

Iran rejects ceasefire; Trump amps threats

Bloomberg News

Iran rejected a proposed ceasefire as Donald Trump amped up his threats as Tuesday's deadline for the U.S. president's ultimatum to reopen the Strait of Hormuz or face further attacks on civilian infrastructure approached.

"They don't want to cry, as the expression goes, 'uncle,' but they will, and if they don't, they'll have no bridges," Trump told reporters Monday at the White House. He added that it was "highly unlikely" that he'd move the deadline again.

Iran demanded a permanent end to the war, lifting of sanctions, and reconstruction efforts, in addition to protocol for safe passage through Hormuz, according to Iran's state-run IRNA. The rejection, delivered through Pakistani mediators, is the latest blow to efforts to end the month-long war that has triggered a global energy crisis.

Trump cast Iran's recent proposals as a "very significant step" but not enough to end the fighting.

U.S. allies are reportedly pressing for a last-minute deal with Iran, as Trump extended his deadline to Tuesday for Tehran to reopen the vital waterway, keeping markets on edge over whether a breakthrough can be reached.

Oil prices swung between losses and gains as traders remain focused on real-world movement of oil barrels amid mixed messaging on peace talks. Brent crude traded near \$109 a barrel while U.S. crude hovered near \$112 a barrel.

Axios reported that Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey are pushing to secure a potential ceasefire — lasting about 45 days — to head off threatened U.S. strikes on Iran's energy infrastructure and retaliation by the Islamic Republic against countries in

the region.

Trump also pushed back on charges that destroying Iranian bridges and power plants would constitute a war crime as outlined under the Geneva Conventions.

"I'm not worried about it," Trump said. "You know what's a war crime? Having a nuclear weapon, allowing a sick country with demented leadership to have a nuclear weapon — that's a war crime."

In an expletive-laced post Sunday, Trump threatened to destroy Iran's power plants and blow up "everything over there," before announcing what appeared to be a new Tuesday 8 p.m. deadline, without offering details.

The move adds to a series of extensions since he began issuing similar ultimatums on March 21 to force Iran to reopen the strategic waterway.

Fighting continued, with Is-

rael, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates reporting Iranian attacks overnight into Monday. Israel struck Iran's biggest petrochemical facility, which is responsible for 50% of the petrochemical production in the country, Defense Minister Israel Katz said.

Even amid repeated delays, Trump has pointed to ongoing negotiations between his envoys and Iran's leadership, which he has yet to identify, aimed at ending the war.

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baghaei acknowledged the exchange of messages with the U.S., but reiterated Tehran is seeking a definitive end to the war instead of a mere pause, according to Shargh newspaper. Baghaei was cited by state TV as saying a short-term detente without no guarantees that the cycle won't be repeated is something "no rational person would do."

Iran rescue operation was harrowing and hurried

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Air Force colonel, badly injured after his F-15E was shot down in southern Iran, climbed some 7,000 feet up a ridgeline armed with a handgun.

Iranian forces had launched a massive manhunt, as his capture would have given Tehran leverage with the United States in negotiations to end the war, now in its sixth week.

"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," President Donald Trump said in a statement early Sunday after the rescue.

For more than 24 hours, the colonel, whose name has not been released, hid in the rugged terrain with a bounty on his head, emitting an emergency beacon in the hope of guiding American special operators to his location, The New York Times reported.

Fighter plane crews undergo extensive training on how to evade capture if their aircraft goes down in enemy territory. That training and the military's mantra to "leave no man behind" were put to the ultimate

test in the race to rescue the airman.

The U.S. reportedly mobilized a force made up of fighters, drones, electronic warfare tools, intelligence assets and the military's most elite special operators to conduct one of its most daring and complex high-stakes rescue operations in recent history.

The Navy's SEAL Team 6 spearheaded the ground rescue element, with Delta Force and the Rangers waiting in reserve, the Times reported.

Overhead, MQ-9 Reaper drones scanned the area, firing when needed to keep enemy fighters at bay, according to

The Wall Street Journal.

Initially, U.S. officials worried that the airman's emergency beacon and radio signals could be a trap to lure U.S. forces, but that possibility was eventually ruled out, the Times and Axios reported.

Meanwhile, the CIA launched a deception operation aimed at buying the colonel time by spreading misinformation inside Iran that he had already been recovered, according to the Times.

With the colonel's location finally pinned down, commanders then waited until dark to launch the rescue, with commandos arriving by helicopter.

F-15 incident part of Iran's air defense puzzle

By LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

Iran's recent shootdown of an American F-15 and the subsequent mission to rescue the plane's crew are raising questions about claims of U.S. air dominance amid White House threats to escalate the 5-week-old war.

Prior to the shootdown, the U.S. repeatedly claimed that Iran's air defenses had been decimated. The Pentagon was so confident in its control over Iran's skies that it deployed slow-moving, low-flying B-52 bombers directly over Iranian territory last week.

President Donald Trump has signaled for weeks that he is prepared to expand U.S. strikes against Iran to power plants and bridges if it does not open the Strait of Hormuz. That would likely put more aircraft at risk of being targeted by Iranian air defenses.

But so far, Trump appears to be framing the loss of the F-15E as a

one-off, noting that Iran downed the plane using a shoulder-fired missile.

