burke-class destroyer based at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, had arrived Down Under.

"The U.S. Navy along with its network of alliances and partners plays a key role

in the security of global trade routes and freedom of navigation and maintaining global access for our Navy is central to that role," Task Force 71, Destroyer Squadron 15, said in the statement.

New Zealand froze most port calls by U.S. Navy ships in 1985. The U.S. the following year suspended its ANZUS treaty obligations to New Zealand, which had declared itself nuclear-free.

The Howard's visit is the first by a U.S. warship to the country since the guided-missile destroyer USS Sampson headed south in 2016. During that trip, the Sampson helped New Zealand authorities respond to a magnitude 7.5 earthquake that struck the country's South Island.

Japan OKs double its supplementary defense budget

By HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japan's Cabinet on Friday approved the country's highest-ever supplementary defense budget, aiming to hasten improvements to the nation's defense capabilities as regional challenges become increasingly severe, according to Ministry of Defense officials.

The Cabinet approved nearly twice last year's supplementary budget, adding about \$6.8 billion in defense spending for the current fiscal year, which ends in March. This marks the biggest supplementary defense budget ever, according to defense officials. Last year's supplementary budget for defense was over \$3.4 billion, according to the Defense Ministry.

With this approval, the total defense budget for this fiscal year is about \$52 billion. It brings Japan to the same level of defense spending of Germany and France, Nikkei Asia reported on Nov. 19. Japan's budget, however, is only a quarter of that of its closest rival, China, the news service reported.

Among other programs it supports, the supplemental budget pledges further spending on a new airfield on Okinawa for the U.S. Marine Corps that the prefectural governor has actively resisted.

The supplementary defense budget usually covers unexpected costs from disasters or maintenance and improvements for its troops, officials said. Government officials in Japan customarily speak to the media on condition of anonymity as a condition of their employment.

Defense officials said this

year's supplementary budget is "packaged" with the next fiscal year's defense budget. The supplementary budget covers the cost to acquire new defense equipment that is included in the coming year's budget request.

The supplementary budget includes funds for new equipment, such as the Lockheed Martin PAC-3 air defense missile, three Kawasaki P-1 maritime patrol aircraft and 13 Bell Subaru UH-2 multi-role helicopters. Including costs for such equipment in this year's supplementary budget will speed up their acquisition by three to six months, officials said.

The budget also includes about \$701 million for construction of a new airfield in Henoko, Okinawa, to relocate Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, the document stated. Another \$763 million will go to costs for U.S. troop realignment, the document stated.

Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki on Thursday denied permission for design changes for the airfield project, a move calculated to delay construction. Tamaki has been overruled on similar administrative moves in the past. The project schedule has lengthened by 16 years and its budget has grown from \$2.2 billion to \$8.7 billion.

The decision comes as the United States hopes Japan will increase its defense spending. A joint statement from the U.S.-Japan summit meeting in April stated that Japan "resolved to bolster its own national defense capabilities to further strengthen the Alliance and regional security."

Water bottle dropped from Osprey prompts complaints

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND MARI HIGA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Okinawa's governor expressed "strong doubts" about U.S. military aircraft safety last week after local officials said a Marine's metal water bottle fell from a MV-22 Osprey in flight Tuesday and landed in a residential area.

The incident occurred at approximately 6:45 p.m. and involved a tilt-rotor aircraft assigned to 1st Marine Aircraft Wing at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, a spokesman from the Okinawa Defense Bureau, which represents Japan's Ministry of Defense on the island, said by phone on Friday.

No injuries or property damage were reported, the spokesman said. Some government officials in Japan customarily speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

"Aircraft-related accidents could lead to serious damage to people's lives and properties," Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki said at a press conference Wednesday. "I cannot help having strong doubts about the U.S. military's safety management system."

Details about the incident were scant last week. Tamaki said at a series of press conferences that the water bottle was made of metal and had fallen in an undisclosed residential area. The news site Nippon.com reported Wednesday that a damaged stainless steel bottle 12 by 6 inches was found near the entrance of a private house.

