

Milley cites 'strategic failure' in Afghanistan

By **CAITLIN DOORNBOS**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Wednesday admitted the United States lost the war in Afghanistan, but told House lawmakers that keeping troops in the country would not have led to a different outcome.

Army Gen. Mark Milley called the war a "strategic failure," but he said it wasn't because of the individual efforts by U.S. troops — about 6,000 of whom helped evacuate 124,000 people from Afghanistan in the conflict's final weeks.

"Strategically, the war is lost — the enemy is in Kabul," Milley told the House Armed Services Committee, referring to the Taliban's Aug. 15 takeover of Afghanistan's capital city. "So, you have strategic failure while you simultaneously have an operational and tactical success by the soldiers on the ground."

The House hearing Wednesday

was the second day of public testimony by Milley, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, the top U.S. commander in the Middle East region. All three spoke before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday and revealed they initially wanted to keep at least 2,500 troops in Afghanistan.

Though Milley originally had been against the decision by former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden to withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan, he told the House committee that keeping a small military force in the country would not have prevented the Afghan government's collapse.

"If we held the 2,500, which I stated was my position ... there would have been a clear risk that the Taliban would have begun to attack us after Aug. 31," Milley said, referring to the date Biden set as the withdrawal deadline.

Austin added that more time would not have been helpful and explained that extending the war "beyond the end of August would have greatly imperiled our people and our mission."

"The Taliban made clear that their cooperation would end the first of September, and as you know we faced grave and growing threats from ISIS-K," he said, referring to the Islamic State group that killed 13 troops in a terrorist attack at the Kabul airport's Abbey gate on Aug. 26.

Some House lawmakers expressed frustration over how the final month of the war played out. Images of chaos at the airport with desperate Afghans clinging to the sides of military aircraft and falling to their deaths and Americans and allies turned away from Taliban checkpoints in the city flooded the airwaves and social media during the 17-day evacuation mission at Hamid Karzai International Airport.

"I think we can all agree that the withdrawal was an unmitigated disaster," said Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala. "Hundreds of Americans were left behind, thousands of Afghan allies stuck with little hope of escape, potentially billions [of dollars] worth of U.S.-provided military equipment now in the hands of the Taliban [and] thousands of al-Qaida and ISIS terrorists freed from prisons."

Though U.S. and coalition forces evacuated about 124,000 people in the final weeks of the withdrawal, some House lawmakers argued more should have been done to help Afghan allies and about 100 Americans left behind in the country.

Austin said evacuation efforts continue without troops in Afghanistan. In the past 48 hours, the U.S. has helped get 63 Americans and 189 legal permanent residents out of the country, he said.

Service members sue over DOD's virus vaccine mandate

By **ROSE L. THAYER**
Stars and Stripes

Two service members filed a class-action lawsuit against Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to halt a mandate that all troops get the coronavirus vaccine and make an exemption for those who were previously infected with the virus because they have "natural immunity."

Army Staff Sgt. Dan Robert, an infantryman at Fort Bragg, N.C., and Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Hollie Mulvihill, an air traffic controller at Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C., filed the lawsuit Aug. 17 in the U.S. District Court of Colorado for themselves and on behalf of all other similarly situated service members, Defense Department personnel and contractors who are documented coronavirus survivors ordered to get the vaccine.

Not only did Robert and Mulvihill state they have immunity from a previous coronavirus infection, they claimed "the DoD cannot force them to take a [coronavirus] vaccination under existing military regulations, federal regulations, federal law and the U.S. Constitution," according to the lawsuit.

More than 1.2 million service members are fully vaccinated, according to the Defense Department. Many of them began receiving the vaccine voluntarily, but the number who have been vaccinated has increased since Austin announced in August that the coronavirus vaccine would be mandatory.

In September, the Pfizer vaccine, which requires two shots administered three weeks apart, received full FDA approval, and Austin called on the leaders of each military service branch to lay out plans to fully vaccinate all service members.

More than 372,000 cases of coronavirus have been reported among Defense Department personnel, including troops, civilians, dependents and contractors, according to the department. Of those cases, 244,300 have been service members and 58 troops died from complications of the virus.

The national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the results of a study in August that found vaccination against the virus offers higher protection than a previous infection. The Kentucky-based study found non-vaccinated coronavirus survivors were twice as likely to be reinfected as those who were fully vaccinated.

"These data further indicate that [coronavirus] vaccines offer better protection than natural immunity alone and that vaccines, even after prior infection, help prevent reinfections," according to the CDC.

China, US in talks on military relations

Associated Press

BEIJING — Defense officials from China and the United States have held two days of talks in a small sign of progress amid a continuing sharp downturn in relations.

The secure video conference held Tuesday and Wednesday was led by Maj. Gen. Huang Xueping, deputy director of China's Army Office for International Military Cooperation, and U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for China Michael Chase.

Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian on Thursday said the sides "exchanged in-depth views on relations between the two countries and the two militaries and issues of common concern."

He blamed "continuous provocation and containment" of China

by the U.S., however, for the "considerable difficulties and challenges" between the two militaries.

"China's sovereignty, dignity and core interests brook no violations," Wu said at a monthly briefing. "Regarding the relationship between the two armed forces, we welcome communication, welcome cooperation, face differences and oppose coercion."

