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Northern Iowa returns to NCAA Tournament for first time in decade

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Trump administration ramps up hiring after slashing federal jobs

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# STARS AND STRIPES

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## Lawmakers who served are vocal in war debate

By STEPHEN GROVES  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As Congress responds to President Donald Trump's attack on Iran, lawmakers who served on the front lines of Iraq and Afghanistan are making their voices heard in a war debate that has taken on intensely personal meaning.

Many admit mixed feelings, taking satisfaction in seeing vengeance taken on the leadership of an Iranian regime that has targeted U.S. service members for decades, yet fearful that another generation of soldiers could soon face the same combat experiences that they did.



Gallego

"Do I take gratification? You know there's the Marine side of me: Yeah, of course," said Arizona Democratic Sen. Ruben Gallego, whose company suffered some of the heaviest losses on the U.S. side during the Iraq War. "I know they killed a lot of American soldiers, American Marines. But do I also understand that I have a responsibility not to let my lust for revenge drive my country into another war?"

Experiences in the post 9/11 wars are also coloring the decisions of the Trump administration, given that top officials, including Vice President JD Vance and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, were once deployed to Iraq.

Gallego, like others on Capitol Hill, leaned heavily on his firsthand experience of fighting in the wars after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks as he assessed the Iran con-

SEE WAR ON PAGE 9



VAHID SALEMI/AP

People wave Iranian flags as they hold posters of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, showing him at different ages, during a rally to support his son Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, who succeeds his father as the new supreme leader, in Tehran, Iran, on Monday.

# Defiant Iran picks leader

Signaling no letup in war, oil prices surge as infrastructures attacked

By JON GAMBRELL,  
DAVID RISING AND SAMY MAGDY  
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran named the hard-line Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei to succeed his late father as supreme leader on Monday, signaling no letup in the war launched by the United States and Israel.

Oil prices surged as Iran attacked regional energy infrastructure and the U.S. and Israel bombed targets across Iran.

The secretive 56-year-old cleric has close ties to the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard,

## RELATED

US Army sergeant dies a week after Iran attacked air base in Saudi Arabia  
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which has been firing missiles and drones at Israel and Gulf Arab states since Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who had ruled Iran for 37 years, was killed during the war's opening salvo.

The appointment marked a new sign of defiance by Iran's embattled leadership after more than a week of heavy U.S. and Israeli bombardment, suggesting Tehran is not close to giving up on what it considers a fight for the Islamic theocracy's survival.

World markets plummeted and Brent crude oil, the international standard, surged to nearly \$120 a barrel Monday, about 65% higher than when the war started, before retreating.

Iran's attacks in the Strait of Hormuz have

SEE DEFIANT ON PAGE 9

# BUSINESS/WEATHER

## DOJ, Live Nation reach settlement over monopoly case

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Justice Department lawyers announced Monday that they'd reached a settlement in their antitrust lawsuit against Ticketmaster and its parent company, Live Nation Entertainment, in a case that alleged an illegal monopoly over live events in America. But it remained possible that some states might continue a trial on their own.

The announcement by the Justice Department at the start of the trial in federal court in Manhattan was greeted angrily by Judge Arun Sub-

ramanian, who said no one informed him of the tentative deal until late Sunday even though a term sheet for a possible settlement was signed on Thursday.

Adam Gitlin, a lawyer for the District of Columbia, said the states were requesting a mistrial, although Texas had expressed "serious concerns" about the deal between the U.S. and Live Nation and states have not yet agreed to the deal. David Marriott, a lawyer for Live Nation, said the company opposed a mistrial and believed it

should proceed.

It comes as the two sides face trial in New York over whether to dismantle the monopoly the Justice Department said was squelching competition and driving up prices for fans.

The case, brought under President Joe Biden's administration in 2024, accused Live Nation of using threats, retaliation and other tactics to "suffocate the competition" by controlling virtually every aspect of the industry, from concert promotion to ticketing.

### EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (March 10)	0.84	Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3748
British pound (March 10)	1.30	Britain (Pound)	1.3373
Japanese yen (March 10)	153.00	Canada (Dollar)	1.3571
South Korean won (March 10)	1439.00	China (Yuan)	6.8965
		Denmark (Krone)	6.4517
		Egypt (Pound)	52.7548
		Euro	0.8637
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8161
		Hungary (Forint)	340.671
		Israel (Shekel)	3.1057
		Japan (Yen)	158.346
		Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3073
		Norway (Krone)	9.6630
		Philippines (Peso)	59.458
		Poland (Zloty)	3.6925
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7501
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.2788
		South Korea (Won)	1484.13
Switzerland (Franc)	0.7790		
Thailand (Baht)	32.042		
Turkey (NewLira)	44.0798		

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

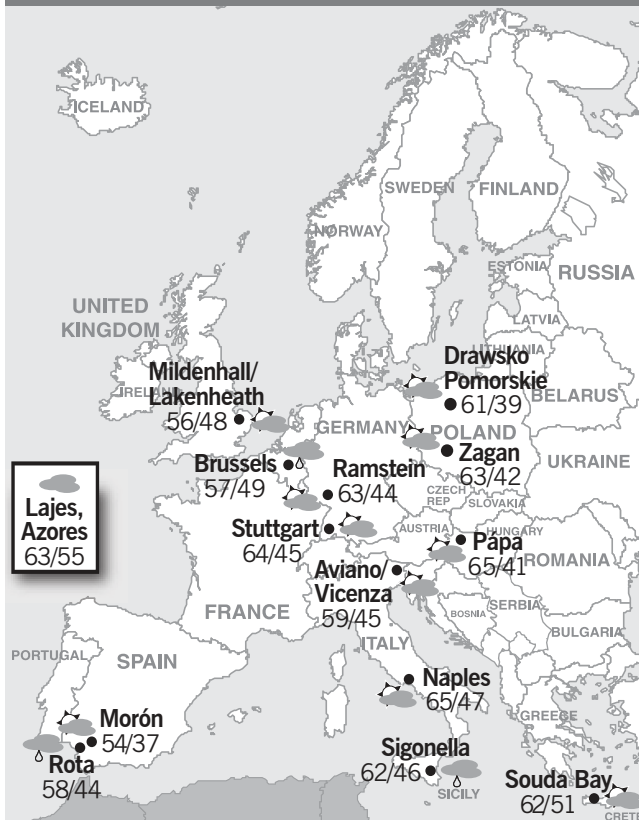
INTEREST RATES	
Prime rate	6.75
Interest Rates Discount rate	3.75
Federal funds market rate	3.62
3-month bill	3.66
30-year bond	4.76

### WEATHER OUTLOOK

#### TUESDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



#### TUESDAY IN EUROPE



#### WEDNESDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is compiled from weather.com reports.

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## STARS AND STRIPES

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## MILITARY

# Russia expanding forces near NATO borders

By JOHN VANDIVER  
Stars and Stripes

Russia continues to add new military units near NATO's eastern flank, according to a new threat assessment that warns against easing Western sanctions on the Kremlin.

More military firepower is how allies can deter potential conflict with Russia, according to the latest annual report by the Lithuanian intelligence service.

New naval infantry units and additional capabilities are being developed in the highly fortified Russian exclave of Kaliningrad and elsewhere, Lithuania's report said.

"According to these plans, brigades along the eastern borders of NATO countries are being expanded into divisions and completely new military units are being formed," the threat assessment stated.

Russia is now setting up a new missile brigade armed with Iskander-M missile complexes in its western military district along with an upgraded radar in Kaliningrad that will increase the Russians' ability to monitor airspace



REGINA KOESTERS/U.S. Army

**Lithuanian soldiers train on the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS, alongside U.S. soldiers in Pabrade, Lithuania, on Jan. 13. Russia is increasing its military presence along NATO's eastern flank, according to a recent report from Lithuania's intelligence service.**

at thousands of miles into the distance, Lithuania's report said.

Kaliningrad borders two NATO allies, Lithuania and Poland. On the heels of Russia's full-scale in-

vasion of Ukraine in 2022, Poland established a permanent U.S. Army base in Poznan to supplement rotational American troops at other installations.

However, despite Russia's efforts to enhance its position, its ability to challenge NATO still hinges on developments in Ukraine, the report said.

If the war winds down and Western financial pressure on Russia is lifted, Moscow would be in a position to ramp up again, the report said.

"Reduced Western pressure on Moscow would accelerate Russia's preparations for conflict with NATO," the report concluded.

In the event of a Russia-Ukraine peace deal or the lifting of sanctions, the pace of Russia's military buildup would increase faster. In that scenario, Russia would be prepared for limited military action in the Baltic region within one to two years. For a large-scale war with NATO, Russia needs between six and 10 years to prepare, the report said.

NATO leaders have repeatedly talked about the need for allies to prepare in anticipation of a Russian buildup aimed at challenging the alliance.

In recent years, NATO members have boosted their defense spending, and allies agreed in 2025 to a demand from President Donald Trump that members boost defense expenditure to 5% of gross domestic product, up from the previous 2% benchmark.

## DOD official says he clashed with Anthropic over autonomous warfare

By MATT O'BRIEN  
Associated Press

A top Pentagon official said Anthropic's dispute with the government over the use of its artificial intelligence technology in fully autonomous weapons came after a debate over how AI could be used in President Donald Trump's future Golden Dome missile defense program, which aims to put U.S. weapons in space.

Defense Undersecretary Emil Michael, the Pentagon's chief technology officer, said he came to view the AI company's ethical restrictions on the use of its chatbot Claude as an irrational obstacle as the U.S. military pursues giving greater autonomy to swarms of armed drones, underwater vehicles and other machines to compete with rivals like China that could do the same.

"I need a reliable, steady partner that gives me something, that'll work with me on autonomous, because someday it'll be real and we're starting to see earlier versions of that," Michael said in a podcast aired Friday. "I need someone who's not going to wig out in the middle."

The comments came after the Pentagon formally designated San Francisco-based Anthropic a supply chain risk, cutting off its defense work using a rule designed to prevent foreign adversaries from harming national security systems.

Anthropic filed two separate lawsuits Monday, one in California federal court and another in the federal appeals court in Washington, D.C., each challenging different aspects of the Pentagon's actions against the company.

The designation affects its business partnerships with other military contractors.

Trump has also ordered federal agencies to immediately stop using Claude, though the Republican president gave the Pentagon six months to phase out a product that's deeply embedded in classified military systems, including those used in the Iran war.

Anthropic said it only sought to restrict its technology from being used for two high-level usages: mass surveillance of Americans or fully autonomous weapons.

Michael, a former Uber executive, revealed his side of months-long talks with Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei in a lengthy conversation with Silicon Valley venture capitalists Jason Calacanis, David Friedberg and Chamath Palihapitiya, co-hosts of the "All-In" podcast.

A fourth co-host, former PayPal executive David Sacks, is now Trump's AI czar and was not present for the episode but has been a vocal critic of Anthropic, including for its hiring of former Biden administration officials shortly after Trump returned to the White House

last year.

As talks hit an impasse last week, Michael lashed out at Amodei on social media, saying he "has a God-complex" and "wants nothing more than to try to personally control" the military. In the podcast, however, he positioned the dispute as part of a broader military shift toward using AI.

Michael said the military is developing procedures for enabling different levels of autonomy in warfare depending on the risk posed.

"This is part of the debate I had with Anthropic, which is we need AI for things like Golden Dome," Michael said, sharing a hypothetical scenario of the U.S. having only 90 seconds to respond to a Chinese hypersonic missile.

A human anti-missile operator "may not be able to discriminate with their own eyes what they're going after," but an autonomous counterattack would be a low risk "because it's in space and you're just trying to hit something that's trying to get you."

In response to the podcast comments, Anthropic pointed to an earlier Amodei statement saying "Anthropic understands that the Department of War, not private companies, makes military decisions. We have never raised objections to particular military operations nor attempted to limit use of our technology in an ad hoc manner."

## US kills 6 in strike on alleged drug boat in eastern Pacific Ocean

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military said it killed six men Sunday in a strike on an alleged drug-smuggling vessel in the eastern Pacific Ocean as part of the Trump administration's campaign against alleged traffickers.

Sunday's attack brought the death toll to at least 157 people since the Trump administration began targeting those it calls "narcoterrorists" in small vessels in early September.

As with most of the military's statements on the more than 40 known strikes in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea, U.S. Southern Command said it targeted alleged drug traffickers along known smuggling routes. The military did not provide evidence that the vessel was ferrying drugs. It posted a video on X that showed a small boat being blown up as it floated on the water.

President Donald Trump has said the U.S. is in "armed conflict" with cartels in Latin America and has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs into the United States. But his administration has offered little evidence to support its claims of killing "narcoterrorists."

In a meeting with Latin American leaders on Saturday, Trump encouraged them to join the U.S. in taking military action against drug-trafficking cartels and transnational gangs, which he said pose an "unacceptable threat" to the region's national security.

To that end, Ecuador and the United States conducted military operations this past week against organized crime groups in the South American country.

With Saturday's gathering, Trump aimed to demonstrate that he remains committed to focusing U.S. foreign policy on the Western Hemisphere, even while waging a war on Iran that has had repercussions across the Middle East.

Critics have questioned the overall legality of the boat strikes as well as their effectiveness, in part because the fentanyl behind many fatal overdoses is typically trafficked to the U.S. over land from Mexico, where it is produced with chemicals imported from China and India.

The boat strikes also drew intense criticism following the revelation that the military killed survivors of the very first boat attack with a follow-up strike.

## MILITARY

# DODEA plans for fewer four-day weekends

By JENNIFER H. SVAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

Significant changes are coming to the academic calendar for students in Defense Department schools overseas, as all four-day weekends are gone and the third quarter is to start earlier.

The revisions were announced last week, when the Department of Defense Education Activity released its 2026-27 academic calendar for schools in the Europe and Pacific regions.

Four school holidays were removed for the first semester, which concludes prior to winter break. Also, most schools in Europe and the Pacific will start summer break on June 3, 2027, about a week earlier than they do this year.

The four previously scheduled school holidays that were removed are on the Fridays before the federal holidays of Columbus Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Washington's Birthday and Memorial Day.

Students will have three-day weekends at those times rather than four-day weekends. Many military families use long weekends to travel, with local commands typically giving service members a "family day" or "training holiday" on some or all of those Fridays, subject to mission requirements.



NATHAN CARPENTER/U.S. Navy

**A teacher explains the day's schedule to her students in her classroom at Naval Air Station Rota, Spain, in May 2023. Department of Defense Education Activity released its 2026-27 academic calendar last week.**

The two school holidays before and after Thanksgiving remain unchanged, DODEA spokeswoman Jessica Tackaberry said in a statement Monday.

The number of instructional and teacher work days remains the same, at 175 and 190, respec-

tively, according to a comparison of the calendars.

There are four "professional learning days" and four teacher-only work days, similar to the current school year calendar. Students don't go to school on those days.

DODEA schools in Europe that follow separate calendars will continue to adhere to those schedules "due to location and other factors," Tackaberry said, without naming which ones.

This year, Garmisch-Partenkirchen in southern Germany,

Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Belgium and AFNORTH Middle High School in Brunssum, Netherlands, are among those with separate calendars, according to the DODEA website.

The first and last days of school will be standard across Europe, with classes starting Aug. 17 and ending June 2, 2027, Tackaberry said. This year, classes end June 9.

Pacific schools will start and end on the same dates as Europe schools, with those in South Korea being an exception. Schools there will begin on Aug. 12 and end on May 28, 2027.

"The earlier start date helps align with annual military activities and gives parents the opportunity to be present and engaged as their children begin the school year," Tackaberry said.

DODEA operates 161 schools for more than 60,000 children of service members and civilian employees stationed overseas and in some stateside locations.

At DODEA schools in the United States, the district superintendent establishes the academic calendar, which typically aligns with the local education community, according to DODEA. Those school calendars are not yet published on DODEA's website.

## Meteor's flash in skies above US bases raised fears of attack

By PHILLIP WALTER  
WELLMAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — A bright fireball seen above the largest U.S. military base in Europe and other nearby installations that some witnesses mistook for a rocket was in fact a meteor, German authorities said.

Officials in the state of Rheinland-Pfalz — home to Ramstein Air Base, Spangdahlem Air Base and dozens of U.S. Army installations — said they had received emergency calls Sunday reporting a bright streak of light in the sky and a loud bang.

"The event is not related to any military activity," the Office for Fire and Disaster Protection said in a statement that evening, adding that there were no reports of injuries, just isolated property damage.

The sighting came as Europe remains on heightened alert amid the escalating conflict in the Middle East between Iran and the joint forces of the U.S. and Israel.

Since the war began Feb. 28, Iran has carried out retaliatory attacks against numerous U.S. bases



DAVID McNALLY/U.S. Army

**A Martian meteorite is housed at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.**

and allies in the Middle East with missiles and drones.

Tens of thousands of U.S. service members, civilians and family members at Ramstein and other installations in Rheinland-Pfalz make up the Kaiserslautern Military Community, the largest American military community outside the United States.

Witnesses in other German states with U.S. military installations, including Baden-Württemberg and Hesse, also said on social media that they had seen the fire-

ball.

Observers across Germany, Belgium, France and the Netherlands shared reports and visuals on the International Meteor Organization's fireball reporting system, which collects sightings worldwide.

The meteor broke apart in the atmosphere, with fragments reaching the ground around 7:15 p.m. local time, state officials said.

Callers reported seeing "a brightly lit object with a brief flash of fire in the sky," a separate statement Sunday by Kaiserslautern police said.

"Based on current police findings and in consultation with military police at Ramstein Air Base, there is no indication of a safety-related incident," the statement said.

In Koblenz, a city about 85 miles north of Ramstein, fragments of the meteor struck the roof of a residential building, creating a hole about the size of a soccer ball, German public broadcaster SWR reported, citing local police.

The residents were in another room at the time of impact and no one was injured, SWR said.



REBECCA C./International Meteor Organization

**A meteor is seen over Alsdorf, Germany, on Feb. 8.**

PACIFIC

# US and Japanese marines conclude Iron Fist exercise

BY BRIAN McELHINEY AND KEISHI KOJA  
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HANSEN, Okinawa — U.S. Marines and their Japanese counterparts practiced seizing an enemy-held town during the culmination of a three-week exercise aimed at strengthening the allies' defense of remote islands.

About 50 members of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit's Battalion Landing Team and roughly the same number of Japanese soldiers were flown Friday on MV-22 Ospreys and CH-47 Chinook helicopters to surround and seize Combat Town, a mock urban training site in Camp Hansen's

Central Training Area. The drill marked the first time forces conducted simulated enemy combat during this year's Iron Fist exercise, an Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade spokesman, Maj. Kenichi Nakashima, told Stars and Stripes between helicopter landings.

The annual training includes amphibious assaults, maritime maneuvers and ground combat drills at multiple locations across Japan and concluded Monday.

"Days like this show how our planning works and how our execution works together," 1st Lt. Giovanni Jimenez, spokesman for the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Bri-



PHOTOS BY RYAN M. BREEDEN/Stars and Stripes

**U.S. Marines depart an MV-22 Osprey while training with Japanese soldiers to seize an enemy-held town on Camp Hansen, Okinawa, on Friday. The drill was part of the annual Iron Fist exercise.**

gade, said between landings.

The scenario's ground operation began at 8 a.m., Nakashima said, with additional forces advancing toward the area from the rear.

The first wave of Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade troops — a Japan Ground Self-Defense Force unit established in 2018 and modeled partly on the U.S. Marine Corps — landed in two helicopters around 2 p.m. A second wave arrived about 15 minutes later.

The troops disembarked and moved into the tree line to establish a perimeter around the training site.

The first wave of Marines arrived in two Ospreys about an hour later and advanced closer to the mock town. As one aircraft took off, hot exhaust from the

tiltrotor's engines ignited a small brush fire in the landing zone. Marines quickly extinguished the flames.

"Nothing was wrong with the engine ... the wind that's generated from the engine is hot enough to ignite a fire with very, very dry and flammable grass," Jimenez said.

Two more Ospreys were scheduled to bring a second wave of Marines about 15 minutes later, but only one aircraft landed. Jimenez said he did not know why the other Osprey did not arrive at the landing zone.

The exercise was to include two Japanese V-22 Ospreys operating for the first time out of U.S. facilities on Okinawa.

However, Japan decided to halt training with the tiltrotor aircraft

on the island, a Japan Ground Staff spokesman told Stars and Stripes on Feb. 19. Some Japanese government officials must speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

Training at Hansen began Feb. 27 with amphibious beach landings before shifting to the Central Training Area later in the exercise, according to training documents from Japan's Ministry of Defense.

Nakashima said Japanese troops have gained confidence through years of training alongside U.S. Marines.

"When we started Iron Fist, we learned a lot from the Marines, and it felt like we were the students and they were the teachers," he said. "But now we're finally on an equal footing."



**A Japan Ground Self-Defense Force soldier takes his position during an Iron Fist landing and combat training drill.**

## USAF commander's last-minute recall forces Marines to adapt at Cobra Gold

BY ALEX WILSON  
Stars and Stripes

CAMP RED HORSE, Thailand — A key combat drill during this year's Cobra Gold exercise nearly unraveled after the lead planner was abruptly reassigned, a decision officials declined to explain and one that forced Marines to scramble to salvage the training.

The disruption came roughly 72 hours before Cobra Gold's March 2 maritime strike drill, one of the exercise's most complex scenarios, which simulates the defense of a beachhead from a coordinated air- and sea-assault.

