

DOD eyes \$1.5T budget for fiscal 2027

By **MATTHEW ADAMS**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON—The Pentagon formally unveiled its \$1.5 trillion budget for fiscal 2027 on Tuesday morning, calling for raises of 5% to 7% for troops, an increase of 44,000 personnel in the overall force and spending \$750 billion on defense capabilities and weapons systems.

“By having a budget of this size, we were not forced to make that trade between investment in the capabilities we need and the readiness of our force,” Space Force Lt. Gen. Steven P. Whitney, director for force structure, resources and assessment, said during a news conference at the Pentagon.

The budget request asks Congress to approve \$1.15 trillion through its annual appropriations process and to enact the remaining \$350 billion through a legislative tactic known as reconciliation, which allows measures to pass with a simple majority in the Senate.

Republicans used reconciliation last year to give the Defense

Department \$150 billion on top of its base budget.

“We wouldn’t ask for the money if we didn’t want it,” said Jules “Jay” Hurst, performing the duties of undersecretary of defense (Comptroller). “So we’ll go back to the White House and we’ll work with Congress to come [up] with a new strategy, if the White House and Congress decide [on] reconciliation.”

The Trump administration is proposing a 42% increase in military spending compared to 2026. The proposal, first unveiled by the White House this month, would offset the increased military spending with an approximate 10% cut in non-military programs.

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

The funding proposes spending \$65.8 billion on shipbuilding—an investment meant to establish President Donald Trump’s “Golden Fleet” as waters around the world become more contest-

ed.

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

The Navy was allocated \$27.2 billion to build 17 ships in fiscal 2026.

The senior defense official said the Army’s budget would increase by 23.9%, the Navy by 24.3% and the Air Force by 33.6%.

The official did not provide the dollar amounts for each of the services.

The Army’s budget is \$253.2 billion, the Navy’s is \$377.5 billion and the Air Force’s is \$391.1 billion.

The budget also includes \$245.3 billion for the president’s priorities such as the defense industrial base, Golden Dome, drone dominance and munitions.

The 118-page budget also calls for spending \$57 billion on U.S. military bases and other facili-

ties, with requesting funds for “critical updates” to housing that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth’s barracks task force established.

The budget does not specifically address the war with Iran, the defense official said, and did not provide details clarifying if a supplemental spending package in Congress would be for funding the Iran war.

Other priorities in the budget include:

- \$2.3 billion in homeland defense initiatives. This includes \$1.47 billion in operation along the U.S.-Mexico border and \$605 million for National Guard mobilized to Washington.

- Over \$100 billion in the defense industrial base investments.

- \$102 billion to increase American airpower with more F-35s and to develop sixth-generation systems.

- \$31.1 billion to expand production capacity and build land power missile stockpiles including Patriot, THAAD, precision strike and mid-range capability.

DOD: US forces seize second tanker supporting Iran

By **LARA KORTE**
Stars and Stripes

U.S. forces conducted an interdiction and boarding of a stateless, sanctioned oil tanker in the Indo-Pacific region, the Pentagon said Tuesday, highlighting the global effort to pressure Iran as ceasefire negotiations continue.

Video footage shared by the Defense Department showed service members rappelling from helicopters onto the deck of the M/T Tifani. A ship by the same name was last reported in the Indian Ocean sailing under

the flag of Botswana, according to ship tracker MarineTraffic.com.

The Pentagon said the operation occurred without incident.

“As we have made clear, we will pursue global maritime enforcement efforts to disrupt illicit networks and interdict sanctioned vessels providing material support to Iran—anywhere they operate,” the Pentagon said in an X post.

This is the second vessel the U.S. has halted in recent days as it seeks to exert maritime control over Iran’s supply net-

works. Over the weekend, the U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer USS Spruance captured an Iranian-flagged cargo vessel attempting to pass through the naval blockade near the Strait of Hormuz.

The U.S. instituted the naval blockade on Iran-bound vessels last week in an attempt to wrest control of the strait from Iranian forces, which have virtually blocked traffic in the vital trade corridor since the war began in late February.

The blockade includes ships carrying a variety of items

deemed contraband by the United States, including weapons, ammunition, nuclear materials, oil products, as well as iron, steel and aluminum bound for Iran.

In its first week, the blockade has redirected at least 27 ships, according to U.S. Central Command. But Pentagon leaders have made clear that they’re willing to go after ships outside the Middle East region. Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine last week described the U.S. mission as a blockade on Iran’s ports and coastline, not a blockade on the strait itself.

Admiral denies trouble feeding sailors

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Sailors serving in the Middle East are not going hungry, the Navy's highest officer said this week.

Ships in the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group have at least a 10-day supply of food, Adm. Daryl Caudle, chief of naval operations, said Monday.

He noted that many of those vessels have enough food to feed their crews for 30 days or more, according to a Navy Times report.

"In no way, shape or form has there been a time where in, at least in this deployment, where they've not met the nutritional requirements of our menu," Caudle said during a meeting with reporters at a maritime conference in Maryland.

His comments come amid reports that sailors on Lincoln and the amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli weren't getting enough to eat and, as a result, were rationing and sharing food. In a post last week on X,

the office of the CNO called those reports "false."

