

## Divide on response to strikes on US troops

*The Washington Post*

A surge in attacks on deployed U.S. forces has roiled some within the Defense Department, where officials, frustrated by what they consider an incoherent strategy for countering the Iranian proxies believed responsible, acknowledge the limited retaliatory airstrikes approved by President Joe Biden have failed to stop the violence.

“There’s no clear definition of what we are trying to deter,” said one defense official, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity to be candid. “Are we trying to deter future Iranian attacks like this? Well, that’s clearly not working.”

Seething anger in the Middle East over U.S. support for the Israeli military campaign in Gaza, where thousands of Palestinian civilians have been killed in the last six weeks, has heightened concern among Biden and his deputies that any overreaction to the attacks on U.S. personnel could incite a wider conflict. In conjunction with the air-

strikes, administration officials have urged Tehran repeatedly over the past month to rein in the militia groups it supports, cautioning that the United States has “the right” to respond “at a time in place of our choosing.” But those warnings have gone unheeded.

Since Oct. 17, U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria have faced nearly daily assault from rocket fire and one-way drones, recording at least 61 incidents and about as many injuries in that span. Pentagon data obtained by *The Washington Post* shows that the attacks have targeted 10 bases used by American personnel who are spread across both countries.

In response, Biden has authorized three rounds of airstrikes, all in eastern Syria. The most recent, on Nov. 12, targeted sites the Pentagon identified as used by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and “Iran-affiliated groups.” A U.S. official said that as many as seven militants were killed, a “rough estimate” as the United States continues to

assess the results.

The strikes have destroyed purported warehouses holding weapons and ammunition, a command post and a training facility, officials have said. Yet each operation has failed to slow the drumbeat of hostile activity, which in all cases resumed almost immediately.

The 61 attacks on U.S. troops have come at a startling frequency as well: There were about 80 similar incidents between January 2021 and March of this year, the Pentagon has said.

A senior defense official said the Pentagon has provided additional options to the president beyond the actions that have been taken to date. This person affirmed, too, that within the Defense Department, there is doubt about the present approach.

In a statement, National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said that Biden has demonstrated “he will never hesitate to take action to protect U.S. forces” and that the

president is “fully prepared to take further measures as needed at any given moment to protect our people.”

In their public statements, Defense Department officials have sought to downplay the attacks in Iraq and Syria, describing them as often inaccurate and causing little damage to U.S. infrastructure.

But as the attack count has continued to climb, so too has the concern that it is a matter of time before one claims a U.S. service member’s life.

“I don’t sense any deterrence,” Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said in an interview. “They keep shooting, waiting for us to respond. We don’t, so they keep shooting.”

“I’m not suggesting we start a full-fledged war with Tehran,” he added. “But I do think our posture has to be a little more aggressive than just strictly defensive, because one of these days, we’re going to miss one of those drones.”

## USS Reagan wraps possible final patrol from Japan

By ALEX WILSON

*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The USS Ronald Reagan steamed into Tokyo Bay on Sunday morning, in time for Thanksgiving, concluding what may be the ship’s final deployment from Japan.

The aircraft carrier arrived at its homeport, where it was greeted by families standing at the base’s northern shore and lining its pier.

“Our Sailors have more than earned their time back home,”

the ship’s skipper, Capt. Daryle Cardone, said in a Sunday news release. “In addition to time with loved ones, their time in port is a chance to invest in the incredibly valuable partnership we have with the Japanese people. We are thankful for our relationship and we will continue to forge those bonds, whether at sea or ashore.”

Media were not invited to cover the carrier’s arrival.

The Ronald Reagan was accompanied by two of its escorts, the guided-missile cruiser USS

Robert Smalls and guided-missile destroyer USS Rafael Peralta, Task Force 70 spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Seth Koenig told Stars and Stripes by email Sunday

“USS Ronald Reagan and the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group completed a very successful 2023 deployment, during which we continued to greatly strengthen relationships and interoperability with partners and allies in support of our shared goals of a free and open Indo-Pacific,” Koenig

said in the email.

The Ronald Reagan’s return on Sunday likely represents the final chapter for the ship’s eight years at Yokosuka before it relocates for scheduled maintenance at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Wash.

The Navy announced April 28 that the carrier USS George Washington will replace the Ronald Reagan as the centerpiece of the 7th Fleet’s carrier strike group sometime next year, although an exact date has not been disclosed.

## US and Philippine Marines practice defending island

By **SETH ROBSON**  
*Stars and Stripes*

American and Philippine Marines practiced their defense of a beach Thursday on the island of Palawan, close to disputed sea territory where Philippine and Chinese vessels have clashed in recent weeks.

Members of Marine Rotational Force—Southeast Asia are taking part in the annual Kamandag exercise involving 2,000 troops, mostly from the two countries, that concludes Monday after 12 days on Palawan and the Philippines' main island of Luzon.

