

## Europe eyes future defense without US

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — The man poised to be Germany's next leader delivered a jolt this week when he warned that the demise of NATO in its current form could be at hand and said Europe must chart a military course separate from the United States.

Friedrich Merz's center-right Christian Democratic Union party won Sunday's federal election, positioning him to lead a government that will grapple with how to deter Russian aggression in an era where American largesse is no longer a guarantee.

"My absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible so that step by step, we can really achieve independence from the USA," Merz said on a post-election debate show Sunday.

"I never thought I would have to say something like this on a tel-

evision program," added Merz, a longtime advocate of close relations with Washington.

Germany and its neighbors would face a daunting challenge in funding and fielding an independent defense capable of turning back Russian forces.

At a minimum, Europe will need to field 50 new combat brigades and some 300,000 troops to offset what the U.S. would be expected to contribute in the event of a Russian attack, according to an analysis by Bruegel, a Brussels-based think tank.

To prevent a rapid Russian breakthrough in the Baltics, for example, Europeans would need a minimum of 1,400 tanks, 2,000 infantry fighting vehicles and 700 artillery systems, the report said.

"This is more combat power than currently exists in the French, German, Italian and British land forces combined," stated the report, published Friday.

Europeans would also need to surge beyond the "barebones stockpiles" of munitions currently available. An estimated one million 155 mm shells would be the minimum for a stockpile large enough for 90 days of high-intensity combat, the report said.

NATO officials have warned that Russia's wartime economy could have the country in a position to threaten allies within five years.

Bruegel's analysis detailed numerous other shortfalls that allies would struggle to fill. More aviation and transport assets, missile and drone warfare capabilities and intelligence systems for identifying enemy targets would be required.

Bruegel said the various necessities would cost more than \$250 billion annually, or roughly 3.5% of gross domestic product, for European countries.

There has been debate about whether Europe is up to such a task. There are also questions

about whether there is enough time to act, given how far behind the Europeans are in matching Russia's military output.

Andrew Michta, an expert on European security at the Atlantic Council think tank, said the "delta" between the level of Russia's force reconstitution and the many deficiencies in most of Europe's militaries means "the risk of war in Europe is real."

And the neglect of Europe's industrial base over the years means it will take a "decade before any real capabilities can be fielded," Michta said Monday on the social media platform X.

Such circumstances mean that there is no substituting American involvement on the Continent, Michta said.

Others have countered that the U.S. has become too unreliable.

"Europe can't afford to wait and see if the U.S. will back us," said Benjamin Tallis, director of the Berlin-based Democratic Strategy Initiative.

## US votes against UN blaming Russia for Ukraine war

*Associated Press*

UNITED NATIONS — In a dramatic shift in transatlantic relations under President Donald Trump, the United States split with its European allies by refusing to blame Russia for its invasion of Ukraine in votes on three U.N. resolutions Monday seeking an end to the three-year war.

The growing divide follows Trump's decision to open direct negotiations with Russia on ending the war, dismaying Ukraine and its European supporters by excluding them from the preliminary talks last week.

In the U.N. General Assembly, the U.S. joined Russia in voting against a Europe-backed Ukrai-

nian resolution that calls out Moscow's aggression and demands an immediate withdrawal of Russian troops.

The U.S. then abstained from voting on its own competing resolution after Europeans, led by France, succeeded in amending it to make clear Russia was the aggressor. The voting was taking place on the third anniversary of Russia's invasion.

It was a major setback for the Trump administration in the 193-member world body, whose resolutions are not legally binding but are seen as a barometer of world opinion.

The U.S. then pushed for a vote on its original draft in the more

powerful U.N. Security Council, where resolutions are legally binding and it has veto power along with Russia, China, Britain and France. The vote in the 15-member council was 10-0 with five European countries abstaining — Britain, France, Denmark, Greece and Slovenia.

The dueling resolutions also reflect the tensions that have emerged between the U.S. and Ukraine. In escalating rhetoric, Trump has called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy a "dictator" for not holding elections during wartime, when much of Ukraine is under Russian occupation, its soldiers are on the frontlines and the country

is under martial law.

Trump has also falsely accused Kyiv of starting the war and warned that he "better move fast" to negotiate an end to the conflict or risk not having a nation to lead. Zelenskyy responded by saying Trump was living in a Russian-made "disinformation space."

The General Assembly voted 93-18 with 65 abstentions to approve the Ukrainian resolution. The result showed some diminished support for Ukraine, because previous assembly votes saw more than 140 nations condemn Russia's aggression and demand an immediate withdrawal.

# USS Truman back after repairs in Greece

By ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

NAPLES, Italy — The aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman conducted routine flight operations in the Mediterranean Sea on Monday after a week-long stay at a Navy base in Greece for repairs following a collision with a cargo ship, the Navy said.

Truman left Naval Support Activity Souda Bay on the Greek island of Crete on Sunday, U.S. 6th Fleet said in a statement Monday.

Sailors worked with maintenance personnel, the Navy's

shipyard in Norfolk, Va., and a Greek ship repair company to assess damage, develop a repair plan and restore weather-tight integrity to the ship following a collision on Feb. 12 with the Panama-flagged cargo ship Besiktas-M, the Navy said.

