

US and Iran reporting progress in talks

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

American and Iranian officials are reporting progress in ongoing peace talks, with a potential second round of negotiations taking shape even as the U.S. military continues to enforce a naval blockade on Iranian ports.

The prospect of further discussions comes as the U.S. exerts its grip on the Strait of Hormuz and as Europe, which has so far declined to join the mission, weighs an eventual role in helping secure the waterway.

On Tuesday, the U.S. Navy moved assets into position to enforce the blockade on Iranian ports, apparently an attempt by President Donald Trump to ratchet up economic pressure on Iran.

Some shipping is moving

through the strait, whose importance as an oil transit route is immense. A Chinese-owned tanker appeared to complete its transit through the waterway Tuesday, according to ship tracking data that showed the vessel pushing its way into the gulf.

The *Rich Starry*, already sanctioned by the United States for past dealings with Iran, is carrying about 250,000 barrels of methanol that was loaded at a United Arab Emirates port, according to shipping data.

Since the ship wasn't operating from an Iranian port, it was likely deemed not subject to the blockade.

So far, no European countries have indicated a willingness to join the U.S. blockade. Allies have come under heavy criticism from Trump for staying on the sidelines.

Oil prices dropped Tuesday in response to signs of more talks between Washington and Tehran. Brent crude fell 3.8% to \$95.56, The Associated Press reported, down from over \$100 a barrel after Trump ordered the blockade.

Officials in Pakistan, which helped mediate the first round of negotiations, told Reuters on Tuesday that diplomatic teams were preparing for a second round after last week's meeting failed to produce a deal.

Iran's uranium enrichment program is emerging as a key point in the negotiations. The U.S. has proposed a 20-year suspension of all nuclear activity, allowing Iran to claim it didn't permanently forgo its right to develop nuclear fuel, The New York Times reported on Tuesday. Iran countered with a propo-

sposal to suspend nuclear activity for up to five years, two senior Iranian officials and one U.S. official told the Times.

While it isn't clear whether either side is willing to budge further, Vice President JD Vance painted a somewhat optimistic picture on Monday.

"We made a lot of progress," Vance told Fox News. "But we also made clear, and I think this is part of the progress we made, what the terms (were) where the United States can make some accommodation, what terms we were flexible on and what things we absolutely needed to see in order for the president of the United States to feel like he was getting a good deal."

"The big question from here on out is whether the Iranians will have enough flexibility," he added.

US amasses major naval force to carry out blockade

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — A third Navy aircraft carrier strike group and additional minesweepers are headed to the Middle East to enforce a U.S. blockade against Iran and wrest away control of a critical oil artery, the Strait of Hormuz.

The impending arrival of about six more ships will put at least 27 Navy vessels — roughly 41% of the service's ships actively deployed and operating at sea worldwide — in the region, according to a Stars and Stripes analysis of USNI News Fleet Tracker data.

The additional forces — on top of at least 21 Navy warships and more than 16,500 sailors and Marines already in the re-

gion — would give commanders greater flexibility in enforcing the U.S. blockade, aimed at throttling Iran's economy and forcing its leadership to curb its nuclear program.

It also will offer the support required to confront Iranian mines and other asymmetric threats as the U.S. seeks to assure safe passage for tankers and other ships in the strait, according to the Navy's top officer.

"You just have to think about this from a multidimensional problem set," Adm. Daryl Caudle, chief of naval operations, said Monday during an event hosted by the Atlantic Council. "That's a tough challenge."

Last week, Iran and the U.S. agreed to a two-week pause in

the fighting, setting up a round of weekend negotiations in Pakistan. But those talks fell apart amid disputes after both sides accused the other of making excessive demands.

Shortly after, President Donald Trump announced the U.S. would begin blockading all ships in the Strait of Hormuz. U.S. Central Command later clarified that its forces would begin implementing a blockade this week against all ships entering or exiting Iranian ports.

During five weeks of open warfare, Iran launched repeated retaliations on American bases and partners in the region after initial strikes Feb. 28 by the U.S. and Israel that killed a number of top Iranian leaders.

Tehran's reprisals also in-

cluded measures that in effect closed the Strait of Hormuz to commercial traffic.

The U.S.-Iran truce ends Tuesday.

Analysts estimate that the Navy needs at least two aircraft carriers, more than a dozen destroyers and other support in the Persian Gulf to effectively implement the dual U.S. strategy of enforcing the blockade and reopening the strait to ships.

The U.S. blockade, which went into effect Monday, will be enforced in the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea east of the Strait of Hormuz, according to a copy of a notice to mariners obtained by a naval and shipping expert and referenced in a podcast posted on X.

N. Korean leader oversees missile system test

By YOOJIN LEE
Stars and Stripes

North Korea launched two strategic cruise missiles and three anti-ship missiles Sunday in an operational test of its destroyer Choe Hyon, the state-run Korean Central News Agency reported Tuesday.

North Korea leader Kim Jong Un oversaw the launch alongside other senior officials, according to the report.

Choe Hyon is a newly un-

veiled, 5,000-ton class destroyer successfully launched in June after the vessel capsized during its first launch attempt in May.

Kim was also briefed on the weapon systems plan for destroyers Nos. 3 and 4, which are under construction, KCNA reported.

The missile tests aimed to assess strike accuracy and the performance of an improved, active anti-jamming navigation system as well as the launching

control line of the ship's integrated weapon command system, according to the report.