"They got lucky," he told Axios on Sunday.

The two crew members were recovered in what Trump called one of the most "daring search and rescue operations in U.S. history." American forces retrieved the pilot hours after he ejected and spent the following two days in a race to find the second crew member, a weapons systems officer, who was confirmed safe on Easter morning.

U.S. Central Command has reported destroying the bulk of Iran's surface-to-air missile facilities and air defense systems.

Speaking to the nation in a prime-time address days before the jet was shot down, Trump told Americans that Iran had "no anti-aircraft equipment."

Tehran's forces used an unspecified new air defense system to target the fighter jet and will

"definitely achieve full control" over domestic airspace, according to Iranian state media. Despite the rescue, Iran has framed the operation as a U.S. failure.

But many experts say that Iran's claims about its air defenses are overstated and that Tehran is unlikely to have acquired an entirely new system.

In reality, the hit most likely came from a shoulder-operated missile or an older surface-to-air missile that Iranian forces had hidden in a bunker, they add.

"These guys have every incentive to hyperbolize, particularly during a war, for deterrence purposes," Behnam Ben Taleblu, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told ABC on Sunday. "But everything that has just happened and transpired in Iran should change the nature of U.S. operations. Low flights in certain areas should probably be revisited."

The shootdown doesn't mean

the U.S. has technically lost control of Iranian skies, said researchers at the Institute for the Study of War, noting that air superiority allows forces to operate without prohibitive interference but does not eliminate threats to aircraft.

"Iranian attempts to challenge U.S. and Israeli air superiority have not seriously impeded the combined force's ability to conduct operations over Iran, as demonstrated by the persistent strikes nationwide," analysts from the think tank wrote.

Iranian forces on Friday also shot down an A-10 Warthog, whose pilot was quickly rescued after making it into Kuwaiti airspace and ejecting, various news outlets reported.

"Statistically, you're going to lose planes in an air campaign," said Michael Eisenstadt, director of the Military and Security Studies Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Social media, tech making it hard for warships to hide

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — Warships from San Diego and elsewhere have found it next to impossible in recent weeks to keep their location quiet as they headed for the Middle East and the war between the U.S. and Iran.

The March 18 departure of the San Diego-based USS Boxer Amphibious Ready Group, a three-ship task force that is en route to the Middle East with about 2,500 Marines from Camp Pendleton, was captured by live harbor-life cameras operated by San Diego WebCam and countless people on land using cameras, iPhones and video equipment.

A video clip posted on X shows children at the Rady Shell waving goodbye to the sailors.

Less than a week later, a boater far out at sea posted a photo of the

Boxer west of Hawaii. The ship was photographed again when it pulled into Pearl Harbor. The same will occur if the Boxer stops in Guam, which is common for such vessels to do.

The public tracking of the Boxer reflects the rapid and ongoing revolution in wartime information — and disinformation — made possible by commercial maritime tracking apps, easily accessible satellite photos, artificial intelligence and social media.

In mid-February, the BBC used satellite imagery to confirm that the San Diego-based aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln was operating in the Arabian Sea, where the ship would launch attacks on Iran weeks later.

The New York Times also has been using satellite images to show the damage Iran has suf-

fered from U.S. bomb and missile attacks.

Iran has responded, in part, by posting and re-circulating videos that purport to show the Lincoln damaged by counter-strikes. The U.S. Central Command and many defense journalists have dismissed such material as AI-generated propaganda.

The Navy's 3rd Fleet, which is headquartered on Point Loma, addressed the matter in a careful tone.

"The information environment is a lot more transparent today than it used to be," 3rd Fleet said in an email to the Union-Tribune.

"Between social media, open-source tracking and commercial imagery, there's simply more visibility into the maritime domain than in the past. It's something we're aware of, and it does add a

layer of complexity.

"It's also a reality we train and operate within every day. Our crews are used to working in an environment where information is more accessible, and we take that into account while maintaining the standards we need to operate safely and effectively."

That reality makes some content providers uneasy. Planet Labs, a commercial satellite imaging company, recently began restricting access to some of its war-related photos.

Sal Mercogliano, a maritime historian at Campbell University near Raleigh, N.C., supports that action.

"Satellite imagery can catch an entire carrier battle group at sea," he said.

"That can be relayed almost real-time. That's scary."

Navy hospital in Japan plans major upgrades

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka, a key medical hub for U.S. forces in Japan, is scheduled to begin an eight-year modernization project worth up to \$280 million.

The project includes significant upgrades and renovations, among them updated electrical and HVAC systems and renovated patient areas, including surgical suites and the emergency and radiology departments, Regena Kowitz, spokeswoman for Defense Health Agency Pacific Rim, told Stars and Stripes by email on Saturday.

The contract for the project — estimated to cost between \$200 million and \$280 million — will be awarded in the coming fiscal year, after which the first phase will begin.

The project is expected to conclude in fiscal 2035.

The work will also include the “safe removal of undisturbed asbestos-containing materials,” which Kowitz said were common in construction when the hospital was built in 1980.

The Orlando-based joint venture RLF and Sherlock Smith and Adams developed the renovation plan under a contract worth nearly \$11 million, according to September 2022 contract announcements from the

Department of Defense.

