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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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GOP seeks votes to reopen government

The Washington Post

The House returns to Washington this week with plans to find enough votes in the narrowly divided chamber to reopen the federal government, which has been partially shut since early Saturday morning after funding lapsed.

It won't be simple: Many House Democrats do not plan to support the deal Senate Democrats struck with the White House.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., told House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., last week that his party would not help pass the package without numerous additional restrictions on immigration enforcement, according to two senior House Democratic aides who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private negotiations.

If most Democrats do not support the package, Republicans will need near-unanimity to pass the funding package, which President Donald Trump has endorsed. But Johnson predicted on NBC News's "Meet the Press" on Sunday that they

would be able to end the shutdown "at least by Tuesday."

"We have a logistical challenge of getting everyone in town, and because of the conversation I had with Hakeem Jeffries, I know that we've got to pass a rule and probably do this mostly on our own," Johnson said, referencing a floor vote that is traditionally passed on party lines.

A procedural vote Monday set for a key committee stacked with several ultraconservative House Freedom Caucus members will provide an early test of whether the GOP can muscle the measure through on its own.

Last month, Republicans and Democrats on the House and Senate Appropriations committees negotiated a sweeping package that would have funded most of the federal government through Sept. 30, the end of the fiscal year.

Many Democrats had already said they were uncomfortable supporting one part of that plan: \$64.4 billion in funding for the Department of Homeland Security, including \$10 billion for Immigration and Customs

Enforcement.

The Trump administration's immigration raids in Minneapolis drew national attention after an ICE agent shot and killed 37-year-old Renée Good last month, prompting mass demonstrations, and another ICE officer shot an undocumented Venezuelan man, Julio Cesar Sosa-Celis, in the leg during an arrest.

The House passed the initial funding package, primarily along party lines. But two days later, immigration agents shot and killed Alex Pretti in Minneapolis. Senate Democrats returned to Washington demanding that Republicans separate DHS funding from the rest of the bill until the parties could agree on new accountability measures for immigration agents, including implementing a code of conduct and requiring body cameras and identification.

The White House struck a deal with Senate Democrats to extend DHS funding for two weeks to buy time for negotiations while passing the remaining funding, which include ap-

propriations for the Pentagon, the Health and Human Services Department and more. The DHS bill also covers the Transportation Security Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection.

That agreement passed the Senate on Friday evening.

But because the changes had not been approved by the House, the unfunded agencies shuttered early Saturday morning.

House Republicans will have one vote to spare if every Democrat votes against the plan. Some House Democrats are considering supporting the package, but others have privately raised concerns that Senate negotiators won't be able to achieve meaningful accountability measures, and some have said they would prefer if ICE is not funded this year, noting that the agency received \$75 billion from last year's Republican tax and spending law. (ICE would also be able to continue operating if it isn't funded, drawing on that money.)

Kremlin confirms Russia-Ukraine talks resuming this week

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A new round of U.S.-brokered talks on ending Russia's war on Ukraine is set to go ahead this week after a brief postponement, a senior Kremlin official said Monday, with negotiations taking place against a backdrop of continued front-line fighting and deadly long-range attacks on rear areas.

The trilateral talks will take place on Wednesday and Thursday in Abu Dhabi, where a pre-

vious meeting was held last month, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Sunday that he would be sending a delegation to the meeting, which initially was to be held over the weekend but was delayed by what Peskov said were scheduling conflicts.

The Trump administration has over the past year pushed the two sides to find compromises.

But breaking the deadlock on

key issues appears no closer as the fourth anniversary of Russia's all-out invasion of its neighbor approaches later this month.

Russian presidential envoy Kirill Dmitriev was in Miami, Fla., at the weekend for talks with American officials, but Peskov refused to provide any details of the meeting.

A key sticking point is whether Russia gets to keep the Ukrainian territory its army has occupied, especially in Ukraine's

eastern industrial heartland. Moscow is also demanding possession of other Ukrainian land there that it hasn't been able to capture.

Russian drones and missiles have continued to bombard civilian areas, killing 12 miners in a bus on Sunday in the most recent mass aerial attack.

The barrages have also wrecked the Ukrainian power grid, leaving people without heating, light and running water in bitter winter cold.

Stakeholders fear infighting threatens NATO

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — European allies and Canada are pouring billions of dollars into helping Ukraine, and they have pledged to massively boost their budgets to defend their territories.

But despite those efforts, NATO's credibility as a unified force under U.S. leadership has taken a huge hit over the past year as trust within the 32-nation military organization dissolved.

The rift has been most glaring over President Donald Trump's repeated threats to seize Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark. More recently, Trump's disparaging remarks about his NATO allies' troops in Afghanistan drew another outcry.

While the heat on Greenland has subsided for now, the infighting has seriously undercut the ability of the world's biggest security alliance to deter adversaries, analysts say.

"The episode matters because it crossed a line that cannot be uncrossed," Sophia Besch from the Carnegie Europe think tank said in a report on the Greenland crisis. "Even without force or sanctions, that breach weakens the alliance in a lasting way."

The tensions haven't gone unnoticed in Russia, NATO's biggest threat.

Any deterrence of Russia relies on ensuring that President Vladimir Putin is convinced that NATO will retaliate should he expand his war beyond Ukraine. Right now, that does not seem to be the case.

