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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US seizes 2 tankers linked to Venezuela

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States has seized two sanctioned oil tankers linked to Venezuela in back-to-back actions in the North Atlantic and the Caribbean, officials said Wednesday.

U.S. European Command announced the seizure of the merchant vessel Bella 1 for “violations of U.S. sanctions” in a social media post. The U.S. had been pursuing the tanker since last month after it tried to evade a U.S. blockade on sanctioned oil vessels around Venezuela.

Then, Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem revealed that U.S. forces also took control of the tanker Sophia in the Caribbean. Noem said in a social media post both ships were “either last docked in Venezuela or en route to it.”

Noem said that both ships are part of a large “ghost fleet” of sanctioned vessels that carry oil from Russia, Iran and Venezuela in defiance of Western sanctions, mostly to customers in Asia.

The Trump administration is “selectively” removing sanctions to enable the shipping and sale of Venezuelan oil to markets

worldwide, according to an outline of the policies published Wednesday by the Energy Department.

The oil sales are slated to begin immediately with the sale of 30 million to 50 million barrels from the South American country. The U.S. government said the sales “will continue indefinitely” with the proceeds settling in U.S.-controlled accounts at “globally recognized banks.” The money would then be disbursed to the U.S. and Venezuelan populations at the “discretion” of the U.S. government.

The two ship seizures come just days after U.S. military forces conducted a surprise nighttime raid on Venezuela’s capital of Caracas and captured President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, whom President Donald Trump’s administration has accused of partnering with drug traffickers.

Since that raid, administration officials have said that they intend to continue to seize sanctioned vessels connected to the country.

“We are enforcing American laws with regards to oil sanc-

tions,” Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on NBC on Sunday. “We go to court. We get a warrant. We seize those boats with oil. And that will continue.”

The U.S. military seized the Bella 1 and subsequently handed over control of it to law enforcement officials, said a U.S. official, who spoke to The Associated Press on Wednesday on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military operations.

The ship was sanctioned by the U.S. in 2014 for allegedly smuggling cargo for a company linked to Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran.

It was cruising across the Atlantic nearing the Caribbean on Dec. 15 when it abruptly turned and changed its heading north, toward Europe.

The change in direction came days after the first U.S. tanker seizure of a ship called the Skipper, on Dec. 10, after it had left Venezuela carrying a cargo of oil.

The U.S. Coast Guard attempted to board it in the Caribbean in December as it headed for Venezuela.

The ship refused boarding and headed across the Atlantic. U.S. European Command confirmed that the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Munro tracked the ship ahead of its seizure “pursuant to a warrant issued by a U.S. federal court” in a social media post.

During this time, the Bella 1 was renamed Marinera and flagged to Russia, shipping databases show. The U.S. official also confirmed that the ship’s crew had painted a Russian flag on the side of the hull.

Earlier Wednesday, open-source maritime tracking sites showed its position as between Scotland and Iceland, traveling north. The U.S. official also confirmed the ship was in the North Atlantic.

Flight tracking websites showed several U-28A U.S. special operations aircraft landing at Wick John O’Groats airport on the northern tip of Scotland, before flying further north toward Iceland on Wednesday. P8 Poseidon submarine-hunting aircraft and KC-135 refueling planes were also seen on tracking websites, heading to the area near the tanker.

Rubio, Denmark to meet next week about Greenland

Associated Press

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said he plans to meet with Danish officials next week after the Trump administration doubled down on its intention to take over Greenland, the strategic Arctic island that is a self-governing territory of Denmark.

President Donald Trump has argued that the U.S. needs to control the world’s largest island to ensure its own security in the face of rising threats from

China and Russia in the Arctic, and the White House has refused to rule out using military force to acquire the territory.

Rubio told a select group of lawmakers that it was the administration’s intention to eventually purchase Greenland, as opposed to using military force.

The remarks, first reported by the Wall Street Journal, were made in a classified briefing Monday evening on Capitol Hill, according to a person with knowledge of his comments who

was granted anonymity because it was a private discussion.

On Wednesday, Rubio told reporters that Trump has been talking about acquiring Greenland since his first term. “That’s always been the president’s intent from the very beginning,” Rubio said. “He’s not the first U.S. president that has examined or looked at how we could acquire Greenland.”

He was on Capitol Hill for a briefing with the entire Senate and House, where questions

from lawmakers centered not only on the administration’s operation to capture former Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro — but also on Trump’s recent comments about Greenland.

Tensions with NATO members escalated after the White House said Tuesday that the “U.S. military is always an option.” Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen warned earlier this week that a U.S. takeover would amount to the end of NATO.

US officials: Raid killed about 75 in Venezuela

The Washington Post

The U.S. government assesses that about 75 people were killed during Saturday's military raid to capture Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, including dozens of fatalities that resulted from a gunbattle at his compound in Caracas, according to officials familiar with the matter.

One person said that at least 67 people were killed in the predawn strike, while another said that about 75 to 80 people were left dead. The officials, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the issue's sensitivity, said the assessments account for Venezuelan and Cuban security forces as well as civilians caught in the fray. The figures roughly match an estimate that Venezuelan officials have shared in recent days.

