

2 US troops killed in ISIS ambush in Syria

BY LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

Two U.S. service members and one American civilian have been killed and three other service members wounded in an ambush on Saturday by Islamic State in central Syria, U.S. Central Command said.

The attack was carried out by a lone gunman, who was engaged and killed, according to CENTCOM.

Republican Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa said the soldiers were members of the Iowa National Guard — where she, too, once served. “Our Iowa National Guard family is hurting as we mourn the loss of two of our own and pray for the recovery of the three soldiers wounded,” she said, according to The Associated Press.

CENTCOM said three service members were also wounded in the ambush Saturday. President Donald Trump said the three “seem to be doing pretty well.”

The identities of the service members killed will be withheld by the Department of Defense for 24 hours. Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said via a post on X that the service members killed were Army soldiers and the civilian was an interpreter.

“The attack occurred as the soldiers were conducting a key leader engagement,” Parnell said.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump vowed that “There will be very serious retaliation.”

“This was an ISIS attack against the U.S., and Syria, in a very dangerous part of Syria,

that is not fully controlled by them,” he said in the post.

He also included in the post that Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa was “devastated by what happened.”

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth also posted on X to condemn the attack.

The attack on U.S. troops in Syria is the first to inflict casualties since the fall of President Bashar Assad’s regime a year ago.

The attack occurred during a joint field tour with Syrian forces near Palmyra, according to a report from SANA, the state-owned news agency in Syria.

U.S. helicopters intervened to evacuate injured personnel to the Al-Tanf base in the southeast part of the country, near the border with Iraq and Jordan,

according to SANA.

An earlier report by the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the attacker was a member of the Syrian security force.

Syria’s Interior Ministry spokesman Nour al-Din al-Baba said the man had joined Syria’s internal security forces as a base security guard two months earlier and was recently reassigned amid suspicions that he might be affiliated with ISIS.

Al-Baba said that Syria’s new authorities had faced shortages in security personnel and had to recruit rapidly after the unexpected success of a rebel offensive last year that intended to capture the northern city of Aleppo but ended up overthrowing the government of Assad.

Terrorists attack Hanukkah celebration in Sydney

Associated Press

SYDNEY — Two gunmen attacked a Hanukkah celebration on a Sydney beach Sunday, killing at least 16 people in what Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called an act of antisemitism and terrorism.

The massacre at Bondi Beach, one of Australia’s most popular and iconic beaches, followed a wave of antisemitic attacks that have roiled the country over the past year, although the authorities didn’t suggest those episodes and Sunday’s shooting were connected. It is the deadliest shooting for almost three decades in a country with strict gun control laws.

One gunman was fatally shot by police and the second, who was arrested, was in critical condition, authorities said. Police

said one of the gunmen was known to the security services, but that there had been no specific threat.

At least 29 people were confirmed wounded, including two police officers, said Mal Lanyon, the police commissioner for New South Wales state, where Sydney is located.

Police said officers were examining a number of suspicious items, including several improvised explosive devices found in one of the suspect’s cars.

“This attack was designed to target Sydney’s Jewish community,” the state’s premier, Chris Minns, said.

The violence erupted at the end of a summer day when thousands had flocked to Bondi Beach, including hundreds gathered for the Chanukah by the Sea

event celebrating the start of the eight-day Hanukkah festival.

Chabad, an Orthodox Jewish movement that runs outreach around the world and sponsors public events during major Jewish holidays, identified one of the dead as Rabbi Eli Schlanger, assistant rabbi at Chabad of Bondi and an organizer of the event.

Israel’s Foreign Ministry confirmed the death of an Israeli citizen, but gave no further details.

Police said emergency services were called to Campbell Parade in Bondi about 6:45 p.m. responding to reports of shots being fired.

Video filmed by onlookers showed people in bathing suits running from the water as shots rang out. Separate footage showed two men in black shirts firing with long guns from a foot-

bridge leading to the beach, as sirens wailed and people cried out in the background.

One dramatic clip broadcast on Australian television showed a man appearing to tackle and disarm one of the gunmen, before pointing the man’s weapon at him, then setting the gun on the ground.

Minns called the man a “genuine hero.”

Albanese told reporters in the Australian capital, Canberra, that he was “devastated” by the massacre.

“This is a targeted attack on Jewish Australians on the first day of Hanukkah, which should be a day of joy, a celebration of faith. An act of evil, antisemitism, terrorism that has struck the heart of our nation,” Albanese said.

SOUTHCOM leader retires amid tensions

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

Adm. Alvin Holsey, head of U.S. Southern Command, retired Friday with two years left in his tenure.

"This is a graduation, not a retirement. As somebody who's been there and done that before, I can tell you life on the other side is awesome," Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the audience.

Caine presided over the change-of-command ceremony at the command's headquarters in Doral, Fla. Holsey formally handed over command to Air Force Lt. Gen. Evan Pettus, who currently serves as his military deputy commander. Pettus will serve as acting head of SOUTHCOM. President Donald Trump has yet to nominate Holsey's replacement.

The change comes amid rising

tensions with Venezuela from seizing an oil tanker Wednesday and more than 20 strikes on alleged drug smuggling boats.

