

CNO touts ‘tailored’ strategic approach

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

SAN DIEGO — The Navy’s top admiral wants the service to take more calculated risks when responding to events around the globe.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Daryl Caudle laid out his “U.S. Navy Fighting Instructions” at the keynote address to more than 1,000 service members, defense industry executives and strategic analysts on Tuesday during the West 2026 conference at the San Diego Convention Center.

“It will ensure we are ready,” Caudle said. “Not for the last war, but for the one that is coming.”

Caudle said he believed that, over time, American military options had too often fallen to the Navy’s carrier strike forces.

The rollout of Caudle’s strategy comes amid the Trump administration’s positioning of aircraft carriers and other ships around hot spots.

The USS Gerald R. Ford carrier and strike group was sent late last year to the Caribbean Sea and ultimately supported last month’s operation to capture then-Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Two weeks ago,

the USS Abraham Lincoln, which was pulled from the South China Sea, arrived in the Middle East amid a rise in tensions with Iran.

In an interview with The Associated Press prior to Tuesday’s strategy rollout, Caudle said he sees the Navy’s future mission in the Caribbean focused on interdictions and watching merchant shipping.

The U.S. military has seized multiple suspicious and falsely flagged tankers connected with Venezuela that were part of a global shadow fleet of merchant vessels that help governments evade sanctions.

“That doesn’t really require a carrier strike group to do that,” Caudle told the AP, adding that he believes the mission could be done with some smaller littoral combat ships, Navy helicopters and close coordination with the Coast Guard.

At the center of the new instructions is a “hedge strategy” to respond to global events with a mix of ships, aircraft and personnel that Caudle said would be “tailored” to each situation.

“Building a fleet to cover every pressing scenario is not only cost- and risk-prohibitive, but a dis-

service to the taxpayer and, quite frankly, less effective operationally,” Caudle said Tuesday in San Diego. “What a hedge strategy avoids is a brittle, single-purpose force that is either overbuilt for the high-end fight and underused day to day or optimized for low-end crises and overmatched.”

Warfare has also changed, according to Caudle. He said that, in the past, the Navy could count on simply overmatching an opponent with “impunity and winning by mass dominance alone.”

But relatively inexpensive drones — flying, surface and underwater — show that combatants have an “ever lowering cost of entry” to challenging great power forces, including the United States.

Caudle said that smaller forces sent to emerging hot spots more rapidly can accomplish the goal of projecting American sea power, compared with larger forces that take more time to assemble and deploy.

“We find ourselves operating in an era with other great powers,” he said. “An era in which speed and decision ruthlessly punish delay.”

Caudle said the approach ac-

cepts a certain level of risk.

“In the next conflict, that system will be tested under pressure, at speed and under fire,” Caudle said. “Communications will be disrupted. Space and cyber operations will be under attack. The enemy will try to fracture our kill chains, slow our decisions and isolate our forces. In that kind of fight, we can’t afford a Navy that waits for permission.”

America’s changing fiscal, industrial and military strategy depends on the ability to field “effective, scalable, risk-worthy mass with the most advanced multi-mission platforms we can build and sustain,” Caudle said.

Caudle said most of the Navy fleet is involved in deterrence.

“It’s a concept that to work must live continuously in the minds of our adversaries, and in turn, allow us to shape their behavior,” Caudle said.

While uncrewed vessels and aircraft will play a growing role in the mix of Navy forces, Caudle said the service members aboard ship and on shore are the Navy’s top asset.

“At the center of this vision will always be the United States Navy sailor,” he said.

Trump mulls sending second carrier to Middle East

The Washington Post

On the eve of a visit from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he was “thinking” of sending a second aircraft carrier to the Middle East, joining the U.S. armada already in the region that could bolster a strike on Iran if bilateral talks begun last week fail.

“Either we will make a deal or we will have to do something ve-

ry tough like last time,” Trump said in an interview with Axios, referring to U.S. airstrikes on three Iranian nuclear sites in June that capped more than a week of attacks by Israel.

“They didn’t believe I would do it,” he said, adding that the Iranians “overplayed their hand.”

Over the past month, the United States has deployed dozens of aircraft to bases near Iran and

assembled about a dozen warships, including the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier group, in and around the Middle East.

Navy officials referred questions about Trump’s comments to the White House. The USS George H.W. Bush aircraft carrier is off the coast of Norfolk, Va., for a training exercise in advance of a previously scheduled deployment, but it was not clear Tuesday when it and several ac-

companying warships would be ready to sail.

“President Trump has been clear that the Iranian regime should make a deal,” White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly said in an emailed response to questions. “The President has demonstrated” with last summer’s strikes and the current military deployments “that he means what he says, and he has all options at his disposal.”

Grand jury rejects indictment over military orders video

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A grand jury in Washington refused Tuesday to indict Democratic lawmakers in connection with a video in which they urged U.S. military members to resist “illegal orders,” according to a person familiar with the matter.

The Justice Department opened an investigation into the video featuring Democratic Sens. Mark Kelly and Elissa Slotkin and four other Democratic lawmakers urging U.S. service members to follow established military protocols and reject orders they believe to be unlawful. All the lawmakers previously served in the military or at intelligence agencies.

