

US Navy jets sent to base in Middle East

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — About a dozen F/A-18 fighter jets from the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier have flown to a military base in the Middle East, as part of the Pentagon's effort to help defend Israel from possible attacks by Iran and its proxies and to safeguard U.S. troops, according to a U.S. official.

The F/A-18s and an E-2D Hawkeye surveillance aircraft took off from the carrier in the Gulf of Oman and arrived at the undisclosed base on Monday, said the official.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered the increased military presence in the region as officials worry about escalating violence in the Middle East in the wake of the killings last week of a senior Hezbollah commander in Lebanon and Hamas' top political leader in Iran, in suspected Israeli strikes. Both groups are backed by Iran.

The Navy jets' land-based deployment is expected to be temporary, because a squadron of Air Force F-22 fighter jets is en route to the same base from their home station in Alaska. The roughly dozen F-22s are expected to arrive in the Middle East in the coming days, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss troop movements.

It's not clear how long all of the aircraft will remain together at the base, and that may depend on what — if anything — happens in the next few days.

As these forces were shifting, U.S. national security leaders said that they and allies are directly pressing Israel, Iran and others to avoid escalating the conflict.

"It's urgent that everyone in the region take stock of the situation, understand the risk of miscalculation, and make decisions that will calm tensions, not exa-

cerbate them," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said at the close of a meeting with Australian leaders.

At the same time, Austin noted the attack Monday on U.S. forces in Iraq by an Iranian-backed militia group, which injured seven personnel, and made it clear that the U.S. won't hesitate to respond.

"Make no mistake, the United States will not tolerate attacks on our personnel in the region," Austin told reporters at a press conference after the meeting. "And we remain ready to deploy on short notice to meet the evolving threats to our security, our partners or our interests."

He said an "Iranian-backed Shia militia group" conducted the attack, but officials are still trying to determine which one.

Blinken and Austin met with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Defense Minister Richard Marles at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., to

discuss efforts to expand military cooperation and broaden diplomatic efforts in the Asia Pacific.

But they led their remarks with calls for de-escalation and support for a cease-fire. "Australia also underlines the risks to all in the region of escalation and of miscalculation," said Wong, calling this a "decisive moment" for a cease-fire in the war between Israel and Hamas.

Their comments came as Hamas named Yahya Sinwar — a mastermind of the Oct. 7 attacks in Israel that set off the war — as its new leader, fueling fears that the announcement will provoke Israel and that tensions will escalate into broader war. Tehran has also vowed revenge against Israel over the killing last week of Hamas' top political leader in Iran, and Lebanon's Hezbollah is threatening retaliation over an Israeli strike that killed one of the group's senior commanders in Beirut.

Weak spots in metal may have led to fatal Osprey crash

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A gear crack that led to a fatal crash of a V-22 Osprey last year may have been started by weak spots in a metal used to manufacture that part, according to documents.

The November crash killed eight Air Force Special Operations Command airmen. It was the second time in less than two years that a catastrophic failure of a part of the Osprey's proprotor gearbox, which serves as its transmission, caused a fatal accident. In June 2022, five Marines were killed when a different part of the proprotor gearbox system failed.

The crashes have led to an aggressive effort by the V-22 pro-

gram office and manufacturer Bell Flight to find fixes for the critical system, which has had some components wear down earlier than the military expected. While investigators still don't know for certain what caused either crash, this latest finding might hold some clues.

There's no other aircraft like the Osprey in the fleet. It can speed to a target like an airplane then rotate its engines to land like a helicopter. Program leaders have pointed out that the Osprey has been vital in special operations and combat missions and has flown hundreds of thousands of hours successfully.

But the aircraft also has a troubled crash history, and the

proprotor gearbox has been a persistent problem.

Data gathered by The Associated Press through the Freedom of Information Act shows 609 proprotor gearboxes have been removed for repair in the past 10 years. Over the last five years, the Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force have reported 60 incidents involving the proprotor gearbox.

Last week the Air Force identified cracking in a pinion gear, a part that's about the size of a large jar lid, as one of two factors that caused the crash off Japan. The Air Force also faulted the pilot and crew, because the Osprey sent six warnings during their flight that the proprotor

gearbox was in trouble.

But additional crash report documents obtained by the AP show this is not the first time this metal has failed in Osprey proprotor gearbox components, although it was the first time it failed in this specific gear. There have been seven previous cracking incidents in related gears that were likely caused by the same metal weakness, investigators reported.

It's not clear if that information had previously been shared with the services, which could have led them to take a much more restrictive approach to how pilots were instructed to respond to any proprotor gearbox warnings.

Austin defends throwing out 9/11 plea deal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke for the first time Tuesday on his decision to throw out a plea deal for the men accused in al-Qaida's 2001 attacks, saying that the depth of American losses and sacrifice on 9/11 demand that the military commission trial goes ahead.

"This wasn't a decision that I took lightly," Austin told reporters at an event with Australian officials in Annapolis, Md.

"But I have long believed that the families of the victims, our service members, and the American public deserve the opportunity to see military commissions, commission trials carried out" in the 9/11 case, he said.