The sizable death toll adds meaning to President Donald Trump's public remarks that the operation he approved was "effective" but "very violent."

About a half-dozen U.S. troops were injured in the operation, with some suffering gunshot wounds in the firefight at Maduro's compound. Some were transported to Brooke Army Medical Center in Texas, where they underwent surgery, two other officials said.

The Pentagon said in a statement Tuesday that two U.S. service members were still recovering from injuries suffered during the operation. Five others who were hurt have returned to duty.

"The fact that this extremely complex and grueling mission was successfully executed

with so few injuries is a testament to the expertise of our joint warriors," the Pentagon said.

The raid was led by elite members of the Army's Delta Force, who were teamed with special operations soldiers from the 75th Ranger Regiment and 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, which flies some of the military's most dangerous missions.

Helicopters launched from numerous warships off the coast off Venezuela and swooped in, flying low over the water to limit detection.

The details — disclosed to congressional officials this week as lawmakers demanded clarity on the Trump administration's aims after forcibly removing Maduro and bringing him to the U.S. to face narco-terrorism charges — indicate that while the operation was "an astonishing feat," it was somewhat miraculous there were zero U.S. fatalities, one of the officials said.

The details were disclosed after top administration officials — including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, the Joint Chiefs chairman — held a classified briefing Monday night for senior lawmakers.

People familiar with Monday's briefing said Rubio, who also functions as Trump's national security adviser, did the majority of the talking and told congressional officials that he is confident he can work with Delcy Rodriguez, who had served as vice president under Maduro and is Venezuela's acting president.

Trump: US to get up to 50M barrels of oil from Caracas

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — President Donald Trump said Tuesday that Venezuela would be providing 30 million to 50 million barrels of oil to the U.S., and he pledged to use proceeds from the sale of this oil "to benefit the people" of both countries.

The White House is organizing a meeting Friday with U.S. oil company executives to discuss Venezuela. The administration has been pressuring the country to open its vast-but-struggling oil industry more widely to American investment and know-how. Representatives of Exxon, Chevron and Conoco-Phillips are expected to attend the White House meeting, according to a person familiar with the matter.

With oil trading at roughly \$56 a barrel, the transaction Trump announced late Tuesday could be worth as much as \$2.8 billion. The U.S. goes through an average of roughly 20 million barrels a day of oil and related products, so Venezuela's transfer would be the equivalent of as much as two and a half days of supply, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The press office for Venezuela's government did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Trump's announcement.

ExxonMobil is developing a mammoth offshore oil deposit in the waters off Guyana, Venezuela's neighbor to the east. The company's major oil discovery in 2015 prompted Venezuela to revive a century-old territorial dispute with Guyana and take steps to annex the region known as Essequibo, which comprises about two-thirds of Guyana's land mass.

First new USMC base in decades nears readiness on Guam

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

CAMP BLAZ, Guam — About two-thirds of an \$8.9 billion budget has been spent on this 562-acre facility to accommodate U.S. Marines relocating from bases on Okinawa, according to Navy and Marine Corps officials.

Nearly \$6.2 billion of the appropriation has gone toward building and outfitting Camp Blaz to date, according to a Wednesday email from Capt. Steven Keenan, a Marine Corps spokesman at the Pentagon. Blaz is the service's first new base since 1952.

The Officer in Charge of Construction Marine Corps Marianas, part of Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Pacific, was formed in 2016 to oversee work on the new installation. The command includes 10 Navy Civil Engineer Corps officers and 100 civilian staff, including construction managers, engineering technicians and administrative staff, Keenan said.

Guam is expected to grow from about 17,000 U.S. service members to 24,000 by fiscal year 2033.

About 4,000 Marines are expected to move

from Okinawa to Guam, part of a 2012 agreement between the U.S. and Japan to reduce the American military footprint on Okinawa, where nearly 30,000 of the 55,000 U.S. service members in Japan are stationed.

About 1,300 members of III Marine Expeditionary Force may be permanently stationed on Guam, while another 3,700 Marines could rotate through the island on temporary deployments.

Japan is providing approximately \$3 billion of the money allocated to build Blaz and other Guam infrastructure.

Lawmakers have 4 weeks to dodge shutdown

The Washington Post

Lawmakers are back in Washington this week for a four-week sprint to finish funding the government before the current spending law runs out on Jan. 30.

If they fail, they will need to pass another short-term extension or spark another government shutdown just two and a half months after the last one, the longest funding lapse in U.S. history.

Funding the government usually requires passing 12 individual bills. Lawmakers approved three as part of a deal to end last fall's shutdown, and they also extended current

funding levels for the rest of the government into January. Those levels were last set in March 2024.

But it will be challenging to finalize some of the remaining bills, which have not yet been formally negotiated between the House and the Senate, or approved by congressional leaders.

The two Appropriations Committee chairs, Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., and Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said in late December that they had reached an agreement on the total spending level they'll shoot for in the remaining bills. They did not reveal the overall cost, but Cole said it is

lower than the amount if Congress were to pass another funding extension, known as a continuing resolution.

"This pathway forward aligns with President [Donald] Trump's clear direction to rein in runaway, beltway-driven spending," Cole said in a statement. "We will now begin expeditiously drafting the remaining nine full-year bills to ensure we are ready to complete our work in January."

