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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Arctic strain rises amid Greenland dispute

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The Arctic is rapidly becoming a front line for NATO competition with Russia and China, as adversaries expand their presence in the High North and probe alliance defenses, the top American general in Europe said over the weekend.

Russian and Chinese naval vessels are conducting more frequent joint patrols in Arctic waters, and Chinese icebreakers and research ships have expanded their operations in the region for military advantage, U.S. European Command's Gen. Alexus Gryniewich said Sunday at a security conference in Sweden.

"It's not for peaceful purposes," said Gryniewich, who also serves as NATO's supreme allied commander in Europe. "They're not studying the seals and the polar bears. They're out

there doing bathymetric surveys and trying to figure out how they can counter NATO capabilities on and under the sea. So that's something that could grow very quickly, and we need to be mindful of it and ready for it."

Gryniewich's comments come as the Arctic emerges as a point of contention between the United States and its allies in Europe.

Last week, President Donald Trump renewed his push for the United States to take possession of Greenland, an autonomous territory of ally Denmark.

The Trump administration hasn't ruled out the possibility of using military force to take control of the territory, which Trump says is needed for national security reasons.

Trump has said his preference is for the U.S. to reach a deal on transferring control of

the island to Washington.

"If we don't do it the easy way, we're going to do it the hard way," Trump said Friday without elaborating on what the "hard way" might entail.

So far, officials in Greenland and Denmark have balked at the idea of a deal.

And the notion of launching a military offensive on a NATO ally has been blasted by numerous U.S. elected officials, including several influential Republican senators.

Other European allies, including Germany and France, have expressed political backing for Greenland's right to determine its own future.

Gryniewich sidestepped the issue on Sunday when asked about Trump's push for Greenland.

"I won't comment on the political dimensions of recent rhetoric. It's not my place to do that as a military officer," he

said.

Instead, he pointed to ongoing discussions in NATO's highest political body, the North Atlantic Council, saying allies are involved in "healthy dialogue" there on thorny issues.

Allies must deal with adversaries including Russia, China, Iran and North Korea that are increasingly aligning their efforts in ways that directly challenge the West, Gryniewich said.

Russia continues to test advanced military systems in the Barents Sea, while "shadow fleets" of oil tankers linked to Russia, Iran and Venezuela help finance Moscow's war effort and pose growing risks to undersea cables and other critical infrastructure in the Baltic and Arctic regions, he said.

In response, NATO has taken steps to strengthen deterrence across northern Europe, Gryniewich said.

Trump: Iran wants to negotiate as protest deaths rise

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — President Donald Trump said Iran wants to negotiate with Washington after his threat to strike the Islamic Republic over its crackdown on protesters, a move coming as activists said Monday that the death toll in nationwide demonstrations rose to about 600.

Iran had no direct reaction to Trump's comments, which came after the foreign minister of Oman — long an interlocutor between Washington and Tehran — traveled to Iran this weekend. It also remains unclear just what Iran could promise, particularly as Trump has

set strict demands over its nuclear program and its ballistic missile arsenal, which Tehran insists is crucial for its defense.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, speaking to foreign diplomats in Tehran, insisted "the situation has come under total control" in remarks that blamed Israel and the U.S. for the violence, without offering evidence.

"That's why the demonstrations turned violent and bloody to give an excuse to the American president to intervene," Araghchi said, in comments carried by Al Jazeera. The Qatar-funded network has been allowed to report live from inside

Iran, despite the internet being shut off.

However, Araghchi said Iran was "open to diplomacy." Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said that a channel to the U.S. remained open, but talks needed to be "based on the acceptance of mutual interests and concerns, not a negotiation that is one-sided, unilateral and based on dictation."

Meanwhile, pro-government demonstrators flooded the streets on Monday in support of the theocracy, a show of force after days of protests directly challenging the rule of 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iranian state tel-

vision aired chants from the crowd, which appeared to number in the tens of thousands, who shouted "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel!"

Iran's attorney general has said prosecutors will levy such charges against protesters, which carry the death penalty.

Trump and his national security team have been weighing a range of potential responses against Iran, including cyberattacks and direct strikes by the U.S. or Israel, according to two people familiar with internal White House discussions who weren't authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

USS Abraham Lincoln holds live-fire drills

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The USS Abraham Lincoln recently held live-fire drills in the South China Sea, where the aircraft carrier has been operating for at least two weeks, according to the U.S. Navy.

The Abraham Lincoln, which deployed to the Indo-Pacific from its homeport of San Diego on Nov. 24, has been in the South China Sea since at least Dec. 26, according to photos posted to the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service website.

Since then, the carrier has kept busy with flight operations, re-

plenishments-at-sea, damage control training and explosive ordinance disposal drills. Its escort ships, which include the guided-missile destroyer USS Spruance, have also participated.

A spokesman for the U.S. 7th Fleet, Cmdr. Matthew Comer, described the warships' activities as "routine operations," in an email Monday.

On Thursday, the Abraham Lincoln continued training with a live-fire drill involving a Phalanx Close-In Weapon System—mounted turrets designed to counter incoming missiles, air-

craft and boats, according to the photo captions.

