

## DOJ: Gunman targeted Trump, officials

*Bloomberg News*

The armed suspect who tried to enter a Washington ballroom where President Donald Trump was speaking was likely targeting administration officials, Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said.

Blanche said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press" that the man is believed to have acted alone after traveling by train from California and had been staying at the Washington Hilton, which was hosting Saturday's annual White House Correspondents' Dinner where Trump was scheduled to speak.

Based on investigations so far "we believe the suspect was targeting administration officials," Blanche said, citing certain writings by the suspect and interviews with people who knew him. Blanche declined to be drawn on whether Trump was the target, saying only that he was part of the administration.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt suggested in a social media post that the gunman "sought to assassinate the President and kill as many top

Trump administration officials as possible." It wasn't immediately clear whether her assessment was based on law enforcement findings.

It remains unclear what the suspect's motives were, Blanche said, adding that he doesn't see a connection to any particular administration policy directive so far. The man had acquired his weapons — a shotgun and a semi-automatic pistol over the past three years, according to a law enforcement intelligence profile reviewed by Bloomberg.

"We will not stop doing things like we did last night in this administration," Blanche said on CBS's "Face the Nation." "And this man, if one of his goals was to get us to be scared, he failed."

The alleged gunman — identified as Cole Tomas Allen, 31, of Torrance, Calif. — will be charged on Monday with assaulting a federal officer and using a firearm in an assault, Blanche said on NBC. He said on CBS that more charges would be possible depending on the shooter's motive and the evidence gathered during the investiga-

tion that is underway.

Authorities found anti-Trump and anti-Christian rhetoric on the social media accounts of the suspect, according to CBS News, which cited an unnamed U.S. official. He sent some of his writings to relatives before the attack, one of whom alerted authorities, CBS said.

A Secret Service agent was shot but the round hit his bullet-proof vest and the officer "will be fine," Jeanine Pirro, the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, said Saturday night at a news conference.

The gunfire disrupted Trump's first appearance as president at the annual dinner, which his predecessors routinely attended. Secret Service officers rushed into the room to evacuate Trump, first lady Melania Trump, Vice President JD Vance and Cabinet officials. Attendees ducked under tables to take shelter. The incident took place just outside the ballroom of the Washington Hilton where the dinner took place.

Trump on Sunday said the shooting was a reminder of why

he is trying to build a massive new ballroom at the White House.

"This event would never have happened with the Militarily Top Secret Ballroom currently under construction at the White House. It cannot be built fast enough!" he wrote in a social media post.

He also compared the security of his planned ballroom to that of the hotel which hosted Saturday's event. "There are no rooms sitting on top for unsecured people to pour in, and is inside the gates of the most secure building in the World," he added.

Blanche, asked on CNN's "State of the Union" whether the incident was a breakdown of security, rejected that notion. "It was a massive security success story," he said. "This suspect barely breached the perimeter."

The shooting marked the latest example of political violence that has plagued the nation, including the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol and the Pennsylvania governor's mansion being set ablaze.

## US Navy intercepts Iran-linked vessel in Arabian Sea

*Bloomberg News*

U.S. naval forces intercepted a sanctioned vessel in the Arabian Sea on Saturday as part of the Trump administration's blockade of Iranian energy exports, according to U.S. Central Command.

The M/V Sevan was among 19 "shadow fleet" vessels sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department on Friday for its links to "transporting billions of dollars worth of Iranian energy, oil and gas products, including propane and butane, to foreign mar-

kets," CENTCOM said in a statement.

On Saturday, the U.S. deployed a Navy helicopter to intercept the merchant vessel, which subsequently complied with U.S. military direction to turn back to Iran under escort, according to CENTCOM.

The Sevan, a tanker that has carried Iranian cargoes in the past, was tracked last week approaching the Strait of Hormuz. The ship is owned and managed by Dubai-based Anka Energy & Logistics Co.

U.S. forces are continuing to enforce the blockade against ships entering or departing Iranian ports and 37 vessels have been redirected since the start of the measures, CENTCOM said.

President Donald Trump earlier Saturday called off a trip by his top envoys to Pakistan for potential talks on a deal with Iran, casting doubt on the future of a ceasefire between the two sides.

The president on Saturday told his son-in-law Jared Kushner and special envoy Steve Witkoff to skip the trip, adding in a

social media post that there has been "Too much time wasted on traveling."

"Besides which, there is tremendous infighting and confusion within their 'leadership.' Nobody knows who is in charge, including them," Trump wrote. "If they want to talk, all they have to do is call!!!"

Trump later told reporters he hasn't "even thought about" what this means for the tentative ceasefire, as all sides try to figure out what's next in the conflict.

# Navy, Marines on different 6th-gen paths

## F/A-XX fighter contract down to 2 bids; USMC vision still a work in progress

BY GARY WARNER

*Stars and Stripes*

The armed forces of the United States have competed among themselves for generations, so it would be surprising if they weren't already heating up over the future sixth-generation fighter.

"Future" is the operative word: Even the most aggressive timelines predict a first flight unlikely before 2028, with an entry to service in the early 2030s. The project demands relatively small fiscal resources for now — just over \$5.1 billion of the \$1.5 trillion defense budget rolled out this week.

The bigger headlines went to Pentagon plans to triple spending on unmanned vehicles to as much as \$75 billion, as well as pay \$30 billion to replenish stocks of missiles and anti-missile missiles used in the joint U.S.-Israeli attack on Iran.

