

## Pentagon sends anti-drone tech to NJ

*Bloomberg News*

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has shipped anti-drone technology to an area of New Jersey located where sightings of mysterious aircraft have set residents on edge and drawn accusations that the federal government isn't taking the incidents seriously.

The Defense Department provided equipment capable of detecting drones and disabling them, Pentagon spokesman Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said at a briefing on Thursday. He added that the equipment includes a system called Dronebuster, a hand-held jammer used by the

Army and Marines.

"The majority of that capability has deployed, the rest should be arriving very shortly, if not imminently," Ryder said. He had said earlier that much of the equipment would be sent to Picatinny Arsenal, a military research and production facility in Morris County.

Ryder has said the government had no involvement in the drone flights, which have confounded officials in New York and New Jersey and prompted arguments that the Biden administration wasn't doing enough or taking the matter seriously. Most of the aircraft, he

has said, are most likely commercial or hobbyist drones. On Wednesday, the Federal Aviation Administration temporarily banned drone flights over nearly two dozen areas of New Jersey.

The reports include nighttime sightings of drones as large as 6 feet in diameter that "operate in a coordinated manner" and travel with their lights switched off, Dawn Fantasia, a New Jersey assemblywoman, posted to X last week after being briefed by local law enforcement.

Witnesses have said they've seen several low-hanging

drones at once in the night sky, some of which hover in one spot.

President-elect Donald Trump has called for the government to provide answers or shoot the drones down. He's said, without citing evidence, that the American military knew where the devices originated.

More than 1 million drones are registered to fly in the U.S., with around 8,500 in flight on any given day, a vast majority of which are recreational or hobbyist used for architectural, engineering, farming or law enforcement purposes, according to Ryder.

## US Navy jet shot down in 'friendly fire' over Red Sea

*Associated Press*

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Two U.S. Navy pilots were shot down Sunday over the Red Sea in an apparent "friendly fire" incident, the U.S. military said.

Both pilots were recovered alive, with one suffering minor injuries, but the incident underlines just how dangerous the Red Sea corridor has become after a year of ongoing attacks on shipping by Yemen's Houthi rebels despite U.S. and European military coalitions patrolling the area.

The U.S. military had conducted airstrikes targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels at the time, though U.S. Central Command did not elaborate on what their mission was.

"The guided missile cruiser USS Gettysburg, which is part of the USS Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group, mistakenly fired on and hit the F/A-18,

which was flying off the USS Harry S. Truman," CENTCOM said in a statement.

From the military's description, the aircraft shot down was a two-seat F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter jet assigned to the "Red Rippers" of Strike Fighter Squadron 11 out of Naval Air Station Oceana, Va.

It wasn't immediately clear how the Gettysburg could mistake an F/A-18 for an enemy aircraft or missile, particularly as ships in a battle group remain linked by both radar and radio communication.

CENTCOM also released a separate statement saying U.S. forces had conducted airstrikes Saturday and early Sunday targeting a Houthi missile storage facility and a command hub in Yemen.

During the mission, U.S. forces also shot down multiple Houthi one-way attack drones and an anti-ship cruise missile

over the Red Sea, according to the statement.

Air Force and Navy assets, including F/A-18s, were used in the operation, CENTCOM said in a post to the command's official account on X.

But it wasn't clear if the Navy jet shot down Saturday in the friendly-fire incident with Gettysburg was involved in the operation.

Houthi-controlled media reported strikes in both Sanaa and around the port city of Hodeida, without offering any casualty or damage information. In Sanaa, strikes appeared particularly targeted at a mountainside known to be home to military installations.

However, there were no images or information released regarding the strikes — which has happened previously when airstrikes hit vital facilities for the rebels.

Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, a

Houthi military spokesman, released a prerecorded statement hours later in which he claimed the rebels launched eight drones and 17 cruise missiles in their attack.

He also claimed without offering any evidence that the Houthis shot down the F/A-18, likely following a pattern of him making exaggerated claims. During the Eisenhower's deployment, he repeatedly falsely claimed the carrier had been struck by Houthi fire.

Saturday's mission against the Iranian-backed group is the second in a week.

Last Monday, U.S. forces also targeted a Houthi militant facility that facilitated the group's attacks against ships in the region.

The Pentagon has beefed up its presence in the region with additional Air Force bombers, fighter jets and refueling aircraft.

# Pentagon reveals more US forces in Syria

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON—The United States has more than doubled the number of its forces in Syria to fight Islamic State — a dramatic increase that the Pentagon revealed Thursday, acknowledging that the added troops have been there for months or even more than a year.

The U.S. had said for years that there were about 900 troops in Syria, but Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary, acknowledged there were roughly 2,000 there now.

The Pentagon was asked repeatedly about the U.S. presence in Syria in the wake of the chaotic overthrow of Syrian President Bashar Assad on Dec. 8. It did not disclose the increase and instead kept repeating the 900 figure.

Speaking at a Pentagon press conference, Ryder said the additional forces had been in Syria “at

a minimum months — it’s been going on for awhile.” He said he only just learned the new number and that the increase was not related to the ouster of Assad or any hike in attacks either by or against ISIS. Pentagon officials said they were working to nail down the timing of the increase and what exactly the additional forces were doing.

