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Latest Houthi missiles fail to hit ships

Stars and Stripes

Houthi rebels fired two anti-ship ballistic missiles without effect Tuesday at commercial ships in the southern Red Sea, according to the U.S. Central Command.

The Iranian-backed Houthis, fighting to overthrow the Yemen government backed by Saudi Arabia, fired their latest missile salvo at 9:30 p.m. from Yemeni territory they control, according to a post on X, formerly Twitter, by CENTCOM.

"Multiple commercial ships in the area reported the impact of the [anti-ship ballistic missiles] into the surrounding wa-

ter though none have reported any damage," the post said. "These illegal actions endangered the lives of dozens of innocent mariners and continue to disrupt the free flow of international commerce."

The attack is the first reported since Iran on Monday sent the destroyer Alborz into the Red Sea, a move considered a challenge to a U.S.-led operation to protect commercial shipping there from continuing attacks.

Shipping firms are refusing to transit the Suez Canal into the Red Sea due to the risk involved, Bloomberg News reported

Tuesday. The most recent, Danish shipping giant Maersk, suspended its cargo traffic in the area that day.

A Houthi missile on Saturday reportedly struck the Maersk Hangzhou, after which the destroyer USS Graveley shot down two more missiles fired from Houthi-controlled areas. The next day, the Hangzhou was attacked by four small boats crewed by Houthis, according to CENTCOM.

U.S. helicopters from the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Graveley fired on the boats, sinking three and killing their crews, the com-

mand said.

The Houthis began attacking commercial vessels in November to show solidarity with Hamas, the militant group that killed approximately 1,200 people and captured scores of others in a surprise attack inside Israel on Oct. 7. Subsequently, Israel has mounted a military campaign against Hamas in Gaza, the Palestinian territory governed by the group, that has so far killed more than 22,000 people.

Tuesday's incident is the 24th attack against merchant shipping in the Red Sea since Nov. 19, CENTCOM said.

Israel on high alert day after strike on Hamas leader

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — The chief of Israel's Mossad intelligence service vowed Wednesday that the agency would hunt down every Hamas member involved in the Oct. 7 attack on Israel, no matter where they are.

He made the pledge a day after the deputy head of the Palestinian militant group was killed in a suspected Israeli strike in Beirut.

Israel has refused to comment on reports it carried out the killing, but the comments by David Barnea appeared to be the strongest indication yet it was behind the blast. He made a comparison to the aftermath of 1972 Munich Massacre, when Mossad agents tracked down and killed a string of Palestinian militants involved in abducting and killing Israeli athletes at that year's Olympic games.

Israel was on high alert Wednesday for an escalation with Lebanon's powerful Hez-

bollah militia after the strike in the Lebanese capital killed Saleh Arouri, the most senior Hamas member slain since the war in Gaza erupted nearly three months ago.

The implications of the killing for the war remain unclear. Israel has killed several top Hamas leaders over the years, only to see them quickly replaced. And the strike in Hezbollah's southern Beirut stronghold could cause the low-intensity fighting along the Lebanon border to boil over into all-out war.

Much depends on how Hassan Nasrallah — who has led Hezbollah since an Israeli strike killed his predecessor in 1992 — chooses to respond. He has previously vowed to retaliate for any Israeli targeting of allied militant leaders in Lebanon and was expected to deliver a speech Wednesday.

But Arouri's killing provided a morale boost for Israelis still reeling from the Oct. 7 attack as

the militants put up stiff resistance in Gaza and continue to hold scores of hostages. Arouri was the highest level Hamas figure killed so far in the conflict.

Barnea said the Mossad is "committed to settling accounts with the murderers who raided the Gaza envelope," referring to the area of southern Israel attacked on Oct. 7. He vowed to pursue everyone involved, "directly or indirectly," including "planners and envoys."

"It'll take time, as it took time after the Munich massacre, but we will put our hands on them wherever they are," he said. Barnea was speaking at the funeral of former Mossad head Zvi Zamir, who died at age 98 a day earlier.

Zamir headed the intelligence agency at the time of the 1972 Munich Olympic attack, in which Palestinian militants killed 11 members of the Israeli delegation. Israel subsequently killed members of the Black

September militant group who had carried out the attack.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli officials have repeatedly threatened to kill Hamas leaders wherever they are. The group's Oct. 7 attack from Gaza into southern Israel killed around 1,200 people, and some 240 others were taken hostage.

Israel claims to have killed a number of mid-level Hamas leaders in Gaza, but this would be the first time since the war that it has reached into another country to target the group's top leaders, many of whom live in exile around the region.

Arouri was the deputy of Hamas' supreme political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, and headed the group's presence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. He was also a key liaison with Hezbollah. The U.S. State Department had listed him as a terrorist and offered a \$5 million reward for information about him.

Carney sailors who shot down 14 drones receive Navy medals

By **DOUG G. WARE**
Stars and Stripes

Sailors serving on a destroyer in the Middle East received commendations on Tuesday for their roles in shooting down more than a dozen drones launched by militants more than two weeks ago, military officials said.

On Dec. 16, the destroyer USS Carney shot down 14 drones over the Red Sea, which borders Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The Pentagon said the attack drones were launched by Iranian-aligned Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, the commander of the 5th Fleet, visited the Carney on Tuesday in Bahrain to award medals to several sailors who helped shoot down the Houthi drones.

