

## 2 of 181 survive plane crash in S. Korea

*Associated Press*

SEOUL, South Korea — A passenger plane skidded off a runway at a South Korean airport Sunday, slammed into a concrete fence and burst into flames after its front landing gear apparently failed to deploy. All but two of the 181 people on board died in one of the country's worst aviation disasters.

The Jeju Air plane crashed while landing in the town of Muan, about 180 miles south of Seoul. The Transport Ministry said the plane was a 15-year-old Boeing 737-800 jet that had arrived from Bangkok and that the crash happened at 9:03 a.m.

A total of 179 people — 85 women, 84 men and 10 others whose genders weren't immediately identifiable — died in the fire, the South Korean fire agency said. Emergency workers pulled two people, both crew members, to safety. Health offi-

cials said they are conscious and not in life-threatening condition.

Among the 177 bodies found, officials have so far identified 88 of them, the fire agency said. The passengers were predominantly South Korean, as well as two Thai nationals.

Ju Woong, director of the Ewha Womans University Seoul Hospital, where one of the survivors was hospitalized, said the man was being treated in an intensive care unit for fractures to his ribs, shoulder blade and upper spine. Ju said the man, whose name wasn't released, told doctors he "woke up to find (himself) rescued."

The fire agency deployed 32 fire trucks and several helicopters to contain the blaze. About 1,570 firefighters, police officers, soldiers and other officials were also sent to the site, according to the fire agency and transport ministry.

Footage of the crash aired by South Korean television channels showed the plane skidding across the airstrip at high speed, apparently with its landing gear still closed, overrunning the runway and colliding head-on with a concrete wall on the outskirts of the facility, triggering an explosion. Other local TV stations aired footage showing thick plumes of black smoke billowing from the plane, which was engulfed in flames.

Lee Jeong-hyeon, chief of the Muan fire station, told a televised briefing that the plane was completely destroyed, with only the tail assembly remaining recognizable. Lee said that workers were looking into various possibilities about what caused the crash, including whether the aircraft was struck by birds, Lee said.

Transport Ministry officials later said their early assessment of communication records

show the airport control tower issued a bird strike warning to the plane shortly before it intended to land and gave its pilot permission to land in a different area. The pilot sent out a distress signal shortly before the plane overshot the end of the runway and skidded across a buffer zone before hitting the wall, the officials said.

Senior Transport Ministry official Joo Jong-wan said workers have retrieved the flight data and cockpit voice recorders of the plane's black box, which will be examined by government experts investigating the cause of the crash and fire. He said it may take months for investigators to complete their probe. The runway at the Muan airport will be closed until Jan. 1, the ministry said.

Boeing said in a statement on X it was in contact with Jeju Air and is ready to support the company in dealing with the crash.

## China online images show possible futuristic fighter jets

*The Washington Post*

Images of advanced aircraft cruising at low altitudes in China on Thursday have surprised analysts, who say they could mark the maiden flights of sixth-generation fighter jets, representing a major breakthrough for the country's military.

Photos and videos originating on Chinese social media platforms and reposted to X on Thursday show large triangular aircraft making sweeping slow turns at a very low altitude.

The images appear to show two different aircraft, one smaller than the other — both

featuring a tailless, stealthy design suggesting they rely on advanced computational technology to be piloted.

Videos of the jets were trending on Friday on Weibo, a Chinese social media site similar to X, though their origin is unclear, and The Washington Post was unable to verify authenticity. In one video, the large fighter appears to be flanked by the fifth-generation J-20, China's current top operational fighter jet.

The testing of two new advanced aircraft in broad daylight is also highly unusual, analysts say, and could indicate Beijing is putting on a purpose-

ful show of force.

It comes amid uncertainty about the future of the United States' own sixth-generation fighter initiative — known as the Next-Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) Program. Projected costs for each of the future U.S. aircraft are estimated to reach hundreds of millions of dollars, and the Air Force in November decided to defer key decisions about the project's direction to the incoming Trump administration.

The Chinese display of new military technology also follows criticism from Elon Musk — whom President-elect Donald Trump has tasked with advis-

ing on budget cuts — regarding the F-35 fifth-generation fighter jet program, which has been saddled with faulty technology and cost overruns. Musk called the F-35 builders, Lockheed Martin, "idiots" and suggested that manned fighter jets should be replaced with drones.

"It seems quite intentional that [the Chinese military] wanted us to see this aircraft flying. I would think personally that the timing on this is really curious because they're aware of this debate and it almost seems designed to influence that debate," said Kelly Grieco, a senior fellow at the Stimson Center.

# Kim vows tougher anti-US policy pre-Trump

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea—North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to implement the “toughest” anti-U.S. policy, state media reported Sunday, less than a month before Donald Trump takes office as U.S. president.

Trump’s return to the White House raises prospects for high-profile diplomacy with North Korea. During his first term, Trump met Kim three times for talks on the North’s nuclear program. Many experts however say a quick resumption of Kim-Trump summitry is unlikely as Trump would first focus on conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. North Korea’s support for Russia’s war against Ukraine also poses a challenge to efforts to

revive diplomacy, experts say.

