

US sends 150 aircraft to Europe, Mideast

The Washington Post

The U.S. military has rapidly increased its presence near Iran, shifting more than 150 aircraft to bases in Europe and the Middle East since a second round of nuclear talks between the United States and Iran ended without a breakthrough on Feb. 17, according to publicly available flight tracking data and satellite imagery reviewed by *The Washington Post*.

The current presence of U.S. military forces in the region is among the largest in more than two decades, since before the Iraq War in 2003.

The buildup comes after President Donald Trump threatened to attack Iran unless a deal can be reached to restrict Iran's nuclear program, although he has not indicated the goals of such an attack. Iranian officials have said a deal is possible but that reaching one will take time.

Experts who reviewed the deployment said it has surpassed the military buildup that was seen before the U.S. strikes against the Iranian nuclear program in June of last year. They said the assets being assembled are indicative of a multiday

campaign without a ground invasion.

Dozens of additional planes are aboard the warship USS Gerald R. Ford, which was spotted off the coast of the Greek island of Crete on Monday. The Ford is the second aircraft carrier sent to the Middle East, and its arrival means roughly a third of all active U.S. ships are now in the region.

"The massive level of force amassed means the U.S. military can execute on whatever Trump decides — anything from a sustained, highly kinetic campaign to more targeted, limited strikes," said Dana Stroul, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense for the Middle East who is now a research director with the Washington Institute, a think tank focused on American foreign policy in the Middle East.

If the administration is planning for an extended, weeks-long air campaign, even more military assets will be needed, said Mark Cancian, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Defense officials acknowledged the major flow of U.S. forces into the Middle East but

declined to comment on the specifics, citing operational security.

More than half of the newly deployed U.S. aircraft landed at bases in Europe, according to satellite imagery and flight-tracking data.

By positioning the planes out of range of most Iranian missiles in Eastern Europe, rather than at bases in the Gulf, the U.S. can strategically position materiel or personnel without presenting the Iranians a "juicy target," said Gregory Brew, a senior Iran analyst at Eurasia Group.

The vast majority of the planes that appear in flight-tracking data are cargo and refueling planes. Combat aircraft often have their location data turned off, so they can be more difficult to track unless they show up in satellite imagery.

Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan has been a key destination for U.S. air assets streaming into the region. More than 60 warplanes were visible in satellite imagery taken Friday. In the imagery, more than a dozen F-35 fighter jets are lined up on a tarmac. These jets are often used to attack an adversary's air

defenses, creating a safer pathway for other jets to follow. The stealthy advanced fighter jet also comes with electronic warfare capabilities, Brew said.

The U.S. has deployed more than a third of its active E-3G Sentry fleet to Europe and the Middle East in recent days, according to flight tracking data and an additional review by Steffan Watkins, an independent researcher who tracks aircraft. Equipped with a large rotating radar dome, the E-3G is an early warning aircraft capable of target detection and all-weather surveillance, providing a real-time picture of activity in the surrounding airspace.

Dozens of warplanes have been photographed in recent days at airstrips in Europe. Photos published online show a dozen F-22A Raptors at RAF Lakenheath in the United Kingdom and at least one F-16 Fighting Falcon landing in the Azores.

"Whatever their administration wants to do with Iran, they want to do in a big way, but they want to do fairly quickly with minimal risk of blowback or negative repercussion," Brew said.

Despite reluctance, Navy fighter development approved

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon will accelerate development of a next-generation stealth fighter for the Navy after previously pushing back — a move that could benefit either Boeing Co. or Northrop Grumman Corp., which are competing to build the aircraft.

The White House has approved a Pentagon plan to move

forward with the Navy program known as the "F/A-XX," according to a Pentagon document sent to Congress recently that was obtained by Bloomberg Government.

That's despite Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's reluctance over concerns the defense industrial base couldn't handle developing two sixth-generation fighter jets simultaneously,

with Boeing already developing the new stealth F-47 jet for the Air Force.

After the Pentagon previously slow-walked the Navy jet program, the DOD sent an 85-page document to Congress spelling out how it plans to allocate almost \$152 billion for fiscal 2026 passed in last year's massive tax-and-spending package, known as reconciliation.

That's separate from the formal \$893 billion fiscal 2026 defense spending measure Congress finally passed in January, in which the Navy requested just \$74 million for the Navy jet, down from the \$454 million sought a year earlier.

The Pentagon told Congress it was directing \$750 million earmarked in the bill "to accelerate the F/A-XX aircraft."

US boards 3rd tanker in Indian Ocean

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. military forces boarded a third sanctioned oil tanker in the Indian Ocean after tracking it from the Caribbean Sea in an effort to target illicit oil connected to Venezuela, the Pentagon said Tuesday.

U.S. Southern Command said in a post on X that U.S. forces boarded the *Bertha* overnight, conducting “a right-of-visit, maritime interdiction and boarding.”

“The vessel was operating in defiance of President [Donald] Trump’s established quarantine of sanctioned vessels in the Caribbean and attempted to evade,” the post

said. “From the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean, we tracked it and stopped it.”

