

## GAO: Navy not reporting all ship fires

By ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

Many fires that happen aboard Navy ships while they're in port aren't documented, leaving the service without an accurate idea of how widespread the problem is, a government watchdog agency found.

The reasons sailors aren't noting fires vary, but a culture that discourages full compliance with reporting requirements was a factor, the Government Accountability Office said in a report released Thursday.

That underreporting "has given the Navy a false sense of security with fire incidents," service officials told the GAO in the report.

The deficiency has been ongoing for years, auditors said. For example, a 2019 Navy study revealed that about 92% of all fire incidents that occurred in port in 2017 and 2018 weren't listed in the Navy's reporting system.

The findings were among several shortcomings cited in the GAO's performance audit, which evaluated in-port fires on ships typically undergoing maintenance.

The November 2021 to April 2023 study also found that although the Navy was making improvements in collecting fire incident data, it had not analyzed the broad impact of fires on its operations. A single agency should be reviewing data on those impacts, the GAO recommended.

The Navy also doesn't have a system for consistently collecting, analyzing and imparting lessons it should be learning from fighting fires, the report said. This leaves the service vulnerable to repeating costly mistakes and makes another disaster like the loss of the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard in July 2020 possible, the GAO said.

Bonhomme Richard was among 15 major fires on ships between May 2008 and July 2020 that caused an estimated \$4 billion in damages, according to the report.

"As a result, the Navy has lost lessons learned over time — such as steps that a ship can take to improve fire safety," the GAO said in its report.

The agency recommended that the Navy

create a system that would consistently collect, analyze and share fire safety lessons.

The report also found that ships and commands were using different ways to report fires and not regularly using a required Naval Safety Command system. Near-miss events that could have resulted in injuries weren't being reported, according to the study.

But auditors found that the Naval Safety Command system was cumbersome and slow, making it difficult to file reports. Those problems also were contributing to underreporting, the GAO said.

The agency also pointed to poor safety training of maintenance personnel, who may not know when to report a fire, as well as inconsistencies in standards determining which fires should be reported. Nor has the service evaluated whether its firefighting training is effective, auditors said.

The report recommended that the Navy establish training goals and performance measures along with a process for monitoring and reporting related progress.

## US Embassy staff quickly evacuated from Sudan

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — U.S. special operations forces carried out a precarious evacuation of the American Embassy in warring Sudan on Sunday, sweeping in and out of the capital, Khartoum, with helicopters on the ground for less than an hour. No shots were fired and no major casualties were reported.

With the last U.S. employee of the embassy out, Washington shuttered the U.S. mission in Khartoum indefinitely. Left behind were thousands of private American citizens remaining in the east African country.

U.S. officials said it would be too dangerous to carry out a broader evacuation mission. Battles between two rival Sudanese commanders entered their

ninth day Sunday, forcing continued closing of the main international airport and leaving roads out of the country in control of armed men. Fighting has killed more than 400 people.

In a statement thanking the troops, President Joe Biden said he was receiving regular reports from his team on efforts to assist remaining Americans in Sudan "to the extent possible."

He also called for the end to "unconscionable" violence there.

About 100 U.S. troops in three MH-47 helicopters carried out the operation. They airlifted all of roughly 70 remaining American employees from a landing zone at the embassy to an undisclosed location in Ethiopia. Ethiopia also provided overflight

and refueling support, said Molly Phee, assistant secretary of state for African affairs.

Biden said Djibouti, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia also assisted with the evacuation.

"I am proud of the extraordinary commitment of our Embassy staff, who performed their duties with courage and professionalism and embodied America's friendship and connection with the people of Sudan," Biden said in a statement. "I am grateful for the unmatched skill of our service members who successfully brought them to safety."

U.S. Africa Command and Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, were in contact with both warring factions before and during the operation

to ensure that U.S. forces would have safe passage to conduct the evacuation. However, John Bass, a U.S. undersecretary of state, denied claims by one faction, Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Security Forces, that it assisted in the U.S. evacuation.

"They cooperated to the extent that they did not fire on our service members in the course of the operation," Bass said.

Biden had ordered American troops to evacuate embassy personnel after receiving a recommendation from his national security team, with no end in sight to the fighting.

"This tragic violence in Sudan has already cost the lives of hundreds of innocent civilians. It's unconscionable and it must stop," Biden said.

# USFK: N. Korea laid out missile plan in '21

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

North Korea's recent ballistic missile tests are part of a 2-year-old military blueprint and a reaction to U.S. and South Korea military exercises, the commander of U.S. Forces Korea told a congressional panel Thursday.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "laid out a trajectory" and "he is moving on it," Gen. Paul LaCamera said in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in Washington, D.C.

Kim unveiled a plan during North Korea's ruling Workers' Party Congress in 2021 that included development of strategic nuclear weapons and a nuclear-powered submarine.

"We must further strengthen the nuclear war deterrent while doing our best to build up the most powerful military strength," Kim said at the time, according to the Korean Central News Agency.

North Korea has fired 12 ballistic missiles in nine separate days of testing so far this year. The communist regime last fired what it claimed was a solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile on April 12.

