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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Suspected US airstrikes batter Houthis

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates—Suspected U.S. airstrikes battered rebel-controlled areas of Yemen into Wednesday, with the Houthis saying that one strike killed at least four people near the Red Sea port city of Hodeida.

Meanwhile, satellite images taken Wednesday and analyzed by The Associated Press show at least six stealth B-2 Spirit bombers now stationed at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean — a highly unusual deployment amid the Yemen campaign and tensions with Iran.

The intense campaign of airstrikes in Yemen under U.S. President Donald Trump, targeting the rebels over their attacks on shipping in Mideast waters stemming from the Israel-Hamas war, has killed at least 65 people, according to casualty figures released by the

Houthis.

The campaign appears to show no signs of stopping as the Trump administration again linked their airstrikes on the Iranian-backed Houthis to an effort to pressure Iran over its rapidly advancing nuclear program.

While so far giving no specifics about the campaign and its targets, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt put the overall number of strikes on Tuesday at more than 200.

The Houthis haven't acknowledged the loss of any of its leadership so far — and the U.S. hasn't identified any official by name. However, messages released by the leak of a Signal conversation between Trump administration officials and their public comments suggest a leader in the rebels' missile forces had been targeted.

Overnight, a likely U.S. air-

strike targeted what the Houthis is described as a "water project" in Hodeida governorate's Mansuriyah District, killing four people and wounding others. Other strikes into Wednesday targeted Hajjah, Saada and Sanaa governorates, the rebels said.

The rebels say they've continued to launch attacks against U.S. warships in the Red Sea, namely the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman, which is carrying out the majority of the strikes on the Houthis. No warship has been struck yet, but the U.S. Navy has described the Houthi fire as the most intense combat its sailors have faced since World War II.

The aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, now in Asia, is on its way to the Middle East to back up the Truman. Early Wednesday, Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell said that "addi-

tional squadrons and other air assets" would be deployed to the region, without elaborating.

That likely includes the deployment of nuclear-capable B-2 bombers to Camp Thunder Bay on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Satellite photos taken Wednesday by Planet Labs PBC analyzed by the AP showed at least six B-2s at the base.

The deployment represents nearly a third of all the B-2 bombers in Washington's arsenal. It's also highly unusual to see that many at one base abroad. Typically, so-called show of force missions involving the B-2 have seen two or three of the aircraft conduct operations in foreign territory.

The nuclear-capable B-2, which first saw action in 1999 in the Kosovo War, is rarely used by the U.S. military in combat, because each aircraft is worth around \$1 billion.

Naval Academy pulls nearly 400 books in DEI purge

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Naval Academy has removed nearly 400 books from its library after being told by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's office to review and get rid of ones that promote diversity, equity and inclusion, U.S. officials said Tuesday.

Academy officials were told to review the library late last week, and an initial search had identified about 900 books for a closer look. They decided on nearly 400 to remove and began doing so Monday, finishing before Hegseth arrived for a visit Tuesday that had already been planned and was not connected to the library purge, officials said. A list of the books has not

yet been made available.

Pulling the books off the shelves is another step in the Trump administration's far-reaching effort to eliminate so-called DEI content from federal agencies, including policies, programs, online and social media postings and curriculum at schools.

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said late Tuesday, "All service academies are fully committed to executing and implementing President Trump's Executive Orders."

The Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., the Air Force Academy near Colorado Springs, Colo., and the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., had not been included in President Do-

nald Trump's executive order in January that banned DEI instruction, programs or curriculum in kindergarten through 12th grade schools that receive federal funding. That is because the academies are colleges.

Pentagon leaders, however, suddenly turned their attention to the Naval Academy last week when a media report noted that the school had not removed books that promoted DEI. A U.S. official said the academy was told late last week to conduct the review and removal. It isn't clear if the order was directed by Hegseth or someone else on his staff.

A West Point official confirmed that the school had completed a review of its curricu-

lum and was prepared to review library content if directed by the Army. The Air Force and Naval academies had also done curriculum reviews as had been required.

An Air Force Academy official said the school continually reviews its curriculum, coursework and other materials to ensure it all complies with executive orders and Defense Department policies. Last week, Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind, the Air Force Academy superintendent, told Congress that the school was in the middle of its course review, but there was no mention of books.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss academy policies.

Destroyers test new anti-drone weapons

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT

Stars and Stripes

ABOARD THE USS GERALD R. FORD — Two F-18 fighter jets roared above the USS Gerald R. Ford, flying past the aircraft carrier in the direction of a destroyer sitting on the horizon.

Four other destroyers were also spread across the ocean as the strike group conducted its final training exercise recently in the Atlantic, preparing for a summer deployment that could take the warships to the Middle East, where Iran-backed Houthi militants have been attacking merchant vessels regularly. If sent to the region, the strike group will put newly adapted counter-drone weapons to the test as the Navy explores alternatives to shooting down cheap Houthi drones with multimillion-dollar munitions.

The strike group's Arleigh Burke-class, guided-missile destroyers will deploy with the Coyote and Roadrunner systems, two interceptor-style drone systems that the Navy has spent the past year developing for ship-based launches, two service officials said. The Coyote and Roadrunner systems, which were modified from existing land-based technologies, are specialized drones designed to stop other drones before they reach their intended targets. The new weapons are intended to counter Houthi drones for a fraction of the price of a standard missile typically used by the Navy.