A spokesman for Ginowan city's Military Base Affairs Department sent Stars and Stripes a picture of the bottle by email Friday. The photo depicts a crushed, can-like object bearing two Marine Corps squadron logo decals.

Green Berets, Navy SEALs train with Greek operators

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Navy SEALs and Green Berets operated alongside their Greek counterparts last week in Athens, where watercraft recently donated by the U.S. to an elite Greek unit were on display.

"I have been so impressed to see not only the growth in the U.S. — Greece Special Forces partnership but also the way the Hellenic Special Forces are working across a wide region," Geoffrey Pyatt, U.S. ambassador to Greece, said in a statement Wednesday after a joint training event in the Greek capital.

For the U.S., finding ways to step up military cooperation with Greece has been a priority over the past couple of years as units increase rotations to the re-

gion.

The U.S. recently donated four Mark V special operations craft to Greece. The high-speed patrol vessels, once used by SEALs but now withdrawn from service, originally cost a total of about \$21 million, Pyatt said. They were given to Greece under the U.S.'s excess defense articles program.

On Wednesday, U.S. Special Operations Command Europe troops patrolled off the coast of Athens to showcase the capabilities of the donated boats.

The drills were aimed at demonstrating how conventional and special operations units can coordinate for rapid response missions across the Mediterranean region, according to SOCEUR. A Greek UH-1H Huey also joined in the drills.

Omicron variant spreads; many limit travel

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — The Netherlands confirmed 13 cases of the new omicron variant of the coronavirus on Sunday and Australia found two as the countries half a world apart became the latest to detect it in travelers arriving from southern Africa.

Israel decided to bar entry to foreigners and Morocco said it would suspend all incoming flights for two weeks starting Monday — the most drastic of a growing raft of travel curbs being imposed by nations around the world as they scramble to slow the variant's spread, just days after it was identified by researchers in South Africa.

The “act first, ask questions

later” approach reflected growing alarm about the emergence of a potentially more contagious variant that some feared could prolong a pandemic that has already killed more than 5 million people.

But many experts cautioned that so much was still unknown about the new strain — and the World Health Organization called for borders to remain open, noting that closing them often has a limited effect. Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health in the United States, emphasized that there is no data yet that suggests the new variant causes more serious illness than previous COVID-19 variants. It is also not yet

known whether it is more resistant to protection provided by the vaccines.

“I do think it's more contagious when you look at how rapidly it spread through multiple districts in South Africa. It has the earmarks therefore of being particularly likely to spread from one person to another. ... What we don't know is whether it can compete with delta,” Collins said on CNN's “State of the Union.”

Collins said the news should make everyone redouble their efforts to use the tools the world already has, including vaccinations, booster shots and measures such as mask-wearing.

America's top infectious diseases expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci,

said he wouldn't be surprised if the omicron variant was already in the U.S., though it hasn't yet been detected there.

The U.S. plans to ban travel from South Africa and seven other southern African countries starting Monday.

“It's going to give us a period of time to enhance our preparedness,” Fauci said of the ban on ABC's “This Week.”

Many other countries have already restricted or banned travel from various southern African countries — among the latest to do so were New Zealand, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates.

Scientists racing to decode new variant

Bloomberg News

Travel bans and other snap defenses that countries threw up against omicron, the new COVID-19 variant, are buying time for scientists to answer key questions that could prevent another wave of deaths.

Labs in Europe, the United States and Africa are preparing for tests to see how the new variant is likely to behave in people who've been vaccinated or previously infected. Real-world research will be important, too, as health authorities monitor the outbreak in South Africa closely to find out how much more transmissible the new variant will be as it spreads and whether it's more dangerous or deadly.

Questions will take weeks to answer, scientists and policy makers said Friday. The search for understanding starts in the variant's dramatic pattern of 50 mutations, more than 30 of which are on the virus's spike protein, which is the weapon COVID-19 uses to invade victims' cells. It will continue via lab work and finally in

observations of illness and transmission patterns in real life.

