

Strikes on neighbors show emboldened Iran

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

Iranian attacks against three neighboring countries indicate that Tehran has been emboldened by the performance of its militia proteges and raise questions about whether it will directly challenge the U.S. and its partners in the Middle East.

Iran has long preferred to fight a shadow war by funding militant groups, which have intensified their attacks on U.S. troops in the region since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in October.

But missile strikes last week in Syria, Iraq and Pakistan that were claimed by Iran's powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps came after its proxies inflicted damage on U.S. military positions at a relatively low cost to Tehran, analysts said.

"I'd say Iran's leaders have been riding high," said Jonath-

an Lord, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security.

The direct attacks most likely came from "a feeling of invincibility" as a result of recent successes by proxy groups, which could lead to miscalculation and overreach, Lord said.

Iran's proxies have repeatedly attacked U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria, including a strike Saturday on al-Asad Air Base in Iraq that required personnel to be evaluated for traumatic brain injuries.

Two cases have been diagnosed so far, U.S. Central Command and Pentagon officials said.

It's unlikely that Iran would have launched and claimed direct attacks on other countries had the U.S. responded more forcefully against the militant groups targeting U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria, said Alex Plit-

sas, a senior fellow with the Washington-based Atlantic Council.

"One hundred percent, if they felt that they were going to be held accountable for the actions they're taking, they wouldn't be doing what they're doing," said Plitsas, an Army veteran. "If you let people get away with things, they'll try to get away with more."

Meanwhile, the U.S. says Iran is directly involved in ship attacks by Houthi militants against shipping in the Red Sea, The Associated Press reported Monday.

Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, the head of the Navy's 5th Fleet, called the attacks on shipping the most significant in two generations.

While the U.S. has blamed Iran for backing these groups financially, there has been little direct action against Tehran for its support, analysts said.

Tehran knows the U.S. has few options to strike back that do not risk starting an open-ended conflict. The White House's stated goal in the Middle East is to prevent the war between Israel and Hamas from igniting the region.

Analysts say the U.S. deserves credit for its efforts to stave off warfare in Lebanon, where the heavily armed militant group Hezbollah has mostly remained on the sidelines.

But the U.S.'s consistent signal that it does not want a wider war has given Iran leeway to be more aggressive.

"You cannot just rule out possibility of an escalation and at the same time you hope for achieving deterrence," said Farzin Nadimi, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute. "The United States probably needs to regain initiative, but that also increases the risks of escalation, obviously."

As DeSantis exits, Trump and Haley turn to NH

Associated Press

The race for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination is down to two major candidates ahead of New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation GOP primary.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who was once seen as Donald Trump's biggest obstacle in the GOP primary, dropped his bid Sunday and backed the former president over Nikki Haley, former United Nations ambassador and South Carolina governor.

On Monday, Haley has scheduled events in Franklin and Salem, while Trump has an evening rally in Laconia.

The former president showed up for his defamation trial in New York, but the proceedings were canceled for the day after a juror fell ill.

After DeSantis withdrew, Trump set aside months of criticism and mockery, celebrating his onetime Republican rival as his newest supporter after the governor endorsed the former president.

For Trump, it's become a familiar ritual to welcome the backing of someone who tried to take him on. Nonetheless, it was notable at Sunday's rally in New Hampshire to see Trump praise DeSantis without calling him "DeSantimonious" or "DeSanc-

tus," putting an end to perhaps the most bitter rivalry of Republicans' 2024 campaign.

"I just want to thank Ron and congratulate him on doing a very good job," Trump said at the outset of his remarks. "He was very gracious, and he endorsed me. I appreciate that, and I also look forward to working with Ron." Trump described DeSantis as "a really terrific person."

Earlier in the day, DeSantis said via video that he would be ending his campaign two days before New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation GOP primary. But, Trump's glee Sunday night aside, it wasn't the warmest of endorsements.

"It's clear to me that a majority of Republican primary voters want to give Donald Trump another chance," DeSantis said, offering matter-of-fact analysis through a forced smile, without adding plaudits for Trump.

"I signed a pledge to support the Republican nominee, and I will honor that pledge," he continued, before adding a dig at the remaining contender, Nikki Haley.

DeSantis described the former U.N. ambassador and onetime South Carolina governor as a stand-in for "the old Republican guard of yesteryear, a re-packaged form of warmed-over corporatism."

Flashlight in F-35 engine causes \$4M in damage

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

A handheld flashlight left inside an F-35 engine by maintainers at Luke Air Force Base last year caused \$4 million in damage, Air Force investigators said in a recently released report.

The flashlight was sucked into the \$14 million engine when the three-person maintenance team at the Arizona base ran the jet's engine for about five minutes on March 15, 2023, following work on the 56th Fighter Wing aircraft.

"I believe I just ingested a flashlight," one maintainer said at the time, according to the report, which was released last week by the Air Education and Training Command.

An accident investigation board determined that a maintainer didn't make sure

the engine inlet was clear of foreign objects and didn't inventory all tools after the work was done.