South Korea's military estimated that the missile, launched near Pyongyang, flew 620 miles and splashed into the East Sea, or Sea of Japan. The launch prompted the Japanese government to warn residents in Hokkaido

to seek shelter and halt trains for roughly 25 minutes.

Kim is also reacting to the largest-ever military drills by Washington and Seoul, conducted last month throughout South Korea and in the air and waters that surround it, LaCamera told the committee. North Korea continued to fire missiles while the exercises were underway.

"The challenge is when we telegraph the timing of it — it gives [Kim] an opportunity to plan to use that as a reaction to us," he added.

USFK regularly declines to publicize details of its military drills due to security concerns.

During the Warrior Shield exercise, around 1,200 U.S. and South Korean soldiers conducted a four-day field exercise at six separate sites that included live-fire by artillery and tanks, mine removal, aerial assaults and squad-level infantry maneuvers.

Naval and amphibious forces carried out the two-week Ssangyong exercise with the arrival of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz and its strike group in Busan. U.S. sailors and Marines equipped with Marine Corps V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft and amphibious assault vehicles conducted sea and landing operations with their South Korean counterparts on the peninsula's southern coast.

In addition, U.S. troops held the Freedom Shield exercise that for the first time tested

the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense anti-missile system's remote launcher capability in an operational setting on March 24. The remote launcher function allows the Army's THAAD system to fire missile interceptors remotely and increases the user's defensive range.

North Korea's missile launches also prompted air power demonstrations over and around the Korean Peninsula. On April 14, one day after Pyongyang last fired a ballistic missile, at least two Air Force B-52H Stratofortress bombers and four F-16 Fighting Falcons flew alongside four South Korean air force F-35As over South Korean airspace, according to a press release and photos of the flight from U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

The U.S. and South Korean military describe their drills as defensive in nature, but North Korea's official propaganda arm calls them a "declaration of war" and rehearsal for an invasion.

Security around the region is "unstable" due to "the reckless and provocative military maneuvers of the U.S. and its allies," North Korean Foreign Affairs Minister Choe Son Hui said in a statement in KCNA on Friday.

"The U.S. and the West have no right to say this or that about [North Korea's] position as a nuclear weapons state, and it will never change no matter what they say," he said.

## N. Korea calls its nukes 'stark reality'

*Associated Press*

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea's foreign minister on Friday called the Group of Seven wealthy democracies a "tool for ensuring the U.S. hegemony" as she lambasted the group's recent call for the North's denuclearization.

The top diplomats from G-7 nations, who met recently in Japan, had jointly condemned the North's recent ballistic missile tests and reiterated their commitment to the goal of North Korea's complete abandonment of its nuclear weapons. Their communique was prepared as a template for leaders at the G-7 summit next month in Hiroshima.

North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui said her country will take unspecified "strong counteraction" if G-7 countries — the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Italy and the Eu-

ropean Union — show "any behavioral attempt" to infringe upon the fundamental interests of North Korea.

"G7, a closed group of a handful of egoistic countries, does not represent the just international community but serves as a political tool for ensuring the U.S. hegemony," Choe said in a statement carried by North Korean state media.

The G-7 foreign ministers in their communique Tuesday said North Korea will never have the status of a nuclear-weapons state under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Choe also said the North's position as a nuclear weapons state "will remain as an undeniable and stark reality." She said North Korea is free from any of the treaty's obligations because it withdrew from the treaty 20 years ago.

## Japan ready to down any satellite debris

*Associated Press*

TOKYO — Japan's defense chief on Saturday ordered troops to activate missile interceptors and get ready to shoot down fragments from a North Korean satellite that may fall on the Japanese territory.

North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un said last week that its first military spy satellite will be launched at an unspecified date.

North Korea has test-fired about 100 missiles since early last year, saying it was responding to joint U.S.-South Korean military drills that it calls an invasion rehearsal.

Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada instructed troops to ready PAC-3 surface-to-air missiles in southwestern Japan, including Okinawa and nearby islands, in an area believed to be under a flight path of a North Korean rocket that will carry the satellite.

# Air National Guard to play role in massive NATO drill

By JOHN VANDIVER

*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — Preparations are underway for Air Defender 23, billed as the largest demonstration of allied air power in Europe in NATO's 74-year history.

The multinational exercise, which has been in the works for four years and will include warplanes from across the alliance, is slated to kick off in June across Europe, NATO's Allied Air Command said in a statement Thursday.

"Our goals for this largest deployment exercise since the foundation of NATO are comprehensive," said Lt. Gen. Ingo Gerhartz, chief of the German air force, in the statement. "We want to demonstrate the agility and swiftness of air forces as a first responder and showcase NATO air power."

The exercise is being led by the German military, which is coordinating with more than 20 other countries for a drill that includes some 220 planes and 10,000 personnel. The participants will simulate maneuvers against a would-be aggressor.

The U.S. contribution will include about 100 U.S. Air National Guard aircraft that will fly into Europe. The training will revolve around an Article 5 scenario, which is NATO's bedrock policy that when one member comes under attack, a collective response from the alliance is required.

Planes will operate from numerous German sites as well as the U.S. Air Force's Spangdahlem Air Base, and locations in the

Netherlands and the Czech Republic. Maneuvers also will feature so-called "out-and-back" missions into the Baltic states and Romania, according to NATO's Allied Air Command, headquartered at Ramstein Air Base.