What's clear so far is that a constellation of mutations has come together that may make omicron spread more quickly, said Wendy Barclay, head of the department of infectious disease at Imperial College London.

“Taken together on paper, it's very biologically plausible that this virus has increased transmissibility,” Barclay said in a briefing Friday. Researchers must apply the knowledge they've gained in more than a year of intense study of the virus, she said. “That's where you start, and then you try and back up that sort of approach by looking at the epidemiology and the laboratory-based studies.”

SARS-CoV-2 has been mutating and changing since it was first identified, with the first variant of concern — alpha — designated in December 2020. Omicron, previously known as B.1.1.529, is the fifth variant of concern the World Health Organization has named.

Afghan PM defends Taliban

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghanistan's Taliban prime minister defended the group's rule in a public address Saturday, saying it was not to blame for a worsening economic crisis and is working to repair the corruption of the ousted government. He also dismissed international pressure for the formation of a more inclusive Cabinet.

The half-hour audio played on state-run media was the first such public address by Mohammed Hassan Akhund since the Taliban captured Kabul and secured their rule over the country three months ago. The Taliban takeover led to a shut-off of international aid to the government and the blocking of billions of dollars in Afghan assets held abroad, worsening an already crumbling economy.

Akhund said the problems of worsening unemployment and the financial meltdown had begun under the previous, U.S.-backed government, adding that Afghans should not believe claims that the Taliban were to blame.

“Nation, be vigilant. Those

left over from the previous government in hiding are ... causing anxiety, misleading the people to distrust their government,” he said.

The ousted government had run “the weakest system in the world,” he said, pointing to pervasive corruption. In contrast, he said, the Taliban are eliminating corruption and have brought security around the country.

“We are trying as much as possible to solve the problems of the people. We are working overtime in every department,” Akhund said.

U.N. officials have warned of a humanitarian crisis with millions of Afghans plunging deeper into poverty and facing hunger — with increasing numbers on the verge of starvation. Afghanistan has been hit by one of its worst famines in decades, and the economic collapse has meant many people are unable to afford food.

Akhund urged people to pray for an end to the famine, which he called “a test from God, after people rebelled against Him.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Rare colonial-minted coin sells for \$350,000

MA BOSTON — One of the first coins minted in Colonial New England, which was recently found among other coins in a candy tin, has sold at auction for more than \$350,000, more than it was expected to get, the auctioneer said.

The one shilling silver coin made in Boston in 1652 — considered the finest example of just a few dozen such coins known to still exist — was sold to an anonymous online bidder from the U.S., London-based Morton & Eden Ltd. said in a statement.

The simple coin has the initials NE for New England on one side, and the Roman numeral XII, representing the 12 pennies in a shilling, on the other.

Suit claims hazing hurt school football player

CA SANTA ANA — A lawsuit claims a player on a highly ranked Southern California high school football team suffered traumatic brain injury, gashes and a broken nose in a locker room hazing ritual in which players punch each other until one gives up.

The Orange County Superior Court lawsuit was filed by the player's family against Mater Dei High School and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange, alleging a wide range of negligence, violation of the California penal code and intentional infliction of emotional distress, Southern California News Group reported.

A relative newcomer to the

team was matched against a bigger player in a ritual called "Bodies" in which they are supposed to punch each other's torsos between the hips and shoulders.

But the newcomer was hit hard in the head and face, and there allegedly was significant delay in treatment, the news group reported.

Animal control officer attacked by dogs, bitten

MI BUENA VISTA TOWNSHIP — Authorities were trying to identify the owner of two dogs that attacked an animal control officer in the Saginaw area.

The officer was bitten in a Buena Vista Township neighborhood after a resident reported being nearly attacked by two pit bulls outside his home, according to MLive.com.

Two officers were attempting to catch the dogs when the attack occurred.

"He was able to defend himself from one dog with a catchpole," Saginaw County Animal Care & Control Director Bonnie Kanicki said of the officer who was attacked. "The other dog managed to bite him on his leg and he fell backward, hitting his head as he kept fending off the dogs with the catchpole."