The board also found shortcomings in the F-35's Autonomic Logistics Information System. A lack of network connectivity on the flight line and unnecessarily lengthy checklists were significant factors in the accident, the report stated.

For one procedure, a maintainer must reference and complete at least 15 checklists, each of which has its own list of required tasks and procedures, the report noted. The number of steps makes it easier to miss important cautions or warnings, investigators found.

The big mistake happened while maintainers were checking for fuel leaks after installing a metering plug into an engine fuel

line.

One of the maintainers used the flashlight to see inside the poorly lit F-35A engine inlet. The flashlight was left on the lip of the intake, according to the report. A tool kit inventory list after the damaged blades were discovered noted a missing flashlight.

Abnormal noises could be heard as the engine was on and maintainers could see the blades were damaged after shutting down the test, the report said.

Nobody was injured in the accident. The engine damage couldn't be repaired locally, according to the report, which did not say where the plane was taken to be fixed.

The maintainers all were qualified to do the engine work and tests for alcohol and other drugs that could cause impairment were negative, the report said.

Military ends rescue search for Navy SEALs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The 10-day search for two Navy SEALs lost in the Arabian Sea during a mission to board a ship and confiscate Iranian-made weapons has been ended and the sailors are now considered deceased, the U.S. military said Sunday.

In a statement, U.S. Central Command said the search has now been changed to a recovery effort. The names of the SEALs have not been released as family notifications continue. Ships and aircraft from the U.S., Japan and Spain continuously searched more than 21,000 square miles, the military said, with assistance from the

Fleet Numerical Meteorology and Oceanography Center, the U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command, University of San Diego — Scripps Institute of Oceanography and the Office of Naval Research.

"We mourn the loss of our two Naval Special Warfare warriors, and we will forever honor their sacrifice and example," said Gen. Erik Kurilla, head of CENTCOM. "Our prayers are with the SEALs' families, friends, the U.S. Navy and the entire Special Operations community during this time."

According to officials, the Jan. 11 raid targeted an unflagged ship carrying illicit Iranian-made weapons to the Houthi rebels in

Yemen. Officials have said that as the team was boarding the ship, one of the SEALs went under in the heavy seas, and a teammate went in to try and save him.

The commandos had launched from the USS Lewis B. Puller, a mobile sea base, and they were backed by drones and helicopters.

They loaded onto small special operations combat craft driven by naval special warfare crew to get to the boat.

In the raid, they seized an array of Iranian-made weaponry, including cruise and ballistic missile components such as propulsion and guidance devices.

Navy officer's early prison release sparks backlash

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

A Navy officer's release by U.S. authorities from his prison term for two 2021 traffic deaths near Mount Fuji has stirred a wave of criticism by Japanese on social media.

Online critique of Lt. Ridge Alkonis' release, ordered Jan. 12 by the U.S. Parole Commission, and his subsequent media

appearances "goes far beyond the scale" sometimes leveled at the U.S. military in Japan, said Jeffrey Hall, a special lecturer at Kanda University of International Studies in Chiba prefecture.

For example, a post by @takigare3 outlining the details of the case on X, formerly Twitter, has received more than 29 million views since Jan. 16.

Alkonis went free from U.S. custody about a month after his December transfer from a Japanese prison where he served less than half of a three-year sentence for negligent driving causing the deaths of two Japanese citizens and injuries to a third in Fujinomiya, Japan.

Alkonis said mountain sickness caused him to fall unconscious behind the wheel follow-

ing a family trip to Mount Fuji from Yokosuka Naval Base, where he was stationed, on May 29, 2021.

The car veered into a restaurant parking lot, striking vehicles and pedestrians and causing the deaths of an 85-year-old woman and her 54-year-old son-in-law. Alkonis expressed remorse over the deaths during his court appearances in 2022.

Biden expands protections for abortion and contraception

The Washington Post

The White House on Monday is announcing new steps intended to ensure access to contraception, abortion medication and emergency abortions at hospitals. It represents President Joe Biden's latest bid to contrast himself with Republican challengers who support strict abortion limits and arrives on the anniversary of the Supreme Court ruling that guaranteed abortion rights for nearly 50 years.

The effort to expand access to contraception involves several measures. Federal agencies are issuing guidance that would make no-cost contraceptives more available under the Affordable Care Act and take similar actions to expand contraception access for federal employees. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra also plans to send a letter to health insurers instructing them of their obligation to provide no-

cost contraceptives, according to a memo the White House sent to reporters Sunday.

The federal health department also announced a new team dedicated to enforcing its interpretation of a law, known as the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, or EMTALA, which the Biden administration has said requires hospitals to provide emergency abortions nationwide, including in the 21 states where the procedure is limited or banned.

Meanwhile, Biden on Monday was expected to convene two dozen senior officials in the White House for a meeting of his reproductive health task force, where he was to be joined by several physicians who have practiced in states with abortion bans. Vice President Kamala Harris is slated to kick off a multistate reproductive rights tour with a visit to Wisconsin, where she is expected to criticize a proposal by state Republicans

to ban abortion after 14 weeks of pregnancy. Wisconsin's Democratic governor has already said he will veto the bill.