The ship was still in the South China Sea as of Friday, according to those images.

Warships operating in the fleet's area of responsibility regularly patrol the Indo-Pacific to "deter aggression, strengthen alliances and partnerships and advance peace through strength," according to the captions.

Shortly after the Abraham Lincoln arrived in the South China Sea, Beijing kicked off a live-fire drill Dec. 29 and 30 that encircled Taiwan, which lies between the East and South China

seas.

The exercise, dubbed Justice Mission 2025, was intended as a "punitive and deterrent action" against Taiwan and countries that support its independence, China's Eastern Theater Command said at the time.

Beijing views Taiwan, a functional democracy, as a break-away province that must be re-united with the mainland, by force if necessary.

Comer did not respond to Stars and Stripes' questions about the Abraham Lincoln's activities or whether they were related to the Chinese drills.

Coast Guard hails actions in rescue off Guam coast

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Coast Guard rescued a mariner stranded aboard a capsized boat less than an hour after receiving a distress call on Monday morning, a feat attributed to the man's emergency preparedness.

The 58-year-old man, who was not identified, was aboard a 22-foot pleasure boat just off Guam's western coast when his vessel overturned, Coast Guard

Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam said in a news release Monday afternoon.

Rough seas, including a high surf advisory and a rip current, "likely contributed to the vessel capsizing," according to the release.

Watchstanders at the Joint Rescue Coordination Center on Guam received an alert from the mariner's personal locator beacon and a distress message from his GPS device at 10:22

a.m.

A 45-foot response boat-medium from U.S. Coast Guard Station Apra Harbor found the capsized vessel—and the mariner sitting on top of it at 11:09 a.m. The boater reported no medical concerns, according to the release.

The use of a locator beacon and GPS advice and his decisions to inform a friend about his plans and to stay with the boat "made all the difference,"

according to Coast Guard Cmdr. Grant Johnson.

"These actions, combined with multiple redundant communication methods, allowed us to locate and recover him swiftly and safely," Johnson said in the release.

The man was taken to Agat Marina, where he met his family. The Coast Guard also issued a warning about the capsized vessel as a potential hazard to other mariners.

On-base bear sighting spurs Air Force alert in Japan

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Air Force is advising people on an installation in northeastern Japan to stay calm after a bear was observed on the facility Saturday night.

"We had a friend on base tonight," Misawa Air Base's Outdoor Recreation Center posted on its Facebook page that evening alongside a cartoon image of a bear on a sled.

Misawa's 35th Fighter Wing has no photograph of the bear,

wing spokesman Capt. LeeRoy Stark said by email Monday.

The bruin was spotted near Misawa's ski lodge, according to the Outdoor Rec post.

Members of the community who encounter a bear should stay calm, the post advised.

"Do not run," the message said. "Make your presence known (firm voice). Back away slowly while facing the bear."

The Japan Ground Self-Defense Force deployed in November to confront the threat of

bears in northern Japan. The rare mobilization followed a surge in bear encounters nationwide that left 13 people dead and more than 200 injured so far this fiscal year, which runs until March 31, according to Japan's Ministry of Environment.

Experts attribute the spike in bear encounters to several overlapping factors, including expanding forests, shrinking food supplies, declining rural populations and a drop in the number of hunters.

An online map of bear sightings updated by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government shows the animals have been encountered within 5 miles of Yokota Air Base, headquarters of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo.

The country is home to two bear species: the Japanese black bear and the larger Ussuri brown bear. Black bears typically reach about 5 feet in height and just over 200 pounds, though adult males can weigh twice as much.

Trump warns Havana to make a 'deal'

Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — President Donald Trump on Sunday fired off another warning to the government of Cuba as the close ally of Venezuela braces for potential widespread unrest after Nicolás Maduro was deposed as Venezuela's leader.

Cuba, a major beneficiary of Venezuelan oil, has now been cut off from those shipments as U.S. forces continue to seize tankers in an effort to control the production, refining and global distribution of the country's oil products.

Trump said on social media that Cuba long lived off Venezuelan oil and money and had offered security in return, "BUT NOT ANYMORE!"

"THERE WILL BE NO MORE OIL OR MONEY GOING TO CUBA — ZERO!"

Trump said in the post as he spent the weekend at his home in southern Florida. "I strongly suggest they make a deal, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE." He did not explain what kind of deal.

Hours later, Cuba's president, Miguel Díaz-Canel, responded on X by saying "those who turn everything into a business, even human lives, have no moral authority to point the finger at Cuba in any way, absolutely in any way."

The Cuban government said 32 of its military personnel were killed during the American operation last weekend that captured Maduro. The personnel from Cuba's two main security agencies were in Caracas, the Venezuelan capital, as part of an agreement between Cuba and Venezuela.

"Venezuela doesn't need pro-

tection anymore from the thugs and extortionists who held them hostage for so many years," Trump said Sunday. "Venezuela now has the United States of America, the most powerful military in the World (by far!), to protect them, and protect them we will."

Trump also responded to another account's social media post predicting that his secretary of state, Marco Rubio, will be president of Cuba: "Sounds good to me!" Trump said.

