

## Trump deploys National Guard in DC

BY MATTHEW ADAMS  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Monday announced he is ordering 800 D.C. National Guard troops to deploy throughout the city in an effort to crack down on crime in the nation's capital.

"We're taking our capital back," he said during a news conference at the White House. "We're taking it back."

Trump also said the federal government would take control of Washington's Metropolitan Police Department, and "we will bring in the military if needed."

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth also attended the briefing and said the D.C. National Guard will be "flowing into the streets of Washington in the coming week."

Other National Guard and specialized units are prepared to be deployed to assist.

"They will be strong, they will be tough and they will stand with their law enforcement partners," Hegseth said.

White House aides distributed photos of a Truth Social

post in which Trump wrote Washington, D.C., would be "LIBERATED today!" The handout included photos of people who it claimed were arrested during the weekend and accused of crimes ranging from drunken driving to possession of narcotics.

"Washington, D.C., should be one of the safest, cleanest and most beautiful cities anywhere in the world," Trump said.

The deployment of troops in Washington comes after nearly 5,000 California National Guard troops were sent to Los Angeles recently with orders to quell protests that had erupted over immigration raids and protect the federal agents conducting them. Only 250 troops remain in Los Angeles as other troops have been sent home.

Six Republican members of the Senate Armed Services Committee praised Trump's move to take control of law enforcement in DC.

"It is beyond humiliating that our nation's capital has been overrun by crime, gangs, and illegals," said Sen. Tommy Tu-

berville, R-Ala., in a post on X. "It's time we MAKE D.C. SAFE AGAIN."

Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., described crime in Washington as "out of control" and thanked Trump for taking action. Sen. Jim Banks, R-Ind., said he fully supported Trump's plan.

"Hoosiers should be able to visit our nation's capital without fear of violence," said Banks on X.

Trump threatened last week to take federal control of Washington after a former Department of Government Efficiency employee was attacked during an attempted carjacking. The D.C. police confirmed the victim was Edward Coristine. He was one of the original DOGE staffers.

Police arrested two 15-year-olds in the attempted carjacking and said they were looking for others.

"We're going to have to federalize D.C. and run it the way it's supposed to be run," Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

"The rate of crime, the rate of muggings, killings and every-

thing else, we're not going to let it, and that includes bringing in the National Guard, maybe very quickly, too," Trump told a member of the White House reporting pool on Wednesday.

D.C. police data indicates violent crime has decreased 26% compared with last year. The D.C. U.S. Attorney's Office also announced in January that violent crime in the city in 2024 was at a 30-year low, citing police data.

Democratic Mayor Muriel Bowser said Sunday that the capital was not experiencing a crime spike.

"It is true that we had a terrible spike in crime in 2023, but this is not 2023," Bowser said on MSNBC's the Weekend. "We have spent over the last two years driving down violent crime in this city, driving it down to a 30-year low."

The surge in federal policing in the city began just after midnight on Friday morning and is expected to last seven days, with the option to extend enforcement "as needed," NPR reported.

## Bahrain welcomes USS Nimitz as its career winds down

BY SHANNON RENFROE  
*Stars and Stripes*

MANAMA, Bahrain — Nearly half a century after its first deployment, the U.S. Navy's oldest active aircraft carrier pulled into Bahrain over the weekend, marking a rare visit that could be among its last.

USS Nimitz arrived for a port visit Sunday at the home of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet, along with Carrier Strike Group 11, Carrier

Air Wing 17 and the destroyers USS Gridley and USS Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee.

The visit "underscores our long-standing partnership with Bahrain and the importance of working together to promote maritime stability, freedom of navigation, and regional security," Rear Adm. Frederic C. Goldhammer, commander of Carrier Strike Group 11, said in a Navy statement.

Initially operating with the

U.S. 7th Fleet in the Indo-Pacific, the Nimitz strike group was redirected in mid-June as tensions rose between Israel and Iran.

Nimitz, which deployed for the first time in 1976, is slated to begin deactivation next year, with completion expected in 2027.

The ship's service life was lengthened amid delays in production of Ford-class carriers, which will replace the Nimitz

class.

The Nimitz and its crew are scheduled to shift homeport to Norfolk, Va., by April 2026, ahead of deactivation.

Of the new class, only USS Gerald R. Ford is in service, having deployed in 2022 following its commissioning in 2017. The second Ford-class carrier, the future USS John F. Kennedy, is slated for delivery in 2027, according to Navy budget documents.

# Cooper is elevated to CENTCOM leader

BY LARA KORTE  
*Stars and Stripes*

Leadership of the U.S. military in the Middle East has shifted to Navy Adm. Brad Cooper, who takes over command from an Army general who oversaw critical operations throughout the region.

Cooper moves up from deputy chief of U.S. Central Command and succeeds retiring Gen. Michael Erik Kurilla as leader of the Florida-based command.

With Friday's change of command ceremony, Cooper became the leader of a command that covers 21 countries in a region where tensions are repeatedly running high.

"I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to lead America's sons and daughters as we

support the important mission of enhancing regional security," Cooper said in a statement.

He previously led Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces out of Bahrain.

