

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

US repels barrage of Red Sea attacks

By **DOUG G. WARE**

Stars and Stripes

U.S. forces in the Middle East shot down a barrage of enemy weapons Tuesday off the coast of Yemen during a sustained attack that lasted for several hours, officials said.

Americans stationed in the region have seen an uptick in insurgent attacks over the last several weeks, which started not long after the militant group Hamas launched a surprise assault on Israel in October. So far, none of the attacks on U.S. bases have caused any American deaths or serious property damage to the bases.

On Tuesday, U.S. fighter jets

and a warship shot down an onslaught of missiles and attack drones in the southern Red Sea over a 10-hour period, military officials said. The downed weapons included a dozen one-way attack drones, three anti-ship ballistic missiles and two land attack cruise missiles.

“U.S. assets, to include the USS Laboon and F/A-18 Super Hornets from the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group, shot [them] down,” said U.S. Central Command, the Pentagon’s top combatant command in the Middle East. “There was no damage to ships in the area or reported injuries.”

It wasn’t clear exactly what the drones and missiles were targeting, but U.S. forces in the region have carried out a number of “self-defense strikes” and shot down other drones and rockets in recent months.

Officials said the attacks Tuesday were launched by Houthi rebels, Iranian-aligned militants that have been fighting with the Yemeni government since 2014. The western coast of Yemen borders the Red Sea.

Houthi rebels have also been attacking commercial vessels in the Red Sea, which is a vital trade route in the area.

Tuesday’s confrontation came

one day after a militant attack in northern Iraq injured three American service members, one critically. In response, President Joe Biden ordered retaliatory strikes against the Iranian-aligned Kataib Hezbollah group in at least three locations in Iraq before dawn on Tuesday.

Attacks by Iranian-backed militant groups began Oct. 17, the date that a blast at a hospital in Gaza killed hundreds.

Iranian-backed militias have carried out more than 100 attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria since the start of the Israel-Hamas war more than two months ago.

Thousands flee as Israel widens its ground offensive

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Thousands of Palestinian families fled Wednesday from the brunt of Israel’s expanding ground offensive into Gaza’s few remaining, overcrowded refuges, as the military launched heavy strikes across the center and south of the territory, killing dozens, Palestinian health officials said.

On foot or riding donkey carts loaded with belongings, a stream of people flowed into Deir al-Balah — a town that normally has a population of around 75,000. It has been overwhelmed by several hundred thousand people driven from northern Gaza as the region was pounded to rubble.

Because U.N. shelters are packed many times over capacity, the new arrivals set up tents on sidewalks for the cold winter night. Most crowded onto streets around the town’s main hospital, Al-Aqsa Martyrs, hoping it would be safer from Israeli

strikes.

Still, no place is safe in Gaza. Israeli offensives are crowding most of the population into Deir al-Balah and Rafah at the territory’s southern edge as well as a tiny rural area by the southern coastline. But those areas continue to be hit by Israeli strikes that regularly crush homes full of people.

The newly displaced were fleeing from several built-up refugee camps in central Gaza targeted in the latest phase of Israel’s ground assault. One of the camps, Bureij, came under heavy bombardment throughout the night as Israeli troops moved in.

“It was a night of hell. We haven’t seen such bombing since the start of the war,” said Rami Abu Mosab, speaking from Bureij, where he has been sheltering since fleeing his home in northern Gaza.

He said warplanes flew overhead, and gunfire and explosions

echoed from the eastern edge of the camp. A home near his shelter was hit, but no one was able to reach the area, he said.

Bureij camp, like others in Gaza, houses refugees from the 1948 war surrounding Israel’s creation and their descendants and now resembles other densely populated neighborhoods.

With much of northern Gaza leveled, Palestinians fear a similar fate awaits other areas, including Khan Younis, just south of Deir al-Balah, where Israeli forces launched ground operations in early December.

In Khan Younis, Israeli shelling Wednesday struck a residential building next to Al-Amal Hospital, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent, which runs the facility.

Health Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra said at least 20 people were killed and dozens more wounded, with the death toll likely to rise. Footage from the scene showed several torn

bodies lying in the street as rescue workers loaded a man whose legs had been severed below the knees onto a stretcher.

Israel has said the bombing campaign and ground offensive are necessary to dismantle Hamas and prevent a repeat of its Oct. 7 attack in which militants broke through Israel’s formidable defenses and killed some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducted around 240. An estimated 129 remain in captivity after dozens were freed.

Achieving its goals, Israel has said, will take “many months.”

Israel’s offensive is already one of the most devastating military campaigns in recent history. More than 21,100 Palestinians, most of them women and children, have been killed, including nearly 200 people in the last 24 hours, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza. The count doesn’t differentiate between civilians and combatants.

Turkey committee approves Sweden's NATO membership

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — The Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee gave its consent to Sweden's bid to join NATO on Tuesday, drawing the previously nonaligned Nordic country closer to membership in the Western military alliance.

Sweden's accession protocol will now need to be approved in the Turkish parliament's general assembly for the last stage of the legislative process in Turkey. No date has been set.

