

## GAO finds barracks in deplorable shape

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Barracks life can mean enduring raw sewage overflows, dangerous gas leaks and rodent infestations, according to a new government report saying military officials don't have a full grasp of the squalor thousands of troops face.

U.S. service members also could be at increased risk of sexual assault and other crimes because of chronically broken windows and locks, the Government Accountability Office said Tuesday in a report based on a visit to 10 stateside military bases.

"At one installation, we noticed a bad odor throughout the barracks. Installation officials told us the smell was methane gas leaking out of aging plumbing with sewage pipes that routinely crack and require replacement," the GAO said, citing one example of the problems it found during a tour of installations.

The Defense Department service branches have come under intense scrutiny because of the

poor living conditions some troops face. Over the past couple of years, there have been high-profile scandals at several locations.

In 2022, for example, a mold infestation at Fort Liberty, N.C., forced 1,200 soldiers out of barracks. The buildings were demolished upon their evacuation.

While there is a general awareness of the problems with base housing, military officials could be underestimating the extent of the barracks crisis because of a rating system that gives passing grades to facilities that are clearly substandard, GAO said.

"DOD doesn't have reliable information about barracks conditions, or how these conditions affect troop morale," the GAO said. "And while DOD spends billions of dollars annually on its facilities, it's unable to identify how much funding goes toward barracks."

Still, the military doesn't appear to have a clear strategy for rectifying the problem, which could be causing people to flee

the services, the GAO said.

"No military service has fulfilled DOD requirements to periodically evaluate the effects of barracks conditions on service members' reenlistment decisions," the GAO said.

The GAO said it observed barracks at seven of 10 military installations visited that required significant improvements, despite positive "condition scores" of 80 and above.

In one case, an unnamed barracks had to be shut down because of plumbing and electrical issues. Yet that base had a score of 90, indicating the building was in excellent condition, the GAO said.

Also, the barracks scrutinized by observers "pose potentially serious health and safety risks" and do not meet minimum DOD standards for privacy and configuration, according to the report.

In discussions with service members living in barracks and their senior enlisted leaders, the GAO was told that such conditions "contributed to an environ-

ment where theft, property damage, and sexual assault were more likely."

In all 12 troop discussion groups at the bases visited, there was a consensus that rundown barracks had a negative effect on mental health, the GAO said.

"For example, in one group, a service member told us about increased anxiety and panic attacks after living in the barracks," the GAO said.

Among the obstacles to improving conditions is a DOD lack of complete funding information to make informed decisions and it conducts insufficient oversight.

The report recommended that the DOD and its service branches put in place an array of bureaucratic reforms to better track barracks conditions and the assessments of service members who reside in them.

DOD concurred with 23 of the 31 recommendations and partially concurred with eight others. The GAO countered that DOD should comply with all the recommendations.

## Red Hill lawyers say Navy erased fuel spill evidence

By JOSEPH DITZLER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Lawyers for hundreds of people seeking damages from a Navy fuel spill in Hawaii say the federal government "recklessly destroyed" evidence on cellphones belonging to officers in charge of the spill's response, according to a court filing Tuesday.

Apple iPhones issued to Navy Capt. Erik Spitzer and James Meyer were wiped clean of call logs and text messages before being reissued to their successors at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, according to

the motion filed in U.S. District Court for Hawaii.

Spitzer, the base commander, and Meyer, the head of Naval Facilities, Hawaii, which includes the base public works department, failed in November 2021 to promptly alert base housing residents that toxic spills at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, 5 miles northwest of Honolulu, had contaminated their water supply, the plaintiffs' lawyers allege.

The lawyers — Lyle Hosoda, Kristina Baehr and Frederick Baker — asked for sanctions against the Navy that compen-

sates for the loss of potential cellphone evidence.

They argue the court has held that "spoliation," or destroying evidence, implies that evidence would have undermined the government's defense.

The court should find that the lost phone data would have shown that the Navy "knew of the water contamination by the afternoon" of Nov. 28, 2021, "but failed to warn" consumers of the danger, the motion for sanctions states.

Jet fuel spilled into the water supply for thousands of military homes in May and November

2021, according to the suit filed by an Army spouse, Patrick Feindt Jr. The suit alleges the contaminated water caused seizures, gastrointestinal disorders, neurological issues, burns, rashes, lesions, thyroid abnormalities, migraines and neurobehavioral challenges.

About 300 people had joined the Feindt lawsuit when another 1,002 complainants filed legal claims in June that may add them to the suit pending in Honolulu.

The Navy has declined comment thus far on the suit, citing ongoing litigation.

# Pentagon outlines impact of a shutdown

By DOUG G. WARE  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military will keep active-duty troops and a limited number of civilian defense employees at their posts during a federal government shutdown, Pentagon officials have said. But they might have to go without pay until lawmakers reach a budget agreement.

The Defense Department has yet to elaborate on how it's preparing for a possible shutdown, but officials have released a 14-page outline of what the situation could look like if Congress lets the fiscal year end on Sept. 30 without approving at least temporary funding for the government.