South Korea's Ministry of National Defense said it detected several cruise missiles over the Yellow Sea — known on the peninsula as the West Sea — near Nampo, North Korea.

South Korean and the U.S. intelligence authorities are analyzing the launch details, according to the ministry.

The strategic cruise missiles

flew for about 2 hours and 11 minutes while the anti-warship missiles flew for about 32 minutes, according to the state-run media reports.

KCNA reported that Kim stressed the importance of “steadily and unlimitedly bolster up the powerful and reliable nuclear war deterrent.”

North Korea has conducted a series of missile test in recent months, including April 7-8 and March 14.

2 Marines secure rare win in Army sniper competition

By LYDIA GORDON
Stars and Stripes

A pair of Marines captured a rare victory at the Army-run International Sniper Competition, securing the service's first win in nearly 17 years and only the second in the event's history.

Staff Sgt. Tyler Johnson and Sgt. Spencer Harrell, representing the Marine Corps Shooting Team, outperformed a field of U.S. and NATO sniper teams during the five-day event, which concluded Friday.

This year marked the competition's 25th anniversary. The Marine Corps last won in 2009, according to the service.

Johnson and Harrell are not designated snipers in the Marine Corps personnel system. The former is a rifleman, while the latter is an anti-tank missile gunner. Both serve as instructors with the Weapons Training Battalion in Quantico, Va.

The Marine Corps began restructuring its scout sniper platoons in 2020, phasing out the specialty in infantry battalions and shifting it under reconnaissance battalions in 2023.

Hosted annually at Fort Benning, Ga., the competition tests

elite shooters through grueling challenges, including long-range marksmanship, reconnaissance, stealth and concealment, according to the Army's website.

Johnson's facial hair helped make the duo a favorite among commenters on the Army Maneuver Center of Excellence's Facebook page. The mustache he sports “could bend physics,” one of the comments stated.

The Marine Corps Shooting Team later took to Facebook to congratulate the pair on their win, though some commenters expressed disappointment that Johnson had since shaved his mustache.

Johnson and Harrell were one of the only duos in an online photo gallery of entrants. Most teams consisted of three members: a shooter, a spotter and a coach.

The international competition was held alongside the Best Jumpmaster and Best Mortar contests, as well as the Lacerda Cup — a multi-event infantry competition testing endurance, marksmanship and tactical skills — as part of the Army's Infantry Week.

Marines declining to meet with Okinawa officials over precautionary helo landing

By BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps has rejected a request to meet with Okinawa government officials over a precautionary landing by a helicopter that disrupted a youth baseball practice last month.

Okinawa Prefectural Assembly representatives planned to hand-deliver a formal protest letter adopted March 27.

The letter urges the U.S. military to disclose the cause of the incident, indicate measures to prevent a recurrence and ensure safety, according to a copy posted on Okinawa prefecture's website.

The assembly asked for a Monday meeting through Marine Corps Installations Pacific's G-7 Government and External Affairs office, a spokesman for the assembly's Political Affairs Research Division said by phone Tuesday.

A UH-1Y Venom landed at about 8:20 p.m. March 6 in a grassy area about 50 feet from Kyoda Baseball Field in Nago

due to an onboard warning during routine training, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing said at the time.

No injuries or property damage were reported, but a youth baseball team was practicing on the field.

“In this case, the aircrew executed the landing in accordance with established procedures and training,” Maj. Pawel Puczko, spokesman for the installations command, said by email Tuesday. “Because the landing was conducted properly and in line with standard operating procedures, it was not appropriate to accept the protest letter.”

The site is about 100 feet from homes, and because children were present, the landing “caused strong anxiety and fear among local residents,” the letter states.

It also asks the military to review aircraft maintenance and inspection requirements and calls for a revision of the status of forces agreement to prohibit flight training over residential areas.

Swalwell resigns House seat, citing 'mistakes'

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — California Rep. Eric Swalwell resigned his congressional seat on Monday under intense pressure from lawmakers of both parties after several women accused him of sexual misconduct, including a former staffer who alleged rape.

Swalwell, a Dublin Democrat who suspended his campaign for California governor on Sunday, said in a statement that he was stepping down from the House, where he has served since 2013, and planned to continue fighting what he called "serious, false" allegations made against him.

"However, I must take responsibility and ownership of the mistakes I did make," Swalwell wrote without specifying which mistakes those were.

His resignation came hours af-

ter the House Ethics Committee opened an investigation into the sexual misconduct allegations against him and as lawmakers from both parties threatened to expel him from the House if he did not leave his post. He said he was aware of the expulsion efforts underway and said that it was "wrong" to expel a member of Congress "without due process, within days of an allegation being made."

"But it is also wrong for my constituents to have me distracted from my duties. Therefore, I plan to resign my seat in Congress," he said.

Asked about replacing Swalwell, Gov. Gavin Newsom's office said in a statement that it is "reviewing the matter. Once the seat is officially vacant, our office will make an official announce-

ment."

The allegations, detailed in reports by the San Francisco Chronicle and CNN last week, drew swift bipartisan condemnation, with lawmakers from both parties calling the accusations "disgusting" and demanding that he either resign or be removed from office.

Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., intended to lead the charge to expel Swalwell. In an interview Monday, Luna said she planned to file a motion as early as Tuesday on the grounds that he violated House rules over an alleged inappropriate sexual relationship with a subordinate. A House floor vote could have been held as early as Wednesday, she said.