At the U.S. military commis-

sion in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, meanwhile, lawyers and the judge in the case of accused 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and two other defendants who had also taken plea deals were still coming to terms with Austin's surprise order and its effect on efforts to resolve the more than 20-year-old case.

Mohammed and a total of four other defendants at Guantanamo are accused in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, using hijacked passenger jets that killed nearly 3,000 people in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. A fourth defendant did not agree to the plea agreement, and a fifth defendant last year was ruled mentally unfit to continue facing trial.

Legal complications, including profound questions over how

much the men's torture while in CIA custody in the first years after their capture has tainted the evidence and the case itself, have helped drag out proceedings. The case remains in pre-trial hearings after more than a decade.

After about two years of plea negotiations, the Pentagon-appointed retired general overseeing the military commission last week approved a plea bargain struck by prosecutors and defense attorneys that would have spared Mohammed and the two others the risk of the death penalty, in return for their guilty pleas.

Families of 9/11 victims offered differing opinions, with some welcoming the resolution and others saying they wanted to see capital trials. Senior Republi-

cans in Congress publicly lambasted the Biden administration for the plea bargain.

An order from Austin made public late Friday, in which he said he was revoking approval of the plea bargain and personally assuming that decision-making authority in the 9/11 case, upended the deal.

Some of the lawyers and civil-rights organizations involved in the Guantanamo Bay cases accuse Austin of bowing to political pressure in overturning the plea deal, and are challenging the legality of Austin's action.

Open hearings are scheduled to resume Wednesday for the first time since Austin's order, and may reveal the defense's response to the overriding of the plea bargain.

US set to invest in Australian island projects for deterrence

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

An Australian island in the Indian Ocean is one of several sites tagged for billions of dollars of U.S.-funded construction and refurbishments aimed at deterring China.

Naval Facilities Engineering Command is seeking proposals for at least three projects worth up to \$15 billion combined in Australia's Cocos Islands, the Philippines, Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea, according to the June 26 bid solicitation.

The projects, which include new facilities, repairs, renovations and infrastructure, would be funded under the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, according to the notice.

The initiative, established by Congress in fiscal 2021, aims to maintain America's military advantage over China by modernizing and strengthening the U.S. presence in the Indo-Pacific.

The Cocos Islands, population 600, are 1,864 miles west of Perth.

The projects outlined in the Navy's solicitation "may or may not support the Darwin Marines Rotational Force," a spokesman for NAVFAC Pacific, the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet engineering arm, told Reuters news agency by email for a report Monday.

Two thousand Marines arrived in the northern Australian port city in March for an annual, six-month-long training rotation.

Australia is already upgrading facilities in the Cocos, which comprise two coral atolls made up of 27 smaller islands, according to information on the Australian Defence Force's website.

The Cocos construction and other U.S.-funded base upgrades in Australia were on the agenda when Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken met their Australian counterparts Tuesday in Annapolis, Md.

US and key allies hold air, sea maneuvers in South China Sea

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The United States, Australia, Canada and the Philippines held air and naval maneuvers Wednesday in what they said was a show of force to promote the rule of law in the disputed South China Sea, where China has increasingly asserted its territorial claims. In an apparent response, China said it conducted air and sea combat patrols on the same day.

Adm. Samuel Paparo, who heads the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and top military and defense commanders from Australia, Canada and the Philippines said in a joint statement that they "stand together to address common maritime challenges and underscore our shared dedication to upholding international law and the rules-based order."

They said they were staging the two-day exercises to uphold unhindered passage in the Indo-Pacific region.

China has long claimed much of the South China Sea, a key global trade and security route, and vowed to defend its territorial interests at all costs. Its claims overlap those of smaller coastal states, including the Philippines and Vietnam, hampering their access to traditional fishing areas and disrupting oil and gas exploration in their internationally recognized exclusive economic zones.

"The naval and air force units of participating nations will operate together, enhancing cooperation and interoperability between our armed forces," the commanders said. "The activity will be conducted in a manner that is consistent with international law and with due regard to the safety of navigation and the rights and interests of other states."

China said it held sea and air combat patrols Wednesday near Scarborough Shoal, a disputed area in the South China Sea, in an apparent response to the exercises.

Debbie also douses many eastern states

Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Tropical Storm Debby pushed bad weather up the East Coast on Wednesday, colliding with other systems and bringing no respite to residents as far away as the Great Lakes and New Jersey, where heavy rain flooded highways and streets and stranded motorists. Officials in New York told people in basement apartments to prepare to flee.

Debbie has already drenched Southern states for days as it churned slowly across Florida, Georgia and South Carolina. But a sequence of weather events Tuesday evening caused intense storms well north of the tropical storm's center.

Some moisture streamed out ahead of Debby and interacted with a frontal boundary that was draped across Long Island, N.Y., and through Pennsylvania and up to the Great Lakes, said Scott Kleebauer, a meteorologist with the national Weather Prediction Center.

There was also a disturbance that was exiting the Great Lakes region at that time. So the combination of these things caused multiple periods of showers and thunderstorms that produced significant rainfall.