"The department will continue to defend the nation and conduct ongoing military operations," the Pentagon wrote in a guidance document on preparing for a possible shutdown. "[The military] will continue activities funded with any available budgetary resources that have not lapsed, as well as excepted activities such as those necessary for the safety of

human life and the protection of property."

Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the top Pentagon spokesman, said it is difficult for the military to plan without reliable funds.

"We are, of course, hopeful that Congress can reach a funding agreement before the end of the [fiscal] year," he said. "We do need predictable, adequate and sustained and timely funding."

The threat of a shutdown is being instigated by the Freedom Caucus, a group of a few dozen House Republicans who have threatened to withhold funding unless certain demands are met. One is the closure of the Pentagon's Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Another demand calls for resuming construction of a wall along the U.S. and Mexico border. Other complaints include the Justice Department's actions against former President Donald Trump.

The shutdown also could affect pay for troops. However, a Pentagon official who spoke on condition of anonymity said troops and civilian defense workers who are

deemed "essential" would receive back pay once a shutdown ends and new funding is approved.

"Members of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Space Force are not guaranteed to be paid during a funding lapse," said Brian Kelly, president of Military Officers Association of America, a nonprofit that supports troops and a strong national defense.

Rep. Adam Smith, of Washington, the top Democrat of the House Armed Services Committee, underscored the impact a shutdown would have on the armed forces, especially because some congressional Republicans are upset with the Pentagon over an abortion policy and claims of other types of "wokeism" — a catch-all term used to refer to progressive initiatives.

"No one is going to be happy not knowing if and when they're going to get paid again," Smith said last week.

There are about 804,000 civilian defense employees, according to the Pentagon's planning

document. Roughly 166,000 of them don't rely on congressional funding and would continue to work during a shutdown. Almost 200,000 of them would have to keep working without pay because they're considered "necessary to protect life and property." The document also lays out additional effects of a shutdown, including restrictions on permanent changes of duty stations and emergency furloughs for nonessential civilian workers.

"Civilian personnel ... who are not necessary to carry out or support excepted activities, are to be furloughed," it states. "Only the minimum number of civilian employees necessary to carry out excepted activities will be [exempted] from furlough."

The last lengthy shutdown that affected the DOD stretched about two weeks in 2013, and troops' pay was not affected because Congress passed a law beforehand that ensured paychecks would not be disrupted. It remains to be seen whether lawmakers will pass a similar statute this time to protect pay for troops.

## West Point is sued over its use of race in admissions

*Associated Press*

West Point was accused in a federal lawsuit Tuesday of improperly using race and ethnicity as factors in admissions by the same group behind the legal challenge that resulted in the U.S. Supreme Court striking down affirmative action in college admissions.

Students for Fair Admissions claims the U.S. Military Academy sets benchmarks for how many Black, Hispanic and Asian cadets there should be in each class. The lawsuit filed in New York's Southern District claims West Point is violating the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which contains an equal-protection principle that binds the federal govern-

ment.

"Instead of admitting future cadets based on objective metrics and leadership potential, West Point focuses on race," according to the complaint. "In fact, it openly publishes its racial composition 'goals,' and its director of admissions brags that race is wholly determinative for hundreds if not thousands of applicants."

The academy said in a prepared statement that it "does not comment on ongoing litigation to protect the integrity of its outcome for all parties involved."

The filing comes after the Supreme Court in June struck down affirmative action in college admissions, forcing institutions of

higher education to look for new ways to achieve diverse student bodies.

The court's conservative majority invalidated admissions plans at Harvard University, and the University of North Carolina, the nation's oldest private and public colleges, respectively.

That ruling did not cover West Point and the nation's other military academies.

But Edward Blum, president of SFFA, said in a prepared statement that with the recent high court decision, "it must follow that the U.S. military's higher education institutions must end their race-based policies as well."

"Over the years, courts have

been mindful of the military's unique role in our nation's life and the distinctive considerations that come with it," Blum said. "However, no level of deference justifies these polarizing and disliked racial classifications and preferences in admissions to West Point or any of our service academies."

West Point in recent years has made concerted efforts to diversify its ranks, with officials increasing outreach to metropolitan areas like New York City, Atlanta and Detroit. Minority enrollment was about 38% for the class of more than 1,240 that entered the academy north of New York City this summer.

# Pilot of F-35 parachuted into backyard

*Associated Press*

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. — The pilot of a \$100 million stealth fighter jet parachuted safely into the backyard of a home in South Carolina after a malfunction forced him to eject from the aircraft, causing the plane to crash into a wooded area about 60 miles away.

A U.S. Marine Corps official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release details of the investigation into Sunday's crash told The Associated Press that the aircraft was not found until the next day. A state law enforcement helicopter located the jet and debris around 5 p.m. Monday in a field near Indiantown, S.C.

The pilot, who has not been identified by the Marine Corps, did not have serious injuries and has been discharged from the hospital.

"He's unsure of where his plane crashed, said he just lost it in the weather," someone can be heard saying of the pilot on audio from a Charleston County Emergency Medical Services call shared Tuesday by a local meteorologist.

