

Military laser downs border patrol drone

Bloomberg

The Pentagon accidentally shot down a Customs and Border Protection drone on the Texas border with Mexico using a high-energy laser, according to people familiar with the matter, weeks after another incident led to confusion and exposed communication lapses among several US agencies.

The Defense Department didn't realize the drone was being flown by CBP when it shot it down, the people said. The military had not first coordinated the use of the laser system with the Federal Aviation Administration, which was notified Wednesday after the event occurred, according to two of the people, who were granted anonymity to discuss it.

The FAA didn't comment on the specific details of the episode but said in a statement Thursday evening that it already had temporary flight re-

strictions in place for the area around Fort Hancock in Texas. "The TFR has been expanded to include a greater radius to ensure safety," the agency said, adding that because of the location of the restrictions, commercial flights are unaffected.

The agency's notice on the restrictions cites "special security reasons" and says no pilots may enter the airspace, with some exclusions for medical emergencies and search and rescue. They are currently set to remain in effect into late June.

"Our heads are exploding over the news that DoD reportedly shot down a Customs and Border Protection drone using a high risk counter-unmanned aircraft system," Democrats on the House Transportation and Infrastructure and Homeland Security Committees said in a statement Thursday night.

The lawmakers, including Representatives Rick Larsen,

André Carson and Bennie Thompson, said the issues stem from a lack of appropriate training for counter-drone operators and poor coordination among the Pentagon, Department of Homeland Security and FAA.

Under the law, the Pentagon has the authority to detect and mitigate threats from drones near sensitive military facilities and assets. But the military is supposed to coordinate counter-drone measures with the Transportation Department and the FAA beforehand if they might affect aviation safety or civilian operations. Two people familiar with the matter said that coordination hasn't been taking place.

The CPB drone operators didn't inform the military's laser unit that it was launching, according to one official.

Earlier this month, the FAA temporarily closed the airspace near El Paso because of concerns over the use of the same

laser system and the potential effects on civilian aircraft at El Paso International Airport.

The FAA imposed flight restrictions, which drew a backlash from local officials and were initially intended to last 10 days, on Feb. 10 but lifted them the following day.

Administration officials, including Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy, said the closure occurred because drones flown by Mexican drug cartels had breached American airspace. Yet other people familiar with the situation said it was really because of the Department of Homeland Security's operation of the Pentagon's laser system without coordination with the FAA.

One of the people with knowledge of the latest event said the agencies are struggling to figure out how this could have happened so soon after the last incident.

Pentagon says Scouting America to alter policies

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Scouting America will alter several policies at the urging of the Pentagon, including one targeting transgender youths, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced Friday as he pushes a campaign against military support for diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

Some of the changes mirror what the organization suggested to the Defense Department in January, which included discontinuing its Citizenship in Society merit badge and introducing a Military Service merit badge as well as waiving registration fees for the children of

military personnel.

Under Hegseth, the Pentagon has taken aim at the military's partnership with Scouting America, decrying its historic rebrand in 2024 from the Boy Scouts and other changes in recent years that he sees as part of "woke culture" efforts that he wants to root out.

Hegseth said in a video posted on X that the Pentagon will "vigorously review" the changes the organization has made in six months and will cease its support of Scouting America if it fails to comply.

"We hope that doesn't happen, but it could," Hegseth said. "Ideally I believe the Boy

Scouts should go back to being the Boy Scouts as originally founded, a group that develops boys into men. Maybe someday."

In a statement released Friday, Scouting America didn't mention the policy change targeting transgender youths, but it noted its need to comply with an executive order from President Donald Trump that targeted diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

Scouting America also pointed out that it maintained its new Scouting America name and "preserved our service to the more than 200,000 girls who participate in our programs."

The organization began allowing gay youth in 2013, ended a blanket ban on gay adult leaders in 2015 and announced in 2017 that it would accept transgender students. It began accepting girls as Cub Scouts as of 2018 and into the flagship Boy Scout program — renamed Scouts BSA — in 2019. As of May 2024, more than 6,000 girls had earned the coveted Eagle Scout rank.

Scouting America said the policy changes deepen the organization's century-old partnership with the military, which has included Scouts meeting on or near military installations in the U.S. and abroad.

Anthropic refuses to bend to Pentagon on AI safeguards

Associated Press

A public showdown between the Trump administration and Anthropic is hitting an impasse as military officials demand the artificial intelligence company bend its ethical policies by Friday or risk damaging its business.

Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei drew a sharp red line 24 hours before the deadline, declaring his company “cannot in good conscience accede” to the Pentagon’s final demand to allow unrestricted use of its technology.

Anthropic, maker of the chatbot Claude, can afford to lose a defense contract. But the ultimatum this week from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth posed broader risks at the peak of the company’s meteoric rise from a little-known computer science research lab in San Francisco to one of the world’s most valuable startups.

If Amodei doesn’t budge, mil-

itary officials have warned they will not just pull Anthropic’s contract but also “deem them a supply chain risk,” a designation typically stamped on foreign adversaries that could derail the company’s critical partnerships with other businesses.

