

## US, China resume talks on air, sea safety

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — For the first time in nearly two years, U.S. and Chinese defense officials met this week to discuss unsafe and aggressive ship and aircraft incidents between the two militaries in the Pacific region, restarting a dialogue that Beijing abruptly ended in a dispute involving Taiwan.

The meeting, which was Wednesday and Thursday in Hawaii, came as Washington and Beijing work to expand communications between the two world powers and ease escalating tensions. Military-to-military contact had stalled in August 2022, when Beijing suspended all such communication after then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, the self-governing island China claims as its own.

The thaw in relations between the two countries got a kick-start last November when U.S. President Joe Biden and China's President Xi Jinping

met on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco. About a month later, Gen. CQ Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke with his Chinese counterpart in a video call — in the first senior military-to-military contact since the Pelosi visit.

Other top-level talks have continued, including a call earlier this week between Biden and Xi, and a visit to China by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen that began on Thursday.

The resurgence of senior military leader discussions includes the relaunch of routine engagements, including the China-U.S. Military Maritime Consultative Agreement meeting, which was this week in Hawaii, and the bilateral Defense Policy Coordination Talks, which were held earlier this year.

The maritime meeting is focused on unsafe and unprofessional incidents involving the

U.S. and Chinese militaries while the coordination talks focus on broader policy issues. This week's meeting included personnel from Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S. Pacific Air Forces and the People's Liberation Army. This is the first time since 2019 that the meeting was held in person; there was a virtual meeting in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to officials, this week's meeting included about 18 senior military and civilian officials from each side.

The U.S. and China delegations each brought up several specific incidents over the past several years that they believe raised operational safety concerns, and the group discussed them.

"Open, direct, and clear communications with the PLA — and with all other military forces in the region — is of utmost importance to avoid accidents and miscommunication," said

the head of the U.S. delegation, Army Col. Ian Francis, in a statement.

Francis, who is the director for Northeast Asia policy at U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, said the U.S. is encouraged that the People's Liberation Army is honoring its commitments to the maritime agreement.

Two U.S. officials said that they've seen a reduction in the number of unsafe incidents by Chinese military aircraft and ships over the past several months.

They said the meeting was a way to make sure that the trend continues and that overall safety is increased in the region for troops who operate there. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the meetings are private.

The U.S. has consistently viewed military communications with China as critical to avoiding any missteps between their armed forces and to maintaining a peaceful Indo-Pacific.

## Israel dismisses 2 officers over deadly drone strikes

*Associated Press*

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military said Friday that it dismissed two officers and reprimanded three others for their roles in drone strikes in Gaza that killed seven aid workers on a food-delivery mission, saying they had mishandled critical information and violated the army's rules of engagement.

The findings of a retired general's investigation into the Monday killings marked an embarrassing admission by Israel, which faces growing accusations from key allies, in-

cluding the U.S., of not doing enough to protect Gaza's civilians from its war with Hamas.

The findings are likely to bolster widespread skepticism over the Israeli military's decision-making.

Palestinians, aid groups and human rights organizations have repeatedly accused Israeli forces of firing recklessly at civilians throughout the conflict — a charge Israel denies.

Meanwhile, Israel has promised to open more border crossings into Gaza and increase the flow of aid into the territory — but U.S. Secretary of State An-

tony Blinken said Friday that the measures may not be enough to meet the Biden administration's demands for dramatic improvements in humanitarian conditions.

If fully implemented, the measures could increase assistance to Palestinians. But the U.S. also wants to see tangible steps to better protect civilians and aid workers, he said.

Those killed Monday were three British citizens, a Polish citizen, an Australian, a Canadian American dual citizen and a Palestinian, all of whom worked for World Central

Kitchen, the international charity founded by celebrity chef José Andrés.

The investigation faulted officers for failing to read messages alerting troops that cars, not aid trucks, would carry workers from the charity away from the warehouse where aid was distributed. As a result, the cars that were targeted were misidentified as transporting militants.

The army also faulted a major who identified the strike target and a colonel who approved the strike for acting with insufficient information.

# Ukraine: Russian warplanes destroyed

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian officials claimed Friday they used a barrage of drones to destroy at least six military aircraft and badly damage eight others at an airfield in Russia's Rostov region. Russian defense officials, however, claimed they intercepted 44 Ukrainian drones and that only a power substation was damaged.

The Associated Press could not independently verify either side's claims.

The assault appeared to be one of Kyiv's biggest air attacks in the war, coming as its forces stepped up their assaults on Russian soil. Russia has also escalated attacks on civilian infrastructure, including Ukraine's power plants, in recent

weeks, signaling a new and potentially dangerous phase in the conflict as both sides struggle to achieve significant advances on the ground.

The overnight attack targeted a military airfield near Morozovsk in Russia and was conducted by Ukraine's Security Service in cooperation with the army, Ukrainian intelligence officials told the AP.

They said around 20 members of the airfield's personnel were killed or injured. Morozovsk airfield was used by Russian bombers that have been launching guided aerial bombs at Ukraine's cities and frontline positions, the officials said.

