

Zumwalt first to get hypersonic missiles

Associated Press

The U.S. Navy is transforming a costly flub into a potent weapon with the first shipborne hypersonic weapon, which is being retrofitted aboard the first of its three stealthy destroyers.

The USS Zumwalt is at a Mississippi shipyard, where workers have installed missile tubes that replace twin turrets from a gun system that was never activated because it was too expensive. Once the system is complete, the Zumwalt will provide a platform for conducting fast, precision strikes from greater distances, adding to the usefulness of the warship.

"It was a costly blunder. But the Navy could take victory from the jaws of defeat here, and get some utility out of them by making them into a hypersonic platform," said Bryan Clark, a defense analyst at the Hudson Institute.

The United States has had several types of hypersonic weapons in development for the past two decades, but re-

cent tests by Russia and China have added pressure to the U.S. military to hasten their production.

Hypersonic weapons travel beyond Mach 5, five times the speed of sound, with added maneuverability making them harder to shoot down.

One of the U.S. programs in development and planned for the Zumwalt is the "Conventional Prompt Strike." It would launch like a ballistic missile and then release a hypersonic glide vehicle that would travel at speeds seven to eight times faster than the speed of sound before hitting the target. The weapon system is being developed jointly by the Navy and Army.

Each of the Zumwalt-class destroyers would be equipped with four missile tubes, each with three of the missiles for a total of 12 weapons per ship.

In choosing the Zumwalt, the Navy is attempting to add to the usefulness of a \$7.5 billion warship that is considered by critics to be an expensive mistake

despite serving as a test platform for multiple innovations.

The Zumwalt was envisioned as providing land-attack capability with an Advanced Gun System with rocket-assisted projectiles to open the way for Marines to charge ashore. But the system featuring 155 mm guns hidden in stealthy turrets was canceled because each of the rocket-assisted projectiles cost between \$800,000 and \$1 million.

Despite the stain on its reputation, the three Zumwalt-class destroyers remain the Navy's most advanced surface warship in terms of new technologies. Those innovations include electric propulsion, an angular shape to minimize radar signature, an unconventional wave-piercing hull, automated fire and damage control and a composite deckhouse that hides radar and other sensors.

The Zumwalt arrived at the Huntington Ingalls Industries shipyard in Pascagoula, Miss., in August 2023 and was removed from the water for the

complex work of integrating the new weapon system. It is due to be undocked this week in preparation for the next round of tests and its return to the fleet, shipyard spokeswoman Kimberly Aguillard said.

A hypersonic weapon was successfully tested over the summer. The Navy wants to begin testing the system aboard the Zumwalt in 2027 or 2028.

The U.S. weapon system will come at a steep price. It would cost nearly \$18 billion to buy 300 of the weapons and maintain them over 20 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Critics have said there is too little bang for the buck.

"This particular missile costs more than a dozen tanks. All it gets you is a precise, non-nuclear explosion, some place far far away. Is it really worth the money? The answer is most of the time the missile costs much more than any target you can destroy with it," said Loren Thompson, a longtime military analyst in Washington, D.C.

Cost-cutter-to-be Musk calls F-35 a waste of money

*Fort Worth (Texas)
Star-Telegram*

The person soon to be in charge of cutting federal spending is blasting Lockheed Martin's F-35.

Elon Musk, the man behind Tesla and SpaceX, said last week on X that the United States should pull the plug on the jet.

"Some US weapons systems are good, albeit overpriced, but please, in the name of all that is holy, let us stop the worst military value for money in history that is the F-35 program!" the

billionaire wrote.

The comment was one of several criticisms Musk made of the fighter, which is expected to cost the federal government more than \$2 trillion over its lifespan, according to Defense News.

President-elect Donald Trump has tapped Musk and fellow billionaire Vivek Ramaswamy to head up his new Department of Government Efficiency, aka DOGE. They will pave the way for Trump's administration to "dismantle Gov-

ernment Bureaucracy, slash excess regulations, cut wasteful expenditures and restructure Federal Agencies," Trump said in a statement.

Musk ultimately aims to cut \$2 trillion in annual federal spending, but in an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*, he and Ramaswamy wrote that they plan to start with cutting \$500 billion in federal spending that is not authorized by Congress.

Musk shared a video that appears to show a large group of drones made by China, caption-

ing the post, "Meanwhile, some idiots are still building manned fighter jets like the F-35."

In another post on Nov. 25, Musk wrote: "The F-35 design was broken at the requirements level, because it was required to be too many things to too many people. This made it an expensive & complex jack of all trades, master of none. Success was never in the set of possible outcomes. And manned fighter jets are obsolete in the age of drones anyway. Will just get pilots killed."

Marine helo unit trains from sea-base ship

By BRIAN McELHINEY
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps recently conducted its first live-fire training with a full detachment of helicopters operating from a sea-base ship near Okinawa, showcasing the flexibility of its expeditionary advanced base operations concept.

About 100 members of Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 165 (Reinforced) — part of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit out of Camp Pendleton, Calif. — carried out the exercises on Sept. 25 and Oct. 13.

Using UH-1Y Venoms and AH-1Z Vipers, the Marines launched day and night sorties from the USS Miguel Keith near Irisuna Jima, an uninhabited island in Okinawa prefecture, the Marines announced Oct. 17.