Lawmakers released three new bipartisan appropriations bills Monday that they plan to vote on in the House later this week. That legislation would fund the Departments of Com-

merce, Justice and Interior, and other agencies dealing with energy, water and the environment — though some House conservatives are already raising concerns with parts of the package.

The six remaining bills — including those funding the Departments of Defense, Labor, and Health and Human Services — pose an even greater challenge. Appropriators must navigate political pressures from their right and left: Fiscal hawks, including many in the conservative House Freedom Caucus, insist that funding levels for most agencies should not be higher than last fiscal year.

White House holding funds from 5 states over fraud

Associated Press

President Donald Trump's administration said Tuesday that it is withholding funding for programs that support needy families with children in five Democratic-led states over concerns about fraud.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees the program, will require the states to provide extra documentation to access the funds.

"Families who rely on child care and family assistance programs deserve confidence that these resources are used lawfully and for their intended purpose," HHS Deputy Secretary Jim O'Neill said in a statement.

The administration has not laid out details about the fraud allegations.

HHS said in a statement that it "identified concerns that these benefits intended for American citizens and lawful residents may have been improperly provided to individuals who are not eligible under federal law."

Five states — California, Col-

orado, Illinois, Minnesota and New York — are targeted, and the HHS said they had been notified.

Gov. Kathy Hochul said New York is prepared to take the administration to court, as Democratic-led states have done scores of times now.

"We'll fight this with every fiber of our being, because our kids should not be political pawns in a fight that Donald Trump seems to have with blue state governors," she said.

The targeted programs provide lifelines to some of the neediest Americans:

- The Child Care and Development Fund subsidizes day care for low-income households, enabling parents to work or go to school.

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families provides cash assistance and job training so parents in poverty can afford diapers and clothes and earn paychecks.

- The Social Services Block Grant, a much smaller fund, supports several different social service programs.

Musk's AI faces backlash over sexualized images

Associated Press

LONDON — Elon Musk's AI chatbot Grok is facing a backlash from governments around the world after a recent surge in sexualized images of women and children generated without consent by the artificial intelligence-powered tool.

On Tuesday, Britain's top technology official demanded that Musk's social media platform X take urgent action, while a Polish lawmaker cited it as a reason to enact digital safety laws.

The European Union's executive arm has denounced Grok while officials and regulators in France, India, Malaysia and Brazil have condemned the platform and called for investigations.

Rising alarm from disparate nations points to the nightmarish potential of nudification apps that use artificial intelligence to generate sexually explicit deepfake images.

The problem emerged after the launch last year of Grok Imagine, an AI image generator that allows users to create

videos and pictures by typing in text prompts.

It includes a so-called "spicy mode" that can generate adult content.

It snowballed late last month when Grok, which is hosted on X, apparently began granting a large number of user requests to modify images posted by others. As of Tuesday, Grok users could still generate images of women using requests such as "put her in a transparent bikini."

The problem is amplified both because Musk pitches his chatbot as an edgier alternative to rivals with more safeguards, and because Grok's images are publicly visible, and can therefore be easily spread.

Nonprofit group AI Forensics said in a report that it analyzed 20,000 images generated by Grok between Dec. 25 and Jan. 1 and found that 2% depicted a person who appeared to be 18 or younger, including 30 of young or very young women or girls, in bikinis or transparent clothes.

DHS: 2K federal immigration agents going to Minnesota

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Department of Homeland Security said Tuesday that it launched what it described as the largest immigration enforcement operation ever carried out by the agency — with 2,000 federal agents and officers expected in the Minneapolis area for a crackdown tied in part to allegations of fraud involving Somali residents.

“The largest DHS operation ever is happening right now in Minnesota,” the department said in a post on X, dramatically expanding the federal law enforcement footprint in the state amid heightened political and community tensions.

On Wednesday, a Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent shot and killed a motorist when she allegedly tried to run over law enforcement officers, authorities said. The officer shot the woman in her vehicle in a res-

idential neighborhood in Minneapolis, DHS spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement.

A throng of protesters gathered at the scene after the shooting, where they vented their anger at the local and federal officers who were there.

In its crackdown, the government planned to deploy about 2,000 ICE agents and officers, according to a U.S. official and a person briefed on the matter. The agents are expected to be dispatched in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, the person said.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem was also present and accompanied ICE officers during at least one arrest. A video posted on X showed Noem wearing a tactical vest and knit cap as agents arrested a man in St. Paul. In the video, she tells the handcuffed man: “You will be held accountable for your

crimes.”

DHS said in a news release that the man was from Ecuador and was wanted in his homeland and Connecticut on charges including murder and sexual assault. It said agents arrested 150 people Monday in enforcement actions in Minneapolis.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat, criticized the federal enforcement surge as “a war that’s being waged against Minnesota.”

“You’re seeing that we have a ridiculous surge of apparently 2,000 people not coordinating with us, that are for a show of cameras,” Walz said Tuesday, a day after announcing he was ending his campaign for a third term.

Many residents were already on edge. The Trump administration has singled out the area’s Somali community, the largest in the U.S.