Ryder blamed the secrecy on “diplomatic considerations” and sensitivities, but declined to be more specific. There has long been friction between the U.S. and Syria’s neighbors — Turkey and Iraq — about the ongoing presence of American forces in Syria and the need to keep them at a particular level.

And Ryder said he is “not tracking” any additional adjustments to the force numbers in the future. That could change, however, as President-elect Donald Trump

has said he does not support U.S. forces getting more involved in Syria.

Ryder told reporters the increase in forces was temporary and they are there to augment U.S. operations against ISIS. He said U.S. Army conventional and special operations forces make up the bulk of the additional troops.

The “temporary” description, however, belies the fact that troops have been rotating in and out of Syria for nearly a decade, and for much of the last year, or possibly two, the number has consistently been higher than the 900 officials repeatedly insisted were there.

There have always been an undisclosed number of U.S. special operations forces deploying into Syria for short periods of time, but that would not account for the extra 1,100 forces.

Asked if Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin knew the total was that high, Ryder said, “I’m confident that the secretary is tracking U.S. forces deployed around the world.” When pressed on whether Austin directed his staff to keep the higher number secret, Ryder said no. He also said that Austin has not talked to Gen. Erik Kurilla, the top U.S. general for the Middle East, about the matter.

Since Assad’s overthrow, Israel and Turkey have both launched military operations inside Syria’s borders, including Tel Aviv’s airstrikes against weapons facilities in the east that belonged to Assad’s regime and Turkey’s offensive in the northeast against Kurdish forces, who have partnered with the U.S. in its fight against ISIS.

The U.S. also has significantly stepped up airstrikes against ISIS targets in Syria.

## Retiring USFK leader to troops: ‘Remain vigilant’

**BY DAVID CHOI**

*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea—U.S. Army Gen. Paul LaCamera bid farewell Friday to the 28,500 troops he led in South Korea for more than three years and urged them to “remain vigilant” against threats from North Korea and other potential adversaries who threatened “the international rules-based order.”

In his final speech before retiring as commander of U.S. Forces Korea, LaCamera reminded the troops that this “land has been sanctified with the blood of countless sons and daughters.”

LaCamera is retiring after 39 years of service. He is succeeded by Army Gen. Xavier Brunson, who promised to build on the “principles of collective security.”

“United we are stronger and more capable of meeting any challenge,” Brunson said at the change-of-command ceremony. “I pledge to serve with humility, respect and an unyielding commitment to our shared mission.”

The commander of USFK also leads the U.N. Command and the Combined Forces Command.

Since the 1950-53 Korean War, South Korea has transformed into “a thriving nation that can stand as a beacon of freedom and prosperity,” LaCamera told an audience of roughly 500 people outside the command’s headquarters.

“But this growth did not come free of cost,” he added.

The four-star general advised troops to “continue training daily” and that “complacency is our greatest adversary.”

## Aviano crew marks end of Pave Hawk helo era

**BY BRIAN ERICKSON**

*Stars and Stripes*

AVIANO AIR BASE, Italy — U.S. airmen here took their final active-duty flight last week in a rescue helicopter that the Air Force is phasing out after decades of use in saving the lives of American personnel the world over.

The HH-60G Pave Hawk was bid farewell Wednesday by members of the 56th Rescue Squadron and 56th Rescue Generation Squadron, as they get set to join the rest of the service in switching to the HH-60W Jolly Green II and its advanced capabilities.

Retirement of the Pave Hawk has been in the works since 2010. The helicopter is made by Sikorsky, which also produces the Army’s Black Hawk.

Over the years, the Pave Hawk has flown missions ranging from

combat rescue to humanitarian aid delivery and disaster response, a U.S. Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa statement said. It served as the Air Force’s primary combat search and rescue helicopter, completing both daytime and nighttime recoveries of service members in hostile environments.

“Today marks the end of an iconic chapter in our Air Force history,” Col. Beau Diers, the 31st Fighter Wing’s deputy commander, said in the statement.

Aviano received its first HH-60W helicopters on Dec. 13 and is scheduled to receive its full order by October 2025.

The Pave Hawk’s replacement has better avionics, threat detection and countermeasures as well as greater fuel capacity, the Air Force statement said.

# Shutdown is averted as Biden signs bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden signed a bill into law Saturday that averts a government shutdown, bringing a final close to days of upheaval after Congress approved a temporary funding plan just past the deadline and refused President-elect Donald Trump's core debt demands in the package.

The deal funds the government at current levels through March 14 and provides \$100 billion in disaster aid and \$10 billion in agricultural assistance to farmers.

"This agreement represents a compromise, which means neither side got everything it want-

ed," Biden said in a statement, adding that "it ensures the government can continue to operate at full capacity. That's good news for the American people."

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., had insisted lawmakers would "meet our obligations" and not allow federal operations to close. But the outcome at the end of a tumultuous week was uncertain after Trump had insisted the deal include an increase in the government's borrowing limit. If not, he had said, then let the closures "start now."

Johnson's revised plan was approved 366-34, and it was passed by the Senate by a 85-11

vote after midnight. By then, the White House said it had ceased shutdown preparations.

