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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Bragg MPs tapped for Minneapolis mission

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Army has ordered several dozen additional active-duty soldiers to prepare for a possible deployment to Minneapolis if needed, a defense official said Wednesday, amid protests over the Trump administration's immigration enforcement crackdown.

The defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive plans, confirmed that members of an Army military police brigade who are stationed at Fort Bragg in North Carolina have been given prepare-to-deploy orders.

If deployed, the troops would likely offer support to civil authorities in Minneapolis, according to the official, who

stressed that such standby orders are issued regularly and they do not necessarily mean that the troops would end up going.

About 1,500 active-duty soldiers from the Army's 11th Airborne Division based in Alaska have received similar standby orders.

President Donald Trump has threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act, a rarely used 19th century law that would allow him to use active-duty troops as law enforcement.

That threat followed protests that erupted in Minneapolis after a federal immigration officer killed resident Renee Good on Jan. 7.

Trump quickly appeared to walk back the threat, telling reporters a day later that there

wasn't a reason to use the act "right now."

"If I needed it, I'd use it," Trump said. "It's very powerful."

When asked about the latest orders, which were reported earlier by MS Now, the Pentagon said it didn't have information to provide at this time.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat and frequent target of Trump, has urged the president to refrain from sending in more troops and, in a statement Tuesday, invited him to visit Minnesota and "help restore calm and order and reaffirm that true public safety comes from shared purpose, trust and respect."

In his second term, Trump has pushed traditional boundaries by using troops in Ameri-

can cities, often over the objections of local officials, amid federal operations targeting illegal immigration and crime.

Trump deployed federalized National Guard troops to Los Angeles last June after protesters took to the streets in response to a blitz of immigration arrests.

Ultimately, he sent about 4,000 Guard members and 700 active-duty Marines to guard federal buildings and, later, to protect federal agents as they carried out immigration arrests.

He also mobilized Guard troops in places like Chicago and Portland, Ore., but has faced a series of legal setbacks.

Trump said in December that he was dropping that push for the time being.

Danish leader says its sovereignty not negotiable

Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Denmark's prime minister insisted that her country can't negotiate on its sovereignty on Thursday after President Donald Trump said he agreed on a "framework of a future deal" on Arctic security with the head of NATO.

Trump said the outcome would be "all the military access we want" to Greenland.

Trump on Wednesday abruptly scrapped the tariffs he had threatened to impose on eight European nations to press for U.S. control over Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark.

It was a dramatic reversal hours after he insisted he wanted to get the island "including right, title and ownership" —

though he also said he would not use force.

Much about the potential deal remained unclear on Thursday, though Trump said in a Fox Business interview that "we're going to have total access to Greenland."

"We're going to have all the military access we want," he added.

Trump said the deal, if completed, will also allow for the United States to install an element of his "Golden Dome," part of a multibillion dollar missile defense system, in Greenland.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said security in the Arctic is a matter for all of NATO and it is "good and natural" that it be discussed between the U.S. president and NATO Sec-

retary General Mark Rutte. She said in a statement that she had spoken with Rutte "on an ongoing basis," including before and after he met Trump in Davos.

She wrote that NATO is fully aware of the kingdom of Denmark's position that anything political can be negotiated on, including security, investment and economic issues — "but we cannot negotiate on our sovereignty."

"I have been informed that this has not been the case," she said, adding that only Denmark and Greenland can make decisions on issues concerning Denmark and Greenland.

Frederiksen said that Denmark wants to continue engaging in constructive dialogue with allies on how to strengthen security in the Arctic, including

the U.S. Golden Dome program, "provided that this is done with respect for our territorial integrity."

Denmark has said the U.S., which already has a military presence, can boost its bases on Greenland. The U.S. is already party to a 1951 treaty that gives it broad rights to set up military bases there with the consent of Denmark and Greenland.

NATO spokesperson Allison Hart said Rutte "did not propose any compromise to sovereignty during his meeting with President Trump."

She said that negotiations between Denmark, Greenland and the U.S. "will go forward aimed at ensuring that Russia and China never gain a foothold — economically or militarily — in Greenland."

Navy closer to free Wi-Fi coverage worldwide

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The U.S. Navy rolled out free Wi-Fi for sailors in unaccompanied housing throughout most of Japan on Thursday, bringing the service to just shy of free coverage worldwide.

Wi-Fi service was launched Thursday at Yokosuka, Naval Air Facility Atsugi and Sasebo Naval Base, said Destiny Sibert, spokeswoman for Navy Installations Command.

Service contracts for bases on Okinawa and at Misawa are currently being negotiated.

