

Think you saw a UFO? DOD wants to know

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The world's largest military says it's serious about investigating unexplained objects in America's skies and will ask service members — and eventually ordinary people — to submit what they think might be alien sightings.

That reporting feature will be included on a new website — www.aaro.mil — that the Pentagon is launching as part of efforts to detail its work to get to the bottom of a slew of incidents in recent years. Those encounters have confounded the national security establishment and provoked accusations that the government is covering up what it knows.

The website will document the Defense Department's unclassified work on what it de-

scribes as “unidentified anomalous phenomena” and will offer links to reports, frequently asked questions and other data for alien hunters.

It will include a secure way to submit sightings “for consideration and review,” Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Pat Ryder told reporters Thursday. That feature is aimed at dispelling what some fighter pilots have said was a stigma against reporting what they believe could be encounters with extraterrestrial life.

Initially, only service members and civilian Pentagon employees will be able to submit reports. As for regular Americans? “That is something that we will look to do in the future but I don't have an estimate right now in terms of when the

public will be able to submit reports,” Ryder said.

Interest in the alien sightings exploded into the mainstream in 2020 when the Pentagon released videos taken by naval aviators that showed unexplained objects flying at high speed and moving in ways that defied explanations. During congressional hearings in July, three former military officers described encounters with what they called unexplained flying objects. One accused the U.S. of secretly holding onto extraterrestrial wreckage.

At those hearings, retired Navy commander David Fravor described an encounter with a “white Tic Tac-shaped object” during one flight. “There were no rotors, no rotor wash, or any visible flight control surfaces

like wings,” he testified. He said the device maneuvered abruptly, changed direction rapidly and “defied material science.”

Another witness, David Grusch, who has claimed whistleblower status, said he knows of the “exact locations” of some recoveries, which included what he called non-human biological matter.

The U.S. military says it has no evidence that interstellar travelers have visited Earth. But in a further sign of the Pentagon's seriousness, Ryder said Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks has been appointed to lead the team that oversees the tracking and reporting of such unexplained encounters, known as the All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office.

Putin, Erdogan to meet amid efforts to fix grain deal

Associated Press

Russian President Vladimir Putin will host Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan for talks next week, the Kremlin announced Friday, just over six weeks after Moscow broke off a deal brokered by Ankara and the U.N. that allowed Ukrainian grain to reach world markets safely despite the 18-month war.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Putin and Erdogan would meet Monday in Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi.

The announcement ended weeks of speculation about when and where the two leaders might meet next as international efforts continue to patch up the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which got grain and other food to parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia where hunger is a

growing threat.

Ukraine and Russia are both major global suppliers of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other commodities that developing nations rely on.

Turkey, together with the United Nations, brokered the deal in July 2022 that allowed Ukraine to resume shipping foodstuffs from three Black Sea ports.

Under the initiative, ship and cargo inspections were overseen from Turkey, and vessels sailed to and from Ukraine from there. Almost 33,000 tons of grain left Ukraine while the agreement was in effect.

Meanwhile, Russian officials said Friday that air defenses intercepted drones heading toward three of the country's western regions. Regional gov-

ernors said defense systems stopped three drones in the Kursk, Belgorod and Moscow regions.

Moscow airports briefly halted flights but no major damage or injuries were reported, according to Russian authorities.

Drones aimed at targets inside Russia — and blamed by Moscow on Ukraine — have become almost daily occurrences as the war has entered its 19th month and Kyiv's forces pursue a counteroffensive. Recently, the drones have reached deeper into Russia.

The apparent Ukrainian strategy is to unnerve Russia and pile pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin, although Kyiv officials normally neither claim nor deny responsibility for attacks on Russian

soil.

Ukraine's military intelligence chief, Maj. Gen. Kyrylo Budanov, said in an interview with online outlet The War Zone that “we work from the territory of Russia.” He did not elaborate.

Meanwhile, satellite images analyzed by the AP show that suspected Ukrainian drone attacks late Tuesday destroyed at least two Ilyushin Il-76 military transport planes at a Russian air base.

The transport planes were deliberately targeted, according to Budanov.

The images taken Thursday show Princess Olga Pskov International Airport, which is a dual military-civilian airport about 400 miles north of the Ukrainian border and near Estonia and Latvia.

US employers added a solid 187K jobs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The nation's employers added 187,000 jobs in August, evidence of a slowing but still-resilient labor market despite the high interest rates the Federal Reserve has imposed.

Last month's job growth marked an increase from July's revised gain of 157,000 but still pointed to a moderating pace of hiring compared with the sizzling gains of last year and earlier this year. From June through August, the economy added 449,000 jobs, the lowest three-month total in three years. In addition, the government revised down the gains for June and July by a combined 110,000.