The exercise takes place during a period of increased tension between Manila and Beijing in the South China Sea. In recent months, Chinese coast guard and maritime militia have tried unsuccessfully to block Philippine vessels resupplying the BRP Sierra Madre. The grounded World War II-era vessel serves as a territorial outpost at Second Thomas Shoal, a disputed reef in the South China Sea.

President Joe Biden in May and October reiterated the U.S. commitment to defend the Philippines against a Chinese attack in the area.

While Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met Wednesday in San Francisco, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his Philippine counterpart, Gilberto Teodoro, got together in Jakarta.

The defense leaders "denounced the recent harassment" of Philippine coast

guard and supply boats by China's coast guard around the shoal, part of the Spratly Islands, according to a joint statement released that day.

The shoal, claimed by both China and the Philippines, is 710 miles from China's Hainan Island but 122 miles from Palawan.

The pair also blasted China's "dangerous" maneuvers against American aircraft and ships in the South China Sea.

Thursday on Palawan, U.S. and Philippine Marines defended a beach against an imaginary force, Marine Capt. Philip Badrov, the U.S. exercise force officer in charge on the island, told Stars and Stripes by phone.

Fewer than 100 members of the rotational force have been camped at Marine Base Rodolfo Punsalang, near Puerto Princesa, Palawan, during the exercise.

They've been practicing skills to surveil surrounding waters, defend the coast, patrol, survive in the jungle and fly RQ-20 Puma surveillance drones, Badrov said.

During the coastal defense exercise, the U.S. Marines kept watch while around 60 members of the Philippine 3rd Marine Brigade surged onto the beach with light armored vehicles, anti-aircraft guns, mortars and infantry, Badrov said.

"They are a very capable force," he said of the Filipino Marines. "The more we work together, the more we will fight alike."

*"They are a very capable force. The more we work together, the more we will fight alike."*

**Marine Capt. Philip Badrov, on Philippine marines**

## US destroyer that shot down drone not intended target

By **MATTHEW ADAMS**  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The guided-missile destroyer USS Thomas Hudner that shot down a drone launched from Yemen over the Red Sea last week was not the intended target, the Pentagon said Thursday.

"Our assessment right now is that the intended target was not the Hudner but that the drone got so close to the crew that the commander did feel it necessary to engage and shoot down the drone," Deputy Pentagon press secretary Sabrina Singh

told reporters.

It is unclear who is responsible for launching the drone. Early last week, the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen threatened to attack ships in the Red Sea.

This was the second intercept by a U.S. Navy vessel since Hamas militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7. Last month, the USS Carney shot down several drones and missiles fired by Houthi forces in the direction of Israel.

Last week the Houthis shot down a U.S. MQ-9 Reaper drone over the Red Sea.

## Marine commandant out of hospital after heart attack

By **DOUG G. WARE**  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Gen. Eric Smith, commandant of the Marine Corps, has been released from the hospital after over two weeks of treatment following a heart attack, officials said Thursday.

Smith suffered the heart attack on Oct. 29 and was hospitalized at a Washington facility for 17 days, the Marine Corps said in a statement. Smith will return to the hospital soon for a medical procedure, the statement added.

"Smith's recovery is well ahead of schedule, and he is now focused on preparing for an upcoming procedure to repair a bicuspid aortic valve in his heart, which his doctors assess directly contributed to his cardiac arrest," the statement added.

Last week, Smith said he was grateful for an "outpouring of support" and said he was looking forward to "getting back in the fight as soon as I can."

At the time of his heart attack, Smith had been performing the duties of commandant and assistant commandant because the general nominated to become the assistant commandant was blocked from promotion along with hundreds of other military personnel by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala. A few days after Smith's heart attack, the Senate got around Tuberville's blockade by individually confirming a few more top Pentagon nominees, including Lt. Gen. Christopher Mahoney as assistant commandant.

Mahoney will perform Smith's duties until he is medically cleared to return to duty.

# NH police kill suspect in hospital shooting

*Associated Press*

CONCORD, N.H. — A man killed by a state police trooper after he shot a security guard to death at a New Hampshire psychiatric hospital has been identified, authorities said Saturday.

New Hampshire Attorney General John Formella said 33-year-old John Madore entered New Hampshire Hospital on Friday afternoon and killed Bradley Haas, a state Department of Safety security officer who was working at the front lobby entrance of the facility. There were several people in the lobby at the time of the shooting, he said.

Formella said Madore was most recently living in a hotel in

the Seacoast region and also had lived in Concord. He was wielding a 9 mm pistol and had additional ammunition on him when he shot Haas, who was unarmed.

Police also found an AR-style rifle, a tactical vest and several ammunition magazines in a U-Haul truck in the hospital's parking lot and were investigating possible connections between the truck and Madore.

"The actions of the trooper and Bradley Haas saved a lot of lives," Formella said.

The shooting happened around 3:30 p.m. at New Hampshire Hospital and was contained to the front lobby of the 185-bed facility, State Police

Col. Mark Hall said late Friday. He said CPR was performed on Haas, who later died at Concord Hospital.

Police are still trying to determine a possible motive.