Both officers then used repellent spray to stop and capture the dogs.

Digital driver's licenses will be coming soon

IA DES MOINES — Iowa motorists will soon have the option of keeping their driver's license on their phones.

State officials have begun a pilot project to make digital

driver's licenses, or "mobile IDs," available for download via smartphone apps sometime in 2022, the Cedar Rapids Gazette reported.

Iowa is one of several states that have considered, tested or begun issuing digital versions of driver's licenses. Iowa plans to test devices equipped with digital versions through December, with about 100 state Department of Transportation employees expected to enlist as a test group.

Melissa Gillett, director of the department's motor vehicle division, said the mobile ID will be optional, but motorists will still be expected to carry hard-copy licenses.

Injured sea turtle's gas hampered it from diving

MS GULFPORT — An injured sea turtle at the Mississippi Aquarium is getting medicine to reduce intestinal gas because a buildup was keeping her from diving.

Banner the green sea turtle was rescued in Florida after being severely injured by a boat propeller. After four years of rehabilitation, staffers at the Florida Aquarium decided the turtle could never be safely released, and she was sent last summer to Mississippi.

Banner's big problem was that her hind end was buoyant, making it harder to dive, Dr. Alexa Delaune, the Mississippi Aquarium's vice president of veterinary services, said in a news release.

Veterinarians think that the propeller may have damaged nerves going to Banner's intestinal tract, Delaune said in an email.

Controversial murals moved from courthouse

MO COLUMBIA — Two courthouse murals that were taken down in Columbia amid concerns that they depict an attempted lynching, a white man pointing a gun at a Native American man and enslaved people building the courthouse have a new home.

The murals are headed to the private Columbia College, where Sidney Larson, the late artist who painted the murals, taught for more than 50 years, The Columbia Daily Tribune reported.

The murals will be stored at the college until an exhibit can appropriately highlight the educational and historical purpose of the artwork, college President David Russell wrote in a letter last week to Presiding Commissioner Dan Atwill.

Blast blows man from home destroyed by fire

NC NEWPORT — A North Carolina man said an explosion blew him from his home before it was destroyed by fire.

Benny Weeks, 59, said he was the only person home and had just finished his Thanksgiving dinner when the blast occurred. The laundry room smoke detector went off and when Weeks went to wave a towel at it, he said there was a big explosion.

"It blew me out of the back screen door onto the deck and followed by just fire everywhere and the house burnt down," Weeks said. There was nothing to salvage after the blast, he said.

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Harbaugh breaks through against Ohio State

Associated Press

Jim Harbaugh has always been a good coach.

Now he's a good coach who has finally beaten Ohio State.

No. 6 Michigan vanquished the Buckeyes on Saturday, ending a losing streak that has defined the program and its coach.

Later Saturday, No. 7 Oklahoma State and coach Mike Gundy similarly flipped their rivalry with Oklahoma, snapping a six-game losing streak in Bedlam behind a tenacious effort in the second-half by the Cowboys' defense.

In Ann Arbor, the Wolverines were tougher and smarter, bludgeoning and confusing the Buckeyes with a well-schemed and well-blocked running game and getting after the No. 1 offense in the country with maybe the best pass-rushing combo in college football.

"It feels like the beginning," Harbaugh said after he improved to 1-5 against Ohio State.

A year ago, it seemed like the end for Harbaugh at his alma mater.

Michigan was terrible during last season's abbreviated Big Ten schedule, going 2-4 and not even getting a chance to play Ohio State because of a COVID-19 outbreak before The Game.

Harbaugh was 49-22 through six seasons

at that point, with no victories in the rivalry that mattered most. He had unquestionably made the Wolverines better since taking over in 2015, but Ohio State had soared to another level and left Harbaugh and Michigan behind.

After last season, athletic director Warde Manuel faced a choice: Stick with Harbaugh, a demonstrably good coach, or dive into the market and hope to find someone better.