Friday's report from the La-

bor Department also showed that the unemployment rate rose from 3.5% to 3.8%, the highest level since February 2022 though still low by historical standards. But the rate rose for an encouraging reason: A sizable number of people — 736,000 — began looking for work last month, the most since January, and not all of them found jobs right away. Only people who are actively looking for a job are counted as unemployed.

Indeed, the proportion of Americans who either have a job or are looking for one rose in August to 62.8%, the highest level since February 2020, before COVID-19 slammed into the U.S. economy.

A decelerating job market could help shift the economy in-

to a slower gear and reassure the Fed that inflation will continue to ease. The central bank's streak of 11 interest rate hikes has helped slow inflation from a peak of 9.1% last year to 3.2% now. Given signs that inflation is slowing, many economists think the Fed may decide no further rate hikes are necessary.

Friday's jobs report also showed that wage gains are easing, a trend that may help signal to the Fed that inflation pressures are cooling: Average hourly pay rose 0.2% from July to August, the smallest such gain in a year and a half. Measured year over year, wages last month were up 4.3% from August 2022, slightly below the 4.4% increase in both July and June.

The Fed wants hiring to slow because intense demand for labor tends to inflate wages and feed inflation. The central bank hopes to achieve a rare "soft landing," in which its rate hikes would manage to slow hiring, borrowing and spending enough to curb high inflation without causing a deep recession.

"This is close to what the Fed wants to see," said Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial Services Group. The August jobs report "could be a way to a soft landing."

Still, Faucher cautioned that the economy may not have yet absorbed the full impact of the Fed's rate hikes, which is why he still expects a recession in early 2024.

Proposal would require more checks by gun dealers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is proposing a rule that would require thousands more firearms dealers to run background checks, in an effort to combat rising gun violence nationwide.

The proposal comes after a mandate from President Joe Biden to find ways to strengthen background checks following the passage of bipartisan legislation on guns last year.

People who sell firearms online, at gun shows or other places outside brick-and-mortar stores would be required to be licensed and run background checks on the buyers before sales under the proposal by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

A firearm-industry trade group swiftly raised concerns about the rule, though, and said it could face a court challenge if finalized in its current form.

The bureau estimates the rule would affect up to 328,000 sellers. It is aimed at those who are in the business of gun sales, rather than those with personal collections.

Background checks help prevent guns from being sold to people convicted of crimes and others who are legally blocked from owning them, said the agency's director, Steve Dettelbach. Federally licensed firearm dealers are also required to keep records and sell guns with serial numbers, both of which help law enforcement trace weapons used in crimes.

"Unlicensed dealers sell guns without running background checks, without keeping records, without observing the other crucial public safety requirements by which the (federally licensed firearm dealer) community abides," he said.

Attorney General Merrick Garland said Congress passed

the gun legislation to reduce gun violence, including by expanding background checks, and said the new rule implements that mandate.

Overall, stricter gun laws are desired by a majority of Americans and in particular background checks, regardless of what the current gun laws are in their state, according to a recent AP-NORC poll on guns. That desire could be tied to some Americans' perceived impact of what fewer guns could mean for the country — namely, fewer mass shootings. As of Monday, there have been at least 33 mass killings in the U.S. so far in 2023, leaving at least 163 people dead, not including shooters who died, according to a database maintained by the AP and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University.

Last weekend, three Black people were shot to death by a white man wearing a mask and

firing a weapon emblazoned with a swastika in Jacksonville, Fla. The shooter, who had purchased the weapons legally despite previously being involuntarily committed for a mental health exam, killed himself.

The legislation last year Congress passed was the most comprehensive gun control in 30 years and it followed a deadly mass shooting in a Uvalde, Texas, elementary school.

The 2022 law toughened background checks for the youngest gun buyers, sought to keep firearms from domestic violence offenders and aimed to help states put in place red flag laws that make it easier to take weapons away from people judged to be dangerous.

Biden has said the law doesn't go far enough. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Thursday the administration would continue to push for more gun control.

Biden wants an extra \$4B for disaster relief funding

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House will seek an additional \$4 billion to address natural disasters as part of its supplemental funding request, bringing the total to \$16 billion — a sign that wildfires, flooding and hurricanes that have intensified during a period of climate change are imposing ever higher costs on U.S. taxpayers.

The Biden administration had initially requested \$12 billion in extra funding for the Federal Emergency Manage-

ment Agency's disaster relief fund, which helps with rescue and relief efforts. But a policy analyst in the Office of Management and Budget, Shelby Wagenseller, said that the fires in Hawaii and Louisiana as well as flooding in Vermont and Hurricane Idalia striking Florida and other Southern states mean that a total of \$16 billion is needed.

As recently as Tuesday, FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell had stressed that \$12 billion would be enough to meet the agency's needs through the

end of the fiscal year this month.

Criswell told reporters at a White House briefing that the lower sum "will be a bridge to get us through the end of the fiscal year."

"If we continue to see more storms, we're going to continuously monitor very closely the health of the disaster relief fund to determine what more may be needed," Criswell said. "But right now, as the situation stands, the supplemental request will get us through the end of this fiscal year."

