

## Book: Milley feared Trump might start war

*The Washington Post*

Twice in the final months of the Trump administration, the country's top military officer was so fearful that the president's actions might spark a war with China that he moved urgently to avert armed conflict.

In a pair of secret phone calls, Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, assured his Chinese counterpart, Gen. Li Zuo Cheng of the People's Liberation Army, that the United States would not strike, according to a new book by Washington Post associate editor Bob Woodward and national political reporter Robert Costa.

One call took place on Oct. 30, 2020, four days before the election that unseated President Donald Trump, and the other on Jan. 8, 2021, two days after the Capitol siege carried out by his supporters in a quest to cancel the vote.

The first call was prompted by Milley's review of intelligence suggesting the Chinese believed the U.S. was preparing to attack. That belief, the authors write, was based on tensions over military exercises in the South China Sea, and deepened by Trump's belligerent rhetoric toward China.

"General Li, I want to assure you that the American government is stable and everything is going to be OK," Milley told him. "We are not going to attack or conduct any kinetic operations against you."

In the book's telling, Milley went so far as to pledge he would alert his counterpart in the event of a U.S. attack, stressing the rapport they'd established through a back-channel. "General Li, you and I have known each other for now five years. If we're going to attack, I'm going to call you ahead of time. It's not going to be a surprise."

Li took the chairman at his word, the authors write in the book, "Peril," which is set to be released next week.

In the second call, placed to address Chinese fears about the events of Jan. 6, Li wasn't as easily assuaged, even after Milley promised him, "We are 100 percent steady. Everything's fine. But democracy can be sloppy sometimes."

Li remained rattled, and Milley, who did not relay the conversation to Trump, according to the book, understood why. The chairman, 62 at the time and chosen by

Trump in 2018, believed the president had suffered a mental decline after the election, the authors write, a view he communicated to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., in a phone call on Jan. 8. He agreed with her evaluation that Trump was unstable, according to a call transcript obtained by the authors.

Believing that China could lash out if it felt at risk from an unpredictable and vengeful American president, Milley took action. The same day, he called the admiral overseeing the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the military unit responsible for Asia and the Pacific region, and recommended postponing the military exercises, according to the book. The admiral complied.

Milley also summoned senior officers to review the procedures for launching nuclear weapons, saying the president alone could give the order — but, crucially, that he, Milley, also had to be involved. Looking each in the eye, Milley asked the officers to affirm that they had understood, the authors write, in what he considered an "oath."

The chairman knew that he was "pulling a Schlesinger," the authors write, resorting to measures resembling the ones taken in August 1974 by James Schlesinger, the secretary of defense at the time. Schlesinger told military officials to check with him and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs before carrying out orders from President Richard Nixon, who was facing impeachment at the time.

Though Milley went furthest in seeking to stave off a national security crisis, his alarm was shared throughout the highest ranks of the administration, the authors reveal. CIA Director Gina Haspel, for instance, reportedly told Milley, "We are on the way to a right-wing coup."

Milley's decision to place himself between Trump and potential war was triggered by several important events — a phone call, a photo op and a refusal to rule out war with another adversary, Iran.

The immediate motivation, according to the book, was the Jan. 8 call from Pelosi, who demanded to know, "What precautions are available to prevent an unstable president from initiating military hostilities or from accessing the launch codes and order-

ing a nuclear strike?" Milley assured her that there were "a lot of checks in the system."

The call transcript obtained by the authors shows Pelosi telling Milley, referring to Trump, "He's crazy. You know he's crazy ... He's crazy and what he did yesterday is further evidence of his craziness." Milley replied, "I agree with you on everything."

Milley's resolve was deepened by the events of June 1, 2020 when he felt Trump had used him as part of a photo op in Lafayette Square during protests that began after the killing of George Floyd. The chairman came to see his role as ensuring that, "We're not going to turn our guns on the American people and we're not going to have a 'Wag the Dog' scenario overseas," the authors quote him saying privately.

Trump's posture, not just to China but also to Iran, tested that promise. In discussions about Iran's nuclear program, Trump declined to rule out striking the country, at times even displaying curiosity about the prospect, according to the book. Haspel was so alarmed after a meeting in November that she called Milley to say, "This is a highly dangerous situation. We are going to lash out for his ego?"

Trump's fragile ego drove many decisions by the nation's leaders, from lawmakers to the vice president, according to the book. Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., was so worried that a call from President-elect Joe Biden would send Trump into a fury that the then-Majority Leader used a back channel to fend off Biden. He asked Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, formerly the No. 2 Senate Republican, to ask Sen. Christopher Coons, the Democrat of Delaware and close Biden ally, to tell Biden not to call him.

So intent was Vice President Mike Pence on being Trump's loyal second-in-command — and potential successor — that he asked confidants if there were ways he could accede to Trump's demands and avoid certifying the results of the election on Jan. 6. In late December, the authors reveal, Pence called Dan Quayle, a former vice president and fellow Indiana Republican, for advice.

Quayle was adamant, according to the authors. "Mike, you have no flexibility on this. None. Zero. Forget it. Put it away," he said.