Severe thunderstorms soaked most of New Jersey on

Tuesday night, causing moderate flooding and leaving thousands without power. As much as 6 inches of rain fell in some South Jersey communities in less than four hours.

Emergency officials warned of potential flash flooding, flying drones with loudspeakers in some New York City neighborhoods to tell people in basement apartments to be ready to flee. Multiple water rescues were reported in New York City and surrounding areas.

Nearly 340,000 customers were without power in Ohio following storms there.

Yet still, the most rain from Debby has fallen in the South.

A spot near Lake City in north Florida leads the nation in total rainfall from Tropical Storm Debby at a whopping 19.67 inches, according to national Weather Prediction Center. Sarasota, Fla. saw 17.78 inches.

The National Weather Service warned up to 9 inches of rain could fall west of Wilmington, N.C., in areas that already saw heavy rains overnight.

Charleston officials lifted a curfew Wednesday following heavy rains that caused flooding and closed dozens of roads Monday and Tuesday. The city experiences floods several times a year because of rising sea levels.

Bell defeats 'Squad' member Bush in Democratic primary

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Wesley Bell has defeated U.S. Rep. Cori Bush in a Democratic primary in St. Louis, marking the second time this year that one of the party's incumbents has been ousted in an expensive contest that reflected deep divisions over the war in Gaza.

Bush, a member of the progressive congressional group known as the "Squad," was seeking a third term in Missouri's 1st Congressional District, which includes St. Louis city and part of St. Louis County. Bell is heavily favored to carry this overwhelmingly Democratic district in November, when his party is aiming to retake control of the U.S. House.

"I am committed to serving the St. Louis region in Congress with integrity, transparency, and dedication," Bell said in a statement. "Together, we will tackle the challenges ahead and build a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive."

Bush, in a fiery concession speech, said she still has work to do, even if she'll no longer be in Congress.

Bell's campaign received a big boost from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, whose super political action committee, United Democracy Project, spent \$8.5 million to oust Bush. She was targeted after repeated criticism of Israel's response to the Oct. 7 Hamas attack.

mas attack.

It was a gameplan that worked earlier this year in New York. In June, United Democracy Project spent \$15 million to defeat another Squad member — Rep. Jamaal Bowman. Bowman lost to George Latimer, a pro-Israel centrist.

A statement from United Democracy Project said the wins by Bell and Latimer, along with John McGuire's defeat of U.S. Rep. Bob Good in a Republican primary last week in Virginia, "is further proof that being pro-Israel is good policy and good politics on both sides of the aisle. UDP will continue our efforts to support leaders working to strengthen the U.S.-Israel alliance while countering detractors in either political party."

Bush, in her concession speech, said she won't change.

"We will keep supporting a free Palestine," Bush said. A crowd member answered back: "Free, free Palestine."

In October, Bush called the Israeli retaliation an "ethnic cleansing campaign." Soon after the Hamas attack, Bush wrote on social media that Israel's "collective punishment against Palestinians for Hamas's actions is a war crime."

Her comments prompted backlash, even among some supporters in her district. Bell, who had been planning a Senate run against incumbent Republican Josh Hawley, instead opted to challenge Bush.

US abortion numbers rise since Roe v. Wade overturned

Associated Press

Abortion was slightly more common across the U.S. in the first three months of this year than it was before the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade and cleared the way for states to implement bans, a report released Wednesday found.

A major reason for the increase

is that some Democratic-controlled states enacted laws to protect doctors who use telemedicine to see patients in places that have abortion bans, according to the quarterly #WeCount report for the Society of Family Planning, which supports abortion access.

The data comes ahead of November elections in which abor-

tion-rights supporters hope the issue will drive voters to the polls. In some places, voters will have a chance to enshrine or reject state-level abortion protections.

Fallout from the Supreme Court's June 2022 ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization has remade the way abortion works across the coun-

try.

The survey found that the number of abortions fell to nearly zero in states that ban abortion in all stages of pregnancy and declined by about half in places that ban it after six weeks of pregnancy.

Numbers went up in places where abortion remains legal until further into pregnancy.

Pakistani charged in plot to take out US political figures

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Pakistani man alleged to have ties to Iran has been charged in a plot to carry out political assassinations on U.S. soil, including potentially of former President Donald Trump.

The case disclosed by the Justice Department on Tuesday comes two years after officials disrupted a separate scheme that they said was aimed at former Trump administration national security adviser John Bolton.

Asif Merchant traveled to New York in June for the purpose of meeting with men he thought he was recruiting to carry out the killings, even paying a \$5,000 advance to two would-be assassins who were actually undercover law enforcement officers, federal officials said. He was arrested in July as he prepared to leave the United States, after having told

the men that he would provide further instructions, including the names of the intended targets, in August or September after he returned to Pakistan.

Court documents do not identify any of the potential targets. But U.S. officials acknowledged in July that a threat on Trump's life from Iran prompted additional security in the days before a Pennsylvania rally in which Trump was injured by a shooter's bullet.

That July 13 shooting, carried out by a 20-year-old Pennsylvania man, was unrelated to the Iran threat and Merchant's arrest has no connection to the Trump assassination attempt, a law enforcement official said.

