

Denmark, NATO boost Greenland presence

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Denmark said it will boost its troop presence in Greenland but stopped short of elaborating on whether the move was aimed at deterring potential American aggression on the island.

“Geopolitical tensions have spread to the Arctic,” the Danish defense ministry said in a statement announcing the deployment of more troops to the

autonomous Danish territory.

The expanded military mission in and around Greenland will be conducted in close cooperation with other NATO allies, some of which are contributing military assets, the ministry said.

The increased Danish military presence will involve aircraft, ships and soldiers, the ministry said. It comes amid a diplomatic feud with the U.S. over Greenland’s status.

On Wednesday, several European partners — including France, Germany, the U.K., Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden — started sending symbolic numbers of troops or promised to do so in the following days, The Associated Press reported.

“The first French military elements are already en route” and “others will follow,” French President Emmanuel Macron announced Wednesday, as

French authorities said about 15 soldiers from the mountain infantry unit were already in Nuuk for an exercise.

Germany will deploy a reconnaissance team of 13 personnel to Greenland on Thursday, the Defense Ministry said.

On Wednesday, Danish and Greenlandic officials held talks at the White House in connection with President Donald Trump’s push to take over the island.

Pentagon targets Stars and Stripes for ‘refocus’

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon said on social media Thursday it would take over editorial content decision-making for Stars and Stripes in a statement from the Defense Department’s top spokesman.

“The Department of War is returning Stars & Stripes to its original mission: reporting for our warfighters. We are bringing Stars & Stripes into the 21st century,” Sean Parnell, the Pentagon’s top public affairs official and a close adviser to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, wrote in a statement posted to X. “We will modernize its operations, refocus its content away from woke distractions that syphon morale, and adapt it to serve a new generation of service members.”

The statement appears to challenge the editorial independence of Stars and Stripes, which while a part of the Pentagon’s Defense Media Activity has long retained independence from editorial oversight from the Pentagon under a congressional mandate that it be governed by First Amendment

principles.

The move was met with pushback from several Democratic senators, who accused the Pentagon of tampering with the newspaper’s reporting.

Stars and Stripes, which is dedicated to serving U.S. government personnel overseas, seeks to emulate the best practices of commercial newspapers in the United States. Its emphasis is on matters of interest to its readership, according to the news organization. It is governed by Department of Defense Directive 5122.11. The directive states, among other key provisions, that “there shall be a free flow of news and information to its readership without news management or censorship.”

Editor-in-Chief Erik Slavin, in a note to Stars and Stripes’ editorial staff across the globe Thursday, said the military deserves independent news.

“The people who risk their lives in defense of the Constitution have earned the right to the press freedoms of the First Amendment,” Slavin wrote. “We will not compromise on

serving them with accurate and balanced coverage, holding military officials to account when called for.”

Stars and Stripes first appeared during the Civil War, and it has been continuously published since World War II.

It is staffed by civilian and active-duty U.S. military reporters and editors who produce daily newspapers for American troops around the world and a website, stripes.com, which is updated with news 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Parnell said Thursday that the military newspaper would now “be custom tailored to our warfighter” with a focus on “warfighting, weapons systems, fitness, lethality, survivability, and ALL THINGS MILITARY.”

Hegseth reposted Parnell’s statement.

Jacqueline Smith, Stars and Stripes’ ombudsman, said Thursday that in her two years in the role she has found the news organization has remained focused on the U.S. military.

“I can say with assurance that

Stripes does focus on ‘warfighters’ in every aspect that affects them and their families,” she said.

Parnell’s post came a day after a Washington Post report revealed that applicants for positions at Stars and Stripes were being asked how they would support President Donald Trump’s policies. The questionnaire appears on the USAJobs portal, the official website for federal hiring. Stars and Stripes was unaware of the questions until the Post inquired about them, organization leaders said.

The Pentagon does not appear to be considering shutting the publication down.

Senate Democrats on Thursday said any efforts to change Stars and Stripes’ editorial independence amounted an attack on the First Amendment.

Democratic Sens. Elizabeth Warren, of Massachusetts; Mark Kelly, of Arizona; Richard Blumenthal, of Connecticut; and Tammy Duckworth, of Illinois, all members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, voiced support for Stars and Stripes’ editorial independence.

Vote to curb action in Venezuela fails

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Republicans in the Senate blocked a war powers resolution on Wednesday that would have forced President Donald Trump to seek congressional approval for any U.S. military action related to Venezuela.

Vice President JD Vance provided a tie-breaking vote to use a procedural move to effectively kill the resolution after five Republicans joined all Democrats last week to advance the measure in a rare bipartisan rebuke of the White House.

Trump had condemned the Republicans on social media, saying they “should never be elected to office again” and accused them of undermining national security and impeding his authority as commander in chief.

Administration officials and Republican leaders had in recent days been lobbying the five senators to change their votes.

Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, one of the Republicans who broke with Trump last week, said he changed his stance Wednesday after receiving assurances from Secretary of State Marco Rubio that the administration will not put ground troops in Venezuela.

“What the Secretary of State said to me, very clearly, is we’re not doing that — we don’t have ground troops in Venezuela, this is not another Iraq, we’re not going to occupy Venezuela,” Hawley said. “And you know what? That’s good enough for me.”

Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind., also flipped his vote from last week, explaining that the administration had committed to seeking

congressional authorization for any future major military operations in Venezuela.

Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky, who co-sponsored the measure, Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska maintained their support for the resolution.

Republican leaders argued Wednesday that the measure was irrelevant and no longer needed because there were no boots on the ground in Venezuela and the military operation that removed the country’s president, Nicolás Maduro, was over.

“The U.S. is not currently engaged in hostilities in or against Venezuela,” said Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D. “We’re not currently conducting military operations there. The Democrats are taking up this bill because their anti-Trump hyste-

ria knows no bounds.”

Democrats countered that the Trump administration was continuing to use military force against Venezuela, pointing to the large naval presence still operating in the Caribbean. Trump said the U.S. may be involved in Venezuela for years to come and has not ruled out deploying troops to the country.

“Everything that’s being done to control Venezuela, its politics and its economy are being facilitated by the United States military,” said Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., a lead sponsor of the resolution. “The boat strikes of Venezuelan boats in international waters is still being carried out by the United States military. The United States military is engaged in a naval blockade of Venezuela, transit out and transit in.”

US seizes another tanker

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. forces in the Caribbean Sea have seized another sanctioned oil tanker that the Trump administration says has ties to Venezuela, part of a broader U.S. effort to take control of the South American country’s oil.

The U.S. Coast Guard boarded the tanker, named Veronica, early Thursday, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem wrote on social media. The ship had previously passed through Venezuelan waters and was operating in defiance of President Donald Trump’s “established quarantine of sanctioned vessels in the Caribbean,” she said.

U.S. Southern Command said Marines and sailors launched from the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford to take part in the operation alongside a Coast Guard tactical team, which Noem said conducted the boarding. The

military said the ship was seized “without incident.”

Several U.S. government social media accounts posted brief videos that appeared to show various parts of the ship’s capture. Black-and-white footage showed at least four helicopters approaching the ship before hovering over the deck while armed troops dropped down by rope. At least nine people could be seen on the deck.

The Veronica is the sixth sanctioned tanker seized by U.S. forces as part of the effort by Trump’s administration to control the production, refining and global distribution of Venezuela’s oil products and the fourth since the U.S. ouster of Venezuela President Nicolás Maduro in a surprise nighttime raid almost two weeks ago.

The Veronica last transmitted its location on Jan. 3 as being at anchor off the coast of Aruba, just north of Venezuela’s main oil terminal.

War Department rebrand cost uncertain, CBO says

By MATTHEW ADAMS

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The cost to implement the Department of War name change ranges from \$10 million to \$125 million, but it could rise to “hundreds of millions,” the Congressional Budget Office said Wednesday.

The CBO assesses that making the change could be a few million dollars for “modest implementation” if it occurred within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, to increasingly higher levels for a “full-scale adoption.”

“CBO’s estimate is uncertain because [the Defense Department] has not provided information about how it plans to implement the order,” the budget office wrote in an 11-page letter. “Costs would be at least a few million dollars if [the Defense Department] phased in a minimal implementa-

tion, but they could be as large as \$125 million if the name change was implemented broadly and rapidly throughout the department. A statutory renaming could cost hundreds of millions of dollars depending on how Congress and [the Defense Department] chose to implement the change.”

President Donald Trump in September signed an executive order instructing the Pentagon to begin using the name “Department of War” in official communications and to pursue actions that would permanently rename the Defense Department.

The department’s website, social media accounts and some signage at the Pentagon have since been changed to reflect the renaming. In November, a new Department of War plaque was installed at the Pentagon’s main entrance for visiting VIPs.

Trump threatens to use Insurrection Act

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — President Donald Trump on Thursday threatened to invoke an 1807 law and deploy troops to quell persistent protests against the federal officers sent to Minneapolis to enforce his administration's massive immigration crackdown.

The threat comes a day after a man was shot and wounded by an immigration officer who had been attacked with a shovel and broom handle. That shooting further heightened the fear and anger that has radiated across the city since an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent fatally shot Renee Good in the head.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act, a rarely used federal law, to deploy the U.S. military or federalize the National Guard for domestic law enforcement, over the objections of state governors.

Presidents have invoked the Insurrection Act more than two dozen times, most recently in 1992 by President George H.W. Bush to end unrest in Los Angeles. In that instance, local authorities had asked for the assistance.

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison responded to Trump's social media post by saying he would challenge such an action in court. He's already suing to try to stop the surge by the Department of Homeland Security, which says it has made more than 2,000 arrests in the state since early December. ICE is a DHS agency.

"I'm making a direct appeal to the President: Let's turn the temperature down. Stop this campaign of retribution. This is not who we are," Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat, said on X.

In Minneapolis, smoke filled the streets Wednesday night near the site of the latest shooting as federal officers wearing

gas masks and helmets fired tear gas into a small crowd. Protesters responded by throwing rocks and shooting fireworks.

Police Chief Brian O'Hara said during a news conference that the gathering was an unlawful assembly and "people need to leave."

Things later quieted down and by early Thursday only a few demonstrators and law enforcement officers remained at the scene.