"There will be no government shutdown," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

Johnson, who had spoken to Trump after the House vote, said the compromise was "a good outcome for the country" and that the president-elect "was certainly happy about this outcome, as well."

The final product was the third attempt from Johnson, the beleaguered speaker, to achieve one of the basic requirements of the federal government — keeping it open. The difficulties raised questions about whether

Johnson will be able to keep his job, in the face of angry Republican colleagues, and work alongside Trump and his billionaire ally Elon Musk, who was calling the legislative plays from afar.

The House is scheduled to elect the next speaker on Jan. 3, 2025, when the new Congress convenes. Republicans will have an exceedingly narrow majority, 220-215, leaving Johnson little margin for error as he tries to win the speaker's gavel.

One House Republican, Rep. Andy Harris of Maryland, criticized Republicans for the deficit spending in the bill and said he was now "undecided" about the GOP leadership.

## Another record for holiday travel in the US expected

Associated Press

Drivers and airline passengers without reindeer and sleighs better make a dash for it: it's beginning to look like another record for holiday travel in the U.S.

The auto club AAA predicts that more than 119 million people will travel at least 50 miles from home between Saturday and New Year's Day, which would top the previous holiday-season high set in 2019. The two weekends on either side of Christmas look to be some of the most crowded times on the road and at airports.

Trade group Airlines for America also foresees record travel, saying it expected U.S. airlines to carry 54 million passengers during a 19-day period that started Thursday and ends Monday, Jan. 6. The number would represent a 6% increase over last year.

Airlines expect to have their busiest days on Friday and Sunday, and on Dec. 26, Dec. 27 and Dec. 29. Flight traffic is expected to be light on both Christmas Day and New Year's Day. The slowest U.S. air-travel day this year — by a wide margin — was Thanksgiving

Day.

The Transportation Security Administration expects to screen 40 million passengers over the holidays and through Jan. 2.

About 90% of Americans traveling far from home over the holidays will be in cars, according to AAA.

"Airline travel is just really high right now, but most people do drive to their destinations, and that is true for every holiday," AAA spokesperson Aixa Diaz said.

Gasoline prices are similar to last year. The nationwide aver-

age Thursday was \$3.05 a gallon, down from \$3.08 a year ago, according to AAA. Charging an electric vehicle averages just under 35 cents per kilowatt hour, but varies by state.

Transportation-data firm INRIX says travel times on the nation's highways could be up to 30% longer than normal over the holidays, with Sunday expected to see the heaviest traffic. Boston, New York City, Seattle and Washington, D.C., are the metropolitan areas primed for the greatest delays, according to the company.

## Army veteran sentenced to probation for Jan. 6 plot

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A U.S. Army veteran was sentenced on Friday to probation instead of prison for his milestone conviction — and his leadership role — in a violent plot by members of the far-right Oath Keepers extremist group to keep Donald Trump in the White House after he lost the 2020 presidential election.

Joshua James was the first

person charged in the U.S. Capitol riot to plead guilty to seditious conspiracy — the most serious crime arising from the Jan. 6, 2021, attack by a mob of Trump supporters.

James cooperated with the Justice Department's investigation but didn't testify at any of the trials for other Oath Keepers members, including the anti-government group's founder and top leader, Stew-

art Rhodes. James was the ninth and final Oath Keepers defendant to be sentenced after cooperating with prosecutors.

James, 37, of Arab, Ala., expressed remorse before U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta sentenced him to three years of probation, including six months in a "residential re-entry center" and six months of home detention. James said he knows that his actions put po-

lice officers in danger on Jan. 6.

"That's not who I am," he said. "I help people in danger."

In sparing James from a prison sentence, Mehta said he wanted to ensure that the married father of three children could continue trying to "put his life together."

"Because if he can do that, I think the rest of us can, too," the judge added.



# German authorities warned of market suspect

Associated Press

MAGDEBURG, Germany — German authorities received a warning last year about the suspected perpetrator in a car attack at a Christmas market, a government office said Sunday as more details emerged about the five people killed in the attack.

“This was taken seriously, like every other of the numerous tips,” the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees said Sunday on X about the tip it said it received in the late summer of last year.

But the office also noted it is not an investigative authority

and that it referred the information to the responsible authorities, following the procedure in such cases. It gave no other details about the suspect or the nature of the warnings.

Police in Magdeburg, the central city where the attack took place on Friday evening, said Sunday that those who died were four women aged 45, 52, 67 and 75, as well as a 9-year-old boy they had spoken of a day earlier.

Authorities said 200 people were injured, including 41 in serious condition. They were being treated in multiple hospitals in Magdeburg, which is about

80 miles west of Berlin, and beyond.

Authorities have identified the suspect in the Magdeburg attack as a Saudi doctor who arrived in Germany in 2006 and had received permanent residency.

On Saturday evening, the suspect was brought before a judge, who behind closed doors ordered that he be kept in custody pending a possible indictment.

Police haven’t publicly named the suspect, but several German news outlets identified him as Taleb A., withholding his last name in line with privacy

laws, and reported that he was a specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy.

Describing himself as an ex-Muslim, the suspect appears to have been an active user of the social media platform X, sharing dozens of tweets and retweets daily focusing on anti-Islam themes, criticizing the religion and congratulating Muslims who had left the faith.

