

White House seeks \$1.5T for DOD budget

By **MATTHEW ADAMS**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — With the U.S. at war with Iran, the White House on Friday asked Congress for \$1.5 trillion in defense spending for the fiscal year 2027 budget.

If enacted, the amount would be the highest military spending level in modern history.

The 2027 budget outline, released by the White House's Office of Management and Budget, says Trump's proposal would reduce nondefense spending by \$73 billion, or 10%, by shifting some responsibilities to state and local governments.

Trump urged Congress to approve the budget that includes more than \$1.1 trillion in base discretionary funding, as well as \$350 billion in reconciliation funds. The president also asked lawmakers to increase federal funding to aid with border en-

forcement and mass deportations.

The proposed budget does not address reports that the Pentagon asked the White House for \$200 billion in additional funds for the war with Iran. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth confirmed on March 19 that the Pentagon asked for funds but did not disclose the amount.

"It takes money to kill bad guys," Hegseth said during a media briefing at the Pentagon. "So we're going back to Congress and our folks there to ensure that we're properly funded for what's been done, for what we may have to do in the future."

The White House budget funds a pay raise of 7% for all military personnel ranked E-5 and below; 6% for E-6 to O-3; and 5% for O-4 and above, according to the document.

"This enduring investment,

far above the standard annual military pay raise, builds on the president's recruiting and retention success, by doubling down on the Administration's goal to restore America's fighting force, the document says.

Leading up to the White House's release of the budget, the president and aides framed the increase as a need to spend more to restock munitions and supplies as the war with Iran enters its second month.

Trump at an Easter lunch on Wednesday told those at the private event that military spending needed to be a national priority.

"We're fighting wars. It's not possible for us to take care of day care, Medicaid, Medicare, all of these individual things," Trump said. "They can do it on a state basis."

The president's budget release comes as the House and Senate remain tangled over

current-year spending and stalemated over Department of Homeland Security funding.

Trump on Friday issued a memo ordering that the remaining DHS workers who have gone without paychecks during the record-long partial government shutdown that has reached 49 days be paid, Bloomberg News reported.

Congress still has to figure out a way to fund DHS operations for workers at an array of agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and the Coast Guard.

The Republican leadership in Congress reached an agreement last week on a path forward to fund the department, but lawmakers are away on recess and have not yet voted on any legislation to end the shutdown that has impacted air travel nationwide.

Trump calls for 41 new ships and industrial overhaul

By **GARY WARNER**
Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump is calling for what he says is the largest American shipbuilding surge since World War II, according to the 2027 defense budget proposal released Friday.

"The whole of the nation's shipbuilding order of 41 ships alone represents the largest demand signal to the maritime industrial base since the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt," said an Office of Management and Budget statement in the budget proposal.

Trump is proposing \$1.5 trillion in defense spending for

2027 — a 42% spike above 2026 levels. Trump would offset the increased military spending with an approximate 10% cut in nonmilitary programs.

The 41-ship plan calls for Congress to spend \$65.8 billion on construction of 18 battle-force ships and 16 non-battle force Navy ships, five vessels for the Coast Guard and Army, a new scientific research ship and a National Park service ferry.

In the 2026 budget, the Navy was allocated \$27.2 billion to build 17 ships.

Detailed plans for the Navy's 2027 spending on specific ves-

sels aren't expected until the release of Trump's more detailed Pentagon budget, which is expected April 21, according to published reports.

But the 2027 "top line" budget released Friday mentions several key projects Trump wants to push forward, including the Navy "Golden Fleet," featuring two "Trump-class" battleships armed with advanced missiles, lasers, and other weaponry.

The Golden Fleet would also include next-generation Navy frigates, to be built as up-armed variants of the current Legend-class Coast Guard National Security Cutters design.

The proposed 2027 budget would maintain or increase procurement of "existing battle force platforms," with the priorities including amphibious assault vessels, Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines and Virginia-class attack submarines.

The budget would support the construction of strategic sealift vessels, hospital vessels, cargo ships and tankers.

It calls for increasing the capacity of public shipyards and improving the manufacturing chain to speed up the delivery of vessels. The repair capacity of public shipyards also would be increased.

US rescues both pilots downed in Iran

Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump says U.S. forces have rescued the missing crew member of a fighter jet that was shot down over Iran.

In a post to Truth Social early Sunday, Trump said the airman is “SAFE and SOUND” following a rescue operation that involved dozens of aircraft.

“He sustained injuries, but he will be just fine,” Trump added.

In a follow-up post hours later, Trump described the crew member as “seriously wounded.” Trump also said he would hold a press conference with military officials at the White House on Monday at 1 p.m.

The rescue came as Trump escalated his rhetoric toward Iran, threatening further strikes and

demanding Tehran reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a vital oil shipping route. In a social media post, Trump declared that “Tuesday will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day” in Iran and warned Tehran to “open the f---in’ Strait ... or you’ll be living in hell.”

The F-15E fighter jet was downed Friday in southern Iran — the first confirmed shootdown of a U.S. warplane over Iran since the conflict began more than a month ago. One of the two crew members aboard the aircraft was rescued earlier by U.S. forces, while the search for the other continued into a second day.

