

## Armed US troops begin border mission

By ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Marines on Monday began to hang temporary barriers along a wall in San Ysidro, Calif., marking the U.S. border with Mexico as an Air Force flight crew prepared to take off from Fort Bliss, Texas, to Ecuador with the military's fourth plane-load of deported migrants.

The efforts are part of the military's fulfillment of an executive order signed just more than a week ago by President Donald Trump to make border security a top priority of the Defense Department.

The 500 Marines in California were the first active-duty troops deployed for the mission, which has climbed from 1,500 to 1,600 in the past week, according to a spokesperson for U.S. Northern Command, the military combatant command leading the mission.

The remaining troops —

pulled from Army units across the country — have first stopped in El Paso, Texas, and San Diego to begin learning about the mission before moving to various locations in the southwest, NORTHCOM said Tuesday.

About 750 troops had arrived at Fort Bliss, an Army post in El Paso, as of Tuesday, according to base officials. The base is often used by the Army to prepare and deploy service members and is supporting the staging of equipment and materials that will go with soldiers to the border.

Those soldiers and Marines will carry their service weapons with them for self-defense, NORTHCOM said. Photos released Monday showed soldiers arriving from bases including Fort Campbell, Ky., and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., dressed in full combat gear and helmets and carrying M-4 ri-

fles.

"The decision to arm military members is based on particular security situations. As of right now, none of the forces moving to the border are intended to be used for law enforcement," according to NORTHCOM.

Customs and Border Protection will choose where troops are sent along the 1,950 miles of border that covers four states, the command said. They join about 2,500 National Guard troops already deployed to the border and will join a mission that began in 2018 during Trump's first term as president.

Filling a support role for Customs and Border Protection, troops conduct vehicle maintenance, light construction, transportation, and observation and detection from the ground and air.

Mark Cancian, a senior adviser with the Washington-

based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies, wrote Monday that these actions have become common in the past 30 years. However, if the mission scales to higher troop levels — such as the 10,000 that the Pentagon confirmed defense officials are discussing — that would be unprecedented, he said.

"President Trump sent troops to the border to emphasize its importance. Other presidents have done the same. However, it would be a mistake for the military to take over this mission. Stopping criminals is a law enforcement activity for which the military is poorly suited. Military personnel are trained and equipped to destroy enemy forces," Cancian said.

For the deportation flights, the Air Force conducted three last week to Guatemala, and NORTHCOM said the flights will continue as needed.

## Milley loses his security protections and clearance

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is pulling the security protections and clearance of retired Joint Chiefs chairman Army Gen. Mark Milley, and has ordered the Pentagon's inspector general to review Milley's actions while serving as the nation's top uniformed officer to determine if a demotion is warranted, two defense officials confirmed late Tuesday.

The inspector general review will include "an inquiry into the facts and circumstances surrounding Gen. Milley's conduct so that the Secretary may determine whether it is appropriate to reopen his military grade review determination," said Pentagon

spokesman John Ulyot.

"The Secretary informed General Milley today that he is revoking the authorization for his security detail and suspending his security clearance as well," he said.

Milley served as chairman during President Donald Trump's first term in office. While the relationship initially went well, it soured deeply and fast, as Milley tried to advise and contain the president on a host of issues.

He pushed back on the president's interest in using force domestically to quell protesters after the death of George Floyd, and was at the center of a controversy in 2021 when he made indepen-

dent calls to his Chinese counterpart. Trump called the calls an act of treason, but at the time Milley said the calls were routine and part of the scope of his job.

Milley in his final days as chairman after Trump had left office was equally outspoken about his former boss. He said at his official retirement ceremony, "We don't take an oath to a king or a queen or to a tyrant or a dictator. And we don't take an oath to a wannabe dictator."

"We don't take an oath to an individual. We take an oath to the Constitution, and we take an oath to the idea that is America, and we're willing to die to protect it," he said at the time.

Hegseth's chief of staff Joe

Kasper said that the decision to strip Milley of his clearance and detail was taken because "undermining the chain of command is corrosive to our national security, and restoring accountability is a priority for the Defense Department under President Trump's leadership."

The moves, which were first reported by Fox News, may also include taking down Milley's Army chief of staff portrait. Milley's chairman portrait was stripped from the wall just hours after Trump was sworn in. The portraits were both paid for by a donation from the Association of the United States Army, not taxpayer dollars and were a gift to Milley honoring his service.

# Booting trans troops is no simple task

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has launched his second bid to oust all transgender troops from the military, and once again it will be headed to the courts to sort it out.

Although the new order will affect only a tiny fraction of America's 2.1 million service members, it has taken on oversized importance to Trump and his administration, who see transgender forces as a sign the military is "woke" or not focused on training and winning wars.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, before he took the job, wrote in his book "War on Warriors" that "for the recruits, for the military, and primarily for the security of the country, transgender people should never be allowed to serve. It's that simple."

Trump's order to push out transgender troops, issued late Monday night, was instantly condemned by an array of activist groups as exceptionally egregious and ultimately harmful to

military readiness. They say transgender people have been serving successfully for years, including openly on and off for the past decade.