"On this day and every day, Vice President Harris and I are fighting to protect women's reproductive freedom against Republicans' dangerous, extreme, and out-of-touch agenda," Biden said in a statement.

The Biden administration's actions — coming on what would have been the 51st anniversary of the landmark ruling in *Roe v. Wade*, before the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion in 2022 — reflect Democrats' effort to highlight an issue that gives them a strong political advantage. Fifty-eight percent of all voters, including about 1 in 5 Republicans, said they trust Democrats more than Republicans on abortion, according to a November poll conducted by KFF, a health policy organization.

Frigid cold across US set to ease

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Sub-freezing conditions and treacherous roadways have contributed to dozens of deaths this month across the U.S., where states as far south as Texas and Florida remain gripped by deadly arctic weather Sunday. But the numbing cold is expected to ease up in the coming days.

Nationally, winter storms have claimed at least 72 lives around the U.S. this January, many involving hypothermia or road accidents.

On Sunday, crews in Memphis, Tenn., continued to work around the clock to find and fix broken pipes that were causing low water pressure throughout the system. Memphis Light, Gas and Water President and CEO Doug McGowen told reporters Sunday afternoon that crews are making progress and he expects most of the 700,000 people the utility services to have water restored over the next 24 hours.

"If we remain on this very positive path, and we are on a positive path, I believe that by Wednesday we will have pressure sufficient for us to take samples of our water system," he said. "Assuming good results, we think that means a Thursday for lifting of the boil water advisory."

McGowen also asked people to stop dripping their faucets to help build pressure in the system.

The continued cold weather is also responsible for at least 27 deaths in Tennessee, according to the Tennessee Department of Health.

Just south in Mississippi, the state's Emergency Management Agency said Sunday that 11 people have died of causes related to frigid weather since Jan. 14.

Possible testimony from Trump in NY trial is postponed due to juror illness

Associated Press

NEW YORK — With former President Donald Trump soon to take the witness stand, a juror's illness forced a last-minute delay Monday of a defamation trial over his comments about E. Jean Carroll, the writer who claims he sexually assaulted her in the 1990s.

It's not clear when the trial will resume. The court is awaiting COVID-19 tests on all the jurors; one of Trump's lawyers also hasn't been feeling well but tested negative, and his team wants to postpone the Republican presidential front-runner's next appearance until after Tuesday's New Hampshire pri-

mary.

There was no indication that Trump himself wasn't feeling well, and he didn't wear a mask in court as he watched Monday's brief proceeding. U.S. District Judge Lewis A. Kaplan announced that one of nine jurors was told to go home and take a coronavirus test after he reported feeling hot and nauseous.

Trump attorney Alina Habba also reported that at least one of her parents has COVID-19 and that she ran a fever in the last two days after having dinner with them several days ago. She said that her law partner, Michael Madaio, also attended the

dinner, although both tested negative for the virus Monday. Neither attorney wore a mask in court.

Whenever it may happen, Trump's testimony stands to allow him — within limits — to explain to a jury why he not only denied Carroll's claims but branded her a liar who faked a sexual attack to sell a memoir. Because a different jury found last year that Trump sexually abused Carroll, Kaplan has ruled that if the former president takes the stand now, he won't be allowed to say she concocted her allegation or that she was motivated by financial or political considerations.

Families of hostages confront Israeli lawmakers

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Dozens of family members of hostages held by Hamas stormed a committee meeting in Israel's parliament Monday, demanding a deal to win their loved ones' release, as European foreign ministers joined growing international calls for Israel to negotiate on the creation of a Palestinian state after the war.

The developments showed the increasing pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has dug in on both fronts. He has insisted to the Israeli public that pursuing the devastating offensive in Gaza is the only way to bring the hostages home. At the same time, he has rejected the United States' vision for a postwar resolution, saying he will never allow a Palestinian state.

The dispute over Gaza's future — as the war rages with no end in

sight — pits Israel against its top ally, the U.S., as well as much of the international community. It also poses a major obstacle to any plans for postwar governance or reconstruction of the coastal territory, large parts of which have been left unlivable by Israeli bombardment.

In the most direct comments yet from Saudi Arabia, the kingdom's top diplomat said it will not normalize relations with Israel or contribute to Gaza's reconstruction without a credible path to a Palestinian state.

Netanyahu has vowed to continue the offensive until "complete victory" over Hamas and to return all remaining hostages after the Oct. 7 rampage in southern Israel that triggered the war. In that attack, some 1,200 people were killed and Hamas and other militants abducted around 250 people.

But more than three months

into the war, Israelis are increasingly divided on the question of whether it's possible to do both.

Around 100 hostages were freed under a weeklong ceasefire deal in November in exchange for the release of Palestinians held in Israeli prisons. Around 130 remain captive, but a number have since been confirmed dead. Hamas has said it will free more captives only in exchange for an end to the war and the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners. Netanyahu has ruled out such an agreement.

