

Nuke threat forces US to weigh options

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

U.S. stealth bombers and precision missile strikes used to wipe out Russian forces in Ukraine could be a White House option to deliver promised “catastrophic consequences” if Russian President Vladimir Putin orders a tactical nuclear strike.

Another, less risky choice: remove all restrictions on the types of weapons the Biden administration is willing to send into Ukraine. Untapped economic penalties, such as unlimited U.S. secondary sanctions on any entity doing business with Russia, also could be on the table.

If Russia violates a nearly 80-year-old global taboo and drops a nuclear bomb of any size on Ukraine, the dilemma facing the U.S. will be imposing costs severe enough to meet the magnitude of the moment while averting the kind of nuclear showdown feared during the Cold War.

“We have not faced the prospect of Armageddon since Kennedy and the Cuban missile crisis,” President Joe Biden told reporters last week. “I don’t think there’s any such thing as the ability to easily (use) a tactical nuclear weapon and not end up with Armageddon.”

U.S. intelligence analysts continue to say that they have no evidence that Putin is planning an imminent strike, and several analysts and former U.S. military officers who spoke with Stars and Stripes characterized the threat as unlikely, given the consequences, but not out of the realm of possibility.

Biden’s comments come as the Kremlin

has ratcheted up its nuclear saber-rattling in the wake of repeated losses on the battlefield.

And over the weekend, Putin’s forces unleashed a wave of indiscriminate shelling across Ukraine, following an explosion that severely damaged the bridge Russia built in Crimea after its illegal annexation of the peninsula.

National security adviser Jake Sullivan has said the Biden administration spelled out to Moscow the consequences it will face if it carries out a nuclear strike.

US options

Sullivan did not elaborate on what those entail. But such an attack would be historic and have implications for the U.S. military in some form.

“Russia is very concerned about direct involvement of U.S. conventional air power, and so we’ve got to keep that option on the table,” said retired Air Force Lt. Gen. David Deptula, dean of the Mitchell Institute of Aerospace Power Studies in Washington. “But we’ve got to be ambiguous about it.”

To send Russia a signal of deterrence, the U.S., should consider moving B-52 and B-2 bombers into the European theater to put the Russians “on notice,” he said.

Deptula stopped short of advocating a direct military response in the event of a nuclear attack in Ukraine or detailing what it could look like, citing the need for tactical ambiguity.

But some former military officials have been more explicit. Retired Gen. David Petraeus said the U.S. could use its vast conven-

tional arsenal to obliterate the Russian military in Ukraine.

“Just to give you a hypothetical, we would respond by leading a NATO, a collective effort that would take out every Russian conventional force that we can see and identify on the battlefield in Ukraine and also in Crimea and every ship in the Black Sea,” Petraeus told ABC News earlier this month.

But such a move could increase the odds that Russia responds with the kind of nuclear escalation Biden has described in apocalyptic terms.

Putin is “not joking when he talks about potential use of tactical nuclear weapons or biological or chemical weapons,” Biden told reporters in New York on Thursday. “We are trying to figure out what is Putin’s off-ramp. Where does he find a way out?”

For that reason, the administration’s position from the outset, that it’s not in vital U.S. interests to become directly involved in the Russia-Ukraine war, is likely to hold even if the conflict goes nuclear, said John Deni, an expert on global security at the U.S. Army War College.

“A more likely response than American boots on the ground or American planes in the skies would be to remove all inhibitions on Western aid to Ukraine,” Deni said.

Advanced Abrams tanks and longer-range missile systems would flow into Ukraine. Allies also could use cyberattacks and mobilize more U.S. Air Force and Navy assets in Europe, Deni said.

Deptula agreed that the supply of such weaponry is a near certainty if Russia resorts to a nuclear attack.

Russian forces keep up renewed barrage on Ukraine

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces showered Ukraine with more missiles and munition-carrying drones Tuesday after widespread strikes killed at least 19 people in an attack the U.N. human rights office described as “particularly shocking” and amounting to potential war crimes.

Air raid warnings sounded throughout the country for a second straight morning as Ukrainian officials advised residents to conserve

energy and stock up on water. Strikes in the capital and 12 other regions Monday caused widespread power outages and pierced the relative calm that had returned to Kyiv and many other cities far from the war’s front lines.

“It brings anger, not fear,” Kyiv resident Volodymyr Vasylenko, 67, said as crews worked to restore traffic lights and clear debris from the city’s streets. “We already got used to this. And we will keep fighting.”

The leaders of the Group of Seven industrial

powers condemned the bombardment and said they would “stand firmly with Ukraine for as long as it takes.” Their pledge flew in the face of Russian warnings that Western assistance would prolong the war and the pain of Ukraine’s people.

Russia launched the widespread attacks in retaliation for a weekend explosion that damaged a bridge linking the country to the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

Honolulu studies how to treat tainted water

Honolulu Star-Advertiser

HONOLULU — In a move to get out in front of the Red Hill water crisis, the Honolulu Board of Water Supply has launched a study to determine whether it will be feasible to treat water tainted by various petroleum chemicals and turn it into something clean and safe to drink.

