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50¢/Free to Deployed Areas

Iran warns US against strikes amid fatal rallies

By Jon Gambrell
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A crackdown on nationwide protests in Iran has killed at least 538 people and even more are feared dead, activists said Sunday, while Tehran warned that the U.S. military and Israel would be "legitimate targets" if America uses force to protect demonstrators.

Another over 10,600 people have been detained over the two weeks of protests, said the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which has been accurate in previous rounds of unrest in Iran in recent years. It relies on supporters in Iran cross-checking information. It said of those killed, 490 were protesters and 48 were members of security forces.

With the internet down in Iran and phone lines cut off, gauging the demonstrations from abroad has grown more difficult. The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the toll.

The Iranian government has not offered overall casualty figures for the demonstrations.

Those abroad fear the information blackout is emboldening hard-liners within Iran's security services to launch a bloody crackdown. Protesters flooded the streets in the country's capital and its second-largest city again Sunday morning.

President Donald Trump has offered support for the protesters, saying on social media that "Iran is looking at FREEDOM, perhaps like never before. The USA stands ready to help!!!"

Trump and his national security team have been weighing a range of potential responses

SEE STRIKES ON PAGE 8



Katelynn Jackson/U.S. Air Force

A U.S. Air Force crew chief guides in an F-22 Raptor following military actions in Venezuela in support of Operation Absolute Resolve, on Jan. 3. The decision by the United States to label the seizure of Nicolas Maduro as a "law-enforcement" operation has sparked legal debate over the safety of troops across the globe.

Raid label sparks debate

Analysts warn foes may manipulate POW entitlements in future

By Rose L. Thayer
Stars and Stripes

The United States' decision to label the military extraction of Nicolas Maduro from Venezuela last weekend as a "law-enforcement" operation has sparked a legal debate that the designation could put service members operating across the globe at risk of not being treated as prisoners of war if captured by an adversary.

All of the nearly 200 special operations troops and 150 aircraft that participated Jan. 3 in the raid to capture the dictator returned to U.S. soil, prompting Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to praise the operators for their flawless execution.

The debate comes from the language used to describe the 2½-hour operation that sent American troops into a military complex in Caracas with support from the CIA.

"This past weekend, colleagues, the United States successfully carried out a surgical law-enforcement operation facilitated by the U.S. military against two indicted fugitives of American justice, narco-terrorist Nicolas Maduro and Cilia Flores," U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz said before an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council on Monday.

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US and Venezuela take first steps toward restoring ties after Maduro's ouster
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SEE RAID ON PAGE 4

BUSINESS/WEATHER

GM hit with $6B in charges as EV credit cut affects sales

Associated Press

General Motors will be hit with charges of about $6 billion as sales of electric vehicles sputter after the U.S. cut tax incentives to buy them and also eased auto emissions standards.

The charges that will be recorded in the fourth quarter follow an announcement in October that the Detroit automaker would take a $1.6 billion charge for the same reason in the previous quarter, with automakers forced to reconsider ambitious plans to convert their fleets to electric power. The EV tax credit ended in September. The clean vehicle tax credit was worth $7,500 for new EVs and up to $4,000 for used ones.

GM, which had been the most ambitious among all U.S. automakers with plans to replace internal combustion engines, said in its filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission late Thursday that the $6 billion in charges includes non-cash impairments and other non-cash charges of about $1.8 billion as well as supplier commercial settlements, contract cancellation fees and other charges of approximately $4.2 billion.

EVs have been considered to be the future of the U.S. automotive industry. GM announced in 2020 that it was going to invest $27 billion in electric and autonomous vehicles over the next five years, a 35% increase over plans made before the pandemic.

GM expected more than half of its factories in North America and China would be capable of making electric vehicles by 2030.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates

Euro costs (Jan. 12)	0.84
British pound (Jan. 12)	$1.31
Japanese yen (Jan. 12)	152.00
South Korean won (Jan. 12)	1418.00

Commercial rates

Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3784
Britain (Pound)	1.3406
Canada (Dollar)	1.3915
China (Yuan)	6.9772
Denmark (Krone)	6.4202
Egypt (Pound)	47.3733
Euro	0.8594
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7952
Hungary (Forint)	331.23
Israel (Shekel)	3.1465
Japan (Yen)	157.879
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3069
Norway (Krone)	10.0936
Philippines (Peso)	59.158
Poland (Zloty)	3.6165
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7460
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2865
South Korea (Won)	1456.33
Switzerland (Franc)	0.8007
Thailand (Baht)	31.45
Turkey (NewLira)	42.9493

(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

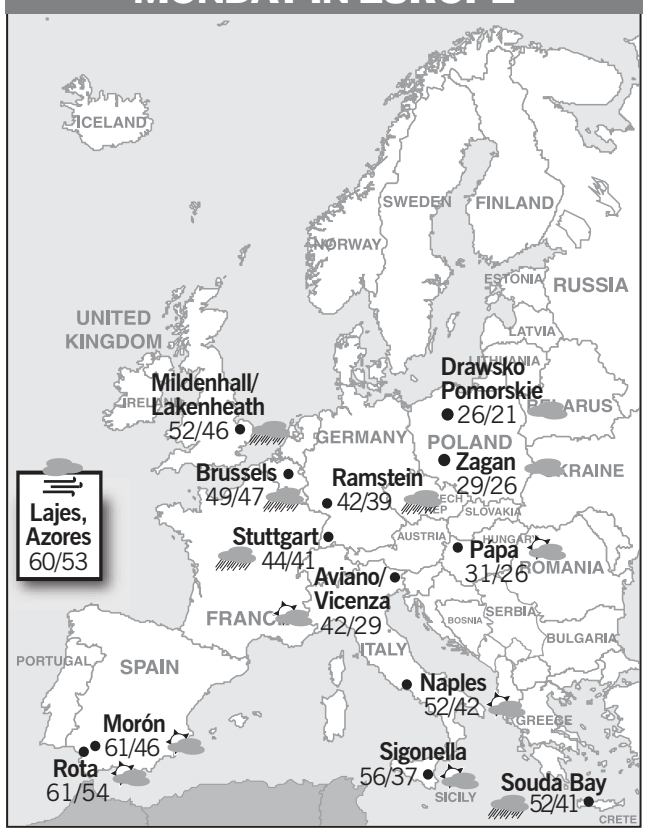
Prime rate	6.75
Interest Rates Discount rate	3.75
Federal funds market rate	3.62
3-month bill	3.60
30-year bond	4.81

WEATHER OUTLOOK

MONDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



MONDAY IN EUROPE



TUESDAY IN THE PACIFIC



This weather is compiled from weather.com reports.

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MILITARY

Army shuts down foreign training command

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Army shuttered its Security Force Assistance Command on Thursday at Fort Bragg, N.C., closing the one-star headquarters that oversaw its brigades of soldiers specially trained to advise foreign military forces.

Unit leaders cased the command's colors for a final time Thursday, signaling the inactivation of the SFAC as part of a broader Army reorganization effort that has prioritized units that generate combat power over other capabilities.

The reorganization mandated last year by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth will also result in the shuttering by the end of the year of four of the Army's six Security Force Assistance Brigades, or SFABs.

Col. Matthew Bunch, who took command of the SFAC from Brig. Gen. Kevin Lambert in June, said that despite the command's inactivation, its soldiers — known as "advisors" for their role in aiding partner armies — had proven successful in their mission to improve allied and partner military forces around the globe.

"From its inception, the Security Force Assistance Command headquarters enabled advisors to deploy with purpose, clarity, and the support necessary to build meaningful relationships with allies and partners," Bunch said during the inactivation ceremony, according to a news release. "Through planning, coordination, and an unwavering commitment to readiness, this headquarters empowered our brigades to operate in every geographic combatant command, advancing the Army's mission in places where trust, cooperation, and shared understanding mattered most. The impact of SFAC's work will continue to be felt long after these colors are cased."



JAQUARI LINDSEY U.S. Army

Col. Mathew F. Bunch, commander of Security Force Assistance Command, center, and Command Sgt. Maj. Darvin T. Williams case the colors during an inactivation ceremony at Fort Bragg, N.C., on Thursday.

The SFAC was established in late 2018 alongside the 2nd Security Force Assistance Brigade, which was also headquartered at Fort Bragg, until its inactivation in November.

The 1st SFAB stood up at Fort Benning, Ga., in 2017, as top Army officials pitched it as a smaller-than-normal brigade of volunteer soldiers who are experts in their craft and receive extra training to advise foreign armies on the trades of soldiering. Ultimately, the Army stood up six SFABs — five active-duty brigades and one National Guard unit — and the SFAC to oversee the training and manning of those units.

The SFABs were the brainchild of retired Army Gen. Mark Milley, who served as the Army chief of staff before becoming the chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Milley pitched them as units purpose-built to conduct the kind of training, advising and assisting operations that brigade combat teams had been doing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Milley and other top Army officials wanted to employ SFABs to take deployment pressure off the Army's brigade combat teams, which had for years been rotated in and out Afghanistan and Iraq to train those nations' forces to fight the wars there.

As Chinese and Russian military aggression grew during the last decade, top Army generals wanted to shift their combat brigades' focus to preparations to fight a large-scale war against an enemy equipped with similar capabilities to the United States.

As operations wound down in Afghanistan and Iraq in recent years, the SFABs were assigned to geographic combatant commands, where they maintained near constant presence to train partner nation forces.

The service intends to leave only two SFABs beyond 2026. The 1st SFAB, which is aligned to U.S. Southern Command, will remain at Fort Benning and the 5th SFAB, which is aligned to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, will remain at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., said Maj. Ryan Miller, an SFAC spokesman.

Under the reorganization, the 1st SFAB has been assigned to the Army's new U.S. Army Western Hemisphere Command, Miller said. The 5th SFAB has been placed under U.S. Army Pacific's command.

The 4th SFAB will hold its inactivation ceremony later this month at Fort Carson, Colo., Miller said. It had been focused on operations in Europe.

The 3rd SFAB at Fort Hood, Texas, will inactivate in late 2026, Miller said. It had previously been aligned with U.S. Central Command but will serve under U.S. Army Pacific until its inactivation, he said.

Bunch, an infantry officer who had previously served as the SFAC's second in command, said that the work of the SFAC and its SFABs would continue to have meaning for the Army for the foreseeable future.

"As we inactivate this command, we recognize that its influence and the relationships it helped forge will continue to guide the Army's approach to global engagement for years to come," he said.

Japan's defense minister visits Okinawa, vows to reduce US footprint

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

NAHA, Okinawa — Japan's defense minister, on his first visit to Okinawa in his new role, repeated a promise to reduce the U.S. military's footprint there and expand joint exercises near Japan's southwestern islands.

Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi on Wednesday met with Lt. Gen. Roger Turner, commander of III Marine Expeditionary Force and the U.S. military's Okinawa area coordinator, at Okinawa Harborview Hotel in the capital city, Naha.

Koizumi met the following day with Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki at the prefectural office in Naha.

In their closed meeting, Koizumi and Turner "confirmed that we will steadily work to reduce the burden of bases in Okinawa while firmly maintaining the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. alliance," Koizumi said at a news conference after the meeting.

The Ministry of Defense will work toward "the full return of [Marine Corps Air Station] Futenma at the earliest possible date based on the Okinawa Consolidation Plan," Koizumi told reporters before meeting with Turner.

The U.S. and Japanese governments agreed in 1996 to relocate the airfield in densely populated Ginowan city to Camp Schwab in rural Henoko. Construction, long delayed by legal challenges, is expected to last until at least 2033, with the airfield ready for use possibly by 2036, then-Defense Minister Gen Nakatani said in January 2025.

Koizumi reiterated that pledge to Tamaki, he said at a press conference after their meeting.

The ministry also "will steadily advance the construction work necessary for the return of land south of Kadena Air Base to reduce the burden of the bases," Koizumi said, according to a readout of the news conference posted on the ministry's website.

Tamaki asked Koizumi to abandon the plan for MCAS Futenma's replacement and to "try to find a solution to the issue through dialogue with Okinawa prefecture," a spokeswoman for the prefecture's Military Base Affairs Division said by phone Friday. Some Japanese government officials speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

In response, Koizumi said "it is my responsibility as Minister of Defense to steadily advance U.S. military realignment in a visible manner," including the return of MCAS Futenma, according to the readout.

Koizumi during the news conference Wednesday repeated statements he made to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who visited in October, to "work toward expanding more advanced and practical joint training exercises in various locations, particularly in the Nansei region."

The Nansei, or Ryukyu, islands include Okinawa and stretch southwest from Kyushu to Taiwan.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has promised to unify self-governing Taiwan with the mainland, by force if necessary. Beijing last month conducted another military exercise that encircled the island and included missile launches.



KEISHI KOJA/Stars and Stripes

Lt. Gen. Roger Turner, commander of the III Marine Expeditionary Force, greets Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi before their meeting in Naha, Okinawa, on Wednesday.

"As neighboring countries and others expand and intensify their activities in the seas and airspace surrounding Japan, improving our deterrence and response capabilities in the Nansei region is an urgent issue," Koizumi told reporters Wednesday.

Turner in remarks before meeting with Koizumi called the U.S.-Japan alliance "the cornerstone of regional peace and security" in the Indo-Pacific region.

He declined to provide specific details about enhanced exercises with Japan.

"We have a really good plan for 2026 that we're super excited about," Turner told reporters after the meeting.

MILITARY

Trump cancels second attack on Venezuela

BY RACHEL EVANS
The Washington Post

President Donald Trump said a second wave of attacks on Venezuela has been canceled, citing improved cooperation from the country.

Venezuela is "working well" with the United States on rebuilding its oil and gas infrastructure and releasing "large numbers" of political prisoners, Trump wrote in a social-media post on Truth Social on Friday. That means another wave of strikes doesn't appear necessary, he said.

Biagio Pilieri, an aide to opposition leader and Nobel laureate María Corina Machado, was released from the infamous Helicoide prison in Caracas late Thursday, according to Foro Penal, an advocacy group. Jorge Rodriguez, head of the National Assembly, said that a significant number of prisoners would be released, and five Spanish citizens were freed earlier in the day.

Brent futures pared gains on the president's statement, trading at $62.16 as of 10:15 a.m. in London. Trump met with U.S. oil executives later as his administration pushes them to rebuild Venezuela's energy sector.

The U.S. has struck more than a dozen boats the administration claims were trafficking drugs, with combating narcoterrorism a partial justification for the operation to capture Venezuelan strongman Nicolas Maduro. Since then, Trump has indicated that while the U.S. would consider using the military to secure the cooperation of the interim government in Caracas, he was hopeful he would not need to order additional action.

Still, military engagement in the region may not be over. For months, Trump has signaled a willingness to target drug-manufacturing facilities in other countries, including Colombia and Mexico, and he said on Thursday strikes were being prepared.

"We are going to start now hitting the land with regard to the cartels," Trump said Thursday in an interview with Fox News. He added that he planned to meet with Machado as soon as this week.

Trump's remarks Thursday come despite the president sending optimistic signals following a phone call with Colombian President Gustavo Petro on Wednesday. After their conversation, Trump posted on social media that he appreciated Petro's "call and tone."

Petro, in his own post, said it was more convenient to start a dialogue "than to settle it on battlefields." The leaders have agreed to meet in Washington.

Raid: Law-enforcement label on operation stirs legal debate

FROM PAGE 1

In using this language and clearly avoiding characterizing the operation as an armed conflict, there could be consequences down the road for any countries that look to the United States' example as an excuse to avoid extending prisoner of war status to captives, said Geoffrey Corn, a retired Army attorney and professor at Texas Tech University School of Law.

"We can agree that the end that was achieved is something that is not a bad thing," he said. "But the manner by which it was achieved creates second- and third-order consequences that don't appear to be sufficiently contemplated."

The decision to mark this as a law-enforcement operation is not only "perplexing, it is fundamentally inconsistent with the entire rationale of the 1949 Geneva Conventions," Corn said.

When drafting the definitions, armed conflict was adopted in a deliberate effort to prevent states from bending the application of its humanitarian laws by misidentifying what is obviously war, he said.

When two countries engage in armed conflict, members of their armed forces who are captured are entitled to a prisoner-of-war status and international law would grant them combatant immunity among many other benefits. Otherwise, they would be held to the laws of that country and charged with crimes.

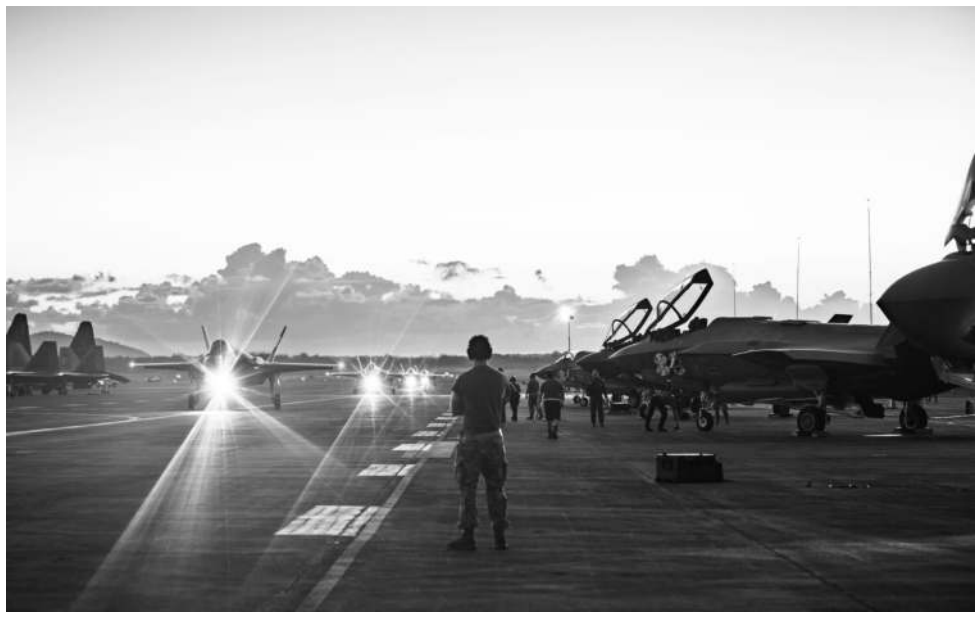
If the U.S. begins to manipulate that entitlement, it could lead its adversaries to do the same, Corn said.

Had any U.S. service members been captured during the Maduro raid, "the U.S. would almost certainly be insisting that they are entitled to prisoner-of-war status, that the Red Cross is entitled to access to them, and that they need to be immediately repatriated as soon as the hostilities are over," he said.

Rich Whitaker, a retired Army attorney with experience in special operations units, interpreted statements by Waltz and others from U.S. officials to be describing a mission of self-defense, an action codified in the U.N.'s charter. He cited public information about Maduro's actions toward the U.S., as justifying self-defense. A federal court indictment stated Maduro and his co-conspirators have distributed "tons of cocaine" in the U.S. for decades and have operated as narcoterrorists relying on corruption and violence.

"I believe the administration intended to execute a military operation, justified by the doctrine of self-defense," Whitaker said. "I believe they also intended to achieve a law-enforcement outcome, but given the facts, and the words chosen by Ambassador Waltz, it is clear to me they relied upon a self-defense legal justification for the use of military force."

In his experience counseling troops as part of his military career, he found soldiers do take an interest in these laws before their missions and truly want to understand the laws of war, Whitaker said.



KATELYNN JACKSON/U.S. Air Force

U.S. Air Force crew chiefs watch as F-35A Lightning II's taxi following military actions in Venezuela in support of Operation Absolute Resolve on Jan. 3.

"They saw themselves as playing by the rules and in order to play by the rules, you have to understand those rules," he said. "Not just for what would happen to them — does this make them more vulnerable? — but really for a higher reason than that. They see themselves as doing right and America doing right."

Whitaker said he imagines that similar conversations occurred in the planning for the mission.

"Despite all the worldwide noise, at the foundation, I think soldiers can rest easy knowing that this mission was properly authorized and was conducted in accordance with the law and policy of the United States and widely accepted international law," he said.

Part of the reason the language of law enforcement might have been used by the White House could be to skirt around the need to seek Congressional approval for the operations. On Thursday, the Senate took action to reinforce its role.

Senators advanced a resolution to require congressional authorization for additional military force against Venezuela, asserting the chamber's constitutional authority to declare war. The Senate will now debate the resolution and then vote on its final passage. It is unclear if the House would approve the measure, and Trump would be able to veto it if landed on his desk.

Executive order meant to protect revenue from Venezuelan oil

Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — President Donald Trump's new executive order on Venezuelan oil revenue is meant to ensure that the money remains protected from being used in judicial proceedings.

The executive order, made public on Saturday, says that if the funds were to be seized for such use, it could "undermine critical U.S. efforts to ensure economic and political stability in Venezuela."

The order comes amid caution from top oil company executives that the tumult and instability in Venezuela could make the country less attractive for private investment and rebuilding.

"If we look at the commercial constructs and frameworks in place today in Venezuela, today it's uninvestable," said Darren Woods, CEO of ExxonMobil, the largest U.S. oil company, during a meeting convened by Trump with oil executives on Friday.

During the session, Trump tried to assuage the concerns of the oil companies and said the executives would be dealing directly with the U.S., rather than the Venezuelan government.

Venezuela has a history of state asset seizures, ongoing U.S. sanctions and decades of political uncertainty.

Getting U.S. oil companies to invest in Venezuela and help rebuild the country's infrastructure is a top priority of the Trump administration after the dramatic capture of now-deposed leader Nicolas Maduro.

The White House is framing the effort to "run" Venezuela in economic terms, and Trump has seized tankers carrying Venezuelan oil, has said the U.S. is taking over the sales of 30 million to 50 million barrels of previously sanctioned Venezuelan crude, and plans to control sales worldwide indefinitely.

"I love the Venezuelan people, and am already making Venezuela rich and safe again," Trump, who was in southern Florida, wrote on his social media site on Saturday. "Congratulations and thank you to all of those people who are making this possible!!!"

The order says the oil revenue is property of Venezuela that is being held by the United States for "governmental and diplomatic purposes" and not subject to private claims.

Its legal underpinnings are the National Emergencies Act and the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. Trump, in the order, says the possibility that the oil revenues could be caught up in judicial proceedings constitutes an "unusual and extraordinary threat" to the U.S.