Patience is at an all-time low in major college football. See LSU and Florida for examples.

Speaking of LSU, the Tigers' fired coach, Ed Orgeron, beat Texas A&M and LSU's desired coach, Jimbo Fisher, 27-24 on Saturday.

Orgeron is getting \$16.8 million to go away. Fisher has a 10-year guaranteed contract and could leave for Baton Rouge tomorrow without penalty. Their records since 2018: Orgeron, 36-14; Fisher, 34-14.

The Wolverines decided not to jump on the coaching carousel and trusted Harbaugh, though not so much that it didn't redo his contract to make getting rid of him more affordable if this season didn't pan out.

With a new defensive staff and more confident and established offensive coordinator (Josh Gattis), Harbaugh delivered a

team that perfectly matches his vision, with echoes of his greatest successes at Stanford and in the NFL with the 49ers.

Michigan's offense is a modernized version of ground-and-pound, supported by a defense that features two elite edge rushers in Aidan Hutchinson and David Ojabo.

Harbaugh returned to college football as its most fascinating coach, confident and quirky with all kinds of hype.

His failures against Ohio State turned him into a punchline and easy target for critics: "This is your savior, Wolverines?"

But if you are what your record says you are, Harbaugh is now 89-44 as a major college head coach and 44-19-1 as an NFL coach with a Super Bowl appearance.

One win over the Buckeyes doesn't make Harbaugh a genius. Five losses against them didn't make him a dummy, though it was fair to ask if he was making Michigan all it can be.

This might turn out to be a blip in the rivalry. Ryan Day, who inherited this Ohio State juggernaut from Urban Meyer, is still assembling one of the two or three most talented teams in the country every season.

But for a day the Wolverines and Harbaugh got the best of the Buckeyes, and the coach who opposing fans love to hate had once again become college football's most interesting man.

Sanders carries No. 7 Cowboys past No. 10 Sooners

Associated Press

STILLWATER, Okla. — Oklahoma State finally broke through against its greatest nemesis.

Spencer Sanders threw for a touchdown and ran for another and No. 7 Oklahoma State beat No. 10 Oklahoma 37-33 on Saturday night to keep alive its College Football Playoff chances and stop the Sooners' streak of Big 12 titles at six.

The Cowboys (11-1, 8-1, No. 7 CFP) snapped a six-game losing streak to the Sooners. Oklahoma State will play No. 9 Baylor next Saturday for the Big 12 championship. The Cowboys have a shot at their first Big 12 title since 2011.

"I told them we couldn't be more proud of them for what

they've accomplished," Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy said. "That's the good news. Next thing is, we need them all back here tomorrow afternoon. We're in a one-week playoff again."

Oklahoma (10-2, 7-2, No. 10 CFP) got the ball one last time at its 20-yard line with 54 seconds remaining and no timeouts. Caleb Williams scrambled and ran 56 yards to put the Sooners in scoring range.

"I wasn't sure we were going to be able to catch him and get him down," Gundy said. "I've seen him do that on TV two, three, four times this year. Nobody ever catches him."

The Cowboys' Collin Oliver sacked Williams on fourth down at the Oklahoma State 32 with

eight seconds remaining, setting off a wild celebration. Fans clad in orange and black poured onto the field to celebrate Gundy's third win in 17 tries against the Sooners. Songs such as "Friends in Low Places" by Garth Brooks and "All I Do Is Win" by DJ Khaled blared over the sound system.

It wasn't easy for the Cowboys. Though Oklahoma State entered the game ranked second nationally in scoring defense and third in total defense, Williams threw three touchdown passes in the first half.

Cowboys linebacker Malcolm Rodriguez, who finished with 11 tackles and two sacks, said the team remained confident after the shaky start. Williams connected on just 6 of 18 passes for

48 yards in the second half.

"We knew we're the best defense, so we just knew we've just got to go out there and punch and just keep fighting, man," Rodriguez said. "Just do our thing, relax and just be us."

