

Houthis fire missile at USS Carney

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Yemen's Houthi rebels launched a missile Friday at a U.S. warship patrolling the Gulf of Aden, forcing it to shoot down the projectile, the U.S. military said Friday.

The attack on the destroyer USS Carney marks a further escalation in the biggest confrontation at sea the U.S. Navy has seen in the Middle East in decades.

It represents the first time the Houthis directly targeted a U.S. warship since the rebels began their attacks on shipping in October, a U.S. official said

on the condition of anonymity because no authorization had been given to discuss the incident.

That contradicted a statement by the U.S. military's Central Command, which said the Houthis fired "toward" the Carney. As it has in previous strikes, the Pentagon has said it was difficult to determine what exactly the Houthis were trying to hit.

Ever since the Israel-Hamas war broke out, the U.S. has tried to temper its descriptions of the strikes targeting its bases and warships to try to prevent the conflict from becoming a

wider regional war.

Acknowledging Friday's assault as a direct attack on a U.S. warship is important, said Brad Bowman, a senior director at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.

"They're now finally calling a spade a spade, and saying that, yeah, they're trying to attack our forces, they're trying to kill us," Bowman said.

Tempering the language, while aimed at preventing a wider war, has had the opposite effect of further enabling the Houthis, he said.

In Friday's attack, an anti-ship ballistic missile came near

the USS Carney, an Arleigh-Burke class destroyer that's been involved in American operations to try and stop the Houthi campaign since November, Central Command said.

"The missile was successfully shot down by USS Carney," Central Command said. "There were no injuries or damage reported."

The attack was the latest assault by the rebels in their campaign against ships traveling through the Red Sea and surrounding waters, which has disrupted global trade amid Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

UN court orders Israel to prevent genocide in Gaza

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — The United Nations' top court ordered Israel on Friday to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in its military offensive in Gaza, but stopped short of ordering a cease-fire.

South Africa alleged that Israel's campaign in the tiny coastal enclave amounted to genocide in the case, which goes to the core of one of the world's most intractable conflicts, and had asked the court to order Israel to halt the operation.

While the ruling stopped short of that, it nonetheless constituted an overwhelming rebuke of Israel's wartime conduct and adds to mounting international pressure to halt the offensive that has killed more than 26,000 Palestinians, decimated vast swaths Gaza, and driven nearly 85% of its 2.3 mil-

lion people from their homes.

In the highly anticipated decision made by a panel of 17 judges, the International Court of Justice decided not to throw out the case — and ordered six so-called provisional measures to protect Palestinians in Gaza.

Many of the measures were approved by an overwhelming majority of the judges. An Israeli judge voted in favor of two of the six.

"The court is acutely aware of the extent of the human tragedy that is unfolding in the region and is deeply concerned about the continuing loss of life and human suffering," Joan E. Donoghue, the court's president, said.

Provisional measures by the world court are legally binding, but it is not clear if Israel will comply with them.

After the ruling, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the fact that the

court was willing to discuss the genocide charges was a "mark of shame that will not be erased for generations," and he vowed to press ahead with the war.

"We will continue to do what is necessary to defend our country and defend our people," he said. "Like every country, Israel has the basic right to defend itself. The court in the Hague rightfully rejected the outrageous request to take that away from us."

Friday's decision is only an interim one; it could take years for the court to consider the merits of the genocide accusation by South Africa. Israel rejects the allegation.

While the case winds its way through the court, South Africa had asked the judges "as a matter of extreme urgency" to impose provisional measures.

Top of the South African list was a request for the court to order Israel to "immediately

suspend its military operations in and against Gaza."

But the court declined to do that.

South Africa also asked for Israel to take "reasonable measures" to prevent genocide and allow access for desperately needed aid.

The court ruled that Israel must do all it can to prevent genocide, including refraining from killing Palestinians or causing harm to them.

It also ruled it urgently needs to get basic aid to people in Gaza and that Israel should prevent and punish any incitement to genocide, among other measures. The court said Israel should submit a report on measures taken within a month.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki welcomed "the significant order."

He said that the judges "ruled in favor of humanity and international law."

NATO chief optimistic over Sweden bid

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg expressed optimism on Friday that Sweden could be ready to join the military organization by March, after receiving positive signals this week from holdouts Hungary and Turkey.

Sweden, along with its neighbor Finland, set aside decades of military nonalignment after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 to seek protection under NATO's collective defense umbrella. Finland has since joined, and it along with the other 30 allies must all agree for Sweden to join.

But Turkey and Hungary have

held up proceedings.

"Sweden's entry into NATO will make the whole alliance stronger," Stoltenberg told reporters as he provided details about talks this week with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and noted new developments in Turkey.

"The message I have received from Budapest is that the parliament will reconvene at the end of February, so we have to wait for that. But I'm absolutely confident, and I count on Hungary," Stoltenberg said.

Initially, Hungary gave no clear reason for the delays, and Orbán had insisted that his gov-

ernment wouldn't be the last to endorse Sweden. But the tone toward Stockholm hardened, as the European Commission refused to allow Hungary access to European Union funds over democratic backsliding.

Budapest accused Swedish politicians of telling "blatant lies" about the state of Hungary's democracy.

