

Trump's threats to Iran risk backfiring

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump said he is considering limited military strikes to pressure Iran into signing a new nuclear deal, but bombing the country may have the opposite effect, risking a new destabilizing conflict in the Middle East.

The Pentagon has orchestrated a massive deployment to the region that includes two aircraft carriers, fighter jets and refueling planes, giving Trump the option to launch limited, or extended, operations against Iran.

ANALYSIS

Yet Trump and other administration officials have given conflicting public accounts of what they actually want from a new deal with Tehran. And Iran experts argue that bombing the country in the middle of negotiations might derail a deal and could prompt a deadly cycle of retaliation.

Tehran would likely suspend participation in talks if the U.S. launched a strike, according to a senior government official in the region, who asked not to be identified discussing private deliberations.

"He's not going to get a diplomatic agreement out of the Iranians if he attacks them again," said Barbara Slavin, a fellow at the

Stimson Center in Washington. The military threats alone — even if the U.S. doesn't ultimately act on them — "is going to make them less willing to make a deal."

While Trump has given a deadline of between 10 and 15 days, it also remains unclear what a new round of airstrikes — limited or otherwise — would actually achieve.

Israel and the U.S. bombed the country's nuclear sites and air defenses extensively in June, with the president saying at the time that "key nuclear enrichment facilities have been completely and totally obliterated."

The U.S. and Israel could target Iran's ballistic missiles, but the danger there is Tehran could be spurred to fire them off at U.S. or allied targets before it loses them, according to Slavin.

Asked during a Friday news conference about what his message would be to the Iranian people, Trump said: "They better negotiate a fair deal. They better negotiate."

While Trump has shown a preference for quick military operations — including brief bombing campaigns in Yemen, Syria and Nigeria, as well as the special operations raid that captured Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro in January — an attack on Iran could prompt a retaliation that pulls the U.S. into a more prolonged conflict.

Historically, Tehran has not acted in line with U.S. assumptions and limited strike campaigns don't always unfold as envisioned, said Becca Wasser, the defense lead at Bloomberg Economics.

"Air and missile strikes are incredibly attractive to senior leaders because they can be done from afar and ostensibly can achieve quick wins," she said, adding that limited campaigns often turn into "long, costly endeavors."

The shifting U.S. rationale for talks — and strikes — makes deciphering U.S. intent even more difficult. Trump's initial threat of airstrikes came in support of protests in Iran in December and January that the regime since has violently suppressed, killing thousands.

And while Secretary of State Marco Rubio has called for concessions on Iran's ballistic missile program, support for militant groups such as Yemen's Houthis and treatment of protesters to be included for a deal to be "meaningful," Iranian officials have pushed back against a broader deal.

Trump now seems to be pushing for a limited nuclear deal, despite in his first term repudiating the 2015 Iran deal negotiated during the Obama administration — a withdrawal that may make big, upfront concessions from Tehran even less likely.

Trump orders release of DOD files related to alien life, UFOs

By JENNIFER H. SVAN

Stars and Stripes

Documents detailing what the U.S. government knows about whether intelligent life exists beyond Earth may not be under wraps for much longer.

Citing "tremendous interest" in the subject, President Donald Trump on Thursday said he's instructing the Pentagon and other government agencies to identify and begin releasing files related to extraterrestrials and unidentified flying objects.

Trump made the announcement in a post on Truth Social, saying his order applies to all "information connected to these highly complex, but extremely interesting and important, matters."

Trump's order came on the heels of former President Barack Obama's remarks

about aliens several days earlier.

Asked about aliens in an interview with podcast host Brian Tyler Cohen earlier this month, Obama said "they're real, but I haven't seen them, and they're not being kept ... in Area 51."

The place Obama referred to is a classified Air Force installation in southern Nevada initially built as a test facility for the Lockheed U-2 spy plane.

In recent decades, it's become the topic of various conspiracy theories about whether the government is using the secretive site to hide alien bodies and recovered UFOs.

On Feb. 15, Obama made a clarifying post on Instagram saying he had not seen any evidence during his presidency "that extraterrestrials have made contact with us."

Trump's post did not give a timeline for the

release of the files. He told reporters Thursday on Air Force One that he doesn't have an opinion on whether aliens exist, according to The Associated Press.

The Pentagon in recent years has stepped up efforts to investigate unidentified and unexplained aerial phenomena, the government's term for UFO-type sightings.

An intelligence report released in 2023 revealed that there were hundreds of new reports of these sightings and many of them were unexplained.

Most of the new sightings came from Navy and Air Force aviators and operators who had witnessed such objects while flying.

In a 2024 report, the Pentagon said there was no indication suggesting that what observers had reported seeing was extraterrestrial.

Sentinel ICBM test unlikely until 2028

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

Software delays related to the U.S. Air Force's future LGM-35A Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile could pose "significant risks" to the program, requiring the U.S. to continue using the existing LGM-30G Minuteman III arsenal for longer than expected, the Government Accountability Office said Wednesday.

The first flight of the new Sentinel is unlikely to occur before March 2028, according to the GAO report.

The timeline runs counter to a U.S. Air Force news release issued Tuesday that said the Sentinel could receive a new Milestone B rating, allowing for a prototype, by the end of the year.

The Air Force said that it believed the missile's first flight could occur in 2027.