Trump pleads not guilty in Ga. election case

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Former President Donald Trump pleaded not guilty on Thursday and sought to sever his case from some other defendants who are accused along with him of illegally trying to overturn the results of the 2020 election in Georgia.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee had set arraignment hearings on Sept. 6 for Trump and the 18 others charged in the case. Trump's court filing entering a not guilty plea also waived arraignment, meaning he won't have to show up for that.

The decision to skip an in-person appearance averts the dramatic arraignments that have accompanied the three other criminal cases Trump faces, in which the Republican former president has been forced amid tight security into a courtroom and entered "not guilty" pleas before crowds of spectators. Georgia courts have fairly permissive rules on news cameras in the courtroom, and this means Trump won't have to enter a plea on television.

McAfee said Thursday that he planned to allow live-streaming of the trial on a Fulton County-provided YouTube channel. He said he would also allow video and photographs to be shot by press pool members.

Trump and 18 others were charged earlier this month in a 41-count indictment that outlines an alleged scheme to subvert the will of Georgia voters who had chosen Democrat Joe Biden over the Republican incumbent in the election.

An attorney for Trump also asked McAfee on Thursday to separate his case from those of defendants who have asked for an expedited trial. The judge has already set an Oct. 23 trial date for one of those defendants.

Unsolicited land offers probed as state tries to keep Lahaina in local hands

Associated Press

HONOLULU — Hawaii Gov. Josh Green said Thursday his administration has opened several investigations into people who have allegedly made unsolicited offers for property in the fire-stricken Maui town of Lahaina in violation of a new emergency order.

Green prohibited such offers by signing an emergency proclamation on Aug. 19 aimed at preventing land in the historic coastal community from flowing into the hands of outside buyers. The order aims to give residents some "breathing room" as they decide what to do next, Green said.

Even before the Aug. 8 fire, Lahaina was a rapidly gentrifying town and there's been widespread concern since that Native Hawaiians and local-born residents who have owned properties in their families for generations might feel pressured to sell.

The fear is they would leave Lahaina, or Maui or the state, take their culture and traditions

with them and contribute to the ongoing exodus of Hawaii's people to less expensive places to live.

"We've seen that in a lot of different places in our country and in our world where people have lost everything but their land and someone swoops in and buys properties for pennies on the dollar," Green said. "We want to keep this land in the hands of local people, and we want to give them at least a chance to decide whether they'd like to build back."

Authorities say 115 people died in the fire, which tore through Lahaina in a matter of hours.

About 1,800 to 1,900 homes were destroyed. The town of 12,000 people was home to many who worked in hotels and restaurants in nearby Kaanapali and Lahaina itself.

About 6,000 people are staying in hotels and vacation rentals while waiting for the toxic waste left by the fire to be cleaned up and rebuilding to begin.

Earlier this month Green, a Democrat, said he wanted to impose a moratorium on land sales in Lahaina to prevent people from being displaced. But the governor said a blanket ban "may not be doable" and he didn't want to prevent people who are considering property sales from initiating those conversations.

The prohibition on unsolicited offers for property was a "de facto" moratorium, he said.

Green said people have reported unwanted offers to his attorney general, although he did not reveal how many investigations have been opened. Those found guilty of a violation may be imprisoned for up to one year and fined up to \$5,000.

Lahaina resident Melody Lukela-Singh said she was disappointed the governor didn't impose an outright ban as he initially said.

"Outsiders should not have the opportunity to grab land or properties. Because emotions are running high, so everyone is vulnerable," Lukela-Singh said.

Smugglers steer migrants into remote Arizona desert

Associated Press

ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NATIONAL MONUMENT, Ariz. — Border Patrol agents ordered the young Senegalese men to wait in the scant shade of desert scrub brush while they loaded a more vulnerable group of migrants — a family with three young children from India — into a white van for the short trip in triple-degree heat to a canopied field intake center.

The migrants were among hundreds who have been trudging this summer in the scorching sun and through open storm gates in the border wall to U.S. soil, following a remote corridor in the sprawling Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument that's among the most desolate and dangerous areas in the Arizona borderlands. Temperatures hit 118 degrees Fahrenheit as smugglers abruptly began steering migrants from Africa and Asia here.

Suddenly, the Border Patrol's

Tucson Sector, which oversees the area, in July became the busiest sector along the U.S.-Mexico border for the first time since 2008. It's seen migrants from faraway countries like Pakistan, China and Mauritania, where social media is drawing young people to the new route to the border that begins in Nicaragua. There are large numbers from Ecuador, Bangladesh and Egypt, as well as more traditional border crossers from Mexico and Central America.

"Right now we are encountering people from all over the world," said Border Patrol Deputy Chief Justin De La Torre, of the Tucson Sector. "It has been a real emergency here, a real trying situation."