Orbán, who has broken ranks with NATO allies by adopting a Kremlin-friendly stance toward Russia's invasion of Ukraine, said Tuesday that he had invited Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson to Budapest to discuss "future cooperation in the field of

security and defense as allies and partners."

Unless an emergency session of parliament is called to debate Sweden's bid, the assembly is due to sit on Feb. 26.

To let Sweden join, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed a series of conditions including a tougher stance on groups that Turkey considers to be threats to its security, like Kurdish militants and members of a network he blames for a failed coup in 2016.

Separately, but linked to his approval, Erdogan insisted on a fighter-jet deal with the United States.

Guard officer deployed to border reprimanded after pleading guilty to assault

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — A New Hampshire National Guard officer who led a battalion on the southern U.S. border has pleaded guilty to assault and several other crimes and been sentenced to a reprimand, the U.S. Army said Thursday.

A military judge in Texas on Wednesday convicted and sentenced Lt. Col. Mark Patterson as part of a deal in which he pleaded guilty to assault consummated by battery, sexual harassment, conduct unbecoming an officer, violation of a general order and other charges, said Army spokesperson Leah Garton. She said that the sentence was "consistent with the terms of a plea agreement."

Defense attorney Joseph Jordan said his client owned up to his errors. He said the judge also took into consideration that Patterson had a brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.

"He took responsibility for exactly what he did wrong, and that is why his sentence was only a reprimand. It is important to remember that this is a decorated combat veteran who suffers greatly from documented PTSD and TBI," Jordan said. "All of that was taken into account, yesterday."

Patterson, of Weare, N.H., was deployed with his unit to the southern border in October 2022 and assigned to support U.S. Border Patrol. In January 2023, the Army opened an investigation and Patterson, then commander, was reassigned, an Army spokesperson said previously. The investigation concluded in May and led to the court-martial at Joint Base San Antonio — Fort Sam Houston in which Patterson pleaded guilty.

The Army has not released details on the actions that led to Patterson being charged and did not immediately provide additional information Thursday.

Navy rolling out Wi-Fi to 4K sailors in pilot program

The Virginian-Pilot

In an effort to appeal to younger generations, the Navy will begin offering free Wi-Fi exclusively to sailors living in barracks at Norfolk and Portsmouth installations beginning next week.

The Navy is deploying Wi-Fi as part of the "virtual single sailor program" to enhance the "lifestyle of the modern sailor" with access to online games, shows and movies, according to a Navy advertisement shared with *The Virginian-Pilot*.

The program launches Feb. 1 with full implementation planned for March. Wi-Fi will be installed in 12 unaccompanied housing barracks at Naval Station Norfolk, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth and Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth. The 12 barracks house roughly 4,000 sailors, said Katie Hewett, spokesperson for Navy Region Mid-Atlantic.

The rollout was announced Thursday at Naval Station Norfolk's Willis Manor building, one of the barracks that will be

equipped with the internet service. Other barracks to get Wi-Fi include buildings at Enterprise Hall, Intrepid Hall, Constellation Hall, Independence Hall, Groshong Hall, Schamberger Hall, Penn Hall and Mayo Hall, all at Naval Station Norfolk; buildings No. 282 and No. 288 at the medical center; and building No. 1585 at the shipyard.

"The Wi-Fi pilot supports the sailors holistically, taking into account their social and entertainment needs, professional training requirements, and career progression goals," Hewett said.

The Navy began working in May to improve quality of life for sailors following recruitment shortfalls and investigations into the suicides of Hampton Roads-based sailors.

Navy Recruiting Command reported in October the service missed its recruiting goals by about 7,000 members. The Department of Defense also reported 48 suicides among active-duty Navy sailors from January to October.

Senate deal on border and Ukraine at risk of collapse

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan Senate deal to pair border enforcement measures and Ukraine aid faced potential collapse Thursday as Senate Republicans grew increasingly wary of an election-year compromise that Donald Trump, the likely Republican presidential nominee, says is “meaningless.”

Senate negotiators have been striving for weeks to finish a carefully negotiated compromise on border and immigration policy that is meant to tamp down the number of migrants who come to the U.S. border with Mexico. But now that negotiations have dragged for weeks, election-year politics and demands from Trump are weighing it down.

At stake is a plan that both President Joe Biden and Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell have worked on for months to broker in hopes of ca-

joling Congress to approve wartime aid for Ukraine. The U.S. has run out of money to supply Ukraine, potentially leaving the country stranded without robust supplies of ammunition and missiles to fend off Russia’s invasion.

Trump on Thursday ramped up his criticism of the potential compromise, writing in two lengthy posts on his social media platform that it would be “meaningless” in terms of border security and “another Gift to the Radical Left Democrats” as Biden runs for reelection.

The former president said the Senate is better off not making a deal, even if it means the country will “close up” for a while. He did not propose alternate policy options.

In a closed-door Republican meeting on Wednesday, McConnell acknowledged the reality of Trump’s opposition, that he is the party’s likely presi-

dential nominee and discussed other options, including potentially separating Ukraine and the border, according to two people familiar who spoke anonymously to discuss the private meeting. Punchbowl News first reported the remarks.