The handoff occurs amid Israeli plans to escalate the nearly two-year war against Hamas and ongoing negotiations with Iran about its nuclear program.

The U.S. is also consolidating its forces in Syria and Iraq, where the military has assisted operations against Islamic State militants for more than a decade.

Kurilla departs after more than three years in the job and is slated to retire. In his time as CENTCOM commander, he led the planning and execution of more than 15 ma-

jor combined combat operations, according to the statement.

They included the six-week conflict with the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen earlier this year and Operation Midnight Hammer, a series of American airstrikes in June that destroyed three key Iranian nuclear sites.

"It has been the honor of my life to have been their commander," he said.

About 40,000 American troops are deployed in the Middle East across at least 19 sites, according to the Council on Foreign Relations' most recent estimate, published in June.

The U.S. maintains several permanent bases throughout the region, including in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar.

## China protests Marcos' remarks on being pulled into any Taiwan war

*Associated Press*

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said Monday his country would inevitably be drawn "kicking and screaming" into any war over Taiwan due to its proximity to the self-ruled island and the presence of large numbers of Filipino workers there, despite China's strong protest over such remarks.

Marcos also told a news conference that the Philippines' coast guard, navy and other vessels defending its territorial interests in the South China Sea would never back down and would stand their ground in the contested waters after the Chinese coast guard on Monday staged dangerous blocking maneuvers and used a powerful water cannon to try to drive away Philippine vessels from the hotly disputed Scarborough Shoal.

It's the latest flare-up of long-simmering territorial disputes in the busy waterway, a key global trade route, where overlapping claims between China and the Philippines have escalated in recent years.

Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also lay claims to parts of the contested waters.

Relations between China and the Philippines have been severely strained after Marcos, who took office in mid-2022, and his administration emerged as among the most vocal critics in Asia of China's increasingly

aggressive actions in the South China Sea.

The Marcos administration deepened its treaty alliance engagements with the United States and started broadening security alliances with other Western and Asian countries like Japan, Australia, India and some EU member states to strengthen deterrence against Beijing's assertiveness.

China protested last week and accused Marcos of interfering in its domestic affairs and violating its "One China" policy when he told reporters on the sidelines of a visit to India that there was no way the Philippines could stay out of a possible war in Taiwan because of his country's proximity to it and the presence of about 200,000 Filipino workers on the self-ruled island. China claims Taiwan as its own territory and has repeatedly threatened to annex it, by force if necessary.

Separately, Philippine Coast Guard Commodore Jay Tarriela said Chinese coast guard ships chased and staged dangerous blocking maneuvers on Monday against Philippine coast guard and fishing vessels in the Scarborough Shoal, a rich fishing atoll in the South China Sea off the northwestern Philippines. A Philippine coast guard ship managed to evade being hit by a Chinese coast guard water cannon during the melee, he said.

There was no immediate comment from Chinese officials.

## One injured after shooting at annex of Hawaii base

BY ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

A suspect is in custody following a Saturday shooting at an annex of Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, that left one person critically injured, according to the base.

The shooting took place around 5:45 p.m. Saturday at the Wahiawa Annex, about 12 miles northwest of the main installation, the Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported Saturday.

"This incident involved two individuals," the base wrote on its official Facebook page Saturday. "This was an isolated event and poses no threat to the broader base community."

The shooting was under active investigation by base security, the Naval Criminal Investigative Services and the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, according to the post.

The base's posts did not disclose details about the shooter or victim.

The shooting occurred at the Wahiawa Annex housing area, according to a Facebook post by the joint base on Saturday. However, Honolulu police said they responded to a shooting at the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station at the annex, according to the Star-Advertiser.

Spokespeople for the base and U.S. Pacific Air Forces did not immediately respond to requests for comment Sunday in Hawaii.

# LA, National Guard trial to start

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A federal judge was hearing arguments on whether the Trump administration violated federal law when it deployed National Guard soldiers and U.S. Marines to Los Angeles following June protests over immigration raids.

President Donald Trump's administration federalized California National Guard members and sent them to the second-largest U.S. city over the objections of Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom and city leaders, after protests erupted June 7 when Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers arrested people at multiple locations.

California is asking Judge Charles Breyer to order the Trump administration to return control of the remaining troops to the state and to stop the federal government from using military troops in California "to execute or assist in the execution of federal law or any civilian law enforcement functions by any federal agent or officer."

The 1878 Posse Comitatus Act prevents the president from using the military as a domestic police force. The case could set precedent for how Trump can deploy the Guard in the future in California or other states.

On Monday, Trump said he was deploying the National Guard across Washington, D.C., and taking over the city's police department in the hopes of reducing crime, even as the mayor has noted that crime is falling in the nation's capital.

Newsom won an early victory from Breyer, who found the Trump administration had violated the 10th Amendment, which defines power between federal and state governments, and exceeded its authority.

The Trump administration immediately filed an appeal arguing that courts can't second-guess the president's decisions and secured a temporary halt from the appeals court, allowing control of the California National Guard to stay in federal hands as the lawsuit continues to unfold. After their deployment, the

soldiers accompanied federal immigration officers on immigration raids in Los Angeles and at two marijuana farm sites in Ventura County.