“Additional overseas locations will be added as existing contracts are modified or as new agreements are secured,

with the goal of delivering free, high-speed Wi-Fi to the majority of Navy-owned unaccompanied housing by the end of 2027,” Sibert told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday.

Wi-Fi service is provided through a partnership between Navy Installations Command’s Morale, Welfare and Recreation program and the Navy Exchange Service Command, according to the MWR website. Internet filters will bar illegal downloads, gambling, nudity and other mature content.

With the added bases in Japan, free Navy internet is available across 88% of the world, said Vice Adm. Scott Gray, the head of Navy Installations Command.

“For the harder places — isolated places like Djibouti and Diego Garcia, Korea, Singapore — it’ll take a bit longer,” he said.

The necessity of internet connections for daily life underscores the importance of the Navy’s Wi-Fi initiative, Gray said.

“I think it’s something that we’ve needed to do for a long time,” he said. “You know, we needed to recognize that Wi-Fi is not a ‘nice to have’ anymore — it’s like a utility.”

The free service at most bases includes 30 Mbps download/5 Mbps upload, which Sibert said supports “streaming and most online activities.”

Sailors who want faster speeds can upgrade, but pricing, speeds and device limits

will vary, she said.

More information is available at www.navymwr.org/wifinext.

Free Wi-Fi service has been available since Nov. 17 at Naval Support Activity Bahrain and Isa Air Base in Bahrain; Naval Support Facility Deveselu in Romania; Naval Support Facility Redzikowo in Poland; Naval Base Guam; and Naval Station Guantanamo Bay.

Installations in the continental United States and Hawaii launched the program Dec. 2, Sibert said.

The initiative is the result of a 2024 pilot program that tested free Wi-Fi at 12 barracks in the Hampton Roads, Va., area near Naval Station Norfolk and Naval Air Station Oceana, Sibert said.

House requests details from DOD on Stripes plan

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The House Armed Services Committee has sent two requests to the Defense Department asking how the department will ensure the congressionally mandated independence of Stars and Stripes amid a plan to “refocus” its content, according to two people familiar with the matter.

A bipartisan request was sent after the Pentagon’s chief spokesperson last Thursday posted to the social media site X that it would overhaul the news organization to rid it of “woke distractions that siphon morale, and adapt it to serve a new generation of service members.”

Democratic staff sent a follow-up information request Tuesday after noticing the Pentagon had removed the federal regulation governing the publication.

“We have yet to receive any answers,” a committee staffer speaking on condition of anonymity said Wednesday.

The Pentagon has also not responded to questions from Stars and Stripes requesting details on the planned changes.

The committee staffer said the elimination of the regulation leaves a Depart-

ment of Defense directive as the only remaining rule addressing the news organization’s editorial independence.

The 1994 directive can be changed on a whim, according to Jacqueline Smith, the ombudsman for Stars and Stripes.

“Given the overall press restrictions and the moves to take over editorial control of Stars and Stripes, the future of the reputable newspaper that dates to the Civil War is in danger,” Smith wrote in a column published Tuesday morning.

The ombudsman role was created in 1991 by the House Armed Services Committee to report to Congress on threats to the Stars and Stripes mission of providing independent news to the military community.

The Defense Department submitted a rule change to the Federal Register last week, writing that the regulation for the newspaper was “unnecessary and may be removed from the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) because it does not have an impact or burden to the public.”

The rule change points out that a proposed modernization of the regulation last year drew 88 public comments that broadly supported Stripes’ independence.

Rep. Adam Smith, the top Democrat on the committee, said he is asking the Defense Department to explain how it intends to maintain the journalistic independence of Stars and Stripes, as long affirmed by Congress.

He said he is also urging Republicans to “exercise their congressional responsibilities and control of the legislative branch” so that the newspaper can continue to operate independently and provide “millions of U.S. service members and civilian personnel with critical news and information tailored to their unique needs.”

Eight members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, as well as two additional senators, sent a letter to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth last week seeking assurances that editorial decisions would not be conditioned on ideological alignment or policy advocacy.

“Congress has been clear for decades that Stars and Stripes must be governed by First Amendment principles and insulated from political influence, regardless of which administration is in power,” the senators, all Democrats and Independents, wrote.

Trump hails 'good' meeting with Zelenskyy

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump said he had a "good" meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Davos and expressed renewed hope the war Russia started four years ago is going to end.

Zelenskyy rushed to Switzerland on Thursday after saying earlier this week that he was unlikely to travel to the World Economic Forum's annual meeting. The Ukrainian leader has been overseeing efforts to respond to massive Russian airstrikes that have left millions of people in vast areas of Kyiv and several other regions without heating, power and water during freezing winter weather.