Demonstrations have become common on the streets of Minneapolis since the ICE agent fatally shot 37-year-old Good on Jan. 7. Agents have yanked people from their cars and homes and have been confronted by angry bystanders demanding the officers pack up and leave.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said the federal force — five times the size of the city's 600-officer police force — has "invaded" Minneapolis, scaring

and angering residents.

In a statement describing the events that led to Wednesday's shooting, Homeland Security said federal law enforcement officers stopped a driver from Venezuela who is in the U.S. illegally. The person drove away and crashed into a parked car before taking off on foot, DHS said.

After officers reached the person, two other people arrived from a nearby apartment and all three started attacking the officer, according to DHS.

During a speech before the latest shooting, Walz described Minnesota as being in chaos, saying what's happening in the state "defies belief."

"Let's be very, very clear, this long ago stopped being a matter of immigration enforcement," he said. "Instead, it's a campaign of organized brutality against the people of Minnesota by our own federal government."

Researchers at workplace safety center reinstated

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Federal officials are reinstating hundreds of U.S. health workers who were laid off last year from a small health agency that aims to protect workers.

In April, President Donald Trump's administration gutted the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, where scientists, engineers and others conduct research and recommend ways to prevent work-related injury, illness, disability and death.

Government officials laid off close to 900 of NIOSH's 1,000 employees. The layoffs were part of the Republican president's remaking of the federal workforce led by then-adviser Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency, but

they drew harsh rebukes from firefighters, coal miners, medical equipment manufacturers and a range of others.

Some employees were brought back last year amid legal challenges and political pressure, including those who staffed a health monitoring program for miners in West Virginia. But now all the terminations have been rescinded, according to the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents workers at NIOSH and parts of the CDC.

"The administration's attempt to lay off nearly every NIOSH worker was shameful and illegal, considering that much of NIOSH's work is required by law," AFGE president Everett Kelley said.

Court reverses decision that freed pro-Palestinian activist

Associated Press

A federal appeals panel on Thursday reversed a lower court decision that released Mahmoud Khalil from an immigration jail, bringing the government one step closer to detaining and ultimately deporting the Palestinian activist.

A three-judge panel of the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia instructed the lower court to dismiss Khalil's habeas petition, a court filing that secured his release.

The panel ruled that the federal district court in New Jersey did not have jurisdiction over the matter because immigration challenges are handled differently under the law.

In a 2-1 decision, the panel ruled that federal immigration laws require deportation challenges to be made by filing a peti-

tion for review of a final order of removal with a federal appeals court — not a lower-level district court.

"That scheme ensures that petitioners get just one bite at the apple — not zero or two," the panel wrote. "But it also means that some petitioners, like Khalil, will have to wait to seek relief for allegedly unlawful government conduct."

It was not clear whether the government would seek to detain Khalil, a legal permanent resident, again while his legal challenges continues to make their way through the court system.

Thursday's decision marked a major win for the Trump administration's sweeping campaign to detain and deport non-citizens who joined protests against Israel.

Crackdown, outage affect Iran protests

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The nationwide protests challenging Iran's theocracy appeared increasingly smothered Thursday, a week after authorities shut off the country from the world and escalated a bloody crackdown that activists say has killed at least 2,637 people.

The prospect of U.S. retaliation for the deaths of protesters still hung over the region, though President Donald Trump signaled a possible de-escalation, saying the killing appeared to be ending. The U.S. announced new sanctions on Iranian officials accused of suppressing the protests, which began late last month over the country's faltering economy and the collapse of its currency.

In Iran's capital, Tehran, witnesses said recent mornings showed no new signs of bonfires

lit the night before or debris in the streets. The sound of gunfire, which had been intense for several nights, has also faded.

Meanwhile, Iranian state media has announced wave after wave of arrests by authorities, targeting those it calls "terrorists" while also apparently looking for Starlink satellite internet dishes, which offer the only way to get videos and images out to the internet.

Iranian state media broadcast a roster of damage from what it called a "terrorist operation," including damage to hundreds of stores and public buildings, scores of cars and ambulances and several "heritage sites."

But as Iran tries to assert control at home, it has signaled worries about threats from abroad, including the United States, which has threatened military action over the killing of peaceful demonstrators. Tensions

soared after Trump's comment that "help is on its way" to Iranian protesters.

The Islamic Republic shut down its airspace for hours early Thursday without explanation, something it has done in previous rounds of attacks between it and Israel, as well as during the 12-day war in June. The U.S. also took steps to move some personnel from Qatar's Al Udeid Air Base while warning diplomats in Kuwait to stay away from military bases where American troops are stationed. Britain closed its Tehran Embassy and withdrew British staff from Iran.

The airspace closure lasted for over four hours, according to pilot guidance issued by Iran, which lies on a key east-west flight route. International carriers diverted north and south around Iran, but after one extension, the closure appeared to

have expired, and several domestic flights were in the air just after 7 a.m.

Around midday, Iranian state television carried a statement from the country's Civil Aviation Authority saying that the nation's "skies are hosting incoming and outgoing flights, and airports are providing services to passengers." It did not acknowledge the closure.