On each training day, four hel-

icopters carried out 18 sorties, employing live ordnance, including 2.75-inch rockets, 20 mm semi-armor-piercing high-explosive incendiary rounds and .50-caliber and 7.62 mm weapons, according to the release.

"We validated, broadly speaking, the ability to deploy H-1s on [expeditionary sea bases] for longer durations," Capt. Brian Tuthill, a 15th MEU spokesman, said by phone Nov. 5.

The full detachment comprises eight helicopters, Lt. Col. Michael Harper, the H-1 officer in charge, said during a Nov. 5 phone interview from aboard the USS Boxer, an amphibious assault ship.

During the training, the Miguel Keith served as a "spoke" in the Marines Corps' hub-spoke-node operational model, supporting the Boxer — the head-

quarters, or "hub." Deploying helicopters from the Miguel Keith extended their range, enabling missions up to 100 miles away without refueling, Harper said.

"In our case we can expand — from an operational sense — hundreds of miles away from our home ship," he said.

The training took place in the Philippine Sea and near Palawan Island in the Philippines. The Boxer returned to its home port at Camp Pendleton on Sunday.

The Venom utility helicopter, manufactured by Bell, can perform close air support, search-and-rescue, casualty evacuation and combat-assault missions. Its armaments include a variety of rockets and machine guns.

The Viper, also made by Bell, offers close air support, anti-ar-

mor, anti-air, armed reconnaissance and fire-support coordination capabilities.

The training aligns with the Marine Corps' Force Design 2030 plan, which emphasizes expeditionary advanced base operations. These tactics involve mobile, distributed units operating within enemy missile ranges to seize islands, disrupt enemy operations and secure maritime dominance.

"When we say 'expeditionary,' part of that means being able to react quickly and get to places quickly," Harper said.

"The other aspect is being able to distribute not just for a short amount of time, but for a sustained amount of time. And so, using these newer or different forms of ships to move Marine forces and support Marine forces is the key."

Zelenskyy: NATO offer must be for all of Ukraine

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — An offer of NATO membership to territory under Kyiv's control would end "the hot stage of the war" in Ukraine, but any proposal to join the military alliance should be extended to all parts of the country that fall under internationally recognized borders, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a broadcast interview.

Zelenskyy's remarks on Friday signaled a possible way forward to the difficult path Ukraine faces to future NATO membership. At their summit in Washington in July, the 32 members declared Ukraine on an "irreversible" path to membership. However, one obstacle to moving forward has been the view that Ukraine's borders would need to be clearly demarcated before it could join so that there can be no mistaking

where NATO's pact of mutual defense would come into effect.

"You can't give an invitation to just one part of a country," Zelenskyy said in an excerpt of the interview with Sky News. "Why? Because thus you would recognize that Ukraine is only that territory of Ukraine and the other one is Russia."

Since the start of the war in 2022, Russia has been expending huge amounts of weaponry and human life to make small-but-steady territorial gains to the nearly one-fifth of Ukraine it already controls.

"If we want to stop the hot stage of the war, we should take under the NATO umbrella the territory of Ukraine that we have under our control. That's what we need to do, fast. And then Ukraine can get back the other part of its territory diplomatically," he said.

Putin OKs record defense spending; EU team in Kyiv

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian President Vladimir Putin approved budget plans, raising 2025 military spending to record levels as Moscow seeks to prevail in the war in Ukraine.

Around 32.5% of the budget posted on a government website Sunday has been allocated for national defense, amounting to 13.5 trillion rubles (over \$145 billion), up from a reported 28.3% this year.

Lawmakers in both houses of the Russian parliament, the State Duma and Federation Council, had already approved the plans in the past 10 days.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine since February 2022 has drained the resources of both sides. Kyiv has been getting billions of dollars in help from its Western allies, but Russia's

forces are bigger and better equipped, and in recent months the Russian army has gradually been pushing Ukrainian troops backward in eastern areas.

New European Council President Antonio Costa and European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas arrived in Kyiv on Sunday, marking their first day in office with a strong message of support for Ukraine. Their visit comes as doubts are deepening over what Kyiv can expect from a new U.S. administration led by Donald Trump.

"From day one of the war, the EU has stood by the side of Ukraine," Costa posted on X, together with a photo of himself, Kallas and EU enlargement chief Marta Kos. "From day one of our mandate, we are reaffirming our unwavering support to the Ukrainian people."

'Deep state' critic Patel picked to lead FBI

Bloomberg News

Donald Trump tapped Kash Patel to be FBI director, nominating a loyalist to lead the chief U.S. law enforcement agency — which the president-elect has long derided as corrupt.

Patel rose to prominence expressing outrage over the agency's investigation into whether Trump's campaign conspired with Russia to interfere in the 2016 presidential election. If confirmed, Patel would replace Christopher Wray, who was chosen by Trump in his first term as president.

In an announcement on his Truth Social network, Trump called Patel "a brilliant lawyer, investigator, and 'America

First' fighter" who played a "pivotal role in uncovering the Russia, Russia, Russia Hoax."

As the leading U.S. law enforcement agency, the bureau has been at the center of the highest-profile investigations related to the president-elect. Trump has pledged a drastic overhaul, claiming the Federal Bureau of Investigation carried out politically motivated probes against him and his allies.