Trump and top administration officials have taken an increasingly aggressive tone toward Cuba, which had been kept economically afloat by Venezuela. Long before Maduro's capture, severe blackouts were sidelining life in Cuba, where people endured long lines at gas stations and supermarkets amid the island's worst economic cri-

sis in decades.

"Those who hysterically accuse our nation today do so out of rage at this people's sovereign decision to choose their political model," Díaz-Canel said in his post. He added that "those who blame the Revolution for the severe economic shortages we suffer should be ashamed to keep quiet" and he railed against the "draconian measures" imposed by the U.S. on Cuba.

The island's communist government has said U.S. sanctions cost the country more than \$7.5 billion between March 2024 and February 2025.

Trump has said previously that the Cuban economy, battered by years of an American embargo, would slide further with the ouster of Maduro.

"It's going down," Trump said of Cuba.

Chair: DOJ threat of charges a pretext to undermine Fed

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Sunday the Department of Justice has served the central bank with subpoenas and threatened it with a criminal indictment over his testimony this summer about the Fed's building renovations.

The move represents an unprecedented escalation in President Donald Trump's battle with the Fed, an independent agency he has repeatedly attacked for not cutting its key interest rate as sharply as he prefers.

The renewed fight will likely rattle financial markets Monday and could over time escalate borrowing costs for mortgages and other loans.

The subpoenas relate to Powell's testimony before the Senate Banking Committee in June, the Fed chair said, regarding the Fed's \$2.5 billion renovation

of two office buildings, a project that Trump has criticized as excessive.

Powell on Sunday cast off what has up to this point been a restrained approach to Trump's criticisms and personal insults, which he has mostly ignored.

Instead, Powell issued a video statement in which he bluntly characterized the threat of criminal charges as simple "pretexts" to undermine the Fed's independence when it comes to setting interest rates.

"The threat of criminal charges is a consequence of the Federal Reserve setting interest rates based on our best assessment of what will serve the public, rather than following the preferences of the President," Powell said. "This is about whether the Fed will be able to continue to set interest rates based on evidence and economic conditions — or whether instead monetary policy will be

directed by political pressure or intimidation."

The central bank has attempted to placate the administration by dialing back some policies, such as efforts to consider the impact of climate change on the banking system, that the administration clearly opposed.

The renewed attacks on the Fed's independence, and Powell's full-throated defense, reignite what had appeared to be a dormant battle between Trump and the chair he appointed in 2017.

In an interview with NBC News Sunday, Trump insisted he didn't know about the investigation into Powell.

When asked if it is intended to pressure Powell on rates, Trump said, "No. I wouldn't even think of doing it that way."

Powell's term ends in May, and Trump administration officials have signaled that he could

name a potential replacement this month.

At the Senate Banking Committee hearing in June, Chairman Tim Scott, a Republican from South Carolina, said the Fed's building renovation included "rooftop terraces, custom elevators that open into VIP dining rooms, white marble finishes, and even a private art collection."

Powell disputed those details in his testimony, saying "there's no new marble. ... there are no special elevators" and added that some of the controversial items are "not in the current plan."

The potential indictment has already drawn concern from one Republican senator, who said that he plans to oppose any potential future nominee to the central bank, including any replacement for Powell, until "this legal matter is fully resolved."

Video shows arrest in on-edge Minneapolis

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Federal agents carrying out immigration arrests in Minnesota's Twin Cities region already shaken by the fatal shooting of a woman rammed the door of one home Sunday and pushed their way inside, part of what the Department of Homeland Security has called its largest enforcement operation ever.

In a dramatic scene similar to those playing out across Minneapolis, agents captured a man in the home just minutes after pepper spraying protesters outside who had confronted the heavily armed federal agents. Along the residential street, protesters honked car horns, banged on drums and blew whistles in attempts to disrupt the operation.

Video of the clash taken by The Associated Press showed some agents pushing back protesters while a distraught woman later emerged from the house with a document that federal agents presented to arrest the man. Signed by an immigration officer, the document — unlike a warrant signed by a judge — does not authorize forced entry into a private residence. A warrant signed by an immigration officer only authorizes arrest in a public area.

Immigrant advocacy groups have conducted extensive "know-your-rights" campaigns urging people not to open their doors unless agents have a court order signed by a judge.

But within minutes of ramming the door in a neighborhood filled with single-family

homes, the handcuffed man was led away.

More than 2,000 immigration arrests have been made in Minnesota since the enforcement operation began at the beginning of December, said Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem told Fox News on Sunday that the administration would send additional federal agents to Minnesota to protect immigration officers and continue enforcement.

The Twin Cities — the latest target in President Donald Trump's immigration enforcement campaign — is bracing for what is next after 37-year-old Renee Good was shot and killed by an immigration officer on Wednesday.

"We're seeing a lot of immigration enforcement across Minneapolis and across the state, federal agents just swarming around our neighborhoods," said Jason Chavez, a Minneapolis city councilmember. "They've definitely been out here."

Chavez, the son of Mexican immigrants who represents an area with a growing immigrant population, said he is monitoring information from chat groups about where residents are seeing agents operating.