Hundreds of special operations troops went deep into Iranian territory to recover the second missing airman, who was equipped

with a beacon and a secure communication device, *The New York Times* reported.

After the airman was located, two transport planes sent to extract U.S. personnel became disabled at a remote Iranian air base, the *Times* reported. Commanders flew in three replacement aircraft and destroyed the disabled planes to prevent them from falling into Iranian hands.

U.S. aircraft dropped bombs and opened fire on Iranian forces to keep them away from the area, the *Times* said, adding that all U.S. commandos and the missing airman returned safely.

Trump described the mission as “one of the most daring Search and Rescue Operations in U.S. History.”

“This brave Warrior was behind enemy lines in the treacherous mountains of Iran, being hunted down by our enemies, who were getting closer and closer by the hour, but was never truly alone,” Trump added.

Iranian state media circulated images and video Friday that appeared to show debris from an F-15, including an ejection seat, and urged residents to report or detain any “enemy pilot.”

Also Friday, Iran claimed its air defenses hit a second U.S. aircraft in the region. Multiple U.S. outlets reported an A-10 Warthog combat plane was struck by Iranian fire, though the pilot was able to navigate the damaged plane to Kuwaiti airspace before ejecting and being rescued.

Iran using children against US troops, rights groups say

**BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN**

Stars and Stripes

Iran is recruiting and mobilizing children as young as 12 into a military campaign led by the country’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, according to Amnesty International, which says the practice amounts to a war crime.

In late March, Rahim Nadali, an IRGC official in Tehran, announced a recruitment campaign open to volunteers 12 and above to join “combatants defending the homeland,” the human rights organization said in a statement Thursday.

Eyewitnesses and video verified by the group show child soldiers armed with AK-47 pattern rifles and other weapons and deployed at checkpoints and patrols, the statement said.

The findings come a little more than a month after the U.S. and Is-

rael launched a bombing campaign that has targeted Iran’s missile infrastructure, military sites and leadership. Tehran has responded by launching attacks on Israel, U.S. partners in the Persian Gulf and American military bases in the Middle East.

“As U.S. and Israeli strikes hit thousands of IRGC sites ... including through drone attacks targeting security patrols and checkpoints, the deployment of child soldiers alongside IRGC personnel or in their facilities puts them at grave risk of death and injury,” Erika Guevara-Rosas, a senior director at Amnesty International, said in the statement.

Nadali announced on state television last month that children as young as 12 could register to help Iran stand against “the global bully,” a term used for the United States, French news agency AFP reported at the time.

LaNeve seen as front-runner to be next Army chief of staff

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Gen. Christopher LaNeve is set to serve as acting Army chief of staff following the removal of Gen. Randy George, capping a rapid rise through the ranks and positioning him as a leading contender to permanently take over the service’s top post.

LaNeve, who had been the Army’s vice chief of staff, steps into the role after Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Thursday removed George before his term was complete.

The shakeup comes at a critical time for the Army, which is preparing for future battlefields where drones and unmanned systems are changing the way ground forces fight.

The decision marked the latest in a series of high-profile general officer firings over the past year that have reshaped the military’s upper ranks. George’s dismissal was first re-

ported by CBS News, which said LaNeve will take over in an acting role.

The report quoted Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell, who described LaNeve as a “battle-tested leader with decades of operational experience (who) is completely trusted by Secretary Hegseth to carry out the vision of this administration without fault.”

It’s unclear whether LaNeve will ultimately be nominated by President Donald Trump for the permanent position, which requires Senate confirmation.

LaNeve became the Army’s vice chief in January after serving as Hegseth’s senior military adviser. LaNeve came onto Trump’s radar during last year’s inauguration, when he appeared virtually at the Commander-in-Chief Ball while serving as the three-star general leading Eighth Army in South Korea.

Artemis II astronauts share 1st images

Tribune News Service

NASA has released the first images sent back by astronauts aboard the Artemis II mission, including a striking view of Earth captured from the Orion spacecraft.

The photo was taken by Artemis II Commander Reid Wiseman shortly after the spacecraft broke from Earth's orbit and set out on its path toward the moon. Visible in the image are two auroras near opposite edges of the planet, as well as zodiacal light as Earth eclipses the sun.

Artemis II launched from Kennedy Space Center in Florida on Wednesday and was expected to reach the moon's sphere of influence on Sunday, when lunar gravity overtakes Earth's pull on the spacecraft. The crew is scheduled to fly around the far side of the moon on Monday.

The newly released images mark the first photos downlinked from the Orion spacecraft during the mission. NASA said additional images and a continuous live feed from the

crew will be shared throughout the journey.

Add "space plumber" to the growing list of jobs for Christina Koch.

In an interview on Thursday, the Michigan-born astronaut and Artemis II crew member explained that she had taken point to troubleshoot the Orion capsule's \$23 million toilet after it malfunctioned shortly after launch last week.

Essentially, a fan/controller issue stopped the urine system from working, but it was fixed

within hours with help from Mission Control.