In a statement issued in Washington, Department of Defense spokesperson Lt. Col. Martin Meiners said the meeting was "an important component of the Biden-Harris administration's ongoing effort to responsibly manage the competition between the U.S. and the PRC by maintaining open lines of communication with the PRC."

During the talks, he said the

two sides held "a frank, in-depth and open discussion on a range of issues."

"Both sides reaffirmed consensus to keep communication channels open. The U.S. side also made clear our commitment to uphold shared principles with our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region," he said.

Relations between China and the U.S. are facing the worst strain in decades over trade, technology, human rights and Chinese military activities in the South China Sea, where Beijing has built airstrips and other infrastructure atop man-made islands.

Military-to-military ties have been characterized by deep mistrust, with the U.S. accusing China of a lack of transparency as it massively upgrades the capabilities of its army, the military wing

of the ruling Communist Party.

China has been angered by the Navy sending ships to sail close to islands it controls in what Washington calls freedom of navigation operations, along with U.S. support for Taiwan.

President Joe Biden has maintained a tough line on China, but has also sought better communication with Beijing. The talks between Huang and Chase are believed to mark the first direct high-level contact between defense officials under the Biden administration.

Wu also reiterated China's opposition to a three-way strategic defense alliance announced by Australia, the United Kingdom and the U.S. that includes building nuclear-propelled submarines for Australia. Beijing views the arrangement as firmly directed at containing its development.

Marine Corps finds low toxin levels in Okinawa wastewater

By **MATTHEW M. BURKE**
AND **MARI HIGA**

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Marine Corps found low levels of the contaminants PFOS and PFOA in water flowing from an air station on Okinawa, more than two weeks after it flushed contaminated water into the public system.

The service tested the water from Marine Corps Air Station Futenma where it flows into Ginowan city's wastewater system on Sept. 14 and found 0.015 micrograms per liter of PFOS and 0.003 of PFOA, Marine Corps Installations Pacific spokesman Lt. Col. Matthew Hilton wrote in a statement Thursday, citing preliminary results.

Japan's provisional safety threshold for drinking water is 0.05 micrograms per liter.

"This sampling was conduct-

ed where the wastewater sewer line exits from within the air station fence line to ensure the measurement captured only wastewater leaving [MCAS Futenma]," Hilton wrote. "These levels are consistent with those that can be found in the public wastewater system."

The samples were taken more than two weeks after the Marines released an undisclosed amount of treated wastewater into the public system on Aug. 26. Ginowan city took samples two hours after the release began and reported combined levels of PFOS and PFOA that were 13 times the safety standard, 0.63 micrograms per liter for PFOS and 0.67 micrograms per liter for the combined concentration. Hilton on Thursday, however, said the water released Aug. 26 measured far below the safety standard.

Senator calls for 'nonpolitical' probe into Afghanistan War

By **COREY DICKSTEIN**

Stars and Stripes

Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., introduced legislation on Thursday to create an apolitical commission to study 20 years of American war in Afghanistan, an effort she hopes would keep the United States from repeating mistakes made during years of conflict after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The Afghanistan War Study Commission would be charged with taking a "deep dive" into every aspect of the war, including top level strategic decisions, combat operations, efforts to train Afghan forces, intelligence work, diplomatic efforts, congressional oversight and corruption in the U.S.-backed Kabul government, Duckworth said Wednesday. She will offer the bill as an amendment to the fiscal 2022 National Defense Authorization Act.

"What we need to do is really glean all the lessons learned," said Duckworth, an Army veteran. "You know the war colleges are going to be looking at this forever. So what I want to do is create this commission that will not have anybody leading it who was in a ... decision-making position [on Afghanistan] during the 20 years."

She said the commission would be molded in the form of the independent, bipartisan 9/11 Commission set up in 2002 to examine the terrorist attacks that launched the next two decades of war in Afghanistan. Commissioners would be "experienced policy professionals" chosen by the chairpersons and ranking members on the House and Senate Armed Services, Intelligence and Foreign Affairs committees, according to the legislation. President Joe Biden would also add one member to the panel.

Military units' gun tracking may aid foes

Associated Press

Determined to keep track of their guns, some U.S. military units have turned to a technology that could let enemies detect troops on the battlefield. The Associated Press has found.

The rollout on Army and Air Force bases continues even though the Department of Defense itself describes putting the technology in firearms as a “significant” security risk.

The Marines have rejected radio frequency identification technology in weapons for that very reason, and the Navy said this week that it was halting its own dalliance.

RFID, as the technology is known, is infused throughout daily civilian life. Thin RFID tags help drivers zip through toll booths, hospitals locate tools and supermarkets track their stock. Tags are in some identity documents, airline baggage tags and even amusement park wristbands.

When embedded in military guns, RFID tags can trim hours off time-intensive tasks, such as weapon counts and distribution. Outside the armory, however, the same silent, invisible signals that help automate inventory checks could become an unwanted tracking beacon.

The AP scrutinized how the U.S. armed services use technology to keep closer control of their firearms as part of an investigation into stolen and missing military guns — some of which have been used in street violence. The examination included new field tests that demonstrated some of the security issues RFID presents.