More than 20,000 people have taken part in a variety of trainings to become "observers" of enforcement activities in Minnesota since the 2024 election, said Luis Argueta, a spokesperson for Unidos MN, a local human rights organization.

Judge restores funding for children's health programs

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A federal judge has ordered the Trump administration to restore nearly \$12 million in funding to the American Academy of Pediatrics, including money for rural health care and the early identification of disabilities in young children.

U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell in Washington, D.C., awarded the preliminary injunction late Sunday, siding with AAP in saying evidence showed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services likely had a "retaliatory motive" when it terminated grants to the pediatric group in December.

"This is not a case about whether AAP or HHS is right or even has the better position on vaccinations and gender-affirming care for children, or any other public health policy," Howell wrote in her decision. "This is a case about whether the federal government has exercised power in a manner designed to chill public health

policy debate by retaliating against a leading and generally trusted pediatrician member professional organization focused on improving the health of children."

The seven grants terminated in December supported numerous public health programs, including efforts to prevent sudden unexpected infant death, strengthen pediatric care in rural communities and support teens facing substance use and mental health challenges.

AAP alleged the cuts were made in retaliation for the group speaking out against the Trump administration's positions and actions. HHS said in letters to AAP that the grants were cut because they no longer aligned with the department's priorities. The department has denied AAP's allegations of retaliation.

The group supports access to gender-affirming care and has publicly criticized HHS positions on the topic.

Mattel adds an autistic Barbie to its doll line

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Mattel Inc. is introducing an autistic Barbie on Monday as the newest member of its line intended to celebrate diversity, joining a collection that already includes Barbies with Down syndrome, a blind Barbie, a Barbie and a Ken with vitiligo, and other models the toymaker added to make its fashion dolls more inclusive.

Mattel said it developed the autistic doll over more than 18 months in partnership with the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, a nonprofit organization that advocates for the rights and better media representation of people with autism.

The goal: to create a Barbie that reflected some of the ways autistic people may experience and process the world around them, according to a Mattel news release.

That was a challenge because

autism encompasses a broad range of behaviors and difficulties that vary widely in degree, and many of the traits associated with the disorder are not immediately visible, according to Noor Pervez, who is the Autistic Self Advocacy Network's community engagement manager and worked closely with Mattel on the Barbie prototype.

Like many disabilities, "autism doesn't look any one way," Pervez said. "But we can try and show some of the ways that autism expresses itself."

For example, the eyes of the new Barbie shift slightly to the side to represent how some people with autism sometimes avoid direct eye contact, he said.

Each doll comes with a pink finger clip fidget spinner, noise-cancelling headphones and a pink tablet modeled after the devices some autistic people who struggle to speak use to communicate.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Convicted Jan. 6 rioter running for county office

FL BRADENTON — A Florida man who grabbed then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's podium and posed for photographs with it during the U.S. Capitol riot is running for county office.

Adam Johnson filed to run as a Republican for an at-large seat on the Manatee County Commission last Tuesday. That was the fifth anniversary of the Jan. 6 riot, where he was photographed smiling and waving as he carried Pelosi's podium after the pro-Trump mob's attack on Jan. 6, 2021.

Johnson told WWSB-TV that it was "not a coincidence" that he filed for office on Jan. 6, saying "it's definitely good for getting the buzz out there." His campaign logo is an outline of the viral photograph of him carrying the podium.

He's far from the first person implicated in the Jan. 6 riot to run for office. At least three ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 2024 as Republicans.

Former husband charged in murders of couple

AZ PHOENIX — The ex-husband of an Ohio woman was charged with the murders of her and her husband, according to court and county records.

Michael McKee, 39, was booked Saturday and is currently being held in Illinois, according to the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office. He is alleged to have shot and killed the couple, Dr. Spencer Tepe, a 37-year-old dentist, and Monique Tepe, 39, in their Columbus home.

Dispatchers first received

calls of concern, including from Spencer Tepe's boss, when he didn't show up for work, which the boss said was "out of character." Columbus police discovered the Tepes on the second floor of their home on Dec. 30 with gunshot wounds when officers conducted a wellness check. Their two young children were in the home and unharmed, police said.

McKee and Monique Tepe married in 2015 and filed for divorce two years later, according to records from the Franklin County Clerk of Courts.

Man pleads not guilty to charges in pipe bomb case

DC WASHINGTON — A Virginia man has pleaded not guilty to charges accusing him of planting two pipe bombs outside the headquarters of the Democratic and Republican national parties on the eve of the Capitol riot on Jan. 6, 2021.

Brian J. Cole Jr., of Woodbridge, Va., entered the plea at a brief hearing on Friday.

He is facing two counts of transporting and attempting to use explosives.

Justice Department prosecutors have said that Cole confessed to placing pipe bombs outside the Republican National Committee and the Democratic National Committee headquarters only hours before a mob of President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol.

If convicted of both charges against him, Cole faces up to 10 years of imprisonment on one charge and up to 20 years of imprisonment on a second charge that also carries a five-year mandatory minimum prison sentence.