# Filth, mold seen at base quarantine quarters

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

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan— Pictures posted on social media by an Air Force spouse of filthy, moldy accommodations set aside for families in coronavirus quarantine have prompted the base commander to announce a thorough review.

The images posted Sunday on the Yokota Spouses & Families Facebook page and a response from base officials sparked more than 800 comments, with many blaming Air Force leaders for the conditions.

In a statement Tuesday afternoon, 374th Airlift Wing commander Col. Andrew Campbell thanked those who brought their concerns to his attention.

“Yokota’s leadership team is

dedicated to ensuring the facilities used reflect the care and respect we have for our community,” he wrote. “As the Wing Commander, I’m responsible for any lapse in focus to that end. Along with Yokota’s leadership team, I’m executing a comprehensive review of how we manage COVID-related isolation and quarantine.”

Campbell said he has given another colonel authority to make needed changes related to the facility’s cleanliness and its team’s readiness to properly host and support the community.

Air Force spouse Heather Ann Knef posted images of a dilapidated apartment where her family was sent for 14 days of quarantine after her daughter tested positive for the coronavirus.

The photographs show a dirty bathroom, stained carpet, food waste spattered on kitchen floors and appliances, holes in the ceiling and walls and what looks like mold growing on fixtures.

The family was overwhelmed by the smell of mold and mildew when they arrived at the unit, Knef said in her post.

“Not to mention you can see mold everywhere you look,” she wrote. “This room wasn’t even cleaned before they forced us to quarantine here. There is pee and poop on the toilets, toothpaste in the sink, food and filth on the carpets, trash on the bathroom floor, rust everywhere, food crusted on the microwave and the shower is still wet from the last people that stayed here.”

No one should be expected to

live such conditions like this, Knef said in her post.

“They are sending sick, vulnerable COVID patients from the comfort of their home to quarantine in this filth,” she wrote.

The 374th Airlift Wing addressed Knef’s post on the popular Facebook page with one of its own Monday evening that blamed a breakdown in administrative processes and communication for sending the family to an apartment that hadn’t been cleaned.

“When the accidental assignment was identified by wing personnel, the family in question was reassigned to another unit,” the message said.

Knef, however, said the second unit was also in poor condition.

## Hot water fixed, so Marine base residents take on mold

*Stars and Stripes*

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan— When the hot water went out in the five-story, residential Bara Tower on Aug. 22, the base housing office estimated a fix would take up to four months.

The office directed tenants to the base gym, where they could shower until the hot water was restored. That was unacceptable to Marine spouse Breanda Webb, who instead bathed her infants in water she heated on her stovetop and carried to the bathtub.

“That’s not an option for me to take my kids to shower at the gym,” she told Stars and Stripes last Thursday. “Am I supposed to place my infants on the shower floor? That’s unsanitary.”

Webb said she was not alone in her frustration, and the sudden lack of hot water was another issue on a list that affects many tower residents. She also raised ques-

tions about the housing office’s handling of problems with mold.

Faced with numerous complaints, the base facilities department fixed the problem itself after outside contractors estimated four months of repairs, base spokesman Maj. Joshua Diddams told Stars and Stripes by email Friday. The department cannibalized needed parts from elsewhere on base.

Webb then turned the attention focused on the hot-water outage and to another familiar problem in base housing in Japan — mold.

Concerned for the health of her three children, Webb said she cleans every day to slow the problem. Her husband, Marine Staff Sgt. Shaquille Webb, helps clean, too, she said.

Webb said the housing office deep cleaned the air conditioning vents and replaced two squares of carpet in the family’s apartment only for the mold to return.

## Hawaii-based soldier admits to beating his wife to death

By **WYATT OLSON**  
*Stars and Stripes*

SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, Hawaii — A 23-year-old Hawaii-based soldier pleaded guilty Monday to the premeditated murder of his wife in January as part of a plea deal that calls for at least 50 years in prison.

During a hearing at Schofield Barracks, Spc. Raul Hernandez Perez calmly described how he crushed the skull of Selena Roth, 25, with four blows of a baseball bat as she slept in her home on Schofield. Military police discovered her body three days later after family members called the base for a welfare check.

The plea agreement reached between the soldier and the prosecution calls for a prison term of 50 to 65 years.

Col. Mark Bridges, a judge in the 25th Infantry Division Staff Judge Advocate’s Office, will determine the length of imprison-

ment after hearing sentencing testimony from members of Roth and Hernandez Perez’s families.

Hernandez Perez and Roth married on Jan. 9, 2020, but their marriage was rocky, with frequent quarreling, according to evidence presented by prosecutors during an Article 32 hearing in May. He filed for divorce in October 2020 and later obtained a restraining order against her. He moved out of their home and into barracks at Schofield.

Despite all that, the couple got together for their first anniversary on Jan. 9, went to a movie and were out late. Hernandez Perez told the court he was too tired to drive home and stayed the night. He woke up about 4 a.m. and began thinking about the divorce.

“I kept getting angrier and angrier,” he said.

“I thought I had to get rid of her in some other kind of way,” he said.