But the budget also included seed money for projects that exist only on paper, such as the Trump-class battleship — as well as competing plans from the Air Force and Navy for a stealth long-range fighter they hope to put into service by the 2030s.

Out front is the Air Force, which already has a number on its plane: F-47. The budget includes \$5 billion to accelerate the development of the Boeing "air dominance" fighter, which is expected to replace the service's F-22.

It also has perhaps the most important fan — President Donald Trump. The Pentagon numbered the plane after Trump, the 47th president. The fighter's name is still to be announced.

The Navy has its own sixth-generation fighter in develop-

ment, the F/A-XX. Until recently, the future of a carrier-launched new jet was uncertain.

When announcing Boeing as the builder of choice for the F-47 in March 2025, Trump told the Pentagon to go "all-in" on the project. He also suggested that building two sixth-generation fighters was problematic.

"Awarding the F/A-XX contract as written is likely to delay the higher-priority F-47 program, with low likelihood of improving the timeline to field a

**"There's not much need to cut anything when talking about how to spend \$1.5 trillion."**

Mark Cancian

Center for Strategic and International Studies

Navy sixth-generation fighter," the White House said in a July 2025 statement to Congress.

But this month, Adm. Daryl Caudle, the chief of naval operations, said the carrier-based sixth-generation fighter was on a faster track to development.

"The Navy will award a production contract for the F/A-XX sixth generation fighter in August," Caudle said.

The final decision comes down to two military industry heavyweights: Boeing and Northrop Grumman.

Boeing, builder of the Navy's F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and EA-18G Growler jets, has pitched a carrier version of its F-47 design, saying that having one contractor on both projects will lead to cost savings and technology sharing.

Northrop Grumman, the oth-

er finalist, has a long reputation with the Navy as the builder of the former F-14 Tomcat. The company has pitched a "clean sheet" design that wouldn't share major elements with the F-47. Supporters flip Boeing's argument on its head, saying that Northrop Grumman will be able to concentrate on the project instead of splitting its energy and manufacturing capacity on building two sixth-generation jets simultaneously.

Lockheed Martin, the builder of both the F-22 and F-35, was eliminated from the competition last year.

How much money is available for the F/A-XX project is a question for the 2028 budget, when the contractor will be decided and design work is further down the road. Once into Engineering and Manufacturing Development (EMD), the cost of the F/A-XX and its piece of the budget will come into focus.

The F/A-XX is budgeted to get \$140 million in fiscal 2027 — \$68 million from the baseline defense budget and \$72 million from reconciliation funding that would need to be passed in separate legislation by Congress.

The Marine Corps has its own ideas — and they may not square with its parent department, the Navy.

Marine Lt. Gen. William Swan, the Marine Corps' deputy commandant for aviation, told reporters at a meeting in Quantico, Va., that its concept for a sixth-generation fighter jet that would enter service around 2041 is one that will likely "look like" but not necessarily be the same as the Navy's choice for the F/A-XX.

"We're fast following with the Air Force, right?" Swan said, according to Breaking Defense.

"They got the F-47, the Navy's looking at F/A-XX, and they're just starting on that. So, we are going to watch."

In the meantime, the services can look at their respective pieces of the Pentagon's \$21.4 billion buy of fifth-generation F-35 Lightning II fighters in the 2027 budget.

The Air Force will buy 38 F-35As, which take off and land at bases.

The Navy will receive 37 F-35Cs, which can be carrier-launched or operate from bases.

The Marines will receive 10 F-35Bs, which can take off and land vertically and operate from amphibious assault warships or unfinished airstrips on land.

The total buy of 85 F-35 Lightning II variants is up from 47 last year.

Mark Cancian, an analyst for the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said it is difficult to forecast the future for the sixth-generation fighters in a year when the Pentagon is asking for a record-shattering \$1.5 trillion in total spending.

Future administrations may be more financially constrained, have different priorities and also need to pay the bills for current conflicts like Operation Desert Fury against Iran.

Cancian said various priorities — such as the likelihood that the Marines would want a sixth-generation fighter with a vertical take-off and landing capability — could come up against a money crunch that might zero out one or more of the aircraft ideas.

"There's not much need to cut anything when talking about how to spend \$1.5 trillion," Cancian said.

# US weighs suspending Spain from NATO

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Suspending Spain from NATO is one option the U.S. is considering in its push to punish allies regarded as uncooperative in American military operations against Iran, according to a news report Friday that cited an internal Pentagon email.

The email outlined various means of retaliation against fellow NATO members, including removing “difficult” countries from prestigious positions in the bloc and also reviewing the U.S. stance on Britain’s claim to the Falkland Islands, a U.S. official told Reuters.

Spain was singled out for punishment, with the idea of suspending the country from NATO being discussed at high levels inside the Pentagon, the news agency reported.

President Donald Trump and others in his administration

have criticized Spain for its refusal to allow bases in the country, such as the Navy’s hub in Rota, to be used for operations against Iran.

The country also has denied the U.S. the right to use Spanish airspace for flight operations connected to the nearly two-month-old conflict.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez played down the report.

“We do not work on emails; we work on official documents and positions taken in this case by the United States government,” Sanchez said Friday, the Spanish news agency Democra-ta reported.