Turkey, a NATO member, has delayed ratification of Sweden's membership for more than a year, accusing the country of being too lenient toward groups that Ankara regards as threats to its security, including Kurdish militants and members of a network that Ankara blames for a failed coup in 2016. The Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee had begun discussing Sweden's membership in NATO last month. But the meeting was adjourned after legislators from Erdogan's ruling party submitted a motion for a postponement on grounds that some issues needed more clarification and that negotiations with Sweden hadn't "matured" enough.

On Tuesday, the committee resumed its deliberations and a large majority of legislators in the committee voted in favor of Sweden's application to join.

Briefing the committee members before the vote, Deputy Foreign Minister Burak Akcpar cited steps Sweden had taken to meet Turkish demands, including lifting restrictions on

defense industry sales and amending anti-terrorism laws in ways that "no one could have imagined five or six years ago."

"It is unrealistic to expect that the Swedish authorities will immediately fulfill all of our demands. This is a process, and this process requires long-term and consistent effort," he said, adding that Turkey would continue to monitor Sweden's progress.

Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström welcomed the committee's decision on a message posted on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter.

"The next step is for parliament to vote on the matter. We look forward to becoming a member of NATO," he tweeted.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg also welcomed the development, saying that he counts on Turkey and Hungary "to now complete their ratifications as soon as possible. Sweden's membership will make NATO stronger."

Hungary has also stalled Sweden's bid, alleging that Swedish politicians have told "blatant lies" about the condition of Hungary's democracy. Hungary hasn't announced when the country's ratification may occur.

Earlier this month, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had openly linked ratification of Sweden's NATO membership to the U.S. Congress' approval of a Turkish request to purchase 40 new F-16 fighter jets and kits to modernize Turkey's existing fleet.

Navy mine-hunting ship back after fixes done early

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — A Navy mine countermeasures ship based in Bahrain could be back on duty earlier than expected after crews finished months of scheduled maintenance more than two weeks ahead of time.

A seven-month project on USS Devastator was completed Dec. 18, the Forward Deployed Regional Maintenance Center in Naples said in a statement issued Wednesday. The expected end date for the work was 18 days later, according to the statement.

The maintenance center serves U.S. 6th Fleet and U.S. 5th Fleet and has detachments in Bahrain and Spain.

Devastator will rejoin three sister ships as the U.S. and other nations work to address missile and drone attacks on international vessels in the Red Sea.

The project included work on propulsion systems, electri-

cal systems and structural areas as well as hull inspection and preservation on the 33-year-old, wooden-hulled ship, according to the statement.

The work was done by the maintenance center's Bahrain detachment.

Devastator's return to the fleet comes as Iran-backed Houthi rebels continue attacking commercial vessels in the Red Sea.

Commissioned in 1990, Devastator is among four Avenger-class mine countermeasures vessels homeported in Bahrain that can find, classify and destroy moored and bottom mines, according to the Navy's website. The others are USS Sentry, USS Gladiator and USS Dextrous.

Equipped with sonar and video systems, the ships also have cable cutters and a mine-detonating device that can be released and controlled remotely, the Navy said on its website.

Military Bowl flyover to have pilots of competing schools

Stars and Stripes

Two F/A-18 Hornets will help kick off the Military Bowl featuring Tulane vs. Virginia Tech on Wednesday in Annapolis, Md., and the pilots of each will have a keen interest in the outcome of the game.

One plane will be piloted by 2006 Tulane graduate Adam Stephens, and at the controls of the other will be 2002 Virginia Tech graduate Elliott Shoup.

"When I heard Tulane was going to play in the game, I immediately started thinking we should do a flyover," said Stephens, who is the commanding officer of the VFC-12 Ambush

U.S. Navy reserves F/A-18 squadron based out of Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach, Va. Shoup is Stevens' second in command, and that only added to the excitement.

"It was a no-brainer to try to do it," Shoup said. "Adam has been a loud proponent of Tulane for as long as I've known him."

After completing the flyover, Stephens and Shoup will continue to Joint Base Andrews then hustle back to Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium to watch their alma maters. And of course, the pilots placed a friendly wager: The loser buys the bottle of rye.

Michigan high court keeps Trump on ballot

Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan’s Supreme Court is keeping former President Donald Trump on the state’s primary election ballot.

The court said Wednesday that it will not hear an appeal of a lower court’s ruling from groups seeking to keep Trump from appearing on the ballot.

The state’s high court said in an order that the application by parties to appeal a Dec. 14 Michigan appeals court judgment was considered, but denied “because we are not persuaded that the questions presented should be

reviewed by this court.”

Free Speech for People had sued to force Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson to bar Trump from Michigan’s ballot. But a Michigan Court of Claims judge rejected their arguments, saying in November that it was the proper role of Congress to decide the question.

The ruling followed a Dec. 19 decision by a divided Colorado Supreme Court which found Trump ineligible to be president because of his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. That ruling was the first time in history that Section 3 of the 14th

Amendment has been used to disqualify a presidential candidate.

The Michigan and Colorado cases are among dozens hoping to keep Trump’s name off state ballots.