# Blinken defends withdrawal from Afghanistan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Antony Blinken pushed back Monday against harsh Republican criticism of the handling of the military withdrawal from Afghanistan, saying the Biden administration inherited a deal with the Taliban to end the war, but no plan for carrying it out.

In a sometimes contentious hearing Monday before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Blinken sought to blunt complaints from angry GOP lawmakers about the administration's response to the quick collapse of the Afghan government and, more specifically, the State Depart-

ment's actions to evacuate Americans and others.

Blinken echoed White House talking points blaming the Trump administration for the situation that President Joe Biden inherited in Afghanistan. "We inherited a deadline. We did not inherit a plan," he said, maintaining that the administration had done the right thing in ending 20 years of war.

"We made the right decision in ending America's longest-running war," said Blinken, who was to testify on Tuesday before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Republicans savaged the withdrawal process as "a disaster"

and "a disgrace." And while some Democrats allowed that the operation could have been handled better, many used their questions to heap criticism on former President Donald Trump.

The State Department has come under heavy criticism from both sides for not doing enough and not acting quickly enough to get American citizens, legal residents and at-risk Afghans out of the country after the Taliban took control of Kabul on Aug. 15. Some seeking to leave remain stranded there, although Blinken could not provide an exact number. He said roughly 100 U.S. citizens remain along with about "several

thousand" green card holders.

"This was an unmitigated disaster of epic proportions," said Rep. Michael McCaul, of Texas, the top Republican on the committee. He said the abrupt withdrawal along with leaving some Americans and Afghans behind had "emboldened the Taliban" and other U.S. adversaries. "I can summarize this in one word: betrayal."

The chairman of the committee, New York Rep. Gregory Meeks, urged his colleagues to keep politics out of their criticism. But he acknowledged that there had been problems.

"Could things have been done differently? Absolutely," he said.

## US flights for Afghan evacuees suspended for measles cases

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — There will be no flights to the United States for Afghan evacuees for at least another week after several cases of measles were detected among recent arrivals, chief Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Monday.

The White House halted the operation Friday after the first cases were discovered. The decision to stop flights for seven more days was based on the recommendation of the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention after five evacuees were diagnosed with measles when they arrived in the U.S., Kirby told reporters at the Pentagon.

About 25,600 of the more than 124,000 people who U.S. and coalition forces evacuated from Afghanistan before the final flights took off from Kabul's airport Aug. 30 are living on

military bases in the U.S. as they await approval to stay in the country, according to the most recent data released Sept. 3. Tens of thousands more remain at staging sites in Europe and the Middle East before they can travel to the U.S.

One of the measles cases was confirmed last week at Fort McCoy in Wisconsin, another at Fort Pickett in Virginia and three were detected upon arrival at Dulles International Airport near Washington, D.C., from overseas staging bases.

Fort McCoy and Fort Pickett are among the eight military installations in the U.S. accepting evacuees, along with Fort Bliss in Texas, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey, Fort Lee and Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia, Camp Atterbury in Indiana and Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico.

"They have been housed separately and are receiving medical care, and the CDC is doing contact tracing and allows people to self-isolate as needed," Kirby said. "We want the people who work on these bases and the families who live there to know how seriously we're taking it and that we are separating these individuals from the rest of the cohort there."

The Defense Department will "be working very quickly on the appropriate immunizations" for the evacuees, Kirby said. The military is now giving the measles, mumps and rubella — or MMR — vaccine to Afghan evacuees already at U.S. bases and will soon begin giving the shot to the evacuees while they are still overseas.

"All arriving Afghans are currently required to be vaccinated for measles as a condition of their humanitarian parole," Kirby said.

## Japan, US, S. Korea discuss N. Korea day after missile launch

Associated Press

TOKYO — Senior diplomats from Japan, the United States and South Korea gathered Tuesday in Tokyo to discuss North Korea's missile and nuclear development a day after Pyongyang announced it successfully tested new long-range cruise missiles, suggesting advancement of its military capabilities.

The three-way meeting includ-

ed U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Sung Kim, South Korea's Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Noh Kyu-duk and Japan's Director-General for Asian and Oceanian affairs Takehiro Funakoshi.

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi told a regular news conference Tuesday that the trilateral meeting had been

scheduled before North Korea's test-firing of the missiles, but the meeting the day after would be a "good occasion to reconfirm close cooperation among the three countries and discuss the latest North Korean situation."

Japanese officials and some experts said North Korea's weekend missile test-firing was a "new threat" to the region.

On Monday, the state-run Ko-

rean Central News Agency reported that the missiles showed they can hit targets 930 miles away. The North hailed its new missiles as a "strategic weapon of great significance," suggesting that they were developed with the intent to arm them with nuclear warheads. North Korea says it needs nuclear weapons in order to deter what it claims is hostility from Washington and Seoul.

# FDA experts join booster shot opposition

Associated Press

The average person doesn't need a COVID-19 booster yet, an international group of scientists — including two top U.S. regulators — wrote Monday in a scientific journal.

The experts reviewed studies of the vaccines' performance and concluded the shots are working well despite the extra-contagious delta variant, especially against severe disease.

"Even in populations with fairly high vaccination rates, the unvaccinated are still the major drivers of transmission" at this stage of the pandemic, they concluded.

