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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Trump makes Greenland pitch at Davos

Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland — President Donald Trump insisted he wants to “get Greenland, including right, title and ownership,” but said he wouldn’t employ force to achieve that — using his speech Wednesday at the World Economic Forum to repeatedly deride European allies and vow that NATO shouldn’t try to block U.S. expansionism.

“What I’m asking for is a piece of ice, cold and poorly located,” Trump said, declaring of NATO: “It’s a very small ask compared to what we have given them for many, many decades.”

He urged NATO — which has held firm since the dawn of the Cold War but now is facing an unprecedented test given Trump’s demands — to allow the U.S. to take Greenland from Denmark. The Republican president even added an extraordinary warning, saying alliance members can say yes “and we’ll be very apprecia-

tive. Or you can say, ‘No,’ and we will remember.”

Despite that, Trump acknowledged, “We probably won’t get anything unless I decide to use excessive strength and force where we would be frankly unstoppable. But, I won’t do that OK?”

“I don’t have to use force,” he said. “I don’t want to use force. I won’t use force.”

Instead, he called for opening “immediate negotiations” for the U.S. to acquire Greenland.

“This enormous unsecured island is actually part of North America,” Trump said. “That’s our territory.”

Trump has spent weeks saying that the U.S. will get control of Greenland no matter what it takes — but his comments at the gathering of global elites were startling in how much further he went on just how he plans to do it.

He also argued that the U.S. is booming compared with Europe

and its economy.

“I love Europe, and I want to see Europe go good, but it’s not heading in the right direction,” Trump said. He added, “We want strong allies, not seriously weakened ones.” He also said of European countries, “When America booms the whole world booms,” and, “You all follow us down, and you follow us up.”

Trump turned the Davos gathering upside-down even before he got there.

His arrival was delayed after a minor electrical problem on Air Force One had forced a return to Washington to switch aircraft.

As Trump’s motorcade headed down a narrow road to the speech site, onlookers, including some skiers, lined the route. Some made obscene gestures, and one held up a paper cursing the president.

Billionaires and top executives nonetheless sought seats inside the forum’s Congress Hall, which

had a capacity of around 1,000, for Trump’s keynote address. When he began, it was standing room only. Attendees used headsets to listen in six languages besides English, and the reaction was mostly polite applause.

More than 60 other heads of state are attending the forum. After the speech, Trump met with the leaders of Poland, Belgium and Egypt and again repeated that the U.S. would not be invading Greenland.

“Military is not on the table. I don’t think it will be necessary,” Trump said, suggesting that the parties involved would use better judgment.

Trump came to the international forum on the heels of threatening steep U.S. import taxes on Denmark and seven other allies unless they negotiate a transfer of the semi-autonomous territory — a concession the European leaders indicated they won’t make.

Congress gets 1st analysis of Trump-class battleships

BY GARY WARNER

Stars and Stripes

Congress has received its first internal analysis of the proposed “Trump-class” battleships, which are the linchpin of the president’s “Golden Fleet” plan for the Navy’s future.

The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service released its report on Tuesday, outlining the battleship project and including a list of suggested questions for Congress on whether the ships are needed, cost-effective and meet overall Navy strategic goals.

The analysis comes the week after the Congressional Budget Office pegged the likely price of the largest non-aircraft carrier surface ship that the Navy has

built since World War II at up to \$22 billion for the first ship. Later ships would cost up to \$12.7 billion, according to the CBO.

The proposed battleships are designated “BBG(X)”: BB for battleship, G for guided-missile, and X for an unfinished design.

The CRS report notes that the ships would not follow the direction of aircraft carriers in using nuclear propulsion and would have a variety of current and future weapons options.

“BBG(X) would be conventionally powered (i.e., “fossil-fueled”) ships armed with a combination of missiles, guns, lasers and other weapons that would be greater in aggregate than the combination of weapons on the

Navy’s current cruisers and destroyers,” the report said.

CRS said the Navy envisions building 15 to 25 BBG(X)s as part of the “forthcoming” Golden Fleet plan that would replace the current plan to build a 381-ship Navy.

The idea of a new, large surface combat vessel has been praised and derided in naval circles since President Donald Trump first announced it during a Dec. 22 news conference at Mar-a-Lago, the president’s private club in Florida.

“They’ll be the fastest, the biggest, and by far 100 times more powerful than any battleship ever built,” Trump said.

Chief of Naval Operations

Adm. Daryl Caudle, speaking at the Surface Navy Association National Symposium last week in Arlington, Va., said the battleship was part of a change in Navy thinking.

“Why is the Navy building that? Well, everything’s an evolution,” Caudle said, according to Navy Times. “If I want to shoot 100 things from 100 things, or I want to shoot 100 things from one thing, which is harder?”

Caudle called the proposed battleships “badass” and said they would enable multiple missions thanks to their higher payload, speed, and the ability to use multiple weapons systems simultaneously with a single command and control system aboard.

DOD budget includes 3.8% troop raise

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers unveiled an \$839 billion full-year defense spending bill on Tuesday that gives the Pentagon about \$8 billion more than requested by the Trump administration and pays for service member pay raises.

The bipartisan, bicameral legislation is part of a larger package the House is expected to vote on this week as Congress races to fund the vast majority of the federal government ahead of a Jan. 30 shutdown deadline.