It is not immediately clear how the United States could suspend or expel Spain from NATO, as no formal mechanism exists for doing so.

While Article 13 in the Wash-ington Treaty, NATO’s found-

ing document, offers a way for a country to quit, the charter is silent on how to force out a mem-ber state that has fallen out of fa-vor.

Should NATO ever decide to remove a member, it would likely have to amend the treaty. And that would mean getting unanimous support from all members, including the coun-try that was being targeted for removal.

Trump has repeatedly criti-cized NATO for not participa-tion in the Iran war, referring to the alliance as a “paper tiger.” He also said he was considering pulling the U.S. out of the orga-nization in response.

But despite Trump’s frustra-tions, the conflict also has show-cased the Pentagon’s reliance on military bases in Europe to project power into the Middle East.

Bases in Germany, the United

Kingdom, Romania and Greece have factored into U.S. opera-tions against Iran.

The email did not detail any plans for closing U.S. bases in Europe or drawing down troop levels, and it did not address po-tential implications for U.S. mili-tary installations in Spain, in-cluding the Navy’s base in Rota and an air base in Moron.

Over the years, frustrations with various allies have periodi-cally flared, prompting ques-tions about whether certain members belong inside the trans-Atlantic security bloc.

For example, Turkey’s 2019 invasion of Syria infuriated al-lies and prompted calls for re-considering its membership.

In 1974, alliance leaders de-bated how to suspend Portugal following a leftist coup. They ended up opting to exclude Por-tugal from most NATO activi-ties for a year.

## US, S. Korea firms to partner on unmanned surface vessel

By JULIE MASSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

South Korean conglomerate Hanwha Group has partnered with a Miami-based auton-omous maritime company to de-velop a next-generation medi-um unmanned surface vessel for the U.S. military, Hanwha’s U.S. subsidiary said last week.

Under the agreement, Han-wha Defense USA and Magnet Defense will jointly build a 124-foot unmanned vessel for the Pentagon, develop AI-driven robotic shipyards and collabo-rate on advanced AI autonomy software, according to a Han-wha news release.

The companies did not re-spond to an email requesting additional details on Thursday.

The Navy has not awarded a contract but last month solicited firms with expertise in auton-omous vessel construction and general maritime experience to

participate in its MUSV Family of Systems program, according to an announcement on sam.gov.

The companies announced their partnership shortly after the Navy solicited proposals.

The Navy is “investing heav-ily in unmanned platforms to provide a strategic hedge and multiply our force,” according to its fiscal year 2027 budget re-quest announced Tuesday.

The “Golden Fleet” Initia-tive aims to modernize the Navy’s surface fleet and includes plans to build advanced warships.

Magnet Defense specializes in fully autonomous national se-curity maritime platforms for fleet operations and missile de-fense missions, according to the news release. Its flagship M48 MUSV has a range of 17,000 nautical miles, the longest of any vessel of its type at sea to-day, according to Hanwha.

## Another Virginia-class sub, USS Idaho, enters service

*Stars and Stripes*

The USS Idaho was commis-sioned in a ceremony at Naval Submarine Base New London, Conn., on Saturday. It is the 26th Virginia-class fast-attack sub-marine to be delivered to the service.

Although the submarine is the fifth Navy ship to be named for the state of Idaho, its com-missioning comes over a centu-ry after that of the most recent naval vessel to carry the name, according to a Navy news re-lease. The last Navy ship named Idaho was a New Mexico-class battleship commissioned in 1919.

The ceremony was attended by Idaho’s governor and one of its senators, as well as Connecti-cut Sen. Richard Blumenthal, Navy Adm. William Houston, the president of Electric Boat and Acting Navy Secretary

Hung Cao, among others. The service’s acting leader formally placed the ship in active service. Cao assumed the position on Wednesday after John Phelan left the role.

The ceremony comes as the Pentagon proposes a substan-tial increase in the Navy’s bud-get for the 2027 fiscal year, much of which is aimed at ship-building. The proposal includes full funding for two Virginia-class nuclear fast attack subma-rines and advance procurement for another four submarines.

The ceremony also came about a month after the com-missioning of another Virginia-class submarine, the USS Mas-sachusetts. It is the first subma-rine to be named for the state.

USS Idaho was co-produced by General Dynamics Electric Boat and HII-Newport News Shipbuilding.

# Change to veteran job protection proposed

By LINDA F. HERSEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Disabled American Veterans is condemning a plan by the Office of Personnel Management to change long-held protections for veterans from federal job layoffs.

The plan, published as a proposed rule on the Federal Register, could potentially affect tens of thousands of veterans who are federal workers. Titled “Reduction in Force,” the proposed rule would prioritize performance reviews over a veteran’s status and years of service.

“At a time when hundreds of thousands of veterans serve in the federal workforce, these changes would disproportionately harm those who have already sacrificed for our nation,” said Coleman Nee, DAV’s national commander.

He lambasted the proposed rule as an attempt by the Trump administration to “remove veterans’ preference protections,” which extend back for decades, and to “undermine the balanced framework established by Congress.”

Preference protections traditionally have provided eligible veterans and their family members certain advantages in federal hiring and job retention, according to OPM.

But OPM said that it is currently seeking to revise its reduction-in-force rules to make them more “streamlined, efficient and merit-based,” the proposed rule said.

More than 600,000 veterans work at federal agencies, making the U.S. government a top employer for former military members, according to the Partnership for Public Service.