Grand jurors in Washington declined to sign off on charges in the latest of a series of rebukes of prosecutors by citizens in the nation’s capital, according to the person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the matter. It wasn’t immediately clear whether prosecutors had sought indictments against all six lawmakers or what charge or charges prosecutors attempted to bring.

Grand jury rejections are extraordinarily unusual, but have happened repeatedly in recent months in Washington as citizens who have heard the government’s evidence have come away underwhelmed in a number of cases.

Prosecutors could try again to secure an indictment.

Besides Slotkin and Kelly, the other Democrats who appeared in the video include Reps. Jason Crow of Colorado, Chrissy Houlahan of Pennsylvania, Maggie Goodlander of New Hampshire and Chris Deluzio of Pennsylvania.

Kelly, a former Navy pilot who represents Arizona, called the attempt to bring charges an “outrageous abuse of power by Donald Trump and his lackies.”

“Donald Trump wants every American to be too scared to speak out against him,” Kelly said in a post on X. “The most patriotic thing any of us can do is not back down.”

Russia to follow nuke limits if US does as well

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Moscow will observe the limits of the last nuclear arms pact with the United States that expired last week as long as it sees that Washington is doing the same, Russia’s top diplomat said Wednesday.

The New START treaty expired Feb. 5, leaving no restrictions on the two largest atomic arsenals for the first time in more than a half-century and fueling fears of an unconstrained nuclear arms race.

Russian President Vladimir Putin last year declared his readiness to stick to the treaty’s limits for another year if Washington followed suit, but President Donald Trump has argued that he wants China to be a part of a new pact — something Beijing has rejected.

Speaking Wednesday to the parliament’s lower house, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that even though the U.S. hasn’t responded to Putin’s offer, Russia will respect New START’s caps for as long as it sees that the U.S. observes them too.

“The moratorium declared by the president will remain as long as the U.S. doesn’t exceed these limits,” Lavrov told lawmakers.

“We will act in a responsible and balanced way on the basis of analysis of the U.S. military policies.”

Lavrov’s statement followed a report by Axios claiming Russian and U.S. negotiators discussed a possible informal deal to observe the pact’s limits for at least six months during talks last week in Abu Dhabi.

NATO Arctic mission counters Russia, China

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

NATO’s new beefed-up mission in the Arctic was launched Wednesday, marking the latest push to increase the alliance’s military presence in a region where Russian and Chinese activity are causing growing concerns.

The Arctic Sentry exercise builds on recent efforts to enhance security in the High North and follows a meeting between President Donald Trump and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte last month over the defense of Greenland.

The vast island in the upper reaches of the Atlantic Ocean is a semiautonomous territory of Denmark, a fellow NATO member.

Arctic Sentry shows the bloc’s resolve “to safeguard its members and maintain stability in one of the world’s most stra-

tegically significant and environmentally challenging areas,” U.S. Air Force Gen. Alexus Grynke, NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, said in a statement Wednesday.

The statement was issued by the Belgium-based Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. It did not specify what military assets would be deployed to the Arctic.

However, the effort was described as a “multi-domain activity,” meaning it would incorporate capabilities across a wide spectrum.

Trump and Rutte agreed that NATO “should collectively take more responsibility for the defense of the region considering Russia’s military activity and China’s growing interest there,” the statement said.

Arctic Sentry will be led by Joint Force Command Norfolk,

which is headquartered in Virginia and oversees Arctic issues for the alliance.

NATO commanders also will coordinate their efforts with U.S. Northern Command and U.S. European Command, according to the statement.

Led by U.S. Vice Adm. Doug Perry, the Norfolk command is slated to eventually be shifted to European leadership as part of an effort to have allies play a larger role in NATO command structures, which have traditionally been headed by Americans.

JFC Norfolk is responsible for the defense of NATO territory stretching from Florida to the North Pole. Among the areas of focus is protecting undersea cables, which transmit internet traffic around the world and carry trillions of dollars of financial transactions on a daily basis.

DOD-FAA dispute on lasers closes airspace

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—The sudden and surprising airspace closure over El Paso, Texas, stemmed from the Pentagon’s plans to test a laser for use in shooting down drones used by Mexican drug cartels, according to three people familiar with the situation who were granted anonymity to share sensitive details.

That caused friction with the Federal Aviation Administration, which wanted to ensure commercial air safety and the two agencies sought to coordinate, according to two of the people.

Despite a meeting scheduled later this month to discuss the issue, the Pentagon wanted to go ahead and test it, prompting the FAA to shutter the airspace. It was not clear whether the laser was ultimately deployed.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said earlier that a response to an incursion by Mexican cartel drones had led to the airspace closure and that the threat had been neutralized. Drone incursions are not uncommon along the southern border.

Officials at the White House, FAA and Department of Transportation did not respond immediately Wednesday to a request for comment about the dispute. The Pentagon said it had nothing to add to its statement that largely mirrored Duffy’s comment.

The FAA had originally announced a 10-day closure of the airspace, confusing travelers at the airport in the border city with a population of nearly 700,000 people. The order was lifted a few hours later.

Duffy said in a post on X that the

FAA and the Defense Department “acted swiftly to address a cartel drone incursion. The threat has been neutralized and there is no danger to commercial travel in the region.” Duffy said normal flights were resuming Wednesday morning. He did not say how many drones were involved or what specifically was done to disable them.