The Navy said the medals recognized the sailors for their “exceptional performance.” Cooper also recognized the entire crew of the Carney with the Combat Action Ribbon, which is

given for active participation.

Houthi rebels, who have been fighting a civil war in Yemen for a decade, have engaged with U.S. forces on multiple occasions in recent months.

Apart from sending the drones on Dec. 16, the rebels also have fired missiles across the region, in some cases in the direction of Israel.

“It’s very important to understand that the Houthis aren’t attacking just one country. They’re really attacking the international community,” said Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon’s top spokesman. “So, in effect, they’ve really become bandits along the international highway that is the Red Sea.”

The USS Carney has shot down many of the Houthis’ weapons. In mid-October, the warship shot down a barrage of missiles and drones that the Houthis fired and launched toward Israel.

Ceremony for slain general in Iran hit by deadly blasts

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Two bombs exploded minutes apart Wednesday at a commemoration for a prominent Iranian general slain in a U.S. drone strike in 2020, officials in Iran said, killing at least 103 people as the Middle East remains on edge over Israel’s war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for what appeared to be the deadliest militant attack to target Iran since its 1979 Islamic Revolution. The blasts shook the city of Kerman, about 510 miles southeast of the capital, Tehran, and sent shrapnel hurtling into a screaming crowd fleeing the first explosion. At least 211 people were wounded.

The gathering marked the fourth anniversary of the killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of the Revolutionary Guard’s elite Quds Force, in a U.S. drone strike in Iraq. The explosions occurred near his grave site as long lines of people gathered for the event.

Iranian state television and officials described the attacks as bombings, without immediately giving clear details of what

happened. Ahmad Vahidi, the interior minister, told state television that the first bomb detonated around 3 p.m., with the other going off some 20 minutes later. He said the second blast killed and wounded the most people.

Images and video shared on social media appeared to correspond with officials’ accounts, which said the first blast happened about 765 yards from Soleimani’s grave in the Kerman Martyrs Cemetery near a parking lot.

The crowd then rushed west along Shohada, or Martyrs, Street, where the second blast struck about 0.62 miles from the grave.

A delayed second explosion is often used by militants to inflict more casualties by targeting emergency personnel responding to an attack.

Iranian state TV and state-run IRNA news agency quoted emergency officials for the casualty figures, which rose rapidly in the hours after the explosions. Authorities said Thursday would be a national day of mourning.

Iran has multiple foes who could be behind the assault.

Wreckage from fatal Osprey crash returns to Iwakuni

By **ALEX WILSON**
AND **JONATHAN SNYDER**
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — U.S. forces have recovered at least a portion of the CV-22 Osprey that crashed in November off southwestern Japan, according to Air Force and Marine Corps spokespeople.

The Air Force wreckage was delivered to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, base spokesman 1st Lt. Aaron Ellis told

Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday.

The wreckage was raised Dec. 27 from the underwater crash site and arrived at the base on Saturday, according to a Sunday report by Japan Today that cited an anonymous source in the Iwakuni city government.

Lt. Col. Rebecca Heyse, a spokeswoman for Air Force Special Operations, declined Wednesday to verify that information. The command “will have additional details of what

wreckage was recovered and next steps in the coming days,” she told Stars and Stripes in an email.

“The investigations — the safety investigation board and the accident investigation board — are both being led by AFSOC general officers,” Heyse wrote. “The search and recovery operations are still being led by Special Operations Command Pacific.”

The recovery comes more than a month after the tiltrotor

crashed Nov. 29 off Yakushima, an island just south of Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan’s four main islands, during a routine training mission.

Since then, U.S. and Japanese crews have carried out continuous search and salvage operations to recover the Osprey and find the remains of the last of its crew members. Seven have been recovered and identified, but the body of Maj. Eric Spendlove, 36, of St. George, Utah, has not been found.

2nd Ivy League head resigns after testimony

Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Harvard University President Claudine Gay resigned Tuesday amid plagiarism accusations and criticism over testimony at a congressional hearing where she was unable to say unequivocally that calls on campus for the genocide of Jews would violate the school's conduct policy.

Gay is the second Ivy League president to resign in the past month following the congressional testimony — Liz Magill, president of the University of Pennsylvania, resigned Dec. 9.

Gay, Harvard's first Black president, announced her departure just months into her tenure in a letter to the Harvard community.

Following the congressional hearing, Gay's academic career came under intense scrutiny by conservative activists who unearthed several instances of al-

leged plagiarism in her 1997 doctoral dissertation. The Harvard Corporation, Harvard's governing board, initially rallied behind Gay, saying a review of her scholarly work turned up "a few instances of inadequate citation" but no evidence of research misconduct.

Days later, the Harvard Corporation said it found two additional examples of "duplicative language without appropriate attribution." The board said Gay would update her dissertation and request corrections.

The Harvard Corporation said the resignation came "with great sadness" and thanked Gay for her "deep and unwavering commitment to Harvard and to the pursuit of academic excellence."

Alan M. Garber, provost and chief academic officer, will serve as interim president until Harvard finds a replacement, the board said in a statement. Garber,

an economist and physician, has served as provost for 12 years.

