

Trump orders revise Pentagon policies

BY MATTHEW ADAMS

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump signed four executive orders Monday that revise the Pentagon's transgender policy, eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion programs, reinstate service members who were kicked out for refusing the coronavirus vaccine and create an "Iron Dome" for the country.

Trump signed the orders while aboard Air Force One on a return flight to Washington from Florida.

"We will get transgender ideology the hell out of our military. It's going to be gone," Trump said Monday night at a retreat of House Republicans at his Doral golf resort in Miami.

The order does not immediately ban transgender troops but requires the Defense Department to update all medical standards "to establish high standards of readiness, lethality ... and integrity." It will end the use of pronouns in the military "that inaccurately reflect an individual's sex" and prohibits men from "sharing sleeping, changing or bathing in facilities" designated for women. The order also applies to women using facilities for men.

The order directs the Pentagon to determine a policy for service members based on readiness within 30 days.

Former President Joe Biden ended Trump's de facto ban on transgender service members and allowed individuals who meet military entrance qualifications to enlist, serve in their self-identified gender and access care deemed medically necessary for gender transition.

In July 2017, Trump issued a series of surprise tweets announcing his intention to ban transgender men and women

from serving "in any capacity."

The Pentagon's de facto ban on transgender men and women enlisting in the military went into effect in April 2019, following nearly two years of legal battles launched after transgender service members and military hopefuls sought to halt its implementation.

The Pentagon long insisted its policy was not a blanket ban because of its protections for those transgender service members who came out after the 2016 policy and a waiver process that could allow some transgender people to join the military.

But the policy barred nearly all people diagnosed with gender dysphoria — described by the American Psychiatric Association as "a conflict between a person's physical or assigned gender and the gender with which he/she/they identify."

It did allow people to enlist with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria who had doctor certification that they had remained stable in their biological sex for 36 months. It disqualified all people who had medically transitioned their sex.

DEI

Among Trump's initial executive orders signed last week was one that declared the government would recognize only two sexes — male and female. He also rolled back diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI, programs across all federal agencies.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Sunday posted on X that the president's orders are clear, "no more DEI" at the Pentagon.

"The Pentagon will comply, immediately. No exceptions, name-changes or delays," Hegseth said.

The order calls for the De-

fense Department and the Department of Homeland Security to abolish every DEI office within the agencies.

The secretaries of both departments must provide detailed guidance for the implementation of this order to their respective agencies within 30 days of the order signing.

Within 180 days, the secretaries must submit a report through the White House deputy chief of staff for policy documenting the progress of implementing the order, along with any recommendations for action to fulfill the objectives of this order.

It remains unclear Tuesday what Pentagon policies were canceled and what programs are still in effect.

Coronavirus vaccine

During Trump's inauguration speech last week, he said he would sign an executive order reinstating all service members, with full back pay, kicked out for refusing the coronavirus vaccine.

"The vaccine mandate was an unfair, overbroad and completely unnecessary burden on our service members," according to the executive order. "Further, the military unjustly discharged those who refused the vaccine, regardless of the years of service given to our nation, after failing to grant many of them an exemption that they should have received. Federal government redress of any wrongful dismissals is overdue."

The executive order calls for service members to revert to their former rank, along with receiving full back pay, benefits, bonus payments or compensation.

It also allows any service

members "who provide a written and sworn attestation" because they voluntarily left or allowed their service time to lapse to return to service with no impact on their service status, rank or pay.

'Iron Dome' for America

Another executive order that Trump signed would begin the process of creating a "next generation" missile defense shield to protect the United States against ballistic missiles and other long-range attacks.

It orders the construction of an "Iron Dome" shield, borrowing the name of the vaunted short-range Israeli missile defense system that for years has been used to intercept launches against them. The U.S. provided billions of dollars in funding to Iron Dome, and the Army has its own system.

"President Ronald Reagan endeavored to build an effective defense against nuclear attacks, and while this program resulted in many technological advances, it was canceled before its goal could be realized," the executive order reads.

"Over the past 40 years, rather than lessening, the threat from next-generation strategic weapons has become more intense and complex with the development by peer and near-peer adversaries of next-generation delivery systems and their own homeland integrated air and missile defense capabilities."

The order calls for the Defense Department to work with the director of the Office of Management and Budget to submit to the president a plan to fund this directive, allowing sufficient time for Trump to consider before finalizing the fiscal year 2026 budget.

DOD workers wrongly charged US \$500K in 2023

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

Charges at bars during the Super Bowl, withdrawals from casino ATM machines and Roblox game purchases were among \$500,000 of worrisome spending that went unnoticed on government credit cards in 2023, according to a Pentagon watchdog report.

The Defense Department inspector general found the problematic spending during fiscal year 2023, which ended Sept. 30, 2023, according to the report released Jan. 21. Much of the money went under the radar because one-third of pro-

gram supervisors were not using available data systems to track potentially fraudulent spending.