Venezuela had faced U.S. sanctions on its oil for several years, relying on a shadow fleet of falsely flagged tankers to smuggle crude into global supply chains.

Trump ordered a quarantine of sanctioned tankers in December to pressure Venezuela’s then-President Nicolás Maduro before Maduro was apprehended in January during an American military operation.

The *Bertha* is a vessel flagged to the Cook Islands and is under U.S. sanctions related to Iran, according to the website of the

Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control.

Video posted by the Pentagon shows U.S. Navy helicopters flying toward the tanker.

Trump’s Republican administration has been seizing tankers as part of its broader efforts to take control of Venezuela’s oil. The Pentagon’s post did not state whether the *Bertha* was formally seized and placed under U.S. control.

Maduro was brought to the U.S. to face charges of working with drug cartels to facilitate the shipment of thousands of tons of cocaine into the U.S. and has pleaded not guilty.

US hits another alleged drug boat in Caribbean Sea

BY MATTHEW ADAMS

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military conducted a strike in the Caribbean Sea on Monday, killing three people, according to U.S. Southern Command.

No U.S. forces were harmed in the operation, SOUTHCOM said in a post on X.

Monday’s attack raises the death toll from the Trump administration’s strikes on alleged drug boats to at least 150 people in at least 44 strikes carried out since early September in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific Ocean.

Trump has said the U.S. is in “armed conflict” with cartels in Latin America and has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs. But his administration has offered little evidence to support its claims of killing “narcoterrorists.”

The U.S. resumed strikes in late January after largely backing off in the region following the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

The latest strike is the second to occur in the region since SOUTHCOM commander Marine Corps Gen. Francis Donovan made an unannounced visit to Venezuela last Wednesday.

The general assumed command on Feb. 5, replacing Adm. Alvin Holsey.

Air Force moves to speed up production of new B-21 bomber

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

The Air Force is taking a big step forward with the B-21 Raider as it seeks to hasten delivery of the service’s next-generation stealth bomber fleet.

Manufacturer Northrop Grumman and the Air Force agreed to boost production capacity of the bomber by 25% using \$4.5 billion in already approved funding, according to a service statement Monday.

The Raider represents a “generational leap” in dual nuclear and conventional stealth aircraft, designed to operate in the most contested environments, according to the Air Force.

It is expected to become the primary penetrating bomber in the U.S. inventory, gradually replacing the B-1B Lancer and B-2 Spirit.

“We are responsibly accelerating delivery of a critical, combat-effective capability,” Gen. Dale White, director of critical major weapon systems at the Pentagon, said in the statement.

The B-21 bomber, now in flight testing, is set to form the backbone of the Air Force’s future bomber fleet alongside upgraded B-52s.

The first aircraft are slated to arrive at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., in 2027.

While the move speeds up delivery of planned aircraft, the Air Force did not an-

nounce changes to the program’s total planned fleet size.

It previously said it would buy at least 100 B-21s, though some military officials and analysts have advocated for a higher number amid the current geopolitical environment.

The push to accelerate the B-21 bomber production comes as military leaders emphasize the need to modernize the aging nuclear triad while preparing for large-scale conflict.

The triad refers to the three delivery systems for U.S. nuclear weapons: land-based missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and strategic bombers. The bomber leg has relied heavily on decades-old aircraft, including the B-52, first fielded during the Cold War.

Military leaders have repeatedly described the B-21 as central to maintaining credible deterrence in the coming decades, particularly as potential adversaries invest in advanced air defenses and long-range weapons.

Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri and Dyess Air Force Base in Texas will be the second and third installations, respectively, to receive the B-21, the service said in 2024.

An expected timeline for those deliveries has not been announced.

Ex-ICE lawyer calls training 'deficient'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A former U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement lawyer who was responsible for training new deportation officers warned Monday that the agency's training program for new recruits is "deficient, defective and broken."

Ryan Schwank's comments during a forum held by congressional Democrats come at a time of intense scrutiny of the officers tasked with carrying out President Donald Trump's mass deportation agenda. Critics, including rights groups and Democratic politicians, have accused deportation officers of using excessive force when arresting immigrants, attacking bystanders who record their

conduct and failing to follow constitutional protections of people's rights.

The Department of Homeland Security is rapidly scaling up the number of deportation officers, raising concerns that it will sacrifice proper screening and training of applicants in a rush to get them into the field. The department denied it was cutting corners, saying new officers get trained on firearms, use-of-force policies and how to safely arrest people.

Schwank testified during a hearing hosted by Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut and Rep. Robert Garcia of California. Blumenthal's office said Schwank resigned from the agency on Feb.

13.

"I am here because I am duty-bound to report the legally required training program at the ICE academy is deficient, defective and broken," Schwank said.

He also accused the department of dismantling the training program for new deportation officers and lying about what they were doing.

"DHS told the public the new cadets receive all the training they need to perform their duties, that no critical material or standards have been cut," he said. "This is a lie. ICE made the program shorter, and they removed so many essential parts that what remains is a dangerous husk."