"It's a major upheaval for Europe, and we are watching it," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov noted last week.

Filling up the bucket

Criticized by U.S. leaders for decades over low defense spending, and lashed relentlessly under Trump, European allies and

Canada agreed in July to significantly up their game and start investing 5% of their gross domestic product on defense.

The pledge was aimed at taking the whip out of Trump's hand. The allies would spend as much of their economic output on core defense as the United States — around 3.5% of GDP — by 2035, plus a further 1.5% on security-related projects like upgrading bridges, air and seaports.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte has hailed those pledges as a sign of NATO's robust health and military might. He recently said that "fundamentally thanks to Donald J. Trump, NATO is stronger than it ever was."

Though a big part of his job is to ensure that Trump does not pull the U.S. out of NATO, as Trump has occasionally threatened, his flattery of the American leader has sometimes raised concern. Rutte has pointedly refused to speak about the rift over Greenland.

Article 5 at stake

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was formed in 1949 to counter the security threat posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and its deterrence is underpinned by a strong American troop presence in Europe.

The alliance is built on the political pledge that an attack on one ally must be met with a response from them all — the collective security guarantee enshrined in Article 5 of its rule book.

It hinges on the belief that the territories of all 32 allies must remain inviolate. Trump's designs on Greenland attack that very principle, even though Article 5 does not apply in internal disputes because it can only be triggered unanimously.

"Instead of strengthening our alliances, threats against Greenland and NATO are undermining America's own interests," two U.S. senators, Democrat Jeanne Shaheen and Republican Lisa Murkowski, wrote in a New York Times op-ed.

Even before Trump escalated his threats to seize control of Greenland, his European allies were never entirely convinced that he would defend them should they come under attack.

Trump has said that he doesn't believe the allies would help him either, and he recently drew more anger when he questioned the role of European and Canadian troops who fought and died alongside Americans in Afghanistan. The president later partially reversed his remarks.

Russia not easily deterred

Despite NATO's talk of increased spending, Moscow seems undeterred. The EU's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, said last week that "it has become painfully clear that Russia will remain a major security threat for the long term."

"We are fending off cyberattacks, sabotage against critical infrastructure, foreign interference and information manipulation, military intimidation, territorial threats and political meddling," she said Wednesday.

Officials across Europe have reported acts of sabotage and mysterious drone flights over airports and military bases. Identifying the culprits is difficult, and Russia denies responsibility.

In a year-end address, Rutte warned that Europe is at imminent risk.

"Russia has brought war back to Europe, and we must be prepared for the scale of war our grandparents or great-grandparents endured," he said.

Meanwhile in Russia, Lavrov

said the dispute over Greenland heralded a "deep crisis" for NATO.

"It was hard to imagine before that such a thing could happen," Lavrov told reporters, as he contemplated the possibility that "one NATO member is going to attack another NATO member."

Russian state media mocked Europe's "impotent rage" over Trump's designs on Greenland, and Putin's presidential envoy declared that "trans-Atlantic unity is over."

Doubt about US troops

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is due to meet with his counterparts at NATO on Feb. 12. A year ago, he startled the allies by warning that America's security priorities lie elsewhere and that Europe must look after itself now.

Security in the Arctic region, where Greenland lies, will be high on the agenda. It's unclear whether Hegseth will announce a new drawdown of U.S. troops in Europe, who are central to NATO's deterrence.

Lack of clarity about this has also fueled doubt about the U.S. commitment to its allies. In October, NATO learned that up to 1,500 American troops would be withdrawn from an area bordering Ukraine, angering ally Romania.

A report from the European Union Institute for Security Studies warned last week that although U.S. troops are unlikely to vanish overnight, doubts about U.S. commitment to European security means "the deterrence edifice becomes shakier."

"Europe is being forced to confront a harsher reality," wrote the authors, Veronica Anghel and Giuseppe Spatafora. "Adversaries start believing they can probe, sabotage and escalate without triggering a unified response."

More frigid temps set for much of US

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Forecasters warned that dangerous extra-cold conditions were to persist into Monday morning for a huge swath of the U.S. from the Gulf Coast into New England that was cleaning up after a weekend bomb cyclone brought heavy snow and flight cancellations to North Carolina and flurries and falling iguanas in Florida.

Temperatures were expected to begin inching up throughout the day but more misery was expected for thousands who were still without power from the ice storm last month in the South.

About 150 million people were under cold weather advisories and extreme cold warnings Sun-

day in the eastern portion of the U.S., with single-digit temperatures in southern states and the coldest air mass in South Florida since December 1989, said Peter Mullinax, a National Weather Service meteorologist in College Park, Md.

The National Weather Service office for Raleigh, N.C., warned that wind chills would drop early Monday to near zero Fahrenheit. "Snow and ice will linger, with refreezing tonight making travel hazardous," the office said Sunday on social media. "Use caution on roads and dress in warm layers."

In eastern North Carolina, James City recorded 18 inches of snow, while Swansboro recorded 17 inches, the weather service

reported.

The bomb cyclone, known to meteorologists as an intense, rapidly strengthening weather system, contributed to nearly a foot of snow in and around Charlotte, North Carolina's largest city. The snowfall represented a top-five snow event all time there, Mullinax said.