Gay's resignation was celebrated by the conservatives who put her alleged plagiarism in the national spotlight. Christopher Rufo, an activist who has helped rally the GOP against higher education, said he's "glad she's gone."

"Rather than take responsibility for minimizing antisemitism, committing serial plagiarism, intimidating the free press, and damaging the institution, she calls her critics racist," Rufo said on X, formerly Twitter. "This is the poison" of diversity, equity and inclusion ideology, said Rufo.

Gay, in her letter, said it has been "distressing to have doubt cast on my commitments to confronting hate and to upholding scholarly rigor — two bedrock values that are fundamental to who I am — and frightening to be subjected to personal attacks and threats fueled by racial animus."

But Gay, who is returning to the school's faculty, added "it has become clear that it is in the best interests of Harvard for me to resign so that our community can navigate this moment of extraordinary challenge."

Gay, Magill and MIT's president, Sally Kornbluth, came under fire last month for their lawyerly answers to a line of questioning from New York Rep. Elise Stefanik, who asked whether "calling for the genocide of Jews" would violate the colleges' codes of conduct. The three presidents had been called before the Republican-led House Committee on Education and the Workforce to answer accusations that universities were failing to protect Jewish students amid rising fears of antisemitism worldwide and fallout from Israel's intensifying war in Gaza, which faces heightened criticism for the mounting Palestinian death toll.

Trump appeals ruling barring him from Maine primary ballot

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — Former President Donald Trump on Tuesday appealed a ruling by Maine's secretary of state barring him from the state's primary ballot over his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Trump, the early front-runner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, appealed the Maine decision by Democrat Shenna Bellows, who became the first secretary of state in history to bar someone from running for the presidency under the rarely used Section 3 of the 14th Amendment. That provision prohibits those who "engaged in insurrection" from holding office.

The former president is expected to soon appeal a similar ban by the Colorado Supreme Court. That appeal would go to the U.S. Supreme Court, while Bellows' action is being appealed to a Maine Superior Court.

Trump's appeal on Tuesday asks that Bellows be required to place him on the March 5 primary ballot. The appeal argues that she abused her discretion and relied on "untrustworthy evidence."

"The secretary should have recused herself due to her bias against President Trump, as demonstrated by a documented history of prior statements prejudging the issue presented," Trump's attorneys wrote.

Bellows reiterated to The Associated Press on Tuesday that her ruling was on pause pending the outcome of the appeal, which had been expected.

"This is part of the process. I have confidence in my decision and confidence in the rule of law. This is Maine's process and it's really important that first and foremost, every single one of us who serves in government uphold the Constitution and the laws of the state," she said.

Prosecutors: Menendez cashed in on connections

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez used his international clout to help a friend get a multi-million-dollar deal with a Qatari investment fund, partly by taking actions favorable to Qatar's government, federal prosecutors said Tuesday in a revised indictment.

The new allegations deepen the legal challenges for Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat, who was already charged with wielding his political influence to secretly advance Egypt's interests.

The superseding indictment in New York said the senator and his wife accepted bribes of gold bars and cash from New Jersey real estate developer Fred Daibes as a reward for several corrupt acts that included his help securing a major investment from the Qatari fund. Prosecutors said Menendez introduced Daibes to a member of

Qatar's royal family who was also a principal in the investment firm, met personally with Qatari officials and made public statements supportive of Qatar while the real estate deal was being negotiated.

The indictment said the Qatari investor eventually invested tens of millions of dollars in Daibes' development project, in a deal finalized in 2023.

Adam Fee, a lawyer for Menendez, said in a statement that prosecutors lacked proof of any wrongdoing.

"What they have instead is a string of baseless assumptions and bizarre conjectures based on routine, lawful contacts between a Senator and his constituents or foreign officials. They are turning this into a persecution, not a prosecution," he said.

Tim Donohue, a lawyer for Daibes, said he had no immediate comment.

Ukraine sets sights on Russian border

Associated Press

Russia said Wednesday it shot down 12 missiles fired at one of its southern regions bordering Ukraine, as Kyiv's forces seek to embarrass the Kremlin and puncture President Vladimir Putin's argument that life is going on as normal despite the 22-month war.

The situation in the border city of Belgorod, which came under two rounds of shelling on Wednesday morning, "remains tense," said regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov, writing on Telegram.

"Air defense systems worked," he said, promising more details about possible damage after inspecting the area later in the day, part of a New

Year's holiday week in Russia.

Ukraine fired two Tochka-U missiles and seven rockets at the region late Tuesday, followed by six Tochka-U missiles and six Vilkha rockets on Wednesday, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

The Soviet-built Tochka-U missile system has a range of up to 75 miles and a warhead that can carry cluster munitions. Ukraine has received some cluster munitions from the United States but the Tochka-U and Vilkha can use their own cluster munitions.

The Russian side of the frontier has come under increasingly frequent attack in recent days. Throughout the war, border villages have sporadically

been targeted by Ukrainian artillery fire, rockets, mortar shells and drones launched from thick forests where they are hard to detect.

Lately, as Russia fired missiles and drones at Ukrainian cities, Kyiv's troops have aimed at Belgorod's regional capital, which is about 60 miles north of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city.