"We have a lot of work to do to really figure out who this man was, why he might have done what he did, what led up to this incident," said Formella, who said the Haas family has requested privacy.

Haas lived in Franklin, a small city about 20 miles from Concord.

He worked as a police officer for 28 years and rose to become police chief, according to a statement from the state attorney general's office.

The hospital remained in operation but was closed to visitors Friday evening.

The facility is the only state-run psychiatric hospital for adults in New Hampshire. Located in the capital city, it is part of a large state office park that includes multiple state agencies and is near the city's high school and district courthouse. The Department of Safety provides security for the hospital.

Steve Ahnen, president of the New Hampshire Hospital Association, said in a statement that the hospital staff serves "patients with respect, compassion and with the utmost care and that extends to all who work there."

## Colorado judge rules that Trump can stay on ballot

*Associated Press*

DENVER — A Colorado judge on Friday found that former President Donald Trump engaged in insurrection during the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol but rejected an effort to keep him off the state's primary ballot because it's unclear whether a Civil War-era Constitutional amendment barring insurrectionists from public office applies to the presidency.

The lawsuit, brought by a left-leaning group on behalf of a group of Republican and independent Colorado voters, contended that Trump's actions related to the attack ran afoul of a clause in the 14th Amendment that prevents anyone from holding office who "engaged in insurrection or rebellion" against the Constitution.

The decision by District Judge Sarah B. Wallace is the third ruling in a little over a week against lawsuits seeking to knock Trump off the ballot by citing Section 3 of the amendment. The Minnesota Supreme

Court said Trump could remain on the primary ballot because political parties have sole choice over who appears, while a Michigan judge ruled that Congress is the proper forum for deciding whether Section 3 applies to Trump.

In her decision, Wallace said she found that Trump did in fact "engage in insurrection" on Jan. 6 and rejected his attorneys' arguments that he was simply engaging in free speech.

Normally, that would be enough to disqualify him under Section 3, but she said she couldn't do so for a presidential candidate.

Section 3 does not specifically refer to the presidency, as it does members of the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives. Instead, the clause refers to "elector of President and Vice President," along with civil and military offices.

Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung, in a statement, called the ruling "another nail in the coffin of the un-American ballot challenges."

## Ford, Stellantis workers approve UAW contracts

*Associated Press*

DETROIT — The United Auto Workers union overwhelmingly ratified new contracts with Ford and Stellantis, that along with a similar deal with General Motors will raise pay across the industry, force automakers to absorb higher costs and help reshape the auto business as it shifts away from gasoline-fueled vehicles.

Workers at Stellantis, the maker of Jeep, Dodge and Ram vehicles, voted 68.8% in favor of the deal. Their approval brought to a close a contentious labor dispute that included name-calling and a series of punishing strikes that imposed high costs on the companies and led to significant gains in pay and benefits for UAW workers.

The deal at Stellantis passed by a roughly 10,000 vote margin, with ballot counts ending Saturday afternoon. Workers at Ford voted 69.3% in favor of the pact, which passed with nearly a 15,000-vote margin in balloting that ended early Saturday. Last week, GM workers narrowly

approved a similar contract.

The agreements, which run through April 2028, will end contentious talks that began last summer and led to six-week-long strikes at all three automakers. Shawn Fain, the pugnacious new UAW leader, had branded the companies enemies of the UAW who were led by overpaid CEOs, declaring the days of union cooperation with the automakers were over.

After summerlong negotiations failed to produce a deal, Fain kicked off strikes on Sept. 15 at one assembly plant at each company. The union later extended the strike to parts warehouses and other factories to try to intensify pressure on the automakers until tentative agreements were reached late in October.

The new contract agreements were widely seen as a victory for the UAW.

"I think this is a huge win for the UAW that they got all three contracts ratified," said Art Wheaton, director of labor studies at Cornell University.

# 'Very sick' babies evacuated from Gaza's main hospital

*Associated Press*

**KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip** — Health officials said Sunday that 31 "very sick" premature babies were safely transferred from Gaza's main hospital to another in the south and will later go to Egypt, as scores of critically wounded patients remained stranded there days after Israeli forces entered the compound.

The fate of the newborns at Shifa Hospital had captured global attention after the release of images showing doctors trying to keep them warm. A power blackout had shut down incubators and other equipment, and food, water and medical supplies ran out as Israeli forces battled Palestinian militants outside.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on social media the "very sick" babies were evacuated along with six health workers and 10 family members of staff. They were receiving urgent care in the southern Gaza city of Rafah.

The babies suffered from dehydration, vomiting, hypothermia and some had sepsis because they hadn't received medication, and they had not been in "suitable conditions for them to stay alive," said Mo-

hamed Zaqout, director of Gaza hospitals. They'll go to Egypt on Monday for more specialized care, he said.

A WHO team that visited the hospital on Saturday said 291 patients were still there, including the babies. Others were trauma patients with severely infected wounds and those with spinal injuries who are unable to move. Four babies died in the two days before their visit, Zaqout said. The WHO said 25 medical staff remained, along with the patients who it said were "terrified for their safety and health, and pleaded for evacuation." The agency described Shifa as a death zone.