The air mission commander assigned to the operation was suddenly recalled to his home base because of what officials described only as "other operational commitments," Master Sgt. Matthew Hall, operations chief for Task Force Ashland, said in a

phone interview Saturday. "That's all he could speak to at this classification level," said Hall, whose task force is made up of about 200 Marines and sailors from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit out of Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Officials declined to elaborate on the decision, or whether it involved moving Indo-Pacific assets to U.S. Central Command, which is overseeing U.S. operations in Iran.

"We don't have anything to offer you on this," a spokesperson for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, who did not identify himself, said in a Thursday email to Stars and Stripes.

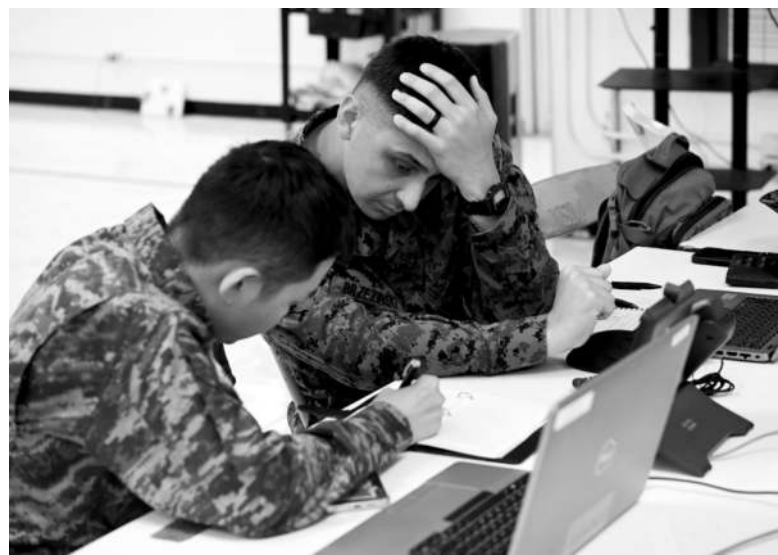
INDOPACOM and U.S. Central Command did not respond to emailed questions sent Thursday. Cobra Gold spokespeople also said they could not provide addi-

tional details. With the drill at risk of cancellation, Hall said the 15th MEU brought in its own air command officers from Manila with less than three days' notice to oversee the mission.

"That's what the Marine Corps is known for," he said. "Being able to be flexible and adapt on a short timeline, short situations, to accomplish a mission."

The drill included surprise attacks on escort ships, coastal artillery defense, aerial assaults on naval targets and attacks on unmanned drone systems, according to a Thai presentation made before the training began.

A variety of warships and aircraft participated, including the U.S. dock landing ship USS Ashland and U.S. P-8 Poseidon and Apache helicopters. On shore, a U.S. M142 High Mobility Artillery



ALEX WILSON/Stars and Stripes

**U.S. and South Korean marines consult ahead of a Cobra Gold maritime strike drill in Rayong, Thailand, on March 2.**

Rocket System and a Thai 155-mm coastal artillery also participated.

This year's Cobra Gold, which began Feb. 24 and concluded Friday, brought together about 8,000 troops from 30 countries for train-

ing across Thailand. The annual exercise, founded in 1982, includes amphibious assaults, humanitarian assistance operations, cyber-defense drills and other multinational training events.

## PACIFIC

# Boat capsizes at Camp Henoko construction site

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY  
AND KEISHI KOJA  
*Stars and Stripes*

Eight crew members were rescued unharmed over the weekend after a work boat capsized at the construction site of a new U.S. Marine Corps airfield in northern Okinawa, Japan's coast guard said.

The 31-foot vessel overturned around 9:40 a.m. Saturday near Cape Henoko while crews were working to untangle anchor lines from other work boats, according to a news release that day from the coast guard's Nakagusuku office.

The accident occurred roughly 2,000 feet offshore.

All eight crew members were pulled from the water by a nearby vessel before their boat had fully sunk, a coast guard spokesman said Monday.

Authorities deployed an oil containment barrier around the vessel and reported a small amount of floating oil that later dispersed, according to the release.

A crane barge lifted the capsized boat from the water shortly after 3 p.m., the coast guard said.

The cause of the accident remains under investigation.

The incident occurred at the site of a long-contested airfield being built in Henoko to replace Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, a base in the densely populated city of Ginowan.

The relocation project has been a persistent source of political tension on Okinawa, where many residents oppose the construction despite support from the Japanese government.

Construction of the replacement airfield is expected to last until at least 2033 and cost nearly \$6 billion, according to Japan's Ministry of Defense.

Officials say the runway may become operational somewhere around 2036.

Work to stabilize the soft seabed of Oura Bay began in late 2024, when contractors started driving tens of thousands of sand piles needed before land reclamation can begin.

As of late January, about 4,700 of the roughly 71,000 piles required for the project had been installed, a spokesman for the prefecture's Seashore Disaster Prevention Division said by phone Monday.

Some Japanese government officials speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.



Nago, Okinawa

A Marine Corps UH-1Y Venom helicopter makes a landing near the Kyoda Baseball Field on Friday.

## Baseball team evacuates field as Marine helicopter lands nearby

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY  
AND KEISHI KOJA  
*Stars and Stripes*

NAGO, Okinawa — This city in northern Okinawa has lodged a formal protest after a U.S. Marine Corps helicopter made a precautionary landing near a youth baseball practice last week, prompting players to evacuate the field.

The UH-1Y Venom landed at about 8:20 p.m. Friday in a grassy area next to Kyoda Baseball Field in Nago after the pilot received an onboard warning, according to Maj. Joseph Butterfield, a spokesman for the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.

The landing site was separated from the baseball field by a roughly 4-foot-high fence. The Venom landed about 50 feet from the fenceline, a photo from Nago city indicates.

The aircraft — assigned to Ma-

rine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369 under the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing based in Oceanside, Calif. — had been conducting routine training when the warning occurred, Butterfield said by email Monday. No injuries or property damage were reported.

Nago Mayor Taketoyo Toguchi on Monday submitted a protest and request letter to Masaru Murai, director of the Okinawa Defense Bureau, a regional arm of Japan's Ministry of Defense, an official with the city's Disaster Prevention and Base Countermeasures Section said.

The youth baseball team had been practicing at the field when the helicopter landed nearby, Toguchi wrote in the letter.

"One wrong move could have resulted in a catastrophic loss of life, and the anxiety it caused

among the residents is unacceptable," the letter said.

The city asked the U.S. military to investigate the incident, implement measures to prevent similar occurrences and establish a system to notify local authorities if an emergency landing becomes necessary.

The Marine Corps said the pilot's decision to land reflected standard safety procedures.

After an inspection, the helicopter was cleared to fly and returned to Marine Corps Air Station Futenma later that night, he said.

The aircraft left the field at 10:41 p.m. and landed at MCAS Futenma roughly 10 minutes later, a spokeswoman for the prefecture's Military Base Affairs Division said by phone Monday.

The helicopter was not carrying weapons or hazardous materials, she added.

## Air Force extends comment period for Maui telescope project

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

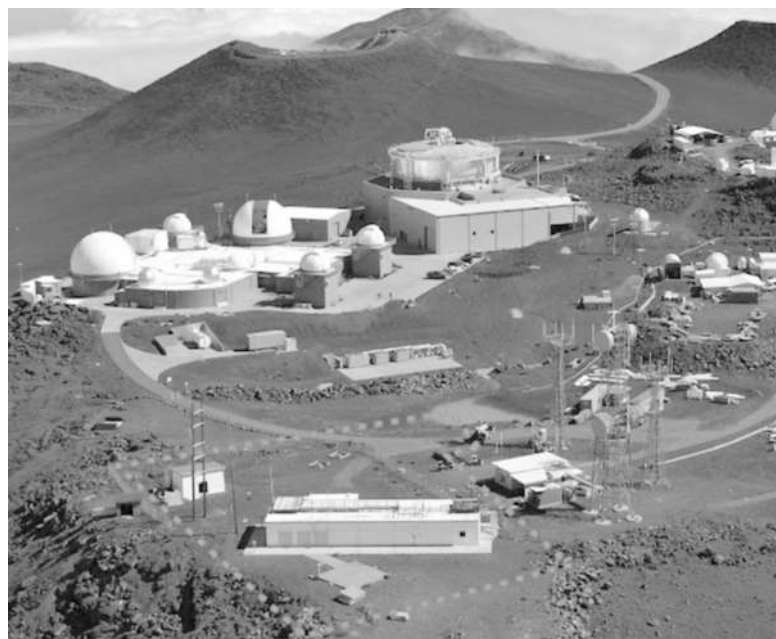
The Air Force has extended the public comment period for a controversial plan to add up to seven telescopes on a small parcel atop a Maui mountain regarded as sacred by some Native Hawaiians.

The comment period will increase from 45 to 75 days, or until April 15, for the draft environmental impact statement for the proposed Air Force Maui Optical Small Telescope Advanced Research facility, the service said in a news release Thursday.

The proposed telescope project would "enhance satellite tracking and communication, making it possible to characterize, catalog, and track tens of thousands of space objects," according to the release.

Haleakala, a dormant volcano, provides high elevation, little artificial light and minimal weather impact," the Air Force said.

The extension came because of feedback, much of it negative, during public hearings held on



U.S. Air Force

The proposed telescope facility would be built in the area around the rectangular building at the bottom center in this photo of the Maui Space Surveillance Complex atop Haleakala.

Maui in February regarding the 516-page draft statement.

"It is imperative for us to re-

main engaged, receptive, and transparent with community members," Space Force Lt. Col.

Doug Thornton, commander of 15th Space Surveillance Squadron, said in the release.

The squadron operates the Maui Space Surveillance Complex atop the 10,000-foot summit of Haleakala.

"As we move through this process, we will continue to have respectful engagements and value the feedback we receive," Thornton said.

The telescopes would be confined to a parcel smaller than an acre and adjacent to the surveillance complex.

The site is under the jurisdiction of the Federal Aviation Administration.

Squadron leaders faced blistering opposition during the public hearings.

"This has nothing to do with science," Lisa Galloway testified at the Feb. 17 hearing, according to a report by Hawaii News Now that day.

"It is about your continued desecration of our land," she said. "You're here on stolen land."

Ancient Native Hawaiians regarded the peak to be the navel, or center, of Maui, with cultural resources in the area dating back more than 1,000 years.

The peak is still regarded as being sacred by some Native Hawaiians.

Another speaker told the officials that the military "does not have a good record here," according to Hawaii News Now.

About 700 gallons of diesel fuel spilled at the surveillance complex in January 2023.

Remediation of the spill site is ongoing.

On Oahu, a massive jet fuel spill near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in late 2021 contaminated drinking water for tens of thousands of residents living in military housing.

Controversy has raged for years on the Big Island over telescopes on top of Mauna Kea overseen by the University of Hawaii.

The draft environmental impact statement for the Maui project is at [www.amosstareis.com](http://www.amosstareis.com).

MILITARY

# Coast Guard to convert college for training

BY GARY WARNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Department of Homeland Security announced Wednesday that it planned to purchase the 1926-acre campus of the former Birmingham-Southern College to use as a new Coast Guard training center.

“We must invest in our most valuable treasure — our people — to meet the increasingly complex maritime security challenges facing the nation,” said Adm. Kevin E. Lunday, the commandant of the Coast Guard.

No sale price was announced. The 168-year-old college closed in May 2024 and has been vacant since.

Alabama A&M had previously offered \$52 million for the campus in a deal that did not advance to a sale, according to the college.

The Coast Guard hopes to begin using the campus later this year.

The Coast Guard’s only enlisted basic training is held at the Coast Guard Training Center in Cape May, N.J. Prospective officers attend the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn.

Then-Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said in a statement Wednesday that a second recruit training facility was needed because the Coast Guard has reached 110% of its recruiting goal and is planning to add 15,000 new service members by 2028.

“This next generation of heroes



Birmingham-Southern College

**The former Birmingham-Southern College campus in Alabama will become a new U.S. Coast Guard training facility, the Department of Homeland Security announced Wednesday. The financially struggling college closed in May 2024. The Coast Guard says it plans to begin using the facilities later this year.**

deserves training centers and support facilities worthy of their mission, and that is exactly what they are going to have in Alabama,” Noem said.

Coast Guard recruits undergo an eight-week basic training program similar to that of the other services. They are given a copy of

“The Helmsman,” which the Coast Guard calls “a guide to boot camp.”

New arrivals receive an orientation, uniforms, an entrance fitness test and they meet commanders and instructors.

Recruits are taught the regulations, traditions and history of the

Coast Guard.

Instruction also includes classroom work on firearms, seamanship, firefighting, damage control and first aid.

About halfway through training, recruits state their preferences for available assignments, locations and unit types.

First assignment orders are sent out to recruits near the end of basic training. Nearly all recruits start as an unspecialized seaman or fireman.

Later, Coast Guard members are able to put in for specialized training to serve on cutters, helicopters, icebreakers and other jobs that require additional training.

In November, the Coast Guard issued a “request for information” for a new training facility that would include accommodations for 1,200 recruits, a 400-person dining facility, a 500-person auditorium, a medical center for 1,000 personnel, plus office space, a gymnasium, a pool and classrooms.

In its announcement Wednesday, the Coast Guard said the Birmingham-Southern campus best satisfied its requirements, offering “turnkey-ready facilities critical to support immediate commencement of the training mission.”

U.S. Sen. Katie Britt, R-Ala., said the campus would help the Coast Guard “recruit service members to combat 21st century threats.”

The Coast Guard said the new Alabama training center is part of the service’s Force Design 2028, a blueprint that will “transform the Coast Guard into a more agile, capable and responsive fighting force.”

## Coast Guard swimmer dies from injuries after distress call at sea

BY GARY WARNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

SEATTLE — A Coast Guard rescue swimmer died Thursday from injuries sustained during a helicopter rescue operation that took place off the coast of Washington on Feb. 27, the service reported Friday.

Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Tyler Jagers, an aviation survival technician, was part of an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter crew responding to a medical emergency aboard the commercial motor vessel Momi Arrow, which at the time was sailing about 120 nautical miles west of Cape Flattery, Wash.

Jagers was transported to Victoria General Hospital in Victoria, British Columbia, for initial treatment following the rescue operation.

He was later transferred to Madigan Army Medical Center at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Tacoma, Wash.

During a ceremony attended by his family and fellow crew members from Air Station Astoria,

Ore., the Coast Guard recognized Jagers’ courage with a meritorious promotion to Petty Officer Second Class.

Jagers was also awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, one of the highest military awards, for heroism during aerial flight.

“Aviation Survival Technician Jagers represented the very best of our Service and the Aviation Rescue Swimmer community,” said Adm. Kevin Lunday, Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard.

“He demonstrated extraordinary heroism in the face of danger, upholding the highest standards of courage and excellence for Coast Guard operations,” he said. “We honor his selfless actions and unwavering devotion to our highest calling: to save others. His family has our deepest condolences and steadfast support, and we continue to honor their privacy

during this very difficult time.”

Jagers joined the Coast Guard in January 2022 and had served at Air Station Astoria since April 2024.

He had previously been recognized for superior performance while a crew member aboard U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Legare during operations that took place in the Caribbean Sea.

The Coast Guard is conducting an investigation into the cause of injuries during the rescue and said it would release additional information when available.

The U.S. Coast Guard Rescue Swimmers group posted an Instagram message in response to Jagers’ passing.

“Our brother put his life on the line for someone he had never met, as Coast Guard aircrews and rescue swimmers have done thousands of times before, answering the call so that he and his crew could save a stranger’s life,” the statement read. “Unfortunately, Tyler lost his in the process. He gave his life in the purest act of service: trying to save another.”



Jagers

## Investigators offering reward in 20-year-old Fort Carson cold case

BY ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Army Criminal Investigation Division on Friday renewed a \$15,000 reward for information about how an Army veteran was found dead 20 years ago inside of a sewage treatment tank at Fort Carson, Colo.

Joseph E. Barker, 21, was last seen on the morning of Feb. 8, 2006, in a barracks room, and then later as unknown people led him to a dark-colored vehicle, according to Army CID.

He’d been documented the day prior on Walmart surveillance footage with friends. They were involved in an exchange with people in another vehicle, according to CID.

Amber Stone, the veteran’s wife, reported him missing on Feb. 14, according to The Colorado Springs Gazette.

His body was found by a worker Feb. 21, floating in a basin at the base’s wastewater treatment fa-

cility. An autopsy was unable to determine his cause of death.

“Cold cases are continually reviewed and updated if new information is found. Protecting the integrity of this ongoing investigation prevents us from releasing further details at this time,” Thomas Hamilton III, CID spokesman, said Friday about the timing of the reward announcement.

Barker, of Tulsa, Okla., had deployed to Iraq before being honorably discharged in May 2005.

He remained friends with soldiers at Fort Carson, according to CID.

Investigators in the past told Stone that they needed someone to come forward to solve the case, and she is still hopeful that it can happen, according to the Gazette.

Anyone with credible information concerning this incident should contact the Army CID Cold Case Unit at (520) 706-8685 or submit an anonymous tip online at [www.p3tips.com/armycid](http://www.p3tips.com/armycid).

## MIDEAST



ABBAS ZAKERI, MEHR NEWS AGENCY/AP

Rescue workers and residents search through rubble in the aftermath of what Iranian officials said was an Israeli-U.S. strike on a girls' elementary school in Minab, on Feb. 28. New footage shows what an expert investigative group says is likely an American Tomahawk missile hitting a compound near the school.

## Analysis further suggests US hit Iranian school in attack

By JULIA FRANKEL  
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — New footage shows what an expert investigative group says is likely an American Tomahawk missile hitting a compound in southern Iran, yards from the school where a deadly unclaimed blast killed over 165 people at the start of the war raging in the Mideast.

It comes as mounting evidence points to U.S. culpability for the Feb. 28 strike, which hit a school adjacent to a Revolutionary Guard base in Minab, Iran, in the country's southern Hormozgan Province. Experts interviewed by The Associated Press, citing satellite image analysis, say the school was probably struck amid a quick succession of bombs dropped on the compound.

A U.S. official familiar with internal deliberations on the matter has told the AP that the strike was likely American. The official spoke anonymously because they were not authorized to comment publicly on the sensitive matter.

The new footage, first analyzed by the investigative group Bellingcat, was taken the day the school was struck but circulated Sunday by Iran's semiofficial Mehr news agency. It shows a missile hitting a building, sending a dark plume of smoke into the air.

The AP was able to geolocate the video and determine it was taken from a site adjacent to the school, while smoke was already rising from the school vicinity. Satellite imagery of the compound is consistent with visual identifiers found in the video, including a flat-roofed building, power lines and

vehicles.

Trevor Ball, a Bellingcat researcher, identified the munition as a Tomahawk cruise missile — which only the U.S. is known to possess in this war. It's the first evidence of a munition used in the strike.

U.S. Central Command has acknowledged using Tomahawk missiles in this war and even released a photo of the USS Spruance, part of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier group located within range of the school, firing a Tomahawk missile on Feb. 28.

Bellingcat said the footage “appears to contradict” President Donald Trump's claim that Iran was responsible for the deadly school blast. Neither CENTCOM nor the Israeli military immediately replied to requests for comment Monday from the AP.

When asked by a reporter Saturday whether the U.S. was responsible for the blast, which killed mostly children, Trump responded, without providing evidence: “No, in my opinion, based on what I've seen, that was done by Iran.” Trump added that Iran is “very inaccurate” with its munitions. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth quickly chimed in to say the U.S. was investigating.

Several other factors point to a U.S. strike.

One is the launching of an assessment of the incident by the U.S. military. According to the Pentagon's instructions on processes for mitigating civilian harm, an assessment is launched after a group of investigators make an initial determination that the U.S.

military may bear culpability.

Another is the location of the school — next to the Revolutionary Guard base and close to barracks for a naval unit. The U.S. military has focused on naval targets and acknowledged strikes in the province, including one in the vicinity of the school. Israel, which has denied conducting the strike, has focused on areas of Iran closer to Israel and hasn't reported any strikes south of Isfahan, 500 miles away.

Complicating any assessment of the incident is the lack of images of bomb fragments from the blast. No independent agency has reached the site during the war to investigate.

Janina Dill, an expert on international law at Oxford University, wrote on X that even if the strike was a misidentification — and the attacker believed that the school had been a part of the neighboring IRGC base — it would still be “a very serious violation of international law.”

“Attackers are under an obligation to do everything feasible to verify the status of targeted object,” she wrote.

The Trump administration, however, strikes a different tone on international humanitarian law. Speaking about the U.S. operation at a press conference March 2, Hegseth said: “America, regardless of what so-called international institutions say, is unleashing the most lethal and precise air power campaign in history.”

“No stupid rules of engagement,” he said. “No politically correct wars. We fight to win, and we don't waste time or lives.”

# Troop dies a week after Iran attacked Saudi Arabian base

Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon on Monday announced the identity of a soldier who died Sunday following an Iranian attack at Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia. He was the seventh U.S. service member to die from combat during Operation Epic Fury.

Sgt. Benjamin N. Pennington, 26, of Glendale, Ky., died of his wounds Sunday from injuries sustained during an enemy attack on March 1. Pennington was assigned to 1st Space Battalion, 1st Space Brigade, at Fort Carson, Colo.

Pennington enlisted in the U.S. Army as a unit supply specialist in 2017. He was assigned to the 1st Space Battalion, 1st Space Brigade, on June 10, 2025. Pennington will be posthumously promoted to staff sergeant, the Army said in a statement.