They spoke on condition of anonymity.

If true, the attack would be

among Ukraine's most successful cross-border strikes. Last October, Ukraine claimed it destroyed nine Russian helicopters at two airfields in Russian-occupied regions using long-range ballistic missiles donated by the United States.

Last August, Ukrainian media, citing unidentified intelligence sources, claimed that drone attacks hit parked Russian bomber aircraft at air bases deep inside Russia.

In a conflicting version of events, Russia's Defense Ministry said a total of 44 drones were "intercepted and destroyed" in the Morozovsky district, more than 60 miles from the border. The attack damaged a power substation, Rostov Gov. Vasily Golubev said, adding that eight

people near the airfield were injured.

Usually well-informed Russian military bloggers confirmed an attempted attack by Ukrainian drones on a military air base in Morozovsk but claimed there were no casualties at the base and no damage to warplanes.

The Russian defense ministry said nine more drones were intercepted over the border regions of Kursk, Belgorod, Krasnodar and the nearby Saratov region, bringing the total of attack drones deployed by Ukraine overnight to 53.

Drone warfare is a key feature of the war, which has extended into a third year since Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor.

## Cleanup begins as major spring storm moves on

*Associated Press*

Snow showers lingered Friday as the cleanup began following a major spring storm that brought heavy snow, rain and high winds to the Northeast, left hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses without power, and contributed to at least two deaths.

Well over a foot of snow, accompanied by gusty winds, was reported in many parts of northern New England by Thursday evening. Some areas got closer to 2 feet.

"This is a lot of heavy, wet snow," said Shawn Black, manager of the Wolfeboro Inn in New Hampshire, which got over a foot. "And the wind is out of the northeast, so it's really not nice in a sense of temperature-wise, especially when the speed gets up to gusts of 55 mph. While I was out on

the snowblower I could really feel my forehead just go numb."

Stowe, Vt., reported 20 inches of snow, the National Weather Service office in Burlington reported. The agency's office in Gray, Maine, said it had 17.4 inches. The Concord Municipal Airport in New Hampshire was on the lower end, at 7.4 inches.

Low pressure meandering through the Gulf of Maine will mean continued snow showers over northern New York, New England, and the spine of the Appalachians in West Virginia from Friday into Saturday, the weather service said.

The snow has created the potential for avalanches in the back country of the Green Mountains in Vermont and the high peaks of the northern Adirondacks in New York, the weather service said.

## Employers in US added a robust 303K jobs in March

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON—America's employers delivered another outpouring of jobs in March, adding a sizzling 303,000 workers to their payrolls and bolstering hopes that the economy can vanquish inflation without succumbing to a recession in the face of high interest rates.

Last month's job growth was up from a revised 270,000 in February and was far above the 200,000 economists had forecast. By any measure, it amounted to a strong month of hiring, and it reflected the economy's ability to withstand the pressure of high borrowing costs resulting from the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes. With the nation's consumers continuing to spend, many employers have kept hiring to meet steady customer demand.

Friday's report from the La-

bor Department also showed that the unemployment rate dipped to 3.8% from 3.9% in February. That rate has now come in below 4% for 26 straight months.

The economy is sure to weigh on Americans' minds as the November presidential vote nears and they assess President Joe Biden's re-election bid. Many people still feel squeezed by the inflation surge that erupted in the spring of 2021. Eleven rate hikes by the Fed have helped send inflation tumbling from its peak over the past year and a half. But average prices are still about 18% higher than they were in February 2021.

The Fed's policymakers are tracking the state of the economy, the job market and inflation to determine when to begin cutting interest rates from their multi-decade highs.

# Ex-Trump officials oppose his 2024 bid

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Former Defense Secretary Mark Esper has called him a “threat to democracy.” Former national security adviser John Bolton has declared him “unfit to be president.” And former Vice President Mike Pence has declined to endorse him, citing “profound differences.”

As Donald Trump seeks the presidency for a third time, he is being vigorously opposed by a vocal contingent of former officials who are stridently warning against his return to power and offering dire predictions for the country and the rule of law if his campaign succeeds.

It’s a striking chorus of detractors, one without precedent in the modern era, coming from those who witnessed first-hand his conduct in office and the turmoil that followed.

Sarah Matthews, a former Trump aide who testified before the House Jan. 6 committee and is among those warning about the threat he poses, said it’s “mind-boggling” how many members of his senior staff have denounced him.

“These are folks who saw him up close and personal and saw his leadership style,” Matthews said.

“The American people should listen to what these folks are saying because it should be alarming that the people that Trump hired to work for him a first term are saying that he’s unfit to serve for a second term.”

Yet the critics remain a distinct minority. Republican lawmakers and officials across the party have endorsed Trump’s bid — some begrudgingly, others with fervor and enthusiasm. Many aides and Cabinet officials who served under Trump are on board for another term, something Trump’s campaign is quick to highlight.

“The majority of the people who served in President Trump’s cabinet and in his administration, like the majority of Americans, have overwhelmingly endorsed his candidacy to beat Crooked Joe Biden and take back the White House,” said Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung.