And if Amodei were to cave, he could lose trust in the booming AI industry, particularly from top talent drawn to the company for its promises of responsibly building better-than-human AI that, without safeguards, could pose catastrophic risks.

Anthropic said it sought narrow assurances from the Pentagon that Claude won’t be used for mass surveillance of Americans or in fully autonomous weapons. But after months of private talks exploded into public debate, it said in a Thursday statement that new contract language “framed as compromise was paired with legalese that would allow those safe-

guards to be disregarded at will.”

That was after Sean Parnell, the Pentagon’s top spokesman, posted on social media that “we will not let ANY company dictate the terms regarding how we make operational decisions” and added the company has “until 5:01 p.m. ET on Friday to decide” if it would meet the demands or face consequences.

Emil Michael, the defense undersecretary for research and engineering, later lashed out at Amodei, alleging on X that he “has a God-complex” and “wants nothing more than to try to personally control the US Military and is ok putting our nation’s safety at risk.”

That message hasn’t resonated in much of Silicon Valley, where a growing number of tech workers from Anthropic’s top rivals, OpenAI and Google, voiced support for Amodei’s stand late Thursday in an open letter.

US allowing embassy staff to leave Israel

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — The U.S. Embassy in Israel on Friday told its staff that it could leave the country and urged anyone considering departure to do so immediately, as the threat of an American strike on Iran looms.

Ambassador Mike Huckabee told embassy employees in an email that discussions with officials in Washington had led to a decision authorizing departures for those who wished to leave.

Meanwhile, the State Department said Secretary of State Marco Rubio will make a quick trip to Israel early next week.

The State Department said in a statement that Rubio would visit Israel on Monday and Tuesday to “discuss a range of regional priorities including Iran, Lebanon, and ongoing efforts to implement President Trump’s 20-Point Peace Plan for Gaza.”

Huckabee’s email was recounted to The Associated Press by someone involved with the U.S. mission who wasn’t authorized to share details.

Sent before 10:30 a.m., it urged staff considering departure to do so quickly, advising them to focus initially on getting any flight out of Israel and to then make their way to Washington.

“Those wishing to take AD should do so TODAY,” Huckabee wrote, using an acronym for “authorized departure.”

“While there may be outbound flights over the coming days, there may not be,” he added.

Huckabee said that there was no need for panic, but for those desiring to leave, it was important to make plans soon.

Sweden intercepts suspected Russian drone during visit by French carrier

Associated Press

STOCKHOLM — Sweden’s military has intercepted a suspected Russian drone off the south of the country as a French aircraft carrier was docked in the port of Malmö, officials said.

The armed forces said Thursday that a Swedish naval ship observed the suspected drone during a patrol in the Öresund, the strait that divides Sweden from Denmark. They said that unspecified countermeasures were taken to disrupt the drone, and that contact with it was then lost.

The French nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle is in the southern Swedish city of Malmö this week as part of regular NATO exercise activities. Malmö is located on the Öresund, opposite Denmark’s capital, Copenhagen.

French military spokesperson Guillaume Vernet told The Associated Press that the drone was detected on Wednesday and handled by Swedish forces integrated into a security system around the carrier.

He said Friday that the drone was more than 6 miles from the

Charles de Gaulle.

“This system showed it is robust, and this event had no impact on the activity of the aircraft carrier battle group,” Vernet said.

Swedish Defense Minister Pål Jonson told public broadcaster SVT Thursday evening that the suspected violation of Swedish airspace by a drone happened in connection with a Russian military ship being in Swedish territorial waters. Asked what country he thinks the drone belongs to, he replied: “Probably Russia.”

Bill Clinton says he 'did nothing wrong'

Former president grilled by members of Congress over relationship with Epstein

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former President Bill Clinton told members of Congress on Friday that he “did nothing wrong” in his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein and saw no signs of his abuse, yet he faced hours of grilling from lawmakers over his connections to the disgraced financier from more than two decades ago.

“I saw nothing, and I did nothing wrong,” the former Democratic president said in an opening statement he shared on social media at the outside of the deposition.

The closed-door deposition in Chappaqua, N.Y., marks the first time a former president has been compelled to testify to

Congress. It came a day after Clinton’s wife, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, sat with lawmakers for her own deposition. Hillary Clinton told lawmakers that she had no knowledge of how Epstein had sexually abused underage girls and had no recollection of even meeting him.

Bill Clinton has also not been accused of any wrongdoing. Yet lawmakers are grappling with what accountability looks like at a time when men around the world have been toppled from their high-powered posts for maintaining their connections with Epstein after he pleaded guilty in 2008 to state charges in Florida for soliciting prostitution from an underage girl.

“Men — and women for that matter — of great power and great wealth from all across the world have been able to get away with a lot of heinous crimes and they haven’t been held accountable and they have not even had to answer questions,” said Republican Rep. James Comer, the chair of the House Oversight Committee, before the deposition began.

Republicans were relishing the opportunity to scrutinize the former Democratic president under oath.