Treating such contaminants promises to be a complicated process that will likely cost hundreds of millions of dollars and might yet prove too costly to undertake, according to BWS officials.

But the study, they said, is worth the effort as they wait to find out exactly how much of an impact the leaks from the Navy's 79-year-old Red Hill Bulk Fuel Facility will have on the aquifer below it.

"It's so incredibly critical that we take this on," board member Na'alehu Anthony

said at a recent BWS meeting. "It's important that we have a firm understanding of what the water is doing in the aquifer, because if we don't, we're just going to struggle that much harder when it comes time to make decisions about where we're putting millions of dollars of equipment down to make sure we can provide safe and clean drinking water to the island of Oahu."

It's been nearly a year since hundreds of military families were sickened by polluted tap water linked to the Red Hill fuel tanks.

Since then, several Red Hill spills have drawn a spotlight, including a May 2021 release of 19,000 gallons of jet fuel and a January 2014 release of up to 27,000 gallons of jet fuel.

Navy studies have indicated that groundwater underneath and near the under-

ground Red Hill tanks is contaminated with petroleum chemicals. Documents also show leaks dating back to 1947, plus ongoing corrosion of the tank liners.

The Honolulu Board of Water Supply shut down three of its wells in response to the Red Hill crisis as a precaution, and monitoring wells have been installed in the area in an effort to track the movement of contaminants in the groundwater.

In August the BWS announced that it had detected trace amounts of petroleum-related chemicals in a monitoring well in Moanalua Valley, elevating concern about the threat to municipal water sources.

"It's important to know what's happening to the aquifer — what's in it, how's it moving and when it could reach our wells," said Ernie Lau, the board's manager and chief engineer.

Army officer is recognized for rescuing troop, 2 others from riptide on Okinawa

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE

Stars and Stripes

TORII STATION, Okinawa — A U.S. Army officer was recognized for rescuing three people from a riptide at a popular Okinawa dive spot in an episode that apparently killed a well-known Japanese manga artist.

Maj. Robert Bourgeau, 49, of Missoula, Mont., the deputy operations officer for the 10th Support Group at Torii Station in Yomitan, was nominated by his command last month for the Soldier's Medal for his actions during the July 4 rescue at Mermaid's Grotto in Onna. The medal recognizes acts of heroism not involving actual conflict with an enemy.

Kazuki Takahashi, 60, the creator of the popular series "Yu-Gi-Oh!," attempted to aid Bourgeau in the rescue, unbeknownst to the American, and drowned in the process, Bourgeau told Stars and Stripes on Oct. 3.

"You play that 'what if' game a lot," Bourgeau said. "This guy had a huge impact on the world."

Takahashi's body was found two days later about 1,000 feet offshore in Awa, Nago city, a Japan Coast Guard spokesman told Stars and Stripes by phone Oct. 4.

Bourgeau, a scuba diving instructor, met a pair of students at Mermaid's Grotto at just after 2 p.m. that day.

"The conditions were really, really rough,"

he said.

Bourgeau spotted a Japanese woman calling for help, he said. She pointed toward her daughter, 11, and a U.S. soldier, 39, who were trapped in a rip current about 100 yards from shore.

The rip current was sucking the pair out, but incoming six-foot waves were crashing on them, creating a whirlpool effect, Bourgeau recalled. Still wearing his running shoes, he and one of his students made their way out to the snorkelers through shallow water while the other student called emergency services.

Bourgeau jumped into the rip current and sped out to the girl, but was quickly exhausted as he worked to bring her toward the shallows, he said. Then he encountered her mother who also had been sucked into the swirling waters.

"I grabbed mom and I grabbed [the girl] and I just kicked for all life," Bourgeau said.

Bourgeau said he got the women into the shallows and returned for the soldier. He tried to help him out of the whirlpool but was soon out of energy and in danger of drowning.

"That was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do, I let [the man] go so I could save myself," he wrote in his witness statement that the Army provided.

Somehow, Bourgeau found his last bit of strength and made it out, he said. He was then able to direct the soldier onto the shore.

USCG seizes \$48M in hashish, meth

BY ALISON BATH

Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Coast Guard cutter seized an estimated \$48 million in illicit drugs from a fishing vessel in the Gulf of Oman earlier this week, bringing an international maritime task force's total to more than \$300 million in drug busts so far this year.

The fast response cutter Glen Harris seized 11,023 pounds of hashish and about 1,764 pounds of methamphetamine Monday from the vessel, which was in international waters, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet said in a statement Tuesday.

Glen Harris is part of the Saudi-led Combined Task Force 150, one of four under the Combined Maritime Forces.

CTF 150 conducts maritime security operations in the gulfs of Oman and Aden, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, according to the task force website.

Last month, another Coast Guard fast response cutter seized 5,313 pounds of heroin worth an estimated \$85 million, also from a fishing vessel traveling in the same waters.

A day later, a U.S. Navy destroyer confiscated \$10 million of hashish from another fishing vessel, also in the Gulf of Oman, Stars and Stripes reported Sept. 30.