The Trump administration argued the troops were needed to protect federal buildings and personnel in Los Angeles, which has been a battleground in the federal government's aggressive immigration strategy.

Ernesto Santacruz Jr., the field office director for the Department of Homeland Security in Los Angeles, said in court documents that the troops were needed because local law enforcement had been slow to respond when a crowd gathered outside the federal building to protest the June 7 immigration arrests.

After opposition from the Trump administration, Breyer issued an order allowing California's attorneys to take Santacruz's deposition. They also took a declaration from a military official on the National Guard and Marines role in Los Angeles.

# Flooding drenches Milwaukee

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Flash flooding canceled the final day of the Wisconsin State Fair on Sunday as continued heavy rainfall in half a dozen Midwest states forced motorists to abandon their vehicles, cut power to thousands of households and closed busy roadways.

Organizers of the Wisconsin State Fair said they were scrapping the final day of the 11-day event after rains flooded the fairgrounds in West Allis, which is just outside Milwaukee.

The National Weather Service issued flood watches and warnings for parts of Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Illinois and Wisconsin. After rainfall began on Saturday in some areas forecasters predicted "repeated rounds of heavy rain," along with hail, damaging winds and isolated tornadoes into Monday.

Among the worst hit was the Milwaukee area, where up to 14 inches of rain had fallen in some areas by Sunday, according to the National Weather Service, which also noted river flooding in Milwaukee and Waukesha counties. Some motorists left their stranded cars on roads. Nearly 18,000 customers of We Energies in southeast Wisconsin were without power late Sunday. In the suburban village of Wauwatosa, an overflowing and fast-moving Menomonee River submerged a popular playground.

Firefighters responded to over 600 calls including for gas leaks, flooded basements, electrical outages and water rescues, according to the Milwaukee Fire Department. Meanwhile, crews worked to clear surface water, and the Red Cross opened two shelters in the city for displaced residents.

# US Steel plant blast leaves people trapped

Associated Press

An explosion at a U.S. Steel plant near Pittsburgh left one dead and dozens injured or trapped under the rubble Monday, with emergency workers on site trying to rescue victims, officials said.

The explosion sent black smoke spiraling into the midday sky in the Monongahela Valley, a region of the state synonymous with steel for more than a century. An Allegheny County emergency services spokesperson, Kasey Reigner, said one person died in the explosion and two were currently believed to be unaccounted for. Multiple other people were treated for injuries, Reigner said.

Allegheny County Emergency Services said a fire at the

plant started around 10:51 a.m. The explosion sent a shock through the community and led to officials asking residents to stay away from the scene so emergency workers could respond.

"It felt like thunder," Zachary Buday, a construction worker near the scene, told WTAE-TV. "Shook the scaffold, shook my chest, and shook the building, and then when we saw the dark smoke coming up from the steel mill and put two and two together, and it's like something bad happened."

Dozens were injured and the county was sending 15 ambulances, on top of the ambulances supplied by local emergency response agencies, Reigner said.

Clairton Mayor Richard Lat-

tanzi said his heart goes out to the victims of Monday explosion.

The plant, a massive industrial facility along the Monongahela River south of Pittsburgh, is considered the largest coking operation in North America and is one of four major U.S. Steel plants in Pennsylvania that employ several thousand workers.

Democratic Sen. John Fetterman, who formerly served as the mayor of nearby Braddock, called the explosion "absolutely tragic" and vowed to support steelworkers in the aftermath.

The Allegheny County Health Department said it is monitoring the explosion and advised residents within 1 mile of the plant to remain indoors.



# Israeli strikes kill Al-Jazeera staff

*Associated Press*

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli ground and air strikes hit northern and southern Gaza on Monday, killing aid-seekers as well as others sheltering in tents and homes as Israeli troops prepared for a broader campaign in the besieged territory.

Hospital officials reported that at least 34 people were killed on Monday, not including journalists who were slain in a tent shortly before midnight.

Among the dead were at least 12 aid seekers killed by Israeli gunfire while trying to reach distribution points or awaiting aid convoys.

Relatives told The Associated

Press that casualties included children and an infant. Witnesses to gunfire near the Morag corridor said they saw barrages of bullets and later dead bodies, describing the grim scene as a near-daily occurrence.

The military did not immediately respond to questions about the deaths. Earlier Monday, it said air and artillery units were operating in northern Gaza and in Khan Younis, where resident Noha Abu Shamala told AP that two drone strikes killed a family of seven in their apartment.

Aid seekers were killed from nearly two miles to just hundreds of yards from sites operated by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, according to Nass-

er and Awda hospitals.

Israel's military also targeted an Al Jazeera correspondent with an airstrike Sunday, killing him, another network journalist and at least six others in what press advocates described as a brazen assault on those documenting the war.

Officials at Shifa Hospital said those killed included Al Jazeera correspondents Anas al-Sharif and Mohamed Qreiqeh. The incident marked the first time during the war that Israel's military has swiftly claimed responsibility after a journalist was killed in a strike.