Following Swalwell's resignation, Luna said the Northern Cali-

fornia lawmaker did "the right thing." But she took issue with him saying that the allegations were not grounds for expulsion, noting that he was under criminal investigation.

In New York, the Manhattan district attorney's office opened an investigation into sexual assault allegations against Swalwell by a former staffer and issued a statement over the weekend that urged "survivors and anyone with knowledge of these allegations to contact our Special Victims Division."

Had Swalwell been expelled, it would have been the first such removal in congressional history on the grounds of sexual misconduct, and among the rare instances in the House's 237-year history in which members ousted one of their own.

Gonzales plans to leave office when House returns

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Ahead of an expulsion vote, Texas Republican Rep. Tony Gonzales said he plans to "file my retirement from office" when the House returns on Tuesday — more than a month after he faced allegations of an affair with his staff member who later died by suicide.

It's unclear whether Gonzales, who dropped his reelection bid last month, meant resignation effective immediately. Calls to his San Antonio, Fort Stockton and Washington, D.C., offices were not answered.

"There is a season for everything and God has a plan for us all. When Congress returns tomorrow, I will file my retirement from office," Gonzales wrote on X. "It has been my privilege to serve the great people of Texas."

Gonzales, 45, is married with six children. He said previously that the relationship with married staff member Regina Santos-Aviles, who died by suicide last

year, was a "mistake" and a "lapse in judgment."

The Ethics Committee opened an investigation into Gonzales in March. House rules prohibit members from engaging in a "sexual relationship" with a staffer.

Earlier this month, a second staffer came forward with texts from Gonzales asking her for nude photos, according to reports by the San Antonio Express-News.

Gonzales is in his third term representing Texas' 23rd District, an area that encompasses roughly 800 miles of the Mexican border.

Though it was unclear from his statement when he planned to leave office, under Texas law, the governor is empowered to call a special election to fill a House vacancy. The timeline is not specified, other than to stipulate that the special election will be held as soon as possible after the vacancy occurs.

Florida, feds address judge on Alligator Alcatraz order

Miami Herald

Officials with the Florida and federal governments said Monday that they are working to comply with a judge's order that expanded access to lawyers for people being held at Alligator Alcatraz.

In a federal court hearing, lawyers for the Florida Division of Emergency Management said the state was in the process of purchasing approximately 80 to 100 cellphones for detainees.

The hearing came days after lawyers with the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation and immigration organizations filed notices with the court alleging that guards had physically assaulted and pepper-sprayed detainees after they protested the abrupt cutoff of phone access at the controversial tent detention center.

The civil rights lawyers said the state and federal governments were disregarding a March order by U.S. District

Judge Sheri Polster Chappell requiring them to provide at least one phone for every 25 detainees. She also ordered that lawyers be allowed to visit their clients at the Everglades facility without a pre-scheduled appointment.

The government lawyers disputed the allegations that they disregarded the judge's order and argued that Friday's notice alleging non-compliance could have been resolved without going to court.

"We are continuing to operate and comply with exactly what we testified during the hearing," Nicholas Meros, a lawyer for the FDEM, said.

Monday's hearing was part of an ongoing lawsuit filed by detainees at the facility who allege that Florida's Department of Emergency Management and the Department of Homeland Security are violating the detainees' First Amendment right to legal counsel.

Republicans air midterm fears at event

The Sacramento (Calif.) Bee

Even as loyalty to President Donald Trump remains strong among Republicans, there is a growing acknowledgment in the party that he has complicated their midterm prospects.

These mixed feelings surfaced at the California party's convention this weekend in San Diego, where more than 1,000 Republicans gathered ahead of the June election. The focal point of the convention was to endorse candidates, though the party failed to reach a consensus on its governor nomination.

The three-day event struck a dual tone as there was huge support for Trump and his second term agenda, paired with a recognition of the political challenges facing the party. California's Democratic supermajority, Proposition 50 and low approval ratings for Trump have all contributed to concerns about November. Recent polls show broad disapproval of the administration's handling of

Iran and the economy.

"We may not hold the House in the midterms," said Rep. Darrell Issa, a GOP stalwart in San Diego who is retiring from Congress this year, on a Saturday afternoon panel.

Hours later, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, who was the keynote speaker at Saturday night's dinner, shared similar concerns.

"If the election was today, it would be bumpy because the left is angry," Cruz told the crowd of more than 250 people.

These sentiments were echoed in interviews with more than a dozen convention attendees, all of whom remain strongly supportive of Trump's policies but recognize his second term decisions could lead to party losses in November. Among the reasons most cited for potential voter backlash were the war in Iran and increased gas prices.

"It would be stupid not to recognize that. ...What I know about the American public, they

are very impatient," said Karen Contreras, the vice president of the San Bernardino Republican Women. "They don't want to suffer anything that makes them feel uncomfortable."

Despite the war, Contreras' support for Trump had not wavered. She called the U.S. government's involvement the right decision in the long term, and one that the country needed to endure.

She was not alone.

At the convention, which featured longtime and ardent Republican supporters, there was widespread approval of the president's moves, including to increase immigration enforcement, implement tariff policies and engage in war with Iran. The majority of Americans are less supportive of Trump's handling of these issues.