He also accused German authorities of failing to do enough to combat what he referred to as the “Islamification of Europe.” He also appears to have been a supporter of the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany party.

## Israeli strikes across Gaza kill at least 22

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli strikes across the Gaza Strip overnight and into Sunday killed at least 22 people, including five children, Palestinian medical officials said.

Also on Sunday, Israeli authorities allowed Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the leader of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land, to enter Gaza and celebrate a pre-Christmas Mass with members of the territory’s small Christian community.

A strike on a school housing displaced people in Gaza City killed at least eight people, including three children, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry. The Israeli military said it struck Hamas militants sheltering there.

A strike on a home in the central city of Deir al-Balah late Saturday killed at least eight people, including three women and two children, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies. Another six people were killed in

separate strikes Sunday, according to local hospitals.

Israel has carried out daily strikes in Gaza more than 14 months into the war with Hamas. It has said it only targets militants, accusing them of hiding among civilians, but the bombings frequently kill women and children.

Israel and Hamas have recently appeared to draw closer to a ceasefire agreement that would include the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, but several obstacles remain and the long-running indirect talks have repeatedly stalled.

Dozens of worshippers gathered in the Holy Family Church in Gaza City as Pizzaballa and other clergy celebrated Mass. A Christmas tree was decorated with golden ornaments and twinkling white lights, and altar boys wearing red and white robes held candles.

“For Christmas, we celebrate the light and we are wondering where the light is. This is one of the places where the light is,” Pizzaballa said.

## Europe allies consider troops in Ukraine if ceasefire reached

The Washington Post

BRUSSELS — Kyiv’s European allies are seriously weighing the idea of deploying troops to Ukraine in the event of a deal with Russia to stop the war, as they lay the groundwork for negotiations and adjust to Donald Trump’s return to the White House.

The prospect of boots on the ground was discussed when NATO Chief Mark Rutte hosted European leaders and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Brussels on Wednesday night, and it was floated to President-elect Donald Trump when he met with Zelenskyy and French President Emmanuel Macron this month in Paris.

Trump showed interest in the idea, said officials briefed on the talks, who, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity to share internal deliberations. They said it remains unclear if the incoming U.S. administration would support such an arrangement, with policy still taking shape as he prepares to take office.

Back in February, when Macron said he wouldn’t rule out

Western troop deployment in Ukraine, the response from many other European capitals was a loud “no.” But leaders are now willing to consider deployment if it happens in the context of a ceasefire agreement. They see it as one option to provide security guarantees to Ukraine while NATO membership remains out of reach, and as a means to claim their place at the table in negotiations to end Russia’s war in Ukraine. It also plays to Trump’s insistence that Europe should be carrying more weight on defense.

“At the moment, it’s really about trying to think out loud what could be more acceptable for the Ukrainians,” said Camille Grand, a former NATO assistant secretary general who is now a distinguished policy fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations.

An agreement on a postwar force could also help make clear “to the Russians that they shouldn’t restart the conflict, and to the Americans that the Europeans have skin in this game and that we mean it,” Grand said.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Squirrels apparently eating other rodents

**CA** LOS ANGELES — A University of California, Davis study showed a nutty novel behavior in California squirrels: They're hunting like carnivores, taking down and then consuming other, smaller rodents.

As part of an ongoing 12-year study of California ground squirrels at Briones Regional Park in Contra Costa County, researchers last summer watched as squirrels began to chase — and eat — voles, a cousin of field mice.

This suggests squirrels are much more opportunistic in their diets than previously realized, wrote the authors of the study, published in the *Journal of Ethology*. Squirrels typically eat acorns, seeds, nuts and fruit, but are known to occasionally eat fresh carrion or roadkill, insects, eggs or other discarded food. Some squirrels at California's college campuses have become infamous among students for their demanding behavior, even winning student elections, but they've never been seen hunting smaller rodents on such a widespread scale.

A video released by researchers shows a ground squirrel grabbing a vole by its neck and shaking it back and forth — clear predatory behavior meant to quickly kill prey, said Dan Blumstein, a professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at UCLA who studies marmots, a related species of large ground squirrel. In squirrels, most biological dietary factors, such as teeth and stomachs, are adapted for vegetation such as nuts and seeds, not meat, he said.

### Ten Commandments tablet sells for over \$5M

**NY** NEW YORK — The oldest known stone tablet inscribed with the Ten Commandments sold for more than \$5 million at an auction last week.

Sotheby's said the 155-pound marble slab was acquired by an anonymous buyer who plans to donate it to an Israeli institution. The tablet dates from 300 to 800 A.D. and is inscribed with the commandments in Paleo-Hebrew script — the only complete example of its kind from antiquity, according to Sotheby's. It was unearthed during railroad excavations along the southern coast of what is now Israel in 1913.

The New York-based auction house said the final price exceeded the presale estimate of \$1 million to \$2 million and followed more than 10 minutes of "intense bidding" in global competition.

### Mastodon jaw discovered in backyard garden

**NY** SCOTCHTOWN — Scholars are hailing the discovery of a fossilized mastodon jaw discovered by a man who spotted two giant teeth while gardening at his upstate New York home this year.