The credit cards are issued to employees and service members to cover the cost of work-related travel and do allow for cash withdrawals, according to the report. The contracts for the cards require certain fraud prevention measures be in place, and last week's report focused on strengthening those guardrails.

While 70% of the \$6.4 billion charged on 2.3 million government cards that year was found to be appropriate, 12% was in-

advertently spent on the wrong things, such as alcohol or in Google's online store for games, smartphone applications and video streaming services. Inspectors also found cards used on federal holidays and during major sporting events when employees were unlikely to have work expenses.

About 2% of spending was considering abuse and less than 1% fraud, according to the report.

That's down from a decade ago, when the inspector general found about \$1 million had been charged to government cards at casinos and adult en-

tertainment venues.

The most egregious case highlighted by the IG was an Air Force airman who withdrew more than \$10,500 from two Maryland casinos between April and August 2023. The airman tried the card nine more times totaling \$3,500, but those transactions were rejected because the card had reached its spending limit.

That service member received nonjudicial punishment after the Air Force program manager reached out to the commander a year after the problem began, according to the report.

Air Force set to reset shaving waivers for airmen, guardians

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force is resetting the expiration dates on waivers for airmen and guardians with shaving exemptions, or profiles, according to a memo from the service's surgeon general.

"All current shaving profiles remain valid but will expire 90 calendar days after the next Periodic Health Assessment," said a Friday memo from Dr. (Lt. Gen.) John DeGoes.

A periodic health assessment is an annual screening by the armed forces to evaluate the individual medical readiness of their service members.

The Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs Office did not respond after business hours Tuesday to an email seeking further information.

In 2020, Air Force surgeon general Dr. (Lt. Gen.) Dorothy Hogg authorized shaving waivers up to five years for airmen and guardians diagnosed with pseudofolliculitis barbae, which causes painful razor

bumps and disproportionately affects Black men.

The number of shaving waivers for medical conditions granted to airmen and guardians has nearly doubled over the past three years, according to an April report by Military.com.

In December, Congress decided against a pilot program to allow airmen and guardians to grow beards but asked the Air Force to brief it by April on the feasibility of such a program, the military news site reported Dec. 10.

DeGoes' memo directs airman and guardians with a medical necessity for a shaving profile to be re-evaluated by a health care provider. Commanders may request a service member be evaluated "due to operational concerns stemming from a medical condition," according to the memo.

Shaving waivers based on religious accommodation are excluded from the new policy, according to the memo.

USAF eliminates subsidies for quality-of-life program

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force has again cut funding for a program that provides substantial discounts for recreational trips and other activities, a service spokeswoman told Stars and Stripes.

Recharge for Resiliency allows up to \$200 per person per day to offset the cost of trips through Outdoor Recreation and Morale, Welfare and Recreation, according to a program guide published in January 2024.

Last year, approximately 120,000 airmen, guardians and their families participated in the program at reduced costs or no cost to them, a spokeswoman for the Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center, Debbie Aragon, said by email Jan. 22.

The federal budget has not paid for the program for the past several years, Aragon said.

Instead, money was reallocated from others areas to sup-

port the program, but not for fiscal year 2025, which began Oct. 1, and due to "competing priorities," it will probably not be funded in fiscal 2026, she said.

Moving money for the program "was not viable" in fiscal 2025 due to funding constraints, Aragon added.

Launched in 2015, Recharge for Resiliency includes three components, the Single Airmen Program Initiative, RecOn and Deployed Affected Program. They offer something for nearly every service member stationed at an Air Force or Space Force base, from ski outings to tourist-destination bus trips.

The program was developed at the height of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom to subsidize social and recreation programs within the Force Support Squadrons and create an Air Force culture that supports a healthy and resilient lifestyle, Aragon said.

Pacific Palisades fully reopens to residents

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — For the first time since the devastating Palisades fire ignited on Jan. 7, all Pacific Palisades residents can now return to their homes — or what is left of them.

All remaining evacuation orders were lifted at noon Monday, with most zones converted to residents-only access.

Residents were previously allowed limited access with a California Highway Patrol escort, but now they can pick up an entry pass and enter independently during non-curfew hours from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Residents can pick up an entry pass at Lot 3 at 1150 Pacific Coast Highway between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. daily and are allowed to bring contractors, tow trucks and tax assessors with them to their property.

“I think this will mean relief that at least they (residents) can go back and see for themselves what’s happened to the neighborhood,” said Quentin Fleming, a member of the Pacific Palisades Community Council, who lost his home. “Now the process of healing can begin.”

The 23,448-acre fire de-

stroyed 6,837 properties, damaged more than 1,000 others and claimed 12 lives, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

At the fire’s peak, more than 10,000 residents were under evacuation orders.

A curfew remains in effect in the fire zone to protect property during the repopulation process.

The U.S. Environmental Agency will begin debris removal this week, and returning residents are asked not to attempt to remove debris themselves due to safety concerns.

For many residents, the reopening process has been a painfully slow and frustrating one.

Evacuation orders were lifted in a piecemeal fashion, and there was a lot of confusion over what areas could be accessed and when, said Fleming.