Charges filed in slaying of Calif. family

Associated Press

MERCED, Calif. — Prosecutors on Monday charged a California man in the kidnapping and killings of an 8-month-old baby, her parents and uncle.

Jesus Salgado is accused of kidnapping the family at gunpoint from their trucking business on Oct. 3. Authorities said Salgado, a former employee with a long-standing dispute, likely killed them within an hour.

Their bodies were not found until late Wednesday, when a farm worker in an almond orchard in a remote area of the San Joaquin Valley, California's agricultural heartland, discovered the remains of Aroohi Dheri; her 27-year-old mother, Jasleen Kaur; her 36-year-old father, Jasdeep Singh; and her 39-year-old uncle, Aman-

deep Singh.

Salgado, 48, tried to kill himself a day after the kidnappings before he was taken into custody.

He faces four counts of first-degree murder with special circumstances, the Merced County District Attorney's Office announced Monday. If convicted, he could spend the rest of his life in prison without the possibility of parole.

The special circumstances allege the slayings were committed during the commission of a kidnapping and were part of multiple killings in the same case.

Salgado appeared in court Monday on video, KFSN reported. He did not enter a plea and asked for more time to find an attorney.

He is scheduled to return to court Thursday.

Merced County Sheriff Vern Warnke last week would not discuss the condition of the adults' remains in the orchard and said it was unclear how the baby died. Warnke said the child had no visible trauma.

Warnke called for Salgado to face the death penalty. But District Attorney Kimberly Lewis on Monday said she would defer that decision to next year.

Salgado is also charged with arson and the possession of a firearm by a prohibited person.

Salgado's younger brother Alberto Salgado, 41, was arrested late Thursday and accused of criminal conspiracy, accessory, and destroying evidence.

Rail union rejects proposal, renewing possibility of strike

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — America's third-largest railroad union rejected a deal with employers Monday, renewing the possibility of a strike that could cripple the economy. Both sides will return to the bargaining table before that happens.

Over half of track maintenance workers represented by the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division who voted opposed the five-year contract despite 24% raises and \$5,000 in bonuses. Union President Tony Cardwell said the railroads didn't do enough to address the lack of paid time off — particularly sick time — and

working conditions after the major railroads eliminated nearly one-third of their jobs over the past six years.

"Railroaders are discouraged and upset with working conditions and compensation and hold their employer in low regard. Railroaders do not feel valued," Cardwell said in a statement. "They resent the fact that management holds no regard for their quality of life, illustrated by their stubborn reluctance to provide a higher quantity of paid time off, especially for sickness."

The group that represents the railroads in negotiations said they were disappointed the union rejected the agreement, but em-

phasized that no immediate threat of a strike exists because the union agreed to keep working for now.

Four other railroad unions have approved their agreements with freight railroads including BNSF, Union Pacific, Kansas City Southern, CSX and Norfolk Southern, but all 12 unions representing 115,000 workers must ratify their contracts to prevent a strike.

Another union, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, initially rejected its deal but has since renegotiated a new contract. Voting will be completed in mid-November.

Ohio Senate debate with Ryan, Vance descends into attacks

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The first debate between Democratic U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan and Republican JD Vance descended quickly into attacks Monday, with the candidates for Ohio's open U.S. Senate seat accusing each other of being responsible for job losses and putting party loyalty ahead of voters' needs.

Vance said Ryan had supported policies that led to a 10-year-old girl in Ohio being raped. Ryan said Vance had started a "fake nonprofit" to help people overcome addiction issues.

The two accused each other of being beholden to their party, with Ryan echoing a comment from former President Donald Trump in calling Vance an "a— kisser"

and Vance saying Ryan's 100% voting record with President Joe Biden means he's not the reasonable moderate he has said he is.

The face-off between Ryan, a 10-term congressman, and Vance, a venture capitalist and author of "Hillbilly Elegy," for the seat being vacated by retiring GOP Sen. Rob Portman was one of the most contentious debates of the general election season so far.

Ryan sought to paint Vance as an extremist, someone who associates with "crazies" from his party who falsely claim the 2020 election was stolen, support national abortion restrictions and contributed to the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

"You're running around with Ron De-

Santis, the governor of Florida, who wants to ban books. You're running around with (Sen.) Lindsey Graham, who wants a national abortion ban. You're running around with (Rep.) Marjorie Taylor Greene, who's the absolute looniest politician in America," Ryan said.

Vance suggested Ryan's focus on allegation of extremism was meant as a distraction from pocketbook issues important to voters, such as inflation and the price of groceries.

"It's close to Halloween and Tim Ryan has put on a costume where he pretends to be a reasonable moderate," Vance said.

Had he been, Vance said, "Youngstown may not have lost 50,000 manufacturing jobs during your 20 years."

Iran's crackdown on protests intensifies

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran intensified its crackdown Tuesday on Kurdish areas in the country's west amid protests sparked by the death of a 22-year-old woman detained by the morality police, activists said.