The opinion piece, published in *The Lancet*, illustrates the intense scientific debate about who needs booster doses and when, a decision with which the United States and other countries are grappling.

After revelations of political meddling in the Trump administration's coronavirus response, President Joe Biden has promised to "follow the science." But the review raises the question of whether his administration is moving faster than the experts.

The authors include two leading vaccine reviewers at the Food and Drug Administration, Drs. Phil Krause and Marion Gruber, who recently announced they will be stepping down this fall. Among the other 16 authors are leading vaccine researchers in the U.S., Britain, France, South Africa and India, plus scientists with the World Health Organization, which already has urged a moratorium on boosters until poor countries are better vaccinated.

In the U.S., the White House has begun planning for boosters later this month, if both the FDA and Centers for Disease Con-

trol and Prevention agree.

Advisers to the FDA will weigh evidence about an extra Pfizer shot Friday at a key public meeting.

Georgetown University's Larry Gostin said the paper "throws gasoline on the fire" in the debate about whether most Americans truly need boosters and whether the White House got ahead of scientists.

"It's always a fundamental error of process to make a scientific announcement before the public health agencies have acted, and that's exactly what happened here," said Gostin, a lawyer and public health specialist.

The FDA did not respond to requests for comment Monday morning.

The U.S. already offers an extra dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines to people with severely weakened immune systems.

## Tropical Storm Nicholas dumps rain on Gulf Coast

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Tropical Storm Nicholas slowed to a crawl over the Houston area Tuesday after making landfall earlier as a hurricane, knocking out power to a half-million homes and businesses as well as dumping more than a foot of rain along the same area swamped by Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

Nicholas could potentially stall over storm-battered Louisiana and could bring life-threatening floods across the Deep South over the coming days, forecasters said.

Nicholas made landfall early Tuesday on the eastern part of the Matagorda Peninsula and was soon downgraded to a tropical storm.

It was about 10 miles southeast of Houston, with maximum winds of 45 mph as of 10 a.m. CDT Tuesday, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

Galveston saw nearly 14 inches of rain from Nicholas, the 14th named storm of the 2021 Atlantic hurricane season, while Houston reported more than 6 inches of rain. That's a fraction of what fell during Harvey, which dumped more than 60 inches of rain in southeast Texas over a four-day period.

Nicholas is moving so slowly it will dump several inches of rain as it crawls over Texas and southern Louisiana, meteorologists said. This includes areas already struck by Hurri-

cane Ida and devastated last year by Hurricane Laura. Parts of Louisiana are saturated with nowhere for the extra water to go, so it will flood, said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy.

"It's stuck in a weak steering environment," McNoldy said Tuesday. So while the storm itself may weaken, "that won't stop the rain from happening. Whether it's a tropical storm, tropical depression or post-tropical blob, it'll still rain a lot, and that's not really good for that area."

Nicholas, expected to weaken into a tropical depression by Tuesday night, could dump up to 20 inches of rain in southern Louisiana.

## Putin criticizes presence of US, other troops in Syria

Associated Press

DAMASCUS — Russian President Vladimir Putin criticized the presence of foreign troops in Syria, saying they are there against the will of the Syrian government and are blocking the consolidation of the war-torn country, the Kremlin said Tuesday.

Putin was referring to hundreds of U.S. troops stationed in eastern Syria and working with Kurdish-led fighters in battling the militant Islamic State, as well as Turkish forces in northern Syria. Speaking during a rare meeting in Moscow on Monday night with his Syrian counterpart Bashar Assad, he said the presence of the foreigners is ille-

gal because they don't have permission to be there from the United Nations or Syria's government.

Russia joined Syria's 10-year conflict in September 2015, when the Syrian military appeared close to collapse, and has since helped in tipping the balance of power in favor of Assad, whose forces now control much of the country. Hundreds of Russian troops are deployed across Syria and they also have a military air base along Syria's Mediterranean coast.

Assad has rarely made trips abroad in the past decade since Syria's conflict began, except to visit key allies Russia and Iran. Assad

and Putin discussed cooperation between their armies and ways to continue operations to gain control of the last rebel-held areas in Syria, state media in Damascus reported.

Putin later announced he was going into self-isolation because of coronavirus cases in his inner circle. Assad and his wife tested positive for coronavirus in March, and recovered three weeks later.

"This clearly violates international law and doesn't allow you to make maximum efforts to consolidate the country," Putin was quoted as telling Assad about the foreign forces, according to a Kremlin statement.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Man arrested, exposed himself to toll collectors

**FL** ORLANDO — A Florida man has been arrested on several indecent exposure charges at various toll booth workers over a week's span.

The Florida Highway Patrol said in a statement that the man was booked into the Osceola County Jail.

Spokeswoman Kim Montes said the investigation was conducted by state troopers. All seven instances happened on three days around 7 a.m. as the man entered the cash lanes of the toll plazas. Toll workers told troopers the man had no clothes on and was "showing his privates."

He was identified through a photo comparison and his identity matched.