Weekend rain triggered mudslides and flooding in the Palisades fire area on Sunday.

Residents seeking to access the Highlands area of the Palisades on Monday were warned to expect some delays as Palisades Drive only had one lane of traffic open because of the rain.

Shooting in Indiana store leaves 3 dead

Associated Press

ELKHART, Ind. — A shooting at a grocery store in northern Indiana on Monday left three people dead, including the suspected shooter, and two police officers wounded, officials said.

Police received a 911 call

around 5:30 p.m. about a shooting at Martin’s Super Market in Elkhart, the city police department said in a social media post. When officers arrived, they found two shooting victims dead inside the store.

When police “engaged” the shooting suspect outside the

store, two officers were wounded and the suspect was fatally shot, according to the Elkhart Police Department post, which was made to update information given at an earlier news conference.

The officers were taken to hospitals with gunshot wounds.

One has since been released and the other is in stable condition, it said.

“In this horrific situation, words cannot express the pain felt in our community when a tragic incident like this happens,” Elkhart Police Department Chief Dan Milanese said.

DOJ fires officials who worked on Trump cases

The Washington Post

The Justice Department fired more than a dozen officials who worked on the special counsel team that investigated Donald Trump in two separate criminal cases, citing a lack of trust in them, a department spokesman said Monday.

The firings were effective immediately and focused on officials who played key roles in prosecuting Trump, the spokesman said.

In a letter sent to the officials, Acting attorney general James McHenry referred to Trump’s claims that previous administrations weaponized law enforcement to hurt political enemies.

The terminations are the latest example of the Trump ad-

ministration reshaping the Justice Department since the inauguration last week, transferring or firing veteran career officials who the president’s allies believe would impede or interfere with their agenda.

The shake-up has hit nearly every major department and could eliminate some guardrails at the Justice Department intended to keep politics from interfering with investigations, according to people familiar with the moves.

Among the people transferred to a less-influential position was Bradley Weinsheimer, the Justice Department’s most senior career official. His position included being involved in some of the department’s thorniest cases, acting as a mediator

in ethical disputes and telling political appointees in the law enforcement agency what they could and could not do.

The chief of the Justice Department’s public integrity section, Corey Amundson, was also being removed from his post, according to people familiar with the matter. The section oversees election crimes and investigations into public officials, and its chief is a nonpartisan career official, according to the Justice Department website.

Veteran career officials in the national security, criminal, environmental and civil rights divisions were also removed from their positions. Some were transferred to a newly created division focused on sanctuary

cities and immigration enforcement.

The transfers to less-desirable positions are probably, in part, intended to skirt career civil service protections and push at least some of these people to resign, according to legal experts.

Legal experts said the attorney general will have the authority to convert some of these career positions into political ones, giving the Trump administration authority to pick whomever it wants for the powerful posts.

While the people removed from their positions have deep expertise in complicated legal areas, some experts said it was important to note whom is in their place.

Israeli troops kill 2 at protests in Lebanon

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Firing by Israeli troops killed two people and wounded 17 on Monday in the second day of deadly protests in southern Lebanon, health officials said, as residents displaced by the 14-month war between Israel and Hezbollah attempted to return to villages where Israeli troops remain.

The shooting came a day after 24 people were killed and more than 130 wounded when Israeli troops opened fire on protesters who breached roadblocks set up along the border.

Under a U.S.-brokered ceasefire on Nov. 27, Israeli forces were to withdraw from southern Lebanon and Hezbollah was to move north of the Litani River by Jan. 26. While the Le-

banese army and U.N. peacekeepers had already deployed in several villages before the deadline, Israel remained in over a dozen villages.

The United States and Lebanon announced later on Sunday that the deadline to meet the ceasefire terms had been extended to Feb. 18.

In a pre-recorded speech aired Monday, Hezbollah leader Naim Kassem said his group won't accept the extension of the ceasefire deadline, without addressing the fact that the Lebanese government had already done so.

Kassem also said his group has not violated the ceasefire terms and acknowledged that they considered retaliating against Israeli airstrikes but

were advised by Lebanese authorities against it.

Protests resumed Monday particularly in eastern border villages, where residents again attempted to return home. Israeli troops opened fire, killing one person in the town of Odaiseh and wounding seven others across four southern villages, the Health Ministry reported.

The Israeli military has blamed Hezbollah for pushing people to protest and has said soldiers fired warning shots when demonstrators approached.

Lebanon's national news agency reported that Israel dropped a bomb at the entrance of the southern village of Yaron to deter residents from proceeding farther.

Israel blamed the Lebanese army for not deploying to the region fast enough, while the Lebanese military accused Israel of stalling its withdrawal, complicating its deployment efforts.

Some family members who entered border villages Sunday discovered the bodies of their relatives. Israeli strikes have killed over 4,000 people during the war.

