

Top generals opposed troop withdrawal

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Gens. Mark Milley and Frank McKenzie were against withdrawing all troops from Afghanistan for fear the country would fall to the Taliban, the Joint Staff chief and head of U.S. Central Command told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday.

Though they personally believed about 2,500 troops should remain in Afghanistan to prevent the fall of the Afghan government, Milley and McKenzie declined to tell senators whether they advised President Joe Biden to keep troops there before he made the April decision to completely withdraw from the country.

However, McKenzie said it would be “reasonable for the committee to assume” that Biden was informed of the generals’ opinion.

That’s counter to Biden’s claim that no military advisers warned against withdrawing from Afghanistan in an Aug. 18 interview with ABC News.

“No one said that to me that I can recall,” Biden told ABC News when asked whether he was advised to keep 2,500 troops on the ground.

Republican legislators, including Sen.

Josh Hawley, R-Mo. expressed outrage that Biden reportedly decided against advice not to withdraw from Afghanistan, calling the hearings’ revelations “extraordinary.”

“The president of the United States lied to the American people about the advice that you gave him about the military judgment that you provided him,” Hawley said.

Milley said he’d been against withdrawing from Afghanistan since last fall when then-President Donald Trump considered ending the war before his presidential term expired. Trump on Nov. 11 issued an order to withdraw from Afghanistan “no later than Jan. 15, 2021,” Milley said, but Trump rescinded the order two days later “after further discussions regarding the risks associated with such a withdrawal.”

“My analysis was that an accelerated withdrawal, without meeting specific and necessary conditions, risks losing the substantial gains made in Afghanistan [and] damaging U.S. worldwide credibility,” McKenzie said.

While not admitting to counseling Biden against the withdrawal, Milley said it is the president’s prerogative to decide whether to adhere to military leaders’ advice. When asked why he didn’t resign after his wishes were ignored, Milley said it would have been

“an incredible act of political defiance for a commissioned officer to just resign because my advice is not taken.”

“This country doesn’t want generals figuring out what orders we’re going to accept and do or not; that’s not our job,” Milley said. “[Civilians] having control of the military is absolute — it’s critical to this republic.”

But Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said keeping U.S. service members in Afghanistan for another year would not have meant peace for the country as Trump had earlier agreed to withdraw from the country by May 1.

“If you stay there at a force posture of 2,500, certainly you’d be in a fight with the Taliban and you’d have to reinforce yourself,” Austin told senators. “This was not risk-free and the Taliban ... were committed to recommencing their operations against our forces [had we not left].”

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., said the withdrawal was “long overdue” and “was conducted in accordance with the advice of his military advisers who planned and executed every step of this withdrawal”

“One more year of propping up a corrupt government and an army that wouldn’t fight on its own was not going to give us a different outcome,” Warren said.

Milley defends calls to general in China as necessary

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

Army Gen. Mark Milley on Tuesday told senators that he never attempted to “usurp authority” from President Donald Trump during the final months of his presidency, labeling calls with China’s top general as needed to calm fears of an imminent U.S. attack.

“I am certain that President Trump did not intend to attack the Chinese, and it was my direct responsibility [from] the [defense] secretary to convey that intent to the Chinese,” the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Senate Armed Services Committee, addressing allegations raised in the new book “Peril.” “My task at that time was to de-escalate. My message, again, was consistent: ‘Stay calm, steady and de-

escalate. We are not going to attack you.”

Bob Woodward and Robert Costa first reported in their book the calls on Oct. 30 and Jan. 8 between Milley and his Chinese counterpart Gen. Li Zuocheng. The Washington Post journalists wrote Milley assured Li that he would warn him ahead of time if Trump decided to attack China. The authors also claimed Milley took other steps — some potentially illegal — to work around Trump after his Nov. 20 election loss, and the general agreed with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., that Trump was “crazy.”

Milley admitted Tuesday that he spoke with Woodward before the book’s publication. He told senators that he had not read the book, however, and could not comment on the accuracy of its portrayal of his ac-

tions.

Some Republicans, including Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, have cited the book’s contents in recent calls for Milley’s removal from his position. President Joe Biden has said he remains confident in Milley and had no intention of firing the general, who became chairman of the Joint Chiefs in 2019 when he was hand-picked by Trump against the recommendations of his former defense secretary Jim Mattis.

In a statement after the book’s contents were reported, Trump called Milley a “dumbass” and suggested he had committed treason if the reporting was accurate.

Milley’s appearance Tuesday on Capitol Hill was the first time that the general offered an extended defense of his actions in Trump’s final months in the White House.

N. Korea fires suspected ballistic missile

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

On the same day his country test-fired another missile, North Korea's ambassador to the United Nations accused the United States of more than 70 years of antagonism toward the communist state.

Ambassador Kim Song lambasted the U.S.' "hostile policy" of stationing troops on the Korean Peninsula and its joint military exercises with South Korea in a speech before the U.N. General Assembly on Monday in New York.