Belgorod, with a population of about 340,000, is the biggest Russian city near the border. It can be reached by relatively simple and movable weapons such as multiple rocket launchers.

On Saturday, shelling of Belgorod killed 25 people, including five children, in one of the

deadliest strikes on Russian soil since Moscow's full-scale invasion. Another civilian was killed Tuesday in a new salvo.

Hitting Belgorod and disrupting city life is a dramatic way for Ukraine to show it can strike back against Russia, whose military outnumbers and outguns Kyiv's forces.

The tactic appeared to be having some success, with signs the attacks are unsettling the public, political leaders and military observers.

Also Wednesday, Russia and Ukraine exchanged hundreds of prisoners of war.

Ukrainian authorities said that 230 Ukrainian prisoners of war returned home in the first exchange in almost five months.

Court rules emergency care abortions not required

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — The Biden administration cannot use a 1986 emergency care law to require hospitals in Texas to provide abortions for women whose lives are at risk due to pregnancy, a federal appeals court ruled Tuesday.

It's one of numerous cases involving abortion restrictions that have played out in state and federal courts after the U.S. Supreme Court ended abortion rights in 2022. The administration issued guidance that year saying hospitals "must" provide abortion services if there's a risk to the mother's

life, citing the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act of 1986, which requires emergency rooms to provide stabilizing treatment for anyone who arrives at the emergency room.

Texas state courts have also been brought separate cases about when abortion must be allowed there, despite bans on it under most circumstances. The Texas Supreme Court ruled last month against a woman who asked for permission to abort a fetus with a fatal diagnosis. The same court heard arguments in November on behalf of women who were denied abortions despite serious

risks to their health if they continued their pregnancies; the justices have not ruled on that case.

Abortion opponents have challenged the emergency care law guidance in multiple jurisdictions. In Texas, the state joined abortion opponents in a lawsuit to stop the guidance from taking effect and won at the district court level. The Biden administration appealed to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which has jurisdiction in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. But the appeal was rejected in Tuesday's ruling by a unanimous three-judge panel.

American Kennel Club introduces new, tiny breed

Associated Press

NEW YORK — It's small in stature, big on activity and known for a "smile," and it's ready to compete with 200 other dog breeds.

Say hello to the Lancashire heeler, the latest breed recognized by the American Kennel Club. The organization announced Wednesday that the rare herding breed is now eligible for thousands of U.S. dog

shows, including the Westminster Kennel Club show.

With long bodies and short coats that are often black and tan, the solidly built dogs are shaped a bit like a downsized corgi, standing around 1 foot at the shoulder and weighing up to about 17 pounds. Historically, they were farm helpers that could both drive cattle and rout rats, and today they participate in an array of canine sports and

pursuits.

"They're gritty little dogs, and they're very intelligent little dogs," says Patricia Blankenship of Flora, Miss., who has bred them for over a decade. "It's an enjoyable little breed to be around."

Their official description — or breed standard, in dog-world parlance — calls for them to be "courageous, happy, affectionate to owner," and owners say

contented heelers sometimes pull back their lips in a "smile."

They're "extremely versatile," participating in everything from scent work to dock diving contests, says United States Lancashire Heeler Club President Sheryl Bradbury. But she advises that a Lancashire heeler "has to have a job," whether it's an organized dog sport or simply walks and fetch with its owners.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Doctor who delivered 1st 2024 baby delivered dad

NY NEW YORK — When New York City’s first baby of 2024 entered the world at the stroke of midnight Monday morning, the newborn boy immediately took after his father: They were both delivered by the same doctor.

Yet Dr. Sherman Dunn of South Brooklyn Health in Coney Island wasn’t aware of the curious twist of fate at the time. It was only later that he’d learn he also delivered the baby’s father, Rafael Abitbol, 23 years earlier at the same facility back when it was known as Coney Island Hospital.

It was the fifth year in a row South Brooklyn Health has brought forth the year’s first baby, according to NYC Health + Hospitals. The city’s public health system has 11 hospitals across the five boroughs.

Baby Abitbol, who weighed in at 7 pounds 13 ounces, and his mom were doing well on Monday, the hospital said.

Battery fire in cargo ship’s hold is out

AK ANCHORAGE — After lithium-ion batteries burned in a large cargo ship’s hold for a number of days, the U.S. Coast Guard said late Saturday that the fire was out and directed the ship to anchor near Dutch Harbor, Alaska.

The 19 crew members of the ship, Genius Star XI, were uninjured and technicians from the Salvage and Marine Firefighting team remain onboard to ensure the fire doesn’t return, according to a Coast Guard news

release.

Genius Star XI was shipping lithium-ion batteries from Vietnam to San Diego. The crew alerted the Coast Guard early Thursday morning to the fire, after pumping carbon dioxide into hold No. 1 — where the blaze began — and sealing it, fearing an explosion.

The Coast Guard diverted the 410-foot cargo ship to Dutch Harbor, one of the nation’s busiest fishing ports located in Unalaska, an Aleutian Islands community about 800 miles southwest of Anchorage.

