

## Deadline looms as threats to Iran rise

BY LARA KORTE  
*Stars and Stripes*

A self-imposed deadline set by President Donald Trump for Iran to reach a peace deal was looming Tuesday, as Trump escalated his threats to destroy the country's infrastructure and talks appeared to stall.

"A whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again," Trump said in a post to his Truth Social account. "I don't want that to happen, but it probably will."

Trump earlier warned that a failure to reach an agreement by the 8 p.m. cutoff would result in U.S. military strikes on infrastructure, including every bridge and power plant in Iran.

Tehran on Monday rejected a 45-day ceasefire proposal, saying it instead wants a permanent end to the war.

Trump's rhetoric is raising questions about potential viola-

tions of international law. Over the weekend, he issued an explosive-laden message telling Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz or it would be "living in hell."

At a news conference Monday alongside senior military officials, he said: "The entire country can be taken out in one night, and that night might be tomorrow night."

In response to a question about whether he's concerned that his threat to bomb power plants and bridges amounts to a war crime, he said no.

But he added that he hopes he doesn't "have to do it."

The U.S. also conducted strikes Tuesday on Iran's Kharg Island, targeting dozens of military sites, including bunkers, a radar station and ammunition storage facilities, Fox News reported. Kharg Island, Iran's main oil export hub, has been struck previously by U.S. forces.

Vice President JD Vance, speaking to reporters on a trip to Hungary on Tuesday, acknowledged U.S. strikes on Kharg Island. He said the U.S. will hold off on striking energy infrastructure until the president's deadline, but that he hopes both sides are able to make a deal before then.

"If the Iranians want to exact a certain amount of pain, the United States has the ability to exact much, much greater pain," the vice president said. "The president doesn't want to do that. I don't want to do that. That's why we're negotiating so aggressively. But fundamentally, the ball is in the Iranians' court."

Trump's threats against Iranian infrastructure have prompted outcry from critics around the globe, including on Capitol Hill.

Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., said such an operation would be

a "textbook war crime." Rep. Yassamin Ansari, D-Ariz., said she will introduce articles of impeachment against Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, calling him the "chief enabler of an illegal war."

"Iran is a country of 90 million people," she said in a video posted to X. "Threatening them with annihilation is a monstrous war crime and puts them and American service members and Americans at grave risk."

With both chambers of Congress under Republican control, however, any articles of impeachment are unlikely to gain traction. But the congressional pushback reflects wider unease about potential strikes.

Officials in Tehran said attacks on power plants and bridges are a violation of the Geneva Conventions, while a United Nations spokesperson said he was alarmed by the rhetoric.

## IG: Navy SEAL speedboat crews at risk of brain injury

BY ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

Sailors who man speedboats used in Navy SEAL operations are in danger of traumatic brain injuries from repeatedly slamming into waves because the vessels don't have systems that alleviate shock, according to a Pentagon watchdog agency.

The boats also lack a monitoring system to measure craft and crew shock and whole-body vibration, among other deficiencies, the Defense Department inspector general said in a March 30 report.

As a result, crew members are at serious risk for lower back and neck injuries as well as chronic pain and head injuries, the report stated. It also

noted that service members are exposed to blast forces when firing heavy weapons.

"Repetitive impacts significantly degrade immediate performance and can result in long-lasting medical problems," the IG said. Traumatic brain injuries also "may result in a degradation of the health of the force and its long-term sustainability," the report added.

The IG report cited a U.S. Special Operations Command directive that said traumatic brain injuries can result from acute or repetitive blast exposure and acceleration and deceleration forces.

The potential for injuries can be heightened by body armor, helmets and night vision goggles,

and a boat console design that forces vessel operators to stand in a slouched forward position to reach controls, the IG found.

At issue are combatant craft assault boats that travel at speeds of up to nearly 70 miles per hour. The vessels are crewed by a contingent of about 800 active-duty personnel and as many as 125 reservist special warfare combatant craft crewmen.

Those sailors are trained in maritime direct-action operations and special reconnaissance as well as insertion and extraction of special operations units, according to a report last year from the Military Health System's Traumatic Brain Inju-

ry Center of Excellence.

The boats' hulls and equipment are designed to withstand a gravitational force, or G-force, of up to 6 with the vessel's suspension seats able to mitigate G-force impacts as high as 5, according to the Military Health System report issued in February 2025.

But "slamming induced impacts to high-speed boats can exceed 20 G-force," it stated.

The Defense Department IG wants Naval Special Warfare Command to review and validate five potential solutions, including installing head and neck support devices and adjustable seating as identified in a January 2024 Naval Special Warfare Group 4 report.

# Trump shares details on airmen rescue

By MATTHEW ADAMS  
*Stars and Stripes*

The U.S. military used 155 aircraft to rescue a missing crew member of a fighter jet that was shot down over Iran last week.

"I ordered the U.S. Armed Forces to do whatever was necessary to bring our brave warriors back home," President Donald Trump told reporters on Monday during a news conference at the White House. "In the United States military, we leave no American behind."

The rescue followed a life-or-death race between U.S. and Iranian forces that stretched over the course of two days to reach the injured airman, who is a weapons systems officer. Navy SEAL Team 6 commandos extracted the officer in a massive operation that involved hundreds of special operations troops and other military personnel, according to the New York Times.