Later Sunday, the hospital's head of plastic surgery, Dr. Ahmed El Mokhallalati, said Israeli troops raided the surgical department, investigated staff and patients, and arrested one patient. The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the incident.

Israel has long alleged Hamas maintains a sprawling command post inside and under Shifa, part of its wider accusation that the fighters use civilians as cover. It has portrayed the hospital as a key target in its war to end Hamas' rule in Gaza following the militant group's

wide-ranging attack into southern Israel six weeks ago.

After searching the grounds for days, Israel's army said Sunday it had discovered a 60-yard tunnel about 33 feet under the hospital's 20-acre complex, which includes several buildings, garages and a plaza. It said the tunnel included a staircase, blast-proof door and a firing hole that could be used by snipers. The army said it was still uncovering the tunnel's route.

The Associated Press couldn't independently verify Israel's findings.

Hamas and hospital staff earlier denied the allegations of a command post under Shifa, and critics describe the hospital as a symbol of what they call Israel's reckless endangerment of civilians. Thousands have been killed in Israeli strikes, and there are severe shortages of food, water, medicine and fuel in the besieged territory.

Heavy clashes were reported in the built-up Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza overnight into Sunday. "There was the constant sound of gunfire and tank shelling," Yassin Sharif, who is sheltering in a U.N.-run hospital there, said by phone. "It was another night of horror."

## Russia frees killers from prison to fight war

*The Washington Post*

Vladislav Kanyus, a young man from Kemerovo in southwestern Siberia, brutally killed his ex-girlfriend Vera Pekhteleva, torturing, suffocating and stabbing her for hours.

He was sentenced in July 2022 to 17 years after a high-profile trial that reignited a national conversation in Russia about the lack of protections against domestic violence and law enforcement indifference to such cases. But then Pekhteleva's bereaved mother, Oksana, received a photo of Kanyus — not in prison but in a military uniform surrounded by other Russian soldiers.

Her daughter's murderer was pardoned by President Vladimir Putin in exchange for taking up arms in Ukraine.

"I thought I was going crazy, I keep zooming into this photo and staring into his face in disbelief," Oksana Pekhteleva said, described the shock it brought to her family. "You know what the human psyche is like, the first stage is denial."

To avoid calling another controversial mobilization and risk angering the public ahead of presidential elections next year, Russia's military has relied increasingly on prison recruitment to bolster its ranks, a tactic pioneered by Yevgeniy Prigozhin, the late Wagner Group mercenary boss.

According to rights activists, the Russian Defense Ministry has enlisted as many as 100,000 people this year by scouring prison colonies and offering to chop off years from the sentences of people convicted of some of the country's most gruesome crimes.

## Volcano to keep Iceland town empty

*Associated Press*

**REYKJAVIK, Iceland** — People in southwest Iceland remain on edge, waiting to see whether a volcano rumbling under the Reykjanes Peninsula will erupt.

Civil protection authorities said that even if it doesn't, it's likely to be months before it is safe for residents evacuated from the danger zone to go home.

The fishing town of Grindavik was evacuated a week ago as magma rumbled and snaked under the earth amid thousands of tremors. It has left a

jagged crack running through the community, thrusting the ground upward by 3 feet or more in places.

The Icelandic Meteorological Office said there is a "significant likelihood" that an eruption will occur somewhere along the 9-mile magma tunnel, with the "prime location" an area north of Grindavik near the Hagafell mountain.

Grindavik residents are being allowed to return for five minutes each to rescue valuable possessions and pets. Scientists say a new eruption would likely produce lava but not an ash cloud.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Woman ordered to pay airline for interfering

**AZ** PHOENIX — A Hawaiian woman has been ordered to pay nearly \$39,000 in restitution to American Airlines for interfering with a crew on a flight last year, according to authorities.

Federal prosecutors said Cayla Farris, 29, was sentenced to more than three months of time served in connection with her actions plus three years of supervised probation.

A U.S. District judge said Farris will have to obtain approval before boarding an aircraft while she's on probation.

According to authorities, Farris was on a Feb. 13, 2022, flight from Phoenix to Honolulu when she began using profanity and threatened the flight crew and other passengers.

The plane's captain decided to turn the aircraft around and landed at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport because Farris' behavior prevented the crew members from continuing their duties.

### Casinos forfeit money won by prohibited gamblers

**NJ** ATLANTIC CITY — Five Atlantic City casinos and a horse racing track are forfeiting over \$77,000 worth of money won by underage gamblers or those who had placed themselves on a list to be excluded from gambling activities.

New Jersey gambling regulators also fined DraftKings, the online sportsbook and casino platform, \$7,500 for similar violations, and online gambling company Rush Street Interac-

ted \$2,000 for taking bets on unapproved events and taking pre-match bets on games that had already begun.

The forfeited money will go to the state to be used for programs to treat compulsive gambling, as well as on programs benefiting seniors and those with disabilities.