Anger has been growing among hostages' families. Relatives and other protesters have set up a tent camp outside Netanyahu's residence in Jerusalem and vowed to remain until a deal is reached to bring the rest of the captives home. Other protests have called for new elections.

On Monday, dozens of family members of the hostages

stormed into a gathering of the Knesset's finance committee, holding up signs and yelling, "You won't sit here while they are dying there!"

"These are our children!" they shouted. "We can't continue with any other agenda, we need to discuss only one thing right now!"

Some had to be physically restrained as they shouted at the lawmakers, and at least one person was escorted out. The meeting was briefly suspended but later reconvened.

At a meeting about the war Monday in Brussels, European Union foreign ministers added their voices to the calls for a Palestinian state, saying it was the only way to achieve peace. French Foreign Affairs Minister Stephane Sejourne said Netanyahu's rejection of statehood was "worrying. There will be a need for a Palestinian state with security guarantees for all."

In Ukraine, Polish leader vows steady support against Russia

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk vowed Monday to keep supporting Ukraine against Russia's nearly 2-year-old invasion and to resolve differences over grain shipments and trucking that soured ties between the neighbors.

Tusk, who returned to power last month and is keen to show that a change in government won't alter its Ukraine policy, also met with his Ukrainian counterpart, Denys Shmyhal.

"There are some conflicts of interest, we know it well, and we will talk about them, but not only in the spirit of friendship, which is obvious, but with the attitude to solve these problems as soon as possible, not to maintain or multiply them," Tusk said, according to his office.

"For me, it is very important to build the feeling that Poland is the most reliable, most stable ally of

Ukraine in this deadly clash with evil," Tusk said in the post on X.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Kyiv will get a new "defensive package" from Poland.

"There's a new form of our interaction for increasing the scale of arms purchases—a Polish loan to Ukraine," he said on social media, without elaborating.

Located on NATO's eastern flank, Poland has been one of Ukraine's strongest allies. Warsaw has provided weapons and humanitarian aid, and opened its borders to Ukrainian refugees since Moscow invaded on Feb. 24, 2022. But relations soured last year as economic competition from Ukrainian food producers and truckers angered Poles who said their livelihoods were under threat. Poland's farmers and truckers have ended their protests for now, but Tusk is seeking to address their concerns.

Pentagon set to install solar panels in clean energy push

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department will install solar panels on the Pentagon, part of the Biden administration's plan to promote clean energy and "reestablish the federal government as a sustainability leader."

The Pentagon is one of 31 government sites that are receiving \$104 million in Energy Department grants expected to double the amount of carbon-free electricity at federal facilities and create 27 megawatts of clean-energy capacity while leveraging more than \$361 million in private investment, the Energy Department said.

Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks and Brenda Mallory, chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, announced the projects Wednesday at the Pentagon.

The solar panels are among several improvements set for the Pentagon, which will also install a heat pump system and solar thermal panels to reduce reliance on natural gas and fuel oil combustion systems.

Brendan Owens, assistant secretary of defense for energy, installations and environment, said the projects will improve energy resilience and reliability at the Pentagon and other military sites in the U.S. and Germany.

Solar panels will provide "an uninterrupted power source" at the Pentagon in case of a cyberattack or other outage to the bulk grid, as well as reduce strain on the building's power load, Owens said in an interview.

The Pentagon is a nationally registered historic landmark, so officials will work with local officials to ensure the panels meet all requirements, he said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Midwife gave children homeopathic pellets

NY NEW YORK — A New York midwife who gave nearly 1,500 children homeopathic pellets instead of required vaccinations has been fined \$300,000, the state's health department announced.

Jeanette Breen, who operates Baldwin Midwifery on Long Island, administered the pellets as an alternative to vaccinations and then falsified their immunization records, the agency said.

The health department said immunization records of the children who received the falsified records have been voided, and their families must now prove the students are up-to-date with their required shots or at least in the process of getting them before they can return to school.

State vows to close youth detention site over abuse

NJ TRENTON — New Jersey's governor re-committed to closing down the state's largest youth detention center, and the state attorney general vowed a prompt investigation after 50 men alleged they were sexually abused there while they were held as boys.

Attorney General Matt Platkin said hours after the lawsuit was filed that the allegations would be "swiftly and thoroughly" investigated.

The suit contends that from the 1970s to the 2010s officers, counselors and other staff sexually assaulted boys under their authority at the New Jersey Training School in Monroe Township.

In a statement, Gov. Phil

Murphy's spokesperson, Tyler Jones, said the Democratic governor is "committed to the responsible closing" of the school, first announced nearly six years ago. The challenge is that the closure would require creating three additional facilities, one each in northern, central and southern New Jersey, and so far only two have been set up, the statement said.

Items possibly written by Louisa May Alcott found

MA WORCESTER — The author of "Little Women" may have been even more productive and sensational than previously thought.

Max Chapnick, a postdoctoral teaching associate at Northeastern University, believes he found about 20 stories and poems written by Louisa May Alcott under her own name as well as pseudonyms for local newspapers in Massachusetts in the late 1850s and early 1860s.