Veterans represent a quarter of the overall federal workforce, according to OPM.

More than 385 public comments have been posted since the Federal Register published the proposed rule on March 5, according to the Federal Register.

The 60-day public comment period runs through May 4.

The proposed rule describes the regulatory framework as cumbersome and inefficient.

Veterans’ preference policies began after the Civil War, but the modern-day framework was established by the Veterans’ Preference Act of 1944, according to OPM.

“OPM has seen how the current regulatory framework has not always supported agency downsizing efforts in an efficient manner,” according to the language in the proposed rule.

Tenure is prioritized over job performance, which may cause “high-performing employees” to be terminated during a reduction in force, while “lower-performing, more senior employees” keep their jobs, according to the 31-page proposed rule.

The proposed rule would continue to give “substantial weight to veterans’ preference in determining retention order during a reduction in force, while making performance the primary factor in retention decisions,” OPM said Monday.

The proposal also has no impact on how the federal government hires veterans, and veterans’ preference in hiring remains unchanged, OPM said.

The Office of Special Counsel also submitted a four-page public comment supporting the rule change.

## US grants Maduro access to funds for criminal defense

*Bloomberg News*

U.S. officials reversed themselves and will now allow Nicolás Maduro and his wife to pay lawyers with Venezuelan funds as they defend themselves in the drug-trafficking case against them in New York.

The reversal clears a roadblock that had stalled the prosecution of the former Venezuelan president and his wife, Cilia Flores, who were captured in early January in a raid of their home in Caracas and brought to the U.S.

U.S. officials barred them from using Venezuelan funds to pay for their defense, arguing that doing so would undermine long-standing sanctions against the country.

The couple claimed that this infringed on their right to a fair trial and argued that the indictment against them should therefore be dismissed.

At a hearing in March, U.S. District Judge Alvin Hellerstein questioned the prosecution’s refusal to let the Venezuelan government to pay for Ma-

duro’s legal defense.

The judge noted that the U.S. is doing business with Venezuela and that Maduro and his wife are no longer inside of that country.

Late Friday, Manhattan U.S. Attorney Jay Clayton informed the court that the Office of Foreign Assets Control had issued the couple amended licenses that allows them to tap Venezuelan funds.

With the funding issue resolved, the couple agreed to withdraw their request to dis-

miss the case, Clayton told the court.

Prosecutors claim Maduro played a key role in a conspiracy to traffic cocaine into the U.S.

They also allege that Maduro and others partnered with groups designated by the U.S. as foreign terrorist organizations and that he sought to enrich himself while serving in government during a span of more than two decades.

Clayton asked the court to set a status hearing the case in about 60 days.

## Mexico: US agents did not have permission to raid lab

*Bloomberg News*

Two U.S. agents who died after an operation to dismantle a suspected Mexican narcotics laboratory had no permission to be carrying out operations of this kind, according to the nation’s security Cabinet.

One of the pair entered Mexico on a visitor’s visa, while the other had diplomatic status, the Cabinet said Saturday, in an official statement.

The pair died alongside two Mexican agents this month when their car careened off of

a mountain road in the northern Chihuahua state, just south of the border with Texas.

The deaths escalated ongoing tensions between Mexico and the United States, as President Claudia Sheinbaum said

that her government had not been made aware of the agents involvement in the raid, which she described as being a breach of security protocols.

A person familiar with the matter confirmed the two U.S. nationals worked for the CIA.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Marijuana vending machine ring busted

**NJ** TRENTON — An illegal marijuana-dispensing vending machine ring that operated throughout New Jersey was busted last week, authorities said.

The 26-month-long multi-agency investigation identified Ben Gross, 40, of Toms River, as the owner of “Barbwire” — a company that owned the machines which were in places of business that were not licensed to dispense marijuana products, the Ocean County Prosecutor’s Office announced last week.

A search of Gross’ house, a home in Jackson and a warehouse in Manchester Township resulted in the seizure of over 100 pounds of flower marijuana, 5 pounds of hashish, several hundred pounds of THC infused candy and THC infused vaping products, investigators said.

At the warehouse, detectives located Delma Canales-Garcia, 50, and Susana Garcia-Canales, 42, both of Lakewood, and Carlos Sanchez-Castillo, 22, of Toms River and took all three into custody, officials said. Each was charged with drug-related offenses.

### Couple confirms ID of baby’s genetic parents

**FL** ORLANDO — The couple at the heart of an embryo mix-up case centering on a Seminole County fertility clinic has identified the genetic parents of their baby girl.

Tiffany Score and Steven Mills, of Melbourne, said in a statement that the identity of the other couple and other infor-

mation about their case, which prompted national headlines, will remain confidential to respect their privacy. It is not clear whether the other couple will seek to raise the child, and Florida law is murky on their right to do so.

But Score and Mills, who used in-vitro fertilization to become parents, proclaimed their commitment to the nearly 4-month-old baby girl borne by Score.

The fertility clinic initially told Score she had been implanted with an embryo created with her egg and Mills’ sperm, but in December she delivered a baby girl who is not their biological child.

### Swastika at school leads cops to explosives

**NY** NEW YORK — A swastika found scrawled on a bathroom wall at a Long Island high school led police to a cache of explosive chemicals in the teen vandal’s home purchased by the boy’s father, Nassau police said Thursday.