After he left the White House, FBI agents raided Trump's Florida resort to seize classified documents, probed his efforts to overturn the 2020 election results and investigated people who stormed the U.S. Capitol in support of him.

The bureau investigates cases from cyberattacks and white-collar crime, to murder and allegations of sexual misconduct.

"This FBI will end the growing crime epidemic in America, dismantle the migrant criminal gangs and stop the evil scourge of human and drug trafficking across the Border," Trump said Saturday.

Patel is also a critic of government agencies for actions that he has said unfairly target Republicans. In his book "Government Gangsters" — which Trump has called a "blueprint to take back the White House" — Patel endorsed calls to fire federal government employees who undermine the

president's agenda.

"We must identify the people in government that are crippling our constitutional republic," Patel told the Conservative Political Action Conference in July.

In Trump's first administration, Patel held a number of stopgap national security positions, including chief of staff to Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller in the final months of Trump's White House term.

Patel also served as senior director for counterterrorism at the National Security Council and as a senior adviser to Acting Director of National Intelligence Richard Grenell.

Storm blankets parts of US with more snow

Associated Press

LOWVILLE, N.Y. — Heavy snowfall and numbing temperatures kept parts of the United States in a deep freeze Sunday as the Thanksgiving holiday weekend draws to a close. Despite the Arctic-type weather, snowmobilers and skiers are reveling in their respective wintry terrains, and weather forecasters gave possible good news ahead of the NFL game in Buffalo.

In the remote Tug Hill region of upstate New York, where lake-effect snow off Lake Ontario can dump several feet of snow at a time, there was up to 46 inches in the Barnes Corners area.

"We just keep digging out," Kevin Tyo, a local businessman, said Sunday "We were out all day yesterday, plowing."

Like many locals, he has a plow attached to the front of his truck for much of the winter, "and I have a tractor with a bucket, and a snowblower."

In Buffalo, officials with the NFL's Bills had sought stadium snow shovelers for the season, in-

cluding ahead of Sunday night's game against the San Francisco 49ers. The team said it would pay \$20 per hour and provide food and hot drinks.

A lake-effect storm began hitting the area Saturday near the Bills' stadium in Orchard Park, N.Y. Snow was continuing to fall near the stadium just hours ahead of the game, according to the State Weather Risk Communication Center in New York.

"Snowfall totals will be highly dependent on whether the current lake effect snow shifts just south of the stadium, or remains in place over the stadium longer," the center said in a post on the social media site X.

A blast of Arctic air late last week brought bitter temperatures of 10 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit below average to the Northern Plains, the National Weather Service said, prompting cold advisories for parts of North Dakota. Frigid air was expected to move over the eastern third of the U.S. by Monday, with temperatures about 10 degrees below average.

Trudeau visits Trump but fails to get assurances about tariffs

Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau returned home Saturday after his meeting with Donald Trump without assurances the president-elect will back away from threatened tariffs on all products from the major American trading partner.

Trump called the talks "productive" but signaled no retreat from a pledge that Canada says unfairly lumps it in with Mexico over the flow of drugs and migrants into the United States.

After the leaders' hastily arranged dinner Friday night at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Florida, Trudeau spoke of "an excellent conversation" and said in a post later Saturday on X, accompanied by a photo of the two men seated at a table and smiling, that he looked forward to "the work we can do together, again." Trump said earlier on Truth Social that they discussed "many important topics that will require both Countries to work together to address."

For issues in need of such cooperation, Trump cited fentanyl and the "Drug Crisis that has deci-

mated so many lives as a result of Illegal Immigration," fair trade deals "that do not jeopardize American Workers" and the U.S. trade deficit with its ally to the north.

Trump asserted that the prime minister had made "a commitment to work with us to end this terrible devastation" of American families from fentanyl from China reaching the U.S. through its neighbors. The U.S., he said, "will no longer sit idly by as our Citizens become victims to the scourge of this Drug Epidemic."

The Republican president-elect has threatened to impose a 25% tax on all products entering the U.S. from Canada and Mexico as one of his first executive orders when he takes office in January.

U.S. customs agents seized 43 pounds of fentanyl at the Canadian border last fiscal year, compared with 21,100 pounds at the Mexican border.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, after speaking with Trump on the telephone, said Thursday that she was confident a tariff war with Washington would be averted.

Syrian army aims to stem rebel advances past Aleppo

Associated Press

BEIRUT — The Syrian military rushed in reinforcements and struck Idlib city Sunday in an attempt to push back insurgents from advancing farther after seizing Aleppo and surrounding strategic locations in an adjacent province in a surprise offensive.

The insurgents led by Salafi jihadi group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham took over most of Aleppo on Saturday and claimed to have entered the city of Hama. There was no independent confirmation of their claim.

The surprise offensive is a huge embarrassment for Syrian President Bashar Assad and raises questions about his troops' preparedness. It also comes at a time when Assad's allies — Iran and groups it backs and Russia — are preoccupied with their own conflicts.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi travels to the Syrian capital, Damascus, later Sunday. He told reporters that

Tehran will back the Syrian government and army. Arab leaders, including Jordan's King Abdullah II and United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in calls with Assad expressed their solidarity with Damascus.