“No one’s accusing anyone of any wrongdoing, but I think the American people have a lot of questions,” Comer said.

Republicans have wanted to question Bill Clinton about Ep-

stein for years, especially as conspiracy theories arose following Epstein’s 2019 suicide in a New York jail cell while he faced sex trafficking charges.

Those calls reached a fever pitch late last year when several photos of the former president surfaced in the Department of Justice’s first release of case files on Epstein and Maxwell, a British socialite who was convicted of sex trafficking in December 2021 but maintains she’s innocent. Bill Clinton was photographed on a plane seated alongside a woman, whose face is redacted, with his arm around her. Another photo showed Clinton and Maxwell in a pool with another person whose face was redacted.

Judge lets White House ballroom project continue

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge on Thursday rejected a preservationist group’s request to block the Trump administration from continuing construction of a \$400 million ballroom where it demolished the East Wing of the White House.

U.S. District Judge Richard Leon ruled that the National Trust for Historic Preservation was unlikely to succeed on the merits of its bid to temporarily halt President Donald Trump’s project. He said the privately funded group based its challenge on a “ragtag group of theories” under the Administrative Procedure Act and the Constitution, and that the lawsuit would have a better shot if amended.

The preservationists sought an order pausing the ballroom project until it undergoes multiple independent reviews and wins approval from Congress.

Trump used his social media

account to hail the ruling as “Great news for America.” The Republican president said the project was ahead of schedule and under budget and “will stand long into the future as a symbol to the Greatness of America.”

Carol Quillen, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, said the group was “disappointed” that no injunction was issued, but “pleased that Judge Leon ruled that the National Trust has standing to bring this lawsuit, as we have asserted from the start.”

The White House announced the ballroom project over the summer. By late October, the Republican president had demolished the East Wing to make way for a ballroom that he said will fit 999 people. The White House said private donations, including from Trump himself, would pay for construction.

Netflix walks away from deal with Warner Bros.

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Netflix is walking away from its offer to buy Warner Bros. Discovery’s studio and streaming business in a stunning move that effectively puts Paramount in a position to take over its storied Hollywood rival.

On Thursday, Warner’s board announced that Skydance-owned Paramount’s latest offer to buy the entire company for \$31 per share was superior to the agreement it had previously struck with Netflix. Warner gave Netflix four business days to come up with a counteroffer — but Netflix instead responded less than two hours later, declining to raise its proposal. It said the new price it would have to pay made the deal “no longer financially attractive.”

“We believe we would have been strong stewards of Warner Bros.’ iconic brands,” Netflix’s

co-CEOs Ted Sarandos and Greg Peters said in a joint statement. “But this transaction was always a ‘nice to have’ at the right price, not a ‘must have’ at any price.”

A Paramount buyout of Warner Bros. Discovery would reshape Hollywood and the wider media landscape. And unlike Netflix — which was only eyeing Warner’s studio and streaming business — Paramount wants the entire company. That means HBO Max, cult-favorite titles like “Harry Potter” and even CNN could soon find themselves under the same roof as Paramount’s CBS, “Top Gun” and the Paramount+ streaming service.

The prospect of such a combination, which will still need the green light from both Warner shareholders and regulators, poses both antitrust concerns and questions of political influence.

Pakistan says it's in 'open war' with Afghanistan after strikes

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan and Afghanistan traded attacks in a dramatic escalation of tensions between the countries that Pakistan's defense minister said Friday means they are now in "open war."

Tensions have been high between the neighbors for months, with border clashes in October killing dozens of soldiers, civilians and suspected militants. Pakistan accuses Afghanistan's Taliban government of harboring militant groups that then stage attacks across the border and also of allying with its archrival India.

A Qatari-mediated ceasefire ended the fighting, although the two sides still occasionally trade fire. Several rounds of peace talks in Istanbul in November failed to produce a formal

agreement.

Late Thursday, Afghanistan launched a cross-border attack on Pakistan, saying it was in retaliation for deadly Pakistani airstrikes on Afghan border areas Sunday.

Pakistan then carried out airstrikes in Kabul and two other Afghan provinces early Friday.

After the strikes, Defense Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif said in an X post that Pakistan had hoped for peace in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of NATO forces in 2021 and expected the Taliban, which seized power in the country, to focus on the welfare of the Afghan people and regional stability. Instead, he said that the Taliban had turned Afghanistan "into a colony of India," with which Pakistan has periodically engaged in wars, clashes and

skirmishes since gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1947. India has had improved ties with Afghanistan recently, offering to enhance bilateral trade, to the annoyance of Islamabad.

"Our patience has now run out. Now it is open war between us," he said. There was no immediate reaction from Afghan officials.

Afghan authorities in the eastern Nangarhar province said that fighting was ongoing in the Torkham border area Friday morning. The province's information directorate said that Pakistani mortar fire hit civilian areas in Torkham, including a refugee camp, which had been evacuated overnight. In response, Afghanistan was targeting Pakistani army posts across the border, it said.