One of the pseudonyms is believed to be E.H. Gould, including a story about her house in Concord, Mass., and a ghost story along the lines of the Charles Dickens classic "A Christmas Carol." He also found four poems written by Flora Fairfield, a known pseudonym of Alcott's. One of the stories written under her own name was about a young painter.

Governor won't ban kids under 12 tackle football

CA SACRAMENTO — California Gov. Gavin Newsom said he will not sign a proposed ban on tackle football for children under 12, end-

ing advocates' short-lived hopes of having the bill become law this year.

"I will not sign legislation that bans youth tackle football," Newsom said in a statement. "I am deeply concerned about the health and safety of our young athletes, but an outright ban is not the answer."

The proposal to ban youth tackle football gained momentum last year amid increasing concern about concussions along with the rise in popularity of flag football. The goal was to have kids play flag football until age 12, which would give athletes about three years of playing tackle football before entering high school. Advocates said that would limit children's risk of brain damage, which studies have shown increases the longer a person plays tackle football.

Former basketball player accused of fraud

MO ST. LOUIS — A former professional basketball player whose ex-girlfriend was sentenced to prison last year for fraud is now facing his own federal indictment, accusing him of falsifying applications for pandemic relief loans.

The indictment of Lorenzo Gordon, 40, comes three months after his former girlfriend, Brittish Williams, was sentenced to four years in prison for fraud-related felonies, which also included schemes connected to the COVID-19 pandemic. Williams pleaded guilty to five charges.

Gordon is charged with three counts of wire fraud and one count of theft of government

property, the Post-Dispatch reported. He is accused of lying on COVID-19 business relief applications about how long he had operated two businesses, how much money they made, and whether he was the sole owner of a janitorial company.

Federal prosecutors said Gordon collected nearly \$273,000 unlawfully, the newspaper reported, citing charging documents.

Plan for monkey-breeding facility draws protest

GA BAINBRIDGE — Some local residents and an animal-rights group are protesting plans for a monkey-breeding facility in southwest Georgia.

Opponents urged the Bainbridge City Council to block plans by a company called Safer Human Medicine to build a \$396 million complex that would eventually hold up to 30,000 long-tailed macaques that would be sold to universities and pharmaceutical companies for medical research. The company said it plans to employ up to 263 workers.

Safer Human Medicine is led by executives who formerly worked for two other companies that provide animals for medical testing.

One of those companies, Charles River Laboratories, came under investigation last year for obtaining wild monkeys that were smuggled from Cambodia. The monkeys were falsely labeled as bred in captivity, as is required by U.S. rules, federal prosecutors have alleged. The company suspended shipments from Cambodia.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Kelce, Chiefs advance to AFC title game

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — No matter the setting — Arrowhead Stadium or Orchard Park — Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs keep finding ways to beat Josh Allen and the Buffalo Bills in the playoffs.

Mahomes threw two touchdown passes to Travis Kelce and the defending Super Bowl champion Chiefs advanced to their sixth straight AFC championship game with a 27-24 win over the Bills on Sunday night.

The Chiefs move on to Baltimore to face Lamar Jackson and the conference's top-seeded Ravens, who beat Houston 34-10 on Saturday.

Kansas City is 0-1 in the playoffs against the Ravens, following a 30-7 loss in the 2010 wild-card round. Baltimore defeated Kansas City 36-35 in their most recent regular-season matchup in Week 2 of the 2021 season.

"There's no weakness there," Mahomes said of the Ravens. "It's going to take our best ef-

fort. Defense, offense, special teams, they do it all. It's always a great challenge and that stadium's going to be rocking, so we're excited for the challenge."

Mahomes passed his first test by winning his first true road playoff game — not including Super Bowl neutral sites — and improving his postseason record to 13-3.

"First of all, this is a great environment, man," Mahomes said of Buffalo. "It really is. We did hear it all week, man, about playing a road game, and we're here to prove a point and show that we can play anywhere."

The Chiefs are accustomed to ending the Bills' season, having done it now in three of the past four playoffs, with the first two wins coming at home in the 2020 AFC championship game and the 2021 divisional round.

"All-time classic again. Any time we play Sean's teams, it comes right down to the end," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said, referring to Bills coach Sean McDermott.

The Chiefs scored on five of their first six possessions, not including a kneedown at half-time, and went ahead for good on Isiah Pacheco's 4-yard touchdown run 40 seconds into the fourth quarter.

Neither team led by more than seven points and they traded leads five times. The outcome was decided when Buffalo kicker Tyler Bass missed a potential game-tying field goal wide right from 44 yards, allowing the Chiefs to run out the remaining 1:47.

"Ultimately, completely on me," said Bass, who had a field goal blocked and missed from 27 yards in a playoff-opening 31-17 win over Pittsburgh last week. "I feel terrible. I love this team, man. It hurts. This one hurts bad."

Allen blamed himself for having Buffalo's final drive stall at the Chiefs 26 following two incompletions — the last a throwaway after he was flushed out of the pocket.

