

Trump threatens strikes on infrastructure

President's warning comes hours after US forces hit highway bridge near Tehran

BY LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump threatened more attacks on Iranian infrastructure on Thursday, hours after U.S. forces struck a highway bridge near Tehran.

Posting on his Truth Social platform, Trump shared a video of the bridge collapsing and urged Iranian leaders to make a deal before it is too late.

"Our Military, the greatest and most powerful (by far!) anywhere in the World, hasn't even started destroying what's left in Iran," he wrote shortly before midnight in Washington. "Bridges next, then Electric Power Plants! New Regime leadership knows what has to be

done, and has to be done FAST!"

The attack on the B1 bridge killed eight people and wounded 95, according to Iran's state media. U.S. officials told Reuters and Axios the strike was militarily justified, saying it aimed to eliminate a supply route for Iran's ballistic missile and attack drone force.

The strike comes as Trump says the U.S. is preparing to wind down the war, which has destroyed much of Iran's weapons stockpile and naval vessels. Officials in Washington have framed the monthlong conflict as successful, saying the U.S. is in talks to reach a ceasefire.

However, Iranian leaders have publicly denied that they

are negotiating with the U.S. and continue to effectively blockade oil tankers from transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

The choke hold on the waterway has sent global fuel prices surging, sparking international condemnation and raising concerns about long-term economic impacts.

Gas prices have been rising in the U.S. and at overseas American military bases. In Germany, home to the largest U.S. armed forces presence in Europe, a gallon of super unleaded cost \$5.01 on Thursday. About three weeks ago, the price was \$4.17 per gallon.

In a prime-time address this week, Trump said the U.S. does not rely on fuel from the strait as

much as other nations, adding that they can get their own oil.

"We will be helpful, but they should take the lead in protecting the oil that they so desperately depend on," he said.

The U.S. was not among the more than 40 nations that gathered virtually on Thursday to discuss ways to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

The United Kingdom hosted the meeting, which explored diplomatic, economic and political measures to get the ships moving again.

"Iran is trying to hold the global economy hostage in the Strait of Hormuz," British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said in a statement following the talks. "They must not prevail."

Hegseth asks Army's chief of staff to step down

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George will step down and retire immediately, the Pentagon said Thursday.

"The Department of War is grateful for General George's decades of service to our nation. We wish him well in his retirement," chief Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell posted on X.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth asked George to step down, a Pentagon official confirmed Thursday.

"Nothing further to provide at the moment," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Hegseth wants someone in the role who will implement President Donald Trump's and

Hegseth's vision for the Army, according to CBS News, which first reported the news.

Two other generals were fired by Hegseth, a Pentagon official confirmed.

They are Gen. David Hodne, who became the head of the service's Training and Transformation Command in October; and Maj. Gen. William Green Jr., the chief of Army chaplains. It was not immediately clear why they were targeted.

The Army chief of staff typically serves a four-year term. George was nominated by President Joe Biden and confirmed by the Senate in 2023.

He was expected to hold the position until fall 2027. A spokesman for George could not be reached for immediate comment.

George, 61, served as the Army's vice chief of staff from 2022 to 2023 and also worked as the senior military assistant to former Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. He has extensive combat experience, including service in the Gulf War, Iraq War and the war in Afghanistan.

With George's ouster, Hegseth has nearly remade the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff. Gen. Eric M. Smith, commandant of the Marine Corps, and Gen. B. Chance Saltzman, head of the Space Force, are the only two remaining since Hegseth took office in January 2025.

Some of the firings include Air Force Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Adm. Lisa Franchetti, the chief of naval operations; Adm. Linda Fa-

gan, the commandant of the Coast Guard; and Air Force Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Kruse, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Gen. David Allvin, the Air Force chief of staff, announced in August that he would retire. The statement from the Air Force did not provide a reason for the decision.

The current vice chief of staff of the Army, Gen. Christopher LaNeve, was formerly Hegseth's military aide. He previously served as the commanding general of the Army's 82nd Airborne Division from 2022 to 2023.

LaNeve replaced Gen. James Mingus, who held the vice chief posting for two years. He will likely be considered as George's replacement.

Ford leaves Croatia to resume operations

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The world's largest aircraft carrier has returned to full operational duty following a hiatus for repairs and crew rest, weeks after a shipboard fire injured three Navy sailors.

USS Gerald R. Ford departed the Croatian city of Split on Thursday after a five-day port call, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet said in a statement.

It wasn't clear whether the carrier will remain in the Mediterranean Sea or move into the Red Sea in support of Operation Epic Fury, the U.S.-Israel campaign against Iran that is nearing the end of its fifth week.

It's also uncertain when Ford, which has been deployed for some 284 days, will return to the

United States. Earlier this week, the Navy's highest-ranking officer, Adm. Daryl Caudle, said Ford likely would go into a "record-breaking" 11th month of operations.

The ship "remains poised for full mission tasking in support of national objectives in any area of operation," the NAVFAC/6th Fleet statement said.