Riot police fired into at least one neighborhood in Sanandaj, the capital of Iran's Kurdistan province, as Amnesty International and the White House's national security adviser criticized the violence targeting demonstrators angered by the death of Mahsa Amini.

Meanwhile, some oil workers Monday joined the protests at two key refinery complexes, for the first time linking an industry

key to Iran's theocracy to the unrest. Workers claimed another protest Tuesday in the crucial oil city of Abadan, with others calling for protests on Wednesday as well.

Iran's government has insisted Amini was not mistreated, but her family has said her body showed bruises and other signs of beating. Subsequent videos have shown security forces beating and shoving female protesters, including women who have torn off their mandatory headscarf, or hijab.

From the capital, Tehran, and elsewhere, videos have emerged online despite authorities disrupting the internet. Videos on Monday showed university and high school students

demonstrating and chanting, with some women and girls marching through the streets without headscarves as the protests continue into a fourth week. The demonstrations represent one of the biggest challenges to Iran's theocracy since the 2009 Green Movement protests.

One video posted online by a Kurdish group called the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights showed darkened streets with apparent gunfire going off and a bonfire burning in Sanandaj, some 250 miles west of Tehran.

Another showed riot police carrying shotguns moving in formation with a vehicle, apparently firing at homes.

A video posted later Tuesday purportedly showed a massive bullet hole inside the home of one Sanandaj resident, a hole that Hengaw alleged came from a heavy .50-caliber machine gun — the type often mounted to armored vehicles. Another video purportedly showed security forces randomly firing in the air while arresting someone there on Monday.

The New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran posted another video showing what it described as a phalanx of motorcycle-riding security forces moving through Sanandaj.

"They reportedly broke the windows of hundreds of cars in the Baharan neighborhood," the center said.

China-based firm tests electric flying taxi in Dubai

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A Chinese firm tested out an electric flying taxi in Dubai on Monday, offering a glimpse of futuristic technology that could one day whisk people through cities high above any traffic.

The XPeng X2, developed by the Guangzhou-based

XPeng Inc's aviation affiliate, is one of dozens of flying car projects around the world. Only a handful have been successfully tested with passengers on board, and it will likely be many years before any are put into service.

Monday's demonstration was held with no pilot seated in the cockpit, but the compa-

ny said it carried out a manned flight test in July 2021.

The sleekly designed vehicle can carry two passengers and is powered by a set of eight propellers. The company said it has a top speed of 80 mph.

Unlike airplanes and helicopters, eVTOL, or "electric vertical takeoff and landing," vehicles offer quick point-to-

point personal travel, at least in principle.

The pilotless vehicles could one day ferry passengers across town high above congested roadways.

But the sector still faces major challenges, including air traffic control and safety, battery life and infrastructure issues.

Families bid farewell as Thai massacre victims cremated

Associated Press

UTHAI SAWAN, Thailand — Hundreds of mourners and victims' families gathered Tuesday evening to watch flames burn from rows of makeshift furnaces at cremation ceremonies for the young children and others who died in last week's mass killings at a day care center in Thailand's rural northeast.

Families bid their final good-byes at a Buddhist temple a short distance from the Young Children's Development Center in the town of Uthai Sawan,

where a former policeman, who was fired from his job earlier this year for using drugs, barged in last Thursday and shot and stabbed children and their caregivers.

Panya Kamrap killed 36 people, 24 of them children, in the small farming community before taking his own life.

Joint ceremonies for most of the victims were held at three temples to spare families from having to wait long hours for successive cremations to be completed, Phra Kru Adisal Kijjanuwat, the abbot of the Rat

Samakee temple, said.

A ceremony for 19 of the dead, 18 of them children, was held at Kijjanuwat's temple. With a large crowd watching, monks slowly walked out of the temple hall, followed by grieving relatives. Each family was led by one monk, with police bearing the coffin behind them.

After the coffins were placed, the victims' relatives came forward to put portraits of their loved ones on top. A large mesh barrier separated onlookers from the relatives, monks and royal palace officials tasked

with lighting the fires.

On Tuesday morning, many of the young victims' bodies had been outfitted as doctors, soldiers or astronauts — what they wanted to be when they grew up — before their evening cremation.

"The more we talked (to the families), we realized that these children also had dreams of becoming doctors, soldiers, astronauts, or police officers," said volunteer rescue worker Attarith Muangmangkang, whose organization arranged for the costumes.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Day care workers fired for cruel viral videos

MS HAMILTON — State regulators are investigating after a video showing four day care employees scaring children at a facility in an unincorporated northeast Mississippi community went viral on a social media site.

The videos on Facebook showed a day care worker at Lil' Blessings Child Care & Learning Center in Hamilton wearing a Halloween mask and yelling at children who didn't "clean up" or "act good."

Children can be seen and heard crying and, at times, running away from the employee wearing the mask while another employee gives directions about which children acted good or bad. The employee in the mask is shown inches away from children's faces at times, raising her voice and screaming.

Sheila Sanders, who has owned the business for the past 20 years, said she was unaware of the videos, the Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal reported.