The field tests showed how tags inside weapons can be quickly copied, giving would-be thieves in gun rooms and armories a new advantage.

And, more crucially, that even low-tech enemies could identify U.S. troops at distances far greater than advertised

by contractors who install the systems.

Which is why a spokesman for the Department of Defense said its policymakers oppose embedding tags in firearms except in limited, very specific cases, such as guns that are used only at a firing range — not in combat or to guard bases.

“It would pose a significant operations security risk in the field, allowing an adversary to easily identify DOD personnel operating locations and potentially even their identity,” Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Uriah Orland told AP.

Spokespeople at the headquarters of the Air Force and Army said they did not know how many units have converted their armories.

AP found five Air Force bases that have operated at least one RFID armory, and one more that plans a retrofit. Executives at military contracting companies said many more units have sought proposals.

A Florida-based Army Green Berets unit, the 7th Special Forces Group, confirmed it uses the technology in “a few” arms rooms. Special forces soldiers can take tagged weapons into the field, said Maj. Dan Lessard, a special forces spokesman. A separate pilot project at Fort Bragg, the sprawling Army base in North Carolina, was suspended due to COVID-19.

The Navy told AP one armory on a base up the coast from Los Angeles was using RFID for inventory. Then this week, after extended questioning, spokesman Lt. Lewis Aldridge abruptly said that the technology “didn’t meet operational requirements” and wouldn’t be used across the service.

Momentum for RFID built within the Air Force after a 2018 case in a machine gun disappeared from the 91st Security Forces Group, which

guards an installation that houses nuclear-tipped missiles. Authorities recovered the weapon, but the incident reverberated across the service.

With Air Force commanders looking to bolster armory security, defense contractors offered a familiar technology — one with a military pedigree.

The origins of RFID trace to World War II and the development of radar. In the U.S. military, use grew in the 1990s, after the first Gulf War showed a need to untangle vast supply chains of shipping containers.

The U.S. military is not alone in employing RFID for firearms management: Government armories in Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere have been outfitted.

Armory conversions cost thousands of dollars, and sometimes more. Convenience is a big selling point. Instead of hand-recording firearm serial numbers on paper or scanning barcodes one-by-one like a cashier, an armorer can read tags in a rack of firearms with the wave of a handheld reader — and without having to see each weapon. The tags tucked inside don’t even need batteries.

Contractors that retrofit armories say tags can be read only within a limited range, typically a few dozen feet or less. But in field testing for AP, two prominent cybersecurity experts showed that a tag inside a rifle can be read from significantly farther, using inexpensive components that fit inside a backpack.

While the hackers who devised the experiments observed U.S. government restrictions on transmitting signals, enemies who would not be so constrained could detect tags miles away, they said.

Some within the military share the tracking concern.

The Marine Corps has, according to a spokesman, decid-

ed across the service not to tag guns.

“The use of RFID tags on individual weapons systems increases the digital signature of Marines on a battlefield, increasing the security/force protection risks,” said Capt. Andrew Wood.

A top weapons expert from the Corps said he saw how tags can be read from afar during training exercises in the Southern California desert in December 2018.

“RFID tags on tanks, weapons, magazines, you can ping them and find the disposition of where units are,” said Wesley Turner, who was a Marine chief warrant officer 5 when he spoke in a spring interview. “If I can ping it, I can find it and I can shoot you.”

The Air Force and Army did not answer detailed questions about use of the technology in firearms. In written statements, spokespeople said unit commanders can add RFID systems as a further layer of accountability, but no service-wide requirement is planned.

Policy experts within the Office of the Secretary of Defense appeared unaware that the services have been tagging firearms with RFID.

Asked why service branches can field a technology that Pentagon planners consider so risky, Defense Department spokesman Orland first said that the services told the Pentagon they are not tagging guns due to security concerns.

Informed that AP found units which acknowledge using the technology, the Pentagon revised its statement and said it allows service branches to explore innovative solutions. The Defense Department “tries to balance preemptive prohibitions due to current security risks with flexibility to adopt new technologies when they mature and those risks decrease,” Orland said.

Biden plan at stake, Pelosi pushes ahead

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With President Joe Biden's government overhaul at risk, Democrats charged into high-stakes trouble Thursday as a promised vote on the first piece, a slimmer \$1 trillion public works bill, faltered amid stalled talks on his more ambitious package.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi assembled her leadership team for a morning meeting and emerged determined to push ahead, strike a deal with Biden over his bigger \$3.5 trillion effort and avoid what would be a stunning setback if voting on the public works bill failed or had to be scrapped.

Democrats are deeply at odds, trust torn, as progressive lawmakers threaten to withhold votes on the roads-and-bridges infrastructure bill they view as insufficient unless

it is paired with Biden's broader vision. In the narrowly controlled House, Pelosi has no votes to spare.

All this on a day that should be a win for Biden with Congress poised to quickly usher through legislation to keep government running past Thursday's fiscal yearend deadline and avert a federal shutdown that had been threatened by Republican blockades.

"Step by step," Pelosi said at the Capitol, suggesting a deal with Biden was within reach.