During a five-day plenary meeting of the ruling Workers’ Party that ended Friday, Kim called the U.S. “the most reactionary state that regards anti-communism as its invariable state policy.”

Kim said that the U.S.-South Korea-Japan security partnership is expanding into “a nuclear military bloc for aggression.”

“This reality clearly shows to which direction we should advance and what we should do and how,” Kim said, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

It said Kim’s speech “clarified the strategy for the toughest anti-U.S. counteraction to be launched aggressively” by

North Korea for its long-term national interests and security.

KCNA didn’t elaborate on the anti-U.S. strategy.

But it said Kim set forth tasks to bolster military capability through defense technology advancements and stressed the need to improve the mental toughness of North Korean soldiers.

The previous meetings between Trump and Kim had not only put an end to their exchanges of fiery rhetoric and threats of destruction, but they developed personal connections.

Trump once famously said he and Kim “fell in love.”

But their talks eventually collapsed in 2019, as they wrangled over U.S.-led sanctions on the

North.

North Korea has since sharply increased the pace of its weapons testing activities to build more reliable nuclear missiles targeting the U.S. and its allies.

The U.S. and South Korea have responded by expanding their military bilateral drills and also trilateral ones involving Japan, drawing strong rebukes from the North, which views such U.S.-led exercises as invasion rehearsals.

Last month, Kim said that his past negotiations with the United States only confirmed Washington’s “unchangeable” hostility toward his country and described his nuclear buildup as the only way to counter external threats.

## Stray bullet kills soldier driving on Fla. AFB range

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE  
*Stars and Stripes*

A U.S. Army sergeant and former star collegiate quarterback was shot and killed by a hunter just days before Christmas while driving on a Florida training range.

Thomas Lazzaro, 27, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), was struck by a stray round on the afternoon of Dec. 22 as he drove on the Eglin Air Force Base range in Freeport, Fla., the online military publication Task & Purpose reported Friday. He was on his way to assist another soldier who was having car trouble.

The unnamed hunter remained on the scene and is cooperating with the investigation, the Walton County Sheriff’s Office wrote on X the following day. The incident appeared to be a “tragic hunting accident,” the sheriff’s office said.

“We deeply mourn the loss of

U.S. Army Sgt. Thomas Lazzaro,” Col. Patrick Nelson, 7th Special Forces Group commander, said in a statement, according to Task & Purpose. “His absence leaves a void that will be felt professionally and personally among those who had the honor of working with Thomas. Our heartfelt condolences extend to his family, friends, and comrades during this difficult time.”

Lazzaro played quarterback for the Central Michigan University Chippewas for four years, where he completed 72 of 149 passes for 758 yards and five touchdowns, according to the team website. He also rushed for 542 yards and 11 touchdowns.

The Eglin range is a popular hunting spot for outdoorsmen. Permitted members of the public are granted access to hunt deer, birds and feral hogs during various seasons, according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission website.

## USS Utah vet who survived Pearl Harbor attack dies

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

Warren “Red” Upton, the last surviving veteran of the battleship USS Utah, which sank in Pearl Harbor during the 1941 Japanese surprise attack and remains there as a memorial, died Wednesday in San Jose, Calif. He was 105.

“Following a short hospital stay, Warren died on December 25th surrounded by his loving family,” Pacific Historic Parks said in a Facebook post Thursday announcing the death.

Upton was the oldest of a handful of still-living veterans who survived the attack that killed 2,335 service members and 68 civilians on Oahu on Dec. 7, 1941.

With his death, only 15 veterans of the attack are known to be alive, according to Kathleen Farley, president of the California chapter of Sons and Daughters of Pearl Harbor Survivors, who has maintained a tally for years.

Upton had for years been the secretary of Pearl Harbor Survivors Chapter 7 in San Jose and routinely notified Farley of the deaths of survivors, she said in an email Thursday.

On the morning of the Dec. 7 attack, the USS Utah, a Florida-class dreadnaught battleship, was moored off Ford Island in Pearl Harbor in an area normally used by the Pacific Fleet’s aircraft carriers. Unbeknownst to the attackers, however, the carriers were at sea. Japanese torpedo bombers instead targeted the Utah, hitting the battleship with several torpedoes within the first few minutes of the attack.

Upton, then a 22-year-old radioman on the Utah, and the crew were forced to abandon ship, Upton said in a Dec. 7, 2021, article published in The Mercury News.

While 58 Utah crew members died that day, 461 survived. The hulk of the ship is part of the Pearl Harbor National Memorial.

# Deadly tornadoes hit in Texas, Mississippi

*Associated Press*

HOUSTON — A strong storm system threatened to whip up tornadoes in parts of the U.S. Southeast on Sunday, a day after severe weather claimed at least two lives as twisters touched down in Texas and Mississippi.

Strong storms moving across the Southeast were expected to continue producing “gusty, damaging winds,” hail and tornadoes through Sunday, National Weather Service meteorologist Frank Pereira said. So far, the line of severe weather had led to about 40 tornado reports from southeastern Texas to Alabama, Pereira said, but those reports remain unconfirmed until surveys

of damage are completed.