Now the 15-year-old Syosset resident and his 48-year-old father, Francisco Sanles, are facing a raft of charges stemming from the explosives found in their home.

Nassau County Police were called to investigate a hate crime at Syosset High School on South Woods Road after the swastika was found on the bathroom wall. When cops went to the teen suspect’s home, they discovered chemicals at the house that had been combined to create explosive materials, officials said.

Investigators determined the chemicals were purchased by

the teen’s father. He allegedly bought the chemicals over several months, cops said.

### Group returns wellness grant after controversy

**MA** BOSTON — An organization is returning all grant funding to the City of Boston after backlash over its decision to use the money to provide “wellness allowance” vouchers for queer migrants, spending the mayor’s office said was improper.

The so-called LGBTQ+ migrant justice organization, Outnewcomers, blamed “safety threats” for its decision to return funding and suspend programming that was distributing the wellness vouchers. The group did not cop to inappropriately spending city grant funding, as mentioned by Boston Mayor Michelle Wu’s office.

The organization described threats received after its wellness allowance program for queer migrants became public as “escalating and credible to the safety of its founder, team, and the vulnerable community it serves.”

### Cruise line handed setback in voyeur case

**FL** MIAMI — Possible victims of a cruise ship crew member who planted a hidden camera to watch women undress won a significant legal victory last week in Fort Lauderdale federal court.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Detra Shaw-Wilder ruled against Miami-based Royal Caribbean’s attempt to require that all victims go through individual arbitration with the cruise line, generally a secretive process often fa-

vored by corporations. Her decision removes one of the biggest obstacles in holding the company accountable and receiving damages.

The original lawsuit was filed in 2024 against Royal Caribbean Cruises and Arvin Mirasol, a former room attendant. The plaintiff, referred to as Jane Doe in the complaint, was a passenger aboard Symphony of the Seas around Feb. 25, 2024.

Mirasol regularly cleaned passenger rooms, restocked towels and changed sheets on Royal Caribbean’s Symphony of the Seas, according to court filings.

Searching his electronic equipment including a USB stick device, law enforcement agents found “several videos of naked females undressing in their bathrooms.” He’d planted small, secret cameras in rooms.

### Lawyer: Man to admit spraying vinegar on Omar

**MN** MINNEAPOLIS — A man charged with assault for spraying Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., with vinegar plans to change his plea to guilty.

Anthony James Kazmierczak, 55, of Minneapolis, was charged in federal court after Omar was sprayed with apple cider vinegar during a Jan. 27 town hall event.

Kazmierczak initially pleaded not guilty on March 20 to one count of assaulting a United States officer. But according to a court filing written by his attorney, John Fossum, the defense and federal prosecutors “reached a settlement” in the case. Fossum said his client would be pleading guilty.

— From wire reports

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# Navy's Heidenreich picked by Steelers

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Jermod McCoy's lengthy wait to hear his name called at the NFL draft came to a quick end on Saturday.

The fact that the call came at all for Eli Heidenreich — and from the Pittsburgh native's hometown Steelers no less — gave what can sometimes be a ho-hum final day of the league's marquee offseason event a dash of electricity ... and more than a dash of the feels.

The Las Vegas Raiders started Day 3 by taking McCoy with the first pick of the fourth round, taking a small gamble that the Tennessee cornerback will return to form after missing all of last season with a torn ACL.

Lingering health concerns appeared to make teams reticent to take a supremely athletic defensive back with a sub-4.40 40-yard dash time. Watching three rounds roll by without getting a call wasn't exactly McCoy's idea of a good time.

"I was prepared for whatever happened, but, I mean, I would've been excited to go higher, for sure, because, I mean, I

had a good pro day, ran some good times and just did good things like that," McCoy said. "But, I mean, I was prepared for whatever happened. Because, I mean, it's not in my control."

McCoy viewed having his stock drop as a slight that will fuel him as he looks to regain the form that had him on a first-round trajectory before the injury.

"I feel like I learned about myself, it's just like, I feel like I'm super mentally strong," he said. "I feel I've just been through a lot. I got a story that I'm still trying to tell."

McCoy isn't the only one.

Heidenreich, Navy's all-time leading receiver who starred at Mount Lebanon High — less than 10 miles away from Acrisure Stadium — walked onto the stage in his service dress uniform to a massive roar after Pittsburgh used a seventh-round pick to bring him home.

"It's the greatest moment of my life," Heidenreich said. "This is the greatest city in the world with the greatest people in the world. I couldn't be any happier."

For higher-profile players selected in rounds four through seven, the overwhelming feeling was likely closer to relief.

Clemson quarterback Cade Klubnik, who began his last season with the Tigers with Heisman Trophy and national title hopes, only to endure a nightmarish fall in which Clemson went 7-6, went to the New York Jets with the 110th pick.

It would be another 139 picks before LSU quarterback Garrett Nussmeier could exhale. Things might have worked out for Nussmeier, whose patience was rewarded after being selected by the Kansas City Chiefs and head coach Andy Reid.

The fanfare of Thursday night's opening round was long gone by Saturday.

Iowa wide receiver Kaden Wetjen was taken by the host Steelers in the fourth round.

There was no draft party for Wetjen. No camera set up in his family's living room to capture the moment. Instead, Wetjen went golfing while his parents headed to the Drake Relays to watch his younger brother com-

pete.