Naval Facilities Engineering Command already contracts with the firm for engineering and design work for medical projects worldwide, according to USAspending.gov.

The work is expansive, but the hospital will remain fully operational and “continue all services throughout the renovation process” thanks to extensive phasing of construction, Kowitz wrote.

Any departments under renovation, such as the emergency department, will be temporarily relocated to fully equipped spaces, she said.

“For the surgery suite modernization, the plan ensures that at

least two operating rooms will be available at all times so that we can continue providing surgical care without interruption,” Kowitz wrote.

Parking and traffic, however, will be temporarily affected during various phases of construction, she said.

“To reduce these impacts, a detailed traffic and parking plan will be implemented. Where possible, disruptive work will be scheduled during off-duty hours,” Kowitz wrote. “We will communicate all parking and traffic changes to our patients via social media and other means well in advance to minimize inconvenience as much as possible.”

Medal of Honor recipient completes recon course

By LYDIA GORDON
Stars and Stripes

A former active-duty Marine who was awarded the Medal of Honor in 2011 for heroism in Afghanistan is ready to shoulder a new challenge as a 37-year-old reservist: reconnaissance work.

Sgt. Dakota Meyer completed the service’s grueling 12-week course and had his military occupational specialty redesignated from infantryman to reconnaissance Marine, according to a Facebook post Friday.

The course features an intensive training regimen that includes amphibious operations, water survival, land navigation, patrolling and combat conditioning.

The course is noted for its high attrition rate and for demanding greater physical and mental standards than the average Marine.

Former President Barack Obama bestowed the Medal of Honor on Meyer in 2011 for his actions during an ambush in the Ganjgal Valley of Afghanistan two years earlier.

At the time, Meyer was a 21-year-old corporal serving as a turret gunner with an embedded training team.

Meyer fought down a mountainside to rescue wounded troops and recover the bodies of fallen comrades. He ventured into direct enemy fire to reach the troops, defying orders to stay in a safer position.

Marine Corps officials credited Meyer with helping save the lives of 36 U.S. and Afghan troops.

The ambush claimed the lives of five Marines and nine Afghan allies.

Meyer was only the third living service member from the war in Afghanistan to receive the award and the first living Marine to be given the honor for battlefield heroics since the Vietnam War.

After leaving active duty, Meyer became a firefighter and motivational speaker. He reenlisted as a reservist almost a year ago during a ceremony hosted by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

Pentagon set to authorize personal firearms on base

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

U.S. military personnel would be allowed to keep off-duty personal firearms on base under a memorandum released late Thursday by Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth.

The directive would modify a long-standing Pentagon policy that limits the possession and carrying of firearms on military installations.

Currently, service members must register with base authorities to store a personal firearm at on-base housing. If they live in a barracks, they must register the firearm and keep it in their unit’s armory.

Hegseth’s memo directs base commanders to allow service members to request permission to carry their personal firearms and calls for a “presumption of approval” of requests.

In a video message announcing the policy, Hegseth said the U.S. Constitution’s Second Amendment should apply to all Americans, including military personnel.

“Uniformed service members are trained at the highest and unwavering standards,” Hegseth said in the video. “These warfighters — entrusted with the safety of our nation — are no less entitled to exercise their God-given right to keep and bear arms than any other American.”

The new policy would apply only to firearms possessed in a nonofficial duty capacity.

Hegseth said the change is in line with a 2016 congressionally approved revision of firearms standards that allowed installation commanders to approve personnel to carry firearms if they were shown to be necessary for personal protection.

Current rules make it difficult for service members to have personal firearms on base, even when allowed under state laws where installations are located. Commanders could approve requests, but approvals were uncommon and restrictive.

The new policy would not allow for concealed carry inside installation buildings.

Artemis II crew breaks Apollo 13 distance mark

Orlando Sentinel

The Orion spacecraft and its four passengers ventured into the moon's gravitational influence Monday and the Artemis II mission set a new record as the farthest humans from Earth, according to the Associated Press.

NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch along with Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen made their closest approach Monday. They surpassed the farthest distance ever traveled from Earth by humans, a record set by the Apollo 13 crew in 1970.

Since launching last Wednesday from Kennedy Space Center, the spacecraft has been under Earth's dominant pull. But at 12:41 a.m. Eastern time, the moon took over that role.

"We noticed we entered the lunar sphere of influence about an hour ago and sure enough we are now falling to the moon rather than rising away from Earth," said Koch on Monday morning. "It is an amazing milestone."

Koch said the crew were able to see both a crescent Earth out the side hatch view and the moon out another of Orion's windows at the same time.

"Definitely by far the moon is bigger than the Earth," she said.

The crew was to continue their approach as they slingshot around the far side of the moon. Around 2 p.m., they passed the Apollo 13 milestone of 248,655 miles, and were next to tack on an additional 4,105 miles as they whip around Earth's satellite into Monday night.

The crew was to take observations all afternoon, coming within 4,070 miles from its surface at 7:02 p.m. They will have a view of the landing sites of both Apollo 12 and Apollo 14, but will be getting views of parts of the moon

that have never been seen before by human eyes.