They also follow a surge of Navy vessels to the Middle East as the U.S. enforces a blockade against Iran while working to ensure safe passage for tankers and other commercial ships through the Strait of Hormuz.

In addition to Lincoln and Tripoli, there are at least 13 destroyers in the region, along with other ships. These include USS New Orleans and USS Rushmore, part of the Tripoli Amphibious Ready Group.

There are at least 16,500 sailors and Marines already in the Middle East, with some 6,000 more on the way as part of the George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group.

It was unclear Tuesday how many supply vessels were in the area to ensure that those ships had adequate stores of food and other necessities, such as body wash, shampoo, toothpaste and other personal care items.

Military Sealift Command operates about 125 vessels that re-

plenish Navy ships, conduct special missions and pre-position combat cargo around the world, among other tasks.

U.S. Central Command didn't answer questions about whether any scheduled replenishments for the ships had been postponed or when Lincoln or Tripoli was last resupplied.

"U.S. military logistics operations to resupply ships and land-based posts throughout the CENTCOM area of responsibility continue," the command said in an email Friday, adding that mail delivery to service members in the region had resumed after a temporary suspension.

A story published last week by USA Today highlighted concerns of unidentified families worried their sailors were not getting enough to eat.

The report included photographs of nearly empty meal trays with just a small portion of food that the families said were sent by sailors aboard Tripoli and Lincoln.

The article "grossly mischaracterized" food service aboard the ships and the accompanying photos were not taken on a Navy vessel but rather were from an ashore dining facility, Caudle said, according to the Navy Times.

But the images did resonate with some former and current sailors, who found them consistent with a late evening shipboard meal called midnight rations, or midrats, served to personnel who may have missed normal dining hours.

"My ship went for about a month or two on our maiden deployment where the only thing they would leave for midrats was the leftover meat options from the day," one poster wrote Friday in a discussion on the digital social media platform Reddit. "No veggies, occasionally overdried rice MAYBE ... as someone on a night shift, my only real option for any vegetable in the day was the onion bits in the breakfast omelet line if they were running it."

US-Iran talks in limbo as clock ticks toward end of truce

Bloomberg News

The U.S. is still in the dark on whether Iran will take part in fresh talks to end the war before a ceasefire expires on Wednesday, with the sides deadlocked on issues including access to the Strait of Hormuz.

President Donald Trump said Tehran had "no choice" but to send a delegation to negotiations in Pakistan, with Vice President JD Vance primed to fly to Islamabad on Tuesday. The U.S. is in a strong negotiating position, he told CNBC, and is "ready to go" with a resumption of bombing if a breakthrough isn't reached.

Iran has yet to confirm its attendance in Pakistan with Trump's ceasefire deadline fast approaching, raising the risk of a resumption of fighting in a seven-week war that's killed thousands of people and triggered a growing energy supply crisis.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who led Iran's delegation during the first round of talks earlier this month, said his country would not "accept negotiations under the shadow of threats."

Trump said he's "going to end up with a great deal" and that a U.S. naval blockade on Iranian

ports would stay in place until an agreement. He doesn't want to extend the ceasefire, which is due to expire late Wednesday U.S. time, he told CNBC.

Referring to the U.S. capture of a ship on Monday, Trump said it "had some things on it, which wasn't very nice, a gift from China, perhaps." He added that this had come as a surprise due to what he called an "understanding" with President Xi Jinping. Trump didn't provide further details on the incident.

Trump said earlier this month that Xi told him Beijing isn't providing weapons to Iran.

He's threatened 50% tariffs on goods from countries who do, which could upend the U.S.-China trade relationship if he follows through.

Ghalibaf has said the Strait of Hormuz—through which about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas exports flowed before the war—will remain closed to most commercial traffic for now, as it has since just after the start of the war on Feb. 28.

The standoff underscores the uncertainty surrounding fresh talks, even after Trump previously said negotiations could begin as early as Tuesday.

Marines unveil proposed Medium Landing Ship

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps has released a video showing the design concept for its McClung-class Medium Landing Ships, designed to deliver 800 tons of troops, weapons, supplies and other equipment directly to beachheads.

Based on the LST-100 design from Dutch shipbuilder Damen Shipyards Group, the new ships would be part of President Donald Trump's "Golden Fleet" naval modernization program. The lead ship, USS McClung, would be built at the Bollinger

Shipyards of Pascagoula, Miss.

"By selecting a mature, in-service platform, the Navy can build these ships at speed, adding critical capacity to the fleet quickly and affordably," the video says.

The lead ship is named after Marine Maj. Megan M.L. McClung, who was killed in combat in Iraq in 2006.

McClung was the first female graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy to be killed in action in any conflict.

The approximately 325-foot-long McClung-class ships will have a displacement of about

4,000 tons. They would include a flight deck capable of accommodating helicopters, vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, and drones. The video lists NMESIS and HIMARS missile systems as among the weapons that could be deployed from the ships.

The Marines touts the LSM as a "shore-to-shore" asset capable of beaching itself and then disengaging and returning to sea.

U.S. Navy Secretary John Phelan said in December that the service plans to buy between 18 and 35 of the LSMs.