McConnell’s comments raised fresh doubts in the Senate about his level of commitment to the border deal, though advocates for moving forward countered that the leader’s remarks were being misinterpreted.

“We’re still working on it,” McConnell told reporters on Thursday morning.

He also reassured the conference at a Republican luncheon Thursday that he still personally supports pairing the border and Ukraine, said Sen. Mike Rounds, a South Dakota Republican.

Oklahoma Sen. James Lankford, the head GOP negotiator, said the group is still working on the package.

Trump walks out of NYC court during summation

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Former President Donald Trump abruptly walked out on closing arguments at his defamation trial Friday as a lawyer for writer E. Jean Carroll urged a jury to award her client at least \$12 million damages, saying Trump had shattered her reputation and her world by unleashing a flood of hate toward her through his public statements branding her a liar.

Just minutes after attorney Roberta Kaplan began her closing argument in Manhattan federal court, Trump suddenly rose from his seat at the defense table and walked toward the exit, pausing to scan the packed courtroom as members of the Secret Service leaped up to follow him out.

The unexpected departure prompted Judge Lewis A. Kaplan to speak up, briefly interrupting the closing argument to say: “The record will reflect that Mr. Trump just rose and walked out of the courtroom.”

The walkout came only minutes after the judge, without the jury present, threatened to send Trump attorney Alina Habba to jail for continuing to talk when he told her she was finished.

“You are on the verge of spending some time in the lock-up. Now sit down,” the judge told Habba, who immediately complied.

Roberta Kaplan and the judge are unrelated.

Trump, who was not required to attend the civil lawsuit proceedings, had appeared agitated all morning, vigorously shaking his head as Kaplan’s closing arguments got underway.

The walkout occurred shortly after Roberta Kaplan said: “Donald Trump has tried to normalize conduct that is abnormal.”

RNC pulls resolution declaring Trump the party’s ‘presumptive 2024 nominee’

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The Republican National Committee has pulled a resolution to consider declaring Donald Trump the party’s “presumptive 2024 nominee” before he formally clinches the requisite number of delegates, a person familiar with the decision said Thursday.

News of the withdrawal came shortly after Trump posted on his Truth Social site that, while he “greatly” appreciated the notion, he felt, “for the sake of PARTY UNITY, that they should NOT go forward with this plan, but that I should do it the ‘Old Fashioned’ way, and

finish the process off AT THE BALLOT BOX.”

The measure, according to a draft obtained Thursday by The Associated Press, had said it “declares President Trump as our presumptive 2024 nominee for the office of President of the United States and from this moment forward moves into full general election mode welcoming supporters of all candidates as valued members of Team Trump 2024.”

The withdrawal was confirmed by a person familiar with the decision who was not authorized to publicly discuss the proposal and spoke on condition of anonymity Thursday night.

If approved, the measure would have further solidified Trump’s control of the party and its operation at a time when former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley is still competing against Trump for the GOP nomination.

RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel had earlier signaled her approval for the resolution. On Tuesday, after Haley finished second to Trump in New Hampshire, McDaniel said that while she felt the former ambassador had “run a great campaign,” Republicans “need to unite around our eventual nominee, which is going to be Donald Trump.”

Ukrainians worry after crash that POW exchanges will end

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — As Russia and Ukraine trade accusations over this week's crash of a Russian military transport plane, one thing is clear: families' fears that future prisoner exchanges may be in danger and loved ones could stay imprisoned.

Even the basic facts are being debated. Russian officials accused Kyiv of shooting down the plane Wednesday and claimed that 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war were on board as they headed for a prisoner swap. The Ukrainian side said it had no evidence of POWs and that Russia is just playing with Ukrainians' psyche. It did say, however, that an exchange had been due to take place on Wednesday.

Neither side provided evidence for their accusations, leaving the relatives and loved ones in vulnerable states with

no answers. Many Ukrainians were already in distress before the incident and had heard nothing from their loved ones in captivity for months.

Yevheniia Synelnyk's brother has been in captivity for over a year and a half. She cried and worried through Wednesday as conflicting items appeared on the news.

"You don't understand which of these is true," she said.

The next day, exhaustion set in.

"There is no strength left to shed tears," she said in a tired voice.

Synelnyk is also a representative of the Association of Azovstal Defenders' Families, which was created in June of 2022, shortly after around 2,500 Ukrainian servicemen surrendered to Russia on the orders of the Ukrainian president during the siege of the Azovstal steel mill in May. According to the

association, around 1,500 fighters from the steel mill remain in captivity. Thousands more taken in other battles also are being held in Russia, Ukrainian officials said.

Yevheniia Synelnyk says relatives' concerns keep growing as returning POWs talk of torture and abuse.

Now, many families fear the exchanges will stop, Synelnyk said. Soldiers who returned usually shared any information they had about other captives with prisoners' relatives. The last time she heard anything about her brother was a year ago.

The families supported each other throughout Wednesday.

"We're together, we must stay strong because we have no other choice," Synelnyk said, emphasizing they will keep organizing rallies. "As long as there is attention on these people, they are still alive there."