Those repairs included removing damaged pieces of metal and installing weatherproofing bulkheads, the service said in a separate statement to Stars and Stripes.

The collision left Truman with scrapes and gashes along the ship's right, or starboard, back end, including a small

slash that penetrated its hull well above the waterline.

A line handling space, the fantail and a platform above a storage space also were damaged along with exterior walls of two storage rooms and a maintenance space, according to initial damage assessments.

"Our ship remains operationally ready to complete deployment with mission and purpose on full display by the entire crew," Capt. Chris Hill, commanding officer of Truman, said in the statement.

While at Souda Bay, Truman underwent a thorough assess-

ment to determine the structural integrity of its hull and bulkheads as result of the late-night collision near the Suez Canal. Bulkheads are interior vertical walls that form compartments within a ship.

"The rapid repair effort on Truman was a testament to our expeditionary maintenance expertise and the exceptional collaboration with our Norfolk Naval Shipyard teammates and industry partners," Capt. Mollie Bily, commanding officer of the Forward Deployed Regional Maintenance Center, said in the statement.

## Families struggle with outages at Yokosuka

By ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A series of power outages has plagued the home of the U.S. 7th Fleet over the past week, with some sailors and families going without electricity for more than 24 hours.

The string of blackouts began Feb. 17 and continued into Tuesday afternoon, according to a series of posts on Yokosuka's official Facebook page.

The outages are caused by defective electrical distribution lines that run parallel to steam lines on base, the base said. The steam, along with age and other environmental conditions, has led to "advanced degradation" of the electrical lines.

Base authorities have been aware of the problem, which causes "unpredictable disruptions" in power, since 2019, the installation wrote on Facebook in May.

"Our Public Works Team

has ensured that procedures are in place and materials are on hand to restore power as quickly as possible when disruptions occur," that post said.

Base spokesman Justin Keller, in a Tuesday email to Stars and Stripes, said the power outages were connected.

"When one line fails, it can put additional stress on surrounding and connected lines, causing a domino effect," he wrote. "The recent cluster of connected outages occurred as the fluctuating power from the outage and repair efforts strained aging neighboring power lines."

The base is planning to initiate another blackout on Thursday for about eight hours to assist with repairs, he added.

Prior to restoration, at least five housing towers, a section of standalone housing, a Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command building and another base facility were without power Tuesday afternoon, according to the posts

## Hospital moves patients off base to receive care

By GARY WARNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

TACOMA, Wash. — The internal medicine clinic at the Navy's third largest base in the United States is now staffed with one doctor for 2,200 patients, forcing officials to move one-third of the backlog of cases to medical care off the base, service officials said.

"Those numbers just don't add up," said Capt. Molly Jenkins, executive officer of Naval Hospital Bremerton in Washington. "We did not make this decision lightly and have been studying this issue for months."

The hospital serves Navy Base Kitsap, which has 15,000 service personnel and 18,000 family members and retirees spread across the 12,000-acre base on Puget Sound, west of Seattle.

Hospital spokesman Douglas Stutz said, as a first step, care for about 700 retired military enrolled in Tricare for Life, a Medicare medical supplement plan for veterans, will have

their care transferred from the internal medicine clinic to civilian doctors and facilities in surrounding Kitsap County.

Stutz said the hospital has about 50 medical caregivers, which include military and civilian doctors, nurses, and Navy hospital corpsmen.

They are assigned to various specialty departments at the hospital.

Transfers of military personnel and attrition among civilian employees have left only one doctor for the internal medicine clinic at the hospital, often the first stop for new patients seeking care, Stutz said.

With 2,200 patients assigned to the clinic, they often have long waits to see a doctor.

"We understand the concerns that come with changes in provider availability," Stutz said. "In addition to normal personnel changes, military medicine has been affected by the nationwide shortage of primary care providers, which has impacted staffing at our hospital."

# Many contracts cut by DOGE likely won't save money

*Associated Press*

Nearly 40% of the federal contracts that President Donald Trump's administration claims to have canceled as part of its signature cost-cutting program aren't expected to save the government any money, the administration's own data shows.

The Department of Government Efficiency, run by Trump adviser Elon Musk, last week published an initial list of 1,125 contracts that it terminated in recent weeks across the federal government. Data published on DOGE's "Wall of Receipts" shows that more than one-third of the contract cancellations, 417 in all, are expected to yield no savings.

In all, DOGE data says the 417 contracts in question had a total value of \$478 million.

That's usually because the total value of the contracts has already been fully obligated, which means the government has a legal requirement to spend the funds for the goods or services it purchased and in many cases has already done so.

"It's like confiscating used ammunition after it's been shot when there's nothing left in it. It doesn't accomplish any policy objective," said Charles Tiefer, a retired University of Baltimore law professor and expert on government contracting law. "Their terminating so many contracts pointlessly obviously doesn't accomplish anything for saving money."

Dozens of them were for already-paid subscriptions to The Associated Press, Politico and other media services that the Republican administration said it would discontinue. Others were for research studies that

have been awarded, training that has taken place, software that has been purchased and interns who have come and gone.