Since the ceasefire began, Israel has conducted near-daily operations such as house demolitions, shelling and airstrikes in southern Lebanon, accusing Hezbollah of violating ceasefire terms by attempting to move weapons. Lebanon in turn has accused Israel of hundreds of ceasefire violations.

Embassies in Congo attacked as protesters decry Rwanda

Associated Press

GOMA, Congo — Congolese security forces on Tuesday tried to slow the advance of Rwanda-backed M23 rebels who say they have captured Goma after entering eastern Congo's largest city, as U.N. officials reported an unspecified number of bodies on the streets.

The officials said hospitals are overwhelmed in Goma, a regional trade and humanitarian hub that is a refuge for hundreds of thousands now fleeing gunfire and shelling in the major escalation in one of Africa's longest conflicts driven by ethnic tensions.

The M23 rebels are one of about 100 armed groups vying for a foothold in the conflict-battered North Kivu province — which includes Goma — rich in minerals critical to much of the world's technology.

Dozens of demonstrators, meanwhile, looted and set fires to parts of at least nine foreign embassy buildings far off in the capital, Kinshasa, including those of Rwanda, France, Belgium, Ken-

ya and Uganda.

The protesters demanded that the international community condemn Rwanda over its role in the conflict. "We denounce the hypocrisy of the international community," said Timothée Tshishimbi, one of the protesters. "They must tell Rwanda to stop this adventure."

The attacks were condemned by the respective countries as well as the Congolese government, which said it has reinforced the security at the embassies.

Many continued to flee across the border into Rwanda, braving gunfire and heavy rains earlier and caught in between shootouts on both sides from the Congolese soldiers and the rebels.

"What we want is this war to come to an end," said Christian Bahati, a Congolese teacher among hundreds now sheltering in the Rwandan town of Gisenyi. "You can see the level of frustration. Congolese people are victims, but now they find themselves seeking refuge from the aggressor."

Explosion forces crew to abandon ship in Red Sea

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — An explosion struck a Hong Kong-flagged container ship Tuesday traveling north through the Red Sea, sparking a major fire that forced its crew to abandon the vessel, shipping industry officials said.

The ship was drifting and ablaze some 140 miles off the coast of Hodeida, a port city in Yemen held by the country's Houthi rebels, said the Diaplous Group, a maritime firm.

It wasn't immediately clear what caused the fire in the Red Sea, which has been repeatedly targeted by attacks from the Houthis.

The rebels said last week they were limiting their assaults following a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. The Houthis did not immediately acknowledge the fire incident.

The vessel was abandoned and the crew later rescued unharmed, another maritime industry official told The Associated

Press. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as authorization hadn't been given to speak publicly about the incident.

The official described the cargo aboard the vessel as "dangerous," without immediately elaborating.

The name of the vessel wasn't released.

The Red Sea is home to coral and marine life that previously has been threatened by burning ships from the Houthi campaign in the area and the threat of wider oil spills.

The Houthi attacks, which began in November 2023, have halved the number of ships passing through the Red Sea corridor, a crucial route for energy shipments and cargo moving between Asia and Europe. Despite the pledge by the Houthis to limit their attacks, shippers broadly are still shying away from the route over the risks.

Some \$1 trillion worth of trade passed through the region each year before the attacks.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Activists arrested for trying to dump manure

NY NEW YORK — A pair of activists with the animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals were arrested while attempting to dump a truck's worth of manure outside the Manhattan offices of a rival animal welfare group.

But the protest may have raised less of a stink than intended, as organizers acknowledged that much of the animal dung remained frozen solid to the truck bed.

"Because of the freezing temperatures, it didn't all fall out," explained Ashley Byrne, a PETA spokesperson. "Someone had to go up in the truck and start shoveling it out, and he was apprehended by the police before he finished."

The stunt was the latest escalation in the group's ongoing campaign against the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, or ASPCA, over their backing of an animal welfare certification program.

Trooper fatally shoots suspect at a hospital

FL OCALA — A Florida Highway Patrol trooper fatally shot a suspect during an altercation at a central Florida hospital on Friday, authorities said.

The altercation happened in the emergency department at HCA Florida Ocala Hospital in Ocala, Fla., according to a statement from the hospital. The unidentified suspect died when the trooper used deadly force, the Ocala Police Department said in a statement.

No law enforcement officers or hospital staff were injured. The highway patrol requested the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to investigate the shooting, according to the police department.

Last 4 escaped monkeys captured after 2 months

SC YEMASSEE — Authorities in South Carolina said the last four of 43 escaped monkeys have been recaptured after two months living in the woods, weathering a rare snowstorm and being tempted back into captivity by peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

The rhesus macaque monkeys, all females, made a break for it after police said an employee did not fully lock their enclosure at Alpha Genesis, a facility that breeds them for medical research — known to locals as "the monkey farm."

The recaptured monkeys appeared to be in good health, Alpha Genesis CEO Greg Westergaard said in a statement relayed by Yemassee Police in a social media post, without further details.

While they were on the loose, the area saw its first snow in seven years, accumulating up to 3 inches.