"We have educated guesses based on what we know about the lunar surface, especially the far side ... but we don't know what to expect," said Kelsey Young, the Artemis II lunar science lead. "This is exploration ... While we have imagery, amazing data from orbiting spacecraft, it's these nuanced observations that we're lacking. This is discovery. We're asking questions that we don't always know the answer to, and that's some of the value of what these Artemis missions bring."

High court sends Bannon's case back to lower courts

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court sent Stephen Bannon's contempt of Congress conviction back to lower courts Monday to address the Trump administration's attempt to wipe out the case against the president's former adviser.

Bannon had appealed his conviction to the justices after both a federal trial judge and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia upheld the rare conviction for contempt of Congress. A jury convicted Bannon in 2022 for refusal to testify and provide documents to the House panel investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capi-

tol.

While Bannon's case was pending before the Supreme Court, U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro in the District of Columbia sought to dismiss the indictment in a way that meant it could not be brought again.

In a brief order on Monday, the Supreme Court sent the case back to the D.C. Circuit to address the attempt to jettison the case. Bannon already has served a four-month prison term.

In a filing, Solicitor General Todd Blanche had called the subpoena used as the basis of the conviction "improper" and said the agency would "undo the

prior administration's weaponization of the justice system."

Blanche's filing echoed arguments made by Bannon and other critics of the select panel, including its lack of a full complement of Republican members.

Bannon refused to testify or provide documents to the panel, but the committee used video clips and other records showing that Bannon said Donald Trump intended to declare victory in the 2020 presidential election regardless of the results on election night. After Bannon's refusal to testify, the House voted to hold him and several other recalcitrant witnesses in contempt.

Aside from challenging the legitimacy of the committee, Bannon argued at the Supreme Court that he had relied on legal advice that he did not have to testify.

A second recalcitrant witness of the House select panel, Trump trade adviser Peter Navarro, was also convicted for contempt and served four months in prison.

Navarro was convicted in 2023 on a similar set of charges. While the Trump administration has not sought to dismiss Navarro's case, it did refuse to defend the conviction, which led to a one-sided oral argument last year.

French sub launches a US Navy drone in joint trials

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

A French nuclear-powered submarine deployed a U.S. Navy underwater drone during recent trials off the coast of Toulon, the U.S. and French navies said.

The test involving a Razorback sea drone demonstrated that American unmanned systems can be operated from an allied submarine, achieving what the U.S. Navy called a "critical milestone" in integrating forces.

While the U.S. Navy conducts joint exer-

cises with allies involving unmanned systems, deploying an American underwater drone from a partner nation's submarine reflects a deeper level of integration between the two forces, the U.S. Navy said.

"The ability to deploy U.S. assets from allied submarines expands our operational reach and enhances our collective undersea warfare capabilities," Commander, Unmanned Undersea Vehicle Group 1 said in a statement Thursday.

The unit operates and develops underwater drones. The Razorback is used by the

Navy for environmental sensing, intelligence preparation and surveillance.

During the trials, a French Suffren-class attack submarine deployed the Razorback, the statement said.

Suffren-class submarines are equipped with a dry deck shelter, an external compartment typically used for transporting swimmer delivery vehicles and specialized equipment.

While remaining submerged, the submarines can also launch and recover underwater drones.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

2 firefighters killed in crash on hunt for woman

PA RICHMOND TOWNSHIP — Two firefighters traveling in a utility vehicle along a Pennsylvania road during a search for a missing woman were killed in a head-on crash with a car, officials said.

The two members of the Walnuttown Fire Company died after the crash with a Toyota Camry at about 6 p.m. Saturday, roughly 45 miles northwest of Philadelphia. Fire Chief Jeff Buck and Assistant Fire Chief Robert Shick Jr. were heading north when they were struck by a sedan heading south on Route 222, according to the Berks County Coroner.

NBC Philadelphia reported that the utility vehicle was riding on the shoulder of Route 222 when the Camry swerved off of the road. Police told the station that a male and a female who were in the Camry when it crashed fled and were later arrested.

No further details about the arrest or the search for the missing woman were immediately available.

Baby mountain lion left behind by family rescued

CA LOS ANGELES — Crimson the baby mountain lion had a rough start to life. He lost the toes on one of his hind feet and, at just 3 weeks old, was separated from his family and left alone in a den to starve.

But the Southern California cub experienced a positive turn of fate when state wildlife officials rescued him and transported him to the Los Angeles

Zoo for emergency treatment.

The plucky little lion has since been transferred to the Oakland Zoo, where veterinarians are hopeful he will make a full recovery.

“Although his health appears good at this time, he is at a delicate stage, and the Zoo will monitor him closely as he grows,” the Oakland Zoo said in a statement.

Crimson is one of the youngest mountain lion cubs the zoo has ever cared for, and ensuring he reaches adulthood is no easy task. He currently requires around-the-clock care, which includes bottle feedings every three hours by veterinary staff, who must provide the level of care that his mother would have while also giving him space to act as much like a wild mountain lion as possible. Staff will also pay close attention to his foot to ensure he uses the leg properly.

Man killed after attacking police, EMS with sword

MA BOSTON — A person clearly suffering from a mental health crisis attacked a police officer with a sword and was tasered and shot, leading to his death, authorities said.