The mastodon jaw and some other bone fragments were found in late September in a backyard near Scotchtown, officials from the New York State Museum said. The owner of the backyard did not want to be identified, said Robert Feranec, the state museum's director of research and collections and curator of Ice Age animals.

The man spotted what he first thought were baseballs, Feranec said. "He picked them up and realized they were teeth," he said.

Excavation by staff from the museum and the State University of New York's Orange County campus yielded a well-preserved jaw of an adult mastodon as well as a piece of a toe bone and a rib fragment, museum officials said.

### School shooter loses bid to withdraw guilty plea

**MI** PONTIAC — A judge refused to allow a Michigan school shooter to withdraw his guilty plea to two dozen charges, including terrorism and first-degree murder.

Ethan Crumbley's appellate lawyers cited his mental health and other factors when he waived his right to trial at age 16 and pleaded guilty to killing four students at Oxford High School in 2021. But Oakland County Judge Kwame Rowe on Thursday said Crumbley's guilty plea was "knowingly, voluntarily, and accurately given."

The judge also said he would not set aside Crumbley's life prison sentence.

### Dozens get sick at Best Restaurants event

**CA** LOS ANGELES — Health officials are investigating a possible norovirus outbreak after dozens of people became sick after eating raw oysters at the L.A. Times 101 Best Restaurants event.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health confirmed that more than 80 people who attended the annual event

— which features some of the area's most celebrated and popular restaurants — reported getting sick with symptoms that included diarrhea, nausea, abdominal pain and vomiting.

The illnesses appear to be linked to raw oysters provided at the Dec. 3 event that have since been recalled, according to a public health spokesperson.

The oysters were supplied by Fanny Bay Oysters, according to Hillary Manning, a spokesperson for the Los Angeles Times. The oysters were sourced by Santa Monica Seafood, which was a sponsor of the event, and provided to one of the restaurants featured in the 101 Best Restaurants list, Manning said.

### Man helped set up secret Chinese police station

**NY** NEW YORK — A Manhattan resident has pleaded guilty to helping establish a secret police station in New York City on behalf of the Chinese government.

Chen Jinping, 60, entered the guilty plea on a single count of conspiracy to act as an agent of a foreign government in Brooklyn federal court last week.

Prosecutors say Chen and his co-defendant, Lu Jianwang, opened and operated a local branch of China's Ministry of Public Security in Manhattan's Chinatown neighborhood starting in early 2022.

The office, which occupied an entire floor of the building, performed basic services, such as helping Chinese citizens renew their Chinese driver's licenses, but also identified pro-democracy activists living in the U.S., according to federal authorities.

— From wire reports

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# Stolen base king Henderson dies at 65

Associated Press

Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson, the brash speedster who shattered stolen base records and redefined baseball's leadoff position, has died. He was 65.

Henderson died Friday. The Athletics said Saturday that they were "shocked and heartbroken by his passing," but did not specify a cause of death.

Known as baseball's "Man of Steal," Henderson had a lengthy list of accolades and accomplishments in his nomadic 25-year career — an MVP, 10 All-Star selections, two World Series titles and a Gold Glove award.

"Rickey was simply the best player I ever played with. He could change the outcome of a game in so many ways," said Don Mattingly, Henderson's teammate with the New York Yankees from 1985-89. "It puts a smile on my face just thinking about him. I will miss my friend."

It was stealing bases where Henderson made his name and dominated the sport like no other.

He broke through with 100 steals in his first full season in the majors in 1980, topping Ty Cobb's AL season record with Billy Martin's "Billy Ball" Oakland Athletics. He barely slowed playing for nine franchises over the next two decades. He broke Lou Brock's season record of 118 by stealing 130 bases in 1982 and led the league in steals for seven consecutive seasons and 12 overall.

Henderson surpassed Brock's career record when he stole his 939th base on May 1, 1991, for Oakland, and famously pulled third base out of the ground and showed it off to the adoring crowd before giving a speech that he capped by saying: "Lou Brock was a great base stealer, but today I am the greatest of all time."

Henderson finished his career with 1,406 steals. His 468-

steal edge over Brock matches the margin between Brock and Jimmy Rollins, who is in 46th place with 470.

"He's the greatest leadoff hitter of all time, and I'm not sure there's a close second," former A's executive Billy Beane said of Henderson.

In September, Henderson insisted he would have had many more steals in his career and in the record-breaking 1982 season if rules introduced in 2023 to limit pickoff throws and increase the size of bases had overlapped with his career.

"If I was playing today, I would get 162, right now, without a doubt," he said.

"Because if they had had that rule, you can only throw over there twice, you know how many times they would be throwing over there twice and they'd be going, 'Ah, (shoot), can y'all send him to third? Give him two bases and send him to third.' That would be me."

He even predicted how he could still be stealing more bases than the current major leaguers even 20-plus years post-retirement: "If they're stealing 40-50 bases right now, I'd lead the league."

Henderson's accomplishment that record-breaking day in 1991 was slightly overshadowed that night when Nolan Ryan threw his record seventh career no-hitter. Henderson had already been Ryan's 5,000th career strikeout victim, which led him to say, "If you haven't been struck out by Nolan Ryan, you're nobody."