“Sgt. Pennington was a dedicated and experienced noncommissioned officer who led with strength, professionalism and sense of duty,” Col. Michael F. Dyer, 1st Space Brigade commander, said in a statement.

The U.S. and Israel launched extensive strikes against Iran on Feb. 28 after months of stalled negotiations over the country's nuclear program. President Donald Trump later that night announced the operation had resulted in the killing of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader.

In addition to the strikes on Iran, Israel has attacked the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon.

Trump on Saturday joined griev-



U.S. Army

**Army Sgt. Benjamin N. Pennington, 26, of Glendale, Ky., was assigned to the 1st Space Battalion, 1st Space Brigade at Fort Carson, Colo.**

ing families at Dover Air Force Base, Del., at the dignified transfer for six U.S. soldiers killed in the war in the Middle East.

The soldiers who died in the fight previously include: Capt. Cody A. Khork, 35, of Winter Haven, Fla.; Sgt. 1st Class Noah L. Tietjens, 42, of Bellevue, Neb.; Sgt. 1st Class Nicole M. Amor, 39, of White Bear Lake, Minn.; Sgt. Declan J. Coady, 20, of West Des Moines, Iowa; Maj. Jeffrey R. O'Brien, 45, of Waukegan, Ill.; and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert M. Marzan, 54, of Sacramento, Calif.

A New York City police officer serving in Kuwait with the Army National Guard died Friday from a medical issue. Maj. Sorffly Davius was deployed to Camp Buehring in Kuwait when the medical incident occurred, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said in a statement late Saturday.

## Officials: NATO shoots down a second Iranian missile as it neared member Turkey

By JOHN VANDIVER  
Stars and Stripes

NATO on Monday shot down an Iranian ballistic missile in Turkish airspace, marking the second time in a week that the alliance's air defenses have been put into action, Turkish officials said.

Air defenses in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea shot down the incoming missile, producing debris that landed in the southern Turkish city of Gaziantep, the Turkish defense ministry said. No injuries or fatalities were caused by the missile fragment, the ministry said.

Turkey is home to Incirlik Air Base, a strategic hub for U.S.

forces that sits near the eastern edge of the Mediterranean.

Last week, NATO increased its ballistic missile defense posture across the alliance in response to threats emanating from Iran. On Wednesday, NATO's air defense system shot down a ballistic missile approaching Turkish airspace.

NATO's missile defense system incorporates a range of capabilities, bringing together U.S. Aegis Ashore sites in Romania and Poland as well as U.S. Navy destroyers out of Rota, Spain.

A high-powered mountaintop radar in Kurecik, Turkey, also is part of the integrated defense system.

MIDEAST

# Defiant: Revolutionary Guard, Hezbollah approve of pick

FROM PAGE 1

all but stopped tankers from using the key shipping lane through which a fifth of the world's oil is carried. Fire broke out at an oil facility that Iran attacked in the United Arab Emirates. Bahrain's only oil refinery was apparently also hit and Saudi Arabia said it had intercepted several drones attacking its Shaybah oil field.

"There is not an oil shortage," President Donald Trump wrote on Truth Social overnight.

"Prices will drop again soon," he added, suggesting shipments from Venezuela to the U.S. could help offset the price spike.

In Israel, sirens blared multiple times on Monday amid unrelenting Iranian drones and missiles. A man was killed in central Israel in a missile strike, the first such death in Israel in a week, and a woman was wounded.

Israel said it struck the Iranian city of Isfahan, hitting command centers for the Revolutionary Guard and its volunteer Basij force, as well as a rocket engine production facility and missile launch sites. There was no immediate confirmation from Iran.

Turkey meanwhile said NATO defenses had intercepted a ballistic missile that entered the country's airspace for the second time since the war started.

Later Monday, Israel defense forces said they began "a wide-scale wave of strikes" on Isfahan as well as Iran's capital, Tehran, where witnesses reported seeing new strikes, and in southern Iran.

The younger Khamenei, who has not been seen in public since the war started, was long considered a potential successor — even before the Israeli strike killed his 86-year-old father. His wife, Zahra Haddad Adel, was killed in the same strike.

Political figures within Iran have criticized handing over the supreme leader's title based on heredity, comparing it to the monarchy overthrown in the 1979 Islamic Revolution. But top clerics in the Assembly of Experts apparently voted for continuity.

Khamenei, who is seen as even more hard-line than his late father, will now be in charge of Iran's armed forces and any decision about Tehran's nuclear program.

Though Iran's key nuclear sites are in tatters after the U.S. bombed them during the 12-day Israel-Iran war in June, it still has highly enriched uranium that's a technical step away from weapons-grade levels. Khamenei could choose to do what his father never did — build a nuclear bomb.

Israel has already described him as a potential target, while Trump has called him "unacceptable" and dismissed him as a "lightweight."

Both the Revolutionary Guard and the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah issued statements in support of Khamenei.

Top Iranian security official Ali Larijani, speaking to Iranian state television, praised the Assembly of Experts for "courageously" convening even as airstrikes pounded Tehran. He said the younger Khamenei had

been trained by his father and "can handle this situation."

Saudi Arabia lashed out at Iran following a thwarted drone attack on its massive Shaybah oil field, saying Tehran would be the "biggest loser" if it continues to attack Arab states.

In the United Arab Emirates, authorities said two people were wounded by shrapnel from the interception of Iranian missiles over the capital, Abu Dhabi. By mid-afternoon, the Emirati Defense Ministry said 15 ballistic missiles and 18 drones were fired on the country on Monday, raising the total to 253 missiles and 1,440 drones launched at the UAE since the war began. So far in the war, four foreign nationals have been killed in the UAE and 117 wounded, it said.

Iran also attacked Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, where it hit a residential area, wounding 32 people, including several children, according to authorities. Another attack appeared to have started a fire at Bahrain's only oil refinery, sending thick plumes of smoke into the air.

Bahrain has also accused Iran of damaging one of its desalination plants, though its electricity and water authority said supplies remained online. Desalination plants supply water to millions of residents in the region, raising new fears of catastrophic risks in parched desert nations.

In Iraq, air defenses downed a drone as it attacked a U.S. military compound inside the Baghdad International Airport, a security official told The Associated Press,

speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press. No injuries or damage were reported. It was not immediately clear who was behind the attack, but Iran-backed militias have previously targeted the base.

Elsewhere, the U.S. military said a soldier died of injuries from an Iranian attack on troops in Saudi Arabia on March 1. Seven U.S. soldiers have now been killed.

The U.S. State Department early Monday ordered nonessential personnel and families of all staff to leave Saudi Arabia following the escalation in attacks.

Several other U.S. diplomatic missions have ordered all but key staff to leave, including Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, the UAE and the consulates in Karachi, Pakistan, and Adana, Turkey.

Smoke billowed over Beirut after Israel carried out airstrikes on its southern suburbs Monday.

Ahead of the strikes, the Israeli army said it would operate against targets associated with the Hezbollah-linked financial institution al-Qard Al-Hasan — which Israel said finances the militant group — and repeated its warning to residents of Beirut's southern suburbs to flee.

The war has killed at least 1,230 people in Iran, at least 397 in Lebanon and 11 in Israel, according to officials. Another person died in Israel of an asthma attack on her way to a shelter. Israel reported its first soldier deaths on Sunday, saying two were killed in southern Lebanon.

# War: Lawmakers who served wary of another drawn-out conflict

FROM PAGE 1

flict. Lawmakers wore bracelets etched with the names of friends killed in battle, told stories of coming under attack from Iran-backed militant groups and reflected on their own life-changing injuries suffered during combat.

While the initial votes on Iran saw Congress divide mostly along party lines, with Republicans backing Trump's actions and Democrats warning of an extended conflict, veterans in both parties share deep reservations about entering the conflict.

"As somebody who knows a lot of friends that didn't come home and a lot of Gold Star families, that's why the week before the attack, I was actually one of the ones that was talking about caution and why we needed to avoid at all costs getting into another long, drawn-out Middle Eastern war," said Republican Rep. Eli Crane of Arizona, a former Navy SEAL who left college to enlist the week after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Crane said his concerns were partially assuaged by briefings from the Trump administration that indicated to him the president is not planning a drawn-out war. He voted against a war powers resolution that would have halted attacks on Iran unless Trump got congressional approval.

But Crane said wars are never straightforward. "I've been on military operations that did not go to plan many times, and so I understand the nature," he said, adding that he was calling for the Trump administration to approach the conflict with "humility and caution."

Gallego and other Democrats worried that it was too late for that approach. They



ALEXANDER KUBITZA/Office of the Secretary of Defense  
**Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth poses for a photo with Rep. Brian Mast, R-Fla., at the 22nd Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, in May.**

paid tribute to the six U.S. military members who were killed in a drone strike in Kuwait and worried that there could soon be more American casualties.

"War is dirty, and mistakes happen," Gallego said. The longer the conflict drags on, he added, the more chance there will be for

U.S. military members to be killed. He said he saw that in Iraq when friends would be killed by seemingly random shots from enemy combatants.

Still, many Republicans argued that it was necessary to attack Iran to stop a regime that for decades has helped train and arm militant groups throughout the Middle East. Rep. Brian Mast, R-Fla., who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee, led the debate on the House floor against the war powers resolution.

Mast, who served as an Army bomb disposal expert, now uses prosthetic legs after receiving catastrophic injuries from an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan. "Me especially, many of my other colleagues, no one wants to see our military go into combat or war," he said.

Then he added, "But Iran's terror, which has caused the deaths of thousands of Americans, it has to stop."

Important questions loom for Congress as the conflict with Iran unfolds and spreads throughout the Middle East. The price for the operation is already likely running into the billions of dollars, likely forcing the Trump administration to soon seek billions in funding from Congress. The outbreak of war has also scrambled global alliances and the future of U.S. foreign policy.

Shadowing it all is the potential of another drawn-out conflict. Lawmakers said they owe it to their fallen comrades to ensure that doesn't happen.

"To me, it's to speak out. It's to say another generation should not go fight in an open-ended, ill-conceived regime change war in the Middle East," said Democratic Rep. Pat

Ryan of New York, his hand moving to a bracelet etched with the names of friends who were killed during his two Army combat tours in Iraq.

Others remembered how frustrated they became with Washington during their service, especially as soldiers tried to fight with insufficiently armored vehicles and not enough troops.



**Duckworth**

"I know what it was like to be on the very end of the receiving line of the decisions made in Washington," said Democratic Rep. Jason Crow of Colorado, who entered the Army as a private before being promoted to a captain and deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Crow said that front-line soldiers often suffered "because people stopped asking tough questions. People stopped being held accountable. Congress stopped voting on it."

Another veteran, Democratic Sen. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois, said that was one of the reasons she sought a congressional seat in the first place. As a Black Hawk helicopter pilot with the Illinois National Guard, Duckworth lost her legs when her helicopter was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade in Iraq.

"I ran for Congress so that when the drums of war started beating once again, I'd be in a position to make sure that our elected officials fully considered the true cost of the war," she said. "Not just in dollars and cents but in human lives."

## NATION

# With DOGE in rear view, agencies fill vacancies

## After slashing federal jobs, US ramps up hiring

BY EMILY DAVIES  
AND MERYL KORNFELD  
*The Washington Post*

A year after Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency allies purged hundreds of thousands of federal employees, the Trump administration is ramping up hiring—a reversal that reflects a quiet retreat from one of the president's defining early priorities and marks a new phase in efforts to reshape the bureaucracy in his image.

"We probably have some skills that we now need to hire back, quite frankly," Scott Kupor, the head of the Office of Personnel Management, said in an interview with *The Washington Post*. "There's no question anytime you do restructurings ... sometimes you over-restructure, sometimes you under-restructure."

The hiring push is unfolding under new rules designed to give the White House greater influence over the government's 2-million person civilian workforce. The administration has lifted restrictions imposed during last year's reductions and created job classifications that make it easier to hire—and fire—employees aligned with the president's priorities. Kupor, who was sworn in last July, said the administration hopes to rebuild in part by rebranding the government as a launchpad for college graduates and early-career professionals and by focusing on recruitment for health care, program management and technology roles.

In recent months, the administration has moved to centralize hiring decisions, expand the role of political appointees in recruitment and roll back diversity initiatives adopt-



PETE KIEHART/For The Washington Post

**U.S. Agency for International Development employees were met by supporters last February as they took their items from the agency's Washington offices. USAID is hiring contractors to wind down programs, but those who were pushed out are not welcome back.**

ed under previous administrations. Together, the shifts amount to changes supporters say will make government more responsive to elected leadership. But critics warn they could erode long-standing protections meant to keep the civil service nonpartisan.

"The president has certain priorities in the administration, and when we decide to actually exercise and do those priorities, people may call that political," Kupor said. "But to me, that's the way the process was designed."

Even with the renewed hiring, officials expect the federal government to remain far smaller than when Trump took office and unleashed DOGE, a department that deleted entire agencies, eliminated offices devoted to civil rights and diversity, and imposed a hiring freeze for most of the calendar year. At the height of DOGE's power, Trump and his senior staff said the cuts would slim a bloated, corrupt bureaucracy and promised to expose waste and fraud at a scale that would meaningfully reduce the national

deficit. No large-scale evidence publicly emerged, and the government spent more in 2025 than it had the previous year. Musk later split with the president over his signature tax and domestic policy bill and DOGE quietly dissolved, its members dispersing inside and outside government.

"President Trump was given a clear mandate to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse from the federal government. In just a year, he has made significant progress in making the federal government more efficient to better serve the American taxpayer," Davis Ingle, a White House spokesman, said in response to questions about the president's plans for rebuilding parts of the federal workforce and why Trump has stopped talking about DOGE.

The Trump administration fired, laid off or accepted buyouts from more than 387,000 employees since the president's inauguration. During that same period, the administration hired roughly 123,000 workers, according to data from the Office of Personnel Management.

A year later, current and former officials warn of vacancies that have created operational blind spots.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, responsible for defending domestic infrastructure against cyberattacks, lost nearly 40% of its workforce last year—a reduction in capacity as cyberthreats from nation states remain a concern.

"With the loss of hundreds of experts, CISA's ability to detect threats from the most significant adversary, China, as well as others like Russia and Iran, is severely diminished, and now is not the time for the U.S. to let down its guard," said a former agency official, who, like others in this piece, spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid retribution.

CISA did not respond to a request for comment about the shortages.

One of the hardest-hit agencies during last year's cuts, the U.S. Agency for International Development, is hiring again for contractors to wind down aid programs but with an exception: Those who were pushed out are not welcome back. Agency leaders are seeking to preclude a contractor from hiring anyone who used to work there "to avoid the risk of impaired objectivity—a conflict of interest that occurs when former personnel are tasked with auditing, closing, or settling actions they may have previously initiated or overseen," according to an internal memo obtained by *The Post*.

Other agencies are struggling to stabilize basic services or recruit enough applicants to fill vacancies.

At the Department of Veterans Affairs, job applications for all positions including nurses are down 50% so far in fiscal year 2026 compared with the previous year, according to the agency's workforce dashboard. At the Social Security Administration, employees in IT, policy and other offices were reassigned to answer phones and handle

customer inquiries as call volumes surged.

Some agency heads have said they can manage with a leaner staff. IRS CEO Frank Bisignano told the House Ways and Means Committee on Wednesday that he believes the agency is sufficiently staffed. "I feel good about the number of employees I have right now," he said.

But the agency's inspector general reported that the IRS had onboarded only 50 of the roughly 2,200 employees it expected to hire to help process tax returns for the 2026 filing season—about 2% of its target as of the end of last year.

Kupor said the administration remains committed to building a leaner, more effective government, noting that just 7% of the federal workforce is under 30—a demographic imbalance he said he intends to address.

Senior White House officials have been personally involved in shaping the rebuild. Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller has been active in hiring discussions, according to two people familiar with the process. He has emphasized recruiting young staffers and ensuring that new hires are aligned with Trump's agenda.

Some job postings now reflect that ideological framing. An immigration services officer position titled "Homeland Defender" urges applicants to be ready to "protect your homeland and defend your culture." Prospective hires must explain how they would advance Trump's executive orders and policy priorities.

Kupor said there are more "opportunities to reshape" agencies this year, suggesting additional staff reductions could come in some departments, though he declined to specify which ones. He also declined to release agency hiring plans submitted to OPM under Trump's executive order, calling them "predecisional."

## Some air travelers encounter long waits amid DHS shutdown

*Associated Press*

Travelers complained of long waits Sunday—lasting hours in some cases—at security checkpoints at airports in Houston and New Orleans, which officials blamed on a government shutdown of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The estimated wait time at the standard security checkpoint at the William P. Hobby Airport in Houston early Sunday evening was at one point three hours, according to the Houston Airports website. The Hobby airport on social media Friday said it expected more travelers than normal due to spring break.

In a series of posts Sunday, the airport on X went from urging travelers to arrive early to asking them to

arrive 3 to 4 hours before their flights to eventually asking them to arrive 4 to 5 hours early to allow extra time for screening, citing the partial government shutdown.

A statement from Houston Airports, which counts Hobby and George Bush Intercontinental Airport as part of its system, said the shutdown "can impact security operations day-to-day and shift-to-shift." Wait times at checkpoints at George Bush Intercontinental Airport early Sunday evening were as brief as a few minutes.

Posts on X from Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport on Sunday said a shortage of TSA agents at the security checkpoint was leading to "longer-than-average" lines. The airport urged travel-

ers to arrive at least three hours before their flights and said wait times could last up to two hours.

It's not immediately clear if the delays in Houston and New Orleans were happening at other airports around the country.

Agents with the U.S. Transportation Security Administration are expected to work without pay during the ongoing shutdown of the department, which began Feb. 14. Democratic lawmakers have said DHS won't get funded until new restrictions are placed on federal immigration operations following the fatal shootings of Alex Pretti and Renee Good in Minneapolis this year.

Chris Sununu, president and CEO of Airlines for America, a trade group for U.S. airlines, in a state-

ment urged Congress and the Trump administration to act.

"We are in spring break travel season and expecting record numbers of people to take to the skies. Airlines have done their part to prepare; now Congress and the administration must act with urgency to reach a deal that reopens DHS and ends this shutdown," he said. "America's transportation security workforce is too important to be used as political leverage."

Jessica Andersen Alexie and her two children, 10 and 13, were among the travelers caught in the long lines at Hobby in Houston as they tried to return home to New Orleans. They had been in Houston for the World Baseball Classic.

Alexie said they arrived 3 hours

early to find a long line and realized they would not make their flight. While in line, she checked rental cars to see if driving home might be an option but couldn't find any available. She was able to rebook for a late-night flight and felt relieved to get through the CLEAR security line after about 3½ hours.

When they finally sat down to eat, she decided to take another look at available flights, on the chance that others in line had to cancel and rearrange their plans, and found three seats on a flight that got her family home Sunday afternoon. When they landed at the New Orleans airport, the line extended out to the parking garage, she said.

"It was nuts," she said. "It was crazy."

## NATION



SETH WENIG/AP

A sign marks a pickup point for the Uber car service at LaGuardia Airport in New York.

## Uber's women-only option now available across the US

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Uber launched a feature Monday to allow both women riders and drivers across the U.S. to be matched with other women for trips, expanding a pilot program aimed at addressing concerns about the safety of its hail-riding platform.

The new feature is being rolled out nationwide despite an ongoing class action lawsuit against the policy in California, filed by Uber drivers who argue that it is discriminatory against men. Rival ride-hailing company Lyft is also facing a discrimination lawsuit over a similar offering that it introduced nationwide in 2024.

The feature, announced in a blog post, allows women to request a female driver through an option on the app called "Women Drivers." Passengers can opt for another ride if the wait for a woman is too long, and they can also reserve a trip with a woman driver in advance. A third option allows female users to set a preference for a woman driver in their app settings, which would increase the chances of being matched with a female driver, though it would not guarantee it. Uber is also allowing its teen account users to request women drivers.

Uber's women drivers can set

the app's preferences to request trips with female riders, and they can turn off that preference at anytime.

Uber, based in San Francisco, says about one-fifth of its drivers in the U.S. are women, though the ratio varies by city.

Two California Uber drivers filed a class-action lawsuit against Uber in November, arguing that its Women Preferences feature violates California's Unruh Act, which prohibits sex discrimination by business enterprises.

The lawsuit charges that the feature gives its minority female drivers access to the entire pool of passengers, while leaving its majority male drivers to compete for a smaller pool of passengers. The lawsuit also argues that Uber's policy "reinforces the gender stereotype that men are more dangerous than women."

Uber filed a motion to compel arbitration in the case, citing an agreement the plaintiffs signed when joining the app as drivers. In the motion, Uber disputed that its new feature violates the Unruh Act, saying it "serves a strong and recognized public policy interest in enhancing safety."

"This feature is a common sense solution to a long-standing request from both women Drivers and

Riders who told Uber they would feel more comfortable and safer if they could choose to ride with another woman," the company said in the court filing.

Two Lyft drivers have filed a similar lawsuit against that company against its "Women+Connect" feature, which allows women and nonbinary riders to match with drivers of the same identification.

Uber piloted the "Women Preferences" feature in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Detroit last summer and expanded it to 26 U.S. cities in November.

The company first launched a version of the feature in Saudi Arabia in 2019 following the country's landmark law granting women the right to drive. It now offers similar options in 40 other countries, including Canada and Mexico.