Oklahoma State already had clinched a spot in the Big 12 title game, but the stakes remained high. With Baylor's victory over Texas Tech earlier Saturday, Oklahoma needed a win to reach the conference championship game. The Cowboys took advantage of the opportunity to eliminate their rival.

For the Sooners, the loss provided perspective.

"I think for everybody, what this does is it makes you appreciate it," Oklahoma coach Lincoln Riley said.

Tide survives 4 OTs; Baylor, Iowa get shots

Associated Press

AUBURN, Ala. — Pushed to the limit, Alabama delivered plays to celebrate in a stadium that has produced a few devastating losses. The result was another unforgettable Iron Bowl.

John Metchie caught a scoring pass from Bryce Young in the fourth overtime to give No. 3 Alabama a 24-22 comeback victory over rival Auburn on Saturday, rescuing the Crimson Tide's national title hopes.

It was the first overtime in the Iron Bowl.

"Wow, what a game," Tide coach Nick Saban said.

Freshman Kool-Aid McKinstry tipped away T.J. Finley's pass in the final OT and Young hit Metchie just as he did in the previous one.

Alabama (11-1, 7-1 Southeastern Conference, No. 3 CFP) moves on to face No. 1 Georgia in the league championship game with its College Football Playoff hopes on the line. The Tigers (6-6, 3-5) dropped their fourth straight game.

Big 12

Blake Shapen threw for 254 yards and two touchdowns in his first start for No. 9

Baylor, and the host Bears held off Texas Tech 27-24 — and got into the Big 12 title game when Oklahoma State beat Oklahoma.

Abram Smith ran for 117 yards and a touchdown for Baylor (10-2, 7-2 Big 12, CFP No. 8). It will face the Cowboys in the championship game.

Big Ten

Tanner Morgan overcame an interception that was returned for a first-half touchdown, leading host Minnesota on three scoring drives after halftime to surge past Wisconsin, take back Paul Bunyan's Axe and give Iowa the Big Ten West Division title Saturday with a 23-13 upset.

Iowa did its part by winning at Nebraska 28-21. Spencer Petras had a 2-yard touchdown run with 2:58 left to give his team its first lead and the visiting Hawkeyes came back from a 15-point deficit in the third quarter.

Iowa won the border battle for the seventh straight year, but not before Jermari Harris intercepted Logan Smothers' pass at the Hawkeyes 2 with 43 seconds left to play. Iowa (10-2, 7-2) will head to the conference championship game next week in

Indianapolis.

ACC

Sam Hartman threw three touchdown passes and ran for a score to help No. 21 Wake Forest beat Boston College, 41-10, for a spot in the Atlantic Coast Conference championship game.

The Demon Deacons (10-2, 7-1) will attempt to claim their first league title since 2006 when they face No. 20 Pittsburgh on Dec. 4.

Academies

Army and Navy both won their final game before their annual showdown on Dec. 11.

Jakobi Buchanan ran for three touchdowns, Christian Anderson threw for a score and the visiting Black Knights beat Liberty 31-16.

Isaac Ruoss ran for two touchdowns, Chance Warren had two TD catches and the visiting Mids defeated Temple 38-14.

Navy (3-8, 3-5 American Athletic Conference) threw just 12 passes for 72 yards, but had touchdown tosses from both Tai Lavatai and Xavier Arline. The Mids rolled up 219 yards on the ground.

Early 14-0 run fuels No. 2 UCLA's victory over UNLV

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The UCLA Bruins had three days off in Las Vegas to think about how they were going to rebound from losing to No. 1 Gonzaga by 20 points.

No. 2 UCLA wasted no time on Saturday, scoring 14 unanswered points early in the first half to beat UNLV 73-51.

"We had a lot to think about after our last game," said Jules Bernard, who led the Bruins with 18 points and had two blocks, four assists and four rebounds. "We had a day off and went right back to practice. That pace we put into practice is what he put into the game."