The bill's spending levels largely mirror funding recommendations in an annual defense policy bill passed in December, including a 3.8% pay raise for troops that took effect this month as well as continuing pay increases for junior enlisted service members. The bill also funds a 1% civilian employee pay increase.

The legislation provides for a total end strength of 1,302,800 active-duty personnel and 764,900 selected reserve forces.

It funds several priorities above the administration's request, allocating an additional \$6 billion for Navy shipbuilding, \$2 billion more for munitions, \$1 billion more for health programs and \$130 million more for the Marine Corps' barracks renovation and modernization effort.

The legislation also provides \$400 million for a Ukraine security assistance program the Trump administration had sought to defund.

Senior Senate GOP staff speaking on condition of anonymity Tuesday said continued aid to Ukraine was a key negotiating tool as the Trump administration seeks to end Russia's war in Ukraine and essential for protecting and preserving any ceasefire or peace deal.

The legislation also allocates \$200 million for the Baltic Security Initiative for the U.S. to provide military aid, training and defense equipment to countries on NATO's eastern front line.

Appropriators used a report accompanying the bill to declare "ironclad" congressional support for the military alliance and its 32

member states. The statement comes amid an intensifying push by President Donald Trump to take control of Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark.

Trump on Tuesday cast doubt on the willingness of NATO allies to fulfill their mutual defense obligations, saying, "I know we'll come to their rescue but I really do question whether or not they'll come to ours."

NATO has invoked Article 5 of its treaty, which holds that an attack on one ally is considered an attack on all, only once — the day after the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. in 2001. It led to NATO's participation in the U.S. war in Afghanistan.

Appropriators said the legislation is the product of two months of negotiations following the end of the longest government shutdown in U.S. history. The 2026 fiscal year began on Oct. 1.

The House will vote first on the package, followed by the Senate when it returns from recess next week.

Admiral calls for overhaul of Navy shore infrastructure

BY ALEX WILSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The U.S. Navy preserved its combat fleet for decades while shore-based facilities deteriorated and sailors' quality of life suffered, the admiral in charge of naval installations said this week.

Ports, dry docks and sailor housing were long treated as lower priorities as the service focused resources on shipbuilding, weapons systems and training, Vice Adm. Scott Gray, head of Naval Installations Command, told Stars and Stripes during his visit to Yokosuka on Tuesday.

The Navy's combat power and readiness originate ashore, Gray said, and inadequate facilities now threaten the service's ability to compete with major adversaries.

"That's exactly where you would not want to be if you're going to face down a major peer competitor" such as China, Gray said. "If we keep doing business the way we've been doing business, we're going to fail."

Gray, who oversees about 70 Navy installations worldwide, said he intends to refocus the service on its shore infrastructure, which he described as the "cornerstone" of Navy readiness.

He said his first step is prioritizing what he called a "minimum viable product" approach.

"No gold plating, no 'I'd really like to have this,'" he said. "It would be nice to have, but I can't afford to buy that anymore. I can afford to buy you what you need to get your mission done, and then the rest of the money is going to somebody else who's hurting as much or worse than you are."

Astronaut and former Navy helo pilot Williams retires

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN

Stars and Stripes

Longtime NASA astronaut and former Navy helicopter pilot Suni Williams has hung up her spacesuit for the last time.

Calling her "a trailblazer in human spaceflight," an agency statement on Tuesday announced Williams' retirement, which began late last month.

During her 27-year career, Williams logged 608 days in space, earning her second place on the list of cumulative time in space by a NASA astronaut.

She ranks sixth on the list of longest single spaceflights by an American, tied with Butch Wilmore, both of whom logged 286 days during NASA's Boeing Starliner and SpaceX Crew-9 missions, according to NASA.

Williams and Wilmore were part of the first crewed Starliner

mission to the International Space Station in 2024. Their original plan to spend 10 days in space turned into more than nine months in orbit due to a Starliner thruster system problem. They hitched a ride home in March with SpaceX.

While they were stranded, Williams completed several spacewalks, bringing her total to nine. Her cumulative spacewalk time of 62 hours and 6 minutes is top among female astronauts and fourth on the all-time list, according to NASA.

"Anyone who knows me knows that space is my absolute favorite place to be," Williams said in the statement.

The retired Navy captain logged more than 4,000 flight hours as a helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft pilot. She was selected to be an astronaut in 1998.

Va. Dems target military college funding

The Washington Post

The nation's oldest state-supported military college may face losing public funding as newly empowered Virginia Democrats seek to determine whether it has done enough to root out racism and sexism at the school.

A resolution filed Tuesday in the House of Delegates would establish a task force with broad authority to investigate whether Virginia Military Institute should continue to receive state dollars.

If approved, the task force would probe how VMI has responded since a 2021 state-ordered report found widespread discrimination at the school. It's the latest in a growing push in higher education from Virginia

Democrats, who now hold larger majorities in both chambers of the General Assembly and control the governor's mansion. They've quickly moved to reshape how universities operate and unwind efforts from conservatives and the Trump administration to end DEI initiatives.

"We need to determine whether this is an institution capable of change," said resolution sponsor Del. Dan Helmer, D-Fairfax, who previously forced VMI to protect students who've reported sexual assaults on campus. Helmer, a U.S. Military Academy at West Point graduate, said Virginia taxpayer money should not be given to an institution "incapable of separating itself from a Lost

Cause ideology that promotes white supremacy."