Turkey, a main backer of Syrian opposition groups, said its diplomatic efforts had failed to stop Syrian government attacks on opposition-held areas in recent weeks. Turkish security officials said a limited offensive by the rebels was planned to stop government attacks and allow civilians to return, but the offensive expanded as Syrian government forces began to retreat from their positions.

The insurgency, led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and which includes Turkey-backed fighters, launched their offensive on Wednesday with a two-pronged attack on Aleppo and the Idlib countryside, before moving toward Hama province. In Aleppo

province, they captured a strategic town that lies on the highway linking Aleppo with Damascus and the coast.

Rebel commander Col. Hassan Abdulghani said that despite the government counter-offensive, his fighters were making gains in Aleppo. He says they took control of Sheikh Najjar, also known as the Aleppo Industrial City, Aleppo's military academy and the field artillery college.

Elsewhere, he said the insurgents advanced in the Idlib countryside, putting all of the province under their control.

The United Nations special envoy for Syria said the shock push by the rebels poses a risk to regional security and called on resuming diplomatic efforts to end the conflict.

According to Syrian state news agency SANA and a war monitor, the army overnight pushed back insurgents in the northern countryside of Hama province.

Taiwan's president arrives in Hawaii

Associated Press

HONOLULU — Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te arrived Saturday in Hawaii to begin a two-day transit in the U.S. as part of a trip to the South Pacific, his first since assuming office.

The stopover in Hawaii and one planned for the territory of Guam have drawn fierce criticism from Beijing, which claims Taiwan as its own territory and objects to official exchanges between the self-ruled democracy and the U.S., the island's biggest backer and military provider.

There were no high-ranking U.S. or Hawaii state officials to greet Lai at the Honolulu hotel where supporters cheered in Mandarin, some waving Taiwanese flags. He visited Hawaii's leading museum of natural history and Native Hawaiian culture, Bishop Museum.

Lai is on a weeklong trip to visit the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau — three diplomatic allies of the self-governed island in the Pacific. Though Taiwan retains strong contacts with dozens of other nations, it has only 12 formal diplomatic allies.

Bishop Museum CEO Dee Jay Mailer presented Lai with a red lei hulu, or feather garland, made by master featherwork artist Kawika Lum-Nelmida. Lai gave Mailer a headdress, made by Paiwan Indigenous people of Taiwan, and neck and shoulder decorative pieces made by Atayal Indigenous people, also of Taiwan.

Lai's visit shows that Taiwan and the United States have a very strong relationship, said Arthur Chen, the president of the Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce of North America. He flew to Hawaii from his home near Dallas to welcome the president to the U.S.

UN halts aid through Gaza's main crossing after looting

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees said Sunday that it is halting aid deliveries through the main cargo crossing into the war-ravaged Gaza Strip because of the threat of armed gangs who have looted recent convoys. It blamed the breakdown of law and order in large part on Israeli policies.

The decision could worsen the humanitarian crisis in Gaza as the cold, rainy winter sets in, with hundreds of thousands of

Palestinians living in squalid tent camps and reliant on international food aid. Experts were already warning of famine in the territory's north, which Israeli forces have almost completely isolated since early October.

Philippe Lazzarini, the head of UNRWA, the main aid provider in Gaza, said the route leading to the Kerem Shalom crossing is too dangerous on the Gaza side.

Armed men looted nearly 100 trucks traveling on the route in

mid-November, and he said gangs stole a smaller shipment on Saturday.

Kerem Shalom is the only crossing between Israel and Gaza that is designed for cargo shipments and has been the main artery for aid deliveries since the Rafah crossing with Egypt was shut down in May. Last month, nearly two-thirds of all aid entering Gaza came through Kerem Shalom, and in previous months it accounted for an even larger amount, according to Israeli figures.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Cops: Assaults followed promises of free tattoos

MD GAITHERSBURG — An FBI agent charged in Maryland with sexually assaulting two women contacted his alleged victims through social media with a promise to give them free tattoos and modeling work, police said.

Neither woman knew that their alleged assailant, Eduardo Valdivia, was an FBI agent, Montgomery County Assistant Police Chief Nicholas Augustine said.

Valdivia used aliases, including Lalo Brown and “El Boogie,” as he contacted the women through an Instagram account for a tattoo parlor in Gaithersburg, according to police.

Valdivia sexually assaulted the women — both of whom are in their 20s — during photo shoots at a tattoo studio and at a hotel, police said.

Both women told police that they feared Valdivia would have caused them more harm if they tried to resist or leave.

State limits bathroom use by trans students

OH COLUMBUS — Transgender students from kindergarten through college at Ohio public and private schools will be banned from using multiperson bathrooms that fit their gender identities under a measure that Republican Gov. Mike DeWine said Wednesday that he has signed.

DeWine signed the law out of public view over the objections of Democrats, teachers’ unions and civil rights groups, which had hoped that his objections to a ban

on gender treatments for minors last year would carry through and prompt another veto. It takes effect in 90 days.

The governor issued no statement regarding the signing.

The Republican-backed measure — labeled the “Protect All Students Act” — requires public and private schools, colleges and universities to designate separate bathrooms, locker rooms and overnight accommodations “for the exclusive use” of either males and females, based on one’s gender assigned at or near birth, in school buildings and other facilities used for school-sponsored events. It contains no enforcement mechanism.