The patrol is calling on other agencies, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Transportation Security Administration, for help in getting migrants "out of the elements and into our processing

centers as quickly as possible," De La Torre said.

During a recent visit, Associated Press journalists saw close to 100 migrants arrive in just four hours at the border wall near Lukeville, Ariz., inside Organ Pipe, as temperatures hit 110 degrees Fahrenheit. The next morning, several hundred more migrants lined up.

"Welcome to America, that's good person," a young Senegalese man said in limited English, beaming after Tom Wingo, a humanitarian aid volunteer, gave him water and snacks.

The storm gates in the towering steel wall have been open since mid-June because of rains during the monsoon season. Rushing water from heavy downpours can damage closed gates, the wall, a rocky border road, and flora and fauna. But migrants get in even when the gates are closed, sometimes by breaking locks or slipping through gaps in the wall.

Thomas discloses 3 trips with GOP donor

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas acknowledged Thursday that he took three trips last year aboard a private plane owned by Republican megadonor Harlan Crow even as he rejected criticism over his failure to report trips in previous years.

It's the first time in years that Thomas has reported receiving hospitality from Crow. In a filing posted on the federal judiciary's website, the 75-year-old justice said he was complying with new guidelines from the federal judiciary for reporting travel, but did not include any earlier travel at Crow's expense, including a 2019 trip in Indonesia aboard the yacht owned by the wealthy businessman and benefactor of conservative causes.

The report comes amid a heightened focus on ethics at the high court that stems from a series of reports revealing that Thomas has for years received undisclosed expensive gifts, including international travel, from Crow.

Crow also purchased the house in Georgia where Thomas' mother continues to live and paid for two years of private school tuition for a child raised by Thomas and his wife, Ginni.

The reporting by the investigative news site ProPublica also revealed that Justice Samuel Alito failed to disclose a private trip to Alaska he took in 2008 that was paid for by two wealthy Republican donors, one of whom repeatedly had interests before the court.

The Associated Press also reported in July that Justice Sonia Sotomayor, aided by her staff, has advanced sales of her books through college visits over the past decade.

Judge strikes down Texas porn law

Associated Press

A federal judge has struck down a Texas law requiring age verification and health warnings to view pornographic websites and blocked the state attorney general's office from enforcing it.

In a ruling Thursday, U.S. District Judge David Ezra agreed with claims that House Bill 1181, which was signed into law by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott in June, violates free speech rights and is overbroad and vague.

The state attorney general's office, which is defending the law, immediately filed notice of appeal to the Fifth Circuit U.S.

Court of Appeals in New Orleans.

The lawsuit was filed Aug. 4 by the Free Speech Coalition, a trade association for the adult entertainment industry and a person identified as Jane Doe and described as an adult entertainer on various adult sites, including Pornhub.

Judge Ezra also said the law, which was to take effect Friday, raises privacy concerns because a permissible age verification is using a traceable government-issued identification and the government has access to and is not required to delete the data.

"People will be particularly

concerned about accessing controversial speech when the state government can log and track that access," Ezra wrote. "By verifying information through government identification, the law will allow the government to peer into the most intimate and personal aspects of people's lives."

Ezra said Texas has a legitimate goal of protecting children from online sexual material, but noted other measures, including blocking and filtering software, exist.

"These methods are more effective and less restrictive in terms of protecting minors from adult content," Ezra wrote.

US official decries Russia-China alliance

Associated Press

STOCKHOLM — The chairman of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee said Friday that a partnership between the Russian and Chinese leaders worried him, adding, “We have never seen a threat this large scale to Europe and the Pacific, I would argue, since World War II.”

An alliance between Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin “provides a very big challenge I think for the free world in this great power competition that we find ourselves in,” Rep. Michael McCaul, a Texas Republican, said during a visit to Sweden.

The Biden administration has warned Xi’s government of unspecified consequences if it supports the Kremlin’s war effort in Ukraine. A United States intelligence report said Beijing possibly provided equipment used in Ukraine that might have military applications. The report cited Russian customs data that showed that Chinese state-owned military contractors supplied navigation equipment, fighter jet parts, drones and other goods, but didn’t say whether

that might trigger retaliation.

China has stepped up purchases of Russian oil and gas, which helps Putin’s government offset lost sales after the United States, Europe and Japan cut off most purchases of Russian energy. Beijing can do that without triggering Western sanctions on its own companies, but Washington and its allies are frustrated that it undercuts economic pressure on Moscow.

China rejects Western trade and financial sanctions on Russia because they weren’t authorized by the United Nations Security Council, where Beijing

and Moscow have veto power. However, China has appeared to avoid directly defying those sanctions.

McCaul, who was part of a U.S. congressional delegation visiting Sweden, said he expects the Nordic country to join NATO by October.

Long-neutral Sweden applied for NATO membership together with neighboring Finland in 2022. New entries must be approved by all existing members, and as NATO leaders met for a summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, Sweden was missing the green light from Turkey and Hungary.