Rep. Veronica Escobar, a Democrat whose district includes El Paso, said neither her office, the city of El Paso nor airport operations received advance notice. She said she believed the shutdown was not based on Mexican cartel drones in U.S. airspace, saying that “is not what we in Congress have been told.”

DOD officials declined to comment on Escobar’s remarks and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott’s office

referred questions to the FAA.

“I believe the FAA owes the community and the country an explanation as to why this happened so suddenly and abruptly and was lifted so suddenly and abruptly,” Escobar said during a news conference. The shutdown had been expected to create significant disruptions given the duration and the size of the metropolitan area around El Paso.

Rep. Tony Gonzales, whose district covers an area that stretches for about 800 miles along Texas’ border with Mexico, said cartel drone sightings are common.

“For any of us who live and work along the border, daily drone incursions by criminal organizations is every-day life for us. It’s a Wednesday for us,” Gonzales said.

Bondi clashes with Dems on DOJ actions, Epstein

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Attorney General Pam Bondi launched into a wide-ranging, passionate defense of President Donald Trump, repeatedly shouting at Democrats during a combative hearing in which she postured herself as the Republican’s chief protector and tried to turn the page from persistent criticism of the Justice Department’s handling of the Jeffrey Epstein files.

Besieged by questions over Epstein and accusations of a weaponized Justice Department, Bondi aggressively pivoted in an extraordinary speech in which she mocked her Democratic questioners, praised Trump over the performance of the stock market and openly aligned herself as in sync with a president whom she painted as a victim of past impeachments and investigations.

“You sit here and you attack the president and I’m not going to have it,” Bondi said. “I am not going to put up with it.”

With victims of Epstein sitting behind her in the hearing room, Bondi defended the department’s handling of the files related to the wealthy financier’s sex trafficking investigation that have dogged her tenure. But she repeatedly refused to directly answer questions from Democrats who have accused her of perpetuating a coverup and ignoring victims.

Bondi’s appearance before the House Judiciary Committee comes a year into her tumultuous tenure that has amplified concerns that the Justice Department is using its law enforcement powers to target political foes of the president. Just a day earlier, the department had sought to secure charges against Democratic lawmakers who produced a video urging military service members not to follow “illegal orders.” But in an extraordinary rebuke of prosecutors, a grand jury in Washington refused to return an indictment.

Lawmakers: DHS funding deal likely despite division

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congressional leaders said Tuesday that a deal was still possible with the White House on Homeland Security Department funding before it expires this weekend. But the two sides were still far apart as Democrats demanded new restrictions on President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown.

After federal agents fatally shot two protesters in Minneapolis last month, Democrats say U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement needs to be “dramatically” reined in and are prepared to let Homeland Security shut down if their demands aren’t met.

On Tuesday, Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer and House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said they had rejected a White House counteroffer that “included neither details nor legislative text” and does not address “the concerns Americans have about ICE’s lawless

conduct.”

“We simply want ICE to follow the same standards that most law enforcement agencies across America already follow,” Schumer said Tuesday. “Democrats await the next answer from our Republican counterparts.”

The Democrats’ rejection of the Republican counteroffer comes as time is running short, with a shutdown of the Homeland Security Department threatening to begin Saturday. Among the Democrats’ demands are a requirement for judicial warrants, better identification of DHS officers, new use-of-force standards and a stop to racial profiling.

A White House official said that the administration was having constructive talks with both Republicans and Democrats. The official, granted anonymity to speak about ongoing deliberations, stressed that Trump wanted the government to remain open and for Homeland Security services to be funded.

Gov. Walz says ICE surge in Minn. could end in days

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Gov. Tim Walz said Tuesday that he expects the federal immigration crackdown in Minnesota will end in “days, not weeks and months,” based on his recent conversations with top Trump administration officials.

The Democratic governor said at a news conference that he spoke Monday with border czar Tom Homan and with White House chief of staff Susie Wiles on Tuesday morning. Homan took over the Minnesota operation in late January after the second fatal shooting by federal officers and amid growing political backlash and questions about how the operation was being run.

“We’re very much in a trust but verify mode,” Walz said. He added that he expected to hear more from the administration “in the next day or so” about the future of what he said has been an “occupation” and a “retribution campaign” against the state.

While Walz said he’s hopeful at the moment because “every indication I have is that this thing is winding up,” he added that things could change.

“It would be my hope that Mr. Homan goes out before Friday and announces that this thing is done, and they’re bringing her down and they’re bringing her down in days,” Walz said. “That would be my expectation.”

Officials with the Department of Homeland Security did not immediately reply to a request for comment on the governor’s remarks.

Walz said he has no reason not to believe Homan’s statement last week that 700 federal officers would leave Minnesota im-

mediately, but the governor added that still left 2,300 on Minnesota’s streets. Homan at the time cited an “increase in unprecedented collaboration” resulting in the need for fewer federal officers in Minnesota, including help from jails that hold inmates who could be deported.

The governor also indicated that he expects the state will get “cooperation on joint investigations” into the shooting deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti by federal officers, but gave no details. That’s been a point of friction between federal authorities and state investigators, who complain that they have been frozen out of those cases so far with no access to evidence.