Monday's was the third public forum held by the two Democrats to examine how ICE is training thousands of new officers and the conduct of those officers once they're on the streets.

Blumenthal's office said Schwank was one of two anonymous whistleblowers who came forward earlier to disclose a new ICE policy authorizing deportation officers to forcibly enter an immigrant's home to remove them from the country even if they didn't have a warrant signed by a judge.

His office also released dozens of pages of documents related to the training of new deportation officers, noting the disclosure came from whistleblowers.

Northeast digs out from brutal snowstorm

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Millions across the northeastern United States on Tuesday contended with treks to school and work as they dug out from a major — in some areas record-breaking — storm that blanketed the region with snow, disrupted transit and downed power lines.

Even as the snow moved north Tuesday giving way to sunshine in parts of the region, National Weather Service forecasters warned another storm originating in the Great Lakes was right around the corner.

In New York City, more than a million students in the nation's largest public school system had a regular day, Mayor Zohran Mamdani declared, inviting kids to pelt him with snowballs over his decision.

Many students and their caregivers seemed open to taking the mayor up on that idea, as they scrambled over mountainous snow banks during the morning drop-off.

Philadelphia switched to online learning Monday and Tuesday. Districts on Long Island and elsewhere in the New York suburbs said they would cancel school again Tuesday.

Monday's storm that meteorologists are calling the strongest in a decade dumped more than 2 feet of snow in parts of the Northeast.

More than 3 feet fell in Rhode Island — surpassing snow totals from the historic Blizzard of 1978 that struck the Northeast, the National Weather Service said.

By Tuesday morning, roads began to reopen, mass transportation was coming back online in some cities and power had returned for some of the hundreds of thousands who had lost electricity in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Delaware and Rhode Island.

Amtrak canceled some trains between Boston and New York and between New York and Philadelphia on Tuesday morning.

Waymo's robotaxis now in 10 major US markets

Associated Press

Waymo will begin dispatching its robotaxis in four more cities in Texas and Florida, expanding the territory covered by its fleet of self-driving cars to 10 major U.S. metropolitan markets.

The move into Dallas, Houston, San Antonio and Orlando, Fla., announced Tuesday, widens Waymo's early lead in autonomous driving while rival services from Tesla and the Amazon-owned Zoox are still testing their vehicles in only a few U.S. cities.

In contrast, Waymo's robotaxis already provide more than 400,000 weekly trips in the six metropolitan areas where they have been transporting passengers: Phoenix, the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, Miami, Atlanta, and Austin, Texas.

Waymo operates its ride-hailing service through its own app in all the U.S. cities except Atlanta and Austin, where its robotaxis can only be summoned

through Uber.

The expansion into four more markets marks a significant step toward Waymo's goal to surpass 1 million weekly paid trips by the end of 2026. Without identifying where its robotaxis will be available next, Waymo is targeting a list of eight other cities that include Las Vegas, Washington, Detroit and Boston while signaling its first overseas stop is likely to be London.

To help pay for more robotaxis, Waymo recently raised \$16 billion as part of the financial infusion that puts the value of the company at \$126 billion. The valuation fueled speculation that Waymo may spin off from its corporate parent Alphabet.

Although Waymo is opening up in four more cities, its robotaxis initially will only be made available to a limited number of people with its ride-hailing app in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio and Orlando before the service will be available to all comers in those markets.

Ukraine marks 4 years since invasion

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared Tuesday that Russia has not “broken Ukrainians” nor triumphed in its war, four years after an invasion that has severely tested the resolve of Kyiv and its allies and fueled European fears about the scale of Moscow’s ambitions.

In a show of support, more than a dozen senior European officials headed to the Ukrainian capital to mark the grim anniversary of the conflict, which has killed tens of thousands of people, upended life for millions of Ukrainians and created instability far beyond its borders.

Zelenskyy said his country has withstood the onslaught by Russia’s bigger and better equipped army, which over the past year of

fighting captured just 0.79% of Ukraine’s territory, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank. Russia now holds nearly 20% of Ukraine.

“Looking back at the beginning of the invasion and reflecting on today, we have every right to say: We have defended our independence, we have not lost our statehood,” Zelenskyy said on social media, adding that Russian President Vladimir Putin has “not achieved his goals.”

“He has not broken Ukrainians; he has not won this war,” Zelenskyy said.

Despite the show of defiance, Ukraine has struggled to hold off Russia’s onslaught, and Russia’s aerial attacks have devastated families and denied civilians power and running water.

Putin made no mention of the anniversary nor did he say how the war was going when he spoke at a meeting in Moscow of top officials of the Federal Security Service, or FSB, on Tuesday.

However, he told them that the threat of Ukrainian attacks on Russian soil has grown. Ukraine has increasingly deployed long-range drones that it has developed to strike oil refineries, fuel depots and military logistics hubs more than 600 miles inside Russia.

As the war of attrition enters its fifth year, a U.S.-led diplomatic push to end the largest conflict on the Continent since World War II appears no closer to finding compromises that might make a peace deal possible.