The risks are clear, but so is the potential reward as Biden and his party reach for a giant legislative accomplishment — promising a vast rewrite of the nation's balance sheet with an ever-slim majority in Congress. His idea is to essentially raise taxes on

corporations and the wealthy and use that money to expand government health care, education and other programs — an impact that would be felt by countless Americans.

The public works bill is one piece of that broader vision, a \$1 trillion investment in routine transportation, broadband, water systems and other projects bolstered with extra funding. It has won broad, bipartisan support in the Senate but has now become snared by the broader debate.

Attention is focused on Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, centrist Democrats who helped steer that bipartisan bill to passage, but are concerned with the overall size of Biden's plan. They view it as too big, but have infuriated colleagues by not making any counter-proposals public.

Ex-Trump aide tells of White House chaos in new book

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Ferocious tantrums. Family gossip. Petty nicknames.

Stephanie Grisham, once a White House press secretary and chief of staff to first lady Melania Trump, is out with a book next week that paints a deeply unflattering picture of Donald Trump — a man with a "terrifying" temper who ogled a young aide and tried to impress dictators while president, she writes.

Grisham, who holds the distinction of having never held a press briefing while serving as White House press secretary, charts her path from low-level press wrangler to the Trumps' inner circles, and her gradual disillusionment with the family and eventual resignation following the Jan. 6 insurrection.

As have the many books critical of Trump, Grisham's "I'll Take Your Questions Now: What I Saw at the Trump White House" has drawn Trump's ire. He bashed the book and its author in deeply personal terms, saying in a statement that Grisham was "paid by a radical left-leaning publisher to say bad and untrue things."

Highlights of the book include:

■ **On Melania Trump:** Grisham describes the former first lady as a Marie Antoinette figure who refused to condemn the violence at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 as Trump's supporters stormed the building to try to halt certification of the 2020 election results.

Grisham writes that she texted Melania

Trump as the scene unfolded. "Do you want to tweet that peaceful protests are the right of every American, but there is no place for lawlessness and violence?" she says she asked. She writes that "literally one minute later and while she was preparing a photo shoot of a new rug she had selected — yes, you read that right — Melania Trump sent me back a one-word response: 'No.'"

■ **On Trump:** "His temper was terrifying. And it could be directed at anyone, whether he or she deserved it or not," Grisham writes. "He questioned people's confidence, their looks, their intelligence — whatever he thought would do the most damage to someone's psyche."

Trump had particular contempt, she says, for the White House lawyers. "He didn't like them telling him that things he wanted to do were unethical or illegal."

Staff, she recounts, often deceived Trump to avoid his wrath, and tried to temper his worst impulses by stalling or distracting in a White House "where everything was like a clown car on fire running at full speed into a warehouse full of fireworks."

■ **#Metoo:** Grisham writes that, while serving as press secretary, she noticed Trump "taking an unusual interest in a young, highly attractive press wrangler" on her team, asking where the woman was, whether she would be traveling with him on foreign trips, and asking Grisham to bring the aide to his office cabin on Air Force One.

"Put her on TV. Keep her happy, promote her," she claims Trump would tell her. "Let's bring her up here and look at her ass," she says she was told he had once said.

Grisham also recalls uncomfortable encounters she had with the president, including him noting one day that she didn't wear pantyhose. On one occasion, she writes, he asked her then-boyfriend whether she was "good in bed."

■ **An awkward call:** Trump allegedly felt compelled to respond to adult film star Stormy Daniels' charges about the size of his genitalia. Grisham says she received an awkward telephone call from the president from aboard Air Force One, who assured her that "everything down there is fine."

"Uh, yes, sir," she says she replied. "Not in two million years had I ever thought I'd have a conversation with the president of the United States about his penis. Thankfully the call ended shortly after that."

■ **Dictators:** "He always seemed to want dictators to respect him," Grisham writes, pointing in particular to Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom staff suspected of arranging for an attractive interpreter and coughing to throw Trump off-guard.

She described one encounter at the meeting of the Group of 20 nations in Osaka, Japan, in 2019 when Trump seemed intent on placating the Russian leader. "Okay, I'm going to act a little tougher with you for a few minutes. But it's for the cameras, and after they leave we'll talk. You understand," she recounts Trump saying.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman who sought beer accused of pulling gun

NE MAYWOOD — A woman was arrested over the weekend in southwestern Nebraska after being accused of pulling a gun after a store clerk refused to sell her beer, authorities there said.

The incident happened shortly before noon Saturday, when a business in the village of Maywood called the Frontier County Sheriff's Office to report that a woman who appeared to be high on drugs pulled a gun when she wasn't allowed to buy beer, station KRVN reported.

Deputies and the Nebraska State Patrol later stopped a vehicle on Highway 23 in which the woman was believed to be riding. Officers arrested Dixie Kaiser, 39, of Wellfleet, on suspicion of making terroristic threats.

Kaiser was being held in the Seward County Jail on \$15,000 bond.

RNC sues 2 cities for noncitizen voting

VT MONTPELIER — The Republican National Committee is suing two Vermont cities for allowing noncitizens to vote on local issues in their communities.

The similar, but separate lawsuits against the cities of Montpelier and Winooski ask judges to declare noncitizen voting unconstitutional.

The suits, filed Tuesday in state courts in Burlington and Montpelier, were brought by the national GOP, its Vermont counterpart and a number of individuals.