Both Uber and Lyft have for years faced criticism over their safety records, including thousands of reports of sexual assaults from both passengers and drivers. In February, federal jury found Uber to be legally responsible in a 2023 case of sexual assault and the company was ordered to pay \$8.5 million to an Arizona woman who said she was raped by one of its drivers.

## 2 held after NYC protest say they are ISIS-inspired

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Two men who brought explosives to a protest outside New York City's mayoral mansion said they were inspired by the Islamic State extremist group, a court complaint said.

Emir Balat and Ibrahim Kayumi were awaiting arraignment Monday on charges that include attempting to provide material support to a terrorist organization and using a weapon of mass destruction.

Kayumi blurted out, as he was being arrested Saturday, that "ISIS" was the reason for his conduct, the complaint said. Balat, 18, later said he had pledged allegiance to the extremist group, and Kayumi, 19, asserted that he was affiliated with the Islamic State group, the complaint said.

Officers asked Balat whether he was aiming to accomplish something akin to the bombing of the Boston Marathon in 2013, when two pressure-cooker bombs exploded near the finish line, killing three people and wounding hundreds more.

"No, even bigger," Balat re-

plied, according to the complaint.

The two men both have addresses in Pennsylvania, and Balat carried a Turkish government identification card along with his Pennsylvania driver's license, according to the complaint.

The homemade devices, which did not explode, were hurled Saturday during raucous counter-protests against an anti-Islamic demonstration led by Jake Lang, a far-right activist and critic of New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani, a Democrat and the first Muslim to hold the office.

Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said there are no indications that the men's alleged activities were connected to the ongoing war in Iran.

After the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, Lang was charged with assaulting an officer with a baseball bat, civil disorder and other crimes.

He was later freed from prison as part of President Donald Trump's sweeping act of clemency. Lang recently announced that he is running for U.S. Senate in Florida.



ANGELINA KATSANIS/AP

Jake Lang shouts from a sidewalk as New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani speaks during a news conference Monday in New York.

## Weight-loss medication lawsuit ends as companies enter collaboration

Associated Press

Novo Nordisk is dismissing its patent infringement lawsuit against telehealth company Hims & Hers, as the two companies have reached an agreement that will see Novo Nordisk's branded weight loss medicines sold through the Hims platform.

Shares of Hims & Hers Health Inc. jumped more than 40% in Monday morning trading.

Early last month Hims & Hers

said that it was going to launch a cheaper, off-brand version of the weight-loss pill Wegovy, just weeks after drugmaker Novo Nordisk launched its highly anticipated reformulation of the blockbuster medication. At the time, Novo Nordisk vowed to sue Hims, calling the new product "an unapproved, inauthentic, and untested knockoff" of semaglutide, the chemical name for Wegovy.

But just two days later, Hims

dropped its plan to offer the cheaper, off-brand version of Wegovy. That move came a day after the Food and Drug Administration threatened to restrict access to the ingredients needed to copy popular weight-loss medications.

The FDA permits specialty pharmacies and other companies to make compounded versions of brand name drugs when they are in short supply. And the booming demand for GLP-1 drugs in recent

years prompted companies like Hims to jump into the multibillion-dollar market for the drugs, with many willing to pay cash.

In 2024, the FDA said that GLP-1 drugs were no longer in a shortage, which was expected to put an end to the compounding. But companies like Hims relied on an exception to keep selling their versions of the medications because the practice is still permitted when a prescription is custo-

mized for the patient.

As part of the deal the two companies reached that was announced on Monday, Hims will offer oral and injectable versions of Wegovy and Ozempic on its platform later this month. Hims will also stop advertising compounded GLP-1 drugs on its platform or in its marketing.

Novo Nordisk said in a statement that it is reserving the right to refile its lawsuit in the future.

# WORLD

## Lebanese parliament extends term amid rising Israeli attacks

Associated Press

BEIRUT — The Lebanese parliament extended its term by two years on Monday due to the U.S.-Israel war with Iran, which has pushed the region into an escalating conflict, and Israel stepped up its attacks on Lebanon following renewed strikes with the militant group Hezbollah.

The Israeli military said Monday it was targeting Hezbollah's financial arm, al-Qard Al-Hasan, as its ground forces in Lebanon's south launched "focused raids" against what it called the group's infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch has accused Israeli forces of using white phosphorus incendiary shells in strikes on residential areas in a Lebanese village in violation of international law.

Lebanon's state news agency said 76 legislators voted in favor of the decision, 41 were against and four abstained. Hezbollah's 13-member bloc in parliament voted in favor of the extension.

The ongoing war with Israel that began last week has displaced over half a million people in Lebanon and made it difficult to hold a vote in large parts of the country.

The parliamentary elections were scheduled for May.

Residents of Beirut's southern suburb, widely known as Dahiyeh, were ordered to evacuate before Israel launched strikes.

Smoke billowed over Beirut after the attacks. The first strike destroyed a building housing an office of al-Qard al-Hasan in the southern suburb of Chiyah. A Lebanese journalist on site told The Associated Press he was wounded in the leg and taken to a nearby hospital. Video footage showed what appeared to be two strikes on the building that were minutes apart.

The strikes on Chiyah were followed by more airstrikes on nearby areas, forcing Lebanese troops to close roads where al-Qard al-Hasan branches are located to ensure people's safety.



AP

A vehicle carrying the first batch of domestically developed long-range missiles, arrives at Camp Kengun in Kumamoto, southwestern Japan, early Monday.

## Japan prepares for deployment of its home-developed long-range missile

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan is preparing to deploy its first batch of domestically developed long-range missiles, with their launchers arriving at an army camp Monday as the country accelerates its offensive capability in response to rising challenges in the region.

The upgraded Type-12 land-to-ship missiles will be deployed at Camp Kengun in Japan's southwestern prefecture of Kumamoto by the end of March, completing

the process of deployment, Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said without giving details.

Army vehicles carrying the launchers and other equipment arrived past midnight in a highly secretive mission criticized by residents.

Opponents have complained about the lack of transparency around the mission and said the deployment would instead escalate tension and make the missiles targets of attacks.

The Defense Ministry last year

moved up the schedule of the missiles' deployment by one year.

Japan has accelerated a military buildup in the southwestern region, while China has escalated tension around Taiwan, the self-governing island Beijing claims as its own.

The upgraded Type-12 missile, developed and produced by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, has a range of about 620 miles.

It will be deployed next at Camp Fuji in Shizuoka, west of Tokyo, later this year.

## Bag containing weed, cash donated to New Zealand charity shop

Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — Two teenagers mistakenly left a knapsack containing marijuana and cash at a donation area outside a New Zealand charity shop

then returned in a panic to retrieve the bag, police said Monday.

A volunteer at the store noticed a pungent aroma before opening the knapsack and finding plastic

bags of marijuana amounting to 43.2 grams and \$2,200 in banknotes, New Zealand Police said.

Using marijuana recreationally and selling the drug are illegal in New Zealand. Some medical use is

allowed with a doctor's prescription.

Police said the episode happened Feb. 18 in the Southland region of the South Island.

The boy and girl had left the

knapsack outside the shop as they waited for their vehicle to be serviced at a nearby workshop, the police statement said. Officers were called after the agitated teens returned to the store.

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The Daily Guide to Navigating The Military Business Market

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WORLD

# Finnish pair wins barrel of ale at 'wife-carrying' contest in England

Associated Press

LONDON — To have and to hold took on a new meaning for about two dozen couples who put their relationships to the test on a grassy hill in southern England.

Wives and girlfriends clung on for dear life as their partners carried them up and down a hillside for the U.K. Wife Carrying Race, one of the country's quirkiest annual sports events.

On Sunday Teemu Touvinen and Jatta Leinonen from Finland were crowned the winners at 1 minute and 45 seconds. Their prize? A barrel of local ale.

The awkward footrace in Dorking, Surrey, is said to be inspired by a 19th-century Finnish legend about a gang that pillages villages and steals the women.

These days the emphasis is on lighthearted fun. Silly costumes are encouraged, and racers can be males or females carrying anyone over 18 and weighing at least 110 pounds. Those under that weight need to wear a rucksack filled with flour or water to bring them to the minimum weight.

"You do not have to carry your own wife. It could be someone else's. Or a mate, girlfriend, boy-



GARETH FULLER, PA/AP

Competitors race through the course during the annual U.K. Wife Carrying Race in Dorking, England, on Sunday.

friend, sister or brother," organizers said. "They should ideally weigh less than you do."

Couples can choose their carrying technique, though most contestants favored the traditional "Estonian Hold," where the "wife" hangs upside-down on the carrier's back with their legs

crossed in front of his face.

Contestants raced up a gently sloping hillside and back down, clearing obstacles like low rows of hay bales and having buckets of water thrown at them for good measure. The course is 416 yards long — "a long way under the circumstances," organizers noted.

# Europe on alert after Belgium, Oslo blasts

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — Belgian Interior Minister Bernard Quintin said Monday that an explosion near a synagogue in the eastern city of Liege overnight was "a despicable antisemitic act" and that federal prosecutors were investigating, as several countries in Europe tighten security due to the war in the Middle East.

Liege police said that the blast outside the synagogue happened early Monday morning. No one was injured but the windows of a building in front of the synagogue were blown out.

The street remained blocked off while investigators combed the area, a statement said.

"The explosion in front of the Liege synagogue was a despicable antisemitic act that directly targeted the Jewish community of Belgium," Quintin said on X. "Security around similar sites will continue to be strengthened." He made no link between the blast and the Iran war.

Belgium, France and Germany are among a number of European countries that have said they in-

tend to beef up security in response to the war, and have also insisted that they are playing no active role in the conflict alongside the United States and Israel.

Meanwhile, police in the Norwegian capital, Oslo, said they were analyzing surveillance videos in the hunt for the perpetrator of an explosion early Sunday outside the U.S. Embassy.

Police released an image captured from a surveillance video showing a person wearing dark clothes and a backpack, with their face covered. The suspect has not been identified, the police said.

Oslo police received reports of a "loud bang" or explosion outside the U.S. Embassy around 1 a.m. on Sunday. No injuries were reported but the embassy entrance was damaged, authorities said.

On Monday, the police said their investigation indicated an improvised explosive device had been placed near the entrance area to the embassy.

It also said it was making inquiries about a video posted on Google Maps around the time of the explosion.

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# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Copperfield residency to end amid Epstein mention

**NV** LAS VEGAS — After more than 25 years, magician and illusionist David Copperfield announced his Las Vegas residency is coming to an end after his name again appeared in the latest Jeffrey Epstein evidence dump.

“For 25 years now, I’ve been fortunate to headline at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. My last performance at MGM will be on April 30th, and I’m excited to announce what’s next soon thereafter,” Copperfield wrote in a statement shared online.

Over the next eight weeks, the 69-year-old magician said he is scheduled to perform another 120 shows before his final bow in Vegas. Guests who have purchased tickets for any shows after that date will be automatically refunded.

The announcement comes after Copperfield’s name was again featured in the latest batch of documents released by the U.S. Justice Department in connection with financier Jeffrey Epstein.

## NTSB: Plane that crashed held too long after deice

**ME** PORTLAND — A private jet that crashed in Maine in January, killing all six people aboard, remained on the ground 8 minutes longer than it should have after receiving a deicing treatment in a snowstorm, according to a preliminary report issued Friday by the National Transportation Safety Board.

The plane should have waited no more than 9 minutes from the start of when the deicing treatment began before taking off in those cold and snowy conditions, according to Federal Aviation Administration guidelines. But the NTSB report said 17 minutes passed before takeoff.

The cockpit voice recorder captured the pilot commenting that it was “standard” to have 14 to 18 minutes and that if the wait was more than 30 minutes, they would return to the ramp to have the plane retreated, and the copilot concurred, the report states.

## Obamas announce June dedication, center opening

**IL** CHICAGO — Following years of delays, the date is finally set for the public opening of the long-awaited Obama Presidential Center on June 19, with tickets for the museum going on sale in May.

On the heels of his speech at funeral services for the Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr., former President Barack Obama on Saturday announced on social media plans for him and former first lady Michelle Obama to host a dedication ceremony for the center on June 18.

“When visitors look up at the Obama Presidential Center’s museum building, they’ll see three simple powerful words: You are



JEFF CHIU/AP

## Golden grand marshal

**Grand Marshal Eileen Gu, the most decorated freestyle skier in Olympic history, waves Saturday during the Chinese New Year Parade in San Francisco. The celebration to ring in the Year of the Fire Horse was first organized in the 1860s, and is the oldest and one of the largest celebrations of its kind outside Asia.**

America,” Obama said in a video shared on X, using the words from his speech during the 50th anniversary of the civil rights marches in Selma, Ala., on March 7, 2015.

Spanning 19 acres, the \$850 million center in Jackson Park, which was first slated to open in 2021, will feature a newly-minted main building and museum; a forum building that includes an auditorium, media suite and other programming rooms; and a Chicago Public Library branch.

## Airport briefly closes over potential threat

**MO** KANSAS CITY — The Kansas City International Airport terminal reopened Sunday afternoon, hours after it was evacuated while authorities looked into a potential threat, the Kansas City Aviation Department said.

Airport spokesperson Jackson Overstreet said in an email shortly after 2 p.m. that the terminal was reopened. The evacuation began after a threat that surfaced around 11:15 a.m. Flights that landed after the evacuation were held on the taxiway during the shutdown, which Overstreet said lasted about two hours.

FBI Director Kash Patel said on social media Sunday afternoon that the FBI reviewed the threat and determined it “not to be credible.”

Logan Hawley, 29, said he was waiting to board a flight to Texas when he noticed a swarm of police and K9 units inside the terminal.

“Suddenly there was an airport worker saying, ‘Immediately evacuate.’ People got up fast and rushed out of there,” Hawley said.

He said the group of roughly 2,000 people were ushered onto the tarmac.

## State Farm reaches deal to keep 17% rate hikes

**CA** LOS ANGELES — A brokered deal with regulators and consumer advocates will allow State Farm General to keep controversial increases in home insurance rates that took effect last year in the wake of the devastating Los Angeles wildfires.

The agreement sent to a judge late Friday cements a \$530-million emergency hike in home insurance rates Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara negotiated with the insurer last summer.

“The agreement will provide financial relief to many policyholders while ensuring continued coverage for State Farm policyholders while California’s insurance market stabilizes,” the insurance department said in a news release.

State Farm argued the emergency hike was necessary because catastrophic fire losses jeopardized its financial ratings.

## 2 wine schools go to court over trademark

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia’s oldest wine school said a competitor is attempting to erase its existence from the internet through a “cy-

berbullying” campaign and trademark infringement, according to a federal lawsuit.

In the suit, PhillyWine LLC alleges that Keith Wallace and Alana Zerbe, the husband-and-wife duo behind the Wine School of Philadelphia, took extraordinary steps to confuse customers and piggyback on PhillyWine’s prestige, causing PhillyWine economic and reputational damage. The suit, filed Feb. 26 in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, also accuses Wallace, the founder of the Wine School of Philadelphia, of fabricating his credentials and using aliases to open businesses that promote his school.

Wallace and Zerbe “have made it their mission to destroy” PhillyWine “by attempting to erase its existence and take over its name,” the suit said. The two schools have coexisted since the early 2000s — “although not always peacefully,” the suit notes — but tensions escalated at the end of 2025, when Wallace secured what the suit calls a “fraudulently obtained trademark” for the name “Philly Wine School.”

## State ‘millionaires tax’ headed for passage

**WA** SEATTLE — Washington’s proposed new income tax for people earning more than \$1 million a year appears headed for passage, with Gov. Bob Ferguson saying he’ll sign the latest version of the measure proposed by legislative Democrats.

Ferguson and Democratic leaders had been haggling over details of the proposal, with disagreements over how much of the tax should be given back to people in tax breaks.

In a statement Friday, Ferguson praised changes in the proposal — which supporters have dubbed a “millionaires tax” — that would expand tax breaks for some families and businesses.

The 9.9% tax on individual earnings would effect roughly 30,000 taxpayers, with collections beginning in 2028. It would not apply to home values or retirement savings.

## Massive fire rips through 11 businesses, church

**NY** NEW YORK — A massive blaze tore through 11 businesses along busy East Gun Hill Road in the Bronx, destroying several stores, FDNY officials said Friday.

The four-alarm fire broke out at 11:50 p.m. on East Gun Hill Road near Givan Avenue in the Williamsbridge section of the Bronx, inside a single-story building that houses both a storefront church and an insurance company.

By the time the FDNY arrived, the fast-moving blaze had already spread to several adjoining stores, officials said.

More than 74 FDNY units and 230 firefighters, emergency medical technicians and paramedics helped fight the blaze.

From wire reports

## FACES

# 'Hoppers' a big leap for Pixar

Original story can be a tough sell for studio known for fresh, high-quality all-ages fare

BY SAMANTHA MASUNAGA  
Los Angeles Times

In 2020, "We Bare Bears" creator Daniel Chong came to Pixar leaders with an idea.

He had seen documentaries in which robotic animals with eyeball cameras captured footage of natural habitats. But what if that technology was so good that no one could tell the difference? And to make it even more zany — what if someone went undercover in that animal body?

That idea became the basis of Walt Disney Co. and Pixar's new animated movie, "Hoppers," which debuted over the weekend. The film is Pixar's latest attempt to break through at the box office with an original story, something that has been a struggle for the storied animation studio since the pandemic.

The pressure of Pixar's legacy can be a little overwhelming and coming up with an original idea is difficult, said Chong, who directed "Hoppers" and also serves as a writer on the film.

"For a Pixar movie, it's very high stakes," he said. "But I just felt like I had a really funny idea, and I thought as long as we made it really funny and had characters you loved, to me that's the key to every Pixar movie — really awesome characters that really connect emotionally with people."

Recent theatrical successes for Pixar as well as other animation

studios has come from sequels, such as 2024's "Inside Out 2," which grossed \$1.7 billion globally. But Pixar's reputation is built on its string of blockbuster originals, including 1995's "Toy Story," 2001's "Monsters, Inc." and 2004's "The Incredibles," making new stories crucial to the studio's future.

People like coming back to familiar characters like Woody and Buzz from "Toy Story," but the studio can do only so many sequels, said Pete Docter, Pixar's chief creative officer. And some films don't lend themselves to new chapters, he said.

Reviews for "Hoppers," which had a production budget of \$150 million, were strong, with a 94% approval rating on aggregator Rotten Tomatoes.

"If we don't continue to do originals, we're going to run out of stuff," Docter said. "If 'Hoppers' can really catch on, it could show that audiences still want original movies. They're still excited to see things that surprise them, that are not just following through on characters and worlds that they've seen before."

It's been a tough time for original animated movies — and new films in general.

Pixar's previous original film, 2025's "Elio," cratered at the box office, partially beset by the tough climate for new animated stories as well as strong competition from other kids' movies such as live-ac-



PIXAR/AP

Pixar executives should be pleased by the \$88 million global opening weekend at the box office for Mabel Beaver and "Hoppers," which is the best result for an original animated film since "Coco" in 2017.

tion adaptations of Universal Pictures' "How to Train Your Dragon" and Disney's "Lilo & Stitch."

The pandemic played a major role in Pixar's recent track record with originals. When COVID-19 hit, original films like 2020's "Soul," 2021's "Luca" and 2022's "Turning Red" all were sent straight to the Disney+ streaming service to give families something to watch during the stay-at-home orders. But that also got audiences accustomed to waiting to watch Pixar films at home.

This year could be a potentially big one for animated films. Nintendo and Universal Pictures' sequel "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie" is out in April, followed by Pixar's "Toy Story 5" in June and Universal Pictures and Illumination Entertainment's "Minions & Monsters" in July. In the fall, Warner Bros. plans to release "The Cat in the Hat."

## 'Hoppers' on top; 'Bride!' on life support

Disney and Pixar's environmental adventure "Hoppers" topped the North American box office this weekend with \$46 million in domestic ticket sales in its debut, according to studio estimates Sunday.

After adding another \$42 million from international showings, the film celebrated an \$88 million global launch in total, the biggest for an original animated film since "Coco" came out in 2017.

But it wasn't all good news for big studio fare at the multiplex: Maggie Gyllenhaal's R-rated reimagining of the Bride of Frankenstein story is flailing. A Warner Bros. release, "The Bride!", starring Jessie Buckley and Christian Bale, debuted to an estimated \$7.3 million. It cost around \$80 million to produce, not including marketing and promotion expenses.

The two movies were hardly competing with one another for viewers — one being a PG-rated family pic, the other an audacious, R-rated, genre-blending ride. Critical responses to "The Bride!" were mixed to negative, and its audience scores weren't much better.

Paramount's "Scream 7" landed in second place in its second weekend with \$17.3 million, down a whopping 73% and bringing its domestic total to \$93.4 million and its global total to \$149.5 million. Sony's "GOAT" came in fourth place with \$6.6 million while Warner Bros.' "Wuthering Heights" rounded out the top five with \$3.8 million.

Emerald Fennell's unorthodox take on Emily Brontë's novel has surpassed \$213 million globally.

From The Associated Press

# Bruce Johnston, 82, leaves the Beach Boys after 60 years

From wire reports

Bruce Johnston, a six-decade member of the Beach Boys' live band, announced he will step away from the group.

The 82-year-old Johnston told Rolling Stone that "It's time for part three of my lengthy musical career! I can write songs forever and wait until you hear what's coming! As my major talent beyond singing is songwriting, now is the time to get serious again."

The Beach Boys' Mike Love also said in a statement that "Bruce Johnston is one of the greatest songwriters, vocalists and keyboardists of our time. We've had the honor of his performance and participation for many many years with the Beach Boys. Change is always promised in life; today we find ourselves in a chapter of change, but not an end."