"It's too late for the government to change its mind on many of these contracts and walk away from its payment obligation," said Tiefer, who served on the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Tiefer said DOGE appeared to be taking a "slash and burn" approach to cutting contracts, which he said could damage the performance of government agencies. He said savings could be made instead by working with agency contracting officers and inspectors general to find efficiencies, an approach the administration has not taken.

The Trump administration says it's targeting fraud, waste and abuse in the government. DOGE says the overall contract cancellations are expected to save more than \$7 billion, an amount that has been questioned as inflated by independent experts.

Some of the canceled contracts were intended to modernize and improve the way government works, which would seem to be at odds with DOGE's cost-cutting mission.

One of the largest, for instance, went to a consulting firm to help carry out a reorganization at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, which led the agency's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The maximum \$13.6 million had already been obligated to Deloitte Consulting LLP for help with the restructuring.

## Top military lawyers fired

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Monday that he was replacing the top lawyers for the military services because he didn't think they were "well-suited" to provide recommendations when lawful orders are given.

Speaking at the start of a meeting with Saudi Arabia's defense minister, Hegseth refused to answer a question about why the Trump administration has selected a retired general to be the next Joint Chiefs chairman, when he doesn't meet the legal qualifications for the job.

President Donald Trump on Friday abruptly fired the chairman, Air Force Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown Jr., and Hegseth followed that by firing Navy Adm. Lisa Franchetti, the chief of naval operations, and Air Force Gen. James Slife, the vice

chief of the Air Force. He also said he was "requesting nominations" for the jobs of judge advocate general, or JAG, for the Army, Navy and Air Force.

He did not identify the lawyers by name. The Navy JAG, Vice Adm. Christopher French, retired about two months ago, and there was already an ongoing effort to seek a replacement. The Army JAG, Lt. Gen. Joseph B. Berger III, and Air Force JAG, Lt. Gen. Charles Plummer, were fired.

The removals — which came without any specified reasons in terms of their conduct — sent a new wave of apprehension through the Pentagon.

Throughout the Pentagon on Monday, military and civilian workers juggled their routine national security duties with a growing unease that anyone could be next.

## Musk renews threat to fire fed workers despite protest

*Associated Press*

Elon Musk vowed yet again to fire any federal workers who don't respond to an email asking them to list five things they accomplished last week.

Hours after the U.S. Office of Personnel Management on Monday directed agencies that responses to its email were optional, Musk again threatened federal workers in a post on X, his social media platform.

Meanwhile, barely a week after mass firings at the Food and Drug Administration, some probationary staffers received unexpected news over the weekend: The government wants them back.

The reversal is the latest example of President Donald Trump and Musk's chaotic approach to cost-cutting, which has resulted in several agencies firing, and then scrambling to rehire, employees responsible for nuclear weapons, national

parks and other services.

The FDA reinstatements followed pushback by lobbyists for the medical device industry, which pays the agency hundreds of millions of dollars annually to hire extra scientists to review products. The industry's leading trade group said Monday "a sizable number" of device reviewers appear to be returning to FDA.

In New York, Gov. Kathy Hochul on Tuesday welcomed recently laid-off federal workers to apply for state jobs using an online portal.

"The federal government might say, 'You're fired,' but here in New York, we say, 'You're hired.' In fact, we love federal workers," Hochul said in a videotaped statement.

Job cuts have been coordinated by Musk's Department of Government Efficiency. There's no official tally of the total number of firings.



# Johnson seeks to pass Trump's 'big' agenda

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Mike Johnson will try against the odds to muscle a Republican budget blueprint to passage this week, a step toward delivering President Donald Trump's "big, beautiful bill" with \$4.5 trillion in tax breaks and \$2 trillion in spending cuts over stiff opposition from Democrats — and even some Republicans.

With almost no votes to spare in Johnson's bare-bones GOP majority, the speaker is fighting on all fronts — against Democrats, uneasy rank-and-file Republicans and skeptical GOP senators — as he works to keep the package on track. Votes set for Tuesday evening are in jeopardy, and the outcome is uncertain.

"We're going to get everyone there," Johnson, of Louisiana, said at an event at the start of the

week, half-joking that he had a "prayer request" involved.

The package, if approved, would be a crucial part of the budget process as Trump pushes the Republicans who control Congress to approve a massive bill that would extend tax breaks, which he secured during his first term but are expiring later this year, while also cutting spending across federal programs and services.

But Republicans are running into a familiar problem: Slashing federal spending is typically easier said than done. With cuts to the Pentagon and other programs largely off limits, much of the other government outlays go for health care, food stamps, student loans and programs relied on by their constituents.

It's all unfolding as billionaire Trump adviser Elon Musk is tearing through federal agencies

with his Department of Government Efficiency firing thousands of workers nationwide, and angry voters are starting to confront lawmakers at town hall meetings back home.

"While we fully support efforts to rein in wasteful spending and deliver on President Trump's agenda, it is imperative that we do not slash programs that support American communities across our nation," wrote Rep. Tony Gonzales, R-Texas, and several other GOP lawmakers in the Congressional Hispanic Conference.