The Air Force said Thursday that it was aware of the GAO report but felt confident that the accelerated timeline it had presented was accurate.

"The Air Force has made tremendous progress since the GAO reports were written, and the Sentinel program is on track to complete its restructure by

the end of 2026," the service said in a statement.

The new missile would be the land-based piece of the United States' nuclear triad, along with submarine-launched ballistic missiles and manned bombers.

The Sentinel program's cost is now pegged at about \$141 billion, including construction of 600 silos and other facilities.

The new ICBM program exceeded statutory cost thresholds in January 2024, delaying the development of a prototype.

The so-called Nunn-McCurdy unit cost limits created by Congress govern the pace of spending on defense programs. Specifics were not available on Thursday.

The GAO said the delay could allow the service time to address issues in the program.

The GAO report said the Sentinel program is four years behind schedule, requiring a 14-year life extension of the Minuteman.

The Los Alamos Study Group Exchange Monitor, a publication for nuclear weapons experts, reported in January 2025 that the last Minuteman III would likely not be decommissioned until 2050 or later.

AFN ending its satellite 'direct-to-home' service

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The American Forces Network is ending its eight-channel satellite television service for U.S. military personnel living off base across Europe and Asia.

The long-running service known as "direct-to-home" is screening its final programming before going dark March 22, said Kimberly Antos, director of AFN's Broadcast Center.

The network is replacing the satellite broadcast with its AFN Now application, which has drawn 57,000 registered users since it launched in 2022, she said by email.

"This transition is absolutely a cost-saving measure," Antos said, adding she doesn't have information about how much money the broadcaster will save.

The change reflects the way modern audiences expect to consume their news, sports and entertainment, she said.

AFN will continue its "direct-to-sailor" broadcast of four standard-definition channels intended for U.S. Navy, Coast Guard and Military Sealift Command vessels, Antos said. Receiving that service requires a 6-foot-wide satellite dish.

AFN doesn't have a way to measure its direct-to-home au-

dience but estimates 400,000 viewers, including service members, government civilians, their families and retirees, across all services, she said.

Not everyone is thrilled about the change. Lanny Haney, a retired airman and AFN viewer since 1980 who lives near Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo, reported technical issues with AFN Now.

"There are times it will lag," he said in a text message. "It will also timeout in the middle of something you're watching (and) you then have to take the time to go to the website and reauthorize the device."

The app shouldn't be glitchy, Antos wrote in her email. Viewers with technical issues should contact the AFN Now help desk at +1 571-559-1415 or via email at DMA.AFN

now.Help@mail.mil. Viewers living on military installations or receiving AFN through an on-base cable system should see no change when direct-to-home ends, she said.

Off-base residents can watch AFNsports, AFNsports2, AFNnews, AFNprime Atlantic and AFNprime Pacific on AFN Now, Antos added.

"We will add additional AFN channels later this year," she said.

NORAD sends jets to escort 5 Russian aircraft out of Alaskan ADIZ

Stars and Stripes

North American Aerospace Defense Command tracked five Russian aircraft operating in the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone on Thursday.

NORAD tracked two Russian Tu-95s, two Su-35s and one A-50, according to a statement released Friday.

NORAD launched two F-16s, two F-35s, one E-3, and four KC-135s to intercept, positively

identify and escort the aircraft until they departed the Alaskan ADIZ.

The Russian military aircraft remained in international airspace and did not enter American or Canadian sovereign airspace.

"This kind [of] activity in the Alaskan ADIZ occurs regularly and is not seen as a threat," said NORAD, a joint U.S.-Canadian command at Peterson Air Force

Base, Colo.

It is the first reported incursion of Russian aircraft in the Alaska zone since Sept. 24.

The September incident came after several incursions in August and July.

The air defense identification zone begins where sovereign airspace ends, usually 12 miles from the coast.

The zone is a defined stretch of international airspace where

all aircraft are expected to identify themselves in the interest of national security.

NORAD employs a layered defense network of satellites, ground-based and airborne radars and fighter aircraft to detect and track aircraft and inform appropriate actions. NORAD says it remains ready to employ a number of response options in defense of North America.

Trump increases new tariff rate to 15%

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump said he will increase the global 10% tariff he announced one day earlier to 15%, stirring up more economic turbulence as he lashed out at the U.S. Supreme Court over its ruling that his preferred mechanism for applying tariffs was illegal.

“I, as President of the United States of America, will be, effective immediately, raising the 10% Worldwide Tariff on Countries, many of which have been ‘ripping’ the U.S. off for decades, without retribution (until I came along!), to the fully allowed, and legally tested, 15%

level,” Trump said in a social-media post on Saturday.

Trump is rushing to preserve his trade agenda following the court’s ruling against his use of an emergency-powers law to impose his so-called reciprocal tariffs around the world and to use levies as a cudgel to bend foreign governments to his will. Enraged by the decision, Trump initially imposed a 10% global tariff on foreign goods on Friday, hours after the high court ruling, as he seeks to maintain the duties he insists are key to his economic and national security power.

But his post on Saturday

made clear he had decided that 10% was not enough, even though he said on Friday, “Every single thing I said today is guaranteed certainty.”

The president’s efforts to restore and maintain the tariffs underscored the economic volatility ahead. The tools he is left with are less nimble than the sweeping authority he had claimed under emergency powers and will be subjected to fresh legal challenges.