Judge OKs law requiring voters to show photo ID

MO COLUMBIA — A law requiring Missouri voters to show government-issued photo identification to cast regular ballots will stand after a lower-court judge found it constitutional.

Cole County Circuit Judge Jon Beetem’s decision upholds the law, which was made possible by a 2016 voter-approved constitutional amendment allowing lawmakers to enact photo ID requirements.

The National Conference of State Legislatures reports 36 states request or require identification to vote, of which at least 21 ask for a photo ID.

Gold coins stolen from shipwreck recovered

FL MELBOURNE — Thirty-seven gold coins, stolen by salvagers from a nearly 310-year-old shipwreck off of Florida’s coast, have been

recovered by authorities, the state’s Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission announced.

The recovery “marks a major milestone in a long-standing investigation” into the theft and illegal trafficking of such historical artifacts, the agency said in a news release. The coins have an estimated combined value of more than \$1 million.

Authorities said that in 2015, there were 101 gold coins salvaged from the 1715 Fleet — a collection of Spanish treasure-laden ships that sank during a hurricane off of Florida’s central coast.

While 51 of these coins were “reported correctly and adjudicated,” 50 coins were not disclosed and were subsequently stolen, Florida authorities say.

Investigations revealed the illegal sale of the coins in 2023 and 2024. Using search warrants, authorities recovered the coins from private residences, safe deposit boxes and auctions.

Executions to resume, breaking 2-year pause

AZ PHOENIX — Executions will resume in Arizona following a two-year pause, the state’s top prosecutor said.

Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes said she will soon seek an execution warrant for Aaron Brian Gunches, who is on death row after being convicted of killing his girlfriend’s ex-husband.

Mayes said her office had been preparing to resume the use of the death penalty in Arizona since earlier this year as it worked with state corrections officials to review and improve procedures.

Gov. Katie Hobbs had promised not to carry out any executions until there was confidence the state can do so without violating any laws. The review Hobbs had ordered effectively ended last month when she dismissed the retired federal magistrate she had appointed earlier to head the review.

Dentist accused of killing wife is charged again

CO DENVER — A dentist accused of killing his wife by poisoning her protein shakes has been charged with trying to get a fellow jail inmate to kill a detective investigating the murder case.

Prosecutors filed two new charges against James Craig — solicitation to commit murder as well as solicitation to commit perjury.

The charging document does not say who Craig allegedly wanted to have killed, but a spokesperson for Aurora police, Joe Moylan, confirmed the alleged intended victim was an Aurora police detective.

A judge allowed Craig’s latest lawyer, Harvey Steinberg, to withdraw from the case Nov. 21, after he cited a professional conflict, just as Craig was about to stand trial for first-degree murder in the death of Angela Craig. Prosecutors filed the two new charges against Craig the following day.

Angela Craig, 43, died in March 2023 of poisoning from cyanide and tetrahydrozoline, the latter a substance found in over-the-counter eye drops, according to the coroner. The couple had been married for 23 years and had six children together.

— From wire reports

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Wolverines upset No. 2 Buckeyes in The Game

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Dominic Zvada kicked a 21-yard field goal with 45 seconds left and the Wolverines stunned the No. 2 Buckeyes 13-10 on Saturday, ending Ohio State's hopes of returning to the Big Ten title game.

Kalel Mullings broke away for a 27-yard run, setting up Michigan's (7-5, 5-4) at the Buckeyes' 17-yard line with two minutes remaining in the game. The drive stalled at the 3, and Zvada came on for the chip shot.

Ohio State (10-2, 7-2, No. 2 CFP) got the ball back but couldn't move it, with Will Howard throwing incomplete on fourth down to seal the Wolverine's fourth straight victory over its bitter rival.

"You come to Michigan to play this game," Zvada said. "So it's the biggest one of the year.

It's the one that everyone looks forward to, and to be able to come in here and take the win, it's amazing."

This loss in the The Game might have been the toughest of the past four because the Wolverines, a 21-point underdog, was unranked and wrapping up a disappointing season. Michigan was playing without a couple of top players in tight end Colston Loveland and cornerback Will Johnson.

Records — and point spreads, for that matter — rarely mean much when these two teams meet.

"Our defense played outstanding," Wolverine's coach Sherrone Moore said. "We held a high-powered offense to 10 points, 77 rushing yards."

The Buckeyes were off all afternoon. Howard was 19 for 33

for 175 yards with one touchdown and two interceptions and Jayden Fielding missed two field-goal attempts. The run game was hardly there.

"It's hard, man," an emotional Howard said. "I really don't have much right now. I do know we're a two-loss team. We're going to get into the playoffs and make a run. But, I mean, this one hurts."

Mullings was Michigan's primary weapon. He rushed for 116 yards and the Wolverines' only touchdown of the game in the first half as neither team could get much going offensively on the frigid afternoon.

"They made plays, we made plays, so as the game wore on you could definitely, slowly feel them starting to lose confidence, lose that energy and lose that faith," Mullings said.

Howard was clunky all day. In the first half, he threw an interception from deep in his own territory that led to Michigan's touchdown.

He went out for a play in the second quarter to be checked for a head injury. After the game, he said he was fine.

"We're very disappointed, and never thought this would happen right here," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said. "We expected to win this game and go play in the Big Ten championship game."