Walz called the news conference primarily to denounce the economic impact of the enforcement surge. He spoke at The Market at Malcolm Yards, a food hall where owner Patty Wall said the entire restaurant sector of the local economy has become “collateral damage” from the surge.

Matt Varilek, the governor’s employment and economic development commissioner, said Malcolm Yards would normally be bustling, but is now struggling because employees and customers are afraid to come due to the crackdown.

Even as Walz was expressing optimism that the crackdown would end soon, federal officers made a highly visible arrest inside the lobby of the main county building in downtown Minneapolis.

After a short foot chase, ICE officers grabbed a man who had arrived for a court appearance on charges of possessing over 50 pounds of methamphetamine.

FDA declines to review Moderna mRNA vaccine

The Washington Post

The Food and Drug Administration has declined to review Moderna’s application for the first mRNA-based flu vaccine, a decision that shocked the company and that comes as the agency plans to tighten federal vaccine approvals.

The nation’s top vaccine regulator, Vinay Prasad, told Moderna that it lacked an “adequate and well-controlled” study, the company said in a news release Tuesday. In a large clinical trial, the vaccine was compared with Fluorix, an approved standard-dose flu vaccine. Prasad’s letter did not detail concerns with the safety or efficacy of the vaccine, which Moderna was aiming to target for adults ages 50 and older.

Moderna President Stephen Hoge said that the company had previously engaged with the FDA on the trial design and that the agency had indicated it would be acceptable.

“We’re trying right now to reach out to the FDA and under-

stand what would be necessary for them to start reviewing the submission,” Hoge said in an interview.

Andrew Nixon, a spokesman for the Department of Health and Human Services, wrote in an email that the FDA “generally does not comment on regulatory communications to individual sponsors.”

Last fall, Prasad laid out a stricter approach for federal vaccine approvals, alarming a dozen former FDA leaders who said the change risks undermining the nation’s ability to fight diseases. In an internal email, Prasad urged the agency to rethink its framework for annual flu shots, examine whether Americans should receive multiple vaccines at the same time and require larger studies to net approval for certain shots.

Moderna has requested a formal meeting with the agency. It said the vaccine has been accepted for review in the European Union, Canada and Australia.

Deadly shooting at school rocks British Columbia

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — A shooting at a school in remote northern British Columbia left seven people dead, while two more were found dead at a nearby home, Canadian authorities said Tuesday. A woman believed by police to be the shooter was also found dead, apparently from a self-inflicted wound.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said more than 25 people were wounded, including two who were airlifted to hospital with life-threatening injuries, after the shooting at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School.

School shootings are rare in Canada, which has strict gun

control laws.

A video showed students walking out of the school with their hands raised as police vehicles surrounded the building and a helicopter circled overhead.

Police found six people dead, a statement said. A seventh person died while being transported to a hospital, and two more were found dead at a residence the authorities believe was connected to the attack. A suspect appeared to have died of a “self-inflicted injury.”

RCMP Superintendent Ken Floyd told reporters that investigators had identified a female suspect but would not release a name, and that the shooter’s motive remained unclear.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

UAW: Ford worker who heckled Trump kept job

DC WASHINGTON — The Ford Motor Co. employee who heckled President Donald Trump during a January visit to the company’s Dearborn Truck Plant in Michigan still has his job and “has no discipline on his record,” a union official confirmed Monday.

“TJ, we got your back,” United Auto Workers Vice President Laura Dickerson said during a Washington, D.C., speech Monday morning. She was referencing TJ Sabula, 40, a UAW Local 600 line worker at the factory who called Trump a “pedophile protector.”

Trump responded by flashing his middle finger and twice mouthing, “F— you,” at Sabula. The president also mouthed a popular catchphrase from his days on reality television: “You’re fired.”

“Well, this ain’t ‘The Apprentice,’” Dickerson said, referencing the NBC program that featured Trump.

The UAW, meeting in Washington this week for its national political conference, has seized on Trump’s confrontation with Sabula as a symbol of how he views the working class.

University seeks testers for nasal spray medicine

MD BALTIMORE — With only a snort a week, a new drug might keep patients safe from several viruses — and the University of Maryland is willing to pay more than \$1,000 for people willing to test it.

The nasal-spray medicine called INNA-051 may boost im-

mune defenses, reducing illness from respiratory viruses, and researchers at the university’s School of Medicine have put out a call for testers.

The drug is not a vaccine but a preventive drug meant to be taken weekly during cold and flu season, according to the university website. It helps the natural sinus immune defenses clear viruses before they can gain a foothold.

State fights young-adult concealed weapon ban

FL TALLAHASSEE — Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier asked an appeals court to uphold a teenager’s right to carry a concealed weapon even after a Broward judge last year declared the ban constitutional, dealing another blow to gun-control advocates who have tried to make it harder to buy and carry firearms in the Sunshine State.

Uthmeier also declined to allow the Broward State Attorney’s Office to defend the law on its own, drawing criticism from some who say the state is abdicating its responsibility to defend the laws passed by the state Legislature.

At issue is a 1987 law that blocks anyone between the ages of 18 and 21 from carrying a concealed firearm.