That was not the case for Henderson. He is the career leader in runs scored (2,295) and in leadoff home runs (81), ranks second to Barry Bonds with 2,190 walks and is fourth in games played (3,081) and plate appearances (13,346). He finished his career with 3,055 hits in 25 seasons spent with Oakland, the Yankees, Toronto, San Diego, Anaheim, the New

York Mets, Seattle, Boston and the Los Angeles Dodgers.

He fittingly finished his career with the Dodgers at age 44 in 2003 by scoring a run in his final play on a major league field.

Henderson is the third prominent baseball Hall of Famer with ties to the Bay Area who died this year, following the deaths in June of former Giants stars Willie Mays and Orlando Cepeda.

Henderson was the rare position player who hit from the right side and threw with his left arm — but then again, everything about Henderson was unique.

He batted out of an extreme crouch, making for a tighter strike zone that contributed to his high walk total. He struck fear in opponents with his aggressive leads off first base, his fingers twitching between his legs inside his batting gloves as he eyed the pitcher and the next base.

Born on Christmas Day in 1958 in Chicago in the back of his parents' Chevy, Henderson grew up in Oakland and developed into a star athlete. He played baseball, basketball and football at Oakland Tech High School and was a highly sought-after football recruit who could have played tailback at Southern Cal — where he likely would have had the chance to run alongside football Hall of Famer Marcus Allen.

Henderson said his mother loved baseball and thought it would be the safer career in a decision that proved to be prescient.

"She didn't want her baby to get hurt," Henderson told the San Francisco Chronicle in 2019. "I was mad, but she was smart. Overall, with the career longevity and the success I had, she made the right decision. Some of the players in football now have short careers and they can barely move around

when they're done."

Henderson was selected in the fourth round of the 1976 amateur draft by the hometown A's and made his big league debut in 1979 with two hits — and, of course, one stolen base.

He became a star for the A's the following season and remained in Oakland through 1984 before being traded to the Yankees. Henderson was part of talented teams in New York that never made the postseason. In 1985, he scored 146 runs in 143 games to go along with a league-leading 80 steals and 24 homers, helping start the "80-20 club" that season with Cincinnati's Eric Davis.

Henderson was traded back to Oakland in June 1989, leading to his greatest successes. He topped the AL that season with 113 runs, 126 walks and 77 steals, was named the ALCS MVP and helped lead the A's to the World Series title in the earthquake-interrupted Bay Bridge series by sweeping the Giants.

Henderson then won the AL MVP the following season for Oakland before the A's lost the World Series to Cincinnati.

"I traded Rickey Henderson twice and brought him back more times than that," former A's general manager Sandy Alderson said. "He was the best player I ever saw play. He did it all — hit, hit for power, stole bases and defended — and he did it with a flair that enthused his fans and infuriated his opponents. But everyone was amused by his personality, style and third-person references to himself. He was unique in many ways."

"Rickey stories are legion, legendary and mostly true. But behind his reputation as self-absorbed was a wonderful, kind human being who loved kids. His true character became more evident over time. Nine different teams, one unforgettable player."



# Ravens roll, tie Steelers atop AFC North

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Lamar Jackson was solid in the Ravens' biggest game of the season so far.

Then, after one of the star quarterback's rare slip-ups, one of his teammates delivered the play of the day.

Jackson threw three touchdown passes and Marlon Humphrey scored on a fourth-quarter interception return to help Baltimore pull even with the Steelers atop the AFC North with a 34-17 victory over Pittsburgh on Saturday.

The Steelers (10-5) would have clinched the division with a victory, but now the teams are deadlocked after the Ravens (10-5) won for just the second time in the last 10 games in this series. Baltimore clinched a playoff berth. Pittsburgh had already done so.

"It was cool to get a pick-6, but clinching a spot in the playoffs, to beat the Steelers, I'm just hap-

py that the guys came in, put in the work, and we just took care of business," Humphrey said. "I felt that this team has had our number over the years. Just take care of business, man. I felt like the performance we put on wasn't perfect, but I felt like that's what we were supposed to do."

Russell Wilson threw two touchdown passes, the second of which tied the game at 17 with 5:14 left in the third quarter. Jackson answered with a 7-yard scoring strike to Mark Andrews, and after Pittsburgh turned the ball over on downs, a 44-yard run by Derrick Henry put the Ravens in the red zone.

That drive came to nothing when Jackson was intercepted for just the fourth time this season, but then Humphrey — who was celebrating the recent birth of his son Duke — picked off Wilson and went 37 yards to the end zone to give Baltimore a cushion in a series that's been

razor-thin of late. The previous nine games between the Steelers and the Ravens were decided by seven points or fewer.

"My whole family's in town to help out with my wife and everything," Humphrey said. "I was texting her before. I'm supposed to go pick her up from the hospital, discharge her with the baby. So there's a lot of just great things that happened this week."

Jackson improved to 2-4 against Pittsburgh as a starter. This was his first time facing the Steelers at home since 2020.

"I feel like we've been busting our behind all season long, had ups and downs throughout this whole season, but to clinch a playoff against a great team like that, that's great," Jackson said. "That means we're moving in the right direction."