VENEZUELA

US, Venezuela take steps to restore relations

By Regina Garcia Cano and Matthew Lee
Associated Press

GUATIRE, Venezuela — The United States and Venezuela said Friday they were exploring the possibility of restoring relations, as a Trump administration delegation visited the South American nation.

The visit marks a major step toward reestablishing diplomatic ties between the historically adversarial governments. In a brazen intervention this month, the U.S. military captured former Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro from his compound in Caracas and flew him to New York to face federal charges of drug-trafficking.

A small team of U.S. diplomats and a security detail traveled to Venezuela to make a preliminary assessment about the potential reopening of the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, the State Department said in a statement.

Venezuela's government on Friday said it plans to send a delegation to the U.S. but it did not say when. Any delegation from the country traveling to the U.S. will likely require sanctions to be waived by the Treasury Department.

The government of acting Venezuelan President Delcy Rodriguez said it "has decided to initiate an exploratory process of a diplomatic nature" with the U.S., "aimed at the re-establishment of diplomatic missions in both countries."

Rodriguez is engaged in a delicate balancing act, under pressure to meet the Trump administration's demands and also win the support of Venezuela's military hard-liners outraged over the U.S. seizure of Maduro.

Her statements on Friday laid bare that tension.

Relating her telephone conversations with the left-wing presidents of Brazil, Colombia and Spain, she condemned Washington's "grave, criminal, illegal, and illegitimate aggression" against her country.

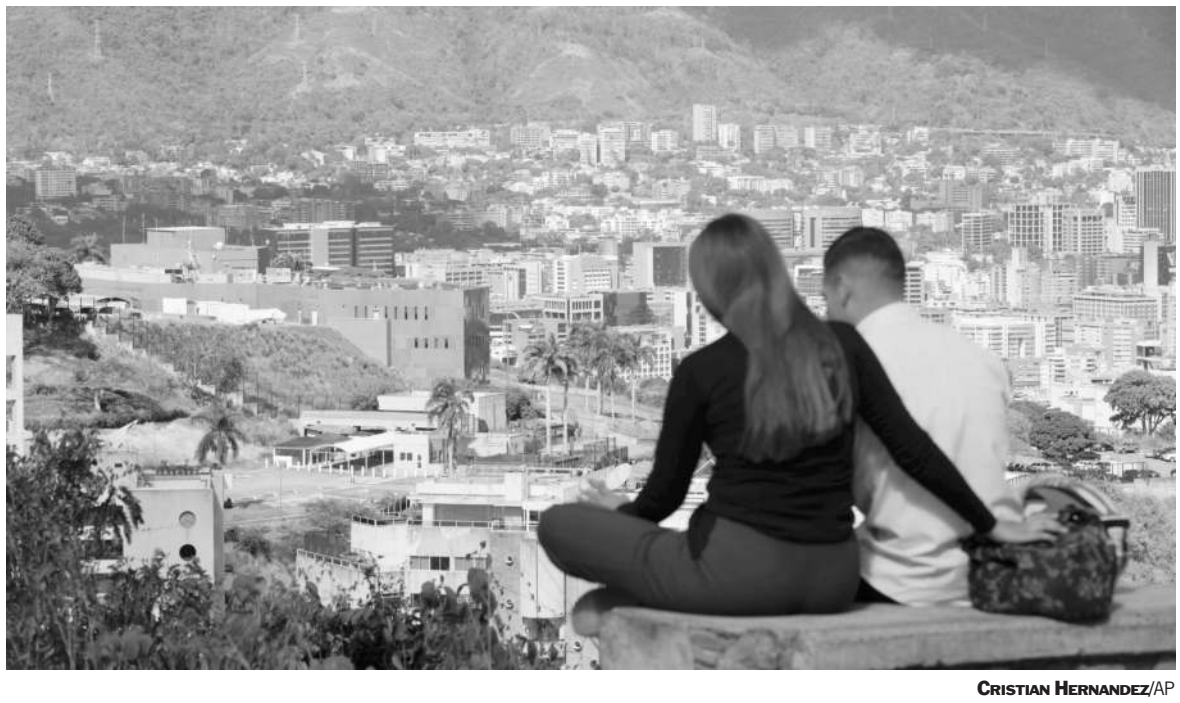
Later, in televised remarks at the inauguration of a small women's health clinic in downtown Caracas, she emphasized diplomacy with President Donald Trump as the best way to defend Venezuela and even "ensure the return of President Nicolas Maduro and first lady Cilia Flores."

"We will meet face-to-face in diplomacy ... to defend the peace of Venezuela, the stability of Venezuela, the future, to defend our independence and to defend our sacred and inalienable sovereignty," Rodriguez said without mentioning the possible resumption of operations at the U.S. Embassy.

Trump has sought to coerce Rodriguez and other former Maduro loyalists still in power to advance his vision for U.S. control of Venezuela's lucrative oil exports. The South American country has the world's largest proven crude reserves.

The U.S. and Venezuela severed ties during Trump's first term in 2019. The U.S. insistence that opposition leader Juan Guaido was the rightful president of Venezuela enraged Maduro, who maintained his firm grip on power.

That year, the Trump administration shuttered the embassy in Caracas and moved diplomats to nearby Bogota, Colombia.



Cristian Hernandez/AP

A couple sits on a bench at a viewpoint overlooking the U.S. Embassy, center left, in Caracas, Venezuela, on Friday. A small team of U.S. diplomats and a security detail traveled to Venezuela to make a preliminary assessment about the potential reopening of the embassy, the State Department said in a statement.

With Trump set to meet with Machado, Nobel officials shut down prize transfer

By Cleve R. Wootson Jr. and Maham Javaid
The Washington Post

President Donald Trump said he would accept the Nobel Peace Prize if this year's prize winner, María Corina Machado, offered it to him when she meets with him this week, but Nobel officials quickly announced Friday that the prize may not be shared or transferred.

"Once a Nobel Prize is announced, it cannot be revoked, shared or transferred to others," the Norwegian Nobel Committee and the Norwegian Nobel Institute said Friday. "The decision is final and stands for all time."

"I understand she's coming in next week sometime, and I look forward to saying hello to her," Trump said of the Venezuelan opposition leader during an interview with Fox News' Sean Hannity that aired Thursday. Trump added that he heard Machado wants to give him the prize, and that it would be "a great honor."

On Friday, the United States and Venezuela took halting first steps toward a resumption of diplomacy. A delegation of Venezuelan diplomats is expected to arrive in Washington in the coming days, according to a statement by the Venezuelan government. And on Friday, diplomatic and security staff from the U.S. Venezuela Affairs Unit — including John McNamara, the interim chargé d'affaires — traveled to Caracas, according to a U.S. official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss personnel movements in a fluid security environment.

The Venezuelan delegation and U.S. diplomats will discuss how the diplomatic missions in both countries can be reestablished after "the aggression and the kidnapping of the President of the Republic and the First Lady," the Venezuelan government said in a statement, referring to the capture by the U.S. of Nicolas Maduro and Cilia Flores.

It is unclear whether the newly sworn in interim President Delcy Rodriguez would be part of the Venezuelan delegation arriving in Washington, D.C.

The White House on Friday morning did not provide details about Machado's trip or specify what issues she and Trump would discuss.

In an interview with Hannity last week in which she heaped praise on Trump, Machado said she had not spoken to the U.S. president since October, when she was announced as the latest Nobel laureate.

She had been in hiding in Venezuela during Maduro's last days in power and turned up in Oslo, Norway, where her daughter accepted the prize on her behalf. But she promised to return to her country and called for elections to replace Maduro.

"But I do want to say today, on behalf of the Venezuelan people, how grateful we are for [Trump's] courageous mission," Machado said on Hannity's show last week, adding that she and the Venezuelan people want to "share" the prize with Trump after the U.S. military seized Maduro and his wife and brought them to New York to stand trial on narco-terrorism charges.

Trump has openly coveted and publicly lobbied for the Nobel Peace Prize, claiming to have "solved" a number of international conflicts. Several world leaders have backed his claims.

Machado, a former National Assembly member, won the opposition primary in Venezuela two years ago but was barred from running by Maduro in the general election. Maduro claimed victory over the candidate Machado backed, but ballot audits by The Washington Post and independent monitors show the reported election result was invalid.

US intercepts 5th sanctioned tanker in Venezuela mission

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. forces boarded another oil tanker in the Caribbean Sea on Friday, the U.S. military said, as the Trump administration targets sanctioned tankers traveling to and from Venezuela as part of a broader effort to take control of the South American country's oil.

The predawn raid was carried out by Marines and Navy sailors launched from the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, part of the extensive force the U.S. has built up in the Caribbean in recent months, according to U.S. Southern Command, which declared "there is no safe haven for criminals" as it announced the seizure of the tanker called the Olina. The Coast Guard then took control of the vessel, officials said.

Southern Command and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem both posted unclassified footage on social media Friday morning of a U.S. helicopter landing on the vessel and U.S. personnel conducting a search of the deck and tossing what appeared to be an explosive device in front of a door leading to inside the ship. In her post, Noem said the ship was "another 'ghost fleet' tanker ship suspected of carrying embargoed oil" and it had departed Venezuela "attempting to evade U.S. forces."

The Olina is the fifth tanker that has been seized by U.S. forces as part of the effort by President Donald Trump's administration to control the production, refining and global distribution of Venezuela's oil products, and the third since the U.S. ouster of Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro in a surprise raid.

In a post on his social media network later in the day, Trump said the seizure was conducted "in coordination with the Interim Authorities of Venezuela" but offered no elaboration. The White House did not immediately respond to requests for more details.

Venezuela's government acknowledged in a statement that it was working with U.S. authorities to return the tanker, "which set sail without payment or authorization from the Venezuelan authorities," to the South American nation.

"Thanks to this first successful joint operation, the ship is sailing back to Venezuelan waters for its protection and relevant actions," according to the statement.

Samir Madani, co-founder of TankerTrackers.com, said his organization used satellite imagery and surface-level photos to document that at least 16 tankers left the Venezuelan coast in contravention of the quarantine U.S. forces have set up to block sanctioned ships from conducting trade. The Olina was among that flotilla.

MILITARY

Man who abused, stole from vet uncle sentenced

By Rose L. Thayer
Stars and Stripes

A Missouri man will spend 13 years in prison and pay the government $1.8 million after pleading guilty to abusing his uncle, a disabled Army veteran, hiding his body after the veteran's death and then collecting his government benefits for years.

Brian K. Ditch, 45, had been solely responsible for his uncle Thomas Clubb, a quadriplegic, since 2008 in the town of Salem and used that position to pocket the federal benefits owed Clubb as a veteran and disabled person. Ditch pleaded guilty in October to four felony counts of wire fraud, one count of aggravated identity theft and one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm.

"This sentencing sends a clear message that the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General will vigorously investigate and hold accountable those who exploit veterans," Special Agent in Charge Gregory Billingsley, with the VA OIG's Central Field Office, said in a statement. "Egregious crimes against those who served our nation will not be tolerated, and the VA OIG extends its gratitude to the U.S. Attorney's Office and our law enforcement partners for their unwavering commitment to achieving justice in this case."

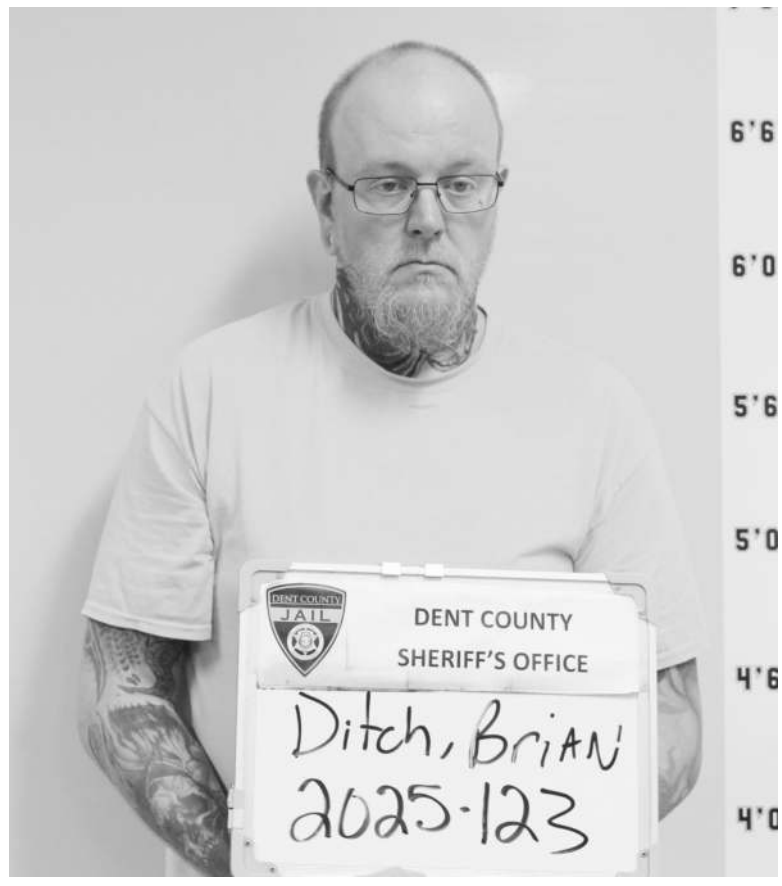
For about a decade, Ditch would lock his uncle in a garage for more than a day at a time, beat him, force him to sit in his own waste and deny him access to food or water, according to court documents.

Ditch concealed Clubb's death in 2019 from relatives, the VA and the Social Security Administration to keep stealing his uncle's money. He hid Clubb's body in a shed behind his home and told relatives Clubb had moved into a nursing home, while telling police that his uncle had moved to live with someone else.

Since 2008, the VA deposited about $1.6 million into Clubb's accounts, and Social Security deposited another $235,210, according to the Justice Department. Ditch used this money to buy exotic reptiles and firearms, according to court documents.

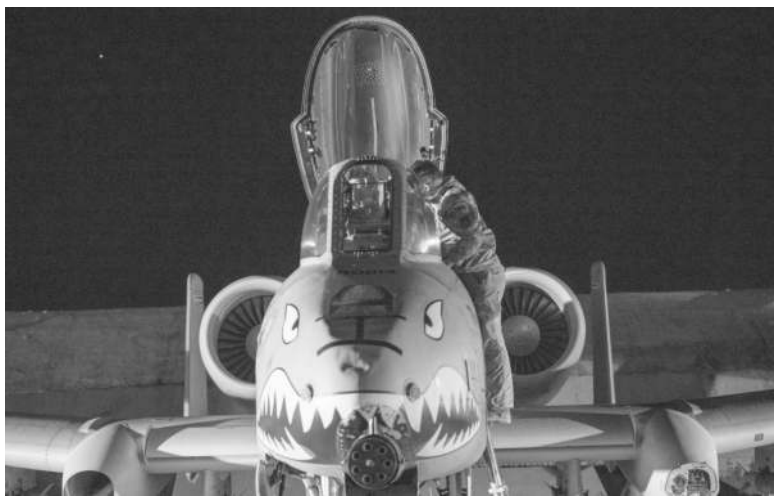
District Judge Zachary M. Bluestone in the Eastern District of Missouri on Thursday ordered Ditch to repay this money in addition to time in prison.

Salem officers in March found the uncle's partially frozen body in a trash can, as well as three shotguns, according to court records.



Dent County Sheriff's Office

Brian K. Ditch, 44, of Salem, Mo., was sentenced to 13 years in prison and ordered to repay $1.8 million in government benefits he stole from his uncle, a disabled veteran.



U.S. Air Force, DVIDS/AP

A U.S. airman prepares an A-10 Thunderbolt II for flight from a base in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, Dec. 19 in support of Operation Hawkeye Strike.

US launches new retaliatory strikes against ISIS in Syria

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. has launched another round of retaliatory strikes against the Islamic State group in Syria following last month's ambush that killed two U.S. soldiers and one American civilian interpreter in the country.

The large-scale strikes, conducted by the U.S. alongside partner forces, occurred around 12:30 p.m. ET Saturday, according to the U.S. Central Command. The strikes hit multiple ISIS targets across Syria.

The Jordanian military later announced it had taken part in the strikes.

Saturday's strikes are part of a broader operation that is part of President Donald Trump's response to the deadly ISIS attack that killed Sgt. Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, Sgt. William Nathaniel Howard, and Ayad Mansoor Sakat, the civilian interpreter, in Palmyra last month.

"Our message remains strong: if you harm our warfighters, we will find you and kill you anywhere in the world, no matter how hard you try to evade justice," U.S. Central Command said in a statement Saturday.

A day earlier, Syrian officials said their security forces had arrested the military leader of ISIS operations in the Levant.

The Trump administration is calling the response to the Palmyra attacks Operation Hawkeye Strike. Both Torres-Tovar and Howard were members of the Iowa National Guard.

Ex-Navy officer's murder conviction upheld for wife's death in Belgium

By Jennifer H. Svan
Stars and Stripes

A former Navy officer who is serving a life sentence for pushing his drugged wife out the window of their seventh-floor apartment in Belgium more than 10 years ago failed in his bid to have his murder conviction overturned.

The U.S. Navy-Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals upheld the findings and sentence for Lt. Craig R. Becker, who was found guilty by a military court in 2022 of one specification of premeditated murder in the death of his 32-year-old wife, Johanna Hove-Becker.

Becker was an explosive ordnance disposal technician serving at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Casteau. His wife died on Oct. 8, 2015, less than two hours after falling from her apartment in nearby Mons.

After a drawn-out appeals process, a three-judge panel ruled unanimously on Dec. 17 that none of the 12 trial issues they took under consideration warranted redress.

Besides murder, Beck was convicted of one specification of battery for poisoning his wife and two specifications of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. His life sentence includes the possibility of parole, according to court documents.

At trial, Becker contended that his wife had jumped from the window after drinking wine and taking medication, according to court documents.

Belgian police immediately ruled her death a suicide but reopened their investigation days later after receiving additional reports calling the initial determination into question.

One month beforehand, the couple had signed a separation agreement, according to court records.



Hove-Becker

The appeals judges noted that the defense's case had relied on the theory that Hove-Becker threw herself from the window, yet there was no indication that she was suicidal at the time, they wrote.

"Indeed, friends and coworkers described her as happy and moving on with her life," the 111-page opinion said. "She also signed a lease on a new apartment on the same day as her death," and had packed a bag for a trip to China she was planning to take with her father the very next day.

The Navy sought to keep the case under Belgian jurisdiction, concerned that a military court might not be able to use evidence collected by Belgian investigators, court records show.

Former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis denied the request and the Navy assumed primary jurisdiction in 2018.

In his appeal, Becker argued that the delay of U.S. military intervention deprived him of his right to a speedy trial and sufficient legal counsel.

He contended that the United States put off jurisdiction intentionally, as it allowed Belgian authorities to interrogate him without the assistance of an American attorney, court documents state.



Becker

Prosecutors then used "the fruits of these interrogations against him" later in his court-martial, he argued.

The appeals court dismissed the claim, saying that Becker did not "identify specific interrogations or statements he now objects to."

Becker also challenged some of the evidence admitted at trial, including cryptic text messages exchanged between him and a woman prosecutors said was his girlfriend several days prior to his wife's death.

He accused the military judge of abusing his discretion by also permitting evidence that he picked up his wife and threw her to the ground at an Army hotel in Belgium in a prior, separate incident in 2013, when court documents say he discovered she was having an affair.

The appellate judges acknowledged that the prosecution's case had been largely circumstantial.

But there was "overwhelming evidence of preparation" ahead of the killing, they found in rejecting Becker's petition.

MILITARY

US Army set to roll out tank of the future

M1E3 prototype to debut at auto show in Detroit this week

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

When the North American International Auto Show opens in Detroit on Wednesday, more than 250,000 expected visitors will have a chance to see a rare and unique vehicle among the 500 SUVs, trucks, and minivans.

It has seating for three, improved fuel mileage, better off-road handling and lots of high-tech bells and whistles.

It comes in one color — Army green.

Standard equipment includes a 120 mm smooth-bore cannon.

"This is a U.S. Army display on the M1E3 Abrams," said Ashley John, an Army spokeswoman for the military display at the car show, on Friday.

The Army hopes the M1E3 prototype will become its main battle tank for decades to come. It's meant to be lighter, faster, more agile, secure and lethal than any armored opposition it faces on the battlefield.

The service is requesting $723.5 million in the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act to develop the tank. Roush, a Michigan-based design firm, produced the prototype. If the tank goes into production, it would be built at the General Dynamics Land Systems factory in Lima, Ohio.

The Detroit showcase comes at a time when tanks' dominance on battlefields is in question for the first time in over a century.

"The fundamental idea has been that for your army to advance, you needed armor to break through — and to destroy your enemy's armor," said Michael Bohnert, an engineering analyst with the research firm Rand Corp.



U.S. Army photos

An image of the gun and portions of the turret and chassis of the prototype M1E3 tank, which will be on display at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit on Wednesday.



Idaho National Guard soldiers train on the M1A2 Abrams at Fort Bliss, Texas, in August.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has undercut the tanks' traditional tactical advantage, with relatively inexpensive drones, loitering munitions, precision artillery and strikes by a new generation of highly precise rockets and missiles.

Russia has lost more than 4,300 tanks since the invasion began in February 2022, including top-end T-90 tanks, according to Oryx, an open-source defense research site.

Ukraine has lost an estimated 800 tanks in the conflict, from Cold War-era T-72 and T-80 tanks it kept after the collapse of the Soviet Union to American M1A2 Abrams, British Challenger 2 and German Leopard 2 tanks it's been supplied by allies since the war began.

The high attrition rates have caught the attention of military leaders around the globe, including at the Pentagon.

U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Geoffrey Norman, director of the Next-Generation Combat Vehicle Cross-Functional Team, said in 2023 that the toll on tanks in Ukraine showed the U.S. had to "optimize" the Abrams if it was to remain "the apex predator on future battlefields."

Until recently, optimization meant more. More armor, more optics, more external defensive systems. The M1A2 was slated for two rounds of system upgrades.

But all the additions also increased the weight of the Abrams, which ballooned to 78 tons. It made transport to the battlefield a logistics headache — a C-17 Globemaster III transport could only carry one tank at a time. The noisy, smoky diesel engine gave off a significant heat and noise "signature," making it easier to spot on the battlefield. The weight could make maneuvering a slog in muddy or uneven terrain.