Flight cancellations exceeded 2,800 in the U.S. on Saturday, with at least another 1,800 on Sunday, according to FlightAware, a flight tracking and data company. More than 800 of those Sunday cancellations were for flights departing from or arriving at Charlotte Douglas International Airport.

The storm caused an hours-long mess on Interstate 85 north-

east of the city, after a crash left dozens of semitractors and other vehicles backed up into Saturday evening, according to the State Highway Patrol. More than 1,000 traffic collisions and two road deaths were reported, North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein said Sunday.

The Tampa-St. Petersburg area in Florida saw snow flurries, while temperatures dropped to the 20s in the Panhandle and 30s in South Florida on Sunday. That left cold-stunned iguanas lying motionless on the ground. Iguanas in South Florida go dormant in the cold and though they usually wake when temperatures warm, the reptiles can die after more than a day of extreme cold.

Longer winter predicted from Punxsutawney Phil

Associated Press

PUNXSUTAWNEY, Pa. — Punxsutawney Phil predicted six more weeks of wintry weather Monday, a forecast sure to disappoint many after what's already been a long, cold season across large parts of the United States.

His annual prediction and announcement that he had seen his shadow was translated by his top hat-wearing handlers in the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club at Gobbler's Knob in western Pennsylvania.

The news was greeted with a mix of cheers and boos from the tens of thousands who braved temperatures in the single-digits Fahrenheit to await the annual prognostication. The extreme cold kept the crowd bundled up and helped keep people on the main stage dancing.

Usually guests can come up on stage and take pictures of Phil after his prediction, but this year the announcer said it was too cold for that and his handlers were afraid to keep him out too long. Instead, the audience was asked to

come to the stage, turn around and "do a selfie."

The Punxsutawney Groundhog Club says that when Phil is deemed to have not seen his shadow, that means there will be an early spring. When he does see it, it's six more weeks of winter.

Phil tends to predict a longer winter far more often than an early spring.

The annual ritual goes back more than a century, with ties to ancient farming traditions in Europe. Punxsutawney's festivities have grown considerably since the 1993 movie "Groundhog Day," starring Bill Murray.

Lisa Gibson was at her 10th Groundhog Day, wearing a lighted hat that resembled the tree stump from which Phil emerges shortly after daybreak.

"Oh man, it just breaks up the doldrums of winter," said Gibson, accompanied by her husband—dressed up as Elvis Presley—and teenage daughter. "It's like Halloween and New Year's Eve all wrapped up into one holiday."

Official says new charges from Epstein files unlikely

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A top Justice Department official played down the possibility of additional criminal charges arising from the Jeffrey Epstein files, saying Sunday that the existence of "horrible photographs" and troubling email correspondence does not "allow us necessarily to prosecute somebody."

Department officials said over the summer that a review of Epstein-related records did not establish a basis for new criminal investigations, and Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said that position remains unchanged even as a massive document dump since Friday has focused fresh attention on Epstein's links to powerful individuals around the world and revived questions about what, if any, knowledge the wealthy financier's associates had about his crimes.

"There's a lot of correspondence. There's a lot of emails. There's a lot of photographs. There's a lot of horrible photo-

graphs that appear to be taken by Mr. Epstein or people around him," Blanche said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union." "But that doesn't allow us necessarily to prosecute somebody."

He said victims of Epstein's sex abuse "want to be made whole," but that "doesn't mean we can just create evidence or that we can just kind of come up with a case that isn't there."

President Donald Trump's Justice Department said Friday that it would be releasing more than 3 million pages of documents and more than 2,000 videos and 180,000 images under a law intended to reveal of most of the material that were collected during long-running investigations into Epstein.

On Monday, the Justice Department said it had taken down several thousand documents and "media" that may have inadvertently included victim-identifying information since it began releasing the latest batch of Epstein documents.

Trump says US is 'starting to talk to Cuba'

Associated Press

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE — President Donald Trump said the United States was beginning to talk with Cuban leaders as his administration puts greater pressure on the communist-run island and cuts off key oil supplies.

He made the comment to reporters on Saturday night as he was flying to Florida.

It comes in the wake of his moves in recent weeks to cut off supplies of oil from Venezuela and Mexico, which he suggested Saturday would force Cuba

to the negotiating table.

His goals with Cuba remain unclear, but Trump has turned more of his attention toward the island after his administration in early January captured Venezuela's then-President Nicolás Maduro and has been more aggressive in confronting nations that are adversaries of the U.S.

Trump has predicted that the Cuban government is ready to fall.

The Republican president did not offer any details on Saturday about what level of outreach

his administration has had with Cuba recently or when, but simply said, "We're starting to talk to Cuba."

His recent moves to cut off its oil supplies have squeezed the island.

Recently, Trump signed an executive order to impose a tariff on any goods from countries that sell or provide oil to Cuba.

The move put pressure on Mexico, which Cuba became dependent on for oil after Trump halted oil shipments from Venezuela.

A senior Cuban diplomat told

The Associated Press on Monday that his government does not have a dialogue with the United States but is currently open to one if certain criteria are met, as tensions continue to remain high between the countries.

Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío said Cuba is ready to have "informal dialogue" with the U.S. "with the aim of ensuring that we can have a respectable, serious coexistence in spite of the differences between our two countries."

US creating reserve of rare earth elements

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration plans to deploy nearly \$12 billion to create a strategic reserve of rare earth elements, a stockpile that could counter China's ability to use its dominance of these hard to process metals as leverage in trade talks.

The White House confirmed on Monday the start of "Project Vault," which would initially be funded by a \$10 billion loan from the U.S. Export-Import Bank and nearly \$1.67 billion in private capital.

The minerals kept in the reserve would help to shield the manufacturers of autos, electronics and other goods from any supply chain disruptions.

During trade talks last year spurred by President Donald Trump's tariffs, the Chinese government restricted the exporting of rare earths that are needed for jet engines, radar systems, electric vehicles, laptops and phones.

China represents about 70% of the world's rare earths mining and 90% of global rare earths processing.

That gave it a chokehold on

the sector that has caused the U.S. to nurture alternative sources of the elements, creating a stockpile similar to the national reserve for petroleum.

The strategic reserve is expected to be the highlight of a ministerial meeting on critical minerals that Secretary of State Marco Rubio will host at the State Department on Wednesday, according to a U.S. official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Vice President JD Vance plans to deliver a keynote address at the meeting, which officials from several dozen European, African and Asian nations plan to attend.

The meeting is also expected to include the signing of several bilateral agreements to improve and coordinate supply chain logistics.

The loan funding the reserve would be for a period of 15 years.

The U.S. government has previously taken stakes in the rare earths miner MP Materials, as well as providing financial backing to the companies Vulcan Elements and USA Rare Earth.

Gaza border with Egypt reopens in key step for truce

Associated Press

CAIRO — Medical evacuees from Gaza entered Egypt on Monday as the Rafah border crossing reopened, marking a key step in the Israel-Hamas ceasefire but a mostly symbolic one. Few people will be allowed to travel in either direction and no goods will pass through.

Ambulances waited for hours at the border before ferrying patients across after sunset, Egypt's state-run Al-Qahera News satellite television channel showed. The crossing had been closed since Israeli troops seized it in May 2024.

About 20,000 Palestinian children and adults needing medical care hope to leave the devastated territory via the crossing, according to Gaza health officials. Thousands of other Palestinians outside the territory hope to enter and return home.

The number of travelers is expected to increase over time if the system is successful. Israel has said it and Egypt will vet people for exit and entry.

The office of the North Sinai governor confirmed that the first Palestinian patient crossed into Egypt.

Before the war, Rafah was the main crossing for people mov-

ing in and out of Gaza. The territory's handful of other crossings are all shared with Israel. Under the terms of the ceasefire, which went into effect in October, Israel's military controls the area between the Rafah crossing and the zone where most Palestinians live.

Violence still continued across the coastal territory Monday, and Gaza hospital officials said an Israeli navy ship had fired on a tent camp, killing a 3-year-old Palestinian boy. Israel's military said it was looking into the incident.

About 150 hospitals across Egypt are ready to receive Palestinian patients evacuated from Gaza through Rafah, authorities said. Also, the Egyptian Red Crescent said it has readied "safe spaces" on the Egyptian side of the crossing to support those evacuated from the Gaza Strip.

Israel has said it and Egypt will vet people for exit and entry through the Rafah crossing, which will be supervised by European Union border patrol agents with a small Palestinian presence. The numbers of travelers are expected to increase over time, if the system is successful.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Teens arrested after shooting at parade

LA CLINTON — Authorities in Louisiana said Sunday they arrested two teenagers in the shootings of a 6-year-old child and four others wounded during a small town's weekend parade.

The suspects, ages 19 and 15, are charged with attempted murder, obstructing justice and reckless discharge of a firearm, the East Feliciana Parish Sheriff's Office said in a statement posted on social media.

Gunfire sent people scrambling for cover Saturday during the Mardi Gras in the Country Parade in Clinton, located about 30 miles north of Baton Rouge.

All five victims are expected to survive, sheriff's Chief Criminal Deputy Bill Cox told The Advocate on Saturday. The department said Sunday it was unaware of any changes in the victims' conditions.

The sheriff's office said Sunday the two teenagers charged were among three people detained Saturday after they were found with guns near the parade.

'Dances With Wolves' actor convicted of assault

NV LAS VEGAS — A Nevada jury on Friday convicted "Dances With Wolves" actor Nathan Chasing Horse of sexually assaulting Indigenous women and girls in a case that sent shock waves through Indian Country.

The jurors in Las Vegas found Chasing Horse guilty of 13 of the 21 charges he faced. Most of the guilty verdicts centered on Chasing Horse's conduct with a

victim who was 14 when he began assaulting her. He was acquitted of some sexual assault charges when the main victim was older and lived with him and his other companions.

Chasing Horse, 49, faces a minimum of 25 years in prison. His sentencing is set for March 11.

He has also been charged with sex crimes in other states as well as Canada.

Man who froze to death rebuffed help from grocer

NY NEW YORK — The 10th person to die on New York City streets amid historic low temperatures refused offers for help from a concerned Queens supermarket manager who spotted him on a bench outside the store the night before he died.