His name also drew some of the loudest applause throughout the convention, and merchandise bearing his likeness and slogans was prominently displayed

across the venue.

Ronald Soloman, who had a convention booth selling mainly Trump themed attire, said he had raked in more than \$12,000 in merchandise sales over the three days. He estimated more business in the coming weeks with the two dozen or so California Republican groups that he had connected with at the convention.

Even so, supporters know that public opinion of the president has fallen in recent months. His approval rating dropped below 40% for the first time in his second term earlier this month, according to numerous polls.

"Anytime you go to war, there's always an issue," said Fern Somoza, president of the Valley Unity for Republican Women in Los Angeles.

Contreras and Somoza, like others, were quick to argue that they believed Trump's claims that the U.S. had essentially won the conflict and it would end soon.

Trump defends AI image after MAGA pushback

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Monday defended his now deleted social media post that appeared to depict himself as Jesus Christ, contending that it was meant to portray him as "a doctor" after right-wing figures continued a recent trend of pushing back on the president's recent comments.

"Well, it wasn't a depiction. It was me, I did post it. And I thought it was me as a doctor, and had to do with Red Cross," Trump said during an impromptu event at the White House. "There was a Red Cross worker there, which we support. And only the fake news could come up with that one."

In the apparently AI-generated image, Trump floats over an impaired man while wearing an

cient robe-like garbs like those worn by Jesus in artistic renderings of Christianity's most important figure. Light emanates from Trump's hands as he places one hand on the bedridden man's forehead, the sky lighting up behind him, while others look up at him, including one person with hands folded in prayer.

"I just heard about it, and I said, 'How did they come up with that?' It's supposed to be me as a doctor, making people better," Trump told reporters. "And I do make people better."

Trump made the comments alongside a DoorDash driver who delivered him two bags of McDonald's food and touted his "no tax on tips" policy that was included in Republicans' 2025 budget reconciliation bill. Trump also asked the DoorDash driver, Sharon Simmons, whether

she thinks men should play in women's sports.

After a brief pause, Simmons replied, "I really don't have an opinion on that."

The Jesus-like meme drew the ire of some vocal right-wing figures days before Trump is slated to speak at an event in Arizona hosted by the conservative activist organization Turning Point USA.

Former Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., a former staunch Trump-ally-turned-critic, slammed the post on X.

"On Orthodox Easter, President Trump attacked the Pope because the Pope is rightly against Trump's war in Iran and then he posted this picture of himself as if he is replacing Jesus," Greene wrote. "This comes after last week's post of his evil tirade on Easter and then threat-

ening to kill an entire civilization. I completely denounce this and I'm praying against it!!!"

Conservative political pundit Michael Knowles wrote in his own X post, referring to Trump: "I assume someone has already told him, but it behooves the President both spiritually and politically to delete the picture, no matter the intent."

Trump during the same exchange with journalists refused to apologize to Pope Leo XIV. Trump wrote in a social media post Sunday that the first U.S.-born pope has said "things that are wrong" about the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran.

"No, I don't," Trump responded when asked by reporters if he planned to apologize for the comments about Leo, who has objected to the Iran conflict on moral grounds.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Molotov cocktail thrown at OpenAI CEO's home

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A 20-year-old man was arrested and charged with attempted murder after throwing a Molotov cocktail at the San Francisco home of OpenAI CEO Sam Altman.

San Francisco police said Daniel Moreno-Gama threw the incendiary device about 4 a.m. Friday, setting an exterior gate at Altman's home alight before fleeing on foot, The Associated Press reported. Less than an hour later, Moreno-Gama allegedly went to OpenAI's headquarters about 3 miles away and threatened to burn down the building.

Moreno-Gama is opposed to artificial intelligence, writing about AI's purported risk to humanity and "our impending extinction," according to a federal criminal complaint.

Driving school suspension leads to licenses revoked

CO COLORADO SPRINGS — A Colorado Springs driving school was suspended last week after state investigators uncovered months of fraud, according to the Colorado Division of Motor Vehicles.

Instructors at the Academy School of Driving marked answers for students on exams "to ensure passing scores," cut state-mandated 15-minute driving tests to less than five minutes and charged applicants "illegal, exorbitant fees ranging from \$550 to \$600 for guaranteed results," according to a DMV news release.

Roughly 460 licenses of Coloradans who attended the driv-

ing school will be revoked, and employees involved in the alleged fraud will face disciplinary action, state officials said. The now-suspended Academy School of Driving will be forced to cease all testing operations pending a formal disciplinary hearing, according to the DMV.

DNA from football used to make NFL Draft beer

PA PITTSBURGH — Next week's NFL Draft will have the usual hoopla and entertainment surrounding the selections, but this year's will have a little something extra for Pittsburgh Steelers fans in particular.

A special beer has been crafted using DNA from the football involved in one of the most historic — and controversial — plays ever.

Pittsburgh Brewing Co. and Nemaocolin resort collaborated on The Divinity Draft. It features DNA from the "Immaculate Reception" football, used in the Dec. 23, 1972, playoff game between the Steelers and the Oakland Raiders.

The football was gifted to resort founder Joseph A. Hardy III, a lifelong Steelers fan, on his 100th birthday.

The ball is stored in a temperature-controlled room for guests to view at Nemaocolin. Brewmaster Mike Carota dry-swabbed the ball's threads, laces and points to collect organic material. The swabs were brought back to the brewery's East Deer facility, where the material was sterilized, filtered and added to a yeast culture. The culture was used throughout fermentation.