Additional details were not immediately forthcoming on how soon the 15% tariff would go into effect. The initial 10% tariffs Trump announced on Fri-

day were scheduled to go into effect on Tuesday at 12:01 a.m. ET, according to a White House fact sheet.

The White House and U.S. Trade Representative’s office didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment.

Trump is applying the new baseline tariff under Section 122 of the 1974 Trade Act, which allows the president to impose tariffs for 150 days without congressional approval. Securing that approval could prove challenging, as Democrats and some Republicans have opposed elements of his trade policy.

Blizzard warnings send the East Coast scrambling

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Cities and towns along the East Coast scrambled to prepare for a bout with heavy snow and damaging winds after forecasters issued blizzard alerts for communities from Maryland to Massachusetts.

The National Weather Service warned Sunday that the storm could prove significantly more severe than projections made just a few days ago.

The weather service said 1 to 2 feet of snow was possible in

many areas as it put out blizzard warnings for New York City and Long Island, Boston and coastal communities in New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

Flooding was also possible in parts of New York and New Jersey, it said.

“While we do get plenty of these nor’easters that produce heavy snow and strong impacts, it’s been several years since we saw one of this magnitude across this large of a region in this very

populated part of the country,” said Cody Snell, a meteorologist at the service’s Weather Prediction Center.

Snell said the storm was to arrive Sunday morning in areas around Washington before stretching toward Philadelphia and New York City and reaching Boston in the evening.

The weather service said the storm could begin as rainfall in some places before worsening. Some of the heaviest snow was projected to fall overnight Sunday, with as much as 2 inches of

snow per hour at times in some areas, before tapering off by Monday afternoon.

The weather service warned that the storm, with gusts up to 55 mph, could cause whiteout conditions that “will make travel treacherous and potentially life-threatening. The strong winds and weight of snow on tree limbs may down power lines and could cause sporadic power outages.”

Officials scrambled to prepare for a storm that forecasters days ago believed would have a much more limited impact.

Crews recover the bodies of nine skiers in California

Associated Press

TRUCKEE, Calif. — Crews recovered the bodies of nine backcountry skiers who were killed by an avalanche in California’s Sierra Nevada, authorities said Saturday, concluding a harrowing operation that was hindered by intense snowfall.

A search team reached the bodies of eight victims and found one other who had been missing and presumed dead since Tuesday’s avalanche on Castle Peak near Lake Tahoe.

The ninth person who was missing was found “relatively close” to the other victims, according to Nevada County Sheriff’s Lt. Dennis Hack, but was impossible to see due to whiteout conditions at that time.

At a news conference, Sheriff Shannon Moon praised the collective efforts of the numerous agencies that helped recover the bodies — from the California Highway Patrol to the National Guard to the Pacific Gas & Electric utility company —

and 42 volunteers who helped on the last day of the operation.

“We are fortunate in this mountain community that we are very tight-knit, and our community shows up in times of tragedy,” Moon said.

The sheriff named for the first time the three guides from Blackbird Mountain Company who died: Andrew Alissandratos, 34, Nicole Choo, 42, and Michael Henry, 30.

According to biographies on the company’s website, Alis-

sandratos was originally from Tampa, Fla., and moved to Tahoe roughly a decade ago. He enjoyed a wide array of adventure activities, from backcountry exploration to rock climbing.

Henry moved to Colorado in 2016 and then to Truckee three years later. He was described as “laid back” and devoted to sharing his knowledge and love of the mountains with others.

There was no bio for Choo on the website.

Venezuela opposition prisoners set for release

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — At least 1,557 people held in Venezuela for political reasons have submitted their applications under an amnesty bill that was signed into law this week and are expected to be released from prison, authorities said Saturday.

Thursday's measure is expected to benefit opposition members, activists, human rights defenders, journalists and many others detained for months or even years.

Its approval marked a reversal for Venezuelan authorities, who for decades have denied holding any political prisoners.

It follows last month's stunning U.S. military raid in the country's capital, Caracas, to

capture then-President Nicolás Maduro.

"As of today, 1,152 new applications have been received, for a total of 1,557 that are being addressed immediately, and at this moment hundreds of releases of persons deprived of liberty who are benefiting from the Amnesty Law are already taking place," National Assembly leader Jorge Rodríguez said Saturday.

Earlier, the president of the special commission overseeing the amnesty law, Jorge Arreaza, said Friday night on state television that 379 amnesty requests had been received and that the applicants' releases would take place between Friday and Saturday.

Further releases could be

granted within 15 days, he also said.

Gonzalo Himiob, vice president of Venezuela-based prisoners' rights group Foro Penal, told The Associated Press on Saturday that so far some have been released in the state of Barinas, in the southwest of the country, but the process of verifying releases under the amnesty was still ongoing.

The new law excludes those convicted of homicide, drug trafficking, serious human rights violations and military rebellion.

Human rights organizations are calling for the law to be applied to all prisoners held for political reasons, even if they are not listed among the beneficiaries.

"It is discriminatory and un-

constitutional to exclude imprisoned military personnel and persecuted political figures," Alfredo Romero, president of Foro Penal, said Saturday on X.

Without this, "there can be no talk of national coexistence," he said.

Rodríguez said thousands of requests are being processed from "individuals who were under alternative measures to the system of deprivation of liberty," and that they are likewise covered by the Amnesty Law.