“It’s not unheard of but it is fairly uncommon to have a severe weather outbreak of this magnitude this late in the year,” he said. The storms will continue to slide east until they eventually move offshore, meaning severe weather risks will dwindle into Sunday evening.

On Saturday, one person died in the Liverpool area, located south of Houston, Texas. Four people suffered injuries that were not considered critical, according to Madison Polston of the Brazoria County Sheriff’s Office.

There were “multiple touch-down points” in the county between Liverpool, Hillcrest Vil-

lage and Alvin. Officials knew of around 10 damaged homes but were working to determine the extent of the damage, Polston said.

In Mississippi, one person died in Adams County and two people were injured in Franklin County, according to the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency.

The National Weather Service said two tornadoes hit around Bude and the city of Brandon, ripping roofs from several buildings.

It appeared at least six tornadoes touched down in the Houston area, though more may be discovered when crews go out to

survey the damage. There was damage in the area from both tornadoes and straight-line winds, according to Josh Lichter, meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

North of Houston, mobile homes were damaged or destroyed in Katy and Porter Heights, where the doors of a fire station were blown in, the weather service said.

Storm damage has been reported in the northern Alabama town of Athens, just northwest of Huntsville. A National Weather Service survey team was expected to begin assessing damage Sunday morning, said meteorologist Chelly Amin.

## 15 hurt in Fla. when train hits a fire truck on tracks

*Associated Press*

Three firefighters and a dozen passengers were injured in Florida on Saturday when a fire truck with its lights flashing drove around rail crossing arms and into the path of a high-speed passenger train after waiting for another train to pass, according to video of the incident and a person briefed on what happened.

The crash happened at 10:45 a.m. in crowded downtown Delray Beach. In the aftermath, the Brightline train was stopped on the tracks, its front destroyed, about a block away from the Del-

ray Beach Fire Rescue truck. Its ladder was ripped off and in the grass several yards away, The Sun-Sentinel reported.

The Delray Beach Fire Rescue said in a social media post that three Delray Beach firefighters were in stable condition at a hospital. Palm Beach County Fire Rescue took 12 people from the train to the hospital with minor injuries.

The person familiar with the details of the crash, who was not authorized to disclose what happened because of the ongoing investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity, said the fire

truck stopped at the crossing and waited for a freight train to go by before maneuvering around the lowered crossing arms.

Video of the collision shows the fire truck driving around cars stopped at the crossing with its lights flashing to cross the double tracks.

Emmanuel Amaral rushed to the scene on his golf cart after hearing a loud crash and screeching train brakes from where he was having breakfast a couple of blocks away. He saw firefighters climbing out of the front window of their damaged

truck and pulling injured colleagues away from the tracks. One of their helmets came to rest several hundred feet away from the crash.

“The front of that train is completely smashed, and there was even some of the parts to the fire truck stuck in the front of the train, but it split the car right in half. It split the fire truck right in half, and the debris was everywhere,” Amaral said.

A Brightline safety officer said the entire community is involved in ensuring railroad safety and drivers should never go around closed gates.

## Chinese espionage campaign reportedly hits 9th firm

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — A ninth U.S. telecoms firm has been confirmed to have been hacked as part of a sprawling Chinese espionage campaign that gave officials in Beijing access to private texts and phone conversations of an unknown number of Americans, a top White House official said Friday.

Biden administration offi-

cials said this month that at least eight telecommunications companies, as well as dozens of nations, had been affected by the Chinese hacking blitz known as Salt Typhoon.

But deputy national security adviser Anne Neuberger told reporters Friday that a ninth victim had been identified after the administration released guidance to companies about

how to hunt for Chinese culprits in their networks.

The update from Neuberger is the latest development in a massive hacking operation that has alarmed national security officials, exposed cybersecurity vulnerabilities in the private sector and laid bare China’s hacking sophistication.

The hackers compromised the networks of telecommuni-

cations companies to obtain customer call records and gain access to the private communications of what officials have said is a limited number of individuals. Though the FBI has not publicly identified any of the victims, officials believe senior U.S. government officials and prominent political figures are among those whose communications were accessed.



# Azerbaijan: Russia shot down plane in error

Associated Press

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev said Sunday that the Azerbaijani airliner that crashed last week was shot down by Russia, albeit unintentionally, and criticized Moscow for trying to "hush up" the issue for days.

"We can say with complete clarity that the plane was shot down by Russia. (...) We are not saying that it was done intentionally, but it was done," he told Azerbaijani state television.

Aliyev said that the airliner, which crashed Wednesday in Kazakhstan, was hit by fire from the ground over Russia and "rendered uncontrollable by electronic warfare." Aliyev accused Russia of trying to "hush up" the issue for several days, saying he was "upset and surprised" by versions of events put forward by Russian officials.

"Unfortunately, for the first three days we heard nothing from Russia except delirious versions," he said.

The crash killed 38 of 67 people on board. The Kremlin said that air defense systems were firing near Grozny, the regional capital of the Russian republic of Chechnya, where the plane attempted to land, to deflect a Ukrainian drone strike.

Aliyev said Azerbaijan made three demands to Russia in connection with the crash.