"The people that did those acts are no longer with us," Sanders said. "They were fired. ... I don't condone that and never have. I just want to say it's been taken care of."

Man who fled police dies after crashing into truck

IN MOORESVILLE — A central Indiana man who fled police for 4 miles drove his car into a pickup truck and later died at a hospital, a sheriff said.

The man was identified as Daniel Staten, 32, of Camby.

A Morgan County sheriff's deputy tried to stop the car for traffic violations on a rural road west of Moorsville when the vehicle fled, Sheriff Richard Myers said in a news release. The traffic violations were not specified.

The chase ended when Staten lost control of the car and the vehicle struck the truck, Myers said.

Driver hits crowd at bar; 1 killed, 4 hospitalized

CO GOLDEN — A man accused of driving into a crowd outside a Colorado bar after a fight, killing one person and seriously injuring four others, was on parole from prison at the time, according to court documents released Monday and authorities.

Ruben Marquez, 29, was released from prison in May after serving nearly three years for "aggravated motor vehicle theft, attempted escape, and a weapons and drug charge," said a state Department of Corrections spokesperson, Annie Skinner. He was required to serve a mandatory two-year parole sentence, she said.

Marquez appeared by video from jail during a brief court hearing Monday to be advised of the possible charges he faces for ramming a white Silverado pickup truck into patrons and employees of the Rock Rest Lodge early Sunday in Golden, west of Denver. Seven people were injured when they were hit by the truck, with four taken to the hospital, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office said. Three remained in the hospital Monday but all were expected to survive, sheriff's spokesper-

son Jenny Fulton said.

One of Marquez's cousins told investigators some men approached him as he was leaving the bar and asked him what his gang affiliation was, causing him to get his cousins and leave, only to be confronted by the same people and others outside, the document said. He is accused of being an accessory to first-degree murder.

Volcano now in 'state of heightened unrest'

HI HONOLULU — Mauna Loa, the largest active volcano on the planet, is in a "state of heightened unrest," but is not erupting and there are no signs of an imminent eruption, the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory said in an update.

Earlier this week, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park closed the Mauna Loa summit backcountry until further notice, calling it a "precautionary measure" amid "elevated seismic activity."

The observatory said the heightened unrest began in mid-September, "as recorded by an increase in earthquakes below Mauna Loa summit." The volcano, which stands about 13,680 feet above sea level on the island of Hawaii, last erupted in 1984, the observatory said. Since 1843, it has erupted 33 times, with the time between eruptions ranging from months to decades, according to the observatory.

Animal rights activists not guilty in piglet theft

UT SALT LAKE CITY — A jury in Utah found two animal rights activists not

guilty on charges of burglary and theft after they allegedly took two sick piglets from an industrial pig farm.

Activists Wayne Hsiung and Paul Picklesimer with the California-based group Direct Action Everywhere had argued during their trial that nothing of value was stolen because the 3-week old piglets were in poor condition and likely to die.

The group took a 360-degree virtual reality video of the March 2017 incident at Smithfield Foods' Circle Four Farms near Milford and promoted it online, as part of a tactic known as "open rescue" that's meant to shed light on abusive farming practices.

Rare fish species in cavern on the rebound

CA DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK — The annual fall count of an extremely rare fish species that lives in a single Mojave Desert cavern found the highest number in 19 years, the National Park Service said.

Scientists counted 263 Devils Hole pupfish last month, the highest autumn count since September 2003, the agency said in a statement.

Devils Hole is a deep water-filled cavern in a detached unit of Death Valley National Park located in Nye County, Nev.

The pupfish live in the upper 80 feet of the water column and on a shallow, sun-lit shelf at the cavern's mouth where they forage and spawn.

The count is conducted by scuba divers and observers on the surface who tally the fish on the shelf.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES
 Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.
Reporting World, National and Military News

Avs focus on keeping key group of players

Associated Press

Joe Sakic adopted a very practical approach to the task of molding the Colorado Avalanche roster that will attempt to repeat as Stanley Cup champions.

“We know we’re not going to be able to sign everybody,” the NHL’s reigning general manager of the year said not long after his team hoisted the Cup. “We know that. But we’ve got our priority.”

That priority has been shared by many recent Cup winners that have bid adieu to key players in order to keep others in the hope of staying atop the league. Colorado is now banking on keeping its championship core of Nathan MacKinnon, Cale Makar, Mikko Rantanen and Gabriel Landeskog together long term and making changes around the edges to keep things fresh — a recipe that has worked for rivals like Chicago, St. Louis and Los Angeles in the West and Pittsburgh, Washington and

Tampa Bay in the East.

“I don’t look at change for the sake of change or change for the sake of keeping people honest: I think change is natural in a salary cap world,” said Doug Armstrong, GM of the Blues, who won the Cup in 2019. “We’ve been fortunate to have some really good players that have stayed here for a long time, and we’ve lost a couple, too. When you look around the league, that’s more the norm than the exception.”