"Those two systems are part of that attempt to get after the cost curve, give our commanding officers more options to engage the threat and ultimately be more effective in defending a high-value unit," Capt. Mark Lawrence, commander of Destroyer Squadron 2, said aboard the Ford as the aircraft carrier trained some 100 miles off the

East Coast.

Six destroyers will support the Ford during its deployment, strike group leaders said. It is unclear how many of the destroyers will be Coyote and Roadrunner capable.

The Ford was the first aircraft carrier sent to the Middle East in late 2023 to help deter the Israel-Hamas war from growing into a regional conflict. The carrier, homeported at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., spent about two months off the coast of Israel before it returned to the United States in January 2024.

The Ford and its strike group are now preparing to pick up where they left off — training for a deployment that could task the ships and the air wing with defending merchant vessels from Houthi drone attacks.

One-way attack drones are one of the main weapons the Houthi use to attack military and merchant ships, according to U.S. officials.

Since November 2023, the Navy has defended against nearly 400 attacks by drones and missiles in the Red Sea, a pace that has seen U.S. ships firing back at levels comparable to World War II battles.

Navy forces have fired more than 200 missiles and upward of 150 artillery rounds — missile expenditures that have cost the sea service hundreds of millions of dollars, according to Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance data.

As of January 2025, the Navy had fired 120 SM-2 missiles, priced at about \$2.1 million apiece. In addition, 80 SM-6 missiles were expended, costing \$3.9 million each. Twenty Evolved Sea Sparrow and SM-3 missiles were also fired, which range in price from \$9.6 million to \$27.9 million.

Missile expenditures are likely higher because the U.S. on March 15 began striking Houthi

facilities in Yemen on an ongoing basis. The strikes will continue, the Pentagon has said, until the Iran-backed rebels pledge to halt attacks on ships transiting the Red Sea.

Navy leaders have acknowledged the expense during the past year, saying the service was working to address the modest threats with lower-cost alternatives such as 5-inch guns, while expediting the development and delivery of new, cheaper technology.

The Coyote and Roadrunner counter-drone systems are among those new technologies.

"Both are specifically designed to go after [drones] so we don't have to shoot the big standard missile at them. From inception to fielding and testing — all have been done in the last year. That's a pretty quick turn for the Navy," said Adm. Daryl Caudle of U.S. Fleet Forces, the command that oversees the training and equipment of East Coast-based naval forces.

The Coyote is a small, expendable, tube-launched drone that can be deployed from the ground, air and ships. Defense technology company Northrop Grumman, a Coyote developer, describes the drone as agile, with the ability to perform high-speed maneuvers and climb to altitudes above 50,000 feet before "pouncing" on its target at supersonic Mach 3.5 speeds.

The system has been developed for 25 years, but the variation that will be used by destroyers supporting the Ford's 2025 deployment was recently adapted and tested at sea in August. Neither the company nor the Navy has said how much the Coyote costs per unit, but a similar model developed by Raytheon for the Army costs about \$125,000 per unit.

The Roadrunner, dubbed a "drone hunter," is a twin jet-powered autonomous air vehicle

that was unveiled in late 2023 by tech company Anduril. The Roadrunner can detect, track and engage targets at significant distances, according to the company. The system can be operated manually or autonomously.

When the system was announced, Anduril declined to identify its customer, but the Defense Department has awarded the company contracts to develop drones for the Navy since at least June 2024. Company executives have said the cost of the system was in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars, but the price tag was expected to decrease when mass production began.

It took the Navy only seven months — from January to August 2024 — to develop the original land-based concepts of both systems for ship-based use and begin at-sea testing, said a Navy official who spoke on the condition of anonymity. The at-sea testing of the systems was supported by \$88 million in supplemental funding from Congress.

The official said the sea service, as well as other services, "pursued a plan" to test and field the systems rapidly in response to the Houthi attacks on military and merchant vessels in the Red Sea. U.S. drone pursuits in the past year have coincided with defense officials raising the alarm on the Navy's increasing missile expenditure, which they say is eating up U.S. inventory that would be needed in a potential conflict with an adversary such as China.

Former national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in December that there was a need to stockpile munitions and invest more in low-cost weapons such as drones after sending billions of dollars in military aid to Ukraine and the Red Sea threat collectively depleting U.S. shelves.

Wis., Fla. results a warning to Trump, GOP

Associated Press

A trio of elections on Tuesday provided early warning signs to Republicans and President Donald Trump at the beginning of an ambitious term, as Democrats rallied against his efforts to slash the federal government and the outsized role being played by billionaire Elon Musk.

In the marquee race for a Wisconsin Supreme Court seat, the conservative judge endorsed by Trump and backed by Musk and his groups to the tune of \$21 million lost by a significant margin in a state Trump won in November. And while Florida Republicans held two of the most pro-Trump House districts in the country, both candidates also underperformed Trump's November margins.

The elections — the first major contests since Trump's return to power — were seen as an early

measure of voter sentiment as Trump works with unprecedented speed to dramatically upend the federal government, clashing with the courts and seeking revenge as he tests the bounds of presidential power.

The party that loses the presidency in November typically picks up seats in the next midterm elections, and Tuesday's results provided hope for Democrats — who have faced a barrage of internal and external criticism about their response to Trump — that they can follow that trend.

Charlie Kirk, the conservative activist and podcaster whose group worked alongside Musk to boost conservative Brad Schimel in Wisconsin, argued Tuesday's Supreme Court loss underscored a fundamental challenge for Republicans, particularly in races where Trump is not on the ballot.