"First, the Russian side must apologize to Azerbaijan. Second, it must admit its guilt. Third, punish the guilty, bring them to criminal responsibility and pay compensation to the Azerbaijani state, the injured passengers and crew members," he said.

Aliyev noted that the first demand was "already fulfilled" when Russian President Vladimir

Putin apologized to him on Saturday. Putin called the crash a "tragic incident" though stopped short of acknowledging Moscow's responsibility.

He said that an investigation into the crash was ongoing, and that "the final version (of events) will be known after the black boxes are opened."

He noted that Azerbaijan was always "in favor of a group of international experts" investigating the crash, and had "categorically refused" Russia's suggestion that the Interstate Aviation Committee, which oversees civil aviation in the Commonwealth of Independent States, investigate it.

"It is no secret that this organization consists mostly of Russian officials and is headed by Russian citizens. The factors of objectivity could not be fully ensured here," Aliyev said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Russian state media on Sunday that Putin had spoken to Aliyev over the phone again, but did not provide details of the conversation.

The Kremlin also said a joint investigation by Russia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan was underway at the crash site near the city of Aktau in Kazakhstan. The plane was flying from Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, to Grozny when it turned toward Kazakhstan, hundreds of miles across the Caspian Sea from its intended destination, and crashed while making an attempt to land.

Dmitry Yadrov, head of Russia's civil aviation authority Rosaviatsia, said Friday that as the plane was preparing to land in Grozny in deep fog, Ukrainian drones were targeting the city, prompting authorities to close the area to air traffic.

## US to send \$1.25B in arms to Ukraine before Jan. 20

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States is expected to announce that it will send \$1.25 billion in military assistance to Ukraine, U.S. officials said Friday, as the Biden administration pushes to get as much aid to Kyiv as possible before leaving office on Jan. 20.

The large package of aid includes a significant amount of munitions, including for the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems and the HAWK air defense system. It also will provide Stinger missiles and 155 mm- and 105 mm artillery rounds, officials said.

The officials, who said they expect the announcement to be made on Monday, spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details not yet made public.

The new aid comes as Russia has launched a barrage of attacks against Ukraine's power facilities in recent days, although Ukraine

has said it intercepted a significant number of the missiles and drones.

Earlier this month, senior defense officials acknowledged that that the Defense Department may not be able to send all of the remaining \$5.6 billion in Pentagon weapons and equipment stocks passed by Congress for Ukraine before President-elect Donald Trump is sworn in.

Trump has talked about getting some type of negotiated settlement between Ukraine and Russia, and spoken about his relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Many U.S. and European leaders are concerned that it might result in a poor deal for Ukraine and they worry that he won't provide Ukraine with all the weapons funding approved by Congress.

This latest assistance would reduce the remaining amount to about \$4.35 billion.

## TikToker jailed for spraying groceries with pesticides

The Washington Post

Charles Smith walked into a Walmart, picked up a can of bug spray, and sprayed produce and other food items, according to police in Mesa, Ariz. — all in the name of going viral on social media.

The 27-year-old, known online as Wolfie Kahletti and Wolfie Party, faces a felony count for "introducing poison," along with three misdemeanor charges for criminal damage, endangerment and theft after the Dec. 19 incident at the store.

According to a police report obtained by The Washington Post, Smith entered the store, took a can of bug spray from a shelf, and sprayed it on vegetables, fruit and rotisserie chickens.

He later posted video of the episode on his TikTok page and Instagram stories. In the now-deleted videos, Smith is seen wearing a black hoodie and pink bandanna

as he records the incident.

Smith returned to the store about 10 minutes later and recorded himself attempting to gather the contaminated items and wheeling them away in a cart to the rear of the store. It's unclear whether he managed to retrieve everything. Authorities reported that Walmart ultimately had to remove products worth \$931 from the shelves.

Mesa Police said Smith was identified through prior police contacts and has an open case with the Tempe Police, along with an active warrant for failure to appear. He turned himself in to Mesa Police and was arrested Dec. 21.

Smith admitted to police to stealing the bug spray and using it on produce before leaving the Walmart, the police report says. He said that online backlash prompted him to return to collect the contaminated items.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Cat dies after eating food tainted with bird flu

**OR** PORTLAND — An Oregon house cat died after eating pet food that tested positive for bird flu, Oregon authorities said, prompting a recall of raw frozen pet food that was sold nationwide.

Northwest Naturals, a pet food company based in Portland, said it had voluntarily recalled one batch of its two-pound Feline Turkey Recipe raw frozen pet food after it tested positive for the virus. The product was sold through distributors in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Wisconsin, as well as Canada's British Columbia.

The recalled product is packaged in two-pound plastic bags with "best if used by" dates of May 21, 2026, and June 23, 2026. The company and Oregon authorities said that consumers who bought the recalled product should throw it away immediately and contact the place of purchase for a refund.

### Church donates last of its money in act of charity

**PA** BETHLEHEM — A church whose congregation has roots going back to the 19th century is closing and donating hundreds of thousands of dollars from the sale of its building to charity in a Pennsylvania city named for the birthplace of Jesus.

Trinity United Church of Christ in Bethlehem hosted its final service Sunday as its members ended decades as a parish with Christmas season charita-

ble donations of nearly \$400,000, the Morning Call of Allentown reported.