Hong Kong, other parts of China brace for typhoon

Associated Press

HONG KONG — Most of Hong Kong and other parts of southern China ground to a near standstill Friday with classes and flights canceled as powerful Typhoon Saola approached.

Many workers stayed at home and students in various cities saw the start of their school year postponed to next week. Trading on Hong Kong’s stock market was suspended and hundreds of people were stranded at the airport after about 460 flights were canceled in the key regional business and travel hub.

Rail authorities in mainland China suspended all trains entering or leaving Guangdong province from Friday night to Saturday evening, state television CCTV reported.

The Hong Kong Observatory issued the No. 10 hurricane signal, the highest warning under

the city’s weather system. It was the first No. 10 warning since it was last issued when Super Typhoon Mangkhut hit Hong Kong in 2018.

The observatory said Saola — with maximum sustained winds of 130 miles per hour — would be closest to the financial hub at around midnight, about 25 miles south of the city’s Tsim Sha Tsui shopping district. The eyewall of Saola was moving across the city at around 8 p.m., “posing a high threat” to the territory, it said.

It expected that winds would gradually weaken Saturday as the typhoon moves west along the coast away from Hong Kong.

The observatory warned of serious flooding in coastal areas and said the maximum water level might be similar to when Mangkhut felled trees and tore scaffolding off buildings in the city.

Greece says firefighters rescued trapped migrants

Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece — Greek firefighters rescued a group of 25 migrants trapped in a forest in northeastern Greece on Friday as flames from a massive wildfire burning for two weeks approached, authorities said.

The fire department said the group became trapped in the forest between two villages in the Evros region, near the border with Turkey. No injuries were reported. There was no immediate information on their nationalities.

The blaze, burning for the 14th day Friday, has already been blamed for the deaths of 20 people whose bodies were found last week. All are believed to have been migrants who had recently crossed the border. Greece’s Disaster Victim Identification Team is trying to identify the remains.

A multinational force of more

than 580 firefighters backed by six planes and two helicopters is battling the wildfire that began on Aug. 19 and within days had joined with other blazes to form the largest single wildfire in a European Union country since records began in 2000.

The fire has burned homes and vast tracts of forest, scorching more than 200,000 acres.

Overnight, residents of the border town of Soufli were put on alert for possible evacuation as a huge wall of flames approached. To date, thousands of people have been evacuated from their homes in villages and towns in northeastern Greece due to the fire, although the vast majority have since been allowed back.

Greece has been stricken by hundreds of wildfires across the country this summer, with dozens of new blazes breaking out each day.

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ACC set to add Stanford, Cal and SMU

Associated Press

The Atlantic Coast Conference has cleared the way for Stanford, California and SMU to join the league next year, two people with direct knowledge of the decision told The Associated Press on Friday, providing a landing spot for two more teams from the disintegrating Pac-12.

The people spoke on condition of anonymity because an official announcement was still being prepared. The conference's university presidents and chancellors met Friday morning and voted to extend invitations to the three schools.

The additions make the ACC the latest power conference to expand its membership and footprint westward. Starting in August 2024, the league with Tobacco Road roots in North Carolina will increase its number of football schools to 17 and 18 in most other sports, with Notre Dame remaining a football independent.

Notre Dame is currently the westernmost ACC school in South Bend, Ind., with Louisville the farthest west among

football members.

But now, like the Big Ten, the ACC will be a cross-country conference. The ACC will span from Boston in the Northeast to Miami in South Florida, out to Dallas in the heart of the Southwest and up to the Northern California, where Stanford and Cal reside.

The move appears to be a marriage of desperation for the Bay Area schools, in need of a Power Five conference to call home after the Pac-12 was picked apart by the Big Ten and Big 12.

For the ACC, adding three schools will increase media rights revenue from its long-term deal with ESPN, and allow the conference to spread much of that new money to existing members.

New conference members typically — though not always — forgo a full share of revenue for several years upon entry.

Stanford and Cal will be the ninth and 10th schools to inform the Pac-12 that this will be their last sports seasons in the self-described Conference of Champions.

The Big Ten lured away Oregon and Washington last month. That came a little more than a year after Southern California and UCLA started the Eastern migration by West Coast schools when they announced they were leaving the Pac-12 for the Big Ten in 2024.

The Big 12 has poached four Pac-12 schools for next year: Arizona, Arizona State, Colorado and Utah.

The Pac-12 will now be down to Oregon State and Washington State.

Officials at both Pacific Northwest schools have said their desired path forward is to rebuild the Pac-12, but without Stanford and Cal that becomes even more complicated. Joining the Mountain West or American Athletic Conference now becomes more likely.

Stanford and Cal have athletic programs with rich histories of producing Olympians, all-stars and hall of famers, including Super Bowl-winning quarterback John Elway and swimmer Katie Ledecky from Stanford and NFL MVP Aaron Rodgers and swimmer Missy

Franklin from Cal.