The video casts the ship's role

as between that of larger ships, which require port facilities to disembark troops and supplies, and smaller vessels that can operate along coastlines.

"The LST-100 is not a traditional amphibious warfare ship designed for large-scale assault," the video says.

The video specifically mentions the Indo-Pacific theater, where combat could be on contested coastlines. China is seen as a "near-peer" military adversary in the region.

"It's built for sustained operations in the vast Pacific theater," the video says.

Navy plans 900 new child care spaces on US bases

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The Navy this week announced plans to add more than 900 child care spaces at key bases through 2028, the latest effort by the service to alleviate shortages in availability.

The expansion includes new child development projects at Naval Base Point Loma in San Diego; Naval Base Kitsap in Bremerton, Wash.; and Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story in Virginia Beach, Va., according to a Monday news release from Navy Installations Command.

The initiative is part of a broader strategy that also includes "constructions of new facilities, innovative facility conversions and long-term capital investments," according to the release.

"Supporting our Sailors means supporting their families," Vice Adm. Scott Gray, head of Navy Installations Command, said in the release. "Access to high-quality, reliable child care reflects our commitment to our people and increases fleet readiness. This

year's expansion makes significant progress toward that commitment, and it is only the beginning."

Child care has been a consistent problem for the Defense Department, with the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.

Child Development Centers reported employee turnover rates of 34% to 50% in fiscal year 2022, according to a May 2024 report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

The Navy has made efforts to reduce the number of families on waitlists for child care.

From October 2022 to October 2024, waitlists for child development centers and school-age care were trimmed by 50%, reducing the number of children with unmet child care needs from 5,000 to about 2,500, the installations command said in a February 2025 news release.

Since then, that number has fallen to about 1,400, according to Feb. 11 testimony from Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy John Perryman before the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel.

Air Force: 'Warthog' will stay in service until 2030

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

In an about-face from earlier years, the Air Force announced Monday that it will maintain the A-10 Thunderbolt II ground-attack jet to 2030.

"We will EXTEND the A-10 'Warthog' platform to 2030," Air Force Secretary Troy Meink said in a post on X.

"This preserves combat power as the Defense Industrial Base works to increase combat aircraft production."

The move means that for the first time in more than a decade, the Air Force will not be attempting to cut or completely shut down the use of the twin-engine jet known best by its nickname, "Warthog."

Before the Pentagon released its detailed 2027 spending plan this week, expectations were that the Air Force would attempt to cut the A-10 again.

The Air Force first tried to get rid of all the A-10s in 1984, the year production ended, according to a 2015 Congressional Research Service report.

Congress has repeatedly

balked at Pentagon attempts to zero out the A-10, most recently last year when it proposed a one-year phase-out of the remaining 162 jets in the Air Force inventory.

Congress said no and required the Air Force to maintain more than 100.

The Air Force seemed to be moving toward more cuts this year. The Pentagon announced that an April 3 graduation ceremony at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., marked the last class of Warthog pilots. The Air Force has also closed its A-10 specialized maintenance hub at Hill Air Force Base, Utah.

But the A-10 continues to fly. More than a dozen have been sent to the Middle East to fly missions as part of Operation Epic Fury, the U.S. attacks on Iran.

One A-10 was lost on April 3 during the effort to help rescue crew members of a downed Air Force F-15 in Iran. Known for being able to absorb ground fire, the A-10 was able to fly to friendly airspace over Kuwait before the pilot ejected to safety.

Hegseth rescinds flu vaccine requirement

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Getting a jab every year to protect against the flu is no longer a requirement for active-duty personnel, reservists and Defense Department civilians as part of a new policy announced by the Pentagon.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth signed a memorandum lifting the annual influenza vaccine requirement in a video posted Tuesday on X.

“We’re seizing this moment to discard any absurd, overreaching mandates that only weaken our warfighting capabilities,” Hegseth said in the video.

“This includes the universal flu vaccine and the mandate behind it,” he said. “The notion that a flu vaccine must be mandatory for every service member, everywhere in every circumstance at

all times, is just overly broad and not rational.”

The new policy is simple and leaves the decision on whether to get the vaccine up to the individual, Hegseth said.

“If you ... believe that the flu vaccine is in your best interest, then you are free to take it; you should,” he said. “But we will not force you, because your body, your faith and your convictions are not negotiable.”

The new guidance, posted Tuesday, is dated Monday. It says that effective immediately, the annual influenza vaccine is voluntary for all active and reserve component service members and DOD civilian personnel.

Hegseth’s revision is at odds with long-standing Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance, which recommends, with rare exceptions, that every-

one 6 months and older get the shot every flu season.

Military health experts have also warned that because influenza can spread quickly, seasonal vaccination “is the most effective control measure” to reduce serious infection and minimize the risk to the force and the mission, according to a flu vaccine statement on the Navy and Marine Corps Force Health Protection Command website.

The Department of Defense Education Activity, which requires the vaccine for its staff and students, did not answer a query by deadline about how the new policy may affect that guidance.

Hegseth also directed the services and components to submit requests for exceptions to the new policy within 15 days of the memorandum publication date.

He prefaced his announce-

ment by discussing the COVID-19 vaccine, which was mandatory for active-duty service members from August 2021 to January 2023 under former President Joe Biden.