A trip that began as a routine training flight did not last very long. The pilot "experienced a malfunction and was forced to eject" on Sunday at an altitude of about 1,000 feet just 1 mile north of Charleston International Airport, according to a situation report given to AP by the Marine Corps official.

More questions than answers remained Tuesday around how an F-35B Joint Strike Fighter wound up leaving a debris field described as "extensive" by the local sheriff's department. Officials closed about 1 mile of road indefinitely as they continued searching rural Williamsburg County for any wreckage.

Residents were being asked to avoid the area while a recovery team worked to secure it.

Federal, state and local officials worked Sunday to locate the jet, and the military appealed to the public for help in finding the aircraft, which is built to evade detection.

The Marine Corps said the pilot of a second F-35 returned safely Sunday to the base where both aircraft had departed earlier that day for the routine training flight.

In a military aviation incident where there are two or more aircraft, it's standard practice for remaining aircraft to stay on location, said Mark Cancian, a retired Marine Corps Reserve colonel and senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "If one goes down the other will circle" to make sure the pilot is OK and relay the crash location information, Cancian said.

The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter was designed in three variants. There is the F-35A Air Force version and the Navy's F-35C, which is equipped for carrier takeoffs and landings. Then there's the Marine Corps' F-35B variant, which can hover and take off and land vertically like a helicopter. The aircraft involved in Sunday's crash was an F-35B, the Marines said.

Each variant has an ejection seat. The Marine Corps' variant has a specialized seat that can auto eject to better protect pilots in case an incident occurs while the plane is in hover mode.

An F-35B crashed last December in Fort Worth, Texas, while descending in hover mode and the pilot safely ejected.

## Okinawa leader: Bases make island a target

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE  
AND MARI HIGA  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The preponderance of U.S. military bases on Okinawa are a threat to world peace and make the island a potential target, Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki told a United Nations panel this week.

Tamaki, speaking Monday before the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, was seeking international support for his campaign to halt construction of a U.S. military runway in Okinawa's rural northeast, a spokesman for Okinawa prefecture's Henoko Base Construction Countermeasures Division said by phone Wednesday.

The latest in a string of legal counterstrikes, Japan's Supreme Court ruled two weeks ago that Tamaki must approve

construction changes for the runway being built at Marine Corps base Camp Schwab.

The airfield is expected to one day replace Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in densely populated Ginowan city.

"I am here today to ask the world to witness the situation in Okinawa, where the concentration of American bases threatens the peace, and prevents equal participation in decision-making," Tamaki said, according to a transcript on the prefecture's website. He called for "stronger diplomatic efforts" by governments operating in the region.

Tamaki's comments were immediately repudiated by an unnamed Japanese official from the government mission in Geneva, Kyodo news agency reported Tuesday.

## Bears raid doughnut van on Alaska military base

*Associated Press*

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Two bears on an Alaska military base raided a Krispy Kreme doughnut van that was stopped outside a convenience store during its delivery route.

The driver usually left his doors open when he stopped at the store, but this time a sow and one of her cubs that loiter nearby sauntered inside, where they stayed for probably 20 minutes Tuesday morning, said Shelly Deano, the store manager for Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson JMM Express.

The bears chomped on doughnut holes and other pastries, ignoring the banging on the side of the van that was aimed at shooing them away, Deano said.

"I was beating on the van and they're not moving. I could hear

them breaking open the packages and everything," she said. "I was like, 'They don't even care.'"

When the bears couldn't be roused, base security was called and sounded sirens meant to scare away the bears, she said.

The bears eventually came out and wandered in front of the convenience store and gas station a bit before heading into the woods.

It's not unusual to see bears on base or around the store but nothing like this has happened before, Deano said, adding that the delivery driver now closes his doors when he stops at the shop.

Capt. Lexi Smith, a spokesperson at the base, said authorities on base "are aware of this and other wildlife situations throughout the past several months."



# Zelenskyy: Russia has turned food, kids into weapons

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday that Russia is “weaponizing” everything from food and energy to abducted children in its war against Ukraine — and he warned world leaders that the same could happen to them.

“When hatred is weaponized against one nation, it never stops there,” he said at the U.N. General Assembly’s annual top-level meeting. “The goal of the present war against Ukraine is to turn our land, our people, our lives, our resources into weapons against you — against the international rules-based order.”

The war in Ukraine has deepened major global supply disruptions caused by the pandemic, driving a huge spike in food and energy prices, jolting the global economy and increasing hardship in many developing countries.

Decades-old energy supply channels to Europe from Russia, a major oil and gas producer, were halted or severely disrupted by the war due to sanctions, trade disputes, pipeline shutoffs and a major push by Western countries to find alternative sources.

Both Russia and Ukraine also are major grain exporters, and Russia withdrew this past summer from a deal that allowed shipments of Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea.

Zelenskyy pointed to the food and fuel crunches, and he highlighted what Ukraine says were kidnappings of at least tens of thousands of children taken from Ukraine after Moscow’s invasion: “What will happen to

them?”