Videos of demonstrations have stopped coming out of Iran, likely signaling the slowdown of their pace under the heavy security force presence in major cities. But in the meantime, protests against Iran have been held around the world as global attention has focused on the crackdown.

The clampdown on the demonstrations has killed at least 2,637, according to the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency.

xAI bans some explicit Grok images

Associated Press

BANGKOK — Elon Musk's AI chatbot Grok won't be able to edit photos to portray real people in revealing clothing in places where that is illegal, according to a statement posted on X.

The announcement late Wednesday followed a global backlash over sexualized images of women and children, including bans and warnings by some governments.

The pushback included an investigation announced Wednesday by California into the proliferation of nonconsensual sexually explicit material produced using Grok that it said was harassing women and girls.

Musk's company, xAI, now says it will geoblock content if it violates laws in a particular place.

US overdose deaths fell in 2025 data

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. overdose deaths fell through most of last year, suggesting a lasting improvement in an epidemic that had been worsening for decades.

Federal data released Wednesday showed that overdose deaths have been falling for more than two years — the longest drop in decades — but also that the decline was slowing.

And the monthly death toll is still not back to what it was before the COVID-19 pandemic, let alone where it was before the current overdose epidemic struck decades ago, said Brandon Marshall, a Brown University researcher who studies overdose trends.

"Overall I think this continues to be encouraging, especially since we're seeing declines almost across the nation," he said.

Overdose deaths began steadily climbing in the 1990s with

overdoses involving opioid painkillers, followed by waves of deaths from heroin and — more recently — illicit fentanyl. Deaths peaked at nearly 110,000 in 2022, fell a little in 2023 and then plummeted 27% in 2024, to around 80,000.

That was the largest one-year decline ever recorded.

The new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data runs through August 2025 and represents the first update of monthly provisional drug overdose deaths since the federal government shutdown.

An estimated 73,000 people died from overdoses in the 12-month period that ended August 2025, down about 21% from the 92,000 in the previous 12-month period.

CDC officials reported that deaths were down in all states except Arizona, Hawaii, Kansas, New Mexico and North Dakota.

But they noted it's likely that not all overdose deaths have been reported yet in every state, and additional data in the future might affect that state count.

Researchers cannot yet say with confidence why deaths have gone down.

Experts have offered multiple possible explanations: increased availability of the overdose-reversing drug naloxone, expanded addiction treatment, shifts in how people use drugs and the growing impact of billions of dollars in opioid lawsuit settlement money.

Some also point to research that suggests the number of people likely to overdose has been shrinking, as fewer teens take up drugs and many illicit drug users have died.

The recent deceleration of overdose deaths could be because producers in Canada and Mexico found alternative sources.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Prosecutors want 20-year sentence for ex-lawmaker

SC COLUMBIA — Prosecutors are asking a judge to sentence a former Republican South Carolina legislator to 20 years in prison for sending hundreds of videos of children being sexually abused to people across the country on social media as he advocated for several laws meant to protect kids.

RJ May, 39, is asking the judge for mercy and a five-year sentence, saying he was addicted to pornography and screens made worse by an increased sex drive from testosterone treatments. He said he wants a chance outside prison to be an example of how easily porn can destroy lives and families.

Judge Cameron McGowan Currie was to listen to both sides Wednesday before handing down her decision in a federal courtroom just blocks from where May used to be a member of the South Carolina House.

May pleaded guilty in September to what prosecutors in court papers called a “five-day child pornography spree” in the spring of 2024.

Convicted ex-Navy SEAL targeted ‘No Kings’ rally

CA SAN DIEGO — A jury convicted a former Navy SEAL with neo-Nazi beliefs of transporting fireworks across state lines with plans to shoot explosives at police during last year’s “No Kings” protest in San Diego, federal prosecutors said.

Following his conviction on Monday, Gregory Vandenberg,

49, was ordered held in custody until his sentencing hearing, which has not yet been scheduled. He faces up to 10 years in prison, according to the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

During a five-day trial in Albuquerque, N.M., prosecutors outlined Vandenberg’s intention to travel from El Paso, Texas, to California to injure law enforcement officers at the June 14 rally.

Investigators found messages on his phone indicating he was angry with President Donald Trump because he believed the U.S. government is controlled by Israel and the Jewish people, according to prosecutors. His home screen on his phone displayed a picture of the Taliban flag.

FBI agents testified that they found clothing and paraphernalia in Vandenberg’s car with anti-Israel slogans and neo-Nazi symbols, including a flag for the militant group the Caucasian Front and a message in Latin saying “Judea must be destroyed.”

Water main break affects over 100,000 homes

TX EL PASO — More than 100,000 residents in the Texas border city of El Paso were left with little to no water after a main break over the weekend, and it was expected to take until midweek for operations to return to normal, officials said.

The break in the 36-inch water main line happened late Saturday night in El Paso, which has a population of about 700,000, officials said. Gilbert Trejo, an official with El Paso Water, called it “an event of unprecedented proportion.”

He said the break was made even more impactful because of “the way the pipeline itself was designed along with how different connections of smaller lines were made to it.”

A boil water notice was issued, and water distribution centers were set up, officials said.