"I'm proud to call myself the space plumber," Koch said with a smile. "I like to say that it is probably the most important piece of equipment onboard, so we were all breathing a sigh of relief when it turned out to be just fine."

Artemis II is the first time humans will travel beyond low Earth orbit since the Apollo 17 in 1972. It will send astronauts around the moon and back to Earth—without landing.

Blanche to lead DOJ after Bondi fired; Zeldin in mix

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's decision to remove Pam Bondi as attorney general delivers a new disruption to an already beleaguered U.S. Justice Department as it works to advance the administration's policy goals and sometimes controversial prosecutions.

Trump announced Thursday that he'd ousted Bondi as the nation's chief law enforcement officer following several high-profile stumbles in her efforts to car-

ry out his agenda. He had expressed frustration with her lack of progress in prosecutions that he had demanded against his adversaries, while her handling of files related to cases involving the late, disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein generated a rare bipartisan uproar.

Trump picked Bondi's deputy, Todd Blanche, to take over as acting attorney general. He's expected to serve until a new nominee by Trump is confirmed by the Senate. While Blanche is viewed as a steady hand at the de-

partment, the agency will still be facing uncertainty as Trump moves to find a permanent replacement for Bondi. The president has discussed naming Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin to the position, according to people familiar with the matter.

Dave Aronberg, former state attorney for Florida's Palm Beach County, said during an interview on Bloomberg's Balance of Power that whoever takes over for Bondi will meet the same fate, because the president has unre-

alistic expectations.

"Donald Trump expects that he can push a button and then have his enemies prosecuted," Aronberg said, "but it's not so easy."

The initial challenges for Blanche will be to manage any personnel changes following Bondi's departure, respond to ongoing controversies and develop closer relationships with key White House aides and other Cabinet officials, according to former Justice Department officials interviewed for this story.

MacDill AFB bomb was housed in two Pepsi bottles

Tampa Bay Times

The bomb placed outside the MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., visitors center last month was built inside two 2-liter cherry Pepsi bottles, according to federal prosecutors.

Alen Zheng, 20, of Land O'Lakes, Fla., is accused of planting the bomb and lighting the fuse at the base on March 10. He drove the explosive to MacDill in the trunk of his Mercedes SUV, according to a document filed by prosecutors Friday. The bomb did not detonate.

U.S. Attorney Gregory Kehoe has said it had the "potential to

be very deadly."

The filing Friday came as part of an attempt to keep Zheng's sister, Ann Mary, from being released as she faces charges of evidence tampering and being an accessory after the fact in her brother's case. Ann Mary Zheng is accused of helping Alen Zheng get rid of his car and flee to China.

The revelation of the bomb's makeup comes amid questions of how it could have sat outside the military installation for six days without being discovered. Authorities say Alen Zheng called 911 after placing it,

though he did not provide a specific location.

Court records do not offer additional details about the device. But it matches the description of a photo circulated on social media in recent weeks. The image depicting the bomb was posted March 16, the day officials found it, on Air Force amn/nc0/snco, a Facebook forum for members of the Air Force and other branches of the military. It has more than 126,000 followers.

The same image was also shared on X and Reddit.

It depicts two bottles of cher-

ry Pepsi inside an unzipped black gym bag. The bottle necks have been cut off and covered with duct tape. A long wire or fuse trails out of one bottle.

A Tampa Bay Times reporter who went to the area last week was able to match the image to a spot behind the visitors center.

There, outside a door marked "mechanical electrical" on the northwest side of the center, the pavement bore black marks that mirrored those in the photograph. The cement appeared to have been singed by the lit fuse.

Few Somalis arrested in targeted ICE action

Star Tribune

MINNEAPOLIS — Federal immigration agents arrested about 3,800 people during Operation Metro Surge, according to new data released by the Deportation Data Project.

The vast majority of the people arrested between December and March 10 were from Latin America, including half from Ecuador or Mexico. Just over 100 were Somali nationals, despite President Donald Trump repeatedly disparaging the Somali community.

The data released March 30 is the most detailed look at the effect of the three-month enforcement surge that brought thousands of protesters into the streets and left two U.S. citizens dead. The region is still recovering, with state and local law-

makers debating whether rental assistance and small business loans will help soften the impact.

Trump repeatedly referenced Somali residents accused in social services fraud schemes as a leading factor for sending thousands of federal agents to the Twin Cities in December. Yet, most Somalis living in Minnesota are here legally, and the new data shows fewer than 3% of those detained during the surge were from Somalia.

Suleiman Adan, deputy executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations Minnesota, said Trump has targeted Somali communities for a long time.

“His rhetoric has painted Somalis as criminals and threats, and that language has real con-

sequences here in Minnesota,” Adan said in a statement. “We heard from families who were afraid to go to work, parents worried about their children at school, and community members who felt watched simply because they are Somali. That kind of damage does not disappear overnight.”

The data does have limitations, according to the Deportation Data Project, a group of academics and attorneys based at the University of California Berkeley School of Law. The group, which obtained the data from the federal government, said one limitation is that ICE omitted detention stints in hospitals and medical centers.