It came less than a year after Israeli army officials first accused al-Sharif and other Al Ja-

zeera journalists of being members of the militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Al Jazeera called the strike a "targeted assassination" while press freedom groups denounced the rising death toll facing journalists working in Gaza. Mourners laid the journalists to rest in Gaza City.

Israel on Sunday repeated claims that al-Sharif led a Hamas cell — an allegation that Al Jazeera and al-Sharif have previously dismissed as baseless.

The latest deaths raise the toll to more than 1,700 people killed while seeking food since the new aid distribution system began in May, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

## Torrential rains cause severe flooding in southern Japan

*Associated Press*

TOKYO — Downpours on Japan's southern main island of Kyushu caused flooding and mudslides on Monday, injuring a number of people and disrupting travel during a Buddhist holiday week. Evacuation advisories were issued and several people were reported missing.

A low-pressure system has been stuck over the region since last week, dumping torrential rain over the southern prefec-

ture of Kagoshima and the island's northern part.

The Japan Meteorological Agency early Monday issued the highest-level warning in the prefecture of Kumamoto, saying rainfall had exceeded 15.7 inches in the last 24 hours and more was expected through Tuesday afternoon over Kyushu.

The agency later downgraded the alert for Kumamoto as the showers moved east toward the

Tokyo region, but kept a lower-level warning for western Japan, where up to 7.8 inches of rainfall was expected by noon Tuesday.

The Fire and Disaster Management Agency said local authorities have issued evacuation advisories to tens of thousands of people in Kumamoto and six other prefectures in the region. Defense troops were deployed to Kagoshima to provide fresh water to the residents in the af-

ected areas, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said.

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said his government was supporting search and rescue operations for the missing and helping others in affected areas. He urged residents "to use maximum caution," encouraging them to "please prioritize actions to save your lives."

Heavy rain also impacted people traveling during Japan's Buddhist "Bon" holiday week.

## Lawmaker visits Syria, seeks info on killed US aid worker

*Associated Press*

DAMASCUS, Syria — U.S. Rep. Abraham Hamadeh made a brief visit to Syria where he discussed with the country's interim president the return of the body of an American aid worker who was taken hostage and later confirmed dead in the war-torn country, his office said Monday.

Hamadeh's visit to Syria comes as a search has been underway in remote parts of the country for the remains of peo-

ple who were killed by Islamic State, which once controlled large parts of Syria and Iraq before its territorial defeat six years ago.

Kayla Mueller, 26, was captured in northern Syria in August 2013, and her family and U.S. officials confirmed her death more than a year later.

Hamadeh, an Arizona Republican, has vowed to return Mueller's body — which has not yet been found — to her family.

Hamadeh's office said he was in Syria for six hours to meet President Ahmad al-Sharaa to discuss the return of Mueller's body to her family in Arizona.

The statement added that Hamadeh also discussed the need to work to establish a secure humanitarian corridor for the safe delivery of medical and humanitarian aid to the southern province of Sweida.

The province has recently witnessed deadly clashes be-

tween pro-government fighters and gunmen from the country's Druze minority.

Mueller, from Prescott, Ariz., was taken hostage with her boyfriend, Omar Alkhani, after leaving a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Aleppo, Syria, where he had been hired to fix the internet service for the hospital.

Alkhani was later released after two months, having been beaten.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**\$7K worth of Labubu dolls stolen from store**

**CA** LOS ANGELES — A group of masked thieves stole about \$7,000 worth of Labubu dolls from a Los Angeles-area store, authorities said.

The incident took place at a store in La Puente, a city about 18 miles east of Los Angeles, the LA County Sheriff's Department said. The department said the suspects used a stolen Toyota Tacoma in the incident, which was recovered shortly afterward. The agency said it was investigating the case and did not have additional information.

Labubu dolls, created by Hong Kong-born artist Kasing Lung, have become a popular collectible item a decade after the toothy monsters were first introduced.

Toy vendor One Stop Sales said in an Instagram post that the thieves took all of the store's inventory and trashed the establishment. The store posted surveillance footage showing a group of people wearing hoodies and face coverings breaking in.

"We are still in shock," the store said in its post, urging people to help find the thieves.

**Police responding to mass shooting, 6 victims**

**MD** BALTIMORE — Baltimore Police said six victims, including one youth, were shot at the intersection of Queensbury and Spaulding avenues in the Central Park Heights neighborhood near Pimlico Race Course.

Joseph Payne, a West Belvedere resident, said that he thought he could hear gunshots

over his music and ran outside when he saw red and blue lights.

He says he saw one person being rolled out on a gurney, with paramedics telling him repeatedly: "Keep your eyes up."

**Judge orders mediation in handling of Floyd Square**

**MN** MINNEAPOLIS — A judge has ordered Minneapolis to come to the table and attempt to settle a lawsuit filed by eight business owners in the south Minneapolis neighborhood where police killed George Floyd in 2020.

The business owners sued the city for \$49 million in damages over its handling of the neighborhood in the aftermath of Floyd's murder. They allege their businesses were damaged when they said police stopped responding to the area and let activists, gangs and crime take over. The city filed a motion to have the case dismissed, but Hennepin County District Judge Laura M. Thomas granted the business owners' request for mediation.