### Artifacts found dating prior to state's founding

**AL** FLORENCE — Archaeologists are analyzing pieces of pottery, nails and glass found at Pope's Tavern, an inn and stagecoach stop for travelers dating back to the early 1800s before Alabama achieved statehood.

A state team funded by a grant recently conducted a dig at the northwest Alabama site, which is the site of a museum that focuses on the history of the city of Florence.

Museum curator Brian Murphy told the TimesDaily that pottery was the most common item discovered during the work.

"They pulled out a bunch of artifacts that are being cleaned and processed right now," Mur-

phy said. "They will give us a really good image of the types of materials and type of utensils used, and really a glimpse into the daily life of the people who lived there and used that space."

The crew also found the brick remains of an old structure that could have been a hearth or outbuilding, he said.

### Coast Guard rescues 3 from sinking sailboat

**NJ** LONG BRANCH — Coast Guard authorities said they rescued three people after a vessel began taking on water off the coast of New Jersey.

Officials said Monmouth County 911 dispatchers called to report the emergency three miles east of Long Branch.

Coast Guard officials said a rescue swimmer was lowered from a helicopter and helped all three people aboard the motor lifeboat. They were taken to Shark River Marina. Officials said all three had life jackets and no injuries or medical concerns were reported.

Petty Officer Stephen Lehmann told the Asbury Park Press that the 25-foot vessel, which was last seen drifting, will be salvaged by its owner.

### Issue causes ground to buckle in neighborhood

**MI** DETROIT — A building in southwest Detroit has been damaged after ground beneath it shifted.

The cause of the ground buckling has not yet been determined, city officials said Sunday night. No injuries were reported.

The damaged marijuana dispensary was considered to be at-risk to collapse on sidewalks and utility lines and will be demolished. The shop's general manager Ashley Babcock told The Detroit News that some employees were inside the building at the time the ground shifted, but no one was hurt.

Detroit's Public Works department, DTE Energy and the Great Lakes Water Authority were trying to determine what caused the ground to shift.

### 3 more state inmates, 2 staff tested positive

**VT** WATERBURY — Three more inmates and two more staff members at Vermont prisons have tested positive for COVID-19, bring the total to 15 cases among inmates and three among staff at four of the state's six correctional facilities, the Department of Corrections said.

One incarcerated person at Northern State Correctional Facility in Newport and two at Northwest State Correctional Facility in St. Albans were found to be infected, the department said. The two positive cases in staff were at the Southern State Correctional Facility in Springfield.

The Newport prison now has a total 13 inmates with COVID-19, officials said.

### Inquiry after cars towed to scrap yards, no OK

**GA** LUDOWICI — Local and state law enforcement agencies are investigating whether the owners of a southeast Georgia tow truck company stole more than 20 ve-

hicles from a repair shop.

Long County sheriff's deputies told WTOG-TV that vehicles were taken by South Georgia Towing from the Immaculate Concepts auto repair shop in Ludowici to scrap yards, possibly after the business unexpectedly closed.

Hinesville resident Miranda Pugh, who owns a truck that was awaiting repairs at the shop, said that she never gave anyone permission to take her truck. She said relatives called her after noticing her vehicle was gone.

The Long County Sheriff's Office asked the Georgia Bureau of Investigation for help last month. The state agency is identifying owners of towed vehicles.

### Buffalo carved out of butter featured at fair

**KS** HUTCHINSON — Kansas' state animal — the buffalo — is being celebrated at the State Fair this year with a 700-pound butter sculpture.

The Hutchinson News reported that a sculptor from Iowa, Sarah Pratt, had to do some research on buffaloes before she designed this year's butter statue.

Pratt said that if she winds up with any extra butter out of the 700 pounds she has to work with, she may add a buffalo calf or some sunflowers.

Pratt, who teaches school by day, lives in West Des Moines with her husband and three children, all of whom help her out with sculpting — from the Kansas State Fair to fairs in Iowa or Illinois.

— From wire reports

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# Raiders rally past Ravens in overtime

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — After a premature bench-clearing celebration and a couple of blunders that almost cost the Raiders the game, the party could finally begin for real after the first game with fans in Las Vegas.

The Raiders won an exhilarating and exhausting season opener thanks to a furious rally, a stellar defensive play from Carl Nassib and a perfect play call that produced a 31-yard touchdown pass from Derek Carr to Zay Jones that gave Las Vegas a 33-27 win over the Baltimore Ravens on Monday night.

“Felt like I died and woke up. And died. And woke up again,” coach Jon Gruden said. “I was like a cat — I had multiple lives.”

Carr engineered three game-tying drives in the fourth quarter before winning it in the wild overtime.

He appeared to win it with a 33-yard TD pass to Bryan Edwards on the first possession of

overtime only to have the celebration halted when replay put the ball at the 1.

An unsuccessful QB sneak, a false start from rookie Alex Leatherwood and then an interception that deflected off Willie Snead’s hands appeared to cost the Raiders the game.

Then Nassib delivered the strip sack of Lamar Jackson in his first game since becoming the first active NFL player to come out as gay in the offseason.

The Raiders then made another blunder by committing a delay of game before a field goal try, leading to Gruden sending the offense back on the field.