They all point to the so-called insurrection clause that prevents anyone from holding office who “engaged in insurrection or rebellion” against the Constitution.

In Colorado, police said Tuesday that they are investigating incidents directed at Colorado Supreme Court justices and providing extra patrols around their homes following the court’s deci-

sion to remove Trump from the state’s primary ballot.

The Denver Police Department “is currently investigating incidents directed at Colorado Supreme Court justices and will continue working with our local, state and federal law enforcement partners to thoroughly investigate any reports of threats or harassment,” it said in an email.

Officers responded to the home of one justice Thursday evening, but police said it appeared to be a “hoax report.” That case is also still being investigated police said.

Haley faces adversity in home state as SC supporting Trump

Associated Press

GILBERT, S.C. — Standing inside a rustic barn a short drive from the state capital, Henry McMaster shocked many South Carolina Republicans seven years ago by backing Donald Trump for president.

Then the lieutenant governor, McMaster became the highest-ranking state official to endorse Trump in 2016. The event was in Lexington County, the adopted political home of then-Gov. Nikki Haley, who had repeatedly criticized Trump and endorsed Florida Sen. Marco Rubio.

Trump would win the 2016 primary in South Carolina and eventually the presidency. After campaigning against him, Haley would accept his nomination as United Nations ambassador, making McMaster governor.

That complicated history is coming to the fore as Haley mounts a spirited effort to become the leading Republican alternative to Trump. Her strategy is centered on a strong showing in next month’s Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary before much of the campaign’s focus shifts to South Carolina, where the Feb. 24 contest could be the last chance for anyone other than

Trump to prove they can survive.

But her home state has shifted closer to Trump in the near-decade since she last ran for state office, threatening her ability to tap into her local roots to notch the victory she has promised.

“Ten years is an eternity when all politics are national,” said Matt Moore, a former state GOP chairman. “Trump tapped into thousands of low-frequency voters who have reshaped South Carolina politics. Many of them weren’t focused on state-level issues prior, or even now.”

The former president this time has the endorsement of almost every major South Carolina Republican. Sen. Lindsey Graham, who ran against Trump, suggested he would destroy the Republican Party and openly questioned McMaster’s thinking over the 2016 endorsement, is now a close ally of the former president and is co-chairing Trump’s state campaign with McMaster.

South Carolina’s lieutenant governor, state treasurer, attorney general and three of its six Republican U.S. House members all back Trump.

The only congressman to endorse Haley is Rep. Ralph Norman, a longtime ally.

Towing firm to repay Marines after cars repossessed, sold

By J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

A North Carolina tow-truck operator must pay almost \$67,000 to settle claims that he repossessed and sold vehicles owned by Marines deployed to Okinawa and elsewhere overseas, according to federal prosecutors.

Billy Joe Goines, owner of Goines Towing and Recovery outside Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, N.C., agreed to the reimbursement amount in a settlement, court documents filed Tuesday said.

He will also forgive storage fees charged to the eight Marines and take training on the legal rights of military personnel.

“Debt collectors and towing companies shouldn’t be allowed to take and sell (service members’) property behind their backs,” U.S. Attorney Michael Easley said in a statement Tuesday.

The federal government sued Goines and his company in March based on claims he had thwarted legal protections for deployed service members.

The case is the first brought by the United States against a

towing company under a section of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act that requires them to submit an affidavit as to whether the owner of a repossessed vehicle is in the military, the Justice Department said Tuesday.

The law intends to give troops their day in court, even if they are not physically present in the country because of deployments or military service.

Prior to asking for a court judgment to sell a vehicle, repo companies are supposed to check whether its owner is in the military.

If so, the court cannot authorize a sale until it appoints a lawyer to represent the interests of the service member.

Goines told the court that he and his employees couldn’t determine that, even when they had towed the vehicle from the parking lot of a barracks on the base.

In one instance, the company filed an affidavit saying it could not tell whether the owner of a Toyota FJ Cruiser was in the military, despite the fact that the owner had called to say he was deployed to Okinawa, according to court documents.

Americans upped spending for holidays

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Holiday sales rose this year and spending remained resilient during the shopping season even with Americans wrestling with higher prices in some areas and other financial worries, according to the latest measure.

Holiday sales from the beginning of November through Christmas Eve climbed 3.1%, a slower pace than the 7.6% increase from a year earlier, according to Mastercard SpendingPulse, which tracks all kinds of payments including cash and debit cards.

This year's sales are more in line with what is typical during the holiday season, however, after a surge in spending last year during the same period.

"This holiday season, the consumer showed up, spending in a deliberate manner" said Michelle Meyer, Chief Economist, Mastercard Economics Insti-

tute. "The economic backdrop remains favorable with healthy job creation and easing inflation pressures, empowering consumers to seek the goods and experiences they value most."

The number of people seeking unemployment benefits has remained very low by historical standards and employers are still having a hard time finding enough workers.

Still, sales growth was a bit lower than the 3.7% increase Mastercard SpendingPulse had projected in September. The data released Tuesday excludes the automotive industry and is not adjusted for inflation.