Maduro asks judge to toss out indictment

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The lawyer for deposed Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro asked a judge on Thursday to toss out the indictment against his client on the grounds that the United States has unconstitutionally violated his rights to defend himself by blocking Venezuelan funds to pay his legal costs.

Attorney Barry Pollack filed papers in Manhattan federal court, saying the U.S. government has violated his client's due process rights by blocking funds to defend him that should come from the Venezuelan government.

The court submission included a declaration from Maduro in which he said he understood that under the laws and practices of Venezuela, "I am entitled to have the government of Venezuela pay for my legal defense."

Maduro added that he has "been working" with Pollack on his legal defense and that he "is my counsel of choice." The declaration was signed "President Nicolas Maduro Moros."

Maduro and his wife have been in custody in New York since they were seized from their Venezuelan home in early January in a stealth nighttime U.S. military operation. They've pleaded not guilty.

A 25-page indictment against Maduro accused him and others of working with drug cartels and members of the military to facilitate the shipment of thousands of tons of cocaine into the U.S. If convicted, both he and his wife face life in prison.

As part of the purported conspiracy, Maduro and his wife allegedly ordering kidnappings, beatings and murders of those who owed them drug money, according to the indictment.

2 South Africans die fighting for Russia in Ukraine after recruitment scheme

Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — At least two South Africans have died fighting for Russia in the war in Ukraine after being tricked into traveling there by a recruitment scheme, South Africa's foreign minister said Thursday.

It was the first time South African authorities had confirmed any of their citizens who were allegedly lured to Russia with false promises of employment or training opportunities had been killed in the war.

Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola didn't name the two people who died or say when or where they had died, but the Foreign Ministry said their families had been informed.

Lamola spoke after he traveled to Durban to visit the fam-

ilies of 11 South Africans who returned home Wednesday after they were allegedly recruited last year in a scheme promising them security training in Russia and ended up involved in the war in Ukraine.

Four men caught up in the same scheme had previously been repatriated, while two remained in Russia with "severe injuries," Lamola said.

Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla, a daughter of former South African President Jacob Zuma, is being investigated by police for alleged involvement in luring those 17 men to Russia. She denied any wrongdoing but resigned as a lawmaker over the allegations. She is one of at least five people under investigation for sending the men to Russia, South African authorities said.

Lamola said the two people who died were not connected to the group allegedly recruited by Zuma-Sambudla, but they were "part of another recruitment drive or another scheme that took them there."

"The law must take its course," Lamola said regarding the cases of the 17 men who were allowed to leave the front lines in Ukraine after diplomatic negotiations between South Africa and Russia. "Everyone who is involved in this scheme must be held accountable and there must be consequences."

Ukraine has said it believes more than 1,700 Africans have been recruited to fight for Russia and several African nations have said some of their citizens have been tricked into fighting by offers of jobs or training.

UConn women roll to 46th straight victory

HARTFORD, Conn. — Azzi Fudd had 24 points and four steals in her final regular-season home game and Sarah Strong added 13 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists as top-ranked UConn cruised to an 84-52 victory over visiting Georgetown to extend its winning streak to 46 games.

Ashlynn Shade had 12 points, Kayleigh Heckel had 11 points and Blanca Quinonez finished with 10 points as the Huskies improved to 30-0 for the 10th time in program history. It was also the 29th 30-win season for UConn.

Summer Davis led Georgetown (14-16, 6-13) with 12 points.

Source: Colts give QB go-ahead to seek trade

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indianapolis Colts have given quarterback Anthony Richardson permission to find a trade partner, a person with knowledge of the decision told The Associated Press on Thursday. The person requested anonymity because no formal announcement is expected.

The Colts believed Richardson could become their franchise quarterback when they drafted him with the No. 4 overall selection in the 2023 NFL Draft, but nothing has gone according to plan for the Colts — or the injury-plagued former Florida star.

Also:

■ A person familiar with the deal told The Associated Press that the New York Jets have agreed to trade pass rusher Jermaine Johnson to the Tennessee Titans for defensive tackle T'Vondre Sweat.

— The Associated Press

Michigan State holds on for 1st win at Purdue since 2014

Associated Press

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Carson Cooper scored 15 points, Kur Teng had 13 and No. 13 Michigan State survived Braden Smith's missed 3-point attempt with a second to play for a 76-74 victory over No. 8 Purdue on Thursday night.

Jeremy Fears Jr. added 12 and Coen Carr had 11 for the Spartans (23-5, 13-4 Big Ten), who snapped a seven-game losing streak at Purdue dating

back to 2014.

Smith, who became the fifth player in Division I history to reach 1,000 career assists, finished with 12 points and 10 assists for Purdue (22-6, 12-5). Jack Benter had 11 points for the Boilermakers.

After Smith's two free throws closed the deficit to 66-64 with 5:48 left, the Spartans responded with a 6-0 run. Trailing 74-67, Smith hit a 3-pointer and a driving layup to trim the lead to

74-72 with 2:16 left.