For first time in 25 years, state 100% drought-free

CA SACRAMENTO — California is free of drought or areas that are abnormally dry for the first time in 25 years, according to federal data released Thursday.

The last time that happened was December 2000, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

The latest data reflects a snapshot in time with the potential to change, California State Climatologist Michael Anderson said, but it shows a "great start" to the state's wet season.

As recently as late December, drought conditions were present in at least some of the state. Data released Dec. 31 showed 97.19% drought-free conditions, except for a large portion of Modoc County in Northern California that was deemed abnormally dry.

But heavy rains that spread across the state around New Year's pushed California to 100% drought free — and made 2025 the state's third consecutive year with above-average precipitation.

Billion-dollar prize tempts man to buy winning ticket

SC ROCK HILL — When the Powerball grand prize recently swelled to more than \$1 billion, it was too much for a Midlands man to resist, according to South Carolina Education Lottery officials.

When the man stopped at a Quik Trip store in December, he heard about the massive jackpot and decided to buy a ticket, officials said in a news release.

Although he didn't win the game's grand prize, the man's spontaneous decision paid off

with a \$150,000 reward, according to the release.

"It's crazy," he said in the release. "I've never won anything before."

His ticket came within one number of winning the Powerball jackpot on Dec. 10, officials said.

City misses tax incentive due to delayed vote

CT WATERBURY — The Board of Aldermen recently approved a contract to install solar panels on five elementary school roofs but the vote came too late to be eligible for a \$500,000 tax incentive.

The solar panel vote missed a Dec. 31 federal tax incentive deadline that would have shaved \$500,000 off Waterbury's share of the \$2.5 million costs because it was tabled during the Dec. 15 meeting as officials asked about equipment guarantees. Jan. 5 was the second contentious seven-hour meeting since four new members were added to the board following the election.

Alderman Kenneth Curran, a newly elected Democrat on the board, questioned the delay in the vote and highlighted the consequences at the recent meeting.

"We all know it's going to pass tonight and I guess my concern was that if there were those who felt so strongly as to preclude us from being eligible for a half million then they would lobby those who supported it," Curran said. "I spoke to everyone who supported the solar program at the last meeting and not a single one of us was contacted to try to dissuade us from going through with it."

— From wire reports

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Purdy, 49ers oust defending champs

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Jauan Jennings hid his eyes behind sunglasses, but could not hide his emotions with the San Francisco 49ers set to play an NFC postseason rubber match in Seattle.

The 49ers wideout-turned-backup quarterback slammed his fists on the table and essentially told the Seahawks to bring it on. He leaned into the microphone and yelled, "CAN'T WAIT!" before he walked off with a knowing smile that perhaps the best in San Francisco was yet to come.

The 49ers are in for a playoff treat, thanks in large part to a pretty neat trick pulled off by Jennings.

Brock Purdy threw a go-ahead 4-yard touchdown pass to Christian McCaffrey late in the fourth quarter, San Francisco used a trick play on a TD toss from Jennings to McCaffrey, and the 49ers eliminated the defending Super Bowl champion Philadelphia Eagles with a 23-

19 wild-card victory Sunday.

"We went to the Super Bowl," Jennings said. "So, we've got to top that."

Maybe if the Eagles watched that 49ers' Super Bowl loss to Kansas City after the 2023 season, they wouldn't have been so caught by surprise by the play. A former high school quarterback, Jennings threw a TD pass on a similar play in the Super Bowl and this one to McCaffrey put him on a list with Purdy, Joe Montana and Steve Young as 49ers QBs who have thrown for multiple career touchdowns in the postseason.

How's that for heady company?

The play was called "Skyy Bang reverse pass" — in honor of wide receiver Skyy Moore — and the double reverse was suggested by offensive coordinator Klay Kubiak.

"It was a hell of suggestion," coach Kyle Shanahan said.

The not-so Philly special was quite a way to put a dagger in the Super Bowl champs' season.

The 49ers head to top-seeded Seattle next weekend for an NFC divisional playoff game. The NFC West rivals split the season series.

Purdy threw for 262 yards and got the road win in Philadelphia he failed to get three seasons ago when he was injured in a dismal outing in Philadelphia in a loss in the NFC title game.

Purdy had two passes intercepted in this one by All-Pro cornerback Quinnyon Mitchell, but the Eagles scored just three points off the turnovers.

The 49ers could head to Seattle without star tight end George Kittle, who was carted off the field with a right Achilles tendon injury late in the first half.

The Eagles — who won a Super Bowl on a trick play — were foiled by one when Jennings was pitched the ball and rolled right and hit McCaffrey for an over-the-shoulder catch and a 29-yard touchdown. The score on the first play of the fourth quarter gave the 49ers a 17-16 lead.

"I looked up, the ball's in the air and Christian tracked it," Purdy said. "It was wobbling in the wind. The fact that Christian caught it over his shoulder, dude, I was like, 'Oh my gosh.'"

Jennings had 66 yards receiving and 48 rushing in addition to his TD pass.

The Eagles got Jake Elliott's 33-yard field goal in the quarter for a brief 19-17 lead.