Each year, VMI holds a ceremony honoring cadets who fought and died for the Confederacy and long celebrated Stonewall Jackson, who was a professor at the school. The Lost Cause narrative glorifies the South's role in the Civil War and asserts it was fought over states' rights.

The specter of losing state funding could pose an existential question for the future of the institute, which in the 2024-25 academic year received 43% of its budget from the state.

VMI boasts a network of influential alumni that include Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Mike Waltz, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

"We are in the early stages of the legislative session and know that the delegates have planned a robust agenda," VMI Superintendent and retired Lt. Gen. David Furness said in a statement. "While we have yet to see a resolution, we look forward to participating in the discussion and supporting the delegates."

The resolution directs the task force to determine whether VMI's programs could be replaced with programs at other schools and evaluate whether it makes sense for the state to have a military academy at all.

"It's an evaluation of the product that VMI offers, the value it provides to taxpayers and whether or not it should be a taxpayer-funded institution," Helmer said.

Legal battles over ICE raids in Minn. grow

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — As confrontations with federal officers over their massive immigration enforcement operation in Minnesota showed no signs of stopping Wednesday, legal battles over the surge and the local response were also intensifying.

Federal prosecutors served grand jury subpoenas Tuesday to Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz's office and five other officials in the state as part of an investigation into whether they obstructed or impeded law enforcement during a sweeping immigration operation in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, a person familiar

with the matter said.

The subpoenas, which seek records, were also sent to the offices of Attorney General Keith Ellison, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, St. Paul Mayor Kaohly Her and officials in Ramsey and Hennepin counties.

The person was not authorized to publicly discuss an ongoing investigation and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The subpoenas came a day after the government urged a judge to reject efforts to stop the immigration enforcement surge that has roiled Minneapolis and St. Paul for weeks.

The Justice Department called the state's lawsuit, filed soon after the fatal shooting of Renee Good by an immigration officer, "legally frivolous." Ellison has said the government is violating free speech and other constitutional rights.

Greg Bovino of U.S. Border Patrol, who has commanded the Trump administration's big-city immigration crackdown, said more than 10,000 people in the U.S. illegally have been arrested in Minnesota in the past year, including 3,000 "of some of the most dangerous offenders" in the last six weeks during Operation Metro Surge.

Julia Decker, policy director at the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, expressed frustration that advocates have no way of knowing whether the government's arrest numbers and descriptions of the people in custody are accurate.

Good, 37, was killed on Jan. 7 as she was moving her vehicle, which had been blocking a Minneapolis street where ICE officers were operating. Trump administration officials say the officer, Jonathan Ross, shot her in self-defense, although videos of the encounter show the Honda Pilot slowly turning away from him.

US seizes seventh sanctioned oil tanker in Caribbean

By MATTHEW ADAMS

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military seized an oil tanker in the Caribbean Sea on Tuesday morning, U.S. Southern Command announced.

The vessel was apprehended without incident, and the ship

was "operating in defiance of President [Donald] Trump's established quarantine of sanctioned vessels," SOUTHCOM said in a post on X.

The apprehension of the Motor Vessel Sagitta is the seventh 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.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, when speaking previously to reporters at the

White House earlier this month, declined to say how many sanctioned oil tankers the U.S. is currently tracking or whether the government is keeping tabs on freighters in any other areas that are beyond the Caribbean Sea.

Top Iran envoy issues blunt threat to US

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran's foreign minister issued the most direct threat yet Wednesday against the United States after Tehran's bloody crackdown on protesters, warning the Islamic Republic will be "firing back with everything we have if we come under renewed attack."

The comments by Abbas Araghchi, who saw his invitation to the World Economic Forum in Davos rescinded over the killings, comes as an American aircraft carrier group moves westward toward the Middle East from Asia. American fighter jets and other equipment appears to be moving in the Mideast after a major U.S. military deployment in the Ca-

ribbean saw troops seize Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro.

Meanwhile, an Iranian Kurdish separatist group in Iraq claimed Iran targeted one of its bases in a drone and missile attack that killed at least one fighter. Iran did not immediately acknowledge the attack, which would be the first foreign operation Tehran has launched since the protests started.

Araghchi made the threat in an opinion article published by The Wall Street Journal. In it, the foreign minister contended "the violent phase of the unrest lasted less than 72 hours" and sought again to blame armed demonstrators for the violence. Videos that have slipped out of Iran despite an internet shutdown appear to show security

forces repeatedly using live fire to target apparently unarmed protesters, something unaddressed by Araghchi.

"Unlike the restraint Iran showed in June 2025, our powerful armed forces have no qualms about firing back with everything we have if we come under renewed attack," Araghchi wrote, referring to the 12-day war launched by Israel on Iran in June. "This isn't a threat, but a reality I feel I need to convey explicitly, because as a diplomat and a veteran, I abhor war."

He added: "An all-out confrontation will certainly be ferocious and drag on far, far longer than the fantasy timelines that Israel and its proxies are trying to peddle to the White House. It

will certainly engulf the wider region and have an impact on ordinary people around the globe."