The rhesus macaques made a break for it on Nov. 6, and mostly hung around near the facility. They're about the size of a cat, weighing roughly 7 pounds.

Wrongfully imprisoned man's family awarded

CT HARTFORD — More than four years after his death, Richard La-

pointe's family is set to receive a nearly \$5.9 million award from Connecticut for his wrongful, quarter-century imprisonment that ended in 2015 when his murder conviction was overturned in the rape and killing of his wife's 88-year-old grandmother.

Lapointe's case became a cause celebre, receiving widespread publicity from advocates for the disabled and celebrities, including writers Arthur Miller and William Styron, who called for his release. Lapointe, who died at age 74 in 2020, had Dandy-Walker syndrome, a rare congenital brain malformation that his lawyers believe was a factor in his falsely confessing to the crime.

The award by the state claims commissioner's office, which now moves to the legislature for approval, was issued Jan. 2 after years of legal battles between Lapointe's lawyers and the state attorney general's office. Lapointe was never declared innocent, but the two sides eventually agreed to settle, leading to the award.

In his decision, Claims Commissioner Robert Shea Jr. said his office agreed that the award is "reasonable and appropriate." The agency decides whether people can file lawsuits against the state or receive money under the state's wrongful incarceration law.

Overturned abortion ban not in effect, court rules

ND BISMARCK — North Dakota's abortion ban will not be enforced while the state appeals an earlier decision that found it unconstitutional, the state's

highest court ruled.

That appeal has yet to fully play out in the state Supreme Court after a judge struck down the law in September.

North Dakota has had no abortion providers since the only one moved from Fargo to neighboring Moorhead, Minn., in 2022.

The only scenarios in which North Dakotans can currently obtain an abortion in the state would be for life- or health-preserving reasons at a hospital.

The plaintiffs had contended that keeping the overturned ban from being enforced was important for patients with pregnancy complications who go to a hospital seeking medical care that might be delayed because of the law.

Man gets 10 years for food court shooting

GA ATLANTA — A gunman who shot and wounded three people at a busy food court in the heart of downtown Atlanta in June has been sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Jeremy Malone pleaded guilty to one count of attempted murder, four counts of aggravated assault and other charges, WSB-TV reported.

Prosecutors said Malone walked into the large food court inside Atlanta's Peachtree Center office complex in the middle of the afternoon and punched a stranger, then shot three people. All of them survived.

An off-duty Atlanta police officer who was working a security job at the complex then shot Malone, stopping the attack, police said.

— From wire reports

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Rockets keep rolling against Celtics

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Houston Rockets have been one of the NBA's more surprising teams this season. After their past three games, they shouldn't shock anyone.

Houston defeated the Eastern Conference-leading Cleveland Cavaliers twice last week before pulling out a 114-112 victory over the defending champion Celtics on Monday night in Boston.

"We're over halfway through now and our record is what it is, so it's not just a fluke or anything," Houston coach Ime Udoka said. "People watch film and see the physicality and the way that we play, it's a little different than the rest of the league, maybe that catches people off guard initially, but I wouldn't say we're sneaking up on anybody anymore at this point in the season."

Houston (31-14), which is second in the Western Conference, posted its ninth win in 11 games on Monday. Its record is a few percentage points better than that of the defending NBA champion Celtics (32-15).

The Cavs and Celtics were a combined 104-28 (.788) entering their games against Houston. The Rockets became the first team in NBA history to win three consecutive games against teams with that high of a winning percentage, with a minimum of 40 games for each opponent, according to OptaSTATS.

Amen Thompson hit a floater over Jaylen Brown with 0.7 seconds left to give the Rockets the victory at Boston.

Led by a balanced lineup featuring Jalen Green, Alperen Sengun, veteran Fred VanVleet, Thompson and Dillon Brooks, the Rockets have been rolling since their 23-point home loss to the Celtics on Jan. 3.

"We're just playing hard, playing together," said Brooks, who finished with a 36 points

against Boston, including a 10-for-15 performance from 3-point range.

"We have trust in one another," Brooks said.

The Rockets are plenty confident, but they understand big wins mean nothing if they can't follow them up. They'll get that chance Tuesday at Atlanta.

"Playing some of the top teams obviously gives us some confidence," Udoka said.

Lakers 112, Hornets 107: Anthony Davis had 42 points and 23 rebounds, and Los Angeles used a huge first quarter from the All-Star center to build a 23-point lead before beating host Charlotte for its fourth consecutive victory.

LeBron James had 22 points and Austin Reaves chipped in 17 for the Lakers, who never trailed.

Miles Bridges had 26 points for the Hornets, who lost LaMelo Ball in the second quarter to a left ankle injury.

Davis scored 21 points in the first quarter on 9-for-12 shooting to go along with 11 rebounds as the Lakers bolted to a 39-19 lead.

Cavaliers 110, Pistons 91: Darius Garland scored 22 points, Donovan Mitchell added 21 and Cleveland snapped a season-high, three-game losing streak with a victory over visiting Detroit.