Here's a look at what it all means and the confusing duel over the ban for the past decade.

## What does the order say?

Trump's order essentially says that anyone who is diagnosed with gender dysphoria — the distress someone feels when their assigned sex and gender identity don't match — cannot serve in the military. It gives the defense secretary 60 days to update the medical standards for enlistment and re-enlistment to reflect that change. And it gives Hegseth 30 days to lay out how he plans to implement it all.

According to the order, "expressing a false 'gender identity' divergent from an individual's sex cannot satisfy the rigorous standards necessary for military service." It says the hormonal and surgical needs involved in taking on a different gender identity "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an hon-

orable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle."

It concludes that, "A man's assertion that he is a woman, and his requirement that others honor this falsehood, is not consistent with the humility and selflessness required of a service member."

The order also zeroes in on the heady bathroom issue.

On his first day in office Trump issued an executive order that he said would "restore biological truth" to the federal government by eliminating the word "gender" and replacing it with "sex." He said the federal government will only recognize people based on their sex at the time of conception based on their "reproductive cell."

His latest order expands on that, saying the military will "neither allow males to use or share sleeping, changing, or bathing facilities designated for females, nor allow females to use or share sleeping, changing, or bathing facilities designated for males."

## Now what?

The Pentagon has said in recent years that it is impossible to count the total number of transgender troops. The military services say there is no way to track them and that much information is limited due to medical privacy laws. Estimates have hovered between 9,000 and 12,000. But it will be very difficult for officials to identify them, even as service members worry about the hunt to root them out.

"This casts an enormous shadow on people that are getting ready to go on a deployment for six months overseas or, you know, getting ready to go on a combat mission," said Sasha Buchert, counsel for Lambda Legal. "This is going to be extremely disruptive. And they're going to have to look over their shoulder in fear of when the next shoe will fall."

Since transgender troops have been able to serve openly for a number of years, it's possible their fellow unit members or commanders know who some of them are.

# Navy issues reminder on its generative AI policy

By ALEX WILSON

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Navy says internal correspondence about the use of generative AI has been misinterpreted as a specific ban against DeepSeek AI Assistant, a Chinese-developed program that recently sent shockwaves through the tech industry.

CNBC reported Tuesday that an email sent to sailors on Friday directed them to avoid using the app "in any capacity" due to "potential security and ethical concerns," since the AI model originates in China.

An unidentified Navy spokesperson confirmed the email's authenticity, CNBC said, and

referenced an earlier Department of Navy memorandum on the use of generative AI.

However, Friday's correspondence was intended to remind sailors that they're prohibited from using any "publicly accessible, open-source AI programs or systems," Cmdr. Tim Hawkins, a Navy spokesman, told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday.

"DeepSeek was mentioned [in the correspondence] as the most recent example of how the standing guidance applies," he wrote.

A memo issued in September 2023 cautions against the use of AI in an operational setting un-

less security requirements "have been fully investigated, identified and approved for use within controlled environments."

It further warns that AI learning models save all prompts and that the use of proprietary or sensitive information "poses a unique security risk" that "could lead to an inadvertent release of sensitive or classified information."

The most recent correspondence was meant to remind sailors about this memo, Hawkins said.

The U.S. government views China as the "most active and persistent cyber threat to U.S.

Government, private-sector, and critical infrastructure networks," according to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence's annual threat assessment Feb. 5.

"If Beijing believed that a major conflict with the United States were imminent, it would consider aggressive cyber operations against U.S. critical infrastructure and military assets," the report said.

DeepSeek released its AI Assistant on Jan. 10 and quickly outpaced OpenAI's ChatGPT by becoming the No. 1 free app. It had more than 5 million downloads from Google Play as of Wednesday.

# Study: DOD should update BAH calculations

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Pentagon should consider changes to its Basic Allowance for Housing methodology to better insulate troops against swift changes to the housing market and better reflect the types of residences in which they choose to live, a new study suggested.

Most troops surveyed by the Defense Department in recent years have reported monthly BAH payments were sufficient, yet the Rand Corp. study published Monday found housing allowance calculations would benefit from localized adjustments to better reflect the types of housing that troops tend to choose around their installations. The study also found the data used to determine BAH rates might not always reflect the best housing options for service members, especially when rent prices skyrocket, as they did during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

“Overall, our analysis suggests that, in many ways, BAH is generally adequate for Army personnel, though not necessarily when

the housing market is changing rapidly and dramatically, as it has in recent years,” the Rand analysts wrote in the 115-page report.

Rand completed the study last year at the Army’s request, relying largely on data collected from soldiers stationed at six stateside posts — Fort Campbell, Ky.; Fort Carson, Colo.; Fort Cavazos, Texas; Fort Liberty, N.C.; Fort Moore, Ga.; and Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va., just outside Washington, D.C. The analysts noted despite using only Army data, the BAH rates are set by the Pentagon for the entire military, and the analysts’ findings extend to the other service branches.