Most of the cases involved patrons who were either asked to provide identification when claiming a manual payout from slot machines or other games, and were either found to be underage or to have produced inadequate identification.

### Toddlers sick by lead tied to tainted fruit pouches

**DC** WASHINGTON — U.S. health officials are warning doctors to be on the lookout for possible cases of lead poisoning in children after at least 22 toddlers in 14 states were sickened by lead linked to tainted pouches of cinnamon apple puree and applesauce.

Children ages 1 to 3 were affected, and at least one child showed a blood lead level eight times higher than the level that raises concern, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

There's no safe level of lead exposure, but the CDC uses a marker of 3.5 micrograms per deciliter to identify children with higher levels than most. The affected children's blood lead levels ranged from 4 to 29 micrograms per deciliter.

The reported symptoms included headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, a change in activity level and anemia.

The illnesses are part of an outbreak tied to recalled pouch-

es of fruit puree marketed to kids from the brands WanaBana apple cinnamon fruit puree and Schnucks and Weis cinnamon applesauce pouches. The products were sold in stores and online.

### Fuel tanker overturns during multiple-car crash

**MA** BILLERICA — State police in Massachusetts are investigating a multiple-vehicle crash north of Boston in which a tanker carrying thousands of gallons of fuel rolled over.

Troopers and firefighters responded to the scene in Billerica, about 24 miles from Boston. Authorities closed all lanes of traffic in both directions on busy Route 3 because of the crash.

The driver of the tanker and the driver of one of the other vehicles involved sustained minor injuries, police said.

Massachusetts State Police said the tanker was leaking fuel from the top and that hazardous material and environmental response work was ongoing. They said they expected the lanes to remain closed "for the foreseeable future."

### 2 men to pay for racial attack on a Black man

**ME** PORTLAND — A pair of white men sentenced to federal prison for breaking a Black man's jaw in a random attack have been ordered to pay \$1.25 million in damages by a state judge.

The judge issued a default judgment against Maurice Diggins and Dusty Leo, of Biddeford, both of whom are in federal custody and weren't repre-

sented by attorneys in the proceeding.

The victim, Daimon McCollum, may never collect the damages but the award "demonstrates that this kind of conduct is abhorrent and won't be tolerated," his attorney, Allyson Knowles, said.

McCollum was attacked in April 2018 in Biddeford by the men, who taunted and shouted racial slurs from their vehicle before a confrontation in which McCollum was struck in the jaw.

### Police, protesters clash at 'Cop City' training site

**GA** ATLANTA — Police used tear gas and flash-bang grenades to halt a march seeking to stop construction of a police and firefighter training center in Atlanta.

More than 500 people marched about 2 miles from a park to the site, which is just outside the Atlanta city limits in suburban DeKalb County.

A wedge of marchers, including some in masks, goggles and chemical suits intended to protect against tear gas, pushed into a line of officers in riot gear on a road outside the training center site. Officers pushed back and then responded with tear gas, with one protester throwing a canister back at officers.

Protests against the proposed training center — dubbed "Cop City" by opponents — have been going on for more than two years. Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr obtained a sweeping indictment in August, using the state's anti-racketeering law to target 61 protesters, characterizing them as "militant anarchists."

— From wire reports

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# Verstappen wins exciting Las Vegas GP

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Max Verstappen hated everything about the Las Vegas Grand Prix from the moment he arrived in Sin City. Formula One's three-time reigning world champion found the excess and opulence over-the-top and prioritized over the actual racing.

He changed his tune — literally — following his 18th win of the season.

"Viva Las Vegas! Viva Las Vegas!" sang Verstappen as he crossed under the checkered flag waved by Justin Bieber. Verstappen had slammed Saturday night's spectacle at every chance, yet raced in an Elvis-inspired firesuit and took the victory on the Las Vegas Strip.

"I hope everyone enjoyed it. We definitely did. Excited to come back here next year and try to do something similar," said Verstappen, who had markedly reversed his week-long position on the Las Vegas spectacle.

"It was a fun race. I enjoyed it," he conceded.

Verstappen passed Charles Leclerc at the start then over-

came a penalty to pass Leclerc once more with 13 laps remaining to continue his season-long dominance.

Verstappen, Leclerc and Sergio Perez were driven in a limousine to a stage located near the Bellagio — "we go straight to the nightclub," Verstappen told his fellow podium finishers — but they were instead treated to the casino's famed fountain show. The Bellagio fountains had been turned off all week and restarted as part of the victory celebration. None of the participants seemed remotely interested as they stood chatting.

After receiving their trophies, they were treated to a New Year's Eve-style fireworks show over the Strip.

Martin Garrix then launched into a throbbing DJ set to entertain those who opened their wallets for the most expensive spectator race of the season. Celebrities danced along on the grid and everyone seemed thrilled with the show. The stars in attendance included Brad Pitt, Rihanna, Usain Bolt and Shaquille O'Neal as F1 said it

drew more than 315,000 spectators over the weekend and estimated an economic impact of \$1.2 billion to Las Vegas.