Clothing sales rose 2.4%, though jewelry sales fell 2% and electronics dipped roughly 0.4%. Online sales jumped 6.3% from a year ago and in-person spending rose a modest 2.2%.

Consumer spending accounts for nearly 70% of U.S. economic activity and economists careful-

ly monitor how Americans spend, particularly during the holidays, to gauge how they're feeling financially.

There had been rising concern leading up to the holiday about the willingness of Americans to spend because of elevated prices for daily necessities at a time that savings have fallen and credit card delinquencies have ticked higher. In response, retailers pushed discounts on holiday merchandise earlier in October compared with a year ago. They also took a cautious approach on how much inventory to order after getting stung with overstuffed warehouses last year.

The latest report on the Federal Reserve's favored inflation gauge, issued Friday, shows prices are easing. But costs remain still higher at restaurants, car shops, or for things like rent. Americans, however, unexpectedly picked up their spending

from October to November as the holiday season kicked off, underscoring their spending power in the face of higher costs.

A broader picture of how Americans spent their money arrives next month when the National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, releases its combined two-month statistics based on November-December sales figures from the Commerce Department. The trade group expects holiday expects U.S. holiday sales will rise 3% to 4%. That's lower than last year's 5.4% growth but again, more consistent with typical holiday spending, which rose 3.6% between 2010 and 2019 before the pandemic skewed numbers.

Industry analysts will dissect the fourth-quarter financial performance from major retailers when they release that data in February.

Conviction of former Rep. Fortenberry thrown out

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — An appellate court on Tuesday reversed a 2022 federal conviction against former Rep. Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska, ruling that he should not have been tried in Los Angeles.

Fortenberry was convicted in March 2022 on charges that he lied to federal authorities about an illegal \$30,000 contribution

to his campaign from a foreign billionaire at a 2016 Los Angeles fundraiser. He resigned his seat days later following pressure from congressional leaders and Nebraska's GOP governor.

In its Tuesday ruling, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit wrote that the trial venue of Los Angeles was improper because Fortenberry made false statements during interviews

with federal agents at his home in Lincoln, Neb., and in his lawyer's office in Washington.

"Fortenberry's convictions are reversed so that he may be retried, if at all, in a proper venue," the decision said.

A federal jury in Los Angeles found the nine-term Republican guilty of concealing information and two counts of making false statements to author-

ities. He vowed to appeal from the courthouse steps.

Fortenberry and his wife, Celeste Fortenberry, praised the court's decision.

"We are gratified by the Ninth Circuit's decision," Jeff Fortenberry said in a statement. "Celeste and I would like to thank everyone who has stood by us and supported us with their kindness and friendship."

Six people arrested during pro-Palestinian protest

New York Daily News

Six people were arrested, including a pair of relatives, when pro-Palestinian protesters clashed with police near the Rockefeller Christmas tree in Midtown Manhattan on Christmas Day, police said Tuesday.

"Christmas is canceled!" protesters screamed as they

marched around the tree on Rockefeller Plaza then headed to Grand Central Station and Union Square.

There were several tense moments with cops and protesters clashing and shoving each other. The scheduled protest began outside the News Corp building on Sixth Ave. at 1:50 p.m. Mon-

day but demonstrators soon began to move.

Protesters were recorded blocking traffic en masse as they took to the streets and headed toward Grand Central.

Six people were taken into custody during the six-hour protest including a 50-year-old Elder Mohammed and his 24-

year-old relative Adam Elder Mohammed, who were both charged with resisting arrest, obstruction of government administration and disorderly conduct.

Others taken into custody included two women, ages 19 and 23, both charged with making graffiti.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Dentist sued over 8 crowns, 4 root canals

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A patient is suing her Eden Prairie dentist after he performed eight dental crowns, four root canals and 20 fillings in a single visit, according to a malpractice lawsuit.

Kathleen Wilson of Minneapolis says she received negligent treatment from Dr. Kevin Mollidrem, of Mollidrem Family Dentistry, in July 2020 that caused significant injuries. Her civil action, filed ahead of the holiday weekend in Hennepin County District Court, accuses Mollidrem of grossly exceeding the safe dosage of anesthesia and falsifying medical records to show he didn't give Wilson an unsafe dosage.

Mollidrem did not respond to messages seeking a response to the accusations. He was served a summons in person at his office on Dec. 20. Wilson's attorney, Nathaniel Weimer with the Minneapolis personal injury law firm Tewksbury & Kerfeld, also didn't respond to requests for comment.

Rare white rhino born at Zoo Atlanta

GA ATLANTA — Zoo Atlanta received a rather large delivery on Christmas Eve: a southern white rhinoceros calf.

Mother Kiazi and her newborn are both doing well, the zoo announced Monday.

Only one other rhino calf — an eastern black rhino born in 2013 — has been born at the zoo in its 134 years.

Southern white rhinos are the largest of the five rhino species,

with newborns weighing 100 to 150 pounds at birth. White rhino pregnancies are also among the animal kingdom's longest, averaging anywhere between 16 and 18 months.

The species is classified as Near Threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Southern white rhinos are especially vulnerable because they often travel in herds in the wild, making them easy targets for poachers who want their horns.