Embezzlement of paper’s funds forces layoffs

OR PORTLAND — An Oregon weekly newspaper has had to lay off its entire staff and halt print after 40 years because its funds were embezzled by a former employee, its editor said, in a devastating blow to a publication that serves as an important source of information in a community that, like many others nationwide, is struggling with growing gaps in local news coverage.

About a week before Christmas, the Eugene Weekly found inaccuracies in its bookkeeping, editor Camilla Mortensen said. It discovered that a former employee who was “heavily involved” with the paper’s finances had used its bank account to pay themselves \$90,000 since at least 2022, she said.

The paper also became aware of at least \$100,000 in unpaid bills — including to the paper’s printer — stretching back several months, she said.

When the paper realized it couldn’t make the next payroll, it was forced to lay off all of its 10

staff members and stop its print edition, Mortensen said.

The alternative weekly, founded in 1982, printed 30,000 copies each week to distribute for free in Eugene, the second-largest city in the state and home to the University of Oregon.

Missing student found safe following scheme

UT RIVERDALE — A foreign exchange student from China who was reported missing last week in Utah has been found in what authorities said was an apparent “cyber kidnapping” scheme to extort \$80,000 from the student’s family.

The 17-year-old student was reported missing Friday, a day after he was last seen at the home where he had been staying in Riverdale, about 30 miles from Salt Lake City.

Riverdale police initially said that they believed the student had been forcefully taken from his home. But on Sunday night they said he was found safe in a tent about 25 miles away from Riverdale in the Brigham City area.

He was convinced that his family in China was threatened and that he needed to isolate himself, according to police.

Man charged with assaulting wife’s co-worker

NC HIGH POINT — Police in North Carolina have charged a man with assaulting his wife’s co-worker behind the counter of a fast food restaurant, saying he put his hands around the cook’s neck and pushed his head toward a deep fryer.

High Point Police officers

were called Thursday to the McDonald’s on South Main Street, where a manager in training said she called her husband for help after employees were disrespecting her, police said in an incident report posted online.

Witnesses told police that when the woman’s husband arrived, he walked around the counter and placed his hands around the cook’s neck, pushing his head toward the deep fryer and punching him several times in the face until he was pulled away, the report states.

The victim, who had a large contusion to his forehead and right eye and scratches on his neck, chose to have his family take him to the hospital, police said.

Surfer dies after shark encounter in Hawaii

HI PAIA — A surfer in Hawaii has died after being injured in a shark encounter off Maui’s northern shore, according to the Maui Police Department. Authorities stopped short of calling the event an attack and didn’t describe the man’s injuries.

Ocean Safety Officers grabbed and transported the man by jet ski to shore, where responders performed life-saving measures until medical personnel arrived and took the victim to a hospital for further treatment, police said in a news release.

The man’s identity was not immediately released pending the notification of extended family and friends. Authorities did say the man was from Haiku, a small community on Maui’s north side.

— From wire reports



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No place like home: Celtics 16-0 in Boston

Associated Press

When the Boston Celtics were winning championships with Larry Bird and Kevin McHale in the 1980s, they were notoriously tough to beat at home. The old Boston Garden could be oppressively hot, and a rowdy home crowd added another obstacle.

Buildings in the NBA aren't like that anymore, but the current Celtics are on their own impressive run at home.

Boston is 16-0 at TD Garden. With its corporate name and modern feel, that arena doesn't have the mystique of the old Garden, but it does house a fine basketball team that is trying to leave its own mark on Celtics history.

"We got the best fans in the league," guard Derrick White said last month when asked about receiving "MVP" chants. "I know I'm not the MVP, but it's always cool to hear."

Forgive Boston fans for getting a little carried away. At home at least, the Celtics look worthy of quite a few honors.

Amazingly, Boston's perfect home record nearly ended last week against a team trying to halt an even longer streak. The Detroit Pistons took a 21-point lead in the second quarter before the Celtics came all the way back to win 128-122 in overtime on Thursday night. It was a record-tying 28th straight loss for the Pistons, and Boston would have been a most unlikely place for them to finally win.

Detroit did end the streak two nights later

at home against Toronto. That was a night after the Celtics had also defeated Toronto at home, again barely keeping their streak alive with a 120-118 victory. Boston's next home game is Friday against Utah. Minnesota, in town next week, could provide a significant test.

What's interesting about this run by the Celtics is that overall, home-court advantage isn't nearly what it used to be in the NBA. Last season, the home team won 58% of the time in the regular season. That number is around the same this season so far. Back in the late 80s, that figure was north of 65%. In the 1950-51 season, it was 74%.

In some ways, the Celtics themselves have reflected the overall state of home-court advantage in the NBA. In 1954-55 — when home court was a huge deal — Boston went 21-5 at home and 4-22 on the road.

In 1985-86, the Celtics set a record by going 40-1 at home. Then they went 10-0 at home in the playoffs en route to the championship.

Nowadays, nobody feels that unbeatable at home. Even Denver, with its difficult altitude, lost seven home games during the regular season in 2022-23, then another in the post-season on its way to the title. Whether it's because of more comfortable travel, less intimidating venues or other reasons, winning on the road is a good bit more common now.

That's not to say nobody can put up a dom-

inant home record anymore. San Antonio matched Boston's record by going 40-1 in 2015-16, losing only to Golden State in its next-to-last home game — a victory the Warriors needed while closing in on the all-time wins record of 73.