Still, the Biden campaign has trumpeted the criticism of former Trump officials in statements and social media posts, hoping to convince at least some Republican voters — including those who backed other candidates during the GOP primary — that they cannot support his

candidacy.

“Those who worked with Donald Trump at the most senior levels of his administration believe he is too dangerous, too selfish and too extreme to ever lead our country again — we agree,” said Biden campaign spokesman Ammar Moussa.

In many ways, the schism among former Trump officials is an extension of his time in the White House. Friction was constant as Trump’s demands ran into resistance from some officials and aides who refused requests that they found misguided, unrealistic and, at times, flatly illegal. Firings were frequent. Many quit.

Staff upheaval was particularly intense in the chaotic weeks after the 2020 election as Trump worked to overturn his election loss to Biden. Trump summoned supporters to Washington on Jan. 6, 2021, as his falsehoods about a stolen election became the rallying cry for supporters who violently breached the U.S. Capitol. Many people serving in the administration quit in protest, including Matthews.

Trump’s attempt to remain in office included a bitter pressure campaign against Pence, who as vice president was tasked with

presiding over the count of the Electoral College ballots on Jan. 6. Trump was adamant that Pence should prevent Biden from becoming president, something he had no power to do. Pence had to flee the Senate chamber on Jan. 6 as rioters stormed the building to chants of “Hang Mike Pence!”

Pence recently said he “cannot in good conscience” endorse Trump because of Jan. 6 and other issues, despite being proud of what they achieved together.

And Pence is not alone.

Esper, who was fired by Trump days after the 2020 election, clashed with the then-president over several issues, including Trump’s push to deploy military troops to respond to civil unrest after the killing of George Floyd by police in 2020.

In a recent interview with HBO’s “Real Time With Bill Maher,” Esper repeated a warning that Trump is “a threat to democracy” and added, “I think there’s a lot to be concerned about.”

“There’s no way I’ll vote for Trump, but every day that Trump does something crazy, the door to voting for Biden opens a little bit more, and that’s where I’m at,” Esper said.

## Judge refuses to dismiss Trump’s documents case

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge refused Thursday to throw out the classified documents prosecution of Donald Trump, turning aside defense arguments that a decades-old law permitted the former president to retain the sensitive records after he left office.

Lawyers for Trump had cited a 1978 statute known as the Presidential Records Act in demanding that the case, one of four against the presumptive Republican nominee, be tossed out before trial. That law re-

quires presidents upon leaving office to turn over presidential records to the federal government but permits them to retain purely personal papers.

Trump’s lawyers have said he designated the records as personal, making them his own property, and that that decision cannot be second-guessed in court.

Prosecutors on special counsel Jack Smith’s team countered that the law had no relevance to a case concerning the mishandling of classified documents and said the files Trump is al-

leged to have hoarded at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Fla., were unquestionably presidential records, not personal ones, and therefore had to be returned to the government when Trump left the White House.

U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, who heard arguments on the dispute last month, permitted the case to proceed in a three-page order that rejected the Trump team claims.

She wrote that the indictment makes “no reference to the Presidential Records Act,” nor

does it “rely on that statute for purposes of stating an offense.” The act, she said, “does not provide a pre-trial basis to dismiss” the case.

The ruling is the second time in three weeks that Cannon has rebuffed defense efforts to derail the case.

It represents a modest win for Smith’s team, which has been trying to push the prosecution forward to trial this year but has also expressed mounting frustration, including earlier this week, with Cannon’s oversight of the case.



# Iran's Revolutionary Guard vows retaliation for strike

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's commander of the powerful Revolutionary Guard General Hossein Salami said Friday "no threat will go unanswered" in retaliation for the airstrike widely attributed to Israel that destroyed the Iranian Consulate in Syria's capital and killed seven of the guard's members, including two top generals.

This came after thousands marched chanting "death to Israel" and "death to America" during the slain officers' funeral procession in the capital.

The marches in the capital, Tehran, along with protests in other Iranian cities, took place at a time of heightened concerns about possible retribution by Iran for Monday's strike that killed 12 people, including four Syrian citizens and a member of the Lebanese militant Hezbollah group, according to officials.

The protesters in the capital headed to Tehran University where Salami gave his speech before the weekly prayers.

"We warn you, no enemy act against our holy system will go unanswered," he said speaking on a podium showing a big placard with the Arabic phrase "Flood of the Free" emblazoned on it.

"The collapse of (the Zionist regime) is very possible and close, with God's grace," Salami said, adding that the U.S. has become "wildly hated by the world, especially in Muslim-dominated countries" for supporting Israel. He said that Israel's current survival depended on U.S. support.

Salami also said that "resistance groups in Gaza are surrounded by Israel ... and weapons can't be sent to them," referring to the Israel-Hamas war that broke out on Oct. 7.

He claimed that "messages sent from inside Gaza show that they have no problem to continue enduring (the war)."

The public funeral coincided with Iran's annual rally Quds Day, or Jerusalem Day, a traditional show of support for the

Palestinians that has been held on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iranian leaders have reiterated promises of revenge. On Wednesday, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said the attack "will not remain without answer."