Trinity has — like many other houses of worship — suffered a decline in membership and sold the Gothic Revival-style church building with large stained-glass windows to another congregation.

### Man who lost home over \$588 is getting it back

**NE** SCOTTSBLUFF — A Nebraska man is getting title to his home back, years after losing it over a \$588 tax debt, one of his lawyers said Thursday.

Kevin Fair, of Scottsbluff, has been involved in a legal dispute since 2018, when he lost title to the home he had owned for nearly three decades for failing to pay \$588 in overdue property taxes. Scotts Bluff County sold the lien to a private investor, as allowed by Nebraska law at the time.

When Fair couldn't repay the money along with interest and fees, the title went to the investor, though Fair was allowed to stay in the home while the legal dispute played out.

The Nebraska Supreme Court ruled against Fair in 2022, but a year later, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the state court to reconsider. In August, the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled that Fair should retain title to the house.

### Jailed crime boss' death blamed on drug overdose

**HI** HONOLULU — A Hawaii crime boss who died in federal detention this month was killed by an opioid

overdose, Honolulu's medical examiner said.

Michael Miske, 50, died of "toxicity of fentanyl and para-fluorofentanyl," the medical examiner's office said in a statement. The death appears to have been accidental but the case is still under investigation, it added, and an autopsy report will likely take at least another 30 days.

It's not clear how Miske got ahold of fentanyl or para-fluorofentanyl while at the Honolulu Federal Detention Center. Para-fluorofentanyl is a synthetic opioid that appears in illicit drugs and is more potent than fentanyl.

### Airport with runway in US and Canada closes

**MN** ROSEAU — The Piney-Pinecreek Border Airport has a unique claim to fame — its runway straddles the border of the U.S. and Canada. But after seven decades of operation, the small airport that sits near Roseau, Minn., and Piney, Manitoba, in Canada, closed for good on Friday.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation said in a news release earlier this month that the airport "had very low use and faced large maintenance expenses including runway, apron and terminal reconstruction. The international agreement required to operate the airport expires on Dec. 26 and will not be renewed by either airport owner."

The airport opened in 1953 with a grass runway — a paved runway was added in 1978. It is one of six airports straddling the border, but the only one with a

paved runway. It was often used by Americans traveling to Canada to hunt and fish.

Under the international agreement, airport staff are allowed to cross between the countries for their work without going through the typical customs process.

### Trial delayed for man accused in Trump plot

**FL** ORLANDO — A man accused of attempting to assassinate President-elect Donald Trump in South Florida won't be tried until September, a federal judge ruled last week.

Ryan Routh's trial will begin Sept. 8 instead of the previously scheduled Feb. 10 start date, U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon said in an order released last Monday.

Routh, 58, a Hawaii resident, has pleaded not guilty.

Routh's attorneys had asked the judge to delay the trial until no earlier than next December, saying they needed more time to review the evidence against him and decide whether to mount an insanity defense.

Routh owned 17 cellphones and numerous other electronic devices, and there are hundreds of hours of police body camera and surveillance videos that have been provided to the defense, Routh's attorneys argued during a hearing two weeks ago in Fort Pierce, Fla.

In her order, Cannon said she wanted to err on the side of providing more time given the seriousness of the allegations, but that starting the trial no earlier than December would be an excessive amount of time.

— From wire reports

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Reporting  
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and Military News

# Army QB breaks TD mark in bowl win over La. Tech

Associated Press

SHREVEPORT, La. — Bryson Daily broke the FBS record for touchdowns by a quarterback in a season with 32, running for three scores in No. 19 Army's 27-6 victory over Louisiana Tech in the Independence Bowl on Saturday night.

Daily ran for 127 yards on 27 carries and was 2-for-9 passing for 65 yards to help Army set a program victory record at 12-2. Daily broke the FBS quarterback record for touchdowns in a season set by Navy's Keenan Reynolds in 2013.

"I'm really proud of this senior class, the way we came to-

gether to have this season," Daily said. "To have two six-win seasons in a row, to turn it around and get 12, just extremely proud of the guys."

Hayden Reed added 114 yards rushing and a TD on 20 carries.

Army entered the game with a nation-best 298.9 yards rushing per game and punished the Bulldogs (5-8), a late replacement for Sun Belt champion Marshall.

The Black Knights were also able to wash away some of the "bad taste" that lingered from a 31-13 loss in the Army-Navy game.

"They responded from a very emotional and difficult loss (to Navy) two weeks ago with a great effort," Army coach Jeff Monken said.

Army set an Independence Bowl record with a 21-play drive, going 75 yards in the second quarter to take a 21-3 lead. Daily scored on an 8-yard run to end the drive that had two third-down conversions and three fourth-down conversions.

Drew Henderson made field goals of 27 and 44 yards for Louisiana Tech. Tru Edwards, who has entered the transfer portal, had eight catches for 92 yards.

## Bowl win caps best season for Iowa State

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — It was a season of Iowa State comebacks. And fittingly, that's how it ended for the Cyclones.