Cleveland, which has led the Eastern Conference all season, ended its slump with an 11th straight victory over Detroit. The Cavs are 22-3 at home.

Cade Cunningham scored 22 points and Malik Beasley 19 for Detroit.

Kings 110, Nets 96: Dornantas Sabonis had 21 points, 22 rebounds and 10 assists in his seventh triple-double of the season, De'Aaron Fox scored 30 points and Sacramento won at Brooklyn.

DeMar DeRozan added 17 points and Malik Monk finished with 16 for the Kings, who

snapped a two-game losing streak.

Heat 125, Magic 119 (2OT): Tyler Herro scored 30 points, Bam Adebayo finished with 26 and Miami erased a 14-point deficit in the fourth quarter before beating visiting Orlando in double overtime.

Adebayo had 10 rebounds and nine assists, Herro had 12 assists and eight rebounds, and Kel'el Ware finished with 19 points and 10 rebounds for Miami — which played hours after Jimmy Butler was suspended yet again.

Franz Wagner had 29 points for Orlando, which got 17 apiece from Paolo Banchero and Tristan da Silva. The Magic were outscored 9-3 in the second overtime.

Knicks 143, Grizzlies 106: Mikal Bridges had 28 points, six assists and five rebounds, and New York snapped visiting Memphis' six-game winning streak.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 24 points and 11 rebounds, and Jalen Brunson had 20 points and six assists for the Knicks, who scored 143 for the second straight game and won their fourth in a row.

Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 21 points for Memphis, and Desmond Bane chipped in 16.

Raptors 113, Pelicans 104: Jakob Poeltl had 21 points and 14 rebounds, Scottie Barnes had 21 points and 11 rebounds, and Toronto beat visiting New Orleans for its first four-game winning streak in almost two years.

Zion Williamson led the Pelicans with 31 points and CJ McCollum added 22 as New Orleans dropped to 4-19 on the road.

Bulls 129, Nuggets 121: Nikola Vucevic had 20 points, 10 rebounds and six assists, and Chicago handed visiting Denver its second straight loss with a victory.

Zach LaVine scored 21 points and Lonzo Ball had 18 for Chicago,

which had lost seven of eight. Ayo Dosunmu added 17 points.

Denver wasted another impressive performance by Nikola Jokic, who had 33 points, 14 assists and 12 rebounds in his sixth triple-double in his past seven games. The three-time MVP has an NBA-best 21 triple-doubles this season.

Timberwolves 100, Hawks 92: Anthony Edwards scored 23 points and Julius Randle added 20 to help host Minnesota hold off short-handed Atlanta.

DeAndre Hunter had a career-high 35 points and Keaton Wallace added 13 for the Hawks, who played without leading scorer and NBA assist leader Trae Young (hamstring) and starters Dyson Daniels (ankle) and Jalen Johnson (shoulder).

Mavericks 130, Wizards 108: Klay Thompson scored 21 of his 23 points in the first quarter, matching a Dallas record by hitting seven 3-pointers in the period, and the Mavericks breezed past visiting Washington.

Bilal Coulibaly scored 16 points for the Wizards (6-39), who finished a six-game trip with their 14th consecutive loss.

Bucks 125, Jazz 110: Giannis Antetokounmpo and Damian Lillard each scored 35 points to lead visiting Milwaukee to a victory over Utah.

Lauri Markkanen led the Jazz with 19 points and nine rebounds. Collin Sexton scored 19 and Brice Sensabaugh finished with 17, including five 3-pointers.

Suns 111, Clippers 109: Devin Booker scored 26 points, Kevin Durant added 24 and surging Phoenix survived a late scare for a win over visiting Los Angeles.

Ivica Zubac had 25 points and 16 rebounds for the Clippers. James Harden added 24 points and 10 assists, while Powell scored 23.

Heat suspend Butler for 3rd time this month

Associated Press

MIAMI — Jimmy Butler was back from suspension. Again.

And then Butler got suspended by the Miami Heat. Again.

Butler has been suspended for the third time this month by the Heat, this one starting basically just as the second one was ending. The team said Butler left Monday's morning shootaround practice early, in advance of a game against the Orlando Magic — something the team called "intentionally withholding services." The suspension is without pay and indefinite for now, with the team saying it will last at least five games.

Butler was expected to come back from his second suspension Monday, only to be suspended for a third time. Butler, according to a person with knowledge of the situation, was told during the shootaround that

he was not going to be back in the starting lineup for that night's game. He left the shootaround not long afterward, said the person, who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because the team did not release that detail publicly.

"The Miami Heat are suspending Jimmy Butler without pay effective immediately for an indefinite period to last no fewer than five games," read the team statement. "The suspension is due to a continued pattern of disregard of team rules, engaging in conduct detrimental to the team and intentionally withholding services. This includes walking out of practice earlier today."

Without Butler, Miami rallied from a 14-point deficit in the fourth quarter and beat Orlando 125-119 in double overtime.