BAH rates are calculated annually based on a service member’s geographic location, rank and status of dependents, and they are meant to cover some 95% of housing costs for service members, according to the Pentagon. The methodology that the department uses to set rates has gone unchanged since 1998, according to Rand.

The Pentagon pays BAH based on six housing profiles for its ser-

vice members that range from a one-bed apartment profile for an E-4 — a specialist or corporal in the Army — up to a four-bedroom, single-family home for an O-5 — a lieutenant colonel in the Army — or higher rank with dependents. It sets BAH rates annually based on a complex methodology meant to estimate the local median rental places across 340 locations near military installations around the globe.

Rand analysts found — at the six Army posts it studied in the U.S. — service members generally chose to live close to their installations, but the vast majority also chose to live in larger housing units than their BAH profile suggested.

Rand suggested the Pentagon further study its BAH profiles and consider adjusting how they are determined.

“While [military] members are not required to live in the profile assigned to their grade and dependency status, the small share of soldiers living in the assigned profile challenges the face validity of using these profiles to set

BAH rates for Army personnel in these locations,” the analysts wrote.

The study also found the Pentagon should look closely at how it determines annual BAH rates given the dramatic rise in rent and housing costs in 2021 during the coronavirus pandemic. That year, as troops struggled to find limited housing around installations, the Pentagon issued temporary increases in BAH rates in some of the locations that saw rental rates rise 10% or more in a matter of months.

Despite that temporary boost, troops struggled to find adequate housing around several military posts, including Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.; Fort Drum, N.Y.; and Fort Irwin, Calif., officials said at the time.

In its study, Rand found BAH calculations did not keep up with the massive increases in rent prices across the United States in 2021 and 2022, likely a result of a problematic algorithm that had not seen such a quick spike in rental prices since it was introduced in 1998.

## GAO: Cuts in training to aid Ukrainians affected readiness

By CAITLYN BURCHETT  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — U.S. Army troops in Germany scaled down some training in favor of Ukrainian forces and faced challenges in keeping equipment functional, according to a federal watchdog report released Tuesday.

Some U.S. troops stationed in Grafenwoehr, Germany, reported they were negatively impacted by scheduling conflicts, additional equipment wear and tear, and delays in meeting their own training requirements while supporting the training of Ukrainian troops, according to a Government Accountability Office report. In a few instances, U.S. training had to be canceled or moved to sites in other countries to accommodate Ukrainian forces. Offi-

cials told the GAO that most units completed training as planned, but some training equipment that is available at Grafenwoehr — for gathering data and measurements, for example — was not available. Host nation requirements also led one battalion to scale down its training.

Additionally, U.S. Army units initially faced challenges training Ukrainian forces because the Defense Department did not always implement a total approach for some defense materials and weapons delivered under the presidential drawdown authority, which allows equipment to be pulled from existing U.S. military stocks and sent to Ukraine on an emergency basis.

Between February 2022 and April 2024, the Defense Depart-

ment trained Ukrainian military personnel — mainly at U.S. training ranges in Germany — using various security assistance processes.

“However, the expanded size, scope, and speed of equipment deliveries to Ukraine contributed to training challenges,” the report read.

The Army units were generally notified 18 days in advance about the training requirements for arriving equipment, which was not sufficient time to plan that training for Ukrainian forces. Typically, units need 30 to 60 days to plan and schedule such training, the GAO said. The federal watchdog was also told some equipment items — such as Paladin tanks — arrived late, in insufficient quantities, and in some cases, were not

in working condition.

As a result, the training unit needed additional time and resources to repair the remaining Paladins to use them for training, according to officials.

The GAO recommended the Pentagon require combatant commands to identify resources necessary for training when proposing a security assistance package, including situations that require rapid execution.

Officials from three U.S. Army units that served as trainers told the GAO that challenges ultimately did not significantly reduce readiness because they had sufficient personnel, maintenance resources, and technical expertise available for the training mission from U.S. Army Europe and Africa.



# RFK struggles with answers at his hearing

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — In a contentious confirmation hearing to be the nation's top health official, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. struggled to answer questions about how he would reform Medicaid or Medicare, the government health care programs used by millions of disabled, poor and older Americans.

Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, a physician and key vote Kennedy needs to win, repeatedly pressed the nomi-

nee on Wednesday to share ways he plans to reform Medicaid, a multibillion-dollar taxpayer-funded program that covers health care for about 80 million people, including children. Republicans have said they might need to make deep cuts to Medicaid to fund President Donald Trump's proposals.

Kennedy also inaccurately claimed that Medicaid is fully paid for by the federal government — it's not; states and fed-

eral taxpayers fund it. He also said most Americans have purchased a Medicare Advantage plan, when only about 1 in 10 Americans have.

His misstatements about the program were peppered in between suggestions that he would seek to push privatization of the programs, repeatedly saying that most Americans like private insurance and that they dislike the government run versions of the programs.

Kennedy is seeking to lead a

\$1.7 trillion department of Health and Human Services agency that will oversee vaccine recommendations as well as food inspections, hospital oversight and funding for hundreds of community health clinics.