The result is an all-malt craft-style pilsner made with 2-row

pilsner barley malt and crystal roasted malts to impart an amber color. The hops provide a mild bitterness.

The Divinity Draft is billed as having a medium mouthfeel with a flavor profile of cherry, vanilla, caramel, ginger and toffee notes with — you guessed it — a hint of leather.

Lindsey Buckingham's attacker arrested

IN FORT WAYNE — A 55-year-old woman wanted in California on charges of stalking and assaulting Rock & Roll Hall of Famer Lindsey Buckingham in Santa Monica was arrested Saturday, roughly 2,000 miles away in Fort Wayne, Ind., the Los Angeles Times confirmed.

Michelle Dick was arrested about 7 p.m. at a hotel, according to Fort Wayne police.

Dick, who has a history of stalking Buckingham, had a warrant out of California after being accused of dousing the former Fleetwood Mac guitarist and vocalist, 76, with an unknown substance as he entered a building in Santa Monica for an appointment earlier this month, according to the Los Angeles Police Department.

Buckingham was not injured.

Restaurant sells burgers to help competitor

MI TRAVERSE CITY — The long line out the door and down the street of the little Oakwood Proper Burgers shop was a head-turner Saturday as the restaurant invited people to its 1,000 Burger Challenge event.

But the swift sales being rung up inside weren't benefiting

their own business. They were a heartfelt helping hand to a competitor across town.

The team behind Oakwood Proper joined together to raise money for "Chef Tim" Bergstrom, the man behind his namesake Bergstrom's Burgers. He's been undergoing cancer treatment for some time, and medical bills are mounting. Oakwood Proper + friends decided to help the best way they knew how: Grilling some great burgers and sharing them with the community.

After Oakwood ran out of burgers Saturday, they tallied the results: The team grilled 1,218 burgers and sold another 1,900 burger equivalents on gift cards in less than nine hours, for a whopping total of 3,118 worth of burgers. That effort equaled "tens of thousands of dollars" raised for the cause. An anonymous donor chipped in another \$10,000.

Candy Hall of Fame coming to retail district

IL CHICAGO — The Magnificent Mile got some good news Thursday when the National Confectionery Sales Association said it will open the first Candy Hall of Fame Experience next year at 830 N. Michigan Ave.

The attraction will occupy 60,000 square feet on three floors just across the street from Water Tower Place. It's one of the biggest leases signed in years at a North Michigan Avenue retail property.

Uniqlo, the Japanese clothing company, left its space at 830 N. Michigan Ave. in 2021, while Macy's and many others abandoned Water Tower Place, leaving much of it dark.

— From wire reports

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Wings select Fudd No. 1 with \$500K deal

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Azzi Fudd is on her way to Dallas as the No. 1 pick in the WNBA draft with a \$500,000 payday waiting for the former UConn star. A record-setting six UCLA players followed her into the league.

“I’m not really sure I have words to describe that feeling, what that meant,” Fudd said of getting drafted. “I don’t think it’s fully sunk in. It’s nothing I could have imagined. The feeling of sitting with my family, with Morgan (Valley), hearing your name called, go up there. Such a surreal feeling.”

Fudd will pair again with former Huskies teammate Paige Bueckers, who was the Wings’ top pick last year. Bueckers — who along with Fudd gave UConn a record seven No. 1 selections — was in attendance at the draft along with Fudd’s Huskies teammates.

UCLA stars Lauren Betts and Gabriela Jaquez went in the top five, a little over a week after leading the Bruins to their first NCAA championship.

Their teammate, Kiki Rice, went sixth to Toronto, the first pick for the expansion franchise. The Tempo chose to have the higher pick in the college draft after winning a coin toss, giving the Portland Fire the top choice in the expansion draft earlier this month.

UCLA broke UConn’s record of having four players drafted in the first round, a mark the Huskies set in 2002, when Angela Dugalic went ninth to Washington, teaming her again with Betts. And Giannna Kneepkens was chosen by Connecticut with the last pick of the opening round.

The Bruins later broke the mark for the most players drafted from one team when Charlissee Leger-Walker was selected by the Sun with the third pick in the second round. Tennessee (1997, 2008), Notre Dame (2019) and South Carolina (2023) held the previous record with five players taken.

Minnesota took Olivia Miles of TCU with the No. 2 pick. Miles decided to stay in college last season instead of entering the draft.

“Deep breath that’s why I got emotional,” Miles said of finishing her journey. “It’s finally here, finally heard my name. This is what this was for.”

After Seattle took Spain center Awa Fam Thiam at No. 3, the Mystic selected the 6-foot-7 Betts before the Chicago Sky followed with Jaquez, who is the sister of Miami Heat player Jaime Jaquez Jr. She now has family bragging rights not only with a national championship, but was also picked higher than him. Jaime was taken 18th in the NBA draft in 2023.

Portland took Spanish guard Iyana Martin Carrion with its first-ever pick. Indiana took South Carolina’s Raven Johnson with the 10th pick and Washington drafted Cotie McMahon of Ole Miss next.

Connecticut took French player Nell Angloma with the 12th pick. A second Gamecock went next with Madina Okot drafted by Atlanta. Seattle drafted Duke’s Taina Mair with the 14th choice. The Sun closed out the first round choosing Kneepkens.