Negotiations are stuck on what happens to the Donbas, eastern

Ukraine’s industrial heartland that Russian forces mostly occupy but have failed to seize completely, and the terms of a postwar security arrangement that Kyiv is demanding to deter any future Russian invasion.

At a makeshift memorial in Kyiv’s central square, where thousands of small flags and portraits show photos of fallen soldiers, Zelenskyy said he would like President Donald Trump to visit and witness for himself Ukrainian suffering.

Trump has repeatedly changed his tone toward Putin and Zelenskyy over the past year, sometimes criticizing the Ukrainian leader’s negotiating position while reaching out to the Russian leader and at others lashing out at Putin and appearing more sympathetic to Ukraine.

FedEx joins others seeking refund after tariffs ruling

Associated Press

FedEx is suing the U.S. government, requesting a full refund on what it paid for tariffs set by President Donald Trump last year after the Supreme Court ruled that the tariffs are illegal.

FedEx said in a filing with the U.S. Court of International Trade that they have “suffered injury” from having to pay the tariffs and that the relief they’re seeking from the court would redress those injuries.

Other companies have already launched efforts to recoup costs from the illegal tariffs, including large U.S. corporations like Costco and Revlon.

The National Retail Federation said in a statement on Friday that the Supreme Court’s ruling provided certainty for U.S. businesses and manufacturers.

“We urge the lower court to ensure a seamless process to refund the tariffs to U.S. impor-

ters,” it said. “The refunds will serve as an economic boost and allow companies to reinvest in their operations, their employees and their customers.”

The Supreme Court struck down Trump’s far-reaching global tariffs on Friday. Trump said he was “absolutely ashamed” of some justices who ruled 6-3 against him.

The court’s ruling imposed under an emergency powers law were unconstitutional, including the sweeping “reciprocal” tariffs he levied on nearly every other country.

The Treasury had collected more than \$133 billion from the import taxes the president has imposed under the emergency powers law as of December, federal data shows. The impact over the next decade has been estimated at some \$3 trillion.

Trump has vowed to collect tariffs through other means.

Cartel clashes are worrisome ahead of World Cup matches

Associated Press

TAPALPA, Mexico — Maria Dolores Aguirre’s family corner store has lived off tourism that has flowed into her charming cobblestoned town of Tapalpa, tucked away in the mountains of Jalisco state.

That was until gunshots erupted and helicopters flew overhead as the Mexican army killed the country’s most powerful drug lord, just a few miles from her home.

Now, the 50-year-old Aguirre worries that the bloodshed will deal a blow to her livelihood and change towns like hers. It is something many in the western Mexican state are grappling with, from its Pacific Ocean beaches to its capital Guadalajara that will host matches in June for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

“It’s going to affect us. It’s collateral damage,” Aguirre said. “The government is going to have to have a lot of security. . . . The entire world just saw what hap-

pened and, of course, people are going to think twice about coming.”

President Claudia Sheinbaum was asked at her daily news briefing on Tuesday what guarantees there are that World Cup matches will be held in Jalisco.

“Every guarantee, every guarantee,” she said, adding that there was “no risk” for fans coming to the tournament.

Also Tuesday, the Portuguese soccer federation said it was “closely monitoring the delicate situation” in Mexico. Its national team was scheduled to play Mexico’s team in a friendly on March 28 at the newly renovated Azteca Stadium, which is scheduled to host the opening match of the World Cup on June 11.

Fighting between the Jalisco New Generation Cartel and Mexican security forces raged on a number of states Monday, fueling fears among many like Aguirre that there will be more violence to come.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Proposed bill would treat abortion as homicide

KY LEXINGTON — Abortion in Kentucky would be treated like a homicide under a bill proposed Friday by social conservative legislator Rep. Josh Calloway, R-Irvington. But if recent history and another legislator interested in the issue are any indication, don't expect the bill to move.

House Bill 690 would supersede Kentucky's current laws around fetal homicide and assault and add provisions putting providers and potentially mothers at risk of legal liability for homicide or assault if an abortion is performed.

The bill redefines "person" and "human being" in Kentucky's homicide and assault statutes to include an "unborn child" from fertilization until live birth, thereby subjecting conduct causing the death or injury of an unborn child to the same criminal laws that apply to born persons.

In less than 2 years, cops crashed 623 times

MD BALTIMORE — Baltimore police vehicles were in 623 crashes in the city from January 2024 to August 2025.

These accidents cost a total of \$1,027,397, with vehicles either being a total loss or repaired for future usage.

Several accidents had more than \$30,000 in damage.

Department spokesperson Lindsey Eldridge said roughly half of the collisions were deemed nonpreventable and that higher repair costs reflect newer patrol vehicles, supply-

chain price increases and the severity of some crashes.

Baltimore Police officers are frequently responding to crimes and driving in areas with limited visibility, increasing their likelihood to crash or violate traffic laws.