Johnston originally joined the group in 1965, filling in as a live vocalist in place of

frontman Brian Wilson, and earning a vocal credit on "California Girls." He left the band in 1972 to pursue solo work, and penned Barry Manilow's hit "I Write The Songs."

Johnston returned to the Beach Boys in 1978, and continued to tour as the only member besides Love from the band's original era. He also wrote several songs for the group, including "Disney Girls (1957)," "Deirdre" and "Tears in the Morning." Johnston will be replaced by Chris Cron, vocalist for the Beach Boys tribute band Pet Sounds Live.

## Season 5 the last for 'The Bear'

"The Bear" is ending after the upcoming Season 5, according to a report from Hollywood news service Deadline.

The much-lauded FX show, led by Jeremy Allen White as a Chicago chef, debuted on the streaming service Hulu in 2022. But

last week, Deadline reported that an insider with the series, created by Christopher Storer, divulged on social media that the story of Carmy Berzatto and how he turned his family's Italian beef shop The Beef into the gourmet restaurant The Bear is coming to a close.

The upcoming fifth season is expected to be released in June.

The show has won 21 Primetime Emmy Awards (including for outstanding comedy series) and five Golden Globes (including best musical or comedy television series).

## Netflix parts with Markle brand

Netflix is parting ways with Meghan Markle's lifestyle brand, As Ever, mere months after it signed a multiyear television and film contract with the Duke and Duchess of Sussex.

Markle launched her brand in August 2025 as part of a partnership with Netflix's

Consumer Products division. Her first product drop — which included items like fruit spreads, flower sprinkles and honey — was done in conjunction with her series "With Love, Meghan." The first season, widely panned by critics, failed to break in to the top 300 shows in its first half of the year on the platform.

## Other news

■ "Country" Joe McDonald, a hippie rock star of the 1960s whose "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag" was a four-lettered rebuke to the Vietnam War that became an anthem for protesters and a highlight of the Woodstock music festival, died Sunday. He was 84. McDonald, who performed with his band, Country Joe and the Fish, died in Berkeley, Calif. His death from complications of Parkinson's disease was reported by Kathy McDonald, his wife of 43 years, in a statement issued by his publicist.

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Jacqueline Smith

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**stripes.com**

## Israeli officials start to ask how the Iran war ends

BY DAVID IGNATIUS

*The Washington Post*

A few senior officials in Israel are starting to voice concern about the escalating, open-ended attack on Iran — and suggesting possible exit ramps that might halt the war before it further damages the region and the global economy.

Talk of an endgame is early, and a decision about whether to stop the attacks rests largely with President Donald Trump, who continues to seek all-out victory. But in a telephone conversation Sunday, a senior Israeli official familiar with the planning and strategy for the Iran war discussed alternatives to Trump's call for "unconditional surrender." The official requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the Iran situation.

Trump has wavered among several conceptions of the outcome. He spoke at first about a negotiated settlement with pliable members of the regime but has since demanded surrender because, he said, his preferred negotiating partners are dead. Like Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he wants to press on to what he described Saturday as "the moment of truth."

The disdain for negotiations expressed by Trump and Netanyahu may deepen after Sunday's announcement that Iran's new supreme leader will be Mojtaba Khamenei, the son of the previous head of state who was killed in a massive airstrike on his compound Feb. 28. The new leader is a hard-liner who, if anything, is even closer to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps than his father was. Not a man for the bargaining table.

What concerns this official and others I've spoken with the past few days is that the cost of the war continues to rise — for gulf states pounded by Iranian missiles, for a global econ-

omy that's facing steep increases in oil and natural gas prices that could trigger a worldwide economic crisis, and for Trump himself, who took the United States to war without a popular base of support for the conflict.

"I'm not sure it's in our interest to fight until the regime is toppled," said the Israeli official. "Nobody wants a never-ending story."

The official said the Israeli and American bombing campaign was nearing the point of achieving its military objectives. It was close to destroying what was left of Iran's nuclear program after U.S. bombardment in June, as well as its ballistic missile inventories and weapons-making factories, along with the top tiers of its military, intelligence and internal security forces. When I asked how long it would take to complete this military mission, the official wouldn't answer.

"Of course, we wish to topple the regime, but that's not the only endgame," the Israeli said. Once the major military targets have been eliminated, "Israel would have achieved its goals," he explained. "Iran won't surrender, but it can send messages to accept a ceasefire with U.S. conditions."

To be clear, this official wasn't speaking for Netanyahu, who said Sunday that in the next phase of the war, Israel wants "to destabilize the regime, to enable change." But the official's views do appear to express a view shared by some within the defense establishment, which became frustrated with Netanyahu's determination to continue combat in Gaza without a clearly defined endgame and remains skeptical about his strategic planning.

"We don't see anyone who can replace the regime," the Israeli official said, summarizing a view shared by U.S. and Israeli intelligence analysts. He said the regime's centralized command-and-control structure was weakening, and there were early signs of internal

rifts — but nothing to indicate that a crack-up is close. The Israeli said he doubted that arming the Kurds or other minorities would be a good strategy because it would alienate the Iranian majority.

Israeli defense planners appear to have two other concerns. One is the risk that Netanyahu will order major ground operations in Lebanon to complete the destruction of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militia.

"We don't want to be dragged into the quagmire," the official said, expressing concern at another point about "the slippery slope of Lebanon."

"We are willing to engage with Lebanese officials," including President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, to "reach agreement on a ceasefire" there, the Israeli said. He said Israeli ground troops were inside Lebanon to attack the remnants of Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force near Israel's southern border, but "we are not planning large ground operations." Israel wants to avoid a repeat of the 1982 ground invasion all the way to Beirut, which many Israelis came to view as a bad mistake.

A second concern expressed by the Israeli official was maintaining good relations with the United States at a time when Americans in both political parties are voicing growing concern about the alliance. "We won't drag the U.S. into an endless war," the official said. "Israel is a reliable ally," not a burden, he argued.

Trump has set his course for the annihilation of the Iranian regime. He speaks about creating a new Iran that reflects that country's yearning for freedom and modern life. But he doesn't appear to have anything approaching a plan for achieving this worthy goal. And he's going to have to answer the Iraq War-era question I heard reprised this weekend: Tell me how this ends?

## With Iran reeling, a safer Middle East is taking shape

BY ANDREW GHALILI

*InsideSources.com*

For four decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been the single greatest source of instability in the Middle East. It armed Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, the Houthis in Yemen, and a constellation of Shiite militias in Iraq and Syria. It plotted assassinations and fomented unrest from Beirut to Bahrain. It built an infrastructure of coercion that stretched across five countries and threatened every government in the region. Its ballistic missile arsenal and advancing nuclear program gave it coercive leverage that no neighbor could ignore. And its willingness to use proxies against any state that pushed back kept the region in a permanent defensive posture.

That era is ending.

In the span of days, Operation Epic Fury has dismantled the command structure that held this network together. Supreme leader Ali Khamenei, who directed the Islamic Republic's campaign of regional terror for more than three decades, is dead. Dozens of the regime's most senior military and security officials were killed. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps leadership that coordinated, armed and funded proxy forces across the region has been gutted. The missile production sites that supplied those proxies have been struck. The nuclear enrichment infrastructure that gave the regime its ultimate leverage has been degraded for the second time in less than a year.

The regime's response proved the case for acting. Tehran has launched missiles and drones at Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan. It targeted civilian airports in Kuwait and Dubai. Debris from intercepted missiles damaged the Burj Al Arab, started fires at Jebel Ali Port, and struck near an Aramco refinery at Ras Tanura, forcing a temporary shutdown.

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry called it "brutal Iranian aggression" and a "blatant violation" of sovereignty. Seven nations issued a joint statement through the State Department condemning the attacks.

Now, consider what Iran's proxy network did to the region. Iran-backed Houthi forces caused a 90% drop in container shipping through the Suez Canal, disrupting \$1 trillion in global trade and driving shipping costs between Asia and Europe up as much as sevenfold. Hezbollah, though significantly degraded by Israeli operations in 2024, had spent decades holding Lebanon captive as an armed state within a state. Iran-backed militias launched 200 attacks against U.S. forces across Iraq, Syria and Jordan since October 2023, while simultaneously intimidating Iraq's elected government.

The IRGC underwrote and coordinated the entire network at an estimated cost of billions of dollars annually, with personnel, weapons and money flowing through a web that connected Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Gaza.

The command structure behind that net-

work is now shattered. The clerical authority that sanctioned it is no longer in place. The missile infrastructure that backed it has been decimated. And the Arab states that lived under its shadow for decades are, for the first time, watching the source of that threat diminish in real time.

This does not mean the region is out of danger. The operation is ongoing. American service members have given their lives. Iran's retaliatory strikes have killed civilians in the region. Proxy groups have pledged continued attacks.

The situation remains volatile, and the road ahead demands sustained commitment.

However, the trajectory is clear. The regime that held the Middle East hostage with proxy armies, ballistic missiles and a nuclear program inching toward a weapon has lost its leadership, its senior military command and significant parts of its offensive capability.

The Arab world is not mourning. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Jordan stood together to condemn the regime that attacked them. Opposition leader Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi told the Iranian people that the time will come to take over their government. The conditions for a region no longer defined by Tehran's threats are more real today than at any point in half a century.

Andrew Ghalili is the policy director at the National Union for Democracy in Iran, representing the Iranian-American community. He wrote this for InsideSources.com.

Bizarro

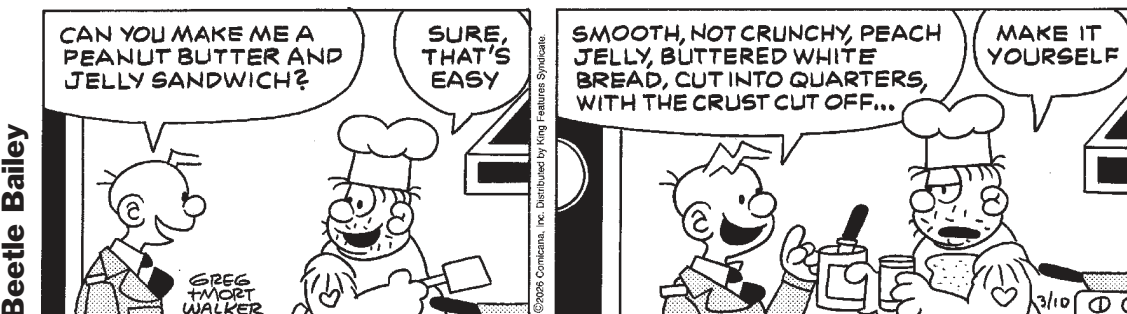
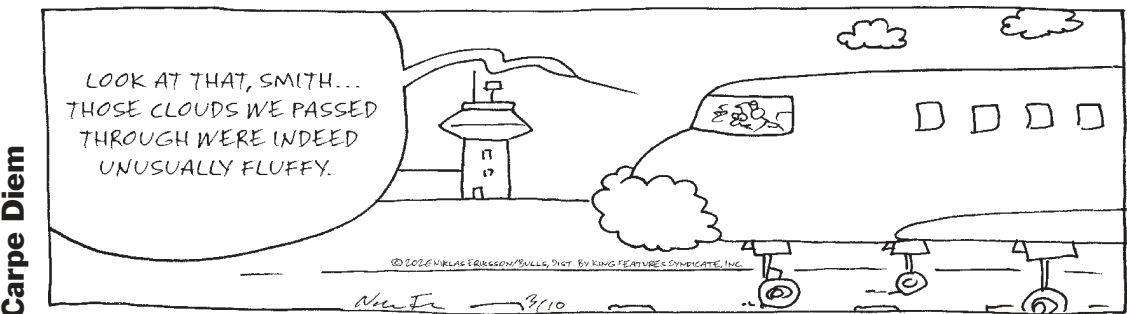
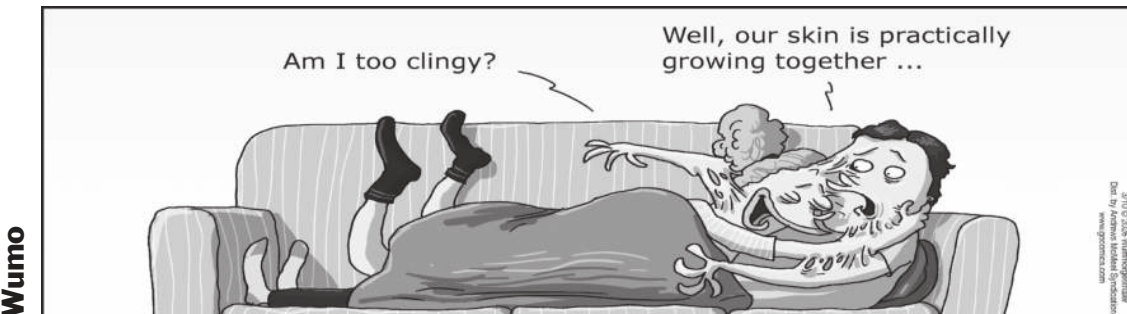
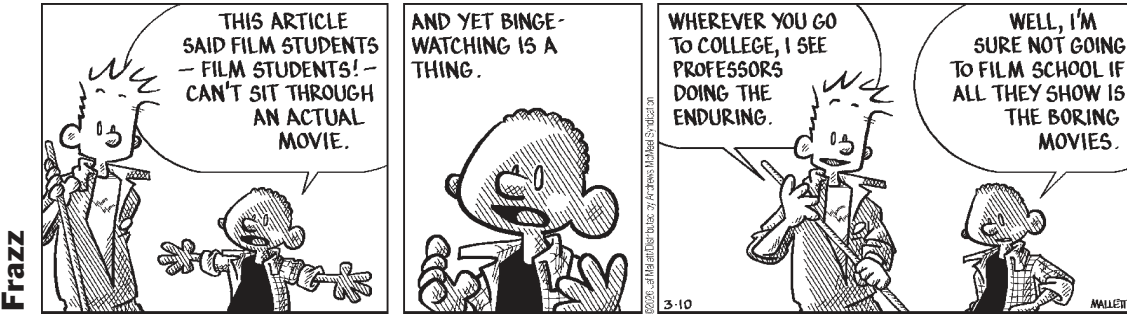


Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13			14			
15				16			17			
18				19			20			
			21			22				
23	24	25			26			27	28	29
30				31			32			
33				34			35			
			36			37				
38	39	40			41			42	43	44
45					46			47		
48					49			50		
51					52			53		



ACROSS

- 1 Kate of "House of Cards"
- 5 Sort
- 8 Spanish eyes
- 12 Tennis score
- 13 Female rabbit
- 14 "Clumsy me!"
- 15 Contraptions
- 17 Sch. book fair sponsors
- 18 Cyber-chats, briefly
- 19 "Awesome!"
- 20 Accra's country
- 21 Joke
- 22 Luau dish
- 23 Father figures
- 26 Surfer's destination
- 30 Biblical king
- 31 Trail the pack
- 32 Despot
- 33 Newspaper format
- 35 School dances
- 36 Dhabi preceder
- 37 "Oy —!"
- 38 Branch of Islam
- 41 Jam holder
- 42 Piercing tool
- 45 Oodles
- 46 Jim Henson's art
- 48 Swerve
- 49 Chowd down
- 50 Luminary
- 51 Slithery
- 52 — Moines
- 53 Superhero's garment

DOWN

- 1 Cr che trio
- 2 Economist Smith
- 3 Disencumbers
- 4 "Hulk" director Lee
- 5 Suitcase attachment
- 6 Parliamentarian
- 7 Crucial
- 8 Faulty argument
- 9 Teeny bit
- 10 Bridge
- 11 "Insecure" actress Rae
- 16 Cooperstown stats
- 20 Sailor
- 21 Heroism
- 22 Cribbage scorer
- 23 Calif. clock setting
- 24 Bond rating
- 25 Tavern

- 26 Bankroll
- 27 Equal (Pref.)
- 28 Highland hat
- 29 Hesitant sounds
- 31 Alysa —, winner of the 2025 World Figure Skating Championships
- 34 Kimono sash
- 35 Criminal, to cops
- 37 Smokes an e-cig
- 38 Rescue
- 39 Peter Fonda role
- 40 Yuletide tune
- 41 Burlap fiber
- 42 Lead-in to girl or boy
- 43 Enfold
- 44 Harp forerunner
- 46 Cushion
- 47 PC key

Answer to Previous Puzzle

A	S	P		U	R	L		S	L	A	W		
B	O	O	S		M	A	I		H	O	R	A	
C	A	S	H		A	C	L		A	L	A	N	
S	P	E	A	R		K	A	R					
				R	A	W		C	A	P	R	I	S
T	E	M	P	J	O	B		S	C	O	R	E	
A	V	I	D		W	E	T		H	O	M	E	
M	E	T	R	O		E	S	T	E	F	A	N	
S	N	E	E	R	S		A	I	D				
				S	E	A	L		E	D	I	C	T
A	H	A	S			P	O	D		A	G	E	E
L	U	X	E			P	R	O		R	O	N	A
B	E	E	R			Y	E	N			R	T	S

3-10

CRYPTOQUIP

ZDPU VDWV IWGX QC IWUVDPHA  
 D W L W A B L A - A Q W X P L  
 CHWVPHUYVK IWHVK, Y'L AWK  
 YV ZWA W GQBJWH XPJJPH.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SHOP WHERE PEOPLE CAN GET ITEMS SUCH AS CLOGS AND CONSTRUCTION HELMETS: A HARD-WEAR STORE.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals Y

# SCOREBOARD

## COLLEGE BASKETBALL

**America East Conference Semifinals Tuesday, March 10**  
UMBC vs. Mass.-Lowell  
Vermont vs. NJIT

**American Conference At Birmingham, Ala. First Round Wednesday, March 11**  
Memphis vs. Tulane  
FAU vs. Temple

**Second Round Thursday, March 12**  
Charlotte vs. Memphis-Tulane winner  
North Texas vs. FAU-Temple winner

**Atlantic 10 Conference At Pittsburgh First Round Wednesday, March 11**  
La Salle vs. St. Bonaventure  
Richmond vs. Loyola Chicago

**Second Round Thursday, March 12**  
Fordham vs. George Washington  
George Mason vs. La Salle-St. Bonaventure winner  
Duquesne vs. Rhode Island  
Davidson vs. Richmond-Loyola Chicago winner

**Quarterfinals Friday, March 13**  
Saint Louis vs. Fordham-George Washington winner  
Dayton vs. TBD  
VCU vs. Duquesne-Rhode Island winner  
Saint Joseph's vs. TBD

**Atlantic Coast Conference At Charlotte, N.C. First Round Tuesday, March 10**  
Stanford vs. Pittsburgh  
SMU vs. Syracuse  
Virginia Tech vs. Wake Forest

**Second Round Wednesday, March 11**  
NC State vs. Stanford-Pittsburgh winner  
Louisville vs. SMU-Syracuse winner  
Florida St. vs. California  
Clemson vs. Virginia Tech-Wake Forest winner

**Quarterfinals Thursday, March 12**  
Virginia vs. TBD, Noon  
Miami vs. TBD  
Duke vs. Florida St.-California winner  
North Carolina vs. TBD

**Big 12 Conference At Kansas City, Mo. First Round Tuesday, March 10**  
Arizona St. vs. Baylor  
Cincinnati vs. Utah  
BYU vs. Kansas St.  
Colorado vs. Oklahoma St.

**Second Round Wednesday, March 11**  
Iowa St. vs. Arizona St.-Baylor winner  
UCF vs. Cincinnati-Utah winner  
West Virginia vs. BYU-Kansas St. winner  
TCU vs. Colorado-Oklahoma St. winner

**Quarterfinals Thursday, March 12**  
Texas Tech vs. TBD  
Arizona vs. TBD  
Houston vs. TBD  
Kansas vs. TBD

**Big East Conference At New York, N.Y. First Round Wednesday, March 11**  
Butler vs. Providence  
Marquette vs. Xavier  
DePaul vs. Georgetown

**Quarterfinals Thursday, March 12**  
St. John's vs. Butler-Providence winner  
Seton Hall vs. Creighton  
UConn vs. Marquette-Xavier winner  
Villanova vs. DePaul-Georgetown winner

**Big Sky Conference Quarterfinals Sunday, March 8**  
Portland St. 85, Idaho St. 78  
Idaho 78, Montana St. 74

**Monday, March 9**  
Montana vs. N. Colorado  
E. Washington vs. Weber St.

**Semifinals Tuesday, March 10**  
Portland St. vs. Montana-N. Colorado winner  
Idaho vs. E. Wash.-Weber St. winner

**Big Ten Conference At Chicago, Ill. First Round Tuesday, March 10**  
Oregon vs. Maryland  
Northwestern vs. Penn St.

**Second Round Wednesday, March 11**  
Iowa vs. Oregon-Maryland winner  
Washington vs. Southern Cal  
Indiana vs. Northwestern-Penn St. winner  
Minnesota vs. Rutgers

**Third Round Thursday, March 12**  
Ohio St. vs. TBD, Noon  
Wisconsin vs. Washington-Southern Cal winner  
Purdue vs. TBD  
UCLA vs. Minnesota-Rutgers winner

**Big West Conference At Henderson, Nev. First Round Wednesday, March 11**  
UC San Diego vs. Cal Poly  
UC Davis vs. UC Santa Barbara

**Quarterfinals Thursday, March 12**  
CS Northridge vs. UC San Diego-Cal Poly winner  
Cal St.-Fullerton vs. UC Davis-UC Santa Barbara winner

**Coastal Athletic Conference At Washington, D.C. Quarterfinals Sunday, March 8**  
Campbell 85, UNC-Wilmington 70  
Monmouth (NJ) 65, Drexel 57  
Towson 81, Coll. of Charleston 56  
Hofstra 92, William & Mary 61

**Semifinals Monday, March 9**  
Monmouth (NJ) vs. Campbell  
Hofstra vs. Towson

**Conference USA At Huntsville, Ala. First Round Tuesday, March 10**  
FIU vs. Missouri St.  
Jacksonville St. vs. New Mexico St.