After ejecting from the F-15E, the weapons systems officer — an Air Force colonel — hid in a mountain crevice, his location initially unknown to either Americans trying to rescue him or Iranians trying to capture him.

The F-15E fighter jet, referred to by call sign Dude 44, was downed Thursday night in southern Iran — the first confirmed shootdown of a U.S. warplane over Iran.

The colonel was "injured quite badly" and in an area teeming with terrorists from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Trump said.

The pilot of the aircraft was rescued earlier by U.S. forces, while the search for the other aviator continued into a second day.

The U.S. deployed 21 planes to rescue the pilot. The second mission involved 155 aircraft, including four bombers, 64 fighters, 48 refueling tankers and 13 rescue aircraft.

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.

"This was an incredibly dangerous mission," said Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

During the search for the first crew member, an A-10 Warthog combat plane flying as part of a "sandy mission" was struck by Iranian fire, though the pilot was able to navigate the damaged plane to Kuwaiti airspace before ejecting and being rescued.

"A sandy has one mission," Caine said, "get to the survivor, bring the rescue force forward, and put themselves between that survivor on the ground and the enemy."

After rescuing the pilot, HH-60 Jolly Green II helicopters were "engaged by every single person in Iran who had a small-arms weapon, and one of the aircraft, the trailing aircraft, took several hits," he said. The crew members received minor injuries.

Meanwhile, the second crew member was injured and "actively evading enemy forces," Caine said. "And thanks to our interagency partners, we were able to get eyes on his location and positively ID him."

The CIA initiated a deception campaign to try to confuse Iranian forces, and convince them the airman had already been rescued and was moving out of the country in a ground convoy, a senior administration official told the Times.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe said the rescue was a "no fail mission." He said the CIA found the airman Saturday morning buried in a mountain crevice "still invincible to the enemy."

## Trump raises Greenland tiff, assails NATO over Iran

*Bloomberg News*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump revisited his grievances with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization over Greenland as he expressed fresh frustration with the security alliance's stance on the Iran war.

"It all began with, if you want to know the truth, Greenland," Trump said during a White House press conference. "We want Greenland. They don't want to give it to us. And I said, 'bye, bye.'"

The U.S. president has long sought Greenland, a Danish territory. Earlier this year, relations between the United States and European allies frayed as Trump used veiled threats of military force and tariffs before

saying he had reached a "framework" agreement over the island that addressed his national security concerns.

Trump continued to lash out at NATO on Monday, repeating that he was "very disappointed" in the alliance. Key member states declined to allow the U.S. to access military bases to carry out the initial Iran strikes and countries have balked at calls to effectively join the war by helping reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

"I think it's a mark on NATO that will never disappear, never disappear in my mind," Trump said.

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte is slated to meet Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Wednesday in

Washington in a bid to sooth the administration's concerns over the alliance. While Trump praised Rutte, with whom he has enjoyed a warm relationship, he indicated the alliance faced a difficult path to mending ties with the U.S.

"You know, they're coming to see me on Wednesday. They're going to say, 'Oh, we'll do this. We'll do that.' Now they all of a sudden want to send things, you know, but they said it loud and clear at the beginning," Trump said.

U.S. ties with NATO, long strained under Trump, have deteriorated over the Iran war. In an interview last week with the United Kingdom's Telegraph newspaper, Trump said he was strongly considering pulling the

U.S. out of the alliance. Under a change enacted under former President Joe Biden's administration, leaving NATO requires the approval of Congress, which Trump is unlikely to obtain.

The comments, nevertheless, alarmed U.S. allies, worried that even if Trump does not exit the alliance, he may still withhold support for the bloc, hampering efforts to aid Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion.

Trump on Monday repeated his criticisms that NATO is a "paper tiger," adding that "Putin's not afraid of NATO; Putin's afraid of us, very afraid of us."

Trump has long questioned NATO's relevance and pushed members to spend more on defense to ease demands on U.S. forces.

# VA proposes 7.7% budget increase to \$488B

By LINDA F. HERSEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs' proposed budget for fiscal 2027 is \$488 billion, which represents a 7.7% increase over 2026 and covers more than \$337 billion in compensation, pensions and other mandatory benefits for millions of veterans, according to new budget documents.

The uptick in VA funding aligns with President Donald Trump's budget priorities, according to the White House.

The VA, which is the nation's largest integrated health care system, expects to provide monthly disability compensation to more than 7.4 million veterans in 2027.

More than 9.2 million veterans will be enrolled in VA med-

ical care, according to budget documents.

Trump's administration on Friday released its 2027 budget request for funding the federal government. It includes \$1.5 trillion for defense spending, an increase of 44% over 2026, according to the Office of Management and Budget.

The proposed budget emphasizes border security, veterans' services, and military investments, and seeks cuts to many nondefense, domestic spending programs, according to the Office of Management and Budget.

"The 2027 budget builds on the president's vision by continuing to constrain non-defense spending and reform the federal government," wrote Russell Vought, director of the Office of Management and Budget, in a

message to Congress.

The plan is considered a blueprint and a starting point for Congress to begin the annual appropriations process.