Trailing 76-74, Purdue's Trey Kaufman-Renn missed a jumper in the lane that would have tied it with 8 seconds left. Michigan State's Cam Ward then missed the front end of one-and-one. Purdue got the rebound and called timeout with 3.4 seconds left to set up the final shot.

Michigan State shot 53% while Purdue hit 49%. Purdue had nine turnovers, three more than Michigan State.

Source: Union plans to survey players about WNBA's latest contract proposal

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Leaders of the WNBA players' union had a meeting with players Tuesday night and will send out a survey to their members to get feedback on the league's latest contract proposal, a person familiar with the negotiations said.

The league and the players have been unable to reach a new collective bargaining agreement since the union opted out of the previous deal, which expired last year. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Thursday night because details of the meeting had not been released to the public.

The last time the union sent out a survey to the players, in December, it was seeking a vote to authorize the seven-player executive committee to call a strike if needed, according to the person.

In a letter to union executive director Terri Carmichael Jackson that was obtained by the AP, 10 prominent WNBA player agents offered to help the union with the survey and asked for "transparency and coordinated communication rather than individual conversations. At this stage of negotiations, with time being of the essence, alignment and shared information will best serve the players and the Union."

Front Office Sports was the first to report about Tuesday's players meeting.

The WNBA told the union Monday during a virtual negotiating session that it needs to get a deal in place by March 10 to start the season on time, another person familiar with the discussions told The Associated Press. That person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity Monday because of the sensitive nature of the negotiations.

The player agents asked to review the league's current proposal for a new CBA, subject to signing a nondisclosure agreement, and offered to help with the survey questions so that they can "reinforce the importance of participation and encourage timely response from our clients."

If a labor deal is agreed to by March 10, it probably would be signed by the end of the month. The expansion draft for new franchises in Portland and Toronto would be held between April 1 and 6 according to a timetable obtained by the AP.

Free agent qualifying offers, including franchise player tags, would be sent out April 7 and 8. Teams would then have three days to negotiate with the more than 80% of players who are free agents. The signing period would take place from April 12-18.

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Knueppel breaks NBA rookie 3s record

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Charlotte's Kon Knueppel reached yet another milestone in a remarkable rookie season for the No. 4 overall pick from Duke.

The Hornets swingman broke Keegan Murray's NBA rookie record for 3-pointers, making his 207th Thursday night against the Indiana Pacers. Knueppel connected on five 3s in the first half and then broke the record in the third quarter off an assist from Sion James, his former college teammate.

Knueppel finished with 28 points and shot 8 of 12 beyond the arc as the Hornets throttled the Pacers 133-109. He leads the NBA with 209 3s.

"It's really just about making the right basketball play," Knueppel said. "My teammates are setting good screens and setting me up in good spots. The coaches as well. I'm just out there looking to make the right play for my team."

It took Murray 80 games in 2022-23 to establish the record — and Knueppel just 59 to surpass it. He said he did not realize the magnitude of the shot that set the mark.

"Honestly, I thought I needed seven," Knueppel said.

Golden State's Stephen Curry holds the single-season NBA record with 402 3s.

Knueppel is shooting 44.2% from 3-point range, making him a contender for NBA Rookie of the Year along with his former college teammate and roommate Cooper Flagg, the No. 1 overall pick of the Dallas Mavericks. He has also helped propel the long-suffering Hornets into playoff contention with 22 games left.

Charlotte has not made the playoffs since the 2015-16 season.

76ers 124, Heat 117: Tyrese Maxey broke Allen Iverson's franchise record for 3-pointers, finishing with five 3s and 28 points as Philadelphia beat visiting Miami.

Maxey also had 11 assists and helped steady the Sixers after they blew a 16-point half-time lead. Joel Embiid had 26 points and 11 rebounds and Kelly Oubre scored 21 points for Philadelphia, which has won three straight after dropping its previous four.

Bam Adebayo had 29 points and 14 rebounds and Tyler Herro scored 25 points for the Heat, who have lost two straight.

Maxey came in with 882 3-pointers, three behind Iverson, and broke the record with 1:38 left in the first quarter. He made all five of his 3s — a career high for a period — and scored 20 points in the first quarter alone. He finished 5 of 12 beyond the arc.

Maxey, 25, has 887 3-pointers midway through his sixth season; Iverson played his first 10 seasons and parts of two more for the Sixers.

Hawks 126, Wizards 96: Newcomers CJ McCollum and Corey Kispert combined for 58 points against their former team, leading host Atlanta to a win against Washington.

It was the second of a two-game home series for the Hawks against the team to which they traded Trae Young in January. The Hawks got McCollum and Kispert in exchange — a decision that paid off in this one.

Kispert scored 22 of his career-high 33 points in the first half, subbing in with 4:56 remaining in the first quarter and promptly going 5 for 5 beyond the 3-point arc over the next 10 minutes. He finished the night 6 of 11 on 3-point attempts.

McCollum, who has worked his way into the starting lineup since arriving, scored 25 points and had six rebounds and three assists.