Mideast nations, particularly diplomats from Gulf Arab countries, had lobbied Trump not to attack. Last week, Iran shut its airspace, likely in anticipation of a strike.

The USS Abraham Lincoln, which had been in the South China Sea in recent days, had passed through the Strait of Malacca, a key waterway connecting the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, by Tuesday, ship-tracking data showed.

A U.S. Navy official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the aircraft carrier and three accompanying destroyers were heading west.

US may possibly lose its status as measles free

Associated Press

It's been a year since a measles outbreak began in West Texas, and international health authorities say they plan to meet in April to determine if the U.S. has lost its measles-free designation.

Experts fear the vaccine-preventable virus has regained a foothold and the U.S. may soon follow Canada in losing the achievement of having eliminated it.

The reevaluation is largely symbolic and hinges on whether a single measles chain has spread uninterrupted within the U.S. for at least 12 months.

Public health scientists around the country are investigating whether the now-ended Texas outbreak is linked to active ones in Utah, Arizona and South Carolina. But doctors and scientists say the U.S. — and North America overall — has a measles problem, regardless of the decision.

"It is really a question of se-

mantics," said Dr. Jonathan Temte, a Wisconsin family physician who helped certify the U.S. was measles-free in 2000. "The bottom line is the conditions are sufficient to allow this many cases to occur. And that gets back to de-emphasizing a safe and effective vaccine."

Last year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed 2,242 measles cases across 44 states — the most since 1991 — and nearly 50 separate outbreaks.

The problem has been years in the making, as fewer kids get routine vaccines due to parental waivers, health care access issues and rampant disinformation. More recently, Trump administration health officials including Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. have questioned and sown doubt about the established safety of vaccines at an unprecedented level while also defunding local efforts to improve vaccination rates.

GOP push to hold Clintons in contempt over Epstein probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans are starting a push Wednesday to hold former President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in contempt of Congress over the Jeffrey Epstein investigation, opening the prospect of the House using one of its most powerful punishments against a former president for the first time.

The contempt proceedings are an initial step toward a criminal prosecution by the Department of Justice that could send the Clintons to prison.

Still, ahead of a meeting Wednesday by the House Oversight Committee to prepare the charges, there were signs of a thaw. The Clintons, both Democrats, appeared to be searching for an off-ramp to testify, and passage of contempt charges through the full House was far from guaranteed, requiring a majority vote.

The repercussions of contempt charges loomed large,

given the possibility of a substantial fine and even incarceration. While the charges have historically been used only as a last resort, lawmakers in recent years have been more willing to reach for the option. The Oversight Committee chair, Rep. James Comer of Kentucky, initiated the contempt proceedings after the Clintons refused for months to fulfill a House Oversight Committee subpoena for their testimony in the panel's Epstein probe.

Comer rejected an offer Tuesday from an attorney for the Clintons to have Comer and the ranking Democrat on the committee, Rep. Robert Garcia, interview Bill Clinton in New York, along with staff.

The Clintons released a scathing letter last week criticizing Comer for seeking their testimony at a time when the Department of Justice is running a month behind a congressionally mandated deadline to release its complete case files on Epstein.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Students train to be election judges

IL TINLEY PARK — About 40 students gathered around very large ballot boxes at Oak Forest High School, excited to be at school after hours.

Unlike some classrooms, said Ryan Nagle, social studies department supervisor for Bremen High School District 228, he did not see students with their heads down. They were training to be election judges, with about 30 of the students training for the first time.

It didn't hurt, he said, that the program was sponsored by the Chicago Bears. Each student received a raffle ticket, and the prize was a football signed by running back D'Andre Swift.

Those large ballot boxes will return to Cook County schools next month as a part of a pilot program sponsored by a collaboration between the Cook County clerk's office and the Bears, called Defenders of DA'Mocracy. The program trained 150 high school juniors and seniors to be election judges during an early voting day on Feb. 26.

Nagle said the program allows 17- to 18-year-old students to engage in the civic process while also gaining confidence and leadership skills.

Restitution arrives in 50-year-old robbery

ID LEWISTON — A remorseful robber has paid \$900 to the family of the man he beat and robbed in 1975.

Until Kerry Houston, 67, of Otis, Ore., came forward over Thanksgiving weekend, a brutal attack 50 years before remained an unsolved mystery remem-

bered only by the grandchildren of Lester C. Ayers.

"Mr. Houston mailed \$900 and we are going to donate it to American Legion baseball," said Debbie Asplund, 63, of Lewiston. Asplund appreciates the "nice" letter that Houston sent, but she doesn't want to meet him.

On July 31, 1975, Houston, a 17-year-old Clarkston High School senior, "peeled a limb out of a tree" and used the tree branch to club Ayers, then 73, in the head. Ayers was loading expired produce onto a truck to feed to livestock when Houston knocked him out cold, and then stole his wallet. Houston used Ayers' \$76 in cash to buy drugs and alcohol for a beach party on the Snake River.

Years later, Houston wanted to make amends. Since he never knew the identity of the man he robbed, he told his story to the Lewiston Tribune, and included an offer of \$800 restitution; if that wasn't enough, he said the family could club him in the head like he had clubbed his victim.

City gets grant money, will make roadway safer

FL CASSELBERRY — One of the busiest stretches of asphalt in Central Florida also is one of the most perilous for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcyclists.