Democrats in the House and the Senate are vowing to fight the whole process. House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York was planning to gather lawmakers on the Capitol steps in protest during Tuesday's session.

"This is not what people want,"

said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., during a rules debate ahead of planned votes.

"We all know that trickle-down economics," he said about the 2017 tax breaks that flowed mainly to the wealthy, "don't work."

Trump has signaled a preference for the "big" bill but also appears to enjoy a competition between the House and the Senate, lawmakers said, as he pits the Republicans against each other to see which version will emerge on a path toward approval.

Senate Republicans, wary that Johnson can lift his bill over the finish line, launched their own scaled-back \$340 billion package last week. It's focused on sending Trump money his administration needs for its deportation and border security agenda now, with plans to tackle the tax cuts separately later this year.

## Trump repeals rule linking US weapons, human rights

The Washington Post

The Trump administration has rescinded a Biden-era regulation that sought to ensure American allies don't use U.S.-made weapons in violation of international humanitarian law, current and former officials said Monday.

The White House's repeal of the February 2024 directive, which President Joe Biden imposed as his administration struggled to reconcile its support for Israel's war against Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip and its alarm about the civilian toll of that fight, comes as President Donald Trump puts his "America First" mark on U.S. foreign policy.

An order Friday from national security adviser Michael Waltz, a copy of which was obtained by The Washington Post, relays Trump's decision to immediately rescind Biden's National Se-

curity Memorandum, known as NSM-20. The repeal was also confirmed by several current and former U.S. officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Biden's memo built on existing laws related to arms transfers, requiring countries acquiring U.S.-made weapons to provide written assurance that they would not employ those arms in violation of international humanitarian law and would facilitate the delivery of U.S.-provided humanitarian aid, under the threat of suspension of arms supplies.

Christopher Le Mon, who served as a senior State Department official for human rights during the Biden administration, said the decision to repeal Biden's directive would lead to more civilians being killed using U.S.-provided weapons and would damage America's standing in the world.

## DOD: Nearly 1K troops now deployed to Gitmo

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — More than 200 additional troops have been deployed to Naval Base Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to help support the detention of migrants at the facility, a Defense Department official confirmed Monday.

The additional troops sent to the base in the past week have increased the force there to about 1,000. The new troops are largely logistics-focused forces meant to facilitate feeding and housing the other troops, according to the defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Troops began deploying to Guantanamo Bay in early February to set up migrant detention facilities. President Donald Trump said the base can hold as many as 30,000 migrants. The Navy base has been used primarily for the last two decades to detain those associated with the 9/11 attacks.

The first deportation flight arrived Feb. 4 at Guantanamo with 10 migrants, who White House officials said were part of a violent Venezuelan gang, the Tren de Aragua. The detention facilities at the base in Cuba are acting as temporary holding places before the migrants are transported to their countries of origin.

At least 14 military flights carrying migrants have landed at the base, according to U.S. Transportation Command, which is responsible for the flights.

Last week, 177 Venezuelan immigrants to the United States were returned to their home country from Guantanamo Bay, The Associated Press reported. Their deportation left Guantanamo Bay with no migrant detainees.

The facilities were not vacant for long. As of Monday, there were 17 "high-threat" migrants being detained at Guantanamo Bay, the defense official said.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Wu-Tang Clan announces final North American tour

**NY** NEW YORK — Wu-Tang Clan is forever, but their touring days are coming to an end.

The legendary rap group — made up of RZA, GZA, Method Man, Raekwon, Ghostface Killah, Inspectah Deck, U-God, Masta Killa and previously, the late Ol' Dirty Bastard — will kick off their final tour this summer.

The “Wu-Tang Forever: The Final Chamber” tour launches June 6 in Baltimore at the CFG Bank Arena and concludes on July 18 at Philadelphia’s Wells Fargo Center.

Wu-Tang Clan will be joined by openers Run the Jewels.

## 2 police officers killed during traffic stop

**VA** VIRGINIA BEACH — Two police officers in Virginia were shot and killed during a traffic stop late Friday night, authorities said.

Virginia Beach Police Chief Paul Neudigate said at a news conference on Saturday that officers Cameron Girvin and Christopher Reece were killed after stopping a vehicle for expired plates. Neudigate says the suspect, John McCoy III, 42, got in an argument with the officers when asked to exit his vehicle. When he eventually got out of the vehicle, Neudigate said McCoy pulled out a pistol and shot both Reece and Girvin multiple times.

Neudigate said the shooting was caught on the officers’ body cameras and described the footage as “horrific.”

“The officers, Girvin and Reece, they were dedicated, de-

termined peace officers and public servants,” Neudigate said. “They had stellar reputations in our department and their work ethic was beyond reproach. We asked them to go out in this community and keep us safe from evil. And last night, evil found them. And that sacrifice is a painful reminder of the dangers our officers face.”

Neudigate added that officers later found McCoy inside a shed with a gunshot wound to the head that they believe was self-inflicted.

## One person is killed in avalanche in western US

**CO** WINTER PARK — One person was killed in an avalanche in central Colorado on Saturday, marking just the latest fatality stemming from avalanches in the western U.S. this season.