UCLA (6-1) shot 47% from the field and from three-point range. Tyger Campbell had 15 points and Johnny Juzang and Jaime Jaquez added 12 points each.

"I'm really happy with our effort and our attitude," Bruins coach Mike Cronin said. "I told them, I really don't care about wins and losses, it's about effort and attitude. I told them we have to do whatever we have to do to win a tough road game and it starts with defense."

Bryce Hamilton led UNLV (4-3) with 15 points, while Donovan Williams added 12 points. The Rebels struggled, finishing at 30%.

"We got in a hole and took a lot of three-point shots," said UNLV coach Kevin Kruger, whose team went 22% (6 of 27) from three-point range. "I think a lot of the shots were right there. There were a lot of drives where we were one (pass) away from finding a better shot. I don't want to think the sky is falling, it is UCLA."

The Bruins outrebounded the

Rebels 47-27 for the game.

"We really worked on rebounding in practice," Bernard said. "When the shot goes up, crashing the boards. What we did in practice is really a reflection of what happened today."

UNLV scored the first two points of the game, but the Bruins went on a 14-0 run and never trailed again. The Rebels cut the lead to 22-19 before UCLA led 37-22 at halftime.

UNLV was down by 9 points with 14:43 left in the second half, but the Bruins countered with a 12-0 run and grew the lead to as many as 22.

"I told them at halftime, 'When you're on the road, teams play with pride, they are going to play you with pressure,'" Cronin said.

Army 65, Marist 61: Jalen Rucker had 24 points as the host Black Knights held on to beat

the Red Foxes.

Josh Caldwell had six assists for Army (4-2). Charlie Peterson added seven rebounds. Aaron Duhart had six rebounds.

Jao Ituka had 12 points for Marist (2-3).

Navy 67, Mount St. Mary's 40: John Carter Jr. posted 18 points as the visiting Mids easily beat the Mountaineers 67-40 on Saturday.

Greg Summers had 11 points and eight rebounds for Navy (5-2), which earned its fourth consecutive victory. Sean Yoder added 10 points.

Malik Jefferson had nine points and nine rebounds for Mount St. Mary's (2-5). Nana Opoku added three blocks.

Jalen Benjamin, who led the Mountaineers in scoring coming into the contest with 14 points per game, was held to six points on 1-for-10 shooting.

Suns push win streak to 16 games

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Devin Booker scored 30 points, Chris Paul had 22 and the Phoenix Suns extended their winning streak to 16 games with a 113-107 win Saturday at Brooklyn.

Playing for the second straight night to end a four-game trip, the Suns never trailed and led by as much as 22 while moving within a victory of matching the longest winning streak in franchise history.

Phoenix will try to do that Tuesday night at home against the Golden State Warriors (17-2) in a matchup of the top two teams in the NBA.

Phoenix improved to 17-3, its best record through 20 games since having the same mark in 2004-05. The Western Conference champions haven't lost in a month since Sacramento dropped them to 1-3.

Paul added eight rebounds and five assists, becoming the first player in NBA history to reach 20,000 points, 10,000 assists

and 5,000 rebounds.

Timberwolves 121, 76ers 120 (2OT): D'Angelo Russell scored 35 points and had a decisive steal and assist in the final seconds of the second overtime in Minnesota's victory over Joel Embiid and Philadelphia.

Embiid had 42 points and 14 rebounds in his return to the lineup after missing nine games because of COVID-19 protocols. Philadelphia lost seven of those games without the four-time All-Star and has now dropped eight of 10.

Nicks 99, Hawks 90: Alec Burks scored 23 points, Evan Fournier added 20 and visiting New York snapped Atlanta's seven-game winning streak.

Burks, starting with Kemba Walker and Derrick Rose nursing injuries, hit three of his four threes and scored 15 points in the third quarter.

Rockets 146, Hornets 143 (OT): Christian Wood scored a career-high 33 points and had 16 rebounds to help host Houston beat Charlotte.

The Rockets have won two straight after losing 15 in a row.

Heat 107, Bulls 104: Kyle Lowry scored 19 points and Jimmy Butler added 18 to help Miami win at Chicago.