Henry rushed for 162 yards. **Chiefs 27, Texans 19:** Patrick Mahomes threw for 260 yards and a touchdown while

running for a score on his ailing ankle, and host Kansas City took a big step toward securing the No. 1 seed in the AFC playoffs with a victory over Houston.

The AFC West champion Chiefs (14-1), who have won four straight against the AFC South champ Texans (9-6), can clinch the postseason bye if Buffalo loses to or ties New England on Sunday. If the Bills win, Kansas City can wrap it up by beating Pittsburgh on Christmas Day.

Xavier Worthy had seven catches for 65 yards and a touchdown, Kareem Hunt ran for 55 yards and another score, and Marquise Brown had five catches for 45 yards.

C.J. Stroud had 244 yards and two touchdown passes with two interceptions for Houston, though one of those TD throws came at great expense. Tank Dell, who had six catches for 98 yards, hurt his left knee on the play and was carted from the field.

# Howard, Smith lead Ohio State to rout of Tennessee

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Will Howard threw two touchdown passes to freshman Jeremiah Smith and Ohio State routed Tennessee 42-17 on Saturday night in a first-round College Football Playoff game, setting up a New Year's Day rematch with No. 1 Oregon at the Rose Bowl.

Quinshon Judkins and TreVeyon Henderson rushed for two touchdowns apiece as the Buckeyes (11-2) gave their fans an early Christmas present that should quiet some of the outcry following the devastating fourth straight loss to Michigan three weeks ago.

"You could tell from the jump that they had a look in their eyes that they were going to win this game," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said.

Howard finished 24-for-29

for 311 yards, his second 300-yard game of the season. Smith had six catches for 103 yards, the sixth freshman to have over 100 receiving yards in a CFP game. Henderson had 10 carries for 80 yards.

"We really put together a full, all-out performance, and I think that's what we needed to do and what we needed to show," Howard said.

The eighth-seeded Buckeyes scored on their first three drives while forcing three straight Volunteers punts. Ninth-seeded Tennessee (10-3) finally got on the board with a second-quarter field goal and touchdown, but couldn't generate anything in the second half until getting a meaningless touchdown late in the game.

"We didn't play the way we needed to, we didn't play well enough, and we didn't coach

well enough," Vols coach Josh Heupel said.

"They made some plays — that's going to happen against a good team, but what we didn't do is to come back and find a way to get back on the right side of it, and that's offensively and defensively."

The 473 yards gained by Ohio State was the most surrendered by the Tennessee defense all season.

**No. 6 Penn State 38, No. 11 SMU 10:** Dominic DeLuca and Tony Rojas returned interceptions for touchdowns and the host Nittany Lions toyed with the mistake-prone Mustangs.

Penn State (12-2) advanced to face third-seeded Boise State in the Fiesta Bowl on New Year's Eve by hounding SMU quarterback Kevin Jennings into three turnovers, including a pair of ill-thrown floaters in the first half

DeLuca and Rojas converted into Pick-6s that sent the white-out crowd at wintry Beaver Stadium into a frenzy and SMU (11-3) into a funk from which it never recovered.

Nick Singleton and Kaytron Allen ran for scores for the Nittany Lions.

**No. 5 Texas 38, No. 12 Clemson 24:** Jaydon Blue ran 146 yards and two touchdowns, the last a 77-yard burst in the fourth quarter, and the host Longhorns beat the Tigers.

Blue's fourth-quarter touchdown came after Clemson rallied from down 31-10 to 31-24 on Cade Klubnik's third touchdown pass.

Texas (12-2) advanced to the Jan. 1 Peach bowl to play Big 12 champion Arizona State.

Blue also scored on 38-yard cut-and-dash burst in the second quarter.

# Tatum's huge night leads Celtics over Bulls

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Jayson Tatum scored a season-high 43 points, grabbed 16 rebounds and dished out 10 assists for his third career triple-double and the Boston Celtics beat the Chicago Bulls 123-98 on Saturday night.

Tatum's triple-double was the first for a Boston player that included 40 or more points since Larry Bird scored 49 points with 14 rebounds and 12 assists against Portland in a 152-148 double-overtime win on March 15, 1992, according to the team.

Kristaps Porzingis scored 22 points and Jaylen Brown added 19 to help the Celtics rebound from a 117-108 loss to the Bulls in Boston on Thursday night.

Nikola Vucevic scored 19 points and 10 assists to lead the Bulls, whose season-high three-game winning streak ended. Zach LaVine, Coby White and Patrick Williams had 14 points each.

**Lakers 103, Kings 99:** LeBron James had 32 points as visiting Los Angeles beat Sacramento

to sweep a two-game set.

Trailing 101-99 with 12 seconds left, the Kings had a chance to tie after Anthony Davis missed two free throws, but squandered the opportunity after they couldn't secure the rebound. Austin Reaves was fouled and made both free throws to put the game away.

**Magic 121, Heat 114:** Cole Anthony scored 27 of his 35 points in the second half and host Orlando tied its largest comeback in franchise history to beat Miami after trailing by 25 points.

The Magic also trailed by 22 entering the fourth quarter before outscoring the Heat 37-8. Their 25-point comeback ties a mark set on Nov. 8, 1989, against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

**Grizzlies 128, Hawks 112:** Desmond Bane scored 23 points and visiting Memphis, without Ja Morant, beat skidding Atlanta.