It did not specify what repairs were made in Croatia or say whether they were connected to the March 12 fire, which started in Ford's main laundry areas and spread to nearby berthing compartments. The blaze was not combat-related, according to the Navy.

The service has released few details, saying only that an investigation into the fire is ongoing. Naval Criminal Investigative Service is leading a law en-

forcement investigation with assistance from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, NAVFAC/6th Fleet said Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush departed its homeport in Norfolk, Va., on Tuesday to begin operations for its deployment, the Navy said at the time.

The Pentagon hasn't announced where Bush will go, but the carrier reportedly will head across the Atlantic Ocean into the NAVFAC/6th Fleet area of operations, presumably to relieve Ford.

Prior to Croatia, Ford stopped at Naval Support Activity Souda Bay on the Greek island of Crete on March 23 for assessment and repairs related to the fire, which occurred while the carrier was on station in the Red Sea.

The three-day port call at Souda Bay included rehabilitation of seven berthing compartments and a repair assessment by service maintenance personnel, such as structural engineers, naval architects and other experts.

Two of the sailors injured in the fire returned to full duty shortly thereafter, while a third was flown off the ship in stable condition for additional medical care, the Navy said at the time.

The fire did not affect the carrier's propulsion plant and it continued to carry out flight operations, officials have said.

Ford's three destroyer escorts — USS Bainbridge, USS Mahan and USS Winston S. Churchill — also have left the Mideast, making the passage through the Suez Canal, USNI News reported Monday.

Reports: US jet shot down in Iran; 1 aviator rescued

By LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

A search and rescue effort was underway on Friday afternoon to locate the crew of a U.S. fighter jet that was shot down in Iran, The New York Times reported, citing U.S. officials.

One crew member from the downed jet was rescued by American forces, two U.S. offi-

cials confirmed to CBS News. CNN reported the crew member is alive and receiving medical treatment. The White House confirmed President Donald Trump had been briefed.

Iranian state media on Friday circulated photos and videos of debris from what appeared to be an F-15 fighter jet,

including an ejection seat, claiming it had been shot down. Videos also appeared to show a C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft and two UH-60 Black Hawks that Iranian media claimed were part of the search effort.

Axios also confirmed the news, citing a source familiar with the incident.

Iranian state media was urg-

ing residents to hand over any "enemy pilot" to police and promised a reward for anyone who did, The Associated Press reported.

Since the war began, Iran has made at least six false claims about shooting down U.S. aircraft, all of which American officials have denied.

Princeton back at sea after small electrical fires in port

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

Small electrical fires aboard the cruiser USS Princeton on March 12 led to a partial evacuation while the ship was docked at Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach in California, the Navy said Thursday.

"Out of an abundance of caution, non-essential personnel

were asked to leave the ship for safety while the federal fire department was called to assist the crew's response," a statement from the 3rd Fleet in San Diego said. "At no point did a major fire break out, and the situation was quickly brought under control with no injuries to personnel."

Seal Beach is about 90 miles

north of Naval Base San Diego.

The Navy said the Ticonderoga-class cruiser experienced an electrical "casualty" — a term for a malfunction or other dangerous situation. After the electrical issues were resolved, the ship returned to San Diego.

"Princeton has since returned to sea and is currently conducting routine training and

operations," the Navy said.

The Princeton, commissioned in February 1989, is among cruisers the Navy decided in 2024 to retire by 2027 instead of modernizing. Current plans call for three Ticonderoga-class cruisers — USS Gettysburg, USS Chosin and USS Cape St. George — to serve until at least 2029.

Senate tees up bill to end Homeland Security shutdown

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The Senate took the first step Thursday in a Republican-backed plan to reopen the Department of Homeland Security, sending the House for a second time its bill to fund the department except for immigration enforcement.

In an early-morning pro forma session, the Senate agreed, by voice vote, to table a House measure that would have extended funding for the entire department for eight weeks. The move effectively restored the bill back to its original Senate-passed version, giving the House another chance to act on it.

The move came after President Donald Trump threw his support behind the Senate proposal, which includes a plan to fund Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and

Border Protection separately through a filibuster-proof reconciliation bill in coming weeks. Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., who had called the Senate bill a “joke” last week because it lacked immigration enforcement funding, rallied behind it Wednesday after Trump’s intervention.

Trump set a June 1 deadline for Congress to pass a reconciliation bill funding the immigration agencies, a tight timeline for a cumbersome process that dragged on for roughly five months last year, when Republicans passed their “big, beautiful bill.”

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said Thursday the new commitment from Trump and Johnson to back the Senate plan came after leaders had time “to figure out what’s in the realm of the possible,” given staunch Democratic opposition

to funding the immigration agencies without new guardrails on federal agents.

But the House stopped short of trying to pass the measure by unanimous consent at its own pro forma session Thursday morning. Johnson was likely going to need to call the House back from its Easter recess at some point to clear the bill for Trump’s signature through a roll call vote.