"I wish he wouldn't have been put in that situation. You

win as a team you lose as a team. One play doesn't define a game, doesn't define a season," Allen said. "Losing sucks. Losing to them, losing to anybody."

Mahomes was 17-for-23 for 215 yards, and the two TD passes to Kelce were the 15th and 16th times they've combined for scores in the playoffs. They have one more than Tom Brady and Rob Gronkowski for the NFL record for most playoff TDs for a quarterback-receiver combination.

"It speaks to Travis and his work, to be able to go out there and make plays in big games," Mahomes said. "Passing anything that has Brady and Gronk in it is special. Because those are two of the greatest players."

Allen went 26-for-39 for 186 yards and a touchdown, and also ran for two scores. His team-leading 72 yards rushing increased his career playoff total to 563, the second-most among NFL quarterbacks in league history and trailing only Steve Young (594).

Goff throws 2 TD passes as Lions outlast Buccaneers

Associated Press

DETROIT — Jared Goff is good enough for Detroit, as his coach recently reminded him.

Cast away by the Los Angeles Rams three years ago in a trade for Matthew Stafford, the quarterback was welcomed by the Lions and has since become a fan favorite at Ford Field, where the crowd chanted his name during a second straight home playoff triumph for the long-downtrodden franchise.

Goff threw his second touchdown pass with 6:22 left and the Lions beat the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 31-23 in the divisional round on Sunday, lifting Detroit into the NFC championship for the first time in 32 years and just the second time in franchise history.

He took a knee on three straight snaps to run out the clock, giving him a chance to enjoy the sights and sounds as fans stood, screamed and twirled white towels.

"I knew it would be the last one in front of our home fans this year, and I took it all in," Goff said.

The Lions (14-5) won two playoff games in a season for the first time since 1957, the last year they won the NFL title, and had two postseason games at home for the first time.

Now they have to travel to face San Francisco, the NFC's top seed, next Sunday for a spot in the Super Bowl — a game they have never played in.

"I envisioned that we would have a chance to compete with

the big boys, and that's where we're at," said coach Dan Campbell, who was hired shortly before Goff was acquired.

Jahmyr Gibbs ran through a huge hole for a tiebreaking, 31-yard touchdown early in the fourth quarter, and Goff made it a two-TD lead when he connected with Amon-Ra St. Brown for a 9-yard score.

Goff finished 30-for-43 for 287 yards and directed an efficient second-half offense for the Lions, who had long touchdown drives on three consecutive possessions. St. Brown had eight catches for 77 yards, and his TD catch capped a masterful 10-play, 89-yard drive.

"Goff in that fourth quarter, he really showed up and made some big throws," said Camp-

bell, who told Goff he was good enough for Detroit last week when he gave him a game ball after beating his former team in a wild-card game.

Gibbs, an electric rookie Tampa Bay didn't have to face when it lost to Detroit in the regular season, had 74 yards rushing on nine carries and four receptions for 40 yards.

The Lions, and their desperate-for-a-winner fans, hope their second appearance in the NFC title game works out better than the first when Washington routed them 41-10 on Jan. 12, 1992.

Baker Mayfield threw three TD passes for Tampa Bay (10-9), including a 16-yard toss to Mike Evans that got the Bucs within one score with 4:37 left.

VanDerveer passes Coach K for NCAA wins mark

Associated Press

STANFORD, Calif. — Only Her.

Tara VanDerveer's face shined in every corner of Maples Pavilion with that very message. Yes, the Stanford Hall of Famer now stands atop major college basketball as the winningest coach of all time.

"Today was just so wonderful," VanDerveer said. Even though she had to text her 96-year-old mother Rita they'd need to cancel a scheduled bridge game because of all the postgame festivities to celebrate her.

"It is a big number and I'm very appreciative of the great players I've coached and the great places I've been and the attention it's brought to women's basketball."

Just as those who love her so hoped it would turn out, VanDerveer passed former Duke and Army coach Mike Krzyzewski with her 1,203rd career victory at home in Maples when No. 8 Stanford beat Oregon State 65-56.

And it never fails that VanDerveer always takes a minute to thank everybody for coming to the game, and that includes offering her immense gratitude to

the Stanford band. On Sunday, moments after her latest remarkable milestone in a career filled with them, she politely asked the band to stop playing. VanDerveer took the microphone and began with her words of appreciation once more.

"I'm overwhelmed," she told the crowd. "I'm not usually lost for words but it's pretty impressive, all these people here, all the former players coming back."

A head coach since age 24, VanDerveer celebrated with thousands of supporters and a couple dozen former players on hand to cheer her on for yet another triumph in a decorated 45-year career featuring so many memorable accomplishments.

And for a nearly full arena, this was also a chance for fans to show their love to the Hall of Fame coach who has been shining her light on women's basketball for 4½ decades.

"Tara! Tara!" they yelled in the closing seconds before the celebration began.