But an FBI agent's affidavit suggests Merchant had current or former high-level officials like Trump in mind.

He told an associate who was secretly cooperating with law enforcement that he wanted a

"political person" to be killed, the complaint said, mapping out on a napkin the different scenarios in which the target could be assassinated and warning that there would be security "all around."

U.S. officials have warned for years about Iran's desire to avenge the 2020 killing of Qassem Soleimani, who led the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force. That strike was ordered by Trump when he was president.

The U.S. government has since paid for security for multiple Trump administration officials, and in 2022, the Justice Department charged an Iranian operative in a foiled plot to kill Bolton.

FBI Director Christopher Wray said at a July House hearing that the Iranian government had been "extremely aggressive and brazen" in recent years.

Deaths rise as Russia battles incursion

Bloomberg News

Fighting in Russia's Kursk region entered a second day following what officials in Moscow called an incursion involving hundreds of Ukrainian troops, turning President Vladimir Putin's invasion back onto his own territory.

Shelling continues in the region, where at least five people have been killed and 28 wounded in the attacks, Russia's state-run Tass news service reported Wednesday. Acting Kursk Governor Alexey Smirnov said on Telegram that a Ukrainian drone struck an ambulance, killing the driver and a paramedic, adding that regional air defenses intercepted four missiles and three drones overnight. Russia's Defense Ministry said Tuesday that troops and border guards were fighting as many as 300 Ukrainian soldiers backed by 11 tanks and more than 20 other armored vehicles in the border region. Artillery and aircraft fired on the Ukrainian formations, and Russia called up reserves of troops to the region, according to the ministry's Telegram channel.

The ministry initially declared that the Ukrainian troops had retreated back across the border after suffering "significant losses." That information was later deleted from its statement.

Russian military bloggers reported Wednesday that Ukrainian troops continued to occupy several border villages and were advancing toward the town of Sudzha, which hosts a key gas metering station, where they were faced air and artillery attacks.

Ukrainian officials haven't publicly commented, while the General Staff press service didn't return calls for comment.

UK deploying 6,000 special officers as more far-right disorder expected

Associated Press

LONDON — British police are gearing up for another night of violence amid concerns that far-right groups plan to target as many as 30 locations around the United Kingdom on Wednesday following a week of rioting and disorder.

Authorities are mobilizing about 6,000 specially trained officers this week to respond to disorder throughout the U.K., and London's Metropolitan Police Service said it would do "everything in our power" to protect the capital.

"We know about the events planned by hateful and divisive groups across the capital," Dep-

uty Assistant Commissioner Andy Valentine of the Met said late Tuesday. "They've made their intention to cause disruption and division very clear ... We will not tolerate this on our streets."

U.K. cities have been wracked by violence for the past week as mobs egged on by far-right extremists have clashed with police and counterdemonstrators sparked by the spread of misinformation about the identity of the suspect in a stabbing rampage that killed three young girls in the seaside community of Southport. The suspect was falsely identified as an immigrant and a Muslim.

Rioters spouting anti-immigrant slogans have attacked mosques and hotels housing asylum-seekers, with reports emerging of violent counterattacks in some communities.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer held a second consecutive meeting of the government's COBRA emergency response committee on Tuesday to coordinate the response to the crisis, which he has described as "far-right thuggery."

Police have already made more than 400 arrests around the country, and the government has pledged to prosecute and jail those responsible for the disorder.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

911 operator walks mom through at-home delivery

TN NASHVILLE — When a 911 call came in saying a woman in Nashville was experiencing sudden labor, emergency operator Kaitlyn Kramer says her training kicked in as she successfully coached the expectant mom and bystanders through delivering a healthy baby boy.

Audio of the July 7 call reveals Kramer's calm voice guiding the process even as the voices on the other end grew frantic as the mother's water broke and the baby's head started crowning.

Kramer is a training officer for Nashville's Department of Emergency Communications.

"We're going to do this together," Kramer told a friend of the mother's over the phone. Moments later, the caller is yelling with excitement that the baby arrived but mentioned that the cord was wrapped around his neck.

Prosecutors to charge ex-police chief over raid

KS TOPEKA — Two special prosecutors said Monday that they plan to charge a former central Kansas police chief with obstruction of justice over his conduct following a police raid last year on the local weekly newspaper.

Prosecutors Marc Bennett and Barry Wilkerson concluded in their 124-page report that the staff at the Marion County Record committed no crimes before former Marion Police Chief Gideon Cody led a raid on its offices and the home of its publisher. They said police warrants

signed by a judge to allow the searches contained inaccurate information from an "inadequate investigation" and that the searches were not legally justified.

Police body camera footage of the 2023 raid on Publisher Eric Meyer's home shows his 98-year-old mother, Joan Meyer, visibly upset and telling officers, "Get out of my house!" She co-owned the paper, lived with her son and died of a heart attack the next afternoon.

Prosecutors found no evidence officers "believed they were posing a risk to Mrs. Meyer's life," but they allege Cody obstructed an official judicial process in the weeks after the raid. He resigned as chief last October.