The business owners say that after the city blocked off the George Floyd Square area, it was overtaken by "civilian occupiers" and became a violent, lawless "no-go zone" that disrupted and ruined their businesses.

**Dog who used to sniff out cold cases now saves bees**

**MI** EAST LANSING — Equipped with her own tailored bee suit and a hood to cover her floppy ears, Maple — a former police dog — has an important retirement task: helping save thousands of honeybee hives.

The canine has spent the past

five months sniffing Michigan bee colonies for American foulbrood, a highly contagious bacteria that's fatal to the insects. Maple, an English springer spaniel, uses her extraordinary sense of smell as a "high-speed screening tool" to prevent beekeepers from having to manually inspect every hive.

American foulbrood only becomes detectable to humans by smell when it reaches severe infection, at which point the colony risks death, said Meghan Milbrath, a researcher and assistant professor of entomology at Michigan State University.

Maple's crossover into bee conservation came after she medically retired from police work, said her longtime handler, Sue Stejskal, who is also new to beekeeping. Stejskal said Maple took a misstep and got injured while they were working on a cold case in Canada, forcing her to step away in April 2024 after seven years as a human-remains detection dog.

**Prosecutors: Fire captain faked injury for insurance**

**CA** LOS ANGELES — A Los Angeles County Fire Department captain is facing felony charges following allegations that he faked a work injury and forged doctors' notes to fraudulently claim thousands of dollars in disability payments, authorities said.

Thomas Merryman, 45, allegedly received more than \$25,000 in insurance payments for a work injury that could not have taken place because he was not at work, according to the LA County district attorney's office.

He allegedly submitted fake paperwork under the name of

another fire captain and a physician to Colonial Life & Accident Insurance Co., allowing him to claim long-term disability payments, prosecutors said.

Merryman, who is currently believed to live in Georgetown, Texas, has been charged with one felony count of insurance fraud, one felony count of false personation and two felony counts of forgery, prosecutors said. He is scheduled to be arraigned in Los Angeles on Sept. 9.

**Yankees great Rivera suffers torn Achilles**

**NY** NEW YORK — The return of the Yankees' Old-Timers' Day alumni game made for a painful afternoon for Mariano Rivera, as the greatest closer of all time suffered a devastating injury during the exhibition.

A Yankees spokesperson said that Rivera hurt his Achilles during the game, confirming what former teammate Roger Clemens told WFAN's Suzyn Waldman and Dave Sims. Fernando Cuza, Rivera's agent, then confirmed that Rivera tore his Achilles. Rivera is set to undergo surgery this week in the New York area.

Saturday marked the Yankees' first Old-Timers' Day alumni game since 2019, as pandemic-era restrictions and injured ex-pinstripers made it impossible or difficult to play the contest in recent years.

Rivera hurt himself while manning center field during a Willie Randolph at-bat. Video taken by The Athletic's Chris Kirschner showed the 55-year-old on the ground after reacting to a pop-up off Randolph's bat.

— From wire reports

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# Texas starts atop AP Top 25 for first time

Associated Press

For the first time, Texas will open a college football season ranked No. 1 in The Associated Press Top 25.

The Longhorns hardly have a mandate in the poll released Monday: They edged out Penn State by just five points in the closest preseason vote since 1998.

Texas received 25 first-place votes and 1,552 points to give the Southeastern Conference the preseason No. 1 team for a record fifth straight year. The Nittany Lions got 23 first-place votes and 1,547 points for their highest preseason ranking since they were No. 1 to open the 1997 season.

The Longhorns face a major test right away. Their Aug. 30 opener at defending champion and third-ranked Ohio State is a rematch of last season's College Football Playoff semifinal, a 28-14 Buckeyes win in the Cotton Bowl.

Ohio State received 11 first-place votes from the panel of 65 media members who cover college football. No. 4 Clemson got

four first-place votes and No. 5 Georgia got one.

Notre Dame, Oregon (which got the final first-place vote), Alabama, LSU and Miami round out the top 10.

The SEC leads all conferences with 10 teams in the preseason Top 25, the most ever by a conference and one more than a year ago. The SEC has four teams in the top 10 for the second straight year.

The Big Ten, which has won the last two national championships, has two of the top three teams in the poll for the third straight year and six in the Top 25 for the third year in a row.

Four Big 12 teams are ranked, with defending conference champion Arizona State the highest at No. 11. The Atlantic Coast Conference has three, led by Clemson.

"Arch Mania" is at a fever pitch in Texas with Arch Manning now the undisputed starting quarterback.

The Longhorns have been on an upward trajectory since they were 5-7 in 2021, Steve Sarkisian's first season. They have

won 25 of their last 30 games and reached two straight CFP semifinals. Last year, they were ranked No. 1 four of five weeks from mid-September to mid-October, and they reached the SEC championship game in their first season in the conference.

"But this is a new year, new faces, new team, and obviously expectations are high for our program," Sarkisian said at SEC media days. "I'm not naive to that. I don't put my head in the sand, and expectations are very high. But I also say we're the University of Texas, and the standard is the standard here, and that's competing for championships year in and year out."