North Korea frequently rails against the deployment of U.S. troops in South Korea and the allies' joint military exercises,

which it views as preparation for an invasion of its country. Roughly 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in the South, most of them 40 miles from Seoul at Camp Humphreys.

Kim also made an apparent jab at the U.S. envoy for North Korea, who repeatedly said in recent months that he was willing to meet with his counterparts "any time without preconditions."

"If the U.S. shows its bold decision to give up its hostile policy, we are also prepared to respond willingly at any time," Kim said. "But it is our judgment that there is no prospect at the present stage for the U.S. to really withdraw its hostile policy towards [North Korea]."

Kim's comments came as North Korea launched what the South believes to be a short-range missile into the sea off its eastern coast on Tuesday. South Korean military officials told reporters the regime had fired the presumptive missile off its eastern coast at 6:40 a.m.

Officials declined to provide additional details Tuesday afternoon, but noted U.S. and South Korean intelligence agencies were conducting a "detailed analysis."

U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in a statement said the missile launch did "not pose an immediate threat to U.S. personnel or territory" and that it was indicative of "the destabilizing impact

of [North Korea's] illicit weapons program."

South Korean President Moon Jae-in was briefed on the launch and directed the National Security Council to "come up with countermeasures by comprehensively and closely analyzing recent statements of North Korea and situations in relation to the missile launch," the presidential Blue House said in a statement.

Following a National Security Council meeting on Tuesday morning, the Blue House said in a separate statement that senior officials "expressed regret" that the launch took place at "a very imperative time to have a stable situation on the Korean Peninsula."

Soldier assaulted by refugees escaped with minor injuries

Associated Press

A soldier reported that she was assaulted by a small group of Afghan refugees at a shelter complex set up for the refugees in New Mexico, Fort Bliss officials said.

A Fort Bliss statement said the assault happened Sept. 19 at the Fort Bliss Doña Ana County Range Complex about 40 miles north of El Paso, Texas.

"We take the allegation seriously and appropriately referred the matter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation," said a Fort Bliss statement.

The soldier was reporting for her shift around midnight when three to four men attacked her, according to a U.S. Defense Department official.

She had minor physical injuries and was able to get away. She was not sexually assaulted, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation.

The official said that soldiers on duty operate with a buddy sys-

tem, but the female soldier was just arriving and had not yet linked up with her buddy for the shift.

The official said that no one had yet been charged and that the FBI was investigating. It was unclear if law enforcement had identified the attackers.

The Fort Bliss statement said the woman was immediately provided "appropriate care, counseling and support" and that security measures at the complex were being strengthened.

U.S. Rep. Yvette Herrell, the New Mexico Republican representing the district where the complex is situated, said her staff was also investigating.

The U.S. government erected the complex in late August and early September to house thousands of Afghan refugees from the Taliban.

According to the Fort Bliss statement, all Afghan nationals are subjected to "a multi-layer screening and vetting process" before being admitted to the United States.

Taliban ban beard shaving in southern Afghan province

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban banned barbershops in a southern Afghanistan province from shaving or trimming beards, claiming their edict is in line with Shariah, or Islamic, law.

The order in Helmand province was issued Monday by the provincial Taliban government's vice and virtue department to barbers in Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital.

"Since I have heard (about the ban on trimming beards) I am heartbroken," said Bilal Ahmad, a Lashkar Gah resident. "This is the city and everyone follows a way of living, so they have to be left alone to do whatever they want."

During their previous rule of Afghanistan, the Taliban adhered to a harsh interpretation of Islam. Since overrunning Kabul on Aug. 15 and again taking control of the country, the world has been watching to see whether they will re-create their strict

governance of the late 1990s.

Some indication came on Saturday, when Taliban fighters killed four alleged kidnappers and later hung their bodies in the public squares of the western city of Herat.

It wasn't immediately clear what penalties the barbers could face if they don't adhere to the no shaving or trimming rule.

During the Taliban's previous rule, the conservative Islamists demanded that men grow beards. Since being ousted from power following the U.S.-led invasion in 2001, many men have opted for no or cleanly trimmed beards.

Barbershop owner Jalaluddin, who, like many Afghans, goes by one name, said he hoped the Taliban would reconsider.

"Now we have few clients coming to us, they are scared, they don't want to trim their hair or beards, so I request them let people free, so we have our business and people can freely come to us," he said.

US hospitals brace for staffing shortages

Associated Press

Hospitals and nursing homes around the U.S. are bracing for worsening staff shortages as state deadlines arrive for health care workers to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

With ultimatums taking effect this week in states like New York, California, Rhode Island and Connecticut, the fear is that some employees will quit or let themselves be fired or suspended rather than get the vaccine.

"How this is going to play out, we don't know. We are concerned about how it will exacerbate an already quite serious staffing problem," said California Hospital Association spokesperson Jan Emerson-Shea, adding that the organization "absolutely" supports the state's vaccination requirement.

New York health care employees had until

the end of the day Monday to get at least one dose, but some hospitals had already begun suspending or otherwise taking action against holdouts.