In a written statement issued Monday, Broward State Attorney Harold Pryor said he disagreed with the attorney general but would comply with his decision. “Given the impact of gun crimes in the State of Florida — including the Feb. 14, 2018, mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland in our community ... — we respectfully disagree with

the position taken by the Office of the Attorney General,” Pryor said.

Despite the Broward judge’s ruling, the law remains on the books, and Pryor said as such his office will continue enforcing it.

Bill would require consent to collect DNA

CA SACRAMENTO — The kinds of DNA-collecting techniques that fuel crime fiction and courtroom TV dramas could soon come with criminal penalties in California when collected without consent by everyday people.

A new bill proposed by an Orange County assemblymember would make it a crime to steal someone’s DNA — such as collecting genetic material from a discarded cup, straw or strand of hair and submitting it for testing without permission.

The measure would create new penalties for unlawfully collecting, testing, sharing or selling another person’s DNA or genetic data without “express consent,” with punishments ranging from a misdemeanor to felonies.

Minnesota flag sales soar during ICE surge

MN ST. PAUL — Minnesota state flags are flying off store shelves as some residents use them to show their state pride and opposition to the wave of federal immigration officers that continue to operate in the state.

The newer version of the flag, which was redesigned and officially adopted by the state after months of heated discussion in 2024, has been waved and draped over shoulders at nu-

merous demonstrations held to protest Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the last few weeks. Activists want the thousands of agents who are part of ICE’s unprecedented enforcement sweep to leave Minnesota.

Lee Herold, who owns Herold Flags in Rochester, said sales of the Minnesota flag have gone up about 75% since the start of the federal government’s Operation Metro Surge, while sales of the old flag have also increased.

“Protest and defiance is what I now see in customers buying the new flag,” Herold said.

Ex-mayor fined \$4K for whistles as campaign dig

NY NEW YORK — Former New York Mayor Eric Adams was fined \$4,000 for a mayoral campaign trail stunt last summer during which he handed out whistles for female reporters he said might feel “unsafe” talking to then-political opponent Andrew Cuomo.

Adams broke rules guarding government resources by having staffers on the city’s dime distribute whistles to reporters as a dig to Cuomo at the Aug. 22 City Hall press conference, the Conflicts of Interest Board said Monday. At the Aug. 22 event, Adams explained the whistles were to protect female reporters against unwanted advances from Cuomo, who was accused of alleged sexual harassment by 13 women. Cuomo has denied those allegations.

Adams went on to endorse Cuomo’s bid for mayor just two months later. The former mayor exited the race on Sept. 28.

— From wire reports



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US routs Canada in hockey preliminaries

Associated Press

MILAN—The U.S. women's hockey team so thoroughly overwhelmed rival Canada that coach John Wroblewski issued a reminder that the 5-0 victory still left the Americans a long way from Olympic gold.

"What's the hardest part of climbing the mountain?" the fourth-year coach asked.

"Getting home," he said, answering his own question. "If you ever feel good about climbing Mount Everest, it's the way down. Oh, you think you've done something, that's when the mountain eats you up."

This was just a preliminary-round meeting between the sport's two global powers. The gold-medal game isn't until Feb. 19.

The Americans are three wins away from a third gold medal after their lopsided victory over a Canadian team missing its captain, and clinched first place in Group A entering the quarterfinals. It

was a performance that continued confirming why the United States entered the tournament as favorites.

Team USA swept all four preliminary-round games by a combined score of 20-1, and brought back memories of how a Canadian team in its prime rolled to winning gold at the 2022 Beijing Games.

Canada's longtime leader, Marie-Philip Poulin, sustained a lower-body injury in a 5-1 win over the Czech Republic a day earlier.

Not having their so-called "Captain Clutch" in the lineup was still no excuse for coach Troy Ryan.

Ryan said Poulin will be reassessed and would likely miss Canada's preliminary-round finale against Finland on Thursday. He was otherwise optimistic Poulin would be back in the lineup potentially as soon as Saturday for the Canadians' quarterfinal game.

The U.S. will open the quarterfinals against host nation

Italy, which went 2-2 in clinching the third and final Group B playoff spot.

Aerin Frankel stopped 20 shots for her third win and second shutout in her first Olympic tournament. And even 36-year-old captain Hilary Knight added an assist — the 32nd Olympic point of her career to tie Jenny Potter for most by a U.S. women's hockey player.

Whatever "O, Canada" buzz there was amid a large Maple Leaf flag-waving capacity crowd quickly dampened on a drizzly day outside the 11,600-seat Santagiulia Ice Hockey Arena. And the soundtrack instead became the sound of the U.S. goal song, Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Free Bird."

Caroline Harvey opened the scoring 3:45 in by driving in from the left point and snapping a shot beating Ann-Renee Desbiens.

The Americans' speed and quick-strike ability was evident on their next goal with

2:42 left in the first period, when Abbey Murphy chased down Harvey's pass in the right corner. Murphy immediately spun and sent a no-look pass Hannah Bilka converted by driving to the net.

Kristen Simms made it 3-0 by jamming the puck over the line 72 seconds into the second period and Murphy set up Bilka for another one-timer some six minutes later.