NYC synagogues receive hoax bomb threats

NY NEW YORK — The NYPD is investigating disturbing bomb threats emailed to synagogues throughout the city on Christmas Eve Day, though the messages appear to be a hoax, police said Sunday.

Police described the threat as "not credible" but added, "we will continue to deploy resources to houses of worship around the city."

Sunday's threats came amid an alarming spike in antisemitic incidents in the city and beyond since the Israel-Hamas war began Oct. 7.

Councilwoman Inna Vernikov, R-Brooklyn, demanded an investigation.

"Making bomb threats, even if false, is a crime and who ever is responsible must be arrested and held accountable," she tweeted.

Beyonce's childhood home catches fire

TX HOUSTON — The childhood home of Beyonce caught fire early on

Christmas morning, though the family living there escaped safely.

The fire was reported at about 2 a.m. Monday and the Houston Fire Department arrived on the scene of the two-story brick house within three to five minutes, the Houston Chronicle reported.

Beyonce Knowles' family bought the home on the 2400 block of Rosedale in 1982 and Beyonce lived there until she was 5 years old.

She was seen taking photos of the property when she was in her hometown for her Renaissance World Tour.

The home in the historic Riverside Terrace neighborhood was built in 1946.

Lawsuits claim gun restrictions violate law

NE OMAHA — Nebraska's two largest cities are violating a new state gun law by prohibiting them from public places such as parks, according to two recent lawsuits.

The Liberty Justice Center filed lawsuits Dec. 18 challenging orders issued by the mayors of Omaha and Lincoln. The lawsuits allege that the orders are in violation of a new state gun law. The suits were filed on behalf of the Nebraska Firearms Owners Association.

State lawmakers in April passed a bill allowing people to carry concealed guns across the state without a permit and without the need to complete a gun safety course. It also said that it overrides stricter local laws, like those in Omaha and Lincoln.

The lawsuits state that despite the new law, Omaha

Mayor Jean Stothert and Lincoln Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird issued executive orders banning all firearms from city property, including parks and sidewalks. The suits said the Omaha City Council also banned "ghost gun" parts and manufacturing, and the Lincoln City Council has not repealed ordinances regulating weapons.

6-year-old boy put on wrong Christmas flight

FL FORT MYERS — A 6-year-old boy who left on a flight for the Christmas holiday to visit his grandmother in southwest Florida instead was put on the wrong plane and ended up 160 miles away in Orlando, Fla.

When the grandmother, Maria Ramos, showed up Thursday at Southwest Florida International Airport in Fort Myers to greet her grandson who was flying for the first time from Philadelphia, she was told he wasn't on the Spirit Airlines flight.

"I ran inside the plane to the flight attendant and I asked her, 'Where's my grandson? He was handed over to you at Philadelphia?' She said, 'No, I had no kids with me,'" Ramos told WINK News.

She then got a call from her grandson from the airport in Orlando, telling her that he landed.

In a statement, Spirit Airlines said the boy was under the care and supervision of an airlines employee the entire time, even though he was incorrectly boarded on a flight to Orlando. Once the mistake was discovered, the airlines let the family know, the statement said.

— From Associated Press



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Pistons set mark with 27th straight loss

Associated Press

DETROIT — The Detroit Pistons have made NBA history.

Detroit became the league's first team to lose 27 straight games in a season, falling 118-112 to the Brooklyn Nets on Tuesday night.

"Is it heavy? Yeah, I would imagine for everybody it is," said Pistons first-year coach Monty Williams, a former NBA coach of the year. "Nobody wants this kind of thing attached to them.

"I was brought in here to change this thing. It's probably the most on me than anybody. Players are playing their hearts out. I got to get them in a position where they don't feel tight or heavy."

The Nets beat the Pistons on Saturday in Brooklyn, handing them their 26th consecutive defeat to match the 2010-11 Cleveland Cavaliers and 2013-14 Philadelphia 76ers for the most losses in a row within one season.

Detroit no longer shares the unwanted mark.

Next up is the overall record

of 28 straight losses, set by the Philadelphia 76ers from late in the 2014-15 season through early 2015-16.

At least matching the record seems likely with a game Thursday night against the NBA-leading Boston Celtics on the road.

The game against Brooklyn, like the season, started with some hope.

Detroit led 9-1 and had a 14-point lead in the first quarter before poor shooting, defense coupled with turnovers paved the way for Brooklyn to extend the Motor City's misery.

The Nets outscored the Pistons by 13 in the second quarter to lead 61-54 at halftime. Cam Johnson scored 24 points and Mikal Bridges added 21. Nic Claxton and Day'Ron Sharpe each added double-doubles for Brooklyn, which beat the Pistons for the second straight game.

Cade Cunningham scored 18 of his 41 points in the third quarter and made a 3-pointer early in the fourth to give Detroit a 97-92 lead they couldn't maintain.

Just as fans who nearly filled

Little Caesars Arena started cheering with passion heard at a playoff game, the Nets went on a 13-0 run to take the lead for good.

"I've been through tough playoff losses, and this is relative to that," said Williams, who led Phoenix and New Orleans to playoff appearances. "When you lose a playoff game, when you get eliminated, this kind of feels like that."