When the manager returned to work the next morning, he was upset to find the man's lifeless body sitting on the same bench.

The 47-year-old victim was found dead about 6 a.m. Tuesday, police said.

His name was not immediately released pending family notification.

He was the 10th person to die on the streets citywide since sub-freezing temps arrived Jan. 24.

The city Medical Examiner will determine his cause of death along with the nine other victims whose deaths are suspected to be cold related.

Authorities: All 8 inmates who escaped captured

LA LAKE PROVIDENCE — Louisiana authorities said all eight inmates

who escaped from a rural jail were captured less than 24 hours after they were reported missing.

Officials have not said how the escape unfolded from the Riverbend Detention Center in Lake Providence, located in East Carroll Parish, before they were reported missing at 1:20 a.m. Friday.

They have also not detailed how each of the men were captured.

The arrests were announced in three batches from Friday afternoon until early Saturday morning and involved several federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, including the police department in Yazoo City, Miss., a nearly two-hour drive from the jail.

The inmates range in age from 19 to 31. Authorities said all of them were considered violent offenders. Court records said the escapees were being held on charges that included murder, aggravated assault with a firearm and aggravated flight from an officer.

Man pleads guilty to sending money to ISIS

CA LOS ANGELES — A Long Beach man pleaded guilty to sending payments to suspected members of ISIS and for illegally possessing a homemade bomb, according to authorities.

Mark Lorenzo Villanueva, 29, pleaded guilty to attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization and being a felon in possession of a firearm, according to a U.S. Attorney's Office Central District of California news release.

According to his plea agree-

ment, Villanueva began messaging a person claiming to be an ISIS fighter living in Syria. Villanueva allegedly sent more than \$1,600 knowing it would be spent on ammunition, weapons, and other supplies, authorities said.

Law enforcement searched Villanueva's home and found a homemade bomb with large amounts of ball bearings and other objects, including nails, screws, and nuts, according to the release.

Librarian arrested on alleged assassination plot

WV RIPLEY — A West Virginia librarian was arrested for allegedly using social media to recruit someone to assassinate President Donald Trump.

Ripley resident Morgan Leigh Morrow, 39, was taken into custody after she engaged in the "social media recruitment of individuals to pursue and assassinate President Trump," the Jackson County Sheriff's Department said in a news release.

According to a criminal complaint obtained by The Marietta Times, the charges against Morrow stem from threatening Tik-Tok videos, including one in which she allegedly said, "Surely a sniper with terminal illness can't be a big ask out of 342 million."

Police were made aware of the posts Jan. 25, and responded to Morrow's residence, then took her to the sheriff's office for further investigation.

She was subsequently charged with one count of terroristic threats after admitting to posting the content.

— From wire reports

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James, 6 first-time picks get NBA All-Star nods

Associated Press

LeBron James is an All-Star again, extending his record streak of selections.

James was a pick for the 22nd consecutive year, one of 14 players who were announced Sunday as reserves for the Feb. 15 midseason showcase that'll take place at the Los Angeles Clippers' arena in Inglewood, Calif.

James is the All-Star record holder in a number of categories. He also has the most All-Star game appearances (20) and the most points (434) in those contests.

"I didn't make it my rookie year. Twenty-two straight. Nah, it ain't bad," James said in a video posted by the NBA before the Lakers' game Sunday night, shortly after the word of his selection was revealed. "Blessed. Honored. Truly."

The Los Angeles Lakers star was not chosen as a starter this season in the process that includes voting from fans, media and other players. NBA coaches

choose the reserves and, if necessary, Commissioner Adam Silver will select any additional players necessary for the All-Star rosters should someone need to be replaced because of injury.

James did not play in last season's All-Star event because of injury.

The reserves from the Eastern Conference: Cleveland's Donovan Mitchell, New York's Karl-Anthony Towns, Indiana's Pascal Siakam, Toronto's Scottie Barnes, Detroit's Jalen Duren, Miami's Norman Powell and Atlanta's Jalen Johnson.

And from the Western Conference, along with James: Minnesota's Anthony Edwards, Denver's Jamal Murray, Oklahoma City's Chet Holmgren, Houston's Kevin Durant, Phoenix's Devin Booker and Portland's Deni Avdija.

Murray — finally — got the nod, after years of All-Star snubs.

The other first-selections were Duren, Powell, Johnson,

Holmgren and Avdija.

This season's All-Star Game has a tournament format — USA vs. World, with three teams of at least eight players going head to head in 12-minute games. Each team is guaranteed two games in the round-robin event, with the best two meeting again in a championship game.

The NBA said the two U.S. rosters and the World roster would be revealed Tuesday night.

Starters and coaches

The players chosen last month as starters: Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo, Boston's Jaylen Brown, the Pistons' Cade Cunningham, Philadelphia's Tyrese Maxey, the Knicks' Jalen Brunson, Golden State's Stephen Curry, the Lakers' Luka Doncic, the Thunder's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, the Nuggets' Nikola Jokic and San Antonio's Victor Wembanyama.

Antetokounmpo will miss a few weeks with a calf injury, so

it would seem unlikely that he plays. Silver would pick a replacement for Antetokounmpo if he pulls out.

Brown, Cunningham, Maxey, Brunson and Curry would be part of the two U.S. teams. Doncic, Gilgeous-Alexander, Jokic and Wembanyama would play for the World team.