It all began with a 10:44 a.m. 911 call Saturday in which the caller reported that four people armed with guns were after him. Police arrived and located the caller and spoke with him through the apartment door, according to Boston Police Commissioner Michael Cox.

The police quickly determined that an EMS mental health clinician would be needed because the person was “suffering some type of mental

health crisis,” Cox said. The clinician, with officers present, spoke with the person through the apartment door.

“As they asked the individual to begin the process of maybe coming up and seeking the attention they needed, the individual immediately opened the door and struck both the clinician and an officer who was outside the door,” Cox said.

At least one officer then fired both Tasers and service pistols at the attacker, “bringing the person to a halt,” Cox said. That person was provided immediate first aid and rushed to a hospital but died from his injuries.

More protesters arrested over new bathroom law

ID BOISE — Six people were arrested on trespassing charges Friday afternoon at the Idaho State Capitol while protesting the state’s newly signed bathroom law.

Idaho State Police confirmed that law enforcement responded to a report of a disturbance inside the building Friday afternoon. Shortly thereafter, troopers arrested six of the 12 people demonstrating against House Bill 752, which criminalizes people using public toilets that don’t align with their sex assigned at birth.

This is the second protest over the law in the Capitol that has ended in arrests. On Wednesday, nine people taking part in a sit-in protest inside Gov. Brad Little’s office were arrested when they refused Idaho State Police requests to leave the Capitol after public business hours.

The law makes it a misdemeanor if someone “knowingly and willfully” uses such a rest-

room. A second offense within five years would come with a felony charge and up to five years in prison.

Food shelves saw record 9 million visits last year

MN MINNEAPOLIS — Many Minnesotans are still struggling to afford food as residents set a fourth consecutive record for food shelf visits in 2025.

Since the pandemic and the record inflation that followed, food insecurity has grown dramatically in the North Star State. Minnesotans made more than 9 million food shelf visits last year, according to the Food Group, a nonprofit. That’s more than double the visits recorded in 2019.

“This isn’t an isolated spike; it’s a multiyear, statewide trend of high food costs and record visits to food shelves,” said Sophia Lenarz-Coy, executive director of the Food Group.

Police rescue bear cub from side of busy road

NJ PERRYVILLE — New Jersey State Troopers rescued an abandoned bear cub along the side of Route 78 on Wednesday, authorities said.

At around 1:37 p.m., Troopers from Perryville Station responded to a report of a lone bear cub abandoned in a roadside ditch, authorities said. It was unclear how long the the bear cub had been abandoned.

Troopers were able to catch the cub and transport it back to the barracks before handing it off to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, authorities said.

— From wire reports



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UCLA clinches 1st women's national title

Associated Press

PHOENIX — It's mission accomplished for UCLA.

Gabriela Jaquez, Lauren Betts and the rest of the Bruins seniors secured the first NCAA women's basketball national championship in school history — a goal that was set after losing in the first Final Four last season.

Jaquez scored 21 points, Betts added 16 and UCLA routed South Carolina 79-51 Sunday in the title game.

"I knew we were going to do it. Coming to UCLA we all set out for a goal, and I imagined this moment," Jaquez said. "I imagined it so many times, and I am just so, so proud. ... Crying a lot, the confetti, all of the fans being here to support us, my family being here, it just means everything. Celebrating with this group, like ... I'm so happy."

The near-record lopsided victory completed the Bruins' journey through this year's March Madness. They ran through their opponents this season with their only loss coming in November to Texas in a Thanksgiving tournament.

"It's immeasurably more than I could ask or imagine," UCLA coach Cori Close said. "It's beyond my wildest dreams."

The Bruins (37-1) were led by

Betts and her fellow seniors and graduate students, like Jaquez — who played all four years with UCLA. She also had 10 rebounds and five assists in front of her brother Jaime, who plays for the Miami Heat and flew in to attend the game to watch his alma mater win.

The group that Close put together through a combination of high school commitments and transfer portal players capped off their stellar careers with a championship, scoring all the points in the title game.

"Connectivity. Attention to detail. You know I looked them in the eyes before in the locker room, before the game, and I said, 'I'm so proud to be able to say this,'" Close said. "Because all year we've been saying the talent is our floor, but our character will determine our ceiling."

The title is UCLA's first since winning the 1978 AIAW championship, which was the post-season tournament for women's basketball before the NCAA took over in 1982.

The championship game loss was the second straight for South Carolina, which won the title in 2024. Dawn Staley and her Gamecocks (36-4) will be favored to return to the game's biggest stage with a talented group of expected returnees,

led by Joyce Edwards and Agot Makeer.

Like their 51-44 semifinal win over Texas, the Bruins were locked in defensively, anchored by Betts. She finished with 11 rebounds and exited the game with 3:45 left, giving Close a huge hug. The 6-foot-7 senior earned Most Outstanding Player honors of the Final Four.

"UCLA is a quality team with very experienced players who got a taste of being in the Final Four last year, and you make adjustments," South Carolina's Staley said. "From last year to this year — they played determined last year, but they played more determined this year because they were so close."

Offensively, the Bruins had a much easier time than in the semifinal game that saw the team score only 20 points in the first half. They surpassed that total in the opening 10 minutes against the Gamecocks. Kiki Rice's 3-pointer just before the first-quarter buzzer made it 21-10 as UCLA got off to a strong start and South Carolina struggled with 17% shooting, its poorest quarter of the season.