Game MVP Rocco Becht scored from a yard out on fourth-and-goal with 56 seconds remaining and No. 18 Iowa State capped the best season in school history by rallying past No. 15 Miami 42-41 in the Pop-Tarts Bowl on Saturday.

Becht finished with 270 passing yards and three touchdowns for Iowa State (11-2), a program that entered this season — the 133rd year of Cyclone football — never having won more than nine games in a year.

"If you look at this team, it's really who they've been all year," coach Matt Campbell said.

It was the fourth time in 2024 that Iowa State got a winning score with less than two minutes remaining. For this one, the Cyclones rallied from a 10-point deficit in the second half — with Miami quarterback Cam Ward watching after a record-setting first half — to get win No. 11. Carson Hansen rushed for two TDs for Iowa State.

And as the MVP, Becht got the honor of choosing which flavor Pop-Tart was to be sacrificed in a giant toaster.

"There's only one," Becht said. "Cinnamon roll."

Ward passed for three touchdowns in his final college game, while Damien Martinez rushed for a career-high 179 yards for Miami (10-3), which dropped its sixth straight bowl game and lost three of four games to end the season — those three losses by a combined 10 points.

"Disappointed that we couldn't pull out a victory," Miami coach Mario Cristobal said. "These guys have always fought and always competed and this was no exception. ... It's painful. It's as painful as it gets when you don't win. But there's a lot to build on."

## Horvath has school-best 95-yard TD run, Mids beat Sooners in Armed Forces Bowl

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Blake Horvath set a Navy record with a 95-yard touchdown run and then scored a go-ahead 6-yarder with 4:34 left as the Midshipmen overcame an early two-touchdown deficit and stopped a late 2-point conversion attempt to beat Oklahoma 21-20 in the Armed Forces Bowl on Friday.

The Sooners (6-7) got a 10-yard touchdown pass from Michael Hawkins Jr. to Jake Roberts with six seconds left. They then went for the win, but Hawkins was sacked by Justin Reed on the conversion try.

"It was a great play that I was able to make," Reed said, quickly crediting the rest of the defense. "We just made sure that we stayed composed after them just getting that touchdown."

Just two weeks after a dominating 31-13 win over Army for the Commander in Chief's Trophy, the Midshipmen (10-3)

reached 10 wins for the sixth time. Their last 10-win season had been in 2019, which had been their last winning season.

"Well, it's the perfect ending," second-year Navy head coach Brian Newberry said. "You're down 14-0, I think it kind of symbolizes everything that these guys have been through, especially the seniors, symbolizes how things started. Things looked bleak, things weren't going great, adversity and they kept scratching and clawing and fighting."

Horvath's record run on a sprint down the middle of the field tied the game at 14 late in third quarter. He then put Navy ahead for the first time on his 6-yard TD run, one play after he converted a fourth-and-3 with a 16-yard pass to Eli Heidenrich.

"I thought if we go score right there, that might be the difference in the game. And it was," Newberry said of going for it on fourth down in that 12-play, 66-

yard drive that took 7½ minutes.

Horvath ran 18 times for 155 yards, and completed 7 of 12 passes for 92 yards. Alex Tecza had an 11-yard TD run for the Midshipmen.

Oklahoma went up after Gavin Sawchuk's 21-yard TD on the opening drive, when he had 37 yards after only 61 in his other eight games this season. It was 14-0 with 5:56 left in the first quarter after Hawkins rolled left, reversed field and got almost to the other side of the field before throwing to Zion Kearney for a 56-yard catch-and-run TD.

The Sooners had a much different-looking roster than the regular season. More than two dozen players went into the transfer portal, and the Sooners were also without standout linebacker Danny Stutsman and safety Billy Bowman, who bypassed playing to begin preparation for the NFL Draft.



# Herbert, Chargers secure playoff spot

*Associated Press*

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — As spontaneous celebrations rippled throughout the Los Angeles Chargers' locker room after their resounding 40-7 win over the New England Patriots, coach Jim Harbaugh grabbed general manager Joe Hortiz and wrapped him up in a bear hug.

"Love you!" Harbaugh said.

"Love you!" Hortiz responded.

"Great job! Let's keep it going," Harbaugh replied, finally loosening his grasp.

The Chargers (10-6) are back in the playoffs. But the message is clear: They have their eyes on achieving much more.

Justin Herbert threw three touchdown passes and Los Angeles locked up its second playoff appearance in three seasons with Saturday's victory.

"We had a good opportunity

tonight and we went out and took it," Herbert said. "We had a good plan. All week we knew how big of a game this was for us. Guys were dialed in, focused and we executed today."

The Chargers also secured the fourth postseason appearance in Harbaugh's five seasons as an NFL coach, adding to the three he made during his stint with the San Francisco 49ers.

"You talk to them and there's more to do," Harbaugh said. "There's no coach who could have it better than to be coaching these players. Nobody. Maybe the only person would be future us, could have it better than us."

Herbert finished 26 of 38 for 281 yards to become the third player in NFL history with at least 3,000 passing yards and 20 touchdown passes in each of his first five seasons. He joins Pro Football Hall of Famer Peyton

Manning and Russell Wilson.