“Those children in Russia are taught to hate Ukraine, and all ties with their families are broken. And this is clearly a genocide,” Zelenskyy said in remarks that ran 15 minutes — the meeting’s often-disregarded time limit.

The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant in March for Russian President Vladimir Putin and another official, accusing them of abducting children from Ukraine. Russian officials have denied any forced transfers of children, saying some Ukrainian youngsters are in foster care.

Russia gets its chance to address the General Assembly on Saturday. Deputy U.N. Ambassador Dmitry Polyansky sat in Russia’s seat during Zelenskyy’s address.

“Did he speak?” Polyansky said with a wry smile when an Associated Press reporter asked about his reaction to the address. “I didn’t notice he was speaking. I was on my phone.”

Zelenskyy took to the world stage at a sensitive point in his country’s campaign to maintain international support for its fight.

Nearly 19 months after Moscow launched a full-scale invasion, Ukrainian forces are three months into a counteroffensive that has not gone as fast or as well as initially hoped.

Ukraine and its allies cast the country’s cause as a battle for the rule of international law, for the sovereignty of every country with a powerful and potentially expansionist neighbor, and for the stability of global food and energy supplies.

## GOP lawmakers clash with AG on Hunter Biden

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans clashed with Attorney General Merrick Garland on Wednesday, accusing him and the Justice Department of the “weaponization” of the department’s work in favor of President Joe Biden’s son Hunter.

Garland’s appearance before the House Judiciary Committee was the first in two years and came at an unprecedented moment in the department’s history: He’s overseeing two cases against Donald Trump, the first former president to face criminal charges, and another against the sitting president’s son, Hunter Biden.

Republicans on the committee — led by Rep. Jim Jordan, the chairman — came out of the gate with accusations that the Justice Department is protecting the Biden family, while targeting his opponent, Trump.

“There’s one investigation protecting President Biden. There’s another one attacking

President Trump,” Jordan, Republican of Ohio, said in his opening statement. “The Justice Department’s got both sides of the equation covered.”

Garland defended the country’s largest law enforcement agency — more than 115,000 employees — at a time when political and physical threats against agents and their families are on the rise.

“Our job is not to take orders from the president, from Congress, or from anyone else, about who or what to criminally investigate,” the attorney general said.

He added, “I am not the president’s lawyer. I will also add that I am not Congress’ prosecutor. The Justice Department works for the American people.”

Garland’s testimony also comes just over a week after Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., launched an impeachment inquiry into Biden with a special focus on the Justice Department’s handling of Hunter Biden’s case.

## Biden creates New Deal-style American Climate Corps

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — After being thwarted by Congress, President Joe Biden will use his executive authority to create a New Deal-style American Climate Corps that will serve as a major green jobs training program.

In an announcement Wednesday, the White House said the program will employ more than 20,000 young adults who will build trails, plant trees, help install solar panels and do other work to boost conservation and help prevent catastrophic wildfires.

The climate corps had been proposed in early versions of the sweeping climate law approved last year but was jetti-

soned amid strong opposition from Republicans and concerns about cost.

Democrats and environmental advocacy groups never gave up on the plan and pushed Biden in recent weeks to issue an executive order authorizing what the White House now calls the American Climate Corps.

“After years of demonstrating and fighting for a Climate Corps, we turned a generational rallying cry into a real jobs program that will put a new generation to work stopping the climate crisis,” said Varshini Prakash, executive director of the Sunrise Movement, an environmental group that has led the push for a climate corps.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Family: iPhone taped to airplane toilet seat

**MA** BOSTON — The family of a 14-year-old girl who allegedly discovered an iPhone taped to the back of a toilet seat on a recent flight from Charlotte, N.C., to Boston said they believe she was targeted by a member of the crew.

During the Sept. 2 American Airlines flight 1441, the girl was told by a male member of the crew to use the first-class bathroom. The crew member entered just before the 14-year-old, told her the seat was broken but not to worry about it and then reentered the bathroom after she left, her family said in a written statement.

After using the toilet, the girl realized that a largely obscured iPhone had been affixed to the back of the toilet seat, apparently to record her. She took a picture of this with her own phone before leaving the bathroom.

"These events have left our daughter — and entire family — shocked and profoundly disturbed," the family wrote in a statement.

Paul Llewellyn, a lawyer representing the family, said they have not yet filed a lawsuit.

### Prince William views reef restoration project

**NY** NEW YORK — Prince William got a firsthand look at the waters of New York City on Monday on a visit to an oyster reef restoration project, after arriving in the United States for an environmental summit connected to a global competition for solutions to climate change challenges.

William was taken to Gover-

nors Island in New York Harbor to see the efforts of the Billion Oyster Project. The organization is trying to rebuild the oyster reefs that were once abundant in New York waters, and which can help with water filtration and protect against storm damage.

William also met Monday with U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, according to the United Nations. It said the two discussed efforts needed to step up the fight against climate change, as well as ways to finance development and improve implementation of key U.N. goals.

On Tuesday, William addressed attendees of the Earthshot Prize Innovation Summit. He founded the prize, which looks for ways to address problems created by climate change.