Execution in Alabama is first to use nitrogen gas

Associated Press

ATMORE, Ala. — A man who was paid \$1,000 to kill an Alabama woman more than 30 years ago was put to death with pure nitrogen gas, a first-of-its-kind execution that again placed the United States at the forefront of the debate over capital punishment.

Kenneth Eugene Smith, 58, appeared to shake and convulse at the start of the procedure before being pronounced dead at 8:25 p.m. Thursday at an Alabama prison after breathing the gas through a face mask to cause oxygen deprivation. It marked the first time a new execution method was used in the U.S. since 1982, when lethal injection was introduced and later became the most common method.

The execution took about 22 minutes from the time between the opening and closing of the curtains to the viewing room. Smith appeared to remain conscious for several minutes. For at least two minutes, he appeared to shake and writhe on the gurney, sometimes pulling against the restraints. That was followed by several minutes of heavy breathing, until breathing was no longer perceptible.

"Tonight Alabama causes humanity to take a step backwards," Smith said in a final statement. "I'm leaving with love, peace and light."

He made the "I love you sign" with his hands toward family members who were witnesses. "Thank you for supporting me. Love, love all of you," Smith said.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey said the execution was justice for the murder-for-hire killing of 45-year-old Elizabeth Sennett in 1988.

US inflation slowed further in December

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge cooled further last month even as the economy kept growing briskly, a trend sure to be welcomed at the White House as President Joe Biden seeks reelection in a race that could pivot on his economic stewardship.

Friday's government report showed that prices rose just 0.2% from November to December, a pace consistent with pre-pandemic levels and barely above the Fed's 2% annual target. Measured from a year earlier, prices increased 2.6%.

Excluding volatile food and energy costs, so-called "core" prices rose just 0.2% from month to month and 2.9% from a year earlier — the smallest such rise

since March 2021. Economists consider core prices a better gauge of the likely path of inflation.

The latest data suggests that the economy is achieving a difficult "soft landing," in which inflation falls back to the Fed's target without a recession. That outcome could make it easier for the Fed to consider cutting its key interest rate, which it raised 11 times since March 2022 to attack inflation. Higher interest rates have throttled home and auto sales by raising the cost of borrowing. Businesses have also chafed under the higher borrowing costs.

On Thursday, a government report showed that the economy expanded at a surprisingly strong 3.3% annual pace in the final three

months of last year. Solid consumer spending propelled the growth, capping a year that had begun with widespread expectations of a recession. Instead, the economy grew 2.5% in 2023, up from 1.9% in 2022.

Biden's Republican critics have sought to highlight what had been the biggest inflation spike in 40 years, for which they have largely blamed the president's spending policies. But with inflation having dropped sharply after an extended period of gloomy consumer sentiment, Americans are starting to show signs of feeling better about the economy. A measure of consumer confidence by the University of Michigan, for example, has jumped in the past two months by the most since 1991.

Mahomes, Jackson get 1st playoff meeting

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Patrick Mahomes has already defeated an impressive list of quarterbacks in the playoffs: Andrew Luck, Deshaun Watson, Ben Roethlisberger, Trevor Lawrence, Joe Burrow, Jalen Hurts, Tua Tagovailoa.

And of course, Josh Allen, who was eliminated for the third time by Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs last week.

One star AFC quarterback whom Mahomes has never run into in the postseason is Lamar Jackson. The Baltimore Ravens star could match Mahomes this season with his second MVP award—but is only now making his first appearance in the AFC championship game.

“He’s going to be the MVP for a reason,” Mahomes said. “He leads his team. He scores, he runs, he throws, he does whatever it takes to win, and that’s

what the greats do. It’s a challenge for our defense, but also a great challenge for our offense to keep up.”

Mahomes and the Chiefs face that difficult task Sunday at Baltimore in the AFC title game. It’s their sixth consecutive year reaching this stage of the playoffs, but the first time in that span they’ll have to play it on the road.

The Chiefs are the defending Super Bowl champions. The Ravens have the NFL’s best record this season. It’s a fascinating matchup made even more so by the presence of Mahomes and Jackson.

Even if Jackson would be happy to avoid such a tough opponent.

“I don’t like competing against him at all,” Jackson said with a laugh. “He’s definitely a Hall of Famer. But I believe it’s just two greats — up-and-com-

ing greats — just going toe to toe, like a heavyweight fight.”

This is the first playoff matchup between former MVP quarterbacks who are both under 30.

That’s not to say Mahomes hasn’t been pushed in the quarterback-deep AFC. Allen has come close to knocking him off, and Burrow actually beat Mahomes in the AFC championship game two years ago before Mahomes won a rematch last season.

Jackson’s most recent matchup with Mahomes was a 36-35 Ravens win in September 2021. Mahomes has won all their meetings the past three seasons.

“Listen, this league is a lot about the quarterbacks, right? We’re fortunate in this game we have two of the best ones in the league,” Chiefs defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo said. “Our goal and what we talk about all the time is, ‘Let’s just

get the ball back to our quarterback.’ That’s our job. And the only way to do that is make sure their quarterback doesn’t do the things that he’s capable of doing.”

Baltimore (14-4) reached this round with a 34-10 win over Houston. Kansas City (12-6) beat Allen and Buffalo 27-24 last weekend — with Taylor Swift in attendance watching her boyfriend, Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce.