Erie County Medical Center Corp. in Buffalo said about 5% of its hospital workforce has been put on unpaid leave for not being vaccinated, along with 20% of staff at its nursing home. And the state's largest health care provider, Northwell Health, said it has begun removing unvaccinated workers from its system, though it said its workforce is nearly 100% vaccinated.

"To those who have not yet made that decision, please do the right thing," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said.

Some New York hospitals prepared contingency plans that included cutting back on noncritical services and limiting nursing home admissions. The governor also drew

up plans to summon help from National Guard members with medical training, retirees or vaccinated workers from outside the state.

About a dozen states have vaccination mandates covering health care workers in hospitals, long-term care facilities or both. Some allow exemptions on medical or religious grounds, but those employees often must submit to regular COVID-19 testing.

States that have set such requirements tend to have high vaccination rates already. The highest rates are concentrated in the Northeast, the lowest ones in the South and Midwest.

The Biden administration also will require the roughly 17 million workers at health facilities that receive federal Medicare or Medicaid to be fully vaccinated under a rule still being developed.

Japan set to lift state of emergency in 19 prefectures

By JOSEPH DITZLER

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO—With the worst phase of its coronavirus pandemic now a recent memory, Japan is moving to restore dining and alcohol sales, according to Japanese media Tuesday.

Tokyo, the capital city, reported 248 new coronavirus infections on Tuesday, continuing a trend of declining case numbers, according to public broadcaster NHK. The number of seriously ill in the city of 13.9 million fell to 117.

The national government is ready to lift a state of emergency in 19 prefectures, including Tokyo and other large cities, when it expires Thursday.

Along with the emergency's end, the mea-

sure to close bars and restaurants between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m. will be lifted in phases in the affected prefectures, the Mainichi newspaper reported. Under the emergency, those establishments were incentivized to close early and to curtail alcohol sales. Businesses overall were encouraged to promote telework and employees to reduce their commutes.

One U.S. military installation in Japan, Yokosuka Naval Base south of Tokyo, reported three new infections, according to a news release Tuesday. One unimmunized and two immunized individuals tested positive after falling ill with symptoms of COVID-19, the coronavirus respiratory disease, since Friday, according to a base news release. The

base is monitoring six patients.

U.S. Forces Japan on Friday reported fewer than 160 cases of COVID-19 on all 15 U.S. bases. Eight installations on Okinawa accounted for nearly 100 of them.

Okinawa prefecture, where the III Marine Expeditionary Force is headquartered, reported another 57 new coronavirus cases and five deaths Tuesday, according to the prefectural Department of Public Health and Medical Care.

Japan on Monday reported 2,134 new coronavirus infections and 21 deaths, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. More than half, 57.4%, of Japan's population, or 72.5 million people, are fully vaccinated.

Biden rule to shield 'Dreamers' aims to bypass Congress

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—The Biden administration on Monday renewed efforts to shield hundreds of thousands of immigrants who came to the United States as young children from deportation, the latest maneuver in a long-running drama over the policy's legality.

The administration proposed a rule that attempts to satisfy concerns of a federal judge in Houston who ruled in July that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program was illegal, largely because the Obama

administration bypassed procedural requirements when it took effect in 2012. The new rule mirrors the Obama-era initiative, re-creating the 2012 policy and seeking to put it on firmer ground by going through the federal regulatory process.

U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen, an appointee of President George W. Bush, said the Obama administration overstepped its authority and did not properly seek public feedback. He allowed for renewals to continue but prohibited new enrollments. The Biden administration is appealing the decision.

The 205-page proposal solicits public feedback to address Hanen's concern, though it is unclear if that would be enough. The proposed regulation will be published Tuesday in the Federal Register, triggering a 60-day comment period and ensuring that it is unlikely to take effect for several months.

The Obama administration created DACA with a memo issued by then-Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano. It was intended as a stopgap measure until Congress legislated a permanent solution, which never occurred.

Talks set as government shutdown looms

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two key Democratic senators are expected to meet Tuesday with President Joe Biden at the White House as the party works to narrow his \$3.5 trillion legislative package and momentum builds to close the deal with centrist and progressive lawmakers.

Sens. Joe Manchin D-W.Va., and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., are linchpins for the final package — two centrist lawmakers who have balked at the price tag and are now under pressure to show Biden what amount they could live with.

Biden is expected to meet separately with Manchin and Sinema as he works to come up with a final number, according to a per-

son familiar with the meetings and granted anonymity to discuss them.

“In the next day or so, we hope to come to a place where we can all move forward on that,” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told reporters Tuesday at the Capitol.

Pelosi said she had yet to hear a new topline figure from Manchin or Sinema, but indicated that she expects talks to start moving swiftly toward a conclusion that would enable passage of Biden’s package as well as a companion \$1 trillion public works bill.

“We have to see what comes of the negotiations that are going on — if they are worthy of the commitments we have made,” she said. “We will pass both bills.”

The behind-the-scenes talks

come as Republican senators blocked a bill Monday to keep the government operating and allow federal borrowing. Democrats aiming to avert a shutdown pledged to try again — at the same time pressing ahead on Biden’s big plans to reshape government.