Over the past eight years, 19 people have been killed and 28 seriously injured along a four-mile stretch of State Road 436 in Casselberry east of U.S. Highway 17-92. Up to 72,000 vehicles drive it every day on average, according to city and state highway traffic data, and pedestrians often have to cross up to

eight lanes of traffic.

Now, thanks to a \$17.2-million influx of federal grant money recently awarded to Casselberry, the Seminole County city is about to kick off a series of long-awaited safety improvements.

The project will cost an estimated \$21.5 million. The federal grant — which will pay for a large chunk of the work — was awarded by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Safe Streets and Roads for All through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed by President Joe Biden in November 2021. The remaining \$4.3 million will come from penny sales tax revenues.

Ex-workers' COVID firing lawsuit dismissed

ID BOISE — Howard Skidmore and Sarah Dance had each worked at J.R. Simplot Co. for over two decades, holding leadership roles at the company's potato processing plant in Caldwell, before they say their careers were cut short when they stood against the company's COVID-19 vaccine requirement.

In November 2021, the company required that certain employees whose jobs required travel receive the vaccination.

Skidmore, an engineering manager, initially sought medical and religious exemptions to the mandate. But he couldn't identify a qualifying medical condition and eventually dropped that request. Dance, a practicing Catholic, also pursued a religious exemption. Simplot denied both requests.

In January 2022, they were both fired after having been placed on administrative leave.

More than a year later, Skid-

more and Dance sued Simplot, alleging retaliation for refusing to get the vaccine. They argued that Simplot failed to accommodate their religious beliefs and that their firings violated Title VII, a federal law that prohibits employment discrimination based on religion.

Senior U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill ruled in the Boise company's favor last month by dismissing the two employees' case. Winmill wrote that Skidmore and Dance failed to establish bona fide religious beliefs that conflicted with Simplot's vaccination requirement.

Cursive writing classes mandatory for grades 3-5

NJ TRENTON — Public school students in the third, fourth and fifth grades will be taught cursive, after a proposal was signed into law Monday.

Gov. Phil Murphy made it official Monday, his last full day as the Garden State's governor, according to NJ.com.

Beginning in the fall, students will be required to read and write cursive proficiently. Murphy called the bill "especially meaningful as New Jersey celebrates the upcoming 250th anniversary of our country's founding," which is significantly documented in that form of print. The governor also cited cognitive benefits for the curriculum change.

Teaching cursive reportedly became optional in New Jersey schools about 15 years ago. Some schools found that high schoolers didn't have signatures due to their inability to form cursive letters, according to NJ.com.

— From wire reports

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Beltrán, Jones elected to Baseball HOF

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Carlos Beltrán fielded a question about the impact of his role in the Houston Astros' cheating scandal as deftly as he grabbed so many balls hit to him in center field.

"There's no doubt that the Astros situation has been a topic," he said. "I feel like a lot of times there are agendas that are not positive toward my way. ... There's no doubt that in baseball you're going to go through ups and downs in life. You're going to make good decisions, so decisions, right, and also you're going to make bad decisions."

Beltrán was elected to baseball's Hall of Fame on Tuesday along with Andruw Jones, center fielders born one day apart who excelled at the plate and with their gloves.

Making his fourth appearance on the ballot, Beltrán received 358 of 425 votes for 84.2% from the Baseball Writers' Association of America, 39 above the 319 needed for the 75% threshold. Jones, in the ninth of 10 possible appearances, was picked on 333 ballots for 78.4%.

Beltrán moved up steadily from 46.5% in 2023 to 57.1% the following year and 70.3% in

2025, when he fell 19 votes short as Ichiro Suzuki, CC Sabathia and Billy Wagner were elected.

Beltrán was hired as the Mets' manager on Nov. 1, 2019, then fired on Jan. 16, 2020, without having managed a game. New York announced its decision three days after he was the only Houston player mentioned by name in a report by Major League Baseball regarding the team's illicit use of electronics to steal signs during the Astros' run to the 2017 World Series championship — his final season.

He was hired by the Mets as a special assistant to the general manager in February 2023.

"When I retired from baseball, I thought that everything that I built in the game of baseball, like relationships and the good people that I was able to relate myself with, I thought that was going to be lost, right?" he said. "And being back in the game of baseball, I still receive love from the people. I still receive love from the players. The teammates that I had inside the clubhouse, they know the type of person that I am. But at the same time, I understand that that's also a story that I have to deal with."

Beltrán and Jones will be in-

ducted in Cooperstown, N.Y., on July 26 along with second baseman Jeff Kent, voted in last month by the contemporary era committee. Jones was born on April 23, 1977, and Beltrán one day later.

"Competing against each other for so many years, it's just a great honor to be in the same elite group with him," Jones said.

Jones received just 7.3% in his first appearance in 2018 and didn't get half the total until receiving 58.1% in 2023. He increased to 61.6% and 66.2%, falling 35 votes short last year.

"The first year I heard a lot of my friends were telling me, you barely made it, you're barely hanging there," Jones said.

BBWAA members with 10 or more consecutive years in the organization were eligible to vote.

Chase Utley (59.1%) was the only other candidate to get at least half the vote, improving from 39.8% last year. He was followed by Andy Pettitte at 48.5%, an increase from 27.9% last year, and Félix Hernández at 46.1%, up from 20.6%.