For NATO and U.S. forces in Europe, expanding the scope of war games has been a priority over the last several years as allies focus on being able to carry out large-scale combat operations designed around defending alliance turf.

Russia's initial intervention in Ukraine in 2014 was the spark for the stepped-up efforts, which have intensified in the aftermath of Moscow's full-scale invasion of the country in February 2022.

While Russia wasn't mentioned in NATO's announcement about the exercise, Air Defender will serve as an opportunity to showcase the alliance's extensive array of fighter jets, drones and transport aircraft. The high-profile display is likely intended as a signal of strength to Russia, which has struggled to gain air superiority over Ukraine throughout the course of the war there.

The countries taking part in Air Defender are the following: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia, Spain, Czech Republic, Turkey, Hungary, the United Kingdom and the United States.

# One of last two USS Arizona survivors dies

*Associated Press*

HONOLULU — Ken Potts, one of the last two remaining survivors of the USS Arizona battleship, which sank during the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, has died. He was 102.

Howard Kenton Potts died Friday at the home in Provo, Utah, that he shared with his wife of 66 years, according to Randy Stratton, whose late father, Donald Stratton, was Potts' Arizona shipmate and close friend.

Stratton said Potts "had all his marbles" but lately was having a hard time getting out of bed. When Stratton spoke to Potts on his birthday, April 15, he was happy to have made it to 102.

"But he knew that his body was kind of shutting down on him, and he was just hoping that he could get better but (it) turned out not," Stratton said.

Potts was born and raised in Honey Bend, Ill., and enlisted in the Navy in 1939. He was working as a crane operator shuttling supplies to the Arizona the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, when the Pearl Harbor attack happened, according to a 2021 article by the Utah National Guard.

In a 2020 oral history interview with the American Veterans Center, Potts said a loudspeaker ordered sailors back to their ships so he got on a boat.

"When I got back to Pearl Harbor, the whole harbor was afire," he said in the interview. "The oil had leaked out and caught on fire and was burning."

Dozens of ships either sank, capsized or were damaged in the bombing of the Hawaii naval base, which catapulted the U.S. into World War II.

Sailors were tossed or forced to jump into the oily muck, and Potts and his fellow sailors pulled some to safety in their boat.

The Arizona sank just nine minutes after being bombed, and its 1,177 dead account for nearly half the servicemen killed in the attack. Today the battleship still sits where it sank eight decades ago, with more than 900 dead entombed inside.

Potts recalled decades later that some people were still giving orders in the midst of the attack but there was also a lot of chaos. He carried his memories of the attack over the course of his long life.

Stratton noted that the only remaining survivor from the Arizona is now Lou Conter, who is 101 and living in California.

# Marine Corps signs deal for drone that brings bullets to far-off troops

By J.P. LAWRENCE

*Stars and Stripes*

The Marine Corps wants an aerial cargo drone capable of delivering ammunition to the battlefield from up to 100 miles away.

The service awarded a contract to the tech company Leidos to develop a prototype drone that can fly 300 to 600 pounds of supplies to its forces, the Reston, Va.-based company said in a statement last week.

The goal is for a single "SeaOnyx" prototype to be made within 18 months and perform a logistics distribution mission, the statement said.

Phenix Solutions, a McMinnville, Ore.-based company, also is part of the SeaOnyx project, the Leidos statement said Tuesday.

The contract value is slightly more than \$14 million, a statement from the Navy's Unmanned Aviation and Strike Weapons program said Friday.

The deal follows other efforts from the military to produce cargo drones for the battlefield.

The Marine Corps flew the first combat resupply mission using a robot helicopter in 2011, Wired reported at the time.



# Court preserves access to abortion pill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Friday preserved women's access to a drug used in the most common method of abortion, rejecting lower-court restrictions while a lawsuit continues.

The justices granted emergency requests from the Biden administration and New York-based Danco Laboratories, maker of the drug mifepristone. They are appealing a lower court ruling that would roll back Food and Drug Administration approval of mifepristone.

The drug has been approved for use in the U.S. since 2000 and more than 5 million people have used it. Mifepristone is used in combination with a second drug, misoprostol, in more than half of all abortions in the U.S.

The court's action Friday almost certainly will leave access to mifepristone unchanged at least into next year, as appeals play out, including a potential appeal to the high court. The next stop for the case is at

the New Orleans-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit, which has set arguments in the case for May 17.

Two of the nine justices — Samuel Alito, the author of last year's decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, and Clarence Thomas — voted to allow restrictions to take effect, and Alito issued a four-page dissent. No other justices commented on the court's one-paragraph order, and the court did not release a full vote breakdown.

President Joe Biden praised the high court for keeping mifepristone available while the court fight continues.

"The stakes could not be higher for women across America. I will continue to fight politically-driven attacks on women's health. But let's be clear — the American people must continue to use their vote as their voice, and elect a Congress who will pass a law restoring the protections of *Roe v. Wade*," Biden said in a statement.

Alliance Defending Freedom, representing abortion opponents challenging the

FDA's approval of mifepristone, downplayed the court's action.

"As is common practice, the Supreme Court has decided to maintain the status quo that existed prior to our lawsuit while our challenge to the FDA's illegal approval of chemical abortion drugs and its removal of critical safeguards for those drugs moves forward," ADF lawyer Erik Baptist said in a statement.