The data also includes more than 200 instances of the same arrest in Minnesota being

counted more than once and doesn’t appear to include every apprehension. The Minnesota Star Tribune isn’t counting those duplicates.

Thirty-eight children are listed among the 3,800 arrested, and they do not appear to include Liam Conejo Ramos, a 5-year-old Columbia Heights student from Ecuador, who was detained with his father Adrian Conejo Arias.

Chaos surrounding the operation contributed to the departure of two of Trump’s top immigration officials — former Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Border Patrol Commander Greg Bovino. The president sent Tom Homan, his border czar, to draw down the operation after weeks of scrutiny.

Artemis II astronauts share photo of Earth from space

Tribune News Service

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US, South Korea end last drill in Freedom Shield

BY YOJIN LEE

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Army’s 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry Regiment, 11th Airborne Division, recently wrapped up its final major training event, a live-fire exercise in South Korea, before it officially becomes a paratroop battalion.

The exercise teamed the squadron troopers with U.S. Marines and South Korean soldiers and marines at Yeongpyeong Training Area, 35 miles east of Seoul, on March 23 and 24, according to an Army news release and information posted on the Defense Visual Information Distribution System.

The exercise was the culminating event of Freedom Shield, the annual large-scale combined exercise by the U.S. and South Korea, 2nd Infantry Division spokesman Maj. Steven Modugno said in an email Thursday.

The “Arctic-specialized”

squadron trained in a different environment to increase adaptability and practice force projection, Modugno said.

“We need to be able to go anywhere, and we’ve got a lot we can learn from our allies here, too,” battalion commander Lt. Col. Craig Nelson said in the email from Modugno.

In July, the unit becomes the 1st Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment as part of the restructuring of Army Alaska announced in May 2022 by then-Army Secretary Christine Wormuth.

The change includes reflagging the 25th Division in Alaska as the 11th Airborne Division, emphasizing its Arctic mission and U.S. strategy in the region, according to Gen. James McConville, at the time the Army chief of staff.

About 900 service members from both countries participated in the combined live-fire exercise, or CALFEX.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Homicides down 30% in NYC in first quarter

NY NEW YORK — Murders in the city dropped by 30% in the first three months of the year, according to NYPD statistics.

As of Tuesday, NYPD detectives had investigated 55 homicides across the five boroughs, a 30% drop from the 79 homicides investigated in the first three months of 2025, statistics show.

Shootings in the city were also down by 5%, from 147 last year to 140.

When March ended, 164 people had been shot in the city, down eight from the first three months of 2025, or a drop of 5%, statistics show.

The drop in crime is a feather in the cap for NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch, who, in her 16 months as the NYPD's top cop, has repeatedly trumpeted her precision-policing model for crimefighting, in which the department sends teams of cops to specific high-crime areas that could be as small as a corner or a city block.

Grenade deaths involved 'willful' safety violations

CA LOS ANGELES — A state investigation into how three Los Angeles County sheriff's bomb squad detectives were killed by a grenade in a department parking lot has found a series of "willful" safety violations, including failure to provide effective training and explosives that were left unattended leading up to the incident last year.

A California Division of Occupational Safety and Health investigation into the July 18 blast resulted in eight citations and

more than \$350,000 in fines, according to records from the state agency reviewed by The Times. The Sheriff's Department said it has appealed the findings.

Beyond the Cal/OSHA investigation, which has not previously been detailed publicly, attorneys for the state allege the Sheriff's Department has impeded the workplace safety inquiry and refused to hand over vital documents, according to court filings in an ongoing dispute between the two agencies.

The explosion at the Biscailuz Center Training Academy killed Detectives Victor Lemus, Joshua Kelley-Eklund and William Osborn. Kelley-Eklund and Osborn had recovered two grenades from a Santa Monica apartment complex. The following day, at least one of the grenades was taken to the facility when it detonated. The whereabouts of the second grenade is unknown.

Bounty hunters in videos charged with felonies

MN MINNEAPOLIS — Two bounty hunters seen in viral social media videos pointing weapons at protesters and firing less-lethal munitions are now facing felony charges in Hennepin County.

Garrett C. Willis, 28, and James R. Willis, 54, both of Ardmore, Okla., were charged Tuesday with two felony counts each of threats of violence. If convicted on both counts, they face up to six years in prison and \$13,000 in fines.

The charges stem from two incidents on March 3 in Minneapolis, as the two bounty hunters made an arrest in the Phillips West neighborhood and lat-

er dropped the person off at the Hennepin County jail downtown. Nonviolent protesters disrupted the bounty hunters on both occasions, leading to tense confrontations.

Bounty hunters, or fugitive recovery agents, are contractors who apprehend fugitives who have posted bail through a bond agency but fail to appear in court. No licenses are needed to operate as a bounty hunter in Minnesota, although they are bound by state laws that apply to all citizens.

Pooh Shiesty, Big30 accused of kidnapping

TX DALLAS — Memphis rappers Pooh Shiesty and Big30 have been arrested alongside seven others in connection with a violent "takeover" of a Dallas recording studio earlier this year, which allegedly saw the group kidnap and rob Gucci Mane and other music industry professionals of jewelry and cash at gunpoint.