The efforts are not necessarily linked, but the fiscal year-end deadline to fund the government past Thursday is bumping up against the Democrats’ desire to make progress on Biden’s expansive \$3.5 trillion social spending and climate legislation.

It’s all making for a tumultuous moment for Biden and his party, with consequences certain to shape his presidency and the lawmakers’ political futures.

“You know me, I’m a born optimist,” Biden told reporters Monday, as he rolled up his sleeve for a COVID-19 booster shot. “We’re gonna get it done.”

Monday’s 50-48 vote against taking up the bill fell well short of the 60 needed to proceed over a GOP filibuster. Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer switched his vote to “no,” a procedural step to allow him to bring the measure back for consideration.

With days to go, Democrats said they will try again before Thursday’s deadline to pass a bill funding government operations past the Sept. 30 fiscal year end, stripping out the debate over the debt limit for another day, closer to a separate October deadline.

R. Kelly is convicted in sex trafficking trial

Associated Press

NEW YORK — R. Kelly, the R&B superstar known for his anthem “I Believe I Can Fly,” was convicted Monday in a sex trafficking trial after decades of avoiding criminal responsibility for numerous allegations of misconduct with young women and children.

A jury of seven men and five women found Kelly, 54, guilty of all nine counts, including racketeering, on their second day of deliberations. Kelly wore a face mask below black-rimmed glasses, remaining motionless with eyes downcast, as the verdict was read in federal court in Brooklyn.

Prosecutors alleged that the entourage of managers and aides who helped Kelly meet girls — and keep them obedient and quiet — amounted to a criminal enterprise. Two people have been charged with Kelly in a separate federal case pending in Chicago.

He faces the possibility of decades in prison for crimes including violating the Mann Act, an anti-sex trafficking law that prohibits taking anyone across state lines “for any immoral purpose.” Sentencing is scheduled for May 4.

One of Kelly’s lawyers, Dev-
eraux Cannick, said he was disappointed and hoped to appeal.

“I think I’m even more disappointed the government brought the case in the first place, given all the inconsistencies,” Cannick said.

Several accusers testified in lurid detail during the trial, alleging that Kelly subjected them to perverse and sadistic whims when they were underage.

Gloria Allred, a lawyer for some of Kelly’s accusers, said outside the courthouse that of all the predators she’s gone after — a list including Harvey Weinstein and Jeffrey Epstein — “Mr. Kelly is the worst.”

Fires threatening California sequoias continue to grow

Associated Press

THREE RIVERS, Calif. — California firefighters battled fast-growing forest fires threatening giant sequoias and small communities in the Sierra Nevada on Monday and worked to fully surround a suspected arson wildfire that destroyed homes last week.

More than 2,000 firefighters were on the lines of the Windy Fire burning on the Tule River Indian Reservation and in Sequoia National Forest, including Giant Sequoia National Monument.

The fire had scorched more than 133 square miles after growing by nearly 11 square miles in 24 hours, according to a Sequoia National Forest statement. Just 2% of the fire was contained.

Numerous small communities were under evacuation orders or warnings to be prepared to leave. Some 2,000 residences and 100 commercial properties were threatened. Two commercial structures have been destroyed.

To the north in Sequoia National Park, two fires that were ignited by lightning and then merged covered more than 73 square miles after experiencing large growth during the week-end. The KNP Complex was 8% contained, according to a statement from Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks, which have both been forced to close.

On the fire’s northern perimeter, firefighters used controlled burns to clear vegetation from Muir Grove, a hidden group of giant sequoias found at the end of a trail.

A week ago, the famous ancient trees of Sequoia National Park’s Giant Forest were protected from the fire because of its history of prescribed burns. The bases of some trees were also wrapped in fire-resistant material.

In the far north end of California’s Central Valley, the Fawn Fire was 60% contained after destroying 184 homes and other buildings in an unincorporated area north of the city of Redding.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Drugs stored in football found near prison fence

NC HOFFMAN — Corrections officers at a North Carolina prison found a football filled with drugs near a prison fence, officials said.

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety said in a news release that staffers at Morrison Correctional Institution in Hoffman spotted a football in an odd location, news outlets reported.

Crews grabbed the ball and took it apart. Inside they found tobacco, marijuana and crystal meth, officials said.

Investigators said they were able to link the drugs to an offender serving time at the prison.

Maskless man arrested after alleged assault

AZ TEMPE — A man who refused to wear a mask and was asked to leave during a performance at Arizona State University's Gammage Auditorium has been arrested after he allegedly assaulted two staff members, according to campus police.

Police said the man was asked to leave the venue during a performance of "Hamilton." Witnesses said those who were attending the show began cheering when the man was removed.

Campus police said the man was being held on suspicion of assault, trespassing and disorderly conduct.

9 hurt when escalator breaks at train station

MA BOSTON — Nine people were taken to the hospital with injuries considered minor following an esca-

lator malfunction at a Boston train station, authorities said.