Cole Hamels topped first-time candidates at 23.8%. The other first-time players were all under 5% and will be dropped

from future votes.

A nine-time All-Star, the switch-hitting Beltrán batted .279 with 435 homers and 1,587 RBIs over 20 seasons with Kansas City (1999-2004), Houston (2004, '17), the Mets (2005-11), San Francisco (2011), St. Louis (2012-13), the New York Yankees (2004-16) and Texas (2016). He had 124 homers hitting right-handed and 311 batting left, crediting coach Kevin Long for his left-handed success.

Beltrán was the 1999 AL Rookie of the Year and won three Gold Gloves, also hitting .307 in the postseason with 16 homers and 42 RBIs in 65 games.

Jones batted .254 with 434 homers, 1,289 RBIs and 152 stolen bases in 17 seasons with Atlanta (1996-2007), the Los Angeles Dodgers (2008), Texas (2009), the Chicago White Sox (2010) and the Yankees (2011-12). He finished his career with the Tohoku Rakuten Golden Eagles of Japan's Pacific League from 2013-14.

A five-time All-Star, Jones earned 10 Gold Gloves. He joins Braves teammates Greg Maddux, Tom Glavine, John Smoltz, Chipper Jones and Fred McGriff in the hall along with manager Bobby Cox.

Mets acquire CF Robert in trade with White Sox

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The New York Mets acquired Luis Robert Jr. in a trade with the Chicago White Sox on Tuesday, filling a hole in center field.

New York sent infielder Luisangel Acuña and minor league pitcher Truman Pauley to Chicago for Robert, who has struggled with injuries and inconsistency since a stellar 2023 season.

The Mets had been looking for outfield help since they traded Brandon Nimmo to the Texas Rangers for second baseman Marcus Semien. They were in the mix for Kyle Tucker before he signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The trade was announced after New York

finalized a \$126 million, three-year contract with Bo Bichette, a two-time All-Star shortstop who is moving to third base with the Mets.

Robert hit a career-low .223 with 14 homers, 53 RBIs and a career-best 33 steals in 110 games last year. Despite the shaky performance, the White Sox picked up his \$20 million option for 2026.

Robert's contract also has a \$20 million club option for 2027 with a \$2 million buyout.

New York is looking to return to the playoffs after it faded to an 83-79 record last year. Popular slugger Pete Alonso and star closer Edwin Díaz departed in free agency, but the Mets signed closer Devin Williams, reliever Luke Weaver and infielder Jorge

Polanco.

The 23-year-old Acuña hit .234 with eight RBIs and 16 steals in 95 games with New York last season. Acuña, who can play second base, third base and shortstop, was acquired by the Mets in a July 2023 trade with Texas for Max Scherzer.

Acuña joins a promising group of young position players that also includes Colson Montgomery, Kyle Teel and Chase Meidroth. Chicago finished last in the AL Central last year with a 60-102 record, a 19-game improvement from the previous season.

Pauley, 22, was a 12th-round pick in the 2025 amateur draft out of Harvard. He had no record and a 2.08 ERA in three starts with Class A St. Lucie last year.

Cadeau, No. 3 Michigan rolls past Indiana

Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Elliot Cadeau scored 10 of his 19 points in the opening minutes of the first half and Yaxel Lendeborg had 13 of 15 points in the second half, leading No. 3 Michigan to an 86-72 win over Indiana on Tuesday night.

The Wolverines (17-1, 7-1 Big Ten) led by 17 points midway through the first half and by 25 points in the second half of a game that wasn't in doubt after a one-sided start.

The Hoosiers (12-7, 3-5) began by missing 14 of 15 shots and finished with a fourth straight loss under first-year coach Darian DeVries.

Indiana's Tucker DeVries scored 15, Nick Dorn had 14 points.

Lamar Wilkerson was held to a season-low eight points on 3-for-10 shooting after averaging nearly 24 points in previous Big Ten games for the Hoosiers.

The Hoosiers were held scoreless until Reed Bailey made a layup 5:41 into the game, and they were 0-for-10 on 3-pointers before Dorn made a shot from beyond the arc with 8:23 left in the first half.

Michigan entered the game ranked No. 2 in field-goal defense, holding opponents to 36% shoot-

ing, and Lendeborg was closely guarding the Hoosiers on the perimeter and helping on the interior or to lead a swarming scheme.

UCLA 69, No. 4 Purdue 67: Tyler Bilodeau hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with eight seconds remaining, and host UCLA rallied to edge Purdue, snapping the Boilermakers' nine-game winning streak in their first visit to Pauley Pavilion in 26 years.

Their first loss in league play kept them from taking sole possession of first place over idle Nebraska.

No. 9 Iowa State 87, UCF 57: Joshua Jefferson had 17 points, 10 rebounds and a career-high 12 assists for his second triple-double of the season as the host Cyclones defeated the Knights.

Milan Momcilovic scored 20 points as Iowa State (17-2, 4-2 Big 12), coming off its first losses of the season, bounced back in its return home, building a 44-26 half-time lead and pulling away in the second half.

No. 10 Michigan State 68, Oregon 52: Carson Cooper scored 19 points and the visiting Spartans won their fifth straight game, over the struggling Ducks.