The VA's \$488 billion request represents a 58% increase in the agency's annual funding level since 2023, according to budget documents.

The VA's request would create the Warrior Independence and Self-Sufficiency Ethos (WISE) Office to oversee programs to address veteran homelessness.

WISE is the result of a May 2025 presidential executive order to "help veterans achieve long-term self-sufficiency, independence, and stability."

The new office would help veterans achieve long-term self-sufficiency, independence, and

stability, according to budget documents.

The budget request calls for \$144.9 billion in discretionary spending, a 9% increase over 2026. This funding covers medical care, mental health services, homelessness prevention and benefits claims processing, according to budget documents.

Approximately \$337.6 billion will cover mandatory program spending, which is \$22.6 billion more than 2026.

Mandatory spending spans compensation and pensions, readjustment benefits, housing and insurance, and continued funding for the toxic exposures fund, which awards benefits to veterans with illnesses and injuries connected to burn pits, radiation and other hazardous materials during service.

## 4,750 immigrants arrested during past year in Colo.

*The Denver Post*

DENVER — During President Donald Trump's first year back in office, 4,750 people without legal status were arrested by federal immigration authorities in Colorado, new data shows, reflecting a near-quadrupling of the prior year's arrest rate.

The data provides detailed insights into the dramatic effects of the Trump administration's mass arrest and deportation efforts — what one immigration attorney previously described as the federal government's "deportation machine."

The share of arrestees who have criminal convictions has plummeted, the data shows, while deportations of those with no criminal history have surged, despite federal officials' claims that they're pursuing the "worst of the worst." The Denver Post analyzed U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement data that was obtained and processed by the Data Deportation Project. It

included arrests in the full year ending Jan. 20, the anniversary of the start of Trump's second term.

Of the thousands arrested in the state, 78% had a listed date of departure — indicating that they had already been removed from the United States.

The people arrested in Colorado came from more than 80 countries spread across five continents. Two thousand and one came from Mexico and 782 from Venezuela. Among others, 316 were from Guatemala, 22 from China, a dozen from Afghanistan and four from the United Kingdom.

They ranged in age from a 91-year-old Mexican man deported last year to two children who were, at most, a year old; one of them has also been deported, the data shows. At least 121 people were younger than 18. Ten of the arrestees were Iranians, all arrested within days of the United States' first bombing campaign against that country in June.

## White House eyes shake-up of college oversight policy

*Bloomberg News*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Education proposed a raft of changes to college oversight guidelines on Monday, moves that would upend the traditional regulatory framework for universities and amplify the Trump administration's higher education policy agenda.

The shift, laid out in a department memo viewed by Bloomberg, would tie colleges' federal funding to White House priorities like eradicating DEI initiatives and promoting political diversity among faculty. The proposals include measures to "address the college affordability issue" by cracking down on high tuition rates and requiring accreditors to consider post-graduate earnings when certifying degree programs for federal funding.

They would also ease the pathway to federal recognition for new accrediting organizations like the Commission for Public Higher Education, backed by

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, allowing them to fast-track the application process.

Undersecretary of Education Nicholas Kent said in an email to Bloomberg that the new policies would "make it easier for emerging accreditors to gain recognition, increase competition, and provide institutions with greater options." As high-profile negotiations with elite colleges like Harvard stalled and a White House push for a "compact" giving funding preferences to Trump-friendly schools fizzled, Education Department officials have focused on accreditation as an effective way to impose the administration's higher education agenda.

While accrediting bodies are independent, the Education Department has the power to rescind their federal recognition. The proposed regulatory changes give the federal government more leeway in revoking that certification for agencies that don't enforce its guidelines.

# Artemis heads home from moon as president calls crew in praise

*Orlando Sentinel*

The crew of Artemis II flew farther from Earth than any human in history, saw parts of the moon never seen before and spoke with President Donald Trump as they took a turn for their return flight home.

"Today you've made history and made all America really proud, incredibly proud," Trump said during a call with the four crew who had just completed seven hours of observations including parts of the far side of the moon.

NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch along with Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen flew 248,655 miles from the planet during their 10-day mission. The quartet launched from Kennedy Space Center last Wednesday, but are now headed for a splashdown in the Pacific Ocean on Friday evening.

They were on a call with NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman, who dialed in Trump who was rife with congratulatory statements.

"We have a lot of things to be proud of lately, but this is there's nothing like what you're

doing, circling around the moon for the first time in more than a half a century," he said.

Only 24 people, all during nine Apollo missions from 1968-1972, had ever left low-Earth orbit and ventured to deep space. The Artemis II crew increases that number to 28, including the first woman, first Black man and first non-American.

Wiseman gave credit to Isaacman's leadership and collaboration with international partners and weighed in on the gravity of the what the crew had just seen, although the connection was littered with awkward moments of dropped audio.

"As we came around the near side of the moon, seeing all the sites that we've seen from Earth for all of our lives, but we're seeing them from a different perspective," he said, but sites like the Orientale basin on the far side, "sites that no human has ever seen before, not even in Apollo. That was amazing for us."

The crew also witnessed a solar eclipse when the moon blocked out the sun.