Instructor charged with manslaughter in crash

PA PHILADELPHIA — A flight instructor charged with involuntary manslaughter for a crash that killed a student pilot in eastern Pennsylvania had surrendered his pilot's certificate after two prior crashes with students aboard, prosecutors said in an indictment unsealed Monday.

Philip Everton McPherson II, 36, of Haddon Township, N.J., was in command of the single-engine Piper PA-28 when it left Queen City Airport in Allentown with the student on Sept. 28, 2022, according to the indictment. He told the National Transportation Safety Board that he took control of the plane from the 49-year-old student just after takeoff, when they encountered engine problems, according to an NTSB report.

The plane soon crashed and

caught fire, killing the student, who was identified only by the initials "K.K." McPherson was seriously injured.

Actor charged with murder in man's shooting

TX HOUSTON — Actor Akili McDowell, who starred in the television series "David Makes Man" and had roles in "Billions" and "The Astronaut Wives Club," has been charged with fatally shooting a man in the parking lot of a Houston apartment complex, authorities said.

McDowell, 21, was charged last week with murder in the July 20 shooting death of Cesar Peralta, 20, the Harris County sheriff's office said. McDowell remained in jail Monday on \$400,000 bond on the murder charge. The attorney listed for him in court records did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

The sheriff's office said deputies found an unresponsive man with gunshot wounds after responding to a call about a shooting at an apartment complex on July 20. The sheriff's office said several witnesses told deputies the man had been in a physical altercation with another man, who fled on foot after the shooting.

Trial starts in Black representation case

MS JACKSON — Mississippi has the largest percentage of Black residents in the U.S., but only one Black justice serves on the state's highest court.

A federal judge started hearing arguments Monday in a lawsuit that seeks to compel Missis-

sippi to redraw its three Supreme Court districts to increase the chances of Black candidates being elected. The district lines have been unchanged since 1987.

About 38% of Mississippi residents are Black.

The state has nine Supreme Court justices, with three elected from each of the districts in the northern, central and southern parts of the state. Eight of the current justices are white, and one is Black.

Four Black justices have served on the Mississippi Supreme Court, and never more than one at a time.

Trooper gets job back in Uvalde after suspension

TX AUSTIN — The Texas Department of Public Safety has reinstated a state trooper who was suspended after the botched law enforcement response to the shooting at a Uvalde elementary school in 2022.

In a letter sent to Texas Ranger Christopher Ryan Kindell on Aug. 2 and released by the agency on Monday, DPS Director Col. Steve McCraw removed the officer's suspension status and restored him to his job in Uvalde County.

McCraw's letter said the local district attorney had requested Kindell be returned to his job, and noted he had not been charged by a local grand jury that reviewed the police response.

Nineteen students and two teachers were killed in the May 24, 2022, attack on Robb Elementary School, making it one of the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history.

— From wire reports

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American Hocker stuns field in men's 1500

Associated Press

SAINT-DENIS, France — The race was billed as a bar brawl between the two baddest 1,500-meter runners in the world.

Nobody figured the little-known American guy would sneak up on both of them, steal the show and take the Olympic gold medal with him.

Cole Hocker threw a jolt into track Tuesday night, first catching up to — then slipping his way past — fierce rivals Jakob Ingebrigtsen and Josh Kerr to pull the upset of the Games with an unexpected victory in a much-hyped showdown that wasn't supposed to involve him.

Hocker bettered his personal best by nearly 3 seconds to win in an Olympic-record 3 minutes, 27.65 seconds.

"If you've been following my season, you knew I was capable of it," Hocker said. "But still, things had to go my way today."

Taking advantage of a blister-

ing early pace set by Ingebrigtsen, the 23-year-old product of the University of Oregon pulled from fifth, to third, then finally to first, over the final 300 meters to pass the gassed-out favorites.

This was supposed to be all about a chance for the defending Olympic champion (Ingebrigtsen) and the reigning world champion (Kerr) to finally settle a feud that's been brewing for over a year. Kerr said the race would be "one of the most vicious and hardest 1,500s the sport's seen in a very long time."

Instead, the guy taking home the \$50,000 winner's check was an up-and-comer who was listed as much as a 30-1 long shot. Kerr finished second by .14 seconds. Another American, Yared Nuguse, was third, and Ingebrigtsen faded to fourth.

"It was a deafening noise. I've never heard that in a stadium before," Hocker said of the 80,000 screaming fans in the Stade de France. "I kind of lost

feeling in my body and it didn't feel like the Olympics anymore until it did."

Hocker, who recorded his previous personal best of 3:30.59 at the U.S. trials this summer, is only the second U.S. man to win the metric mile at the Olympics over the last 112 years. Matt Centrowitz took gold in 2016.

All eyes for this one were trained on Ingebrigtsen, the defending champion out of Norway who came in with a point to prove, and Kerr, the Scotsman who beat him last year at the world championships.

Ever since, Kerr and Ingebrigtsen poked at each other. Among the salvos that stuck was Kerr's assertion that Ingebrigtsen only wins races with pace-setters, which are not allowed at major events like the Olympics.