Classes were canceled Monday at more than a dozen schools in the El Paso Independent School District due to the outage. Other schools in the area remained open but were under the boil water notice.

IG probes police crime statistics

DC WASHINGTON — Washington’s inspector general’s office announced on Monday that it has started an investigation into the Metropolitan Police Department’s crime data reporting system, the latest in a series of probes into how the force has collected its crime statistics.

In a letter to interim police Chief Jeffery Carroll, Inspector General Daniel Lucas said his overall objective is “to assess the design, implementation, and operation of MPD’s internal control system for collecting, classifying and reporting crime data and statistics.”

The police force’s crime statistics collection has faced increasing scrutiny from authorities in recent weeks. That has come after President Donald Trump issued a monthlong emergency order last summer that federalized the police force and launched a federal law enforcement operation in the nation’s capital that his Republican administration said was meant to fight crime.

According to the MPD, there were 127 homicides in the District of Columbia last year, a 32% drop from the year before.

Wildlife crews end searches for wolves

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Wildlife crews are no longer actively searching for two juvenile gray wolves who were part of a pack that killed dozens of cows and calves last summer in Northern California’s Sierra Valley, an official said Tuesday.

The two wolves were members of the Beyem Seyo pack that in 2025 killed or injured at least 92 calves and cows in a seven-month period, according to a report released last week by two researchers with the University of California, Davis.

Wolves in the state are protected under California law and the federal Endangered Species Act. Under former President Joe Biden, officials said they planned a first-ever national recovery plan for wolves, but President Donald Trump’s administration ended that initiative in November.

In October, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife announced it had euthanized four gray wolves — three adults and a juvenile — from the Beyem Seyo pack after “an unprecedented level of livestock attacks across the Sierra Valley” by a single wolf pack since the canids returned to the state. It also said it planned to capture and relocate the remaining two wolves to wildlife facilities to prevent their behavior from spreading to other wolves in California.

— From wire reports

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Mitchell scores 35 as Cavs beat 76ers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Donovan Mitchell had 35 points and nine assists, Darius Garland scored 20 points before leaving with an injured foot and the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Philadelphia 76ers 133-107 on Wednesday night.

Garland was ruled out for the game late in the third quarter when he hurt his right foot diving for a loose ball. Garland already had surgery in June on the injured left big toe that hampered him during Cleveland's exit from the playoffs.

The All-Star guard averaged 17.9 points after a slow start this season as he recovered from surgery. Garland continued his recent hot streak and shot 8 for 13 against Philadelphia.

Garland averaged 20.6 points and 6.7 assists during the regular season to help the Cavaliers finish atop the Eastern Conference.

Joel Embiid scored 20 points and hit a 3-pointer that helped him reach 13,000 career points, the seventh player in team history to hit that mark.

Paul George had 17 points for the Sixers in the opener of a two-game series.

Raptors 115, Pacers 101: Brandon Ingram scored 30 points, including two key 3-pointers late, Scottie Barnes had

26 points and 13 assists, and visiting Toronto used a fast start to defeat Indiana.

Grady Dick had 21 points and 11 rebounds off the bench for the Raptors, who have won all three meetings with the Pacers.

When Indiana surged late to close the gap to 103-99 with 4:17 remaining, Ingram responded with 3-pointers on back-to-back possessions.

Pascal Siakam led the Pacers with 26 points and 10 rebounds.

Nuggets 118, Mavericks 109: Jamal Murray scored 33 points and visiting Denver held on over Dallas, which was without Cooper Flagg for the second half after the rookie No. 1 overall pick sprained his left ankle.

The Nuggets were comfortably in front when Flagg turned the ankle as he stumbled to the court when he was called for a foul while defending Peyton Watson with 6:01 remaining in the second quarter.

Flagg limped to the locker room, but returned and played the final 2:35 before the break. He didn't come out for the second half before the announcement that he was done for the night. The 19-year-old former Duke standout scored six points in 15 minutes.

The Mavericks got back within six in the final 1:12 before Murray hit a jumper just above the

free-throw line and Gordon hit two free throws.

Pelicans 116, Nets 113: Trey Murphy III scored 34 points, Saddiq Bey made a tying 3-pointer, converted an offensive rebound into a dunk and hit two free throws in the final 1:04, and host New Orleans edged Brooklyn.

Zion Williamson had 25 points for the Pelicans, who won for just the second time in 13 games. Yves Missi contributed 12 points and 12 rebounds, nine on the offensive end to help New Orleans finish with 33 second-chance points.

Michael Porter Jr., who scored 20 points for the Nets, gained possession in the final seconds after a scramble for a loose ball near midcourt and let go a desperation heave that missed as the horn sounded.

Bulls 128, Jazz 126: Nikola Vucevic made a tiebreaking layup with 4 seconds remaining, and host Chicago overcame Brice Sensabaugh's career-high 43 points to beat Utah.

Vucevic scored 35 points to lead the Bulls, who had five reserves finish in double figures. Isaac Okoro was the only other starter in double figures with 12 points for a Chicago team playing without Josh Giddey because of strained left hamstring.

George scored 25 points and

Kyle Filipowski had 19 for the Jazz, who were coming off a surprising victory at Cleveland on Monday.