By attacking an Iranian diplomatic station, Israel's apparent escalation has raised fears that the devastating six-month war against Hamas could spill over into the entire Mideast region and beyond.

Israel faces increasing isolation as international criticism mounts over its killing of six foreign aid workers this week who were trying to deliver desperately needed food in Gaza.

Iran does not recognize Israel and views it as its archenemy. It also supports militant groups, Hamas and Hezbollah.

Clashes between Israel and Hezbollah along the Israeli-Lebanese border have increased since the war in Gaza began.

## Yellen calls out China over trade

Associated Press

GUANGZHOU, China — U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen called on China on Friday to address manufacturing overcapacity that she said risks causing global economic dislocation, and to create a level playing field for American companies and workers.

Starting a five-day visit in one of China's major industrial and export hubs, she raised what the U.S. considers to be unfair Chinese trade practices in talks with senior Chinese officials.

"The United States seeks a healthy economic relationship with China that benefits both sides," she said ahead of a meeting with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng in the southern city of Guangzhou. "But a healthy relationship must provide a level playing field for firms and workers in both countries."

Earlier, she said at an event hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce in China that there are "Chinese practices that are tilting the playing field away from American workers and firms."

He didn't get into specifics in his remarks before the media but said that both sides "need to properly respond to key concerns of the other side."

High on Yellen's list is the overcapacity issue. Chinese government subsidies and other policy support have encouraged solar panel and EV makers in China to build far more production capacity than the domestic market can absorb.

The massive scale of production has driven down costs and ignited price wars for green technologies, a boon for consumers and efforts to reduce global dependence on fossil fuels. But Western governments fear that markets will be flooded with low-priced exports, threatening American and European jobs.

## Airplane passenger fined in Sydney for urinating in cup amid deplaning delay

Associated Press

SYDNEY — A passenger has been fined for urinating in a cup during a delay in deplaning after landing at Sydney Airport.

The incident, after a 3-hour Air New Zealand flight from Auckland, occurred last December and a Sydney court fined the 53-year-old man \$395 for offensive behavior in February, officials said Friday.

The incident only came to public attention on Friday, when New Zealand news website Stuff reported that a passenger in the same row, identi-

fied only as Holly, said she had reported the behavior to the air crew.

She said she and her 15-year-old daughter were sitting in the aisle and middle seats when the man in the window seat, whose name has not been released, was urinating in a cup.

Holly said the plane had been on the tarmac for about 20 minutes, waiting for a terminal gate to be allocated, when she heard the unmistakable sound of the passenger urinating in a cup, Stuff reported.

She said the man was "ob-

viously quite drunk" and spilled urine on a flight attendant as he left the plane, it reported.

But the mishap with the attendant wasn't his crime. Australian Federal Police said in a statement that officers removed him from the plane because he had "urinated into a cup while in his seat."

Air New Zealand said it does not comment on individual incidents. It said it bans between five and 10 customers each month for disruptive behavior, including intoxication.

# Final Four serves up feel-good stories

Associated Press

GLENDAL, Ariz. — The Final Four this week delivers the last entry in college basketball's heartwarming yearbook, an annual assortment of legendary longshots, coaches looking for hugs and magic oozing from every corner of the bracket.

Only problem with the 2024 version: UConn doesn't believe in magic.

The lone thing that has come close to stopping the Huskies on their march to a second straight title so far has been the uncooperative airliner that was supposed to fly them to Phoenix. Coach Dan Hurley and his players, who have won their four tournament games by an average of 27.8 points, finally arrived at 3:15 a.m. Thursday after a nightmare mix of mechanical issues, then bad weather, left them hanging on the tarmac for hours.

"It was therapeutic to watch the de-icing," Hurley said.

Awaiting the Huskies once they finally arrived — nothing but feel-good stories.

■ Purdue, led by 7-foot-4 Zach Edey, is back at the Final Four for the first time since 1980, trying to win a title a season after becoming only the second team in history to be bounced in the first round as a No. 1 seed.

■ Alabama, which plays UConn on Saturday, is in the program's first Final Four after a complete rebuild of a roster that was supposed to make a deep run last season, then lost nine players to the pros, the transfer portal and graduation.

■ And then there's North Carolina State. The Wolfpack is back in a reboot of 1983, only instead of coach Jim Valvano rushing the court, looking for someone to hug after winning the title, this year's mascot is 6-foot-9, 275-pound DJ Burns Jr., the center with the mile-wide smile and, some say, potential in both the NFL and the NBA.

"We expected to be here. I know people don't believe that," coach Kevin Keatts said. "But in our mind as a team, this is not a fluke."

The Wolfpack did the same as the '83 squad, staring down a weekend's worth of must-win games in the ACC Tournament simply to qualify for the NCAAs. That '83 squad might have been the first to inscribe "Cinderella" into the March Madness dictionary, though it's hardly the only team that rode momentum and dreams en route to a championship no one saw coming.

Some might say Alabama fits the same mold. Crimson Tide coach Nate Oats had only three players returning from last year's top-seeded team, which went out in the Sweet 16.