"We did a lot in Wisconsin, but

we fell short. We must realize and appreciate that we are the LOW PROP party now," he said in an X post, referring to low-propensity voters who don't regularly cast ballots. "The party has been remade. Special elections and off-cycle elections will continue to be a problem without a change of strategy."

Trump won Wisconsin in November by 0.8 percentage points, or fewer than 30,000 votes. In the first major test since he took office, the perennial battleground state shifted significantly to the left.

Sauk County, northwest of the state capital of Madison, is a state bellwether. Trump won it in November by 626 votes. Sauk shifted 14 points in the direction of Judge Susan Crawford, the liberal favorite backed by national Democrats and billionaire donors like George Soros.

Trump had better luck in Florida, where Republican Randy Fine won his special election in the 6th District to replace Mike Waltz, who stepped down to serve as Trump's national security adviser. But Fine beat his Democratic challenger, Josh Weil, by 14 percentage points less than five months after Waltz won the district by 33.

Jimmy Patronis, the state's chief financial officer, fended off a challenge from Democrat Gay Valimont to win the northwest Florida seat vacated by Matt Gaetz but also underperformed Gaetz's last margin of victory.

The pair of wins gave Republicans a 220-213 margin in the House of Representatives, when concerns about a thin GOP majority led Trump to pull the nomination of New York Rep. Elise Stefanik to be United Nations ambassador.

Musk's DOGE days in DC might be winding down

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — DOGE's days appear to be numbered.

Elon Musk recently suggested that he will be done with his work in the near future. President Donald Trump told reporters this week that "at some point, he's going to be going back" to running his companies. As far as the Department of Government Efficiency, Trump said "it will end."

That was before Musk faced a setback Tuesday in Wisconsin, where voters rejected his choice for a state Supreme Court candidate despite more than \$21 million in personal donations and his campaign appearance over the weekend. There are more problems for the billionaire at Tesla, his electric automaker, which saw a 13% drop in sales in the first three months of the year.

The White House has not disclosed any timeline for closing down DOGE, and the govern-

ment cost-cutting organization was never supposed to be permanent. But it could be reaching a conclusion faster than anticipated. DOGE was originally intended to operate until July 4, 2026.

Now there are signs that it already is winding down. DOGE employees have been shifted to various federal agencies, which are supposed to take the lead on cutting costs. Government-wide layoffs are underway to accomplish some of the goals laid out by Musk and Trump.

"We think probably over the next two or three months, we'll be pretty much satisfied with the people that are working hard and want to be members of the administration," Trump said last week.

The potential end of DOGE does not mean Trump will stop shaking up Washington. But it appears the administration's efforts will be entering a new phase that is less focused on Musk.

Booker breaks Thurmond's record with 25-hour speech

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a feat of determination, New Jersey Democratic Sen. Cory Booker held the Senate floor with a marathon speech that lasted all night and into Tuesday night, setting a historic mark to show Democrats' resistance to President Donald Trump's sweeping actions.

Booker took to the Senate floor on Monday evening, saying he would remain there as long as he was "physically able." It wasn't until 25 hours and 5 minutes later that the 55-year-old senator, a former football tight end, finished speaking and limped off the floor. It set the record for the longest continuous Senate floor speech in the chamber's history. Booker was assisted by fellow Democrats who gave him a break from speaking by asking him questions on the Senate floor.

It was a remarkable show of stamina as Democrats try to show

their frustrated supporters that they are doing everything possible to contest Trump's agenda. Yet Booker also provided a moment of historical solace for a party searching for its way forward: By standing on the Senate floor for more than a night and day and refusing to leave, he had broken a record set 68 years ago by then-Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, a segregationist and southern Democrat, to filibuster the advance of the Civil Rights Act in 1957.

"I'm here despite his speech," said Booker, who spoke on the Senate floor of his roots as the descendant of both slaves and slave-owners. He added, "I'm here because as powerful as he was, the people are more powerful."

Booker railed against cuts to Social Security offices led by Trump adviser Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency.

China simulates port strikes in Taiwan drills

The Washington Post

China conducted a second day of drills around Taiwan on Wednesday, adding to the unprecedented military pressure it is applying to President Lai Ching-te, a leader it strongly dislikes.

The latest exercises, labeled Strait Thunder-2025A, were held in the central and southern parts of the Taiwan Strait, Chinese military spokesman Senior Colonel Shi Yi said in a statement. They tested the ability of the People's Liberation Army to conduct a blockade and involved "precision strikes" on simulated targets including ports and energy facilities.

The PLA also held "long-range live-fire drills" in the East China Sea, Shi said, referring to the body of water north of Taiwan. The Shandong aircraft carrier task group traveled east

of Taiwan's main island as part of the maneuvers, he said separately. The drills were completed on Wednesday, according to state-run China Central Television.

Some 37 Chinese aircraft crossed the mid-line in the strait, the Defense Ministry in Taipei said on X, adding that its own warplanes, ships and missile systems responded, without saying what that entailed. The airspace and waters around Taiwan were normal, a ministry spokesman said in an afternoon briefing.

The latest drills add to Beijing's campaign of intimidation against Taipei, and come a day after exercises that involved the most naval warships in nearly a year. The PLA has now held at least seven sets of drills of varying intensity around Taiwan since Lai took office in May last

year. That's easily the most that any president of the archipelago has faced since democratic elections started some three decades ago. The PLA didn't say when it planned to hold the B version of Strait Thunder-2025, but it is a clear sign that the PLA is preparing more drills.