International flavor

There were 11 international players taken in the draft who didn’t play at a U.S. college, including three in the first round with Fam Thiam, Martin Carrion and Angloma.

Fam Thiam was the highest selected player from Spain ever drafted in the league. Three Spanish players were taken in total.

“Incredibly excited for our country and the global game,” said Marta Suarez, who was drafted by Seattle in the second round before getting traded to Golden State.

WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert said in her pre-draft press conference that the league planned to play either an exhibition game or a regular-season game overseas next year.

World Aquatics set to lift restrictions on Russian athletes

Associated Press

Russian swimmers, divers and water polo players will be allowed to compete without restrictions and with their national flag and anthem.

The decision by governing body World Aquatics marks a major shift in how a key sport treats Russia ahead of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, and prompted condemnation by Ukraine.

World Aquatics said Monday that it will remove restrictions which required Russian and Belarusian athletes to be vetted and to compete as neutrals.

It excluded Russia and Belarus from its events like the world championships after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, then allowed limited participation as neutrals a year later, and further eased the rules since.

“Senior athletes with Belaru-

sian or Russian sport nationality will be permitted to compete in World Aquatics events in the same way as their counterparts representing other sport nationalities, with their respective uniforms, flags and anthems,” World Aquatics said in a statement. It had previously relaxed the rules for junior athletes.

World Aquatics isn’t the first sports body to reinstate Russia in full, but it’s by far the biggest.

Russian Sports Minister Mikhail Degtyaryov thanked World Aquatics President Husain Al Musallam “for his firm position on this issue”.

“It is very important that international sporting dialogue is bearing fruit and enables the orderly restoration of sporting ties,” Degtyaryov wrote on the social media app Max.

Ukrainian Minister of Youth

and Sports Matvii Bidnyi condemned the decision.

“Sport should unite around fair rules and respect for life. Returning the flag to a country that disregards and systematically destroys these rules is a wake-up call for the entire sports community,” Bidnyi said.

Ukraine has previously objected to efforts to allow Russian athletes to return to competition. Last month, it led boycotts of the Paralympic opening and closing ceremonies after Russians were allowed to compete under their national flag.

Ukraine’s men’s water polo team forfeited a scheduled World Cup game Monday against a team of Russians in Malta. The Russians were handed a 5-0 win by default because Ukraine “voluntarily chose not to start,” World Aquatics said.

Ukrainian media reported the boycott was a protest against the involvement of the Russian team, which was officially labeled as “Neutral Athletes B,” in any capacity, rather than Monday’s announcement from World Aquatics.

World Aquatics said Russian and Belarusian athletes will have to undergo four anti-doping tests and background checks before competing after Monday’s decision. It wasn’t immediately clear what would be checked.

Its decision applies only to its own events like the world championships, but could add momentum within the Olympic world for a full return of Russian athletes ahead of the 2028 LA Games.

There was no immediate response to a request for comment from the International Olympic Committee.

Flyers top Canes in SO for playoff spot

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Tyson Foerster scored the only goal in the shootout to send the Philadelphia Flyers to a 3-2 win over the Eastern Conference top seed Carolina Hurricanes on Monday night and into the playoffs for the first time since 2020.

Philadelphia goalie Dan Vladar stopped Carolina's fourth shootout attempt and set off a wild celebration at the next. The Flyers skated to center ice and raised their sticks toward a packed and rowdy crowd that hasn't enjoyed a home playoff series since 2018.

Up next, a postseason series with Pittsburgh.

The Hurricanes got the point they needed to secure the top seed in the East.

Carolina reached the Eastern Conference final last season, where it was eliminated by eventual Stanley Cup champion Florida. The Hurricanes were the No. 1 seed in the East in 2006, when they won the Stanley Cup.

Philadelphia, which entered the game tied for fifth in the NHL with 21 comeback victories, woke up in the second period and played like a team with a playoff berth at stake.

Flyers fans came to life when Denver Barkey used a perfect cross-ice pass and found Matvei Michkov at the left circle. Michkov beat Brandon Bussi and scored his 19th goal to cut it to 2-1.

Trevor Zegras, sensational in his first season with Philadelphia, scored on a power play later in the period, tying the game at 2. Zegras' goal gave him 13 points in the last 13 games and 26 goals overall this season.

Lightning 4, Red Wings 3: Nikita Kucherov scored 27 seconds into overtime to give host Tampa Bay a win over Detroit.

Erik Cernak, Jake Guentzel and Conor Geekie also scored for the Lightning. Andrei Vasi-

levskiy made 27 saves as Tampa Bay recorded at least 50 wins in a season for the fifth time in franchise history.

The Lightning were tied with Montreal for second place in the Atlantic Division going into Tuesday. Each team has one game remaining.

Patrick Kane recorded his 1,400th career point for the Red Wings. Alex DeBrincat, David Perron and Marco Kasper scored for Detroit. Cam Talbot finished with 19 saves.

Sabres 5, Blackhawks 1: Tage Thompson scored twice to reach 40 goals on the season, and visiting Buffalo clinched the Atlantic Division title by defeating Chicago.

Alex Tuch had a goal and an assist as the Sabres (50-23-8) posted their fourth consecutive win. Ryan McLeod and Josh Norris also scored, and Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen made 15 saves.