**Quarterfinals Wednesday, March 11**  
Liberty vs. FIU-Missouri St. winner  
Sam Houston St. vs. Jacksonville St.-New Mexico St. winner

**Thursday, March 12**  
Louisiana Tech vs. Middle Tennessee  
W. Kentucky vs. Kennesaw St.

**Horizon League Semifinals Monday, March 9**  
Wright St. vs. N. Kentucky  
Robert Morris vs. Detroit

**Championship Tuesday, March 10**  
Wright St.-N. Kentucky winner vs. Robert Morris-Detroit winner

**Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference At Atlantic City, N.J. Semifinals Sunday, March 8**  
Merrimack 58, Marist 57  
Siena 76, Fairfield 61

**Championship Tuesday, March 10**  
Merrimack vs. Siena

**Mid-American Conference At Cleveland, Ohio First Round Thursday, March 12**  
Miami (Ohio) vs. UMass  
Toledo vs. Bowling Green  
Akron vs. Buffalo  
Kent St. vs. Ohio

**Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference At Norfolk, Va. First Round Wednesday, March 11**  
Morgan St. vs. Delaware St.

**Thursday, March 12**  
Norfolk St. vs. SC State  
NC Central vs. Md.-Eastern Shore

## DEALS

**Sunday's transactions**

**BASEBALL Major League Baseball American League**

**ATHLETICS** — Optioned RHP Chen Zhong-Ao Zhuang to Las Vegas (PCL).  
**BALTIMORE ORIOLES** — Optioned OF Reed Trimble to Norfolk (IL). Optioned RHP Cameron Foster and RHP Anthony Nunez to minor league camp. Reassigned C Silas Ardoin, OF Jud Fabian, RHPs Jean Carlos Henriquez and Cameron Weston to minor league camp.  
**CLEVELAND GUARDIANS** — Optioned LHP Daniel Espino and RHP Franco Aleman to Columbus (IL).  
**HOUSTON ASTROS** — Optioned RHP Jason Alexander to Sugar Land (PCL).  
**SEATTLE MARINERS** — Optioned RHP Ryan Loutos to Tacoma (PCL).  
**TAMPA BAY RAY** — Optioned RHP Alex Cook and C Dom Keegan to Durham (IL).  
**TEXAS RANGERS** — Claimed OF Dairon Blanco off waivers from Kansas City. Optioned RHPs Leandro Lopez and David Davalillo to Frisco (TL). Placed LHP Jordan Montgomery on the 60-day IL.

**National League**

**ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS** — Optioned LHPs Mitch Bratt and Kohl Drake, RHPs Juan Burgos and Grant Holman and INF Jose Fernandez to Reno (PCL). Reassigned RHPs Gerardo Carrillo, Hayden Durke, Junior Fernandez and Taylor Rashi, LHP Spencer Giesting, INFs LuJames Groover, Cristofer Torin and Tommy Troy and OFs A.J. Vukovich and Ryan Waldschmidt to Reno.  
**CHICAGO CUBS** — Optioned RHPs Riley Martin and Jack Neely and INFs Ben Cowles and James Triantos to Iowa (IL), and INF Pedro Ramirez to Knoxville (SL). Reassigned RHPs Grant Kipp, Connor Noland, Connor Schultz and Jaxon Wiggins to Iowa.  
**COLORADO ROCKIES** — Optioned LHPs Welinton Herrera, Carson Palmquist and Luis Peralta, RHP Gabriel Hughes and OF Sterlin Thompson to Albuquerque (PCL).  
**MIAMI MARLINS** — Optioned RHPs William Kempner, Josh White and LHP Dax Fulton, SS Jared Serna and 3B Deyvison De Los Santos to Jacksonville (IL).  
**MILWAUKEE BREWERS** — Optioned RHP Coleman Crow to Nashville (IL). Reassigned LHPs Tate Kuehner and Drew Rom to Nashville.

**Mountain West Conference At Las Vegas First Round Wednesday, March 11**  
UNLV vs. Wyoming  
Nevada vs. Air Force  
Colorado St. vs. Fresno St.  
Boise St. vs. San Jose St.

**Patriot League Semifinals Sunday, March 8**  
Lehigh 76, Colgate 69  
Boston U. 73, Navy 72

**Championship Wednesday, March 11**  
Lehigh vs. Boston U.

**Southeastern Conference At Nashville, Tenn. First Round Wednesday, March 11**  
Kentucky vs. LSU  
Auburn vs. Mississippi St.  
Texas vs. Mississippi  
Oklahoma vs. South Carolina

**Second Round Thursday, March 12**  
Missouri vs. Kentucky-LSU winner  
Tennessee vs. Auburn-Miss. St. winner  
Georgia vs. Texas-Mississippi winner  
Texas A&M vs. Okla.-S. Carolina winner

**Quarterfinals Friday, March 13**  
Florida vs. TBD  
Vanderbilt vs. TBD  
Alabama vs. TBD  
Arkansas vs. TBD

**Southern Conference At Asheville, N.C. Semifinals Sunday, March 8**  
ETSU 69, W. Carolina 67  
Furman 81, UNC-Greensboro 75

**Championship Monday, March 9**  
ETSU vs. Furman

**Southland Conference At Lake Charles, La. First Round Sunday, March 8**  
New Orleans 73, Houston Christian 60  
Nicholls 61, Northwestern St. 47

**Quarterfinals Monday, March 9**  
Texas A&M-CC vs. New Orleans  
Texas Rio Grande Valley vs. Nicholls

**Semifinals Tuesday, March 10**  
Stephen F. Austin vs. Texas A&M-Corpus Christi-New Orleans winner  
McNeese St. vs. Texas Rio Grande Valley-Nicholls winner

**Southwestern Athletic Conference At College Park, Ga. First Round Monday, March 9**  
Alabama St. vs. Alcorn St.  
Grambling St. vs. MVSU

**Second Round Tuesday, March 10**  
Prairie View vs. Alabama St.-Alcorn St. winner  
Jackson St. vs. Grambling St.-MVSU winner

**Sun Belt Conference At Pensacola, Fla. Semifinals Sunday, March 8**  
Troy 78, Southern Miss. 70  
Georgia Southern 82, Marshall 78

**Championship Monday, March 9**  
Troy vs. Georgia Southern

**West Coast Conference At Las Vegas Quarterfinals Sunday, March 8**  
Oregon St. 78, San Francisco 77  
Santa Clara 76, Pacific 68

**Semifinals Monday, March 9**  
Gonzaga vs. Oregon St.  
Saint Mary's (Cal.) vs. Santa Clara

**Championship Tuesday, March 10**  
Gonzaga-Oregon St. winner vs. Saint Mary's (Cal.)-Santa Clara winner

## AUTO RACING

### Straight Talk Wireless 500

**NASCAR Cup Series Sunday Avondale, Ariz. Lap length: 1.00 miles Start position in parentheses**

- (5) Ryan Blaney, Ford, 312 laps, 65 points.
- (12) Christopher Bell, Toyota, 312, 54.
- (2) Kyle Larson, Chevrolet, 312, 36.
- (14) Ty Gibbs, Toyota, 312, 36.
- (11) Denny Hamlin, Toyota, 312, 47.
- (28) Bubba Wallace, Toyota, 312, 37.
- (9) William Byron, Chevrolet, 312, 32.
- (8) Tyler Reddick, Toyota, 312, 39.
- (16) Michael McDowell, Chevrolet, 312, 28.
- (32) Erik Jones, Toyota, 312, 27.
- (18) Shane Van Gisbergen, Chevrolet, 312, 26.
- (30) Todd Gilliland, Ford, 312, 26.
- (13) Ryan Preece, Ford, 312, 24.
- (17) Chris Buescher, Ford, 312, 30.
- (37) Brad Keselowski, Ford, 312, 22.
- (25) Austin Dillon, Chevrolet, 312, 21.
- (29) Kyle Busch, Chevrolet, 312, 20.
- (22) Riley Herbst, Toyota, 312, 19.
- (23) AJ Allmendinger, Chevrolet, 312, 18.
- (7) Carson Hocevar, Chevrolet, 312, 21.
- (27) Austin Hill, Chevrolet, 312, 0.
- (21) Ricky Stenhouse Jr, Chevrolet, 312, 15.
- (26) Chase Elliott, Chevrolet, 312, 14.
- (34) Cody Ware, Chevrolet, 312, 13.
- (15) John H. Nemechek, Toyota, 312, 12.
- (33) Ty Dillon, Chevrolet, 311, 11.
- (24) Zane Smith, Ford, accident, 294, 10.
- (6) Ross Chastain, Chevrolet, 286, 10.
- (19) Connor Zilisch, Chevrolet, suspension, 281, 8.
- (4) Daniel Suárez, Chevrolet, accident, 254, 11.
- (1) Joey Logano, Ford, accident, 253, 23.
- (10) Josh Berry, Ford, accident, 253, 5.
- (31) Anthony Alfredo, Chevrolet, accident, 217, 0.
- (3) Austin Cindric, Ford, accident, 216, 13.
- (36) Cole Custer, Chevrolet, garage, 159, 2.
- (35) Noah Gragson, Ford, accident, 155, 1.
- (20) Chase Briscoe, Toyota, accident, 131, 1.

**Race Statistics**

**Average Speed of Race Winner:** 88.225 mph.  
**Time of Race:** 3 hours, 32 minutes, 12 seconds.  
**Margin of Victory:** .399 seconds.  
**Caution Flags:** 12 for 86 laps.  
**Lead Changes:** 23 among 8 drivers.  
**Lap Leaders:** J.Logano 0-46; R.Blaney 47-64; J.Logano 65; C.Bell 66-96; J.Logano 97; C.Bell 98-108; J.Logano 109-124; C.Bell 125-133; J.Logano 134-138; C.Bell 139-162; J.Logano 163; R.Preece 164-167; D.Hamlin 168-172; C.Bell 173-190; J.Logano 191; C.Bell 192-211; J.Logano 212; J.Berry 213-225; C.Bell 226-247; J.Logano 248; C.Bell 249-289; W.Byron 290; T.Gibbs 291-302; R.Blaney 303-312

**Leaders Summary (Driver, Times Led, Laps Led):** C.Bell, 8 times for 176 laps; J.Logano, 9 times for 74 laps; R.Blaney, 2 times for 28 laps; J.Berry, 1 time for 13 laps; T.Gibbs, 1 time for 12 laps; D.Hamlin, 1 time for 5 laps; R.Preece, 1 time for 4 laps; W.Byron, 1 time for 1 lap.  
**Wins:** T.Reddick, 3; R.Blaney, 1.  
**Top 16 in Points:** 1. T.Reddick, 225; 2. R.Blaney, 165; 3. B.Wallace, 153; 4. C.Elliott, 128; 5. S.Van Gisbergen, 116; 6. C.Bell, 113; 7. J.Logano, 113; 8. M.McDowell, 111; 9. C.Buescher, 111; 10. K.Larson, 109; 11. W.Byron, 108; 12. D.Hamlin, 107; 13. A.Allmendinger, 104; 14. C.Hocevar, 103; 15. T.Gibbs, 101; 16. B.Keselowski, 100.

**NASCAR Driver Rating Formula**

A maximum of 150 points can be attained in a race. The formula combines the following categories: Wins, Finishes, Top-15 Finishes, Average Running Position While on Lead Lap, Average Speed Under Green, Fastest Lap, Led Most Laps, Lead-Lap Finish.

## GOLF

### Arnold Palmer Invitational

**Sunday At Bay Hill Club Orlando, Fla. Purse: \$20 million Yardage: 7,466; Par: 72 Final Round x-won on first playoff hole**

x-A. Bhatia, \$4,000,000	70-66-68-69-273 -15
Daniel Berger, \$2,200,000	63-68-72-70-273 -15
Ludvig Aberg, \$1,200,000	66-71-72-67-276 -12
C. Young, \$1,200,000	67-73-67-69-276 -12
Collin Morikawa, \$840,000	66-71-70-70-277 -11
Russell Henley, \$702,000	70-69-71-68-278 -10
Min Woo Lee, \$702,000	69-71-68-70-278 -10
Sahith Theegala, \$702,000	70-67-75-66-278 -10
Rickie Fowler, \$578,000	69-69-72-70-280 -8
Harry Hall, \$578,000	73-69-68-70-280 -8
Adam Scott, \$493,000	68-73-71-70-282 -6
Jordan Spieth, \$493,000	72-71-68-71-282 -6
Billy Horschel, \$373,200	69-74-72-68-283 -5
Viktor Hovland, \$373,200	72-72-67-72-283 -5
Si Woo Kim, \$373,200	71-71-71-70-283 -5
M. McNealy, \$373,200	70-74-69-70-283 -5
Sepp Straka, \$373,200	72-69-66-76-283 -5

## BASEBALL

### World Baseball Classic

GROUP A		
	W	L Pct.
Puerto Rico	2	0 1.000
Cuba	2	0 1.000
Panama	1	2 .333
Canada	1	1 .500
Colombia	0	3 .000
GROUP B		
	W	L Pct.
Mexico	2	0 1.000
United States	2	0 1.000
Italy	2	0 1.000
Britain	0	3 .000
Brazil	0	3 .000
GROUP C		
	W	L Pct.
Japan	3	0 1.000
Australia	2	1 .667
Taiwan	2	2 .500
South Korea	1	2 .333
Czech Republic	0	3 .000
GROUP D		
	W	L Pct.
Dominican Republic	2	0 1.000
Venezuela	2	0 1.000
Israel	1	1 .500
Netherlands	1	2 .333
Nicaragua	0	3 .000

**Sunday, March 8**  
Japan 4, Australia 3  
Cuba 7, Colombia 4  
Dominican Republic 12, Netherlands 1  
Italy 7, Britain 4  
Panama 4, Canada 3  
Israel 5, Nicaragua 0  
Mexico 16, Brazil 0

**Monday, March 9**  
South Korea at Australia  
Colombia at Panama  
Dominican Republic at Israel  
Brazil at Britain  
Venezuela at Nicaragua  
Cuba at Puerto Rico  
Mexico at United States

**Tuesday, March 10**  
Czech Republic at Japan  
Canada at Puerto Rico  
Israel at Netherlands  
Italy at United States

## PRO SOCCER

**MLS Eastern Conference**

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
NYC FC	2	0	1	7	8	2
Nashville	2	0	1	7	7	2
Inter Miami CF	2	1	0	6	6	6
New York	2	1	0	6	3	4
Chicago	1	1	1	4	4	2
Charlotte FC	1	1	1	4	4	5
Cincinnati	1	2	0	3	2	2
D.C. United	1	2	0	3	2	3
Toronto FC	1	2	0	3	3	6
CF Montréal	1	2	0	3	3	8
Columbus	0	1	2	2	4	5
Philadelphia	0	3	0	0	1	4
New England	0	2	0	0	1	5
Atlanta	0	3	0	0	2	7
Orlando City	0	3	0	0	3	11

**Western Conference**

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
San Diego FC	3	0	0	9	8	0
Vancouver	3	0	0	9	8	1
LAFC	3	0	0	9	6	0
San Jose	3	0	0	9	6	0
Colorado	2	1	0	6	6	3
Seattle	2	1	0	6	4	2
Real Salt Lake	2	1	0	6	5	4
LA Galaxy	1	1	1	4	5	5
FC Dallas	1	1	1	4	3	3
Austin FC	1	1	1	4	4	5
Minn. United	1	1	1	4	4	5
Houston	1	1	0	3	2	3
Portland	1	2	0	3	4	8
St Louis City	0	2	1	1	1	4
Sporting KC	0	2	1	1	2	6

**Sunday, March 8**  
CF Montréal 3, New York 0  
Toronto FC 1, Cincinnati 0

**Saturday, March 14**  
New York at Toronto FC  
Philadelphia at Atlanta  
Nashville at Columbus  
Miami at Charlotte FC  
Colorado at New York City FC  
CF Montréal at Orlando City  
D.C. United at Chicago  
San Diego FC at FC Dallas  
Portland at Houston  
Sporting Kansas City at LA Galaxy  
Austin FC at Real Salt Lake  
St Louis City at Los Angeles FC

## AUTO RACING/BASEBALL

## Blaney ends Reddick's streak, gives Penske sweep

By JENNA FRYER  
Associated Press

AVONDALE, Ariz. — Ryan Blaney completed a Team Penske sweep at Phoenix Raceway by winning the Cup Series race Sunday — a victory that denied Tyler Reddick a fourth consecutive win to start the NASCAR season.

Blaney was the race favorite after winning last November in the season-finale on the mile oval but he had to overcome at least three tire problems that cost him track position. He chased down Ty Gibbs — the 49th car he passed Sunday — to take the lead with 10 laps remaining and seal his 18th career victory.

“Just perseverance,” Blaney said. “We had a couple mistakes that we learned from, got better, had to come from the back a couple times. It’s cool to win, especially after a day like that. Can’t say enough about the (team) for keeping their head down and doing what they do.”

As he celebrated on the frontstretch, his parked Ford began to roll away and Blaney had to chase after it to ensure it was in park.

The victory came during a weekend celebration of Team Penske’s 60th season of competition and during a “desert doubleheader” that bundled IndyCar and NASCAR together at Phoenix. David Malukas won the IndyCar pole for Roger Penske and then Josef Newgarden won Saturday’s race; Joey Logano won the pole for the Cup race and then Blaney completed the sweep.

“Really proud of everybody at Team Penske,” Blaney said.

“We swept the weekend, Newgarden winning yesterday, us winning today. Can’t wait to see Roger.”

The win was the first this season for Ford after Reddick — in a Michael Jordan-owned Toyota for 23XI Racing — set a NASCAR record by winning the first three races of the season.

Christopher Bell finished second in a Toyota for Joe Gibbs Racing, reigning Cup champion Kyle Larson was third in a Chevrolet for Hendrick Motorsports and Gibbs



DARRYL WEBB/AP

Ryan Blaney celebrates after winning the NASCAR Cup Series race at Phoenix Raceway on Sunday. Blaney gave Team Penske a weekend sweep of the Cup and IndyCar races.

dropped to fourth.

Denny Hamlin, who lost the championship last November at this track, was fifth as JGR drivers took three of the top five positions.

Bell dominated the race the same way Hamlin did in November and, just like Hamlin, lost because of the wrong pit strategy.

Hamlin in November took four tires on the final stop and was beat for the championship by Larson, who took two tires. On Sunday, Blaney took two tires while Bell and Hamlin each took four.

“You win some, you lose some,” said Bell,

who led 176 of the 312 laps. “This one stings, but on the positive side, I’m really proud of our entire team. It’s something to build on. It was a day that we needed.”

Bubba Wallace was sixth for 23XI, William Byron was seventh for Hendrick, and Reddick was eighth. Toyota drivers took six of the top 10 spots.

“It would have been nice to make it four,” Reddick said.

“Scored the fourth-most amount of points on the day... solid day. If we’re not going to win, these are the kind of days we need to have.”

The race was slowed by a record-tying 12

cautions, most caused by a rash of tire failures.

## Gibbs responds

Ty Gibbs has chosen not to comment on the federal lawsuit his grandfather’s race team filed against its former competition director, even after court declarations from Chris Gabehart claimed he left Joe Gibbs Racing in part because of the young driver.

Ty Gibbs said ahead of the race Sunday he’d let his performance on track speak for him and then delivered with his second consecutive fourth-place finish.

“Very happy with my team. All the guys, I’m with the right guys. That makes a difference,” Gibbs said. “So we’re running good because of that. It shows.”

Ty Gibbs was successful in NASCAR’s second-level series, where he won 12 races and the 2022 championship by winning the finale at Phoenix. His father, Coy, was found dead in his Phoenix hotel room the morning after the championship. Ty Gibbs moved to the Cup Series in 2023 and is winless in 127 starts. The 23-year-old finished a career-best 15th in the 2024 Cup standings.

## Alfredo out early

Contact between Joey Logano and Ross Chastain caused a multi-car crash with under 100 laps remaining that ruined Anthony Alfredo’s season debut.

Alfredo got the call this week from Hendrick Motorsports to drive the No. 48 Chevrolet after Alex Bowman was ruled out with vertigo. Alfredo has spent hundreds of hours over the past four years inside a racing simulator doing test work for Hendrick and Sunday’s start was the best opportunity of his career.

Phoenix marked Alfredo’s first Cup start of the season — he qualified for the Daytona 500 driving for tiny Beard Motorsports, but his car was disqualified and kicked out of the field. Alfredo has 43 career Cup starts for smaller teams. The crash caused him to finish 33rd in his first race with NASCAR’s winningest team.

## Skubal will reconsider making another WBC start for US

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Tarik Skubal is thinking about pitching again for the United States in the World Baseball Classic after the Detroit Tigers ace had previously planned to make just one start.

His mindset changed after he started for the U.S. in a 9-1 win over Britain on Saturday night.