Approximately 8,700 service members were involuntarily separated for not complying with the vaccine mandate, and more than 3,000 of them did not receive honorable discharges, the Pentagon has said. Discharged service members have until April 2027 to pursue reinstatement under a program to welcome them back to active-duty service with fully reinstated benefits.

“Our men and women in uniform were forced to choose between their conscience and their country even when those decisions posed no threat to our military readiness,” Hegseth said of the COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

Labor secretary resigning post amid investigations

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Labor Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer, the former one-term congresswoman from Oregon whose tenure has been marked by allegations of misconduct including an “inappropriate” relationship with a subordinate, is departing her Cabinet post.

Chavez-DeRemer will be leaving the administration for an undisclosed position in the private sector, White House Communications Director Steven Cheung said Monday on social media.

“She has done a phenomenal job in her role by protecting American workers, enacting fair labor practices and helping Americans gain additional skills to improve their lives,” Cheung wrote.

Chavez-DeRemer is the third member of President Donald Trump’s Cabinet to depart in the past two months.

Keith Sonderling, currently the

deputy secretary of Labor, will take on the role of acting secretary of Labor, Cheung added.

Chavez-DeRemer’s tenure leading the department has been roiled by multiple scandals. In January, the New York Post reported that Chavez-DeRemer was under investigation for an alleged “inappropriate” relationship with a subordinate. She was also accused of drinking alcohol in her office during the workday.

The New York Times reported last week that Chavez-DeRemer’s husband and father exchanged text messages with young female staff members.

According to the Times, four department employees have been forced out of their jobs, including Chavez-DeRemer’s former chief of staff and deputy chief of staff, her director of advance and a member of her security detail, with whom Chavez-DeRemer has been accused of having an affair.

FBI leader sues over story claiming heavy drinking

New York Daily News

FBI Director Kash Patel on Monday sued The Atlantic magazine for \$250 million over an explosive article that detailed claims he regularly drinks too much and his binges have caused serious national security risks.

The article by author Sarah Fitzpatrick, which Patel calls a “malicious hit piece,” quoted two dozen colleagues and witnesses about Patel’s “bouts of excessive drinking” and behavior including “both conspicuous inebriation and unexplained absences.”

The story said Patel’s behavior has alarmed officials at the FBI and Department of Justice and that he desperately fears being fired by President Donald Trump, who doesn’t drink and distrusts heavy drinkers.

Patel, 46, who chugged beer while celebrating the U.S. men’s national ice hockey team’s Olympic gold medal in Italy, filed the suit in federal district court in

Washington, D.C. He denied the allegations of drunken behavior and criticized the magazine for relying on anonymous sources.

“Defendants cannot evade responsibility for their malicious lies by hiding behind sham sources,” the lawsuit said.

The Atlantic said it stands by the story and expects what it calls the “meritless lawsuit” to be dismissed. Fitzpatrick wrote that she interviewed more than two dozen people about Patel and granted them anonymity to “discuss sensitive information and private conversations.” The article claimed Patel “is known to drink to the point of obvious intoxication, in many cases at the private club Ned’s in Washington, D.C., while in the presence of White House and other administration staff.”

Several times, Patel’s security detail “had difficulty waking Patel because he was seemingly intoxicated,” the article said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Lamborghini thieves lead police on wild chase

NJ BERGEN COUNTY — Two men in a purple Lamborghini stolen in Bergen County led police on an early morning chase through several North Jersey towns before the driver was arrested in Union County, authorities said.

The incident began around 3:30 a.m. when two men stole a Lamborghini Urus after breaking into MoeModz, a vehicle customization shop in Elmwood Park.

Police tracked the stolen vehicle into Newark, but the luxury car sped off as officers approached.

The vehicle was spotted again a short time later in Upper Saddle River and officers deployed spike strips along Route 17 South near a ramp to the Garden State Parkway, police said.

“The vehicle continued to flee and was pursued by multiple law enforcement agencies throughout the area,” Elmwood Park Police Chief Michael Foligno said.

The chase ended in Hillside when the vehicle came to a stop with a flat tire. The driver and passenger ran off, but officers caught up with the driver and took him into custody, Foligno said.

The passenger remains at large.

ICE detentions prompt singing in protest

WA BELLINGHAM — Singing Resistance Whatcom formed earlier this year with one goal in mind: to bring community members to-

gether in a different form of protest. The local chapter of a larger national movement has sung at larger actions like the No Kings protest as well as organized their own.

On Thursday, they raised their voices outside the Whatcom County Courthouse in downtown Bellingham to protest federal immigration enforcement in and around the courthouse.

Group founder Mary Francell-Sharfstein said she tries to organize at least one action a month. So when she heard about Whatcom County Superior Court’s expansion of virtual hearings in response to an uptick in detainments by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, she decided that Singing Resistance Whatcom should bring attention to the issue.

About 30 people gathered by the courthouse steps Thursday afternoon with banners, tambourines and microphones. Members of the Bellingham Troublemakers also came to act as peacekeepers and brought large signs reading “ICE abducted our neighbors here.”