Ladd McConkey had eight catches for 94 yards and pulled in TD throws of 6 and 40 yards. With a 10-yard reception in the second quarter, he passed 1,000 yards receiving for the season, making him the third Chargers rookie receiver to reach that milestone.

JK Dobbins rushed 19 times for 76 yards and a TD.

The Patriots (3-13) have lost six straight, their second such losing streak of the season.

"We just didn't play well enough in any phase of the game," coach Jerod Mayo said. "No complementary football, and that's what you get."

Asked if he thinks he is coaching for his job, Mayo said it comes with the territory.

"I'm always under pressure and it's been that way for a very long time, not just when I became the head coach of the Pa-

triotics," he said.

New England quarterback Drake Maye finished 12-for-22 for 117 yards and a touchdown. He became the first rookie quarterback in franchise history with a TD pass in eight straight games. But he was sacked four times, and a second-quarter fumble marked his eighth straight game with at least one turnover.

Los Angeles outgained New England 428-181.

Maye briefly left the game to be evaluated for a head injury following a blow to his helmet in the first quarter.

He was replaced by backup Jacoby Brissett in the next series, which ended in a punt. But after further evaluation in the locker room and a Cameron Dicker 27-yard field goal put the Chargers in front 10-0, Maye returned to the game for the Patriots' third series.

# Bengals stay alive as Burrow hits Higgins for TD in OT

*Associated Press*

CINCINNATI — This time, near the very end of a mostly agonizing season, the Cincinnati Bengals made enough plays to win.

A familiar connection closed it out.

Joe Burrow threw his third touchdown pass to Tee Higgins with 1:07 left in overtime, and the Bengals kept their slim playoff hopes alive with a wild 30-24 victory over the Denver Broncos on Saturday.

"This is one of the crazy ones I've been involved with in the NFL," Burrow said. "It feels like we had a couple of those this year, and it's nice to come out on top in one."

After Denver's second punt in overtime, Burrow completed a 31-yard pass to Higgins to the Denver 3, and then went back to the lanky receiver for the final play in Cincinnati's fourth con-

secutive victory. Higgins finished with 11 receptions for 131 yards.

Cade York had a chance to win it for Cincinnati with about three minutes left in overtime, but his 33-yard field goal bounced off the left upright. Denver then went three-and-out, including a Bo Nix incompleteness on third down, handing the ball right back to Burrow and the Bengals (8-8).

"Tough one to lose," Denver coach Sean Payton said. "We had our opportunities. The will to compete and answer, it was pretty impressive. In the end, we didn't make enough plays, and they did."

It was the Bengals' first win this season against a team with a winning record. They need another victory in their final game at Pittsburgh and some help from other teams to make it to the postseason for the first time

since 2022.

"We know we can hang with anybody," Burrow said.

"We've proven that this year. We played everybody this year close. It's just about making the plays down the stretch to win those games. Today we did. The last four weeks we have. We've got to continue to do it."

The Broncos (9-7) would have secured an AFC wild card with a victory over the Bengals. They'll have another opportunity to earn a postseason berth when they host Kansas City next weekend. A victory over the Chiefs also would eliminate the Bengals.

Burrow continued his stellar season, going 39-for-49 for 412 yards and three touchdowns, all to Higgins. Ja'Marr Chase finished with nine receptions for 102 yards.

**Rams 13, Cardinals 9:** Ah-kello Witherspoon made a div-

ing interception on a deflected pass in the end zone with 37 seconds to play, and host Los Angeles barely maintained command of the NFC West race with a victory over Arizona.

Puka Nacua had 129 yards receiving and Kyren Williams scored the only touchdown for the Rams (10-6), who grinded through a difficult offensive night and survived a hair-raising fourth quarter for their fifth consecutive victory.

The Rams host Seattle (9-7) in their regular-season finale next weekend, but they could already have coach Sean McVay's fourth division title clinched before then.

If the Bills, Browns, Vikings, Commanders and 49ers combine for three wins — or two wins and a tie — over the next two days, Los Angeles will be NFC West champions based on its strength of schedule.

# Ovechkin scores in return, Capitals win

Associated Press

TORONTO — Alex Ovechkin's record chase is back on.

His empty-net goal for the Washington Capitals in Saturday's 5-2 victory over the Toronto Maple Leafs wasn't the most challenging goal among the 869 he's scored in the NHL, but it was significant given his return from a 16-game hiatus due to injury.

"Every goal is hard to score in this league, so if you want to try, put on skates and go six on five," Ovechkin quipped after the game.

Washington's captain moved closer to Wayne Gretzky's record of 894 career goals. Ovechkin is 25 back with 46 games remaining in the regular season.

Ovechkin played his first game since fracturing his left fibula Nov. 18 in a game against the Utah Hockey Club.

The 39-year-old said it didn't take long for him to get back in rhythm.

"I tried to feel how I feel with the puck, mentally, physically.

And as soon as the first shift ended, I was feeling like 'OK, now I could play,'" he said.

Ovechkin scored a league-leading 15 goals in 18 games before the injury occurred.

**Jets 4, Senators 2:** Connor Hellebuyck made 33 saves, Nikolaj Ehlers had a goal and two assists and NHL-leading Winnipeg beat visiting Ottawa.