The partial shutdown of DHS, now 48 days old, has become the longest in history, with tens of thousands of workers going unpaid until the shutdown ends. Trump issued a directive to pay Transportation Security Administration workers on an emergency basis.

And on Thursday, Trump announced he would begin paying all DHS workers, without providing details on where the money would come from.

100% tariff on some medications planned

Bloomberg News

The Trump administration will impose tariffs of as much as 100% on certain imported medicines, albeit with several key exemptions, a maneuver to pressure drugmakers to manufacture more in the U.S.

The new levy, which President Donald Trump authorized on Thursday, applies to patented drugs made in countries that lack tariff deals with the U.S. by companies that don’t have most-favored-nation-pricing agreements with the administration.

Duties for products made by certain larger companies will take effect in 120 days, while items from smaller ones won’t be hit for another 180 days, per a White House statement.

Tariffs on imports from major economies that cut deals with the White House will be capped at 15%. That includes the European Union, South Korea, Japan, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, the statement said. Imports from the U.K. will face a lower rate, after it agreed to double government spending on new medicines as a proportion of gross domestic product over the next decade in a separate deal.

Medicines made by companies that commit to some manufacturing in the U.S. would see their imported products taxed at 20%, and if they strike MFN agreements, the rate would fall to zero, the White House said. The tariff-free exemption lasts through Jan. 20, 2029.

The charges deliver on threats the president made last fall to impose 100% tariffs on branded or patented medicines unless companies move production to the U.S. But they also contain significant carve-outs that could blunt the impact of the measures.

Judge blocks termination of parole for migrants who entered US with an app

Miami Herald

A federal judge has temporarily blocked the U.S. government from ending parole and work authorization for hundreds of thousands of migrants who entered the country using the CBP One app.

District Judge Allison D. Burroughs in Massachusetts ruled that the Department of Homeland Security acted unlawfully by terminating parole en masse without reviewing individual cases, which she said is a violation of the Administrative Procedure Act, which governs how federal agencies propose, adopt and enforce regulations.

“The parole terminations ex-

ceeded the agency’s statutory authority and contradicted the procedures set forth in its own regulations,” the judge wrote in the ruling on March 31.

The migrants affected by the ruling entered the United States through CBP One, a mobile application launched in 2023 under the Biden administration that allowed individuals to request parole, schedule inspections and coordinate legal entry with U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The program was designed to manage border crossings more effectively and provide a legal pathway for migrants to enter the country. DHS’s early mass termination of the program af-

ected more than 900,000 people nationwide who had entered the U.S. using the app.

The 25-page ruling vacates the April 2025 terminations, restoring the legal status and work authorization of migrants affected by mass notices from the administration.

It also allows a class-action lawsuit to proceed, though the court narrowed the scope to migrants directly impacted by the blanket terminations.

In a written statement, DHS said it disagrees with the judge’s ruling, calling it “blatant judicial activism undermining the President’s authority to determine who remains in this country.”

Rubio accuses China of harassing ships

Bloomberg News

The U.S. accused China of harassing and detaining Panama-flagged ships after the Central American nation struck down contracts with a Hong Kong conglomerate operating ports on both sides of the Panama Canal.

The allegations, first raised by the U.S. Federal Maritime Commission and amplified by Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Thursday, add another point of tension between the U.S. and China ahead of President Donald Trump's scheduled visit to Beijing in May.

"China's recent actions against Panama-flagged vessels raise serious concerns about the use of economic tools to undermine the rule of law in Panama, a sovereign nation and vital partner for global commerce," Rubio said in a statement.

"Detentions, delays, or other impediments to the movement of vessels undermine the stability of global supply chains, increase costs for businesses and consumers, and erode confidence in the international trading system," Rubio added.

Panama's Supreme Court

ruled in January that the contract granted to CK Hutchison Holdings Ltd. to operate two ports near the Panama Canal was unconstitutional, delivering a win to Trump's efforts to rein in China's control of strategic infrastructure in Latin America.

The canal has been in focus since December 2024, when Trump — then a month away from returning to office — began threatening to "take back" the waterway from Panama, citing unfair fees. He also falsely claimed the canal was being operated by China, setting off

tensions between the geopolitical powers.

China has denied U.S. allegations related to the detention of Panama-flagged ships.

"The U.S.'s repeated wrongful allegations only reveal its attempt to take control of the canal," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said in a regular briefing on Friday.

CK Hutchison last month filed international arbitration against Panama seeking at least \$2 billion in damages and alleging an "illegal state takeover" of the ports.

Cuba releasing 2K prisoners as tensions with US rise

Miami Herald

Amid heightened tensions with the United States, the Cuban government announced Thursday evening it will release more than 2,010 prisoners as a humanitarian gesture amid Holy Week celebrations.

It is unclear if among those pardoned are some of the 1,200 political prisoners human-rights groups estimate are held currently on the island. The Cuban government does not recognize them as such.

The statement, published Thursday on the Communist Party's newspaper *Granma*, says "this humanitarian and sovereign gesture stemmed from a careful analysis of the nature of the acts committed by those sanctioned, their good conduct while in prison, the fact that they had served a significant portion of their sentences, and their state of health."