The Pentagon pivoted, and the upgrades to the M1A2 were trimmed or ditched.

The new tank is not a "clean sheet" model, designed from the treads up. But the "E" in the designation M1E3 stands for "engineering," signaling that the new tanks are a significant departure from earlier models.

The few renderings of the new tank appear to show the Army sticking with the 120 mm smooth-bore M256 cannon. However, Army planners have sought the ability to use self-propelled hypersonic rounds and anti-tank guided munitions in place of standard armor-piercing and anti-personnel rounds.

A Congressional Research Service report said the Army was expected to incorporate many of the suggestions from a 2019 U.S. Army Science Board report on specifications for a "fifth-generation" tank.

Improvements included reducing the crew from 4 to 3 by eliminating the loader and adopting an automatic ammunition system. The tank would have a hybrid electric drive, which would enhance performance, range, and reduce the noise and heat "signatures" of a diesel-only engine. An artificial intelligence system aided with parsing images from the battlefield to better detect threats and rank targeting priorities for the gunner.

Initially, the developers of the M1E3 tank wanted to field it by 2030. But Army officials pushed for deliveries in 2026, even as changes were made during the process.

Gen. Randy George, the Army chief of staff, said earlier this month that four prototypes will be delivered to undisclosed Army bases this year.

What the M1E3 does in combat won't be known until well down the road. The prototype on display in Detroit, which will remain stationary, will show off the exterior — no peeking inside.

The Army says the M1E3 is a work in progress. Bohnert says that is all any tank can be today.

"Everyone is trying out their own vision of a solution," Bohnert said. "You can't afford to wait and see. You have to keep on experimenting. It is going to take a lot of failure-based learning, which is not great if a human life is involved. Whoever figures it out is going to make a lot of money and save a lot of lives."

Italy base to be site of first F-35 pilot training school outside US

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — An Italian air base in Sicily will host the first F-35 Lightning II pilot training facility outside the U.S., an indication of NATO's increasing demand for the fifth-generation fighter jet.

The roughly $130 million multinational training school will be situated at a joint military-civilian airport near the city of Trapani on the island's northwest side, according to U.S. and Italian media reports citing a formal announcement by the Italian defense ministry last week.

Establishment of the European pilot training center for the F-35 responds "to the growing demand for training linked to greater program participation by NATO and European countries," the Italian online military magazine Analisi Difesa reported Thursday, quoting directly from defense ministry documents.

Italy is among at least 13 European countries flying the fighter jet, which is quickly becoming a cornerstone of European defense.

For example, Dutch F-35s shot down Russian drones over Poland in September, one of a string of European airspace violations blamed on Russia that had NATO debating how to respond.

Italy and Denmark plan to add 25 and 16 of the aircraft, respectively, to their fleets, manufacturer Lockheed Martin said in a statement Wednesday.

The U.S. has F-35 pilot training facilities at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida and Luke Air Force Base in Arizona, among other installations.

Development of the Trapani training facility will be financed by the Italian government and overseen by the F-35 Lightning II Joint Program Office as well as Lockheed Martin, according to a Defense News report.

It's expected to have two full mission simulators, with initial ground training offered by December 2028. Completion of the center is expected by July 2029, Defense News reported.

The joint program office and the Italian defense ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Lockheed Martin deferred comment on plans for an Italy-based F-35 pilot training center to the Italian government.

Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto told reporters last year that Sicily would be the first location outside the U.S. to train F-35 pilots, the Italian news agency Ansa reported in July.

The training facility at Trapani further expands Italy's stake in the F-35 program. The country already has a maintenance, repair, overhaul and upgrade facility in the north for Europe-based jets.

The hub, which inducted its first Europe-based U.S. F-35 for planned depot maintenance in March, also includes the jet's only European assembly line.

The training facility at Trapani will be the third Italian base with an F-35 squadron, joining Amendola and Ghedi air bases.

U.S. Naval Air Station Sigonella, near the Sicilian town of Catania, is about 192 miles southeast of Trapani. It is adjacent to an Italian air base.

MILITARY

N. Korea accuses South of drone incursion

By Hyung-Jin Kim
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea's military accused South Korea of flying drones across the border between the nations this week, warning Saturday that South Korea will face consequences for its "unpardonable hysteria."

South Korea quickly denied the accusation. But the development is likely to further dim prospects for efforts by South Korea's liberal government to restore ties with North Korea.

North Korean forces used special electronic warfare assets on Sunday to bring down a South Korean drone flying over North Korea's border town. The drone was equipped with two cameras that filmed unspecified areas, the General Staff of the North's Korean People's Army said in a statement carried by state media.



AP

North Korea's Kaepoong village is seen from Ganghwa, South Korea, near the border with North Korea, Saturday.

South Korea infiltrated another drone into North Korean airspace on Sept. 27 before it was forced to crash following electronic strikes by North Korea, the statement said, adding authorities found the drone also contained video data on major objects in North Korea.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said it did not operate drones during the times specified by North Korea and doesn't even possess the types of drones that North Korea claimed were used.

Senior ministry official Kim Hong-Cheol said in a statement that authorities will investigate whether civilians flew the drones found in North Korea. He said South Korea has no intentions of provoking North Korea and will continue its efforts to build trust between the Koreas.

Since taking office in June, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung has pushed hard to reopen talks with North Korea and reconcile the rivals. But North Korea has steadfastly rebuffed Lee's overtures.

Lee said Wednesday he asked Chinese President Xi Jinping to serve as a mediator to ease animosities between the two Koreas during their recent summit, and Xi called for patience.

North Korea has shunned talks with South Korea and the United States since leader Kim Jong Un's high-stakes nuclear diplomacy with President Donald Trump fell apart in 2019 due to wrangling over U.S.-led sanctions. North Korea has since focused on building more powerful nuclear weapons and declared a hostile "two-state" system on the Korean Peninsula to terminate relations with South Korea.

Drone flights are a source of animosity between the two Koreas, with the rivals accusing each other of flying drones into their territories in recent years.

North Korea accused South Korea in October 2024 of flying drones over its capital, Pyongyang, to drop propaganda leaflets three times. South Korea's military said it couldn't confirm whether the North's claim was true.

Strikes: Protests grow throughout Iran; Israel watching 'closely'

FROM PAGE 1

against Iran including cyberattacks and direct strikes by either the United States or Israel, according to two people familiar with internal White House discussions who were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The White House, which did not immediately respond to a request for comment, has not indicated it has made any decisions. The massive ongoing U.S. military deployment to the Caribbean has created another factor that the Pentagon and Trump's national security planners must consider.

The threat to strike the U.S. military and Israel came during a parliamentary speech by Mohammad Baagher Qalibaf, the hardliner speaker of the body who has run for the presidency in the past.

He directly threatened Israel, calling it "the occupied territory."

"In the event of an attack on Iran, both the occupied territory and all American military centers, bases and ships in the region will be our legitimate targets," Qalibaf said. "We do not consider ourselves limited to reacting after the action and will act based on any objective signs of a threat."

Lawmakers rushed the dais in parliament, shouting: "Death to America!"

It remains unclear how serious Iran is about launching a strike, particularly after its air defenses were destroyed during the 12-day war in June with Israel. Any decision to go to war would rest with Iran's 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The U.S. military has said in the Mideast it is "postured with forces that span the full range of combat capability to defend our forces, our partners and allies and U.S. interests." Iran targeted U.S. forces at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar in June, while the U.S. Navy's Mideast-based 5th Fleet is stationed in the island kingdom of Bahrain.



AP

In this frame grab from footage circulating on social media from Iran showed protesters once again taking to the streets of Tehran despite an intensifying crackdown as the Islamic Republic remains cut off from the rest of the world in Tehran, Iran, Saturday.

Israel, meanwhile, is "watching closely" the situation between the U.S. and Iran, said an Israeli official, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to not being authorized to speak to journalists. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio overnight on topics including Iran, the official added.

"The people of Israel, the entire world, are in awe of the tremendous heroism of the citizens of Iran," said Netanyahu, a longtime Iran hawk.

At the Vatican, Pope Leo XIV mentioned Iran as a place "where ongoing tensions continue to claim many lives," adding that "I hope and pray that dialogue and peace may be patiently nurtured in pursuit of the common good of the whole of society."

Online videos sent out of Iran, likely using Starlink satellite transmitters, purportedly showed demonstrators gathering in northern Tehran's Punak neighborhood. There, it appeared authorities shut off streets, with protesters waving their lit mobile phones. Others banged metal while fireworks went off.

"The pattern of protests in the capital has largely taken the form of scattered, short-lived, and fluid gatherings, an approach shaped in response to the heavy presence of security forces and increased field pressure," the Human Rights Activists News Agency said. "Reports were received of surveillance drones flying overhead and movements by security forces around protest locations, indicating ongoing monitoring and security control."

In Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city some 450 miles northeast of Tehran, footage purported to show protesters confronting security forces. Protests also appeared to happen in Kerman,500 miles southeast of Tehran.

Iranian state television on Sunday morning had correspondents appear on the streets in several cities to show calm areas, with a date stamp shown on screen. Tehran and Mashhad were not included.

Government rhetoric ratcheted up. Ali Larijani, a top security official, accused some demonstrators of "killing people or burning some people, which is very similar to what ISIS does," referring to the Islamic State by an acronym.

State TV aired funerals of slain security force members while reporting another six had been killed in Kermanshah. In Fars province, violence killed 13 people, and seven security forces were killed in North Khorasan province, it added. It showed a pickup truck full of bodies in body bags and later a morgue.

Even Iran's reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian, who had been trying to ease anger before the demonstrations exploded in recent days, offered a hardening tone in an interview aired Sunday.

"People have concerns, we should sit with them and if it is our duty, we should resolve their concerns," Pezeshkian said. "But the higher duty is not to allow a group of rioters to come and destroy the entire society."

The demonstrations began Dec. 28 over the collapse of the Iranian rial currency, which trades at over 1.4 million to $1, as the country's economy is squeezed by international sanctions in part levied over its nuclear program. The protests intensified and grew into calls directly challenging Iran's theocracy.

NATION

Suspect charged in fatal Mississippi rampage

Associated Press

WEST POINT, Miss. — A 24-year-old Mississippi man killed six people — his father, brother, uncle, 7-year-old cousin, a church pastor and the pastor's brother — at three locations during a Friday night rampage in a rural area, authorities said.

Daricka M. Moore was arrested at a police roadblock in Cedarbluff just before midnight after dozens of local, state and federal officers flooded the northeast Mississippi area.

Moore was being held without bail Saturday at the Clay County jail in West Point on murder charges and ahead of an expected initial appearance Monday before a judge.

Clay County District Attorney Scott Colom, who said he expects to pursue the death penalty, told The Associated Press that Moore would likely be appointed a public defender at that time.

If charges are upgraded to capital murder before then, Moore will be ineligible for bail under state law.



Moore

Clay County Sheriff Eddie Scott said at a Saturday news conference that evidence and witnesses indicate that Moore was the only shooter and no other injuries have been reported.

Investigators were continuing to interview Moore but do not currently know what may have motivated him, he added.

"A situation like this, you've got a family member attacking their own family," Scott said. "Whatever the reason is, we're hoping that we'll find out."

The shootings unfolded in an area of fields, woods and mostly modest homes about 125 miles northeast of Jackson.

Investigators believe Moore first killed his father, 67-year-old Glenn Moore, his brother, 33-year-old Quinton Moore and his uncle, 55-year-old Willie Ed Guines, at the family's mobile home on a dirt road in western Clay County.

The sheriff said Moore then stole his brother's truck and drove a few miles to a cousin's house, where he forced his way in and attempted to commit sexual battery. Scott said Moore than put a gun to the head of a 7-year-old girl and fatally shot her.

"I don't know what kind of motive you could have to kill a 7-year-old," he said.

Scott said that according to witnesses, Moore then placed a gun against a younger child's head, but she was not shot. It was not clear whether he did not pull the trigger or the gun misfired.

"That's how violent it was," Scott said.

The mother and a third child were also present, the sheriff said.

Moore then allegedly drove to a small white frame church, the Apostolic Church of The Lord Jesus. There, Scott said, he broke into a residence, killed the pastor and his brother and stole one of their vehicles.

Scott said the last two victims, the Rev. Barry Bradley and Samuel Bradley, lived most of the time in nearby Columbus but spent weekends on church grounds. Some Moore family members attend the church, Scott said.

Moore was caught at a roadblock at 11:24 p.m. near where the second shooting occurred, Scott said, four-and-a-half hours after the first call came in. Colom said Moore had a rifle and a handgun. Scott said officers are investigating where Moore obtained the guns.

The state medical examiner is performing autopsies on the victims.

Scott said Moore's surviving relatives are overwhelmed with grief.

"It was really hard to have conversations other than prayers with everybody out there," he said, adding, "this has really shaken our community."

Colom, a Democrat who is seeking his party's nomination this year to run against Republican U.S. Sen. Cindy Hyde Smith, said he is confident that his office has the resources to prosecute Moore and pursuing the death penalty is the right thing to do.

"Six people, one night, several different scenes, it's about as bad as it gets," Colom said.

Health subsidy extension passes

By Lisa Mascaro and Kevin Freking
Associated Press



J. Scott Applewhite/AP

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., speaks to reporters just after the House passed legislation that extends expired health care subsidies, at the Capitol in Washington, on Thursday.

WASHINGTON — In a remarkable rebuke of Republican leadership, the House passed legislation Thursday that would extend expired health care subsidies for those who get coverage through the Affordable Care Act as 17 renegade GOP lawmakers joined every Democrat in support.

The tally, 230-196, signified growing political concern over Americans' health care costs. Forcing the issue to a vote came about after a handful of Republicans signed on to a so-called "discharge petition" to unlock debate, bypassing objections from House Speaker Mike Johnson. The bill now goes to the Senate, where pressure is building for a bipartisan compromise.

Together, the rare political coalitions are rushing to resolve the standoff over the enhanced tax credits that were put in place during the COVID-19 crisis but expired late last year after no agreement was reached during the government shutdown.

"The affordability crisis is not a 'hoax,' it is very real — despite what Donald Trump has had to say," said House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, invoking the president's remarks.

"Democrats made clear before the government was shut down that we were in this affordability fight until we win this affordability fight," he said. "Today we have an opportunity to take a meaningful step forward."

Ahead of voting, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that the bill, which would provide a three-year extension of the subsidy, would increase the nation's deficit by about $80.6 billion over the decade.

At the same time, it would increase the number of people with health insurance by 100,000 this year, 3 million in 2027, 4 million in 2028 and 1.1 million in 2029, the CBO said.

Johnson, R-La., worked for months to prevent this situation. His office argued Thursday that the federal health care funding from the COVID-19 era is rife with fraud and urged a no vote.

While the momentum from the vote shows the growing support for the tax breaks that have helped some 22 million Americans have access to health insurance, the Senate would be under no requirement to take up the House bill and has already rejected it once before.

Instead, a small group of senators from both parties has been working on an alternative plan that could find support in both chambers and become law.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said that for any plan to find support in his chamber, it will need to have income limits to ensure that the financial aid is focused on those who most need the help.

He and other Republicans also want to ensure that beneficiaries would have to at least pay a nominal amount for their coverage.

Greenland leaders firmly reject Trump push for US control

Associated Press

Greenland's party leaders have rejected President Donald Trump's repeated calls for the U.S. to take control of the island, saying that Greenland's future must be decided by its people.

"We don't want to be Americans, we don't want to be Danes, we want to be Greenlanders," Greenland Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen and four party leaders said in a statement Friday night.

Trump said again on Friday that he would like to make a deal to acquire Greenland, a semiautonomous region that's part of NATO ally Denmark, "the easy way."

He said that if the U.S. doesn't own it, then Russia or China will take it over, and the U.S. does not want them as neighbors.

"If we don't do it the easy way, we're going to do it the hard way," Trump said, without explaining what that entailed.

The White House said it is considering a range of options, including using military force, to acquire the island.

Greenland's party leaders reiterated that "Greenland's future must be decided by the Greenlandic people."

"As Greenlandic party leaders, we would like to emphasize once again our wish that the United States' contempt for our country ends," the statement said.

Officials from Denmark, Greenland and the United States met Thursday in Washington and will meet again this week to discuss the renewed push by the White House for the control of the island.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has warned that any attempt at an American takeover of Greenland would mark the end of NATO.

The party leaders' statement said that "the work on Greenland's future takes place in dialogue with the Greenlandic people and is prepared on the basis of international laws."

"No other country can interfere in this," they said. "We must decide the future of our country ourselves, without pressure for quick decision, delay or interference from other countries."

The statement was signed by Nielsen, Pele Broberg, Múte B. Egede, Aleqa Hammond and Aqqalu C. Jerimiassen.

While Greenland is the largest island in the world, it has a population of around 57,000 and doesn't have its own military.

Defense is currently provided by Denmark, whose military is dwarfed by that of the United States.

It is currently unclear how the remaining members of NATO would respond if the U.S. did make the decision to forcibly take control of the island or if they would possibly attempt to come to Denmark's aid.

NATION

Anti-ICE protesters assemble across the US

By Rebecca Santana
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Thousands of people marched in Minneapolis on Saturday to protest the fatal shooting of a woman by a federal immigration officer there and the shooting of two people in Portland, Ore. Minnesota leaders urged demonstrators to remain peaceful.

The protest was one of hundreds planned for towns and cities across the country over the weekend. It came in a city on edge since the killing of Renee Good on Wednesday by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer.

"We're all living in fear right now," said Meghan Moore, a mother of two from Minneapolis who joined the protest. "ICE is creating an environment where nobody feels safe and that's unacceptable."

On Friday night, a protest outside a Minneapolis hotel that attracted about 1,000 people turned violent as demonstrators threw ice, snow and rocks at officers, Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara said. One officer suffered minor injuries after being struck with a piece of ice, O'Hara said. Twenty-nine people were cited and released, he said.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey stressed that while most protests have been peaceful, those who cause damage to property or put others in danger will be arrested. He faulted "agitators that are trying to rile up large crowds."

"This is what Donald Trump wants," Frey said of the president who has demanded massive immigration enforcement efforts in several U.S. cities. "He wants us to take the bait."

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz echoed the call for peace.

"Trump sent thousands of armed federal officers into our state, and it took just one day for them to kill someone," Walz said on social media. "Now he wants nothing more than to see chaos distract from that horrific action. Don't give him what he wants."



JOHN LOCHER/AP

People participate in a protest and noise demonstration calling for an end to federal immigration enforcement operations in the city Friday in Minneapolis.

"We will fight with peaceful expression, in court, through public debate, and at the ballot box. Keep the peace. And keep the faith," Walz said later in another post.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security says its deployment of immigration officers in the Twin Cities is its biggest ever immigration enforcement operation. Trump's administration has said both shootings were acts of self-defense against drivers who "weaponized" their vehicles to attack officers.

Connor Maloney said he was attending the Minneapolis protest to support his community and because he's frustrated with the immigration crackdown.

"Almost daily I see them harassing people," he said. "It's just sickening that it's happening in our community around us."

He and other protesters, including children, braved subfreezing temperatures and a light dusting of snow, carrying handmade signs saying declaring, "De-ICE Minnesota!" and "ICE melts in Minnesota."

They marched down a street that is home to restaurants and stores where various nationalities and cultures are celebrated in colorful murals.

Steven Eubanks, 51, said he felt compelled to attend a protest in Durham, N.C., because of the "horrifying" killing in Minneapolis.

"We can't allow it," Eubanks said. "We have to stand up."

Indivisible, a social movement organization that formed to resist the Trump administration, said hundreds of protests were scheduled in Texas, Kansas, New Mexico, Ohio, Florida and other states.

In Minneapolis, a coalition of migrant rights groups organized the demonstration that began in a park about half a mile from the residential neighborhood where the 37-year-old Good was shot on Wednesday.

But the large protest apparently did not deter federal officers from operating in the city.

A couple of miles away, just as the demonstration began, an Associated Press photographer witnessed heavily armed officers — at least one in Border Patrol uniform — approach a person who had been following them. Two of the agents had long guns out when they ordered the person to stop following them, telling him it was his "first and final warning."



JENNY KANE/AP

People gather outside the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility Friday in Portland, Ore.

The agents eventually drove onto the interstate without detaining the driver.

In Richfield, a suburb of Minneapolis, federal agents with their faces covered pointed their fingers at journalists and warned them to stay away as they detained a man outside a home improvement store.

Protests held in the neighborhood have been largely peaceful, and in general there has been minimal law enforcement presence, in contrast to the violence that hit Minneapolis in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd in 2020. Near the airport, some confrontations erupted on Thursday and Friday between smaller groups of protesters and officers guarding the federal building used as a base for the Twin Cities crackdown.

O'Hara said city police officers have responded to calls about cars abandoned because their drivers have been apprehended by immigration enforcement. In one case, a car was left in park and a dog was left inside another.

He said immigration enforcement activities are happening "all over the city" and that 911 callers have been alerting authorities to ICE activity, arrests and abandoned vehicles.

Congress debating possible consequences for ICE after Minn. killing

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The killing of a Minnesota woman by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer is reverberating across Capitol Hill where Democrats, and certain Republicans, are vowing an assertive response as President Donald Trump's aggressive deportation operations spark protests nationwide.

Lawmakers are demanding a range of actions, from a full investigation into Renee Good's shooting death and policy changes over law enforcement raids to the defunding of ICE operations and the impeachment of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, in what is fast becoming an inflection point.

"The situation that took place in Minnesota is a complete and total disgrace," House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York said as details emerged. "And in the next few days, we will be having conversations about a strong and forceful and appropriate response by House Democrats."

Yet there is almost no consensus among the political parties in the aftermath of the death of Good, who was behind the wheel of an SUV after dropping off her 6-year-old at school when she was shot and killed by an ICE officer.

The killing immediately drew dueling narratives. Trump and Noem said the ICE officer acted in self-defense, while Democratic officials said the Trump administration was lying and they urged the public to see the viral videos of the shooting for themselves.

Vice President JD Vance blamed Good, calling it "a tragedy of her own making," and said the ICE officer may have been "sensitive" from having been injured during an unrelated altercation last year.