November sees drop in job postings

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. employers posted far fewer jobs in November than the previous month, a sign that employers aren’t yet ramping up hiring even as growth has picked up.

Businesses and government agencies posted 7.1 million open jobs at the end of November, the Labor Department said Wednesday, down from 7.4 million in October. Layoffs also dropped, however, as companies appear to be holding onto workers even as they are reluctant to add staff.

The report suggests that the “low-hire, low-fire” job market remains in effect, with workers enjoying some job security but those out of work struggling to find new jobs.

The moribund labor market stands in contrast to data showing solid economic growth, which topped 4% at an annual rate in the July-September quarter, the latest data available. Economists forecast growth slowed but remained solid in the final three months of 2025.

A key question for this year is whether hiring will pick up to match healthy growth, or whether sluggish job gains will eventually drag down the economy. There is a third possibility: Automation and artificial intelligence could enable steady economic growth without creating many jobs.

Further insights into that question will emerge Friday when the monthly jobs report for December will be released.

The number of postings in November was the fewest since September 2024. But outside that month, it was the lowest in nearly five years.

The figures provide some critical measures of the job market after last fall’s government shutdown delayed the release of data on hiring and inflation.

Citing ‘rhetoric,’ Iranian army chief threatens preemptive military action

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran’s army chief threatened preemptive military action Wednesday over the “rhetoric” targeting the Islamic Republic, likely referring to President Donald Trump’s warning that if Tehran “violently kills peaceful protesters,” the U.S. “will come to their rescue.”

The comments by Maj. Gen. Amir Hatami come as Iran tries to respond to what it sees as a dual threat posed by Israel and the U.S., as well as the protests sparked by its economic woes that have grown into a direct challenge to its theocracy.

Seeking to halt the anger, Iran’s government began

Wednesday paying the equivalent of \$7 a month to subsidize rising costs essentials like rice, meat and pasta. Shopkeepers warn prices for basic items will triple after the collapse of Iran’s rial currency and the end of a preferential subsidized dollar exchange rate for importers and manufacturers.

“More than a week of protests in Iran reflects not only worsening economic conditions, but long-standing anger at government repression and regime policies that have led to Iran’s global isolation,” the New York-based Soufan Center think tank said.

Hatami spoke to military academy students. He took over

as commander of the Iran’s army, known by the Farsi word “Artesh,” after Israel killed a slew of the country’s top military commanders in June’s war.

“The Islamic Republic considers the intensification of such rhetoric against the Iranian nation as a threat and will not leave its continuation without a response,” Hatami said, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

He added, “I can say with confidence that today the readiness of Iran’s armed forces is far greater than before the war. If the enemy commits an error, it will face a more decisive response, and we will cut off the hand of any aggressor.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Third in-state immigration detention center in sights

FL ORLANDO — Florida is awaiting approval from federal officials to open a third immigration detention center, following “Alligator Alcatraz” and “Deportation Depot,” and the state also is looking into a potential fourth detention facility, Gov. Ron DeSantis said Monday.

Florida officials were waiting for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to sign off on the third detention center in the state’s Panhandle, DeSantis said at a news conference outside “Deportation Depot,” at the former Baker Correctional Institution in northeast Florida.

DeSantis said that there had been 10,000 arrests of people in the U.S. illegally in Florida during the past year through a state initiative with federal law enforcement, and that local law enforcement had made an additional 10,000 arrests for a total of 20,000 arrests. Under the state initiative, 63% of those arrested had a criminal arrest or conviction, DeSantis said.

Florida has led other states in constructing facilities to support President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown.

Police chief retires after theft allegations

CT NEW HAVEN — New Haven’s police chief abruptly retired following allegations he stole money from a department account, Mayor Justin Elicker announced Monday.

The Democrat said Chief Karl Jacobson admitted he took money from a city fund that

compensates confidential informants for helping police solve crimes.

He said the chief acknowledged taking the funds for personal use when three of his deputies confronted him Monday morning over the financial irregularities.

“No one is above the law,” Elicker said in an evening press conference at the police station. “We put our trust in law enforcement to uphold the law, not to violate the law themselves.”

The mayor said he was set to meet with Jacobson and place him on administrative leave when the chief instead submitted his paperwork to retire, effective Monday.

Jacobson had been with the department for 15 years before being named chief in 2022. He previously served in the East Providence Police Department in Rhode Island for nine years.

Snowmobiler dies after Sierra Nevada avalanche

CA TRUCKEE — An avalanche in California’s Sierra Nevada on Monday buried a snowmobiler in snow and killed him, authorities said.

Rescuers responded after a 911 call around 2:20 p.m. reported a possible avalanche near Johnson Peak and Castle Peak in Truckee.

The snowmobiler was initially reported missing but then was found under the snow several minutes later, the Nevada County Sheriff’s Office said in a statement. The people who found him attempted lifesaving efforts, according to the statement.

Emergency personnel were working to safely extract the victim late Monday and to con-

firm no others were buried. The sheriff’s office said more avalanches could occur and recommended that people avoid the area.