Philadelphia was again doomed by a lethargic offensive effort under embattled offensive coordinator Kevin Patullo that cost it a shot at a repeat championship. Super Bowl MVP Jalen Hurts threw for only 168 yards and a touchdown and the Eagles failed to build off a 13-10 halftime lead by totaling only 36 total yards in the third quarter on 16 plays.

Hurts was incomplete on a last-gasp fourth-and-11 attempt with 43 seconds left that ended their final drive.

"I just didn't make the play," Hurts said. "I own it. I own it all."

Allen carries Bills over Jags to rare playoff road win

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Josh Allen took a pounding and doled out punishment — looking every bit like the reigning MVP.

He carried Buffalo to its first road playoff win in more than three decades, 27-24 over Jacksonville in the AFC's wild-card opener Sunday. Tough and tenacious, Allen did what he does best.

With linebacker Devin Lloyd bearing down on him, Allen found Brandin Cooks for 36 yards just before the two-minute warning and then capped the go-ahead drive with a 1-yard touchdown run in which Jacksonville let him score.

On the fourth-down play before his score, Allen gained 10 yards on a sneak, refusing to go

down while being pushed and pulled to the goal line.

"When your quarterback's that type of warrior, that type of competitor, it just goes through the whole team," Bills coach Sean McDermott said.

Buffalo (13-5) will play at top-seeded Denver on Saturday, a chance to build a road winning streak after a decades-long skid.

"Now we have a chance to do it again," said Allen, who came up short on final drives in playoff games the past two years.

"Feels good. Feels good. At the same time, it just means we get another game."

Focused on getting rid of the ball quickly and negating Jacksonville's pass rush, Allen completed 28 of 35 passes for 273

yards and a touchdown. He ran for two scores, was sacked just once and played turnover-free football. Khalil Shakir caught 12 passes for 82 yards for the Bills.

"Such a competitor," Jaguars coach Liam Coen. "He was spitting it out pretty good, obviously. ... He definitely carried them."

It was somewhat necessary considering NFL rushing leader James Cook was mostly bottled up, finishing with 46 yards on 15 carries.

"We're going to play for each other, we're gonna fight to the very last second, and you saw that here today," Allen said.

Jacksonville got the ball back with a chance to drive for the win, but Trevor Lawrence's first pass was tipped and inter-

cepted. Tre'Davious White got a hand on the ball, and fellow safety Cole Bishop corralled to end any chance of a comeback.

"It was awesome," Allen said. "A guy that's been under a lot of scrutiny throughout the last couple years. To get him back and get him back in a Bills uniform and making plays for us when we need it the most, that's Tre."

The Bills had been 0-5 on the road in the playoffs under McDermott, starting with a 10-3 loss at Jacksonville in the 2017 wild-card round. The Bills had dropped eight consecutive postseason games on the road since winning at Miami in the 1992 AFC championship game. It had been the NFL's second-longest active road playoff skid.

Maye, dominant defense lead Pats to win

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Patriots coach Mike Vrabel talked to his team about being prepared to bleed as New England entered its first playoff game since the 2021 season.

Then, shortly after Milton Williams sacked the Chargers' Justin Herbert on Sunday night to secure the Patriots' first playoff victory in seven years, Williams celebrated with a head-butt of Vrabel.

It knocked the first-year coach backward and bloodied his lip.

"He came over and got me pretty good. But that's what happens," Vrabel said.

Drake Maye threw a touchdown pass to Hunter Henry in the fourth quarter, and New England's defense roughed up Herbert as the Patriots beat Los Angeles 16-3 in an AFC wild-card playoff game.

Andy Borregales kicked three field goals for the Patriots (15-3), who hadn't won in the postseason since their Super Bowl victory to cap the 2018 season. They'll host the winner of Monday night's game between Pittsburgh and Houston in the divisional round.

In his playoff debut, Maye completed 17 of 29 passes for 268 yards and ran for a team-high 66 yards.

He also threw an interception and lost a fumble, but the Chargers (11-7) couldn't capitalize on those turnovers.

New England held Los Angeles to 207 yards

of offense and sacked Herbert six times, with one of those resulting in a lost fumble that set up the Patriots' TD.

"It's on us, what we do. I've been saying that all season," Williams said. "We can control the game. If we do what we need to do up front, we're going to win."

This is the second straight season in which the Chargers have lost in the wild-card round. Herbert fell to 0-3 in the playoffs. He was just over a month removed from surgery to repair a broken bone in his nonthrowing hand.

"There was no issue," Herbert said. "I just have to do a better job holding on to the ball."

Chargers coach Jim Harbaugh said his quarterback wasn't 100%.

"He's a warrior. He just gives it everything he has, all the time," Harbaugh said, acknowledging that Herbert was limited by his hand injury.

The last time the Chargers failed to score a TD in the playoffs was their 21-12 AFC championship game loss to the Patriots during the 2007 season.

The Patriots drove into the red zone on their first possession of the third quarter, but the drive ended when Maye was strip-sacked by Odafe Oweh and De'Shawn Hand recovered for the Chargers.

After Los Angeles punted, Maye connected on a pass to Kayshon Boutte that went for 42 yards to set the Patriots up on the Chargers 27.