Democrats homed in on his vaccine commentary, with Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon pointing out that Kennedy has previously claimed there's "no safe" vaccine, initiating a back and forth between him and Kennedy.

## Trump offers federal employees 'deferred resignation'

*Bloomberg News*

The White House announced details Tuesday of a "deferred resignation" offer it made to federal employees that allows them to resign with pay through Sept. 30.

It is the latest step the Trump administration has taken to reshape the federal workforce — including ordering most federal workers back to the office, firing inspectors general at several agencies and directing the government to lay off staff working on diversity, equity and inclusion.

Federal workers who accept

the deferred resignation offer will remain employed, retain all pay and benefits and be exempt from in-person work requirements until their final resignation date of Sept. 30, according to the Office of Personnel Management.

The deferred resignation letter shared by the office suggests that those who take the offer could see their duties changed — or be reassigned or placed on leave — before their resignation.

Under the offer, employees can accelerate their resignation date but not extend it. If a fed-

eral worker becomes eligible for early or normal retirement at any point before their resignation date, they may also elect to retire, according to the office.

The offer expires Feb. 6, according to the office, and there is no penalty for civil servants who do not respond to the email with the offer.

The announcement states that the majority of federal agencies will be downsized as part of the Trump administration's overhauls, likely through furloughs and reclassifying employees to at-will status, which

would make them easier to fire.

Not all federal employees are eligible. Agency heads may determine carve-outs within their agencies. Military personnel, employees of the U.S. Postal Service, and those in positions related to immigration enforcement and national security are also exempt, according to the Office of Personnel Management.

Trump pledged on the campaign trail to shrink the civil service, which he and his allies have cast as a liberal "deep state" that disrupted his plans during his first term.

## Stampede at festival in India leads to deaths, injuries

*Associated Press*

PRAYAGRAJ, India — At least 30 people were killed and many more injured in a stampede at the world's largest religious gathering early Wednesday, police said, as millions of pilgrims rushed to dip in sacred waters during the Maha Kumbh festival in northern India.

Police officer Vaibhav Krishna in Prayagraj city said another 60 injured were rushed to hospitals.

Wednesday was a sacred day in the six-week Hindu festival, and authorities expected a rec-

ord 100 million devotees to engage in a ritual bath at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers. Hindus believe that a dip at the holy site can cleanse them of past sins and end the process of reincarnation.

The stampede happened when pilgrims tried to jump barricades erected for a procession of holy men, Uttar Pradesh state's top elected official, Yogi Adityanath, said in a televised statement.

The event's main draw is the thousands of ash-smeared Hin-

du ascetics who make massive processions toward the confluence to bathe.

Indian authorities took more than 16 hours to release casualty figures, even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi acknowledged the loss of lives, calling the incident "extremely sad" and extending his condolences.

"Suddenly there was pushing in the crowd, and we got trapped. A lot of us fell down and the crowd went uncontrolled," the Press Trust of India news agency quoted pilgrim Sarojini as saying. "There was no

chance for escape, there was pushing from all sides," she said.

Distressed families lined up outside a makeshift hospital, desperate for news of missing loved ones. Clothes, blankets and backpacks were strewn around the site of the stampede.

Millions continued to throng the 15-square mile pilgrimage site despite the stampede, even as police urged them over megaphones to avoid the confluence. Adityanath urged people to take baths at other riverbanks instead.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Man killed by a stray hammer thrown at meet

**CO** COLORADO SPRINGS — An errant weight thrown by a competitor struck and killed a spectator at a youth track and field meet in Colorado, according to officials at the university where the competition was held.

The hammer in the hammer throw event cleared certified barriers before striking the man Sunday morning at the University of Colorado's Colorado Springs campus, according to a university statement.

Firefighters pronounced the man dead at the scene. He apparently had tried to shield his wife and son from the ball, KRDO-TV reported. The so-called hammer in the hammer throw event is actually a heavy ball on a chain.

Authorities did not identify the athlete or the man killed. He was the father of a competitor for the Colorado United Track Club that hosted the event for high school-age athletes from around the state, according to the station.

## Man pardoned by Trump fatally shot in traffic stop

**IN** RENSSELAER — An Indiana man was fatally shot by a deputy during a traffic stop just days after he was pardoned by President Donald Trump for a misdemeanor related to the 2021 U.S. Capitol riot.

Matthew Huttel, 42, of Hobart, was killed Sunday by a Jasper County sheriff's deputy, authorities said.

State police are investigating. They said the deputy tried to ar-

rest Huttel when "an altercation took place between the suspect and the officer, which resulted in the officer firing his weapon and fatally wounding the suspect."

"The investigation also shows that during the traffic stop, the suspect was in possession of a firearm," state police added.

In 2023, Huttel was sentenced to six months in custody after pleading guilty to entering a restricted building, the U.S. Capitol. He had traveled with his uncle to Washington to attend the Jan. 6, 2021, pro-Trump rally. Huttel was inside the Capitol for 16 minutes and recorded it on video.