The Bruins extended the lead to 15 points in the second quarter by clogging up the paint on defense and working the ball inside on offense for a 36-23 lead at the half.

UCLA put the game away in the third quarter, opening the period with a 12-3 run. Jaquez had five points during the spurt. The Gamecocks never threatened again as the Bruins outscored them 25-9 in the period.

"We just didn't have it today. We tried, but we just didn't have it today," Staley said. "They were the better team."

South Carolina avoided the most lopsided loss in championship history of 33 points, set in 2013 when UConn defeated Louisville. The Gamecocks also surpassed the title game record low of 44 points by Louisiana Tech in 1987 against Tennessee.

South Carolina was trying to cement its name as the premiere program in the sport with a fourth championship and third in the past five seasons. It just wasn't meant to be Sunday as the Gamecocks had their worst shooting game of the season against a talented UCLA team.

"This is not the ending we wanted, but we got here. No one thought we would, and we did it," said Tessa Johnson, who led South Carolina with 14 points.

Makeer added 11 for the Gamecocks.

"The score speaks for itself," said South Carolina senior Raven Johnson, who played in five Final Fours in her career.

Dream get All-Star Reese from Sky for two 1st-round picks

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Atlanta Dream acquired two-time WNBA All-Star Angel Reese from the Chicago Sky on Monday in exchange for first-round draft picks in 2027 and 2028.

Atlanta also receives the right to swap second-round picks with Chicago in 2028.

The 6-foot-3 Reese averaged 14.1 points and 12.9 rebounds in her two seasons with the Sky, earning All-Star honors each year while finishing as the run-

ner-up for rookie of the year in 2024.

"She has already proven herself as one of the most impactful players in the league, and her competitiveness, production and drive to win align seamlessly with our vision. This is an exciting moment for our organization and our fans," general manager Dan Padover said in a statement released by the Dream.

Reese, 23, was the No. 7 overall pick by Chicago in the

2024 WNBA draft after leading LSU to the 2023 national championship.

The trade comes after Reese expressed frustrations late in last season's 10-34 finish for the Sky. She told the Chicago Tribune that she "might have to move in a different direction and do what's best for me" if the team didn't improve its outlook. She later apologized to the team for the comments.

The Sky suspended Reese for half of a game for comments

deemed "detrimental to the team." The team listed her as dealing with a back injury for its final three games, raising speculation about her long-term future in Chicago.

Reese averaged 14.7 points last season and led the WNBA with 12.6 rebounds per game. She joins an Atlanta roster that boasts other established stars, such as Allisha Gray and Rhyne Howard, under the leadership of coach Karl Smesko.

Celtics surge in 4th quarter to beat Raptors

Associated Press

BOSTON — Jaylen Brown scored 26 points, Jayson Tatum had 23 points and 13 rebounds and the Boston Celtics beat the Toronto Raptors 115-101 on Sunday.

Neemias Queta had 18 points and seven rebounds, and Payton Pritchard scored 17 points for Boston, which won its third straight to move closer to clinching second place in the Eastern Conference.

Ja'Kobe Walter led Toronto with 16 points, and Brandon Ingram and RJ Barrett each had 15.

Celtics center Nikola Vucevic returned after missing a month following surgery for a broken right ring finger. He looked a bit rusty, scoring just four points in 13 minutes with four rebounds.

Mavericks 134, Lakers 128: Cooper Flagg scored 45 points and Dallas ended its longest home losing streak in 32 years at 14 games with a victory over Los Angeles.

The Lakers dropped into a tie for third in the Western Conference with Denver, although LA holds the tiebreaker on the Nug-

gets. Houston has a chance to get into the third-place mix in the final week of the regular season.

Cavaliers 117, Pacers 108: Donovan Mitchell scored 23 of his 38 points in the second half, James Harden had 28 points and seven assists and host Cleveland beat Indiana.

The playoff-bound Cavaliers (49-29) reduced their magic number for home-court advantage in the first round to one, despite resting their starting front-court of Jarrett Allen, Evan Mobley and Sam Merrill. Fourth-place Cleveland is four games ahead of Atlanta in the Eastern Conference with four to play.

Thunder 146, Jazz 111: Chet Holmgren scored 21 points, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 20 and host Oklahoma City had a season-high point total to rout Utah.

Cason Wallace scored 16 points and Jalen Williams added 15 for the Thunder, who increased their lead over San Antonio to three games with four remaining in the race for the top seed in the playoffs.

Rockets 117, Warriors 116: Alperen Sengun made the go-

ahead layup with 11 seconds left on a pass from Kevin Durant and visiting Houston held off Golden State and Stephen Curry in his return after being sidelined more than two months.

Gary Payton II scored the go-ahead basket on a goaltend by Amen Thompson with 20 seconds left, but Durant took charge on the other end. He finished with 31 points, eight rebounds and eight assists against his former team, making a crucial 3-pointer with 2:10 remaining. But he missed with 38 seconds left, and Draymond Green found a cutting Payton in the key.

Hornets 122, Timberwolves 108: LaMelo Ball scored 35 points and Miles Bridges added 25 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for surging Charlotte in a victory over host Minnesota.