After the game, Wolverine players attempted to plant their flag at midfield and were confronted by Buckeyes players. A skirmish ensued as both teams pushed and shoved before being separated. Police deployed pepper spray in an attempt to stop the players from fighting.

Texas rides Wisner past A&M, into SEC title game

Associated Press

COLLEGE STATION, Texas — The third-ranked Texas Longhorns are heading to the Southeastern Conference championship game in their first season in the league after knocking off the No. 20 Texas A&M Aggies on Saturday night in the renewal of a storied rivalry.

Next up is a rematch with No. 6 Georgia in Atlanta.

"The goal has always been let's get to Atlanta and if we can get to Atlanta, those other goals might start to line themselves up," Texas coach Steve Sarkisian said.

Quintrevion Wisner ran for a career-high 186 yards and Quinn Ewers threw a touchdown pass to lead the Longhorns to the 17-7 victory.

Texas (11-1, 7-1 SEC, No. 3 CFP) will face the Bulldogs next Saturday for the SEC title, with the winner getting a first-round bye in the 12-team College Football Playoff.

The highly anticipated return of this rivalry, which dates to the 1890s, had all the hype of a heavyweight title bout. It looked to be headed for a blowout after the Longhorns took a 17-0 halftime lead.

But Ewers turned the ball over in the red zone on consecutive possessions to keep Texas A&M in the game, the first giveaway an interception that Will Lee III returned 93 yards for a TD.

The Aggies (8-4, 5-3, No. 20 CFP) had a shot to cut the lead to three with about 4½ minutes remaining, but Ethan Burke dropped Amari Daniels for a 3-yard loss on fourth-and-goal from the 1. Texas stopped Texas A&M on three fourth downs in the game.

"We just didn't play well enough on offense at all to have any chance at having success," Aggies coach Mike Elko said.

Backup quarterback Arch Manning ran for a score early

to help the Longhorns get their 11th straight win on an opponent's home field and its fifth consecutive victory overall since a 30-15 home loss to Georgia.

"It's a great way to end the regular season," Sarkisian said. "This is where we wanted to be. We knew when we had the slip-up earlier in the season that we would have to win out to get back to a championship game. And we've earned that right."

The crowd of 109,028 included Texas superfan Matthew McConaughy, A&M Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Manziel, former Saints quarterback Drew Brees and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott.

Ewers said it meant a lot to get the win in a series that was paused after Texas A&M went to the SEC. The teams hadn't played since 2011.

"It's been a tradition for the long time and then it went away for a little bit," he said.

"Now it's back and it's fun to be on top for sure."

DJ Hicks tipped the pass that Lee intercepted and returned 93 yards for the touchdown to cut the lead to 17-7 with about six minutes left in the third quarter.

The Aggies' defense came up big again on the next possession when Cashius Howell stripped the ball from Ewers and it was recovered by Taurian York at the A&M 11 near the end of the third.

The Aggies failed to cash in on that error and punted. Texas A&M blocked a punt to get the ball back in the red zone. But the Longhorns' defense secured the win after Texas failed to score after halftime.

"We had an opportunity to do something really special this year, and we couldn't close on it," said Elko, in his first season after Jimbo Fisher was fired. "And so that will haunt me, that will haunt us, that will haunt the players."

SMU reaches ACC title game in 1st year

Associated Press

DALLAS — Brashard Smith and ninth-ranked SMU never felt they were finished, even when already locked into the Atlantic Coast Conference championship game in their league debut.

"It was really important, just being undefeated in the conference," Smith said. "We came in on a mission."

The Mustangs completed a sweep of their first ACC schedule with a 38-6 win over California in their regular-season finale Saturday, making them the only team in their new league that didn't lose a conference game.

"I think it shows their maturity. They wanted to finish," third-year Mustangs coach Rhett Lashlee said. "We wanted to go 8-0, we wanted to win the regular season outright and not share it. And we were playing for a lot because the College Football Playoff still comes out with rankings for two more weeks. ... We didn't need to stumble, have a setback."

Smith had 134 total yards (68 rushing, 66 receiving) with two touchdowns, Kevin Jennings threw for 225 yards with two scores, and the Mustangs (11-1, 8-0 ACC, No. 9 CFP) closed out the regular season with their 17th consecutive win in a league game. They won their last nine American Athletic Conference games before moving this year into the power conference.

"Just to come in our first year in the ACC and do it, it's really crazy for us, and it's amazing," said Jennings, who is 9-0 as the starter this season.

Lashlee said he's in awe of his team.

"Pretty cool, you know, these guys back-to-back 11 wins, didn't lose a conference game, and going to be playing championship weekend two years in a row," he said.

SMU will play No. 12 Clemson on Saturday for the ACC title

and a spot in the expanded 12-team CFP. No. 8 Miami, Smith's team the past three seasons, would have been in the ACC championship game with a win, but lost at Syracuse to clear the way for Clemson.

While Lashlee believes the Mustangs have done enough already to be in the playoff field, they would definitely be in with a win over the Tigers and likely have a first-round bye.

SMU took control with touchdowns on three consecutive drives early. It was 21-0 after Derrick McFall's 8-yard TD run with 13:02 left in the first half, when the Mustangs had 234 total yards. They finished with 415.

Syracuse 42, No. 8 Miami 38: Kyle McCord and the host Orange knocked the Hurricanes out of title contention — and possibly ended Miami's College Football Playoff hopes — by rallying from a 21-0 deficit for a win.