Against that backdrop, Ingebrigtsen darted to the front quickly and ran there for the first 3½ laps, while Kerr traded

between second and third, getting ready for his typical wind-up and a potential slingshot past the Norwegian over the closing stretch, much the way he did last year.

"Of course, it's a tactical error that I'm not able to reduce my pace the first 800," Ingebrigtsen said.

While he and Kerr were wearing each other out, Hocker, his long hair pulled back in a bun and standing at 5-foot-9½, more than 3½ inches shorter than the top two contenders, almost looked like he was trying to photo bomb them at the end of the race.

As they entered the home stretch, Hocker snuck up on the inside once, only to have Ingebrigtsen block that move.

So Hocker fell back and wound up for another try with about 50 meters left.

"I gathered myself and I attacked again. Just incredible," Hocker said.

Harvard grad Thomas sprints to 200-meter gold medal

Associated Press

SAINT-DENIS, France — Before Gabby Thomas set foot on the Stade de France's purple track, surrounded by 80,000 or so screaming spectators, her coach gave her some last-minute advice.

"The only thing I needed to do was get the lead. Get the lead and then finish strong," Thomas said, recounting Tonja Buford-Bailey's counsel. "And I did that."

She sure did. Following precisely that easier-said-than-done plan, Thomas, a 27-year-old Harvard grad, sped to the victory in the women's 200 meters at the 2024 Olympics on Tuesday night, finishing in 21.83 seconds to add a gold to the bronze she took home in the event from Tokyo three years ago.

"I don't think," Thomas said, "it could have gone any better."

She burst into the lead for good at the curve and was never challenged down the stretch, finishing well clear of 100-meter champion Julien Alfred of St. Lucia, who was 0.25 seconds off the pace in 22.08.

After Thomas crossed the line, she

shouted and placed both of her hands on her head, looking every bit like someone enjoying what she called "the happiest moment of my life."

"I couldn't tell you where my competitors were in that race, because I blacked out," Thomas said.

That's one explanation. Another would be that there was no one really all that near her.

Brittany Brown of the United States got the bronze in 22.20, 0.02 seconds in front of Dina Asher-Smith of Britain, who was another hundredth of a second ahead of teammate Daryll Neita.

"I'm happy. There's nothing I can complain about," Alfred said. "I just know I went out there and gave my best."

Out of three sprints so far on the purple track at Stade de France, the Americans have picked up two golds: Thomas' triumph followed Noah Lyles' success in the men's 100 on Sunday night by a far slimmer margin: five thousandths of a second.

"It really was so inspiring, hearing Noah go after what he wanted and take it," Tho-

mas said. "I knew that if I were in any position in this race, I could still go after it and take it if I had to."

Ask a teammate what about Thomas is most impressive, and "poise" is a word that comes up.

"She's very much an empowerment woman. She carries a lot of power. You can tell by how she carries herself," said McKenzie Long, a 24-year-old who finished seventh Tuesday. "She reminds me of me — but an older version."

After she earned her degree at Harvard in neurobiology and global health, Thomas enrolled at the University of Texas, where she got a Masters in public health for studying sleep patterns of different ethnic groups — while also making the wise choice to double down on her track training.

The decision was to set up a six-year schedule, with the long-term aim being this cool evening in the City of Light. Thomas didn't want the Paris Games to be her first Olympics, so she did what it took to get herself to Tokyo three years ago.

Men's basketball team rolls into semis

Associated Press

PARIS — All the favored teams in the first three men's basketball quarterfinals at the Paris Olympics had problems. Canada lost to France. Serbia erased a 24-point deficit to beat Australia. Germany had to shake off a double-digit deficit before beating Greece.

So, going into the fourth and final game of the night, the U.S. knew what it had to do.

"We wanted to come out and make sure we were the aggressor," said U.S. coach Steve Kerr.

They made it look easy, too. Devin Booker led a balanced front with 18 points and the Americans had little trouble with Brazil in the quarterfinals of the Paris Olympics, winning 122-87 on Tuesday.

The U.S. (4-0) moves on to face Serbia (3-1) in Thursday's semifinals, while Germany (4-0) takes on France (3-1) in the other semifinal. Winners of those games will play Saturday night for the gold medal; Thursday's losers will play Saturday morning for the bronze medal.

"Everybody expects us to win," U.S. forward Jayson Tatum said. "But you don't take things for granted, right? Canada lost

earlier. It's a different game. It's not like playoffs, where it's a series. We've got one game and a lot of (stuff) can happen in one game, especially over here."

If there was one issue, it was this: LeBron James left in the third quarter after catching an elbow around his left eye, struck by Brazil's Georinho de Paula while going for a rebound. James went down, eventually pressed a towel over the eye and left for the locker room later in the third.

Kerr said James needed four stitches.

"I'm all right," James said. "Got hit with an inadvertent elbow around the eye."

Anthony Edwards scored 17 points, while Joel Embiid — booed again in France, of course — had 14 points and seven rebounds in 12 first-half minutes for the Americans. Anthony Davis finished with 13 points and eight rebounds for the U.S. James had 12 points and nine assists.