"The meeting was good," the U.S. president told reporters after an hour-long sitdown with

Zelenskyy. U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, were set to travel to Moscow later on Thursday.

"They're meeting with [Russian] President [Valdimir] Putin today, as you know," Trump said. "We'll see how it turns out."

An aide to Zelenskyy also characterized the meeting as "good."

The latest flurry of diplomatic efforts has in recent days been overshadowed by Trump's territorial claims on Greenland, with Germany calling on allies to re-focus on ending Europe's worst conflict since World War II.

"We hope it's going to end. A lot of people being killed," Trump said Thursday. "It's really a war that has to end."

Zelenskyy said earlier this week he would reconsider plans to skip the gathering if there were agreements to be signed on security guarantees and a plan to revive the country's economy with the U.S.

Witkoff said on Wednesday the work on the latest peace proposals was "90% done." He and Kushner have been holding talks with Ukrainian counterparts on a 20-point peace plan, security guarantees and post-war rebuilding since November. The teams met again in Davos on Wednesday.

"We spent at dinner last night talking about the upward trajectory for Ukraine, and economy and financial system, capital markets, the jobs," Witkoff told the audience at a breakfast panel organized by Ukrainian billio-

naires Victor Pinchuk in Davos on Thursday.

"This is the time to end this" war, Witkoff said. "I think we're going to get it done."

Finland's President Alexander Stubb told the same audience that while he was convinced that Ukraine, the U.S. and Europe will arrive at "a good package which has the elements for a lasting peace," the big question mark remains Russia.

"I'm not convinced that Russia will approve this and this is the worry that I have," Stubb said. "And that's why this is not over yet."

Later, Zelenskyy blasted his European allies for what he portrayed as the Continent's slow, fragmented and inadequate response to Russia.

Former Uvalde schools officer acquitted in trial on response

Associated Press

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas — A former Uvalde schools police officer was acquitted Wednesday of charges that he failed in his duties to confront the gunman at Robb Elementary during the critical first minutes of the deadly school shooting.

Jurors deliberated for more than seven hours before finding Adrian Gonzales, 52, not guilty in the first trial over the hesitant law enforcement response to the 2022 attack, in which a teenage gunman killed 19 fourth-graders and two teachers. Had he been convicted, he faced up to two years in prison on more than two dozen charges of child abandonment and endangerment.

Gonzales appeared to fight back tears and hugged his lawyers after the verdict was read in Corpus Christi, hundreds of miles from Uvalde, where his legal team said a fair trial would not have been possible.

"Thank you for the jury for considering all the evidence,"

Gonzales told reporters. Asked if he wanted to say anything to the families, he declined.

Several family members of the victims sat in silence in the courtroom, some crying or wiping away tears.

"Faith is fractured, but you never lose faith," said Jesse Rizzo, whose 9-year-old niece Jackie Cazares was killed. He said he was frustrated by the verdict and hopes the state will press ahead with the trial of former Uvalde schools Police Chief Pete Arredondo, the only other officer who has been charged over the police response.

Arredondo's trial has not yet been set. Paul Looney, his attorney, told The Associated Press that he believes the verdict will result in prosecutors dropping the case against his client.

At least 370 law enforcement officers rushed to the school, where 77 minutes passed before a tactical team finally entered the classroom to confront and kill the gunman.

House moves to pass final bills to fund government

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House was looking to pass this year's final tranche of spending bills on Thursday, an effort that is being complicated by Democratic lawmakers' concerns that the measure funding the Department of Homeland Security inadequately addresses President Donald Trump's mass deportation efforts.

The House has already passed eight of the 12 annual appropriations bills that fund federal agencies and programs. If the final four bills pass on Thursday, action would then move to the Senate, with final passage needed before a Jan. 30 deadline to avoid a partial government shutdown.

House Democratic leaders Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, Rep. Katherine Clark of Massachusetts and Rep. Pete Aguilar of California announced in a closed-door meeting that they would oppose the Home-

land Security bill. Their members are demanding a forceful stand in response to the Republican president's immigration crackdown, most recently centered in the Minneapolis area, where more than 2,000 officers are stationed and where a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer fatally shot Renee Good, a mother of three.

"There's a very big concern about ICE being out of control," said Rep. Rosa DeLauro, the ranking Democratic lawmaker on the House Appropriations Committee.

But Democrats have few good options to express their opposition. DeLauro said that passing a continuing resolution to fund Homeland Security at current levels for the remainder of the budget year would cede spending decisions to Trump. There's also little appetite for another shutdown, even if it would affect only a portion of the federal government.