Will Riley and Tre Johnson led the Wizards with 14 points apiece. Anthony Davis and Young, whom the Wizards traded for earlier this season, were both sidelined with injuries.

Spurs 126, Nets 110: Julian Champagnie scored 26 points to lead visiting San Antonio to its 11th straight victory.

Victor Wembanyama had his second straight quiet night offensively, finishing with 12 points, but the surging Spurs had plenty of balance against the lottery-bound Nets. Stephon Castle scored 18 points, De'Aaron Fox and Devin Vassell had 14 apiece, Keldon Johnson scored 13 and Dylan Harper had 12.

San Antonio (43-16) is on its longest winning streak since it won 13 straight in the 2015-16 season.

Michael Porter Jr. had 24 points and 14 rebounds for the Brooklyn, which have lost six straight. Reserve Day'Ron Sharpe had 14 points and 11 rebounds.

Rockets 113, Magic 108: Kevin Durant scored 26 of his season-high 40 points in the second half and Houston wiped out a 19-point deficit in less than four minutes to beat host Orlando.

Reed Sheppard came off the Houston bench to add 20 points, hitting five 3-pointers in the second half. Alperen Sengun had 16 points, six rebounds and five assists.

Desmond Bane led the Magic with 30 points. Paolo Banchero added 19 points, nine assists and eight rebounds.

Kings 130, Mavericks 121: Precious

Achiuwa had a career-high 29 points and added 12 rebounds, Maxime Raynaud scored 22 points and visiting Sacramento beat Dallas.

The Kings (14-47) have won two of their past three following a franchise-record 16-game losing streak. Averaging an NBA-low 110.1 points per game, they fell short of a season high by five points.

Naji Marshall scored a season-high 36 points, one short of his career best, and had 10 rebounds and six assists for the Mavericks (21-37), who have lost 11 of their last 13 games and six consecutive at home.

Trail Blazers 121, Bulls 112: Jerami Grant scored 27 points and Portland held on to hand host Chicago its 11th consecutive loss.

Toumani Camara scored 16 points, Robert Williams III had 14 points and 14 rebounds and Vit Krejci also scored 14 points for the Trail Blazers, who were without All-Star Deni Avdija (back) for the second straight game.

Matas Buzelis scored 20 points to lead the Bulls, who matched the third-longest losing streak in franchise history. Chicago last won against Miami on Jan. 31.

Pelicans 129, Jazz 118: Saddiq Bey scored 42 points, Zion Williamson had 20 and New Orleans won at Utah to open a two-game set.

The teams will meet again in Salt Lake City on Saturday night. The Pelicans, who opened a six-game trip, have won three straight and five of seven.

Ace Bailey led Utah with 23 points, and Brice Sensabaugh had 20.

Suns 113, Lakers 110: Royce O'Neale made a 3-pointer with 0.9 seconds remaining, Grayson Allen scored 28 points and short-handed Phoenix beat visiting Los Angeles after blowing a late 12-point lead.

Allen drove into the lane on the Suns' final possession before finding Collin Gillespie in the corner. Gillespie quickly swung the ball to an open O'Neale.

L.A.'s Austin Reaves missed an open corner 3 at the buzzer. Luka Doncic led the Lakers with 41 points, eight rebounds and eight assists.

Timberwolves 94, Clippers 88: Anthony Edwards scored 31 points, Donte DiVincenzo added 18 and surging Minnesota beat host Los Angeles.

Derrick Jones Jr. scored 18 points and Benedict Mathurin added 14 for the Clippers, who struggled from the outset with a season-low 38 points in the first half.

Whirlwind continues for Olympic hero

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Jack Hughes knows that, at some point, the chaos that has been his life since his gold-medal-winning overtime goal for the United States at the Milan Cortina Olympics will end.

The New Jersey Devils star isn't there yet. And might not be for a while.

The 24-year-old Hughes — his smile still missing the handful of teeth he lost in the Olympic final against Canada — received a loud and long ovation on the road in Pittsburgh on Thursday night, the latest in a series of “is this really happening?” moments since his overtime score on the final day of the Games gave the U.S. its first Olympic goal in men's hockey in 46 years.

During a brief pregame ceremony that included a nod to members of the gold-medal-winning U.S. women's team as well as Penguins and Team Canada captain Sidney Crosby, the crowd at PPG Paints Arena turned the volume way up when the spotlight swung to Hughes' No. 86.

Some of the 18,288 fans in attendance chanted “Huuuuuughhhes! Huuuuuughhhes!” before it morphed into “U-S-A! U-S-A!,” catching Hughes a little off guard.

“I was thinking going into the game, I knew they'd do something, but obviously, you know, Crosby's the biggest athlete here,” said Hughes, who had an assist on New Jersey's lone goal in a 4-1 loss to the Penguins. “So I'm sure they were cheering for Canada as well, but obviously a lot of proud Americans in the crowd tonight. And that was something I'll always remember.”