Holsey announced his retirement in October. In a closed-door meeting with senior lawmakers on Tuesday, Holsey insisted his decision is personal and had nothing to do with the operations in his command, according to comments by Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, published in Politico.

In his farewell remarks, Holsey did not address operations or the reasons for his retirement. He did urge his successor to uphold longstanding partnerships in the region by standing firmly behind the shared values of democracy and support for the rule of law.

"I concluded my final commanders conference yesterday,

and I was clear with my team to be a trusted partner. We must be credible, present and engaged," Holsey said.

Reuters reported Holsey was pushed out by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth after the secretary had grown frustrated with SOUTHCOM as he sought to flex U.S. military operations and planning in the region.

Spokespeople for Hegseth previously have denied that there was tension between Holsey and Hegseth.

"We extend our deepest gratitude to Admiral Alvin Holsey for his more than 37 years of distinguished service to our nation," Hegseth said in a post on X in October.

Hegseth on Friday traveled to Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala., for the relocation of U.S. Space Command Headquarters and a designation ceremony.

Former Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin presided over the SOUTHCOM change-of-command in November 2024.

Holsey is a native of Fort Valley, Ga., and was commissioned through the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps program at Morehouse College in 1988. Before leading U.S. forces in Latin America, Holsey served as the military deputy commander of SOUTHCOM.

Caine pointed out that Holsey comes from a family with a long line of service. Holsey's father served in active duty during the Korean War and six uncles also served — three in the Navy and three in the Army.

One of his two sons, Joshua, followed his father into the Navy and aviation. He is a lieutenant commander and currently flying Black Hawks off the USS Abraham Lincoln in the Pacific Ocean.

DOD: Troops to see BAH increase by average of 4%

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon will boost housing allowance rates for service members by an average of 4.2% on Jan. 1, the Defense Department announced Thursday.

Troops can expect to see basic allowance for housing increases in the range of \$93 to \$212 per month in 2026, depending on factors including their pay grade, family size and location, according to a Pentagon news release. The Defense Department estimates it will pay about \$29.2 billion in BAH to about 1 million service members in 2026.

Service members who remain at their current location are also protected from having their payments decreased if BAH rates in their area are reduced in 2026, the Pentagon said.

A watchdog report ordered by the Defense Department this year suggested that the Pentagon should rework its BAH rate calculations to protect troops from rapid housing market changes, such as were seen during the 2020 and 2021 coronavirus pandemic, and to better reflect the housing choices service members have been making. Troops in recent years have typically chosen to rent or purchase larger housing units than their BAH profiles suggested they live in, the RAND Corp. study found.

Service members can calculate their housing allowance by using the Basic Allowance for Housing calculator at: <https://www.travel.dod.mil/Allowances/Basic-Allowance-for-Housing/BAH-Rate-Lookup/>

Marines certify 12 attack drone operators at event

By BRIAN McELHINEY
Stars and Stripes

CAMP SCHWAB, Okinawa — The Marine Corps certified Okinawa's first 12 attack drone operators during a two-week competition this month, creating the means to make precision strikes while keeping Marines out of harm's way.

The competition began Dec. 1 and culminated Thursday with a kinetic strike at Schwab's Range 10, where Marines piloted and detonated two drones carrying C-4 explosives over a rusted-out tank more than half a mile down-range.

About 50 Marines and sailors, including Lt. Gen. Roger Turner, commander of the III Marine Expeditionary Force, and Vice Adm. Pat Hannifin, commander of U.S. 7th Fleet, witnessed the strike.

The exercise goal was to "defend this piece of terrain from some type of enemy that has some type of armored vehicles," Col. Scott Cuomo, commander of the Weapons Training Battalion in Quantico, Va., told reporters before the strike.

The Marine Corps in March announced formation of the Attack Drone Team in response to the "rapid proliferation" of armed, first-person view drone technology in modern conflicts, especially in Eastern Europe.

The competition at Schwab is the third since the team's formation, Cuomo said. Three more are planned around the world.

Additionally, five attack drone instructors, two payload specialists and two payload specialist instructors were certified during the event.

USFJ: 'Mistake' made in arrest of US civilian

By BRIAN McELHINEY
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — U.S. Forces Japan has acknowledged that military police on patrol on an Okinawa street made a "mistake" when they aggressively detained a U.S. civilian last month in an incident captured on video that went viral.

Two videos posted online show a U.S. military police officer lifting and slamming Kareem El to the pavement along Gate 2 Street in Okinawa city early Nov. 22.

The incident ignited a social media backlash.

"While the investigation is still ongoing, it is clear that the detention of Mr. El was a mistake on the part of the patrol, who approached him solely because they believed he was a U.S. servicemember," USFJ

spokesman Col. John Severns said Friday.

The Washington Post first reported Severns' statement on Thursday in Washington, where El is from.

El, a former Marine captain, has said he was on Okinawa on a business trip.

USFJ commander Air Force Lt. Gen. Stephen Jost halted unilateral patrols by the U.S. military on Okinawa and ordered an investigation into the incident, Severns said Nov. 26. El is not connected to the military and was detained by a liberty patrol consisting only of U.S. military police, Severns said.

U.S. military police continue joint patrols in Okinawa city with Okinawa Prefectural Police, most recently on Dec. 6 on Gate 2 Street, a popular night-

life district outside Kadena Air Base.