### Pilots die in collision shortly after race finish

**NV** RENO — Two veteran California pilots were killed over the weekend when their World War II-era planes collided in midair while preparing to land just after finishing first and second in a title race at the National Championship Air Races north of Reno.

Officials identified the victims of Sunday's crash as Chris Rushing, of Thousand Oaks, and Nick Macy, 67, of Tulare.

Race officials said they were cooperating with the National Transportation Safety Board, the Federal Aviation Administration and local authorities to determine the cause of the crash.

The crash marred the 59th and final year of the National Championship Air Races at the

Reno-Stead Airport.

The deaths brought the number of pilots or performers who have died at the Reno races to 24 since the event began in 1964, along with 10 spectators who died during a crash on the edge of the grandstand in 2011.

### Phoenix track to end live racing, OTB sites closing

**AZ** PHOENIX — Turf Paradise, a racetrack that has been a staple of horse racing in Arizona for decades, announced Monday that it will cease live racing.

Jerry Simms, the longtime owner, announced he is retiring to spend more time with family.

There will be no live racing or simulcasting from the north Phoenix racetrack starting Oct. 1.

This also means the 37 Off Track Betting sites Turf Paradise runs, which make up more than half of OTB sites statewide, will close. OTB sites televise live races and simulcasts from other racetracks nationwide for wagering. They are inside bars and restaurants.

But live racing is a requirement for operating off-track betting facilities.

### Rep. Wexton won't seek reelection after diagnosis

**VA** FALLS CHURCH — U.S. Rep. Jennifer Wexton, a Democrat, announced Monday that she won't seek reelection in her competitive district in the northern Virginia suburbs of Washington after learning she has a severe form of Parkinson's disease.

Wexton announced in April that she had been diagnosed

with Parkinson's and that she planned to continue her work in Congress.

On Monday, she said she received a modified diagnosis of progressive supra-nuclear palsy, which she described as "a kind of 'Parkinson's on steroids.'"

Wexton said she received the new diagnosis after feeling like she wasn't responding well to treatment and noticing that the women in her Parkinson's support group were having a different experience.

She plans to continue serving the rest of her term, which runs through 2024.

### Gator with missing nose, jaw finds home in park

**FL** ORLANDO — A Florida reptile park has taken in an alligator that lost its nose and upper jaw to a fight or boat propeller.

Gatorland Orlando said over the weekend that the injured alligator came from a lake in nearby Sanford, about 20 miles northeast of Orlando.

"She had basically no chance of surviving in the wild with such a severe injury," the park said in a social media post.

Over the next few days, the park's veterinarian staff will be monitoring the gator in an effort to make sure it is eating in a stress-free environment, the park said.

To get the gator to eat, the staff has cut up small pieces of food which they will toss in the back of its throat, believing it had survived in the wild doing the same on its own with snails, slugs and frogs, said Kathy Hernandez, a spokeswoman for the park.

— From wire reports

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and Military News

# Big Ten riding rugged defenses early on

Associated Press

Read the names of the players in the Football Hall of Fame and there is a who's who of Big Ten Conference defensive players — Dick Butkus, Rod Woodson, Ray Nitschke, Alex Karras, Herb Adderley, Charles Woodson and others.

The NFL ranks are loaded with guys who played recently in the Big Ten: Aidan Hutchinson, Joey and Nick Bosa, Micah Parsons, T.J. Watt, Jeff Okudah and Chase Young. There were five first-round defensive picks in the recent draft, led by Illinois cornerback Devon Witherspoon, who was taken fifth overall by Seattle.

Defense has played a vital role in making the Big Ten one of the toughest conferences in the country, and nothing has changed early this season.

Eight of the league's 14 teams are among the top 50 overall defenses in the country; No. 2 Michigan and No. 6 Ohio State are in the top three, each surrendering fewer than 225 yards per game. Three Big Ten teams are in the top 10 in scoring defense, too: Michigan (5.33 points allowed per game), Ohio State (6.67) and

Rutgers (10.0).

Rutgers coach Greg Schiano knew his team's fortunes would rely on the defense living up to his expectations that it could play with any team in the league. It has so far heading into Saturday's game at Michigan in a matchup of two 3-0 teams.

"I think we can play at a much higher level on a defensive front because I think we have enough depth for guys to be fresh," Schiano said. "When you have guys that you have enough people to go out there and play and be fresh, then I expect darn near perfect execution."

Rutgers will need it with Wolverines coach Jim Harbaugh returning from a three-game school-imposed suspension.

Harbaugh said watching the past three games changed some of his perspectives. He said he felt he might have been putting too much on his team to win by 40, or 30 or even 25.

"I want the defense to be the best," he said. "I want the offense to be the best. I want the special teams to be the best. Then I get even more greedy and want each position group to be the best, and each individual players to be the

best. That's where we want to go and what we want to be about and we are going to keep chasing it."

Sometimes the best friend of a good defense is a talented offense.

Ohio State and No. 7 Penn State also rank among the top 20 nationally in both scoring offense and scoring defense. The Buckeyes rank No. 20 in scoring offense (40.3 points), while the Nittany Lions are 14th in scoring offense (43.7 points).