Man critically injured in tree accident

CT LEBANON — A 65-year-old Lebanon resident was taken to the hospital in critical condition after he became trapped underneath a tree in his Tobacco Street yard Sunday morning, an official said.

The man was cutting a tree when the trunk split, knocked him to the ground and fell onto him, Lebanon Volunteer Fire Deputy Chief Mark Elliott said.

A family member home at the time tried to get the trunk, estimated to be 12 to 14 inches around, off the man but was unsuccessful, Elliott said.

Fourteen members responded to the scene around 10:37 a.m. and helped get the tree off the man, Elliott said. The man is expected to be hospitalized for an extended period.

Storms fueled at least 15 tornadoes last week

IL CHICAGO — Beginning a week ago, what the local National Weather Service office called “an incredibly active stretch of weather” — including record-breaking rainfall and large hail — culminated Friday with more than a dozen tornadoes across northern and central Illinois. As water levels in area rivers kept rising over the weekend, the ripple effects of the severe storms are continuing into this week.

The Des Plaines River was expected to crest at 18 feet on Monday morning before gradually receding, according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Water Prediction Service.

Other Chicago area rivers continue to experience flooding.

The Fox River is forecast to reach 11.9 feet on Thursday at the Algonquin tailwater in McHenry County.

Potomac named most endangered river in US

DC WASHINGTON — The Potomac River was named the most endangered river in the United States in a new report by American

Rivers, which pointed to a massive sewage spill this winter and the growing footprint of data centers in Maryland and Virginia.

The report cited the Jan. 19 collapse of the Potomac Interceptor, which state and federal agencies have said released an estimated 243 million to 300 million gallons of untreated wastewater into the river.

American Rivers and Potomac River advocates cast that disaster, along with fast-moving data center growth, as evidence that the river is under mounting strain.

25,000 assaults reported on school staff in 5 years

KY LEXINGTON — More than 25,000 assaults on Kentucky school staff have been reported in the past five years, according to the Kentucky Education Association, a union that represents teachers statewide.

Now, using a new survey, KEA wants to gather on-the-ground data from thousands of public school employees to help develop related legislative and policy decisions.

The effort comes after the Kentucky General Assembly sought to address the issue in the 2026 legislative session.

Senate Bill 101, sponsored by Sen. Matt Nunn, R-Sadieville, was signed into law April 7 by Gov. Andy Beshear.

A new law strengthens protections for teachers and school personnel and establishes statewide standards for reporting school assaults, including making reporting mandatory, according to a news release from the Senate Majority Caucus.

— From wire reports

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Wembanyama voted top defensive player

Associated Press

There had never been a unanimous NBA Defensive Player of the Year. Until now.

Victor Wembanyama — as expected — was announced Monday as the league's top defensive player. The San Antonio center was second in the voting for DPOY as a rookie, was the favorite last season until a medical condition ended his season prematurely, then left no doubt this year.

At 22, he's the youngest winner of the award.

"The real struggle might have been getting to 65 games," Wembanyama said — referring to the number he needed for award eligibility — on NBC Sports Network. "But I'm super, super happy to win this award and actually super proud to be the first-ever unanimous."

Oklahoma City's Chet Holmgren was second and Detroit's Ausar Thompson was third after both helped their teams secure No. 1 seeds for the playoffs. But this was never in doubt, not after the 7-foot-4 Wembanyama led

the NBA in blocked shots for a third consecutive season and generally terrorized opponents any time they wanted to score.

"Best player in the world," Spurs forward Keldon Johnson said.

The NBA continued its award announcements Tuesday when the Clutch Player of the Year — either Minnesota's Anthony Edwards, Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander or Denver's Jamal Murray — is revealed. Wembanyama is also a finalist for MVP, with the winner of that trophy not set to be revealed until next week at the earliest.

First, the league got this announcement out of the way. And Wembanyama's win was accompanied by a slew of milestones:

■ Every other winner of the award had been at least 23. Wembanyama doesn't turn 23 until January.

■ San Antonio became the first franchise with four players to win DPOY, which was first handed out in the 1982-83 season. The others were Alvin Robertson in 1986, David Robinson in 1992

and Kawhi Leonard in 2015 and 2016.

■ Wembanyama joins Robinson and Michael Jordan as the only players to win both Rookie of the Year and DPOY.

The biggest accomplishment may be this: Wemby got every voter to agree.

Golden State's Stephen Curry was the unanimous MVP in 2016 and in the 10 seasons that have followed, there have been only two instances of a player collecting 100% of the first-place votes for an award.

Those were Wembanyama for Rookie of the Year in 2024, and now this.

No player in at least the last 50 seasons has won two major individual awards unanimously.

It's the 10th known unanimous pick in any vote for MVP, Rookie of the Year, Sixth Man of the Year, Most Improved Player, DPOY or Coach of the Year. And some of the biggest names, including LeBron James and Michael Jordan, never won a major award unanimously.

"I feel like he is one of the har-

dest workers that I've ever been around," Johnson said. "He takes his craft very seriously. I feel like this is just a small token of what's to come for Victor. He's a special player now. He's a special player on the court and even more special person off the court as well. This is just a small token, small flowers that's given to him for Defensive Player of the Year."