Desbiens allowed five goals on 27 shots and was pulled after Laila Edwards scored with 8:07 left. She was replaced by Emerance Maschmeyer, who finished with five saves.

Canada's worst fears were realized in opening the game minus Poulin, after concerns were already raised after the U.S. dominated in sweeping a four-game exhibition pre-Olympic Rivalry Series. The Americans outscored Canada by a combined margin of 24-7.

The U.S. has now defeated Canada in seven straight meetings.

Von Allmen shuts out competition for 3rd super-G gold

Associated Press

BORMIO, Italy — Franjo von Allmen shrugged his shoulders and gestured with his gloves to indicate that he didn't feel his run was good enough for gold. Maybe not even good enough for any medal. He playfully stuck out his tongue as well.

But it was enough. It was enough for history, too.

The 24-year-old Swiss racer joined elite ski-racing company by winning the men's super-G on Wednesday for his third Olympic gold medal of the Milan Cortina Games.

Von Allmen became the third men's Alpine ski racer to win three events at one Winter Olympics. The other two are legends of the sport: Jean-Claude Killy of France, who won three at the 1968 Grenoble Games, and

Austrian Anton "Toni" Sailer, a three-time winner at the 1956 Winter Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.

"It sounds stupid, but I'm not really interested in what's on the paper," von Allmen said of equaling records. "For me, I'm really trying to enjoy the Olympics here, and maybe in a few years it will be important for me. For now, it isn't really."

Von Allmen, the seventh racer on the course, found a fast line on snow growing softer and softer in the warming weather to finish in a time of 1 minute, 25.32 seconds. He beat American Ryan Cochran-Siegle by 0.13 seconds, while von Allmen's teammate, Marco Odermatt, captured bronze.

"I maybe had a little bit of luck with the bib (number) and the

snow," said von Allmen, who became the first men's racer from ski-crazed Switzerland to win the Olympic super-G.

Regardless of conditions, he's racing at a different level in Bormio. He won the downhill Saturday and paired with Tanguy Nef to win the inaugural team combined event Monday.

"When you're on, you're on," Cochran-Siegle said. "He did an awesome job."

It's another Olympic medal for the 33-year-old Cochran-Siegle, who also earned silver in the super-G at the 2022 Beijing Games. It's also another medal for his family as his mom, Barbara, captured gold in the slalom at the 1972 Sapporo Games. She happened to be in the crowd on Wednesday, too.

"Must be something in the wa-

ter back home in Vermont," Cochran-Siegle cracked. "It's crazy that we're sitting here with another successful Olympics."

Cochran-Siegle overcame a stomach bug on his way to silver, one that hit him hard before the downhill race when he finished 18th. He said he threw up in the gondola and again two hours before Saturday's start.

He felt back to health for the super-G.

"Today was about really trying to trust my skiing," Cochran-Siegle said. "It's nice to put down a run top-to-bottom where I felt like I was really pushing in the right way."

Odermatt, a four-time overall World Cup champion, added bronze to his silver in the team event. He was fourth in the downhill over the weekend.

Wembanyama sends message in Spurs' win

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Victor Wembanyama began his 40-point performance against the Lakers on Tuesday night with a 25-point first quarter. That relentless start was a direct message from both the San Antonio Spurs and their young superstar.

Wembanyama is tired of the Spurs playing poorly against lesser opponents, and he took it on himself personally to make spectacularly quick work of a Lakers lineup missing nearly all of Los Angeles' best players in San Antonio's 136-108 victory.

"What got me going was honestly proving myself a point, proving my team a point," said Wembanyama, who also had 12 rebounds while matching his highest-scoring performance of the season. "I'm not worried about us, I'm not worried about me, against good teams. But history has showed that I need to be worried about us against teams like this. So yeah, we don't just talk about what we need to do. We need to actually act."

When Wembanyama coolly

dropped in a turnaround fadeaway jumper that gave him 25 points with four minutes still left in the first quarter, it was clear he was in a profound groove.

The French big man went 8-for-9 from the field with three 3-pointers in those first eight minutes. He went on to a 37-point first half while leading San Antonio to a 30-point lead over the Lakers, who were without Luka Doncic, LeBron James and Austin Reaves.

"He was very aggressive, as aggressive to start a game as I've seen him, both in attacking the basket and in shooting without hesitation from three," Lakers coach JJ Redick said. "He just really put his imprint on the game in that first half."

Wembanyama had the highest-scoring first half performance by anybody in the NBA this season, and the highest-scoring half by a Spurs player in the 21st century.

And he played only 26 minutes — the fewest by any player in a 40-point game since Sleepy Floyd did it in 24 minutes in Feb-

ruary 1991.

"It feels right," Wembanyama said with a grin when asked to describe his first-half flow.

He was looking for his shot at every opportunity, and his teammates fed him relentlessly. It was all by design for the center, who will start his first All-Star Game this weekend several miles down the freeway at Intuit Dome.

"These kind of games, you've got to have the greed," Wembanyama said. "I mean, every game you've got to have this greed to want more every time, because, you know, at all times, it doesn't matter who's on the court, somebody is going to want to stop you from what you're doing out there. So you've got to be greedy."