"We could see the corona of the sun, and then we could see the planet train line up," Wise-

man said noting they could also see Mars. "All of us commented how excited we are to watch this nation and this planet become a two-planet species."

Trump kept floating Mars as the next step for NASA, but touted his administration's plans to start a lunar base in the coming years.

"Your mission paves the way for America's return to the lunar surface. Very soon, we're going all out. We're doing everything we can, and it's headed up by Jared. We'll plant our flag once again, and this time, we won't just leave footprints. We'll establish a permanent presence on the moon, and we'll push on to Mars," he said. "That'll be very exciting. I'm waiting for that so much. I'd love to be here, but maybe we won't quite make it in terms of timing, but we will be up in the moon, and that's going to happen soon."

Artemis II is the first crewed mission of the Artemis program, which is aiming to return humans to the lunar surface for the first time since the Apollo 17 mission in 1972. That won't come until Artemis IV aiming for an early 2028 launch before the end of Trump's second term.

# Parents charged after child hurt at zoo

*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

PHILADELPHIA — A 17-month-old was hurt Saturday after crawling under a fence at Pennsylvania's Hersheypark zoo and sticking his hand into a wolf enclosure. Now, the boy's parents face charges.

The child, who has not been publicly identified, was "unsupervised" at ZooAmerica North American Wildlife Park, which is inside Hersheypark, a police statement said. His injuries were classified as "minor," but officials didn't elaborate.

The Derry Township Police Department reported the child squeezed through a small opening in a wooden perimeter fence, entering a restricted area. He then reached a metal fence and stuck his hand through it. That's when one of the wolves approached and "instinctively and naturally grabbed onto the child's hand with its mouth."

"This type of response is consistent with natural animal behavior, and was not a sign of aggression," a zoo spokesperson said in a statement.

ZooAmerica hosts three gray wolves in its enclosure, according to its website: a male, Twister, and two sisters, Hazel and Freya.

Bystanders reportedly intervened and pulled the child out.

Police said the toddler's parents, Carrie B. Sortor, 43, and Stephen J. B. Wilson, 61, both of Lititz, Pa., were about "25 to 30 feet away from the child" and distracted on their phones before noticing the commotion.

According to the police department, each parent has been charged with one count of child welfare endangerment, a misdemeanor.

# Passenger gives birth just before jet lands

*New York Daily News*

NEW YORK — A passenger gave birth just before arrival at John F. Kennedy International Airport over the weekend.

The delivery happened Saturday night as Caribbean Airlines Flight BW005 from Kingston, Jamaica, neared Jamaica, Queens.

"We have a passenger, a pregnant passenger, who's going into labor at this time. Requesting direct detail," a pilot told air traffic control in a recording ob-

tained by CBS News.

The controller confirms that he understands the situation and begins coordinating a medical response as the passenger plane approaches. But the situation plays out quickly.

"Is it out yet?" the control can be heard asking. The pilot confirms that the baby has arrived.

"All right, tell her she's got to name it Kennedy," the controller says.

"Ah, Kennedy, will do," the pilot responds with a chuckle.

Caribbean Airlines confirmed that a "medical event" had taken place on a flight destined for New York City, and no emergency was declared.

"Upon arrival, the mother and newborn were attended to by medical personnel and are receiving the necessary care," the airline said.

No information about the mom nor the newborn has been reported. Caribbean Airlines asked for the passengers' right to privacy to be recognized.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Redesign of George Floyd Square to begin soon

**MN** MINNEAPOLIS — Construction at George Floyd Square, the Minneapolis intersection where Floyd was murdered by a Minneapolis police officer in 2020, is expected to begin this summer as the city moves forward with plans to redesign the area.

Street and infrastructure improvements around the intersection of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue are scheduled to begin in June, with substantial completion expected in 2027, city officials said. The work marks a major step in a long-debated effort to reshape the site, which has become both a neighborhood hub and a global symbol of protest and remembrance.

City officials say the redesign aims to improve street infrastructure while preserving the intersection's role as a gathering place and memorial site.

### Nearly 100 cats found in shed, public help wanted

**AL** SHELBY COUNTY — Hoover's Kitty Kat Haven & Rescue has asked for the public's help with dozens of cats and kittens rescued from an emergency hoarding situation late last week.

The group found 91 cats over the weekend and one that was rescued gave birth to a litter on Friday, according to its Facebook page.

The cats' owner was evicted from the small home in Shelby County he was staying in, and the landlord gave rescuers until April 5 to remove the animals.

"This kind-hearted man cried

saying goodbye to his cats," wrote shelter employee Krysten Harper in a post to Facebook.

"He knew all of their names, how old they were, when they were born, and what they liked. ... The most amazing thing is that overall, these cats are healthy. When I complimented the man on how well taken care of they were, he admitted to feeding them even when it meant he had to go without."

Kitty Kat Haven & Rescue is looking for adopters and rescue partners to help with the 55 cats currently in temporary foster homes.

### Eaglets have landed for Big Bear couple

**CA** FAWNSKIN — It's an Easter Sunday to remember for Big Bear bald eagles Jackie and Shadow, who welcomed a pair of eaglets this weekend in front of 2.5 million social media followers.

The first chick hatched late Saturday at 11:33 p.m. while the second emerged Sunday at 8:30 a.m., according to Friends of Big Bear Valley, the nonprofit group that oversees the couple's webcam.