The government said that among those released are "young people, women, adults over the age of 60, and those reaching the end of their term of early release during the current six-month period and the coming year, as well as foreign na-

tionals and Cuban citizens residing abroad."

The government said it did not release hardened criminals — including people sentenced for sexual assault, pedophilia, murder, or drug offenses — and "certain individuals who had previously received a pardon but subsequently committed new crimes." The statement said that people who committed crimes against public authorities — a charge often used to imprison protesters — were also excluded.

Earlier this month, the government said it would release 51 prisoners as a gesture of "good will" towards the Vatican. Of those, about 25 have been released, some of them political prisoners, including people who joined demonstrations against the government in July 2021.

While the statement Thursday said this is "a habitual practice in our criminal justice system and in the humanitarian trajectory of the Revolution," the gesture comes when talks with the Trump administration appear stalled and the U.S. president has repeatedly floated the idea of "taking" Cuba.

Kenyan anti-gang forces accused of rape in Haiti

Miami Herald

Four cases of rape in Haiti involving members of the departing Kenya-led Multinational Security Support mission, including one involving a 12-year-old girl, have been investigated and corroborated, a United Nations report says.

The U.N. said it received the reports of sexual exploitation and abuse involving personnel from the Kenya-led anti-gang force in Haiti last year, and they were referred to the commander of the mission for investigation and action.

"All the allegations were found to be substantiated by investigations conducted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights," said the report on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

The police-led anti-gang force has consisted mostly of cops from Kenya and is not specifically a U.N. mission, although it was authorized by the Security Council in 2023.

The mission, now in the process of withdrawing from Haiti, deployed its first personnel to

the Caribbean nation in June 2024. A one-page summary of the four cases did not provide many details on the allegations. The report lists four cases under the category of mission personnel, and the ages of the four female victims: 12, 16, 16 and 18 years old. Under the reports' findings, all of the cases said: "Violation corroborated."

All but one lists "pending" under action taken. In the case of the 12 year-old, the report says that an internal investigation was conducted by the mission itself. No further details were provided.

Stéphane Dujarric, the spokesman for Secretary-General António Guterres, said the U.N. has "flagged" the issue for follow-up with the new anti-gang force that officially began its deployment Wednesday.

In its report last week, the office of the high commissioner for human rights noted that it will be crucial, as the new force is deployed in Haiti, to put in place mechanisms to prevent, investigate, deal with and publicly report on potential human rights violations and abuses, including sexual exploitation.

Braves rout D-backs in series opener

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Matt Olson, Dominic Smith and Mauricio Dubón hit solo homers, Reynaldo López gave up one run over five innings and the Atlanta Braves coasted to a 17-2 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks on Thursday night in the opener of a four-game series.

The Braves broke it open with an eight-run fifth, sending 12 batters to plate to take a 10-1 lead. Austin Riley and Michael Harris II had two-run doubles and Ozzie Albies brought home two more with a single.

It was a frustrating inning for the D-backs — partly thanks to technology. Ryne Nelson walked three batters, including Ronald Acuña Jr., which forced in a run. The right-hander had a potential strike three to Albies overturned by an ABS challenge, turning it into a walk. A potential inning-ending double play was also overturned when Drake Baldwin was ruled safe at first.

On top of that, 10-time Gold Glove third baseman Nolan Arenado made an error that led to five unearned runs for Nelson.

Nelson (0-1) made it just 4½ innings, giving up seven runs, but only two were earned. He walked three and struck out three.

López (1-0) gave up four hits and a walk while striking out three. Olson finished with three hits and three RBIs.

Twins 5, Royals 1: Taj Bradley pitched six innings of five-hit ball, and visiting Minnesota homered three times in the ninth inning to break open a close game and avoid a three-game series sweep.

Bradley (1-0) struck out three and walked one while out-dueling Cole Ragans (0-2), helping the Twins improve to 2-0 with him on the mound. Minnesota was winless in its other four games on a six-game trip through Baltimore and Kansas City.

Kody Clemens scored on an error by five-time Gold Glove-winning catcher Salvador Perez in the second, and Byron Buxton added a sacrifice fly off John Schreiber in the eighth, before the Twins teed off against Royals reliever Steven Cruz in the ninth.

Matt Wallner began the barrage with his homer to left, Clemens followed two batters late with his first of the season, and Josh Bell gave the Twins their first back-to-back homers since last July with his shot off Cruz to right field.

The only offense for Kansas City came in the eighth, when Maikel Garcia and Bobby Witt Jr. put runners on the corners with

back-to-back singles, and Vinnie Pasquantino hit a sacrifice fly. But after Perez grounded into a fielder's choice, Twins reliever Taylor Rogers struck out Jac Caglianone with a sweeper out of the zone to leave the tying run on second base.

Giants 7, Mets 2: Rookie catcher Daniel Susac went 3 for 3 with a walk in his first major league start as San Francisco rolled over visiting New York.