Federal court upholds Democrat-leaning map

UT SALT LAKE CITY — New Utah voting districts that give Democrats an improved shot at winning a U.S. House seat can be used in this year's election, a federal court ruled Monday while turning aside a Republican request to block the new map.

The ruling marked the second setback in recent days for Republicans, who also lost an appeal at Utah's state Supreme Court.

A Utah judge imposed the new districts last November after striking down the congressional districts that the Republican-led Legislature had adopted after the 2020 census. The judge ruled that the Legislature had circumvented standards against partisan gerrymandering that were approved by voters in 2018.

The map keeps Salt Lake County almost entirely within one district, instead of dividing the heavily Democratic population center among all four districts, as previously done.

FEMA set to help with sewage spill

DC WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has approved emergency assistance to Washington, D.C., to help the city address a sewage system leak that

dumped at least 250 million gallons of raw sewage into the Potomac River.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency announced Trump's approval on Saturday, allowing FEMA to provide equipment and resources to help with the response to the Jan. 19 spill after a pipeline ruptured.

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser had requested the federal help on Wednesday and declared an emergency.

The 72-inch pipeline, known as the Potomac Interceptor, burst on Jan. 19, sending 250 million gallons of untreated sewage into the Potomac River just north of Washington in the first five days.

Mom on trial accused of killing husband

UT PARK CITY — A murder trial began Monday for a Utah mother of three who published a children's book about grief after her husband's death and was later accused of killing him.

Kouri Richins, 35, faces a slew of felony charges for allegedly killing her husband, Eric Richins, with fentanyl in March 2022 at their home just outside the ski town of Park City. Prosecutors say she slipped five times the lethal dose of the synthetic opioid into a Moscow mule cocktail that he drank.

She is also accused of trying to poison him a month earlier on Valentine's Day with a fentanyl-laced sandwich that made him break out in hives and black out, according to court documents.

Prosecutors have argued that Richins killed her husband for financial gain while planning a future with another man she

was seeing on the side. Richins has vehemently denied the allegations.

Director's son enters not guilty plea in slaying

CA LOS ANGELES — Nick Reiner, the 32-year-old son of acclaimed director Rob Reiner, pleaded not guilty Monday to two counts of first-degree murder in the fatal stabbing of his parents in December.

Reiner's attorney, Deputy Public Defender Kimberly Greene, entered the plea on his behalf as he stood behind glass in an enclosed custody area of the packed Los Angeles courtroom. The third of Rob Reiner's four children, Nick Reiner has been held without bail since his arrest hours after the actor-director and Michele Singer Reiner, his wife of 36 years, were found dead on Dec. 14 at their home in the upscale Brentwood section of Los Angeles.

Reiner appeared in court with his head shaved and wearing brown jail clothes. He talked to his lawyer briefly before the judge started the hearing and spoke only to answer yes to a question from the judge. He was not wearing the suicide prevention smock he wore in his first court appearance in December.

The judge told Reiner to return to court April 29 for the scheduling of a preliminary hearing where prosecutors will present evidence and a judge will decide if it's enough for Reiner to go to trial.

District Attorney Nathan Hochman said outside court that his office still hasn't decided whether it will seek the death penalty for Reiner.

— From wire reports



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Mayweather, Pacquiao agree to rematch

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao have agreed to a rematch of their landmark 2015 bout.

Their second fight will be held Sept. 19 in Las Vegas, the boxing icons announced Monday. The rematch, which will be streamed on Netflix, will be the first boxing event to be held at Sphere, the immersive event venue east of the Strip.

Mayweather, who turns 49 years old on Tuesday, announced his intention last week to end his nine-year retirement from competitive boxing.

The 47-year-old Pacquiao ended his own four-year retirement last year, and he is scheduled to meet Ruslan Provodnikov on April 18 in the second bout of his comeback.

Mayweather and Pacquiao didn't announce a weight class or length for their second bout.

The two most prominent boxers of their generation will meet again 11 years after Mayweather beat Pacquiao by decision in a fight that didn't live up to the dec-

ade of hype preceding it. The bout's promoters claimed it was still the most profitable fight in history, setting pay-per-view records and attracting worldwide attention.

"I already fought and beat Manny once," Mayweather said in a statement. "This time will be the same result."

Pacquiao later revealed he fought with a shoulder injury because he didn't want to postpone such an important event. He was unable to apply his usual offensive pressure to Mayweather, who employed his usual defense-first strategy while easing to victory.

"The fans have waited long enough — they deserve this rematch," Pacquiao said. "I want Floyd to live with the one loss on his professional record and always remember who gave it to him."

The fighters' first meeting happened more than a half-decade after fans first began to clamor for an obvious matchup between two similarly-sized greats. Both sides blamed the other for the de-

lay at times, but Mayweather always asserted he would fight whoever he wanted, whenever he wanted — leading many fans to believe Mayweather waited to accept the bout until he felt age had taken a bit of sting out of Pacquiao's famously vicious punches.

Both fighters are now much more than a decade removed from their primes, but Mayweather and Pacquiao remain two of the biggest names in boxing.