The Ravens sent a blitz and Carr lofted a pass that Jones ran under for the score, sending Las Vegas pouring out on the field for a second celebration.

“I’m glad coach trusted us, put it in our hands at the end,” Carr said. “Because it always feels good to win that way, especially when you almost gave

away.”

The Raiders trailed 14-0 early, ending a 98-game, regular-season win streak for the Baltimore when leading by at least 14 points dating to 2004.

The loss capped a rough stretch for the Ravens, who have had a run of injuries that sidelined top three running backs J.K. Dobbins, Gus Edwards and Justice Hill, as well as cornerback Marcus Peters, for the season.

“We just didn’t close the game out when we had the opportunity to do it three or four times,” coach John Harbaugh said. “That’s what you need to do when you have an opportunity to win, you got to win. We just didn’t do that tonight.”

They had won the past five openers by a margin of 177-26, but came up short in this nail-biter thanks to a strong game from Carr, who threw for 435 yards.

The overtime came after a wild back-and-forth fourth

quarter that featured Las Vegas rallying to tie the game on three separate occasions, with Carr driving the team to a tying 55-yard field goal in the final 37 seconds.

Baltimore had taken the lead when Jackson scrambled 28 yards to help set up Justin Tucker’s 47-yard field goal.

But Jackson is still haunted by the two late fumbles.

“That ticked me off,” he said. “I hate any type of turnover.”

The Raiders earlier got a forced fumble by Quinton Jefferson against Jackson to set up Josh Jacobs’ 15-yard TD run, tying the game at 17.

The Ravens answered when former Raider Latavius Murray ran it in from 8 yards one play after Jackson found Sammy Watkins on a mismatch for a 49-yard pass.

Carr then connected on a 37-yard pass to Henry Ruggs III that set up a tying 10-yard TD to Darren Waller with 3:44 to play.

## Southern Cal fires Helton just two games into season

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Clay Helton’s unlikely tenure as the head football coach at Southern California began bizarrely and lasted far longer than almost anybody expected.

The folksy Southerner won a Rose Bowl and a Pac-12 title early on, but he never won over most of the Trojans’ fans.

After one more embarrassing defeat for a school desperate to add to its 11 national championships, USC finally moved on.

Helton was fired on Monday, two games into his seventh season in charge. Athletic director Mike Bohn made the move two days after a 42-28 home loss to Stanford that sent the Trojans plummeting out of the AP Top 25.

Helton went 46-24 at USC.

Donte Williams, the Trojans’

cornerbacks coach and associate head coach, is taking over for the rest of the season alongside offensive coordinator Graham Harrell and defensive coordinator Todd Orlando.

Williams, a Los Angeles-area native, becomes the first Black head coach in USC football history. He joined the program in 2020 from Oregon, and he has played a major role in the Trojans’ recruiting advancements over the past two cycles.

### Cantlay wins PGA Tour player of the year award

Patrick Cantlay closed out another victory, this time without hitting a shot.

Cantlay was voted PGA Tour player of the year by his peers, capturing the Jack Nicklaus Award that could be seen as a

referendum on how players value winning the FedEx Cup.

His solid year became so much more over the final two weeks of the season when Cantlay won a six-hole playoff at the BMW Championship over Bryson DeChambeau and then captured the FedEx Cup with a one-shot victory over Jon Rahm in the Tour Championship.

It presumably was a tight race over Rahm, the No. 1 player in the world who won the PGA Tour money title and the Vardon Trophy for the lowest scoring average.

### Sluggo Braun retires after 14-year career

MILWAUKEE — Ryan Braun, the Milwaukee Brewers’ home run leader whose production was slowed by injuries dur-

ing the second half of his 14-year career, announced his retirement on Tuesday.

Braun hasn’t played all season and said during spring training that he was leaning toward retirement. The 2011 NL MVP made it official Tuesday in a video the Brewers posted on Twitter.

Braun, 37, batted .296 with 352 homers and 1,154 RBIs. He ranks second among Brewers in RBIs (1,154), extra-base hits (809), total bases (3,525) and doubles (408). He ranks third in runs (1,080), hits (1,963), triples (49), stolen bases (216) and walks (586). He is fourth in games played (1,766).

Braun became a free agent after Milwaukee declined to exercise a \$15 million mutual option in his contract last October.

# Nice save: Big 12's coaches like move

*Associated Press*

Kansas State coach Chris Klieman said he was never worried the Big 12 would disband or become irrelevant, even with the lingering questions about the conference's future when Oklahoma and Texas head to the Southeastern Conference.

"I knew none of that was true," Klieman said.

The Big 12's swift response to expand with the additions of BYU, UCF, Cincinnati and Houston certainly helped answer a lot of those questions and created some stability moving forward for the league that some didn't think would survive the departures of its only football national champions.

"We got four really good programs ... I think it solidifies the Big 12 as a power conference that's here to stay for the long haul," Klieman said Monday during the first Big 12 coaches' teleconference of the season.

"Well, we hit a home run, the presidents, ADs, Big 12 office, whoever was involved in this. There couldn't be a better scenario," said Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy.