The North Texas U.S. Attorney's Office announced the arrests on Thursday, confirming Pooh Shiesty, whose real name is Lontrell Williams Jr., and his father, Lontrell Williams Sr., were among those in custody, Action News 5 reported. It comes after federal authorities earlier in the week carried out a raid at their family home.

The other suspects were arrested on Wednesday across Memphis and Nashville, Tenn., and Dallas, according to the news outlet. They include Kedarius Waters, Terrance Rodgers, Damarian Gipson, Demarcus Glover, Kordae Johnson and Darrion McDaniel.

The violent incident unfolded at a music studio in Dallas on

Jan. 10, when Shiesty invited three music industry professionals to a meeting to discuss his contract. Shiesty was previously signed to Mane's 1017 label, the Department of Justice said.

"Instead of discussing business in a civil matter, the defendants resorted to violence and intimidation to achieve their purported business objectives," said Ryan Raybould, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas.

Lawmakers seek to close loophole in assault law

AK JUNEAU — A Juneau lawmaker has introduced a bill aimed at closing a gap in state law that has made it harder to prosecute medical providers accused of sexually assaulting patients during treatment.

The legislation follows a high-profile Juneau case in which a chiropractor was accused of assaulting more than a dozen patients during treatment.

The bill is the latest in a decadeslong pattern of proposed changes to state law prompted by sexual assault cases involving health care providers.

One subsection of Alaska law defines sexual assault by medical provider during treatment, which says it is a crime of sexual assault in the first or second degree when the offender knows that the victim is unaware of the sexual contact during the professional treatment of the victim. In other words, if a victim testifies that they were aware that the contact was assault as it was happening, the prosecutor may not be able to secure a conviction.

— From wire reports



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Michigan, UConn push way to title game

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Game of the year? This wasn't even the game of the night.

Michigan overpowered Arizona early and humbled the 'Cats for 40 long minutes Saturday, turning their highly anticipated Final Four matchup into a 91-73 Wolverines dunkfest-slash-highlight reel.

Junior center Aday Mara scored a career-high 26 points and grabbed nine rebounds. About the only question in this one concerned the health of Wolverines forward Yaxel Lendeborg, a first-team All-American who landed on an Arizona player's foot, rolled his ankle and sprained his knee, but still had 11 points in 14 minutes.

He vowed he'd be ready for Monday's title matchup against UConn, a 71-62 winner over Illinois in the early semifinal that was billed — wrongly — as the undercard to this battle of No. 1 seeds.

"It's going to take a full 40 minutes of fighting," Lendeborg said.

This one was over in about five.

The Wolverines blew through their fifth straight March Madness opponent by double digits while becoming the first team to break 90 points five times in a single tournament.

It was all quite a shock, considering Michigan and Arizona came in with the nation's top two defenses, a pair of top-five offenses and somewhere between eight and a dozen future NBA stars between them.

But it was the Wolverines (36-3) who looked like pros, running to a double-digit lead only 5:31 into the contest, then swatting (three blocks) and slamming (nine dunks) Arizona into oblivion.

"These guys have such, I guess, extensive background in playing high-profile basketball games," said Michigan coach Dusty May, who was spotted courtside earlier in the evening, scouting UConn-Illinois for a Monday night game he sensed he'd be part of. "We just felt like we are battle-tested."

Michigan packed the paint on defense, basically giving the team that averaged the fifth-fewest 3-point attempts in the

country this year free rein from long distance, then daring Arizona to create inside. The Wildcats failed at both.

Koa Peat had a quiet 16 points and 11 rebounds for Arizona, which shot 6-for-17 from 3, 36% overall and had two assists and nine turnovers over a first half that ended with them trailing 48-32. Sparkplug Jaden Bradley got his fourth foul 94 seconds into the second half and finished with 13 points, most in extended garbage time.

Arizona's only two losses before this were by four and by three back in February. The Wildcats trailed by nine less than 2:30 into this one.

Making it all the more impressive for Michigan was that it started this runaway without Lendeborg, who committed two fouls within five seconds of each other less than 90 seconds into the game, then landed on Motiejus Krivas' foot a little later and went to the locker room for ice.

Lendeborg called the injury "a weird feeling" but promised, "there's no way I'm missing the game on Monday no matter what goes on."

UConn 71, Illinois 62: UConn got another critical 3-pointer from Braylon Mullins and coach Dan Hurley's Huskies are heading back to the national title game, beating Illinois in the Final Four as they seek their third championship in four seasons.

Tarris Reed Jr. had 17 points and 11 rebounds, while the fabulous freshman Mullins scored 15 for the Huskies (34-5), who rode strong inside play and tough defense to their 19th straight victory in the Sweet 16 or later rounds of the NCAA Tournament.

UConn will face Michigan on Monday night as it seeks its seventh title, all since 1999, and third under Hurley, who would become the only active coach with more than two.

Mullins, whose buzzer-beating 3-pointer sent the Huskies past Duke and into the Final Four, hit a 3 with 52 seconds left that gave UConn a 66-59 lead.