After Mayweather beat Conor McGregor in 2017 and retired with a 50-0 record, he spent much of his 40s competing in lucrative boxing "exhibitions" against YouTubers and fringe competitors while largely maintaining his lavish lifestyle outside the ring. He is currently in legal disputes with multiple alleged creditors over issues ranging from unpaid rent on a Manhattan apartment to outstanding jewelry bills.

Mayweather has announced another exhibition against 59-year-old Mike Tyson this spring, although the bout still doesn't

have a location or date.

Pacquiao ran unsuccessfully for the presidency of his native Philippines and then lost in the Philippine Senate election last May. He returned to the ring two months after that political setback, fighting WBC welterweight champion Mario Barrios to a majority draw while trying to become the oldest 147-pound champion.

The rematch is the latest bout to land on Netflix as the platform continues to scoop up top fights for its live sports programming. The streamer showcased Terence Crawford's victory over Canelo Álvarez last year, and it will present heavyweight champ Tyson Fury's comeback bout in April.

The Sphere venue, which opened in 2023, hosted a UFC show in 2024. UFC President Dana White said the promotion had to pay roughly \$20 million to produce that show — about 10 times more than a normal UFC pay-per-view event — because of the venue's unusual capabilities and requirements.

Skubal intends to make only one start for Team USA

Associated Press

LAKELAND, Fla. — Detroit Tigers ace Tarik Skubal plans to make only one start for the United States in the World Baseball Classic, regardless of how far Team USA advances.

The two-time AL Cy Young Award winner wants to remain on a regular spring training regimen and ramp up for opening day mostly with Detroit.

"The reason I didn't announce it (sooner) was I wanted to keep the momentum on the WBC, but I'm just making one start and then I'll stick around for a few games," Skubal told reporters Monday in Florida. "I haven't determined what games I'm going to watch. If they go to the finals, I think I'm going to try and lobby to just go watch and be with the

guys. But yeah, I'm just making one start and getting back on track and getting back to here."

Skubal made his first Grapefruit League start Monday, striking out four over two scoreless innings of two-hit ball in the Tigers' 3-0 loss to Minnesota. He is expected to pitch for Detroit again Sunday against Toronto and then start for the U.S. late next week during WBC pool play in Houston.

After that, the rest of his outings this spring will come in a Tigers uniform, he said.

"It's kind of the best of both worlds. That was the communication I had with those guys," Skubal said. "There's some risk obviously, and I'm trying to do both things, trying to pitch for Team USA, but also I understand

I need to be here with these guys and get ready for the season. I think it's kind of the best of both worlds in that aspect, and I'm grateful they took me in that capacity."

Skubal, who can become a free agent in the fall, is scheduled to start Detroit's season opener March 26 in San Diego. The 29-year-old left-hander won his salary arbitration hearing with the Tigers this month and will be paid \$32 million this season instead of the team's \$19 million offer.

The WBC runs from March 5-17 in Tokyo, Houston, San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Miami, where the final will be played for the second straight time.

"The whole point of me doing the WBC was to make sure that I

could stay on a normal workload of a spring training regimen and be able to make a start for Team USA and then come back here and continue my normal routine to get ready for opening day," Skubal said. "I think everything's going to stay the same. I'm not ramping up earlier than I need to. I don't want that narrative out there. I'm treating this as I'm going to Team USA, making a start, coming back to Lakeland and getting ready to go for opening day."

Skubal, a two-time All-Star, has won the past two AL Cy Young Awards and ERA titles. He was 13-6 with a career-best 2.21 ERA in 31 starts last season, striking out 241 and walking 33 in 195⅓ innings. His 0.891 WHIP topped qualified pitchers.

No. 14 Kansas tops No. 5 Houston in rebound

Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Tre White scored a season-high 23 points and No. 14 Kansas bounced back from a surprising defeat with a 69-56 victory over No. 5 Houston on Monday night.

Freshman star Darryn Peterson added 14 points on 5-for-14 shooting in 30 minutes for the Jayhawks (21-7, 11-4 Big 12), who fell six spots in this week's AP Top 25 following an 84-68 loss at home Saturday to unranked Cincinnati.

Bryson Tiller had 11 points, 10 rebounds and three blocks for Kansas, which handed the scuffling Cougars (23-5, 11-4) their

third consecutive defeat — all against top-15 opponents.

Kingston Flemings scored 16 on 6-of-18 shooting for Houston, which hadn't dropped three straight games since January 2017. The Cougars shot 32% from the field, including 5-for-24 (21%) from 3-point territory.

The Jayhawks haven't lost consecutive home games since the 1988-89 season, Roy Williams' first as coach. They are 52-1 on ESPN's Big Monday in Allen Fieldhouse, including 41-0 under coach Bill Self. Two weeks ago, they took down top-ranked Arizona at The Phog.

No. 18 North Carolina 77, No. 24 Louisville 74: Seth Trimble scored a career-high 30 points and hit two key free throws with 12.3 seconds left to help the host Tar Heels hold off the Cardinals.