Last November, voters in Winooski authorized noncitizens to vote in local elections if they were in the U.S. legally. In 2019, the city of Montpelier passed a similar measure.

Earlier this year the Vermont Legislature approved changes to the charters of the two communities allowing noncitizen voting. The

initial bills were vetoed by Republican Gov. Phil Scott, but both vetoes were overturned by the Legislature.

Park ranger honored for saving crash victim

NV BAKER — The head of law enforcement at Great Basin National Park is being recognized for his bravery and credited with saving the life of a visitor who was trapped in a burning vehicle.

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland awarded the Citation of Valor to Joshua Vann, a U.S. Park Service ranger at the national park in eastern Nevada near the Utah line.

The department says the park visitor crashed in a parking area of Lehman Caves Center last November. The vehicle caught fire as Vann arrived on scene, entered the vehicle and pulled the visitor to safety just as it exploded.

The department's statement said that without Vann's heroic efforts, the crash victim likely would have died.

Teaching cursive would be required under bill

WI MADISON — All Wisconsin elementary schools would be required to teach cursive writing under a bill passed Tuesday by the state Assembly.

The bill's sponsors say teaching cursive will stimulate different parts of the brain and improve the education of students. But opponents, including groups representing school boards, superintendents and administrators, oppose the measure, saying it could be a costly mandate and that instructional time would be better spent teaching more modern forms of communicating, like keyboarding.

Teaching cursive is included in state standards for education set by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. However, those are a model and not a requirement.

The Assembly passed the Repub-

lican-backed bill Tuesday on a 59-39 vote. It now heads to the Senate.

It would have to pass the Senate and be signed by Democratic Gov. Tony Evers in order to become law.

Vonnegut museum now a literary landmark

IN INDIANAPOLIS — An Indianapolis museum that documents the life and writings of novelist Kurt Vonnegut has been named Indiana's first-ever Literary Landmark by a national group.

The designation by the Literary Landmarks Association puts the Kurt Vonnegut Museum and Library in company with sites associated with Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain and other noted authors.

Vonnegut was born in Indianapolis. He died in 2007, at age 84. His novels included "Cat's Cradle" and "Slaughterhouse-Five," which was inspired by his experiences as a prisoner of war in Germany during the Allied bombing of Dresden, which killed thousands of civilians near the end of World War II.

Homeowners sue over sinkhole risks

SD BLACK HAWK — More than 150 homeowners in a development outside Rapid City are suing Meade County over risks to their properties after a sinkhole exposed an abandoned gypsum mine.

The federal complaint filed Monday by Hideaway Hills residents in Black Hawk seeks damages to be determined by a jury and other relief "allowed by law or equity."

The sinkhole forced about 40 residents from 15 homes in April 2020. Geotechnical studies show there could be water flowing through the abandoned mine and toward Interstate 90 and there is the potential for future sinkholes, the Rapid City Journal reported.

The complaint alleges several violations of the state Constitution. It says the decision to approve the subdivision by the county Planning

Commission and the Meade County Commission put homeowners at risk.

Five teens accused of robbing delivery driver

NC HIGH POINT — Five North Carolina teenagers are accused of robbing a pizza delivery driver, stealing his car and leading law enforcement officers on a chase, police said.

News outlets report the driver told High Point police he made a delivery on Sunday to a home where the five forced him inside, assaulted and robbed him. According to police, the driver suffered minor injuries.

Police said the teenagers were spotted in the stolen car by deputies with the Davidson County Sheriff's Office. The car collided with another vehicle along N.C. 109 in Thomasville, after which the teenagers ran, police said.

Three of the teens were found and arrested in the search, and a fourth was captured when he tried to get a ride with a passing motorist, police said. A fifth teen was arrested hours later.

Goats get loose in tony Buckhead neighborhood

GA ATLANTA — A herd of goats brought in to clear weeds got loose Monday, briefly becoming a thorn in the side of Atlanta's tony Buckhead neighborhood.

Atlanta police responded after a driver called to report the goats were wandering in the road, news outlets reported.

They had been brought in to eat weeds at a nearby Kroger supermarket but got free, according to police.

Television news footage showed them grazing outside a furniture store along a busy thoroughfare. They were eventually caught and removed.

Police said no one was injured.

— From wire reports

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Grudge match: Brady vs. Belichick

Associated Press

Without Bill Belichick, Tom Brady won his seventh Super Bowl and is on pace to throw a career-high 53 touchdown passes at age 44.

Without Brady under center, Belichick is 63-75 over his career, including 8-11 since the future Hall of Fame quarterback left New England for Tampa Bay.

Brady vs. Belichick? The numbers don't lie, but it's not that simple.

The ultimate NFL grudge match takes center stage Sunday night when Brady returns to face the Patriots (1-2) for the first time with the Buccaneers (2-1).

For many, the Brady vs. Belichick debate ended when No. 12 led the Buccaneers to a convincing 31-9 victory over the Kansas City Chiefs and earned his fifth Super Bowl MVP award last February. Brady's success in Tampa and Belichick's struggles since the GOAT left Patriot Place proves the quarterback was more valuable than the coach. It's clear the Patriots wouldn't have won six Super Bowl titles without Brady.