The fifth round included Ohio State defensive back Lorenzo Styles Jr., following brother Sonny — selected seventh overall by Washington on Thursday — into the pros when he was taken by New Orleans.

The Denver Broncos made Buffalo's Red Murdock this year's "Mr. Irrelevant," taking him with the 257th and final pick.

The final day of the league's offseason festival began with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell telling the rain-soaked fans outside Acrisure Stadium that Pittsburgh had set a record for attendance on Thursday and Friday, with more than 600,000 people packing themselves into the city's North Shore and nearby Point State Park.

Former Penn State quarterback Drew Allar was a somewhat surprising third-round selection.

"I'm really excited," Allar said. "Enjoyed my four years at Penn State ... But I'm really excited to represent Steeler fans and Steeler nation and really win a lot of games."

## Hurricanes beat Senators to complete first-round sweep

Associated Press

OTTAWA, Ontario — Logan Stankoven scored the go-ahead goal in the third period as the Carolina Hurricanes defeated Ottawa 4-2 to sweep the first-round series.

Taylor Hall added a goal and an assist before Sebastian Aho buried two pucks into the empty net. Frederik Andersen made 25 saves. Seth Jarvis chipped in two assists.

Drake Batherson, with a goal and an assist, and Dylan Cozens replied for the Senators, who put up just five goals in four games and never led against the Hurricanes. Linus Ullmark stopped 26 shots. Rookie defenseman Carter Yakemchuk added two assists in

his playoff debut.

Of the 213 NHL teams to fall behind 3-0 in a seven-game series, just four have come all the way back to win — the 1942 Toronto Maple Leafs, 1980 New York Islanders, 2010 Philadelphia Flyers and 2014 Los Angeles Kings.

Ottawa also trailed last spring's first-round matchup with Toronto 3-0 after seven years outside the postseason tournament before eventually falling in six games.

Stankoven scored his fourth goal in as many games at 9:10 of the final period on a power play off a rebound from the end boards.

Batherson came close to equalizing again with six minutes to go

before Carolina was whistled for too many men. But Ottawa's anemic power play again couldn't generate any quality looks against a high-pressure penalty kill.

Aho scored into the empty net before Cozens made it 3-2 with 1:49 left on the clock. Aho then sealed the series for good with another empty netter.

Carolina opened the scoring in a physical, nasty second period when Hall beat Ullmark five-hole at 15:15 after Mark Jankowski made a big shot block at the other end.

Ottawa's power play finally broke through when Batherson tipped a Tim Stutzle one-timer.

**Wild 3, Stars 2 (OT):** Matt Boldy scored on a deflection with

28.9 seconds left in the first overtime and host Minnesota beat Dallas in Game 4 to tie the first-round NHL playoff series.

Jared Spurgeon took a shot that Boldy, unmarked in front of the net, tipped with his stick shaft to guide the puck past goalie Jake Oettinger after the Wild lost Game 3 in double overtime.

**Penguins 4, Flyers 2:** Sidney Crosby and Kris Letang each scored goals and the three-time Stanley Cup champion teammates are headed back to Pittsburgh after they helped the visiting Penguins avoid a first-round series sweep with a win over Philadelphia.

Game 5 is Monday in Pittsburgh.

# SGA, Thunder top Suns for commanding 3-0 lead

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 42 points in a brilliant shooting performance, Ajay Mitchell added 15 in place of the injured Jalen Williams and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Phoenix Suns 121-109 on Saturday to take a 3-0 lead in the Western Conference first-round series.

Gilgeous-Alexander — the league's reigning MVP — hit 15 of 18 shots on a variety of tough looks, frustrating a Phoenix defense that actually played decently for much of the game. Alex Caruso added 13 points off the bench while Chet Holmgren had 10 points, seven rebounds and two blocks.

Defending champion Oklahoma City will go for the sweep in Game 4 on Monday in Phoenix.

Dillon Brooks led the Suns with 33 points on 11-of-21 shooting while Jalen Green added 26.

The Thunder took an 87-79 lead after three quarters and never trailed in the fourth. Gilgeous-Alexander hit a difficult fallaway 19-foot jumper to put them up 102-87 with about five minutes left, deflating the Phoenix crowd and pretty much ending any hope for a comeback.

OKC was leading 69-60 early in the third quarter when Suns guard Devin Booker hurt his left ankle on a drive to the basket. He stayed on the floor for a few seconds in obvious pain before getting up and hobbling back to the locker room.

The five-time All-Star returned a few minutes later to huge cheers from the home crowd, making a short baseline jumper and a 3-pointer to cut the Thunder's lead to 75-69.

Oklahoma City scored the next six points to turn back the rally. Booker finished with 16 points and seven assists.

Phoenix took an early 24-15 lead but the Thunder erased the deficit in a hurry, hitting four 3-pointers during a 16-3 run. The game was tight throughout the rest of the first half with OKC surging ahead late in the second quarter for a 62-53 lead.

The Thunder were without Williams, the high-scoring guard who hurt his left hamstring in Game 2. Mitchell started in his place and shot just 5 of 20 from the field, but added six rebounds and two assists.

The Suns were without center Mark Williams (foot) and guard Jordan Goodwin (calf).

Grayson Allen returned from a hamstring injury and scored seven points in 17 minutes.