## Quake rattles houses in Maine, is felt states away

**ME** SCARBOROUGH — A 3.8-magnitude earthquake centered near the Maine coast rattled houses in northern New England on Monday and was felt by surprised residents of states hundreds of miles away.

The earthquake took place at about 10:22 a.m. on Monday and was centered about six miles southeast of York Harbor in southern Maine, the United States Geological Survey reported. It was reported at a depth of about eight miles the survey said.

Officials said the quake could be felt in every state in New England and as far away as Pennsylvania. In southern Maine, many residents reported feeling houses and buildings shake as the surprising earthquake interrupted a sunny winter morning.

The Maine Emergency Management Agency asked resi-

dents to only call 911 in the event of an emergency. The earthquake did not appear to cause major damage, said Vanessa Corson, a spokesperson for the agency.

## Prosecutors: Ex-trooper shot himself, lied about it

**NY** NEW YORK — A former New York state trooper has been arrested and charged after prosecutors say he shot himself in the leg and then falsely claimed he was wounded by an unknown gunman on a Long Island highway last year.

Thomas Mascia shot himself at Hempstead Lake State Park then stashed the gun, drove to the highway and called for help, prosecutors said Monday.

Mascia was charged with official misconduct, tampering with evidence and falsifying documents.

His parents, Dorothy and Thomas, were also each charged with criminal possession of a firearm as the .22-caliber gun was discovered in their West Hempstead bedroom, according to prosecutors.

The three pleaded not guilty and were released until their next court date on Feb. 5.

Prosecutors said in court filings Monday that Mascia, 27, shot himself in an apparent bid to gain attention and sympathy. They also confirmed he was no longer with the state police.

## Person hurt in explosion, nearby homes evacuated

**WV** CLARKSBURG — One person was taken to a hospital after an explosion in a West Virginia neighborhood and nearby homes

were evacuated, officials said.

The explosion happened Sunday in the Chestnut Hills community of Clarksburg and one person had injuries that were considered life-threatening, officials said in a social media post.

Due to a gas leak, all residents in a five-block radius were required to evacuate, Clarksburg police said, warning that people should avoid the area "at all costs."

Residents of that area were not allowed to return Sunday, the Harrison County Office of Emergency Management said.

## Police: Mom set house fire that killed her daughter, 12

**MI** GRAND RAPIDS — A western Michigan woman is accused of setting a house fire that killed her 12-year-old daughter who was trapped in a bedroom.

"This is a shockingly cruel, unimaginable crime committed by a mom against her three kids," Grand Rapids Police Chief Eric Winstrom said.

The child died Monday night, two days after the fire in Grand Rapids. Two other children, ages 7 and 10, survived.

Winstrom said the 46-year-old mother removed smoke detectors from the house and poured lighter fluid before setting the fire. She was outside when police arrived.

Screams from inside the house "will live on in our heads for the rest of our lives," Fire Chief Brad Brown said Monday.

The mother was in custody awaiting a court appearance. Prosecutor Chris Becker said mental health likely played a role in the fire.

— From wire reports

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# St. John's has 1st perfect January since '85

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rick Pitino joked that senior guard Kadarly Richmond was like a fine wine.

"He keeps getting better with age," Pitino quipped. "And he's 35."

Even if he was 35 and not 23, Richmond still would not have been born the last time St. John's got through January without a loss. That was 40 years ago in 1985 — the last time the program reached the Final Four.

The 15th-ranked Red Storm are 7-0 since the New Year and 9-1 in Big East play for the first time since the '80s heyday under late Hall of Fame coach Lou Carnesecca, which doesn't come up much around the gym.

"I really don't talk about the

'80s," Pitino said after a 66-41 victory at Georgetown on Tuesday night.

"I always toast Lou after every game and say the same thing to everybody: 'Lou would be proud of this team.' But I don't bring it up too much. I don't bring it up they're the most wins in January. I never bring any of that up. That's your job. We really just do focus on getting better. This team is getting better and better."

St. John's has won three of the past four without point guard Deivon Smith, who has been nursing a bruised right shoulder. Smith could return Saturday when Providence visits Madison Square Garden, and that only makes the Red Storm more dangerous.

"They're doing really well

without him," Georgetown coach Ed Cooley said. "I don't know. I mean, I haven't played against them with him. It's another athlete on the floor, another tenacious defender. They've played great without him."

Cooley emphasized great, and it's hard to argue. Tied with No. 9 Marquette atop the Big East, St. John's has outscored opponents 519-423 during this run, and that includes erasing a 16-point deficit in the second half to beat Xavier in overtime last week.

"It means a lot for us, but we're just taking it one game at a time," swingman Aaron Scott said of winning seven straight. "We're not looking too far in the future. We're just going to prepare for Providence and just get ready for that game."

Pitino called the game against the Hoyas his team's best defense-offense performance of the season. The lead got as big as 30, and it was over at halftime.

He told players in the locker room that he'd only coached one team that "could go out in the second half, play it 0-0 and dominate" — Kentucky in 1996 on the way to a national title. St. John's is not there yet, and that's OK to Pitino.