Cunningham did his part to give the team a shot to finally win, but he didn't have much help and even he had a turnover late in the game that appeared to be unforced.

"A lot of this load is trusted to me, on the court and in the locker room," Cunningham said. "Every day, I try to lead the squad, and I haven't been successful at that — 2-28. It's only right that I speak for it and be the face of it."

The No. 1 pick overall from the 2021 NBA draft had a message for his teammates in the locker room after the latest loss.

"Don't jump off the boat," he said. "We've got to stay together. Right now is the easiest time to

stand off and be on your own, but we need to continue to lean on each other and continue to push each other, and hold each other accountable more than ever now."

Bojan Bogdanovic did score 23 points before fouling out and after leaving Cam Johnson wide open for a 3-pointer that gave Brooklyn a six-point lead with 1:40 to go.

"We had a few breakdowns," Williams said. "It just cost us."

Jaden Ivey, the No. 5 pick overall last year, missed 9 of 12 shots as the Nets backed off him and welcomed the guard to shoot.

In the final minute, fed-up fans started to chant, "Sell the team! Sell the team!" though Pistons owner Tom Gores was not in the building to hear it.

Gores recently spoke with reporters remotely, and passed along his apologies to the fans for the disappointing season while standing by Williams and general manager Troy Weaver.

"Change is coming," he said. "I'm just saying in terms of Monty, Troy, they'll be in place."

Thunder hit 18 3-pointers in rout of Timberwolves

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 34 points, Jalen Williams added 21 and the Oklahoma City Thunder made 18 shots from 3-point range Tuesday night in a 129-106 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Chet Holmgren and Lu Dort each added 20 points for the Thunder (19-9), who went 18 for 39 (46.2%) on 3s and forced 24 Minnesota turnovers that led to 23 points.

"I think we played together on both ends of the floor, for the most part," said Gilgeous-Alexander, who finished 14 of 19 from the field and dished out a team-high nine assists. "When we do that and trust that, things go our

way, usually."

Dort was 5 of 6 from beyond the arc. Oklahoma City shot 60.5% from the field and led by as many as 25 in the second half of its sixth victory in eight games.

Grizzlies 116, Pelicans 115 (OT): Ja Morant scored 31 points and visiting Memphis defeated New Orleans in overtime to improve to 4-0 since Morant made his season debut in New Orleans a week earlier.

Desmond Bane scored 27, including a 3 in the final minute of regulation that helped Memphis erase a 15-point, second-half deficit.

Magic 127, Wizards 119: Franz Wagner had 28 points, nine assists, and eight rebounds,

rookie Anthony Black scored a career-high 23 points and visiting Orlando beat Washington.

Paolo Banchero overcame a slow start to finish with 24 points and eight assists.

Trail Blazers 130, Kings 113: Anfernee Simons scored 29 points to lead host Portland over Sacramento.

Duop Reath added a career-high 25 points and grabbed nine rebounds for the Blazers.

Pacers 123, Rockets 117: Tyrese Haliburton had 33 points and 10 assists and hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with a minute left to lead visiting Indiana over Houston, snapping a three-game losing streak.

Bulls 118, Hawks 113: Andre Drummond had season highs of

24 points and 25 rebounds in his first start of the season, DeMar DeRozan scored 25 points and host Chicago cooled off Atlanta's Trae Young somewhat in beating the Hawks.

Young finished with 21 points and 13 assists.

Jazz 130, Spurs 118: Lauri Markkanen had 31 points and 12 rebounds, and visiting Utah overcame a slow start to beat San Antonio, which has lost five straight since snapping a franchise-worst 18-game losing streak.

Clippers 113, Hornets 104: James Harden scored 20 of his 29 points in the first half and host Los Angeles rallied for a victory over Charlotte to end a two-game losing streak.

Freshman Arnold takes over for Sooners

Associated Press

NORMAN, Okla. — After all the hype, the Jackson Arnold era is set to begin at Oklahoma.

It came a bit earlier than expected. Dillon Gabriel, the first-team Associated Press All-Big 12 quarterback, has transferred from Oklahoma to Oregon. That left Arnold — a five-star true freshman — as the new starter heading into No. 12 Oklahoma's Alamo Bowl matchup with No. 14 Arizona on Thursday.

In 2022, Arnold was the Gatorade National Player of the Year and MVP of the Elite 11 quarterback competition. He enrolled at Oklahoma in January and participated in spring ball, helping him earn the spot as Gabriel's backup. Sooners fans have clamored to see more of him, and now they'll get a full dose of perhaps the next great player at a program that has featured Gabriel, Heisman winners Baker Mayfield and Kyler Murray, Jalen Hurts, Spencer Rattler and Caleb Williams in recent years.

Gabriel has been one of the

most productive quarterbacks in FBS history, yet the Sooners have carried on as usual in his absence with Arnold next in line.

"Having the coaches' trust is a huge thing for me, and knowing that the coaches are trusting of me to go out and perform my best and they're not changing the game plan whatsoever — we're running the same stuff," Arnold said. "We would've run the same stuff if Dillon was here, too, so just that trust they have in me is really special to me."