The cam has followed Jackie and Shadow, who have been mating since 2018, and made the birds worldwide celebrities and regular fixtures of morning TV shows.

The two chicks will be named by the third-graders at a school in Big Bear, according to Friends of Big Bear Valley.

The births are a triumph for Jackie and Shadow, who lost a clutch in late January. Ravens ate the couple's two eggs when they were left unattended.

### Gov. to end spending on sugary drinks with order

**CO** DENVER — Colorado's proposed ban on allowing the largest food assistance program to pay for soft drinks is on hold while a lawsuit against the federal government plays out, but Gov. Jared Polis is planning an executive order to limit state soda purchases.

The proposed change would prevent the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps, from paying for sweetened beverages unless they contain milk or at least 50% juice.

People could still use SNAP to buy chocolate milk, unsweetened seltzers and some juice drinks but not sodas.

Five individuals, including one Colorado resident, sued the U.S. Department of Agriculture last month for approving "waivers" that allowed 22 states to ban SNAP from paying for soft drinks.

Polis didn't directly answer whether he could order the change to SNAP if the board opted not to move forward. Adding a ban on most sweetened beverages would allow Colorado to keep working on other changes, such as allowing SNAP to pay for hot foods.

### Driver arrested after road rage encounter filmed

**CA** LOS ANGELES — The LA man who was filmed punching and kicking the Mercedes-Benz of "Gown and Out in Beverly Hills" stars Patrik Simpson and Pol' Atteu in Hollywood was arrested this week and booked on felony vandalism.

The reality stars shared the

dramatic video of the incident on social media.

In the video, a man wearing a Cheech & Chong tee that reads "Don't Panic, It's Organic" blocked the Melrose Avenue and Vine Street intersection Sunday around 9:20 a.m. and hopped out of his Toyota 4Runner.

The man, who has been identified as Los Angeles resident Kevin Antonio Hernandez, approached their vehicle and punched the driver's side window and kicked the driver's side door.

The Los Angeles Police Department told The Times that Hernandez was arrested Wednesday. He has since been released.

### Egg hunters come across possible human skull

**CA** LOS ANGELES — Authorities were investigating after the discovery Sunday afternoon of possible human remains at a Long Beach park as visitors gathered to celebrate Easter.

The Long Beach Police Department responded to a call around 5 p.m. at DeForest Park after a possible small skull was found by someone searching for Easter eggs in the area, KTLA 5 reported.

The Los Angeles County medical examiner's office responded to the scene following the discovery, police said. The investigation is ongoing.

DeForest Park runs along the LA River and features a large wetland area with nature trails. Other public amenities include sports courts, playgrounds and a community center.

— From wire reports

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# Michigan beats UConn, nabs second title

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Michigan's new Fab Five threeshot style points out the door and brought home a prize not even the school's most famous team could capture.

The five fabulous transfers who make up coach Dusty May's starting lineup got down and dirty with the rest of the Wolverines — coming out with the national title trophy Monday night after muscling their way to a 69-63 victory over stingy, stubborn UConn.

Michigan only made two 3-pointers all night.

The Final Four's most outstanding player, Elliot Cadeau, led the Wolverines with 19 points, including the team's first 3, which came 7:04 into the second half. The second 3, from freshman Trey McKenney, came with 1:50 left and felt like a dagger, giving May's team — which had scored 90 points in five straight March Madness games leading to the final — a nine-point lead.

To no one's surprise, the Huskies fought to the finish. Solo Ball banked in a 3 to cut the deficit to

four with 37 seconds left — and after two missed free throws, UConn's Alex Karaban (17 points) barely grazed the rim on a 3 that would've cut the deficit to one with 17 seconds left.

Not until McKenney sank two free throws to bring Michigan's shooting from the line to 25 for 28 for the night could the Wolverines (37-3) kick off the celebration for the program's second title — the other coming in 1989, a few years before the Fab Five arrived and made two trips to the championship game, but never won a title.

"HAIL TO VICTORS!!!!" Jalen Rose, part of the Fab Five, posted on social media. "NATIONAL CHAMPIONS!!!!"

It was the first men's hoops title for the Big Ten since Michigan State in 2000. Including UCLA's win in the women's NCAA Tournament Sunday, the conference swept the football (Indiana) and basketball titles this year.

Michigan won this one with defense, holding UConn to 30.9% shooting — the fourth straight game the Wolverines held their opponent to a season-low field-

goal percentage.

"These guys have done it all year," May said. "When one side of the ball has let us down, the other side has picked it up. Our togetherness defensively ultimately got us over the hump."

Michigan had to fight for everything. The Wolverines missed their first 11 shots from 3, finished 2-for-15 beyond the arc and won despite the struggles of their best player, Yaxel Lendeborg. Ailing with a hurt knee and foot that kept him from elevating, the graduate transfer from UAB finished with 13 points on 4-for-13 shooting.

"If you'd told me we would shoot it this poorly and (be) dominated on the glass and still find a way to win, I don't know if I would have believed you," May said. "This team just found a way all season."