The escalator from the platform up to the street-level lobby at the Back Bay Station malfunctioned, according to a statement from the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.

Boston Emergency Medical Services said in a tweet that it sent multiple ambulances to the scene and took nine to area hospitals "with injuries reported to be minor in nature."

Witnesses described a chaotic scene and said the escalator appeared to reverse direction and flatten out, turning into "a slide." The reason for the malfunction remains unclear.

Officials look into fire at Anthony Museum

NY ROCHESTER — Fire officials in Rochester were investigating a fire that damaged the Susan B. Anthony Museum & House.

Firefighters responding to an alarm arrived to find the back porch of the museum engulfed in flames. The porch suffered heavy damage, but officials said none of the historical artifacts inside were damaged. The fire department listed the cause of the fire as suspicious.

The house, a National Historic Landmark, was built in the mid-18th century and was Anthony's home and also the site of her arrest in 1872 after she cast her ballot in a presidential election. It served as the headquarters of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

Woman accused of firebombing a temple

FL PALM BEACH GARDENS — A Florida woman is accused of firebomb-

ing a Buddhist temple, sheriff's officials said.

Palm Beach County Sheriff's deputies arrested Mei Cheung, 46, after they were called to St. Dak Buddhist Temple near Palm Beach Gardens, officials said in a news release.

Video surveillance at the temple captured a woman igniting and throwing four firebombs over the gate onto the temple property. She was also seen on video placing a fifth lit firebomb in a mailbox on the temple grounds, the release said.

Cheung was charged with five counts of using a fire bomb and one count of property damage at a religious facility, jail records showed.

Deputy chief probed after firing gun in office

CT HARTFORD — An internal investigation is underway after a deputy police officer in the Hartford Police Department unintentionally fired her weapon in her office in the city's public safety complex.

Deputy Chief of Administrative Services Sonia Watson discharged the gun as she was securing the weapon and preparing to leave work, the Hartford Courant reported.

"The full circumstances of this discharge will be investigated and there may be disciplinary action warranted," Lt. Aaron Boisvert, the department spokesman, told the Courant. "While no one was injured, we take any discharge of a weapon very seriously."

Zoo's oldest polar bear Snow Lilly dies at 36

WI MILWAUKEE — North America's oldest polar bear living in human

care at the Milwaukee County Zoo has died, zoo officials said.

The Journal Sentinel reported that 36-year-old Snow Lilly was euthanized due to her declining health and subsequent quality of life concerns. According to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the median life expectancy for polar bears in human care is about 23 years.

A recent wellness exam found Snow Lilly had heart disease and was undergoing other age-related changes, the release said. Snow Lilly came to the Milwaukee County Zoo in 2005 from the Bronx Zoo.

A necropsy will be performed, as important information can continue to be collected from it and help other polar bears living in human care.

Speedway holds last day of racing before sale

ME SCARBOROUGH — Engines roared and cars raced around the oval for the final time at Beech Ridge Motor Speedway.

The race track is being sold to developers, leaving just three auto racing tracks in Maine: Wiscasset Speedway, Oxford Plains Speedway and Speedway 95 in Hermon.

Beech Ridge owner Andy Cusack told the Portland Press Herald that he was approached by a developer looking for a large tract of land in Scarborough.

Todd Libby and his sister, Sara Schroeder, grew up in Porter and were raised at the track, where they spend weekends.

"This place has taught me how to win, and how to lose — and how to carry myself like a man when I do lose," said Libby. "You just go out and work harder."

— From wire reports

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Cardinals use depth to win 16 straight

Associated Press

It's Paul Goldschmidt, Adam Wainwright, Yadier Molina and Nolan Arenado. But it's also Giovanny Gallegos, Andrew Knizner, Jake Woodford and Kodi Whitley.

The St. Louis Cardinals are proving to be a lot more than their biggest stars—a Lars Nootbaar more.

The soaring Cardinals had won 16 in a row heading into Tuesday night's game against NL Central champion Milwaukee. It's the majors' longest streak since Cleveland took 22 in a row in 2017, and the best in the National League since the New York Giants won 16 straight in 1951 on their way to an improbable pennant.

One more win, and St. Louis clinches the second NL wild card

for its third straight postseason appearance. Wainwright took the mound Tuesday night against Brandon Woodruff and the visiting Brewers.

"I think, finally, now, you know maybe at the most important time of the season, we're putting everything together and we're not trying to force anything," Knizner said. "You see each game different guys stepping up, making big plays or making big pitches to win us a game."

Each of the team's big stars has pitched in. Goldschmidt is batting .383 with seven homers and 16 RBIs in his last 16 games. The 40-year-old Wainwright is 3-0 with a 3.52 ERA in September. Molina has six RBIs in his last six games, and Arenado has four homers and 12 RBIs during the streak.

But the Cardinals (87-69) are receiving positive contributions from all over their roster.