Buckeyes coordinator Jim Knowles feels his defense is limiting explosive plays. Still, he admitted he never feels good about things, adding that he and his players are constantly striving to get better.

"You emphasize the positives, you see things (and) you build on that, and that builds confidence," he said. "So I think, you know, we just need to keep getting better at that confident approach. The more reps you get, the more plays you make those all count like in the bank."

Nebraska (1-2) is playing well in the 3-3-5 scheme new defensive coordinator Tony White brought from Syracuse. The Huskers held Minnesota to 55

yards rushing, and they've allowed an average of 43 yards on the ground through three games. The Huskers have a Power Five-leading 14 sacks.

"This group is playing like a very ferocious unit," defensive back Quinton Newsome said. "No matter if we're subbing guys in or what. It looks the same throughout the game and we just try to go out there and dominate."

Wisconsin has perennially been one of the league's top defensive teams. New coach Luke Fickell and new coordinator Mike Tressel used a 3-3-5 system with Cincinnati, a shift from the Badgers' longtime use of the 3-4 under Jim Leonhard.

The Badgers, who are giving up more yardage this season, went two games without recording a turnover and were minus-5 for the season before forcing six — including five interceptions — in a win over Georgia Southern last weekend.

"Obviously, turnovers are huge," said safety Hunter Wohler, who had two interceptions for Wisconsin (2-1). "That was the emphasis all week. Let it fly and play loose."

## Sanders condemns death threats against player

Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. — Deion Sanders stood up for Henry Blackburn after the Colorado State safety received death threats for a late hit that sent Colorado's two-way star Travis Hunter to the hospital with a lacerated liver.

"That's absurd for people to be threatened," the Colorado coach said Tuesday at his weekly news conference. "I don't mind getting death threats. I get them every week. But a kid, it's not good. He does not deserve a death threat over a game. At the end of the day, this is a game — someone must win, someone must lose. Everybody continues their life the next day. Very unfortunate."

Blackburn delivered a late blow to Hunter's midsection on an incomplete pass in the first quarter of the Rocky Mountain Showdown last weekend. The Rams' senior drew a flag for unsportsmanlike conduct, one of 17

penalties the Rams committed in the 43-35 double-overtime loss to the Buffaloes. Hunter went to the hospital for further evaluation.

Sanders said he has forgiven Blackburn and so have the team and Hunter, who doesn't have a definitive timeline for a return. Sanders added there's no place for the threats directed toward Blackburn and his family.

"Henry Blackburn is a good player who played a phenomenal game," said Sanders, whose 19th-ranked Buffaloes (3-0) travel to No. 10 Oregon on Saturday before hosting No. 5 Southern Cal next week. "He made a tremendous hit on Travis on the sideline. You could call it dirty, you could call it he was just playing the game of football. But whatever it was, it does not constitute that he should be receiving death threats."

Colorado State coach Jay Norvell said Monday that police were involved given the nature of the comments.

"I'm saddened if there's any of our fans, that's on the other side of those threats," Sanders said. "I would hope and pray not, but that kid was just playing (to) the best of his ability. And he made a mistake. ... Let's move on. That kid does not deserve that."

In his online streaming show, Hunter said of Blackburn's hit: "He did what he was supposed to do. It's football. Something bad is going to happen on the field sooner or later. You've got to get up and fight again."

A two-way player, Hunter rarely came off the field for the Buffaloes in wins over TCU and Nebraska. He has an interception and nine tackles on defense. He's also caught 16 passes for 213 yards from quarterback Sheedeur Sanders.



# Blue Jays hold lead for 2nd AL wild card

Associated Press

NEW YORK — George Springer celebrated his 34th birthday with his 57th career leadoff homer, Bo Bichette hit a two-run drive and the Toronto Blue Jays beat the New York Yankees 7-1 on Tuesday night.

Toronto stayed one game ahead of Seattle and Texas for the second AL wild card. The Yankees are seven back in the race for the last playoff berth.

Yusei Kikuchi (10-6) was pulled one batter into the sixth because of a muscle cramp. Kikuchi allowed one run in five-plus innings for his first win since Aug. 2.

**Orioles 9, Astros 5:** Austin Hays had two homers and four RBIs as visiting Baltimore beat slumping Houston, cutting the Astros' lead in the AL West to a half-game over Seattle and Texas.

Houston has lost four of five and six of eight. AL-leading Baltimore has won four straight and has a 2½-game edge over second-place Tampa Bay in the AL East.

**Padres 2, Rockies 0:** Blake Snell lowered his major league-leading ERA to 2.33 and struck out 10 in seven brilliant innings for host San Diego, which took a combined no-hitter into the ninth before beating Colorado.

Xander Bogaerts hit a two-run homer off Tyler Kinley (0-3) with two outs in the ninth to give the

Padres their season-high sixth straight victory.

**Twins 7, Reds 0:** Willi Castro hit a two-run homer and made two spectacular catches in center field, Kenta Maeda and four relievers threw a four-hitter and visiting Minnesota beat Cincinnati to narrow its magic number to clinch a third AL Central title in five seasons down to three.