"I really enjoyed it and I am especially happy that we finished the weekend on a high note because it was hurting me to see the sport that I love so much starting so wrong on Thursday," said Leclerc. "The fact that we had an amazing race makes it all better."

The race was the third stop this season in the United States, more than any other country, and was promoted by F1 and owner Liberty Media. But the event has been lambasted — especially by Verstappen — for its emphasis on becoming a neon extravaganza.

Tickets were expensive, hotels along the famed Strip hiked their prices, and the sporting element of the 21st race of the season was overshadowed by everything from celebrities, musical acts and myriad Elvis impersonators roaming the paddock that included a wedding chapel where former F1 champion Jacques Villeneuve was married earlier in the week.

Liberty expected to spend \$500 million on the first grand prix it self-promoted, but paddock speculation before Saturday night's race was that Liberty had gone well over budget. The entire event nearly imploded nine minutes into the first practice session on Thursday night when Carlos Sainz Jr. ran over a water drain valve cover on the track that badly damaged his Ferrari and F1 had to close the 3.85-mile circuit for inspection.

Fans were forced to leave at 1:30 a.m. Friday morning after witnessing just nine minutes of track activity. The second practice started at 2:30 a.m. and ran until 4 a.m., and instead of an apology, F1 simply offered \$200 credits to the LVGP merchandise store to any ticket holders who had only purchased Thursday access. A class-action lawsuit was filed Friday against the Las Vegas Grand Prix.

It made it critical for F1 to deliver a good race Saturday night and, even though it was Verstappen's sixth consecutive victory, it was one of the most spirited events of the season.

## Navy blanks East Carolina for third shutout of season

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Alex Tecza rushed for the only touchdown and Navy's defense turned in its third shutout this season with a 10-0 victory over East Carolina on Saturday.

The Midshipmen became the first FBS team to have three shutouts this season.

Navy (5-5, 4-3 American Athletic Conference) held the Pirates to 189 total yards, intercepted two passes and recovered two fumbles. Navy lost two of its own fumbles, had a field goal blocked and missed another. But Nathan Kirkwood's 27-yard field goal midway through the fourth quarter was more than enough insurance in this game.

The field goal came after ECU punter Luke Larsen fumbled and Adam Walker recovered.

The closest ECU (2-9, 1-6) came to scoring was a missed 49-yard field-goal attempt in the second quarter.

Tecza's 19-yard touchdown came in the first quarter on a two-play possession following quarterback Xavier Arline's 39-yard run.

Arline threw for 102 yards and rushed for 68. Tecza rushed for 94 yards on 24 carries. Navy had 276 yards of offense.

Navy concludes its league season next Saturday at SMU before its traditional game with Army on Dec. 9.

**Army 28, Coastal Carolina**

**21:** Tyson Riley, Bryson Daily and Ay'Jaun Marshall each had a rushing touchdown for the host Black Knights.

Army (5-6) plays Navy on Dec. 9 with an opportunity to win the Commander in Chief's Trophy outright as the Midshipmen already fell to Air Force 17-6 on Oct. 21.

Riley and Daily each had a short touchdown run in the first half and Jabril Williams returned a blocked punt for a 37-yard touchdown to give Army (5-6) a 21-7 lead with 1:48 left before halftime. It was Army's second straight week with a blocked punt — and its 11th in the last four seasons.

Riley had a team-high 112

yards on 12 runs and Daily had a team-high 22 carries for 94 yards.

**UNLV 31, Air Force 27:** Jayden Maiava threw for 339 yards and two touchdowns and the visiting Runnin' Rebels shut out the Falcons in the second half to take over sole possession of first place in the Mountain West Conference.

Air Force drove to the UNLV 8 on its final possession, but John Busha's pass to Caleb Rillos on fourth-and-goal with 23 seconds left fell incomplete. It was the Falcons' third straight loss.

Air Force ran for 344 yards and three touchdowns, led by Dylan Carson's 104 yards on 16 carries.

# Georgia seems on pace for threPEAT

*Associated Press*

This season college football fans have been told it's Ohio against the World, Michigan vs. Everybody, Oregon vs. Them, etc., etc.

Two weeks before College Football Playoff selection Sunday, it's really Georgia against the field.

The two-time defending national champions have been No. 1 all season, but it has been a methodical ramp up to Death Star mode for the Bulldogs. Georgia appears to be fully operational now.

A week after toying with Mississippi at home in what was a top-10 matchup on paper only, the Bulldogs tore up No. 21 Tennessee on the road Saturday for their 28th straight victory.

"All we're trying to do is find the best version of ourselves," Georgia coach Kirby Smart said.

On the way to trying to become the first team to win three straight national titles in the poll era, Georgia became the first Southeastern Conference team to have three consecutive 8-0 regular seasons in league play.

"What (Georgia has) done in

the past couple years is special," Tennessee coach Josh Heupel said.

Hard to say Georgia was ever really doubted this year. Some took a cautious approach as the Bulldogs played a weak nonconference schedule and then looked less-than-dominant against SEC low-lights South Carolina and Auburn.