The younger brother of former Giants catcher Andrew Susac singled in his first two big league at-bats off David Peterson (0-1), then drew a walk and singled off Sean Manaea.

Rafael Devers homered and Casey Schmitt went 3 for 3 with a walk and an RBI for the Giants, who had 13 hits overall and handed the Mets their third straight loss.

Robbie Ray (1-1) gave up two runs and three hits in 5½ innings. He struck out seven and walked three.

Former Mets reliever Blade Tidwell worked three scoreless innings to earn his first big league save.

Bo Bichette's RBI double off Ray gave the Mets a 1-0 lead in the first before the Giants scored three times with two outs in the bottom of the inning.

Royals rookie catcher benched after oversleeping

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Kansas City catcher Carter Jensen was removed from the Royals' starting lineup for Thursday game with the Minnesota Twins after he overslept.

"I didn't wake up to my alarm. Slept through it," Jensen told The Kansas City Star and other outlets. "Don't really have an excuse — nor should I. It sucks. It happens. I feel like I let teammates down, coaches down. Just learn from it and just know it won't happen again."

Jensen eventually arrived, but not early enough to prepare adequately to start the game. He did end up coming in as Kansas

City's catcher in the ninth inning of the Royals' 5-1 loss.

Salvador Perez, who was expecting to be Kansas City's designated hitter Thursday, ended up catching the first eight innings.

"First and foremost, I'm glad Carter's OK," Royals first baseman Vinnie Pasquantino told reporters.

"I mean, that was kind of the initial thought when you're trying to get a hold of his parents and everything like that — just make sure he's OK."

Pasquantino said Jensen, a 22-year-old rookie, needs to learn from this experience.

"There are some things that cannot happen, and that's one of them," Pasquantino

said. "So he's going to have to wear it on the chin — same way anybody would have to. It can't happen, and hopefully it doesn't happen again. But it's one of those things that you just can't afford mistakes like that in this game. Just got to move forward the best that he can. I know he feels really bad.

"I know it was not his favorite drive to the field this morning, but it wasn't our favorite morning either, trying to figure out what was going on. He'll learn from it, grow a little bit. We're here for him, though. It's not like anybody's mad at him. Things happen. But you've got to learn from mistakes like that — and maybe get another alarm clock or something."

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Lakers lose Doncic to injury, suffer blowout loss to Thunder

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 28 points as the Oklahoma City Thunder routed the Los Angeles Lakers 139-96 on Thursday night in a game in which NBA leading scorer Luka Doncic left due to injury.

Only six times in their storied history have the Lakers been defeated by more points. They fell six short of their worst margin of defeat ever — a 49-point loss to the Dallas Mavericks in 2017.

Gilgeous-Alexander, the reigning league MVP, got the best of his matchup with Doncic — one of Gilgeous-Alexander's top competitors for this season's award. Doncic had scored at least 40 points in five of his previous seven games, but he finished with 12 points on 3-for-10 shooting from the field and 1-for-7 shooting from 3-point range against the Thunder's suffocating defense.

Doncic left the game with a left hamstring injury in the third quarter. Lakers coach JJ Redick said he will have an MRI on Friday.

Austin Reaves scored 15 points and LeBron James added 13 for the Lakers.

Hornets 127, Suns 107: Miles Bridges scored 25 points, and rookie Kon Knueppel set a franchise record for 3-pointers in a season and finished with 20 points as Charlotte Hornets rolled past visiting Phoenix.

Knueppel, the No. 4 overall pick from Duke, made four 3s to give him 261, breaking the previous record of 260 set by Kemba Walker in the 2018-19 season. Knueppel broke the record with a corner 3 after missing two open looks earlier in the fourth quarter.

Earlier in the game, Phoenix's Collin Gillespie set the Suns' franchise record for 3s in a season, eclipsing the mark of 226 held by Quentin Richardson in the 2004-05 season. Gillespie finished with two 3s and six points.

Jalen Green had 25 points and Devin Booker added 22 for the Suns, who have lost six of their past seven road games.

Pistons 113, Timberwolves 108: Jalen Duren had 22 points and 14 rebounds, Daniss Jenkins scored 26 points and Detroit beat visiting Minnesota as both teams were without a superstar.

Minnesota ruled out All-Star guard Anthony Edwards, listing his right knee injury and an illness, about 90 minutes before tipoff. The Pistons announced earlier in the day that Cade Cunningham would be out at least another week to recover from a collapsed left lung.

Edwards and Cunningham will be ineligible for NBA postseason awards because they can't reach the 65-game minimum.

Minnesota's Julius Randle finished with 27

points, Ayo Dosunmu and Naz Reid scored 19 points each and Mike Conley scored all 14 of his points in the first half.

Detroit's Ausar Thompson, the Eastern Conference defensive player of the month, had a career-high nine assists to go along with nine rebounds and seven points.

Cavaliers 118, Warriors 111: Donovan Mitchell had 25 points and six rebounds, Max Strus' 3-pointer with 54 seconds left helped seal it as he scored 24, and Cleveland beat host Golden State.