Go back as far as the 2010 Blackhawks to see a team forced by the salary cap to jettison top contributors. Colorado most closely resembles Chicago from 12 years ago because it made the decision to keep defensemen like Josh Manson and forwards Valeri Nishushkin around and switch out goaltenders, from Darcy Kuemper to longtime Rangers backup Alexandar Georgiev.

The Blackhawks won it all three times in six years with two different goalies and a ro-

tating supporting cast around Jonathan Toews, Patrick Kane, Duncan Keith and Brent Seabrook. Only Kane and Toews remain with Chicago plunging into a long-term rebuild.

The engine behind the Kings’ 2012 and 2014 Cup runs remain in L.A.: goaltender Jonathan Quick, defenseman Drew Doughty and center Anze Kopitar. They’re now the elder statesmen for a team shifting back into contender status.

“They calm the pace,” Kings center Phillip Danault said. “They don’t panic. They go with the flow. They know what to do. They’ve done it twice, so they can do it again.”

The Penguins did it twice, too, going back to back in 2016 and 2017. Three players remain from those two Cup teams and the one in 2009 that won it after management resigned center Evgeni Malkin and defenseman Kris Letang to keep the trio with captain Sidney Crosby together.

Can Pittsburgh win again?

“When you have those two guys — a leader like Sid — everything’s possible,” Letang said.

The same goes for the Capitals with Alex Ovechkin, and the bulk of the 2018 championship core remains from John Carlson on the blue line to Evgeny Kuznetsov and T.J. Oshie up front. Washington brought in Kuemper to take another run.

The Cup champs in between keep riding their goalies. Jordan Binnington is unquestionably the starter in St. Louis, and Tampa Bay’s Andrei Vasilevskiy is widely considered the best in the world.

After winning in 2020 and ’21 and reaching the Final last season before losing to Colorado, the Lightning made a difficult choice to part with a key part of the core, veteran defenseman Ryan McDonagh, to maintain flexibility, re-sign younger players and remain one of the NHL’s best teams.

Not rushing NHL prospects is a popular approach

Associated Press

Cale Makar was impressed when 2021 top pick Owen Power went back to college for another season rather than jump immediately to the NHL with the Buffalo Sabres.

“It was a very mature decision by him,” Makar said.

It also was out of the ordinary. Power was the first No. 1 pick not to play in the NHL immediately since Erik Johnson in 2006.

But after Makar, the fourth pick in 2017, spent two extra seasons at UMass-Amherst and blossomed into arguably the best defenseman in hockey, it’s becoming a popular path for top prospects. Juraj Slafkovsky could be next after Montreal took the big Slovak winger first in the draft.

“You can never be over-ready,” said Makar, who was playoff MVP in helping Colorado win the Stanley Cup last season. “If you believe in yourself and you know you’re going to get there, then there’s no rush. You want to make sure you’re ready.”

Slafkovsky, who said he tried everything he could to play in the NHL, also acknowledged he would do whatever the Canadiens thought was best. That might involve him getting a taste before being sent to the American Hockey League.

That’s a different route than Makar, Power and Seattle’s Matty Beniers, who got extra seasoning at the NCAA level. But it is further evidence of rebuilding teams showing newfound patience with young players.

“That was pretty much the plan all along,” said Beniers, who was the second pick behind Power in 2021. “You don’t want to go too early. You don’t want to go before you’re really ready. And you want to go in, you want to make an impact. You want to try to avoid as much struggle as possible because the NHL’s tough. It’s a business and (when) you go in, you’ve got to be ready to perform.”

Much like Makar, who knows the transition to the NHL would have been different

if he had gone sooner, Power benefited from one more season at Michigan, playing with Beniers and several other top college players for one of the nation’s top teams.

Unlike Makar, who declined Canada’s invitation to participate in the 2018 Olympics so he could continue to shore up weaknesses in his game, Slafkovsky, Powers and Beniers all went to Beijing when the NHL pulled out. Slafkovsky scored a tournament-high seven goals in helping Slovakia win its first Olympic medal. Power skated a team-high 21:38 a game for Canada, and Beniers was one of the best U.S. players.

“I think it really helped us ... just being able to play against pros and being in that atmosphere where there’s a lot on the line,” Power said. “It just kind of helped us mature a little. It’s been big for us.”

Power, Beniers and fellow Olympian Mason McTavish are now considered the leading candidates for the Calder Trophy as rookie of the year.

Roughing call sparks Chiefs over Raiders

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Chiefs headed off to the locker room facing a big hole against the Las Vegas Raiders on Monday night, everything from the big plays to the officiating calls going the way of their longtime AFC West rivals.

One call in particular lit a fire under them.

It was a dubious penalty on Chiefs defensive tackle Chris Jones for roughing Raiders quarterback Derek Carr, and nobody in the Kansas City locker room could believe it. But rather than stew over it, or lament their 10-point deficit, Patrick Mahomes and the rest of the Chiefs used it as motivation to storm from behind for the 30-29 victory.

“There was anger just about how we had played up to that point,” said Mahomes, who threw four touchdown passes to tight end Travis Kelce. “We needed everybody to go out there and take the fight to them.”