Coen Carr added 15 points and eight rebounds for Michigan State (17-2, 7-1 Big Ten).

No. 12 Texas Tech 92, Baylor

73: Christian Anderson had 26 points while making eight of the Red Raiders' program record-tying 17 3-pointers and the visiting Red Raiders beat Baylor for their fourth win in a row.

No. 19 Kansas 75, Colorado
69: Melvin Council Jr. scored 10 of his 18 points in the final 5:07 and the visiting Jayhawks held off the Buffaloes with assistant coach Jacque Vaughn leading the team as Bill Self recovers from a precautionary trip to the hospital.

No. 20 Arkansas 93, No. 15
Vanderbilt 68: Darius Acuff Jr. scored 17 points and the host Razorbacks handed the Commodores their third consecutive loss.

No. 16 Florida 79, LSU 61: Rueben Chinyelu scored 15 points and tied his career high with 21 rebounds, becoming the first Gator in two decades with four consecutive double-doubles, and host Florida, handled the Tigers for their fifth straight victory.

LSU leading scorer Dedan Thomas Jr. missed his first six shots back after missing nearly three weeks with a leg injury.

NC State 80, No. 18 Clemson
76 (OT): Ven-Allen Lubin scored 22 points and Derrion Williams' 3-pointer with 2:40 left in overtime put the visiting Wolfpack ahead to stay as they ended the Tigers' nine-game winning streak.

No. 21 Georgia 74, Missouri

72: Marcus "Smurf" Millender scored 18 points and converted a go-ahead three-point play with 5.5 seconds left to lift the Bulldogs to a road victory over the Tigers.

Jeremiah Wilkinson had 14 points and Kannon Catchings added 12 for Georgia (16-3, 4-2 Southeastern Conference), which was held to a season low in scoring.

No. 24 Saint Louis 81, Duquesne 77: Robbie Avila, Dion Brown and Trey Green each scored 14 points as the visiting Billikens held off a frantic late rally by the Dukes.

Saint Louis (18-1, 6-0 Atlantic 10) extended its winning streak to 12 despite blowing most of a 17-point second-half lead.

No. 25 Miami (OH) 107, Kent State 101 (OT): Peter Suder scored 27 points, Elan Elmer added 25 and the host RedHawks remained unbeaten, rallying past the Golden Flashes in overtime before a standing-room-only crowd at Memorial Athletic and Convocation Center.

Ranked for the first time since 1999, Miami had to rally in the final minute to force overtime and maintain the best start in Mid-American Conference history at 20-0 overall and 8-0 in conference play.

Record crowds see Alcaraz, Sabalenka, Gauff, Zverev win

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Another day, another record-setting crowd. Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka and Carlos Alcaraz advanced in straight sets Wednesday and the No. 3 seeds — Coco Gauff and Alexander Zverev — also progressed to the third round of the Australian Open.

The combined numbers for day and night sessions — 103,720 fans — set a full-day record for the third time in four days of the main draw at the season-opening major, which

has become a festival of tennis.

Two-time Australian Open champion Sabalenka opened Day 4 with a 6-3, 6-1 win over Bai Zhouxuan on Rod Laver Arena, and Gauff beat left-hander Olga Danilovic 6-2, 6-2 at Margaret Court Arena.

Alcaraz fended off Yannick Hanfmann 7-6 (4), 6-3, 6-2 in an afternoon encounter on the center court, and then reflected on his own performance and on his golf outing with Roger Federer.

"I didn't see myself playing that good but then talking to

my team, I realized that I played better than I thought," he said of his tough outing against the free-hitting Hanfmann. "I'm still getting used to the conditions, getting used to playing better."

Alcaraz, 22, is trying to win his first title at Melbourne Park to become the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam.

Zverev, who lost last year's final here to Jannik Sinner, had to wait through a half-hour rain delay and concern over a sore left ankle before beating Alex-

andre Muller 6-3, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

He was leading the fourth set 2-1 and serving at 15-0 when he had to halt the match and sit in a courtside chair for treatment.

He was playing a night match on John Cain Arena, the third of Melbourne Park's arenas with a retractable roof, where only ground pass tickets are needed for entry. So on a day with a massive crowd, it was still full late.

"The atmosphere is insane. The crowd is wild," Zverev said. "I love playing here."

Sheppard keys Rockets rally in 4th

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Alperen Sengun had 20 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists to help the Houston Rockets rally for a 111-106 victory over the San Antonio Spurs on Tuesday night.

Reed Sheppard scored 12 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter and Kevin Durant added 18 points to help the Rockets to their third straight victory.

The Rockets trailed by as many as 16 and were down by 10 before opening the fourth quarter with a big run to close the gap.

The game was tied with about two minutes to play when Sheppard blocked a 3-point attempt by Julian Champagnie. Jabari Smith Jr. put the Rockets on top 106-104 with a fadeaway shot a few seconds later.

Sengun made a basket with about 30 seconds left to extend the lead to 108-104 before Stephon Castle missed a 3-point attempt. Sheppard added two free throws after that to seal the victory.

Champagnie made eight 3-pointers and led the Spurs with 27

points on a night Victor Wembanyama was held to 14 points with 10 rebounds. Champagnie's performance came after he set the franchise record by sinking 11 3-pointers in a win over the Knicks on Dec. 31.