"Targeted military exercises against Taiwan with a high degree of political coercion have surpassed those of previous administrations, at least in terms of frequency," said Chieh Chung, adjunct associate research fellow at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research in Taipei.

Beijing has many reasons for holding the latest drills now, including better weather in the strait at this time of year and responding to the Trump administration's foreign policy coming into focus. The US has been en-

couraging NATO allies to step up their defense spending to counter Russia, while the US prioritizes China. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth used a recent trip to Japan and the Philippines to pledge a range of military resources that allies require to counter the PLA.

Despite its rhetoric, there is little sign that China is actually preparing to invade Taiwan soon, a move that would massively disrupt its own economy and that of its trade partners, let alone the supply chains for the advanced semiconductors that are the archipelago's specialty. Last month, Taiwanese Defense Minister Wellington Koo said the PLA wasn't ready to execute a major amphibious operation. A running purge of China's military also complicates the outlook for any major action by the PLA.

Old flight limitations on pregnant airmen return

BY ZADE VADNAIS
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force is reinstating flight restrictions for airmen in the early stage of pregnancy and elevating waiver decisions for members from flight surgeons to higher command, according to the service.

The changes apply to all pregnant airmen with in-flight duties and are based on recommendations from medical professionals across the service, a statement from the Air Force surgeon general's office said.

Under the new guidance, aircrew members may no longer fly without a waiver during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy due to increased risk of miscarriage during the first trimester.

Meanwhile, the authorized flying window following the first trimester has been extended under the new policy. Aircrew members may now be re-

instated to fly from week 12 through week 32 of pregnancy, four weeks longer than the previous policy allowed.

The Air Force cited medical research indicating no significant increase in risk between weeks 28 and 32.

Aircrew members who are expecting also are prohibited from flying in high-performance aircraft or planes with ejection seats at any point during pregnancy.

The change requiring waiver requests to be reviewed at the major command level gives senior medical personnel a broader view of cases and service-wide trends, Air Force medical officials said in the statement.

Aircrew members who are temporarily grounded due to pregnancy may still use flight simulators, take courses and fulfill other duties, the statement said.

Trump halts dozens of federal grants at Princeton

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has halted dozens of research grants at Princeton University, the latest Ivy League school to see its federal money threatened in a pressure campaign targeting the nation's top universities.

Princeton was notified this week that several dozen federal grants are being suspended by agencies including the Department of Energy, NASA and the Defense Department, according to a campus message sent Tuesday by Christopher Eisgruber, the university's president.

Eisgruber said the rationale was not fully clear but that Princeton will comply with the law. The school is among dozens facing federal investigations into antisemitism following a wave of pro-Palestinian protests last year.

"We are committed to fighting antisemitism and all forms of discrimination, and we will cooperate with the government in combating antisemitism," Eisgruber wrote. "Princeton will also vigorously defend academic freedom and the due process rights of this University."

As President Donald Trump presses his political agenda on universities across the country, he has paid special attention to Ivy League institutions.

Columbia University was the first one targeted, losing \$400 million in federal money with threats to terminate more if it didn't make the campus safer for Jewish students. The school agreed to several demands from the government last month, including an overhaul of student discipline rules and a review of the school's Middle East studies department.

Merrill signs 9-year, \$135M extension deal

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — All-Star outfielder Jackson Merrill and the San Diego Padres agreed Wednesday to a \$135 million, nine-year contract covering 2026-34.

Merrill gets a \$10 million signing bonus, \$1 million payable within 30 days of the contract's approval by Major League Baseball and \$3 million on Jan. 15 in each of the next three years.

Merrill will get salaries of \$1 million in 2026, \$6 million in 2027, \$8 million in 2028, \$10 million in 2029 and \$20 million annually from 2030-34.

San Diego has a \$21 million option for 2034 that would become a player option at the same salary if he finishes among the top five in MVP voting in any season from 2026-34.

Merrill's salary would escalate by \$1 million for all remaining years for any season in which he has 500 or more plate appearances.

The option price would escalate by \$1 million each time Merrill finishes among the top 10 in MVP voting. He will also get a hotel suite on the Padres' road trips.

Merrill, who turns 22 on April 19, made his major league debut last season and became an All-Star, hitting .292 with 24 homers, 90 RBIs and 16 stolen bases. He finished second in NL Rookie of the Year voting to Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher Paul Skenes.

Merrill has an \$809,500 salary while in the major leagues this year after earning the \$740,000 minimum last year and gaining \$1,191,534 from the pre-arbitration bonus pool.

B. Williams hired as Terps coach

Associated Press

Maryland moved on quickly after Kevin Willard's departure, hiring another coach with plenty of experience at a high level.

Buzz Williams is changing jobs again.

The Terrapins hired Williams as its men's basketball coach Tuesday, bringing in an accomplished candidate following Willard's exit to take the Villanova job. Williams arrives after six seasons at Texas A&M. He has also coached at Virginia Tech, Marquette and New Orleans.

He'll be the first to coach in the Big East, ACC, Southeastern Conference and Big Ten, according to Sportradar.

"It is an honor and privilege to be named the head coach of the University of Maryland men's basketball team," Williams said in a statement. "I promise to uphold the history of Maryland basketball and make Terp Nation proud with the men who represent this institution."