Freshman Keaton Wagler had 20 points and eight rebounds to lead the Fighting Illini (28-9), who reached their first Final Four since losing the championship game to North Carolina in 2005.

Jokic scores 40 as Nuggets stop Spurs' winning streak

Associated Press

DENVER — Nikola Jokic had 40 points, 13 assists and eight rebounds, Christian Braun added 21 points and the Denver Nuggets beat San Antonio 136-134 in overtime Saturday to snap the Spurs' 11-game winning streak.

Cameron Johnson scored 17, Jamal Murray finished with 15 points and 10 assists and Aaron Gordon scored 15 for the Nuggets.

Gordon scored with 6.2 seconds left in regulation to tie the game, then forced Victor Wembanyama into a miss on the final shot of regulation.

Wembanyama finished with 34 points, 18 rebounds, seven as-

ists and five blocked shots for the Spurs, who lost for only the third time in their last 30 games.

Stephon Castle scored 20 points for San Antonio, while Devin Vassell and Julian Champagne each scored 18 for the Spurs.

Castle's three-point play midway through the second quarter put the Spurs up 57-44, that 13-point margin the biggest that they would hold all afternoon.

Wembanyama scored with 9:08 remaining to put San Antonio up 107-96.

Jokic had 16 of his points in the final 14 minutes, while Denver held Wembanyama to 1-for-4 shooting in that span.

Heat 152, Wizards 136: Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 32 points before dashing out to fly to the NCAA women's basketball title game, Kel'el Ware finished with 24 points, 19 rebounds and seven blocks, and host Miami rolled past Washington.

Bam Adebayo — who scored 83 points in Miami's last game with Washington — faced a triple-team on his first possession and scored 14 for Miami. Andrew Wiggins had 21 and Pelle Larsson scored 16 for the Heat. Adebayo also had nine rebounds and seven assists.

Pistons 116, 76ers 93: Tobias Harris scored 19 points,

and Daniss Jenkins added 16 points and 14 assists as visiting Detroit beat Philadelphia to clinch the top seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs.

The last time the Pistons (56-21) were the top seed in the East was in 2006-07. They have already clinched the Central Division title for the first time since 2007-08.

Jalen Duren added 16 points and seven rebounds, and Ausar Thompson had 14 points for the Pistons, who have won 12 of their last 15 games.

The Pistons are 8-2 in the 10 games that Cade Cunningham has missed with a collapsed left lung.

Angels' Adell robs 3 Mariners home runs

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Jo Adell made three home run-robbing catches, including a spectacular leaping grab while crashing into the seats in the ninth inning, and the Los Angeles Angels held off the Seattle Mariners 1-0 on Saturday night.

Jack Kochanowicz (1-0) allowed four hits and struck out seven in 5½ innings, and Zach Neto provided the only run, walling Seattle right-hander Emerson Hancock's fourth pitch for a 443-foot homer in the first.

Angels reliever Chase Silseth escaped a two-on, no-out jam in the seventh.

J.P. Crawford led off the ninth with a drive toward the right-field corner, where Adell leaped to glove the ball, flipped over the wall and fell into the first row of seats before holding his glove up to present the catch, which was upheld after a replay review.

Adell leaped high above the yellow line on the wall to deny Cal Raleigh of a solo homer in the first and made a nearly identical catch to deny Josh Naylor of a solo homer in the eighth.

Jordan Romano, the Angels' sixth pitcher, then retired Cole Young on an infield popup and struck out Leo Rivas for his third save.

Brewers 5-2, Royals 2-8: Garrett Mitchell matched a career high for RBIs with a two-run double and a three-run homer in the first three innings alone, and visiting Milwaukee held on to beat Kansas City in the opener of their doubleheader.

Salvador Perez's solo homer highlighted a six-run sixth inning as Kansas City beat Milwaukee to earn a split.

After Perez's second home run of the year snapped a 2-2 tie, the Royals chased Brandon Sproat (0-1) with three consecutive two-out singles. Kansas City took an 8-2 lead when eight straight hitters reached safely after two were out.

Sproat pitched 3⅓ innings, allowing four runs on four hits and three walks with four strikeouts.

Tigers 11, Cardinals 6 (8): Kerry Carpenter, Zach McKinstry and Matt Vierling hit two-run homers and drove in three runs apiece, and Detroit powered its way to a rain-shortened home victory over the St. Louis Cardinals on Saturday.

The game was called after 8½ innings following a 40-minute rain delay.

Gleyber Torres added a solo shot for the Tigers, who had only two home runs in their first seven games.

The game was delayed with one out in the ninth because of inclement weather. The field was deemed unplayable after the delay.

White Sox 6, Blue Jays 3: Munetaka Murakami hit a two-run homer and Colson Montgomery followed with a solo shot in host Chicago's three-run sixth inning as the White Sox beat Toronto.

Murakami's 431-foot shot to straightaway center off Brendon Little was his fourth homer and first at home since signing with the White Sox (3-5) as a free agent in December.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit his first homer of the season, a two-run shot in the top of the sixth to give Toronto (4-4) a 2-1 lead. Pinch hitter Nathan Lukes drove in a run with a sacrifice fly.