The two 3-pointers were tied for second-fewest by a winning team in the title game, according to Sportradar. Michigan also got out-rebounded 22-12 on the offensive glass by a UConn team that would not go away.

"How are you disappointed at all in your group?" Huskies

coach Dan Hurley said. "These guys have 22 offensive rebounds versus that group of 'mon-stars' out there. So, proud of the guys."

Truth be told, it wasn't anyone's prettiest night.

UConn's hopes of becoming the first team since John Wooden's UCLA dynasty to win three titles in four seasons came up short, done in by massive foul trouble and its own terrible shooting.

Hurley's team missed its first 11 shots from 3 in the second half.

Braylon Mullins, the hero of the Duke win that put the Huskies in the Final Four, finished 4-for-17, though he made a pair of late 3s that kept the game in reach. Tarris Reed Jr., the transfer from Michigan, finished with 13 points and 14 rebounds but never took control.

UConn (34-6) covered the 6½-point spread, and Hurley kept his players out on the court to watch the podium get set up for the victors.

About the only consolation: The Huskies clogged things up, slowed things down, and made the Wolverines beat them at their game.

## Source: North Carolina set to hire Malone as next coach

Associated Press

North Carolina is working toward finalizing a deal with NBA championship-winning coach Michael Malone to lead the Tar Heels' men's basketball program, a person with knowledge of the situation said Monday.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the school hasn't publicly discussed its search. Malone would replace Hubert Davis, who was fired March 24 after five seasons as the successor to retired Hall of Famer Roy Williams.

ESPN was the first to report UNC moving toward hiring Malone.

The 54-year-old Malone spent

12 seasons as a head coach in the NBA, including a 10-year run in Denver. He led the Nuggets to the 2023 championship behind three-time league MVP Nikola Jokic.

Denver fired Malone last spring with less than a week left in that regular season. Almost a year to the day, in another surprise move, Malone is on the verge of taking over a blue-blood program with six national titles, a record 21 appearances in the Final Four and alums including Michael Jordan, James Worthy, Vince Carter and Atlantic Coast Conference career scoring leader Tyler Hansbrough.

UNC would have two big-name former pro coaches lead-

ing its two highest-profile programs. The Tar Heels hired six-time Super Bowl champion Bill Belichick as their football coach in December 2024. Belichick struggled to a 4-8 record in his debut season.

Davis' firing opened one of the top jobs in college basketball for only the fourth time since the late Hall of Famer Dean Smith's retirement after 36 seasons in October 1997.

The job had stayed in the "Carolina Family" ever since. Longtime assistant Bill Guthridge replaced Smith, followed by former UNC player Matt Doherty, former Smith assistant Williams and then Davis, who played under Smith and worked on Wil-

liams' staff.

Names like Arizona's Tommy Lloyd, Michigan's Dusty May and Chicago Bulls coach Billy Donovan had been linked to the job since Davis' firing. Lloyd announced Friday at the Final Four that he would return to the Wildcats.

Three days later, the search had turned in an unexpected direction with Malone, who has never been a college head coach and has spent most of his career in the NBA. His primary connection to UNC athletics is the presence of daughter Bridget on the Tar Heels' volleyball team.

Malone had stints in college as an assistant at Oakland, Providence and Manhattan.

# Banchero, Magic top Pistons in seeding fight

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Paolo Banchero scored 31 points, Desmond Bane added 25 and the Orlando Magic beat the Detroit Pistons 123-107 on Monday night.

Jalen Suggs had 12 points, 12 assists, six rebounds and three steals for Orlando, which won for the fourth time in five games.

Jalen Duren and Daniss Jenkins scored 18 points apiece for Detroit. Kevin Huerter and Javonte Green added 17 each for the Pistons, who had 21 turnovers.

Having clinched the top playoff spot in the Eastern Conference on Saturday, Detroit was without eight players, including Tobias Harris, Duncan Robinson, Caris LeVert and All-Star Cade Cunningham, who missed his 11th straight game with a collapsed lung.

The Magic, playing for position in the packed middle of

the Eastern Conference standings, kept alive their chances of finishing as high as sixth. With three games remaining in the regular season, Orlando could also finish as low as 10th.

The Magic played without forward Franz Wagner, whose high ankle sprain was subject to “injury management” after his three-game return from a long absence. Anthony Black, who had missed 15 games with an abdominal strain, returned and scored 14 points in 15 minutes for Orlando.

The first of two Bane 3-pointers in a span of 16 seconds put the Magic up 33-31 early in the second quarter, and they led the rest of the game.

Banchero scored twice during a 12-0 run that stretched Orlando’s lead to 26 points late in the third quarter.

Green and Huerter led a late rally by the Pistons, and a 3-pointer by Jenkins cut the

margin to three points with 4:07 left before the Magic pulled away.

**Knicks 108, Hawks 105:** CJ McCollum’s half-court shot at the buzzer was ruled no good after a review and visiting New York held off Atlanta.

Jalen Brunson made two free throws with 1.2 seconds left to give the Knicks a three-point lead. McCollum took an inbounds pass near the free-throw line and took two dribbles before launching a shot that banked in. But replays showed the ball was still in his hands as time expired.

It was the Hawks’ first home loss since early February and put an end to their 13-game home win streak.