Wembanyama is an MVP finalist (along with Gilgeous-Alexander, the reigning MVP, and three-time winner Nikola Jokic of the Nuggets), which almost certainly means he'll be an All-NBA first-team selection. And the DPOY win means he'll also be on the All-Defensive team, so the Frenchman is assured of no fewer than four trophies from this year's award season.

"We often overlook the team aspect," Wembanyama said. "I'm sitting here. I happen to be the guy who's put in the spotlight, but I am part of a system and I couldn't get this award and I couldn't do what I do if it wasn't for my teammates ... and my coaching staff."

Edwards, Randle push Wolves past Nuggets to even series

Associated Press

DENVER — A big early deficit in Denver didn't bother the Minnesota Timberwolves, who two years ago staged the biggest Game 7 comeback in NBA history, clawing out of a 20-point hole to beat the Nuggets and advance to the Western Conference finals.

This time, they overcame a 19-point deficit, rallying past Denver 119-114 on Monday night behind 30 points from Anthony Edwards and 24 from Julius Randle to tie their first-round playoff series at one game each.

"Just coming together, staying poised within those moments," Edwards said.

Jamal Murray scored 30 points for the Nuggets, who had won 13 straight games since their last loss March 18. They jumped

out to a 44-25 lead early in the second quarter only to see a potential laugh quickly turn into a head-scratcher.

After outscoring Minnesota 39-25 in the first, Denver watched the Timberwolves flip that exact score in the second period.

"So basically same quarters, first and second, just opposite teams," said Nikola Jokic, who had 24 points, 15 boards and eight assists for the Nuggets.

After a slow start, Edwards looked much better than he did during his 22-point effort in Game 1, when his rust from a bum knee was apparent. This time, he drove to the basket more instead of settling for jumpers, fueling the comeback.

"He was awesome. It was un-

believable," Minnesota coach Chris Finch said. "Also in that (first) period when we were down, he was great on the bench. Great leadership, positive. He recognized he needed to get into attack mode and get downhill a little bit more. He did that."

Cavaliers 115, Raptors 105:

Donovan Mitchell scored 30 points, James Harden added 28 and host Cleveland held on against Toronto for a 2-0 lead in their Eastern Conference first-round series.

Cleveland — which never trailed — has won 12 straight playoff games against the Raptors, tying the NBA postseason record for consecutive wins against an opponent. The streak began in the 2016 Eastern Conference finals, when the Cavs took

the final three games. Cleveland swept Toronto in four games in the second round in 2017 and '18.

The Cavaliers also have 12-game winning streaks against Detroit and Atlanta, while the Los Angeles Lakers had a 12-game run against Seattle from 1980 through '89.

Hawks 107, Knicks 106: CJ McCollum scored 32 points and visiting Atlanta rallied to stun New York, tying their first-round playoff series at one game apiece.

McCollum led a late surge that was almost for naught when he missed two free throws with 5.6 seconds remaining. The Knicks rushed the ball up the court without any timeouts left, but Mikal Bridges missed a jumper as time expired.

Flyers beat Penguins to take 2-0 lead

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Dan Vladar stopped 27 shots, rookie Porter Martone scored for the second straight game and the Philadelphia Flyers shut out Sidney Crosby and the Pittsburgh Penguins 3-0 on Monday night to take a 2-0 lead in their best-of-seven first-round series.

The 19-year-old Martone became the sixth-youngest player in NHL history to score in each of his first two playoff games when he beat Stuart Skinner deep into the second period to put the Flyers in front. Garnet Hathaway added a short-handed goal a few minutes later, and Luke Glendening chipped in an empty-netter late in the third.

Vladar made it stand up as red-hot Philadelphia, which needed a scorching finishing stretch just to reach the playoffs, frustrated the suddenly offensively challenged Pen-

guins all night.

“He’s been like that all year for us,” Flyers coach Rick Tocchet said of Vladar. “Guys enjoy playing for him.”

Game 3 is Wednesday night in Philadelphia.

Pittsburgh, the NHL’s third-highest scoring team during a resurgent regular season, again struggled to get pucks on net against Vladar. The Penguins, who had just 17 shots in a Game 1 loss Saturday night, vowed to come out with more jump.

While Pittsburgh controlled long swaths of the game after another slow start, including sustained pressure in the third, it could not find a way to slip the puck past Vladar.

“(We) should be frustrated, we just lost two games at home,” Penguins coach Dan Muse said. “But with frustration it’s how are you going to respond. ... Nobody is happy. Nobody should

be.”

The 28-year-old Vladar, who had never won a playoff game in his six-year career before this series, held firm as the Flyers headed home with momentum.

Pittsburgh shuffled its top two lines midway through the game looking for a jolt. While it created more opportunities, it did not result in more goals. The Penguins went 0-for-5 on the power play to fall to 0-for-7 with the man advantage during the series.

Stuart Skinner made 20 saves for Pittsburgh, including a couple of breakaways that could have broken things open, but it wasn’t against a young Philly team that seems to be gaining confidence with each passing game.

Martone, who was playing collegiately at Michigan State last month, scored his fifth goal in 10 games as a pro when a re-

bound off a Travis Konecny shot came right to his stick. Martone powered it into the open net to put Philadelphia in front with 6:21 to go in the second.