But Good's killing, at least the fifth known death since the administration launched its mass deportation campaign, could change the political dynamic.

"The videos I've seen from Minneapolis yesterday are deeply disturbing," said Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, in a statement.

"As we mourn this loss of life, we need a thorough and objective investigation into how and why this happened," she said. As part of the investigation, she said she is calling for policy changes, saying the situation "was devastating, and cannot happen again."

The push in Congress for more oversight and accountability of the administration's immigration operations comes as lawmakers are in the midst of the annual appropriations process to fund agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security, to prevent another federal government shutdown when money expires at the end of January.

As anti-ICE demonstrations erupt in cities in the aftermath of Good's death, Democrats have pledged to use any available legislative lever to apply pressure on the administration to change the conduct of ICE officers.

"We've been warning about this for an entire year," said Rep. Maxwell Frost, D-Fla.

The ICE officer "needs to be held accountable," Frost said, "but not just them, but ICE as a whole, the president and this entire administration."

Congressional Democrats saw Good's killing as a sign of the need for aggressive action to restrain the administration's tactics.

Several Democrats joined calls to impeach Noem, who has been under fire from both parties for her lack of transparency at the department, though that step is highly unlikely with Republicans in control of Congress.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

White House: Saving East Wing not economical

DC WASHINGTON — The White House said Thursday that it was not feasible to save the East Wing because of structural issues, past decay and other major concerns as officials shared details of President Donald Trump's planned ballroom at a public meeting of the commission charged with approving it.

Josh Fisher, director of the White House Office of Administration, said an unstable colonnade, water leakage, mold contamination and other problems made it more economical to tear down the East Wing to make room for the $400 million ballroom than to renovate it.

It was the most comprehensive explanation to date for the dramatic demolition of the East Wing, which caused a public stir when it began in October with little advance notice.

The commission's chairman, Will Scharf, who is also a top White House official, said he thought the project would ultimately be approved.

Skulls, body parts found in grave robbery case

PA PHILADELPHIA — Bones and skulls visible in the back seat of a car near an abandoned cemetery on Philadelphia's outskirts led police to a basement filled with body parts, which authorities say were hoarded by a man now accused of stealing about 100 sets of human remains.

Officers said the arrest culminated a monthslong investigation into break-ins at Mount Moriah Cemetery, where at least 26 mausoleums and vaults had been forced open since November.

Investigators later searched the Ephrata home and storage unit of Jonathan Christ Gerlach, 34, and reported finding more than 100 human skulls, long bones, mummified hands and feet, two decomposing torsos and other skeletal items.

"They were in various states. Some of them were hanging, as it were. Some of them were pieced together, some were just skulls on a shelf," Delaware County District Attorney Tanner Rouse said.

Most were in the basement, authorities said, and they also recovered jewelry believed to be linked to the graves. In one case, a pacemaker was still attached.

Decades-old school desegregation order ends

LA DESOTO PARISH — The Trump administration and Louisiana officials have lifted another decades-old school desegregation order, part of a campaign to end court mandates they describe as outdated.

A federal judge on Monday approved a joint motion from Louisiana and the U.S. Justice Department to dismiss a 1967 lawsuit in DeSoto Parish schools, a district of about 5,000 students in the state's northwest. It's the second such dismissal since the Justice Department began working to overturn desegregation cases it once championed.

Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill thanked President Donald Trump and Attorney General Pam Bondi on Wednesday for "helping us to finally end some of these cases."

The case dates to 1967, when the Justice Department sued DeSoto Parish to end its racially segregated school system. The case resulted in a 1970 court order requiring the district to eliminate segregation and provide regular progress reports. The order was modified several times but there had been little activity in recent years.

In their motion, Louisiana and Trump officials said the order was no longer needed.

State loses $160M over licenses for immigrants

CA SACRAMENTO — California will lose $160 million for delaying the revocations of 17,000 commercial driver's licenses for immigrants, federal transportation officials announced Wednesday.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy already withheld $40 million in federal funding because he said California isn't enforcing English proficiency requirements for truckers.

The state notified these drivers in the fall that they would lose their licenses after a federal audit found problems that included licenses for truckers and bus drivers that remained valid long after an immigrant's visa expired. Some licenses were also given to citizens of Mexico and Canada who don't qualify. More than one-quarter of the small sample of California licenses that investigators reviewed were unlawful.

But then last week California said it would delay those revocations until March after immigrant groups sued the state because of concerns that some groups were being unfairly targeted. Duffy said the state was supposed to revoke those licenses by Monday.

Notorious 'Torso Killer' confesses to 1965 killing

NJ FAIR LAWN — One of the New York City area's most notorious serial killers has confessed to another killing.

Police in New Jersey announced Tuesday that Richard Cottingham, known as the "Torso Killer," admitted killing Alys Eberhardt in 1965. The 18-year-old was found dead in her family's home in Fair Lawn.

Investigators reopened the cold case in 2021, and "through countless interviews" over several years, extracted a full confession from Cottingham, "including details that were never publicly known," the department said in a statement.

Fair Lawn Police Chief Joseph Dawicki said Cottingham will not face additional charges as the department closes the case.

The 79-year-old has been imprisoned since his arrest in 1980. He is serving three life sentences at the South Woods State Prison in Bridgeton, N.J.

Hochul, Mamdani unveil plan for free child care

NY NEW YORK — New York City parents would have access to free child care for their 2-year-olds under a plan unveiled Thursday by Gov. Kathy Hochul and Mayor Zohran Mamdani, the first step for the mayor in delivering on a signature campaign promise.

The two Democrats announced the proposal at a celebratory event in Brooklyn a week after Mamdani was sworn in — marking an early political victory for Mamdani, who has faced questions over whether he will have the state support needed to enact his ambitious affordability-focused agenda.

Hochul, a moderate who is up for reelection this year, has been aligned with the city's new progressive mayor on his free child care plan, though questions remain on precisely how the program will take shape and what it might cost over the long term.

The proposed program will begin slowly, focusing first on "high-need areas" selected by the city, then expanding gradually over years until it becomes available across the city. The mayor expects it to cover around 2,000 children this fall, though he said it was not yet clear where the first seats would open up.

Medical issue prompts early return from space

DC WASHINGTON — In a rare move, NASA is cutting a mission aboard the International Space Station short after an astronaut had a medical issue.

The space agency said Thursday the U.S.-Japanese-Russian crew of four will return to Earth in the coming days, earlier than planned.

NASA canceled its first spacewalk of the year because of the health issue. The space agency did not identify the astronaut or the medical issue, citing patient privacy. The crew member is now stable.

NASA officials stressed that it was not an onboard emergency, but are "erring on the side of caution for the crew member," said Dr. James Polk, NASA's chief health and medical officer.

Polk said this was the NASA's first medical evacuation from the space station although astronauts have been treated aboard for things like toothaches and ear pain.

The crew of four returning home arrived at the orbiting lab via SpaceX in August for a stay of at least six months. The crew included NASA's Zena Cardman and Mike Fincke along with Japan's Kimiya Yui and Russia's Oleg Platonov.

From The Associated Press



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Real but not real exciting

Children hold graphics with drawings of food on them after an event about nutrition guidelines at U.S. Department of Health and Human Services headquarters on Thursday in Washington.

NATION

Sluggish hiring closes out 2025

By Christopher Rugaber
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sluggish December hiring concluded a year of weak employment gains that have frustrated job seekers even though layoffs and unemployment remained low.

Employers added just 50,000 jobs last month, nearly unchanged from a downwardly revised figure of 56,000 in November, the Labor Department said Friday. The unemployment rate slipped to 4.4%, its first decline since June, from 4.5% in November, a figure also revised lower.

The data suggests a reluctance by businesses to add workers even as economic growth has picked up. Many companies hired aggressively after the pandemic and no longer need to fill more jobs. Others have held back due to widespread uncertainty caused by President Donald Trump's shifting tariff policies, elevated inflation, and the spread of artificial intelligence, which could alter or even replace some jobs.

Still, economists were encouraged by the lower unemployment rate, which had risen in the previous four straight reports. Weakening employment raised alarms at the Federal Reserve, which cut its interest rate three times last year.

"The labor market looks to have stabilized, but at a slower pace of employment growth," Blerina Uruci, chief economist at T. Rowe Price, said. "There is no urgency for the Fed to cut rates further, for now."

Some Federal Reserve officials are concerned that inflation hasn't improved since 2024 and remains above their target of 2% annual growth. They support keeping rates where they are to combat inflation. Others, however, have grown worried that hiring has nearly ground to a halt and have supported lowering borrowing costs to spur spending and growth.

November's job gain was revised slightly lower, from 64,000 to 56,000, while October's now shows a much steeper drop, with a loss of 173,000 positions, down from previous estimates of a 105,000 decline. The government revises the jobs figures as it receives more survey responses from businesses.

Nearly all the jobs added in December were in the health care and restaurant and hotel industries. Health care added 38,500 jobs, while restaurants and hotels gained 47,000. Governments added 13,000.

Manufacturing, construction and retail companies all shed jobs. Retailers cut 25,000 positions, a sign that holiday hiring has been weaker than previous years. Manufacturers have shed jobs every month since April, when Trump announced sweeping tariffs intended to boost manufacturing.

Wall Street and Washington are looking closely at Friday's report as it's the first clean reading on the labor market in three months. The government didn't issue a report in October because of the six-week government shutdown, and November's data was distorted by the closure, which lasted until Nov. 12.

The economy gained just 584,000 jobs in 2025, sharply lower than that more than 2 million added in 2024. It's the smallest annual gain since the COVID-19 pandemic decimated the job market in 2020. Outside of recessions, it's the smallest annual increase since 2003.



MARK VANCLEAVE/AP

Children watch television at ABC Learning Center in Minneapolis last month.

Judge halts administration's effort to block 5 states' child care money

By Geoff Mulvihill and Hannah Schoenbaum
Associated Press

A federal judge ruled Friday that President Donald Trump's administration cannot block federal money for child care subsidies and other programs aimed at supporting low-income families with children from flowing to five Democratic-led states for now.

The states of California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota and New York argued that a policy announced Tuesday to freeze billions of dollars in funds for three grant programs is having an immediate impact on them and creating "operational chaos." In court filings and a hearing earlier Friday, the states contended that the government did not have a legal reason for withholding the money from them.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said it was pausing the funding because it had "reason to believe" the states were granting benefits to people in the country illegally, though it did not provide evidence or explain why it was targeting those states and not others.

U.S. District Judge Arun Subramanian, who was nominated to the bench by President Joe Biden, did not rule on the legality of the funding freeze but said the five states met a legal threshold "to protect the status quo" for at least 14 days while arguments are made in court.

Health department officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The affected programs are the Child Care and Development Fund, which subsidizes child care for 1.3 million children from low-income families; the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, which provides cash assistance and job training; and the Social Services Block Grant, a smaller fund that provides money for a variety of programs.

The five states say they receive a total of more than $10 billion a year from the programs.

New York Attorney General Letitia James, who is leading the lawsuit, called the ruling a "critical victory for families whose lives have been upended by this administration's cruelty."

The government had requested reams of data from the five states, including the names and Social Security numbers of everyone who received benefits from some of the programs since 2022.

The states argue that the effort is unconstitutional and is intended to go after Trump's political adversaries rather than to stamp out fraud in government programs — something the states say they already do.

Banks criticize Trump push for 10% credit card interest cap

By Adela Suliman
The Washington Post

President Donald Trump has called on credit card companies to cap interest rates at 10% for a year, effective from Jan. 20, without specifying how the proposal could be implemented or enforced.

"We will no longer let the American Public be 'ripped off' by Credit Card Companies that are charging interest rates of 20 to 30% … AFFORDABILITY!" he wrote on Truth Social late Friday.

The Trump administration has sought to highlight its actions on affordability in a midterm election year -- even as analysts say the messaging could be muddled by the administration's recent flurry of foreign policy moves. Critics have argued that a credit card rate cap would limit consumers' access to credit.

The Bank Policy Institute, American Bankers Association, Consumer Bankers Association, Financial Services Forum and Independent Community Bankers of America said in a joint statement Friday that a 10% cap "would reduce credit availability and be devastating for millions of American families and small business owners who rely on and value their credit cards."

"If enacted, this cap would only drive consumers toward less regulated, more costly alternatives," the statement added.

Bill Ackman, a hedge fund billionaire who endorsed Trump's 2024 candidacy, also expressed concerns.

In a social media post Friday, which was subsequently deleted, Ackman called the move "a mistake," warning that credit card lenders could cancel cards for consumers if they could not charge rates "adequate enough to cover losses and to earn an adequate return on equity."

In a subsequent post on Saturday morning, Ackman called Trump's aim to reduce credit card interest rates "a worthy and important" goal, but added "my concern about capping rates at 10% is that doing so will inevitably cause millions of Americans to have their cards canceled as credit card companies lose the ability to adequately price subprime credit risk."

Last year Sens. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., and Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., introduced bipartisan legislation to cap credit card interest rates at 10%, stating that with soaring bills, working families were in need of financial relief. The lawmakers said credit card companies that charged interest rates of more than 25% were "not engaged in the business of making credit available. They are engaged in extortion and loan sharking." The bill faced opposition from banking groups, and has yet to progress in Congress.

Hours before Trump's announcement, Sanders had criticized Trump on social media, saying Trump had failed to act on his promise to cap credit card interest rates, and calling it "unacceptable."

Trump pledged to cap credit card interest rates while on the 2024 presidential campaign trail, but did not progress the issue in 2025. Last year, his administration supported the removal of a federal rule introduced under President Joe Biden that would have capped credit card late fees to $8.

WORLD

Ukrainian drone attack kills at least 1 person in Russia

Strike follows intense Russian bombardment

Associated Press

A Ukrainian drone strike killed one person and wounded three others in the Russian city of Voronezh, local officials said Sunday. Meanwhile, thousands of residents were still without power in Kyiv, following an intense Russian bombardment.

A young woman died overnight in a hospital intensive care unit after debris from a drone fell on a house during the attack on Saturday, regional Gov. Alexander Gusev said on Telegram.

Three other people were wounded and more than 10 apartment buildings, private houses and a high school were damaged, he said, adding that air defenses shot down 17 drones over Voronezh. The city is home to just over 1 million people and lies some 155 miles from the Ukrainian border.

The attack came after Russia bombarded Ukraine with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles overnight into Friday, killing at least four people in the capital Kyiv, according to Ukrainian officials. For only the second time in the nearly four-year war, Russia used a powerful new hypersonic missile that struck western Ukraine in a clear warning to Kyiv and NATO.

Ukraine's largest private energy supplier, DTEK, said Sunday that 30,000 people in Kyiv were still without power following the attack. Mayor Vitali Klitschko said Friday around half the apartment buildings — nearly 6,000 — in snowy Kyiv were left without heat in daytime temperatures of about 17.6 degrees Fahrenheit.



EFREM LUKATSKY/AP

A residential building is seen damaged after a Russian strike in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Friday.

The intense barrage and the launch of the nuclear-capable Oreshnik missile followed reports of major progress in talks between Ukraine and its allies on how to defend the country from further aggression by Moscow if a U.S.-led peace deal is struck.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday in his nightly address that Ukrainian negotiators "continue to communicate with the American side."

Chief negotiator Rustem Umerov was in contact with U.S. partners on Saturday, he said.

Separately, Ukraine's General Staff said Russia targeted Ukraine with 154 drones overnight into Sunday and 125 were shot down.

The Ukrainian Defense Ministry's main intelligence directorate said Sunday that Russia this month deployed the new jet-powered "Geran-5" strike drone against Ukraine for the first time. The Geran is a Russian variant of the Iranian-designed Shahed.

According to the directorate, the drone can carry a 200-pound warhead and has a range of nearly 620 miles.

Kurdish fighters evacuated from Syrian city after clashes

Associated Press

ALEPPO, Syria — Kurdish fighters were evacuated from a contested neighborhood in Syria's northern city of Aleppo, officials said early Sunday, a move that could bring an end to several days of violent clashes with government forces.

State-run news agency SANA reported buses transported the last of the fighters from the Aleppo neighborhood of Sheikh Maqsoud to northeastern Syria, which is under the control of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

"Through international mediation to halt the attacks and violations against our people in Aleppo, we have reached an understanding leading to a ceasefire and the safe evacuation of martyrs, the wounded, trapped civilians, and fighters from the Achrafieh and Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhoods to northern and eastern Syria," SDF commander Mazloum Abdi said in a post on X.

He called for "mediators to uphold their promises to stop the violations and work towards the safe return of the displaced to their homes."

An Associated Press journalist at the scene saw buses leaving Sunday and was told by officials that the transports carried 360 fighters. Other buses carrying civilians and detained fighters departed on Saturday.

Syrian security forces deployed Saturday in Sheikh Maqsoud after days of clashes with Kurdish fighters that killed and wounded dozens.

During the day, several drone strikes were reported in Aleppo, Syria's largest city, leading authorities to stop civilian flights at Aleppo International Airport until further notice, state TV said.

On Saturday afternoon, an explosive drone hit the Aleppo Governorate building shortly after two Cabinet ministers and a local official held a news conference on the developments in the city. There was no immediate word on casualties.

Syria's state TV aired footage showing a drone exploding as it slammed into the building and blamed Kurdish fighters for the attack. The SDF denied the reports, saying its fighters did not attack a civilian target.

The fighting between the two sides is the most intense since the fall of then-President Bashar Assad in December 2024. At least 22 people were killed in five days of clashes and more than 140,000 were displaced.

U.S. Special Envoy to Syria Tom Barrack held talks in Damascus on Saturday with top officials, including President Ahmad al-Sharaa, and called on all parties to cease hostilities and return to dialogue.

"Violence risks undermining the progress achieved since the fall of the Assad regime and invites external interference that serves no party's interests," Barrack said in comments posted on X. "We urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint, immediately cease hostilities, and return to dialogue," he added, saying that fighting undermines the deal reached in March between the government and the Kurdish leadership.

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OPINION

2026's new political fault lines are already forming

By Matt K. Lewis
Los Angeles Times

That escalated quickly. We're barely into 2026, and events are already unfolding that could meaningfully reshape the political landscape.

The death of Renee Nicole Good, a 37-year-old mother and U.S. citizen who was shot and killed by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent in Minneapolis on Wednesday, has the potential to shake the political landscape in ways reminiscent of George Floyd's killing in 2020.

The Trump administration initially claimed Good "weaponized her vehicle" in an act of "domestic terrorism," an account that appears to be contradicted by video evidence. Whether the incident escalates into a broader political reckoning — or fades from public attention — may determine its lasting effect on President Donald Trump's popularity and his immigration policies.

Meanwhile, Trump's decision to invade Venezuela and capture then-President Nicolas Maduro remains controversial, even among some of his fans.

The attack drew immediate criticism from Marjorie Taylor Greene, Tucker Carlson and Laura Loomer, with Carlson and Loomer going so far as to float the claim that Maduro's ouster was really about imposing gay marriage on Venezuela (this is impressive, because it manages to combine foreign policy, culture war panic and complete nonsense into a single sentence).

But this schism isn't limited to ex-House members, podcasters and conspiracy theorists. Inside the administration, the balance of power appears to be tilting away from the non-interventionists and toward the hawks — at least, for now.

The current beneficiary of this shift is Secretary of State Marco Rubio. As recently as last month, JD Vance, who has generally staked out an anti-interventionist posture, seemed like Trump's obvious heir. Now, Rubio's stock is up (if "Lil Marco" falls short, he can always settle for Viceroy of Venezuela).

That's not to say Rubio is anywhere near being Trump's clear successor. Venezuela could disappear from the headlines as quickly as it arrived, buried beneath the next crisis, scandal or social media outburst. Or it could go sideways and dominate headlines for years or decades. Military adventurism has an uncanny habit of doing exactly that.

If Venezuela turns into a slow-motion disaster, Democrats will reap the benefits as will the GOP's "America First" contingent.

But January hasn't just presented a possible touchstone for Republicans; Democrats have been hit with their own challenge, too: the Minnesota fraud scandal, which has already pushed Democratic Gov. Tim Walz out of a reelection bid. It is the kind of story that reinforces voters' worst suspicions about their party.

During the past five years, parts of Minnesota's Somali diaspora became entangled in alleged fraudulent activity, reportedly submitting millions of dollars in claims for social services that were not actually rendered.

The details are complicated; the implications are not. Public programs retain support only when voters believe they are competently managed, and this story suggests the opposite.

The fact that the scandal involves the Somali community makes it even more combustible. Fair or not, it provides ready-made ammunition for those eager to stoke racial resentment, discredit refugee policies and turn bureaucratic failure into an indictment on Democrats.

The fallout extends well beyond Minnesota. Kamala Harris has been signaling interest in another presidential run, and Walz was her vice-presidential pick in what was already a truncated and awkward campaign. That decision alone won't sink a future bid for her, but it certainly doesn't strengthen her already dubious case that she has exceptional political judgment.

More troubling for Democrats is the fear that Minnesota is the tip of the iceberg. Walz's exodus was sparked by a right-wing YouTuber who started doing some sleuthing — and brought attention to years-old investigations by the Walz and Biden administrations. Other influencers are already promising similar exposés elsewhere.

Right-wing podcaster Benny Johnson, for example, has announced plans to descend on California, declaring it "the fraud capital of the world." Gov. Gavin Newsom returned fire with a vicious Trump-like retort, demonstrating once again why he became the Democratic front-runner in 2025.

Newsom's Twitter rejoinder aside, it's not crazy to think that the Democrats' recent momentum could be squandered if it turns out more of these scandals exist and have been ignored, downplayed or (worse) covered up.

It's risky to describe anything in modern politics as a turning point, because each week reliably produces something that eclipses the last outrage. Still, the opening days of this new year already feel consequential. Seeds have been planted. Whether they mature is the question.

Buckle up. It's only January.

Matt K. Lewis is the author of " Filthy Rich Politicians" and "Too Dumb to Fail."

Hands off Cuba? This brave dissident has a warning.

By Michael Lucchese
Special to The Washington Post

In recent years, Cuba has been largely offstage in geopolitics, left to quietly crumble under communist misrule. But lately, the island nation has been thrust into the news.