Maryland introduced Williams at a news conference Wednesday. Willard left for Villanova last

weekend after leading the Terrapins to the Sweet 16.

Williams took the Aggies to the NCAA Tournament in each of the past three seasons.

"We would like to thank Buzz for his years of service heading up our men's basketball program," Texas A&M athletic director Trev Alberts said. "We are excited about the future of Aggie basketball, and we will find the right leader for our program."

Williams' first task is to bring some stability to Maryland after a couple of tumultuous weeks. Around the same time the Terps were beginning their NCAA Tournament run, Willard complained about a lack of support for the program at the school — and athletic director Damon Evans left for SMU.

Colleen Sorem is now the interim AD, and she was able to land Williams, who took Marquette to three Sweet 16s and Virginia Tech to one.

"We are thrilled to bring a coach of the caliber of Buzz Williams to the University of Maryland," Sorem said. "His incredi-

ble record of success at three prominent basketball programs speaks for itself, but we were equally impressed with his tireless work ethic and his dedication to building a program the right way. He embraces the high expectations here at Maryland and we are all excited to get started on this new era in Maryland basketball."

The 52-year-old Williams from Greenville, Texas, is one of 12 active Division I head coaches to win at least one NCAA Tournament game at three different programs. His deepest run was in 2013 when he took Marquette to the Elite Eight.

Willard spent three seasons at Maryland, taking it to the NCAAs twice. This season's team — with a starting unit nicknamed the "Crab Five" — came on strong toward the end of the season. But the school confirmed Monday that two starters were in the transfer portal, and star big man Derik Queen was noncommittal about his future after throwing out a ceremonial first pitch at the Baltimore Orioles' home opener.

Finalists revealed for John R. Wooden Award

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The John R. Wooden Award announced five finalists for its men's and women's awards as the nation's outstanding college basketball player.

The men's finalists are: John Broome, of Auburn; Walter Clayton Jr., of Florida; Duke's Cooper Flagg, Mark Sears, of Alabama; and Braden Smith of Purdue. On the women's side, the finalists are Paige Bueckers, of UConn; Lauren Betts, of

UCLA; Madison Booker, of Texas; Hannah Hidalgo, of Notre Dame; and JuJu Watkins, of Southern California.

Broome, Clayton and Flagg will lead their teams at the men's Final Four in San Antonio this weekend, while Bueckers, Betts and Booker will star in the women's Final Four in Tampa, Fla.

The other members of the men's Wooden All-America team announced Tuesday are: L.J. Cryer, of Houston; Kam Jones, of Marquette; Ryan Kalk-

brenner, of Creighton; Chaz Lanier, of Tennessee; and John Tonje of Wisconsin. The players rounding out the women's All-America team are: Georgia Amoore, of Kentucky; Ta'Niya Latson, of Florida State; Oliva Miles, of Notre Dame; Aneesah Morrow, of LSU; and Hailey Van Lith, of TCU.

The Wooden Award winners will be honored April 11 at the Los Angeles Athletic Club. Voting was done by sportswriters and sportscasters nationwide.

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Jokic scores career-high 61 in 20T loss

Associated Press

DENVER — Michael Malone called him Superman. At the moment, Nikola Jokic's just super-tired.

The Denver Nuggets' big man can't wait to get some sleep after a career-best 61-point performance in which he played nearly 53 minutes. He didn't leave the court after halftime of a 140-139 double-overtime loss to the Minnesota Timberwolves on Tuesday night.

His scoring spree was the most by a player in the NBA this season. Jokic also had 10 rebounds and 10 assists, notching the third 60-point triple-double in NBA history. Luka Doncic did it on Dec. 27, 2022 and James Harden did it on Jan. 30, 2018.

"The guy's Superman," Nuggets coach Malone said. "He's on a whole other level, man. People say he's not athletic, but not many guys can do what he does."

Jokic's previous career best was 56 points in a loss at Washington on Dec. 7. The franchise mark is held by David Thompson, who had 73 points at Detroit

on April 9, 1978.

On Tuesday, Jokic attempted 24 free throws—making 19—to match the team mark held by Carmelo Anthony. For all his exploits, Jokic had just one overriding emotion: "Tired," he said. "It was an exhausting game."

Anthony Edwards gave the three-time NBA MVP major props. Jokic's in a heated race for another MVP award with Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander.

"Nikola Jokic, he might be the best basketball player that I have ever seen close up, besides myself," cracked Edwards, who had 34 points and 10 rebounds. "He is incredible. The MVP race is tough. I don't know. He had 60. That is crazy."

Of course, this game—a sixth straight loss to Minnesota, including playoffs—will be remembered by Denver fans for Jokic's exploits on the court. But it will also be remembered for a wild finish.

Leading 139-138 with around 14 seconds left, Russell Westbrook stole the ball and dished it over to Christian Braun who

then sent it right back to Westbrook for a layup. But Westbrook's layup clanked off the rim and started a break the other way.

Westbrook ran down the court and fouled Nickeil Alexander-Walker in the corner with 0.1 seconds remaining. The Timberwolves guard hit two of three free throws to steal the victory.

Bucks 133, Suns 123: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 37 points and host Milwaukee relied on a team-record shooting performance to snap a four-game skid by beating slumping, short-handed Phoenix.

The Bucks shot 68.9% (51 of 73) from the floor to set a franchise record for field-goal percentage. The previous record was 66.7% on Dec. 15, 1985, against Sacramento.