Delcy Rodríguez, acting president of Venezuela since Jan. 5, said during the signing of the law that it showed the country's political leaders were "letting go of a little intolerance and opening new avenues for politics in Venezuela."

Danish military evacuates US submariner in Greenland

Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Denmark's military said its arctic command forces evacuated a crew member of a U.S. submarine off the coast of Greenland for urgent medical treatment.

The Danish Joint Arctic Command, on its Facebook page, said the crew member was evacuated Saturday some 7 nautical miles off Nuuk — the capital of the vast, ice-covered territory — and transferred to a hospital in the city.

The crew member was retrieved by a Danish Seahawk helicopter that had been deployed on an inspection ship.

Also late Saturday, President Donald Trump announced plans to deploy a hospital ship to the Danish autonomous territory of Greenland, alleging that many people there are sick and not receiving care — prompting a defense of Denmark's health care system from Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen.

"Working with the fantastic Governor of Louisiana, Jeff Landry, we are going to send a great hospital boat to Greenland to take care of the many people who are sick, and not being taken care of there. It's on the way!!!" Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform, referring to his special envoy for Greenland.

The historically strong bilateral ties after World War II between NATO allies Denmark and the United States have come under severe strain in recent months, as Trump has ratcheted up talk of a possible U.S. takeover of the mineral-rich and strategically located Arctic island.

Frederiksen defended Denmark's health care system Sunday, writing on Facebook that she was "happy to live in a country where there is free and equal access to health for all. Where it's not insurances and wealth that determine whether you get proper treatment."

Russian barrage fatally hits suburbs near Kyiv

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia attacked Ukraine with a barrage of missiles and drones, killing one person in the Kyiv region, Ukraine's Emergency Service said Sunday.

Another eight people, including a child, were rescued from under the rubble of destroyed buildings, the service said.

The attack caused damage and fires to erupt in five districts in the suburbs of Kyiv. In the village of Putrivka in the Fastiv district, emergency first responders worked on saving people buried under debris.

Russia also struck energy infrastructure in Ukraine's southern Odesa region, resulting in significant fires, which were later extinguished, the emergency service said.

During the four years since Russia launched an all-out war on its neighbor, and despite a new push over the past year in U.S.-led peace efforts, Ukrai-

nian civilians have endured constant aerial attacks. Russia has also ramped up attacks targeting the country's energy grid, leaving Ukrainian civilians without electricity and heating amid harsh winter conditions.

Ukraine's Air Force said Sunday that Russia's overnight barrage had included 297 drones and 50 missiles of various types, of which 274 drones and 33 missiles were shot down or neutralized.

Of those remaining, 14 missiles and 23 drones struck 14 locations, it said. Three missiles were unaccounted for.

Separately, an explosion in Ukraine's western city of Lviv killed one person and injured 25, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post Sunday. One person has been arrested over the incident, which is unrelated to Russia's aerial attack on Ukraine.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police seek suspect who stole, crashed ambulance

ID BOISE — Authorities in Idaho are searching for a suspect who they said stole an ambulance outside a hospital, poured an accelerant over it and drove it into a nearby building that houses Department of Homeland Security offices.

Meridian Police Chief Tracy Basterrechea didn't identify the substance poured on the inside and outside of the ambulance. "It appears the suspect was unable to ignite the accelerant before being scared off by responding agencies," he said in a statement.

The suspect took the ambulance from St. Luke's hospital and drove it through a parking lot, Basterrechea said. The suspect then retrieved gas cans from nearby vegetation, he said.

Judge blocks referendum on redrawing districts

VA RICHMOND— A Virginia court on Thursday effectively blocked Democrats' planned April voter referendum to redraw the state's congressional maps, a potentially devastating blow to the party's effort to pick up four more U.S. House seats in the national redistricting battle.

Virginia Democratic Attorney General Jay Jones has already vowed to appeal the ruling by a Tazewell Circuit Court, which granted a temporary restraining order requested by the Republican National Committee and the National Republican Congressional Committee. The plaintiffs argue that the ballot referendum's timing and phrasing are illegal.

The court's decision, while

temporary, could kill the referendum for this year if it withstands appeal. The restraining order is in effect until March 18 and early voting is slated to start March 6.

The Republican request for a restraining order argued that Democrats were ramming redistricting-related bills through the legislature despite legal hurdles that prevent such a rushed process.

Hospital system closes all clinics after cyberattack

MS JACKSON — A ransomware attack forced the University of Mississippi Medical Center to close clinics and cancel elective procedures for a second day on Friday.

University officials warned that the shutdown could continue for days as they try to evaluate the extent of the attack and restore network systems they took down as a precaution.

Hospitals and emergency rooms remained open, and patients there were receiving proper care, Vice Chancellor LouAnn Woodward said at a news conference Thursday.

Authorities are trying to determine whether patients' private information was accessed, Woodward said.

NASA delays astronaut moon mission again

FL CAPE CANAVERAL — In the latest setback to return astronauts to the moon, NASA delayed the highly anticipated flight yet again after a new problem cropped up with the rocket Saturday.

April is now the earliest that the four Artemis II astronauts could fly to the moon.

NASA revealed the latest problem just one day after targeting March 6 for Artemis II, humanity's first flight to the moon in more than half a century. Overnight, the flow of helium to the rocket's upper stage was interrupted, officials said. Solid helium flow is essential for purging the engines and pressurizing the fuel tanks.