Former Patriots cornerback Asante Samuel said Belichick is "just another coach" without Brady.

However, it's fair to say Brady wouldn't have earned six rings in New England without Belichick. He drafted Brady in the sixth round with the 199th overall pick and built a dynasty around him led by a tenacious defense that helped them tremendously during their two decades together.

"What Brady has been able to do in his career I'll never take anything away from him. Greatest athlete in my opinion to ever play any sport, and obviously, the greatest football player," said former Patriots tight end Jermaine Wiggins, a member of New England's first champion-

ship team. "But for me, I look at Bill, and what Bill has done for this organization, it's about drafting guys and bringing guys in here and giving guys opportunities. And he gave Brady that opportunity. Tom Brady, a lot of the stuff he knows now and I think what you're seeing down in Tampa, Brady has taken everything that Bill taught him and now implemented in Tampa — getting those to buy in down there."

So, Brady vs. Belichick depends on the question.

Who needed the other more? The best answer just might be they needed each other.

"Well, I have 20 years of being there and, obviously he's a great mentor for me," Brady said this week on his SiriusXM podcast. "And, yes, there's definitely great lessons I've learned from him. He's a great football coach and he does a great job for his team. Any player I think they would just hope that their coaches give them everything they've got, and I'm sure every great coach wants every player to give them everything they've got. And I think that's what makes a great relationship."

Who is more important to a team's success? Brady hoisted another Vince Lombardi Trophy and playfully tossed it from one boat to another in his first season after leaving New England. Belichick doesn't even have a winning record with all other QBs.

"Tom's had an unbelievable career. There's not enough superlatives and adjectives to compliment him on everything he's achieved and continues to achieve," Belichick said. "It's unbelievably impressive. Nothing Tom does surprises me. He's a great player. Works hard. Takes care of himself. He's thought about playing until he's 50 and if anyone can do it, he probably can."

Panthers' Hubbard steps in for injured McCaffrey

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — As the Carolina Panthers were preparing to make their pick in the fourth round of this past April's draft, coach Matt Rhule received an unexpected text message from his wife.

It read: "Please take Chuba Hubbard!"

A few minutes later, Hubbard was a member of the Panthers. Of course, the Carolina scouting department had their eyes on Hubbard for a long time before Julie Rhule's endorsement, but it certainly made for a funny story — one that team owner David Tepper shared with Hubbard when he called to congratulate him on becoming a member of the Panthers.

"Julie, being a coach's wife, she's sat through a lot of games and seen a lot of people," Rhule said at the time. "It's funny, I had one former executive who texted me and said, 'It's pretty simple. When you play against guys and you hate playing against them, they're people someday you want to put on your team.'"

On Sunday, the Panthers (3-0) will get an extended look at Hubbard as he's expected to get his first NFL start against the Dallas Cowboys (2-1) with Christian McCaffrey out for the next few weeks with a hamstring injury.

Royce Freeman will also play running back and the team could promote Rodney Smith and/or Spencer Brown from the practice squad, too.

Quarterback Sam Darnold said that while playing without McCaffrey is "not ideal," he's confident the rookie will be productive if he doesn't try to do too much.

"He doesn't have to do anything special," Darnold said. "He just has to do his job every day. That is what we ask of everyone. And we aren't going to ask him to do anything more just because Christian is out."

Hubbard had significant playing time last Thursday night after McCaffrey pulled up while running a sweep play in the first quarter of the team's 24-9 win over the Houston Texans.

Hubbard struggled initially, but seemed to get his footing — literally — in the second half.

Rather than slipping and falling as he had been doing in some of his previous carries, Hubbard started hitting holes hard and finished with a respectable 52 yards on 17 carries. Freeman, who is considered a better pass-blocker, carried five times for 17 yards.

But it was Darnold who ran for two touchdowns while rookie Tommy Tremble scored the other on a tight end sweep.

"I told Chuba at halftime, 'That's why we drafted you, man,'" Rhule said. "I thought Chuba was outstanding. At the end of the half, we didn't give him a ton of chances, but I thought he got in there at the end and made some key runs. When we can line up in four-minute offense and run and get the first down on two plays, especially versus that stout defense, that's a credit to the offensive line, credit to the tight ends and fullbacks."

Rhule said it would be unfair to Darnold and the offensive line to dramatically change the game plan just because McCaffrey is out.

Sure, there will be different formations and Carolina may skip some plays that McCaffrey runs well. But for the most part, Rhule has told players they'll continue to do what they normally do against the Cowboys.

Hubbard has shown the ability to put up some big games while playing at Oklahoma State, including a 171-yard, two-touchdown performance against the Rhule-coached Baylor Bears in 2019.

That was the one that caught his wife's eye.

SEC's leading teams host big surprises

Associated Press

Alabama and Georgia, the top-ranked teams in the country and the favorites to win their Southeastern Conference divisions, are preparing to face the league's biggest early season surprises.

No. 12 Mississippi is heading to Alabama to take on the top-ranked Crimson Tide while No. 8 Arkansas plays at No. 2 Georgia.

The matchups Saturday weren't necessarily penciled in as quite such high-profile games leading up to the season.