Detroit's J.B. Bickerstaff will coach one of the All-Star teams — he earned that because the Pistons are atop the East — and the Spurs' Mitch Johnson will coach another. Johnson earned the nod Sunday night when San Antonio beat Orlando and Oklahoma City topped Denver.

The Thunder's Mark Daigneault coaches the team with the West's best record, but he cannot coach the All-Star Game this year because he coached at the event last season. That left Johnson and Adelman vying for the spot and it came down to Sunday before it was decided.

The NBA has not revealed how the coach of the third team will be decided.

Athlete arrivals help enliven Milan's Olympic village

Associated Press

MILAN — The Milan Olympic Village was coming alive Sunday as athletes laden with gear rolled into a brand-new complex where they will sleep, eat meals, work out and mix with other competitors for the next three weeks.

Members of Team Canada were doing security with their suitcases from Canada's own lululemon, and Team France, decked out in Le Coq Sportif uniforms, received a pep talk before ascending to their 6th-floor rooms. Dutch speedskater Jutta Leerdam filmed a TikTok in front of the Olympic rings inside the village.

The Milan village, which will house 1,500 athletes and team members during the Feb. 6-22 Winter Games, was offi-

cially inaugurated Monday by International Olympic Committee President Kirsty Coventry. But it has been buzzing to life for days as athletes have moved in.

Teams have decked out their room windows with national flags and symbols: Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands, among others, quickly made their presence known. China added a friendly panda, while Team USA hung a pair of four-story-tall banners featuring the Stars and Stripes.

Room and board

Athletes eat in a cavernous dining center run by Italian caterers offering a range of healthy, local choices. Lunch on Sunday featured chicken,

pork and turkey and a variety of fish, including two kinds of salmon and hake. Italian specialties like pasta could be dressed in red sauce or meat ragu. Pizza and focaccia were also on offer, as well as gluten-free options. Salad bars included legumes and nuts.

The athletes' rooms were practical and equipped with the essentials. A single bed fit atop storage cubbies for suitcases and gear, while a stand-alone closet was stocked with a drying rack, pack of hangers, a laundry bag, a dry mop and extension cord. In the era of electronics, the room itself was outfitted with another four outlets. The only design accent in the sample room on Sunday's tour were a sage green bedside table, bathroom shelf and coat

hook to match the painted concrete floor.

A full-length mirror hung outside of the bathroom, which featured the usual shower, toilet and sink — plus the very Italian bidet. The fixture is de rigueur in Italian residences but often perplexes visitors, including some athletes whose room videos have done double-takes.

The village, across from the Fondazione Prada exhibition complex and in an area attracting other luxury brand headquarters, will be an Olympic legacy to the city. After the Olympic and Paralympic Games, it will be turned into subsidized student dormitories, including communal kitchens, sorely needed in a city with six universities and squeezed for affordable housing.

Duren, Pistons beat Nets in lopsided win

Associated Press

DETROIT—Jalen Duren had 21 points and 10 rebounds after being added to the All-Star Game on Sunday night as an Eastern Conference reserve, and the Detroit Pistons routed the Brooklyn Nets 130-77 in the most-lopsided victory in franchise history.

The 53-point margin topped the mark of 52 set in a 118-66 victory at Boston on Jan. 31, 2003. Brooklyn had a 54-point loss—120-66—on Jan. 21 against New York.

Cade Cunningham, the Detroit star who was earlier selected an East All-Star starter, added 18 points, 12 assists and four steals. The Eastern Conference-leading Pistons improved to 36-12 with their second straight victory. They beat Golden State on Friday night to finish 2-1 on a three-game trip.

Cunningham had 13 points, 10 assists and four steals in the first half as Detroit raced to a 67-44 lead. Ausar Thompson hit a half-court shot at the halftime buzzer.

The Pistons outscored the Nets 33-18 in the third quarter to push it to 100-62. Detroit's largest lead was 55 points.

Cam Thomas and Drake Powell each had 12 points for Brooklyn. The Nets are 13-35.

Egor Demin was 0 for 4 from 3-point range, ending his NBA rookie record of at least one 3 in 34 straight games. He broke the record Friday night in Utah.

Brooklyn scoring leader Michael Porter Jr. sat out because of personal reasons.

Spurs 112, Magic 103: Victor Wembanyama had 25 points, eight rebounds and five blocks and host San Antonio beat Orlando in a game that started five hours late because of the Spurs' travel woes.

San Antonio was scheduled to leave Charlotte following a 111-106 loss Saturday, but had to stay overnight because of the storm that dropped nearly a foot of snow. The team then had a mechanical issue on its flight.

Devin Vassell added 16 points for the Spurs. Dylan Harper had 15 points, and De'Aaron Fox had 14 points and 10 assists.

Desmond Bane scored 25 points for the Magic, and Paolo Banchero had 19 points and 10 rebounds. Orlando had won two in a row.

Celtics 107, Bucks 79: Jaylen Brown had 30 points and 13 rebounds, Anfernee Simons scored 27 points off the bench and host Boston coasted over Milwaukee.