This helium issue has nothing to do with the hydrogen fuel leaks that marred a countdown dress rehearsal of the Space Launch System rocket earlier this month and forced a repeat test.

NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman said a bad filter, valve or connection plate could be to blame for the stalled helium flow. Regardless of the cause, he said, the only way to access the area and fix the problem is to return the 322-foot rocket to its hangar for repairs.

Black veterans memorial bridge to be replaced

AK ANCHORAGE — Thousands of Black soldiers performed the back-breaking work of transforming rough-hewn wilderness in extreme weather swings during World War II to help build the first road link between Alaska and the Lower 48.

The work of the segregated Black soldiers is credited with bringing changes to military discrimination policies. The state of Alaska honored them by naming a bridge for them near the end point of the famed Alaska Highway.

Now, eight decades later, the aging bridge needs to be replaced. Instead of tearing it down, the state of Alaska intends to keep two of the bridge's

nine trestles in place as a re-fashioned memorial. The others will be given away.

The state of Alaska will replace the 1,885-foot bridge that spans the Gerstle River near Delta Junction, the end point of the Alaska Highway about 100 miles south of Fairbanks.

Seven of the bridge's trestles are being offered for free to states, local governments or private entities who will maintain them for their historical features and public use.

Congressman claims he's being 'blackmailed'

TX HOUSTON — U.S. Rep. Tony Gonzales of Texas claimed Thursday he was being "blackmailed" following a report he allegedly had an affair with a former staffer who later died after she set herself on fire.

The claim by the married Republican congressman comes after the San Antonio Express-News reported that it had obtained text messages in which the former staffer, Regina Ann Santos-Aviles, wrote to a colleague that she had an affair with the lawmaker.

On Thursday, an attorney for Adrian Aviles, Santos-Aviles' husband, said the husband had found out about the affair prior to his wife's death.

On social media, the congressman posted a partial screenshot of an email from the husband's attorney and accused him of seeking money.

"I WILL NOT BE BLACKMAILED," Gonzales wrote in a post on the social media site X on Thursday. "Disgusting to see people profit politically and financially off a tragic death."

— From wire reports



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US tops Canada in OT for Olympics hockey title

Associated Press

MILAN — The United States is on top of the hockey world for the first time in nearly a half-century. No miracle needed.

Jack Hughes scored in overtime and the U.S. beat Canada 2-1 in the gold medal final at the Milan Cortina Olympics on Sunday, earning the nation's third men's title at the Games and its first since the "Miracle on Ice" in 1980 — 46 years to the day of the upset over the mighty Soviet Union, too.

Unlike that ragtag group of college kids that pulled off one of the biggest shockers in sports history, the Americans in Milan were a machine that rode goaltender Connor Hellebuyck and a roster full of NHL players through the tournament unbeaten. Still, they were underdogs again against the stacked Canadians and came out on top — again.

"This is all about our country right now," said Hughes, who lost at least one and maybe two of his front teeth taking a high stick during the game. "I love the USA. I love my teammates.

It's unbelievable. The USA Hockey brotherhood is so strong."

Hughes' goal off the rush off a pass from Zach Werenski 1:41 into 3-on-3 OT sent players into a wild celebration as Canada's entire team watched from the bench. There was a hint of sadness amid all the joy as Werenski and Matthew Tkachuk carried a Johnny Gaudreau No. 13 jersey around the ice as the latest tribute to the beloved player who was killed along with his brother in 2024.

Gaudreau's parents, Guy and Jay, his widow, Meredith, and their oldest children were in attendance. It was John Jr.'s second birthday and he was brought on the ice with older sister Noa for the team photo.

"He was so near and dear to us," Brady Tkachuk said of the player known as "Johnny Hockey." "We did it for him."

Hellebuyck was by far the best player on the ice, stopping 41 of the 42 shots he faced as Canada tilted the ice toward him. He made the save of the tournament by getting his stick

on the puck on a shot from Devon Toews in the third period, then minutes later denied Macklin Celebrini on a breakaway — something he also did to Connor McDavid earlier.

"Unbelievable game by Hellebuyck," Hughes said. "He was our best player by a mile."

It was only fitting the Americans needed to go through Canada, their northern neighbor that beat them at the 4 Nations Face-Off a year ago and has won every international competition over the past 16 years that featured the world's best players.

Not anymore.

Winning a fast-paced, riveting game that was full of big hits and plenty of post-whistle altercations, the U.S. got a goal from Matt Boldy 6 minutes in and led until Cale Makar tied it late in the second period. Hellebuyck and the penalty kill was a perfect 18 for 18 at the Olympics.

"I can't even believe this," Hughes said. "I mean it's such an unbelievable game, USA-Canada. Such a good game. There's so many great players.

We're a great team. That's exactly how we wanted it to go. We're underdogs to Canada, (but we) beat them. It could have gone either way."

Hughes paid a painful price when he took the high stick and wound up face down on the ice. The teeth were out, but the celebration wasn't far away.

"More people are going to be looking at his medal than his teeth," winger Matt Boldy said.

Canada, back-to-back Olympic champions in 2010 and '14 and winners of three of the first five, fell short while playing without injured captain Sidney Crosby. The 38-year-old two-time gold medalist and three-time Stanley Cup champion left the quarterfinal game against Czechia and sat out the semifinal game against Finland.