Coby White had 17 points for the Hornets (43-36), who shot 48.9% from the floor (45-for-92) on the way to their fourth straight win. They're a half-game out of sixth place in the Eastern Conference.

Clippers 138, Kings 109: Kawhi Leonard scored 26 points

and visiting Los Angeles snapped a two-game skid by beating the Kings to improve their playoff positioning.

The Clippers moved into a tie for eighth place in the Western Conference with Portland with four games to play. The eighth-place team will have two shots to get into the playoffs through the play-in tournament.

Suns 120, Bulls 110: Devin Booker scored 30 points, Jalen Green added 25 and visiting Phoenix ended the game on an 11-2 run to top Chicago.

Magic 112, Pelicans 108: Desmond Bane scored 27 points and visiting Orlando overcame a 15-point deficit in the second half to beat New Orleans.

Nets 121, Wizards 115: Nolan Traore hit five 3-pointers and finished with 23 points and seven assists, Jalen Wilson added 19 points and host Brooklyn beat Washington.

Bucks 131, Grizzlies 115: Ryan Rollins scored 24 points and host Milwaukee withstood a triple-double from Memphis' Rayan Rupert to outlast the Grizzlies in an afternoon matchup of lottery-bound teams.

Thomas' first hat trick keeps Blues in playoff hunt

Associated Press

DENVER — Robert Thomas broke a tie with 2:50 left to complete his first NHL hat trick and the St. Louis Blues kept their late postseason charge rolling with a 3-2 victory over the Colorado Avalanche on Sunday night to open a home-and-home set.

St. Louis is 13-3-3 since the NHL returned from the Olympic break in late February. The Blues have 78 points as they chase the last Western Conference wild-card spot, which is currently occupied by Nashville with 81 points. Los Angeles (81), San Jose (79) and Winnipeg (78) are in the mix, too.

Rangers 8, Capitals 1: Charlie Lindgren allowed eight goals on

32 shots as the defense melted down in front of him, and visiting Washington blew a major opportunity to keep pace in the Eastern Conference playoff race by losing to already-eliminated New York.

The Capitals now face a daunting task to get in: three points back with four games left to play. The Blue Jackets, Islanders and Flyers are ahead of them in the chase for third in the Metropolitan Division, with those teams plus the Red Wings and Senators also in the way for the East's second and final wild card spot.

Flyers 2, Bruins 1 (OT): Porter Martone capped a fantastic first week in the NHL with a power-play goal in the NHL to put host

Philadelphia even closer toward ending a miserable playoff drought with a win over Boston.

The Flyers needed this win to get in Eastern Conference playoff position for the first time since Jan. 12.

Devils 3, Canadiens 0: Jacob Markstrom made 18 saves for his first shutout of the season and visiting New Jersey beat Montreal, ending the Canadiens' eight-game winning streak hours after they clinched a second straight playoff spot.

Cody Glass, Timo Meier and Connor Brown scored for the Devils as they fight to keep their slim postseason chances alive.

Senators 6, Hurricanes 3: Brady Tkachuk scored twice and

host Ottawa beat Carolina to move into the second wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference.

The Senators moved a point ahead of the New York Islanders for the last playoff spot with five games left. The Hurricanes lead the East, two points ahead of Tampa Bay. Carolina missed a chance to clinch the Metropolitan Division.

Wild 5, Red Wings 4: Kirill Kaprizov completed the sixth hat trick of his NHL career on the power play with 1:51 remaining to lead visiting Minnesota over Detroit.

Penguins 5, Panthers 2: Rickard Rakell scored twice, Sidney Crosby had a goal and two assists and host Pittsburgh beat Florida.

A's top Astros on Rooker's walk-off homer

Associated Press

WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Brent Rooker homered twice and had a career-high six RBIs, including a three-run shot in the bottom of the 10th inning that gave the Athletics a 12-10 victory over the Houston Astros on Sunday.

Tyler Soderstrom hit a bases-loaded triple and scored three times for the A's, who rebounded from an 11-0 defeat Saturday and took two of three games from Houston for their first series win this season.

Shaking off a cold start at the plate, Rooker launched his first homer of the year in the seventh. The two-run shot snapped a 5-all tie and sparked a four-run inning. It was his 100th homer with the Athletics, who finished with 16 hits.

The Astros pulled even with four runs in the eighth. Jake Meyers homered, Jose Altuve had an RBI double and Cam Smith tied it at 9 with a two-run single.

Carlos Correa gave Houston a 10-9 lead with an RBI single in the 10th before Rooker connected against Bryan Abreu (0-1).

Cubs 1-5, Guardians 0-6: Miguel Amaya hit an RBI single in the eighth inning and four Chicago pitchers combined for a one-hitter in a victory over host Cleveland in the opener of a traditional doubleheader.

The Guardians managed only one hit — a double that possibly could have been caught — against Cubs starter Edward Cabrera (5½ innings) and relievers Caleb Thielbar (1-0), Hoby Milner and Daniel Palencia, who worked a perfect ninth for his first save.

Cleveland won the second game for a split after rallying for a comeback in the eighth. The Guardians were six outs from being swept when CJ Kayfus, who entered as a pinch-hitter in the sixth, homered off Jacob Webb (0-1) to tie it 4.