Of course, those Spurs then dropped two of their three home games during a second-round playoff loss to Oklahoma City.

There are signs that home-court advantage isn't as big a factor anymore in the postseason, either.

From 1983-94, home teams were undefeated in Game 7s. And after Washington beat Seattle in 1978, no road team won Game 7 of the NBA Finals until LeBron James and Cleveland did it at Golden State in 2016.

These days, however, home court assures nothing in a Game 7. Last season, two road teams won in that scenario — Golden State at Sacramento and Miami at Boston. That was, remarkably, the fourth time in the past two decades the Celtics have dropped a Game 7 at home. It also happened in 2005 against Indiana, 2009 against Orlando and 2018 against Cleveland.

In that span, no other team has lost more than two Game 7s at home.

So Boston's dominance at TD Garden is noteworthy, but the Celtics know as much as anyone that they can't take it for granted when they start the postseason.

Gilgeous-Alexander leads Thunder to 5th straight win

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — That's another signature win for the Oklahoma City Thunder.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 36 points and the Thunder held off the NBA-leading Boston Celtics 127-123 on Tuesday night for their fifth straight victory.

Oklahoma City has won eight of nine. During that stretch, the Thunder have beaten defending champion Denver twice, ended the Los Angeles' Clippers winning streak at nine, beaten Western Conference leader Minnesota and now topped the Celtics.

This one was tougher than some of the others. Oklahoma City beat Minnesota by 23 and Denver by 26 on the road last week.

This time, the Celtics trimmed an 18-point deficit in the fourth quarter to two before the Thunder held on.

"I thought we were pretty resilient tonight," Oklahoma City coach Mark Daigneault said. "I thought we took some punches."

Kristaps Porzingis scored 34 points and Jayson Tatum had 30 for the Celtics, who had won six straight and 11 of 12.

"I thought it was two great teams," Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said. "The game went about how I thought it would go as far as it coming down to the last couple of possessions."

76ers 110, Bulls 97: Joel Embiid had 31 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists in his return from a sprained right ankle, Tyrese Maxey scored 21 points and

host Philadelphia beat Chicago.

Embiid missed all four games on the 76ers' holiday road trip, and they went 2-2. One of those games was in Chicago just three nights earlier, a 105-92 loss in which the Sixers never led in the second half.

Grizzlies 106, Spurs 98: Ja Morant had 26 points, 10 assists and a fourth-quarter dunk over Victor Wembanyama, Desmond Bane added 24 points and host Memphis used a second-half spurt to beat San Antonio.

Santi Aldama added 13 points and 11 rebounds for Memphis, which snapped a three-game losing streak.

Warriors 121, Magic 115: Stephen Curry scored 36 points and delivered on key plays in the fourth quarter to help host Gold-

en State snap a three-game losing streak with a victory over Orlando.

Curry scored or set up 13 straight Warriors points in a four-minute stretch late in the fourth quarter that gave Golden State its first win in three tries on a season-high seven-game homestand.

Hornets 111, Kings 104: Terry Rozier scored 14 of his 34 points in the fourth quarter after missing a game due to illness, and visiting Charlotte beat Sacramento to snap an 11-game losing streak.

Pelicans 112, Nets 85: CJ McCollum scored 16 points, Herb Jones added 14 and host New Orleans routed Brooklyn for its third straight victory and eighth in 11 games.

Purdue ends Maryland's home win streak

Associated Press

COLLEGE PARK, Md.— Zach Edey had 23 points and 12 rebounds, and No. 1 Purdue cruised past Maryland 67-53 on Tuesday night to snap the Terrapins' 19-game home winning streak.

The Boilermakers (13-1, 2-1 Big Ten) won their sixth straight, having little difficulty with an offensively challenged Maryland team. Purdue hadn't won at Maryland since 2017. Although the Terps (9-5, 1-2) hung tough defensively for a while, they couldn't overcome shooting woes that have made this season a disappointment.

The Boilermakers took an 8-0 lead and forced Maryland to take an early timeout. The Terps managed only 19 points in the first half and trailed by 13 at the break. Purdue quickly pushed the lead to 22 in the second.

Jahmir Young scored 26 points for the Terps, the only Maryland player with more than nine.

Braden Smith scored 14 points for Purdue and Lance Jones added 11.

No. 4 UConn 85, DePaul 56: Cam Spencer scored 20 points to lead the host Huskies to their 17th straight win over the Blue

Demons.

The graduate transfer from Rutgers shot 7-for-11 from the field, including 4-for-7 from 3-point range.

Alex Karaban added 17 points for UConn (12-2, 2-1 Big East).

No. 5 Tennessee 87, Norfolk State 50: Zakai Zeigler scored 17 points and had four assists to lead the Volunteers.

Dalton Knecht scored 15 and Tobe Awaka collected 10 points and 11 rebounds as Tennessee (10-3) won its sixth straight game and 10th straight home game dating to last season.

No. 8 North Carolina 70, Pittsburgh 57: Armando Bacot had 16 points and 10 rebounds, RJ Davis added 15 points and four assists, and the visiting Tar Heels pulled away for the win.