Houston trailed by five midway through the fourth before Sheppard scored all of the team's points during an 8-2 run that put the Rockets on top 101-100 with about four minutes to go.

Suns 116, 76ers 110: Devin Booker scored 27 points and Jalen Green added 12 points in his return to the lineup as visiting Phoenix beat Philadelphia in a match-up of teams playing the second game of a back to back.

Rookie VJ Edgecombe led the 76ers with 25 points. Andre Drummond finished with 15 rebounds and eight points for the Sixers, who lost for the fourth time in six games.

Bulls 138, Clippers 110: Coby White scored 27 points and hit six of Chicago's franchise record-tying 25 3-pointers in a home win over surging Los Angeles.

The Clippers had won six straight and 13 of 15 since a 6-21 start.

James Harden led Los Angeles with 24 points. John Collins scored 23 and matched a season high with five 3-pointers.

Jazz 127, Timberwolves 122: Keyonte George scored a career-high 43 points, Jusuf Nurkic recorded his second career triple-double, and host Utah rallied to beat Minnesota.

Rookie Ace Bailey scored 20 points and Isaiah Collier had 18 points and 10 assists for the Jazz (15-29), who delivered coach Will Hardy his 100th career victory.

Anthony Edwards scored 38 points for the Timberwolves (27-17), who squandered a 15-point lead and closed out a four-game trip with three straight losses.

Heat 130, Kings 117: Bam Adebayo scored 25 points, Norman Powell added 22 and Miami cruised to a road win over Sacramento.

The Heat have won three of their last five and led by double digits the entire fourth quarter.

Sacramento has dropped two straight games after winning a season-high four in a row.

Lakers 115, Nuggets 107: Luka Doncic had 38 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists, and visiting Los Angeles rallied to beat Denver.

LeBron James, who was not voted an All-Star starter for the first time since his rookie season, scored 19 points for Los Angeles, which played the second half without center Deandre Ayton due to a left eye injury.

Raptors 145, Warriors 127: Immanuel Quickley matched his career high with 40 points and added 10 assists, and Toronto ran away from Golden State for a road win in the Warriors' first game since losing star guard Jimmy Butler to a season-ending right knee injury.

With Butler out, Golden State coach Steve Kerr turned to Jonathan Kuminga for the first time in 17 games and the high-flying forward finished with 20 points on 7-for-10 shooting and five rebounds in 21 minutes.

Hagel scores twice as Lightning stay hot with win over Sharks

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Brandon Hagel scored two goals to reach 25 for the season and surpass Nikita Kucherov for the team lead as the Tampa Bay Lightning continued their surge with a 4-1 win over the San Jose Sharks on Tuesday night. Anthony Cirelli and Jake Guentzel each had a goal and an assist, and Kucherov had two assists to reach 48. Kucherov has 72 points, tied for third in the league with San Jose's Macklin Celebrini, who was held scoreless.

Tampa Bay has a 14-game point streak and has won two straight since its one loss in that span, a 3-2 shootout defeat at St. Louis last Friday. The Lightning (31-13-4), who haven't lost in regulation since Dec. 18, matched Carolina atop the Eastern Confe-

rence with 66 points.

Tyler Toffoli scored for the Sharks, who concluded their East Coast trip at 2-2. San Jose returns home for one game Friday before a five-game trip with the first three in Western Canada.

Senators 4, Blue Jackets 1: Tyler Kleven and Tim Stutzle both scored in the first period, and visiting Ottawa beat Columbus, snapping its four-game winning streak.

Sean Monahan scored for the Blue Jackets.

Canadiens 4, Wild 3: Cole Caufield scored the winner with 15 seconds remaining to lift host Montreal over Minnesota.

Phillip Danault—with his first of the season—Alexandre Carrier and Lane Hutson also scored for the Canadiens.

Stars 6, Bruins 2: Jason Ro-

bertson scored two goals, Justin Hryckowian had a goal and two assists, and host Dallas ended a three-game skid while snapping Boston's six-game winning streak.

The Bruins trailed 6-0 when Morgan Geekie scored on the power play to end Jake Oettinger's shutout bid with 7:49 to play.

Sabres 5, Predators 3: Konsta Helenius scored his first NHL goal, assisted on two others, and visiting Buffalo beat Nashville.

Noah Ostlund scored twice, Tage Thompson and Peyton Krebs also scored and Alex Lyon made 32 saves for the Sabres, 3-1-1 in their last five games.

Jets 3, Blues 1: Mark Scheifele had two goals and an assist to lead host Winnipeg over St. Louis.

Josh Morrissey added a goal and two assists as the Jets scored three goals on 16 shots.

Kings 4, Rangers 3: Kevin Fiala had a goal and an assist, and Anton Forsberg made 28 saves after taking over for the injured Darcy Kuemper in host Los Angeles' victory over slumping New York.

Adrian Kempe, Taylor Ward and Andrei Kuzmenko also scored for the Kings, who snapped a four-game skid with only their second regulation victory in January.

Devils 2, Oilers 1: Arseny Gritsyuk and Cody Glass each had a goal and an assist and visiting New Jersey held on to beat Edmonton. The Devils have won four of their last five outings, including a 2-1 overtime victory Monday in Calgary.