First, Cuba was a featured player in the recent seizures of oil tankers from Venezuela. The Cuban economy, such as it is, depends heavily on oil provided at cut-rate prices from the Chavista regime in Caracas. After the United States arrested Venezuela's socialist dictator Nicolas Maduro on Jan. 3, President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio turned the spotlight on Cuba, suggesting its leaders might be next.

Before marchers in Brooklyn and San Francisco start any "Hands off Cuba" campaigns, they would do well to consider the recent words of Cuban dissident José Daniel Ferrer. They were uttered in November at a ceremony in his honor: The Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, in conjunction with the Embassy of Lithuania, presented Ferrer with their Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom in recognition of his struggle against the communist regime oppressing his homeland. His speech is a profound warning against the West's complacency toward radicalism.

Ferrer did not win this award in 2025. He was originally recognized in 2020, but at that time, he was sitting in a jail for his bold opposition to the Cuban regime's heinous oppression of its own people. Cuba's communist government had arrested Ferrer more than 100 times since 2003, in addition to conducting a harassment and intimidation campaign against his friends and family. He said he had been assaulted in his own home, in front of his wife and children, and subjected to inhumane torture and humiliation in prison. The regime finally released him into exile in October 2025, bending to a pressure campaign led by the U.S. and the Vatican.

"After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, I thought the Cuban regime would collapse as well," Ferrer said in his remarks. "I was optimistic because I was young," he admitted. That optimism ultimately proved false. The Cuban regime has only clung more tightly to power as its confederates in revolution have toppled.

Ferrer made it clear that he has learned communism is an imperial ideology. Not only do revolutionaries victimize their own people, he said, but they also pose an incalculable threat beyond their borders. Communists have always sought to remake the whole world according to their materialist ideology, and compromise is not possible with regimes committed to this totalizing vision. As Ferrer's experience shows, they will brook no dissent or opposition to their diabolical schemes, and there is no depth of depravity to which their tyrannies will not sink.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Kestutis Budrys spoke at the event, later remarking that "José Daniel Ferrer has stood tall against the Cuban communist regime despite years of oppression." Ferrer had noted in his speech that it is fitting that the Embassy of Lithuania participated in the award ceremony, because Eastern Europe has once again become a front in the fight against despotism. Both Budrys and Ferrer linked the struggle against communism in Cuba to Europe now being threatened by Russian President Vladimir Putin's revanchist expansionism, on display most vividly in neighboring Ukraine.

Even decades after the end of the Cold War, the specter of authoritarian extremism looms large. From holdout regimes in Cuba and North Korea, to the much stronger and more terrifying powers of Russia and China, tyrants across the globe seek to undo the forward march of liberty and reorder the world around their totalizing vision.

Unfortunately, new radicals are rising across American politics. Inspired by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani, many look to the rotten ideology of socialism to give them a sense of hope for a better life. They have clearly not reckoned with the human toll caused by the revolutions of the 20th century — or their ideological successors still imposing tyranny around the world today, including in our own hemisphere. That makes the witness of José Daniel Ferrer all the more important, both as a warning and an inspiration. Revolutions may tempt the young with their simplistic solutions to various ills, but Ferrer's example is an enduring reminder that only true freedom remains worthy of our sacrifice.

Michael Lucchese is the founder of Pipe Creek Consulting and an associate editor of Law & Liberty.

Bizarro



Loose Parts



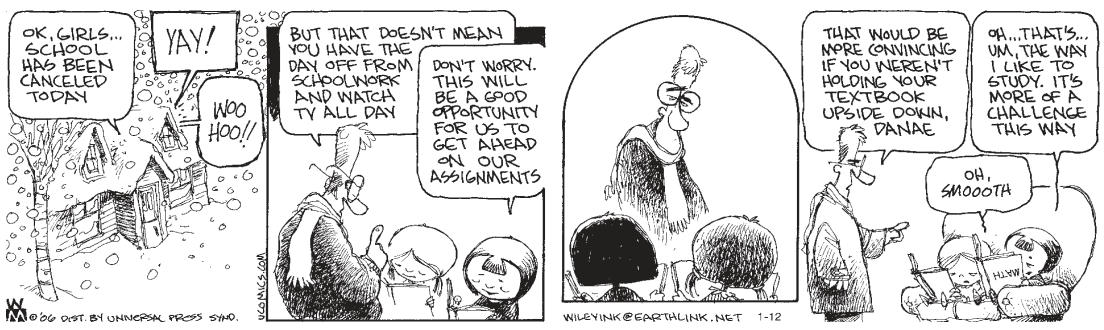
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



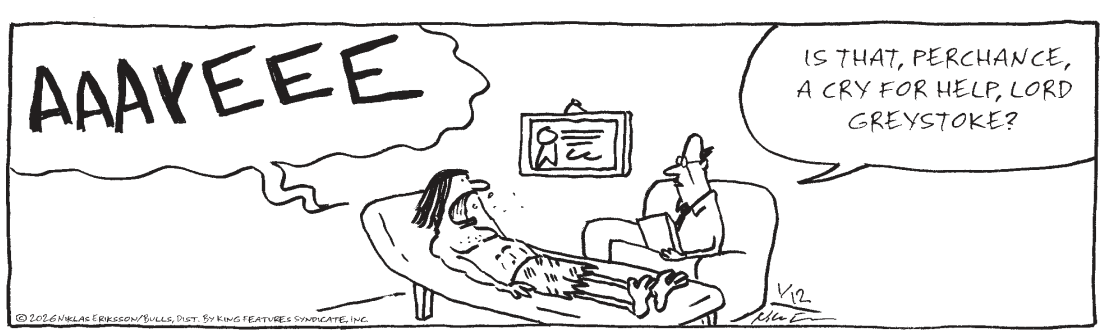
Non Sequitur



Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



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		54	■	55			
56				■	57			■	58			
59				■	60			■	■	61		

ACROSS

1 Golfer Ernie
4 Pampering, for short
7 Cobra feature
11 One of the three B's
13 Fitting rhyme for "spa"
14 Bigfoot's kin
15 Antioxidant berry
16 Capote nickname
17 Goad
18 Mythical deity
20 Singer Guthrie
22 Vigor
24 Baking spice
28 Toiled
32 Paratrooper's need
33 Ready, as for surgery
34 Menagerie
36 Saxophone range
37 Board
39 Radiator protectors
41 Actor Kutcher
43 "Today" rival, briefly
44 Enthusiastic
46 Huge success
50 Froth
53 Bird doc
55 Golden State sch.
56 Waikiki's island
57 Moody music
58 Viewed
59 Bikini parts
60 D-Day vessel
61 Hwys.

DOWN

1 Israel's Abba
2 Frilly
3 Fraud
4 Bit of ink
5 Zhivago's love
6 Make butter
7 Area of the brain that regulates body temperature
8 Not 'neath
9 Ear-related prefix
10 Carried out
12 River horse
19 That ship
21 Robitaille of hockey
23 Dispensed candy
25 Ponder
26 Diminutive suffix
27 GM cars of the '90s
28 Links gp.
29 Man of war?
30 "Little Women" sister
31 Pooch
35 URL ending
38 Eggy quaff
40 Online chats, briefly
42 Dickens work
45 Jewels
47 Computer brand
48 "Citizen Kane" prop
49 — Christian Andersen
50 Watch chain
51 Rowing need
52 "Caught ya!"
54 Preschooler

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

1-12

CRYPTOQUIP

SHMS-WXEF LXNPX YKXR PSXP YVNP HZNKWP-KXPHZM FHECN XEK LXEPHXR PV: YXWXEVZH XZC FKKN.

Saturday's Cryptoquip: AFTER THE PLAYFUL TEACHER TIED ALL OF HER PUPILS' SHOELACES TOGETHER, THEY HAD A CLASS TRIP.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: M equals G

FACES

Amy Poehler's 'Good Hang' breakthrough

'SNL' vet avoids rampant celebrity podcast fatigue through light, politics-free chatter with A-list guests

By Emily Yahr
The Washington Post



Associated Press and iStock images

Every Monday afternoon, something wonderful happens on Instagram for a certain sector of the internet: Amy Poehler announces who will sit down with her the next day on her podcast, "Good Hang."

"God is real and it's this podcast's talent booker," one commenter wrote when the reveal was Julia Louis-Dreyfus, beloved star of "Seinfeld" and "Veep."

"The booker of this show is out of control," another declared upon seeing Academy Award winner Olivia Colman slotted onto the schedule.

"GIRL who is in charge of booking because I'm like so in awe of your guests it's actually insane," one fan wrote upon learning that Paramore lead singer Hayley Williams was Poehler's next guest.

You may have assumed, at this point in the evolution of the podcast industry, that listeners would reject yet another "celebrities talking to other celebrities" podcast, something they already have more of than one could ever possibly need or want. But "Good Hang," launched in March, quickly captured a devoted base of fans dazzled by the lighthearted conversations between the "Saturday Night Live" veteran and an eclectic mix of A-list guests — actors, comedians, singers, chefs, a former first lady — all of whom seem to find a charming rapport with the gentle yet insightful interviewer. It's hard for new podcasts to break through in general. But by the summer, "Good Hang," produced by the Ringer and Poehler's production company Paper Kite, had landed in the Top 50 podcasts in America, and ended the year at No. 10 on Spotify's most-listened-to chart.

How did Poehler's show break through in an era of celebrity — and especially comedian — podcast overload?

Timing was key, even as Poehler joked in the premiere that "I like to be five or six years late to any trend." The goal of the show was to have fun and lighten people's moods, she said, but she emphasized that she is not a therapist or a self-help expert. "I don't care if you get any better. I don't have advice for you," she deadpanned, adding, "I want us to feel like there's a way to have laughs amid all of the craziness that is life."

During the show, she doesn't elaborate on exactly why this has been such a difficult time for so many people; guest Maya Rudolph described her experience playing Kamala Harris on "SNL" and came the closest to explicitly addressing the political climate before Poehler lightly redirected her. But Poehler makes it clear that she knows people are going through a lot right now, and she wants "Good Hang" to be a distraction. (A publicist for the show said Poehler was not available for an interview for this story.)

"When we were thinking about this podcast, it was like, all the guys get to just goof around and have fun, and it'd be like, straight comedy escapism — and our stuff has to be, I don't know, about menopause," Poehler said during her episode with Fey, dutifully adding, "Which is also important."

While escapism isn't a groundbreaking concept, Poehler is uniquely positioned to be a source of joy, given that she's the voice of Joy, literally, in the "Inside Out" Pixar movies. (Nick Jonas was absolutely floored by this hardly secret revelation during his episode.) Plus, she's the face of "Parks and Recreation," one of TV's most popular comfort-watches that became especially important during the pandemic.

But Poehler has also proved that she can chat with anyone, thanks to that "yes, and ..." mentality instilled in her through years of improv comedy.

"I had a dream the other night," explained Dakota Johnson, meeting Poehler for the first time during her guest spot. She noted that her dream was like a movie plot. "So, Matty Healy from the 1975 was in my dream, and he was murdering people. ... And when the people were looking for him — they were cops, maybe, I don't know — he would turn into a piece of asparagus."

"This is a really good idea," Poehler chimed in. "A24 would be all over that."

Johnson continued, saying that in the dream, Angelina Jolie was there, and she also turned into asparagus.

"What? She's in this, too?" Poehler exclaimed. "Let's make a movie."

Her enthusiasm is contagious, whether she's talking to Michelle Obama about the pleasures of once again driving her own car (something she could not do during her years in the White House) or reminiscing about the fun-yet-stressful "SNL" days with Rudolph. (They recalled the time that a member of the cleaning staff tried to console a sobbing writer by saying, "Don't cry, sexy.") She's comfortable with macabre humor, such as the time she tried to trick Andy Samberg into believing that Frisbee, Seth Meyers' dog and Samberg's enduring nemesis, had died. (Samberg didn't fall for it.)

The show occasionally tackles difficult issues, such as when Poehler welcomed her former "Parks and Recreation" co-star Aubrey Plaza, who made her first public comments about her husband's recent death and her own grieving process. Such conversations subsequently make news, but there's little indication that's intentional on Poehler's part. Poehler just makes her visitors feel comfortable.

That extends to the listeners (or viewers watching on YouTube), as well, and evokes the kind of relationship that Americans once had with its late-night hosts. Even in a sea of tough competition from many other celebrity podcasts, Poehler has somehow re-created the magic of a dying TV genre for a new medium, with a warmth and camaraderie that inspires listeners to return every week.

"Good Hang's" most clever gimmick is the introduction that kicks off each episode, during which Poehler invites someone who knows the guest to participate in a brief video call where they "talk well" behind the guest's back, and the person suggests questions that Poehler should ask. Jon Hamm called in from a film set and urged her to ask Paul Rudd when he stopped being worried about whether his acting was good enough; Louis-Dreyfus suggested Poehler ask Ina Garten how to make a proper lemon sorbet, and gave viewers a glimpse of her refrigerator as she retrieved her own attempt at making the dessert to show Poehler.

With this kind of informal warmup, instead of opening in a professional podcast studio, Poehler makes listeners feel like a part of a casual conversation. This tradition started on a high note during the first episode last March, where the guest was Fey, and Poehler invited her former SNL colleagues Meyers, Rachel Dratch and Fred Armisen, along with comedian Zarna Garg, during the introductory video chat to come up with questions.

A multitude of tech problems instantly erupted for Dratch, including her hopelessly tangled wired headphones. Just as things started to calm down, her old-timey doorbell rang with a food delivery, causing her dog to start barking and all five professional comedians on the call to dissolve into hysterical laughter.

It's hard to watch it and not feel like part of the group — and just for a few minutes, no matter what's going on in your life, feel transported to somewhere else.

Directors Guild favors Anderson, Coogler, del Toro, Safdie, Zhao

From wire reports

Paul Thomas Anderson, Ryan Coogler, Guillermo del Toro, Chloé Zhao and Josh Safdie have been nominated for the Directors Guild's top prize. The organization announced feature film and first-time director nominees Jan. 8 for the 78th annual Directors Guild Awards.

The five films singled out for the top prize, "One Battle After Another," "Sinners," "Frankenstein," "Hamnet" and "Marty Supreme," exactly mirrored the ensemble Actor Award nominees announced Jan. 7, further narrowing the field of this season's top contenders.

Directors Guild nominees often closely align with those of the Academy Awards. Over the past two decades, the winner of the DGA award has almost always also triumphed at the Oscars, including last year when Sean Baker won for "Anora." Oscar nominations are still a few weeks away, however, and set for Jan. 22.

Both Zhao and del Toro have won the award before, for "Nomadland" and "The Shape of Water." It's the first time Safdie and Coogler have been nominated for the prize. Although Anderson, previously nominated for "There Will Be Blood" and "Licorice Pizza," is seemingly the front-runner, if Coogler wins it would be a first for a Black filmmaker.

Directors nominated for first features include Eva Victor for "Sorry, Baby,"Alex Russell for "Lurker," Charlie Polinger for "The Plague," Harry Lighton for "Pillion" and Hasan Hadi for "The President's Cake."

The winners will be announced Feb. 7.

Other news

■ **Taylor Swift** leads the 2026 iHeartRadio Music Award nominees with nine. She's followed by Bad Bunny, Sabrina Carpenter and Alex Warren, who are tied with eight each. The iHeartRadio Music Awards, which will take place March 26, honor the most played artists of the previous year on its stations and app and include fan-voted categories.

■ Walt Disney Pictures announced Jan. 7 that its live-action adaptation of **"Tangled"** will star Teagan Croft and Milo Manheim in the lead roles of Rapunzel and Flynn Rider. The 2010 animated hit featured the voices of Mandy Moore and Zachary Levi and grossed more than $590 million worldwide. No release date has been announced.

SCOREBOARD/OLYMPICS

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Saturday's men's scores

EAST

Albany 71, Bryant 46
Boston University 100, Army 91
Bucknell 70, Loyola (Md) 67
Central Connecticut 69, Le Moyne 59
Dartmouth 102, Cornell 91
Drexel 64, William & Mary 58
Fordham 81, St. Bonaventure 77
George Washington 101, Loyola Chicago 66
Harvard 79, Columbia 54
Hofstra 67, Monmouth 64, OT
Holy Cross 84, American 73
LIU 67, St. Francis (PA) 63
Lehigh 78, Colgate 77
Maine 74, NJIT 70
Maryland-Eastern Shore 69, Howard 57
Mercyhurst 70, Wagner 69
Morgan State 72, South Carolina State 67
Navy 76, Lafayette 50
New Haven 65, Fairleigh Dickinson 55
Norfolk State 66, Delaware State 64
North Carolina Central 88, Coppin State 77
Pennsylvania 81, Brown 73
Princeton 76, Yale 60
Saint Louis 84, La Salle 72
Seton Hall 76, Georgetown 67
Stonehill 85, Chicago State 82, OT
Syracuse 83, Pittsburgh 72
Towson 87, Northeastern 78
UConn 72, DePaul 60
UMBC 75, New Hampshire 74
UMass 79, Ball State 71
UMass Lowell 73, Binghamton 68
UNC Wilmington 75, Stony Brook 71
West Virginia 86, Kansas 75

SOUTH

Alcorn State 64, Alabama A&M 62
Auburn 95, Arkansas 73
Austin Peay 81, Stetson 69
Bethune-Cookman 74, Grambling State 65
Charleston 74, Hampton 70
Chattanooga 88, Samford 79
Coastal Carolina 67, Appalachian State 62
Duke 82, SMU 75
East Tennessee State 86, UNC Greensboro 60
Eastern Kentucky 79, Central Arkansas 75, OT
Elon 83, Campbell 82
Florida 91, Tennessee 67
Florida A&M 67, Southern University 59
Furman 69, VMI 48
George Mason 86, VCU 80
Georgia 75, South Carolina 70
Georgia State 81, Marshall 73
High Point 84, Charleston Southern 82, OT
Jackson State 75, Alabama State 64
Jacksonville 75, West Georgia 43
James Madison 70, Old Dominion 69
Kennesaw State 88, Jacksonville State 82
Kentucky 92, Mississippi State 68
Lipscomb 84, Florida Gulf Coast 77
Longwood 77, Presbyterian 70
Louisiana Tech 70, Delaware 68, OT
Louisville 75, Boston College 62
McNeese 73, Southeastern Louisiana 61
Mercer 109, Wofford 97
Miami (FL) 91, Georgia Tech 81
Morehead State 71, Southeast Missouri State 69
Murray State 92, Valparaiso 79
Nicholls State 90, New Orleans 77
North Carolina 87, Wake Forest 84
North Carolina State 113, Florida State 69
Northwestern State 79, Texas A&M-CC 78
Ole Miss 76, Missouri 69
Queens 89, North Florida 82
Rhode Island 70, Davidson 45
South Alabama 87, Georgia Southern 71
Southern Miss 70, Louisiana-Monroe 60
Texas 92, Alabama 88
The Citadel 79, Western Carolina 77, OT
Troy 90, Louisiana 70
UNC Asheville 91, Radford 72
Vanderbilt 84, LSU 73
Virginia 70, Stanford 55
Virginia Tech 78, California 75
Winthrop 71, USC Upstate 50

MIDWEST

Belmont 78, Drake 76
Bradley 75, Northern Iowa 69
Central Michigan 87, Kent State 85
Clemson 76, Notre Dame 61
Eastern Illinois 74, Tennessee State 70
Evansville 72, Indiana State 69
Iowa State 83, Oklahoma State 71
Little Rock 82, Lindenwood 74
Missouri State 79, Florida International 71
Nebraska 83, Indiana 77
North Alabama 82, Bellarmine 73
North Dakota State 78, Omaha 76
Ohio 91, Buffalo 80
Purdue 93, Penn State 85
South Dakota 82, Denver 72
St. John's 90, Creighton 73
Tennessee Tech 59, Western Illinois 54
Tennessee-Martin 73, Southern Indiana 56
UIC 63, Illinois State 59, OT
Villanova 76, Marquette 73
Western Michigan 79, Eastern Michigan 62
Wisconsin 91, Michigan 88
Xavier 97, Providence 84

SOUTHWEST

Arizona 86, TCU 73
Arkansas State 83, Texas State 82
Arkansas-Pine Bluff 74, Texas Southern 66
East Texas A&M 77, Texas Rio Grande Valley 69
Houston 77, Baylor 55
Lamar 63, Incarnate Word 51
Liberty 82, Sam Houston 74
Prairie View A&M 70, Mississippi Valley State 69
South Florida 93, Tulsa 78
St. Thomas 82, Oral Roberts 71
Stephen F. Austin 85, Houston Christian 67
Texas A&M 83, Oklahoma 76
Texas-Arlington 82, Abilene Christian 72
Tulane 85, UTSA 52
Western Kentucky 68, UTEP 56

FAR WEST

Arizona State 87, Kansas State 84
BYU 89, Utah 84
Cal Poly 84, UC Davis 78
Cal State Fullerton 86, Cal State Northridge 79
California Baptist 58, Southern Utah 55
Eastern Washington 66, Montana 65
Grand Canyon 76, San Jose State 58
Idaho 92, Montana State 89
Idaho State 81, Northern Arizona 79
Long Beach State 81, Cal State Bakersfield 75
Middle Tennessee 59, New Mexico State 55
Nevada 92, Wyoming 83
New Mexico 91, Air Force 49
North Dakota 81, Kansas City 79
Pacific 77, San Diego 70
Portland 82, Oregon State 76
Portland State 96, Sacramento State 69
Saint Mary's 88, Washington State 82
San Diego State 71, Fresno State 52
San Francisco 80, Pepperdine 60
Santa Clara 103, Loyola Marymount 72
Texas Tech 73, Colorado 71
UC San Diego 69, UC Riverside 66
UCLA 67, Maryland 55
Utah State 93, Boise State 68
Utah Valley 92, Utah Tech 76
Weber State 76, Northern Colorado 71