Each winter, 25 to 30 people die in avalanches in the U.S., according to the National Avalanche Center. The center’s current map shows high risk spots in Utah and Washington and areas of considerable risk in California, Colorado, Idaho and Wyoming.

Lawmaker spared prison time in corruption case

TN NASHVILLE — A federal judge on Monday reduced a prison sentence to probation for a former Tennessee lawmaker whose testimony helped convict the former state House speaker and his onetime aide of public corruption.

Although her cohorts were pardoned by President Donald Trump, Republican Rep. Robin Smith had been slated to report to prison for an eight-month sentence. But U.S. District Judge Eli Richardson in Nashville on Monday reduced it to one year of probation.

Smith had been instrumental in helping prosecutors secure convictions against Republican ex-House Speaker Glen Casada and his former aide, Cade Cothren, who along with Smith created a shadowy company to win taxpayer-funded work to send mailings to constituents; she had cut a deal with prosecutors to cooperate in the trial and testify about the scheme.

About two weeks after Smith was sentenced in late October, Trump pardoned Casada and Cothren. In September, the judge sentenced Casada to

three years in prison and Cothren to 2½ years.

Smith said she is still seeking a pardon from Trump and has “continued faith in this process.”

Tuberville files to enter Alabama governor’s race

AL HOOVER — Republican U.S. Sen. Tommy Tuberville filed paperwork Monday to officially enter the 2026 race for Alabama governor, saying he wants to be the “chief recruiter to make our state better.”

Tuberville, who leveraged fame from his Auburn University football coaching days to win election to the U.S. Senate in 2020, announced last year that he planned to run for governor instead of seeking another Senate term. He signed paperwork at the Alabama Republican Party headquarters on Monday to officially enter the race.

Tuberville’s entry into the race is likely to discourage other Republicans from joining the field vying to replace Republican Gov. Kay Ivey. On the Democratic side, former U.S. Sen. Doug Jones, who lost to Tuberville in 2020, is also running for governor, setting up a possible rematch in November.

Tuberville won his Senate election by casting himself as a political outsider closely aligned with President Donald Trump. In 2023, Tuberville maintained a monthslong blockade on military promotions over his opposition to a Pentagon policy that provided travel funds and support for troops and their dependents who seek abortions but are based in states where they are now illegal.

—From wire reports

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Miami's defensive rise fuels run to semis

Associated Press

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — The biggest signing for Miami going into this season might not have been quarterback Carson Beck out of Georgia, wide receiver CJ Daniels out of LSU or defensive back Keionte Scott out of Auburn.

It might have been the guy they got from Minnesota.

Corey Hetherman — the Hurricanes' defensive coordinator — was hired away from the Golden Gophers in January 2025 and given a simple yet enormous task: Fix a defense that was so porous last season that not even a 10-win team with a No. 1 draft pick like Cam Ward at quarterback and the top-ranked offense in the country was deemed worthy of a spot in the College Football Playoff.

The result: Miami (12-2) is giving up its fewest points per game since 2001, which not coincidentally just happens to be its last national championship season. The Hurricanes have given up 9.7 points per game in their

current six-game winning streak, plus an even-stingier 8.5 points per game in their two CFP wins over Texas A&M and Ohio State. And now comes another massive test against high-octane Mississippi (13-1) in a CFP semifinal at the Fiesta Bowl on Thursday night.

"He's a guy that has no Miami ties," Hurricanes coach Mario Cristobal said of Hetherman. "But he quickly established himself as a very knowledgeable person with a very high care factor and a ridiculous amount of intensity."

It all stems from an acronym that Hetherman brought with him to Miami: ESV. It stands for excitement, swarm, violence. That has been the base philosophy for everything that he's installed in the Hurricanes over the last 12 months.

That sort of thinking, combined with a ton of talent, has been the perfect match. Defensive linemen Rueben Bain Jr. and Akheem Mesidor are generally considered to be first-round

draft candidates and have been one of the best 1-2 punches in college football, combining for 19 sacks.

"Those two are game-wreckers," Beck said. "Even just having one of those guys would be a huge impact to any defense. But being able to have both of them has completely changed the course of this season and the way that our defense plays, right? ... Obviously, they've done a phenomenal job, along with the rest of the defense, this year of executing and playing a physical brand of ball, which is a lot of fun to watch."

It's far from just Bain and Mesidor leading the way. The secondary that was shelled last season has 16 interceptions this year, 11 of them coming from either freshman Bryce Fitzgerald or transfer Jakobe Thomas. Scott, who Miami believes was snubbed from some major individual awards, had a game-changing interception for a touchdown in the win over Ohio State. Linebacker Mohamed

Toure might have saved the season with a pass breakup near the goal line in the final moments of the win at Texas A&M. The cornerback play is vastly improved. Linebacker Wesley Bissainthe has made big play after big play.

And if all that isn't enough, Hetherman's staff includes none other than Hall of Famer Jason Taylor — the defensive line coach who has gone from Miami Dolphins great to Miami Hurricanes great.

The numbers from 2024 to 2025 are simply staggering. The Hurricanes were 69th nationally in points allowed and 27th nationally in yards allowed per game last season; they are fourth in points allowed and 10th in yards allowed this season.