They had a new quarterback in Carson Beck. They had key offensive players dealing with injuries: receiver Ladd McConkey, tight end Brock Bowers, tackle Amarius Mims and running back Kendall Milton.

The defense, which produced almost an entire 11-man starting unit of NFL players the past two seasons, was not quite as scary.

Just two weeks ago, Missouri gave the Bulldogs all they could handle — which probably says more about the Tigers than it does Georgia.

Bowers and Mims returned last week against Ole Miss, and Georgia's offense now seems to be able to do pretty much whatever it wants. Whatever the Bulldogs lost in experience and mobility with Stetson Bennett, Beck makes up for by being a better passer.

There will be some debate about who is QB3 after Caleb Williams and Drake Maye in the NFL Draft. Beck could end up in that conversation.

This is the point in the season when the number of CFP contenders shrinks. In the final year of the four-team playoff, the race still includes about nine teams with a chance.

How many can beat Georgia? It would make the rest of the season more fun and interesting to think as many as six or seven of those contenders could knock off the Bulldogs. Fun, but probably folly.

Fact is, in the super-team era, parity at the top of college football is almost nonexistent.

New quarterbacks at Georgia and Alabama and Ohio State, the other recruiting superpowers, gave hope for others to break through this season. None more so than No. 2 Michigan.

The Wolverines played their closest game of the season Saturday at Maryland, sputtering on offense and needing two safeties, a defensive touchdown and several fourth-quarter stops to hold off the Terrapins.

"We all know what time it is," linebacker Michael Barrett

said. "Once this game was over, we knew where our attention was going to go."

Michigan will try to make it three straight wins against No. 3 Ohio State next week in Ann Arbor, a monster game for a rivalry that has had more than its share. The winner faces Iowa, which slogged to another West Division title, in the Big Ten championship with a CFP spot on the line.

Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh will again not be on the sideline next week as he serves the final of a three-game ban from the Big Ten as punishment for a sign-stealing scheme that has brought off-the-field turmoil to Michigan's season.

On the field, Michigan believes its experienced roster has closed the gap on Georgia. A long look suggests not enough.

Georgia faces rival Georgia Tech next week before playing No. 8 Alabama (10-1) in the SEC championship game.

The Crimson Tide might have the best chance to beat the Bulldogs, but even that might not keep them out of the CFP.

If it is Georgia vs. the field, the Bulldogs look like the best bet right now.

## Last year's Super Bowl teams meet in rematch

*Associated Press*

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The storylines are ripe for the choosing when the Philadelphia Eagles visit the Kansas City Chiefs on Monday night.

Favor some good, old-fashioned revenge? The NFC-leading Eagles (8-1) will try to exact some when they visit Arrowhead Stadium just nine months after the AFC-leading Chiefs (7-2) used a second-half rally to beat them in the Super Bowl.

Love seeing some points? Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts and Chiefs counterpart Patrick

Mahomes, the MVP of that memorable February showdown, have you covered. They're the triggers behind two of the league's top 10 offenses.

Hankering for some history? Andy Reid can pass Hank Stram as the winningest Chiefs coach, and become the first to hold that distinction with two different franchises; the other just happens to be Philadelphia.

How about social intrigue, the kind at the intersection of sports and entertainment? Eagles center Jason Kelce and younger brother Travis Kelce will match up one more time. And this time,

rumors are flying that pop superstar Taylor Swift, who has been seeing the Chiefs tight end for the past couple of months, could be bringing her parents to meet his for the first time.

"It's going to be a great game. You've got great teams in general," Mahomes said. "Jalen is a great quarterback but I think just the whole entire team on both sides — two teams that usually find a way to get a win, playing on Monday Night Football in front of the whole world. I think it's going to be a great game."

Given the circus surrounding

it, the game itself almost seems like an afterthought. One with important ramifications.

The teams are coming off a relatively late bye, which has freshened them up for the back half of the season. And while both currently hold the No. 1 seed in their respective conferences, and the lone playoff bye that comes as the reward, the standings are tight enough that the Eagles and Chiefs need to keep winning if they want to earn a postseason week off.

They know that is the easiest way to get back to the game that matters the most.

# Couturier's overtime goal lifts Flyers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Sean Couturier scored the game winner a minute into overtime, and the Philadelphia Flyers relied on a pair of power-play goals to defeat the defending Stanley Cup champion Vegas Golden Knights 4-3 on Saturday for their fourth consecutive victory.

Couturier took advantage of a turnover by Jack Eichel and tried to pass the puck to Travis Konecny, but the pass took a weird bounce and slid through the pads of goalie Logan Thompson. The goal stood up to video review for a potential missed stoppage.

"That was supposed to go on (Konecny's) blade, and I don't know what happened on the way," Couturier said. "I guess it bounced but was definitely a pass."

The Flyers' power play, which has ranked at or near the bottom of the league all season, was able to score on its first two opportunities.