**Magic 113, Pistons 105:** Paolo Banchero and Desmond Bane each scored 25 points, and host Orlando blew a 17-point fourth-quarter lead before rallying to beat Detroit for a 2-1 lead in their Eastern Conference first-round series.

Banchero had 12 rebounds and nine assists. Franz Wagner scored 17 points for the Magic, who got 15 from Jalen Suggs and a 14-point, 17-rebound game from Wendell Carter Jr.

Cade Cunningham scored 27 for the Pistons, who trailed 96-79 with 8:34 left — then outscored Orlando 26-8 over the next six minutes to grab the lead. But Detroit, which got 23 points from Tobias Harris, couldn't hold on.

**Knicks 114, Hawks 98:** Karl-Anthony Towns had his first postseason triple-double, OG Anunoby scored 22 points and visiting New York recovered after back-to-back losses to beat Atlanta, tying the Eastern Conference playoff series at 2-2.

Towns had 20 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists. He be-

came the fourth Knicks player to record a triple-double in a playoff game, joining Walt Frazier, Dick McGuire and Josh Hart.

New York hosts Game 5 at Madison Square Garden on Tuesday night, and the Hawks will host the series again with Game 6 on Thursday.

**Timberwolves 112, Nuggets 96:** Ayo Dosunmu scored a career-high 43 points, stepping up after leg injuries to Anthony Edwards and Donte DiVincenzo with the highest-scoring playoff performance by a reserve in 50 years, and host Minnesota beat Denver.

The Timberwolves took a 3-1 lead in the series in a game that ended with ejections of the Nuggets' Nikola Jokic and Minnesota's Julius Randle after Jokic became angry when Jaden McDaniels made a meaningless layup with 2.1 seconds remaining and confronted the Timberwolves' swingman near his bench.

The story before that was Dosunmu, who had the best performance by a sub since Fred Brown scored 45 off the bench for Seattle in a 116-111 loss to Phoenix on April 15, 1976.

# Red Sox fire manager Cora along with five coaches

Associated Press

BOSTON — Red Sox manager Alex Cora, who rode a roster with Mookie Betts, Xander Bogaerts, Rafael Devers and Chris Sale to the most successful season in franchise history and then struggled to win with the discount lineups that replaced them, was fired Saturday with Boston again mired in last place in the AL East.

Cora, who was an infielder on the Red Sox's 2007 World Series championship team and managed them to a franchise-record 108 wins and another title in '18, will be replaced on an interim basis by Chad Tracy. A career minor leaguer whose father, Jim Tracy, served as a big league manager for 11 seasons with the Los Angeles Dodgers, Pittsburgh and Colorado, Chad Tracy had been managing Boston's Triple-A Wor-

cester affiliate in the International League.

"Alex Cora led this organization to one of the greatest seasons in Red Sox history in 2018, and for that, and the many years that followed, he will always have our deepest gratitude," owner John Henry said in a statement. "He has had a lasting impact on this team and on this city. He has led on and off the field in so many important ways."

Boston (10-17) made the announcement Saturday after a 17-1 victory in Baltimore over the Orioles that snapped a four-game losing streak — including a three-game sweep at Fenway Park by the archrival New York Yankees.

The team said it is also parting ways with five members of the coaching staff: hitting coach Peter Fatse, third base coach Kyle Hudson, bench coach Ramón Vázquez, as-

sistant hitting coach Dillon Lawson, and major league hitting strategy coach Joe Cronin.

Game planning and run prevention coach Jason Varitek, the widely respected former Red Sox captain who was the catcher for three of the franchise's four World Series titles this century, has been reassigned to an unspecified role within the organization.

In all, Cora was 620-541 as Boston's manager. He was the first big league manager let go this season.

Chad Epperson, who had been managing the club's Double-A Portland affiliate in the Eastern League, will serve as the interim third base coach. Collin Hetzler, who had been Worcester's hitting coach, will join the Red Sox's hitting staff.

# Phillies top Braves to end 10-game skid

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Bryce Harper had four RBIs, including a tie-breaking single in the 10th inning, and the Philadelphia Phillies snapped their 10-game losing streak with an 8-5 win over the Atlanta Braves on Saturday night.

Philadelphia ace Zack Wheeler made his 2026 debut and looked strong, giving up two runs and three hits over five innings. The right-hander returned from thoracic outlet decompression surgery last September after a blood clot was discovered in his pitching shoulder.

Wheeler struck out six, walked three and left with a 3-2 lead. Harper had two hits and scored twice for the Phillies, who hadn't won since April 13.

Brad Keller (1-0) tossed 1½ hitless innings for the win. Kyle Backhus got Michael Harris II to ground out with two runners aboard to end it.

Ozzie Albies was 3 for 5 with an RBI and Harris went 2 for 4 with two RBIs for Atlanta, which had won nine of 10.

**Padres 6, Diamondbacks 4:** Ty France homered twice and Gavin Sheets hit a two-run single during a four-run seventh inning as San Diego rallied past Arizona in Mexico City.

Mason Miller pitched a perfect ninth for his 10th save, extending his scoreless streak to 34⅓ innings dating to last season and breaking the previous Padres record set by reliever Cla Meredith with 33⅓ innings in 2006.

Diamondbacks right-hander Zac Gallen was hit by a line drive on his pitching shoulder in the third. He was lifted after three shutout innings as a precaution, manager Torey Lovullo said.