Saturday's women's scores

EAST

Army 64, Boston University 57
Binghamton 80, UMass Lowell 52
Brown 77, Penn 65, 2OT
Bryant 62, Albany 55
Columbia 58, Harvard 55
Cornell 61, Dartmouth 52
Dayton 66, Fordham 58
Fairleigh Dickinson 65, New Haven 57
Holy Cross 65, American 48
Iona 60, Canisius 51
LIU 77, St. Francis (PA) 61
Le Moyne 65, Central Connecticut 61
Lehigh 64, Colgate 45
Loyola (MD) 49, Bucknell 46
Maine 86, NJIT 67
Manhattan 74, Niagara 53
Marist 62, Rider 49
Marshall 80, Coastal Carolina 74
Maryland-Eastern Shore 62, Howard 56
Mercyhurst 69, Wagner 66
Merrimack 82, Siena 65
Mount St Mary's 55, Saint Peter's 51
Navy 97, Lafayette 58
Norfolk State 69, Delaware State 53
Northern Kentucky 81, Robert Morris 76
Ohio 71, Buffalo 59
Princeton 76, Yale 50
Quinnipiac 65, Sacred Heart 49
Rhode Island 66, St. Bonaventure 45
Saint Joseph's 69, La Salle 60
Sam Houston 73, Delaware 65, OT
St. John's 49, Butler 39
UMBC 58, New Hampshire 47
UMass 74, Central Michigan 72

SOUTH

Alabama A&M 76, Alcorn State 34
Appalachian State 82, Southern Miss 59
Chattanooga 61, Furman 44
Coppin State 77, North Carolina Central 70
Florida A&M 60, Southern University 57
Florida Atlantic 70, UAB 63
Florida Gulf Coast 63, Lipscomb 42
Florida International 76, Kennesaw State 65
Gardner-Webb 64, USC Upstate 61
Georgia Southern 77, Old Dominion 60
Georgia State 72, James Madison 70, OT
Grambling State 67, Bethune-Cookman 60
High Point 78, Radford 40
Jackson State 62, Alabama State 54
Longwood 67, UNC Asheville 58
McNeese 77, Southeastern Louisiana 55
Middle Tennessee 88, New Mexico State 51
Morehead State 65, Southeast Missouri State 59
Nicholls State 79, New Orleans 64
North Alabama 67, Bellarmine 52
North Florida 64, Queens 51
North Texas 59, Tulane 53
Northwestern State 65, Texas A&M-CC 49
Richmond 91, Davidson 84, 3OT
Samford 73, Western Carolina 62
South Alabama 73, Louisiana-Monroe 67
South Carolina State 62, Morgan State 59
South Florida 90, Memphis 81
Stetson 56, Austin Peay 53
Texas State 55, Louisiana 43
Troy 86, Arkansas State 64
UNC Greensboro 76, Mercer 59
West Georgia 74, Jacksonville 59
Western Kentucky 68, UTEP 59
Winthrop 63, Charleston Southern 54
Wofford 61, East Tennessee State 57

MIDWEST

Bowling Green 65, Northern Illinois 48
Chicago State 51, Stonehill 48
DePaul 80, Georgetown 77
East Carolina 83, Wichita State 56
Eastern Illinois 71, Tennessee State 45
Green Bay 74, Detroit Mercy 53
Kansas City 77, North Dakota 56
Kent State 78, Eastern Michigan 65
Lindenwood 71, Little Rock 43
Miami (OH) 79, Akron 56
Missouri State 63, Jacksonville State 47
North Dakota State 94, Omaha 39
Oakland 66, Milwaukee 45
South Dakota 72, St. Thomas 65
South Dakota State 103, Oral Roberts 76
Southern Illinois 97, Valparaiso 59
Southern Indiana 52, Tennessee-Martin 43
Texas Tech 71, Cincinnati 60
Toledo 59, Western Michigan 46
Utah 80, Kansas State 73
Western Illinois 77, Tennessee Tech 60
Youngstown State 58, Purdue Fort Wayne 54

SOUTHWEST

Abilene Christian 59, UT Arlington 56
BYU 79, Houston 64
Eastern Kentucky 64, Central Arkansas 54
Lamar 78, Incarnate Word 62
Mississippi Valley State 80, Prairie View A&M 73
Stephen F. Austin 87, Houston Christian 67
Texas Southern 80, Arkansas-Pine Bluff 57
UT Rio Grande Valley 60, East Texas A&M 55
UTSA 69, Charlotte 63

FAR WEST

Air Force 76, San Jose State 57
Boise State 62, Colorado State 59
Cal State Bakersfield 75, Long Beach State 48
Cal State Fullerton 73, Cal State Northridge 58
California Baptist 82, Southern Utah 77, OT
Eastern Washington 65, Montana 58
Gonzaga 69, Portland 55
Grand Canyon 71, Fresno State 64
Idaho State 59, Northern Arizona 46
Montana State 99, Idaho 66
Nevada 70, New Mexico 61
Northern Colorado 69, Weber State 66
Oregon State 68, Seattle 38
Sacramento State 68, Portland State 64
San Diego 54, Pepperdine 51
San Diego State 73, Utah State 72
Santa Clara 98, Washington State 92
UC Davis 87, Cal Poly 61
UC Irvine 50, Hawai'i 47
UC San Diego 70, UC Riverside 54
UCF 58, Arizona 55
UNLV 82, Wyoming 53
Utah Tech 65, Utah Valley 54

AP SPORTLIGHT

Jan. 12

1951 — Ezzard Charles knocks out Lee Oma in the 10th round at Madison Square Garden in New York to retain the heavyweight title.

1958 — Dolph Schayes of the Syracuse Nationals sets an NBA record for career points in a 135-109 victory over the Detroit Pistons. Schayes scores 23 points to bring his career mark to 11,770, breaking the record of 11,764 held by George Mikan.

1958 — The NCAA rules committee makes the first change in football scoring rules since 1912 by adding the two-point conversion.

1969 — New York Jets quarterback Joe Namath "guarantees" a victory before the game against 17-point favorite Baltimore, then leads the AFL to its first Super Bowl victory, a 16-7 triumph over a Colts team that had lost only once in 16 games all season.

1975 — The Pittsburgh Steelers shut down Minnesota's offense, handing the Vikings their third Super Bowl defeat, 16-6. Franco Harris, the game's MVP, sets a Super Bowl rushing record with 158 yards.

2008 — Tom Brady completes all but two of his 28 passes to lead New England to its second straight AFC championship game with a 31-20 victory over the Jacksonville Jaguars. The Patriots improve to 17-0, matching the 1972 Miami Dolphins, the only team to go unbeaten from the first game of the season through the Super Bowl.

2012 — Dwight Howard breaks Wilt Chamberlain's nearly 50-year-old NBA record for most free throw attempts in a game, making 21 of 39 in the Orlando Magic's 117-109 victory over the Golden State Warriors. Chamberlain shot 34 for the Philadelphia Warriors against St. Louis on Feb. 22, 1962.

2013 — Colin Kaepernick rushes for a quarterback playoff-record 181 yards and two touchdowns and throws two scoring passes to Michael Crabtree in the San Francisco 49ers' 45-31 win over the Green Bay Packers.

2013 — Joe Flacco throws a 70-yard game-tying touchdown to Jacoby Jones with 31 seconds left in regulation, helping send it into overtime and the Baltimore Ravens beat the Denver Broncos in the second extra period, 38-35.

2014 — Jeremy Abbott wins his fourth U.S. figure skating title. Teenager Jason Brown finishes second and defending champion Max Aaron places third.

2015 — Ezekiel Elliott rushes for 246 yards and four touchdowns as Ohio State wins the first national title in college football's playoff era, running over Oregon 42-20.

2017— Justin Thomas, 23, becomes the youngest player to shoot a sub-60 round of 59 in the opening round of the Sony Open at Waialae CC in Hawaii. Thomas also wins the tournament.

DEALS

Saturday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Acquired RHP Josh Grosz from Colorado in exchange for OF Jake McCarthy.
ATLANTA BRAVES — Agreed to terms with RHP Tyler Kinley on a one-year contract.
MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Agreed to terms with RF Greg Jones on a minor league contract.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

NBA — Suspended Sacramento G Dennis Schroder three games without pay for an off-court confrontation after a game on Dec. 28.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

ATLANTA FALCONS — Hired Matt Ryan as president of football.
BUFFALO BILLS — Signed LB Baylon Spector to the active roster. Placed WR Joshua Palmer on injured reserve.
CHICAGO BEARS — Activated CB Kyler Gordon from injured reserve.
DENVER BRONCOS — Designated LB Drew Sanders to return from injured reserve.
LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Activated TE Tucker Fisk from injured reserve. Placed WR KeAndre Lambert-Smith on injured reserve.
WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Hired David Blough as offensive coordinator.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

BUFFALO SABRES — Recalled D Zac Jones from Rochester Americans (AHL).
CAROLINA HURRICANES — Activated D Jaccob Slavin from injured reserve.
CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS — Recalled G Stanislav Berezhnoy from Rockford (AHL).
COLORADO AVALANCHE — Recalled F TJ Tynan from Toronto (AHL).
EDMONTON OILERS — Assigned D Riley Stillman to Bakersfield (AHL).
FLORIDA PANTHERS — Placed D Seth Jones on injured reserve. Recalled F Sandis Vilmanis from Charlotte (AHL).
LOS ANGELES KINGS — Placed F Anze Kopitar on injured reserve. Activated F Corey Perry from injured reserve.
MINNESOTA WILD — Recalled F Ben Jones from Iowa (AHL). Placed D Zach Bogosian on injured reserve. Waived D Matt Kiersted.
MONTREAL CANADIENS — Activated D Kaiden Guhle from injured reserve.
NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Placed F Stefan Noesen on injured reserve. Assigned D Dennis Cholowski to Utica (AHL).
NEW YORK RANGERS — Assigned F Justin Dowling to Hartford (AHL).
OTTAWA SENATORS — Assigned F Stephen Halliday to Belleville (AHL). Recalled G Hunter Shepard from Belleville. Assigned G Mads Sogaard to Belleville.
PITTSBURGH PENGUINS — Recalled F Rafael Harvey-Pinard from Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (AHL).
SEATTLE KRAKEN — Activated F Jaden Schwartz from injured reserve.
ST. LOUIS BLUES — Signed D Philip Broberg to a six-year contract extension.
TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Activated F William Nylander from injured reserve.
VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS — Assigned D Dylan Coghlan to Henderson (AHL). Activated D Shea Theodore from injured reserve.

SOCCER
National Women's Soccer League

DENVER SUMMIT FC — Signed MF Yuna McCormack to a three-year contract.

TENNIS

Brisbane International

Sunday
At Brisbane, Australia
Purse: $1,691,602
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Seedings in parentheses
Women's Singles
Championship

Aryna Sabalenka (1), Belarus, def. Marta Kostyuk (16), Ukraine, 6-4, 6-3

Men's Singles
Championship

Aleksandar Kovacevic, United States, def. Cameron Norrie (7), Britain, 7-6 (4), 4-6, 6-4

ASB Classic

Sunday
At Auckland, New Zealand
Purse: $283,347
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Seedings in parentheses
Women's Singles
Championship

Elina Svitolina (1), Ukraine, def. Wang Xinyu (7), China, 6-3, 7-6 (6)

Hong Kong Open

Sunday
At Hong Kong, China
Purse: $700,045
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Seedings in parentheses
Men's Singles
Championship

Alexander Bublik (2), Kazakhstan, def. Lorenzo Musetti (1), Italy, 7-6 (2), 6-3



FRANCISCO SECO/AP

Two-time Olympic gold medalist Chloe Kim said she dislocated her shoulder in training.

American Kim hurts shoulder

BY EDDIE PELLS
Associated Press

American snowboarding star Chloe Kim said Thursday that she took "the silliest fall" in training and dislocated her shoulder, threatening her chance to win a third straight gold medal at next month's Winter Olympics in Italy.

Kim posted video of the accident in Laax, Switzerland, earlier this week as she practiced for a key Olympic tune-up there next weekend. She tumbled to the snow and went skittering across the halfpipe.

She did not say which shoulder she hurt and that she was "trying to stay optimistic" about competing at the Olympics but "I don't have much clarity now." The 25-year-old said she had an MRI scheduled for Friday that would reveal the extent of the damage.

"The positive thing is, I have range, I'm not in that much pain, I just don't want it to keep popping out, which has happened," she said. "I'm just trying to stay really optimistic. I feel really good about where my snowboarding is at right now, so I know the minute I get cleared and I'm good to go, I should be fine."

Kim's absence would deprive the Winter Games of one of its biggest names and one of its best storylines.

She is trying to become the first action-sports athlete to win three straight gold medals. Shaun White took three halfpipe golds, but they were spread out over five games.

Kim was the breakout star of the 2018 Olympics, a bubbly teenager taking gold in her parents' home country of South Korea. Four years ago in China, she won again, with that victory punctuated by her messages about the ups and downs of success and fame.

The Olympic qualifying round in women's halfpipe is Feb. 11.

NHL

ROUNDUP

Flames snap Penguins' win streak

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Matt Coronato scored in the third period to lift the Calgary Flames over the Pittsburgh Penguins 2-1 on Saturday.

Connor Zary also scored for the Flames, who won for the first time in 2026 and snapped a four-game losing streak. Calgary was limited to one goal in each of its previous three losses.

Devin Cooley stopped 27 shots in his first start since Dec. 20.

Egor Chinakhov scored for the Penguins, who saw a season-high six-game winning streak end. Pittsburgh had won seven of eight before Saturday's loss. Arturs Silovs made 23 saves.

Thomas Novak thought he scored the tying goal in the third period, but it was ruled that Sidney Crosby interfered with Cooley.

Evgeni Malkin got his 854th assist to pass Bryan Trottier and Anze Kopitar for the 10th most assists in NHL history with one team.

Crosby's eight-game point streak ended, and Erik Karlsson's nine-game home point streak was also snapped.

Coronato scored the winning goal when he beat Silovs with a wrist shot 42 seconds into the third period.

Zary opened the scoring for Calgary with a breakaway goal at 2:33 of the first period. He intercepted an errant pass from Ryan Shea at the offensive blueline and beat Silovs between the legs.

Pittsburgh scored its only goal at 9:17 of the second period when Chinakhov finished a give-and-go with Malkin from the right faceoff dot.

Bruins 10, Rangers 2: Pavel Zacha recorded his first career hat trick — one of which was a delayed goal awarded after a replay review during the first intermission — and host Boston coasted past the Rangers.

Marat Khusnutdinov had four goals to go along with Zacha's three, giving the Bruins their first pair with hat tricks in the same game since 1964.

The Bruins won for the fourth time in five games.

David Pastrnak matched a Boston record with six assists.

Mika Zibanejad and J.T. Miller scored for the Rangers, who have lost six of seven.

Avalanche 4, Blue Jackets 0: Brent Burns scored twice, Trent Miner made 29 saves for his first NHL shutout and host Colorado beat Columbus for its 17th straight home win.

The Avalanche move one victory away from matching their longest home win streak in franchise history, a mark that was set during the 2021-22 Stanley Cup-winning season. The longest home win streak in NHL history is 23 by Detroit in 2011-12.



GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

Calgary Flames' center Nazem Kadri (91) tries to move past Pittsburgh Penguins' center Connor Dewar, left, in front of goalie Arturs Silovs during the first period in Pittsburgh on Saturday.

Sharks 5, Stars 4 (OT): Tyler Toffoli scored twice and added an assist, including the winning goal at 1:58 of overtime as host San Jose rallied from two goals down to beat Dallas.

Jason Robertson scored his 26th goal of the season and added an assist for Dallas, Mikko Rantanen also had a goal and an assist, and Justin Hryckowian and Kyle Capobianco also scored. Casey DeSmith finished with 26 saves.

Lightning 7, Flyers 2: Nikita Kucherov scored on each of his first two shots and assisted on Gage Goncalves' two goals to help visiting Tampa Bay win its ninth straight game, beating Philadelphia.

Nick Paul, Brandon Hagel and Yanni Gourde also scored for the Lightning. Andrei Vasilevskiy made 18 saves for his seventh consecutive victory.

The teams will meet again Monday night in Philadelphia.

Sabres 5, Ducks 3: Jack Quinn scored twice, Tage Thompson had a goal and an assist, and host Buffalo beat Anaheim for its 13th win in 14 games.

Buffalo's 14-game run is the best in franchise history. The stretch has elevated the Sabres from last place in the Eastern Conference into a playoff position as the team tries to end the longest postseason drought in NHL history at 14 seasons.

Olen Zellweger, Leo Carlsson and Mason McTavish scored for the Ducks late in the third period after the Sabres twice established three-goal leads. Lukas Dostal had 27 saves as Anaheim closed out a four-game trip by losing its ninth in a row.

Hurricanes 3, Kraken 2: Jaccob Slavin's first assist of the season on William Carrier's goal lifted Carolina to a home win over Seattle.

Berkly Catton and Matty Beniers scored for the Kraken and Joey Daccord stopped 31 shots. Seattle lost in regulation for the first time in 11 games (8-1-2).

Maple Leafs 5, Canucks 0: William Nylander had a goal and two assists in his return from an injury, Joseph Woll made 29 saves for his second shutout of the season and host Toronto beat Vancouver.

Nylander missed six games because of a lower-body injury.

Red Wings 4, Canadiens 0: Visiting Detroit took over first place in the Atlantic Division from Montreal, blanking its Original Six rival.

Detroit, which has won three in a row, is now two points ahead of Montreal, although the Canadiens have a game in hand.

Lucas Raymond, Dylan Larkin, Alex DeBrincat and Andrew Copp scored for the Red Wings. John Gibson stopped 27 shots as he recorded his third shutout of the season.

Panthers 3, Senators 2: Gustav Forsling and Carter Verhaeghe each had a goal and an assist, and visiting Florida beat Ottawa.

Evan Rodrigues also scored for the Panthers, and Sergei Bobrovsky had 18 saves. Florida snapped a two-game skid and got its second win in six games (2-3-1).

Blackhawks 3, Predators 0: Drew Commesso made 37 saves for his first NHL shutout and victory, Connor Bedard set up the first two goals and visiting Chicago beat Nashville.

Tyler Bertuzzi scored his team-leading 23rd goal and had an assist, and Nick Lardis and Ryan Greene added goals to help Chicago — playing its lone road game in an eight-game stretch — win for the fourth time in five games.

Islanders 4, Wild 3 (OT): Simon Holmstrom scored his second goal of the game 1:34 into overtime and visiting New York beat Minnesota.

The Islanders improved to 3-0-1 in their past four games.

Matt Boldy, Kirill Kaprizov and Ben Jones scored for Minnesota in its third loss in four games (1-1-2). Quinn Hughes assisted on all three Wild goals and Filip . Gustavsson stopped 23 shots.

Golden Knights 4, Blues 2: Mitch Marner had a goal and an assist in his 700th career game, Mark Stone tied the Golden Knights' record with a goal in his seventh straight game, and host Vegas defeated St. Louis for its third straight win.

Robert Thomas had a goal and assist for the Blues, and Jake Neighbours scored the other goal on a power play. Jordan Binnington finished with 21 saves as St. Louis lost its third straight.

Kings 4, Oilers 3 (SO): Adrian Kempe scored the lone goal in a shootout and visiting Los Angeles beat Edmonton in its first meeting since the first-round of the playoffs.

Edmonton has eliminated Los Angeles in the opening round of the playoff the past four seasons.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Detroit	46	27	15	4	58	145	142
Tampa Bay	43	27	13	3	57	153	114
Montreal	45	25	14	6	56	151	148
Buffalo	43	24	15	4	52	140	134
Toronto	44	22	15	7	51	148	140
Boston	45	24	19	2	50	151	146
Florida	44	23	18	3	49	135	142
Ottawa	44	20	19	5	45	141	148

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Carolina	45	28	14	3	59	155	135
N.Y. Islanders	45	25	15	5	55	134	125
Philadelphia	43	22	13	8	52	132	127
Washington	45	23	16	6	52	148	130
Pittsburgh	43	21	13	9	51	140	134
New Jersey	44	22	20	2	46	115	137
N.Y. Rangers	46	20	20	6	46	120	135
Columbus	44	18	19	7	43	132	151

Western Conference

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Colorado	44	33	4	7	73	179	99
Dallas	45	26	10	9	61	157	129
Minnesota	46	26	11	9	61	146	125
Utah	45	22	20	3	47	137	127
Chicago	45	19	19	7	45	129	142
Nashville	44	20	20	4	44	122	146
St. Louis	46	17	21	8	42	114	161
Winnipeg	43	16	22	5	37	126	135

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	43	20	11	12	52	137	134
Edmonton	44	22	16	6	50	149	148
San Jose	44	23	18	3	49	141	155
Seattle	43	20	15	8	48	119	126
Los Angeles	43	18	15	10	46	115	122
Anaheim	45	21	21	3	45	150	168
Calgary	45	19	22	4	42	116	135
Vancouver	44	16	23	5	37	121	158

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.

Friday's games

Washington 5, Chicago 1
Winnipeg 5, Los Angeles 1
Utah 4, St. Louis 2

Saturday's games

Boston 10, N.Y. Rangers 2
Calgary 2, Pittsburgh 1
Colorado 4, Columbus 0
San Jose 5, Dallas 4, OT
Tampa Bay 7, Philadelphia 2
Carolina 3, Seattle 2
Buffalo 5, Anaheim 3
Detroit 4, Montreal 0
Toronto 5, Vancouver 0
Florida 3, Ottawa 2
Chicago 3, Nashville 0
N.Y. Islanders 4, Minnesota 3, OT
Vegas 4, St. Louis 2
Los Angeles 4, Edmonton 3, SO

Sunday's games

New Jersey at Winnipeg
Pittsburgh at Boston
Columbus at Utah
Washington at Nashville
Vegas at San Jose

Monday's games

Carolina at Detroit
Florida at Buffalo
Seattle at N.Y. Rangers
Tampa Bay at Philadelphia
Vancouver at Montreal
New Jersey at Minnesota
Edmonton at Chicago
Dallas at Los Angeles
Toronto at Colorado

Tuesday's games

Calgary at Columbus
Montreal at Washington
Tampa Bay at Pittsburgh
Vancouver at Ottawa
Carolina at St. Louis
Detroit at Boston
Edmonton at Nashville
N.Y. Islanders at Winnipeg
Dallas at Anaheim
Toronto at Utah

Scoring leaders

Through Sunday

	GP	G	A	PTS
Connor McDavid, EDM	45	30	48	78
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	44	36	42	78
Macklin Celebrini, SJ	44	24	46	70
Nikita Kucherov, TB	39	22	43	65
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	45	23	40	63
Mikko Rantanen, DAL	44	18	43	61
David Pastrnak, BOS	40	19	36	55
Martin Necas, COL	44	20	35	55
Jason Robertson, DAL	45	26	28	54
Kyle Connor, WPG	43	21	31	52

COLLEGE BASKETBALL ROUNDUP

Wisconsin hands No. 2 Michigan first loss

Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — John Blackwell had 26 points, Nick Boyd scored 22 and Aleksas Bieliauskas set a career high with 17 points to lead Wisconsin to a 91-88 win over previously unbeaten, second-ranked Michigan on Saturday.