Scotty Pippen Jr. added 22 points and nine assists. Morant, who injured his back in the Grizzlies' Dec. 19 win over Golden

State, was ruled out with low back soreness before Saturday's game.

**Jazz 105, Nets 94:** Lauri Markkanen scored 21 points, Collin Sexton and Svi Mykhailiuk each had 18 points, and visiting Utah beat Brooklyn.

The Jazz, who have one of the worst records in the NBA (7-20), have won consecutive games for the first time this season; they beat the Pistons 126-119 on Thursday.

**Cavaliers 126, 76ers 99:** Darius Garland scored 26 points and Evan Mobley had 22 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists, sending NBA-leading Cleveland to a victory over visiting Philadelphia.

Donovan Mitchell had 19 points and Georges Niang added 13 points off the bench for the Cavaliers, who are 25-4 for the top record in the league.

**Bucks 112, Wizards 101:** Bobby Portis replaced Giannis Antetokounmpo in the starting lineup and scored a season-high 34

points, leading host Milwaukee to a victory over Washington.

**Warriors 113, Timberwolves 103:** Stephen Curry scored 11 straight points in the fourth quarter and 31 for the night as visiting Golden State beat Minnesota.

**Knicks 104, Pelicans 93:** Jalen Brunson scored 29 of his season-high 39 points in the second half to power visiting New York to a victory over New Orleans.

**Mavericks 113, Clippers 97:** Quentin Grimes scored 20 points off the bench, 14 in the fourth quarter, leading eight Dallas players in double figures as the Mavericks beat visiting Los Angeles despite missing leading scorer Luka Doncic again.

**Spurs 114, Trail Blazers 94:** Victor Wembanyama scored 30 points and tied a career high with 10 blocks as host San Antonio rolled to a win over Portland.

**Pistons 133, Suns 125:** Cade Cunningham scored 28 points and had 13 assists, Jalen Duren added 17 points and 11 rebounds and visiting Detroit beat Phoenix.

## Blankenburg lifts Predators past Kings in overtime

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Nick Blankenburg scored at 1:03 of overtime to lift the Nashville Predators to a 3-2 victory over the Los Angeles Kings on Saturday.

Zachary L'Heureux and Jonathan Marchessault also scored, and Justus Annunen made 22 saves for the Predators, who are 2-0-1 in their past three games.

Quinton Byfield and Alex Laferriere scored, and Darcy Kuemper made 23 saves for the Kings, who are 8-1-2 in their past 11 games.

In overtime, Blankenburg converted the rebound of a shot by Filip Forsberg for his first goal as a member of Nashville.

**Flames 6, Blackhawks 4:** Jonathan Huberdeau, Connor Zary, Blake Coleman, and Matt Coronato each had a goal and an assist as Calgary beat visiting Chicago.

Nazem Kadri and Mikael Backlund also scored for Flames, who have picked up points in their past four games, going 2-0-2. Dustin Wolf made 24 stops and improved to 10-5-2 in his rookie season.

**Oilers 3, Sharks 2 (OT):** Leon Draisaitl scored 18 seconds into overtime as host Edmonton overcame a slow start to win its second straight game in extra time.

Zach Hyman and Mattias Ekholm also scored for the Oilers, who have won 10 of their past 12 contests. Connor McDavid had three assists, and Evan Bouchard had two.

**Bruins 3, Sabres 1:** Morgan Geekie scored a tiebreaking, power-play goal with 1:45 left in regulation, and Boston sent visiting Buffalo to its 13th straight loss.

Charlie Coyle scored a first-period goal and Brad Marchand added an empty-netter for the Bruins, who improved to 10-4-1 under interim coach Joe Sacco.

**Flyers 5, Blue Jackets 4 (OT):** Owen Tippett scored at 3:30 of overtime to punctuate a four-point game and host Philadelphia snapped a three-game losing streak with come-from-behind win over Columbus.

Morgan Frost scored twice and Tyson Foerster tied the game with less than two minutes left in the third period as Philadelphia won for the fifth time this season when trailing after

two periods. Samuel Ersson made 21 saves.

**Islanders 6, Maple Leafs 3:** Bo Horvat had two goals and two assists, Isaiah George scored his first NHL goal and New York won at Toronto.

**Canadiens 5, Red Wings 1:** Patrik Laine scored on the power play again, and Montreal beat visiting Detroit for the second straight night.

**Devils 3, Penguins 0:** Nico Hischier had a goal and two assists and Jacob Markstrom made 12 saves for his second shutout of the season as host New Jersey beat Pittsburgh.

**Jets 5, Wild 0:** Connor Hellebuyck made 19 saves for his NHL-leading fourth shutout of the season and 41st of his career to lead host Winnipeg to a victory over Minnesota, which has lost four in a row.

**Senators 5, Canucks 4 (OT):** Jake Sanderson scored 15 seconds into overtime and visiting Ottawa stretched its win streak to six games with a victory over Vancouver.

**Golden Knights 6, Kraken 2:** Mark Stone had a goal and two assists and host Vegas beat Seattle.