Gabriel Vilardi gave Winnipeg a 3-2 lead on a power play midway through the third period, scoring off Ehlers' one-touch pass.

**Canadiens 4, Panthers 0:** Jakub Dobes stopped 34 shots in his NHL debut, Kirby Dach had his first two-goal game in nearly two years, and Montreal won at Florida.

Dobes, a 23-year-old from the Czech Republic, went 9-3-1 with a 2.44 goals-against average and a .910 save percentage in the minors this season, his second as a pro.

**Flyers 3, Ducks 1:** Noah Cates extended his goal-scoring streak to five games, Morgan

Frost scored the go-ahead goal early in the third period and visiting Philadelphia beat Anaheim.

**Kraken 5, Canucks 4 (OT):** Vince Dunn scored his second goal of the game 2:15 into overtime and Seattle overcame a three-goal, third-period deficit to beat host Vancouver.

Jaden Schwartz also scored twice, tying it at 4 with 49 seconds left and goalie Philipp Grubauer off for an extra attacker.

**Kings 4, Oilers 3 (OT):** Quinton Byfield scored his second goal of the game with 1:41 remaining in overtime as Los Angeles beat visiting Edmonton.

Byfield scored on a wrist shot from the right circle to give Los Angeles a win in its first of four regular-season games against Edmonton, which has knocked the Kings out of the playoffs for three straight seasons.

**Bruins 4, Blue Jackets 0:** Jeremy Swayman stopped 18 shots for his second shutout of the season, David Pastrnak

scored on a clean breakaway and Boston beat visiting Columbus to split consecutive-night, home-and-home games between the teams.

**Hurricanes 5, Devils 2:** Jackson Blake scored a power-play goal with 9:17 remaining to give Carolina the lead, and Jack Roslovic scored twice as it beat visiting New Jersey.

**Lightning 6, Rangers 2:** Brayden Point scored twice and added an assist to lead host Tampa Bay past reeling New York.

Nikita Kucherov added a goal and two assists for Tampa Bay.

**Islanders 6, Penguins 3:** Casey Cizikas and Anders Lee each scored twice as host New York beat Pittsburgh.

**Flames 3, Sharks 1:** Jonathan Huberdeau scored twice and visiting Calgary handed San Jose its seventh straight loss.

Mikael Backlund also scored and Nazem Kadri had two assists for the Flames.

## Johnson helps Hawks beat Heat for 3rd straight win

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Jalen Johnson scored 28 points and the Atlanta Hawks closed out a four-game homestand by winning a third straight contest, 120-110 over the Miami Heat on Saturday.

Trae Young added his 22nd double-double of the season, with 11 points and 15 assists, and De'Andre Hunter scored 26 points in his 14th consecutive game with at least 15 points coming off the bench.

After a close first half that featured nine lead changes, Atlanta seized control early in the second half. With five minutes to go in the third quarter, Garrison Mathews and Hunter hit back-to-back 3s to give Atlanta an 81-72 lead, its biggest of the night, and force a Miami timeout.

Tyler Herro scored 28 points and dished out 10 assists and Bam Adebayo added 17 points and 10 rebounds. It was the Heat's fourth game in a row without star Jimmy Butler, who sat out for what the team called "return to competition reconditioning."

**Thunder 106, Hornets 94:** Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 22 points, Jalen Williams added 20 and visiting Oklahoma City beat Charlotte for its 10th straight regular-season win.

Aaron Wiggins added 17 points and Isaiah Hartenstein had 12 points and 15 rebounds for the Thunder, who never trailed.

Miles Bridges had 19 points and 10 rebounds, while Vasa Micic added 16 points for the Hornets, who have lost 15 of

their last 16 games.

**Knicks 136, Wizards 132 (OT):** Jalen Brunson scored nine of his season-high 55 points in overtime and Karl-Anthony Towns had 30 points and 14 rebounds as visiting New York extended its season-long winning streak to seven games by beating Washington.

**Bulls 116, Bucks 111:** Josh Giddey had 23 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists for his second triple-double this season to lead host Chicago to a win over Milwaukee.

Coby White, who scored 22, nailed a tiebreaking jumper with 32 seconds remaining.

**Warriors 109, Suns 105:** Jonathan Kuminga had 34 points and made the go-ahead free throw in host Golden State's win over Phoenix.

**Nuggets 134, Pistons 121:** Nikola Jokic had 37 points, Jamal Murray scored 21 of his 34 in a decisive third period, and host Denver survived Detroit's fourth-quarter rally to win.

**76ers 114, Jazz 111:** Joel Embiid and Tyrese Maxey each scored 32 points to lead visiting Philadelphia over Utah.

**Trail Blazers 126, Mavericks 122:** Shaedon Sharpe scored 23 points and Anfernee Simons 22 as host Portland held off Dallas.

Deandre Ayton had 21 points, 16 rebounds and three blocks and Deni Avdija had 21 points, five rebounds and five assists.

**Lakers 132, Kings 122:** Anthony Davis had 36 points, 15 rebounds and eight assists for host Los Angeles in Sacramento's first game under interim coach Doug Christie.