Buffalo earned its first division title since the 2009-10 season and seventh overall. It reached 50 wins for the third time in franchise history, also accomplishing the feat in 2005-06 and 2006-07.

The last-place Blackhawks dropped to 7-17-7 in their last 31 games.

Avalanche 2, Oilers 1 (SO): Nathan MacKinnon scored the decisive goal in a shootout and visiting Colorado beat Edmonton.

Sam Malinski scored in regulation for the NHL-best Avalanche, who have won three of four overall and seven straight road games.

Connor McDavid scored his 48th goal for the playoff-bound Oilers, who have lost four of five. Edmonton fell two points behind first-place Vegas in the Pacific Division.

McDavid leads the league with 134 points and needs one more to become the seventh player in league history to reach 135 at least twice. The others

are Wayne Gretzky (12 times), Mario Lemieux (five), Bobby Orr, Phil Esposito, Marcel Dionne and Steve Yzerman.

Blues 6, Wild 3: Theo Lindstein scored and host St. Louis overcame a two-goal deficit to beat Minnesota.

Lindstein scored on a backhand shot with 3:19 remaining in the second period to put the Blues up 4-3. Jonathan Drouin and Dalibor Dvorsky each had an assist on the goal.

Pavel Buchnevich scored the 200th goal of his NHL career and Jimmy Snuggerud, Jake Neighbours, Otto Stenberg and Colton Parayko added goals for St. Louis.

Parayko's goal was his 81st, and he moved into fourth in franchise history in goals by a Blues defenseman behind Al MacInnis (127), Alex Pietrangelo (109) and Chris Pronger (84). He moved out of a tie with Jeff Brown (80).

Sharks 3, Predators 2: Macklin Celebrini scored twice in the third period, including an empty-netter with 1:45 remaining, to reach 44 goals on the season and visiting San Jose beat Nashville to end a 15-game losing streak in the series.

With the Predators' loss, idle Anaheim clinched a playoff berth for the first time since 2018.

Celebrini's 30th multi-point game of the season moved him into a tie with Owen Nolan (1999-00) and Patrick Marleau (2009-10) for second-most by a Shark in a single season — only trailing Jonathan Cheechoo's 56 in 2005-06.

Luke Evangelista scored both goals for Nashville to reach 12 on the season.

Kings 5, Kraken 3: Quinton Byfield scored twice, Anton Forsberg made 28 saves and visiting Los Angeles secured a playoff spot with a win over Seattle.

Trevor Moore, Adrian Kempe and Alex Laferriere al-

so scored for the Kings, who won their fifth straight and are playoff-bound for the fifth consecutive season.

With two games left, LA is in position for the second Western Conference wild card and fourth in the Pacific Division, just two points behind second-place Edmonton. The Kings' victory, combined with Nashville's loss to San Jose, wrapped up their playoff spot and eliminated both the Predators and the Sharks.

Stars 6, Maple Leafs 5: Mavrik Bourque had his first NHL hat trick and added an assist as visiting Dallas rallied from a pair of deficits and beat Toronto.

Jason Robertson had a goal and an assist and Wyatt Johnston and Arttu Hyry also scored for the playoff-bound Stars, who rallied from deficits of 3-0 and 5-3.

Dallas is locked into the Central Division's No. 2 seed.

Panthers 3, Rangers 2: Cole Reinhardt scored his second goal of the game with 1:50 remaining and spoiled New York goaltender Jonathan Quick's final NHL game as host Florida beat the Rangers.

Quick, a three-time Stanley Cup champion, announced his retirement before Monday's game after 19 seasons. He won the Cup twice in 16 seasons with Los Angeles and was part of Vegas' 2023 championship team.

Golden Knights 6, Jets 2: Mark Stone scored his fourth goal in three games and combined with Jack Eichel for seven points as host Vegas defeated Winnipeg to move the Golden Knights closer to winning a fifth Pacific Division title in their nine seasons.

A victory over visiting Seattle in Wednesday night's regular-season finale will give Vegas the division title and home-ice advantage through at least the first two rounds of the NHL playoffs.

Yankees edge Angels in Judge-Trout match

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Aaron Judge and Trent Grisham both homered twice and the New York Yankees scored on a game-ending wild pitch in a three-run ninth inning to overcome Mike Trout's two homers and five RBIs in an 11-10 win over the Los Angeles Angels on Monday night that stopped a five-game losing streak.

"It was great. That's baseball for you," Trout marveled. "It's what fans want, and to be able to see something like that, pretty cool."

Judge and José Caballero each hit a two-run homer off Yusei Kikuchi for a 4-0 second-inning lead on an unseasonably warm 77-degree night, but Caballero's error on Trout's fourth-inning leadoff grounder to shortstop led to four unearned runs.

Grisham's pinch-hit, three-run homer off Shaun Anderson lifted New York into a 7-4 lead in the fifth. Trout, like Judge a three-time AL MVP, retied the score with a three-run drive in the sixth against Jake Bird.

"Every time he comes to the Bronx, man, he puts on a show," Judge said. "I hate to see it, but it's fun competing against a guy like that."

Judge's homer off Anderson leading off the bottom half gave him 47 multi-homer games, one more than Mickey Mantle and trailing only Babe Ruth's 68 among Yankees.

Pirates 16, Nationals 5: Paul Skenes allowed one hit in six strong innings and Brandon Lowe homered for the third time in two games, driving in five runs as host Pittsburgh steamrolled Washington to begin a four-game series.