In limited action, Arnold has completed 75% of his passes, demonstrating exceptional accuracy while running and scrambling effectively.

"I've watched Jackson since he's been here," Oklahoma receiver Jalil Farooq said. "I've watched him grow up. Him stepping up in the room — I'm very excited to see him play in the bowl game. I can't wait until he showcases his talent. He's a great dude, a great leader. He can sling it."

Arnold helped the Sooners beat BYU after Gabriel was knocked out of the game in the first half. With Oklahoma leading 31-24 in the fourth quarter and trying to hold onto the lead, Arnold directed a possession that ran the final 5:08 off the clock. His eight-yard completion for Farooq on a third-and-eight effectively sealed the game.

"I would say that the No. 1 thing that stands out for me as I watch him and his growth is just his consistency," Oklahoma coach Brent Venables said after Arnold's performance against BYU. "He's never too high, never too low. He's just always the same guy every day. Likes to compete, makes the most of his opportunity, values his opportunity, respects the game and what it takes to develop. So he's got great work ethic. And he understands as much as anybody you get what you earn."

Arnold will be working with a new offensive coordinator. Oklahoma promoted Seth Littrell

from offensive analyst after Jeff Lebby left to become Mississippi State's head coach.

"I've been close with coach Littrell since he got here, a constant communication since he's got here," Arnold said. "He's helped me develop as a player, even while not in the OC role. It's been super great to get to know him, and I'm super happy he's in the OC role now."

The Sooners have also promoted tight ends coach Joe Jon Finley to co-offensive coordinator. Finley will continue to coach tight ends and will play an increased role in offensive game-planning and oversight.

Venables sees benefits in ushering in a new quarterback and offensive coaches ahead of a bowl game and before joining the Southeastern Conference next year.

"You have a small amount of time," Venables said. "In a perfect world you'd have more time. But that's just not where college football — we're not the only team. It's across the country. So we'll adjust and adapt."

Taylor's big day leads Minnesota in Quick Lane Bowl

Associated Press

DETROIT — Freshman Darinus Taylor returned from a leg injury to rush for a career-high 208 yards, and Minnesota beat Bowling Green 30-24 in the Quick Lane Bowl on Tuesday.

Minnesota (6-7), which was selected for the bowl because it had the best Academic Progress Rate among five-win teams, won its seventh consecutive bowl game overall and fifth in a row under coach P.J. Fleck.

Taylor, who had missed the Gophers' previous five games, had 35 carries, including a 17-yard touchdown run midway through the fourth quarter that gave Minnesota a 30-17 lead.

Taylor's return was crucial for Minnesota, which had senior Cole Kramer making his first ca-

reer start at quarterback after Athan Kaliakmanis entered the transfer portal. Kramer went 8-of-16 passing for just 26 yards, but he came through in the red zone, throwing for two touchdowns and running for another.

Conor Bazelak threw for two scores and ran for one for Bowling Green (7-6), which lost the Quick Lane Bowl for the second year in a row.

Guaranteed Rate Bowl

Kansas 49, UNLV 36: At Phoenix, Jason Bean threw for 449 yards and all six of his touchdown passes to two receivers, and the penalty-plagued Jayhawks outlasted the Runnin Rebels.

Kansas (9-4), ranked 14th nationally for fewest penalties with

55 during the regular season, was flagged 18 times for 210 yards, including four personal fouls.

The Jayhawks made up for it with an explosive offense that produced 591 total yards.

Luke Grimm had four catches for 160 yards and three touchdowns. Lawrence Arnold added six catches for 132 yards and three more scores, giving Kansas two receivers with three touchdowns in a game for the first time in program history.

Bean finished 19 of 28 and overcame two interceptions in the third quarter to lead Kansas to its first postseason win since the 2008 Insight Bowl, also in Phoenix.

Jayden Maiava threw two touchdown passes in the third

quarter to rally UNLV (9-5) nearly all the way back from a 21-point deficit.

First Responder Bowl

Texas State 45, Rice 21: At Dallas, linebacker Brian Holloway returned two interceptions for touchdowns, Jahmyl Jeter ran for three scores and the Bobcats won their first bowl appearance as an FBS program.

Holloway had a 36-yard pick-6 early in the second quarter and returned his second interception 48 yards for a TD in the third that made it 38-21. Both picks came against AJ Padgett, who was intercepted three times. Shawqi Itraish relieved Padgett in the fourth quarter and threw two more. Texas State forced seven turnovers.

Grant-Foster overcomes near-death events

Associated Press

PHOENIX — As a child surrounded by a dark world of gangs, drugs and crime, Tyon Grant-Foster chose the light of a basketball court.

When two near-death experiences threatened to take away the game he loved most, Grant-Foster leaned into his faith, the winding path landing him in a starring role at Grand Canyon University.

“You never question God’s path he has for you because everyone’s path is different,” Grant-Foster said. “So just because my path is hard and for other people it isn’t doesn’t mean that it’s less important or mean that you give up. I had hard times, but it’s what makes me who I am today.”