In came Grant Nelson (North Dakota State), Latrell Wrightsell Jr. (Cal State Fullerton) and Aaron Estrada (from Hofstra, via Oregon and St. Peter's). By the time March rolled around, Alabama was getting it together — taking a football school to a place it has never been in basketball.

"We had to sell our guys that we can make the run before the tournament," Oats said. "Now that we made the run, get to the

Final Four, I want our guys playing loose and free, but I want them thinking they've got a chance to win."

Purdue has the reigning Player of the Year in Edey, but a year ago, that didn't prevent the Boilermakers from joining the 2018 Virginia team as only the second No. 1 seed to exit in the first round. A lot of teams might have rebuilt. Purdue mostly decided to stand pat.

"I've always dove into what we're doing and tried to pick at what we're doing to make improvements," coach Matt Painter said. "When you get beat in the first round of the NCAA Tournament by a 16 seed, that doesn't change anything."

Great as all these stories are, the stark reality is that nothing — other than the airplane — has been making much of a dent in UConn this year. The Huskies are 35-3. They have won their last 10 tournament games, dating to last season, by 13 points or more. They have had at least a 30-point lead in all four March Madness games this year.

## Clark, Cardoso haven't entered the WNBA draft yet

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Caitlin Clark hasn't officially entered the WNBA draft yet. Iowa fans shouldn't get their hopes up that she's returning for another season.

Clark, who said on social media before the women's NCAA Tournament began that she would enter the draft, has been busy. Iowa plays UConn in the Final Four on Friday night. She has approximately

48 hours after the season ends to submit the paperwork necessary to take part in the April 15 draft.

Clark isn't the only one who has not yet filed her paperwork. South Carolina's Kamilla Cardoso, who also announced on social media that she would enter the draft, hasn't officially done so yet. South Carolina faces North Carolina State in the other semifinal Friday.

The WNBA on Thursday re-

leased a list of 89 players who are draft eligible. That included LSU's Angel Reese, who announced Wednesday she was forgoing her final year of eligibility. Players who have exhausted their eligibility don't have to declare for the draft, so there are more players who still could enter.

One name not on the list was LSU's Hailey Van Lith, who has a year of eligibility remaining. She entered the transfer

portal on Thursday for the second consecutive year.

The WNBA is the hardest U.S. sports league to make, with a maximum of 144 roster spots available. Only 15 of the 36 players drafted last year made opening day rosters.

Other entrants included Tennessee's Riquea Jackson, UCLA's Charisma Osborne, Stanford's Cameron Brink and Virginia Tech's Elizabeth Kitley.

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit [www.stripes.com](http://www.stripes.com).

Reporting  
World, National  
and Military News

# Tigers defeat Mets 6-3 in 11 innings

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Colt Keith hit an RBI double in the 11th inning Thursday afternoon, sparking the Detroit Tigers to a 6-3 comeback win that extended their best start since 2016 and sent the New York Mets to their worst start since 2005.

Gio Urshela added a two-out, two-run single for the Tigers, who sought to match the 2016 team's 6-0 start in the second game of the doubleheader. The twinbill was necessitated by rainouts Tuesday and Wednesday.

**Mets 2, Tigers 1 (2nd Game):** Pete Alonso launched a tying homer leading off the ninth inning, Tyrone Taylor lined a game-winning single and the New York Mets — after going 13 innings without a hit — rallied past Detroit for their first victory of the season Thursday and a doubleheader split.

Harrison Bader's bloop single to start the eighth was New York's first hit in the second game. But the Mets finally broke through in the ninth to give Carlos Mendoza his first win as a major league manager. They avoided opening 0-6 for the first time since their second season in 1963.

**Cardinals 8, Marlins 5:** Nolan Gorman hit a go-ahead two-run double in the seventh inning and St. Louis won their home opener over winless Miami, who are off to the worst start in the 33-year history of the franchise.

Jake Burger hit a pair of homers for Miami (0-8), which is off to the worst start in the majors since Atlanta and Minnesota each lost their first nine games in 2016.

The Marlins are the only winless team in baseball after the New York Mets got their first win Thursday, beating Detroit.

Gorman, who had three hits, highlighted a five-run seventh-inning rally with a double on the first pitch from reliever Andrew Nardi to give St. Louis a 6-5 lead. Alec Burleson followed with a single and Masyn Winn added a run-scoring triple.

**Guardians 4, Twins 2:** Tanner Bibee and the Cleveland bullpen had 15 strikeouts to put the clamps on Minnesota's bats, Steven Kwan had three hits and Cleveland spoiled Minnesota's home opener with a victory.

Bibee (1-0) matched his career high with nine strikeouts, allowing one run over 5½ in-

nings. Four relievers followed, with Emmanuel Clase working a perfect ninth for his third save.

Carlos Correa had three hits and Edouard Julien homered for the Twins. Minnesota, which averaged more than 10 strikeouts per game to lead the majors last year, fanned 15 times and stranded nine runners — eight in scoring position.