The Badgers (11-5, 3-2 Big Ten) beat their highest-ranked regular-season opponent since a win over No. 2 Michigan in 2019. They beat the AP poll's No. 2 team on the opponent's court for the second time since winning at Maryland on Feb. 13, 2016.

The Wolverines (14-1, 4-1) led by as much as 14 in the first half and lost because they gave up 54 points in the second half.

Michigan had a game-tying basket waved off by basket interference on Aday Mara, who followed up Roddy Gayle Jr.'s missed layup with 35.2 second left. The call stood after video review.

Braeden Carrington made two free throws on the ensuing possession after being fouled on a long, inbounds pass.



LON HORWEDEL/AP

Wisconsin guard Braeden Carrington tries to save the ball from going out of bounds in front of the Michigan bench during the second half in Ann Arbor, Mich., on Saturday. The Badgers won 91-88.

No. 1 Arizona 86, TCU 73: Freshman Koa Peat had 20 points and seven rebounds, Anthony Dell'Orso and Jaden Bradley scored 17 points apiece and the visiting Wildcats beat the Horned Frogs.

Arizona (16-0, 3-0 Big 12) never trailed while extending the school's best start since going 21-0 in 2013-14. The victory came a few hours after No. 2 Michigan's 91-88 loss to Wisconsin reduced the number of undefeated teams to five.

Tanner Toolson scored 20 points for TCU (11-5, 1-2), which dropped to 1-11 against No. 1 teams in a second loss this week to a ranked opponent. The Horned Frogs fell at No. 22 Kansas 104-100 in overtime Tuesday.

No. 3 Iowa State 83, Oklahoma State 71: Joshua Jefferson had 19 points and five assists, and Milan Momcilovic scored 16 of his 18 points in the first half to lead the host Cyclones over the Cowboys.

Iowa State's best start in program history continued as it improved to 16-0 overall and 3-0 in the Big 12. The Cyclones are one of five unbeaten Division I teams and could jump No. 2 Michigan in the AP poll following the previously undefeated Wolverines' loss to Wisconsin earlier in the day.

There were five ties and four lead changes before Dominick Nelson's three-point play put Iowa State ahead in the last three minutes of the first half, and it never trailed again.

No. 4 UConn 72, DePaul 60: Braylon Mullins had 16 points and Alex Karaban scored 15 as the host Huskies extended their winning streak to 12 with a win over the Blue Demons.

Mullins was active on both sides of the court with seven rebounds, three assists, three steals and two blocked shots.

Silas Demary Jr. added 14 points, four assists and three steals for UConn (16-1, 6-0 Big East).

No. 5 Purdue 93, Penn State 85: Braden Smith had 26 points and 14 assists and Oscar Cluff had 23 points to lead the host Boilermakers to a win against the Nittany Lions.

Fletcher Loyer scored 17 and C.J. Cox 16 for Purdue (15-1, 5-0 Big Ten), which won its seventh consecutive game.

Freddie Dilione V scored 25, Melih Tunca scored 14 and Ivan Juric had nine points and 10 rebounds for Penn State (9-7, O-5).

No. 6 Duke 82, No. 24 SMU 75: Isaiah Evans scored 21 points and had a critical 3-pointer with 1:15 left to help the host Blue Devils beat the Mustangs.

Evans slipped to the left side for the 3-pointer off a feed from freshman star Cam Boozer to make it 76-70, a repeat of the play that sent Duke past Florida when he hit a late 3 in December.

Patrick Ngongba II tied his career high in scoring with 17 points for the Blue Devils (15-1, 4-0 Atlantic Coast Conference), while Boozer had 18 points — including muscling up his own interior basket to give Duke a 73-68 lead shortly before Evans' big shot.

No. 7 Houston 77, Baylor 55: Emanuel Sharp scored 17 points to lead five players in double figures for the visiting Cougars, who overcame two extended shooting slumps before halftime in a win over the Bears. Houston set a school record with its 16th consecutive road win.

Joseph Tugler had 12 points and 11 rebounds for his second double-double in a row for the defending Big 12 champion and national runner-up Cougars (15-1, 3-0 Big 12). Isiah Harwell also had 12 points, while true freshmen Chris Cenac had 11 and Kingston Flemings 10.

Houston hasn't lost a true road game since at No. 8 Kansas on Feb. 3, 2024. That road winning streak is the longest active run in the country, with all of them Big 12 games for a league record.

No. 9 BYU 89, Utah 84: Richie Saunders scored 17 of his 24 points in the second half and the visiting Cougars outlasted the Utes.

Robert Wright III had 23 points and AJ Dybantsa added 20 for BYU. Saunders tied his career high with 14 rebounds as the Cougars (15-1, 3-0 Big 12) won their 12th straight game.

No. 10 Nebraska 83, Indiana 77: Jamarques Lawrence scored a career-high 27 points and Rienk Mast added 13 points and six rebounds Saturday to help the visiting Cornhuskers overcome a 16-point second-half deficit and extend major college basketball's longest winning streak to 20 games with a victory over the Hoosiers.

The Big Ten Conference co-leaders became the first Power Four team to start 16-0, opened conference play at 5-0 for the first time since 1965-66 and could soon ascend to their highest ranking in school history. Nebraska reached No. 8 in 1965-66.

No. 11 Vanderbilt 84, LSU 73: Tyler Tanner scored 20 points to lead five Commodores in double figures as host Vanderbilt matched the best start in program history Saturday by beating the Tigers.

The Commodores (16-0, 3-0 Southeastern Conference) equaled the 2007-08 squad's 16-0 start as the best in the 124 years of Vanderbilt basketball. The Commodores came into Saturday one of six undefeated teams this season.

Texas 92, No. 13 Alabama 88: Jordan Pope scored 28 points, Dailyn Swain added 18 and a huge block in the waning seconds, and the visiting Longhorns stunned the Crimson Tide for their first Southeastern Conference win of the season.

The biggest play of the game came when Swain blocked Aden Holloway's drive to the basket in a three-point game in the final minute. Pope got the loose ball and was perfect from the line.

No. 14 Texas Tech 73, Colorado 71: Donovan Atwell scored 17 points, JT Toppin had 16 points and 13 rebounds, and the visiting Red Raiders held off a furious second-half rally by the Buffaloes.

Christian Anderson added 15 points for Texas Tech, making its first trip to Boulder in nearly 16 years. Atwell went 5 of 12 from 3-point distance as the Red Raiders (12-4, 2-1 Big 12 Conference) won a true road game for the first time this season.

Auburn 95, No. 15 Arkansas 73: Keyshawn Hall scored 30 points and the host Tigers shot 57% from the field in routing the Razorbacks.

KeShawn Murphy added 16 points and 10 rebounds for Auburn (10-6, 1-2 Southeastern Conference), and Elyjah Freeman scored 13 off the bench.

No. 17 North Carolina 87, Wake Forest 84: Henri Veesaar had 25 points and nine rebounds, and the host Tar Heels edged the Demon Deacons for their 500th win at the Dean E. Smith Center.

Caleb Wilson added 22 points and 12 rebounds for his 11th double-double, while Jaydon Young contributed a season-high 12 points off the bench for North Carolina (14-2, 2-1 ACC), which bounced back from its first ACC loss last Saturday at SMU.

No. 18 Georgia 75, South Carolina 70: Kanon Catchings scored 20 points, Somto Cyril had 14 of his 18 points in the second half and the visiting Bulldogs rallied from eight points down with less than nine minutes left to defeat the Gamecocks.

Georgia (14-2, 2-1 Southeastern Conference) had trailed by as many as 12 points and was down 62-54 after Eli Ellis' basket with 8:45 remaining. That's when the Bulldogs started a 15-2 run, fueled by reserve Marcus Millender's jumper and 3-pointer.

No. 20 Louisville 75, Boston College 62: Sananda Fru had 19 points and 13 rebounds and missed just one of his nine field-goal attempts to lead the short-handed Cardinals over the visiting Eagles.

Louisville (12-4, 2-2 Atlantic Coast) struggled early without its top two scorers. Freshman Mikel Brown Jr. (16.6 ppg) missed his sixth straight game with a back injury and leading-scorer Ryan Conwell (19.9 ppg) was scratched before tipoff with a back injury.

Florida 91, No. 21 Tennessee 67: Boogie Fland scored a season-high 23, Rueben Chinyelu dominated the paint and the host Gators handled the Volunteers to extend their home winning streak to 15.

Chinyelu finished with 17 points and 16 rebounds for his eighth double-double of the season. He fouled out in the waning seconds and got the loudest ovation of the game.

West Virginia 86, No. 22 Kansas 75: Honor Huff scored 17 of his 23 points in the second half, Brenen Lorient added 18 points and the host Mountaineers used a big second-half run to defeat the Jayhawks.

West Virginia (11-5, 2-1 Big 12) beat Kansas (11-5, 1-2) for the third straight time, improving to 8-4 in games played in Morgantown.

No. 23 Virginia 70, Stanford 55: Thijs De Ridder scored 22 points, Chance Mallory added 13 and the host Cavaliers pulled away to beat the Cardinal for their third straight victory.

Virginia (14-2, 3-1 ACC) led 41-34 at halftime, then used a 9-0 run early in the second half to increase its advantage to 51-37 with 15 minutes to play. The Cavaliers outscored Stanford 29-21 after the break and led by 22 points.

NBA/MLB

NBA ROUNDUP

Wembanyama seals Spurs' win

Associated Press

BOSTON — Victor Wembanyama scored 16 of his 21 points in the second half, including a game-sealing jumper with 19.2 seconds left, and the San Antonio Spurs beat the Boston Celtics 100-95 on Saturday night.

De'Aaron Fox also finished with 21 points for the Spurs and Keldon Johnson added 18 points and 10 rebounds. San Antonio won its second straight after losing two in a row.

Derrick White led Boston with 29 points and Jaylen Brown had 27. The Celtics lost for just the third time in 12 games.

The game was tied at 84 before Baylor Scheierman's corner 3-pointer pushed Boston ahead with just under seven minutes left. White followed with a driving basket before the Spurs went on a 9-2 spree, taking a 93-91 lead on Johnson's 3-pointer with 2:14 left.

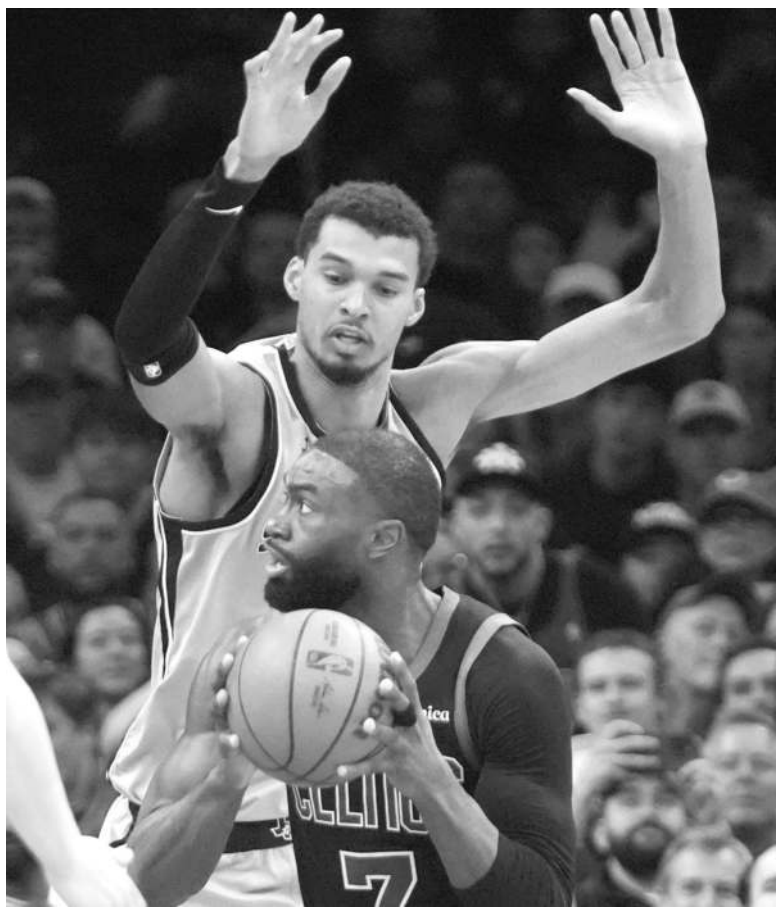
After Brown's layup tied it, Wembanyama's fadeaway jumper pushed San Antonio back in front with 1:33 to go.

Brown was then stripped of the ball near midcourt by Fox, and Julian Champagnie converted a putback of his own miss to make it 97-93 with 41 seconds left.

Wembanyama's left-wing jumper made it 99-95.

Playing his third straight game after missing a pair with a sore knee, Wembanyama didn't score his first points until hitting a 3 from the top midway into the second quarter.

But he got going in the second half, scoring nine consecutive points for San Antonio midway into the third quarter, bringing the Spurs back from a nine-point deficit to tie it on his three-point play.



ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP

San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama defends against Celtics guard Jaylen Brown during the second half on Saturday in Boston.

Cavaliers 146, Timberwolves 134: Donovan Mitchell scored 28 points and Cleveland took control in the second half for a home victory over Minnesota on that snapped the Timberwolves' four-game winning streak.

Mitchell also had four 3-pointers as the Cavaliers had five players score at least 20 points.

Pacers 123, Heat 99: Andrew Nembhard had 29 points and nine assists, Aaron Nesmith added 12 points and nine rebounds before an early exit and host Indiana routed Miami.

Indiana matched its longest winning streak of the season with a rare second straight victory, this time taking an easy route. The Pacers never trailed and held a double-digit lead for most of the game.

Clippers 98, Pistons 92: Kawhi Leonard scored 26 points and John Collins added 25 as visiting Los Angeles rallied to beat shorthanded Detroit.

The Pistons played without Cade Cunningham (wrist), Isaiah Stewart (illness), Tobias Harris (hip) and Jalen Duren (ankle). That left Detroit without its top three scorers, three of their top four rebounders and their top three shot blockers. Cunningham also has 321 assists — the only player who entered Saturday's action with more than 100.

Bulls 125, Mavericks 107: Coby White scored 22 points, Ayo Dosunmu had 20 and host Chicago beat Dallas to snap a three-game losing streak.

The Bulls put seven players in double figures, outscored the Mavericks 38-8 in fast-break points and never trailed.

Hornets 150, Jazz 95: Brandon Miller scored 18 points, LaMelo Ball had 17 and visiting Charlotte built a 47-point lead in the first half of a rout against Utah.

Brice Sensabaugh scored 26 points for the Jazz, who rested leading scorer Lauri Markkanen and were without injured starting center Jusuf Nurkic.

All-Star Bregman agrees to $175M deal with Cubs

BY JAY COHEN
Associated Press

CHICAGO — All-Star third baseman Alex Bregman has agreed to a $175 million, five-year contract with the Chicago Cubs, according to two people familiar with the deal.

The people spoke to The Associated Press on Saturday night on the condition of anonymity because the agreement was pending a physical. The contract includes a no-trade provision allowing Bregman to block deals without his consent.

Bregman, who turns 32 in March, was back on the market for a second straight offseason. He also was pursued by the Cubs before he signed a $120 million, three-year contract with Boston last February, with opt-outs after each of the first two seasons.

He decided to test free agency again after hitting .273 for the Red Sox with 18 homers and 62 RBIs in 114 games, his fewest since 2021. Bregman missed all of June with a quadriceps injury.



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Boston Red Sox Alex Bregman runs to first base on a single against the New York Yankees during Game 1 of an American League wild-card playoff serie. Bregman agreed to a 5 year contract with the Chicago Cubs.

He earned $40 million in his one season with Boston, of which he received $15 million last year. The Red Sox owe him $5 million in January 2028 and $2 million each June from 2035-44.

Bregman played his first nine seasons with the Houston Astros, winning World Series titles in 2017 and 2022 — although the first of those yielded a sign-stealing scandal that earned Bregman and his teammates plenty of scorn.

When the Gold Glove winner joined the Red Sox, they already had All-Star Rafael Devers at third base. Boston asked Devers to move to DH, and the team's relationship with the slugger soured to the point that Devers was traded to San Francisco in June.

Boston ended up leading the major leagues in errors, but the Red Sox did return to the postseason for the first time in four years. Bregman's OPS of .822 was his best since 2019, and he earned All-Star honors for a third time.

Chicago finished second in the NL Central last year with a 92-70 record. The Cubs reached the playoffs for the first time since 2020 before getting eliminated by Milwaukee in a five-game Division Series.

The Cubs used Matt Shaw at third base last season, and the rookie played stellar defense while batting .226 with 13 homers, 44 RBIs and 17 steals in 126 games. Shaw also can play second base, but Nico Hoerner is a two-time Gold Glove winner at the position.

There could be another trade on the horizon to clear up the team's infield situation, or Shaw could move into a super-utility role with Bregman's arrival.

The addition of Bregman was the second major move by the Cubs in a matter of days. They acquired right-hander Edward Cabrera in a trade with the Miami Marlins on Wednesday.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	24	14	.632	—
Boston	24	14	.632	—
Toronto	23	16	.590	1½
Philadelphia	21	15	.583	2
Brooklyn	11	24	.314	11½

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	21	18	.538	—
Miami	20	18	.526	½
Atlanta	19	21	.475	2½
Charlotte	14	25	.359	7
Washington	10	27	.270	10

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	28	10	.737	—
Cleveland	22	18	.550	7
Chicago	18	20	.474	10
Milwaukee	17	21	.447	11
Indiana	8	31	.205	20½

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	27	11	.711	—
Houston	22	13	.629	3½
Memphis	16	22	.421	11
Dallas	14	25	.359	13½
New Orleans	9	31	.225	19

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	32	7	.821	—
Denver	25	13	.658	6½
Minnesota	25	14	.641	7
Portland	19	20	.487	13
Utah	13	25	.342	18½

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	23	13	.639	—
Phoenix	23	15	.605	1
Golden State	21	18	.538	3½
L.A. Clippers	15	23	.395	9
Sacramento	8	30	.211	16

Friday's games

Boston 125, Toronto 117
New Orleans 128, Washington 107
Philadelphia 103, Orlando 91
L.A. Clippers 121, Brooklyn 105
Oklahoma City 117, Memphis 116
Atlanta 110, Denver 87
Phoenix 112, New York 107
Golden State 137, Sacramento 103
Portland 111, Houston 105
Milwaukee 105, L.A. Lakers 101

Saturday's games

Cleveland 146, Minnesota 134
Indiana 123, Miami 99
L.A. Clippers 98, Detroit 92
Chicago 125, Dallas 107
San Antonio 100, Boston 95
Charlotte 150, Utah 95

Sunday's games

New Orleans at Orlando
Brooklyn at Memphis
New York at Portland
Philadelphia at Toronto
Miami at Oklahoma City
San Antonio at Minnesota
Milwaukee at Denver
Washington at Phoenix
Atlanta at Golden State
Houston at Sacramento

Monday's games

Utah at Cleveland
Boston at Indiana
Philadelphia at Toronto
Brooklyn at Dallas
L.A. Lakers at Sacramento
Charlotte at L.A. Clippers

Tuesday's games

Phoenix at Miami
Chicago at Houston
Denver at New Orleans
Minnesota at Milwaukee
San Antonio at Oklahoma City
Atlanta at L.A. Lakers
Portland at Golden State

Wednesday's games

Cleveland at Philadelphia
Toronto at Indiana
Brooklyn at New Orleans
Utah at Chicago
Denver at Dallas
New York at Sacramento
Washington at L.A. Clippers

Scoring leaders

Through Saturday

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Doncic, LAL	29	299	273	967	33.3
Gilg.-Alxndr, OKC	37	403	302	1182	31.9
Maxey, PHI	34	364	188	1043	30.7
Mitchell, CLE	36	374	184	1071	29.8
Jokic, DEN	32	339	203	948	29.6

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Indiana-Miami an improbable title matchup

By Eddie Pells
Associated Press

It looked improbable two months ago.

Two years ago — impossible.

But against the odds, Miami and Indiana have a date in the College Football Playoff final — a first-of-its-kind matchup on Jan. 19 in the second national title game of the expanded-playoff era.

The Hoosiers (15-0), the top-seeded favorite in the 12-team tournament, stomped Oregon 56-22 on Friday night to reach the final. The Hurricanes (13-2), seeded 10th and the last at-large team to make the field, beat Mississippi 31-27 the night before.

Indiana opened as a 7½-point favorite, according to the BetMGM Sportsbook.

The game is set for Hard Rock Stadium in South Florida — the long-ago-chosen venue for a game that happens to be the home of the Hurricanes. Indiana quarterback Fernando Mendoza is a Miami native who grew up less than a mile from the campus in Coral Gables.

"It means a little bit more to me," Mendoza said of the title game doubling as a homecoming.

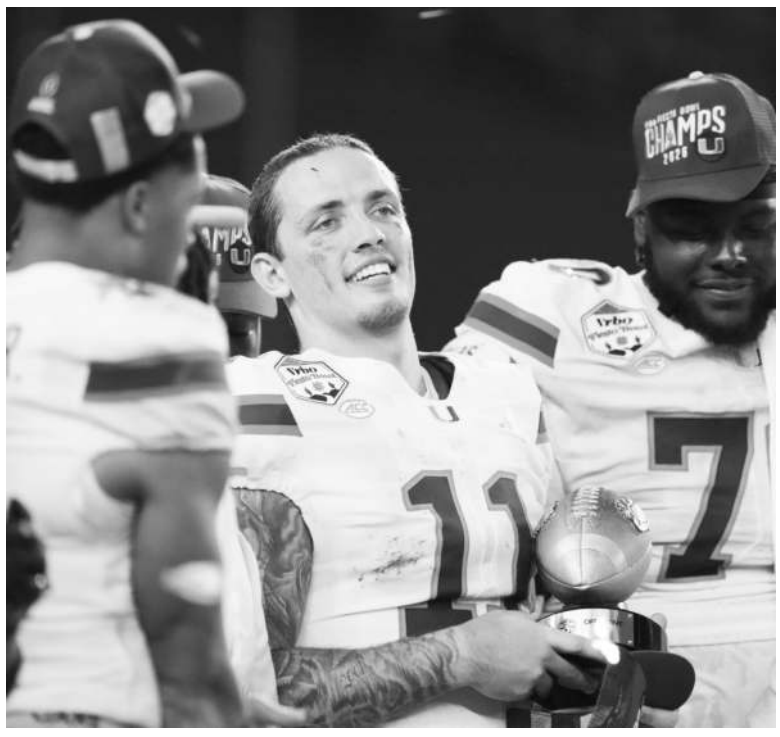
He'll be going against the program known as "The U." Miami won five titles between 1983 and 2001 and earned the reputation as college football's brashest renegade.