Grant-Foster’s impact has been massive in his short time at Grand Canyon.

The 6-foot-7 senior guard’s 20.9 points per game rank 13th nationally, and he’s second on the team with 6.0 rebounds. With Grant-Foster leading the way, the Antelopes beat then-No. 25 San Diego State on Dec. 5 for the program’s first win over a ranked opponent and, at 10-1, they are off to their best start in 28 years.

“He’s a very gifted basketball player and has raised the level of our team, given us an elite

scoring option,” Grand Canyon coach Bryce Drew said. “The thing that we have really enjoyed is just his appreciation for the game and just the joy he brings just in life in general.”

Grant-Foster grew up in Kansas City, Kan., where the street life could have overtaken him. He and his three younger brothers, with the guidance of their parents, steered around the temptations to thumping of a basketball.

The long, athletic guard had game from an early age. He starred at Schlagle High School and was the No. 2 junior college transfer recruit after a season at Indian Hills Community College, according to the 247 Sports composite.

Blueblood Kansas and Hall of Fame coach Bill Self came calling, offering a potential step up in Grant-Foster’s trajectory. He instead played a limited role on a talented roster and opted to enter the transfer portal.

Grant-Foster ended up at DePaul, ready to start a new chapter of his basketball life.

Real life interrupted to rewrite the narrative.

Grant-Foster hit a last-second 3-pointer before halftime of his first game and joyfully ran off the court. Joy turned to terror when Grant-Foster collapsed in the Blue Demons’

locker room.

Foaming at the mouth, he had to be resuscitated and was revived three more times on the way to the hospital.

Grant-Foster spent the next 10 days in the hospital undergoing a series of tests, with no clear-cut diagnosis, a defibrillator inserted in his chest.

As the months went by, Grant-Foster began to think the collapse was an anomaly. He felt fine and decided to play a pickup game back at home, former Kansas and NBA guard Christian Braun among the players at the community center gym.

Grant-Foster collapsed again, putting his basketball future in doubt.

The easy path would have been to give up, to succumb to tough streets that had snuffed out many dreams long before his.

Relying on family, friends and faith, Grant-Foster chose to forge ahead. Though believing he would play again, he also began looking at a life without playing basketball, working as a referee while looking into a job as a graduate assistant at DePaul.

“He had his down days, but the thing with Tyon is you would never really know,” said Reese Holliday, Grant-Foster’s train-

er, mentor and friend. “He handled it better than most people would. He was upbeat, he was positive most of the time and had a good outlook on things.”

Grant-Foster’s perseverance paid off 16 months later, when his doctor gave the good news: He was cleared to play again.

Grant-Foster entered the transfer portal, but found most schools were reluctant to sign someone with a heart condition who hadn’t played in two years.

The one school that was interested turned out to be the perfect landing spot.

Not only was Grand Canyon a program on the rise — two NCAA Tournament appearances in three years — it was a Christian school in a city where Grant-Foster’s cousin, Ish Wainright, was playing for the NBA’s Phoenix Suns at the time.

The Antelopes also had a coach who could relate to Grant-Foster’s persistence.

Drew had a heart condition as a child and never let it slow him down, hitting one of the most memorable shots in NCAA Tournament history for Valparaiso in 1998 before playing six NBA seasons.

“When you when your life is so fragile as it was in those moments for him, I think it does make you evaluate life more differently,” Drew said.

Siemian gets another start at QB for Jets vs. Browns

Associated Press

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — Trevor Siemian celebrated his 32nd birthday by getting the call to start again for the New York Jets.

Zach Wilson remained in the concussion protocol Tuesday and coach Robert Saleh announced Siemian will be under center for the second consecutive game when the Jets face the Browns in Cleveland on Thursday night.

Siemian was 27-for-49 for 217 yards with a touchdown pass to Jason Brownlee and an interception in New York’s 30-28 victory over Washington on Sunday. He was 3 for 5 for 26 yards while helping lead the Jets on their final drive that was capped by Greg Zuerlein’s win-

ning 54-yard field goal.

“Trev did some nice things in the game,” Saleh said. “He’s got so much play time under his belt, so it was great to just have a conversation with him and his recognition that he could’ve even done better. So, obviously, it is a short week but he’ll prepare the way he needs to.”

Wilson suffered a concussion in the first half of New York’s 30-0 loss at Miami last Sunday. He hasn’t practiced since and it’s uncertain if he’ll be cleared to play in the season finale at New England on Jan. 7.

“We’ll see,” Saleh said. “The most important thing is for him to get rid of all these symptoms and him progressing. That’s first and

foremost, obviously.”

For now, the offense will be led by Siemian, who helped the Jets score 17 points in the first quarter against Washington. It was New York’s biggest opening quarter since it also had 17 in a win over Pittsburgh in 2014. But the offense stalled a bit in the second half, when the Commanders rallied to erase a 20-point deficit and briefly took the lead before Zuerlein’s winner.

“When it was good, it was good,” Siemian said. “We had a good rhythm in the first half, obviously had some short fields, but like everyone else, we’re just trying to find that consistency and stay in that flow. And if we do that, we have a chance.”