But New England settled for a 39-yard field goal that stretched their lead to 9-3.

Early in the fourth quarter, Maye used a 16-yard pass to Boutte and a 13-yard burst by Rhamondre Stevenson to set up his precise 28-yard TD toss to Henry that put the Patriots in front 16-3.

The Chargers picked up back-to-back first downs to open their ensuing drive. But when Herbert dropped back to pass on the next play, linebacker K'Lavon Chaisson strip-sacked him and fell on the loose ball. Los Angeles had one final possession, but it ended with Herbert getting sacked by Williams on fourth down.

Patriots get 3 the hard way

The opening quarter had lots of action, but it took until early in the second quarter for the Patriots to end a scoreless stalemate.

After a Chargers punt pinned the Pats deep, Maye's pass was tipped by Tear Tart and intercepted by Daiyan Henley.

Los Angeles started at the Patriots 10 but was stopped on fourth-and-2 when Herbert misfired a pass to Keenan Allen.

The Patriots took over and got some breathing room via a 48-yard catch-and-run by Stevenson.

Thirteen plays and a fourth-down conversion later, the drive ended with Borregales' 23-yard field goal.

Korpisalo, Bruins shut out Pens as Arvidsson goal holds up

Associated Press

BOSTON — Joonas Korpisalo made 27 saves for his first shutout of the season and the eighth of his career, Viktor Arvidsson scored and the Boston Bruins beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 1-0 on Sunday.

The Bruins won for the fifth time in six games despite going 0-for-6 on the power play a day after beating the Rangers 10-2. It was Boston's first shutout this season.

Coming off a loss at home against Calgary on Saturday that halted their season-high six game winning streak, the Penguins were shut out for the fourth time this season. Stuart Skinner stopped 17 shots.

Unlike Boston's game a day before, this one was limited in high-quality scoring chances

and didn't have any wacky moments like when the Bruins were awarded a reviewed goal when most of the opponents were in their locker room at the end of the opening period.

Arvidsson's goal came 11 minutes into the first when he had two shots at a rebound, outworking defenseman Erik Karlsson before lifting a backhander past Skinner from the edge of the crease.

The Penguins made a surge late in the second, with Korpisalo's best save coming as he quickly slid across the crease to make a glove stop on Sidney Crosby's backhander from the right circle.

Jets 4, Devils 3: Tanner Pearson broke a tie at 6:17 of the third period and host Winnipeg beat New Jersey for its

first back-to-back victories since mid-November.

Pearson took a pass from Josh Morrissey in front of the net and beat Jake Allen.

The Jets beat Los Angeles on Friday night to end an 11-game losing streak. Winnipeg also won a one-goal game for the first time since Nov. 15.

Blue Jackets 3, Mammoth 2 (OT): Dmitri Voronkov scored on a power play at 1:01 of overtime to give Columbus a road victory over Utah.

Voronkov tipped Zach Werenski's feed past Vitek Vanecek from close range with Utah's Daniil But off for tripping late in regulation.

Jack McBain and Mikhail Sergachev scored for Utah, with Clayton Keller assisting on both for his eighth multi-as-

sist game of the season.

Predators 3, Capitals 2: Roman Josi scored a goal and added two assists to lead Nashville to a home victory over Washington.

Steven Stamkos had a goal and an assist, Cole Smith also scored, and Justus Annunen made 28 saves for the Predators.

Golden Knights 7, Sharks 2: Tomas Hertl had two goals and three assists, Jack Eichel also scored twice and visiting Vegas beat San Jose, ending young Sharks star Macklin Celebreni's points streak at 13 games.

Vegas won its fourth straight game, completing a back-to-back after beating St. Louis 4-2 at home Saturday night.

Barnes clinches OT win for Raptors

Associated Press

TORONTO — Scottie Barnes hit a tiebreaking free throw with 0.8 seconds remaining in overtime and the Toronto Raptors beat the Philadelphia 76ers 116-115 on Sunday night in the first of back-to-back meetings between short-handed teams.

Barnes made the first of two from the line and intentionally missed the second as Toronto won its third straight home meeting with the 76ers. He finished 10-for-12 at the line.

Barnes scored 31 points, Jamal Shead added a career-high 22 and Immanuel Quickley had 20 as Toronto won its third straight at home. Collin Murray-Boyles had 17 points and matched his career-high with 15 rebounds.

Tyrese Maxey scored 38 points for the 76ers and VJ Edgcombe had 17. Kelly Oubre Jr., Domnick Barlow and Quentin Grimes each scored 13 points but Philadelphia lost for the second time in seven games.

Kings 111, Rockets 98: DeMar DeRozan had 22 points and became the 23rd player in NBA history to reach 26,000 points, helping host Sacramento beat Houston.

DeRozan reached the milestone in the second quarter.

Zach LaVine added 18 points, Russell Westbrook had 15 points, 10 assists and six rebounds, and Malik Monk also scored 15 points in the Kings' first victory of 2026. They are 9-30.

Amen Thompson had 31 points and 13 rebounds for Houston. Kevin Durant added 23 points, and Alperen Sengun had 19 points and nine rebounds. The Rockets have lost four of five to fall to 22-14.