Before the game, the Blue Jays placed two-time All-Star catcher Alejandro Kirk on the injured list with a dislocated and fractured left thumb.

Padres 3, Red Sox 2: Ramón Laureano had a bloop RBI single with two outs in the ninth inning off closer Aroldis Chapman and visiting San Diego outlasted Boston at frigid Fenway Park.

Adrian Morejon (1-0) worked an inning, and Mason Miller struck out all three batters he faced for his third save.

Trailing 2-1 in the eighth, Boston put runners on first and third with one out against Morejon. Pinch-hitter Andruw Monaste-

rio hit what looked like a sure double-play grounder back to the mound, but second baseman Jake Cronenworth dropped the ball on the transfer before throwing late to first.

In the top of the ninth, Fernando Tatis Jr. doubled over center fielder Ceddanne Rafaela, who initially broke in, and Laureano followed with his go-ahead hit off Chapman (0-1). Tatis struck out swinging in his first four times up.

Dodgers 10, Nationals 5: Freddie Freeman hit two-run doubles in the first and second innings and Andy Pages added a three-run homer in the fifth to help Los Angeles to a road win over Washington.

Pages went 3 for 5 to raise his average to .500 (15 for 30) on the young season.

The Dodgers have scored 23 runs on 32 hits in the first two games of this series despite losing Mookie Betts in the first inning Saturday because of lower back pain.

Astros 11, Athletics 0: Christian Walker homered, doubled and drove in two runs as visiting Houston routed the Athletics.

Walker finished 3-for-5 with three runs scored, while Joey Loperfido, Yainer Diaz and Christian Vázquez each added three hits as Houston matched a season high with 11 runs.

Pirates 3, Orioles 2: Nick Yorke singled home Bryan Reynolds in the bottom of the ninth inning to lift Pittsburgh to a victory over Baltimore.

Reynolds doubled against Ryan Helsley (0-1) with one out. Baltimore then intentionally walked Ryan O'Hearn to bring up Yorke, who had entered as a pinch runner in the eighth. Yorke worked the count to 2-2 and fouled off a couple of pitches before he lined a shot over Baltimore left fielder Dylan Beavers to lift the Pirates to their fourth straight victory.

Reds 2, Rangers 0: Rhett Lowder allowed three hits over six innings as visiting Cincinnati

beat Texas, giving the right-hander his first win since 2024 after missing all of last season because of injuries.

Graham Ashcraft, Tony Santillan and Emilio Pagán each worked a scoreless inning to wrap up the Reds' second shutout this season. Pagán matched the early MLB lead with his third save, his second in as many days, benefitting from a double play while walking two and giving up a two-out single.

Diamondbacks 2, Braves 1: Rookie José Fernández's bunt single in the second inning led to two unearned runs and host Arizona held on to defeat Atlanta.

With runners at first and second, Fernández dropped a bunt to the third-base side of the mound. Braves pitcher Bryce Elder picked it up and threw wildly to first, allowing Gabriel Moreno and Nolan Arenado to score.

Yankees 9, Marlins 7: Giancarlo Stanton stole his first base in the regular season since 2020 and had a go-ahead, two-run single to help host New York beat Miami for its first 7-1 start in seven seasons.

Stanton snapped a 6-6 tie in the eighth with a clean single to left field off Michael Petersen (1-1) after the reliever walked three. In the seventh, Stanton swiped second for his first steal in a non-playoff game since Aug. 3, 2020.

Phillies 2, Rockies 1: Trea Turner hit a go-ahead RBI double in the fifth inning and visiting Philadelphia beat Colorado.

Turner finished with two hits, and Kyle Schwarber added an RBI double in the first inning.

Mets 9, Giants 0: Clay Holmes and Tobias Myers combined on a three-hitter and visiting New York beat San Francisco.

Holmes (2-0) matched his career high with seven innings and allowed only one runner past first base. The right-hander gave up three hits and had four strikeouts with two walks.

Avs blank Stars, padding Central lead

Associated Press

DALLAS — Martin Necas broke a scoreless tie midway through the third period, Nathan MacKinnon added an empty-netter and the NHL-leading Colorado Avalanche took a big step toward home-ice advantage throughout the playoffs with a 2-0 victory over the Dallas Stars on Saturday.

Scott Wedgewood made 17 saves against his former team for his third shutout of the season in the first meeting of these Central Division rivals not to go to a shootout. Dallas won two of those three.

The regulation win gave the Avalanche an eight-point edge over the Stars, who have five games remaining. Colorado has seven games to go.

The Stars won each of the postseason meetings with the Avs the past two seasons, and a second-round showdown could be looming this spring.

Dallas is headed toward an opening-round match with third-place Minnesota, which pulled within four points of the Stars with a 4-1 victory over Ottawa and has an extra game remaining.

While Wedgewood has a good chance to start in net for the Avalanche, the Stars went with Casey DeSmith, the backup to Jake Oettinger, in the final regular-season meeting. DeSmith made 20 stops.