**Cavaliers 142, Grizzlies 126:** Evan Mobley scored 24 points, Dennis Schroder had 22 points and 11 assists, and visiting Cleveland beat Memphis despite the Grizzlies tying the NBA single-game rec-

ord with 29 3-pointers.

The Cavaliers (50-29) reached 50 wins for the second straight season and 14th overall.

**Spurs 115, 76ers 102:** Stephon Castle had 17 points, 13 assists and 10 rebounds, and host San Antonio held on to beat Philadelphia after Victor Wembanyama left in the first half due to a left rib contusion.

Wembanyama’s status for the final week of the regular season is unknown.

**Nuggets 137, Trail Blazers 132 (OT):** Nikola Jokic had 35 points, 13 rebounds and 13 assists, and host Denver rallied from a 16-point deficit in the fourth quarter to beat Portland in overtime.

The Nuggets (51-28) moved into third place in the Western Conference with their season-high ninth straight win. Jokic recorded his 33rd triple-double to move Denver a half-game ahead of the Los Angeles Lakers (50-28).

# Sabres defeat Lightning, setting up tight Atlantic race

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Jason Zucker tipped in Bowen Byram’s shot for the go-ahead goal 7:38 into the second period, and the Buffalo Sabres beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 4-2 on Monday night, further tightening the race for the Atlantic Division title.

Jack Quinn, with an assist from goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, sealed the win by scoring into an empty net with 1:54 left. Josh Norris and Alex Tuch also scored. Buffalo snapped a minor 2-3-2 slump to tie Tampa Bay atop the division with 102 points, and two ahead of idle Montreal entering the final 10 days of the season.

Luukkonen stopped 23 shots to improve to 10-2-1 in his past 14 appearances and strengthen his hold on the starting job.

Jake Guentzel, with a goal and assist, and Nikita Kucherov also scored, but the Lightning lost in regulation for just the third time in 14 games (9-3-2). Kucherov became the NHL’s eighth Russian-born and second Tampa Bay player to score 400 goals, and also tied Connor McDavid for the points lead with 126.

Andrei Vasilevskiy made 25 saves in falling to 7-2-1 in his past 10 outings.

The Sabres never trailed and were greeted by a standing ovation upon returning home since clinching their first playoff berth in 15 seasons Saturday.

Darren Raddysh prevented a Buffalo clearing attempt to set up Guentzel’s goal to tie the game at 2 at the 3:56 mark of the second period. Zucker scored less than four minutes later by

deflecting in Byram’s shot from the blue line.

The game had its chippy moments between two budding division rivals, but nothing matching the ferocious intensity of the teams’ memorable outing a month ago. The Sabres squandered a three-goal lead before rallying from a two-goal deficit to win 8-7 in an outing that featured more than 100 penalty minutes.

**Jets 6, Kraken 2:** Kyle Connor scored twice, and Jonathan Toews and Gabriel Vilardi had a goal and an assist each to lead host Winnipeg over Seattle.

Brad Lambert and Vladislav Namestnikov, into an empty net, also scored for the Jets, who have collected points in seven of their last nine games. Mark Scheifele registered three assists.

Jordan Eberle and Jared McCann scored for the Kraken, who extended their losing streak to five games and have lost nine of their last 10.

**Sharks 3, Blackhawks 2:** Will Smith earned his 100th NHL point with a third-period goal, and host San Jose beat Chicago.

Smith scored the winning goal on a wrist shot 3:28 into the third, assisted by Collin Graf and Macklin Celebrini, putting the Sharks on top 3-1.

**Kings 3, Predators 2 (SO):** Adrian Kempe scored the only goal of the shootout in the second round, and host Los Angeles tightened the Western Conference playoff race with a win over Nashville.

The Kings have played extra time in seven of their last 10 games — and 32 this season.

# Rays top Cubs in Tropicana Field return

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Cedric Mullins, Jonathan Aranda and Junior Caminero homered and the Tampa Bay Rays beat the Chicago Cubs 6-4 on Monday in their first game at Tropicana Field in 561 days.

The Rays were back in their domed stadium after playing the 2025 season across the bay in Tampa at Steinbrenner Field — the spring training home of the New York Yankees — because Hurricane Milton destroyed the Trop's roof and caused extensive damage.

A sellout crowd of 25,114 welcomed the Rays home.

"The fans' support was amazing," said Caminero. "It was exciting to be back at Tropicana."

Shane McClellan, making his first start at the Trop since July 22, 2023, allowed two runs and one hit in four innings. He struck out five and walked four.

Kevin Kelly (1-1) pitched a perfect fifth to earn the win and Bryan Baker finished for his first save, yielding Matt Shaw's solo shot in the ninth.

"It felt pretty good to say the least," Baker said of his reaction to the final pitch. "I think that was an encapsulation of how everybody felt getting back in this building and playing in front of these fans. To get out there and seal the deal for the boys was really fun."

**Padres 5, Pirates 0:** Germán Márquez (1-1) combined with two relievers on a seven-hit shutout for his first win with San Diego, and the visiting Padres ended Pittsburgh's five-game winning streak.

Nick Castellanos hit the first of San Diego's four RBI doubles. Jackson Merrill, Jake Cronenworth and Ramón Laureano each had a run-scoring double as well to help the Padres win their third straight.