Gabe Vincent made four three-pointers and had 20 off the bench for the Heat, and Bam Adebayo added nine points, six assists, and seven rebounds.

Cavaliers 105, Magic 92: Darius Garland scored a season-high 26 points, rookie Evan Mobley had 13 points in his return from a sprained right elbow and host Cleveland beat Orlando.

Jazz 127, Pelicans 105: Donovan Mitchell had 21 points, seven rebounds and seven assists to help host Utah beat New Orleans.

Wizards 120, Mavericks 114: Bradley Beal scored 26 points, Kyle Kuzma had 10 of his 22 in the fourth quarter and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored the clinching four points in the closing seconds in Washington's victory at Dallas.

Kraken deny Panthers NHL's home win record

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Chris Driedger was the winning goalie when Florida's home-ice winning streak started last season.

The streak ended Saturday — and Driedger was the winning goalie again.

Driedger made 33 saves against his former team, helping the Seattle Kraken defeat the Panthers 4-1 on Saturday night to deny Florida what would have been a record-setting 12th consecutive home win to start the season.

"Honestly, it was a bit of a challenge trying to just keep my head in the game," Driedger said. "And, you know, it's so familiar being in this barn. Just seeing those guys on the other side of the ice is a bit different."

Jordan Eberle scored twice in his 800th game, Ryan Donato and Jamie Oleksiak added goals and Joonas Donskoi had two assists for Seattle, which was facing the Panthers for the first time.

Patric Hornqvist had the goal for Florida, and Spencer Knight stopped 23 shots for the Panthers.

Florida was bidding to become the first team in NHL history to start a season 12-0-0 at home; the Panthers will have to share the record of 11 straight home-ice victories to open a season with Chicago, which had such a start in 1963-64.

"We all know what was at stake tonight, but it's behind us now," Panthers forward Owen Tippett said.

It was also Florida's first home-ice regular-season loss since last season. The Panthers had won 15 consecutive games at home since last April, excluding playoffs, a span that included two coaches, two arena names.

Red Wings 3, Sabres 2 (OT): Lucas Raymond scored 26 seconds into overtime to give host Detroit a win over Buffalo.

Dylan Larkin and Filip Hronek assisted on Raymond's goal,

which came shortly after the Sabres forced the extra session with a goal late in the third period.

Oilers 3, Golden Knights 2: Mikko Koskinen stopped 36 shots and earned his 11th victory in visiting Edmonton's win over Vegas.

Koskinen's win total is tied for the NHL's best this season. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Zach Hyman and Jesse Puljujarvi scored for the Oilers.

Kings 4, Senators 2: Carl Grundstrom scored twice as host Los Angeles snapped a five-game losing streak by beating Ottawa.

Viktor Arvidsson had a power-play goal and Arthur Kaliyev also scored for the Kings.

Jets 4, Flames 2: Kyle Connor scored twice, including the game-winner with five minutes left, as Winnipeg snapped a five-game skid with a comeback win at Calgary.

Paul Stastny and Andrew Copp also scored for the Jets.

Matthew Tkachuk and Elias Lindholm scored for the Flames, who lost in regulation for the first time in eight games.

Canadiens 6, Penguins 3: Josh Anderson scored two empty-net goals and visiting Montreal scored five times in the third period to end a seven-game road drought with a win over Pittsburgh.

Tyler Toffoli also scored into an empty net, and Christian Dvorak and Artturi Lehkonen added goals in the final 20 minutes for the Canadiens.

Blues 6, Blue Jackets 3: Pavel Buchnevich and Ivan Barbashev each scored twice and host St. Louis beat Columbus.

Stars 3, Coyotes 2: Roope Hintz scored his seventh goal in eight games and visiting Dallas extended its winning streak to four games in beating Arizona.

Avalanche 6, Predators 2: Mikko Rantanen had a hat trick and an assist, Bo Byram scored in his return to the lineup, and host Colorado beat Nashville.