Cincinnati remained a game behind Chicago for a playoff spot in the NL.

**Rays 6, Angels 2:** Osleivis Basabe hit a tiebreaking two-run double in a four-run eighth inning and playoff-bound Tampa Bay topped visiting Los Angeles.

Randy Arozarena homered for the AL wild card-leading Rays. Yandy Díaz had three hits and Robert Stephenson (3-4) won in relief.

**Marlins 4, Mets 3:** Jake Burger hit a game-winning single in the bottom of the ninth inning and host Miami beat New York after blowing a late lead.

Josh Bell had an early RBI double and Braxton Garrett did not allow an earned run in six stellar innings for the Marlins, who are a half-game behind the Chicago Cubs for the final NL wild card spot.

**Braves 9, Phillies 3:** Ronald Acuña Jr. homered twice on his bobblehead night and stole his 67th base, leaving him one long ball shy of becoming Major

League Baseball's first 40-60 player, and host Atlanta stopped a four-game losing streak.

Bryce Harper hit his 19th homer for Philadelphia, which leads the NL wild-card race.

**Brewers 7, Cardinals 3:** William Contreras homered and Tyronne Taylor scored twice and drove in a run as visiting Milwaukee downed St. Louis.

The Brewers stopped a two-game skid and reduced their magic number to clinch the NL Central to six.

**Diamondbacks 8, Giants 4:** Ketel Marte had four hits, Zac Gallen earned his 16th win and host Arizona won its fourth straight game by beating San Francisco.

The Diamondbacks remained a half-game in front of the Chicago Cubs for the second of three NL wild-card berths. The Giants, who have dropped four of five, fell three games behind the Cubs for the final playoff spot.

**Cubs 14, Pirates 1:** Alexander Canario hit a grand slam for his first major league home run in an eight-run eighth inning, and host Chicago ended a five-game losing streak by routing Pittsburgh.

Cody Bellinger hit a three-run homer later in the eighth for the Cubs, who remained a half-game ahead of Miami for the final NL wild card.

**Mariners 7, Athletics 2:** J.P. Crawford homered in the ninth

inning and Jarrod Kelenic hit two RBI singles to support Luis Castillo's eighth consecutive win, leading Seattle over host Oakland.

Castillo (14-7) has won three straight starts and is 8-0 in his last 12 since a July 14 loss to Detroit. The Mariners remained tied with Texas for the final AL wild card and closed within a half-game of AL West-leading Houston.

**Rangers 6, Red Sox 4:** Josh Jung hit a tiebreaking single in a two-run seventh inning and host Texas beat Boston in its bid for a playoff berth.

Texas, which ended a four-game losing streak, remained tied with Seattle for the third AL wild card. Both teams closed within a half-game of first-place Houston in the AL West.

**Royals 7, Guardians 6:** MJ Melendez homered and drove in three runs, late-season revelation James McArthur struck out three straight batters to end an eighth-inning threat, and Kansas City held off visiting Cleveland.

**Dodgers 3, Tigers 2:** Max Muncy's base hit with two outs in the ninth inning scored Mookie Betts with the winning run, and Los Angeles beat visiting Detroit for its fifth consecutive victory.

**Nationals 4, White Sox 3:** Pinch-hitter Joey Meneses hit a three-run homer in the seventh inning as Washington beat host Chicago.

## After elbow surgery, Ohtani will hit, won't pitch in '24

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Los Angeles Angels star Shohei Ohtani had elbow surgery Tuesday, and his doctor said he expects the two-way star will be available as a hitter on opening day next season and will return to the mound as a pitcher in 2025.

Ohtani tore the ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow on Aug. 23, ending his pitching season. He continued as a batter through Sept. 3 until suffering an oblique strain.

Los Angeles Dodgers head team physician Dr. Neal ElAttrache operated Tuesday at the Cedars-Sinai Kerlan-Jobe Institute in Los An-

geles. He said in a statement that the sides decided to "reinforce the healthy ligament in place," suggesting the UCL wasn't reconstructed via Tommy John surgery. ElAttrache also performed Tommy John surgery on Ohtani on Oct. 1, 2018.

"I had a procedure done on my elbow earlier this morning and everything went very well," Ohtani said in a post on Instagram. "Thank you very much for everyone's prayers and kind words. It was very unfortunate that I couldn't finish out the year on the field, but I will be rooting on the boys until the end. I will work as hard as I can and do my best to come

back on the diamond stronger than ever."

Nez Balelo, Ohtani's agent, issued a statement released by the Angels. Balelo did not go into specifics on the type of surgery.

"The final decision and type of procedure was made with a heavy emphasis on the big picture," Balelo said. "Shohei wanted to make sure the direction taken gave him every opportunity to hit and pitch for many years to come."

Ohtani is eligible for free agency after the World Series. Before the elbow injury, there was speculation he would get a record contract of \$500 million or more.

# Purdy better prepared for Thursday night

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Brock Purdy learned about the difficulties of playing on a short turnaround for a Thursday night game in just his second career start last season.