The justices weighed arguments that allowing restrictions contained in lower-court rulings to take effect would severely disrupt the availability of mifepristone.

The Supreme Court had initially said it would decide by Wednesday whether the restrictions could take effect while the case continues. A one-sentence order signed by Alito on Wednesday gave the justices two additional days, without explanation.

The challenge to mifepristone is the first abortion controversy to reach the nation's highest court since its conservative majority overturned *Roe v. Wade* 10 months ago.

## Troop moves spark talk of Ukrainian counteroffensive

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian military forces have successfully established positions on the eastern side of the Dnieper River, according to a new analysis, giving rise to speculation Sunday that the advances could be an early sign of Kyiv's long-awaited spring counteroffensive.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, reported late Saturday that geolocated footage from pro-Kremlin military bloggers indicated that Ukrainian troops had established a foothold near the town of Oleshky, along with "stable supply lines" to their positions.

Analysts widely believe that if Ukraine

goes ahead with a spring counteroffensive, a major goal would be to break through the land corridor between Russia and the annexed Crimean Peninsula, which would necessitate crossing the Dnieper River in the country's south.

Responding to Ukrainian media reports proclaiming that the establishment of such positions indicated the counteroffensive had begun, Natalia Humeniuk, the spokeswoman for Ukraine's Operational Command South, called for patience. While neither confirming nor denying the report, she said that details of military operations in the Dnieper delta couldn't be disclosed for operational and security reasons.

Speaking on Ukrainian television, Humeniuk added that it was "very difficult work" when "it's necessary to overcome an obstacle such as the Dnieper, when the front line passes through a wide and powerful river."

The Kremlin-installed head of the Kherson region denied on Sunday that Ukrainian forces have established a foothold on the east bank of the Dnieper.

In a Telegram update, Vladimir Saldo said that Russian forces are "in full control" of the area, and speculated that the images referenced by the ISW may have depicted Ukrainian sabotage units that "managed to take a selfie" across the Dnieper before being forced back.

## Explorers find sunken WWII ship that held POWs

Associated Press

SYDNEY — A team of explorers announced it found a sunken Japanese ship that was transporting Allied prisoners of war when it was torpedoed off the coast of the Philippines in 1942, resulting in Australia's largest maritime wartime loss with a total of 1,080 lives.

The wreck of the Montevideo Maru was located after a 12-day search at a depth of over 13,120 feet off Luzon island in the South China Sea, using an autonomous underwater vehicle with in-built sonar.

There will be no efforts to remove artifacts or human remains out of respect for the fam-

ilies of those who died, said a statement Saturday from the Sydney-based Silentworld Foundation, a not-for-profit dedicated to maritime archaeology and history. It took part in the mission together with Dutch deep-sea survey specialists Fugro and Australia's Defense Department.

"The extraordinary effort behind this discovery speaks for the enduring truth of Australia's solemn national promise to always remember and honor those who served our country," Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said. "This is the heart and the spirit of *Lest We Forget*."

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Family wants probe after death in infested cell

**GA** ATLANTA — The family of a man who died in a bedbug-infested cell in a Georgia jail's psychiatric wing is calling for the U.S. Justice Department to investigate the facility.

Lashawn Thompson, 35, died in September, three months after being booked into the Fulton County Jail in Atlanta. Prominent civil rights attorney Ben Crump, who represents Thompson's family, called for those responsible for his death to be held accountable.

Photos of the cell and of Thompson's face and body covered in insects sparked outrage when they spread on social media after his family's local attorney, Michael Harper, released them. The medical examiner's report lists Thompson's cause of death as "undetermined" but notes a "severe bed bug infestation."

### Early morning blaze engulfs high school

**ID** POCATELLO — An early morning fire engulfed much of a large high school in southern Idaho.

The Pocatello Fire Department said Friday's fire at Highland High School was reported just before 4 a.m., and when firefighters arrived they found flames showing above the building amid heavy snowfall.

The Pocatello School District canceled classes and fire crews worked to contain the flames and save what they could. The flames have reportedly caused part of the roof and some walls to collapse as well as some explo-

sions inside the school, but there were no reports of injuries in the first three hours of fighting the fire, the Idaho State Journal reported.

Authorities have not yet said what might have caused the fire in one of the largest high schools in Idaho.

### Woman also charged with hate crime in bus attack

**IN** BLOOMINGTON — A southern Indiana woman now faces a federal hate crime charge in addition to attempted murder in the stabbing of an Indiana University student of Chinese descent on a public bus.

Billie R. Davis, 56, of Bloomington, was indicted by a federal grand jury in Evansville on a charge of willfully causing injuries to the victim due to her race and national origin, the Justice Department said. Her lawyer said she's mentally ill.

Davis, who is white, is accused of repeatedly stabbing the 18-year-old woman with a folding knife on Jan. 11 as the victim, from Carmel, Ind., waited to get off a bus in downtown Bloomington.

Citing court records, WRTV-TV reported that Davis told police she stabbed the woman multiple times in the head with a folding knife, because it "would be one less person to blow up our country."