Trimble's free throws made it a two-possession game after Louisville had chopped North Carolina's 16-point second-half lead all the way down to 74-71.

Freshman Mikel Brown Jr. hit a desperation 3-pointer with 1.3 seconds left to pull the Cardinals within 76-74. They were able to foul Derek Dixon to extend the game with 0.8 seconds left, but Dixon made the second of his two free throws. They had a final

chance, but Ryan Conwell couldn't get off the tying shot in time after catching a long in-bounds heave.

Henri Veesaar and Luka Bogavac each added 12 points for the Tar Heels (22-6, 10-5 Atlantic Coast Conference), who again played without injured freshman star Caleb Wilson.

Brown, a high-end NBA prospect, scored 24 points while Conwell added 23 for Louisville (20-8, 9-6). The Cardinals shot 38.8% and went 14-for-39 from 3-point range. But they missed their first 10 shots out of halftime and had to battle uphill the rest of the night.

No. 1 Duke, No. 2 Arizona, No. 3 Michigan to get major tests

Associated Press

The committee that will select the NCAA Tournament field has zeroed in on a clear top tier of Duke, Arizona and Michigan.

Those three teams — now ranked 1-2-3 atop the AP Top 25 — have matching 25-2 records and a similar path this week: a Tuesday game against an opponent lower down the conference standings followed by a challenging test against a top-15 squad.

The Blue Devils, who pushed their record total of No. 1 appearances to 148 on Monday, visit Notre Dame before hosting No. 11 Virginia on Saturday in the Atlantic Coast Conference. In the Big 12, the second-ranked Wildcats visit Baylor before hosting No. 14 Kansas on Saturday.

And in the Big Ten, the Wolverines follow a home game against Minnesota with Friday's trip to No. 10 Illinois.

The committee had Michigan as its top overall seed in Saturday's reveal of the top 16 seeds for March Madness, followed by Duke and Arizona. But the Blue Devils beat the Wolverines and the Wildcats won at Houston later that day, shuffling the order in Monday's new AP poll.

No matter the order, selection committee chairman and Sun Belt commissioner Keith Gill pointed to that trio as having a clear separation from Iowa State, the fourth 1-seed in those preliminary rankings.

And those rankings generally experience only minor fluctuations by Selection Sunday. For example, 25 of the 32 teams

(78.1%) to hold a No. 1 seed in the preliminary rankings since the debut show in 2017 ultimately secured a 1-seed for the NAAs. That data excludes 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic forcing the cancellation of that year's tournament.

As of Monday afternoon, KenPom and Evan Miyakawa ranked the order as Michigan-Duke-Arizona, while Bart Torvik had it Michigan-Arizona-Duke.

"This is where there was some consensus though in terms of these teams being 1, 2 and 3," Gill said during Saturday's CBS show to unveil the seedings. "When we get to the 4 overall seed, that's where there was a lot more debate."

Round 2

The Big East has a marquee throwdown between its top two teams, with sixth-ranked UConn (25-3) hosting No. 15 St. John's on Wednesday. That comes just shy of three weeks since the Red Storm took an 81-72 win at Madison Square Garden to end the Huskies' 18-game winning streak.

St. John's (22-5) has won 13 straight games since falling to Providence in early January.

Notable matchups

Four other games stand out on the AP Top 25 schedule:

■ No. 8 Purdue hosts No. 13 Michigan State on Thursday in the first meeting between the longtime Big Ten foes.

■ No. 4 Iowa State hosts No. 16 Texas Tech on Saturday in the Big 12, with the

Red Raiders trying to regroup after losing AP preseason All-America selection JT Toppin to a season-ending knee injury.

■ There are two ranked-vs.-ranked games in the Southeastern Conference on Saturday, with No. 7 Florida hosting No. 20 Arkansas, and No. 17 Alabama visiting No. 22 Tennessee looking to avenge an earlier home loss.

Still unbeaten

The nation's lone undefeated team remains Miami (Ohio) of the Mid-American Conference, which opens this week at 27-0 and with a No. 21 ranking.

The RedHawks have a pair of road games against teams that enter the week with a combined 7-22 league record, first with Tuesday's stop at Eastern Michigan and then Friday's visit to Western Michigan.

Watch list

Wisconsin (19-8) fell out of the poll from No. 24 last week and was the leading vote-getter among unranked teams. The Badgers' schedule this week takes them to the Pacific Northwest in the westernmost reaches of the Big Ten's coast-to-coast footprint, starting with Wednesday's game at Oregon followed by Saturday's trip to Washington.

Saint Mary's (25-4) is next up. The Gaels host 23-win Santa Clara on Wednesday, then host No. 9 Gonzaga on Saturday to close the regular season in the West Coast Conference.

Spurs power past Pistons' 'bully ball'

Associated Press

DETROIT — The San Antonio Spurs refused to let the Detroit Pistons rough them up, responding to physical play with toughness and talent in a potential preview of the NBA Finals.

Victor Wembanyama had 21 points, 17 rebounds and six blocks, Devin Vassell scored 28 and San Antonio beat Detroit 114-103 on Monday night.