"We kept the Big 12 status. I always felt like that we needed more than 10 teams. Now we're back to 12, we are the Big 12. And I couldn't be any more pleased with the direction that it's gone over the last week."

The Big 12 has as many of its future schools ranked in the Top 25 as it does current members, with two each. Oklahoma is third, and Cincinnati eighth. Iowa State dropped out of the top 10 to 14th after losing to Iowa and BYU is No. 23.

Only six weeks after Oklahoma and Texas accepted invitations to join the SEC by 2025, the Big 12 added four schools that will join its league before then. BYU, now playing as an independent in football, will start Big 12 play for the 2023 football season, with the three American Athletic Conference schools coming in no later than 2024.

After getting their Big 12 invitations on Friday, the four future foes all won Saturday. BYU beat Utah for its first victory against its in-state rival in nine tries since 2009, and the other three had lopsided wins.

Oklahoma and Texas, which fell out of the Top 25 after a 40-21 loss at future SEC

foe Arkansas, have said they will honor their current contracts with the Big 12 and do not plan to join the SEC until 2025, when the conference's current television rights contracts expire with ESPN and Fox.

Sooners coach Lincoln Riley said he didn't really have any thoughts on the Big 12 additions since it doesn't change anything now. When recruits and parents ask when the Sooners will be switching leagues, he tells them the plan is still 2025 and that he will let them know if anything changes.

"We've been trying to be pretty honest," Riley said. "They're going to get an opportunity to play a high level here at OU, no matter what league you're in."

The Sooners are the league's only team to make the four-team College Football Playoff. And while they have lost in the semifinals in each of their four appearances, they have dominated the Big 12, winning the last six conference titles and 14 of 25 overall.

Oklahoma's departure will seemingly open the way for other teams to be at the top.

## Navy keeps Jasper in reversal, other assistant out

*Associated Press*

Longtime assistant Ivin Jasper is staying with the Navy coaching staff after another bad loss left his status in limbo.

The Midshipmen did part ways with another member of their staff — offensive assistant Billy Ray Stutzmann said he's been dismissed after he was unable to follow the academy's COVID-19 policy for religious reasons.

On a dramatic day for the struggling program, coach Ken Niumatalolo said athletic director Chet Gladchuk decided to fire Jasper — the team's offensive coordinator for over a decade — after Navy's listless performance against Air Force on Saturday. But after further discussion, Jasper will remain in his other role as quarterbacks coach. Niumatalolo will call plays.

"It was an unfortunate situation. There's some emotion involved, obviously, but we just lost a big game," Niumatalolo said. "I think cooler heads have prevailed."

Navy went 3-7 last year, only its third losing season in 18 years. The team's option attack fizzled, and the Midshipmen have dropped their first two games this

season by a combined score of 72-10. Navy lost a nationally televised game to Air Force 23-3 on Saturday, and the Midshipmen managed only one first down before the fourth quarter.

That was followed by the initial decision to relieve Jasper — in his 14th year as offensive coordinator and 20th as quarterbacks coach — of his duties.

"I don't think Mr. Gladchuk was too happy the way things transpired. He's the leader of our department, and he made the decision after the game that he was going to let Coach Jasper go," Niumatalolo said. "None of us were happy. A lot of emotions after the game — to lose to a rival like that, we didn't play well on offense."

Niumatalolo, who is in his 14th season as Navy's head coach, said losing Jasper wasn't the answer.

"Obviously, we're not playing well now on offense, but the things that he's done for this school and this program over the years has been monumental," Niumatalolo said. "He's beloved by people. He's beloved by his players. He's a great developer of quarterbacks but also of men."

Stutzmann, in his third season as an of-

fensive assistant at Navy, posted a message on Twitter saying he'd been dismissed.

"The Naval Academy Athletic Association policy regarding COVID-19 requires all coaches and staff to be vaccinated against this virus. Based on my religious convictions, and after much thought and prayer, I am unable to follow the requirements of the Naval Academy's COVID-19 policy, as it has changed these last few months," Stutzmann said. "After applying for a religious exemption and attempting to further negotiate alternative working arrangements, I was ultimately relieved of my duties here at Navy. I continue to stand firm in my conviction of faith, but I understand and respect that each individual and institution has a choice on how they wish to manage these issues."

Niumatalolo let Stutzmann's statement speak for itself, but said it's a big loss for the team.

"He's added a lot to our program," Niumatalolo said. "Wish him the best of luck, he and his wife Shanelle. Wonderful young man. Got a bright, bright future in this profession."

# Giants first to clinch postseason berth

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — It's been five years since Brandon Belt got to toast a playoff berth, so the Giants first baseman was admittedly out of practice when the champagne started to flow in San Francisco's clubhouse.

"I forgot how much this burns to get in your eyes, but it burns so good," a beaming Belt said. "We absolutely love it."

The surprising Giants became the first team to clinch a playoff spot this season, hitting four home runs to beat the San Diego Padres 9-1 on Monday night for their season-high eighth consecutive victory.

After finishing 29-31 during the pandemic-shortened 2020

season, San Francisco has turned things around in manager Gabe Kapler's second year. It has the best record in baseball (94-50) with 18 games remaining — guaranteeing it at least a wild card as it tries to hold off the rival Dodgers for the NL West title.