Derrick White added 17 points, eight assists and seven rebounds, and Neemias Queta had 14 points and eight boards as the Celtics won their second straight game after alternating wins and losses in their previous four. It was Brown's third double-double this season.

Boston led 56-42 at halftime and Brown, who missed an easy win over Sacramento on Friday with left hamstring tightness and a bruised right knee, scored 10 of the Celtics' initial 12 points to start the second half, pushing them ahead 68-47.

The Celtics' lead ballooned to 27 points on Brown's 3-pointer midway into the final quarter before coach Joe Mazzulla pulled his starters.

Heat 134, Bulls 91: Bam Adebayo and Pelle Larsson each had 20 points, and host Miami tied its third-biggest victory margin ever in a rout of Chicago.

The Heat led by as many as 54; before Sunday, their biggest lead this season was 45 at Memphis on Oct. 24. It was Miami's second-largest lead of the play-by-play era that dates to 1996; the Heat beat the Grizzlies by 60 on March 29, 2024.

The 54-point hole was the Bulls' biggest since a 58-point deficit against Boston on Dec. 8, 2018. Chicago's biggest deficits this season were a pair of 41-point games—one against Minnesota on Dec. 29, the other also against Miami on Nov. 21.

Wizards 116, Kings 112: Rookie Will Riley scored a sea-

son-high 18 points, including a go-ahead 3-pointer with 2:07 left, and host Washington beat Sacramento in a matchup of last-place teams.

The Wizards have won three of four since a nine-game skid of their own. Washington began the night last in the Eastern Conference, but moved one-half game ahead of Indiana.

Zach LaVine scored 35 points and DeMar DeRozan had 32 for the Kings, who are last in the West and concluded their season-long East Coast trip at 0-6.

Raptors 107, Jazz 100: RJ Barrett scored 21 points, Sandro Mamukelashvili added 20 and Toronto beat Utah to open a five-game homestand.

Brandon Ingram added 19 points to help the Raptors end a two-game losing streak. Immanuel Quickley had 17 points.

Lauri Markkanen had 27 points and 11 rebounds for the Jazz. Isaiah Collier added 19 points, and Jusuf Nurkic had 11 points and 13 rebounds.

Knicks 112, Lakers 100: OG Anunoby scored 25 points, Landry Shamet added 23 and host New York beat Los Angeles to spoil what could be LeBron James' last game at Madison Square Garden.

Josh Hart finished with 20 points and Jalen Brunson had 12 points and a season-high 13 assists for the Knicks, who matched a season high with their sixth straight win, most of them coming easily.

Luka Doncic had 30 points, 15 rebounds and eight assists. The game was exactly a year to the day of the Lakers' last trip to New York, when shortly after their victory came word that they agreed to the blockbuster trade with Dallas that brought Doncic to LA.

Cavaliers 130, Trail Blazers 111: Jarrett Allen scored a career-high 40 points and grabbed 17 rebounds as visiting Cleveland handed Portland its fifth straight loss.

Sam Merrill added 22 points,

including six 3-pointers, and the Cavaliers rebounded from a loss to Phoenix on Friday night that snapped a five-game winning streak. Allen also contributed five assists and four blocks.

Caleb Love had 21 points for the Trail Blazers, who struggled without top scorer Deni Avdija. He missed the game with a lower back strain.

Thunder 121, Nuggets 111: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 34 points and Cason Wallace added a career-best 27, including seven 3-pointers, as visiting Oklahoma City beat Denver.

Gilgeous-Alexander had 13 assists and the Thunder, who had lost three of four, sank 19 3-pointers. They went 8 of 13 from long range in the third quarter when OKC expanded a seven-point halftime cushion to 16.

Nikola Jokic scored 16 points but took only nine shots in his second game back from a knee injury that sidelined him for 16 games. Jamal Murray, who earned his first All-Star berth in his ninth NBA season Sunday, dished out 12 assists but scored just 12 points on 4-of-16 shooting—including 1 for 8 from 3-point range.

Clippers 117, Suns 93: Kawhi Leonard scored 25 points and visiting Los Angeles, playing without James Harden, routed Phoenix.

Leonard, who was left off the Western Conference All-Star reserves announced earlier Sunday, had eight rebounds as well as his 27th consecutive game with 20 or more points. Ivica Zubac had 20 rebounds as the Clippers bounced back from a loss at Denver on Friday and dominated the inside, outrebounding the Suns 63-35 and outscoring them 64-18 in the paint.

Jordan Miller had 20 points, John Collins added 16, Zubac scored 14 and Kobe Sanders had 12 for LA, which shot 51.8% from the field. Sanders started for Harden, who missed the game for personal reasons.

Major NHL stars finally going to Olympics

Associated Press

Jack Eichel in the fall of 2021 still did not believe he and the rest of the world's best hockey players would be going to the Olympics in Beijing a few months later, even after the NHL reached an agreement to do so.

"Don't hold your breath," Eichel said at the time.

His skepticism proved to be prescient, as pandemic scheduling issues led the league to withdraw.

Eichel is part of a generation of NHL stars who have never gotten the chance to play in the Olympics. Unlike players of the past — before the league allowed its stars to take part — Eichel, fellow American Auston Matthews, Canadians Connor McDavid and Nathan MacKinnon and many others of their vintage grew up expecting to go to the Games. The NHL, after all, played in five consecutive Olympics from 1998-2014.