Gallegos has 10 saves and a sparkling 0.84 ERA over his last 11 games, solidifying the back end of St. Louis' bullpen. Nootbaar, a rookie outfielder, homered twice and scored five times during the Cardinals' four-game sweep of the Chicago Cubs. Whitley has a string of 12 consecutive scoreless relief appearances.

Mix in a breakout performance for Tyler O'Neill, who has a career-high 32 homers and 77 RBIs, and the Cards are hoping to turn a big finish into another successful October.

"Good teams have a deep roster (with) guys that can contribute," manager Mike Shildt said. "The thing I love about our game is you never know who has to be

on the mound, you don't who's going to take the at-bat, you don't know who he's going to hit it to.

"So we prepare for everything, and our guys have done a tremendous job."

St. Louis showed off its depth during Sunday's 4-2 victory over the Cubs. The game was tied before a couple of role players keyed a two-run ninth.

Knizner, who backs up Molina behind the plate, led off with a walk. Nootbaar, who entered in the eighth as part of a double switch, followed with a perfectly placed bunt single. Tommy Edman then moved the runners over with a sacrifice.

After Goldschmidt was walked intentionally, Knizner scored on a wild pitch and Nootbaar scampered home on O'Neill's comebacker.

Cleveland wins its last home game as Indians

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The Cleveland Indians won their last home game before becoming the Guardians, beating the Kansas City Royals 8-3 on Monday to close a run that started in 1915 and will continue next season with a new identity.

Amed Rosario homered and Cal Quantrill pitched six strong innings to delight a Progressive Field crowd of 13,121 that came to see their team play one last time as the Indians. Rosario finished with four hits and three RBIs.

Cleveland's Bradley Zimmer homered off his brother, Kansas City reliever Kyle Zimmer, in the eighth.

Salvador Perez drove in two runs for the Royals.

The home finale was the club's final game in Cleveland as the Indians, ending a 106-year run in a city where the name will forever be attached to legendary players such as

Bob Feller, Larry Doby and Jim Thome.

The team announced the name change earlier this year in the wake of a nationwide reckoning over racist names and symbols.

Cleveland won two World Series (1920 and 1948) as the Indians, and came close to winning it all in 1995, 1997 and 2016 only to twice lose in heartbreaking fashion. Now, baseball's longest current title drought carries on under a new name.

Mariners 13, Athletics 4: Mitch Haniger hit two identical three-run homers and host Seattle gained precious ground in the AL wild-card race with a win over Oakland.

The Mariners' 10th straight victory against the Athletics tied the team record for most consecutive wins against a single opponent. Seattle has won eight of nine overall and nine of their last 11.

It is 1½ games behind Boston for the second wild card, with

Toronto a game back of the Red Sox. Both those teams were off Monday.

Oakland fell 3½ games behind Boston and two back of the Mariners with two more games to play in Seattle. The A's also were eliminated from the AL West race.

White Sox 8, Tigers 7: Eloy Jiménez hit a two-run home run, Yasmani Grandal homered to spark a six-run fourth inning and AL Central champion Chicago held off host Detroit.

The benches cleared after White Sox first baseman Jose Abreu and Tigers shortstop Niko Goodrum exchanged words when Abreu was tagged out attempting to steal second base in the ninth. Abreu had been hit by a pitch from Alex Lange one inning after Detroit's Isaac Paredes was hit by a pitch. There were no ejections. Jimenez reached base four times and scored two runs. Cesar Hernandez and Zack Collins drove in two runs apiece in the make-

up of a game postponed last Wednesday because of rain.

Reds 13, Pirates 1: Joey Votto homered twice and drove in four runs, and host Cincinnati beat Pittsburgh to stay alive in the race for the second NL wild card.

Nick Castellanos, Jonathan India and Eugenio Suarez also connected as the Reds (82-75) posted their fourth straight victory, clinching a second straight winning season. Castellanos had five RBIs, and India finished with four hits and scored four times.

Cincinnati pulled within 5½ games of idle St. Louis for the second wild card. The Cardinals (87-69) need just one more win to secure the spot.

Nationals 5, Rockies 4: Josiah Gray pitched into the sixth inning to earn his second career win, and visiting Washington beat Colorado.

Luis García hit a two-run single and Alcides Escobar had three hits for the Nationals.

Prescott, Cowboys roll past Eagles

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Dak Prescott ran toward the tunnel, raising his arms to the fans and tossing them souvenirs after the Dallas Cowboys manhandled the Philadelphia Eagles in prime time.

The scene was a stark contrast to almost a year earlier, when the star quarterback was in tears as he rode on a cart through the same spot after the gruesome ankle injury that ended his season.

Prescott threw for three touchdowns in his first home game since the injury, Trevon Diggs returned an interception 59 yards for a score and the Cowboys beat the Eagles 41-21 on Monday night.

“Just thankful for everything that I’ve been through, all of the hard work that made me account for just to be back out here doing what I love,” Prescott said. “It’s the greatest place to play football.”

Ezekiel Elliott ran for a season-

high 95 yards and two touchdowns, and tight end Dalton Schultz had the first two-TD game of his career.