Although the Lakers altered their defensive game plan and upped their intensity in the third quarter after that first-half embarrassment, only the grind of the NBA season likely held Wembanyama to a mere 40 points, 10 shy of his career high.

The Spurs have another game

at Golden State on Wednesday night, so coach Mitch Johnson gave an early night to Wembanyama after he hit one last 3-pointer and checked out with 4:13 left in the third.

"Of course I'm ready to go back on the court," Wembanyama said. "I was also pushing to go back. But I mean, they made the right choice by keeping me on the bench. We've got to think long-term."

The Spurs are 14-7 since New Year's Eve, but they've lost to Charlotte, New Orleans, Memphis and Portland in that stretch. San Antonio has the NBA's third-best record despite those lapses.

"Playing against quote-unquote 'bad teams' or teams missing players has been our problem," Wembanyama said.

"Or consistency. I think almost every time we've been ready against the top seeds. Our record against them shows it. But we've also been bad against below-.500 teams. Tonight, I think we had to make a statement and show progress."

Pacers hold off Knicks, snapping 4-game losing streak

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Pascal Siakam scored 30 points, Andrew Nembhard had 24 points and 10 assists and the Indiana Pacers snapped a four-game losing streak by holding off the New York Knicks with a 137-134 overtime victory on Tuesday night.

The Pacers scored the first nine points of overtime and overcame a furious Knicks run over the final 24.3 seconds, during which they scored eight points in 20 seconds.

Indiana had eight players that scored in double figures and the Pacers' bench outscored New York's 43-18.

Jalen Brunson had 40 points and had eight assists and five rebounds for New York, which dropped only its second game in

its past 11 overall and seventh time in 28 home games. Josh Hart had 15 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists for his second triple-double of the season for the Knicks. Karl-Anthony Towns had 22 points and 14 rebounds before fouling out with 2:14 left in overtime.

The Knicks entered tied for the NBA's second-most home wins with 21. Indiana, which played without center Ivica Zubac (ankle), came in tied for the league's fewest road wins (three) and with the worst road win percentage in the Eastern Conference at .120.

Rockets 102, Clippers 95: Kevin Durant scored 26 points and Alperen Sengun added 22 to help Houston to a home victory over Los Angeles.

Houston led by six points at the start the fourth period and scored the first seven points of the quarter to extend its lead to 85-72 with 10½ minutes remaining. Kawhi Leonard made two free throws, but the Rockets scored the next four points to extend the lead.

The Rockets were up by 12 later in the fourth when Durant stole the ball from Brook Lopez, and Reed Sheppard made an off-balance 3-pointer to make it 92-77 with about 6½ minutes to go.

Houston remained up by 15 about a minute later when Los Angeles coach Tyrone Lue cleared his bench.

Los Angeles made 20 3-pointers in that 128-108 victory, but was just 8 for 30 from long range on Tuesday.

Suns 120, Mavericks 111: Dillon Brooks scored 23 points, Devin Booker had 19 and Phoenix beat visiting Dallas to send the Mavericks to their eighth consecutive loss.

Naji Marshall had 31 points and Cooper Flagg finished with 27 for Dallas, which hasn't won since beating Golden State at home on Jan. 22. It's the Mavericks' longest skid since also losing eight in a row in 2016.

Phoenix nearly led the entire game, taking a 2-1 lead on Booker's turnaround jumper with 10:01 left in the first quarter and never trailing again. The Suns led by as many as 31 points at 61-30 on their way to what appeared would be a blowout win — until the Mavericks made a game of it late.

Purdue blows big lead, tops Nebraska in OT

Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Oscar Cluff's layup put Purdue ahead with 3.9 seconds left in overtime after Nebraska had taken its first lead and Gicarri Harris' two free throws sealed the No. 13 Boilermakers' 80-77 victory over the No. 7 Cornhuskers on Tuesday night.

Purdue (20-4, 10-3 Big Ten) escaped after blowing a 22-point lead early in the second half. The Boilermakers recorded their second top-10 win of the season to start a difficult closing stretch that has them playing three top-10 teams in 16 days.

Nebraska (21-3, 10-3) lost for the third time in four games following a 20-0 start. All three losses were to ranked opponents.

Fletcher Loyer led Purdue with 18 points, Trey Kaufman-Renn had a career-high 19 rebounds and Braden Smith had 13 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds.

Rienk Mast led the Huskers with 18 points, Jamarques Lawrence added 16 and Pryce Sandfort had all 15 of his points in the second half.

No. 3 Houston 66, Utah 52: Emanuel Sharp set the school record for career 3-pointers and finished with 27 points to lift the visiting Cougars over the Utes.

Sharp made a career-high eight 3s on 8-of-13 shooting from beyond the arc to give him 277, surpassing Marcus Sasser (276 in 2019-23) for the school mark. The record-breaking 3 was a 30-foot jumper with 15:06 to play.

Joseph Tugler and Milos Uzan each scored 9 points for Houston (22-2, 10-1 Big 12), which has won five straight and 16 of its last 17.

No. 4 Duke 70, Pittsburgh 54: Isiah Evans scored 21 points on 8-of-10 shooting, including 5 for 6 on 3-pointers, and the visiting Blue Devils pulled away in the second half to defeat the Panthers.