USFJ instituted the joint patrols in April to enforce an order prohibiting service members from drinking alcohol off base between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m.

The order stemmed in part from a rash of sexual assault allegations that arose in December 2023 and have so far yielded two convictions.

The U.S. military began its own patrols in September in Okinawa city and in November in Chatan town and Naha city, Okinawa's capital.

El, 32, told Stars and Stripes in an interview Nov. 28 that he was detained without provocation in front of Star Bar around 2 a.m. on Nov. 22.

Civil rights attorney Lee Merritt, who is representing El, in a statement Nov. 29 said he suf-

fered a head injury, wrist lacerations, cuts and abrasions and "significant psychological trauma."

In a Dec. 4 video call with Merritt and Stars and Stripes, El said he was dropped from three feet onto concrete, injuring his face and the left side of his body.

He said the slam injured his knees, and his wrists were lacerated from being handcuffed.

Merritt said his office has opened its own investigation and is exploring possible civil claims against the individual police officers involved in the incident and the U.S. military.

Merritt said he has spoken to U.S. and Japanese citizens who claim to "have suffered similar injuries or harassment."

He did not say how many he interviewed.

USS George Washington air wing unit back in Japan after sea tour

By JANIQUE ROBINSON
Stars and Stripes

The men and women that keep Navy fighters, tiltrotors and helicopters flying from the aircraft carrier USS George Washington returned home Thursday after six months at sea.

The engine mechanics, ordnance technicians, clerks and other personnel of Carrier Air Wing 5 arrived in waves aboard several aircraft at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, the wing's home base when not deployed.

The George Washington returned the same day to its pier at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, nearly 450 miles to the northeast.

During its deployment the carrier and its escorts operated throughout the Western Pacific,

worked alongside military forces from Japan, Australia, South Korea and other countries, and made port calls in the Philippines, Guam and South Korea, according to carrier strike group spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Spencer Marion.

Approximately 65 families, friends and coworkers waited at a hangar with homemade signs, and tables laden with a variety of food for the returning service members.

The first contingent arrived around 4 p.m., the last wasn't expected for another four hours.

Many of the pilots and aircraft from the wing's flying squadrons, ranging from F/A-18 Super Hornets, F-35C Lightning IIs, Sea Hawk helicopters and CMV-22B Ospreys, had already returned to the air base.

US sailor may face charges in fatal crash in Japan

By HANA KUSUMOTO
AND ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA, Japan — Japanese police on Tuesday forwarded to prosecutors their case against a U.S. sailor involved in a deadly motorcycle collision earlier this year.

Police allege the sailor was driving negligently April 27 when he made a right turn in Yokosuka's Heisei neighborhood and collided with a Japanese motorcyclist, Shinji Takahashi, 47, in the intersection.

Takahashi was pronounced dead less than an hour later at a nearby hospital.

Police on Tuesday recommended that prosecutors charge the sailor, who is stationed at Yokosuka Naval Base, a Yokosuka city police spokesman said Friday.

Prosecutors, not police, decide formal charges under Japan's criminal justice system.

Stars and Stripes is withholding the service member's identity until formal charges are filed.

If convicted, he could face up to seven years imprisonment and a maximum fine of about \$6,000, according to information on the Japan Legal Support Center website.

Takahashi's family filed a civil lawsuit against the sailor earlier this month seeking roughly \$772,000, according to their attorney, Masahiko Goto.

The lawsuit lists Takahashi's three sons, his mother, two brothers and his partner as plaintiffs.

Their suit alleges serious negligence and seeks compensation for the loss of a family member, according to a copy of the filing provided by Goto.

The family filed suit ahead of criminal charges to ensure their suit could be served before the service member can leave Japan, Goto said.

Zelenskyy is open to dropping NATO bid

Associated Press

BERLIN — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday voiced readiness to drop his country's bid to join NATO in exchange for Western security guarantees but rejected the U.S. push for ceding territory to Russia as he held talks with U.S. envoys on ending the war.

Zelenskyy sat down with U.S. President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner. The Ukrainian leader posted pictures of the negotiating table with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz sitting next to

him facing the U.S. delegation.

Responding to journalists' questions in audio clips on a WhatsApp group chat before the talks, Zelenskyy said that since the U.S. and some European nations had rejected Ukraine's push to join NATO, Kyiv expects the West to offer a set of guarantees similar to those offered to the alliance members.

"These security guarantees are an opportunity to prevent another wave of Russian aggression," he said. "And this is already a compromise on our part."

Russian President Vladimir

Putin has cast Ukraine's bid to join NATO as a major threat to Moscow's security and a reason for launching the full-scale invasion in February 2022. The Kremlin has demanded that Ukraine renounce the bid for the alliance membership as part of any prospective peace settlement.

Zelenskyy emphasized that any security assurances would need to be legally binding and supported by the U.S. Congress, adding that he expected an update from his team following a meeting between Ukrainian and U.S. military officials in Stuttgart, Germany.

Washington has tried for months to navigate the demands of each side as Trump presses for a swift end to Russia's war and grows increasingly exasperated by delays.

The search for possible compromises has run into major obstacles, including control of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, which is mostly occupied by Russian forces.

Putin wants Ukraine to withdraw its forces from the part of the Donetsk region still under its control among the key conditions for peace, a demand rejected by Kyiv.