The Cardinal won the women's NCAA basketball tournament 2021 and last year earned for the 26th time the Directors' Cup, which measures overall athletic department success.

Success has been harder to come by in football lately for the Big Game rivals.

After a decade that included three Pac-12 championships and six double-digit victory seasons under coaches Jim Harbaugh and David Shaw, Stanford sunk to 14-28 the last four years and now have a new coach in Troy Taylor.

Cal has been mired in mediocrity — and athletic department debt — since not long after Rodgers was drafted by the Green Bay Packers 2005. The Bears have just three winning football seasons since 2010.

For SMU, the ACC is a return to major conference football for the first time since the program infamously was shuttered by the NCAA as part of sanctions for paying players back in the early 1980s.

Bryson Barnes helps No. 14 Utah beat Florida 24-11

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah gave Florida a taste of the same suffocating defense the Utes have used to recently dominate Pac-12 opponents.

Bryson Barnes threw a 70-yard touchdown pass to Money Parks on Utah's first play of the game, rushed for another score and the No. 14 Utes beat Florida 24-11 on Thursday night in the opener for both teams.

Nate Johnson split time at quarterback with Barnes for the Utes with starter Cam Rising still recovering from a knee injury suffered in the Rose Bowl.

Utah clamped down on defense in Rising's absence, forcing a turnover and getting five

sacks. The Gators converted 1 of 13 third downs and 2 of 5 fourth downs while totaling 13 yards rushing on 21 carries.

"If you had to say what was the one phase or one thing that was the biggest difference in the game, it was the way our defense played," Utah coach Kyle Whittingham said.

Graham Mertz threw for 333 yards, a touchdown and an interception in his first start for the Gators. Ricky Pearsall had 92 yards on eight catches. Florida drove inside the red zone four times but totaled only 10 points on those drives.

"They just always seemed like they had one extra guy," Mertz said.

Making his second career start, Barnes wasted no time making an impact with the scoring strike to Parks. Barnes completed his first four passes and had 150 yards passing by halftime. He finished with 159 yards.

Barnes said he learned he was starting for Utah 1½ weeks before Thursday's game. His first-play touchdown gave the entire team an energy boost.

"That's the type of stuff you think of as kids, so it was great to go out there and actually put it on tape," Barnes said.

Johnson also put Florida's defense on its heels when he checked in during the second quarter. He faked a handoff to

Micah Bernard and raced 27 yards to extend Utah's lead to 14-3 midway through the second quarter.

Special teams mistakes set up both second-quarter scoring drives for the Utes. The Gators committed a fourth-down equipment infraction penalty to negate a punt and keep the Utes' second touchdown drive alive. Then, a 21-yard Florida punt to set up a 51-yard field goal from Cole Becker.

Sione Vaki tipped an interception to himself inside the Florida 15 to set up Utah's third touchdown. Barnes capped the 3-play drive with a 5-yard run to put the Utes up 24-3 early in the third quarter.

Braves' Acuña hits historic grand slam

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Ronald Acuña Jr. hit a grand slam on his wedding night to become the first player with 30 homers and 60 stolen bases in a season, and the Atlanta Braves overcame a pair of Mookie Betts home runs to beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 8-7 on Thursday night.

In a meeting of the top NL MVP contenders, the Braves took a 7-1 lead and hung on when Raisel Iglesias struck out Kiké Hernández with two on for the final out.

Acuña got married earlier in the day, then got three hits and helped the major league-best Braves improve to 88-45. He sent a 429-foot shot into the left-field pavilion off Lance Lynn (10-10) in a six-run second inning for his third career grand slam. Acuña has 36 career homers in August, his most in any month. He stole his 62nd base in the ninth.

Betts was 2 for 4 with four RBIs, three runs and two homers, giving him a career-high 38 on the season. Twelve of the game's 15 runs came on seven homers by the top two long-ball teams in the majors.

Spencer Strider (16-4) was the winner.

Tigers 4, Yankees 3: Anthony Volpe became the 15th rookie with a 20-homer, 20-stolen base season as New York lost to host Detroit.

Kerry Carpenter scored from second base on Gleyber Torres' throwing error in the 10th inning, allowing the Tigers to end a five-game skid and salvage the finale of the four-game series against the Yankees.

Beau Brieske (1-2) retired the Yankees in order in the top of the 10th.

With one on in the bottom of the inning, Zack Short grounded back to Jonathan Loáisiga (0-1), who threw to Torres for the

force at second. Torres' throw to first sailed past DJ LeMahieu, allowing Carpenter to score.

Down 3-0 in the ninth, Volpe tied the game with a three-run homer to right off Tigers closer Alex Lange to become the first Yankees rookie to reach 20 homers and 20 stolen bases in a season. He is the second this year with Arizona's Corbin Carroll.