Authorities in Grand County responded Saturday to what they described as a skier-triggered avalanche in a steep area known as “The Fingers” above Berthoud Pass. It was the second reported avalanche in the county that day. A few people were caught in the other slide but were uninjured.

Saturday’s avalanche death is the third in Colorado this winter and the second fatality in less than a week in that state, according to the Colorado Avalanche Information Center. A Crested Butte snowboarder was killed Feb. 20 in a slide west of Silverton.

## Greenpeace says lawsuit threatens rights, future

**ND** MANDAN — A Texas pipeline company’s lawsuit accusing Green-

peace of defamation, disruptions and attacks during protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline went to trial in North Dakota on Monday, in a case the environmental advocacy organization says threatens free speech rights and its very future.

The lawsuit stems from the protests in 2016 and 2017 over the oil pipeline’s planned Missouri River crossing, upstream from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe’s reservation. The tribe has long argued that the pipeline threatens its water supply. Of the thousands of people who protested the project, hundreds were arrested.

Energy Transfer and its subsidiary Dakota Access allege trespass, nuisance, defamation and other offenses by Netherlands-based Greenpeace International and its American branch, Greenpeace USA. The lawsuit also names the group’s funding arm, Greenpeace Fund Inc.

## Sheriff’s deputy is killed while responding to a call

**MS** TERRY — A Mississippi sheriff’s deputy was shot and killed while responding to a call outside the state’s capital city of Jackson, authorities said.

Deputy Martin Shields, 37, of the Hinds County Sheriff’s Office died after the Sunday night shooting, the sheriff’s office said in a statement.

Shields was responding to a domestic call at a home on Midway Road in Terry, Miss., southwest of Jackson, authorities said. Few other details on the circumstances were immediately released.

A man was found dead inside

the residence, the sheriff’s office said. His identity and details of how he died were not released.

Shields had been employed by the sheriff’s office for about 9 months, but also had other law enforcement experience, authorities said.

The Mississippi Bureau of Investigation is investigating.

## Border Patrol agent gets military honors at burial

**MN** MINNEAPOLIS — A U.S. Border Patrol agent whose killing in Vermont during a traffic stop near the Canadian border has been tied to a cultlike group was buried with full military honors Saturday at a national cemetery in Minnesota.

David Maland, 44, died Jan. 20 during the stop on Interstate 91 in Conventry, about 20 miles south of the border with Canada. The driver of the stopped car is accused of opening fire on Maland and other agents, sparking a shootout that left her companion dead. Both belonged to a group called the Zizians that may be linked to six deaths in three states, investigators said.

Maland was memorialized at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis during a funeral attended by family, friends, community members and Border Patrol agents from around the country. Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz ordered flags to fly at half-staff in Maland’s honor.

A native of Minnesota, Maland, who went by Chris, served in the Air Force and the State Department before joining the Border Patrol.

— From wire reports

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# Wolves use 25-point rally to top Thunder in OT

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Just when it appeared the Oklahoma City Thunder were going to run away from Minnesota like they've run away from the pack in the Western Conference standings, the Timberwolves made a stand.

Minnesota rallied from a 25-point deficit in the second half to win 131-128 in Oklahoma City on Monday night. Now a Timberwolves team that reached the Western Conference Finals last season but has struggled at times this season has regained its confidence.

The Thunder led 82-57 with just over seven minutes left in the third quarter and 102-80 heading into the fourth. Some Minnesota players weren't even sure they could rally.

"Probably not, just because this one didn't feel like there was a chance in hell," Nickeil Alexander-Walker said. "For me, my mindset was, 'Okay, this game is pretty much over.' However, how we finish is going to carry over to the next game."

The T-wolves finished by outscoring Oklahoma City 41-19 in the fourth quarter, then winning in the extra period. Jaden McDaniels had 27 points and 10 rebounds, Naz Reid had 22 points and 11 rebounds and Anthony Edwards added 17 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists for Minnesota.

A road win against the top team in the West is just what the Timberwolves needed. Minnesota had lost its first two games since the All-Star break, including a 130-123 home loss to the Thunder on Sunday night.

The Wolves are 32-27 this season, but Monday's win shows their potential heading into road games against the Los Angeles Lakers, Utah and Phoenix.

"I think this starts a lot of momentum for us," Reid said. "We bring the energy we brought to-

night in the fourth quarter from the jump, we've got a great chance of beating all of those teams. I'm excited to get going."

Jalen Williams scored 27 points and Aaron Wiggins added 19 for OKC, which still leads the Western Conference at 46-11.

**Pistons 106, Clippers 97:** Cade Cunningham had 32 points and nine rebounds, Jalen Duren added 12 points and 19 rebounds, and host Detroit won its seventh straight game with a victory over Los Angeles.

Tobias Harris added 20 points for the Pistons, who broke a 10-game losing streak to the Clippers.

Detroit (32-26) hadn't won seven straight since Dec. 26, 2014, to Jan. 7, 2015. The Pistons have their best 58-game record since they were 42-16 in 2007-08 — the last year they won a playoff game.

James Harden had 18 points and 12 rebounds for Los Angeles. Ivica Zubac had 13 points and 16 boards.