'Sinners' sets Oscars nomination mark

Associated Press

Ryan Coogler's blues-steeped vampire epic "Sinners" led all films with 16 nominations to the 98th Academy Awards on Thursday, setting a record for the most in Oscar history.

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences voters showered "Sinners" with more nominations than they had ever bestowed before, breaking the 14-nomination mark set by "All About Eve," "Titanic" and "La La Land." Along with best picture, Coogler was nominated for best director and best screenplay, and double-duty star Michael B. Jordan was rewarded with his first Oscar nomination, for best actor.

Paul Thomas Anderson's father-daughter revolutionary saga "One Battle After Another," the favorite coming into nominations, trailed in second with 13 nominations of its own. Four of its actors — Leonardo DiCaprio, Teyana Taylor, Benicio Del Toro and Sean Penn — were nominated, though newcomer Chase Infini was left out in best actress.

In those two top nominees, the film academy put its full force behind a pair of visceral and bracingly original American ep-

ics that each connected with a fraught national moment. Coogler's Jim Crow-era film — the rare horror movie to win the academy's favor — conjures a mythical allegory of Black life. In "One Battle After Another," a dormant spirit of rebellion is revived in an out-of-control police state.

Both are also Warner Bros. titles. In the midst of a contentious sale to Netflix, the 102-year-old studio had its best Oscar nominations morning ever. As the fate of Warner Bros., which Netflix is buying for \$72 billion, hangs in the balance amid a challenge from Paramount Skydance, Hollywood is bracing for potentially the largest realignment in the film industry's history.

The 10 films nominated for best picture are "Bugonia," "F1," "Frankenstein," "Hamnet," "Marty Supreme," "One Battle After Another," "The Secret Agent," "Sentimental Value," "Sinners" and "Train Dreams."

Guillermo del Toro's "Frankenstein," Josh Safdie's "Marty Supreme" and Joachim Trier's "Sentimental Value" all scored nine nominations.

The nine for "Marty Su-

preme" included a third best actor nod for 30-year-old Timothée Chalamet, the favorite in the category who narrowly missed winning last year for "A Complete Unknown." With Jordan and Chalamet, the nominees are DiCaprio for "One Battle After Another," Ethan Hawke for "Blue Moon" and Wagner Moura for "The Secret Agent."

Nominated for best actress was the category favorite, Jessie Buckley ("Hamnet"), along with Rose Byrne ("If I Had Legs I'd Kick You"), Kate Hudson ("Song Sung Blue"), Renate Reinsve ("Sentimental Value") and two-time winner Emma Stone, who landed her sixth nomination, for "Bugonia."

The year's most-watched movie, with more than half a billion views on Netflix, "KPop Demon Hunters," scored nominations for both best song ("Golden") and best animated feature. Sony Pictures developed and produced the film, but, after selling it to Netflix, watched it become a worldwide sensation.

Blockbusters otherwise had a tough morning. Universal Pictures' "Wicked: For Good" was shutout. While "Avatar: Fire and Ash" notched nominations for

costume design and visual effects, it became the first "Avatar" film not nominated for best picture. The biggest box-office hit nominated for Hollywood's top award instead was "F1," an Apple production. The streamer partnered with Warner Bros. to distribute the racing drama.

The supporting actress nominees are Elle Fanning and Inga Ibsdotter Lilleaas for "Sentimental Value," Amy Madigan for "Weapons," Wunmi Mosaku for "Sinners" and Taylor for "One Battle After Another."

For supporting actor, the nominees are Jacob Elordi for "Frankenstein," Penn for "One Battle After Another," Stellan Skarsgård for "Sentimental Value," Del Toro for "One Battle After Another" and Delroy Lindo for "Sinners."

The Oscars added a new category this year, for casting. That new honor helped "Sinners" and "One Battle After Another" pad their already impressive stats. Along with those two films, the nominees are "Hamnet," "Marty Supreme" and "The Secret Agent."

The Academy Awards will take place March 15. Conan O'Brien will return as host.

ICE memo: Agents don't need judge's warrant at homes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal immigration officers are asserting sweeping power to forcibly enter people's homes without a judge's warrant, according to an internal Immigration and Customs Enforcement memo obtained by The Associated Press, marking a sharp reversal of longstanding guidance meant to respect constitutional limits on government searches.

The memo authorizes ICE officers to use force to enter a residence based solely on a more narrow administrative warrant to arrest someone with a final order of removal, a move that advocates say collides with

Fourth Amendment protections and upends years of advice given to immigrant communities.