"This is a tremendous accomplishment for Tara VanDerveer, who is already one of the most accomplished coaches in the history of basketball," Krzyzewski said in a statement. "This is yet another milestone to add to an

amazing legacy. More important than all the astounding numbers and career accomplishments, she's positively impacted countless lives as a coach and a mentor. Tara remains a true guardian of our sport."

A video tribute with messages from everyone from Billie Jean King to Steve Kerr, Dawn Staley and Coach K himself showed on the big screen.

It was tense at times, with VanDerveer standing with arms crossed and pacing the sideline as Kiki Iriafen and her supporting cast made the big plays when it mattered most — including Iriafen's first 3-pointers. Stanford was missing All-American Cameron Brink because of a lower left leg injury suffered in Friday's win over Oregon.

"I want to bring attention to the beauty of women's basketball and the wonderfulness of these players that work so hard," VanDerveer said. "I'm so jealous because I never got to do what they get to do and I'm able to watch a little girl's dream play out through them."

Iriafen contributed a career-high 36 points on 16-for-26 shooting and 11 rebounds and Talana Lepolo had 14 points and six assists for the Cardinal (17-2, 6-1

Pac-12). The game drew a near-capacity crowd of 7,022 at Maples Pavilion, which holds 7,233.

VanDerveer improved to 1,203-267 overall and 1,051-216 over 38 seasons at Stanford. A 17-time Pac-12 Coach of the Year with five national Coach of the Year honors, VanDerveer has captured three NCAA titles with Stanford — 1990, '92 and 2021 — and coached the 1996 U.S. Olympic team to a gold medal at the Atlanta Games during a year away from Stanford.

Stanford led 28-22 at the break having shot just 12-for-34, but was willed in the second half as former star players such as Jennifer Azzi, Chiney Ogwumike, Ros Gold-Onwude and Jayne Appel-Marinelli were among those in attendance along with former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice supporting the beloved coach.

"What does it mean to me? It means everything. It's like your family member getting married or someone had a baby, Coach is making history, we all come back and we celebrate," Ogwumike said. "It's just a part of our life now. Showing up for Tara is the same way you show up for a sister, an aunt, a brother. She's family to all of us."

Clippers overcome 18-point deficit to stun Nets late

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — After getting outshutled and outshot for three quarters, the Los Angeles Clippers turned into a team possessed.

Kawhi Leonard scored 14 of his 21 points in the final five minutes and the Clippers overcame an 18-point deficit with a game-ending 22-0 run to beat the Brooklyn Nets 125-114 on Sunday.

After getting outscored 16-0 to start the game, the Clippers were in catch-up mode.

"They came out and punched us in the mouth and in that fourth quarter we played Clipper basketball, got some stops and the rest is history," said James Harden, who had 24 points and 10 assists.

The Clippers took their first lead on Leonard's basket with 2:50 remaining. Their stun-

ning run ended with Leonard's 3-pointer from the corner to win for the 10th time in 12 games.

Celtics 116, Rockets 107: Kristaps Porzingis scored 32 points and NBA-leading Boston beat host Houston.

The Celtics improved to 33-10, rebounding from their first home loss of the season Friday night against Denver. Boston is 20-1 at home and 13-9 on the road.

Suns 117, Pacers 110: Kevin Durant scored 40 points, Devin Booker had 26 and host Phoenix beat Indiana for its fifth straight victory.

Bradley Beal added 25 points on 11-for-16 shooting. He hit three baskets in the final 2:11 that were crucial in helping Phoenix keep the lead. Booker shot just 9-for-24 from the field, including 1-for-7 from 3-point range, but had a

crucial steal with 25 seconds left to seal it.

Lakers 134, Trail Blazers 110: D'Angelo Russell scored 34 points, LeBron James added 28 and host Los Angeles routed Portland to get back to .500 at 22-22.

Austin Reaves scored 15 points, and Anthony Davis had 14 points and 14 rebounds to help the Lakers bounce back from an 18-point loss to Brooklyn two nights earlier. Russell and James combined to score the Lakers' first 19 points of the fourth.

Nuggets 113, Wizards 104: Nikola Jokic had 42 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists and defending champion Denver beat host Washington.

Magic 105, Heat 87: Paolo Banchero scored 20 points and host Orlando handed Miami its third straight loss.

Alcaraz in Aussie quarters for 1st time

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Carlos Alcaraz completed a Grand Slam set by reaching the Australian Open quarterfinals for the first time, setting up a showdown against Olympic champion Alexander Zverev.

All four quarterfinalists from the top half of the women's draw are also into the last eight at Melbourne Park for the first time, with No. 12-seeded Zheng Qinwen the highest-ranked player in the group.

Zheng matched her career-best run — she reached the U.S. Open quarterfinals last year — by breezing to a 6-0, 6-3 win in under an hour against Oceane Dodin in the final night match.

She'll next play Anna Kalinskaya, who beat No. 26 Jasmine Paolini 6-4, 6-2. In 13 previous majors, Kalinskaya had never got past the second round.

Zheng received a surprise visit from 2014 Australian Open winner Li Na, China's first major winner, after the third round and took some advice: "Focus

on the moment. Li Na said, 'Just play, don't think too much. Keep it simple.'"