That romance could be headed to the Super Bowl next month — but the Ravens will do their best to end Kansas City’s run.

This is the first time Baltimore is hosting the AFC title game since the Colts beat the Oakland Raiders in January 1971. The current Baltimore franchise has made it to this game four times previously, all on the road, and won twice on the way to Super Bowl titles.

49ers and Lions set for NFC championship matchup

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — The San Francisco 49ers have been waiting a year to get back to the NFC championship game after last season’s disappointing loss.

The wait for the Detroit Lions and their fans has been far longer, with the success-starved franchise one step away from their first Super Bowl appearance.

Either the Niners (13-5) will avenge title game losses from the past two seasons or the Lions (14-5) will win in their first appearance on this stage in 32 years when the teams meet in the NFC championship game on

Sunday night.

“You worked so hard all season long. We talked about it all season. To be able to put ourselves in a position where we can play the NFC championship game again. We did that,” 49ers All-Pro linebacker Fred Warner said.

“We have that opportunity right now. ... I know the type of team we have, the type of players we have and talent.

“I know if we play our best ball for three hours, we’ll get the job done.”

While San Francisco has been a top contender the past five seasons under coach Kyle Sha-

nahan, this is new territory for the Lions.

Coach Dan Campbell came aboard in 2021 and helped lead a turnaround that reached a new level this season with Detroit hosting a playoff game for the first time in 30 years and winning their first one in 32 years.

Lions owner Sheila Ford Hamp, whose late father, William Clay Ford, bought the team six decades ago gave Campbell a chance to be a full-time NFL coach for the first time.

“It feels good to prove her right, but we’re not done yet,” Campbell said Thursday.

Now the only franchise that

has played every season in the Super Bowl era without reaching the ultimate game has a chance to end that drought.

“There’s four teams left and these are the times you dream of as kid and you grow up, hoping to be in these final games,” said quarterback Jared Goff, who went to the Super Bowl with the Rams five years ago.

“We’re one win away from our ultimate goal of getting to the Super Bowl and winning that game as well.”

The 49ers have a long history of playing against Goff, who spent his first five seasons in the NFC West with the Rams.

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Knicks hand Nuggets season-worst loss

Associated Press

NEW YORK — OG Anunoby scored 26 points, Jalen Brunson added 21 and the New York Knicks handed the defending NBA champion Denver Nuggets their worst loss of the season, 122-84 on Thursday night.

Quentin Grimes had 19 points, Julius Randle 17 and Donte DiVincenzo 16 for the Knicks. They have won five straight and 11 of 13 since Anunoby was acquired from Toronto.

Nikola Jokic had 31 points and 11 rebounds for the Nuggets, whose three-game winning streak ended. Denver went 3-2 on a five-game trip that began with a loss at Philadelphia.

The Nuggets' previous biggest loss was a 119-93 home defeat to Oklahoma City on Dec. 29.

Celtics 142, Heat 110: Jayson Tatum scored 26 points, Kristaps Porzingis had 19 before spraining his left ankle and visiting Boston made 22 3-pointers on the way to routing Miami.

Jaylen Brown scored 18 points, Jrue Holiday had 17 and Derrick White 15 for the NBA-leading Celtics. They improved to 35-10 and are 2-0 this season against the team that beat them in last season's Eastern Conference

finals.

The 143 points were the most Boston ever scored against Miami, and the 33-point margin represented Boston's most-lopsided win over Miami in 172 meetings between the franchises, including playoffs.

The Celtics' previous scoring best against the Heat was a 139-118 win on April 12, 1990. Boston shot 64% on Thursday and out-rebounded Miami 47-31.

Bam Adebayo and Tyler Herro each scored 19 points for Miami. The Heat have lost five straight, their longest slide since dropping six in a row in March 2021.

Lakers 141, Bulls 132: LeBron James had 25 points and 12 assists a few hours after being named to his record 20th NBA All-Star team and host Los Angeles beat Chicago.

D'Angelo Russell hit eight 3-pointers and scored 29 points, Anthony Davis had 22 points and Austin Reaves added 20 points and eight assists. The Lakers hit 60.9% of their shots in their fourth win in six games.

Los Angeles racked up a season-high 112 points through three quarters and took a 24-point lead that kept it safe during the Bulls' 39-point fourth quarter. The Lakers' 141 points

were a season high, as were the Bulls' 132.

DeMar DeRozan scored 14 of his 32 points in the fourth for Chicago.

Pacers 134, 76ers 122: Indiana newcomer Pascal Siakam had 26 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists for his first triple-double since November 2022, leading the Pacers past visiting Philadelphia.

Joel Embiid had 31 points and seven rebounds just three days after breaking the 76ers' franchise record with 70 points. Philadelphia had won six in a row.

Embiid, the NBA's reigning MVP, was one of the starters announced Thursday for the Feb. 18 All-Star Game that will be played in Indianapolis.

The Pacers snapped a three-game losing streak and gave Siakam his first win since joining the team last week in a trade with Toronto.

Jazz 123, Wizards 108: Lauri Markkanen scored 29 points and visiting Utah beat Washington, spoiling Brian Keefe's debut as interim coach after Wes Unseld Jr. was moved to the Wizards' front office.