Now there all kinds of intriguing storylines: national and SEC championship implications; established powerhouses hosting ambitious fast risers; former assistants against their old bosses.

"We'll have our hands full," said Ole Miss coach Lane Kiffin, a former Crimson Tide offensive coordinator under Nick Saban, whose current team is a two-touchdown underdog.

"I'm sure that's why we're a huge underdog."

Ole Miss is sporting its highest ranking since rising to No. 12 during the 2016 season. Arkansas, which started to emerge from the program's doldrums in coach Sam Pittman's first year, hasn't been as high as No. 8 since 2012.

Wins over Texas and then No. 7 Texas A&M helped the Razorbacks become one of September's biggest college football stories. They and Ole Miss are trying to show they're ready to perhaps unseat Alabama in the SEC West.

Pittman, a former Georgia assistant, said the extra attention hasn't affected him or his team, though getting an appearance on CMT "was awesome." But going from Texas A&M to Georgia to Ole Miss to No. 22 Auburn is a good ego check.

"It's hard to get the big head because one of them are going to knock you out if you're not prepared for them," Pittman said. "Our team understands that."

But he noticed more interest

from recruits since that win over Texas, and figures the Razorbacks program is worthy of their attention.

"It's certainly an exciting time to be at the University of Arkansas," Pittman said. "It kind of solidifies our belief in what we can do because we're the University of damn Arkansas."

Of course, Ole Miss and Arkansas have a long way to go to approach the sustained success of the universities of Alabama and Georgia. Those programs have become old hands at these big games in the regular season and beyond.

Georgia has already faced then-No. 3 Clemson and Alabama survived a visit to No. 10 Florida. The Tide have beaten a record 22 ranked teams by 25-plus points under Saban.

Bulldogs coach Kirby Smart doesn't necessarily think that big-game experience gives any edge for his team.

"We haven't really even thought about that, because I look at it they've had two mas-

sive games as well," Smart said. "There's no kid that is going to say, 'Oh man, this game is bigger than that game.' They're all big. I mean they are all tremendously big games and they only get bigger from here. So, I don't think anybody has an advantage when it comes to that."

Kiffin is well acquainted with Saban's famed "Process" having been the Tide's offensive coordinator in 2014 and 2015 when the Rebels pulled off back to back upsets of Alabama under Hugh Freeze.

Then there was the 2016 game when Ole Miss scored on a fumble by Tide quarterback Jalen Hurts. Alabama did rally for the win. Kiffin said it takes some breaks to beat a No. 1 team, along with playing and preparing very well.

"That's why they rarely happen," Kiffin said. "Maybe we can get one of those passes where the quarterback gets hit and they drop it and it tips up to us and we go score. Call Hugh and ask him what that play is called."

NLRB says college football players are employees

Associated Press

College athletes who earn millions for their schools are employees, the National Labor Relations Board's top lawyer said in guidance released Wednesday that would allow players at private universities to unionize and negotiate over their working conditions.

NLRB General Counsel Jennifer Abruzzo also threatened action against schools, conferences and the NCAA if they continue to use the term "student-athlete," saying that it was created to disguise the employment relationship with college athletes and discourage them from pursuing their rights.

"The freedom to engage in far-reaching and lucrative

business enterprises makes players at academic institutions much more similar to professional athletes who are employed by a team to play a sport," Abruzzo wrote.

In a statement, the NCAA disputed the characterization of its athletes as employees and said that its member schools and conferences "continue to make great strides in modernizing rules to benefit college athletes."

"College athletes are students who compete against other students, not employees who compete against other employees," said the nation's largest college sports governing body, with oversight of some 450,000 athletes. "Like other students on a college or university cam-

pus who receive scholarships, those who participate in college sports are students. Both academics and athletics are part of a total educational experience that is unique to the United States and vital to the holistic development of all who participate."

Abruzzo's memo does not immediately alter the dynamic between the schools and their athletes, who can receive scholarships and limited cost of attendance funding in exchange for playing sports. Instead, it is legal advice for the NLRB should a case arise.

That could be triggered by an effort by a team to unionize, a claim of an unfair labor practice or even by a school continuing to refer to a player as a

"student-athlete," Abruzzo said.

"It just perpetuates this notion that players at academic institutions are not workers that have statutory protection," she said. "It is chilling workers' rights to engage with one another to improve their terms and conditions of employment."

Gabe Feldman, the director of the Tulane Sports Law Program, said the memo is "yet another threat" to the NCAA and its business model, which relies on unpaid athletes to reap billions in revenue that is distributed to its 1,200 member schools.

"All signs point to an increasingly at-risk and fragile system of college athletics," he said.

Blue Jays end Yankees' winning streak

Associated Press

TORONTO — Bo Bichette homered twice, including a tiebreaking drive off Clay Holmes in the eighth inning that lifted the Toronto Blue Jays over the Yankees 6-5 on Wednesday night, tightened the AL wild-card race and ended New York's seven-game winning streak.

Marcus Semien hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the first off a faltering Gerrit Cole, setting a big league record for second basemen with his 44th home run of the season.

With the score 5-all, Bichette led off the eighth against Holmes (8-4) with his 28th home run, an opposite-field drive that cleared the scoreboard in right-center.