Kings 112, Knicks 101: DeMar DeRozan scored 27 points to move into 22nd place on the NBA's career scoring list, and host Sacramento beat New York.

The Kings (11-30) won their third straight to spoil the return of Knicks coach Mike Brown, who made his first appearance in Sacramento since being abruptly fired early in the 2024-25 season.

OG Anunoby had 15 points and Karl-Anthony Towns scored 13 for New York.

Clippers 119, Wizards 105: Kawhi Leonard scored 33 points and James Harden added 22 points as host Los Angeles extended its winning streak to four games with a victory over Washington.

The victory came without starting center Ivica Zubac (ankle) and starting forward John Collins (groin), while Leonard (ankle) was on a minutes restriction. Leonard finished 7 of 11 from 3-point range in 30 minutes.

Kyshawn George scored 23 points and Khriston Middleton added 17 for the Wizards, who lost their fourth consecutive game and fell to 0-2 on a four-game road trip.

Ex-Ravens coach Harbaugh working on deal with Giants

Associated Press

John Harbaugh and the New York Giants are working on an agreement to make him the team's head coach, three people with knowledge of the decision said Thursday.

The people spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the deal hasn't been finalized. Harbaugh is not meeting with the Tennessee Titans and with the goal to "reach the finish line with the Giants," according to one of the people.

A second person said the deal was not done but that "barring any setbacks," Harbaugh would become New York's coach.

Harbaugh interviewed in person with the Giants on Wednesday, spending hours at the team facility in East Rutherford, N.J. The Super Bowl-winning former coach of the Baltimore Ravens was believed to be New York's top candidate in the pursuit of Brian Daboll's full-time successor.

Fired by the Ravens after they missed the playoffs on a missed field goal attempt at the buzzer in the season finale, Harbaugh is on track to pick the Giants over other possible landing spots, including Tennessee and Atlanta.

Baltimore made the playoffs 12 times during 18 seasons with Harbaugh in charge and won the Super Bowl in the 2012 season, a year after New York's most recent championship under Tom Coughlin. Counting

playoff games, the seven coaches who followed Coughlin in the organization have gone 45-105-1.

General manager Joe Schoen, who's returning for a fifth season running the football operations department, said he would cast a wide net in the coaching search. Interviewing Raheem Morris and Antonio Pierce satisfied the NFL's Rooney Rule requirements for minority or female candidates.

Oregon QB Moore will return to Ducks

Associated Press

Oregon quarterback Dante Moore has decided to return to the Ducks next season rather than declare for the NFL draft.

Moore, 20, announced his decision on Wednesday on ESPN.

"When it comes to me just making my decision, of course I want to feel most prepared and do what's best for my situation, especially as a quarterback," he said. "And with my decision, it's been very tough. I prayed a lot about it, talked to many people, my mentors, and people I just look up to, and with that being said, of course I'll be coming back to Oregon for one more year, being able to play for the Oregon Ducks and reach our goal and be national champions."

This season, Moore completed nearly 72% of his throws for 565 yards, with 30 touchdowns and 10 interceptions. The Ducks finished 13-2.

Moore had been forecast to be

the second quarterback selected in the NFL draft, behind Indiana quarterback and Heisman Trophy winner Fernando Mendoza.

Oregon is coming off a 56-22 loss to the Hoosiers in a College Football Playoff semifinal Jan. 9.

Moore had three crucial turnovers in the first half, leading to three Indiana touchdowns that gave the Hoosiers a commanding 35-7 lead at halftime.

Moore completed 24 of 39 passes for 285 yards and two touchdowns against Indiana.

Moore began his college career at UCLA but left after one season to sign with the Ducks. He backed up Dillon Gabriell last season before moving up to the starting job when Gabriel departed for the NFL.

"I feel like when it comes to me pushing my teammates to make sure that they're at their best, I can become a better leader," Moore said about his goals in returning.

"And when it comes to my playing style, just dissecting defenses, being able to be comfortable as I see it, if I see a defense that I know I've seen this covered before and how to attack it," he said. "I'm still 20 years old, so I'm still young and I have a lot of memories to make out here in college. I'm excited to be around the guys."

Oregon coach Dan Lanning said following the Indiana loss that he hoped to have Moore return.

"Dante has been exceptional," the coach said. "It's gone right for us 13 times. It didn't go right tonight. You can't let that overshadow (the season). Every one of us has unbelievable disappointment. Learn from it."

Moore's decision comes after ex-Nebraska quarterback Dylan Raiola announced he'd be transferring to the Ducks, and Oregon tight end Kenyon Sadiq and safety Dillon Thieneman declared for the NFL draft.

Sadiq had a team-high 51 receptions for 560 yards and eight touchdowns this past season, his first as a starter. He is expected to be a first-round draft pick.

Thieneman finished the season with 96 tackles, including 3.5 for loss, as well as five pass breakups and two interceptions.

Among the players who have announced they will return to the Ducks include center Iapani Laloulu, a finalist for the Remington Trophy this year, tight end Jamari Johnson and defensive ends Teitum Tuioti and Matayo Uiagalelei.