Person of interest held in Brown campus shooting

Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Police in Rhode Island said early Sunday that they had a person of interest in custody after a shooting that rocked the Brown University campus during final exams, leaving two people dead and nine others wounded.

Col. Oscar Perez, the Providence police chief, said that the person in custody was in their 30s and that investigators were not searching for anyone else but that no one has been charged yet. He declined to say whether the detained person had any connection to Brown. The person was taken

into custody at a Hampton Inn hotel in Coventry, R.I., about 20 miles from Providence, where police officers and FBI agents remained Sunday, blocking off a hallway with crime scene tape as they searched the area.

The shooting occurred during one of the busiest moments of the academic calendar, as final exams were underway. Brown canceled all remaining classes, exams, papers and projects for the semester and told students they were free to leave campus, underscoring the scale of the disruption and the gravity of the attack.

The gunman opened fire inside a classroom in the university's engineering building, firing more than 40 rounds from a 9 mm handgun, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press. As of Sunday morning, authorities had not recovered a firearm but did find two loaded 30-round magazines, the official said. The official was not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly and spoke to AP on the condition of anonymity.

"Everybody's reeling, and we have a lot of recovery ahead of us," Brown University President Christina Paxson said at a news

conference. "Our community's strong and we'll get through it, but it's devastating."

As of Sunday morning, one student had been released from the hospital, said Paxson. Seven others were in critical but stable condition and one was in critical condition.

Providence leaders warned that residents will notice a heavier police presence on Sunday. Many local businesses announced they would remain closed and expressed shock and heartbreak as the community continued to process the news of the shooting.

Trump, Clinton, others in photos from Epstein estate

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Democrats released a selection of photos from the estate of Jeffrey Epstein on Friday, including some of Donald Trump, Bill Clinton and the former Prince Andrew.

The dozens of photos initially released by Democratic lawmakers on the House Oversight Committee were a small part of more than 95,000 they received from the estate of Epstein. The

photos released Friday were separate from the case files that the Department of Justice is now under compulsion to release, but anticipation is growing as the Trump administration faces a deadline next week to produce the Epstein files that have been the source of conspiracy theories and speculation for years.

The photos were released without captions or context and included a black-and-white im-

age of Trump alongside six women whose faces were blacked out.

The president said he hadn't seen the photos from Epstein's estate released Friday but they were "no big deal."

Trump said Epstein was "all over Palm Beach" and had "photos with everybody."

Rep. Robert Garcia, the top Democrat on the House Oversight Committee, did not say whether any of the women in the

photos was a victim of abuse, but he added, "Our commitment from day one has been to redact any photo, any information that could lead to any sort of harm to any of the victims."

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson accused Democrats of "selectively releasing cherry-picked photos with random redactions to try and create a false narrative" and called it part of a "Democrat hoax against President Trump."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman gives birth in Waymo self-driving taxi

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Self-driving Waymo taxis have gone viral for negative reasons involving the death of a beloved San Francisco bo-dega cat and pulling an illegal U-turn in front of police who were unable to issue a ticket to a nonexistent driver.

But the self-driving taxis are the bearer of happier news after a San Francisco woman gave birth in a Waymo.

The mother was on her way to the University of California, San Francisco medical center when she delivered inside the robo-taxi, said a Waymo spokesperson in a statement. The company said its rider support team detected “unusual activity” inside the vehicle and called to check on the rider as well as alert 911.

Waymo, which is owned by Alphabet, declined to elaborate on how the vehicle knew something was amiss.

The company has said it has cameras and microphones inside as well as outside the cars.

Waymo said the vehicle was taken out of service for cleaning after the ride. While still rare, this was not the first baby delivered in one of its taxis, the company said.

Student dies during stabbing at high school

NC WINSTON-SALEM — A stabbing at a central North Carolina high school left one student dead and another injured, authorities said.

Forsyth County Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough said officers at North Forsyth High School in

Winston-Salem sought assistance shortly after 11 a.m.

“We responded to an altercation between two students,” Kimbrough said at a news conference, adding that “there was a loss of life.”

Sheriff’s office spokesperson Krista Karcher said the injured person was treated at a hospital and released.

Ex-‘Real Housewives’ star sent from jail to program

TX BRYAN — Jennifer Shah, a former star on “The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City,” has been moved from a federal prison into a community confinement program after serving less than half of her sentence for defrauding thousands of people.

A Bureau of Prisons spokesperson confirmed that Shah was transferred from the Federal Prison Camp in Bryan, Texas, to the program overseen by the Phoenix Residential Residential Reentry Management Office. The transfer means that Shah is either being held in home confinement or in a halfway house. Her projected release date is Aug. 30, 2026.

Shah, 52, was sentenced in 2023 to 6½ years in prison for defrauding people in a telemarketing scam that stretched nearly a decade.

Judge won’t step aside in ex-Trump attorney case

WI MADISON — A Wisconsin judge refused to step aside as requested by President Donald Trump’s former attorney, who faces felony forgery charges related to the 2020 election in the battleground state.

The judge also refused to can-

cel a preliminary hearing for Trump’s former attorney, who also previously worked as a judge in the same county where he is being prosecuted, and two other former Trump associates.