A quarter century later, they are one side in a tale of two resurgences.

Miami's was sparked by coach Mario Cristobal, a local boy and former 'Cane himself who came back home four years ago to lead his alma mater to a place it hasn't been in decades.

Among his biggest wins was luring quarterback Carson Beck to spend his final year of eligibility with the 'Canes.

Beck, steadily rounding back to form after an elbow injury that ended his season at Georgia last year, is getting better every week. He has thrown for 15 TDs and two interceptions over a seven-game winning streak dating to Nov. 8.



ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

Miami quarterback Carson Beck, center, has thrown for 15 TDs and two interceptions in a seven-game winning streak.

"He's hungry, he's driven, he's a great human being, and all he wants to do is to see his teammates have success," Cristobal said after Beck threw for 268 yards and ran for the winning touchdown against Ole Miss.

It was the latest step in a long climb from No. 18 in the season's first CFP rankings on Nov. 4 — barely within shouting distance of the bubble — after their second loss of the season.

The Hurricanes haven't lost since.

Hoosiers rise from nowhere to edge of title

Indiana's climb to the top is an even longer haul. This is the program that had a nation-leading 713 losses over 130-plus years heading into the 2024 season. Since then, only two.

The turnaround is thanks to coach Curt Cignetti, who arrived from James Madison and declared: "It's pretty simple. I win. Google me," while explaining his confident tone at a signing day news conference in December 2023 when he landed the core of the class that has taken Indiana from obscurity to the edge of a title.

But Indiana's biggest catch came about a year ago from the transfer portal — the oxygen that drives the current game.

Mendoza, who went to the same high school as Cristobal in Miami, chose Indiana as the place to finish his career. So far, he has won the Heisman Trophy and is all but assured to be a top-five pick in the NFL draft.

"Can't say enough about him," Cignetti said.

One more win and he'll bring a national title and an undefeated season to Indiana, an even 50 years after the Hoosiers' 1975-76 basketball team, led by coach Bob Knight, did the same.

Lots of people could see that one coming. Hard to say the same



MIKE STEWART/AP

Indiana wide receiver Elijah Sarratt, left, celebrates his touchdown reception with quarterback Fernando Mendoza during the second half of the Peach Bowl semifinal on Friday in Atlanta. Mendoza, whoi has breathed new life into the Hoosiers' program, almost went to Miami.

Committee almost kept game from happening

It might seem like ancient history, but Miami almost didn't make the playoffs.

In its first ranking of the season, back in November, the CFP selection committee ranked the Hurricanes eight spots behind a Notre Dame team they beat to start the season.

The history of Miami's slow crawl up the standings, then its leapfrogging past the Irish for the last spot, has been well-documented.

If Miami's trip to the final proved anything, it's how off-base the committee was when it started the Canes at 18, even if they were coming off a loss at SMU, its second of the season.

There is some familiarity in these programs

One of the best games of 2024 was Miami's comeback from 25 points down to beat Cal. The quarterback for the Bears: Mendoza, who threw for 285 yards but got edged out by Cam Ward in a 39-38 loss.

With Ward headed for the NFL, the Hurricanes were a consideration for Mendoza as he sought a new spot to finish out his college career. But he picked Indiana, Beck moved to Miami, and now, they meet.

Enforcement group concerned about third-party NIL offers

By Eddie Pells
Associated Press

A transfer portal spiraling out of control prompted the new regulatory body for college sports to issue a memo to athletic directors Friday night saying it has "serious concerns" about some of the multimillion-dollar contracts being offered to players.

The "reminder" from the College Sports Commission came out about an hour before kickoff of the semifinal between Indiana and Oregon in a College Football Playoff that has shared headlines with news of players signing seven-figure deals to move or, in some cases, stay where they are.

The CSC reminded the ADs that, according to the rules, third-party deals to use players' name, image and likeness "are evaluated at the time of entry in NIL Go, not before, and each deal is evaluated on its own merits."

"Without prejudging any particular deal, the CSC has serious concerns about some of the deal terms being contemplated and the consequences of those deals for the parties involved," the memo said.

Under terms of the House settlement that dictated the rules for NIL payments, schools can share revenue with their players directly from a pool of $20.5 million. Third-party deals, often arranged by businesses created to back the schools, are being used as workarounds this so-called salary cap.

The CSC, through its NIL Go portal, is supposed to evaluate those deals to make sure they are for a valid business purpose and fall within a fair range of compensation for the services being provided.

The CSC did not list examples of unapproved contracts.

One high-profile case involved Washington quarterback Demond Williams Jr., who initially sought to enter the transfer portal and turn his back on a reported deal worth $4 million with the Huskies. Legal threats ensued and Williams changed course and stayed at Washington.

"Making promises of third-party NIL money now and figuring out how to honor those promises later leaves student-athletes vulnerable to deals not being cleared, promises not being able to be kept, and eligibility being placed at risk," the CSC letter said.

The commission listed two rules about contracts it evaluates, some of which have been termed "agency agreement" or "services agreement" in what look like attempts to bypass the rules.

- "The label on the contract does not change the analysis; if an entity is agreeing to pay a student-athlete for their NIL, the agreement must be reported to NIL Go within the reporting deadline."
- "An NIL agreement or payment with an associated entity or individual ... must include direct activation of the student-athlete's NIL rights." This is a reference to the practice of "warehousing" NIL rights by paying first, then deciding how to use them later.

NFL

Stafford's first nod highlights AP All-Pro Team

Garrett, Nacua, Smith-Njigba picked as unanimous choices



MIKE STEWART/AP

Los Angeles Rams quarterback Matthew Stafford, left, and wide receiver Puka Nacua were among the players selected to the AP All-Pro Team. It was Stafford's first selection and Nacua's second.

BY ROB MAADDI
Associated Press

Matthew Stafford beat out Drake Maye, while Myles Garrett, Puka Nacua and Jaxon Smith-Njigba were unanimous choices for the 2025 Associated Press NFL All-Pro Team.

Bijan Robinson is the running back while Christian McCaffrey earned the All-Purpose spot. Ja'Marr Chase is the third wide receiver and tight end Trey McBride got 49 of 50 first-place votes.

Will Anderson Jr. and Micah Parsons joined Garrett at edge rusher. Jeffery Simmons and Zach Allen were selected as interior defensive linemen.

"That's great. Needed that for real," said Parsons, who had surgery to repair a torn ACL and was out of Green Bay's playoff-opening loss to Chicago. "Look forward to trying to get back to that same status this offseason."

The 37-year-old Stafford received 31 first-place votes to Maye's 18 to earn All-Pro honors for the first time in his 17-year career. Josh Allen got the other vote. Stafford was first in the NFL with 4,707 yards and 46 touchdowns. His passer rating of 109.2 was second only to Maye, who finished at 113.5. Maye had 4,394 yards passing and 31 TDs.

Last year, Lamar Jackson was the first-team All-Pro quarterback and Allen was the AP NFL MVP.

"That's amazing," Stafford said when he heard the news. "I did not see that coming. Played a lot of years. A lot of respect for this game. A lot of respect for the other guys who do what I do. It's not an easy thing to do. It means a lot."

Stafford is the second player ever to be named a first-team All-Pro for the first time in his 17th season or later, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. Kicker Gary Anderson also made it for the first time in his 17th season, in 1998. Before Stafford, the longest wait for a quarterback was Fran Tarkenton, who was an All-Pro for the first time in his 15th season, in 1975.

Denver, the AFC's No. 1 seed, had four first-team players and two second. Allen, left tackle Garrett Boles, left guard Quinn Meinerz and special teamer Devon Key made the first team. Cornerback Patrick Surtain II, the reigning NFL Defensive Player of the Year, and safety Talanoa Hufanga made the second team.

Philadephia cornerback Quinyon Mitchell and slot cornerback Cooper DeJean made the roster in their second seasons. Houston's Derek Stingley Jr. got 41 first-place votes to lead the voting at cornerback.

Kansas City center Creed Humphrey, Bears left guard Joe Thuney and Detroit right tackle Penei Sewell along with Meinerz are repeat selections.

Garrett, who broke the NFL's single-season sack record with 23, is a five-time All-Pro. Parsons is a three-time first-teamer and once made the second team.

"That's crazy," Anderson said about joining Garrett and Parsons. "It means a lot. It's such a blessing. I have to give credit to my guys. I wouldn't be here without them."

Baltimore's Kyle Hamilton and Chicago's Kevin Byard are the safeties. The Lions' Jack Campbell and Miami's Jordyn Brooks are the linebackers.

San Francisco fullback Kyle Juszczyk rounds out the offense.

Eighteen players are first-timers, including five on special teams.

Key, Minnesota kicker Will Reichard, Ravens punter Jordan Stout, Buffalo kick returner Ray Davis and Tennessee rookie punt returner Chimere Dike are the first-timers. Jacksonville long snapper Ross Matiscik made it for the second time.

Luck: Texans still seeking first playoff road win in team history

FROM PAGE 24

ery year for nearly two decades. But he hasn't won a playoff game since the 2016 season. With a misstep against Houston and the NFL's top-ranked defense, the volume about Tomlin's job status will no doubt be turned back up, even if the conversation is a non-starter internally for a coach whose next losing season will be his first.

"They've got to find something to try and get after him," Rodgers said. "Mike T.'s probably like me, though. He doesn't (care a whole lot) about any of those comments. (But) we all love him. We want to play for him. We want to win for him."

Tomlin and the Steelers aren't the only ones who will bring some baggage to the final game of wild-card weekend. The Texans (12-5) come to Pittsburgh riding a nine-game winning streak, but also still searching for their road playoff victory in the franchise's 24-year history.

Houston is 5-3 away from NRG Stadium this season, though just one of those wins came against a team that reached the playoffs. Coach DeMeco Ryans thinks his players have "handled themselves pretty well on the road," though the energy and the stakes will be far higher against a Steelers team that hasn't lost a Monday night home game since 1991.

Houston Texans (12-5)
at Pittsburgh Steelers (10-7)
Wild-Card round
AFN-Sports
2:15 a.m. Tuesday CET
10:15 a.m. Tuesday JKT

Then again, considering the hole the Texans were in after a 3-5 start, in a way their postseason started two months ago.

"Our guys know how to win football games," Ryans said. "That doesn't change because we're in the playoffs. We've been in that mode for a while now."

Metcalf returns

Pittsburgh wide receiver DK Metcalf will be back in the lineup after being suspended for the Steelers' last two games of the regular season as punishment for making contact with a fan at Detroit on Dec. 21.

Pittsburgh flirted with giving away the AFC North in his absence, limping through a loss to Cleveland before rebounding in the second half against Baltimore on a night Rodgers finished with a season-high 294 yards passing, the final 26 coming on a toss to a wide-open Calvin Austin III for the go-ahead touchdown.

Metcalf, who took responsibility for his actions but declined to get into specifics, was so excited after Ravens kicker Tyler Loop missed a 44-yard field goal as time expired that he hopped in his car and raced to Acrisure Stadium to join the celebration.

The two-time Pro Bowler, by far the Steelers' most accomplished pass catcher, is thankful for the reprieve.

"My teammates gave me another opportunity to come back, so just big shoutout to them," said Metcalf, whose 850 yards receiving led the team but also marked a career low.

Kickin' it with Ka'imi

Acrisure Stadium is one of the trickier places to kick in the NFL, as Loop found out last week when his potential game-winning kick sailed wide right on the final play.

Houston isn't worried about the conditions affecting Ka'imi Fairbairn, who earned his second Pro Bowl nod after tying an NFL record by making 44 field goals during the regular season.

"I have all the faith in the world in Ka'imi no matter where we are," Ryans said.

Fairbairn could come up big this week for a team that has a habit of playing in tight games. Seven of the Texans' nine victories during their current winning streak have been decided by eight points or less.

"I tell our guys: 'You take for granted when you have such a great kicker who is able to secure you points, even if things don't go your way in the red zone,'" Ryans said. "You want to score touchdowns every single drive, but it doesn't happen. You get in range, and you got a sure-footed kicker who can make those points."

Houston's fearsome duo

The key to the Texans' stellar defensive performance this season is clear to Ryans.

"For us and how we play defense all year, it's really predicated on how we get after the passer," he said.

Leading that charge against Rodgers on Monday will be defensive ends Danielle Hunter and Will Anderson Jr., who have combined for 27 sacks.

Tomlin raved about the duo.

"Will Anderson and Hunter are simply the most dynamic edge rush tandem in the National Football League in 2025," he said.

And he knows what they'll have to avoid if they want to give the 42-year-old Rodgers time to operate.

"We better stay out of a bunch of one-dimensional passing circumstances, because if we're in those circumstances we're going to be in trouble," Tomlin said. "That's just the reality of it."

NFL PLAYOFFS

Williams rallies Bears from 18 points down for win over Packers

BY ANDREW SELIGMAN
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Caleb Williams dropped back, pump-faked and found DJ Moore wide open down the sideline for the go-ahead touchdown.

His latest clutch throw propelled the Chicago Bears to yet another improbable comeback win and kept their breakout season going for at least another round of the postseason.

Williams came through in his playoff debut, throwing a 25-yard touchdown pass to Moore with 1:43 remaining, and Chicago rallied from an 18-point deficit to beat the rival Green Bay Packers 31-27 in a wild-card game Saturday night.

The Bears trailed 21-3 at halftime and 21-6 through three quarters, only to outscore Green Bay 25-6 in the fourth on the way to their first playoff win in 15 years.

"True belief," Williams said. "Belief. That's all you need. You got belief in the coaches that they're gonna call the right play at the right time. You got belief in the players on the field that you're gonna make the right play at the right time."

After Williams connected with Moore to give Chicago its first lead since it was 3-0, Jordan Love led the Packers into Bears territory. But on third down at the 28, he dropped the snap, scrambled and heaved a pass to the end zone with no time left. Jaquan Brisker deflected the ball, setting off a wild celebration — and a curt handshake between Chicago coach Ben Johnson and Green Bay coach Matt LaFleur.

The Bears will host a divisional-round game next weekend against either Philadelphia or San Francisco.

Chicago pulled within 21-16 on D'Andre Swift's 5-yard run early in the fourth quarter. The Packers responded, with rookie Matthew Golden breaking three tackles and leapfrogging a fourth defender on a 23-yard catch-and-run for his first career touchdown, making it 27-16. Brandon McManus missed the extra point wide left.

The Bears went 76 yards, with Williams throwing an 8-yard touchdown pass to Olamide Zaccheaus and hitting rookie Colston Loveland for the 2-point conversion to make it 27-24 with 4:18 remaining.

Green Bay then drove to the Chicago 21, only to come away with nothing when McManus missed wide right on a 44-yard field goal attempt. The Bears responded with the go-ahead touchdown drive and hung on for their first playoff win since the 2010 team beat Seattle in the divisional round at Soldier Field. They had lost three straight in the postseason, starting with a loss to Aaron Rodgers and the Packers in the NFC championship game that season.

Chicago envisioned nights like this when it drafted Williams No. 1 overall last year, and when it hired Johnson in the offseason. Williams delivered after a shaky start, throwing for 361 yards and the two late touchdowns. He completed 24 of 48 passes and was intercepted twice.

Loveland caught eight passes for a career-high 137 yards for the Bears, who had closed the regular season with tight losses to the 49ers and Detroit.

Green Bay dropped its final five games. That certainly was not what the Packers envisioned when they acquired star pass rusher Micah Parsons from Dallas in late August and sent expectations soaring. The two-time All-Pro suffered a season-ending knee injury in a Week 15 loss at Denver, and the defense struggled without him.

Love threw for 323 yards and four touchdowns after missing the final two regular-season games. He hadn't played since a helmet-to-helmet hit from Chicago's Austin Booker in the second quarter of a Week 16 loss at Soldier Field.

Romeo Doubs, Christian Watson and Jayden Reed each had TD catches in the first half. Ty'Ron Hopper stopped a threat in the third quarter when he intercepted a backpedaling Williams near the goal line.



NAM HUH/AP

In his playoff debut, Chicago quarterback Caleb Williams threw for 361 yards and two touchdowns in the Bears' 31-27 win Saturday.



ERIK VERDUZCO/AP

Los Angeles quarterback Matthew Stafford threw for 304 yards and three touchdowns, leading the Rams to a late rally as they beat the Carolina Panthers 34-31 on Saturday in Charlotte, N.C.

Stafford's late TD throw lifts Rams past Panthers

BY STEVE REED
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Puka Nacua stepped into the huddle with the Los Angeles Rams trailing by four with 2:38 left, the home crowd roaring and his team's season on the line.

He never thought twice about losing.

"Never a doubt — No. 9 is with us," Nacau said with a wide smile in reference to the team's 37-year-old All-Pro quarterback, Matthew Stafford.

Stafford calmly led the Rams 71 yards by completing 6 of 7 passes — the only incompletion coming on a drop by Davante Adams — before capping it with a perfectly-placed 19-yard touchdown pass to Colby Parkinson with 38 seconds left, lifting Los Angeles to a dramatic, come-from-behind 34-31 win over the Carolina Panthers in the opening game of the NFL playoffs Saturday.

Stafford finished 24 of 42 for 304 yards with three touchdown passes and an interception, while Nacua had 10 receptions for 111 yards and two total touchdowns as the Rams (13-5), who were 10½-point favorites, advanced to the divisional round.

Stafford surpassed Kurt Warner for the most postseason passing yards and completions in franchise history. He credited his calmness to his 17 years of NFL experience.

"I have been in that spot a lot in my life — and I love that spot," Stafford said. "I would rather be me having to go out there with our offense and do it then watch from the sideline. You can make it stressful or you can make it calm and collected, and think the latter is what we were today."

Bryce Young threw for 264 yards and a touchdown and ran for another score for the Panthers (8-10), who finished their second season under coach Dave Canales by losing four of their final five games.

Jalen Coker had career highs with nine receptions for 134 yards with a touchdown and Chuba Hubbard ran for 46 yards and two touchdowns as Carolina lost in its first playoff appearance since the 2017 season.

"There is such a mix of emotions right now in the locker room, from guys being proud of what we accomplished and where we got, to being sick about the opportunity that was right there in front of us," Canales said. "And that is going to sting."

The Panthers, who beat LA 31-28 on this same field six weeks ago, fell behind 14-0 early but stormed back to take a 24-20 lead on Hubbard's second touchdown of the run game early in the fourth quarter.

Stafford, who was selected as an All-Pro earlier in the day, led the Rams back down on the field and found Kyren Williams for a 13-yard touchdown to regain the lead.

Los Angeles appeared to be in charge after getting a stop on defense, giving Stafford the ball back.

But a holding penalty put the Rams behind the sticks and forced a punt, which Isaiah Simmons blocked to set Carolina up the LA 30.

Four plays later, Young found Coker in the left corner of the end zone for a 7-yard touchdown to give the Panthers a 31-27 lead with 2:39 left, sending the crowd into a frenzy. But the celebrations quickly turned to silence after Stafford gave the Rams the lead again.

Carolina's last attempt to move into field-goal range ended when Jimmy Horn dropped a fourth-down pass from Young. The Panthers were hoping the return of former quarterback Cam Newton to Bank of America Stadium to hit the "Keep Pounding" drum before the game would give them a little extra mojo early, but things didn't start well.

After Los Angeles' defense came up with a stop on fourth down at midfield on Carolina's opening drive, Stafford quickly moved the offense downfield and found Nacua for a 14-yard touchdown over the middle for a 7-0 lead.

Nacua made it 14-0 on a 5-yard run following Young's interception.

The Panthers cut the lead 17-14 at halftime after a 1-yard touchdown run by Hubbard and a 16-yard scramble by Young, the second-longest TD run of his career.

The Rams had a chance to build on the lead, but Nacau dropped a potential third TD on a pass down the right sideline from Stafford just before halftime.

SPORTS

Unbeaten no more

Wisconsin ends Michigan's perfect season ›› College basketball, Page 19

NFL PLAYOFFS

Hoping for better luck

Tomlin, Steelers look to end prolonged run of postseason futility

By Will Graves
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Mike Tomlin has no interest in shucking the weight of the Pittsburgh Steelers' recent playoff failures onto the shoulders of his players heading into Monday night's opening-round visit by Houston.

"I'm certainly not going to unpack my bags on the collective's bed, if you will," said Tomlin, who will take a six-game postseason losing streak onto the Acrisure Stadium turf to face the streaking Texans.

Pittsburgh (10-7) seems intent on carrying it anyway, its future Hall of Fame quarterback perhaps most of all.

Aaron Rodgers, in the late stages of his 21st and perhaps final season, is well-versed in how things work. He wasn't immune to the noise that reached a hard-to-avoid level in late November when fans chanted for Tomlin's firing near the end of a blowout loss to Buffalo that left the Steelers at 6-6.

"A lot of you probably in this group, either publicly or privately, were talking about Mike T. getting axed," Rodgers said. "So it feels good to shut all those comments down. It's a clean slate now. Anybody can make a run."

That includes, Rodgers believes, his own erratic team. Pittsburgh responded from the messy end against the Bills by winning four of five to earn its first AFC North title in five years, the final win coming in a heart-stopper in Week 18 against Baltimore that ended up costing longtime Ravens coach John Harbaugh his job.

Tomlin survived, as he has ev-

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Gene J. Puskar/AP

Steelers head coach Mike Tomlin walks off the field and waves toward fans after beating the Baltimore Ravens on Jan. 4 in Pittsburgh.

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