Owners opted against sending players in 2018, and missing out in 2022 became a sad result of circumstances largely out of stakeholders' control. The 12-team tournament in Milan is a moment many have been waiting their entire careers for.

"It's awesome," Eichel said before this season, perhaps willing to exhale. "It's something that we've wanted for a while."

Out of Eichel's control are construction delays at the main hockey arena, a longstanding worry. NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman began raising concerns all the way back in 2023, before the deal was reached to send players in 2026 and '30.

"We have been given assurances that the building will be ready," Bettman said in February 2024. "We're relying on those assurances. There's a lot of construction that remains to be done on that building. I think they only recently started. But we're being told by everybody not to worry. But I like to worry, so we'll see."

Those worries have persisted, and work has continued on locker rooms and other facilities at Santagiulia Ice Hockey Arena, which is set to host the majority of the men's games beginning Feb. 11. The women's tournament begins there Feb. 5.

Test games in January left league and players' union officials pleased about the condition of the ice, though even that has been a matter of consternation after rinks were made more than

3 feet shorter than NHL players are used to. That will change aspects of play, but won't keep the NHL out of the Olympics as long as everyone involved agrees the surface is safe.

Connor Bedard, the 2023 No. 1 pick who just missed out on making Canada's roster for Milan, is so young at 20 that he does not even have a favorite Olympic memory. He was 4 when idol and fellow countryman Sidney Crosby scored the "golden goal" to win on home ice in Vancouver in 2010 and 9 when T.J. Oshie gave the United States a shootout victory over host Russia in Sochi in 2014.

Canada's Macklin Celebriini, drafted first in 2024 and at 19 the second-youngest men's hockey player at the Olympics, has only gotten to dream about the possibility of representing his country on this stage.

"That's the pinnacle, just the best on best, all the special moments that have happened at the Olympics, the history," Celebriini said. "There's just a little bit more energy around it. It's bigger than yourself."

In all, 12 NHL players are back at the Olympics after participating in the 2014 Games, the last time the league went and it was a

true best-vs.-best tournament. The group includes Crosby and Drew Doughty for Canada; Gabriel Landeskog, Erik Karlsson and Oliver Ekman-Larsson for Sweden; Mikael Granlund and Olli Maatta for Finland; and Radko Gudas and Ondrej Palat for the Czech Republic. There are no Americans on that list.

"It's a cherry on top of athletic life," Gudas said. "Twelve years ago when we went to Sochi was such a great experience that I wish I can do that again. I was that much more sad that we couldn't go the last two times, so for me I think it's a great feeling to be able to do that."

American defenseman Zach Werenski at 28 is old enough to remember Crosby's goal in 2010, and four years later he was watching Oshie's heroics with other members of the U.S. National Team Development Program. Four of his teammates from back then are also set to go to Milan — Matthews, Matthew Tkachuk, Charlie McAvoy and Noah Hanifin — to finally have their Olympic moment.

"The significance of that, the build-up, we've waited a long time for this," McAvoy said, "so it's going to be incredible."

Lightning rally from 4-goal deficit, top Bruins in thriller

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Nikita Kucherov scored the tying goal in the third period, Jake Guentzel scored the only goal in the shootout, and the Tampa Bay Lightning rallied from a four-goal deficit to beat the Boston Bruins 6-5 in front of 64,617 fans at an NHL Stadium Series game at Raymond James Stadium.

Kucherov finished with a goal and three assists, Brandon Hagel had a goal and two assists, while Oliver Bjorkstrand, Darren Raddysh and Nick Paul all scored power-play goals after Tampa Bay fell behind 5-1 in the second period.

The Lightning's four-goal comeback is the largest in NHL outdoor game history and the largest comeback victory in franchise history.

Morgan Geekie had a pair of goals and three points for Boston. Viktor Arvidsson, Alex Steeves and Matthew Poitras also scored for the Bruins, who improved to 11-1-1 in the past 13 games. Charlie McAvoy had a pair of assists while Jeremy Swayman finished with 41 saves.

Hurricanes 3, Kings 2 (OT): Sebastian Aho scored early in overtime to lead host Carolina to a win over Los Angeles.

Brandon Bussi made 11 saves to continue his dominant rookie season, while Jordan Staal and Alexander Nikishin also scored for the Hurricanes, who have earned at least a point in eight straight games (6-0-2).

Samuel Helenius and Quinton Byfield scored for the Kings and Anton Forsberg made 31 saves. LA wrapped up its road trip with a 3-1 record with one game (last Mon-

day at Columbus) postponed due to severe winter weather.

Ducks 4, Golden Knights 3: Chris Kreider scored two goals, Lukas Dostal made 27 saves and host Anaheim swept its three-game season series with Vegas.

Cutter Gauthier scored and Ryan Poehling added an empty-net goal for the Ducks. Anaheim earned its eighth victory in 10 games overall despite nearly blowing an early 3-0 lead during a third period dominated by the Golden Knights.

Mitch Marner and Ivan Barbashev scored goals in their third straight games for Vegas, which has lost five straight and seven of eight. The Golden Knights have gone on two five-game skids since Christmas, with an 8-2-0 surge sandwiched between them.