Knicks 123, Trail Blazers 114: Jalen Brunson had 26 points and New York snapped Portland's five-game winning streak with a road victory.

The Knicks had lost five of their previous six games.

Deni Avdija had 25 points for the Blazers but in the final moments he grabbed his back after going up for a rebound and headed for the locker room. The extent of the injury was not known.

The teams traded the lead until Miles McBride's pullup 3-pointer put the Knicks on top 109-104 with 3:47 left. New York stretched the lead to 117-107 on Brunson's 3 with 2:23 to go and Portland couldn't catch up.

Magic 128, Pelicans 118: Paulo Banchero had 23 points, eight rebounds and eight assists, Desmond Bane added 27 points and host Orlando beat New Orleans in Magic center Moritz Wagner's return from a serious knee injury.

Zion Williamson led New Orleans with 22 points, and Trey Murphy III and Jordan Poole added 21 each. The Pelicans have lost 10 of 11.

Since losing to New York in the NBA Cup semifinals on Dec. 13, the Magic have followed losses with wins seven straight times.

Grizzlies 103, Nets 98: Cedric Coward hit two late 3-pointers and scored 21 points to help host Memphis hold off Brooklyn.

Jock Landale added 16 points and nine rebounds, and Santi Aldama had 15 points and eight rebounds. Cam Spencer had 12 points and 12 assists in the Grizzlies' last game before their two-game series against Orlando in Berlin and London.

Noah Clowney and Tyrese Martin led the Nets with 17 points each, and Danny Wolf and Jalen Wilson scored 11 points each. Wolf also had 10 rebounds. Martin was 6-for-8, going 5-for-7 from 3-point range.

Thunder 124, Heat 112: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 29 points after a slow start and host Oklahoma City beat Miami.

Jalen Williams had 19 points for Oklahoma City, and Chet Holmgren and Ajay Mitchell each added 16. The Thunder

have won three straight.

Andrew Wiggins scored 23 points — including seven 3-pointers — to lead Miami, which has lost three straight. Tyler Herro had 19 points and Pelle Larsson added 16.

With about four minutes remaining in the third, Gilgeous-Alexander — who had 16 points in the quarter — made a 3-pointer and pumped his fist while he walked back toward the other end as Miami called a timeout. It was part of a 15-0 run that gave the Thunder a 13-point lead.

Both teams came in among the top four in the NBA in defensive rating, and while Oklahoma City and Miami both shot better than 50%, the defenses left their mark.

Timberwolves 104, Spurs 103: Anthony Edwards banked in a go-ahead, 3-foot runner with 16.8 seconds and host Minnesota overcame a 19-point deficit to beat San Antonio.

Edwards scored 23 points. Julius Randle had 15 points, eight rebounds and the winning defensive possession against Victor Wembanyama, who had 29 points in 27 minutes in his return to San Antonio's starting lineup.

De'Aaron Fox's 3-point heave near the buzzer missed, too, sending the Minnesota crowd into a frenzy after the back-and-forth finish between two of the top teams in the Western Conference.

Donte DiVincenzo scored 19 points with a major spark for the comeback from the 19-point deficit early in the third quarter for the Timberwolves (26-14), who are 16-6 since Thanksgiving Day.

Suns 112, Wizards 93: Royce O'Neale scored 19 points, Devin Booker added 17 and Phoenix breezed to a home victory over Washington.

Phoenix has won 10 of its last 13 games.

The Suns led 96-65 going into the fourth quarter after Dillon Brooks scored 11 points in the

third, hitting three 3-pointers. The sloppy Wizards shot just 6 of 21 (28.6%) in the third and had seven turnovers.

The Suns improved to 14-5 at home and were able to sit their starters for the entire fourth quarter. O'Neale made 5 of 9 shots from 3-point range while Brooks finished with 16 points and made four threes. Booker added eight assists.

Nuggets 108, Bucks 104: Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 25 points, Aaron Gordon had 23 and the injury-ravaged host Denver beat Milwaukee.

Peyton Watson had 19 points, eight rebounds and six assists for the Nuggets. Over his team's past seven games, the fourth-year guard has been averaging 23.7 points and 6.9 rebounds per game. Zeke Nnaji added 14 points and 11 rebounds for his first double-double of the season.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 31 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds for the Bucks. Myles Turner scored 16 points while Bobby Portis and AJ Green added 14 apiece.

Ryan Rollins was held to two points, snapping a career-best streak of 37 consecutive games with at least 10 points.

Hawks 124, Warriors 111: Nickeil Alexander-Walker scored 24 points, Jalen Johnson contributed 23 points, 11 rebounds and six assists and visiting Atlanta beat Golden State.

Luke Kennard had a season-best 22 points and six 3-pointers off the bench in the Hawks' third straight win.

Stephen Curry scored 31 for his 13th 30-point performance of the season and Jimmy Butler had 30 points, seven rebounds and six assists in his fourth 30-point outing as the Warriors had a three-game home winning streak snapped. They had one other game both scoring 30 or more points and the Warriors also lost that one at Orlando on Nov. 18.