"At the end of the day, I feel like I can still learn so much more. And of course, as a kid, since I was four years old, I've dreamed about being in the NFL. But this team, we've been through a lot and a lot of people are returning," Moore said. "And so I feel like we have exciting things coming this year. And I'm excited to keep pushing my team."

Tkachuk scores 200th goal as Senators top Rangers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Brady Tkachuk scored his 200th regular-season NHL goal and had three assists, and the Ottawa Senators handed the New York Rangers a fifth consecutive loss, beating them 8-4 on Wednesday night.

Tkachuk, a St. Louis native who is set to play for the United States at the Milan Cortina Olympics, helped set up Drake Batherson's goal on the power play 2:18 in and Dylan Cozens' with 5.7 seconds left in the first period. Adding goals from Nick Jensen and Tkachuk in between, Ottawa scored four in a period at Madison Square Garden for the first time in its 33-season franchise history.

Home fans booed their team off the ice at the first intermission after a lackluster 20 minutes, and it did not get much better until long after the outcome had been deter-

mined. New York lost for the 17th time in 22 games at the Garden and is now in last place in the Eastern Conference.

Jonathan Quick allowed six goals on 17 shots before getting the mercy pull and relieved by Spencer Martin a little past the midway point of the second. Quick was hardly to blame for the Rangers' eighth defeat in nine games, with mistakes by teammates in front of him putting the veteran goaltender in all sorts of difficult positions.

At the other end of the rink, Leevi Merilainen, making his ninth consecutive start in Linus Ullmark's absence, had 18 saves and allowed two goals to Gabe Perreault and one apiece to Noah Laba and Alexis Lafrenière.

Devils 3, Kraken 2 (OT): Nico Hischier scored his second goal of the game on a breakaway at 3:42

of overtime to give host New Jersey a victory over Seattle.

Hischier took a pass from Jack Hughes and broke in on goalie Philipp Grubauer. As the Kraken's Matty Beniers caught up, Hischier turned to to his backhand to shield Beniers and put a shot past Grubauer. The Devils captain leads the team with 15 goals.

New Jersey built on a 5-2 victory Monday night in Minnesota that ended a four-game losing streak.

Jared McCann and defenseman Adam Larsson scored for Seattle, and Grubauer stopped 23 shots. The Kraken have two games left on a trip that opened with a loss at Carolina and a victory over the New York Rangers.

Golden Knights 3, Kings 2 (OT): Mark Stone scored 25 seconds into overtime, Jack Eichel

had three assists and visiting Vegas beat Los Angeles.

Kevin Fiala had a goal and an assist, and Darcy Kuemper made 24 saves for the Kings. They have lost four of five.

Schmid got his third straight win, and his 14-4-5 record has helped the Golden Knights navigate the absence of Adin Hill because of a lower-body injury.

Sabres 5, Flyers 2: Rasmus Dahlin scored a pair of power-play goals and host Buffalo won for the 14th time in its last 16 games, beating Philadelphia.

Mattias Samuelsson, Jack Quinn and Ryan McLeod also scored goals, while Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen made 20 saves. Josh Doan and Tage Thompson had a pair of assists each for a Sabres team that had just 14 shots and was coming off a Monday night loss to Florida.

Smith leads No. 5 Purdue's rally over Iowa

Associated Press

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Braden Smith scored all 16 of his points in the second half and tied the Big Ten record for assists in conference play, and No. 5 Purdue overcame a nine-point deficit to beat Iowa 79-72 on Wednesday night.

Trey Kaufman-Renn added 12 points, Fletcher Loyer had 11 and Oscar Cluff 10 to help the Boilermakers (16-1, 6-0 Big Ten) win their eighth straight game. They have won their first six conference games for only the fifth time since 1940.

Smith finished the game with 478 assists in league games — the same number former Michigan State player Cassius Winston had.

Bennett Stirtz had 19 points to lead the Hawkeyes (12-5, 2-4). Kael Combs added 16 points as Iowa lost its third in a row overall, fell to 0-4 against ranked teams this season and extended its losing streak against top-10 opponents to 10 since 2021-22.

No. 1 Arizona 89, Arizona State 82: Koa Peat had 24 points and 10 rebounds, Tobe Awaka added 25 points and the host Wildcats remained undefeated with a win over the rival Sun Devils.

Arizona (17-0, 4-0 Big 12) had a hard time shaking Arizona State in a physical first half before Peat came alive in the second. The 6-foot-8 freshman, who shot 2 of 8 in the first half, made all seven of his shots in the second as the Wildcats built a 12-point lead.

Odum led the Sun Devils (10-7, 1-3) with 23 points and Massamba Diop added 16.

No. 4 Michigan 82, Washington 72: Aday Mara scored a season-high 20 points and the visiting Wolverines bounced back from their first loss of the season with a victory over the Huskies.

The 7-foot-3 Mara finished 10 of 11 from the field and added three blocks, two rebounds and two assists. Morez Johnson Jr.

had 16 points and a career-best 16 rebounds for Michigan (15-1, 5-1 Big Ten) in its first trip to Hec Edmundson Pavilion since 1994.