Pittsburgh fans did something similar 16 years ago for then Buffalo Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller, who was on the wrong end of Crosby's “golden goal” for Team Canada that

Brady Tkachuk slams TikTok video shared by White House as ‘clearly fake’

Associated Press

OTTAWA, Ontario — American hockey player Brady Tkachuk said Thursday that he did not appreciate a doctored TikTok video shared by the White House that made it look like he was disparaging Canadians after winning Olympic gold, calling it fake and something he would never say.

The video includes fabricated audio of Tkachuk referring to Canadians as “maple syrup eating (expletive),” with the expletive bleeped out. The video carries a note saying it “contains AI-generated media.”

“It's clearly fake because it's not my voice and not my lips moving,” Tkachuk said. “I'm not in control of any of those accounts. ... I know that those words would never come out of my mouth.”

Asked if he liked the video, Tkachuk said he did not: “I would never say that. That's not who I am.”

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Tkachuk also denied being the voice heard shouting “close the northern border” during Team USA's celebratory phone call with U.S. President Donald Trump after Sunday's 2-1 overtime win over Canada to win the gold medal at the Winter Olympics.

“I've been seeing stuff that people think it's me, but if you watch the video, that's not my voice and something that I never say,” Tkachuk said. “I don't really know how that kind of took a storm on its own when I play here and give everything I have here.”

Tkachuk, a 26-year-old Arizona native, is the captain of the NHL's Ottawa Senators and has played his entire career in the Canadian cap-

ital. He and other members of the U.S. team returned from Italy this week and are resuming the NHL season. Some attended Trump's State of the Union speech in Washington on Tuesday night and were cheered by those in attendance.

The U.S. women also beat Canada 2-1 in overtime, the first time the Americans swept both Olympic hockey tournaments. The celebration of the twin victories has been shadowed by U.S. politics almost since the final horn of the men's game.

Talking on a speakerphone in the postgame locker room, Trump extended an invitation to the White House to the men's team, then added, “We're going to have to bring the women's team, you do know that.” The president also joked that if he didn't extend the invitation, he would probably be impeached. Some of the men's players chuckled, something at least one said they regretted later. Tkachuk said he understood how the moment on the phone call could have been viewed by the women's players.

“I mean, I get it,” he said. “We supported them, they supported us. You can't control what other people say.”

The women's players didn't learn they had also been invited to the State of the Union until late Sunday, making it difficult to change travel plans already disrupted by bad weather on the East Coast.

In his address, Trump said plans were in the works to have the women's team visit the White House, though it was unclear when that could happen. The earliest the team could travel to Washington would be in late spring after the conclusion of the PWHL season.

capped the 2010 Games in Vancouver.

Miller and that U.S. team had to settle for silver. Hughes etched out his space in U.S. Olympic lore and earned gold with his overtime score in Italy. The last few days have been a whirlwind that included a trip to the White House and a cameo at President Donald Trump's State of the Union.

Hughes was celebrated at

home in New Jersey on Wednesday. To receive the same welcome against a Metropolitan Division rival, with the chance at another one on Saturday when the Devils visit St. Louis, is not something he anticipated.

“Obviously, it's not going to last forever, but just really cool,” he said.

Hughes admitted that the pace of things has not really al-

lowed him to process it all just yet. While re-entering the grind of the NHL regular season has been challenging after what he called “probably the best moment of my life,” his time at the rink has given him a welcome dose of routine.

“The best thing that's happened to me is getting back on the ice and playing,” he said. “Just so I have, like, four or five hours of no distractions.”

Marchand, Panthers resume playoff push

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Olympic silver medalist Brad Marchand scored twice, Evan Rodrigues got the first short-handed goal of his career and added an assist, and the Florida Panthers resumed their playoff push with a 5-1 victory over the Toronto Maple Leafs on Thursday night.

Marchand now has 27 goals, tying Sam Reinhart for the team lead. Olympic bronze medalist Anton Lundell had two assists for Florida, while Carter Verhaeghe and gold medalist Matthew Tkachuk also scored for the Panthers — the back-to-back Stanley Cup champions who began the night eight points out of the final Eastern Conference wild-card spot.

Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 28 shots for Florida, which had lost five of its last six games going into the break.

John Tavares scored for Toronto, which started the night six points out of a playoff berth and — like the Panthers — is looking for some late-season magic to get into the postseason. Joseph Woll stopped 31 shots.

Marchand — after watching a celebration of USA Hockey's Olympic gold medal to start the game, a win that came over his Canada club — opened the scoring just 3:18 into the contest, the start of a three-goal opening period for the Panthers.

Oilers 8, Kings 1: Connor McDavid secured his ninth 100-point season with a goal and an assist, Leon Draisaitl had a goal and three assists, and Edmonton snapped its four-game skid with a win at Los Angeles.

McDavid scored his 35th goal and Draisaitl his 30th during his fourth four-point game of the season as the Oilers again routed the opponent they've knocked out of the first round of the Stanley Cup playoffs in each of the past four seasons.