Except for a fumble in the end zone that gave Philadelphia (1-2) its first touchdown, Prescott was efficient, going 21-for-26 for 238 yards without an interception in the first NFC East game for both teams.

Prescott’s first game at AT&T Stadium since the season-ending compound fracture and dislocation of his right ankle in Week 5 last year against the New York Giants was also the return to full capacity after the pandemic-imposed limits last season. There were 93,267 fans inside with the retractable roof open at the \$1.2 billion facility.

“A guy like Dak, he’s going to be psyched regardless,” Elliott said. “There’s not any extra he can get besides just the competitor he is, the player he is.”

Dallas (2-1) had a 19-1 edge in first downs late in the first half,

but the Eagles were down just 20-7 at the break. After Javon Hargrave forced Prescott’s fumble and caught the ball for the score, Philadelphia stuffed the QB on a fourth-down sneak at the other end.

Diggs stepped in front of a pass from Hurts to the sideline on the third play of the second half and ran untouched for his first career TD while becoming the first Cowboys player with a pick in each of the first three games since Everson Walls in 1985.

Diggs and Cincinnati’s Logan Wilson share the NFL lead with three interceptions.

Hurts had completions of 41 yards to Quez Watkins, 38 yards to tight end Dallas Goedert and 27 yards to tight end Zach Ertz while finishing 25-for-39 for 326 yards with two TDs and two interceptions. Plenty of the Texas native’s passing yards, and the second TD, came with the game out of reach.

“I didn’t do a good enough job

of leading,” Hurts said. “I didn’t do a good enough of running our offense, doing the things I need to do. This one’s on me.”

Prescott’s 19-yard touchdown pass to Schultz put Dallas ahead for good at 14-7 late in the first quarter, and a 2-yarder to Cedrick Wilson on fourth down essentially put the game away at 34-14 early in the fourth.

Any doubt was erased when rookies Micah Parsons and Osa Odighizuwa shared a sack of Hurts on a desperation try on fourth-and-9 midway through the fourth quarter. Odighizuwa had his first career sack in the first half, dropping Hurts for an 11-yard loss.

Schultz, who led the Cowboys with 80 yards receiving, scored again on a 22-yarder in the fourth quarter.

Tony Pollard added 60 yards rushing on 11 carries as Dallas finished with 160 yards on the ground against the NFL’s No. 2 run defense.

Hyman, Chara among NHL veterans in new uniforms

Associated Press

One call from Connor McDavid was all Zach Hyman needed to put unfinished business with the Toronto Maple Leafs behind him upon joining the Edmonton Oilers.

Hyman left his hometown team to sign a \$38.5 million, seven-year contract with McDavid and the Oilers, who are similarly trying to get over the hump in the playoffs. McDavid immediately invited him to work out with him and some other teammates, so it did not take long for Hyman to feel welcome and appreciate the reigning NHL MVP’s game.

“It was awesome,” Hyman said. “It’s not just natural ability. It’s his drive and determination to continue to push and get better, which was really awesome to see.”

Hyman became a salary-cap casualty in Toronto, where he spent his first six NHL seasons playing a jack-of-all trades role, which included playing time on the top line. A two-time 20-goal-scorer, he’s expected to add much-needed offensive depth to Edmonton, which lacked secondary scoring in being swept by Winnipeg in the first round of the playoffs.

Hyman chose Edmonton after having a chance to tour the city with his wife once the Maple Leafs made it clear they wouldn’t be re-signing him.

“I said to my wife, ‘It looks like this is where I want to play from a hockey standpoint, like is where I think I have the best chance,’” he recalled. “And my wife’s all in on winning. She’s like, ‘Go and win.’”

Another factor behind elect-

ing to stay in Canada was knowing his family and friends would be able to travel to see him play, given the uncertainty of cross-border travel restrictions during the pandemic.

The Oilers also got three-time Cup-winning defenseman Duncan Keith from Chicago, acquired forward Warren Foegele from Carolina for Ethan Bear and signed defenseman Cody Ceci and forward Derek Ryan.

Among the Maple Leafs’ most notable offseason moves was signing forward Nick Ritchie.

Old timers keep going

When Zdeno Chara considered whether to play another NHL season at age 44, it came down to one thing.

“I love the game,” the big defenseman said after signing

with the New York Islanders. “I have passion for the game and believe that I can still play.”

He isn’t the only graybeard playing at least one more season. Still chasing it at 42, Joe Thornton signed with the Florida Panthers.

KK to Carolina

Center Jesperi Kotkaniemi left Montreal and signed a one-year, \$6.1 million offer sheet with the Carolina Hurricanes that the Canadiens declined to match. Two years ago, the Canadiens extending an offer sheet to Hurricanes star Sebastian Aho two years ago, which was matched by Carolina. Kotkaniemi’s offer sheet included a \$20 bonus, which is Aho’s number.

“It’s pretty funny,” Aho said. “I mean, everyone’s talking about it.”

What to watch as NBA camps open

Associated Press

The first practices of the season in the NBA are here, as teams hit the floor on Tuesday to formally begin getting ready for the 2021-22 campaign.