Owen Tippett scored for the fourth consecutive game, banging in the rebound of a shot from Travis Sanheim to give the Flyers a 1-0 lead in the first period, and Tyson Foerster scored his first goal of the season 59 seconds into the second, gathering a partially blocked shot by Sanheim and putting it

past Thompson.

Foerster, a 2020 first-round pick, snapped a 15-game goal drought.

Aside from the improved power play, the Flyers also blocked 27 shots in the game.

Reigning playoff MVP Jonathan Marchessault scored twice in the second period for Vegas, first on a spinning backhand from the left circle and later on a two-man advantage for his ninth goal of the season.

**Bruins 5, Canadiens 2:** Trent Frederic scored two goals, Brad Marchand collected his 500th career assist and host Boston cruised past longtime rival Montreal.

**Kraken 4, Canucks 3:** Jordan Eberle had a goal and two assists and visiting Seattle won back-to-back games for the second time this season.

**Rangers 5, Devils 3:** Jimmy Vesey and Artemi Panarin scored two goals apiece as visiting New York beat New Jersey, extending its point streak to 11 games.

**Avalanche 6, Stars 3:** Mikko Rantanen scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period, and visiting Colorado erased a three-goal deficit to beat Dallas.

**Kings 5, Blues 1:** Adrian Kempe had a goal and an assist, and Los Angeles won its second straight home game after winning

just one of its first seven.

**Jets 5, Coyotes 2:** Mark Scheifele had a goal and two assists to lead host Winnipeg over Arizona.

**Capitals 4, Blue Jackets 3:** Alex Ovechkin scored the 827th goal of his NHL career and host Washington handed Columbus its eighth consecutive loss.

**Hurricanes 4, Penguins 2:** Seth Jarvis broke a tie with 8:08 remaining with his first goal in six games and then added an empty-net tally as host Carolina beat Pittsburgh.

**Lightning 6, Oilers 4:** Steven Stamkos and Luke Glendening scored 39 seconds apart midway through the third period, and host Tampa Bay rallied for a victory over Edmonton.

**Senators 2, Wild 1:** Josh Norris scored the only goal in a shootout to lift Ottawa past Minnesota as the NHL's Global Series continued in Stockholm.

**Islanders 5, Flames 4 (SO):** Oliver Wahlstrom scored the shootout winner to lead visiting New York over Calgary.

**Predators 4, Blackhawks 2:** Cole Smith scored two goals, Gustav Nyquist scored just hours after welcoming his third child into the world and host Nashville snapped a four-game skid.

# Holmgren forces overtime, Thunder outlast Warriors

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — When Golden State's Andrew Wiggins hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with fewer than two seconds remaining in regulation, it seemed to be the difference that the Warriors had been searching for all game long.

Instead, the Thunder forced overtime with a frenzied sequence. As the final 1.6 seconds ticked down, Oklahoma City rookie Chet Holmgren grabbed the inbound pass and knocked down a game-tying shot from deep to beat the final buzzer.

"It felt like a movie in the moment," Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander said.

Gilgeous-Alexander had 40 points, six rebounds and six assists, and the Thunder sent the Warriors to their sixth straight loss with a 130-123 overtime victory on Saturday night.

The Thunder outscored the Warriors 13-6 in the extra period to seal back-to-back wins at Chase Center and secure the season series, 2-1.

Holmgren scored a season-high 36 points and added 10 rebounds and five assists, and Jaylin Williams had 22 points and six rebounds.

The Warriors dominated through the first half and seemed on the verge of putting the game away midway through the third, when they led by 18 points. But the Thunder stepped up on defense and went on a 22-6 run to cut the deficit to two points entering the fourth.

Gilgeous-Alexander led the charge by scoring 32 points after the first half, including 10 in overtime.

**Timberwolves 121, Pelicans 120:** Karl-Anthony Towns capped a 29-point performance with a running floater off the glass with 5 seconds left, and visiting Minnesota overcame a 14-point deficit in the final 7:32 to beat New Orleans.

Anthony Edwards scored 23 points before fouling out with 10 seconds left while guarding Brandon Ingram along the perimeter. But Ingram missed one of his two free throws, allowing Towns to put Minnesota in

front from close range.

The Pelicans still had a shot to win it as time ran out, but Ingram, who had a game-high-30 points, missed a mid-range jumper.

**Knicks 122, Hornets 108:** Jalen Brunson scored 32 points as visiting New York extended its winning streak to three games with a victory over Charlotte.

Brunson scored 26 points in the opening half for the Knicks, who never trailed and built a 15-point lead by the intermission on the way to their sixth win in seven games.

**Bucks 132, Mavericks 125:** Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 40 points and Damian Lillard added 27 as host Milwaukee beat Dallas and extended its winning streak to four games.

**Grizzlies 120, Spurs 108:** Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 27 points as short-handed Memphis overcame a 19-point deficit and sent host San Antonio to its eighth straight loss.

**Bulls 102, Heat 97:** DeMar DeRozan scored 23 points and host Chicago snapped a three-game skid, rallying to halt Miami's winning streak at seven games.