"We have done it differently here than I've done it everywhere else, as far as like where we install and do certain things on certain days," Hetherman said. "And it's worked out really well. And I think our guys are playing fast with the way we're doing it right now."

Michigan improves to 14-0 by surviving Penn State rally

Associated Press

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — L.J. Cason scored 14 points and No. 2 Michigan held on to beat Penn State 74-72 on Tuesday night.

Nimari Burnett and Trey McKenney had 12 points each and Yaxel Lendeborg added 10 for the Wolverines (14-0, 4-0 Big Ten), off to their best start since opening the 2018-19 season 17-0.

Michigan, which led by 15 with 10:41 left, had to survive a late Nittany Lions push that fell short when Freddie Dilione's 3-point attempt at the buzzer bounced off the rim.

No. 6 Duke 84, No. 20 Louisville 76: Cameron Boozer scored 27 points, including seven during a 16-6 run early in the second half, Isaiah Evans added 23 and the visiting Blue Devils shot 71% after the break to rally past the Cardinals for their third consecutive victory.

Duke (14-1, 3-0 Atlantic Coast Conference) erased a 47-38 halftime deficit by making 5 of 7 field goals and 6 of 9 free throws in a 6:24 span, including two by Booz-

er for their first lead at 54-53 with 13:36 remaining. Caleb Foster added seven points and Evans six during another spurt for a 10-point lead with 6:58 left, and the Blue Devils didn't let up to beat Louisville (11-4, 1-2) for the eighth straight time.

No. 7 Houston 69, No. 14 Texas Tech 65: Kingston Flemings scored 23 points, including nine in the final two minutes, and the host Cougars rallied in the second half for a win over the Red Raiders.

Emanuel Sharp scored 17 points, Chris Cenac Jr. added 11 points and 11 rebounds, and Joseph Tugler had 11 points and 10 rebounds for Houston (14-1, 2-0 Big 12), which won its eighth straight game and 14th straight home game.

Florida 92, No. 18 Georgia 77: Thomas Haugh had 21 points, 12 rebounds and five assists, and the host Gators dominated the Bulldogs in the second half to stretch their home winning streak to 14 games.

Alex Condon added 21 points, and Boogie Fland chipped in eight points, eight re-

bounds and six assists for defending national champion Florida, which beat Georgia for the 13th time in their past 14 meetings.

Minnesota 70, No. 19 Iowa 67: Langston Reynolds scored 22 points and Cade Tyson added 16 as the host Golden Gophers held off a rally to defeat the Hawkeyes.

Bennett Stirtz scored 21 points, all in the second half, as Iowa (12-3, 2-2 in the Big Ten) rallied from a 14-point second-half deficit to take the lead in the final two minutes.

No. 21 Tennessee 85, Texas 74: Ja'Kobi Gillespie scored 34 points to lead the host Volunteers to a victory over the Longhorns.

No. 22 Kansas 104, TCU 100 (OT): Darryn Peterson scored 32 points, including three crucial free throws in regulation to tie the game, and the host Jayhawks erased a double-digit deficit to outlast the Horned Frogs.

Oklahoma State 87, No. 25 UCF 76: Parissa Fallah scored 24 points and Kanye Clary added 18 and nine rebounds to help the host Cowboys defeat the Knights.

Ravens fire Harbaugh after 18 seasons

Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — John Harbaugh's 18-year tenure in Baltimore included two distinct periods of success.

After taking over, Harbaugh capitalized on the last few years of Ray Lewis' career, reaching the AFC title game three times in his first five seasons as coach and winning a Super Bowl.

When Lamar Jackson arrived in 2018, the Ravens became contenders again — but there's been no conference championship yet for this particular era, and lately Baltimore has experienced more angst than glory.

So Harbaugh is out of a job.

Owner Steve Bisciotti fired Harbaugh on Tuesday after the Ravens were one of the league's most disappointing teams this season. They went 8-9, missing the playoffs after starting as one of the Super Bowl favorites.

Baltimore's season ended Sunday night when Tyler Loop missed a last-second field-goal attempt, allowing Pittsburgh to hold on for a 26-24 victory in the game that decided the AFC North title.

"This was an incredibly difficult decision, given the tremendous 18 years we have spent together and the profound respect I have for John as a coach and, most importantly, as a great man of integrity," Bisciotti said in a statement. "Throughout what I firmly believe is a Hall of Fame coaching career, John has delivered a Super Bowl championship to Baltimore and served as a steadfast pillar of humility and leadership."

Harbaugh was hired after coaching special teams and defensive backs for Philadelphia. With the Ravens, he went 193-124 including the postseason. He led Baltimore to a Super Bowl title in 2012, and this season was only the sixth time the Ravens missed the postseason under Harbaugh. That's the same number of times they won the AFC North with him at the helm.

But most of Baltimore's postseason success came in his first few years. After beating his brother Jim, who was coaching San Francisco, in the Super Bowl, John Harbaugh was 9-4 in

the playoffs. For the rest of his tenure, he was just 4-7. After the Ravens went three straight seasons without a playoff berth, they drafted Jackson. The star quarterback won two MVPs in his first six years in the league, but Harbaugh's lone run to an AFC championship game with Jackson was wasted two seasons ago when they lost at home to Kansas City.