"It's definitely a night where we confirmed progression and confirmed potential as well," Wembanyama said. "That was a good test."

The Spurs passed it — even with their superstar struggling with his shot.

Wembanyama was 6-for-16, but his teammates more than made up for it with Vassell making seven 3-pointers and three other teammates scoring in double figures. San Antonio combined to make 18 of 40 shots beyond the arc.

"We know how talented

Wemby is and how impactful he can be, but it's not a one-man show over there," Pistons coach J.B. Bickerstaff said. "They have a bunch of talented perimeter players."

The Spurs have won a season-high nine games in a row and trail only the defending champion Oklahoma City Thunder in the Western Conference.

Eastern Conference-leading Detroit, which had won five straight, host Oklahoma City on Wednesday night in another opportunity to find out how they measure up against the league's best teams.

Cade Cunningham ended up missing 21 of 26 shots and finishing with 16 points and 10 assists with Stephon Castle guarding him most of the game.

"I don't know what the playoffs are like, but I know we're going to need some of that," said Wembanyama, who is in his third season with a franchise that hasn't been in the postseason since 2019.

The Pistons, meanwhile, are trying to take the next step this season by advancing in the playoffs for the first time since 2008.

Detroit had one of the most remarkable turnarounds in league history last season and ended a 15-game losing streak in the playoffs in the first round against the New York Knicks, but was still eliminated.

Against San Antonio, tempers flared in the first half.

Cunningham was called for an offensive foul after extending his arms and knocking Castle down on the court.

Spurs forward Keldon Johnson responded by pushing Cunningham and Pistons center Jalen Duren, who was recently suspended by the league, pointed his right finger in Johnson's face.

"That sparked a lot of energy on our team because we're not going to back down," Castle said.

After a review, Johnson and Duren were called for technical fouls in the second quarter of the closely contested game.

The NBA suspended center Isaiah Stewart for seven games earlier this month after he left the bench during a fight in Detroit's game at Charlotte, and he was still serving the suspension during the Spurs' visit. Duren was forced to sit for two games for initiating the altercation.

Wembanyama said the Pistons play "bully ball," and added that he was glad to experience their physical style.

"This is probably the team that is most capable of playing that ball," he said.

San Antonio, it turns out, can handle itself just fine against teams like Detroit.

"They are going to test your toughness," Spurs coach Mitch Johnson said. "Detroit just toes the line. I don't think they cross it."

Kings end 16-game skid with victory over Grizzlies

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — The losses had mounted. Sacramento had never suffered through a streak of futility this long.

For 16 games, the Kings went to the locker room facing the frustration of another setback. They had eclipsed the franchise's worst losing streak of 14 games, set when the team played in Cincinnati and was known as the Royals.

The misery finally ended Monday night as Sacramento, behind veterans Russell Westbrook and DeMar DeRozan, beat the injury-plagued Memphis Grizzlies 123-114.

"Obviously, you do not want that with your name," Kings coach Doug Christie said of the losing streak. "But there are points in this where I'm really proud of how our guys continued to evolve."

Said DeRozan: "Nobody wants to lose, especially the streak that we were on. I just felt good to get that monkey off your back."

Sacramento hadn't won since beating visiting Washington 125-115 on Jan. 16. The Kings' previous road win was Dec. 6 at Miami, and their only road win against a Western Conference opponent this season was Nov. 22 over Denver.

On Monday night, Sacramento held on thanks to a strong fourth quarter from Westbrook and two-way player Daeqwon Plowden. Both scored 10 points in the period, totaling 20 of the Kings' 24 points in the fourth. DeRozan and Plowden each finished with 19 points.

The last four losses in the streak were barely competitive, with Sacramento falling by an

average margin of 27 points. This time, it was able to withstand short bursts by Memphis, and never let the Grizzlies get closer than seven points in the final five minutes.

"We've had this opportunity to get through it many, many times," Christie said. "Sometimes it just keeps getting you, and then in your head you're thinking: 'When's that moment going to come?'"

Players said there was no big celebration to go with the win. None were willing to say this would be a springboard for the rest of the season, but there was relief in the locker room.

"It gives us a good momentum," said rookie center Maxime Raynaud, who finished with 10 points and 13 rebounds. "On top of that, it lifts the spirits up a little bit."

"I'm glad that we finally broke it, and hopefully we can start a winning streak the other way."

Rockets 125, Jazz 105: Jabari Smith Jr. had 31 points and nine rebounds and Amen Thompson scored 20 points as host Houston beat Utah.

Smith hit his first five shots and matched a career-high with 14 points in the first quarter. He converted 12 of 17 shots overall and made six 3-pointers.

Thompson shot 8 for 9 from the field and finished with seven rebounds, three assists and two steals.

Kevin Durant scored 18 points and added a season-high 12 assists. Reed Sheppard scored 15 points off the bench.

With the win, the Rockets (35-21) moved into third place in the Western Conference behind Oklahoma City and San Antonio.