**Nuggets 125, Pacers 116:** Nikola Jokic had a career-best 19 assists, while adding 18 points and nine rebounds, Aaron Gordon scored 25 points and visiting Denver defeated Indiana.

Michael Porter Jr. had 19 points and 11 rebounds, Christian Braun added 17 points and Jamal Murray scored 16 for the Nuggets.

Myles Turner led the Pacers with 23 points. Tyrese Haliburton had 19 points and 15 assists, Pascal Siakam scored 19 points and Aaron Nesmith had 17.

Denver shot 56% and held a 46-32 rebounding edge.

**Bulls 142, 76ers 110:** Josh Giddey had 25 points, 16 rebounds and six assists as visiting Chicago ended a six-game skid by routing Philadelphia.

Kevin Huerter scored 23 points, Zach Collins added 19 and Matas Buzelis 17 as the Bulls led by as many as 50 points in the fourth quarter and

sent the Sixers to their eighth straight loss.

Chicago entered having lost 11 of 15. It holds the 10th and final play-in tournament spot in the Eastern Conference. Philadelphia is in 12th place, 2½ games back.

Paul George and Kelly Oubre Jr. each scored 19 points and Tyrese Maxey added 13 as the 76ers lost for the 10th time in 11 games.

**Wizards 107, Nets 99:** Jordan Poole scored 26 points, including a couple of crucial jumpers late as host Washington snapped its six-game losing streak with a victory over Brooklyn.

Washington trailed 97-96 before going on a 7-0 run that included a 3-pointer and a long 2 by Poole. Bilal Coulibaly added 20 points for the Wizards, who won for just the 10th time this season.

Ziaire Williams led the Nets with 19 points, but after Tendon Watford's layup with 4:45 remaining, Brooklyn didn't score again until Cam Johnson's two free throws with 13 seconds to play.

It was the first time all season Washington held an opponent under 100 points. The Nets managed only 12 in the fourth quarter. The Wizards won despite scoring just 40 after halftime.

**Hawks 98, Heat 86:** Trae Young had 11 points and 14 assists, and host Atlanta snapped a three-game losing streak with a victory over Miami.

Onyeka Okongwu had 17 points and eight rebounds, while Terrance Mann and Caris LaVert both added 15 points off the bench. NBA steals leader Dyson Daniel had seven steals, one off a season high.

The Hawks allowed their fewest points since a 100-82 victory over Cleveland on March 14, 2021, and moved past the Heat into eighth place in the Eastern Conference.

Andrew Wiggins had 23 points for Miami, which lost for

the sixth time in seven games and missed 13 of its first 14 3-point attempts.

**Trail Blazers 114, Jazz 112:** Anfernee Simons had 28 points and out six assists to lead visiting Portland to a victory over Utah.

Jerami Grant scored 20 points, Avdija added 18 points and 14 rebounds, and Scoot Henderson finished with 17 points and six assists as the Trail Blazers snapped a three-game road losing streak on the first game of a seven-game trip.

Brice Sensabaugh led the Jazz with 23 points. Keyonte George added 21 points and Kyle Filipowski had 20 points and 11 rebounds as Utah lost for the sixth time in eight games.

The Jazz closed within 113-112 with 3.6 seconds left after George hit back-to-back 3-pointers. Grant converted 1 of 2 free throws to extend the lead to two points before George missed a contested 3-pointer at the buzzer.

**Kings 130, Hornets 88:** Zach LaVine scored a season-high 42 points in his finest game with Sacramento since being acquired in a multi-team trade near the deadline, leading the host Kings to a win over Charlotte.

LaVine hit eight 3-pointers and shot 16-for-19 overall as Sacramento earned its first home win over the Hornets since 2021. LaVine has scored in double figures in all eight games for the Kings.

DeMar DeRozan had 18 points and seven rebounds for Sacramento (29-28). Malik Monk scored 13, Keegan Murray added 10 and Domantas Sabonis finished with seven points, 10 rebounds and seven assists.

Miles Bridges scored 23 points for Charlotte. LaMelo Ball and Nick Smith Jr. each scored 13 points, and Jusuf Nurkic and Moussa Diabate scored 12 apiece for the Hornets, losers in 12 of their last 14 games.



# Packers propose banning tush push

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The Green Bay Packers are proposing an end to the tush push play the Philadelphia Eagles have used so successfully at the goal line and in short-yardage situations, including during their victory over the Kansas City Chiefs in the Super Bowl.

Green Bay general manager Brian Gutekunst confirmed Tuesday the Packers had submitted a proposal to ban the play, a modified quarterback sneak where two teammates behind Jalen Hurts push him forward to help him try to gain the yardage necessary for a first down or touchdown.

“Yeah, I’m aware of it,” Gutekunst said during his session with reporters at the NFL scout-

ing combine. “We really haven’t had very many discussions about it. I’m sure we will over the next few weeks as we head into the owner’s meetings. So I’m aware that we did, but really haven’t had many discussions about it.”

According to NFL Network and the Washington Post, league executive Troy Vincent said Monday that a team submitted a proposal to ban the play.

NFL owners could vote on the proposal when they meet next month in Florida.