"Well, I was hoping for a different kind of message on my last day here, someday, but that day has come today," Harbaugh said in a statement. "It comes with disappointment certainly, but more with GRATITUDE & APPRECIATION. Gratitude to the owner and organization who was willing to bring in a head coach who made his mark with special teams success. A difficult thing to do... and Appreciation for all the moments, all these years, that are etched into eternity."

The 2025 season was a mess for Baltimore from the start. The Ravens looked great for much of their opener at Buffalo before blowing a late lead. In-

deed, squandering significant advantages became a troubling trend in Harbaugh's last few seasons. They have blown 10 double-digit leads in the second half in the past six seasons.

After a hamstring injury sidelined Jackson, Baltimore stumbled to a 1-5 start. Harbaugh and the Ravens worked their way back into contention and eventually reached Sunday's winner-take-all matchup as a favorite to beat the Steelers. But despite Derrick Henry's early dominance on the ground and Jackson's sensational fourth quarter, another season ended in excruciating fashion.

If Harbaugh's departure was a result of that loss — which is not necessarily clear — then the missed kick at the end could have quite a domino effect throughout the league. If he wants to coach next season, Harbaugh may well be the most sought-after candidate on the market, and the Baltimore job might be the best available, given the short-term possibilities with Jackson and the organization's reputation for stability.

Spencer's late surge helps Grizzlies overcome Spurs

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Cam Spencer scored 21 points, including five in the final 1:26, and the Memphis Grizzlies beat San Antonio 106-105 on Tuesday night, offsetting 30 points by the Spurs' Victor Wembanyama in his return after a two-game absence.

Spencer's 10-foot baseline jumper with 36.5 seconds left were the final points. San Antonio's De'Aaron Fox took a 15-footer with 5 second left but was blocked by Santi Aldama, and Memphis snapped a four-game losing streak.

Jaren Jackson Jr. also had 21 points for the Grizzlies. Spencer had eight rebounds and eight assists.

Wembanyama's 30 points led

the Spurs while Julian Champaigne finished with 23. Stephon Castle had 15 points before fouling out with 3:13 left. Wembanyama, who played 21 minutes, was 10-for-20 from the field.

Memphis led 101-100 with 2:44 left when Fox, who started 1-for-13 from the field, was in the midst of six straight points, giving San Antonio a 104-101 lead with 1:39 to play. But Spencer's late burst gave Memphis the victory.

Wizards 120, Magic 112: CJ McCollum scored 27 points and steadied host Washington after it nearly blew a 26-point, but it held on for a victory over Orlando.

Alex Sarr added 23 points for the young and suddenly competitive Wizards, who have won five of seven.

Cavaliers 120, Pacers 116:

Darius Garland scored 14 of his 29 points in the fourth quarter, fueling a late 13-point run that sent visiting Cleveland past struggling Indiana for its fourth win in five games.

The Pacers, the defending Eastern Conference champs, lost their 13th straight to set a franchise record in their NBA era. They now a league-worst 6-31.

Timberwolves 122, Heat 94:

Anthony Edwards scored 26 points and host Minnesota beat Miami for the second time in four days.

The Timberwolves have now won three in a row, including a 125-115 win over Miami on Saturday.

Lakers 111, Pelicans 103:

LeBron James scored 30 points, Luca Doncic capped his 30-point, 10-assist performance with a pair of off-balance, bailout 3s as the shot clock wound down, and visiting Los Angeles held off reeling New Orleans.

Deandre Ayton had 18 points and 11 rebounds for the Lakers, who won for the fourth time in their past five games while sending the Pelicans to their eighth straight loss.

Mavericks 100, Kings 98:

Cooper Flagg scored 20 points, Brandon Williams hit the winning 3-pointer with 33.9 seconds to play and visiting Dallas held on against Sacramento to snap a seven-game road losing streak.

Miller scores 2 as Hurricanes top Stars

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — K'Andre Miller scored twice while Andrei Svechnikov had four assists as the Carolina Hurricanes beat the Dallas Stars 6-3 on Tuesday night.

In a game packed with individual storylines, the Hurricanes chased Dallas goalie Jake Oettinger by midway through the second period while taking a 5-1 lead.

Logan Stankoven scored for Carolina against his former team, which traded him here last year at the deadline in the deal that sent Mikko Rantanen to Dallas.

The Hurricanes acquired Rantanen last January in a three-team deal, though he played just 13 games before Carolina moved him when it became clear he wouldn't sign an extension. Rantanen was booed throughout his return to Raleigh, as well as hearing chants of "Logan's better!" after Stankoven juked Rantanen on his first-period score from the slot.

Rantanen eventually found the net with a forehand-backhand move early in the third to beat Brandon Bussi to set off even more hearty boos — along with roaring jeers when he headed to the penalty box midway through the period.

Carolina goals leader Seth Jarvis returned from an eight-game absence with an upper-body injury, scoring the goal that knocked Oettinger from the game after the netminder misplayed the puck behind the net.

Shayne Gostisbehere and William Carrier also scored for Carolina, while Nikolaj Ehlers added three assists and Bussi made 19 saves.