James Harden contributed 19 points and five assists as the Cavs won for the seventh time in nine games during a stretch playing five times in eight nights.

Gui Santos and Brandin Podziemski scored 25 points apiece for the Warriors, who were missing Stephen Curry for the 27th straight game but his return could come as soon as Sunday. He scrimmaged 5-on-5 for the third time in as many days to test his injured right knee that has sidelined him since Jan. 30.

Trail Blazers 118, Pelicans 106: Jrue Holiday had 27 points, including seven 3-pointers, and Portland downed visiting New Orleans.

Deni Avdija added 26 points for the Blazers, who have won three straight and eight of their past 10 games. Toumani Camara finished with 23 points.

Jeremiah Fears had 21 points off the bench for the Pelicans, who have lost 11 of their last 12 games.

The Blazers have already clinched a play-in game. The team sits a half-game back of the eighth-place Clippers. If the Blazers can move into eighth, they'd have to win one game to advance to the playoffs, whereas in ninth, they'd have to win two.

Spurs 118, Clippers 99: De'Aaron Fox scored 22 points on 9-of-13 shooting, and San Antonio beat host Los Angeles without Victor Wembanyama in the lineup to win their 11th in a row.

Wembanyama was rested on the second night of a back-to-back. He had 41 points and 18 rebounds in a 127-113 win at the Golden State Warriors on Wednesday.

The Spurs had six players in double figures, including Stephon Castle with 20 points and Dylan Harper with 19 off the bench.

San Antonio kept alive its hopes of catching Oklahoma City for the top spot in the West. The Spurs improved to 27-2 since Feb. 1 and 11-5 when Wembanyama doesn't play.

Kawhi Leonard scored 24 points to lead the Clippers with his 53rd consecutive game of 20 or more points.

UConn star voted top women's player

Sarah Strong, of UConn, was named The Associated Press women's basketball Player of the Year on Thursday after leading the Huskies to an undefeated season, setting the stage for a run to the Final Four.

Strong is the fifth player to win the award in her sophomore year, joining Oklahoma's Courtney Paris (2007), UConn stars Maya Moore (2009) and Breanna Stewart (2014), and USC's JuJu Watkins, who won it last year. The AP started giving out the award in 1995.

It's the 13th time that a Huskies player has won the award. Paige Bueckers was the last to do it before Strong in 2021.

Vanderbilt's Shea Ralph, who was a former UConn player and assistant coach, won the AP Coach of the Year award.

Strong received 25 votes from a national media panel that votes for the Top 25 each week. Vanderbilt's Mikayla Blakes garnered four votes and UCLA's Lauren Betts got the other two. Voting was completed before the NCAA Tournament began.

Strong is averaging 18.6 points, 7.6 rebounds, 3.4 steals and 1.6 blocks a game while helping UConn go 38-0. She's shooting 59.4% from the field, 40.4% from 3 and 84.8% from the the foul line.

Also:

■ Cheryl Miller, whose impact on women's basketball spans generations, from dominating on the court at Southern California in the 1980s to making her mark in the broadcast booth, and former UConn star Breanna Stewart were honored by The Associated Press on Thursday as the greatest players of the women's college basketball poll era, selected by a 13-member panel. Miller accepted the honor at "The AP Top 25 Fan Poll Experience." Delta State was also recognized as the first No. 1 team when the women's basketball poll debuted 50 years ago.

— The Associated Press

Cousins expected to mentor Mendoza

Associated Press

HENDERSON, Nev. — Kirk Cousins agreed to a deal with the Las Vegas Raiders, his agent Mike McCartney announced Thursday morning, giving them a veteran quarterback to help ease the expected selection of Fernando Mendoza with the top draft pick.

Cousins' most recent team, Atlanta, will pay \$8.7 million this season and Las Vegas will handle the remaining \$1.3 million. Another \$10 million in guaranteed money will come next March. The Raiders also have a two-year, \$80 million option.

Cousins later posted "The Autumn Wind..." in a nod to the Raiders' theme that is played before every home game and was made famous by NFL Films.

Raiders coach Klint Kubiak and general manager John Spytek telegraphed this kind of move, saying they wouldn't want to throw a rookie quarterback into the starting lineup. It's been a poorly kept secret that rookie likely will be Mendoza, who won the Heisman Trophy en route to leading Indiana to its first and highly unlikely national championship.

"Ideally, you don't want him to start from Day One," Kubiak said Tuesday at the NFL owners meetings. "You'd love him to be able to learn behind somebody. That's in a perfect world. It doesn't always work out that way. Sometimes they have to play from Day One and it's our job as coaches to get them ready to go. I think it does help the player if they can sit behind a mature adult and

watch how they run the show."

Cousins, 37, has played 14 seasons in the NFL, including the past two in Atlanta. The Falcons signed him to a four-year, \$180 million deal only to draft Michael Penix Jr. with the eighth overall pick just six weeks later.