### Driver killed amid rock-throwing spree

**CO** GOLDEN — A 20-year-old Colorado woman died after she was struck by a rock that investigators say was thrown through her windshield by someone who did

the same thing to several other vehicles over a two-hour span.

Alexa Bartell, of Arvada, was talking on the phone with a friend while driving when she was hit by the rock, said Karlyn Tilley, a spokeswoman for the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office.

After the call went silent, the friend tracked Bartell's location with a phone app and found the woman dead in her car, which had crashed into a field. Tilley said Bartell was killed by the rock and not the crash.

Investigators believe the attack is linked to several other similar incidents reported in the area northwest of Denver late Wednesday night and early Thursday morning. Tilley said the rocks were either thrown from a vehicle or the roadway. Each was between 4 and 6 inches in diameter and weighed 3 to 5 pounds.

### Former wrestler charged in welfare fraud case

**MS** JACKSON — Companies run by a former professional wrestler received "sham contracts" in Mississippi and misspent millions of dollars of welfare money that was supposed to help some of the neediest people in the U.S., according to a new federal indictment.

After the indictment of former wrestler Ted "Teddy" DiBiase Jr., 40, of Madison, was unsealed, he pleaded not guilty.

The indictment is the latest development in a sprawling Mississippi corruption case involving wealthy and well-connected people receiving contracts from the state Department of Human Services from 2016 to 2019.

DiBiase was a WWE wrestler in the 2000s and 2010s. The indictment accuses him and co-conspirators, including former Mississippi Department of Human Services director John Davis, of fraudulently obtaining federal money and using it for their own benefit.

### Judge won't recuse himself in Catholic case

**LA** NEW ORLEANS — A federal judge refused Friday to recuse himself from the New Orleans Roman Catholic bankruptcy after an Associated Press report that he donated tens of thousands of dollars to archdiocese charities and consistently ruled in favor of the church in the contentious case involving nearly 500 clergy sex abuse victims.

U.S. District Judge Greg Guidry told attorneys in the high-profile case that a panel of federal judges he asked to review the possible conflict determined no "reasonable person" would question his impartiality despite his contributions and longstanding ties to the archdiocese.

Guidry read from the opinion of the Washington-based Committee on Codes of Conduct, which noted that none of the charities he donated to "has been or is an actual party" in the bankruptcy and that Guidry's eight years on the board of the archdiocese's charitable arm ended more than a decade before the bankruptcy.

"Based upon that advice and based upon my certainty that I can be fair and impartial, I have decided not to recuse myself," said Guidry, who oversees the bankruptcy in an appellate role.

— From wire reports

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# Lakers top Grizzlies for 2-1 series lead

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — LeBron James and the Lakers came out in front of the franchise's first sellout playoff crowd in a decade and immediately produced one of the greatest first quarters in team history.

Los Angeles leaped to a 35-9 lead amidst one raucous ovation after another from fans eager for a return to the Lakers' tradition of playoff success.

After all those first-quarter fireworks, not even Ja Morant could carry the Memphis Grizzlies all the way back to prevent the Lakers from seizing Game 3.

Anthony Davis had 31 points and 17 rebounds, James finished with 25 points after Dillon Brooks was ejected for striking him in the groin, and Los Angeles survived Morant's 24-point fourth quarter to beat the

Grizzlies 111-101 Saturday night for a 2-1 lead in their first-round playoff series.

Rui Hachimura scored 16 points in another strong effort off the bench for the seventh-seeded Lakers, who came out impressively in this long-awaited return to a true playoff atmosphere for a franchise with 17 titles. Los Angeles tied an NBA record by taking a 26-point lead into the second quarter, and Memphis couldn't get closer than 13 points until the final two minutes.

Brooks was ejected 17 seconds into the second half after the Memphis agitator struck James in the groin while guarding him near midcourt. While the top scorer in NBA history rolled on the court in pain, officials tossed Brooks after a brief video review — and James

stood up and led the Lakers to victory.

"I didn't make a statement," James said. "I've been doing this too long. I'm not making any statements. We had the opportunity to come home and play well on our home floor, and we did that. No statement was made. We just wanted to play well, and we got a win. I don't need to make statements."

Game 4 is Monday night in Los Angeles.

Morant scored 45 points in his return from a one-game absence with a sore right hand, even scoring 22 consecutive points for the Grizzlies during his stunning fourth quarter while they attempted to rally from an early 29-point deficit. He wore a black brace and padding on his hand and appeared tentative early, but eventually

found his usual unguardable form.

Morant also had 13 assists and nine rebounds, but second-seeded Memphis couldn't fully recover after the lowest-scoring first quarter in franchise history.

"I think we won by double digits in the last three quarters, so obviously that first quarter pretty much hurt us," Morant said. "(I) feel pretty good, man. Obviously some stuff you've just got to play through and tolerate. ... In that fourth quarter, I was just trying to win the game. Got it going pretty good, making shots, and just couldn't get it over that hump."

With the Lakers' sellout crowd booing his every move, Brooks had just seven points on 3-for-13 shooting before his ejection.

## Butler helps Heat top Giannis-less Bucks; Oladipo out

Associated Press

MIAMI — Jimmy Butler took a hard fall. Victor Oladipo took a harder one. And the Miami Heat still found a way to knock off the Milwaukee Bucks, reclaiming the lead in their Eastern Conference playoff series.