Giants 7, Padres 2: Mike Yastrzemski homered and drove in two runs and San Francisco beat host San Diego to open a one-game lead over Arizona for the NL's third wild-card spot.

Opener Jakob Junis and three relievers combined on a seven-hitter. The Giants were up 7-0 before the Padres got their first hit, a single by Matthew Batten with two outs in the fifth off former Padres pitcher Sean Manaea (5-5).

Yastrzemski had an RBI sin-

gle in the third, when the Giants scored six runs, five of them unearned due to two errors by first baseman Matthew Batten. The Padres had three errors overall, tying their season high.

Padres starter Pedro Avila (0-2) allowed six runs, one earned, on six hits in three innings.

Marlins 6, Nationals 1: Jazz Chisholm Jr. hit a three-run homer and Miami beat host Washington.

Jake Burger added his 28th home run of the season for Miami, which climbed back to .500 after losing eight of 10. The Marlins entered three games behind San Francisco for the NL's final wild card.

Braxton Garrett (8-5) and three relievers combined on a three-hitter. Garrett allowed one run and three hits over six innings.

Joan Adon (2-1) surrendered five runs in five innings.

John Isner heads to retirement after US Open losses

Associated Press

NEW YORK — John Isner rested his chin on clasped hands, the words coming slowly, the tears welling in his eyes, as he spoke during a news conference at the U.S. Open on Thursday, his last day as a professional tennis player.

"It's been a huge part of my life. It's tough to say goodbye. It's not easy," the 38-year-old American said. "But eventually, this day would come. It's hard to prepare for the emotions of it."

As career-ending days go, it would be hard to come up with a more appropriate way for Isner to bow out than a pair of final-set tiebreakers — one in singles, one in doubles — and, while he would have preferred a victory or two, of course, he did appreciate the raucous crowd support and standing ovations he was showered with at each defeat.

The 6-foot-10 Isner an-

nounced the week before play began at Flushing Meadows that this Grand Slam tournament would mark his farewell, and the guy who long was his country's best male player bowed out in the second round of the singles bracket with a 3-6, 4-6, 7-6 (3), 6-4, 7-6 (10-7) loss to another American wild-card entry, Michael Mmoh, at the Grandstand.

A few hours later, Isner headed into full-fledged retirement by dropping a doubles match alongside Jack Sock, another American who has said the U.S. Open will be his last tournament. They were beaten by Robert Galloway and Albano Olivetti 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (10-3) at Court 12.

"There's, of course, a lot of disappointment with the result of my singles match today, but at the same time a lot of gratitude, as well, just to have one

last time playing in an atmosphere like that. It was very cool. As I said on the court, that's why I work so hard," Isner said. "Hard to explain how bad my body feels — I'm not talking (about) right now, because it does, but just in general, lately."

"So everything I do to get it ready to play, there's a lot that goes into it. I wanted one more U.S. Open, and was able to get that."

Women advancing included Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova, Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka, 2017 U.S. Open runner-up Madison Keys, three-time major semifinalist Elina Svitolina and No. 13 seed Daria Kasatkina.

No. 3 seed Jessica Pegula, the highest-ranked American woman, took control early and beat Patricia Maria Tig 6-3, 6-1 in 72 minutes in Arthur Ashe Stadium at night, after defending

men's champion Carlos Alcaraz reached the third round by overpowering Lloyd Harris 6-3, 6-1, 7-6 (4) in a match that some viewers in New York, Los Angeles and several other cities couldn't watch on ESPN2 when it went dark because of a dispute between Disney and the Charter Spectrum cable system.

"I played a great match," Alcaraz said, "from the beginning until the last ball."

In the day's final match, which ended after 1 a.m., 2021 U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev beat Christopher O'Connell 6-2, 6-2, 6-7 (6), 6-2.

In other action, Stan Wawrinka, a 38-year-old owner of three major titles including the 2016 U.S. Open, moved into the third round, while Andy Murray, a 36-year-old owner of three major titles including the 2012 U.S. Open, was eliminated.

Rodgers, Jets are NFL's top storyline

Associated Press

One No. 12 started the clock on the countdown to his gold jacket and another switched numbers, conferences and shades of green.

The biggest storyline in the first NFL season this century without Tom Brady centers on Aaron Rodgers' quest to turn the New York Jets into a championship contender. The 39-year-old, four-time NFL MVP left Green Bay for a team that hasn't reached the playoffs since the 2010 season and hasn't won a Super Bowl since Broadway Joe Namath guaranteed one more than 50 years ago.

Rodgers has plenty of talent surrounding him but the Jets play in one of the toughest divisions in the league and a conference loaded with contenders, including the defending Super Bowl champions.

Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs are aiming to become the first team to win consecutive titles since Brady led the New England Patriots to back-to-back rings in 2003-04. The Chiefs have dominated the AFC West under coach Andy Reid, capturing seven straight division crowns and hosting five consecutive conference championships.