Rookie Chase DeLauter followed with a single and Rhys

Hoskins walked before Gabriel Arias delivered his second run-scoring single of Game 2. Austin Hedges singled in a run to put Cleveland up 6-4.

Pirates 8, Orioles 2: Ryan O'Hearn homered and matched a career high with four RBIs as host Pittsburgh beat Baltimore to sweep a three-game series and extend its winning streak to five.

O'Hearn hit a two-run shot to right-center in the first inning. In the second, his two-run double highlighted a four-run outburst as the Pirates pushed their lead to 6-0. Oneil Cruz made it 8-1 with a two-run homer to center field in the sixth.

That was plenty of support for Braxton Ashcraft (1-1), who allowed one run and four hits in six innings. He had a career-high eight strikeouts and no walks.

Padres 8, Red Sox 6: Jackson Merrill had three hits, including a solo homer in the eighth inning that gave visiting San Diego the lead, and the Padres rallied from a four-run deficit to beat Boston and send the Red Sox to their seventh loss in their last eight games.

Manny Machado connected for a three-run homer and ex-Boston shortstop Xander Bogaerts also got three hits for San Diego.

The Red Sox tied it in the seventh on Masataka Yoshida's two-run double. It was his third straight hit after starting the season 0 for 10. Willyer Abreu also had three hits for Boston.

White Sox 3, Blue Jays 0: Davis Martin tossed six innings of four-hit ball to lead host Chicago to its first three-game sweep of Toronto in 10 years.

Miguel Vargas had an RBI triple, and Lenyn Sosa and Austin Hays each drove in a run as the White Sox opened 3-0 at home for the first time since 2004. Luisangel Acuña got two hits for Chicago, which last swept the Blue Jays in April 2016 at Toronto.

Ernie Clement had two of the Jays' six hits as the AL cham-

pions dropped their fourth straight game and were shut out for the first time this season.

Rockies 4, Phillies 1: Mickey Moniak homered twice and host Colorado defeated Philadelphia to salvage the finale of a three-game series.

Tomoyuki Sugano (1-0) struck out five and gave up one run in six innings for the Rockies.

Rays 4, Twins 1 (10): Richie Palacios hit a two-run homer in a three-run 10th inning, and visiting Tampa Bay beat Minnesota.

Junior Caminero also went deep for the Rays, who concluded a nine-game, 11-day, season-opening road trip with the 900th career win for manager Kevin Cash.

Brewers 8, Royals 5: William Contreras had a double and two RBIs and Kyle Harrison struck out six as visiting Milwaukee defeated Kansas City.

Harrison (1-0) allowed three hits and two runs in 5½ innings, earning his first win since May 30, 2025. Christian Yelich was 2 for 5 with an RBI triple that opened the scoring in the first inning.

Reds 2, Rangers 1: Elly De La Cruz singled home the winning run in the eighth inning after scoring in the fourth inning with the use of his speed as visiting Cincinnati beat Texas to sweep the three-game weekend series.

De La Cruz sliced an opposite-field hit to right field to score Matt McLain, who walked leading off the inning against Robert Garcia (0-1) and stole second base.

Dodgers 8, Nationals 6: Shohei Ohtani homered and hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly, and visiting Los Angeles rallied from a five-run deficit to defeat Washington and complete a three-game sweep.

Teoscar Hernández and Dalton Rushing also homered for Los Angeles, which has won four of its last five.

Diamondbacks 6, Braves 5 (10): Ketel Marte doubled on the

first pitch of the 10th inning to score automatic runner Jorge Barrosa, and host Arizona beat Atlanta to split the four-game series.

Taylor Rashi, making his first appearance of the season, pitched a scoreless 10th for his first victory in the majors. He was helped by shortstop Geraldo Perdomo, who made a backhanded stop on a sharp grounder while playing in and threw out Mauricio Dubón for the second out to keep the automatic runner at third.

Angels 8, Mariners 7 (11): Nolan Schanuel drove in automatic runner Adam Frazier with a one-out sacrifice fly in the 11th inning to lift host Los Angeles to a walk-off win over Seattle.

Shaun Anderson (1-0) struck out Cal Raleigh with the bases loaded to end the top of the 11th. Anderson gave up a run in two innings pitched.

Marlins 7, Yankees 6: Pinch-hitter Graham Pauley had a go-ahead, two-run double in a four-run eighth inning, and visiting Miami held off New York to stop a four-game winning streak.

John King (1-0) escaped a two-on jam in the seventh and Anthony Bender allowed Jazz Chisholm Jr.'s two-run double with two outs in the ninth before striking out pinch-hitter J.C. Escarra with two on for his second save.

Cardinals 5, Tigers 3: Iván Herrera's two-run single capped a four-run fifth inning and visiting St. Louis salvaged the finale of a three-game series with a victory over Detroit.

St. Louis starter Kyle Leahy (1-1) gave up two runs and five hits in five innings. Riley O'Brien pitched the ninth for his second save.

Mets 5, Giants 2: Pinch-hitter Luis Torrens keyed visiting New York's four-run eighth inning with a two-run double and the Mets made it three straight wins over San Francisco with a victory.