“I made this jump because I believed I could help this hockey team,” Martone said. “I hopped on a moving train and it’s been good ever since.”

The Flyers were on the penalty kill just over four minutes later when they doubled their lead. Owen Tippett fought off a pair of Penguins to keep the puck in the Pittsburgh zone and then fed Hathaway, who deposited it into the open net on a night the only place Philadelphia dominated was the scoreboard.

“Sometimes in the playoffs you have to win those ugly games,” Tocchet said. “It was an ugly game for us. ... Sometimes you’ve got to win games like that.”

Johnston, Duchene lead Stars over Wild to even series at 1

Associated Press

DALLAS — Wyatt Johnston scored goals on a ricochet and a roller, Matt Duchene had a tie-breaking power-play goal and an assist, and the Dallas Stars beat the Minnesota Wild 4-2 in Game 2 on Monday night to even their Western Conference first-round playoff series.

Dallas went ahead to stay with a power play winding down about four minutes into the penalty-filled second period when Duchene made a quick pass to Mikko Rantanen and then got the puck back just in front of the crease. That made it 2-1 in the kind of physical game expected between the Central Division rivals.

Stars goalie Jake Oettinger stopped 28 shots, including a point-blank attempt by Kirill Kaprizov with 2½ minutes to play when Minnesota was on a power play after Dallas was pe-

nalized for too many men on the ice.

Brock Faber scored his first two playoff goals and Quinn Hughes had two assists for the Wild, who won the opener 6-1 on Saturday but missed a chance in their 15th playoff appearance to take a 2-0 series lead for the first time.

“From our end anyway, it was a playoff game. I thought they played two, we played one,” Stars coach Glen Gulutzan said. “So it’s more of what we look like, more of the way we are, but you can still see how tight it is.”

Jason Robertson, who like Johnston had 45 goals in the regular season, also scored for Dallas. Nils Lundkvist had two assists.

“It was good just to show each other what we can do and not get kind of pushed out of the series,” said Robertson, who has scored in both games. “We’re

going to try to ride the momentum into Game 3.”

The series shifts to Minnesota on Wednesday night.

Hurricanes 3, Senators 2 (2OT): Jordan Martinook beat Linus Ullmark from the slot at 13:53 of the second overtime to help host Carolina beat Ottawa and take a 2-0 lead in their first-round series in the NHL playoffs.

Martinook — who was stopped on a penalty shot in the first OT — kept the winning play alive by chasing down a loose rebound toward the boards to keep the possession in the offensive zone. Moments later, Nikolaj Ehlers found Martinook between the circles to beat Ullmark, who was partially shielded by Carolina captain Jordan Staal at the top of the crease.

That set off a mob celebration by the Hurricanes around Martinook in a corner of the ice, end-

ing a game that saw them hang on despite blowing a 2-0 lead and having an apparent winner by Mark Jankowski waved off in the first overtime due to an off-side call on review.

Oilers 4, Ducks 3: Kasperii Kapanen scored his second goal of the game with 1:54 left in the third period to lift host Edmonton over Anaheim in the opener of their first-round playoff series.

Jason Dickinson also scored twice for the Oilers, who trailed 3-2 entering the third.

Edmonton star Leon Draisaitl returned to the ice after missing the final 14 regular-season games with an injury.

Edmonton is seeking its third consecutive trip to the Stanley Cup Final, having lost each of the last two seasons to Florida, which missed out on postseason play this year.

Rafaela, Red Sox top Tigers on Patriots' Day

Associated Press

BOSTON — Pinch-hitter Ceddanne Rafaela had a tie-breaking, two-run single in the seventh inning and the Red Sox beat the Detroit Tigers 8-6 on Monday in Boston's annual Patriots' Day game to salvage a split of their four-game series.

Isiah Kiner-Falefa also had a two-run single for the Red Sox, who halted a two-game skid.

The Tigers lost for just the second time in 10 games after taking the last two.

The game coincided with the running of the Boston Marathon. The Red Sox wore their special "Boston" home white jerseys, which debuted as a tribute to the city after the marathon bombings in 2013.

Red Sox starter Sonny Gray left the game in the third inning with right hamstring tightness.

Garrett Whitlock (2-1), the sixth of eight Boston pitchers, worked a perfect inning for the victory. Aroldis Chapman got the last two outs for his fourth save.

Athletics 6, Mariners 4: Carlos Cortes, Nick Kurtz and Shea Langeliers each hit a solo homer, and the visiting Athletics overcame an early three-run deficit to defeat Seattle.

Cortes went 4-for-5 with a home run in the fourth inning that trimmed the Mariners' lead to 3-1. Kurtz and Langeliers hit back-to-back shots in the sixth to chase starter Emerson Hancock with the score tied at 3.

Max Muncy put the A's ahead 4-3 in the eighth on a sacrifice fly with the bases loaded and no outs. Lawrence Butler added a two-run single to make it 6-3, as the Athletics went on to take sole possession of first place in the AL West.

A's starter J.T. Ginn struck out six in 5½ innings, allowing six hits and three runs. Hogan Harris (2-0) fanned two in 1½ hitless innings to earn the win, and Joel Kuhn worked the ninth for his fourth save.