The typical two days of installation of the game-plan are packed into one, practices are replaced by walkthroughs and there is little time for rest.

"The preparation is just, it's more intense for both teams," Purdy said Tuesday. "You don't get four or five days of preparation to lengthen everything out. You have two days to put it all together and roll."

The process for Purdy headed into Thursday night's home opener against the New York Giants is a bit easier than what he went through last season at Seattle when he didn't know if he'd even be able to play because of a broken rib until just before the game started.

"Last year the main focus was 'Will I be able to throw

come Thursday?' Obviously, I didn't throw a ball for three days," he said. "So now it's like, all right, now I can hone into the plays, the details of the operations of the offense, all that stuff. Not worrying about the broken rib."

That performance through an injury when Purdy went 17 for 25 for 217 yards and two TDs in a key division win helped to establish Purdy as the Niners' No. 1 quarterback.

He has only built from there and comes into this week's game having won all 10 games he has played when he has thrown at least 10 passes. His only loss as a starter in the NFL came in the NFC title game when he injured his elbow on the first drive and couldn't throw the ball past the line of scrimmage after returning in the second half.

Coach Kyle Shanahan said he didn't need to see Purdy play through the injury in Seattle to have confidence in him,

saying the way Purdy handled himself that entire week just reinforced what he knew.

"That's what was cool talking to him that whole week because he is not a guy who just tells you what you want to hear, like, 'Yes coach, I'll be ready. I'm fine.' And then they get to the game and they're not ready," Shanahan said. "Brock was honest with us all week and I knew there was times he didn't think he'd be able to and he was going to be honest with us. But when it got close to kickoff, he was like, 'Hey, I think I could do this. Let me try.' Then he tried. As the first quarter went, he gained confidence and so did we as it went."

The Niners' confidence in Purdy has only grown since that night in Seattle as he continues to produce at an extremely efficient rate — even after returning from offseason elbow surgery.

Purdy has completed 66.7%

of his passes so far this season, with two TDs, no turnovers and an average of 7.9 yards per attempt.

An offense that was performing well last season under Jimmy Garoppolo has been even better under Purdy, scoring at least 30 points in eight of the 10 games when he has been healthy.

Shanahan didn't hold back on what he asked Purdy to do as a rookie last year, and nothing major has changed early this season.

"He knows that I can handle what he's had with Jimmy the last couple years and what we did last year," Purdy said. "Nothing really changed. And so that's really how it's been this year. There hasn't been a drastic change of, 'All right, we're going to add more to his plate since he's playing more or anything like that.' It's been about the same. That's how this offense has rolled and that's how we've done it."

# Browns bring back RB Hunt after Chubb is injured

Associated Press

BEREA, Ohio — Kareem Hunt ran right back to the Browns.

Desperate to find a quality running back after losing star Nick Chubb for the season, the Browns have reunited with Hunt, who was available as a free agent and is expected to be able to help Cleveland's offense immediately.

The team is giving Hunt a one-year deal worth up to \$4 million, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press. Hunt's deal includes numerous incentives, said the person who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the team is not making the terms public.

A Cleveland-area native, Hunt spent four seasons with the Browns before the team de-

cided not to re-sign him this offseason. His departure came following a turbulent 2022 during which he asked for a new contract and to be traded.

Because he already knows the system, the 28-year-old Hunt can step right in and likely will play Sunday when the Browns (1-1) host the Tennessee Titans (1-1).

Hunt will back up Jerome Ford, who came off the bench and ran for 106 yards Monday after Chubb got hurt. Hunt visited several teams over the summer but ultimately decided to stay in the area and was available.

Hunt visited the Browns on Tuesday and the sides quickly worked out a deal.

Chubb is facing more surgery on his left knee after tearing ligaments when he was hit by

Pittsburgh safety Minkah Fitzpatrick. The four-time Pro Bowler sustained a major injury to the same knee in 2015 when he played at Georgia.

The team placed Chubb on injured reserve.

Hunt and Chubb once gave the Browns the top 1-2 running back tandem in the NFL. Hunt rushed for 1,874 yards and 16 touchdowns in four seasons with Cleveland. He was also effective as a pass catcher, getting 211 receptions for 1,806 yards.

Hunt led the league in rushing as a rookie in 2017 for Kansas City. His career took a turn the following year after video surfaced of him pushing a woman in the hallway of a hotel in downtown Cleveland.

He was suspended for the first eight games in 2019.

Hunt had a turbulent 2022 season with the Browns. Unable to get a new contract, he drew the ire of coaches by sitting out drills in training camp. Hunt wound up playing in all 17 games, but wasn't as effective while running for 468 yards and adding 210 receiving.

## Panthers LB Thompson to miss rest of season

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Carolina Panthers linebacker Shaq Thompson has a broken right leg and is expected to miss the remainder of the season, according to coach Frank Reich.

Thompson underwent surgery on Tuesday to fix a fractured fibula he sustained in the first quarter of Carolina's 20-17 loss to the New Orleans Saints on Monday night. He has been placed on injured reserve.