The tush push has become synonymous with the Eagles. Perhaps no example summed up how much the play can be a challenge for Eagles opponents quite like when Philadelphia used it against Washington in

the NFC championship game. The Commanders jumped offside four times in a sequence of five plays while trying to stop the tush push — earning them a warning from the referee that he could award the Eagles a touchdown if the Commanders did it again.

Packers president and CEO Mark Murphy called the tush push “bad for the game” in a message posted on the team’s website after the Packers were eliminated by the Eagles in the playoffs.

“There is no skill involved and it is almost an automatic first down on plays of a yard or less,” Murphy wrote. “I would like to see the league prohibit pushing or aiding the run.”

Atlanta Falcons coach Ra-

heem Morris said Tuesday he wouldn’t mind seeing it go away.

“I’ve never been a fan,” Morris said. “Never understood why it was allowed. I definitely will be one of the guys voting against it.”

Bills coach Sean McDermott, a member of the competition committee, on Monday mentioned player safety concerns — even though Buffalo has used a version of the play.

“The way that the techniques that are used with the play, to me, have been potentially contrary to the health and safety of the players,” McDermott said at the NFL scouting combine. “You have to go back through, in fairness, to the injury data on the play, but I just think the optics of it I’m not in love with.”

## Morrissey, Scheifele rally Jets to OT win over Sharks

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Josh Morrissey scored the tying goal in the final minute of regulation and Mark Scheifele got the winner 1:33 into overtime as the Winnipeg Jets rallied to beat the San Jose Sharks 2-1 on Monday night for their franchise-record 10th straight victory.

Connor Hellebuyck made 17 saves for the Jets.

William Eklund scored for San Jose, and Vitek Vanecsek had 33 saves.

Morrissey tied it with a slap shot from the top of the circle with 26 seconds left after Hellebuyck was pulled for his eighth goal of the season.

In the extra period, Scheifele scored on a backhand shot for his 32nd goal. It was the 329th of his career, making him the franchise leader. He passed Ilya Kovalchuk, who set the record when the team was the Atlanta Thrashers.

**Kings 5, Golden Knights 2:**

Trevor Moore scored two goals, Warren Foegele got the go-ahead score and Los Angeles rallied to beat visiting Vegas.

It was Moore’s second two-goal game this season. Four of the forward’s 10 goals have come in the past four games.

Joel Edmundson and Kevin Fiala also scored in the third period for the Kings, who are 14-1-1 in their past 16 games. Quinton Byfield had three assists and Darcy Kuemper stopped 19 shots.

Brayden McNabb and Mark Stone scored in the second period for Vegas, which had its three-game winning streak snapped. Ilya Samsonov made 14 saves.

The Kings trailed 2-1 after two periods, but Moore tied it 42 seconds into the third with a wrist shot from the left faceoff circle that went off the crossbar.

Foegele, who also had an assist, put a backhand past Samsonov at 8:31 of the third to give the Kings a 3-2 lead.

## Commissioner reduces Hartman ban to 8 games

Associated Press

NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman upheld the suspension of Minnesota Wild forward Ryan Hartman for slamming an opponent’s head to the ice, while making the unusual decision on Monday to reduce the penalty from 10 games to the union-recommended eight after hearing Hartman’s in-person appeal.

Hartman was punished for roughing Ottawa Senators forward Tim Stutzle on Feb. 1, after which Stutzle had two cuts and bruising above his left eye and needed five stitches. Bettman wrote that he believes the revised length of the ban would still serve as an “appropriate wake-up call” for Hartman, 30, to “reevaluate his conduct on the ice and make positive changes to his game.”

This is Hartman’s fifth career suspension and fourth in 22 months. Hartman will be eligible to return when the Wild play at Seattle on March 4.

In other NHL news:

■ Anaheim Ducks forward Trevor Zegras was suspended three games without pay for a hit to the head of Detroit’s Michael Rasmussen. No penalty was called on the play. Rasmussen left with injury and was ruled out of Detroit’s game Tuesday at Minnesota. It is Zegras’ first suspension since entering the league in 2021. It will cost him \$89,844 in salary.

■ The New York Rangers called up one of their top prospects in case veteran Chris Kreider was unable to play Tuesday against the Islanders. The team announced Monday it recalled forward Brennan Othmann from the Hartford Wolf Pack of the American Hockey League. Othmann was the Rangers’ first-round pick in 2021 and has 20 points in 27 games in the minors this season.

Kreider missed Sunday’s game at Pittsburgh with an upper-body injury.

# Rough week ahead for SEC contenders

Associated Press

The biggest games of the week in men's college basketball reside in the Southeastern Conference.

Seems to be a recurring theme this season.

It make sense given the league that was once synonymous solely with football has four of the nation's top six teams in the AP Top 25, led for the seventh consecutive week by No. 1 Auburn. And that the league's eight total teams in the rankings are nearly double any other conference; the Big 12 is next with three in the top 10 and five total in the poll.

But the focus this week can be narrowed even further: the state of Alabama.

The Tigers (25-2, 13-1), who have won four straight since a loss to Florida, begin a brutal four-game stretch that would have been entirely against ranked teams had Mississippi not fallen out Monday. Auburn faces the Rebels on Wednesday night before going to No. 17 Kentucky on Saturday, with No. 12 Texas A&M and No. 6 Alaba-

ma awaiting the following week.