McDavid, who wore the "C" in Crosby's absence, suffered another devastating defeat on the doorstep of a title. He and the Edmonton Oilers have lost to Matthew Tkachuk and the Florida Panthers in the Stanley Cup Final each of the past two years.

Nolte wins bobsled gold; Humphries Armbruster gets 6th medal

Associated Press

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy — Germany's Laura Nolte didn't let this lead get away. She's golden, again.

And Kaillie Humphries Armbruster of the United States has a new favorite number — six, as in the number of Olympic bobsled medals now in her collection.

Nolte is now the back-to-back two-woman Olympic bobsled champion, holding off teammate Lisa Buckwitz to grab gold at the Milan Cortina Games on Saturday night.

Nolte — the winner of the last four World Cup two-woman titles — cemented her status as the sport's current queen, teaming with Deborah Levi to win her second consecutive two-woman gold medal by finishing four runs in 3 minutes, 48.46 seconds. Levi was in her sled for the golden ride in 2022 as well.

"It means a lot, and even to defend it together as a team again is so cool," Nolte said. "It was such a fun race and we had to keep our

nerves together until the very last corner, until the very last run, but it was amazing."

Buckwitz, with Neele Schuten in her sled, was second in 3:48.99. Humphries Armbruster and Jasmine Jones — two mothers in the same sled for the U.S. — finished third in 3:49.21. It was the sixth Olympic medal for Humphries Armbruster, tying monobob gold medalist Elana Meyers Taylor for the most by any woman in the sport's history.

"Just knowing Jasmine was behind me, knowing what this meant for us as a team, I really wanted it for her more than for myself," Humphries Armbruster said. "She gave everything she did and entrusted me to do the same. That's what teamwork's really about. I couldn't have done this with anybody else, and I didn't want to do it with anybody else."

Humphries Armbruster hasn't made any decisions on her sliding future. Meyers Taylor seems a whole lot closer to making her choice.

"It's been a hell of a journey. I can't even put into words what it's meant to be able to do this for so long," a teary Meyers Taylor said. "To be able to represent my country and be able to slide ... I don't know if this is the end. It kind of feels like it is."

Also for the U.S., Kaysha Love — who has been dealing with a hamstring issue for much of the season and had it flare up again in Italy — and Azaria Hill finished fifth in 3:49.71.

"Azaria and I haven't been doing this long enough to be anything other than proud," Love said. "This is only my third season driving. It's only her third season pushing. The people we're up against have 20 years of experience. I want to be frustrated because I think that we expect greatness out of each other."

Meyers Taylor and Jadin O'Brien, who were doomed by a second-heat skid at the top of the track Friday night, got a few spots back in the standings Saturday and finished tied for seventh in 3:50.49.

Gu defends ski halfpipe gold for 6th medal

Associated Press

LIVIGNO, Italy — Maybe the most staggering thing of Eileen Gu’s entire gold medal-winning day was that she lost her balance on the first trick in her first run.

Perhaps she is mortal? But maybe not, as Gu defended her Olympic ski halfpipe title on Sunday to make it six medals in six events over her Winter Games career.

“She is ‘Wonder Woman,’” New Zealand’s Mischa Thomas said.

The 22-year-old Gu, American-born but competing for her mother’s homeland of China, is already the most decorated freeskiier in the short history of the sport at the Olympics. She also captured two silver medals at the Milan Cortina Games, to pair with two golds and a silver from the Beijing Games.

“The reason I love the records so much is that it’s not about man or woman,” Gu said. “I’m the most decorated freeskiier of all time, male or female. ... That’s a

testament to competitive strength, it’s mental strength. It’s being able to perform under pressure. It has nothing to (do with) if you’re a boy or a girl.”

Gu won the event on the strength of her second run, a clean, technically sound pass. She got even better in her final run — pumping her ski poles after landing the final trick — and finished with a score of 94.75. Her teammate, Li Fanghui, took silver and Zoe Atkin of Britain was third.

The event was rescheduled to Sunday following a big snowstorm the night before. It was a bright, sunny day as Gu shined in the final event at the Livigno Snow Park. She shielded her eyes from the sun to catch a peek of her winning score — and instantly liked what she saw.

There were quite a few Gu fans at the base of the halfpipe, holding up pictures of her and waving flags.

“Being able to lead the way and pioneer the sport is something I

never imagined I’d be able to do,” Gu said. “But I’m really honored and proud that I have.”

Atkin, an American-born skier who competes for her father’s homeland of Britain, soared high all contest, a staggering 18 feet above the pipe at one point. She finished ninth at the Beijing Games but has been a steady presence on World Cup podiums ever since. She has three victories over the last four years, all in events where Gu didn’t compete.

The 23-year-old Atkin is the defending world champion.

“(Gu) is a really great competitor. She’s a really amazing skier,” said Atkin, whose sister, Isabel, won an Olympic bronze in ski slopestyle at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games. “We have an amazing group of skiers as well. I think the level is truly unmatched, and I think that’s really special. I think that makes it really exciting to watch for the next coming years.”

Canada’s Amy Fraser echoed that.

“She’s a great skier, and she raises the level for everyone else, but she’s not unbeatable,” said Fraser, who finished fourth. “I don’t think the level is untouchable.”