Butler scored 30 points before leaving with a sore glute, leading the eighth-seeded Heat past the top-seeded Bucks 121-99 on Saturday night for a 2-1 lead in their first-round playoff series.

But what should have been a celebratory postgame — big win, series lead, halfway to upsetting the NBA's top overall seed — was anything but, after Oladipo left in the fourth quarter after a knee injury that had the Heat fearing very bad news.

"I feel probably like how everybody feels," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "It was a great win, but when you see a player go down like that — especially a player like Vic who's gone

through so much in the last three years ... that's definitely not a good feeling."

Oladipo learned Sunday after an MRI that he tore his left patellar tendon, the team announced. The injury is season-ending and calls his availability for the start of next season into some doubt as well.

Injuries have now become the biggest story in this series. The Bucks were without two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo for a second consecutive game because of a bruised lower back, an injury he suffered in Game 1. The Heat were already without Tyler Herro because of a broken right hand, also from Game 1.

Khris Middleton scored 23 points, Jrue Holiday added 19 and Grayson Allen scored 14 for Milwaukee.

Game 4 is in Miami on Monday night, when the Heat will aim for a 3-1 lead.

**76ers 96, Nets 88:** Tobias

Harris had 25 points and 12 rebounds, and visiting Philadelphia overcame the absence of Joel Embiid to beat Brooklyn, completing a sweep that made them the first team to reach the second round of the playoffs.

James Harden added 17 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds for the third-seeded 76ers, who will wait for the winner of the series between the Boston Celtics and Atlanta Hawks. The defending Eastern Conference champion Celtics have a 2-1 lead.

The 76ers hope Embiid will be recovered from his sprained right knee in time for the start of the next series.

Tyrese Maxey finished a strong series with 16 points and Paul Reed added 10 points and 15 rebounds after replacing Embiid in the starting lineup.

Spencer Dinwiddie scored 20 points and Nic Claxton had 19 points and 12 rebounds for the Nets.

**Suns 112, Clippers 100:** Kevin Durant scored 31 points, Devin Booker added 30 and visiting Phoenix defeated Los Angeles without Kawhi Leonard to take a commanding 3-1 lead in the first-round playoff series.

The Clippers, who lost Game 3 by five points, again made a strong run with Leonard watching from the bench. He has missed two straight games with a sprained right knee. They're also without Paul George, who hasn't played since March 21 because of the same injury as Leonard.

Russell Westbrook carried the Clippers in the fourth quarter. He had 14 points, including nine in a row when they twice pulled within two points.

Westbrook finished with a game-high 37 points. Norman Powell added 14 points and Terance Mann had 13 off the bench.

Game 5 is Tuesday in Phoenix.



# Avs spoil Kraken's home playoff debut

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Nathan MacKinnon, Mikko Rantanen and Cale Makar weren't interested in being side characters to a historic night for the Seattle Kraken.

The trio took center stage and reclaimed home-ice advantage for the defending Stanley Cup champions.

MacKinnon and Rantanen scored in a 1:28 span early in the third period, and the Colorado Avalanche spoiled Seattle's first home playoff game with a 6-4 victory Saturday night in Game 3 of the first-round series.

Tied at 3 after a wild first 40 minutes, the defending Stanley Cup champions relied on their best players to take a 2-1 lead in the series.

"I think scoring in the playoffs on the road is awesome. It's a cool feeling, no matter how you get

them. They feel great," MacKinnon said. "A lot of guys scored some big goals tonight."

MacKinnon scored his first two goals of the playoffs, Makar added his first of this postseason after winning the Conn Smythe Trophy as the MVP of last year's championship run, and Rantanen scored for the second straight game, capping the victory with an empty-net goal with 2:14 left.

MacKinnon scored on a breakaway late in the first period to give Colorado a 2-1 lead. His second goal was even better, taking advantage of Seattle's fourth line getting stuck on the ice and ripping a shot past Seattle goalie Philipp Grubauer for a 5-3 lead.

MacKinnon's second goal came moments after Rantanen finished off a 3-on-2 rush and silenced fans in a frenzy after Seattle's second-period rally.

"He was the difference-maker that we've come to expect in big games, in must win games, in critical games, regular season and playoffs," Colorado coach Jared Bednar said about MacKinnon. "He played with great speed, great competitiveness, physical, and then when he got the puck, he was really tough to check."

J.T. Compher scored short-handed in the first period and Makar's goal at 4:33 of the second period gave the Avalanche a 3-1 lead. Makar's goal came off a clean faceoff win by Colorado and left Seattle's fans murmuring uncomfortably instead of the deafening cheers in the opening moments of the game.

Alexandar Georgiev made 26 saves for the Avalanche. Game 4 is on Monday night in Seattle.

"We had a couple of lapses in the game, but overall I feel like we

played to our strengths," Makar said.

Jaden Schwartz became the answer to a trivia question when he gave Seattle a 1-0 lead tipping Justin Schultz's shot past Georgiev just 6:08 into the game. Jamie Oleksiak and Matty Beniers then scored 19 seconds apart during a wild sequence in the second period to pull Seattle even.