The eighth inning was emblematic of the Twins' struggles. With Minnesota down by two runs, Correa led off with a double. But he remained stuck at second as Scott Barlow struck out Carlos Santana, Manuel Margot and Willi Castro in order to end the threat.

**Pirates 7, Nationals 4:** Pittsburgh bounced right back from their first loss and lowest-scoring game of the season, producing a four-run first inning with the help of Rowdy Tellez's two-run single to send them on their way to a victory over host Washington.

Connor Joe contributed his first homer of the season — a 400-foot, two-run shot in the fifth — and Michael A. Taylor added three hits against his former team. Tellez, Oneil Cruz and Bryan Reynolds each had

two hits for the Pirates, who went up 7-1 and then held on.

Martín Pérez (1-0) pitched 6⅓ innings, allowing two runs and six hits while striking out six.

The Pirates completed their season-opening road trip with a 6-1 record and have scored at least six runs in all but one game.

**Royals 10, White Sox 1:** Nelson Velázquez and MJ Melendez each homered and drove in two runs, leading Seth Lugo and Kansas City to a victory over the visiting Chicago White Sox.

Right fielder Hunter Renfroe threw out the potential tying run at the plate in the sixth inning before Kansas City broke it open with eight runs in the seventh.

Velázquez drove in the first two runs of the game with a single and a homer. Lugo (1-0) allowed one run and eight hits in 6⅓ innings for his first win with the Royals.

It was the latest quality outing by one of Kansas City's starters, who have a 1.43 ERA.

Lugo struck out three and walked two. Angel Zerpa retired Andrew Benintendi with a runner on second to end the seventh, preserving a one-run lead.

## Athletics to play next 3 seasons at minor league park

Associated Press

WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The Athletics will leave Oakland after this season and play temporarily at a minor league park near Sacramento until their planned new stadium in Las Vegas is built.

The A's announced the decision to play at the home of the Sacramento River Cats from 2025-27 with an option for 2028 on Thursday after being unable to reach an agreement to extend their lease in Oakland during that time.

Sacramento Kings owner Vivek Ranadivé, who also owns the minor league River Cats,

said the region has the potential to become a "mecca for sports."

"We have an incredible community and a passionate fan base — the best fans in the world," Ranadivé said. "Today's announcement marks the next chapter of professional sports in Sacramento."

Ranadivé joined A's owner John Fisher and local officials to announce the news at Sutter Health Park in West Sacramento, where the A's will play for the next three seasons. The stadium is right across from the historic yellow Tower Bridge that connects the city with downtown Sacramento.

It is in an area where new restaurants, bars and apartment complexes have opened up in recent years and is about a mile from the state Capitol and the NBA arena where the Sacramento Kings play. The stadium has 10,624 fixed seats and can currently hold 14,014 fans with lawn seating and standing room.

Ranadivé hopes the move is a step toward the Sacramento region eventually hosting a permanent MLB team.

Fisher said West Sacramento was among several locations, including the Oakland Coliseum, considered for the team's tem-

porary home.

"Even with the long-standing relationship and good intentions on all sides in the negotiations with Oakland, the conditions to achieve an agreement seemed out of reach," he said in a statement, adding that he understands the move will disappoint many fans.

Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao said in a statement that the city "offered a deal that was fair to the A's and was fiscally responsible for our city." Thao said the city will now work on acquiring the A's rights to the Coliseum site and focus on redevelopment efforts in the area.



# 76ers beat Heat to tighten East race

Associated Press

MIAMI — Tyrese Maxey scored 37 points, Joel Embiid added 29 and the Philadelphia 76ers topped the Miami Heat 109-105 on Thursday night to tighten the Eastern Conference playoff chase.

Maxey was one rebound shy of a triple-double, finishing with 11 assists and nine boards for Philadelphia. Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 18 points for the 76ers, who moved a half-game behind Miami for No. 7 in the East.

Terry Rozier had 22 points and Jimmy Butler added 20 for Miami, which entered the night No. 6 in the East but ceded that spot back to Indiana. Bam Adebayo had 14, Haywood Highsmith scored 12, Kevin Love had 11 points and 16 rebounds off the bench and Nikola Jovic added 11 points for Miami.

Embiid, in his second game back after missing two months following surgery on the meniscus in his left knee, shot 11 for 25, and the 76ers were outscored by 19 points in his 32-plus minutes.

**Mavericks 109, Hawks 95:** Luka Doncic finished with 25

points after a rare scoreless first quarter and Dallas stayed alone in fifth place in the Western Conference with a victory over Atlanta.

Kyrie Irving scored 26 points and Doncic had 12 rebounds and eight assists as the Mavericks opened a stretch of three home games in four days with their 12th victory in 14 games.

The juggled home slate came after a scheduled game at Golden State in January was postponed following the death of Warriors assistant coach Dejan Milojevic.

**Knicks 120, Kings 109:** Jalen Brunson had 35 points and 11 assists, Josh Hart scored a season-high 31 points and host New York erased a 21-point deficit and beat Sacramento to end a three-game losing streak.