Skenes (3-1) struck out six and walked one, throwing a career-high 32 changeups among his 88 pitches while improving to 7-1 in his last 11 home starts. The only run he gave up came on a first-inning homer by CJ Abrams.

Lowe became the first Pirates

player to knock in at least five runs in consecutive games since RBIs became an official statistic in 1920.

Oneil Cruz reached base four straight times for Pittsburgh and went 2 for 3 to extend his hitting streak to a career-high 12 games. He had three RBIs and scored three runs.

Marlins 10, Braves 4: Agustín Ramírez and Connor Norby homered and visiting Miami ended its three-game skid with a win over Atlanta.

Ramírez hit a 418-foot, three-run shot in the fifth inning off Aaron Bummer (0-1) that broke a 3-3 tie. He finished 3 for 4 with four RBIs and two runs scored. Liam Hicks was 3 for 4 with three RBIs, Norby was 2 for 5 and drove in two runs, and Xavier Edwards was 2 for 4 and scored three times.

Andrew Nardi (1-0), Calvin Faucher, John King, Lake Bachar and Anthony Bender combined for five scoreless innings out of the Marlins bullpen and gave up two hits.

Michael Harris II was 2 for 3 with a walk in his return from paternity leave, and Austin Riley knocked in two runs for the Braves.

Rangers 8, Athletics 1: Nathaniel Eovaldi allowed three hits in seven scoreless innings, Jake Burger homered twice and drove in four runs, and visiting Texas snapped the Athletics' five-game winning streak.

Eovaldi (2-2), who entered with a 7.98 ERA through his first three starts, gave up three singles, walked two and struck out seven. He threw 53 of his 84 pitches for strikes in the opener of a four-game series.

Evan Carter and Corey Seager drew one-out walks from Luis Severino (0-2) in the first inning and Burger followed with his third home run for a 3-0 lead.

Lawrence Butler robbed Seager of a home run to right in the fifth before hitting his second homer in the eighth off Luis Curvelo to prevent a shutout.

Mariners 6, Astros 2: Josh Naylor hit his first two homers of the season and drove in five runs, George Kirby allowed two runs in 7⅓ innings and host Seattle completed a four-game sweep of Houston.

It was Naylor's seventh career game with five or more RBIs.

The Mariners were coming off a five-game skid before sweeping the Astros. Banged-up, last-place Houston has lost eight in a row, its longest skid since it dropped the last 15 games of the 2013 season en route to 111 losses.

Kirby (2-2) allowed his only runs in the fifth on an RBI single by Yainer Diaz and a double-play grounder from Nick Allen. He struck out six, allowed seven hits and walked one while throwing 99 pitches.

Orioles 9, Diamondbacks 7: Jeremiah Jackson hit a grand slam and a solo shot, Pete Alonso put host Baltimore in front with a seventh-inning homer and the Orioles rallied from a six-run deficit to beat Arizona.

Nolan Arenado hit two home runs with five RBIs and Ketel Marte hit a pair of solo homers to put the Diamondbacks up 7-1 in the sixth, but their bullpen gave up the lead.

Taylor Rashi allowed two hits and a walk in the sixth before Jackson hit a hanging slider into the left-field seats. One inning later, Jonathan Loáisiga (0-1) hit Taylor Ward with a pitch before Alonso launched his second homer of the season.

Baltimore manager Craig Albernaz was struck in the face by a foul ball hit by Jackson in the fifth inning. He was helped from the dugout into the tunnel and returned shortly after, not being seriously hurt.

Phillies 13, Cubs 7: Kyle Schwarber homered twice and drove in three runs, Cristopher Sánchez (2-1) pitched six innings of two-run ball and host Philadelphia defeated Chicago.

JT Realmuto had three hits

and three RBIs for the Phillies, who got back to .500 with just their second win in the last six games.

Dansby Swanson hit a two-run homer for the Cubs, who have lost three of four.

Twins 13, Red Sox 6: Boston ace Garrett Crochet was battered by host Minnesota for 11 runs — 10 earned — and nine hits in 1⅓ innings.

Crochet, a two-time All-Star who finished second in AL Cy Young Award voting last season, became the first Red Sox pitcher to allow 10 runs in less than two innings.

Victor Caratini hit his first home run for the Twins in the second, a three-run drive off the facing of the third deck in left field. Light-hitting infielder Ryan Kreidler ended Crochet's night with his third career home run, a solo shot into the second deck in left.

Guardians 9, Cardinals 3: Angel Martínez and Brayan Rocchio homered as visiting Cleveland beat St. Louis.

Gavin Williams (2-1) allowed two runs in five-plus innings for the win. He gave up five hits, walked two and struck out four.

Jordan Walker's major league-best eighth home run leading off the sixth ended Williams' night. Walker became the fifth player in St. Louis history to hit at least eight homers in the first 16 games of a season, joining Stan Musial (1954), Mark McGwire (1998), Scott Rolen (2004) and Albert Pujols (2006).

Dodgers 4, Mets 0: Justin Wroblewski pitched two-hit ball over a career-high eight innings, Andy Pages launched a three-run homer and host Los Angeles beat New York in a matchup between two of baseball's biggest spenders.

The two-time defending World Series champion Dodgers (12-4) have won eight of 10 and lead the NL West.

The Mets (7-10) lost their sixth straight and were shut out for the fourth time this season.