Cousins went 12-10 in starting 22 of 34 games. His 16 interceptions in 2024 led the league despite playing in just 14 games. The Falcons released him heading into free agency.

He is 88-77-2 as a starter with Washington, Minnesota and Atlanta. His greatest success came in 2022 when Cousins quarterbacked the Vikings to a 13-4 record.

Mendoza had his pro day on Wednesday at the Indiana facility in front of all 32 teams.

Court sets back Virginia QB's bid for 7th season

Associated Press

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Virginia quarterback Chandler Morris was denied in his bid for a preliminary injunction as he seeks a seventh season of eligibility.

Morris had filed a lawsuit in Charlottesville (Va.) Circuit Court last month seeking the injunction after the NCAA denied his medical redshirt waiver and appeal. A circuit court judge ruled against Morris on Thursday.

"The NCAA is pleased by the court's decision today, which protects the integrity of collegiate competition," the NCAA said in a statement. "As additional lawsuits challenging common-sense, academically-tied eligibility rules are filed, the NCAA will continue to defend against attempts to rob high school students across the nation of the opportunity to compete in college and experience the life-changing opportunities only

college sports can create.

"The NCAA and its member schools are making changes to deliver more benefits to student-athletes, but the patchwork of state laws and inconsistent, conflicting court decisions make partnering with Congress essential to provide stability for all college athletes."

Morris' case is one of 71 eligibility lawsuits that have been filed. Of those cases, 33 preliminary injunctions have been denied and 13 have been granted.

Twelve eligibility lawsuits are still pending in lower courts and 13 have been voluntarily dismissed prior to a decision on a preliminary injunction.

The dispute surrounding the 25-year-old Morris involves his 2022 season with TCU and whether it should count against his eligibility. Morris suffered a knee injury that season and applied for a medical redshirt,

but the NCAA denied that request after Morris made limited appearances in three games later that season.

Morris, the son of Clemson offensive coordinator Chad Morris, has thrown for 9,185 career yards while playing at Oklahoma (2020), TCU (2021-23), North Texas (2024) and Virginia (2025).

He passed for 3,000 yards and 16 touchdowns with nine interceptions, while also rushing for 245 yards and five touchdowns at Virginia last season.

Virginia ended last season 16th in the AP Top 25 after posting an 11-3 record that included a 27-20 overtime loss to Duke in the Atlantic Coast Conference championship game and a 13-7 victory over Missouri in the Gator Bowl.

The Cavaliers' 11 wins set a school single-season record. The Gator Bowl marked Virginia's first bowl appearance since 2019.

Masters without Lefty, Woods for 1st time since '94

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Three-time champion Phil Mickelson withdrew from the Masters on Thursday, citing a personal health matter with his family that kept him out of all but one of the five LIV Golf events this year.

"Unfortunately I will not play in the Masters Tournament next week and will be out for an extended period of time as my family continues to navigate a personal health mat-

ter," Mickelson posted on social media.

Tiger Woods said Tuesday he was taking an indefinite leave to seek treatment after his arrest on suspicion of driving under the influence in a Feb. 27 crash in Florida.

It will be the first time neither Woods nor Mickelson will be at the Masters since 1994, when Woods was a senior in high school and Mickelson had broken his leg while skiing earlier that year.

Mickelson called the Masters "definitely the most special week of the year," and his record reflects that. He won his first major at Augusta National in 2004, the last player to win the Masters by one shot with a birdie putt on the 72nd hole.

He also won in 2006 and in 2010, one of only eight players to win the Masters at least three times. Mickelson has not shared details of the personal family matter.

Wild top Canucks, clinch playoff spot

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Matt Boldy scored his 39th and 40th goals, Kirill Kaprizov added his 40th and the Minnesota Wild wrapped up a playoff spot with a 5-2 victory over the Vancouver Canucks on Thursday night.

Third in the Western Conference and the NHL's stacked Central Division, Minnesota secured the postseason spot in 75 games after getting in last season in the 82nd and final game before falling to Vegas in the first round.

Ryan Hartman scored twice in the third period to reach 20 goals, and Filip Gustavsson made 29 saves to help the Wild rebound from a 6-3 loss at Boston on Saturday.

Former Canucks defenseman Quinn Hughes had his 67th assist. He joined the Wild in a December trade that sent Marco Rossi, Zeev Buium, Liam Ohgren and a first-round pick in 2026 to Vancouver.

Stars 3, Jets 0: Jake Oettinger made 22 saves for his third shutout of the season in a matchup of Team USA Olympic goaltenders and rookie Arttu Hyry had a goal in his first multipoint NHL game as Dallas beat visiting Winnipeg.

Adam Erne also had a goal and an assist and Matt Duchene also scored for the Stars, who opened a five-game homestand that will close their home season. They are second in both the Central Division and the overall league standings.

Oettinger was an Olympic backup while Winnipeg's Connor Hellebuyck backstopped Team USA to the gold medal.