Cameron Boozer added 17 points and 10 rebounds for

Duke, and Caleb Foster had 14 points and eight boards.

The Blue Devils (22-2, 11-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) bounced back from a buzzer-beating loss to archrival North Carolina on Saturday that ended Duke's 10-game winning streak. The Blue Devils blew a 15-point lead in the second half of that one and allowed the last nine points.

TCU 62, No. 5 Iowa State 55: Jayden Pierre's 3-pointer put the Horned Frogs ahead with 48 seconds left, and host TCU scored the final 12 points to upset the Cyclones.

Tanner Toolson had 17 points and nine rebounds off the bench for the Horned Frogs (15-9, 5-6 Big 12), who earned their first victory over a top-five team since beating No. 3 Houston in January 2024. Micah Robinson also scored 17.

Pierre's pull-up 3 gave TCU a 57-55 lead, and Xavier Edmonds stole the ball from Iowa State point guard Tamin Lipsey near midcourt on the ensuing possession. That started a fast break, which Robinson finished with a dunk to make it 59-55 with 28 seconds remaining.

Wisconsin 92, No. 8 Illinois 90 (OT): Nick Boyd scored 25 points and John Blackwell had 24 to lead the visiting Badgers to an overtime victory over the Fighting Illini.

The pair combined for nine of Wisconsin's 11 points in overtime, handing Illinois its second straight overtime loss. The Illini lost Saturday at No. 10 Michigan State.

The Badgers (17-7, 9-4 Big Ten) trailed by 12 points with 8:10 to go in regulation, but sent the game into overtime at 81-all thanks to two 3-pointers by Austin Rapp in the final two minutes. Rapp finished with 18 points.

Miami 75, No. 11 North Carolina 66: Malik Reneau scored 16 points, Ernest Udeh Jr. had 15 points and 10 rebounds, and the host Hurricanes never trailed

while beating the Tar Heels for Miami's first victory over a Top 25 opponent in two years.

Tre Donaldson finished with 14 points, six rebounds and five assists, and Shelton Henderson added 12 points for the Hurricanes (19-5, 8-3 Atlantic Coast Conference).

Udeh made a free throw with 2:11 remaining, then rebounded his missed second attempt and scored on a layup to put Miami ahead 66-60.

No. 12 Gonzaga 83, Washington State 53: Graham Ike had 20 points and seven rebounds, Davis Fogle scored 17 off the bench and the host Bulldogs routed the Cougars for their ninth straight victory over Washington State.

Mario Saint-Supery and Adam Miller added 11 points apiece for Gonzaga (24-2, 12-1 West Coast Conference), which tied Santa Clara atop the league standings. The teams meet Saturday with first place on the line.

Jerone Morton scored 15 points while Ace Glass and Richards Vavers each had 12 for the Cougars (11-16, 6-8), also blown out at home by the Zags in January.

No. 15 Virginia 61, Florida State 58: Jacari White scored 19 points off the bench, including a go-ahead dunk with 1:12 remaining, and the visiting Cavaliers closed on an 11-0 run to rally past the Seminoles.

White shot 5 of 9 from 3-point range as the Orlando native returned to the Sunshine State and helped Virginia (21-3, 10-2 Atlantic Coast Conference) extend its winning streak to five games. He played 21 minutes and scored more points than he had in any ACC game this season.

Lajae Jones had 21 points and a season-high 13 rebounds for Florida State (11-13, 3-7), which had won three straight. Robert McCray V finished with 20 points.

No. 19 Vanderbilt 84, Auburn 76: Tyler Tanner scored 25 points, Jalen Washington added

22 and the visiting Commodores outlasted the Tigers.

Washington hit 7 of 8 shots and knocked down both of his 3-point attempts as a 25% shooter beyond the arc. Devin McGlockton had 12 points and seven rebounds.

Tanner, Vanderbilt's leading scorer, drilled a 3-pointer late in the clock to stop a second-half run by Auburn.

No. 21 Arkansas 91, LSU 62: Darius Acuff Jr. scored 28 points — the freshman's fifth straight game scoring 21 or more — and the visiting Razorbacks routed the reeling Tigers.

Fellow freshman Meleek Thomas added 20 points, Trevon Brazile had 14 points and 12 rebounds, and Billy Richmond III scored 13 points for Arkansas (18-6, 8-3 Southeastern Conference), which led throughout and by as many as 36 points en route to its fifth victory in six games.

Marquel Sutton scored 18 points and Pablo Tamba added 11 points for LSU (14-10, 2-9), which shot 31% (21 of 68) while losing for the fifth time in six games.

No. 22 BYU 99, Baylor 94: AJ Dybantsa scored 36 points, Robert Wright III added a career-high 30 while getting booed nearly every time he touched the ball and the visiting Cougars ended a four-game losing streak with a victory over the Bears.

Wright backed out on an agreement to return to Baylor after spending his freshman season there, and the Foster Pavilion fans let him know how they felt. Loud boos rang out during his pregame introduction, and Bears fans chanted "traitor" several times during the game.

BYU (18-6, 6-5 Big 12) rallied from an early 12-point deficit, led by Dybantsa and Wright and with some key plays from Richie Saunders as the Cougars avoided matching their longest skid since losing the final five games of the 2004-05 season.