McCord threw for 380 yards and three touchdowns for Syracuse (9-3, 5-3). LeQuint Allen ran for two scores and picked up two critical first downs on Syracuse's final, clock-killing drive, and Devin Grant forced a fumble that he returned 56 yards for a touchdown to help the Orange beat a ranked foe for the third time this season.

Cam Ward had 349 yards passing with two touchdowns for Miami (10-2, 6-2, No. 6 CFP), which will be off next week while Clemson faces SMU for the ACC title and will have to hope for an at-large bid into the 12-team playoff.

No. 16 South Carolina 17, No. 12 Clemson 14: LaNorris Sellers' 20-yard touchdown run with 1:08 to play gave the visiting Gamecocks their sixth straight win.

Sellers, a freshman in his first season as starter, finished with 166 yards rushing and two scores as the Gamecocks (9-3, 4-1 SEC, No. 15 CFP) continued a run that has seen them defeat

four ranked opponents this month.

Clemson (9-3, 5-2 ACC, No. 12) drove to the South Carolina 18 with 16 seconds left — well within reach of a tying field goal — when Cade Klubnik was intercepted by Demetrius Knight Jr.

No. 14 Arizona St. 49, Arizona 7: Cam Skattebo ran for 177 yards and three touchdowns, Sam Leavitt threw for three scores and the host Sun Devils put themselves in position to play in the Big 12 championship game with a blowout of rival Arizona.

Arizona State (10-2, 7-2 Big 12, No. 16 CFP) needed a win and a little help to secure a spot in the Big 12 championship game.

Arizona State left no doubt about the winning part.

The Sun Devils led 35-0 at halftime behind three touchdown runs by Skattebo and barely let off the gas in the second half. Leavitt threw for 291 yards on 17-for-22 passing and Arizona State had 643 total yards a year after losing 59-23 to Arizona at home.

"Our guys played their best game of football on the most important game of the year and it was great to see," Dillingham said.

After a short wait, the Sun Devils locked up a trip to Arlington, Texas, next weekend with Cincinnati's 20-13 loss to TCU. Arizona State will face No. 17 Iowa State in the Big 12 championship.

No. 17 Iowa State 29, Kansas State 21: Rocco Becht threw for two touchdowns and ran for another and Iowa State's defense came up with big stops in the second half to help the host Cyclones earn the first 10-win season in program history.

Becht's first TD pass, a 15-yarder to Jayden Higgins, came after Myles Purchase recovered Avery Johnson's errant pitch on the game's first play from scrimmage. Becht's 9-

yard TD pass to Jaylin Noel came after Joey Petersen picked up Keagan Johnson's fumble. Noel went over 1,000 yards receiving for the season with the catch.

About three hours after the game, they had their ticket to the Big 12 title game punched when BYU's win over Houston provided the help they needed to advance to a meeting with Arizona State.

No. 5 Notre Dame 49, USC 34: Christian Gray returned an interception 99 yards for a touchdown with 3:39 to play, Xavier Watts returned another interception 100 yards for a score with 1:18 left, and the visiting Irish punched their ticket to the College Football Playoff with its 10th consecutive victory.

Riley Leonard threw two touchdown passes and rushed for another score for the Fighting Irish (11-1), who completed an impressive regular season by holding off the persistent Trojans (6-6) for their sixth win in the last seven editions of this famed intersectional rivalry.

Notre Dame led 35-21 early in the fourth quarter, but Ja'Kobi Lane made the second of his three touchdown catches for the Trojans with 8:43 left.

After USC stopped the Irish offense, Jayden Maiava moved the Trojans to the Notre Dame 21 for a shot at a tying score — but Gray kept his feet after an acrobatic interception of a goal-line pass intended for Kyron Hudson, and the sophomore returned it all the way down the USC sideline.

No. 25 Army 29, UTSA 24: Bryson Daily tied the American Athletic Conference record for single-season touchdowns and threw for a season-high 190 yards and a score to the host Black Knights.

Army (10-1) finished the regular season 8-0 in the AAC and earned the right to host the championship game on Friday.

Kakko's late goal lifts Rangers past Canadiens

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Kaapo Kakko scored a power-play goal with 24 seconds left, and the New York Rangers stopped a five-game slide by topping the Montreal Canadiens 4-3 on Saturday.

Artemi Panarin, Vincent Trocheck and Mika Zibanejad also scored for the Rangers, who got their first win since a 4-3 victory at Vancouver on Nov. 19. Adam Fox had two assists, and Jonathan Quick made 25 saves.

With the Canadiens' Kirby Dach serving a four-minute, high-sticking penalty, Kakko got his fourth goal of the season.

Trocheck tipped the puck past Montreal goaltender Sam Montembeault at 19:56 to put New York ahead after Panarin and the Canadiens' Mike Matheson scored earlier in the first.

Panthers 6, Hurricanes 0: Spencer Knight made 20 saves, Mackie Samoskevich scored with less than a second left in the second period and host Florida got four goals in the third to beat Carolina and complete a two-day sweep.

Aleksander Barkov, Sam Bennett, Aaron Ekblad, Evan Rodrigues and Adam Boqvist also scored for the Panthers, who won 6-3 at Carolina on Friday. Florida has won three straight — that streak following a stretch of six losses in seven games for the Stanley Cup champions.