JJ Mandaquit led Washington (10-7, 2-4) with 15 points off the bench. Quimari Peterson scored 13 and sank four 3-pointers, but his teammates combined to go 5 for 21 from beyond the arc. Hannes Steinbach had 11 points and 14 rebounds.

No. 6 Duke 71, California 56: Cameron Boozer had 21 points and 13 rebounds and the visiting Blue Devils pulled away in the second half to beat the Golden Bears.

Duke (16-1, 5-0 Atlantic Coast Conference) led 50-47 with 10 minutes remaining before going on a 21-5 run to put away California (13-5, 1-4) in front of a sellout crowd of 11,201 at Haas Pavilion.

Boozer had 11 points in the run. The freshman who entered Wednesday leading the ACC in scoring at 22.9 points per game was held to four points in the first half.

Texas 80, No. 10 Vanderbilt 64: Matas Vokietaitis scored 22 points, Tramon Mark added 21 and the host Longhorns handed the Commodores their first loss the season.

Dailyn Swain had 14 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for Texas (11-6, 2-2 Southeastern Conference), which has consecutive victories over AP Top 25 teams, having beaten then-No. 13 Alabama on Saturday.

Duke Miles led Vanderbilt (16-1, 3-1) with 21 points and Tyler Tanner had 17. But the Commodores shot just 26.7% from the field in the second half, finishing the game at 36.7%.

No. 11 BYU 76, TCU 70: AJ Dybantsa scored 17 of his 25 points in the second half as the host Cougars surged past the Horned Frogs.

Richie Saunders had 18 points and Robert Wright III added 15 points, six rebounds and six as-

sists to help BYU (16-1, 4-0 Big 12) win its 13th consecutive game.

Xavier Edmonds led TCU (11-6, 1-3) with 19 points and eight rebounds. Micah Robinson had 10 points and six boards off the bench.

No. 13 Illinois 79, Northwestern 68: Keaton Wagler scored 20 of his 22 points in the second half, and the visiting Fighting Illini beat the Wildcats for their season-high sixth consecutive victory.

Tomislav Ivisic added 21 points and seven rebounds as Illinois (14-3, 5-1 Big Ten) won at Northwestern for the first time since Jan. 29, 2022. The Illini had dropped their last three games in Evanston.

Jayden Reid led the Wildcats with a career-high 28 points, including 20 in the second half. Nick Martinelli had 20 points.

Stanford 95, No. 14 North Carolina 90: Freshman Ebuka Okorie had 36 points and nine assists and the host Cardinal rallied from 12 points down in the second half to beat the Tar Heels.

Okorie outdueled North Carolina freshman star Caleb Wilson and helped Stanford (14-4, 3-2 ACC) knock off the Tar Heels (14-3, 2-2) for the second straight season as conference opponents. UNC had won all 13 meetings between the schools before coach Kyle Smith took over last season in Stanford's first year in the ACC.

Jeremy Dent-Smith hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with 1:04 to play for his sixth long ball of the night to make it 88-87. After Wilson turned it over at the other end, Ryan Agarwal hit another 3 to put the Cardinal up by four points with 32 seconds to play.

No. 15 Texas Tech 88, Utah 74: JT Toppin had 31 points and 13 rebounds for his sixth consecutive double-double and Christian Anderson had his own with 26 points and 10 assists as the host Red Raiders beat the Utes.

It was Toppin's 11th double-

double this season, his 30th in 49 games over two seasons with Texas Tech since transferring from New Mexico, and his 42nd overall. The 6-foot-9 junior forward also had seven assists and five blocked shots while making a career-high three 3-pointers.

Keanu Dawes and Don McHenry each had 18 points, and Terrence Brown 17 for Utah (8-9, 0-4). The Utes have lost 11 consecutive true road games.

No. 17 Arkansas 108, South Carolina 74: Darius Acuff Jr. had 18 points and 13 assists as the host Razorbacks routed the Gamecocks.

Meleek Thomas led six Arkansas players in double figures with 21 points off the bench. Reserve forward Malique Ewin scored 18, Trevon Brazile had 13 and D.J. Wagner added 12.

Nick Pringle, who spent last season at South Carolina, set a season high with 15 points and grabbed seven rebounds.

Mississippi 97, No. 21 Georgia 95 (OT): Patton Pinkins sank a follow-up shot with 1 second remaining in overtime and the visiting Rebels beat the Bulldogs despite Jeremiah Wilkinson's season-high 32 points for Georgia.

Marcus "Smurf" Millender made one of two free throws for the Bulldogs (14-3, 2-2 Southeastern Conference) with 10.2 seconds remaining in overtime to tie the game at 95.

Following a miss by AJ Storr, who led Ole Miss (10-7, 2-2) with 27 points, Pinkins grabbed the rebound and sank the winning shot to finish with 18 points.

No. 23 Utah State 71, Nevada 62: Mason Falslev scored 26 points and the host Aggies beat the Wolf Pack for their eighth straight victory.

MJ Collins, Jr. added 14 points for Utah State (15-1, 6-0 Mountain West). The Aggies are 15-1 for the third straight season.

Corey Camper Jr. led Nevada (12-5, 4-2) with 14 points. Elijah Price added 13, and Tayshawn Comer had 11.