Kevin Durant scored 11 points and passed Lisa Leslie as the U.S. Olympic career scoring leader, men's or women's. Leslie had 488 points in her four Olympic appearances, all of which ended with gold medals. Durant is trying to go 4-for-4 on the gold front, as well; he's two wins away from getting that

done.

"He's incredible. He was born to play ball and he's simply incredible," James said. "I'm happy for him. Congratulations to him. I'm super proud of him. And he's got more to go."

There was a moment where Brazil might have thought it had a chance. It trailed the U.S. by only eight midway through the second quarter. A big deficit had turned into something rather manageable.

The moment was short-lived.

A 21-2 run over the final 3:56 of the half turned things into their predictable blowout state. It eliminated whatever doubt there might have been — let's be honest, there wasn't much, if any — and the U.S. turned that eight-point lead into a 63-36 runaway going into the final 20 minutes.

Bruno Caboclo was the star for Brazil, leading all scorers with 30 points.

Playing in Paris for the first time during these Games, the crowd was smaller — the arena used for the three games in the group stage is nearly twice as big as the one being used for the knockout stage — but given the stakes, the turnout certainly seemed more star-studded.

Women's soccer team advances to gold-medal match

Associated Press

LYON, France — Glimpsing a sliver of the net, Sophia Smith's aim was true.

Smith's extra-time goal earned the United States a spot in the gold-medal match at the Paris Olympics with a 1-0 semifinal victory over Germany on Tuesday.

The Americans, undefeated in France under new coach Emma Hayes, will be vying for their fifth gold medal in their sixth appearance in the Olympic women's soccer final.

The U.S. will play Brazil, which defeated Spain 4-2 in the late match, in the tournament final on Saturday in Paris. Germany will play Spain for the bronze medal on Friday at Lyon.

Smith broke the scoreless stalemate five minutes into extra time, outmaneuvering defender Felicitas Rauch and German goalkeeper Ann-Katrin

Berger. After scoring her third goal of the tournament, Smith fell to the ground in celebration and joined in an embrace with teammate Mallory Swanson.

"I saw like a little opening of net and I was just like, 'I've got to put it there. Just put it there,'" Smith said. "It was a good feeling. I know I had a few other chances this game that I should have put away. But sometimes one is all it takes."

At the final whistle, the U.S. players ran downfield to embrace goalkeeper Alyssa Naehler, who made a key save when she jumped and kicked the ball away from the goal with her left foot in the waning moments of the second extra period.

"The goal is closer but the job's not done yet," Swanson said. "I think that obviously we're in a great position. You take this win and we're on a high right now, but it's important just

to stay steady with everything we're doing. Just stay steady."

The Americans had routed Germany 4-1 in the group stage earlier in the tournament.

The U.S. had missed out on the finals at the last two Olympic tournaments, eliminated in the quarterfinals in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro and relegated to the bronze-medal match at the Tokyo Games three years ago.

Germany was missing veteran captain Alexandra Popp because of an illness. Popp was the only current German player who was also on the squad that won the gold medal in 2016.

Lea Schuller, who scored two goals against Zambia in the group finale to send Germany through to the quarterfinals, was also absent because of an inflamed right knee.

The U.S. recalled defender Tierna Davidson to the game-day roster after she missed the

last two games with a leg contusion. Defender Emily Sams, activated in Davidson's absence, returned to the alternate list.

Midfielder Sam Coffey, who missed the quarterfinals after yellow card accumulation, returned against Germany.

There were few chances on either side in the opening half. Klara Buehl forced Naehler into a diving save in the 29th minute but she was offside. For most of the match, Germany hunkered down on defense in the absence of Popp and Schuller.

Rose Lavelle had a chance for the U.S. early in the game but her attempt went straight into Berger's arms.

Swanson broke down the field in the 62nd and had a clear look at the goal but shot into the side netting.

Swanson appeared to break through in the 85th but she was called back for offside.

Astros win, Valdez nearly gets no-no

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Framber Valdez was so steady for eight innings.

A wobbly ninth cost the Houston left-hander his second career no-hitter.

Valdez was an out away from more history when Texas slugger Corey Seager hit a two-run homer in the Astros' 4-2 victory over the Rangers on Tuesday night.

It had been just more than a year since Valdez's first no-hitter, and the 30-year-old was cruising when he took the mound needing just three outs for what would have been the second this season for Houston.

The 99th pitch from the two-time All-Star finished a leadoff walk to Robbie Grossman, but the 100th was the second Texas double play of the game.

When Ezequiel Duran's bouncer to third baseman Alex Bregman emptied the bases with two outs, the roar from another strong contingent of Houston fans at the home of the Rangers signaled the anticipation.

Josh Smith kept the defending champs alive with another walk, setting up Seager's 24th homer on the first pitch he saw in the ninth — the 107th and final one from Valdez (11-5). It was the fifth homer in five games for the reigning World Series MVP.

Josh Hader replaced Valdez and walked Marcus Semien before Josh Jung flied out to the base of the wall in right field. It was Hader's 23rd consecutive save, one shy of Brad Lidge's franchise record from 2005.