The Wizards announced earlier in the day that Unseld was out as coach midway through his third season with the team.

Washington dropped to 7-37. It has lost six in a row and 12 of 13.

John Collins added 22 points and 16 rebounds to help Utah snap a three-game losing streak. Kyle Kuzma led Washington with 26 points.

Timberwolves 96, Nets 94: Karl-Anthony Towns scored 27 points, Anthony Edwards added 24 and visiting Minnesota held off Brooklyn.

Minnesota led by 17 points in the third quarter and was still ahead by 10, midway through the fourth quarter.

Cam Thomas led Brooklyn with 25 points and Bridges had 21. The Nets have lost three straight, seven of eight and 12 of their last 14.

Kings 134, Warriors 133: Domantas Sabonis had the go-ahead dunk with 22 seconds left, Harrison Barnes scored 39 points and visiting Sacramento held off Golden State to split the season series 2-2.

De'Aaron Fox added 29 points and five assists for Sacramento. The Kings beat Atlanta 122-107 at home on Monday night to end a four-game losing streak.

Stephen Curry scored 33 points for Golden State. Jonathan Kuminga had a career-high 31.

Djokovic says one loss is not the beginning of the end

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — A solitary loss in 11 semifinals at the Australian Open was nowhere near enough for Novak Djokovic to contemplate a generational change in tennis.

Djokovic didn't get a look at a break point during a 6-1, 6-2, 6-7 (6), 6-3 loss to Jannik Sinner on Friday that ended the 10-time Australian Open champion's unbeaten streak after making the final four in Melbourne.

He commended the 22-year-old Italian for playing "flawless" tennis — it was Sinner's

third win over Djokovic in their past four matches — but said his own performance was the worst he could remember at a major.

"This tournament hasn't been up to my standard or criteria or the level that I would normally play or expect myself to play," Djokovic said, "but doesn't necessarily mean that it's beginning of the end, you know, as some people like to call it.

"Let's see what happens in the rest of the season."

The 36-year-old Djokovic has been dealing with illness and a sore right wrist this month in

Australia and clearly wasn't at his peak, by his own admission and from observations across the net from Sinner.

But no man has won more Grand Slam titles than Djokovic, who lifted his record to 24 with three titles last year when he went 27-1 in the majors tournaments.

"I still have high hopes for other Slams, Olympics, and whatever tournaments that I'll play," he said. "It's not the feeling that I'm used to. I mean, it kind of has been incredibly satisfying for me to start off most of

my seasons with a Grand Slam win and never lost in semis or finals of Australian Open."

The so-called Big Three of Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer have dominated the majors in this era.

Stan Wawrinka's title here a decade ago was the only Australian title that one of the Big Three didn't win since Marat Safin beat Lleyton Hewitt in the 2005 final.

That's going to change this Sunday, with Sinner in his first final and facing Daniil Medvedev or Alexander Zverev.

Sears, Alabama defeat No. 8 Auburn

Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Mark Sears had 22 points and eight assists and made two free throws with 9 seconds left to seal Alabama's 79-75 win over No. 8 Auburn on Wednesday night, ending the Tigers' 11-game winning streak.

The Crimson Tide (13-6, 5-1 Southeastern Conference) moved into a tie with their rival atop the league standings with their first win over a ranked team in five tries this season. It was a big rebound from a 20-point loss to No. 5 Tennessee on Saturday.

Auburn (16-3, 5-1) had a chance to tie with 13 seconds left when Alabama fouled Chad Baker-Mazara on a 3-point attempt. Baker-Mazara hit the first two but missed the third to make it 75-74 and Alabama won it at the line.

Johni Broome led Auburn with 25 points, 14 rebounds and five blocked shots.

Northwestern 96, No. 10 Illinois 91 (OT): Boo Buie scored 29 points, Brooks Barnhizer added 23 and host Northwestern beat Illinois.

The Wildcats (14-5, 5-3 Big Ten) scored the first nine points in overtime after Illinois' Marcus Domask missed a jumper at the end of regulation.

Buie put the Wildcats on top in overtime with a 3-pointer.

Barnhizer hit one from the corner, got fouled by Quincy Guerrier and made the free throw to complete the four-point play.

Matthew Nicholson put back a missed layup by Buie following a steal, making it 85-76 with 2:35 left, and the Wildcats remained in control the rest of the way.

Coleman Hawkins had 22 points and 13 rebounds for Illinois. Domask scored 22. Guerrier added 15 points and 11 rebounds.

No. 14 Marquette 86, DePaul 73: David Joplin made six of Marquette's 15 3-pointers, and the visiting Golden Eagles beat DePaul in the Blue Demons' first game under interim coach Matt Brady.

Joplin finished with 21 points. Tyler Kolek had 22 points and seven assists, and Oso Ighodaro finished with 19 points, 12 rebounds and six assists.

Led by Joplin, the Golden Eagles (14-5, 5-3 Big East) went 15 for 33 from beyond the arc.

Jalen Terry scored 22 points for the Blue Demons (3-16, 0-8), and Jeremiah Oden finished with 19. Brady was elevated to the interim job after Tony Stubblefield was fired on Monday.