"I'm proud of these guys," he said. "I think the best quality that we have is we're humble. We just keep playing hard. We don't think we're great. We aspire to be great, but we don't believe we're great. We understand that anybody can beat us."

They just haven't in a long time, and March Madness is right around the corner.

## No. 7 Michigan State rolls to its 13th straight victory

Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Tre Holloman scored all 12 of his points in the first half, Jaden Akins had 10 of his 12 after halftime and No. 7 Michigan State routed Minnesota 72-51 on Tuesday night.

The Spartans (18-2, 9-0 Big Ten) have won 13 straight games for the first time since the 2018-19 season that ended with Hall of Fame coach Tom Izzo's eighth and most recent Final Four appearance.

The Golden Gophers (11-10, 3-7) had won three straight Big Ten games, including victories over then-No. 15 Oregon and then-No. 20 Michigan.

Dawson Garcia scored 21 points for Minnesota but didn't get much help. The Gophers didn't have another player with more than eight.

**No. 12 Kentucky 78, No. 8 Tennessee 73:** Koby Brea scored 18 points to lead the visiting Wildcats past the Volunteers.

Jaxson Robinson added 17

points for Kentucky (15-5, 4-3 SEC), which snapped a two-game skid. Otega Oweh scored 14 and Amari Williams had 10 points and 15 rebounds.

Igor Milicic led Tennessee (17-4, 4-4) with 19 points and nine rebounds. Chaz Lanier scored 15 and Zakai Zeigler added 13.

**No. 9 Marquette 78, Butler 69:** Stevie Mitchell scored 10 of his career-high 22 points during a key five-minute stretch in the second half, helping the Golden Eagles overcome Kam Jones' foul trouble to beat the host Bulldogs.

Marquette (18-3, 9-1 Big East) won its third straight to stay tied with No. 15 St. John's atop the league standings despite losing Jones, their best player, for nearly 10 minutes after drawing his fourth foul with 13:32 to play. Jones finished with 17 points.

Jahmyl Telfort scored 24 points for Butler (9-12, 2-8). Patrick McCaffery added 12 as the Bulldogs lost for the 10th time in 12 games.

**No. 11 Kansas 91, UCF 87:** Zeke Mayo scored 24 points, including a pair of clinching free throws with 3.1 seconds left, and the host Jayhawks rallied to beat the Knights and avoid their first back-to-back losses in Allen Fieldhouse in 36 years.

Hunter Dickinson added 24 points and Flory Bidunga had 10 points and 11 rebounds for Kansas (15-5, 6-3 Big 12), which was coming off a double-overtime loss to sixth-ranked Houston.

UCF (13-7, 4-5), which got 34 points from Keyshawn Hall and 19 from Darius Johnson, led by nine early in the second half before Kansas used a 12-2 run to take its first lead since midway through the first half.

**No. 13 Texas A&M 75, Oklahoma 68:** Zhuric Phelps had 15 points, Henry Coleman III added 14 and the Aggies held on for a victory over the visiting Sooners.

Texas A&M (16-5, 5-3 Southeastern Conference) led by four with about 2½ minutes left when a three-point play by

Wade Taylor IV extended the lead to 68-61.

Brycen Goodine scored all five Oklahoma points in a 5-2 spurt that cut it to 70-66 with less than a minute to go. Coleman then made four free throws to secure the win.

Goodine had 24 points for the Sooners (15-5, 2-5), who had won two in a row after dropping their first four conference games. Jalon Moore scored 22.

**No. 21 Louisville 72, Wake Forest 59:** Terrence Edwards Jr. scored 18 points as the host Cardinals cruised to a victory over the Demon Deacons.

A 12-0 run midway through the first half gave Louisville (16-5, 9-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) a 26-11 lead with 8:26 left and it led by 29 in the second half.

Hunter Salis, who came in third in the ACC with 18.9 points per game, scored 13 for Wake Forest (15-6, 7-3) before he was ejected with 14:47 remaining after picking up his second technical foul.



# Johnston, Stars push past Knights in OT

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Wyatt Johnston scored 20 seconds into overtime to complete a natural hat trick and rally the Dallas Stars to a 4-3 victory Tuesday night over the Vegas Golden Knights.

It was Johnston's second career hat trick as the Stars erased a 3-1 second-period deficit and won for the fourth time in five games. He also had a hat trick March 5 of last season at San Jose.

Mavrik Borque scored the other Dallas goal, Roope Hintz had two assists and Jake Oettinger made 25 saves.

Jack Eichel and Pavel Dorofeyev each had a goal and an assist for the Golden Knights, Tomas Hertl scored a goal and Mark Stone had two assists. Adin Hill finished with 25 saves.

Stars defenseman Miro Heiskanen went to the locker room in the third period after Stone fell toward his left knee and thigh while possibly getting tripped. Stone was assessed a 2-minute tripping penalty.

"I coached Mark Stone," Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said. "He's not a dirty player. He's not trying to hurt anybody. I

know that. That doesn't mean they can't call a 5(-minute major) or at least look at it. That was my argument."

**Sabres 7, Bruins 2:** Tage Thompson and JJ Peterka each had a hat trick and an assist to lead host Buffalo over Boston.