Marlins 5, Cardinals 3: Agus-

tín Ramírez homered and Max Meyer pitched effectively into the sixth inning to lead host Miami over St. Louis, snapping the Cardinals' five-game winning streak.

Meyer, who has battled injuries since being selected third overall in the 2020 amateur draft, left after 5½ innings and 91 pitches. He permitted two runs on three hits and two walks with eight strikeouts.

Calvin Faucher (2-2) got the final two outs in the sixth. He allowed the tying run to score on a wild pitch, but was credited with the win after the Marlins went back ahead in the bottom half.

Pete Fairbanks gave up a leadoff triple to Masyn Winn and a sacrifice fly to Ramón Urías in the ninth before finishing for his fourth save in five opportunities.

Orioles 7, Royals 5 (12): Leody Taveras hit a grand slam during a five-run 12th inning, and visiting Baltimore held on for a wild victory over Kansas City, handing the Royals their eighth straight loss.

With the Orioles down to their last strike in the ninth inning, Samuel Basallo tied it at 1-all with their second hit of the game, an RBI single that scored Dylan Beavers. Basallo then led off the 12th with a single off Alex Lange (0-2), scoring automatic runner Coby Mayo to make it 3-2. Jeremiah Jackson singled and Weston Wilson walked to load the bases for Taveras, whose first career slam traveled 419 feet to center field.

That sent KC fans to the exits, but the Royals made it interesting in the bottom half when Nick Loftin hit a bases-clearing double off Cameron Foster. The rookie then retired the next three batters, striking out Kyle Isbel to end it.

Astros 9, Guardians 2: Isaac Paredes hit his first two home runs of the season and Christian Walker also went deep as visiting Houston beat Cleveland for

just its third victory in 15 games.

Walker lined a two-run shot to left-center in the first inning to open the scoring. The first baseman snapped an 0-for-15 slump by going 3-for-5 with three runs.

Paredes broke a 2-all tie with a leadoff homer to left field in the fourth that sparked a four-run inning. His first long ball of the year came in his 76th plate appearance. Paredes, who homered at least 19 times in each of the last four seasons, added a solo shot in the eighth to close the scoring.

Reds 6, Rays 1: Rookie Sal Stewart homered, doubled, stole a base and scored twice as visiting Cincinnati beat Tampa Bay for its fourth straight win.

Stewart put the Reds on the board with a two-run homer in the first inning, ending Jesse Scholtens' scoreless streak to start the season at 9½ innings.

With his eighth homer, Stewart matched the Chicago White Sox's Munetaka Murakami for the lead among major league rookies and St. Louis' Jordan Walker for the National League lead. Stewart has the rookie lead in RBIs (21) and extra-base hits (13). The 23-year-old first baseman also snagged a line drive with the bases loaded for the final out.

Braves 9, Nationals 4: Matt Olson had three RBIs, Bryce Elder struck out six in 6½ innings and visiting Atlanta won its sixth straight game with a victory over Washington.

Drake Baldwin added two RBIs, and Ozzie Albies, Michael Harris II, Dominic Smith and Eli White each had an RBI for the Braves.

Ronald Acuña Jr. was hit by a pitch in the fourth and sixth innings before leaving in the bottom of the sixth. Atlanta said X-rays were negative and Acuña was day to day.

Cubs 5, Phillies 1: Colin Rea (3-0) pitched into the seventh inning, Dansby Swanson hit a three-run homer and host Chicago beat Philadelphia for its

sixth consecutive win.

Chicago has outscored its opponents 44-14 during the team's longest win streak since it also won six in a row from Aug. 26 to Sept. 1, 2024. The Cubs were tied with Atlanta for the majors' longest active win streak going into Tuesday.

The Phillies have dropped six in a row and seven of eight. They have been outscored 42-10 during their losing streak.

Dodgers 12, Rockies 2: Max Muncy went 4-for-4 with two homers and scored four times as visiting Los Angeles hit five long balls to back Justin Wroblewski in a victory over Colorado.

Dalton Rushing also had two home runs for the Dodgers, giving him seven in his past seven games. Miguel Rojas launched his first of the season and got his 1,000th career hit with a single in the fourth inning.

Wroblewski (3-0) allowed one run and eight hits across seven innings to help LA split the four-game series at Coors Field. He struck out three and walked none, throwing 72 of his 97 pitches for strikes. The left-hander has yielded just two earned runs in 21 innings over his last three starts.

Blue Jays 5, Angels 2: Dylan Cease struck out 12 in five innings and Vladimir Guerrero Jr. had three hits, including a two-run homer, as visiting Toronto beat Los Angeles.

Lenyn Sosa put the Blue Jays ahead with a sacrifice fly in the sixth, and Nathan Lukes knocked in two late insurance runs after coming off the bench.

Cease (1-0) earned his first win for Toronto and finished one strikeout shy of his career high despite needing 110 pitches to get 15 outs. The right-hander, who signed a \$210 million, seven-year contract as a free agent in December, limited the Angels to two runs and five hits. He walked two and whiffed Jorge Soler with a 99 mph fastball on his final pitch.