**Mariners 11, Cardinals 9:** Julio Rodriguez, Will Wilson and Cole Young each homered, and Leo Rivas hit a two-run single in the ninth to help visiting Seattle beat St. Louis.

Nathan Church homered twice and had four RBIs, JJ Wetherholt and Iván Herrera hit back-to-back home runs to leadoff the bottom of the first inning, and Pedro Pagés also homered for the Cardinals.

Rivas lined the bases-loaded hit off Riley O'Brien (3-1), who had not allowed an earned run in 13 previous appearances this season.

**Red Sox 17, Orioles 1:** Andrew Monasterio hit a grand slam as part of a 10-run ninth inning and visiting Boston snapped a four-game skid with a victory over Baltimore.

Hours later, the Red Sox (10-17) fired manager Alex Cora and five members of the coaching staff. He will be replaced on an interim basis by Chad Tracy, who had been managing the club's Triple-A Worcester affiliate.

Willson Contreras added a three-run homer and Caleb Durbin a two-run shot in the Boston ninth against Orioles outfielder Weston Wilson, after Monasterio's drive had helped to chase reliever Keegan Akin in his season debut.

**Blue Jays 5, Guardians 3:** Kazuma Okamoto homered for the second straight game, Andrés Giménez hit a two-run single and host Toronto beat Cleveland.

Daulton Varsho had the tie-breaking hit in the Blue Jays' three-run sixth inning as Toronto won for just the second time in eight games against AL Central opponents.

**Rays 6, Twins 1:** Shane McClellan (2-2) turned in five scoreless innings to get his first win at Tropicana Field in nearly three years as host Tampa Bay beat Minnesota. The left-hander, returning from two surgeries that cost him the 2024 and 2025 seasons, scattered three hits and struck out seven.

Jake Fraley provided the early run support, connecting for a two-run home run in the fourth inning, his second of the

season. The Rays added four more runs late, capped by a Ben Williamson RBI double in the eighth.

**Nationals 6, White Sox 3 (10):** Nasim Nunez drove in four runs, including two in the top of the 10th inning, as visiting Washington beat Chicago.

Automatic runner James Wood scored the go-ahead run on a wild pitch in the top of the 10th before the Nationals tacked on three more runs against Jordan Leasure (2-1) on a walk with the bases loaded and a two-run single by Nunez.

Washington starter Jake Irvin allowed four hits, struck out nine and walked none in 5⅓ innings. Cionel Perez (2-3) pitched a scoreless ninth for the win as the Nationals snapped a three-game losing streak.

**Pirates 6, Brewers 3 (10):** Bryan Reynolds had a go-ahead single in the 10th, Nick Gonzales followed with a two-run single and visiting Pittsburgh beat Milwaukee. Henry Davis started the 10th at second for the Pirates against Angel Zerpa (0-2). Pinch-hitter Marcell Ozuna walked and Nick Yorke pinch ran for Ozuna. Reynolds singled to left to score Davis and chase Zerpa. Gonzales then hit a sharp single off Grant Anderson to drive in Yorke and Reynolds.

Gregory Soto (2-0) pitched the ninth, and Yohan Ramírez worked the 10th for his first save.

The Brewers had a chance in the bottom of the eighth against Dennis Santana. Garrett Mitchell laced a two-out double and Sal Frelick was walked intentionally before Greg Jones struck out swinging.

**Giants 6, Marlins 2:** Casey Schmidt hit a two-run homer, Drew Gilbert and Heliot Ramos added solo shots and host San Francisco beat Miami.

Matt Gage (2-0) got the win in relief of Giants starter Robbie Ray, who allowed four hits and struck out four in five innings.

**Rangers 4, Athletics 3:** Josh

Jung hit a go-ahead, two-run home run in the sixth inning in host Texas' victory over the Athletics.

Cole Winn (2-1) retired all three batters he faced following left-handed starter MacKenzie Gore, who allowed all three runs on six hits and three walks in five innings. Jacob Latz, the last of four Rangers relievers, pitched a perfect ninth inning for his first save of the season.

**Red 9, Tigers 2:** Sal Stewart hit a three-run home run and drove in five runs as host Cincinnati beat Detroit.

Nathaniel Lowe, Elly De La Cruz and TJ Friedl also homered for the Reds, who are nine games over .500 for the first time since Aug. 2, 2003. At 18-9, the Reds are off to their best start since going 18-8 in 2003.

**Royals 12, Angels 1:** Cole Ragans (1-4) struck out 11 in six innings of one-run ball and Nick Loftin had a career-high four RBIs as host Kansas City routed Los Angeles.

Loftin had an RBI single, a two-run single and a bases-loaded walk. Salvador Perez went 3 for 5 with a solo homer and an RBI double.

**Yankees 8, Astros 3:** Austin Wells hit a tiebreaking homer in the seventh inning and visiting New York extended its winning streak to eight games with a victory over Houston.

Trent Grisham and José Caballero also went deep for the Yankees (18-9). The winning streak matches their longest in a single season since June 2024.

**Dodgers 12, Cubs 4:** Roki Sasaki (1-2) earned his second career victory and host Los Angeles rallied with six runs in the fourth inning to beat Chicago, snapping the Cubs' 10-game winning streak.

Shohei Ohtani ended an 0-for-12 skid with a single in the first and then swiped second for just his second stolen base of the year. He had one of the Dodgers' 14 hits as Los Angeles set a season high for runs at home.