Jake Walman scored two goals, Zach Hyman had a goal and two assists, and Ty Emberson, Vasily Podkolzin and Andrew Mangiapane also scored in Edmonton's impressive rebound on a painful loss in Anaheim. Connor Ingram made 22 saves for the Oilers, who have returned from the Olympic break with 13 goals in two games.

Penguins 4, Devils 1: Connor Clifton and Egor Chinakhov scored 50 seconds apart in the third period as host Pittsburgh surged past Olympic hero Jack Hughes and reeling New Jersey.

Tommy Novak, serving as the first-line center while captain Sidney Crosby recovers from a lower-body injury sustained at the Milan Cortina Olympics, scored his 12th goal of the season. Blake Lizotte added an

empty-netter late for Pittsburgh, which has won eight of 10 to move into second place in the crowded Metropolitan Division.

Paul Cotter scored his sixth goal of the season for the Devils but couldn't halt New Jersey's slide. The Devils have dropped seven of eight to fall off the pace in the race for one of the Eastern Conference's two wild-card spots.

Red Wings 2, Senators 1 (OT): Dylan Larkin scored his second goal of the game at 1:50 of overtime and John Gibson made 26 saves as Detroit won at Ottawa.

Detroit tied it at 1 on a power play early in the second when Lucas Raymond fed Larkin at the side of the net for a one-timer past Senators goaltender Linus Ullmark.

Just over two minutes later, Simon Edvinsson stepped into Ottawa captain Brady Tkachuk, with the Senators forward's stick bouncing up and hitting him in the face. Tkachuk dropped to the ice, and Dylan Cozens jumped to his teammate's defense. Edvinsson and Cozens were both sent to the box.

Tkachuk returned to the ice before play resumed and skated to the penalty box to confront Edvinsson, drawing a 10-minute misconduct. Once in the box, Tkachuk continued to voice his displeasure.

Islanders 4, Canadiens 3 (OT): Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored 3:14 into overtime, rookie Matthew Schaefer had two goals in a 55-second span in the second period and visiting New York rallied to beat Montreal.

Schaefer has 18 goals to surpass Denis Potvin for the most by a rookie defenseman in team history. Schaefer, selected first overall in last year's draft, also moved past Phil Housley for the most goals in NHL history by an 18-year-old defenseman.

Islanders captain Anders Lee, skating in his 900th game, also scored and Ilya Sorokin made 21 saves to help New York win its third straight. Sorokin improved to 7-0-2 in his career against Montreal.

Blues 5, Kraken 1: Dylan Holloway had a hat trick and added an assist in his return from a sprained ankle, Joel Hofer made 23 saves and St. Louis came off the Olympic break with a win over visiting Seattle.

Jordan Kyrou and Holloway — activated from injured reserve before the game — scored in a 23-second span early in the second period to give St. Louis a 3-1 lead.

Holloway completed St. Louis' first hat trick of the season with 3:01 left, scoring into an empty net for his 11th of the season.

Predators 4, Blackhawks 2: Ryan O'Reilly scored with 3:16 remaining and

host Nashville scored three times in the third period in a victory over Chicago in the teams' first game following the Olympic break.

Filip Forsberg and Matthew Wood also scored for Nashville. Steven Stamkos scored his 29th of the season into an empty net in the final minute for the Predators, who had lost two in a row and five of their last seven games heading into the break. Justus Annunen stopped 21 of 23 shots.

Flyers 3, Rangers 2 (OT): Matvei Michkov scored his second goal of the game 2:10 into overtime and Samuel Ersson made 23 saves as Philadelphia won at New York.

Michkov beat Rangers goalie Igor Shesterkin for his 15th goal of the season after the Rangers failed to score on a power play to start the extra period.

Trevor Zegras also scored for the Flyers, who trailed 2-0 early in the second period before rallying for their second win since Jan. 23.

Wild 5, Avalanche 2: U.S. Olympian Matt Boldy had two goals and two assists, Filip Gustavsson stopped 44 shots and visiting Minnesota defeated Colorado for its sixth straight victory.

In Minnesota's first game after the Olympic break, Boldy extended his points streak to seven games, and fellow U.S. teammate Quinn Hughes had his team-leading 53rd assist of the season.

Flames 4, Sharks 1: Nazem Kadri scored two goals and Calgary beat host San Jose in the first game back from the Olympic break for both teams.

Connor Zary broke a tie early in the third period when he beat Yaroslav Askarov.

Kadri provided some needed insurance when he converted after a defensive-zone turnover by Timothy Liljegren for his second goal of the game.

Mikael Backlund added an empty-net goal to seal the victory.

Hurricanes 5, Lightning 4: Sebastian Aho scored a power-play goal through traffic midway through the third period to help Carolina beat visiting Tampa Bay.

Carolina pushed its point streak to 11 games, while Tampa Bay lost in regulation for only the second time since Dec. 18.

Bruins 4, Blue Jackets 2: Viktor Arvidsson scored twice, Joonas Korpisalo made 36 saves and Boston beat visiting Columbus in the first game for both teams after the three-week break for the Olympics.

Kirill Marchenko scored his 20th of the season for Columbus, and Merzlikins made 19 saves.