Sabres 5, Canucks 3: Alex Tuch had a goal and an assist, and host Buffalo held on to beat Vancouver for its 11th win in 12 games.

Jake DeBrusk, Elias Pettersson and Liam Ohgren all scored

in the third period, and Brock Boeser had two assists for the Canucks, who have lost four straight (0-2-2) and six of seven (1-4-2). Thatcher Demko had 15 saves.

Josh Doan sealed the Sabres' win with his 13th of the season into an empty net with 1:24 remaining.

Lightning 4, Avalanche 2: Brandon Hagel snapped a third-period tie with his 20th goal of the season to lead Tampa Bay to its eighth consecutive win with a home victory over Colorado.

Jake Guentzel and Zemgus Girgensons also scored for the Lightning, and Anthony Cirelli added an empty-netter. Nikita Kucherov recorded his seventh straight multipoint game with a pair of assists.

Parker Kelly and Brock Nelson scored for Colorado, which has dropped consecutive games in regulation for the first time this season. The Avalanche had just three regulation losses on the season entering Tuesday.

Hagel scored the winning goal after Kucherov protected the puck near the left circle, found Max Crozier who cut down the slot before finding Hagel for a sweeping one-timer at 8:31 of the third period. Cirelli scored an empty-net goal with 1:25 left.

Flyers 5, Ducks 2: Trevor Zegras scored twice for Philadelphia in his first game against his former team to lead them to a home win over Anaheim.

Cutter Gauthier scored his 20th goal of the season for the Ducks in his second game in Philadelphia against the franchise he forced to trade him — and turned him into one of Philly's biggest sports villains.

Cam York and Travis Sanheim also scored for the Flyers and Nikita Gregorenko added an empty-netter.

Islanders 9, Devils 0: Anthony Duclair recorded a hat trick for the first time in more than six years, Ilya Sorokin stopped

all 44 shots he faced in his return from injury and host New York handed New Jersey a second consecutive defeat.

Back in the lineup after being a healthy scratch the past two games, Duclair scored three goals in a row during a stretch from 4:01 into the first period to 3:29 into the second and also had two assists for a five-point game. His fourth hat trick in the NHL was his first since Dec. 14, 2019, four teams ago when he was with the Ottawa Senators.

At the other end of the rink, Devils goaltender Jacob Markstrom allowed goals on the first two shots he faced — from Mat Barzal and Duclair — and three on five, finishing with nine on 24.

Maple Leafs 4, Panthers 1: Matthew Knies scored a goal and set up Auston Matthews to push Toronto to a home win against defending Stanley Cup champion Florida.

Easton Cowan also scored for the Maple Leafs and Bobby McManus added an empty-net goal.

Knies made it 2-0 early in the second period. Then, less than four minutes later, he set up Matthews with a pass in front for the captain's team-leading 21st.

The Panthers have been blanked only once this season.

Golden Knights 4, Jets 3 (OT): Tomas Hertl scored on the power play at 4:47 of overtime and visiting Vegas beat Winnipeg, handing the Jets their 10th straight loss.

Reilly Smith had a goal and an assist, Mitch Marner also had a power-play goal, and Brett Howden also scored for the Golden Knights, who snapped a five-game skid (0-3-2). Carter Hart had 17 saves.

Jets defenseman Haydn Fleury was alert and moving his extremities after he was taken off the ice on a stretcher after a violent collision with the boards.

Fleury was checked in the

chest by Vegas Golden Knights forward Keegan Kolesar in the first period Tuesday night and his back took the brunt of the hit behind the net.

Oilers 6, Predators 2: Connor McDavid scored three goals, including one on a penalty shot, and Leon Draisaitl had a goal and two assists as host Edmonton beat Nashville on Tuesday night.

Kasperi Kapanen had a goal and an assist and Curtis Lazar also scored for the Oilers, who snapped a two-game skid. Connor Ingram finished with 24 saves.

Ryan O'Reilly and Nick Blankenborg scored for the Predators, who have lost two of their last three. Juuse Saros had 37 saves.

Sharks 5, Blue Jackets 2: Alex Wennberg had a goal and an assist against his former team, and host San Jose bounced back from a frustrating loss three days earlier and beat Columbus.

Zack Ostapchuk also had a goal while Macklin Celebrini and Mario Ferraro added empty-netters to help the Sharks win their fourth in five games. Alex Nedeljkovic stopped 34 shots for San Jose, which was coming off a 7-3 loss to Tampa Bay on Saturday night.

Kraken 7, Bruins 4: Kaapo Kakko had two goals and an assist, Berkley Catton scored his first two NHL goals, and host Seattle beat Boston.

Jared McCann had a goal and an assist, and Jordan Eberle and Ben Meyers also scored as Seattle extended its point streak to nine games (8-0-1) — the second-longest in franchise history. Matt Beniers, Vince Dunn and Freddy Gaudreau each had two assists, and Joey Daccord finished with 32 saves.

David Pastrnak scored two goals, Viktor Arvidsson had a goal and an assist, and Mason Lohrei also scored for the Bruins. Jeremy Swayman had 20 saves.