Milwaukee coach Doc Rivers improved his career record to 1,155-816 and tied Phil Jackson for seventh place in NBA history in regular-season wins.

The Suns lost their fourth straight. They were playing without Kevin Durant, Bradley Beal and Royce O'Neale.

Warriors 134, Grizzlies 125:

Stephen Curry scored 52 points, including 12 3-pointers, as Golden State held on for a victory at Memphis.

Curry was 16-for-31 from the field, making 12 of his 20 shots from distance, the dozen 3-pointers matching his season high.

Bulls 137, Raptors 118: Co-

by White scored 28 points, Talen Horton Tucker had 27 points and host Chicago locked in a spot in the Eastern Conference play-in tournament with a victory over Toronto.

Trail Blazers 127, Hawks

113: Shaedon Sharpe had 33 points and 10 rebounds and Deni Avdija finished with 32 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists as Portland beat host Atlanta to snap a four-game skid.

Magic 116, Spurs 105: Paolo Banchero had 24 points and 10 rebounds, Franz Wagner added 24 points and Orlando rallied to a road victory at San Antonio.

Knicks 105, 76ers 91: OG

Anunoby scored 27 points and host New York sent Philadelphia to its ninth straight loss.

NFL owners put off decision on 'tush push' until May

Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. — A decision on the future of the "tush push" has been pushed until next month.

NFL team owners had been set to vote Tuesday on Green Bay's proposal to ban the play that's helped the Philadelphia Eagles reach two Super Bowls and win one in February, but it was tabled until May.

Owners approved modifying the kickoff rule, expanding replay assist and revising overtime rules, along with other changes.

Postponing the "tush push" vote means the debate will continue while teams gather more information. Proponents of the play and those who oppose it

presented strong arguments while the league's medical experts expressed safety concerns.

It takes 24 of 32 votes to approve rule changes.

As for changes that did pass, regular-season overtime rules now will match those in the playoffs and both teams will have a chance to get a possession even if the offense scores a touchdown on the opening drive. The proposal was amended to make overtime 10 minutes, not 15 minutes.

Owners also approved a proposal from the NFL Competition Committee to allow replay assist to consult on-field officials to overrule objective calls such as face-mask penalties,

whether there was forcible contact to the head or neck area, horse-collar tackles or tripping if there was "clear and obvious" evidence that a foul didn't occur. Replay would also be able to overturn a roughing-the-kicker or running-into-the-kicker penalty if video showed the defender made contact with the ball.

Replay assist could wipe out a foul only if it was incorrectly called, but it will not be used to throw a flag if a penalty wasn't called.

The dynamic kickoff rule becomes permanent, with touchbacks moving to the 35-yard line instead of the 30.

Pittsburgh's proposal to allow teams to have one video or

phone call with no more than five prospective unrestricted free agents during the two-day negotiation period was approved. Teams can now make travel arrangements with such players upon agreeing to terms.

Owners also approved a rule to permit clubs to prepare kicking footballs ("K-Balls") before game day, similar to the process permitted for game footballs.

Detroit's proposal for playoff seeding to be based on winning percentage was also tabled for May.

The proposal to stop automatic first downs from being awarded on defensive holding and illegal contact penalties didn't pass.

Ovechkin nets No. 891, Caps top Bruins

Associated Press

BOSTON — Alex Ovechkin is a hat trick away.

The Washington Capitals forward scored goal No. 891 of his career on Tuesday night, leaving him three away from tying Wayne Gretzky's NHL record and four from becoming the league's all-time leading goal-scorer.

Only a missed empty-netter in the final minutes of the Capitals' 4-3 victory over the Boston Bruins kept Ovechkin from getting even closer.

"It's getting close," Capitals coach Spencer Carbery said. "You can feel it. You can definitely feel it."

"If that empty netter ...," he said, his words trailing off as he broke into a smile. "Yeah, it's getting close."

A three-time NHL MVP who has led the league in goals nine times, Ovechkin missed six weeks this fall with a broken left leg but has scored 12 goals in his past 18 games to get back on a record-breaking pace. He has 38 goals in 58 games, a rate that would put him over the top in Washington's penultimate game of the regular season on April 15 at the New York Islanders.

"I go back to when he was injured and out for a while. When that happened, everyone was kind of thinking to themselves whether or not it was going to be possible," goalie Charlie Lindgren said.

"But anything's possible with Alex Ovechkin. We've seen that this far," Lindgren said. "We've got eight games to go, and the best thing about it is it doesn't feel like there's any pressure at all. And the team's enjoying it."

The Caps trailed 1-0 with about four minutes left in the first period when John Carlson passed the puck toward the net and Dylan Strome redirected it across the crease. Ovechkin easily pushed into the open half of the net for power-play goal No. 322 — already an NHL rec-

ord. He pumped both arms before joining his teammates in a celebratory hug. Afterward, he downplayed the importance of the goal.

"A goal is a goal," he said. "It was a great play by Stromer and Carly."

The Boston crowd gave a mixed cheer for visiting Washington. The Bruins, who lost their ninth straight game, have already fired their coach and are likely to miss the playoffs for the first time since 2016, so many fans — more than a few of them in Ovechkin jerseys — were likely there to see history in progress.

Kings 4, Jets 1: Andrei Kuzmenko, Adrian Kempe and captain Anze Kopitar each had a goal and an assist in host Los Angeles' victory over NHL-leading Winnipeg.