Colorado was without star defenseman Cale Makar for a second straight game due to an upper-body injury, while fellow blueliner Brent Burns became the second player in NHL history to play in 1,000 consecutive games.

Penguins 9, Panthers 4: Evgeni Malkin had his 14th career hat trick and added an assist to become the 23rd player in NHL history to reach 1,400 career points, and host Pittsburgh routed Florida to eliminate the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions from playoff

contention.

While Florida will miss the playoffs for the first time in four years, Pittsburgh is inching toward a return to the postseason after three straight absences.

The Penguins strengthened their hold on second in the Metropolitan Division by blitzing the Panthers during the first half of the second period, pouring in four goals in less than 10 minutes.

Anthony Mantha broke a 2-2 tie with his 31st goal of the season just 1:51 into the second. Malkin then beat Sergei Bobrovsky twice in less than three minutes to create more than enough breathing room.

Lightning 3, Bruins 1: Darren Raddysh broke a tie with 5:31 left and host Tampa Bay beat Boston, hours after the Lightning secured a playoff spot.

The Atlantic Division-leading Lightning wrapped up the Eastern Conference postseason position with Detroit's 4-1 loss at the New York Rangers in the afternoon. Boston holds the first wild-card spot in the East.

After assisting on defenseman Charle-Edouard D'Astous' tying goal at 2:13 of the third, Raddysh put the Lightning ahead with a sharp-angle shot past goalie Jeremy Swayman from the right side on a break.

Nikita Kucherov added his 42nd goal of the season into an empty net, and Andrei Vasilevskiy made 21 saves to help the Lightning finish a seven-game homestand 5-1-1.

Mammoth 7, Canucks 4: Clayton Keller had the third hat trick of his career and Utah extended its winning streak to three games with a road victory over Vancouver.

Keller's first three-goal game of the season came on a disputed power-play score and two empty-net goal. His man-advantage goal at 7:04 of the second period came on the deflection of a point shot by Dylan Guenther that gave Utah a 3-2

lead.

The goal was originally waived off due to his stick touching the puck above the cross bar. After a video review, the referee ruled the stick was at or below the cross bar.

Dylan Guenther and Lawson Crowse each had a goal and an assist for Utah, which continued to push for a Western Conference playoff spot. Kailer Yamamoto and Liam O'Brien, who was in the lineup after 18 games as a healthy scratch, also scored for the Mammoth, who won their fourth straight road game.

Rangers 4, Red Wings 1: Failing to score until there were 32 seconds left and allowing a hat trick to Gabriel Perreault, Detroit lost an important game in its pursuit of a playoff spot in a defeat to visiting New York.

With six games left, the Red Wings remain on the outside looking in as part of a competitive Eastern Conference race down the stretch. They are among a handful of teams fighting for the East's second and final wild-card spot.

Detroit's loss clinched a berth for the Buffalo Sabres, who ended the NHL's longest postseason drought at 14 seasons. Though his teammates came up empty on scoring, goaltender John Gibson made some big saves among his 17, playing well in his 14th consecutive start.

Capitals 6, Sabres 2: Aliaksei Protas had a goal and assist in his return from injury and host Washington beat Buffalo.

Jakob Chychrun and Connor McMichael also had a goal and assist, and Dylan Strome, Ryan Leonard and Tom Wilson also scored for the Capitals, who have won four of their last five and moved within one point of the second wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference.

Rasmus Dahlin had a goal and assist, and Beck Malenstyn also scored for the Sabres, who clinched a playoff berth for the first time in an NHL-record 14

seasons but have dropped two in a row.

Wild 4, Senators 1: Ryan Hartman scored twice to lead Minnesota to a road win over Ottawa.

Jonas Brodin and Jake Middleton also scored for the Wild (43-21-12), and Jesper Wallstedt made 33 saves.

Linus Ullmark stopped 19 shots for the Senators (39-27-10). Drake Batherson scored for Ottawa.

Jets 2, Blue Jackets 1: Kyle Connor scored twice and visiting Winnipeg overcame an early deficit to beat Columbus, keeping its playoff hopes alive and sending the Blue Jackets to their sixth straight loss.

Winnipeg moved to 78 points, a point out of the final wild-card spot in the crowded Western Conference.

Hurricanes 4, Islanders 3: Seth Jarvis had two goals and an assist and host Carolina beat New York for its fourth victory in five games.

Sebastian Aho broke a tie with a short-handed goal in the second period, Jackson Blake also scored and K'Andre Miller had two assists, and rookie Brandon Bussi made 13 saves to boost his season record to 29-6-1.

Kings 7, Maple Leafs 6 (OT): Quinton Byfield scored 2:33 into overtime, Adrian Kempe had two goals and two assists, and host Los Angeles beat Toronto.

Byfield finished off Artemi Panarin's pass for his second goal of the game, securing a crucial win for the Kings, who set an NHL single-season record by playing their 31st game past regulation.

Canadiens 4, Devils 3 (SO): Oliver Kapanen's decisive goal in the shootout gave Montreal a road win over New Jersey for its eighth straight win.

Kapanen scored on a wrist shot past Devils goalie Jake Allen in the fifth round of the shootout.