In her second run, Thomas dropped into the halfpipe — and dropped her phone. It had to be retrieved for Thomas. After the competition, she reported: “My phone is great. Never been better.”

Svea Irving was a “DNS” — did not start — in the American’s second run. She returned for a third run, but struggled to complete a maneuver and finished in 11th.

Atkin took the lead after the first run with a smooth performance. Meanwhile, Gu lost her balance on her first trick and cut the run short.

Cassie Sharpe of Canada sat out the final after a hard crash in Thursday’s qualifying round. She won the gold in the event at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games and silver four years later in Beijing.

Knicks rally from 18 down, stun Rockets in 4th quarter

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Karl-Anthony Towns scored 25 points, Jalen Brunson had 20 and the New York Knicks overcame an 18-point deficit in the fourth quarter to beat the Houston Rockets 108-106 on Saturday night.

OG Anunoby added 20 points, and Mikal Bridges had 11 for New York. The Knicks bounced back two nights after a disappointing loss to Eastern Conference-leading Detroit.

Kevin Durant scored 30 points for Houston. Jabari Smith Jr. had 21, Alperen Sengun added 16, and Amen Thompson had 12 points and 10 rebounds. The Rockets had won five a row.

New York, which led by 13 points in the first half, began its comeback with an 8-1 run in the opening minutes of the fourth before Smith hit a 3-pointer in front

of the Houston bench.

The Rockets missed eight consecutive shots and turned the ball over two times as the Knicks went on a 14-2 run, capped by Towns’ layup off the glass that cut it to 99-97 with 3:32 left.

Brunson’s jumper tied it at 103 with 1:26 left. Durant then lost the ball near the sideline and committed an offensive foul on the following possession as he plowed into Brunson.

Brunson answered with a pul-lup jumper that gave New York the lead for good. Durant had a chance to win it at the buzzer, but missed a 40-footer.

Suns 113, Magic 110 (20T): Jalen Green hit a 3-pointer from the right corner at the buzzer to give host Phoenix a double-overtime victory over Orlando.

After Jalen Carter tied it for the Magic with 1.1 seconds left with a

corner 3, Green hit all net from the corner as the horn sounded. Green struggled all game until that final shot, making only 6 for 26 from the field and 2 of 6 free throws. His winning basket was just his second successful 3 in 11 attempts.

Pelicans 126, 76ers 111: Jordan Poole highlighted a 23-point performance with five 3-pointers, and host New Orleans outscored Philadelphia 60-35 during the final 21 minutes for a win.

Poole entered the night having appeared in just two games this season, and had not played since Oct. 29.

Spurs 139, Kings 122: Victor Wembanyama had 28 points and 15 rebounds, and visiting San Antonio beat Sacramento for its eighth straight win and a sweep of their two games in Austin.

The Kings lost a franchise rec-

ord 16th straight game, the last two after center Domantas Sabonis and guard Zach LaVine had season-ending surgery.

Pistons 126, Bulls 110: Jalen Duren had 26 points and 13 rebounds in his return from a suspension to help visiting Detroit take charge in the second half and roll over Chicago.

Duren helped establish the Pistons’ dominance after sitting out two games for his role in a fight at Charlotte on Feb. 9.

Heat 136, Grizzlies 120: Andrew Wiggins scored 28 points on 9-of-10 shooting, Norman Powell finished with 25 and host Miami beat Memphis.

Tyler Herro finished with 14 points, Bam Adebayo added 13, while Kasparas Jakucionis and Jaime Jacquez Jr. each scored 12 for the Heat. Miami’s Kel’el Ware had 11 points and 15 rebounds.

Boozer, No. 3 Duke top No. 1 Michigan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Cameron Boozer scored 18 points and No. 3 Duke handed another neutral-site loss to fellow blueblood Michigan, knocking off the top-ranked Wolverines 68-63 on Saturday night in a raucous possible Final Four preview in the nation's capital.

Michigan had won 11 straight and replaced Arizona atop the AP Top 25 this week. The now-fourth-ranked Wildcats won at No. 2 Houston earlier Saturday, making it the first time since Feb. 8, 2025, that the top two teams in the poll lost on the same day.

With his dad, former Duke and NBA star Carlos Boozer, in attendance, Cameron Boozer hit a 3-pointer with 1:55 left to give the Blue Devils a 64-58 lead. Isaiah Evans added 14 points for Duke (25-2), which could return to Capital One Arena in just over a month for the East Regional of the NCAA Tournament.

Yaxel Lendeborg scored 21 points for the Wolverines (25-2), who had not lost since a home defeat by three points to Wisconsin on Jan. 10.

No. 4 Arizona 73, No. 2 Houston 66: Anthony Dell'Orso tied a season high with 22 points and the visiting Wildcats toppled the Cougars to move into sole possession of first place in the Big 12 Conference.

Arizona (25-2, 12-2), which opened the season 23-0, won its second straight game following consecutive losses to then-No. 9 Kansas and then-16th-ranked Texas Tech, that knocked the team out of the No. 1 spot in the AP Top 25 poll.

The Wildcats were down by two before scoring the next 12 points to make it 60-50 with about five minutes remaining. The Cougars missed eight consecutive shots and had three turnovers in that stretch to allow Arizona to build the lead.