Maple Leafs 5, Lightning 3: Auston Matthews picked up an assist in his return to the lineup and Joseph Woll stopped 38 shots as visiting Toronto beat Tampa Bay.

Chris Tanev had a goal and an assist and Mitch Marner added two assists. Nick Robertson, John Tavares and William Nylander also scored for the Maple Leafs. Matthews assisted on Nylander's empty-net goal in the third period after missing nine games with an upper-body injury.

Capitals 6, Devils 5: Pierre-Luc Dubois, Rasmus Sandin and Taylor Raddysh each scored a goal and added an assist in visiting Washington's win over New Jersey in a meeting featuring the top two teams in

the Metropolitan Division.

The Capitals (17-6-1) matched their franchise record for consecutive road wins with seven.

Penguins 6, Flames 2: Michael Bunting and Kris Letang each scored a power-play goal and added two assists as host Pittsburgh beat Calgary.

Alex Nedeljkovic made 30 saves for his first win since Nov. 16 against San Jose.

Flyers 3, Blues 2 (OT): Matvei Michkov scored 26 seconds into overtime as visiting Philadelphia beat St. Louis.

Owen Tippett and Tyson Foerster also scored for the Flyers, and Aleksei Kolosov had 25 saves.

Kings 5, Senators 2: Anze Kopitar, Trevor Moore and Kevin Fiala each had a goal and an assist, and host Los Angeles beat Ottawa for its season-high third consecutive win.

Alex Laferriere and Adrian Kempe also scored for the Kings, and David Rittich made 20 saves.

Islanders 3, Sabres 0: Simon Holmstrom scored twice and

Ilya Sorokin stopped 29 shots for the first shutout of the season as host New York beat Buffalo. Anders Lee also scored for the Islanders, who had lost three straight (0-2-1). Sorokin's shutout was the 19th of his career.

Wild 3, Predators 2 (OT): Jared Spurgeon scored a minute into overtime as host Minnesota beat Nashville.

Kirill Kaprizov and Declan Chisholm also scored for the Wild, who are 5-1-1 in their last seven games. Filip Gustavsson stopped 25 shots.

Oilers 4, Avalanche 1: Ryan Nugent-Hopkins had a goal and an assist, Stuart Skinner stopped 27 shots and visiting Edmonton beat Colorado.

Utah 6, Golden Knights 0: Nick Schmaltz scored twice, Jaxson Stauber made 29 saves and visiting Utah beat Vegas.

Sharks 4, Kraken 2: Will Smith extended his goal streak to three games, Mikael Granlund and Jake Walman each had two assists and Mackenzie Blackwood made 36 saves as visiting San Jose beat Seattle.

Johnson, Hawks hold on to top Hornets for 3rd straight win

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Jalen Johnson had 20 points and nine assists, De'Andre Hunter added 18 points and the Atlanta Hawks handed the Charlotte Hornets their fifth straight loss, 107-104 on Saturday night.

Onyeka Okongwu added 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Hawks, who have won three straight. Trae Young and No. 1 overall draft pick Zaccharie Risacher each had 14 points.

Brandon Miller finished with 32 points for the Hornets and Josh Green added 17.

Miller's 3-pointer cut Atlanta's lead to one, but Hunter answered with two free throws with 9.7 seconds left. Charlotte had a chance to tie, but Miller missed an off-balance 3 and Okongwu grabbed the rebound and made two free throws to seal the game.

76ers 111, Pistons 96: Tyrese Maxey scored 28 points and visiting Philadelphia beat Detroit for just its fourth game of the season.

Jared McCain added 19 points and Ricky Council IV scored 17 for the 76ers, who had lost seven of their previous eight games.

Malik Beasley had 19 points for the Pistons. Jaden Ivey had 15 points and Marcus Sasser scored 12. Simone Fontecchio had 11 rebounds for Detroit — the only player on either team to reach double figures in assists or rebounds.

Bucks 124, Wizards 114: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 42 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists in his return to Milwaukee's lineup and the host Bucks won their sixth in a row by beating struggling Washington.

Antetokounmpo had missed Milwaukee's 106-103 NBA Cup victory at Miami on Tuesday due to swelling in his left knee.

The two-time MVP has three triple-doubles in the last six games he has played.

Suns 113, Warriors 105: Devin Booker scored 27 points, Kevin Durant added 21 and host Phoenix beat Golden State.

Tyus Jones added 19 points and nine assists, making 7 of 9 shots, including 4 of 5 3-pointers. Grayson Allen added 17. The Suns made 18 of 35 (51.4%) shots from 3-point range.

The Warriors have lost four in a row. Stephen Curry led Golden State with 23 points but shot just 8 of 20 from the field. Andrew Wiggins added 18 points while Draymond Green had 13 points.

Mavericks 106, Jazz 94: Kyrie Irving scored 30 points and Quentin Grimes had 24 points to power short-handed Dallas over host Utah.

The Mavericks led the entire game despite playing without Luka Doncic (right wrist), Klay Thompson (left foot) and Dante Exum (right wrist). Naji Marshall left in the second quarter and didn't return because of illness.

P.J. Washington had 16 points and 10 rebounds for Dallas, which has won four of five games — all without Doncic.