Speaking of the Crimson Tide, they enter the week tied with the third-ranked Gators for second in the SEC, two games behind their biggest rival. Alabama (22-5, 11-3) faces No. 24 Mississippi State on Tuesday night and visits No. 5 Tennessee on Saturday, part of a run of seven straight against ranked teams with Florida and the Tigers on deck next week.

"It's about survival," Auburn coach Bruce Pearl said succinctly. "The league is so good and so competitive."

Still, the Tigers keep winning. Their only losses have come against teams ranked second (Duke) and third (Gators) in the Top 25. And they 10 wins over ranked opponents, including the current No. 4 (Houston), No. 5 (Volunteers) and No. 6 (Crimson Tide).

Not that Pearl is satisfied. Auburn has much bigger goals: a third regular-season SEC title in the past eight seasons, a second straight conference tournament title and, just maybe, a second Final Four and first na-

tional championship in school history.

"We've got to continue to try to get better," Pearl said. "That's our goal. And while we're trying to do that, we're trying to beat the people in front of us. We're trying to play for championships."

Elsewhere in the SEC, Vanderbilt (18-9, 6-8, No. 43 NET) can help its NCAA Tournament hopes when it visits the No. 12 Aggies on Wednesday and then faces No. 15 Missouri on Saturday. The Commodores are among many teams in power leagues, including conference rivals Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas, that are hanging precariously on the NCAA bubble.

The Sooners play Kentucky on Wednesday and visit Ole Miss on Saturday. The Longhorns get the Razorbacks on Wednesday and Georgia on Saturday. And Arkansas follows its game against Texas with a trip to South Carolina on Saturday.

## Big 12's best

The Big 12, which has long been considered the nation's

dominant league, still has three in the top 10 and five in the Top 25 this week. Two faced off on Monday night when the No. 4 Cougars beat No. 10 Texas Tech, and two more match up on Saturday when No. 22 Arizona heads to ninth-ranked Iowa State.

The other ranked team is BYU, which entered at No. 25 this week after dismantling Kansas and edging Arizona last week. Houston visits Arizona State on Wednesday night before facing West Virginia on Saturday.

## Other notable games

No. 8 Michigan State is tied atop the Big Ten standings with No. 15 Michigan after the Wolverines beat Nebraska on Monday. But the Spartans have a tough week ahead with a trip to No. 16 Maryland on Wednesday night and a visit from No. 11 Wisconsin on Sunday.

No. 23 Saint Mary's, which has clinched the regular-season West Coast title, gets Loyola Marymount and Oregon State this week.

# Houston closer to Big 12 title by beating Texas Tech

Associated Press

LUBBOCK, Texas — Milos Uzan scored a career-high 22 points and No. 4 Houston clinched at least a share of the Big 12 regular-season title with a 69-61 victory over 10th-ranked Texas Tech on Monday night.

J'Wan Roberts had 16 points and seven rebounds as the Cougars (24-4, 16-1 Big 12) avenged their only conference loss.

JT Toppin and Elijah Hawkins scored 14 points apiece for the short-handed Red Raiders (21-7, 12-5), who tried to feed off the energetic crowd despite playing just six players. Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes watched his alma mater from a seat next to

the Texas Tech bench.

Emanuel Sharpe scored 10 points as Houston eliminated the Red Raiders from the Big 12 race and left No. 22 Arizona as the only team with a chance to catch them.

**No. 15 Michigan 49, Nebraska 46:** Roddy Gayle Jr. scored 12 points and Tre Donaldson made two free throws with four seconds left to give the visiting Wolverines a win over the Cornhuskers.

It was the fewest points Michigan scored in a victory in 17 years.

The Wolverines (21-6, 13-3) shot a season-low 30%.

The game alternated between a mix of great defense and abys-

mal shooting. Nebraska (17-11, 7-10) was 1-for-7 on layups; Michigan was 3-for-12.

Donaldson finished with 11 points for the Wolverines.

Brice Williams led the Cornhuskers with 26 points. Nine teammates combined for 20.

**Kansas 71, Colorado 64:** Hunter Dickinson scored a season-high 32 points and grabbed 13 rebounds to help the visiting Jayhawks beat the Buffaloes.

Dickinson made 13 of 18 shots and 6 of 10 free throws for Kansas (19-9, 10-7 Big 12 Conference), which fell out of the AP Top 25 for the first time since Feb. 8, 2021, after losing three of five before arriving in Boulder.

KJ Adams had 15 points for

the Jayhawks.

Kansas moved a half-game behind 25th-ranked BYU for fifth place in the conference with three games left in the regular season.

**North Carolina 96, Florida State 85:** RJ Davis had 20 points, Seth Trimble came off the bench to score 17 and the visiting Tar Heels cruised past the Seminoles.

Davis made 5 of 9 shots with three 3-pointers for North Carolina (18-11, 11-6 ACC), which has won four in a row to pull within a half-game of Wake Forest and SMU for fourth place. The top four teams receive byes into the third round of the conference tournament.