A six-pack of things to watch as things get started:

The champs

Milwaukee is running it back.

The Bucks used eight players in Game 6 of the NBA Finals, the title clincher against Phoenix, and seven of them are still on the roster; the exception is P.J. Tucker, now part of the Miami Heat. The Bucks also have seven of their top eight scorers, in terms of total points, back from a year ago; the exception in that case is Bryn Forbes, who returned to San Antonio.

Plus, Giannis Antetokounmpo played the game of his life to finish off that title run, a 50-point, 14-rebound masterpiece — and he isn't even 27 yet. His best easily may be yet to come.

Camp central

San Diego hasn't technically had an NBA team since 1984.

This week, the city has three.

The Los Angeles Clippers, Denver Nuggets and Brooklyn Nets are all calling San Diego home this week for training camp. They're all practicing separately, using three different facilities. The Nets will play in Los Angeles against the Lakers on Sunday before returning home, while the Nuggets and Clippers will play in Los Angeles on Monday.

Youth is served

There are no fewer than 21 teens on NBA rosters as training camps began Tuesday, including five Rockets and a trio of 18-year-olds — Golden State's Jonathan Kuminga, Oklahoma City's Josh Giddey and San Antonio's Joshua Primo.

Of those, Kuminga and Giddey will turn 19 before the regular season begins. Primo doesn't turn 19 until Dec. 24. He'll be 18 years, 300 days old when the Spurs open their season Oct. 20 against Orlando.

That means he's in line to become the youngest player in an NBA game in more than 15 years — Andrew Bynum was 18 years, 191 days old when he appeared in a playoff contest for the Los Angeles Lakers against Phoenix on May 6, 2006.

There have been four 18-year-olds to debut in the NBA since Bynum: Dragan Bender, Sekou Doumbouya, Devin Booker and Giannis Antetokounmpo.

But technically, if Primo debuts before Nov. 17, he'll be younger than any of them were for their NBA regular-season games by a matter of days.

How things change

It hasn't even been a year since the 2020 NBA Finals between the Los Angeles Lakers and Miami Heat — they were played in October.

"Feels like three years ago," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said.

The Lakers used 12 players in that series; of those, only LeBron James and Anthony Davis have remained with the team on an

uninterrupted basis. Rajon Rondo and Dwight Howard are back now, after playing elsewhere last season.

The Heat also used 12 players in that series; of those, only Jimmy Butler, Bam Adebayo, Tyler Herro and Duncan Robinson remain in Miami.

Preseason perspective

The games that start Sunday when Brooklyn visits the Los Angeles Lakers mean, and this can't be stressed enough, absolutely nothing in terms of wins and losses.

Milwaukee went 0-3 in the preseason last year and won the NBA title. Phoenix went 0-4 in the preseason last year and went to the NBA Finals.

The only team in the last 25 years that had the best record in the preseason and went on to win the NBA crown was Golden State in 2016-17.

Finally, home

For Raptors fans in Toronto, the wait is nearly over.

The team plays at home next week. Really at home, that is.

For the first time since Feb. 28, 2020, the Raptors will play a game in Toronto when they open their preseason schedule against Philadelphia. Only a handful of players and staff remain from that team, so the Raptors are having camp in Toronto instead of going elsewhere in Canada — as they've done often in recent years.

Toronto called Tampa, Fla., home last season because of the pandemic.

Clemson's goals, once lofty, now on life support

Associated Press

CLEMSON, S.C. — The early warning signs at Clemson have turned into a desperate call for help for the 25th-ranked Tigers.

The team which opened at No. 3 in the preseason, has lost twice in September for the first time since 2014 — all but ending its bid for a seventh straight berth in the College Football Playoff.

Clemson (2-2, 1-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) was also the runaway favorite for a seventh consecutive league title. Instead, it is no longer the team-to-beat in

the Atlantic Division race after a 27-21 double-overtime loss at North Carolina State this past Saturday.

"All the goals are still on the table," Tigers offensive coordinator Tony Elliott said Monday. "But, obviously, we need a little help."

The team plays Boston College (4-0), which begins ACC play at Clemson on Saturday night. The Eagles are coming off a 41-34 overtime victory against Missouri of the Southeastern Conference.

Tight end Davis Allen believes the Tigers can bounce back quickly, no matter the hole they've dug for themselves.

"No one is used to having two losses, but we can't worry about playoffs right now," Allen said. "As long as we put our head down and continue to work, we look up and we're 10-2. Who knows what can happen?"

That seems a stretch at the moment, given Clemson's struggles on offense and mounting list of injuries to key players on both sides of the ball.

The Tigers are last in total offense and 13th out of 14 teams in scoring in the ACC, categories they dominated the previous three years. Clemson led the league in points scored, averaging 43 or better a game from 2018-2020.

The Tigers were first in yardage in 2018 and 2019, and second to North Carolina last year, all with more than 500 yards a game.

This season, Clemson has averaged 226 yards and 12.6 points in its three games against FBS teams.