Oleksiak's seventh career playoff goal was a nifty backhanded finish after stickhandling through several Colorado defenders and Beniers scored the first of what Seattle hopes is many playoff goals at 13:10 of the second period.

"We knew it was gonna be a long series. We knew it wasn't going to be easy," Schwartz said. "So we've got a lot of faith in our game, lot of belief in each other. Just got to regroup."

## Maple Leafs, Devils, Golden Knights all win in overtime

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Down a goal and outplayed for much of the night, the Toronto Maple Leafs found a way to reclaim home-ice advantage in their first-round playoff series against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Ryan O'Reilly scored with a minute left in regulation, then won a faceoff that set up Morgan Reilly's goal at 19:15 of overtime that gave the Maple Leafs a 4-3 victory Saturday night in Game 3 of the best-of-seven matchup.

Ilya Samsonov stopped 36 shots for Toronto. He had eight saves in the extra period, one on Lightning star Nikita Kucherov from point-blank range, to give the Maple Leafs a 2-1 series lead. Game 4 is Monday night at Amalie Arena.

Toronto, which hasn't won a playoff series since 2004, also regained home-ice advantage in the series after watching it slip away during a lopsided loss at home in Game 1.

The Maple Leafs are 0 for 7 in their last seven postseason matchups, including first-round exits each of the past six years.

"It wasn't the best game by us, but we did a good job of sticking with it," O'Reilly said.

Maple Leafs coach Sheldon Keefe also liked the way his team stayed the course,

noting that in past years "we've lost this game."

Auston Matthews and Noel Acciari scored early for Toronto, which forced overtime when O'Reilly slipped a shot past Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevski with 60 seconds remaining in the third period.

Play was interrupted for several minutes early in the third period while officials sortied through a wild sequence that began with Reilly pushing Tampa Bay's Brayden Point into the boards as the two battled for a loose puck.

The hit touched off several skirmishes, one of them involving Tampa Bay's Steven Stamkos and Matthews.

Stamkos and Matthews were sent to the penalty box for fighting, as were Kucherov and O'Reilly.

Reilly was initially assessed a five-minute penalty for boarding, but following a review, the officials ruled there was no penalty for the shove on Point, who skated to the locker room bent over in pain before returning in the closing minutes of regulation.

**Devils 2, Rangers 1 (OT):** Dougie Hamilton scored 11:36 into overtime and visiting New Jersey beat New York to cut its series deficit to 2-1.

Jack Hughes scored and Jesper Bratt had two assists for New Jersey, which lost the first two games at home by 5-1 scores. Akira Schmid got the start in goal in place of Vitek Vanecek and finished with 35 saves.

Chris Kreider scored for New York. Igor Shesterkin stopped 26 shots.

Game 4 is Monday night at Madison Square Garden.

**Golden Knights 5, Jets 4 (OT):** Michael Amadio scored at 3:40 of the second overtime to lift visiting Vegas past Winnipeg for a 2-1 series lead.

Dylan Samberg's clearing attempt for Winnipeg from the back boards deflected off Vegas forward Ivan Barbashev's skate to Amadio for a one-timer that went into the top right corner — going between goalie Connor Hellebuyck's head and glove.

Adam Lowry tied it for Winnipeg with 21.9 seconds left in regulation, beating goalie Laurent Brossoit of a rebound to cap a three-goal, third-period comeback. Nino Niederreiter, Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor also scored for the Jets.

Jack Eichel had two power-play goals and added an assist. Chandler Stephenson had a goal and an assist, and Keegan Kolesar also scored. Brossoit made 30 saves.

# Rays set home run record in walk-off win

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Randy Arozarena homered in the first inning as Tampa Bay set a major league record by going deep in each of its first 21 games, then hit a 10th-inning single for his fourth RBI that gave the Rays a 4-3 win over the Chicago White Sox on Saturday.

Tampa Bay is 18-3, the best start in the major leagues since the 2003 New York Yankees. The Rays are 12-0 at Tropicana Field, the best start at home since the 2009 Los Angeles Dodgers won their first 13 games.

Arozarena hit a two-run homer in first off Dylan Cease, and the Rays surpassed the previous mark of homers in the first 20 games by the 2019 Seattle Mariners. Arozarena's RBI single against Kenya Middleton put Tampa Bay ahead 3-2 in the fifth, but pinch-hitter Gavin Sheets tied the score with a eighth-inning homer against Jason Adam.

"Randy's been so clutch for us all year," Rays starter Shane Bieber said. "It's been fun to watch."

With the score 3-3, in the 10th Jimmy Lambert (1-1) intentionally walked Wander Franco with one out and a runner on second, and Arozarena lined a first-pitch single to right for his team-high 22nd RBI.

"We liked the match up," White Sox manager Pedro Grifol said. "We liked the Lambert, Arozarena match up. We were good with it."

**Marlins 6-3, Guardians 1-2:** Garrett Hampson drove in two runs and Luis Arraez and Bryan De La Cruz each had three hits in the second game and visiting Miami completed a double-header sweep of Cleveland.

Braxton Garrett (1-0) worked 5  $\frac{2}{3}$  innings, allowing one run, and A.J. Puk pitched a dicey ninth for his fourth save. Puk hit Andrés Giménez with a pitch and walked Gabriel Arias with no outs before retiring the next

three batters.