The three former Trump aides face 11 felony charges each in relation to their roles in the 2020 fake elector scheme. They are: Jim Troupis, who was Trump’s attorney in Wisconsin in the 2020 election; Kenneth Chesebro, an attorney who advised Trump’s campaign; and Mike Roman, Trump’s director of Election Day operations in 2020.

Troupis, joined by the other two defendants, argued that all of the judges in Dane County were biased against him. Troupis was a judge in the county for one year from 2015 to 2016.

Judge: Continue hormone therapy for trans inmates

GA ATLANTA — A federal judge has permanently ordered Georgia’s prison system to keep providing some kinds of gender-affirming care for transgender prisoners, although the state plans to appeal.

U.S. District Judge Victoria Marie Calvert ruled that a new state law denying hormone therapy to inmates violated their protection against cruel and unusual punishment under the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

She ordered the state to keep providing hormones to inmates who had been receiving therapy and to allow others medically diagnosed as needing hormone therapy to begin receiving treatment.

“The court finds that there is no genuine dispute of fact that

gender dysphoria is a serious medical need,” Calvert wrote in her order. “Plaintiffs, through their experts, have presented evidence that a blanket ban on hormone therapy constitutes grossly inadequate care for gender dysphoria and risks imminent injury.”

Inspector, assisted-living owner cast blame for fire

MA FALL RIVER — A safety inspection company and the owner of a Massachusetts assisted-living facility that was the site of a fire in July that killed 10 people are blaming each other for failing to address a faulty sprinkler system.

Inspector Fire Systems Inc. sued Gabriel House owner Dennis Etzkorn, claiming it notified the facility months before the fire about recalled sprinklers that needed to be replaced.

Etzkorn filed a cross-claim alleging that Fire Systems Inc. had failed for years to properly inspect and test the sprinklers at Gabriel House.

The fire in Fall River was the state’s deadliest in more than four decades. Documents obtained by The Associated Press showed a history of troubles at the facility, including a period in which it was barred from accepting new residents until it corrected problems with resident mistreatment.

Investigators have said the cause of the fire was unintentional and may have originated with someone smoking or an electrical issue with an oxygen machine.

The facility has been the subject of lawsuits from residents in the aftermath of the fire.

— From wire reports

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Horvath, Heidenreich lead Navy over Army

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Blake Horvath to Eli Heidenreich.

That's the connection that led Navy to such a memorable season — and the two of them came through again on the biggest play of the biggest game.

Horvath threw an 8-yard touchdown pass to Heidenreich with 6:32 remaining — on fourth-and-goal — and the No. 22 Midshipmen rallied to beat Army 17-16 on Saturday. Heidenreich, the career and single-season franchise leader in yards receiving, caught six of Horvath's seven completions on the day.

"Who wouldn't go to him?" Horvath said. "Talk about an all-time Navy legend. You're going to be talking about Eli Heidenreich for years and years and years."

Although it was clearly a passing situation, and Heidenreich was the Midshipmen's top

target, he was single covered over the middle.

"Tried to bring some pressure on them," Black Knights coach Jeff Monken said. "Good throw and good catch."

With President Donald Trump in attendance, Navy (10-2) got its second straight victory over Army (6-6), and the Midshipmen won the Commander In Chief's Trophy for a second straight season. The Black Knights have not beaten a Navy team that was ranked by the AP since 1955.

Horvath was fortunate to have the chance to throw that decisive touchdown pass. On second-and-goal from the 1, he lost the ball while attempting a tush push. Army linebacker Eric Ford had a chance to scoop it up, but Midshipmen running back Alex Tecza lunged over to prevent that, and Heidenreich eventually fell on the ball back at the 8.

"That's probably the last thing you want to see on the 1-yard line is you turn around and the ball is just bouncing behind you," Heidenreich said. "I was blocking down. I thought he had pushed in, and kind of out of my peripheral I saw it going behind me."

On the next play, Horvath was nearly sacked, but he was able to throw the ball toward Tecza as he went down. The ball fell incomplete instead of being caught around the 15, which was just as well for Navy because it made going for it on fourth down a more viable option.

"I kind of felt like we had to," Midshipmen coach Brian Newberry said. "The nature of what they do offensively, despite how well we played in the second half, you may not get the ball back."

Even after Heidenreich's touchdown and a Black Knights

punt, Navy still had to escape one more near-turnover. On third-and-3 from the Army 43, the ball popped loose on a run by Horvath, but he was able to catch it out of the air. It came loose again and the Black Knights recovered, but after a review, Horvath was ruled down before the second fumble — a yard short of the line to gain.

Tecza then ran for the first down that enabled the Midshipmen to kneel out the clock, and Horvath appeared to wave goodbye at the Army sideline. There was a bit of a ruckus near midfield after the final kneel-down before things eventually calmed down for the traditional singing of the alma maters.

"They want to talk all their crap during the game and act like they're so tough," Horvath said. "The excuse last year was that they played a conference championship game before us. This year, we'll see what it is."

QB Mendoza becomes 1st Hoosier to win Heisman

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Fernando Mendoza, the enthusiastic quarterback of No. 1 Indiana, won the Heisman Trophy on Saturday night, becoming the first Hoosier to win college football's most prestigious award since its inception in 1935.