The Raiders still had a chance when Davante Adams, who earlier had hauled in a 58-yard touchdown catch, added a 48-yarder with 4:29 to go. It came after Kelce’s final touchdown catch, when Kansas City failed on a two-point try that left the score 30-23. But rather than kick a tying extra point, Raiders coach Josh McDaniels also went for two.

Josh Jacobs, who had shredded the Chiefs defense all night, was stuffed at the goal line.

The Raiders got the ball back one last time with 2:29 left, and a long third-down pass to Adams down the Kansas City sideline appeared to get them in field-goal range. But the play was reviewed and Adams failed to get both feet in bounds, and Carr threw incomplete on fourth-and-1 with 47 seconds left.

“We didn’t fall apart on each other,” Chiefs safety Justin Reid said. “We battled through adversity.”

Carr finished with 241 yards passing, and Jacobs ran for 133 yards and a score, as the Raiders lost to the Chiefs (4-1) for the fourth straight time.

“We had a chance,” McDaniels said. “We just didn’t make one or two plays there at the end to finish it.”

The game of twists and turns began with the Raiders failing to score on their opening drive for the first time all season.

They made up for it on the next one.

Facing fourth-and-inches in their own territory, McDaniels sent his offense back on the field. But rather than run Jacobs up the middle, or sneak with Carr, he aired it out to Adams, who ran past Rashad Fenton for the 58-yard TD catch.

A pass interference penalty moved Las Vegas deep into Chiefs territory. Adams drew another penalty on Jaylen Watson in the end zone, setting up Jacobs’ TD plunge.

It was 17-0 when Kelce finally reached the end zone for the Chiefs, and it appeared as if the momentum had turned when Jones stripped Carr from behind and landed him. But despite the ball clearly coming out, and the Pro Bowl defensive tackle coming away with it, referee Carl Cheffers threw a penalty flag and called Jones for roughing the passer.

Chiefs coach Andy Reid stormed off the sideline to argue. And after the teams traded field goals in the final minutes, leaving the Raiders ahead 20-10, Reid cornered Cheffers and lit into him again as the teams headed to the locker room.

“I got it off my chest,” Reid said. “I said what I needed to say.”

Cheffers told a pool reporter that Carr “gets full protection of all aspects of what we give the quarterback in a passing posture. So when he was tackled, my ruling was the defender landed on him with full body weight.”

Mahomes said: “It wasn’t the greatest call in the world. You have to find a way to bounce back and we did.”

Did they ever.

Young vs. Hooker an intriguing matchup, if it happens

Associated Press

It could well be among the marquee quarterback matchups of the season: Alabama’s Heisman Trophy winner Bryce Young vs. Tennessee’s own emerging candidate, rising star Hendon Hooker.

Or it could be Jalen Milroe and Hooker instead.

Young’s sprained right shoulder was being re-evaluated on Monday, but coach Nick Saban was cautiously optimistic about his status for the third-ranked Crimson Tide’s game Saturday at No. 6 Tennessee.

“Hopefully we’re going to try to get him ready to play this week, but this is something that, you know, nobody can predict how quickly this is going to give him an opportunity to go out and be able to do what he needs to do,” Saban said. “And we’ll see as the week progresses, but I don’t have an update much more than that.”

Young hasn’t played since early in the second quarter against Arkansas. Jalen Milroe took over the rest of the way in that

game and started in Alabama’s mistake-filled, 24-20 win over Texas A&M that came down to a goal-line stand.

Hooker, meanwhile, has put up Young-like numbers for one of the most prolific offenses in the nation. He has completed 70% of his passes for 1,432 yards and 10 touchdowns without throwing an interception and has passed Young in the midseason Heisman Trophy odds, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

“Hooker has really done a nice job of executing their offense,” Saban said. “He’s one of the leading pass efficiency guys in the country as well as has the ability to extend plays and make plays with his feet.”

Young has passed for 1,202 yards, completing 67.2% with 14 touchdowns and three interceptions. The Tide offense hasn’t been the same without him, despite Milroe’s big-play flashes.

Alabama is just 68th nationally in pass offense while ranking behind only Air Force and Army in running the ball.

Hooker and Young both attended the Manning Academy over the summer.

“Awesome player. Very electric. Love to see him play,” Hooker said. “We spent some time at the Manning Academy and chopped it up a little bit. Really just had a good time, a genuine time of enjoying everyone that was there and just having general conversation.”

Milroe turned in an uneven performance against the Aggies, losing two fumbles and getting intercepted once. He completed 12 of 19 passes for 111 yards and ran 17 times for another 83.

“I just think Jalen played with a lot of anxiety,” Saban said. “I don’t think he allowed himself to let his training sort of guide him and trust and believe in it so that he could have success in executing plays. You can’t turn the ball over and not execute plays like they’re designed.”

Tennessee coach Josh Heupel called Milroe “athletic, dynamic with the ball in his hands.”

Gilbert, Kirby anchor Mariners now, beyond

Associated Press

The Seattle Mariners turned to George Kirby to close out the team's wild-card sweep against Toronto.

Logan Gilbert gets the ball for Seattle's return to the AL Division Series.