Shane Bieber (1-1) matched his career high in the first game with four walks and allowed three runs in 5  $\frac{1}{3}$  innings, the 2020 AL Cy Young Award winner's shortest start this season.

Andrew Nardi (2-1) retired all four batters he faced in relief of spot starter Devin Smeltzer.

**Rangers 18, Athletics 3:** Adolis García hit three home runs and then two late doubles as host Texas routed Oakland.

All three of García's homers were two-run shots, and his first double also scored two to give him a career-high eight RBIs to go with his first three-homer game.

Andrew Heaney's streak of 10 scoreless innings over two starts ended with Oakland's two-run first. Heaney (2-1) answered with five scoreless innings, allowing five hits in six innings.

**Brewers 5, Red Sox 4:** Rowdy Tellez continued to torment Boston, homering for the second straight game and helping host Milwaukee win.

Yu Chang and Rafael Devers hit two-run homers for the Red Sox. Boston brought the tying run to scoring position in each of the last two innings, but couldn't break through.

Milwaukee's Wade Miley (3-1) struck out three and allowed four hits, two runs and one walk in five innings to lower his ERA to 1.96.

**Pirates 2, Reds 1:** Ke'Bryan Hayes hit a key triple and Rich Hill got through five innings for the win as streaking Pittsburgh extended its winning streak to six games by beating visiting Cincinnati.

Bryan Reynolds had two doubles and a sacrifice fly, while Hayes and Tucupita Marcano added two hits each for the Pirates.

Hill (2-2) won his second consecutive start. The 43-year-old lefty pitched one-run ball and struck out seven, though he gave up six hits and three walks.

**Orioles 5, Tigers 1:** Kyle Gibson tied a career high with 11 strikeouts in the latest impressive outing by a Baltimore starter, and Ramón Urías hit a three-run double to lift the host Orioles to their fifth straight victory.

Gibson (4-0) allowed two hits in 6  $\frac{1}{3}$  innings. He walked two in the first to load the bases with one out, then retired the next 11 Detroit hitters. Zach McKinstry hit a solo homer off him in the seventh for the first run allowed by a Baltimore starter since the first inning last Sunday.

Adley Rutschman hit a two-out RBI single, and after a single by Ryan Mountcastle and a walk to Anthony Santander, Urías delivered his big hit with the bases loaded.

**Astros 6, Braves 3:** Yordan Álvarez and Kyle Tucker each hit a two-run homer in the sixth inning off Kyle Wright, and visiting Houston earned its third straight victory.

Astros starter Framber Valdez (2-2) gave up Sean Murphy's fifth homer, a 424-foot shot to left field, to make it 1-0 in the fourth. He also allowed Ozzie Albies' fifth long ball, a two-run shot that went 421 feet to left and trimmed Houston's lead to 4-3 in the sixth.

Wright (0-1) gave up seven hits, one walk and four runs — three earned — in five innings. He led the majors with 21 wins last year, but started the season on the injured list with right shoulder inflammation.

**Giants 7, Mets 4:** Logan Webb (1-4) stopped his four-game losing streak, allowing two runs and five hits in seven innings with eight strikeouts and one walk for host San Francisco.

San Francisco is batting just .205 against left-handers but reached Mets lefty David Peterson (1-3) for seven runs in five innings. David Villar hit a sacrifice fly for the game's first run and Brandon Crawford hit a three-run homer that snapped

an 0-for-14 slide.

**Yankees 3, Blue Jays 2:** Pinch-hitter DJ LeMahieu hit a walk-off bases-loaded single in the ninth to give host New York the win after Anthony Rizzo doubled off Jordan Romano (2-1).

The Yankees' Gerrit Cole allowed four hits in 5  $\frac{2}{3}$  innings with four strikeouts and two walks, extending his scoreless streak to 20  $\frac{1}{3}$  innings and lowering his ERA to 0.79. Toronto's Alek Manoah gave up two hits in seven innings with five strikeouts and one walk, dropping his ERA from 6.98 to 5.13.

**Dodgers 9, Cubs 4:** Max Muncy hit a two-run homer in the seventh against Mark Leiter Jr. and a solo drive in the ninth off Brad Boxberger, tying the New York Mets' Pete Alonso for the major league lead with 10 home runs as visiting Los Angeles topped Chicago.

**Padres 5, Diamondbacks 3:** Fernando Tatis Jr. connected for his first homer since 2021, Ha-Seong Kim had a crucial two run single and visiting San Diego rallied to defeat Arizona.

**Nationals 10, Twins 4:** Joey Meneses tied a career high with four hits, and CJ Abrams hit his first home run since Washington acquired him last summer.

**Phillies 4, Rockies 3:** Nick Castellanos hit his first two home runs this season, both off Kyle Freeland (2-2), for his 10th multi-homer game. Cristian Pache also went deep for the first time this year as host Philadelphia won.

**Royals 11, Angels 8:** MJ Melendez was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded as visiting Kansas City scored five times in the ninth inning to rally past Los Angeles and snap a six-game losing streak.

**Mariners 5, Cardinals 4:** Teoscar Hernández homered for the second consecutive night, and Eugenio Suárez broke a seventh-inning tie with a two-run single to lead host Seattle over St. Louis.