"I try to always go out there trying to have fun," Valdez said through an interpreter. "Obviously, sometimes I have got to get serious. Went out there and do what I try to do every single time, try and throw strikes on all my pitches and just try to help help the team win."

Yordan Alvarez hit a two-run homer in the ninth inning that ended up being the difference. Jake Meyers drove in the first two Houston runs with a pair of singles.

White Sox 5, Athletics 1: Andrew Benintendi hit a two-run homer and visiting Chicago snapped its American League record-tying losing streak at 21 games on Tuesday night, beating Oakland.

Jonathan Cannon gave up one run in six innings to end his personal drought while helping the White Sox to their first victory since early July.

Chicago on Monday matched the longest losing streak since the 1988 Baltimore Orioles lost 21 in a row, falling to the Athletics 5-1. The NL record since 1900 is held by

the 1961 Philadelphia Phillies, who lost 23 straight.

Reds 8, Marlins 2: Elly De La Cruz again battered the Marlins while at bat and on the bases, going 4 for 5 with two doubles, as visiting Cincinnati routed Miami.

A night after hitting two homers and two doubles, De La Cruz singled in the first, doubled and scored in the third and hit a bases-loaded double in the fourth that scored two. He then scored after stealing his major league-leading 58th base of the season, snagging third without a throw while Marlins starter Max Meyer (2-2) was in his stretch.

Cardinals 4, Rays 3: Victor Scott II and Tommy Pham each hit two-run homers, Sonny Gray pitched seven innings and host St. Louis beat Tampa Bay.

Scott, who was recalled from Triple-A Memphis on Sunday, hit his first big league homer in the four-run second inning. Pham added a double in a 2-for-4 night.

Brandon Lowe hit a two-run homer in the first inning for the Rays, who were visiting St. Louis for the first time since Aug. 27, 2017.

Brewers 10, Braves 0: Willy Adames hit a pair of two-run homers and visiting Milwaukee handed Atlanta its third straight loss.

Colin Rea (10-3) dominated the Braves for seven innings, striking out a season-high nine while allowing five hits and one walk. Rea has not given up a run in his last three road starts, spanning 19 innings. The Brewers improved to 14-5 in Rea's 19 starts this season.

Blue Jays 5, Orioles 2: Alejandro Kirk hit a three-run home run, Chris Bassitt struck out a season-high nine in seven innings to snap a three-start losing streak and host Toronto beat Baltimore.

Addison Barger hit a two-run double in the Blue Jays' five-run sixth inning as Toronto handed the Orioles their 14th loss in their last 24 games.

Orioles right-hander Grayson Rodriguez was scratched minutes before the first pitch because of pain in his upper back and shoulder.

Cubs 7, Twins 3: Shota Imanaga gave up two hits through seven innings, Isaac Paredes hit a three-run drive for his first homer with the Cubs and host Chicago ended Minnesota's five-game winning streak.

Imanaga retired the first 10 hitters he faced before issuing his only walk of the game, then gave up a two-run homer to

Royce Lewis. The 30-year-old left-hander struck out 10 — nine swinging — to tie his career high.

Nationals 11, Giants 5: James Wood homered, tripled and scored four runs, and host Washington erased a quick four-run deficit to beat San Francisco.

Wood also walked twice and stole two bases for the Nationals, who have won three of four after losing five straight.

Red Sox 6, Royals 5: Dominic Smith scored the go-ahead run on a wild pitch in the sixth inning on a call that was overturned on a challenge, and visiting Boston beat Kansas City.

Smith doubled to open the sixth and moved to third on a single by Eric Sogard. After David Hamilton struck out, Smith charged home on a pitch by the Royals' Seth Lugo that bounced in front of the plate and got away from catcher Salvador Perez. Perez chased the ball to the backstop, wheeled and threw to Lugo, who appeared to tag Smith for an apparent out. The Red Sox challenged the call, which was overturned on review.

Rockies 6, Mets 3: Jake Cave hit a two-run home run, Elias Díaz had two hits and two RBIs, and host Colorado beat New York.

Harrison Bader had a two-run single and Brandon Nimmo had two hits and an RBI for the Mets, who have lost four of six.

Padres 6, Pirates 0: Donovan Solano had four hits and four RBIs, and visiting San Diego used six pitchers to shut out Pittsburgh in a game delayed nearly three hours due to rain.

San Diego has won 12 of 14 games to move into the first NL wild-card spot, a half-game ahead of the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Tigers 4, Mariners 2: Parker Meadows homered and drove in two runs, Keider Montero pitched six strong innings and visiting Detroit beat Seattle.

Montero (2-5), making the ninth start of his career, allowed just four hits, including Luke Raley's solo homer in the fifth.

Phillies 6, Dodgers 2: Cristopher Sánchez pitched six strong innings, Edmundo Sosa and Kyle Schwarber homered back-to-back in the ninth and visiting Philadelphia beat Los Angeles in a matchup of the National League's top two teams.

Sánchez (8-7) allowed one run and five hits, struck out two and walked one to help end the Dodgers' three-game winning streak.