Trevor Moore also scored for the Kings, who moved two points ahead of the Oilers for second place in the Pacific Division.

Darcy Kuemper made 18 saves as LA earned its 11th victory in 14 games while dominating this meeting of the NHL's top two defensive teams.

Cole Perfetti scored his 17th goal and Connor Hellebuyck stopped 16 shots for the Jets, whose three-game winning streak ended in the opener of a three-game road trip.

Canadiens 3, Panthers 2 (OT): Nick Suzuki scored his second of the game 29 seconds into overtime as host Montreal came back for a dramatic victory over Florida in the second game of a home-and-home.

Suzuki also tied the game with 8.4 seconds remaining in regulation.

Josh Anderson also scored for the Canadiens (35-30-9) and Sam Montembeault stopped 25 shots.

Lane Hutson earned three assists to pad that total to 57 this season, passing Chris Chelios for second-most by a rookie defenseman in NHL history.

Blues 2, Red Wings 1 (OT):

Cam Fowler scored with 1:34 remaining in overtime and host St. Louis won its 10th straight game.

Jordan Kyrou also scored and Jordan Binnington made 20 saves for the Blues, who moved into a tie with the idle Wild for the first Western Conference wild-card spot with 88 points. Minnesota holds the tiebreaker with one more regulation and overtime win.

J.T. Compher scored and Cam Talbot made 35 saves for Detroit, which is four points behind Montreal and two points behind Columbus and the New York Rangers in the race for the second wild-card spot in the East.

Fowler scored his ninth goal of the season on a feed from Robert Thomas, who has 11 assists in his last five games.

Lightning 4, Islanders 1:

Jake Guentzel had a goal and an assist, Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 28 shots and visiting Tampa Bay inched closer to clinching a playoff spot with its fourth straight victory.

Oliver Bjorkstrand scored his 20th of the season, Victor Hedman also scored and Nick Paul added an empty-netter for the Lightning. Nikita Kucherov and Brayden Point each added two assists.

Bo Horvat scored a short-handed goal for New York and Ilya Sorokin made 19 saves as the Islanders lost their sixth straight (0-4-2), further diminishing their slim playoff hopes.

Oilers 3, Golden Knights 2:

Leon Draisaitl added to his NHL-leading goal total by scoring on a 5-on-3 power play to put Edmonton ahead for good, but host Vegas clinched a playoff berth despite the loss.

The Golden Knights, who had their season-high six-game winning streak snapped, were assured a playoff spot when the Calgary Flames were beaten by the Utah Hockey Club.

The Oilers kept their slim

hopes alive for the Pacific Division title, pulling to within seven points of first-place Vegas. Both teams have eight games left.

Sabres 5, Senators 2: Rasmus Dahlin and Alex Tuch each had a goal and an assist, and visiting Buffalo swept its season series against Ottawa with a victory.

The Sabres outscored the Senators 17-5 in their four meetings this season.

The Senators were without captain Brady Tkachuk, who is sidelined with an upper-body injury from a hit by Ryan Graves in Sunday's game against Pittsburgh. This marks only the fourth game Tkachuk has missed in the past three years.

Blue Jackets 8, Predators 4:

Kirill Marchenko scored three goals for his third career hat trick and added an assist, and host Columbus beat Nashville.

Sean Monahan had two goals and two assists, Adam Fantilli had two goals and an assist, Dante Fabbro had a goal and an assist, and Zach Werenski and Kent Johnson each had two assists for the Blue Jackets. Elvis Merzlikins stopped 24 shots.

Utah 3, Flames 1: Kevin Stenlund and Barrett Hayton scored for Utah in a victory over visiting Calgary.

Clayton Keller had an empty-netter and Karel Vejmelka stopped 32 shots to help Utah get its second straight win.

Rasmus Andersson scored for Calgary and Dustin Wolf finished with 25 saves. The Flames lost for the third time in four games (1-2-1).

Ducks 4, Sharks 3 (SO): Mason McTavish scored the only goal in the shootout as host Anaheim beat San Jose.

Trevor Zegras and Sam Collangelo each had a goal and an assist, Jackson LaCombe also scored for the Ducks and McTavish had three assists. Lukas Dostal stopped 28 shots as Anaheim won for the fourth time in six games.

Eovaldi goes distance, shuts out Reds

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Nathan Eovaldi pitched a four-hitter for the majors' first complete game of the season, and the Texas Rangers beat the Cincinnati Reds 1-0 on Tuesday night.

Eovaldi struck out eight and walked none in his fifth career complete game. The right-hander threw 99 pitches, 70 for strikes.

It was Eovaldi's first shutout since April 29, 2023, against the Yankees and No. 3 for his career.

Wyatt Langford homered for Texas in the first against Carson Spiers (0-1).

Eovaldi retired his first 12 batters, including five straight strikeouts during one stretch. Gavin Lux hit a leadoff single in the fifth for Cincinnati's first base-runner.

Dodgers 3, Braves 1: Dustin May pitched five strong innings after missing nearly two years, Mookie Betts hit his third go-ahead homer of the season and host Los Angeles beat winless Atlanta.

With a 7-0 mark, the defending World Series champion Dodgers are off to the club's best start since moving to LA. The only better starts in franchise history came in 1955 (10-0) and 1940 (9-0) when the team was located in Brooklyn.

The Braves fell to 0-6 for the first time since opening 0-9 in 2016.