Mendoza claimed 2,362 points, including 643 first-place votes. He beat Vanderbilt quarterback Diego Pavia (1,435 points), Notre Dame running back Jeremiah Love (719 points) and Ohio State quarterback Julian Sayin (432 points).

Mendoza's Heisman win was emphatic. He finished first in all six Heisman regions, the first to do so since Caleb Williams in 2022. He was named on 95.16% of all ballots, tying him with Marcus Mariota in 2014 for the second-highest in the award's history and he received 84.6% of total possible points, which is the seventh-highest in Heisman history.

"I haven't seen the numbers yet," said Mendoza, "but it's such an honor to be mentioned with these guys (Pavia, Love and Sayin). It's really a credit to our team. It's a team award."

Mendoza guided Indiana to its first No. 1 ranking and the top seed in the 12-team College Football bracket, throwing for 2,980 yards and a national-best 33 touchdown passes while also running for six scores. The Hoosiers, the last unbeaten team in major college football, will play a College Football Playoff quarterfinal game in the Rose Bowl on Jan. 1.

Mendoza, Indiana's first-year starter after transferring from California, is the triggerman for an offense that surpassed program records for touchdowns and points set during last season's surprise run to the CFP.

A redshirt junior, the once lightly recruited Miami native is the second Heisman finalist in school history, joining 1989 runner-up Anthony Thompson. Mendoza is the seventh Hoosier to earn a top-10 finish in Heisman balloting and it marks another first in program history — having back-to-back players in the top 10. Indiana quarterback Kurtis Rourke was ninth last year.

With his teammates chanting "Heisman Doza" as he addressed the media, he said there felt like a realistic chance of winning the Heisman when the Hoosiers routed then

No. 19 Illinois 63-10 on Sept. 20.

"At that point my boys (teammates) said we might make it to New York (for the award ceremony)," he said. "It was light-hearted at the time, but that's when it started."

Quarterbacks have won the Heisman four of the last five years, with two-way player Travis Hunter of Colorado ending the run last season.

Mendoza is the 43rd quarterback to win the Heisman and the second winner of Latin American descent to claim the trophy. Stanford's Jim Plunkett was the first in 1970.

"Although I grew up in America, my four grandparents are all from Cuba," he said. "I had the opportunity to go there and that was important to me. I credit the love to my grandparents and the Hispanic community."

The Heisman Trophy presentation came after a number of accolades were already awarded. Mendoza was named The Associated Press player of the year earlier this week and picked up the Maxwell and Davey O'Brien awards Friday night, while Love won the Doak Walker Award.

Wemby returns, Spurs make Cup final

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Here's how much the NBA Cup semifinals against Oklahoma City meant to San Antonio's Victor Wembanyama: He grabbed the ball after a missed Thunder shot in the final moments, squeezed it and screamed in delight.

Welcome back, Victor. The Spurs are headed to the NBA Cup championship game against New York, after knocking off defending NBA champion Oklahoma City 111-109 on Saturday night in the tournament semifinals.

The win came in Wembanyama's return from a 12-game absence caused by a left calf strain. He finished with 22 points and nine rebounds in 21 minutes — coming off the bench for the first time in his NBA career.

A fallaway that turned into a falling-down shot by Wembanyama put the Spurs up by six with 9:49 left. He got fouled by OKC's Cason Wallace the next time down the floor.

Wembanyama scored in the lane with 2:32 left to put San Antonio up for good, then helped

finish off the win by going 4 for 6 from the foul line in the final 78 seconds. His impact on the game was immediate. The Thunder led 31-20 after the first quarter, but Wembanyama checked in for the first time to open the second quarter and everything quickly changed.

He played 7:19 of the first half. In that time, the Spurs outscored Oklahoma City by 20 points — 9-2 in his first stint, 15-2 in his second stint, 24-4 combined.

Knicks 132, Magic 120: Jalen Brunson scored at least 30

points for the fourth consecutive game, his season-high 40 leading visiting New York past Orlando on Saturday and putting New York in the NBA Cup final.

The Knicks, who have won five in a row and nine of 10, will play San Antonio on Tuesday night for the championship.

Jalen Suggs scored 25 of his 26 points in the first half for the Magic before leaving in the fourth quarter because of a sore left hip. Paolo Banchero added 25 points and Desmond Bane scored 18.

No. 1 Arizona pushes past No. 12 Alabama in second half

Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Brayden Burries scored 28 points, 20 of those coming during a 14-minute second-half flurry, and No. 1 Arizona roared back from its first halftime deficit of the season to beat No. 12 Alabama 96-75.

The Wildcats (9-0) trailed by two points at halftime before seizing command with a 14-1 run, highlighted by Burries making three consecutive baskets. Burries was 5-for-10 from 3-point range, mitigating a quiet night for fellow freshman Koa Peat, who was saddled by foul trouble and scored six points — far off his 15.9 points-per-game average.

Labaron Philon Jr. scored 24 points, including a twisting pullup in the lane that gave Alabama (7-3) a 41-39 lead at the half. That was the final highlight for the Tide, which couldn't match Arizona's intensity over the final 20 minutes.