No. 5 UConn 73, Villanova 63: Alex Karaban scored 12

points, Tarris Reed Jr. added 11 and the visiting Huskies used a dominating second half to defeat the Wildcats.

Braylon Mullins added 10 points for UConn (25-2, 15-2 Big East), which rebounded from Wednesday's 91-84 home loss to unranked Creighton.

Tyler Perkins scored 15 points and Matt Hodge had 13 for Villanova (21-6, 12-4), which had won six in a row since losing 75-67 in overtime to the Huskies on Jan. 24 in the teams' first meeting.

No. 23 BYU 79, No. 6 Iowa State 69: AJ Dybantsa had 29 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists to help the host Cougars beat the Cyclones for their first victory over a Top 10 opponent this season.

Kennard Davis, Jr. added 17 points, and Mihailo Boskovic had 13 for BYU (20-7, 8-6 Big 12), which outscored Iowa State 40-22 in the paint and had a 39-28 edge on the glass.

Tamin Lipsey led the Cyclones (23-4, 10-4) with 19 points.

Iowa State whittled a double-digit deficit to a basket, drawing to 57-54 on Lipsey's 3-pointer with 7:21 left. Dybantsa and Davis scored back-to-back baskets at the rim to quell the rally. It marked the beginning of a 13-3 run that made it 70-57 with 3:33 remaining.

Cincinnati 84, No. 8 Kansas 68: Moustapha Thiam had a career-high 28 points and led the visiting Bearcats to an upset over the Jayhawks.

The 7-footer Thiam made 11 of 17 shots from the field and had eight rebounds. Baba Miller added 18 points, eight assists and seven rebounds.

No. 9 Nebraska 87, Penn State 64: Pryce Sandfort scored 20 of his career-high 33 points in the first half and finished with eight 3-pointers, leading the host Cornhuskers in a rout of the Nittany Lions.

Nebraska (23-4, 12-4 Big Ten)

bounced back from a 57-52 loss at Iowa on Tuesday and moved into a tie for third place in the conference with its dominant performance against the league's last-place team.

UCLA 95, No. 10 Illinois 94 (OT): Donovan Dent hit a go-ahead layup with 1 second remaining in overtime, lifting the host Bruins over the Fighting Illini after they rallied from a 23-point, first-half deficit.

Eric Dailey Jr. led six Bruins in double figures with 20 points. Tyler Bilodeau had 18 points and Trent Perry added 17.

No. 11 Gonzaga 71, Pacific 62: Graham Ike had 20 points and three blocks, Davis Fogle scored 18 points and the host Bulldogs wrapped up a top-two seed and a semifinal spot in the WCC Tournament.

Emmanuel Innocenti added 13 points for Gonzaga (27-2, 15-1 West Coast Conference). Ike had 20 or more points for the ninth straight game.

No. 12 Florida 94, Mississippi 75: Alex Condon scored 24 points and the visiting Gators tightened their grip atop the Southeastern Conference standings with a win over the Rebels.

Florida (21-6, 12-2 SEC) entered as the conference leader with a two-game cushion in the loss column over Alabama, Arkansas and Tennessee with four games remaining.

No. 13 Texas Tech 100, Kansas State 72: Donovan Atwell had 26 points with six 3-pointers, Christian Anderson scored 21 and the host Red Raiders beat the Wildcats in their first game since standout post JT Toppin's season-ending knee injury.

No. 14 Virginia 86, Miami 83: Chance Mallory drew a foul on a 3-point attempt with 3.6 seconds to play, and then sank all three free throws to lift the host Cavaliers over the Hurricanes.

Jacari White came off the bench to score 17 points, hitting

five 3-pointers for Virginia (24-3, 12-2 Atlantic Coast), which won its eighth straight.

No. 16 North Carolina 77, Syracuse 64: Henri Veesaar returned to the starting lineup and scored 19 points in leading the visiting Tar Heels over the Orange.

Seth Trimble and Luka Bogavac each had 13 points and Zayden High added nine for the Tar Heels (21-6, 9-5 ACC).

No. 17 St. John's 81, Creighton 52: Bryce Hopkins had 15 points and 10 rebounds as the host Red Storm breezed past the Blue Jays for their 13th straight victory — marking the school's longest winning streak in 41 years.

Dylan Darling scored 17 points off the bench and Zuby Ejiogor added 15 for the first-place St. John's (22-5, 15-1 Big East), who led wire-to-wire and held Creighton to 32% shooting from the field in their 18th victory in 20 games.

Tennessee 69, No. 19 Vanderbilt 65: Ja'Kobi Gillespie scored 17 points as the visiting Volunteers outlasted the Commodores in a back-and-forth affair.

No. 20 Arkansas 94, Missouri 86: Billy Richmond III scored 21 points and Darius Acuff Jr. added 20 to pace the host Razorbacks in a win over the Tigers.

Arkansas (20-7, 10-4 Southeastern Conference) improved to 7-0 in games following a loss this season while also staying in contention for the SEC regular-season title.

No. 21 Louisville 87, Georgia Tech 70: Mikel Brown Jr. scored 19 points, including seven during a 17-2 run midway through the second half that helped propel the host Cardinals past the Yellow Jackets.

No. 25 Alabama 90, LSU 83: Aiden Holloway scored 17 points, Amari Allen added 16 and the visiting Crimson Tide beat the Tigers for their sixth straight victory.