"What it means right now is

just we proved to ourselves that we have a tremendous amount of grit," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "You know, and you gain confidence from that."

Butler was suspended for Miami's most recent two games after missing a team flight to Milwaukee last week. He has now missed 15 of the Heat's last 20 games, including 10 of the last 13 because of the suspensions — the first a seven-game ban for conduct that the team deemed detrimental, followed by the two-game suspension, and now the indefinite one.

"It kind of feels normal now at this point," Heat guard Tyler Herro said at the morning shootaround when asked what it's like to have Butler available again after a suspension — those words coming a few hours before the latest suspension was announced. "Kind of is what it is, but nothing's guaranteed.

We've just got to be ready to roll with whatever cards we're dealt tonight. We've just got to be ready to go."

Butler wants a trade, and Miami is trying to comply. But moving Butler and his \$48.8 million salary this season is likely going to be more complicated than it would have been in past seasons, largely because of the league's aprons — salary levels installed as part of the new collective bargaining agreement that restrict the ways bigger-spending teams can make certain moves.

It has been a saga that has lasted now for nearly two months and figures to come to a head over the next week and a half. The NBA's trade deadline is Feb. 6. After Monday, there are only five games left for Miami before the deadline, raising the possibility that Butler will not play for the team again.

McDavid, Perry lead Oilers' rally past Kraken

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Connor McDavid and Corey Perry scored in the second period and the Edmonton Oilers rallied to beat the Seattle Kraken 4-2 on Monday night for their third straight victory.

Mattias Ekholm had a goal and an assist, and Mattias Janmark also scored for the Oilers, who have won 11 of 14 and moved back into first place in the Pacific Division — one point ahead of idle Vegas. Calvin Pickard had 26 saves.

Eeli Tolvanen and Vince Dunn scored for the Kraken, who led 2-1 after one period but lost for the second time in three games. Joey Daccord stopped 27 shots.

McDavid, back in Edmonton's lineup after a three-game suspension for cross-checking Vancouver's Conor Garland, tied the score 2-2 at 1:57 of the second. Perry gave the Oilers the lead for good at 9:38.

Ekholm had an empty-netter with 58 seconds left to seal the win.

Red Wings 5, Kings 2: Marco Kasper scored twice, Lucas Raymond had a goal and three assists, and host Detroit rallied to beat Los Angeles.

Elmer Soderblom scored his first goal of

the season and Alex DeBrincat also scored as the Red Wings erased a 2-0 first-period deficit. Cam Talbot made 23 saves to improve to 8-1 in January.

Quinton Byfield and Kevl Fiala scored for the Kings, and Darcy Kuemper had 23 saves.

Flyers 4, Devils 2: Bobby Brink, Joel Farabee and Garnet Hathaway scored to help host Philadelphia build a three-goal lead and it held on to beat New Jersey.

Scott Laughton had a goal and an assist to help the Flyers snap a two-game losing streak and win the opener of a home-and-home set. Travis Konecny and Rasmus Ristolainen each had two assists, and Samuel Ersson stopped 31 shots in Philadelphia's fourth straight home victory.

Dougie Hamilton and Timo Meier scored for the Devils, who have lost both meetings with the Flyers this season. The teams meet again in New Jersey on Wednesday.

Canucks 5, Blues 2: Conor Garland had two goals, and J.T. Miller and Pius Suter also scored to help Vancouver win at St. Louis.

Tyler Myers added an empty-net goal, and Kevin Lankinen made 24 saves for the Canucks.

Dylan Holloway and Colton Parayko scored for the Blues, who have lost three straight for the third time this season. Jordan Binnington gave up three goals on 18 shots before being pulled midway through the second period. Joel Hofer made 10 saves in relief.

Sharks 2, Penguins 1: Macklin Celebrini scored the tiebreaking goal early in the third period, Yaroslav Askarov stopped a penalty shot and host San Jose beat Pittsburgh to snap a six-game losing streak.

Celebrini received a pass from Tyler Tofoli in the slot and converted for his 16th goal of the season to give the Sharks the lead in the third. Askarov then stopped Drew O'Connor on a penalty shot for the most important of his 32 saves, delivering San Jose a much-needed win.

Mikael Granlund scored in the first period for the Sharks.

Sidney Crosby, who was the No. 1 overall pick in the draft 19 years before Celebrini went first to San Jose, had scored for the Penguins just 24 seconds into the third period to tie the game.

Alex Nedeljkovic made 26 saves for Pittsburgh.

Allen ponders what-ifs after Bills loss

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Josh Allen could take plenty of satisfaction from a season in which he became the betting favorite for MVP and the Buffalo Bills defied the doubters who predicted a down year.

Instead, Allen and the Bills again fell short of their goal of winning the Super Bowl, and on Monday, the star quarterback was second-guessing himself about what more he could have done in a 32-29 loss to the two-time defending champion Kansas City Chiefs in the AFC championship game a day earlier.