Thompson and Peterka became the first pair to score a hat trick in the same game for the Sabres since 2008.

Mason Lohrei and Brad Marchand scored and Jeremy Swayman made 26 saves for the Bruins, who have won five of their past eight games following a six-game winless streak.

Zach Benson also scored for Buffalo and Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen made 26 saves.

**Jets 4, Canadiens 1:** Kyle Connor scored twice and Connor Hellebuyck made 24 saves as visiting Winnipeg beat Montreal for its fourth win in a row.

Mark Scheifele also scored and Rasmus Kupari added an empty-net goal. Gabriel Vilardi provided two assists.

Juraj Slafkovsky gave the Canadiens an early lead and Sam Montembeault stopped 20 shots, but Montreal lost its third consecutive game after winning 10 of its previous 13.

**Blackhawks 4, Lightning 1:**

Connor Bedard scored from a seemingly impossible angle, Arvid Soderblom stopped 34 shots and visiting Chicago beat Tampa Bay.

Landon Slaggert, Ryan Donato and Teuvo Teravainen also scored for the Blackhawks, who won for just the third time in 18 games this season when trailing after the first period.

The 19-year-old Bedard sparked Chicago on a power play midway through the second. He drifted to near the bottom of the right circle before firing a shot through a tiny window that got past goaltender Jonas Johansson and hit the left post for his 14th goal of the season.

**Hurricanes 4, Rangers 0:** Andrei Svechnikov scored twice and added an assist, Frederik Andersen made 22 saves, and visiting Carolina beat New York.

Sebastian Aho and Seth Jarvis also scored for the Hurricanes, who won for the fifth time in their last six games. The Rangers lost their second in a row after earning points in 10 straight games.

The shutout was Andersen's first this season and the 28th of his career. He has won three

straight since his return after knee surgery to improve to 6-1-0.

**Islanders 5, Avalanche 2:** Simon Holmstrom scored twice and added an assist, and Ilya Sorokin made 30 saves to lead host New York to a win over Colorado.

Bo Horvat, Anders Lee and Alexander Romanov also scored for the Islanders, who have won five in a row.

**Capitals 3, Flames 1:** Logan Thompson made 32 saves, Pierre-Luc Dubois, Dylan Strome and Aliaksei Protas scored goals, and visiting Washington beat Calgary.

Blake Coleman scored on the power play for the Flames and Dustin Wolf had 20 stops.

**Ducks 6, Kraken 4:** Mason McTavish scored the tying goal early in the second period and assisted on Robby Fabbri's go-ahead goal 4:35 later, sending visiting Anaheim to a victory over Seattle.

Troy Terry, Cutter Gauthier, Jackson LaCombe and Frank Vatrano also scored for the Ducks, who took the lead for good with three goals in the first eight minutes of the second. Anaheim has won three straight after losing seven of eight.

## Wild's Kaprizov needs surgery for lower-body injury

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Minnesota Wild star Kirill Kaprizov needs surgery on the lingering lower-body injury he recently returned from and will be sidelined for at least a month.

General manager Bill Guerin said during practice Tuesday that Kaprizov is expected to be back with the team later this season, but the Wild must again compensate for the absence of their leading scorer and popular teammate.

"Kirill was having a Hart Trophy-type season. It's disappointing for him. It's disappointing for us, too, but we've put ourselves in a good position in the standings with the way we're playing, and we just need to deal with the situation. It's not the

end of the world," Guerin said. "We're going to keep playing and continue to get better, and when Kirill's healthy and all healed up, he'll be back and we'll be even better."

The impact of Kaprizov's absence will be stemmed a bit by the two-week break on the NHL schedule next month for the 4 Nations Face-Off tournament. If Kaprizov were to return in four weeks, for example, he'd only miss 10 games. But Minnesota will certainly take another cautious approach to the recovery of its 27-year-old left wing, who has 23 goals and 29 assists in 37 games.

"Kirill's very upset. Kirill is such a team-focused guy, and I think with what he has, he knows he could probably get by in games and try to help the team. Him at 60% is better than most players in the league, but he

wants to be 100% and help us play as long as we can this year, and I agree with him," Guerin said. "I don't think it's the best thing for a player to try to gut it out in this situation, because I think you leave yourself open to other injuries. I think the best thing to do is to shut him down right now for a little while, fix the problem and then get him back to 100%."

After missing 12 games over a month of inaction, Kaprizov rejoined the Wild last week. He played in three games, but he was not himself.

"Even on the bench at times, he was struggling to get through it," coach John Hynes said. "He did, and we did everything we could to see if it would work for him, but it didn't."

# Maxey scores 43 points, 76ers top Lakers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Tyrese Maxey scored 43 points to lead a Philadelphia 76ers team without injured Joel Embiid and Paul George to a 118-104 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday night.

Last season's NBA Most Improved Player, Maxey continued his recent scoring streak as he tried to keep the Sixers within striking distance of the play-in tournament. Maxey had averaged 30.4 points over the past 10 games and he blew past the mark in the third quarter, finishing with 41 headed into the fourth.