"This is a pretty focused and even-keeled team," said Kapler, who won a World Series ring as a player with the Boston Red Sox in 2004. "You have quite a few World Series champions in that room and people who understand that this is one step in the direction that we want to go, but not the ultimate goal."

The Giants extended their

latest hot streak by getting early power at the plate and steady pitching from the bullpen after opener Dominic Leone threw two strong innings.

Tommy La Stella homered on the fourth pitch from Padres starter Yu Darvish and Evan Longoria hit a three-run drive five batters later. Mike Yastrzemski added a solo shot in the fourth, when Belt also went deep as San Francisco secured a postseason berth for the first time since 2016.

This one was unexpected for a team that won the World Series in 2010, 2012 and 2014. "It took us maybe half the season to get the recognition nationally, but now we understand we

have a target on our back," Longoria said. "It doesn't get any easier from here."

All four homers came off Darvish (8-10), struggling in his first season with San Diego after starting 6-1. The five-time All-Star lasted four innings, allowing eight runs and six hits.

The Padres fell a game behind idle Cincinnati for the second NL wild card.

After the final out, Giants players hugged on the field and coaches did the same in the dugout before heading inside the clubhouse for a bubbly celebration.

It's the earliest date the franchise has ever clinched a trip to the postseason.

# Hey, Siri! Astros rookie homers twice in win

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Jose Siri homered twice and added a two-run single in his first big league start, Jordan Alvarez hit a pair of 400-foot homers and the AL West-leading Houston Astros overwhelmed the last-place Texas Rangers 15-1 on Monday.

Siri became the first big league player since RBIs became official in 1920 to have two homers and five RBIs in a first career start.

"I feel really happy, I feel really proud of myself to be able to accomplish that," Siri, who finished 4-for-5 and scored three times, said through a translator.

Alex Bregman also went deep for the Astros (84-59). Carlos Correa and Jose Altuve added two-run doubles as Houston built a 9-0 lead after scoring multiple runs in each of the first three innings off three Rangers pitchers.

The 26-year-old Siri got called up by the Astros on Sept. 4 after hitting .318 in 94 games at Triple-A Sugar Land. He had made his pro debut eight years ago in the Dominican Summer League, and Houston became his fourth big league organization when he signed as a free agent last winter.

**Blue Jays 8, Rays 1:** Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit his major league-leading 45th home run, Alek Manoah set a career high by pitching eight shutout innings, and host Toronto dealt AL East-leading Tampa Bay its fourth loss in five games.

Teoscar Hernández had his first career five-hit game and Bo Bichette added a solo home run, his 24th, as the surging Blue Jays improved to 12-1 in September.

Guerrero moved ahead of Angels two-way star Shohei Ohtani for most home runs in the majors. He also eclipsed the single-season high set by his Hall of Fame father with Montreal in 2000.

**Yankees 6, Twins 5 (10):** Aaron Judge hit a tying three-run homer off Alex Colomé with two outs in the eighth inning, Gary Sánchez lined a winning single in the 10th, and host New York overcame a five-run deficit to beat Minnesota.

The Yankees won for just the fourth time in 16 games and moved one percentage point ahead of Boston for the second AL wild-card berth, one game behind Toronto, with 18 games left.

Gleyber Torres was the automatic runner on second when Sánchez singled with one out in the 10th off Ralph Garza Jr. (1-3).

**Dodgers 5, Diamondbacks 1:** Clayton Kershaw struck out five in his first start since July 3 and Los Angeles beat Arizona for its seventh straight home win.

Activated from the injured list earlier in the day, Kershaw had missed 57 games with elbow inflammation. The 33-year-old left-hander gave up four hits, walked one and didn't figure in the decision after throwing 50 pitches over 4 ½ innings.

Phil Bickford (4-2) got the win with one inning of scoreless relief.

**Cardinals 7, Mets 0:** Adam Wainwright won his fifth straight start in a rare matchup of 40-year-old pitchers, and visiting St. Louis blanked New York.

Paul Goldschmidt homered and had two RBIs for the surging Cardinals, who began the day one game behind Cincinnati and San Diego for the second NL wild card.

The Mets entered the game three games behind the Reds and Padres.

**Mariners 5, Red Sox 4:** Mitch Haniger made Boston pay for a costly error by first baseman Kyle Schwarber, hitting a three-run home run with two out in the seventh inning for host Seattle.

Reliever Ryan Brasier (0-1) took the loss for the Red Sox, who have allowed 33 unearned runs since the All-Star break, most in the American League.

**Marlins 3, Nationals 0:** Sandy Alcantara allowed one hit over eight innings and Miami won at Washington.

With two outs in the seventh, Josh Bell lined a single off the base of the right-field fence to end Alcantara's no-hit bid. The right-hander then retired his next four batters, leaving with seven strikeouts and no walks after throwing 96 pitches.

Jesus Sanchez had a first-inning RBI single and Alex Jackson doubled home two runs in the ninth. Dylan Floro worked a one-hit ninth for his 11th save.