No. 22 Florida Atlantic 69, Rice 56: Nick Boyd scored 18 points, Johnell Davis added 14 points and nine rebounds and visiting Florida Atlantic extend-

ed its winning streak to five games with a victory over Rice.

Boyd scored 11 points in the first half as FAU built a 33-26 halftime lead. Davis and Boyd combined to shoot 10 of 17 from the field.

Alijah Martin added 14 points and eight rebounds for FAU (16-4, 6-1 American Athletic Conference), which out-rebounded Rice 43-34 and held a 36-14 advantage in points in the paint.

Alem Huseinovic scored 16 points and Mekhi Mason added 13 for Rice (7-12, 1-5). The Owls have lost six of their last seven.

No. 23 Iowa State 78, Kansas State 67: Milan Momcilovic scored 19 points as host Iowa State pulled away late to beat Kansas State.

Keshon Gilbert added 15 points and grabbed 13 rebounds for the Cyclones (15-4, 4-2 Big 12), who extended their home-winning streak to 12 games. Curtis Jones contributed 18 points.

Arthur Kaluma led Kansas State (14-5, 4-2) with 16 points, as the Wildcats slipped from the top of the conference standings.

Hason Ward put Iowa State on top for good with a dunk at the 4:09 mark. A 3-pointer from Jones made it 66-61 with 2:47 remaining.

Nevada 77, No. 24 Colorado State 64: Jarod Lucas scored

28 points, Kenan Blackshear added 20 and host Nevada beat Colorado State.

Nick Davidson had 10 points and seven rebounds for the Wolf Pack (16-4, 3-3 Mountain West Conference), who shot 53.7% from the field.

Lucas was 10 of 14 and Blackshear went 9 for 12.

Jalen Lake led the Rams (15-4, 3-3) with 13 points and Josiah Strong scored 12. Colorado State was held to 39.3% from the floor.

Rams guard Isaiah Stevens, who averages 17.2 points per game, finished with eight points on 4-of-16 shooting.

No. 25 New Mexico 95, San Jose State 75: Jaelen House scored 18 points, Jamal Mashburn Jr. and Donovan Dent both added 17 and visiting New Mexico beat San Jose State for the Lobos' fourth straight win.

House drilled back-to-back 3-pointers from the left wing to push the Lobos' lead to 17 with under five minutes to play in the second half after San Jose State had cut the lead to single digits.

The Lobos (17-3, 5-2 Mountain West) opened up a double-digit lead late in the first half on a 3-pointer by Mashburn. They led the Spartans (8-11, 1-5 Mountain West) by as many as 17 in the first half.

Myron Amey Jr. led San Jose State with 24 points.

No. 1 South Carolina comes back to beat No. 9 LSU

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — Bree Hall made a go-ahead 3-pointer with 1:14 remaining, and No. 1 South Carolina rallied from an 11-point deficit to beat ninth-ranked and defending national champion LSU 76-70 on Thursday night.

Chloe Kitts scored 14 points to lead the Gamecocks (18-0, 6-0 Southeastern Conference), who beat the Tigers (18-3, 5-2) for

the 15th straight time and snapped LSU's 29-game home winning streak.

Raven Johnson had 13 points, Te-Hina Paopao 12 and Kamilla Cardoso 11. Hall finished with 10 points, eight in the final seven minutes.

Aneesah Morrow had 16 points and 13 rebounds for LSU. Angel Reese had 15 points and eight rebounds.

No. 7 North Carolina State

71, Clemson 49: Madison Hayes scored a career-high 24 points and visiting North Carolina State won its 15th straight over Clemson.

The Wolfpack (17-2, 5-2 Atlantic Coast Conference) had gone 2-2 after opening the season 14-0 including road losses at Virginia Tech and Miami.

But Hayes and North Carolina State took control of this one in a hurry. The Wolfpack

opened with a 13-2 run. After Clemson closed to 18-15, they went on a 14-0 burst to restore the big lead.

Mimi Collins scored 14 points and Saniya Rivers 13 for the Wolfpack.

Ruby Whitehorn led Clemson with 11 points. The Tigers' leading scorer, Amari Robinson, was held to 10 points after coming in averaging nearly 18 points a game.

Hurricanes top Devils; Oilers streak at 15

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen each had a goal and an assist, leading the Carolina Hurricanes past the New Jersey Devils 3-2 on Thursday night.

New Jersey coach Lindy Ruff was struck in the face by a puck during the second period. He stayed behind the bench initially, but didn't come out for the third period. Associate coach Travis Green ran the team the rest of the way.

Jordan Staal also scored for the Hurricanes, who have won three of four. Antti Raanta made 23 saves.

Justin Dowling and Jesper Bratt scored New Jersey's goals in the third period. Dowling was making his Devils debut in his first NHL game this season. Nico Daws was pulled after Carolina's third goal.

Oilers 3, Blackhawks 0: Connor McDavid had two goals and an assist, backup Calvin Pickard made 27 saves for his fifth career shutout and host Edmonton won its 15th straight game.

Zach Hyman also scored and Leon Draisaitl had three assists for the Oilers, who are just the fifth team in NHL history to win 15 or more consecutive games. The 1992-93 Pittsburgh Penguins hold the NHL record with 17 wins in a row.