“I didn’t expect these types of emotions to run through my brain or my thoughts to differ,” Skubal told reporters. “I was pretty committed to making a start and getting back to camp. Things have changed, obviously. That’s why I’m going to have some conversations and try to figure out a plan for me. But yeah, I don’t know either way.”

Skubal, who has won the last two AL Cy Young Awards, said he was talking to his agent, Scott Boras, and the Tigers about the situation. But the left-hander, who can

become a free agent after this season and is expected to command a huge contract next winter, added he was “not in the right headspace to make a decision right now.”

Last month, Skubal said he would make only one WBC start regardless of how far Team USA advances because he wanted to remain on a regular spring training regimen and ramp up for opening day mostly with the Tigers.

Detroit manager A.J. Hinch said Sunday in Florida that he talked with Skubal briefly on Saturday night.

“I don’t think anything’s been determined,” Hinch said, according to MLB.com. “I think he’s incredibly emotional about the experience. It’s a difficult time that weighs heavily on players because they want to do it all.”

Hinch said they planned to have more conversations about it soon.

“We agreed to talk again as



ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

United States starting pitcher Tarik Skubal follows through on a pitch during the first inning of against Britain, Saturday in Houston.

things settled down a little bit and he got a good night’s sleep,” Hinch said. “He’ll wake up and get a good work day in today.”

Skubal added the situation has created “one of the tougher decisions I’ve made in my career so far.”

He also expressed appreciation for the U.S. team supporting whatever he chooses to do.

“They’ve been extremely supportive of everything,” Skubal said. “They totally get what’s going on with my situation — it’s unique. I’ve had these discussions with people, and most of it is, they’re extremely supportive of me being here in the first place. And I’ve got a ton of respect for that. But it’s just hard. When you get in these environments, and you get this team, it’s hard to walk away from that.”

Skubal gave up a home run to Nate Eaton on his first pitch Saturday night but allowed just one single after that while striking out five in three innings.

The U.S. improved to 2-0 with the win and faces Mexico on Monday night with reigning NL Cy Young Award winner Paul Skenes on the mound.

## NHL

## ROUNDUP

# Novak, Pens defeat Bruins in OT

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Tommy Novak scored 17 seconds into overtime to complete a wild comeback in the Pittsburgh Penguins' 5-4 victory over the Boston Bruins on Sunday.

Anthony Mantha scored two third-period goals to help Pittsburgh — playing without franchise cornerstones Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin — snap a three-game losing streak. Second in the Metropolitan Division, Pittsburgh has points in 16 of its last 19 games.

Crosby is out a minimum of four weeks because of a lower-body injury and Malkin served the second of a five-game suspension for slashing Buffalo's Rasmus Dahlin in the head.

Egor Chinakhov added a power-play goal, Connor Dewar also scored and Arturs Silovs stopped 22 shots. Chinakhov has 14 goals this season and 11 goals in 25 games with Pittsburgh.

Pavel Zacha had his second career hat trick, and David Pastrnak also scored for Boston. The Bruins have lost five of their last eight. They have a three-point lead for the final wild-card spot in the East.

Joonas Korpisalo made 34 saves for the Bruins.

Pittsburgh had its second three-goal comeback this season. The last time the Penguins had a three-goal comeback without Crosby and Malkin was February 10, 2001, against New Jersey.

Mantha became the first Pittsburgh player to score multiple game-tying goals in a third period since Alex Kovalev on March 23, 2002, against Philadelphia.

Pittsburgh trailed 3-1 in the third period, but Dewar and Mantha scored 33 seconds apart to tie it.

Zacha completed his hat trick at 8:34 of the third period, but Mantha tied it again for Pittsburgh with 8:42 to go when he tapped in a rebound from the left post.

**Stars 4, Blackhawks 3 (OT):** Defenseman Miro Heiskanen scored 22 seconds into overtime to give Dallas a home victory over Chicago.

The Blackhawks took a 2-0 lead in the first period on a deflection by Bertuzzi at 6:59 and Rinzel's blast from the slot fewer than two minutes later. Bastian scored Dallas' first goal late in the period.

The Stars turned a 2-1 deficit going into the third period into a 3-2 lead on Bourque's goal 42 seconds in and Hryckowian's power-play goal at 9:40.

Second in the Western Conference, the Stars are 11-0-1 in their last 12.

Young Chicago star Connor Be-



GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

**The Penguins' Tommy Novak, left, celebrates his game-winning goal in overtime with Egor Chinakhov in Pittsburgh on Sunday. The Penguins beat the Bruins 5-4 and have points in 16 of their last 19 games.**

dard forced the extra period by scoring with 1:20 left in regulation with the Blackhawks playing with an extra skater.

Mavrik Bourque had a goal and an assist for Dallas. Nathan Bastian and Justin Hryckowian also scored, and Casey DeSmith made 12 saves.

The Blackhawks are 2-7-4 in their last 13.

**Oilers 4, Golden Nights 2:** Vasily Podkolzin, Leon Draisaitl and Kasperii Kapanen scored in the third period and visiting Edmonton beat Vegas to tighten the Pacific Division race.

The teams traded goals in the second period, but a goal from Golden Knights winger Keegan Kolesar was successfully challenged by the Oilers.

Then in the third, Podkolzin scored an unassisted goal on a breakaway off a faceoff to put the Oilers ahead 2-1 just 2:34 into period. Draisaitl's goal with 8:07 remaining came after Eichel failed to clear the puck out of his zone because teammate Rasmus Andersson's broken stick was in the way. The Golden Knights, with 72 points, missed a chance to go back in front of Anaheim, which remained at 73 after the Ducks lost 4-0 at home to St. Louis. Third-place Edmonton has 70.

Vegas winger Brett Howden played for the first time in two months. He had been out with a lower-body injury.

Vegas has lost five of six games, and the Oilers had dropped six of eight going into this meeting.

**Avalanche 3, Wild 2 (SO):** Nathan MacKinnon scored his NHL-leading 43rd goal and scored the winning goal in a shootout, lifting Colorado to a home victory over Minnesota in a matchup between two of the NHL's top four teams in points.

MacKinnon has 70 points in 55 career games against Minnesota.

Trailing 1-0 entering the third period, the Wild scored two goals in a stretch of 2:44, one on a power play and one short-handed, to take the lead. The Avalanche countered with a Nicolas Roy tip-in goal with 7:21 remaining to send the game into overtime.

Both teams converted on one of their first three shootout opportunities before Vladimir Tarasenko was stonewalled by Scott Wedgewood, giving MacKinnon the opportunity to deliver his team a win.

Wedgewood, who leads the NHL in goals against average and is second in save percentage, had 32 saves on 34 Minnesota shots.

**Sabres 8, Lightning 7:** Josh Doan opened and closed the scoring with power-play goals and host Buffalo outlasted Tampa Bay in a wild and feisty showdown for the Atlantic Division lead.

Doan broke a tie with 4:17 left with his 21st goal of the season, helping the Sabres win their seventh straight and move two points ahead of the Lightning.

The teams combined for 100 penalty minutes in a game that included five fights and a postgame scrum. They'll meet one more time in the regular season on April

6 in Buffalo.

Doan capped a two-goal, third-period comeback for Buffalo in a game the Sabres led by three goals.

Alex Tuch and Jason Zucker also scored twice for the Sabres. Sam Carrick and Rasmus Dahlin added goals, Tage Thompson had four assists and Bo Byram three. Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen made 21 saves.

**Red Wings 3, Devils 0:** John Gibson and Cam Talbot combined to make 31 saves, Dominik Shine scored his first NHL goal and visiting Detroit beat New Jersey.

Opening a four-game trip, Detroit ended a two-game losing streak and stopped the Devils' winning streak at four.

Gibson and Cam Talbot stopped 10 shots in the third. They became the first Detroit goalies to combine for a shutout since Jonas Gustavsson and Jimmy Howard in 2014.

Defenseman Justin Faulk made his Red Wings debut.

**Blues 4, Ducks 0:** Joel Hofer made 22 saves for his fifth shutout of the season, Jonathan Drouin scored in his Blues debut and visiting St. Louis beat Anaheim to sweep a four-game trip

Drouin scored the second of three second-period goals, firing a slap shot past Ville Husso on a power play with 9:53 left.

Jordan Kyrrou, Jimmy Snuggerud and Pius Suter also scored to help St. Louis win for the fifth time in six games since the Olympic break.

## Scoreboard

### Eastern Conference

#### Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Buffalo	64	39	19	6	84	225	193
Tampa Bay	62	39	19	4	82	223	172
Detroit	64	36	21	7	79	189	190
Montreal	62	34	18	10	78	222	209
Boston	63	35	22	6	76	212	200
Ottawa	62	31	22	9	71	212	198
Florida	63	31	29	3	65	191	210
Toronto	64	27	26	11	65	202	226

#### Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Carolina	63	40	17	6	86	224	183
Pittsburgh	63	32	17	14	78	213	188
N.Y. Islanders	64	36	23	5	77	188	183
Columbus	62	32	21	9	73	200	198
Philadelphia	62	29	22	11	69	181	194
Washington	64	31	26	7	69	200	192
New Jersey	64	32	30	2	66	166	192
N.Y. Rangers	62	24	30	8	56	169	198

### Western Conference

#### Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Colorado	62	43	10	9	95	238	155
Dallas	63	39	14	10	88	220	173
Minnesota	64	37	16	11	85	215	185
Utah	63	34	25	4	72	201	173
Nashville	63	28	27	8	64	187	216
Winnipeg	62	26	26	10	62	178	189
St. Louis	63	25	29	9	59	166	212
Chicago	63	23	29	11	57	169	205

#### Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Anaheim	63	35	25	3	73	211	221
Vegas	64	29	21	14	72	209	205
Edmonton	64	31	25	8	70	227	218
Seattle	62	29	24	9	67	177	186
San Jose	61	30	25	6	66	189	212
Los Angeles	62	25	23	14	64	163	186
Calgary	62	25	30	7	57	155	189
Vancouver	63	19	36	8	46	165	236

**Note:** Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

#### Sunday's games

Colorado 3, Minnesota 2, SO  
Pittsburgh 5, Boston 4, OT  
Dallas 4, Chicago 3, OT  
Buffalo 8, Tampa Bay 7  
Detroit 3, New Jersey 0  
St. Louis 4, Anaheim 0  
Edmonton 4, Vegas 2

#### Monday's games

Los Angeles at Columbus  
Calgary at Washington  
N.Y. Rangers at Philadelphia  
Utah at Chicago  
Ottawa at Vancouver

#### Tuesday's games

Calgary at N.Y. Rangers  
Columbus at Tampa Bay  
Detroit at Florida  
Los Angeles at Boston  
Pittsburgh at Carolina  
San Jose at Buffalo  
Toronto at Montreal  
N.Y. Islanders at St. Louis  
Utah at Minnesota  
Vegas at Dallas  
Anaheim at Winnipeg  
Edmonton at Colorado  
Nashville at Seattle

#### Wednesday's games

Montreal at Ottawa  
Washington at Philadelphia

#### Thursday's games

Anaheim at Toronto  
Calgary at New Jersey  
Columbus at Florida  
Detroit at Tampa Bay  
San Jose at Boston  
St. Louis at Carolina  
Washington at Buffalo  
Edmonton at Dallas  
N.Y. Rangers at Winnipeg  
Philadelphia at Minnesota  
Chicago at Utah  
Colorado at Seattle  
Nashville at Vancouver  
Pittsburgh at Vegas

#### Scoring leaders

##### Through Sunday

	GP	G	A	PTS
Connor McDavid, EDM	64	35	73	108
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	61	43	61	104
Nikita Kucherov, TB	58	34	69	103
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	61	34	58	92
Macklin Celebrini, SJ	61	32	57	89
Mark Scheifele, WPG	62	30	48	78
Martin Necas, COL	59	28	48	76
Kirill Kaprizov, MIN	64	36	40	76
David Pastrnak, BOS	58	23	52	75
Nick Suzuki, MTL	62	21	53	74

# NBA

## Scoreboard

Eastern Conference				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	43	21	.672	—
New York	41	24	.631	2½
Toronto	36	27	.571	6½
Philadelphia	34	29	.540	8½
Brooklyn	16	47	.254	26½
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	35	28	.556	—
Miami	36	29	.554	—
Atlanta	33	31	.516	2½
Charlotte	32	33	.492	4
Washington	16	47	.254	19
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	45	18	.714	—
Cleveland	39	25	.609	6½
Milwaukee	27	36	.429	18
Chicago	26	38	.406	19½
Indiana	15	49	.234	30½
Western Conference				
Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	47	17	.734	—
Houston	39	24	.619	7½
Memphis	23	39	.371	23
Dallas	21	43	.328	26
New Orleans	21	45	.318	27
Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	50	15	.769	—
Minnesota	40	24	.625	9½
Denver	39	25	.609	10½
Portland	31	34	.477	19
Utah	19	45	.297	30½
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	39	25	.609	—
Phoenix	37	27	.578	2
Golden State	32	31	.508	6½
L.A. Clippers	31	32	.492	7½
Sacramento	15	50	.231	24½

Sunday's games				
Boston 109, Cleveland 98	L.A. Lakers 110, New York 97	Toronto 122, Dallas 92	Miami 121, Detroit 110	New Orleans 138, Washington 118
Orlando 130, Milwaukee 91	San Antonio 145, Houston 120	Portland 131, Indiana 111	Sacramento 126, Chicago 110	Phoenix 111, Charlotte 99
Monday's games				
Philadelphia at Cleveland	Denver at Oklahoma City	Memphis at Brooklyn	Golden State at Utah	New York at L.A. Clippers
Tuesday's games				
Memphis at Philadelphia	Dallas at Atlanta	Detroit at Brooklyn	Washington at Miami	Boston at San Antonio
Phoenix at Milwaukee	Toronto at Houston	Charlotte at Portland	Chicago at Golden State	Indiana at Sacramento
Minnesota at L.A. Lakers				
Wednesday's games				
Cleveland at Orlando	Toronto at New Orleans	New York at Utah	Charlotte at Sacramento	Houston at Denver
Minnesota at L.A. Clippers				
Thursday's games				
Philadelphia at Detroit	Phoenix at Indiana	Washington at Orlando	Brooklyn at Atlanta	Milwaukee at Miami
Dallas at Memphis	Denver at San Antonio	Boston at Oklahoma City	Chicago at L.A. Lakers	

Scoring leaders					
Through Sunday					
	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Doncic, LAL	52	542	413	1692	32.5
Gil-Alex., OKC	53	573	441	1677	31.6
Edwards, MIN	54	553	303	1599	29.6
Maxey, PHI	61	616	333	1767	29.0
Jokic, DEN	48	488	318	1384	28.8
Brown, BOS	57	602	315	1635	28.7
Mitchell, CLE	56	555	296	1600	28.6
Leonard, LAC	49	475	292	1367	27.9
Brunson, NY	60	556	288	1569	26.2
Durant, HOU	60	548	328	1563	26.1

## ROUNDUP

# Celtics' Brown, Tatum hold off Cavs

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Jaylen Brown scored 23 points and Jayson Tatum had 20 in his second game back from a torn right Achilles, lifting Boston to a win over Cleveland in a battle of Eastern Conference contenders.

Brown also had nine rebounds and eight assists as the Celtics built an 81-55 lead in the third quarter, sweeping their three-game season series with Cleveland. Tatum scored six points in the fourth, finishing 6-for-16 from the field in 27 minutes.

Payton Pritchard added 18 points and Baylor Scheierman had 16 points and 10 rebounds as Boston moved within three games of East-leading Detroit. Neemias Queta grabbed 11 boards.

Donovan Mitchell scored 30 points and Evan Mobley had 24 points and eight rebounds for the fourth-place Cavaliers, who had won a season-high seven straight at home. James Harden had 19 points and 10 assists.

Cleveland, which is 22-9 since Dec. 29, pulled within 94-86 midway through the fourth on Jaylon Tyson's 3-pointer. Pritchard answered with a 3-pointer and tacked on back-to-back hoops to restore the Celtics' double-digit lead.

**Lakers 110, Knicks 97:** Luka Doncic had 35 points and eight rebounds, Austin Reaves added 25 points and host Los Angeles overcame LeBron James' injury absence to grind out a 110-97 victory over New York.

Rui Hachimura scored 13 points for the Lakers, who never trailed the surging Knicks in their fourth consecutive victory even while James missed his second straight game with a bruised left elbow and a left foot injury.

The Lakers slumped in the fourth quarter, managing just one basket in a 6½-minute span down the stretch while New York cut its 23-point deficit to 10. But the Knicks couldn't hit enough shots to capitalize and committed eight turnovers in the fourth.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 25 points and 16 rebounds for the Knicks, who lost for just the second time in six games.

**Spurs 145, Rockets 120:** Victor Wembanyama had 29 points, De'Aaron Fox had 20 points and 10 assists and San Antonio won their fourth straight, rolling to a home victory over Houston.

Stephon Castle added 23 points for San Antonio, which has won 15 of 16.

Kevin Durant and Amen Thompson had 23 points each for Houston, which allowed a season high in points.

The Spurs (47-17) won the season series against the Rockets 3-1 and strengthened their hold on the No. 2 seed in the Western Conference.

Houston (39-24) dropped into fourth in the West, a half-game behind Minnesota (40-24) and seven games behind San Antonio in the loss column.

**Trail Blazers 131, Indiana 111:** Scoot Henderson scored a season-high 28 points on 10-for-15 shooting and host Portland beat skidding Indiana.

Jerami Grant and Jrue Holiday added 21 points apiece for the Blazers, who handed Indiana its ninth straight defeat. Henderson also had six assists with no turnovers.

Indiana has dropped its past six games by an average of 20 points. This marks the team's third losing streak of at least eight games this season.



DAVID RICHARD/AP

**Boston Celtics guard Jaylen Brown shoots in the second half against the Cavaliers in Cleveland on Sunday. Brown scored 23 points as the Celtics defeated the Cavaliers 109-98.**

Pascal Siakam led the Pacers with 22 points and Jay Huff had 16 points and five blocks. Andrew Nembhard added 14 points and nine assists, and Jarace Walker also scored 14.

**Heat 121, Pistons 110:** Tyler Herro scored 25 points, Bam Adebayo had 24 to go over the 10,000-point mark for his career, and host Miami beat Detroit to extend the Pistons' season-worst losing streak to four games.

Adebayo — who added nine rebounds and six assists — entered the night 23 points away from the scoring milestone. He and Dwyane Wade are the only players with 10,000 points in a Heat uniform.

The Heat are still without Norman Powell (groin) and Nikola Jovic (back), and Andrew Wiggins (toe) was also sidelined.

Cade Cunningham finished with 26 points and 10 assists and Jalen Duren scored 24 for the Pistons, whose lead in the Eastern Conference is down to 2½ games over Boston.

**Raptors 122, Mavericks 92:** RJ Barrett scored a season-high 31 points, Scottie Barnes added 17 and host Toronto beat struggling Dallas.

Jakob Poeltl had 16 points and 10 rebounds and Sandro Mamukelashvili scored 13 points as the Raptors snapped a four-game losing streak against Dallas.

Daniel Gafford had a season-high 21 points and 11 rebounds, Cooper Flagg scored 17 points and Brandon Williams added 16 but the slumping Mavericks lost their seventh straight and 17th of 19.

**Pelicans 138, Wizards 118:** Trey Murphy III scored 24 points, Saddiq Bey added 23 against his former team and host New Orleans defeated the reeling Wizards to extend Washington's losing streak to eight games.

Zion Williamson had 20 points and Dejounte Murray provided 19 for the Pelicans, who outscored Washington 72-44 in the paint.

Wizards rookie Tre Johnson scored 20 points. Will Riley added 19.

**Magic 130, Bucks 91:** Paolo Banchero

scored 33 points and Orlando cruised to a road win over Milwaukee, who rested Giannis Antetokounmpo in the second game of a back-to-back.

The Magic won their fourth straight to remain sixth in the Eastern Conference, one game behind fifth-place Toronto and percentage points ahead of Miami.

Orlando never trailed and led 67-55 at half-time. Early in the fourth quarter, Suggs hit a 3-pointer to start a 12-0 run that extended the Magic's lead to 26 points. Banchero headed to the bench for good late in the third with Orlando ahead by 31.

**Kings 126, Bulls 110:** Russell Westbrook had 23 points, 12 assists and 11 rebounds for his NBA-record 208th career triple-double, and host Sacramento beat Chicago.

Westbrook shot 7-for-17 with three 3-pointers in 35 minutes. It's the fourth triple-double of the season for the 37-year-old, who moved within one assist of passing Mark Jackson for sixth on the NBA's career list.

Westbrook's triple-doubles are an ongoing record for the nine-time All-Star and came six days after he ripped into the Sacramento media for the narrative around the Kings this season.

**Suns 111, Hornets 99:** Devin Booker had 30 points and 10 assists as Phoenix stopped Charlotte's road winning streak at 10 games with a home victory.

Collin Gillespie and Jalen Green each scored 24 points for the Suns, who have won four of five. Rasheer Fleming added 16 off the bench, including four 3-pointers.

LaMelo Ball led the Hornets with 22 points. Their road winning streak was the NBA's longest since the Los Angeles Lakers won 11 straight away from home in 2019-20. Charlotte hadn't lost on the road since Jan. 17 at Golden State.

The longest road winning streak in NBA history is 16 games, by the 1971-72 Lakers during their league-record 33-game run overall.

## NFL/GOLF

# Dolphins to release Tagovailoa

BY ALANIS THAMES  
AND TIM REYNOLDS  
Associated Press

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — The Miami Dolphins are moving on from Tua Tagovailoa and starting over at quarterback.