Hours after announcing that Julius Randle would have right shoulder surgery and miss the rest of the season, the Knicks showed why they might still be dangerous without him. Hart shook off a sprained right wrist to shoot 14 for 19 and add nine rebounds and eight assists, and Donte DiVincenzo scored 21.

The Knicks tied Orlando for the fourth-best record in the Eastern Conference at 45-31. The Magic own the head-to-head tiebreaker and would have home-court advantage in a first-round series if they finish with the same record.

**Warriors 130, Rockets 110:** Steph Curry and Klay Thompson scored 29 points each and visiting Golden State stretched their winning streak to a season-high six games with a win over Houston.

The Warriors, who are in 10th place in the Western Conference, never trailed and built a 15-point lead by halftime behind 21 points by Thompson.

He made seven 3-pointers, with five of them coming in the first half.

They improved to 3-0 against Houston this season and have won the past 13 regular-season games against the Rockets.

Jabari Smith Jr. had 24 points to lead the Rockets, who dropped their third game in a row after winning their previous 11 games. Rookie Cam Whitmore added 17 points off the bench.

The Warriors moved to 42-34 with the win to give them a winning season for the 38th time in franchise history and the fourth in a row.

**Clippers 102, Nuggets 100:** Paul George scored 28 points, James Harden added 20 and the Los Angeles Clippers overcame an early 17-point deficit to beat visiting Denver.

The Clippers snapped a five-game skid at home despite the absence of Kawhi Leonard, who missed his second straight game because of a sore right knee.

Nikola Jokic had 36 points, 17 rebounds and 10 assists — his 24th triple-double of the season — to lead Denver, which had won two in a row and six of eight. Aaron Gordon added 18 points.

Nuggets coach Michael Malone was ejected with 7:54 remaining in the game. He came on the court to argue with the officials and was hit with two technical fouls.

The Clippers took a 75-70 lead into the fourth. They made 9 of 10 free throws while extending their lead to 90-79.

## Akshay Bhatia opens with a 63 to lead at Texas Open

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Akshay Bhatia rode the rare experience of knowing a PGA Tour course with a sublime day with his irons for a 9-under 63 on Thursday, giving him a three-shot lead in the Valero Texas Open and taking a small step toward a potential trip to the Masters.

The Texas Open is the last chance for players to qualify for Augusta National by winning. The 22-year-old Bhatia won the Barracuda Championship last summer, but it was held opposite the British Open and didn't count toward a Masters invitation.

And that's thinking too far ahead for Bhatia, anyway.

"Doesn't matter to me," Bhatia said of his lead. "I'm excited to go and sleep. It's been a long day, it's been very hot. I'm just trying to do the things that my mental coach and I have been talking about and I'm not trying to win the golf tournament today. But it's just nice having a nice day."

Brendon Todd birdied four of his last five holes for a 66 to join Justin Lower, who played in the morning. Neither of them are in the Masters yet.

It wasn't a bad day for Rory McIlroy, fresh off a visit to swing coach Butch Harmon in Las Vegas and two days at Augusta National before his final tournament ahead of the one major

keeping him from the career Grand Slam.

He also played bogey-free, but managed only three birdies. He failed to birdie both par 5s on the back nine at the TPC San Antonio, missing a 3-footer on the 14th.

"I think it's the first round I've had without a bogey in quite a while," McIlroy said. "My game over the last couple months has been quite volatile, so to go out there and play a solid round of golf in pretty tricky conditions, pretty happy with it."

Jordan Spieth had another edge-of-the-seat performance. He hit his tee shot out-of-bounds on the par-5 14th and took double

bogey, putting him at 4 over and in danger of missing his third straight cut for the first time since the fall of 2020.

He followed that with a hole-in-one with a 7-iron on No. 15. He went from the bunker on the 17th to 12 feet for another birdie and salvaged a 73.

"I'm playing so much better than I've been scoring and it doesn't like look like it," Spieth said. "It's hard to explain. I've played way worse and had consecutive top 10s than the missed cuts that I've had. It's just very bizarre."

Max Homa and Cognizant Classic winner Austin Eckroat were in the group at 68.

# Bruins notch 4-1 win over Hurricanes

*Associated Press*

David Pastrnak and Danton Heinen each had a goal and an assist in the first period and Boston beat the Carolina Hurricanes 4-1.

Brad Marchand had the game's first goal, Hampus Lindholm added an empty-netter and Jeremy Swayman made 27 saves for Boston.

The Bruins won their third game in a row and moved four points in front of the Hurricanes, who have a game in hand, in a matchup of Eastern Conference playoff-bound teams. Boston finished a six-game road stretch at 4-2-0.

Carolina's Jake Guentzel scored on a 5-on-3 power play in the second period, but the Hurricanes were left without a point for just the second time in their last 11 games.

**Penguins 4, Capitals 1:** Ryan Shea scored his first NHL goal and Michael Bunting his fourth with his new team, Alex Nedeljkovic made 30 saves and visiting Pittsburgh beat Washington to move closer to a playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

Shea's goal 25 games into his rookie season was also his first point in the league.