Red Sox 6, Orioles 0: J.D. Martinez homered and drove in three runs to back a dominant pitching performance by Nathan Eovaldi, and visiting Boston beat Baltimore to break a four-game skid and bolster its playoff hopes.

Martinez hit his 28th homer in the second inning for a 1-0 lead, and the Red Sox used a broken-bat single and an error to tack on two unearned runs in the sixth.

Mariners 4, Athletics 2: Seattle won for the 10th time in 11 games and stayed in the thick of the AL wild-card race with a win over visiting Oakland.

Ty France's sacrifice fly in the seventh inning gave Seattle the lead and Abraham Toro added his first home run since Aug. 31 with two outs in the eighth inning.

Brewers 4, Cardinals 0: St. Louis' team-record 17-game winning streak ended as visiting Milwaukee's Daniel Vogelbach hit a two-run homer that backed Adrian Houser.

A night after clinching a postseason berth, the Cardinals did not start regulars Nolan Arenado, Tyler O'Neill and Tommy Edman.

Braves 7, Phillies 2: Max Fried pitched seven strong innings, Austin Riley drove in three runs and host Atlanta beat Philadelphia to move within one victory of a fourth straight NL East title.

The Braves have won nine of 11 and reduced their magic number to one. Philadelphia lost its third straight.

Rays 7, Astros 0: Drew Rasmussen and three relievers combined for a three-hitter, Brandon Lowe and Ji-Man Choi both homered and visiting Tampa Bay coasted past Houston to earn the No. 1 seed in the AL playoffs.

The Astros lost for the fifth time in six games and their magic number to win the AL West is still one over Seattle, which beat Oakland 4-2.

Giants 1, Diamondbacks 0: Alex Wood and three relievers combined for a four-hitter, Kris Bryant hit a sacrifice fly and host San Francisco reached 104 wins for the first time since 1905 by beating Arizona.

Wood was dominant in his third start since coming off the COVID-19 list, allowing three hits in six innings with six strikeouts.

Dodgers 11, Padres 9: Corey Seager hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the eighth inning, when host Los Angeles went deep four times to rally past San Diego.

The Dodgers trailed 9-6 before Max Muncy and AJ Pollock began the onslaught by going back-to-back. With one out, Cody Bellinger launched a shot to right field. Justin Turner doubled to deep left and scored on Seager's shot to right with two outs.

White Sox 6, Reds 1: Carlos Rodón pitched five scoreless innings in a closely watched start ahead of the playoffs, and host Chicago beat Cincinnati.

Tim Anderson and Gavin Sheets homered as the White Sox (91-68) moved a sea-

son-high 23 games above .500 with their fourth consecutive victory.

Royals 10, Indians 5: Salvador Perez tied a team record with his 48th homer of the season before leaving with a sprained right ankle, and host Kansas City went on to beat Cleveland.

Perez, who already broke the big league record for homers by a catcher, leads the majors in home runs and RBIs (121).

Angels 7, Rangers 2: Shohei Ohtani sparked a four-run sixth-inning rally with his legs, and visiting Los Angeles sent Texas to its first 100-loss season since 1973.

With the score 2-2, Ohtani led off the sixth with a sharp grounder to first baseman Nathaniel Lowe and beat pitcher Taylor Hearn to the bag. Ohtani stole second, continued to third on a throwing error by catcher Jose Trevino and came home when Jack Mayfield singled through a drawn-in infield.

Marlins 3, Mets 2: Miguel Rojas' two-run single capped a three-run rally in the eighth inning, spoiling Taijuan Walker's longest start in more than four years and sending Miami past host New York.

Miami snapped a seven-game losing streak while the Mets lost for the 11th time in 14 games.

Rockies 10, Nationals 5: Trevor Story had four hits in possibly his final appearance at Coors Field as Colorado beat Washington.

Cubs 3, Pirates 2: Willson Contreras drove in all of Chicago's runs as it beat host Pittsburgh to end a seven-game losing streak.

Twins 5, Tigers 2: Jorge Polanco launched a three-run homer in the first inning and Michael Pineda was solid in his last start of the year as host Minnesota beat Detroit.

Brewers reliever to miss playoffs with broken hand

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Milwaukee Brewers reliever Devin Williams fractured his throwing hand when he punched a wall after his team celebrated its NL Central title, likely knocking him out for the entire postseason.

Brewers president of baseball operations David Stearns said before the Brewers' Wednesday

night game with the St. Louis Cardinals that Williams' injury likely will require surgery. Stearns said there's an "outside chance" the 2020 NL rookie of the year could be available for the World Series if the Brewers get that far.

Milwaukee clinched the division crown Sunday by beating the New York Mets 8-4 in its reg-

ular-season home finale.

"After our celebration, I went out to have a few drinks," Williams said Wednesday. "On my way home, I was a little frustrated and upset, and I punched a wall. That's how it happened."

The injury leaves the Brewers without their main setup man for All-Star closer Josh Hader.

"I don't think it's going to be

one player who fills that role," manager Craig Counsell said. "I think it's going to be multiple players that fill that role. And when you say the role, don't think about the regular season is what I guess I would say. It's going to be a pitcher. It's not necessarily going to be a reliever. We have to get 27 outs to win a playoff game. That's truly how we see it."