North Carolina (10-3) used Davis' shot-making and its size advantage to muscle its way past Pitt (9-5). The Tar Heels had a 15-1 advantage in second-chance points.

No. 9 Illinois 96, Northwestern 66: Marcus Domask scored 32 points and had a team-high six assists to lead the host Illini in their second game without suspended star Terrance Shannon Jr.

Justin Harmon had 20 points,

Quincy Guerrier scored 14 and Coleman Hawkins had 13 for Illinois (11-2, 2-0), which never trailed, and led by as many as 33 points.

No. 13 Colorado State 74, New Mexico 68: Patrick Cartier scored a season-high 21 points, Nique Clifford and Isaiah Stevens went a combined 8-for-9 on free throws down the stretch and the host Rams held off the Lobos.

Colorado State (13-1, 1-0) opened a 17-point lead with 5:15 remaining, only to see New Mexico (12-2, 0-1) storm back and make things interesting.

No. 14 Duke 86, Syracuse 66: Mark Mitchell scored 18 of his career-high 21 points in the first half and Jared McCain finished with 18 points to lead the host Blue Devils.

Duke (10-3, 1-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) made all eight 3-point attempts after halftime and finished by shooting 75% from the field in the second half.

No. 17 Florida Atlantic 79, East Carolina 64: Johnell Davis and Alijah Martin each scored 20 points and the host Owls shook off a slow start to win their American Athletic Conference debut.

Bryan Greenlee scored 13 off

the bench and Vladislav Goldin finished with 11 points and 11 rebounds for Florida Atlantic (11-3, 1-0).

No. 18 Baylor 98, Cornell 79: Ja'Kobe Walter scored 23 points and had a team-high nine rebounds, fellow freshman Yves Missi added 16 points while making all eight of his shots and the Bears christened the brand-new Foster Pavilion with a victory over the Big Red.

Missi scored the first points in Baylor's new home when the 7-footer from Cameroon made a short jumper 30 seconds into the game.

No. 21 Wisconsin 83, Iowa 72: Tyler Wahl scored a season-high 19 points, Steven Crawl had a double-double and the host Badgers turned up their offense in the second half to beat the Hawkeyes.

After the game was tied 32-all at halftime, Wisconsin (10-3, 2-0 Big Ten) pulled away by shooting 58.3% in the second half.

No. 25 Auburn 88, Penn 68: Johni Broome had 24 points and 12 rebounds and nearly matched his season total for 3-pointers in leading the host Tigers to their sixth straight victory, one day after entering the Top 25 for the first time this season.

Clark scores 40, hits long 3 at buzzer to win it for Iowa

Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Caitlin Clark knew her shot at the buzzer was going in, even though she launched it from the Hawkeyes logo near midcourt.

So did her coach.

"Caitlin has ice in her veins," Iowa's Lisa Bluder said. "Everybody knows it."

Clark proved it again with her long 3-pointer as time expired, giving her 40 points and the No. 4 Hawkeyes a 76-73 victory over Michigan State on Tuesday night.

Clark, the nation's leading scorer, was 14-for-34 from the

field and went more than 14 minutes without a point in a stretch in the second and third quarters. The Hawkeyes were able to get her the ball in the final seconds — though a long way from the basket — as Clark took the pass from Hannah Stuelke and hit from 30 feet as the buzzer sounded.

"Honestly, when it left my hand, I knew it was going in," Clark said.

The Hawkeyes (14-1, 3-0 Big Ten) extended their winning streak to 11 games behind Clark and Stuelke, who had 15 points.

Michigan State (11-3, 1-2) had

tied the game at 73 on DeeDee Hagemann's layup with 22 seconds left. After a timeout, the Hawkeyes worked the clock down. Stuelke lost the ball momentarily, but recovered to get it to Clark.

That bobble, Clark said, might have made the difference.

"I think it almost kind of worked out in my favor, because my girl (Michigan State's Moira Joiner) almost went for the steal a little bit," Clark said. "I was able to get to my step-back to the left, which is my favorite shot."

Clark hit a similar buzzer-beater against Indiana in last

year's regular-season finale. This time, she ran to the opposite end of the court with her arms outstretched as the sellout crowd celebrated.

"I almost started laughing," Clark said. "I think everybody was like, 'Oh, thank God, this game's over with, we don't have to go to overtime.' You know, it was ugly, but it was a win, and that's what matters at the end of the day."

Michigan State coach Robyn Fralick said the Spartans defended the final play well.

"She made a really hard shot," Fralick said.

Ovechkin, Capitals hold off Penguins

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Alex Ovechkin scored a power-play goal during Washington's fast start, and the Capitals beat Sidney Crosby and the Pittsburgh Penguins 4-3 on Tuesday night.

Ovechkin and Crosby faced off for the 67th time in the regular season. Crosby finished with a goal and an assist, but Washington held on after racing out to a 4-0 lead.

It was the 10th time that Ovechkin and Crosby scored in the same game, and first since a Capitals win on Nov. 7, 2018.

Martin Fehervary, Tom Wilson and Beck Malenstyn also scored for Washington, which had dropped four in a row. Darcy Kuemper made 33 saves.