Twelve Longhorns were taken in the NFL draft, including three first-round picks, but elite recruiting and additions from the transfer portal should alleviate concerns about losses on the offensive line and at receiver. The defense brings back plenty of talent.

Still, Texas received just 38.5% of the first-place votes (25 of 65), the smallest share for a No. 1 team in the preseason poll

since Georgia got 33.9% (22 of 65) in 2008.

The Longhorns have ended a season No. 1 in the AP poll three times (1963, 1969, 2005) but until now had never started a season higher than No. 2 (1962, 1965, 1970, 2005, 2009).

Second-ranked Penn State is not only six points from being No. 1, it is 75 points ahead of Ohio State in what might be considered a slight to the national champs.

The Nittany Lions will have Drew Allar back under center for what many consider a light schedule ahead of a late September visit from Oregon before a Nov. 1 showdown at the Buckeyes' home field.

Ohio State, in the preseason top five for the ninth straight year and 12th of the last 13, will have a new look with only five starters back on offense and three on defense.

"This team has its own identity," coach Ryan Day said. "It wants to have its own identity, but it also wants to be the first Ohio State team to win back-to-back national championships."

## Olympian Rivera secures first national gymnastics title

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Hezly Rivera was the fresh face a year ago. The newcomer. The teenager on a team of 20-something Olympic gymnasts, doing her best to absorb what she could from Simone Biles, Sunisa Lee, Jade Carey and Jordan Chiles.

The one thing that stood out, even more than the sometimes otherworldly gymnastics, is the way her fellow gold-medal-winning teammates went about their business.

"They looked so confident," Rivera said. "They're like, 'I'm going to go out and I'm going to hit.' It gave me that confidence as well."

The now 17-year-old who says she's paying no attention to the idea that she's the leader of the women's program in the early stages of the run-up to the 2028 Olympics certainly looks the part.

Buoyed by a polished steadiness — and a beam routine that finally looked the way it does back home at her home gym in Texas —

Rivera captured her first national title Sunday night at the U.S. Championships. Her two-day total of 112.000 was good enough to fend off a challenge from Leanne Wong and put her in excellent position to lead the four-woman American delegation at the world championships in Jakarta, Indonesia, in October.

Rivera, by far the youngest member of the five-woman team that finished atop the podium in Paris a year ago, bounced back from a shaky performance at the U.S. Classic last month with the kind of measured, refined gymnastics that she attributed to simply "letting go" of whatever pressure she might feel as the lone Olympic gold medalist in a remarkably young field.

"No matter how rough the competition is, I still can get back into the gym and work hard because all those months previously that I've been working hard, I know it's going to show up eventually," she said.

"So it kind of just took a weight off my shoulders."

Rivera, at the very least, locked up a spot in the world championship selection camp next month. So did Wong, a four-time world championship medalist, budding entrepreneur and pre-med student who shows no signs of slowing down despite years of competing collegiately and at the elite level simultaneously.

Asked how she juggles it all, Wong, who insists she doesn't keep a planner, said she lives by the motto "there's time for everything."

The victory hardly came easy for Rivera. She was pushed through four rotations by Wong, who started Sunday with a stuck Cheng vault and didn't relent over the course of two hours.

Rivera responded each time — she posted the top scores on three of the four events — but it wasn't until she walked off the podium following her floor routine with victory in hand that she could relax.



# Palou locks up 3rd IndyCar title in row

Associated Press

Alex Palou wrapped up his fourth IndyCar championship in the last five seasons Sunday at Portland International Raceway when title contender Pato O'Ward lost power early in the race.

O'Ward started from the pole and was the only driver mathematically eligible to beat Palou for the championship. Palou went into Sunday with a cozy 121-point lead over O'Ward in the standings and so long as he left Portland up by 108 points, he'd clinch the championship in the first race of a three consecutive weekends to close the season.

The Astor Cup became his just 22 laps into the race on the Portland road course when O'Ward had an electronic issue on his Arrow McLaren Chevrolet and had to make an unplanned pit stop. He returned to the track down nine laps from the leaders.

Palou finished third, O'Ward

finished 25th and Palou has the title cemented with two races remaining in the IndyCar season and an insurmountable 151-point lead.

Palou was feisty in the closing portion of the race and raced unnecessarily aggressive at times — even driving off course with four laps remaining and dragging Christian Lundgaard for position.

"We're here to win. That's why we're here. We've said it many times. When we come here, although we have that big goal of winning the championship, our priority is always to win races and win every single weekend," insisted Palou. "Even though could have been OK to stay third, we wanted to win."

Palou has won all four of his championships for Chip Ganassi Racing and ran away with this one, his third consecutive, by storming out of the gate with a win in the first two races of the

year to set the pace for Ganassi to win its 17th IndyCar title in 30 years. The 17 championships tie Penske Racing.

Twelve of Ganassi's IndyCar titles have come in the last 17 years, starting with Scott Dixon's brilliant 2008 season in which he put together a run similar to the one Palou had this year. Dixon in 2008 won six races, including the Indianapolis 500, six poles and the first of his six championships.

Ganassi has many times before dressed-down drivers for putting themselves in unnecessary positions, but this time had no qualms with Palou racing hard for a win rather than sitting back and coasting.