Motiejus Krivas, Arizona's 7-foot-2 Lithuanian center, finished with 14 points and 14 rebounds. Point guard Jaden Bradley added 14 points and seven assists, haunting the former Crimson Tide program that he helped earn the top overall seed in the 2023 NCAA Tournament.

No. 2 Michigan 101, Maryland

83: Yaxel Lendeborg had 29 points, a career-best nine assists and eight rebounds, and visiting Michigan rallied from a nine-point deficit Saturday night to defeat Maryland.

Aday Mara scored 18 points for the Wolverines (10-0, 2-0 Big Ten).

No. 7 Houston 99, New Orleans 57: Kingston Flemings, Chris Cenac Jr., Chase McCarty and Mercy Miller each scored 15 points, and the host Cougars won their fourth straight. Flemings and Cenac, both freshmen, combined to shoot 11-for-19 from the field for Houston (10-1).

No. 8 Gonzaga 82, No. 25 UCLA 72: Graham Ike had 25 points and five assists and the host Bulldogs improved to 9-1.

Tyler Bilodeau led UCLA (7-3) with 22 points. He was 4-for-6 from 3-point range.

No. 9 Michigan St. 76, Penn St. 72: Divine Ugochukwu scored a career-high 23 points and the visiting Spartans overcame a sloppy performance to beat the Nittany Lions.

Jaxon Kohler posted his fifth double-double of the season with 10 points and 12 rebounds while Carson Cooper added 10 points for the Spartans (9-1, 2-0 Big Ten), who committed a season-high 17

turnovers and trailed for long stretches in both halves.

No. 10 BYU 100, UC Riverside 53: AJ Dybantsa had 26 points, eight rebounds, and seven assists to lead the host Cougars.

Andrew Henderson led UC Riverside (5-6) with 14 points and BJ Kolly added 12.

No. 11 Louisville 99, Memphis 73: Ryan Conwell had 17 points and reserve Adrian Wooley scored 15 as he and Kasean Pryor alternated making six of the Cardinals' seven consecutive 3-pointers during a first-half surge that rocketed host Louisville past Memphis.

The Cardinals (9-1) converted 18 of 35 attempts from long range, second to their 20 made 3s against NJIT on Nov. 26.

No. 23 Nebraska 83, No. 13 Illinois 80: Jamarques Lawrence hit a 3-point shot with less than a second remaining Saturday to give the Cornhuskers a road win.

Undefeated Nebraska (11-0, 2-0 Big Ten) is off to the best start in program history.

No. 14 North Carolina 80, USC-Upstate 62: Caleb Wilson had 20 points and 11 rebounds to lead the host Tar Heels past USC Upstate.

No. 15 Vanderbilt 83, Central Arkansas 72: Tyler Nickel

scored a career-high 30 points and the host Commodores beat Central Arkansas.

Tyler Tanner had 12 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for Vanderbilt.

No. 17 Arkansas 93, No. 16 Texas Tech 86: Trevon Brazile scored 18 of his 24 points after halftime and finished with 10 rebounds as the visiting Razorbacks overcame the Red Raiders in a rematch of a Sweet 16 game in last season's NCAA Tournament.

Arkansas (8-2) went ahead for good on Brazile's driving layup that made it 78-77 with 5:20 left.

No. 18 Florida 80, George Washington 70: Xaivian Lee scored 24 points to lead the host Gators over George Washington in the second game of the Orange Bowl Basketball Classic.

No. 19 Kansas 77, NC State 76 (OT): Melvin Council Jr. had career highs of 36 points and nine made 3-pointers to help the visiting Jayhawks edge the Wolfpack.

No. 22 St. John's 91, Iona 64: Oziyah Sellers scored 16 of his 19 points in the second half, Zuby Ejiofor tied a career-high by blocking eight shots for the second straight game and host St. John's survived a difficult start and pulled away for a victory over Iona.

Devils top Ducks to end losing streak

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — Stefan Noesen, Paul Cotter and Cody Glass each scored to help the New Jersey Devils beat the Anaheim Ducks 4-1 on Saturday and snap a five-game home losing streak.

New Jersey started the season 9-0-1 on its home ice before losing five straight at the Prudential Center.

The Devils' third line of Cotter, Juho Lammi and Noesen combined for five points (two goals, three assists). It was Noesen's first goal in 22 games.

Jake Allen stopped 30 shots for New Jersey for his first win since Nov. 28. Allen had lost three straight.

Troy Terry scored for Anaheim. Lukas Dostal had 18 saves for the Ducks, who failed to convert on four power-play opportunities.

Sharks 6, Penguins 5 (OT): John Klingberg capped off a frantic late rally by scoring his second goal of the game 2:57 into overtime to lift visiting San Jose to an improbable victory over Pittsburgh.

Klingberg's seventh of the season off a feed from Macklin Celebrini gave the Sharks their first victory in the franchise's 34-year history when trailing by four goals in the third.

San Jose trailed 5-1 with less than 14 minutes to go. Klingberg and William Eklund scored to get the Sharks back in it, and Celebrini and Tyler Toffoli beat Penguins goalie Arturs Silovs with the goaltender pulled to force overtime.

Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby beat Yaroslav Askarov in the first period for his 19th goal of the season and assisted on Bryan Rust's power-play goal in the second to push his career point total to 1,721.