Plenty of teams are standing in Kansas City's path to another deep run in January.

Joe Burrow and the Cincinnati

Bengals are primed to return to the Super Bowl after falling short two years ago. Josh Allen and the Buffalo Bills are under pressure to get there after losing in the divisional round the past two seasons.

Sean Payton joined the Denver Broncos, hoping to help Russell Wilson regain his Pro Bowl form and turn the Denver Broncos into winners.

Doug Pederson, who won a Super Bowl in his second season in Philadelphia, will try to guide Jacksonville to a similar leap after quickly rebuilding Urban Meyer's mess and leading the Jaguars to a playoff victory.

Then there's Justin Herbert and the Los Angeles Chargers, Lamar Jackson and the Baltimore Ravens, Tua Tagovailoa and the Miami Dolphins.

And those are just the AFC contenders.

Fewer teams enter the season with a legitimate chance to win it all, though it seems there's always a surprise team. Last year, it was the Philadelphia Eagles. Jalen Hurts and the stacked Eagles are hungry to hoist the Vince Lombardi trophy after wasting a late lead in a 38-35 loss to Mahomes and the Chiefs.

Dak Prescott, Mike McCarthy and the Dallas Cowboys are feeling pressure to lead America's Team back to glory for the first time in more than 25 years.

The San Francisco 49ers have

a dominant defense and a versatile offense, and quarterback Brock Purdy is healthy again.

Dan Campbell's Detroit Lions are getting plenty of hype. Perhaps they can overtake the Minnesota Vikings and make a strong playoff push.

Five teams have first-year head coaches, including the Broncos, who convinced Payton to end his one-year broadcasting stint and return to the sideline. Payton won a Super Bowl with Drew Brees in New Orleans and knows what it takes to get Wilson and the Broncos back to prominence.

The Carolina Panthers hired former Colts coach Frank Reich to lead a rebuild behind No. 1 overall pick Bryce Young. They've got a shot to compete in a weak NFC South.

AP Assistant Coach of the Year DeMeco Ryans took over in Houston. The Texans made bold moves to get QB C.J. Stroud and edge rusher Will Anderson with picks Nos. 2-3 in the draft.

Two former Eagles coordinators got the top job with teams that need a new direction. Shane Steichen landed in Indianapolis, which starts the season with rookie QB Anthony Richardson and without disgruntled star running back Jonathan Taylor. Jonathan Gannon went to Arizona, which is rebuilding and collecting draft capital.

While Rodgers was the biggest name to change teams, a few more accomplished QBs got a fresh start.

Derek Carr traded the silver and black for gold and black in New Orleans. The Saints are the front-runner in a division that didn't have a winning team in 2022.

Baker Mayfield joins Carr in the NFC South, taking over for Brady in Tampa Bay. He has a chance to resurrect his career with the Buccaneers, who still have playmakers on offense and defense.

Jimmy Garoppolo ended up in Las Vegas, reuniting with Josh McDaniels. All Garoppolo does is win. He's 44-19, including playoffs. Getting the Raiders over .500 might be his toughest task yet.

The NFL is coming off a record-setting season filled with close games and dramatic finishes. Among the records set in 2022 were most games decided by six or fewer points (122), by seven or fewer points (141) and eight or fewer points (156); most games in which team overcame deficit of 10 or more points to win or tie (52); most games in which teams came back to win after trailing in fourth quarter (85).

The marathon starts Sept. 7 when the Lions visit the Chiefs in the first of 544 NFL games.

Get ready for some football.

USA Basketball survives tough test to top Montenegro

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The U.S. got its first real test of the Basketball World Cup on Friday, and found a way to survive and remain unbeaten. Barely.

Anthony Edwards scored 17 points, Austin Reaves had 12, Jaren Jackson Jr. added 11 and the Americans overcame a half-time deficit to beat Montenegro 85-73 in the second-round open-

er at the World Cup for both teams. It put the U.S. on the brink of clinching a spot in the quarterfinals.

Mikal Bridges and Tyrese Haliburton each scored 10 for the U.S. (4-0).

Nikola Vucevic had 18 points and 15 rebounds for Montenegro, which led 39-38 at the half. Kendrick Perry scored 14 for Montenegro (2-2).

The U.S. led 61-55 going into the fourth and tacked a point on for a seven-point lead — its biggest of the game to that point — early in the final quarter.

Montenegro just wouldn't go away. A 3-pointer by Nikola Ivanovic got the underdogs within 64-62 with 7:15 remaining, and the Americans couldn't exhale until the final seconds — a far cry from the way the first three

games of the tournament went, with points coming in bunches and the U.S. winning every game by at least 27 points.

It was a bad first half for the U.S. by almost all statistical measures: The Americans shot 35% from the field, were just 1 for 9 from 3-point range, got out-rebounded 28-17 and managed only nine points off 12 turnovers by Montenegro.