Crosby scored his 21st of the season, a power-play goal in the

second period. He has 1,540 points, passing Joe Thornton for 12th on the NHL's career points list.

Hurricanes 6, Rangers 1: Andrei Svechnikov scored twice, Pyotr Kochetkov made 28 saves and visiting Carolina earned its fourth straight win.

Oilers 5, Flyers 2: Connor McDavid had a goal and four assists, and host Edmonton extended its winning streak to six games.

Maple Leafs 3, Kings 0: Martin Jones made 31 saves for his 30th career shutout, William Nylander scored two goals and visiting Toronto snapped its three-game losing streak with a victory over Los Angeles.

Avalanche 5, Islanders 4 (OT): Nathan MacKinnon scored a power-play goal 32

seconds into overtime, lifting host Colorado past New York.

Bruins 4, Blue Jackets 1: James van Riemsdyk scored on a power play and added two assists, helping visiting Boston to its fourth consecutive victory.

Panthers 4, Coyotes 1: Sam Reinhart and Matthew Tkachuk scored 42 seconds apart in the third period, sending visiting Florida to its fifth consecutive victory.

Predators 3, Blackhawks 0: Gustav Nyquist and Ryan O'Reilly each had a goal and an assist, leading host Nashville past Chicago.

Jets 4, Lightning 2: Nikolaj Ehlers and Morgan Barron scored in the third period, and host Winnipeg extended its point streak to nine games.

Canadiens 4, Stars 3: Kai-

den Guhle and Jordan Harris added to their team's NHL-leading 30 goals from defensemen, and Sam Montembeault stopped 30 shots for visiting Montreal.

Flames 3, Wild 1: Andrew Mangiapane and Jonathan Huberdeau scored in the first period for visiting Calgary, and Blake Coleman added an empty-netter.

Canucks 6, Senators 3: Elias Pettersson and Pius Suter each scored twice, and host Vancouver used a fast start to beat Ottawa.

Red Wings 5, Sharks 3: David Perron scored the tying and go-ahead goals in the third period, including the winner with 1:30 left, and visiting Detroit pushed San Jose's losing streak to nine games.

49ers have rare quartet of players in 1,000-yard group

Associated Press

The San Francisco 49ers and their deep group of playmakers accomplished a rare feat.

They soon could have company from the Miami Dolphins and Detroit Lions.

Tight end George Kittle became the latest Niners player to eclipse 1,000 yards from scrimmage this season, joining Christian McCaffrey, Brandon Aiyuk and Deebo Samuel.

That made San Francisco the sixth team ever to have four players hit that mark in one season, joining the 2020 Carolina Panthers, the 2004 Indianapolis Colts, 1995 Atlanta Falcons, 1990 Houston Oilers and 1989 Washington.

McCaffrey leads the way with 2,023 yards for the fifth-best total in franchise history. It is the second time he has eclipsed 2,000 yards from scrimmage after doing it with Carolina in 2019. He joins Eric Dickerson and Marshall Faulk as the only players to do it with two franchises.

San Francisco also has a 4,000-yard passer with Brock Purdy setting a franchise record with 4,280 — two more than Jeff Garcia's total in 2000.

Of the previous teams with four 1,000-yard players, only the Colts, Falcons and

Oilers also had a 4,000-yard passer.

The Dolphins can join that group if rookie De'Von Achane gains 64 yards next week to join teammates Tyreek Hill, Raheem Mostert and Jaylen Waddle with at least 1,000. Tua Tagovailoa already has more than 4,000 yards passing.

The Lions also have an outside shot at it but would need rookie Sam LaPorta to get 136 yards to join Amon-Ra St. Brown, Jahmyr Gibbs and David Montgomery with at least 1,000 yards from scrimmage. Jared Goff also has already hit the 4,000-yard mark in passing.

Impressive streaks

The Kansas City Chiefs wrapped up their eighth straight AFC West title when they beat Cincinnati on Sunday.

That's the second-longest streak in NFL history, trailing only the 11 straight division titles won by New England from 2009-19.

Kansas City's nine straight playoff berths are tied with Indianapolis (2002-10) and Dallas (1975-83) for the second longest streak, behind only the 11-year run for the Patriots.

While the Chiefs have dominated the AFC West, no one has been able to do that in the NFC East. If the Cowboys win on Sunday or

if the Eagles lose, it will mark the 19th straight season a team failed to repeat as division champion. Philadelphia was the last to do it in 2003-04.

Pittsburgh coach Mike Tomlin extended his impressive streak of never having a losing record after the Steelers beat Seattle for their ninth win of the season.

The Steelers have gone 20 straight seasons without a losing record — one shy of Dallas' record set from 1965-85. Tomlin has been the coach for 17 of those seasons, trailing only Tom Landry (21 straight seasons) and Bill Belichick (19) for the longest streaks for a coach.

One-sided rivalry

The New England Patriots end their season against their favorite opponent of late, aiming for a 16th straight win over the New York Jets.

Only four teams have ever beaten an opponent 16 straight times in the regular season. Kansas City's 16-game streak against Denver ended earlier this season.

Washington had a 16-game winning streak over Detroit from 1968-97, San Francisco beat the Rams 17 times in a row from 1990-98 and Miami had 20 straight wins against Buffalo from 1970-79.