May allowed just one hit and an unearned run. He struck out six and walked three in his first start since May 17, 2023. The right-hander missed last season while rehabbing from a torn flexor tendon in his right arm. In 2023, his season ended with Tommy John revision surgery.

Marlins 4, Mets 2: Sandy Alcantara pitched five effective innings for his first win in 19 months and host Miami beat New York despite getting only three hits.

Alcantara, who missed last season after undergoing Tommy

John surgery, allowed two runs and four hits while striking out four in his first victory since Sept. 3, 2023. The 2022 NL Cy Young Award winner got a no-decision in his season debut March 27.

Graham Pauley hit a go-ahead, two-run double in the fourth and Kyle Stowers homered for the Marlins.

Rays 7, Pirates 0: Jake Mangum collected three hits and two RBI and Shane Baz struck out a career-high 10 in six innings as host Tampa Bay beat Pittsburgh.

Brandon Lowe homered as the Rays earned their third consecutive win. Lowe finished with three hits and three RBIs.

Baz (1-0) allowed seven hits and walked none in his first start of the season. Mason Englert pitched two innings before Mason Montgomery finished the nine-hitter for Tampa Bay.

Diamondbacks 7, Yankees 5: Eugenio Suárez hit a go-ahead grand slam with two outs in the eighth, Corbin Burnes pitched 4 1/3 innings in his Arizona debut, and the visiting Diamondbacks handed New York its first loss.

Geraldo Perdomo started Arizona's rally with an RBI single off Tim Hill, and the D-backs loaded the bases on two walks. After Mark Leiter Jr. (0-1) struck out Josh Naylor, Suárez smashed his sixth career slam into the left-field seats for a 7-4 lead.

Arizona rallied for its second straight win after Burnes allowed four runs—two earned—and four hits in his first start since signing a \$210 million, six-year deal with the Diamondbacks as a free agent Dec. 30. The 2021 NL Cy Young Award winner struck out eight in a 98-pitch outing.

Blue Jays 5, Nationals 3: Bo Bichette hit a tiebreaking two-run single with two outs in the eighth inning and host Toronto won its third straight.

Bichette bounced an 0-2 pitch

from Washington left-hander Jose A. Ferrer (0-1) down the first base line to drive in George Springer and Will Wagner.

Chad Green (1-0) got one out for the win and Jeff Hoffman finished with a 1-2-3 ninth for his second save in two opportunities.

Twins 8, White Sox 3: Jose Miranda hit a tiebreaking two-run single in visiting Minnesota's five-run sixth inning, and the Twins beat Chicago for their first win of the season.

Ryan Jeffers and Ty France each had two hits for Minnesota, and Harrison Bader added a three-run homer in the ninth.

White Sox right-hander Shane Smith allowed two hits and two runs in 5 1/3 innings in his major league debut. He struck out three and walked four.

Brewers 5, Royals 0: Eric Haase and Christian Yelich hit solo home runs to back a strong start by Chad Patrick and host Milwaukee beat Kansas City for its first win of the season.

Patrick gave the Brewers something they hadn't had thus far—three scoreless innings to begin the game. Milwaukee had surrendered 24 runs in the first three innings of its first four games.

Patrick fell an out short of qualifying for the win in his first career start, giving up three hits and three walks with five strikeouts in 4 2/3 innings.

Angels 9, Cardinals 7 (11): Kyren Paris hit a tiebreaking single in the 11th inning, Yoan Moncada followed with a two-run double and visiting Los Angeles beat St. Louis.

The game was tied at 3 after nine innings before each team scored three runs in the 10th—and the Angels added three in the 11th. Victor Scott II had an RBI single in the bottom half, but Ryan Zeferjahn got two outs for his first career save.

Zeferjahn struck out Willson Contreras with a runner aboard to end it as the Angels outlasted

the Cardinals in extra innings for the second consecutive night.

Giants 3, Astros 1: Logan Webb pitched seven strong innings, Willy Adames hit a two-run double and visiting San Francisco beat Houston.

Adames' double down the left-field line scored Christian Koss and Patrick Bailey. Heliot Ramos later added a solo homer, his third of the year, and that was all Webb (1-0) would need. He held the Astros to just one run and five hits with six strikeouts and no walks.

Houston's lone run came on a homer by José Altuve to the left-field Crawford Boxes, his first of the year, in the fourth.

Tigers 4, Mariners 1: Casey Mize (1-0) combined with three relievers on a one-hitter, and visiting Detroit beat Seattle.

Riley Greene homered for the second straight day as the Tigers got their second straight win after dropping their first three games. Kerry Carpenter, Colt Keith and Spencer Torkelson drove in runs.

Padres 7, Guardians 0: Michael King struck out 11 in five innings and Jackson Merrill homered for host San Diego, which started 6-0 for the first time in its 57-season history by beating Cleveland.

The Padres' previous best start was 4-0 in 1984, when they went to their first World Series.

Cubs 7, Athletics 4: Seiya Suzuki hit a three-run homer in the first inning, Kyle Tucker added a solo shot in the third and visiting Chicago slugged away for a second straight game.

The A's answered in the bottom of the first on Brent Rooker's two-run drive, and Shea Langeliers had a two-run shot in the third.

Cubs lefty Justin Steele (2-1) struck out six in 6 2/3 innings and continued his impressive interleague success in his third start of 2025, helping Chicago win back-to-back games for the first time this season.