The Pirates went 1 for 10 with runners in scoring position and lost at home for the first time this season.

**Nationals 9, Cardinals 6:**

James Wood, Brady House and CJ Abrams homered during a six-run eighth inning, and host Washington rallied for a victory over St. Louis.

Wood tied it with a three-run shot against Ryne Stanek, House's two-run homer off Matt Svanson (0-1) made it 8-6, and Abrams followed with a solo drive for his 500th career hit.

Washington righty Zack Littell struck out six and allowed four hits and one run in five innings. His second-inning strikeout of Nolan Gorman was the 500th of his nine-year career.

**Brewers 8, Red Sox 6:** Garrett Mitchell lined a tiebreaking single in the eighth inning and visiting Milwaukee beat Boston, sending the Red Sox to their eighth loss in nine games.

Christian Yelich had three hits and an RBI for the red-hot Brewers (8-2).

Willson Contreras hit a solo homer and reached base five times for Boston (2-8).

**Dodgers 14, Blue Jays 2:** Dalton Rushing hit two solo home runs for his first career multihomer game and visiting Los Angeles went deep five times to rout Toronto in a rematch of the 2025 World Series.

Teoscar Hernández and Freddie Freeman both hit two-run home runs and Shohei Ohtani added a solo blast.

Blue Jays catcher Tyler Heineman came on to pitch the ninth and retired the side in order, Toronto's only 1-2-3 inning of the game.

**Orioles 2, White Sox 1:** Spot starter Brandon Young pitched five scoreless innings, Gunnar Henderson homered and visiting Baltimore beat Chicago to stop a three-game skid.

Ryan Helsley worked out of a jam in the ninth for his third save. He walked the first two batters, and pinch-hitter Lenyn Sota's one-out grounder made it 2-1. After an infield single by Andrew Benintendi, Helsley struck out Edgar Quero on a 99 mph fastball to end it.

Tyler O'Neill hit a fly ball that fell for an RBI single in the fourth inning when White Sox left fielder Austin Hays pulled up with a right hamstring injury, which forced him to leave the game.

**Rangers 2, Mariners 1:** Jake Burger hit a tiebreaking RBI double over the outstretched glove of left fielder Randy Arozarena in the sixth inning, Jacob deGrom and five Texas relievers combined for a two-hitter, and the host Rangers beat Seattle.

Texas snapped a four-game losing streak and won for the first time in four home games.

The Mariners have lost three consecutive games and five of their last six. Catcher Cal Raleigh, who led the major leagues last season with 60 home runs, hit his first of the season in the first inning.

**Royals 4, Guardians 2:** Carter Jensen and Jonathan India homered, Michael Wacha allowed one run in seven innings and visiting Kansas City defeated Cleveland.

All-Star third baseman José Ramírez became the Guardians' franchise leader in games played with 1,620. Ramírez, who went 0-for-2 with two walks, surpassed Terry Turner's nearly 108-year-old mark.

Steven Kwan and Brayan Rocchio had solo shots for Cleveland, which has dropped two of three.

**Reds 2, Marlins 0:** Elly De La Cruz doubled and singled, Tyler Stephenson homered and four Cincinnati pitchers combined for a shutout as the visiting Reds beat Miami.

Brandon Williamson (1-1) scattered three hits over 6⅔ innings. The 28-year-old left-hander struck out four and walked one. He kept the Marlins hitless until Otto López's two-out single in the fourth.

Cincinnati, which won its fourth straight, began Monday tied with San Francisco for fewest runs scored in the majors

with 26. The Reds scored nine runs in their three-game sweep at Texas over the weekend.

**Twins 7, Tigers 3:** Luke Keaschall hit a two-run homer in the fourth inning and four Minnesota relievers combined for four scoreless innings as the host Twins beat Detroit.

Keaschall's first home run of the season helped Joe Ryan earn his first win of the year. Anthony Banda, Eric Orze, Kody Funderburk and Cody Laweryson provided shutout relief for Minnesota. Laweryson pitched the final 1⅓ innings for his first save.

**Rockies 9, Astros 7:** Troy Johnston hit a solo homer, a double and a single and host Colorado rode an eight-run fifth inning to a victory over Houston.

Ryan Feltner (1-0) allowed seven hits and four earned runs while striking out one in 5⅓ innings for the win. Juan Mejia earned his first save of the season after a hitless 1⅓ innings to finish the game.

**Angels 6, Braves 2:** José Soriano pitched eight dominant innings and host Los Angeles got home runs from Zach Neto and Jo Adell in a victory over Atlanta.

Neto launched a leadoff shot on Chris Sale's first pitch, and Soriano (3-0) struck out 10 as the Angels won their third consecutive game. The right-hander allowed one run and three hits without issuing a walk, throwing 69 of his 96 pitches for strikes.

**Phillies 6, Giants 4:** Alec Bohm hit a go-ahead double in the seventh inning after Bryce Harper's two-run single tied it, and visiting Philadelphia rallied past San Francisco for a win.

Giants right-hander Adrian Houser looked strong pitching into the seventh in his home debut before Justin Crawford's leadoff single got the Phillies going on the way to their fifth victory in six games.