Despite Alex Ovechkin scoring on the power play for his 27th goal of the season and 849th of his career, the Capitals' losing streak reached four, further endangering their chances of playing beyond the regular season. Charlie Lindgren, whose goaltending has carried them for the past month or so, struggled in allowing three

goals on 23 shots with his heaviest workload in the NHL appearing to take a toll.

**Panthers 6, Senators 0:** Sergei Bobrovsky made 30 saves for his fifth shutout of the season, Matthew Tkachuk had a goal and two assists and visiting Florida routed Ottawa.

Nick Cousins, Dmitry Kulikov, Anton Lundell, Sam Bennett and Sam Reinhart also scored to help Florida improve to 48-24-5. Panthers coach Paul Maurice moved into sole possession of fourth place on the NHL victory list with 865.

Joonas Korpisalo allowed four goals on 17 shots for Ottawa. Anton Forsberg gave up two on 14 shots in relief.

**Islanders 4, Blue Jackets 2:** Noah Dobson scored the go-ahead goal early in the third period and the New York Islanders stayed alive in their quest for the final Eastern Conference wild-card spot with a 4-2 win over host Columbus.

Pierre Engvall and Bo Horvat scored first-period goals, and Ilya Sorokin stopped 25 shots for the Islanders, who have won three straight.

Kirill Marchenko had a goal and an assist, and Dmitri Voronkov also scored for Columbus, which had won its last two. Daniil Tarasov stopped 13 shots before leaving the game with 2:07 left in the first period after a collision by the net. Jet Greaves made 24 stops in relief.

**Lightning 7, Canadiens 4:** NHL points leader Nikita Kucherov scored his 43rd goal of the season and had two assists,

Steven Stamkos and Nicholas Paul each scored twice and visiting Tampa Bay beat Montreal.

The Lightning, in the first Eastern Conference wild-card spot, improved to 43-26-7.

Matt Tomkins, a 29-year-old making only his fourth NHL start and the first since Nov. 7, made 26 saves for the victory.

Michael Eyssimont and Brandon Hagel also scored for Tampa Bay.

**Predators 6, Blues 3:** Filip Forsberg had two goals and an assist, Juuse Saros made 44 saves and host Nashville beat St. Louis to snap a three-game losing streak.

Roman Josi, Anthony Beauvillier, Michael McCarron and Mark Jankowski also scored goals and Gustav Nyquist had three assists for Nashville.

Brandon Saad, Jake Neighbours and Jordan Kyrou scored and Jordan Binnington made 25 saves for St. Louis, losers of two of their past three.

**Avalanche 5, Wild 2:** Nathan MacKinnon had a goal and two assists, Justus Annunen made a career-high 44 saves and visiting Colorado moved closer to first place in the Central Division with a win over Minnesota.

Jonathan Drouin scored twice and added an assist as the playoff-bound Avalanche bounced back from a vexing loss Monday at Columbus, last in the Eastern Conference. Second-place Colorado is three points behind idle Dallas.

Artturi Lehkonen and Mikko Rantanen also scored for the Avs.

Vinni Lettieri and Declan Chisholm scored for Minnesota. Wild goalie Filip Gustavsson stopped 31 shots.

**Jets 5, Flames 2:** Gabe Vilar-di had a hat trick and host Winnipeg wrapped up a playoff spot and eliminated Calgary from the wild-card race.

Vilardi scored his third goal of the game and 19th of the season into an empty net with 1:04 left. Nikolaj Ehlers had a goal and an assist, Tyler Toffoli also scored and Connor Hellebuyck stopped 31 shots to help the Jets improve to 46-24-6.

Martin Pospisil and MacKenzie Weegar scored for Calgary. Dustin Wolf made 40 saves.

**Kings 2, Sharks 1:** Akil Thomas scored his first NHL goal and David Rittich stopped 15 shots as visiting Los Angeles beat San Jose Sharks to improve their playoff position.

Adrian Kempe also scored for the Kings, who are 7-0-1 in their past eight games against San Jose.

Los Angeles moved seven points ahead of St. Louis for the second Western Conference wild card with six games remaining.

The Kings also stayed one point behind Nashville for the top wild card and climbed one point behind Vegas for third place in the Pacific Division.

Klim Kostin scored for the last-place Sharks, who have lost 11 of 12. Mikael Granlund had an assist to extend his point streak to six games.

Mackenzie Blackwood made 25 saves in the loss.

## Attorney: Chiefs' Rice was driving Lamborghini in crash

*Associated Press*

DALLAS — Kansas City Chiefs' player Rashee Rice was the driver of one of two speeding sports cars who left after causing a chain-reaction crash on a Dallas highway over the week-

end, the wide receiver's attorney said Thursday.

Why Rice left the crash Saturday was "a good question that's still being investigated," said Rice's attorney, state Sen. Royce West, but did not elabo-

rate. West expects charges to be filed against Rice, who was driving a Lamborghini sport utility vehicle, he said at a news conference without his client.

"He's a young man that made a mistake," West said Thursday,

adding that Rice's "heart goes out" to those who were injured.

The crash involved the Lamborghini, a Corvette and four other vehicles and left four people with minor injuries, police said.