The Oilers are 23-3-0 in their past 26 games.

Petr Mrazek stopped 31 shots for the Blackhawks, who have lost 19 straight road games (0-18-1) and its last three overall.

Canadiens 4, Islanders 3: Sean Monahan scored his second goal of the game with 2:12 to play, lifting the Canadiens past New York and spoiling Patrick Roy's return to Montreal.

After the Canadiens gave up a 3-1 lead in the third period, Monahan fired a one-timer into the Islanders' net to put Montreal back on top.

Nick Suzuki and Cole Caufield each had a goal and an assist for Montreal, which snapped a three-game losing streak. Sam Montembeault stopped 43 shots and had an assist on Monahan's first goal.

Mathew Barzal and Bo Horvat each had a goal and an assist, Kyle Palmieri also scored and Noah Dobson had three assists as the Islanders fell to 1-2-0 under Roy. The Hall of Fame goaltender who helped lead the Canadiens to Stanley Cup victories in 1986 and 1993 was hired as the Islanders' coach Jan. 20.

Bruins 3, Senators 2(OT): Brad Marchand scored at 1:48 of overtime and visiting Boston beat Ottawa.

David Pastrnak and Trent Frederic also scored for the Atlantic Division- and Eastern Conference-leading Bruins. Jeremy Swayman stopped 35 shots.

Thomas Chabot and Vladimir Tarasenko scored for the Senators. Joonas Korpi made 20 saves.

Ottawa was trailing 2-1 when Josh Norris thought he had tied the game at 13:18 of the third. But, officials determined a hand

pass was involved. The Senators did come back to tie the game at 2-all with a power-play goal at 16:42, when Tarasenko sent a shot past Swayman.

Red Wings 3, Flyers 0: Alex Lyon made 29 saves for his third career shutout, Andrew Copp scored his 100th goal and host Detroit silenced Philadelphia.

Dylan Larkin and Moritz Seider also scored during Detroit's three-goal second period as the Red Wings bounced back from a 5-4 loss to Dallas at home Tuesday. Copp's goal was short-handed, Larkin extended his point streak to 10 games and Lucas Raymond added two assists.

Samuel Ersson made 17 saves for the Flyers.

Lightning 6, Coyotes 3: Nikita Kucherov had a goal and two assists to retake the NHL lead in points and Steven Stamkos recorded his 1,100th career point as host Tampa Bay beat Arizona.

Brayden Point had a goal and an assist, Mitchell Chaffee scored his first career NHL goal and Darren Raddysh and Luke Glendening added scores for Tampa Bay, which won its fifth straight home game. Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 17 shots.

Clayton Keller had a goal and an assist and defenseman Sean Durzi scored his eighth goal of the season for Arizona. Connor Ingram, who had allowed one goal in his previous two career games against Tampa Bay, allowed six goals on 37 shots.

Stars 4, Ducks 3(OT): Thomas Harley scored 38 seconds into overtime for host Dallas.

Miro Heiskanen tied it midway through the third period.

Craig Smith and Matt Duchene also scored for the Stars.

Jake Oettinger made 21 saves for Dallas, needing only one in overtime.

Anaheim's John Gibson stopped 40 shots in regulation, but the only Stars shot in overtime was Harley's wrist shot from about 30 feet. Troy Terry, Jakob Silfverberg and Urho Vaakanainen scored for the Ducks.

Predators 3, Wild 2: Alexandre Carrier and Filip Forsberg scored 35 seconds apart to open a three-goal third period, Juuse Saros made 22 saves and visiting Nashville came back to beat Minnesota.

Roman Josi added his 10th goal of the season and had an assist, while Ryan O'Reilly had two assists for Nashville.

Joel Eriksson Ek scored his team-leading 21st goal of the season for Minnesota and Matt Boldy got his 16th. Filip Gustavsson stopped 25 shots for the Wild.

Blue Jackets 5, Flames 2: Alexandre Texier scored Columbus' first short-handed goal this season and the Blue Jackets beat skidding Calgary.

Yegor Chinakhov, Damon Severson, Dmitri Voronkov and Adam Fantilli, into an empty net, also scored for Columbus. The Blue Jackets improved to 4-2-2 in their past eight road games.

MacKenzie Weegar and Connor Zary each had a goal for the Flames.

Atlanta Falcons hire Raheem Morris as head coach

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Three years ago, the Atlanta Falcons passed on a chance to make Raheem Morris their head coach.

They didn't let him get away this time — even after an exhaustive search that included six-time Super Bowl winner

Bill Belichick.

The Falcons hired the Los Angeles Rams defensive coordinator on Thursday, bringing back a familiar name who served as Atlanta's interim coach for the final 11 games of the 2020 season after Dan Quinn was fired.

The 47-year-old Morris was hired by the Falcons after 14 candidates were interviewed, with Belichick the most notable among them. Earlier Thursday, the team conducted a second interview with Houston Texans offensive coordinator Bobby Slowik.

In the end, the Falcons decided to go with an experienced coach who has been in the league all but one season going back to 2002, including a three-year stint as head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He previously worked in Atlanta from 2015-2020.