Lightning 6, Penguins 3: Anthony Cirelli registered his second career hat trick, Nikita Kucherov had a goal and three points, and Tampa Bay moved into first place in the Atlantic Division with a victory over visiting Pittsburgh.

Zemgus Girgensons scored his 100th career goal and Bray-

den Point scored his second in 14 games for Tampa Bay, which improved to 7-1-2 in the past 10 games. Jake Guentzel and Gage Gougeon both had two assists while Andrei Vasilevskiy finished with 21 saves.

The Penguins remain in second place in the Metropolitan Division, three points ahead of the New York Islanders.

Predators 5, Kings 4 (SO): Luke Evangelista scored the only goal of the shootout in the eighth round, and Nashville tightened the Western Conference playoff race with a victory at Los Angeles.

Nashville, Los Angeles and San Jose are now even with 79 points apiece for the second wild-card playoff spot in the West, but the Sharks — who beat Toronto 4-1 on Thursday — have a game in hand.

Canadiens 3, Rangers 2: Cole Caufield scored his 48th and 49th goals of the season, and Montreal won its seventh game in a row to move closer to making the playoffs by defeating host New York.

Caufield's second was his NHL-best 12th winning goal, putting the Canadiens ahead 47 seconds after Will Cuyll tied it. He moved one back of Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon for the league lead in goals and in the process extended his career high with 83 points.

Senators 4, Sabres 1: Lars Eller broke a third-period tie and host Ottawa beat Buffalo, preventing it from clinching a drought-breaking playoff spot.

Buffalo will have to wait to end its NHL-record 14-season postseason skid, the second-longest active futility run in North America's four major sports behind the New York Jets and their 15-season slide.

Hurricanes 5, Blue Jackets 1: Logan Stankoven scored two goals in the first nine minutes, and host Carolina clinched a playoff berth for the eighth consecutive season by beating Co-

lumbus.

Alexander Nikishin added a first-period short-handed goal and Jordan Martinook and Andrei Svechnikov also scored as the Metropolitan Division-leading Hurricanes were on the way to winning for the third time in their past four games. Taylor Hall and Sebastian Aho each had two assists and Frederik Andersen made nine saves.

For Carolina, the 10 shots allowed matched the fewest shots against in franchise history.

Red Wings 4, Flyers 2: Patrick Kane scored a pivotal goal in the same building where he scored a Stanley Cup Final winner, Alex DeBrincat scored two goals and Lucas Raymond had one to lead visiting Detroit past Philadelphia.

The Red Wings snapped a points tie in the chase for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. Detroit has 88 points to 86 for the Flyers through 75 games. The Red Wings are now tied in points with Ottawa, but the Senators have more regulation wins if it comes to a tiebreaker.

Kane's Game 6 overtime goal helped Chicago beat the Flyers in 2010 for the Stanley Cup.

Panthers 2, Bruins 1: Florida goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky made 15 saves in the third period and 28 overall in a victory over visiting Boston.

Two-time defending Stanley Cup champion Florida avoided elimination from the playoffs.

The Panthers got first-period goals from Mackie Samoskevich and Sam Bennett in their second straight victory.

Boston, which had won four straight, got a goal from Fraser Minten. Jeremy Swayman made 22 saves in the loss.

Devils 7, Capitals 3: Jack Hughes had two goals and three assists and Dawson Mercer scored twice as host New Jersey beat Washington.

Hughes scored his first goal for the Devils 9:10 into the sec-

ond period on a wrist shot, assisted by Jesper Bratt and Johnathan Kovacevic. He tacked on a wrist shot 8:10 into the third, assisted by Bratt and Connor Brown. Hughes has 24 goals and 44 assists this season.

Oilers 3, Blackhawks 1: Connor McDavid set up Matt Savoie's power-play goal to pad his NHL-leading points total and help host Edmonton win its season-high fifth straight game.

Chicago lost its fifth straight to drop out of playoff contention, extending its postseason drought to six seasons. Edmonton matched Pacific Division-leading Anaheim with 87 points, but has played one more game than the Ducks.

McDavid's goals streak ended at five games. He has 43 goals and 83 assists for 126 points, two more than Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov for the NHL lead.

Sharks 4, Maple Leafs 1: Zack Ostapchuk scored his first goal in nearly three months and San Jose beat visiting Toronto for its fourth straight victory.

San Jose, which had the worst record in the NHL last season, is fighting for a wild-card spot in the crowded Western Conference. The Sharks haven't made the playoffs since 2018-19.

Mammoth 6, Kraken 2: Logan Cooley scored twice for the first of visiting Utah's six straight goals, and Karel Vejmelka made 25 saves in a victory at Seattle.

Utah won its second straight game and has a five-point lead for the first wild-card spot in the Western Conference.

Golden Knights 6, Flames 3: Mitch Marner had three goals and two assists and host Vegas scored three times in the third period to defeat Calgary.

The Golden Knights are five points ahead of Los Angeles and San Jose for the third and final Pacific Division playoff spot. Vegas is three points behind division leaders Anaheim and Edmonton.