Tagovailoa — the team's primary starter for the last 5½ seasons — will be released, the Dolphins said Monday, a move that comes less than two years after he signed a \$212 million extension with the club.

It will result in a \$99 million dead cap hit, the largest in NFL history, yet the Dolphins evidently saw that as the best path forward.

"I recently informed Tua and his representation that we are going to move in a new direction at the quarterback position and will be releasing him after the start of the new league year," Dolphins general manager Jon-Eric Sullivan said in remarks released through the team.

The league year starts Wednes-

day afternoon. If the move is designated as a post-June 1 release, the \$99 million is split over two years, with about two-thirds on this year's cap and the remaining third in 2027.

"As I shared with Tua, I have great respect for the person and player he is," Sullivan said. "On behalf of the Miami Dolphins, I expressed our gratitude for his many contributions, both on the field and in the community, during his six seasons in Miami."

Tagovailoa went 44-32 as Miami's starter, dealt with concussions on multiple occasions and at times was a lightning rod for critics. Over the last five seasons — not counting his first year when he wasn't the full-time starter yet — Tagovailoa completed 68.6% of his passes, second only to Joe Burrow over that span, while ranking 11th leaguewide in passing yards and passing touchdowns.

At times, it was good. In the end, it just wasn't always good enough.

Tagovailoa reacted to Monday's announcement on social media, thanking the Dolphins "for six unbelievable years."

"From the moment I arrived, you believed in me, supported me, and embraced my family as your own," Tagovailoa wrote. "I was able to marry my wife and welcome both my kids to this world. ... Wearing this jersey and representing this city has been one of the greatest joys of my life."

He also expressed disappointment that he couldn't deliver that long-awaited playoff breakthrough for the team and its fans.

"I also carry deep regret that I couldn't get the job done and bring a championship home to this city," Tagovailoa said. "Miami deserves that, and I'll always wish I could have delivered it for you."

It's the latest, and certainly one of the most significant, moves in this offseason of rebuilding and change for the Dolphins.

Sullivan and head coach Jeff

Hafley are both new, and big names like receiver Tyreek Hill and pass rusher Bradley Chubb aren't being brought back.

Another move came Monday when the Dolphins agreed to trade safety Minkah Fitzpatrick to the New York Jets for a seventh-round pick, according to a person familiar with the negotiations.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because neither team announced the move.

The biggest question left was the one at quarterback, and if Tagovailoa would get another shot.

It was finally answered Monday, though there were strong hints long before now.

A trade or release had been somewhat expected after Tagovailoa, drafted fifth overall in 2020, was benched by former Dolphins coach Mike McDaniel toward the end of last season because of poor play. Tagovailoa at the time said he wasn't happy with



ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP

Quarterback Tua Tagovailoa went 44-32 as the starter for Miami.

the decision and wasn't sure what his future with the team would look like.

Tagovailoa was demoted for rookie Quinn Ewers with three games remaining last season, a clear signal that that his six-year run with the Dolphins might be coming to an end. Tagovailoa, who turned 28 earlier this month, led the league in passing yards in 2023 with a career-best 29 passing touchdowns, but he never quite replicated that form.

He threw a career-high 15 interceptions last season.

# Bhatia rallies from 5 strokes down to win Bay Hill in a playoff

BY DOUG FERGUSON  
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Akshay Bhatia missed a 30-inch par putt to fall five shots behind Sunday in the Arnold Palmer Invitational, angry enough to want to do something about it. What followed was a charge on the back nine at Bay Hill that would have made the King proud.

"You must play boldly to win," was one of Palmer's famous quotes.

Bhatia was every bit of that. Four straight birdies got him into the mix. Two shots behind with three to play, he hit 6-iron to a dangerous pin on the par-5 16th that nearly went into the cup on the second bounce and set up a short eagle to stay in the game.

And then he outlasted Daniel Berger in the first playoff at Bay Hill since 1999 — three years before Bhatia was born — to win the Arnold Palmer Invitational in a stunning comeback.

"If he was up there watching, he's probably pretty proud of how that finished," said Bhatia, wearing the red cardigan that goes to the winner of Palmer's tournament.

"Play bold — I think that was a big thing everyone knows of Mr. Palmer," he said. "I could feel that energy and buzz. It was awesome. I'm very fortunate to win this tour-

nament."

Bhatia, who also took on the flag over the rock-framed water on the 18th in regulation and nearly pulled it off, closed with a 3-under 69 and won his third PGA Tour title, all of them in playoffs.

This was the biggest, a \$20 million signature event that moves the 24-year-old into the top 20 in the world at the start of a big stretch in golf that concludes with the Masters next month.

Berger looked like he had this won, walking confidently after shots in building a four-shot lead at the turn. He lost the lead by missing a 7-foot par putt on the 17th hole and showed plenty of moxie just to get into the playoff with an up-and-down from 70 yards for par on the final hole for a 70.

They finished at 15-under 273.

Berger, who hit his tee shot into the right rough on the 18th in regulation, pulled his drive in the playoff and did well to hammer a 6-iron to the front edge of the green, 106 feet away. He rolled that to 7 feet below the hole, and his par putt to extend the playoff was weak and missed below the cup.

Bhatia played to the center of the green. He took two putts from just inside 30 feet for the win and the \$4 million prize.

"Everyone knows when you show up to Bay Hill it's going to be a test," Bhatia said.



MATT SLOCUM/AP

Akshay Bhatia, right, reacts after winning in a playoff against Daniel Berger at the Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill golf tournament on Sunday in Orlando, Fla.

He also felt like he had some of "Arnie's Army" on his side down the stretch, and there were moments the crowd was clearly in his favor, and opposed to Berger.

"No pressure," one spectator yelled as Berger walked in for a putt just inside 15 feet for par in regulation that he holed to force the playoff. "Get in the water," another spectator said on his putt.

Bhatia started the back nine with four straight birdies, one of them from just inside 60 feet on the 11th hole. There was a two-shot swing at the 13th when Bhatia holed a 10-foot birdie putt and Berger had a plugged lie in a bun-

ker, facing a shot to the crispy green with water on the other side. He smartly played back toward the fairway and salvaged a bogey, his lead down to one shot.

The final hour turned electric on the par-5 16th with Bhatia's biggest shot. He said caddie Joe Greiner told him, "Just try to hit the best 6-iron of your life."

"It was one of those professional pushes," he said. "I wasn't trying to aim at the flag."

Berger, who missed 18 months with a back injury after the 2022 U.S. Open and suffered a broken finger last August, was trying to become the first wire-to-wire win-

ner at Bay Hill in 10 years.

"It's tough to win. It's tough to battle," he said. "But I feel like I did a good job, and a shot here or there was the difference."

Cameron Young, who used to spend his winters in Orlando as a kid, played bogey-free for a 69 and tied for third with Ludvig Aberg (67).

Scottie Scheffler took another double bogey on the 18th hole — his second in as many rounds and his third double bogey in his last 19 holes at Bay Hill — for a 73. He tied for 24th. It was the first time since the U.S. Open last year that he failed to break 70 at a tournament.

# COLLEGE BASKETBALL

## CONFERENCE TOURNAMENTS

### Gladden hits winner as Boston Univ. stuns Navy in Patriot semis

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Chance Gladden buried a 3-pointer at the buzzer, scoring 24 of his 26 points in the second half to help Boston University stun top-seeded Navy 73-72 on Sunday in the semifinals of the Patriot League Championship, ending the Midshipmen's 14-game winning streak.

Gladden's game winner for the fourth-seeded Terriers (17-16) came after Austin Benigni drove for a go-ahead layup for the Midshipmen (26-7) with three seconds remaining.

Boston University will play No. 2 seed Lehigh in the championship game on Wednesday. Lehigh beat third-seeded Colgate 76-69 in an earlier semifinal Sunday.

Gladden shot 8-for-12 from the floor (3-for-5 from 3-point range) and 7-for-8 from the free-throw line for the Terriers. Michael McNair totaled 22 points and seven rebounds, hitting 5 of 8 shots from beyond the arc. Ben Defty pitched in with 14 points on 6-for-7 shooting, adding seven rebounds.

Aidan Kehoe led the Midshipmen with 26 points, 12 rebounds, five steals and two blocks. Benigni contributed 17 points, six assists and three steals.

Navy swept the Terriers during the regular season.

**Queens University 98, Central Arkansas 93:** Chris Ashby made 10 3-pointers and scored 34 points to lead Queens University to an NCAA berth in its first year of eligibility with a 98-93 win over Central Arkansas in the Atlantic Sun Tournament in Jacksonville, Fla., on Sunday despite 49 points by Camren Hunter.

The third-seeded Royals (21-13) of Charlotte, N.C., survived a late second-half collapse and Hunter's heroics to reach the NCAA Tournament in its fourth season of Division I play.

Queens had an 11-point lead with 3:25 remaining in regulation but couldn't handle the Bears' full-court pressure, turning the ball over five times while Hunter went on a 20-point scoring binge to tie the game at 82.

Ashby scored the first five points of overtime and the Royals kept the lead, making 9 of 10 free throws including two more by Ashby for a 95-90 edge.

All of Ashby's shots came from beyond the arc, finishing with a tourney record 10 made 3s on 19 attempts. Jordan Watford added 19 points, Nasir Mann 14 and Yoav Berman 10 with Avantae Parker collecting 10 rebounds to go with eight points.

### Scoreboard

#### NCAA Automatic Bids Men's

LIU, Northeast  
Tennessee St., Ohio Valley  
High Point, Big South  
N. Iowa, Missouri Valley  
Queens (NC), Atlantic Sun  
North Dakota St., Summit

#### Women's

W. Illinois, Ohio Valley  
Samford, Southern  
UCLA, Big Ten  
Duke, Atlantic Coast  
Texas, Southeastern  
Rhode Island, Atlantic 10  
West Virginia, Big 12  
South Dakota St., Summit  
High Point, Big South

Hunter bested his career high by 16 points, hitting 17 of 30 shots, including 8 of 12 3-pointers on his way to his tournament-record total. Ty Robinson added 16 points and Javion Guy-King 10 for the Bears (22-12), who were also seeking their first NCAA berth.

**High Point 91, Winthrop 76:** Rob Martin scored 24 points, Cam'Ron Fletcher added 17 with 19 rebounds, and top-seeded High Point beat No. 2 seed Winthrop 91-76 on Sunday in Johnson City, Tenn., for the Panthers' second straight Big South Conference Championship title.

High Point (30-4) set a program and Big South record with its 30th victory of the season. It is also coach Flynn Clayman's first year at the helm with the Panthers.

Martin shot 6-for-19 from the floor and 11-for-13 from the free-throw line to go with seven assists. Fletcher made two 3s and matched a tournament record for most rebounds in a game.

Terry Anderson added 18 points for the Panthers. Owen Aquino and Chase Johnston chipped in with 11 points apiece.

Kareem Rozier scored 22 points and Daylen Berry 18 for Winthrop (23-11). Logan Duncomb, the Big South Conference player of the year, scored 17 points before fouling out with 4:32 to play and the Eagles down 79-68.

High Point took the lead for good early in the second half and had its largest lead, 67-51, with 9:49 remaining.

**North Dakota State 70, North Dakota 62:** Damari Wheeler-Thomas scored 19 points to lead the top-seeded Bison to the Summit League championship and an automatic berth in the NCAA Tournament.

Wheeler-Thomas made 8 of 16 shots with two 3-pointers for North Dakota State (27-7), which has made four previous trips to the NCAA Tournament, most recently in 2019. He added six rebounds. Tay Smith scored 13 points off the bench.



LON HORWEDEL/AP

Michigan forward Yaxel Lendeborg, right, shoots over Michigan State forward Coen Carr in the second half in Ann Arbor, Mich. on Sunday. Lendeborg scored 27 points in the Wolverines' 90-80 victory.

## TOP 25 ROUNDUP

# Lendeborg leads Wolverines to 15th straight Big Ten win

Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Yaxel Lendeborg scored 19 of his 27 points in the first half and Morez Johnson Jr. finished with 18 points, leading No. 3 Michigan to a 90-80 win over No. 8 Michigan State on Sunday to give the Big Ten champions a 15th straight conference win.

The Wolverines (29-2, 19-1 Big Ten) head to the conference tournament, hoping to earn a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament before shooting for the school's second national championship and first since 1989.

The Spartans (25-6, 15-5) were swept by their rivals in the regular season, but might get a third shot against them in a week at the Big Ten Tournament final.

Lendeborg, a preseason All-America selection, was the best player on the court for the second time in the series.

The UAB transfer was 8-for-12 from the field, matched a career high with five 3-pointers, had three assists and also made winning plays at the other end of the court.

After Jeremy Fears Jr. made a jumper to pull Michigan State within three points with 3:47 left,

Lendeborg made a 3-pointer on the ensuing possession to start a 10-2 run that sealed the victory.

**No. 9 Nebraska 84, Iowa 75 (OT):** Cale Jacobsen came off the bench to score 13 of his 15 points after halftime and hit the tiebreaking 3-pointer in overtime, and Nebraska matched its program record for wins in a season with a home victory over Iowa.

Sam Hoiberg, who scored 15 points and had five steals on his senior day, hugged teammate Pryce Sandfort near halfcourt as time ran out and then heaved the ball high into the stands. He and his father, coach Fred Hoiberg, embraced and a short time later the rest of the Huskers came out of the tunnel to salute the sellout crowd at Pinnacle Bank Arena.

Nebraska (26-5, 15-5 Big Ten) led by 10 points with five minutes left in regulation but missed five of its next seven shots and a couple of late free throws to let the Hawkeyes back in it. Kael Combs scored Iowa's last eight points of regulation, including a second-chance 3-pointer that tied it 70-all with 2.7 seconds left.

After Cooper Koch tied it at 75-all in overtime, Jacobsen made a 3 from the corner and the Huskers

went on to score the final nine points. The Huskers beat Iowa (20-11, 10-10) for the first time in five meetings and split the season series.

**No. 11 Illinois 78, Maryland 72:** David Mirkovic had 22 points and 11 rebounds as visiting Illinois held off Maryland.

The Terrapins (11-20, 4-16 Big Ten) have had a desultory season under first-year coach Buzz Williams, losing 20 games for the first time since 1988-89, but they gave the Illini (24-7, 15-5) a battle. Illinois led 63-62 before Ben Humrichous made a 3-pointer that started a 7-0 run for the Illini.

The Terps pulled back within two, but a successful challenge of an out-of-bounds call enabled the Illini to keep the ball with 1:04 to play.

Mirkovic worked free for a layup inside, and Maryland's next possession went about as badly as possible when the Terrapins used most of the shot clock before Andre Mills misfired from 3-point range.

The win gave Illinois a bye into Friday's quarterfinals in the Big Ten Tournament. The Illini also tied a program record with their eighth road win in Big Ten play.

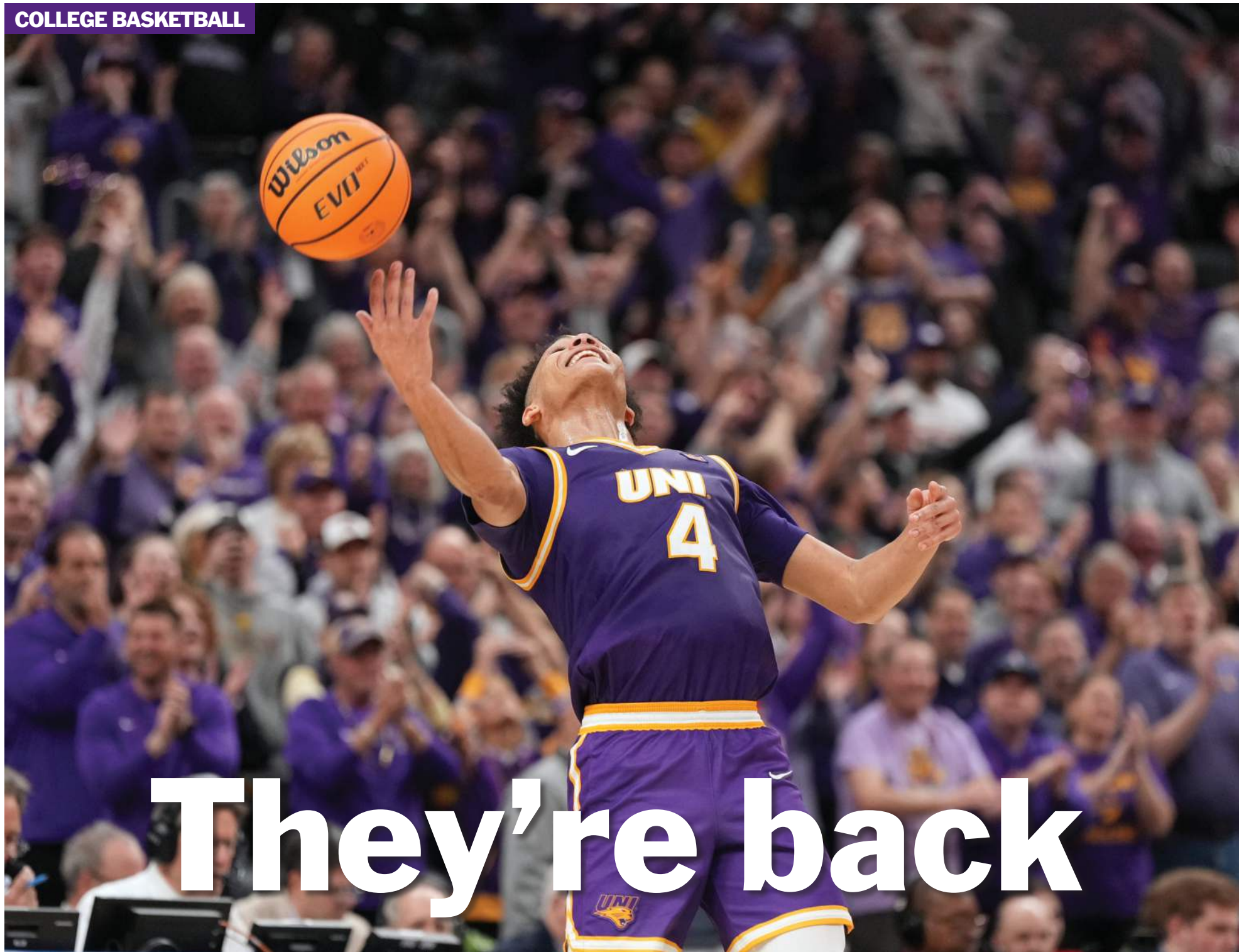
## SPORTS



## Miami moving on

Dolphins to release QB Tua Tagovailoa and take record cap hit » **NFL, Page 22**

## COLLEGE BASKETBALL



## They're back

JEFF ROBERSON/AP

Northern Iowa's Trey Campbell celebrates as the final buzzer sounds after defeating Illinois-Chicago in the championship game in the Missouri Valley Conference tournament on Sunday in St. Louis. Campbell scored 23 points in the game to lead the Panthers to the NAAs for ninth time but the first time since 2016.

## Northern Iowa returns to the NCAA Tournament for the first time in a decade

By NOAH TRISTER  
Associated Press

Few midmajor programs have experienced the highs and lows of the NCAA Tournament like Northern Iowa.

Now the Panthers are back to ride the roller coaster again.

Trey Campbell scored 23 points to lead Northern Iowa over Illinois-Chicago on Sunday in the championship game of the Missouri Valley Conference Tournament. The Panthers reached the NAAs for the first time since 2016.

Northern Iowa has won its first-round game in each of its last three NCAA appear-

ances, and in 2010 followed that up with a victory over top-seeded Kansas to make the Sweet 16. (Remember the name Ali Farokhmanesh?)

Then in 2016, the Panthers beat Texas on Paul Jesperson's buzzer beater from mid-court. They were less than a minute from another Sweet 16 trip, but they blew a 10-point lead in the final 30 seconds of regulation in a loss to Texas A&M.

On Sunday, the Panthers (23-12) won the MVC for the sixth time and earned their ninth NCAA appearance. Sixth-seeded UNI became to lowest seed to win the tournament and the first to win four games in four days.

Campbell was 8-for-13 shooting, including 6-for-9 from the arc, for the Panthers, who shot 63% and were 12-for-23 on 3-pointers. Ben Schwieger was 7-for-8 shooting and made three 3-pointers to finish with 18 points.

Will Hornseth and Leon Bond added 10 each. Tristan Smith had a game-high eight rebounds to go with nine points.

Elijah Crawford scored 28 points on 13-for-29 shooting to lead the fifth-seeded Flames (19-15). Ahmad Henderson II added 13, and Rashund Washington Jr. and Jayce Nathaniel 10 each. UIC shot 44% against the nation's top scoring defense (61.1 ppg).

The Panthers led all the way and were

ahead 48-41 at halftime. After hitting just one of its first six shots to open the second half, the Panthers made seven in row, including a pair of 3s from Campbell and another by Schwieger, to lead by 13.

The Flames rallied behind Nathaniel and Crawford who scored all the points in a 9-2 run to get within six. Campbell stopped that run with a straightaway 3-pointer to begin a 13-2 run that ended with UNI up by 17 — their largest lead — with 37 seconds left.

Three other teams earned automatic bids to this year's men's NCAA Tournament on Sunday: High Point in the Big South, Queens University in the Atlantic Sun and North Dakota State in the Summit League.

## Blaney ends Reddick's streak at Phoenix » NASCAR, Page 19