"It depends on the situation, the driver. Like Alex said, we go into this race with that 10 car team, every race, we want to win the race, OK? That's how we got to this point," said Ganassi.

"We didn't change anything today. You can't play God."

But Ganassi admitted Palou did cause a brief scare with his determination to race hard in the final laps.

"I got to say my heart skipped a beat when he went off there, but other than that I was all for it," said Ganassi.

Only A.J. Foyt (seven) and Dixon (six) have more championships than Palou, who broke through this season by winning on ovals to finally show he's the complete package. That was clear years ago, and he is embroiled in a \$30 million breach of contract civil suit with Arrow McLaren for not honoring a deal to join that team.

He's instead stayed loyal to Ganassi and this year, Palou won five of the first six races, including the Indianapolis 500 that had eluded him in five previous tries. That win at the Brickyard cemented the Spaniard's path to another championship and he's been untouchable since.

## Van Gisbergen takes Watkins Glen for 4th Cup win

Associated Press

WATKINS GLEN, N.Y. — Shane van Gisbergen's latest victory in NASCAR's premier series was as historical as it was emotional.

With his father, Robert, on hand for the first time this year, the Auckland, New Zealand, native set a Cup Series rookie record with his fourth victory, blowing out the competition again at Watkins Glen International.

"It's just amazing to have him here," said van Gisbergen, who last saw his father while visiting home over the Christmas break. "It's been a very tough, tough year for dad, and he hasn't been able to travel, so to have him here for the next three weeks and share this with him, it's amazing."

The Trackhouse Racing driver joined 2020 champion Chase

Elliott and NASCAR Hall of Famer Jeff Gordon as the only drivers to win four consecutive Cup races on road or street courses.

Unlike his prior wins at Mexico City, Chicago and Sonoma, van Gisbergen was unable to start from the pole position after being edged by Ryan Blaney. After qualifying second, van Gisbergen bided his time and took his first lead on the 25th of the 90-lap race. He then settled into a typically flawless and smooth rhythm on the 2.45-mile road course.

"I'm just a very lucky guy to get to drive for an amazing bunch of people and just execute," van Gisbergen said. "The day went flawlessly."

The 36-year-old rookie made his final pit stop with 27 laps remaining and cycled into first place on Lap 74 of a clean race

with only three yellow flags. Cruising to a big lead while leading the final 17 laps, van Gisbergen beat Christopher Bell by 11.116 seconds.

"I'm thrilled because we've been struggling a little bit," Bell said. "Just trying to execute the races has been tough for us, so really awesome to have a good day. Frustrated to get our butts kicked by (van Gisbergen). He's doing such a really good job."

With five victories in only 38 career starts in NASCAR's premier series, van Gisbergen trails only Elliott (seven wins) and Kyle Larson (six) among active drivers on street or road courses. He is also the fastest to five wins in Cup since the legendary Dan Gurney, who won his fifth race in his 13th start in January 1968.

The win validated the decision by Trackhouse to sign van

Gisbergen to a multiyear contract extension last week. Tied with Denny Hamlin for the series lead in victories, van Gisbergen holds the No. 2 seed in the playoffs with two races remaining in the regular season.

The first round will be held at three oval tracks, where the inexperienced van Gisbergen, who raced exclusively on road and street courses while winning three championships in the Australia-based Supercars, has an average finish of 26.9 this year.

"It ain't going to be easy, that's for sure," van Gisbergen said of his playoff outlook. "The first round, it's some very difficult left-handed tracks for me, but I'm getting better at it, and I'm enjoying myself, and it's a challenge. That's why we're here, and we'll have a proper crack at it."

# Brewers sweep Mets on a walk-off HR

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Isaac Collins hit a solo homer off Mets closer Edwin Diaz in the ninth inning and the MLB-best Milwaukee Brewers extended their winning streak to nine games with a 7-6, walk-off win over the scuffling New York Mets on Sunday.

The Brewers trailed 5-0 early and tied it a 6-all in the eighth on Joey Ortiz's two-out RBI single off the glove of diving first baseman Pete Alonso.

After Nick Mears (3-3) tossed a scoreless top half of the ninth, Collins sent a 2-2 pitch from Diaz (5-2) 363 feet to right field for his eighth homer.

The Mets lost their seventh straight game and fell 5½ games behind the NL East-leading Phillies.

William Contreras had two homers for Milwaukee, a solo shot to open a three-run fourth, and a two-run homer in the fifth, his 12th, to pull the Brewers within 6-5.

New York scored in each of the first four innings for a five-run lead against Quinn Priester, who had won his previous 10 decisions.

**Braves 7, Marlins 1:** Matt Olson, Marcell Ozuna and Michael Harris II hit home runs to support a strong start from Joey Wentz and host Atlanta beat Miami.

Wentz (1-2) allowed one run in 5½ innings for his first win since the left-hander was claimed by the Braves off waivers from Minnesota on July 11.

Jen Pawol, who made history in Saturday's doubleheader as the first female umpire to work a regular-season game in the majors, was behind the plate.