Maxey hit four 3-pointers and made 15 of 26 shots overall from the floor. He extended his career-best streak of 25-point games to 11 straight to the delight of a handful of NFC champion Eagles who sat courtside.

LeBron James scored 31 points for the Lakers. Anthony Davis left Los Angeles without a key cog when he was forced out in the first half with an abdominal muscle strain.

**Rockets 100, Hawks 96:** Jalen Green scored 12 of his 25 points in the third quarter and Houston avoided a late collapse to win at Atlanta.

Alperen Sengun added 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Rockets, who led 96-80 after Green's steal and layup with 5:41 left before the Hawks closed within two in the final minute.

Dillon Brooks and Amen

Thompson each scored 11 points for Houston, which earned its fourth straight win.

Trae Young had 21 points and nine assists for Atlanta, which dropped its sixth straight.

**Warriors 114, Jazz 103:** Dennis Schroder scored 23 points with five 3-pointers, Brandin Podziemski contributed 20 off the bench with Stephen Curry sitting out to rest his troublesome knees, and host Golden State beat Utah.

Collin Sexton matched his season high with 30 points on 12-for-19 shooting for the Jazz, who lost their seventh straight game and 10th of 11 overall.

Andrew Wiggins added 19 points and the Warriors capitalized with 12 first-quarter points

off Utah's six turnovers and 26 in all from Jazz miscues.

Podziemski also had seven rebounds and six assists, helping carry the point-guard load without Curry. Kevon Looney grabbed 11 rebounds.

**Trail Blazers 125, Bucks 112:** Deni Avdija scored a season-high 30 points and host Portland bested former Trail Blazer Damian Lillard with a victory over Milwaukee.

Anfernee Simons added 25 points for Portland, which has won five of its past six. The Blazers led by 19 in the final quarter.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 39 points and 12 rebounds for the Bucks, who had won nine of their last 11 but were playing their third game in four nights.

## Scheffler details injury, is eager to get back to golf

Associated Press

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. — Scottie Scheffler felt frustrated sitting at home for two tournaments he normally plays while recovering from glass puncturing the palm of his right hand while making ravioli. A big part of him was thankful the injury wasn't worse.

Scheffler went into detail Tuesday about how he injured his hand making Christmas dinner, and how he practiced hard early last week in cold weather in Dallas to feel confident he wasn't returning to the PGA Tour too soon.

He makes his season debut at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, the second \$20 million signature event with an 80-man field, including amateur partners for the opening two rounds at Pebble Beach and Spyglass Hill.

Scheffler played Cypress Point on Monday and Pebble Beach on Tuesday, without a bandage and swinging as freely as ever.

As for the fateful dinner?

Scheffler said he and his

family wanted to make ravioli from scratch, so they rolled the dough but were in a rental house and didn't have the right tools to cut the pasta. He found a wine glass, and that's when the trouble began.

"I had my hand on top and it broke," he said. "I've heard nothing but horror stories since this happened about wine glasses, so be careful. ... It broke and the stem kind of got me in the hand. I can't live in a bubble, like I've got to live my life and accidents happen."

"It could have been a lot worse," he said. "I actually talked to somebody who did the exact same thing and the stem went straight through their hand. It's one of those deals where immediately after it happened I was mad at myself because I was like, 'Gosh, that's so stupid.' But you just don't think about it when you're in the moment."

It was one of the few mistakes Scheffler made all year.

Rory McIlroy, in his 18th full season as a pro, said Scheffler stood out in 2024 beyond his

seven PGA Tour titles, his second green jacket and the Olympic gold medal.

"I've never — this is anyone, this is Tiger, this is in the history of golf — I don't think I've ever seen a golfer play as many bogey-free rounds as Scottie," McIlroy said. "He just doesn't make mistakes. He plays the right shot at the right time over and over and over again."

McIlroy had another reaction when asked what he thought when heard the news of Scheffler suffering the injury while preparing dinner. He jokingly replied, "I think he made enough money to hire a chef. It's like, 'Why are cooking yourself?'"

"I've got a chef. Her name's Meredith," Scheffler said with a laugh, referring to his wife. "She's pretty cute."

Scheffler had a tiny, clear bandage over the spot where he had surgery to remove the shards of glass — upper palm, right below the middle finger, and that's as demonstrative as he got.

Scheffler had to miss The Sentry at Kapalua, a tournament he enjoys because it allows him to shake off rust he might have accumulated over the holidays. He also missed The American Express in the California desert, another tournament he enjoys playing because it has good weather and gives him an indicator of his game. Palm Springs is about birdies, not his best brand of golf.

"Missing those events is not fun," Scheffler said.

Scheffler watched more golf than usual, including a package of video of his wins. He also watched the tournaments he was missing.

"It was definitely still frustrating watching golf on TV and not being able to play," he said.

Scheffler didn't decide until Friday to enter Pebble Beach. He said he made an effort to hit a lot of golf balls early last week, wanting to push himself hard to make sure there were no issues when he got to a tournament.