Allen took responsibility. He had the ball with an opportunity to tie the game or put the Bills ahead in the closing minutes — only to come up empty on a desperation fourth-down heave that fell through the arms of diving tight end Dalton Kincaid.

“Yeah, it sucks. You keep going back and thinking about what you could have done dif-

ferently, plays even throughout the game,” said Allen, who was stopped earlier in the fourth quarter on fourth-and-1.

“Any time you lose, you’re going to have those thoughts in your head and just understanding that you’re not promised opportunities like that all the time,” Allen added. “You can’t just knock on the door, you got to kick it down.”

Try as they might, the Bills and Allen once again will be spectators on Super Bowl Sunday. This marked the fourth time in five years they’ve been eliminated by the Chiefs, and the second time in the conference title game.

Winners of five consecutive AFC East titles, the Bills became the first team to win 11 or more games over five straight seasons that didn’t reach the Super Bowl at least once over that span.

Fairly or not, the narrative remains unchanged. Allen, coach

Sean McDermott and the Bills enter another offseason being remembered more for their shortcomings than their successes.

“It’s hard to win Super Bowls in this league. We understand that,” Allen said. “And when you’re playing a team that’s now been to three in a row, you gotta go out there and you gotta beat them. You gotta take it from them, and we didn’t do that.”

Buffalo matched a franchise record with 13 regular-season wins and ran away with the division, clinching the title in Week 13. The Bills became the first team to finish with 30 touchdowns passing and rushing and matched an NFL record by having 13 players catch a TD pass.

Buffalo did all that following an offseason salary-cap purge that cost them six of eight team captains, including receiver Stefon Diggs, who was traded to Houston.

Using a spread-the-wealth

approach on offense, the Bills became the only team to beat each conference’s top seed — Kansas City and Detroit — in the regular season. Then they eliminated Bo Nix and the Broncos and Lamar Jackson and the Ravens in the first two playoff rounds, only to have Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs again block their path in a game that featured four lead changes.

Allen’s teammates had his back.

“I can’t even begin to fathom what that dude has to put on his shoulders every single week,” tight end Dawson Knox said.

“He’s got the whole city on his back and he carries it with grace and better than anybody that I could possibly imagine carrying it, what he has to go through, the plays he made last night,” he added. “The game could’ve easily gone our way. And then we’d be having different conversations now.”

Until next year, perhaps.

Flagg’s big second half helps Duke hold off NC State

Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — Star freshman Cooper Flagg scored 23 of his 28 points after halftime to help No. 2 Duke hold off North Carolina State 74-64 on Monday night.

Fellow rookie Kon Knueppel had 19 points for the Blue Devils (18-2, 10-0 Atlantic Coast Conference), who have won 14 straight games. And they had to fight the entire way to get there.

That’s because the Wolfpack (9-11, 2-7) played loose and fearlessly to build a 13-point first-half lead and then stay within reach of Duke every time the Blue Devils tried to push free in the final 10 minutes.

Dontrez Styles scored 18 points for N.C. State, which shot just 32% after halftime but matched its season high with 10

3-pointers.

This was a rematch of an NCAA Tournament Elite Eight game won by the Wolfpack during the program’s improbable Final Four run last year.

The game also had a pair of stoppages in the last 4½ minutes for health reasons, first when Duke freshman center Khaman Maluach vomited on the baseline during play and then when one of the “Cameron Crazies” fans apparently fainted and had to be carried out of the bleachers.

The Blue Devils were coming off their closest call in league play, a 63-56 win Saturday at Wake Forest. This one was another test.

The Wolfpack entered having lost four straight league games by a combined margin of 14 points, and coach Kevin Keatts’

club gave Duke fits all night in this one.

Duke ran off 19 consecutive points spanning halftime, first with the final seven points of the first half and then the first 12 of the second. Flagg scored eight in that run, which erased Duke’s big first-half deficit.

Marcus Hill, the Wolfpack’s leading scorer at 13.2 points per game, finished with four on 1-for-10 shooting.

Arizona 86, No. 3 Iowa St. 75 (OT): Caleb Love hit a tying heave from beyond halfcourt at the end of regulation and made two more 3-pointers in overtime, finishing with 22 points and lifting the Wildcats to a win over the Cyclones.

Iowa State (17-3, 7-2 Big 12) appeared to be in control when Joshua Jefferson hit one of two free throws with 2.2 seconds re-

maining, but they left too much time on the clock.

Love, who was 1-for-10 on 3s at that point, took a couple of dribbles and banked in his shot from behind the midcourt logo, sending a roar through McKale Center.

Love then hit two corner 3s in overtime and Carter Bryant added another to cap Arizona’s first win over a top-5 opponent as an unranked team since beating No. 3 UCLA in 1979.

“Best moment of my life,” Love said. “Obviously, it wasn’t going our way throughout the game, but you’ve got to trust your work, to stay confident.”

Tobe Awaka finished with 17 points and 12 rebounds for the Wildcats (14-6, 8-1).

Tamin Lipsey scored 18 points and Keshon Gilbert added 17 to lead the Cyclones.