**Astros 7, Yankees 1:** Jason Alexander pitched one-hit ball through six innings, Jose Altuve hit his 250th career homer and visiting Houston beat New York after Yankees manager Aaron Boone was ejected in the third inning.

Alexander (3-1) allowed his first hit in the sixth inning, a one-out single to Ben Rice. Alexander did not allow a run for the second straight start.

New York managed three hits and lost for the seventh time in nine games and was booed after the final out. Boone was ejected for the fifth time this season after arguing a called strike on Ryan McMahon.

**Twins 5, Royals 3 (11):** Luke Keaschall hit a two-run homer in the 11th inning, Ryan Fitzgerald homered for his first career hit and host Minnesota beat Kansas City.

With two outs, Keaschall hit a fastball from Royals closer Carlos Estévez (4-4) to the first row of seats in right-centerfield for the Twins' ninth walk-off win of the season.

Michael Tonkin (1-0), Minnesota's seventh pitcher, pitched scoreless 10th and 11th innings for his first win since July 30, 2024.

**Nationals 8, Giants 0:** CJ Abrams homered and visiting Washington beat San Francisco to spoil Justin Verlander's milestone 3,500th career strikeout.

Josh Bell and Paul DeJong had three hits apiece to highlight a 17-hit day for the Nationals, with James Wood adding a pair of two-run doubles.

Verlander (1-9), the three-time Cy Young Award winner who has struggled in his first season with the Giants, struck out the side in the first inning and became the 10th pitcher in MLB history with 3,500 strikeouts.

**Phillies 4, Rangers 2:** Zack Wheeler (10-5) struck out seven and allowed three hits, Edmundo Sosa homered and visiting Philadelphia beat Texas to sweep the three-game series.

Trailing 2-0 early, the Phillies answered in the fourth with an RBI double from Bryce Harper. They tied it in the fifth on Sosa's solo homer, and took the lead for good with Weston Wilson's

RBI single two batters later.

**Tigers 9, Angels 5:** Kerry Carpenter homered and drove in three runs to help host Detroit beat Los Angeles.

Casey Mize (11-4) got the win, allowing two runs on three hits in five innings. He walked two and struck out five.

**Athletics 3, Orioles 2:** Willie MacIver hit a two-run, ninth-inning double off Keegan Akin to rally the visiting Athletics to a series-clinching victory over Baltimore.

MacIver's liner down the left-field line against Akin (3-2) scored Darel Hernaiz and Lawrence Butler, the latter of whom pinch ran for Gio Urshela and ran through third base coach Eric Martins' stop sign.

**White Sox 6, Guardians 4:** Lenyn Sosa and Colson Montgomery homered and host Chicago snapped a six-game skid with a win over Cleveland.

Sosa hit a two-run homer, his 14th, in the first and Montgomery followed later in the inning with a solo shot, his ninth. Curtis Mead and Kyle Teel also knocked in runs for the White Sox, who banded out 11 hits.

**Reds 14, Pirates 8:** Miguel Andujar hit his first home run with Cincinnati, Spencer Steer and Noelvi Marte had three hits and four RBIs each, and the visiting Reds outlasted Pittsburgh to earn a split in the four-game series.

Andujar, who hit a three-run shot to the rotunda in left field in a four-run second inning, hit six homers for the Athletics before being traded at the deadline.

**Diamondbacks 13, Rockies 6:** Adrian Del Castillo hit a three-run homer in the first inning and host Arizona set a franchise record with nine consecutive hits during an eight-run fifth inning for a win over Colorado.

In addition to his first home run of the season, Del Castillo hit a ground-rule double into

the pool in right field and a single in the fifth when the Diamondbacks batted around to open a 12-3 lead.

**Mariners 6, Rays 3:** Cal Raleigh hit his major league-leading 45th home run in a four-run first inning and host Seattle hung on for a victory over Tampa Bay.

It was the Mariners' seventh straight win, the longest active run in the American League. Josh Naylor also homered for Seattle, which wrapped up a 9-1 homestand.

**Padres 6, Red Sox 2:** Dylan Cease (5-10) was impressive for six innings before San Diego's All-Star-laden bullpen got into and out of trouble in the seventh and the host Padres beat Boston to take two of three.

The Padres have won 11 of 14 games as they moved to within two games of the defending World Series champion Los Angeles Dodgers in the NL West.

**Blue Jays 5, Dodgers 4:** Shohei Ohtani led off the game with his 41st homer, but Ernie Clement hit the tiebreaking homer leading off the ninth inning and AL-leading Toronto hung on to avoid a series sweep with a victory over host Los Angeles.

Mason Fluharty earned his first career save in spectacular fashion after replacing erratic Blue Jays closer Jeff Hoffman in the ninth with the bases loaded and one out. The rookie left-hander struck out Ohtani with a full-count breaking ball before getting Mookie Betts on a game-ending grounder.

**Cardinals 3, Cubs 2:** Nolan Gorman singled home the winning run, lifting host St. Louis to a victory over Chicago to wrap up its three-game series.

In the seventh, Jordan Walker singled with two outs. He stole second and scored when Gorman singled to right field to knock Shota Imanaga (8-5) out of the game after 6½ innings with nine strikeouts and no walks.