Oilers 6, Maple Leafs 3: Connor McDavid had two goals and an assist and Tristan Jarry made 25 saves in his first game for visiting Edmonton, helping the Oilers beat Toronto.

Edmonton is 6-2-1 in its last nine and 15-11-6 overall.

Jarry and defenseman Spencer Stastney made their Oilers debuts. Jarry was acquired from Pittsburgh on Friday in a five-player deal that sent fellow goalie Stuart Skinner and defender Brett Kulak to the Penguins. Stastney was added in a deal with Nashville.

Steven Lorentz, Easton Cowan and Oliver Ekman-Larsson scored for the Maple Leafs. Dennis Hildeby allowed all six goals on 32 shots before getting pulled. Artur Akhtyamov — Toronto's fifth goalie to see action 32 games into the season — made four saves in relief in his first NHL action.

Wild 3, Senators 2: Joel Eriksson Ek scored with 23.1 seconds remaining to lift host Minnesota over Ottawa.

Eriksson Ek buried a one-timer from the right circle after a cross-ice pass by Marcus Johansson to stun the Senators, who had rallied from a 2-0 deficit to tie it.

Tyler Pitlick and Ryan Hartman also scored for the Wild, while Jesper Wallstedt made 34 saves.

Hurricanes 4, Flyers 3 (SO): Jackson Blake scored in the shootout, and Eastern Conference-leading Carolina beat host Philadelphia to open a home-and-home set.

Seth Jarvis scored his 18th goal, Nikolaj Ehlers and Alexander Nikishin also scored and Shayne Gostisbehere had two assists for the Hurricanes, who have won two consecutive shootouts. Carolina has won three straight and six of eight overall.

Bobby Brink, Trevor Zegras and Carl Grundstrom scored for the Flyers, who concluded their six-game homestand with a 2-2 record.

Golden Knights 3, Blue Jackets 2: Ben Hutton and Brayden McNabb scored in the third period, and visiting Vegas continued its strong road run, beating Co-

lumbus for its sixth win in seven games.

The Golden Knights have earned nine of a possible 10 points on their five-game road trip and have not lost in regulation this month.

Pavel Dorofeyev also scored for Vegas, Mitch Marner added three assists and Carter Hart made 26 saves.

Jets 5, Capitals 1: Connor Hellebuyck made 24 saves in his return from a knee injury, Gabriel Vilardi scored twice and host Winnipeg beat Washington to end a three-game losing streak.

Hellebuyck had arthroscopic surgery three weeks ago. The reigning Hart and Vezina Trophy winner missed 12 games, with the Jets going 2-9-1.

Alex Iafallo had a goal and assist, and Logan Stanley and Morgan Barron also scored for Winnipeg. Adam Lowry, Josh Morrissey, Kyle Connor and Mark Scheifele each had two assists.

Rangers 5, Canadiens 4 (OT): J.T. Miller scored his second goal of the game on a power play at 2:56 of overtime as host New York rallied to beat Montreal.

Will Cuyille, Noah Laba and Artemi Panarin also scored to help the Rangers snap a three-game skid (0-1-2).

Zach Bolduc, Arber Xhekaj, Jake Evans and Josh Anderson scored for the Canadiens in their third loss in four games (1-2-1).

Panthers 4, Stars 0: Sergei Bobrovsky made 15 saves for his third shutout this season to continue his mastery of Dallas, and Brad Marchand had two goals and an assist as visiting Florida blanked the Stars.

Anton Lundell had a goal and an assist and Sam Bennett also scored as the Panthers shook off a 6-2 loss at Colorado on Thursday.

Bobrovsky improved to 21-2-2 against Dallas as Florida won its fifth straight over the Stars, including in a shootout at home Nov. 1.

Avalanche 4, Predators 2: Nathan MacKinnon scored his NHL-leading 26th goal and added an assist, and Colorado beat Nashville for its 11th straight home win.

MacKinnon, who has scored in six straight home games, leads the league with 55 points.

Jack Drury, Victor Olofsson and Valeri Nichushkin also scored for the Avalanche, who are 13-0-2 on home ice this season. The 11 straight wins matches the second-longest in franchise history, previously accomplished Jan. 31-March 27 of last season.

Flames 2, Kings 1 (OT): Morgan Frost scored in overtime and Blake Coleman had a short-handed goal in visiting Calgary's victory over Los Angeles.

Dustin Wolf made 20 saves for the surging Flames. They have won eight of their past 12 games, with Wolf winning his last four starts.

Adrian Kempe scored for the Kings, and Darcy Kuemper made 36 saves. Los Angeles played its 14th game decided in overtime or a shootout out of 21 total one-goal contests this season.

Islanders 3, Lightning 2 (SO): Emil Heineman and Mathew Barzal scored in the shootout, and host New York defeated Tampa Bay.

Matthew Schaefer and Cal Ritchie scored in the first period for the Islanders, with Anthony Duclair assisting on both, and New York extended its winning streak to three games. Ilya Sorokin made 32 saves and stopped two of three Lightning attempts in the shootout.

Red Wings 4, Blackhawks 0: Alex DeBrincat scored twice and had an assist, John Gibson earned his second shutout in three starts, and visiting Detroit beat Chicago.

Patrick Kane had a goal and an assist and Emmitt Finnin also scored for the Red Wings, who have won four of five.