The Mariners have two of baseball's best young arms in Kirby and Gilbert, and they are hoping the right-handers are ready for a deep postseason run.

Gilbert takes the mound for Game 1 of the ALDS at Houston on Tuesday after Kirby got the save in Seattle's wild 10-9 win at Toronto, sending the Mariners into the next round in the franchise's first postseason appearance since 2001.

Seattle views each pitcher as a vital component of its future. The 25-year-old Gilbert was a first-round pick in the 2018 amateur draft, and the 24-year-old Kirby was a first-round selection in 2019. Both are under club control through at least 2027.

The development of Gilbert and Kirby is a big reason why the Mariners are optimistic about their pitching situation going forward, no matter what happens this month. They al-

so have Robbie Ray, Luis Castillo and a handful of other prospects.

"We felt good about our starting rotation entering the season, we feel really good about it now," Seattle President of Baseball Operations Jerry Dipoto said. "And if we can keep these guys healthy and doing what they do, it should be fun for a lot of years."

At times this season, Gilbert was one of the best pitchers in the American League. He was the AL pitcher of the month in April when he started four games, allowed one earned run and had 22 strikeouts in 22⅓ innings.

One of the hallmarks of Gilbert's sophomore season was his consistency. He pitched at least five innings in 31 of 32 starts. He allowed three earned runs or less 26 times.

Outside of two starts against the Yankees mid-summer and a bad outing in Kansas City late in the season, Gilbert was unflappable. And that included four starts against the Astros when he pitched well enough to win each time. Gilbert shut out Houston for seven innings back in May and threw six innings and allowed three runs or less in his other three

starts against the Astros.

But Gilbert hasn't pitched since Sept. 30, the night Seattle clinched a playoff spot, when he threw a career-high eight innings and allowed one run.

"It's, if anything, good to get a little extra rest, especially at this point in the year," he said.

For all the talent Gilbert has, his preparation also played a major factor in his success this season. That started in the offseason when he went to work on reshaping the look of his breaking pitches. The result was a harder slider and a significant uptick in his curveball velocity from where both were during his rookie season.

Kirby's first season followed a similar path as Gilbert's rookie year in 2021. Kirby started off in the minors, but by early May was making his debut with six shutout innings and seven strikeouts against Tampa Bay. And that's what has stood out the most about Kirby—his command of the strike zone. He set a major league record during a start in August against Washington, throwing 24 consecutive strikes to start the game.

Phillies remove interim tag from manager Thomson

Associated Press

ATLANTA — After guiding the Philadelphia Phillies to their first playoff berth in more than a decade, manager Rob Thomson had the interim removed from his title Monday.

The only issue?

Thomson had to sit through a news conference to discuss his new two-year contract to remain as Phillies manager through 2024.

He would prefer to talk about anything but himself.

"Completely," Thomson said after his new deal was announced on the eve of the NL Division Series against the reigning World Series champion Atlanta Braves. "I really want the spotlight on the players and the series. And baseball is what I want to get to."

The Phillies made the obvious choice to keep the manager who guided an improbable turnaround, one that propelled the club to its first playoff berth since 2011.

The 59-year-old Thomson took over on June 3 when Joe Girardi was fired with the Phillies mired at 22-29.

Philadelphia went 65-46 the rest of the regular season, finishing a distant third in

the NL East behind Atlanta and the New York Mets but still good enough to land a wild card.

In the opening round of the playoffs, Philadelphia swept the NL Central champion Cardinals in two games at St. Louis for its first postseason series victory in a dozen years.

The best-of-five series against the Braves began Tuesday afternoon at Truist Park.

Thomson is the first Canadian-born manager to lead a team to the postseason. But it was the way he handled his players that really stood out, allowing them to express their personalities and play much looser than they did under Girardi.

"He's very deserving of this," Game 1 starter Ranger Suárez said through a translator. "He let us be ourselves. There's a lot of freedom that we feel when we're around him. And the most important thing is that we're comfortable because we can be ourselves."

President of Baseball Operations Dave Dombrowski said several players came to him during the season, urging him to keep Thomson on as manager beyond 2022.

Dombrowski said his mind has been made up for quite a while to retain Thom-

son, but baseball rules designed to promote more opportunities for minority candidates prevented any announcement until after the regular season.

"I think just the overall change of atmosphere and communication and just the way the clubhouse felt when you're around," Dombrowski said, explaining his reasoning. "It's not being negative toward the past, but it was just different, and you could tell we were playing with a relaxed but focused approach."

Thomson had been the Phillies' bench coach since 2018 before he was promoted to interim manager.

He became only the fourth manager in major league history to take over a team at least seven games under .500 and lead it to the postseason. The others were Dick Howser (1981 with the Royals), Cito Gaston (1989 with the Blue Jays) and Jim Tracy (2009 with the Rockies).

The Phillies won their first eight games with Thomson at the helm. A rash of injuries kept the team from keeping pace with the surging Braves or chasing down the Mets, but there were no complaints after Philadelphia ended the National League's longest playoff drought.