Alcaraz, the 20-year-old Wimbledon champion, missed the season-opening major in 2023 because of injury. But he's more than making up for lost time.

The No. 2-seeded Alcaraz beat Miomir Kecmanovic 6-4, 6-4, 6-0 in less than two hours Monday to open the night session on Rod Laver Arena.

He has dropped just one set en route to the last eight. Zverev is there for the third time but is coming off some long five-set wins, including a four-hour, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (3) fourth-round victory over No. 19 Cameron Norrie.

It was the 32nd five-set match so far at Melbourne Park, a tournament record in the Open era.

Their match on Margaret Court Arena was prolonged after being delayed briefly when a protester threw anti-war pamphlets onto the back of the court

in the third set. The protester was escorted out by security.

No. 3 Daniil Medvedev, a two-time Australian Open runner-up, beat No. 69-ranked Nuno Borges 6-3, 7-6 (4), 5-7, 6-1 and will next face No. 9 Hubert Hurkacz, who ended the run of French wild-card entry Arthur Cazaux 7-6 (6), 7-6 (3), 6-4.

Medvedev had two match points at 5-4 in the third set but Borges forced a fourth, only to fade as the Russian pulled away for victory.

While the highly-ranked players continue to advance in the men's draw, the seeded players keep toppling out on the women's side. And that has opened opportunities for Dayana Yastremska and Linda Noskova to advance to the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam for the first time.

Yastremska beat the 18th-seeded Victoria Azarenka 7-6 (6), 6-4, a two-time Australian Open champion, and No. 23-seeded Elina Svitolina had to retire after hurting her back when

she was trailing Noskova 3-0.

Azarenka served for the first set twice and had two set points at 6-5, but couldn't convert them. Yastremska was down a break in the second but rallied to win six of the last seven games.

"I think I need to take a thousand breaths because my heart I think is going to jump out of my body," Yastremska said. "During the match, I was imagining how I lost already like 25 times. I was losing the tiebreak, second set I was losing, I always felt I was running behind the train.

"But because I'm a little bit of a fighter I think I won this match." There was no handshake, as is the convention between Ukrainian players and opponents from Russia and Belarus.

The 19-year-old Noskova beat top-ranked Iga Swiatek in the third round and now is the youngest player to reach the Australian Open women's singles quarterfinals since 2008.

Horvat lifts Isles past Stars in OT in Roy's first game

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Bo Horvat scored 41 seconds into overtime and the New York Islanders beat the Dallas Stars 3-2 Sunday night to win new coach Patrick Roy's debut.

Alexander Romanov and Hudson Fasching also scored for New York and defenseman Noah Dobson had two assists. Ilya Sorokin finished with 41 saves.

Roy, who went 130-92-24 in three seasons coaching Colorado from 2013-16, was hired on Saturday to replace Lane Lambert after the Islanders went 0-3-1 on a four-game trip.

Jason Robertson and Nils Lundqvist scored for Dallas, and Joe Pavelski had two assists. Scott Wedgewood made 25 saves in the Stars' second loss in

three games after winning four of five.

In the extra period, Mathew Barzal found Horvat behind the Stars' defense and Horvat converted a forehand-backhand maneuver to give the Islanders their third win in 11 games (3-6-2).

Wild 5, Hurricanes 2: Kirill Kaprizov scored three goals for his second career hat trick, and Joel Eriksson Ek had the tie-breaking goal in the third period to lead visiting Minnesota past Carolina.

Jake Middleton also scored for the Wild in their third win in four games after losing eight of nine. Filip Gustavsson stopped 40 shots.

Martin Necas and Michael Bunting had goals for Carolina, which finished 3-2-1 on a six-

game homestand.

Red Wings 2, Lightning 1: Daniel Sprong scored the go-ahead goal in the second period and host Detroit snapped Tampa Bay's five-game winning streak.

Lucas Raymond also scored for the Red Wings, who are 7-1-1 over the last nine games. Alex Lyon made 29 saves, including 19 in the third period.

Rangers 5, Ducks 2: Artemi Panarin scored the tiebreaking goal with less than six minutes to go in the third period, Chris Kreider and Vincent Trocheck each had a goal and an assist, and visiting New York rallied to beat Anaheim.

Will Cuyllé and Jimmy Vesey also scored for the Rangers, who had dropped six of their last eight coming into the game. Igor Shesterkin made 16 saves and

Adam Fox had two assists.

Senators 5, Flyers 3: Vladimir Tarasenko and Claude Giroux scored third-period goals and visiting Ottawa rallied to win Shane Pinto's return to the lineup from a gambling suspension.

Tim Stützle had two goals and Zack MacEwen also scored for the Senators. Pinto, playing for the first time after a 41-game suspension, had an assist.

Egor Zamula had two goals and an assist, and Joel Farabee had a goal and two assists for the Flyers.

Maple Leafs 3, Kraken 1: Auston Matthews scored his league-leading 38th goal in the first period, Ilya Samsonov got his first win since early December, and visiting Toronto beat Seattle.