The shift comes as the Trump administration dramatically expands immigration arrests nationwide, deploying thousands of officers under a mass deportation campaign that is already reshaping enforcement tactics in cities such as Minneapolis.

For years, immigrant advocates, legal aid groups and local governments have urged people not to open their doors to immigration agents unless they are shown a warrant signed by a judge. That guidance is rooted in Supreme Court rulings that generally prohibit law enforce-

ment from entering a home without judicial approval. The ICE directive directly undercuts that advice at a time when arrests are accelerating under the administration's immigration crackdown.

The memo itself has not been widely shared within the agency, according to a whistleblower complaint, but its contents have been used to train new ICE officers who are being deployed into cities and towns to implement the president's immigration crackdown. New ICE hires and those still in training are being told to follow the memo's guidance instead of written training materials that actually contra-

dict the memo, according to the whistleblower disclosure.

It is unclear how broadly the directive has been applied in immigration enforcement operations. The Associated Press witnessed ICE officers ramming through the front door of the home of a Liberian man, Garrison Gibson, with a deportation order from 2023 in Minneapolis on Jan. 11, wearing heavy tactical gear and with their rifles drawn.

Documents reviewed by The AP revealed that the agents only had an administrative warrant — meaning there was no judge who authorized the raid on private property.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Hot dog maker Nathan's Famous sold for \$450M

NY NEW YORK—Nathan's Famous, which opened as 5-cent hot dog stand in Coney Island more than a century ago, has been sold to packaged meat giant Smithfield Foods in a \$450 million all-cash deal, the companies announced Wednesday.

Smithfield, which has held rights to produce and sell Nathan's products in the U.S., Canada and at Sam's Clubs in Mexico since 2014, will acquire all of Nathan's outstanding shares for \$102 each.

The transaction is expected to close in the first half of 2026.

Smithfield said it expects to achieve annual savings of about \$9 million within two years of closing the deal.

Nathan's board of directors, which own or control nearly 30% of the outstanding shares of Nathan's Famous common stock, approved the buyout and agreed to recommend to its shareholders to vote in favor of the deal.

Authorities: Ex-attendant posed as pilot for flights

HI HONOLULU—A former flight attendant accused of posing as a pilot and working airline employee fooled three U.S. carriers into giving him hundreds of free tickets over a span of four years, federal authorities say. But precisely how he is alleged to have done it — and why the airlines wouldn't have caught on sooner — has industry insiders scratching their heads.

Dallas Pokornik, 33, of Toronto, was arrested in Panama after

being indicted on wire fraud charges in federal court in Hawaii last October. He pleaded not guilty Tuesday following his extradition.

According to court documents, Pokornik was a flight attendant for a Toronto-based airline from 2017 to 2019, then used fake employee identification from that carrier to obtain tickets reserved for pilots and flight attendants on three other airlines.

U.S. prosecutors said Tuesday that Pokornik even requested to sit in an extra seat in the cockpit — the “jump seat” — typically reserved for off-duty pilots. It was not clear from court documents whether he ever actually rode in a plane's cockpit, and the U.S. Attorney's Office declined to say.

The indictment did not identify the airlines except to say they are based in Honolulu, Chicago and Fort Worth, Texas.

The scheme lasted four years, the U.S. prosecutors in Hawaii said.

Feds revoke conservation nonprofit's bison leases

MT HELENA — The U.S. Department of the Interior announced on Friday that it is revoking grazing permits in Montana's Phillips County that American Prairie had been using to sustain its herd of bison.

The decision comes after a 3½-year battle between the Montana livestock industry, backed by Gov. Greg Gianforte and the Montana Department of Justice, and American Prairie, a conservation nonprofit working to restore the prairie ecosystem of north-central Montana.

The Montana Stockgrowers

Association cheered the news, describing it as a “win for public lands ranching in Montana.”

American Prairie called the decision a “troubling precedent” for those reliant on consistent, predictable federal land management decisions.

In its Jan. 16 letter to American Prairie signed by Sonya Germann, the state director for the Bureau of Land Management's Montana/Dakotas office, the Interior Department took issue with how American Prairie has characterized its herd of bison, estimated in 2024 at approximately 900 animals.

American Prairie had been grazing bison on four leases for about three years as the high-profile case wound through the Interior Department's Office of Hearings and Appeals.

Suspect in incident at Vance's home enters plea

OH COLUMBUS — The individual charged in connection with the vandalism of Vice President JD Vance's Ohio home earlier this month pleaded not guilty on Tuesday.

William D. DeFoor, 26, entered pleas to three counts in federal court in Cincinnati. Prosecutors have charged DeFoor with damaging government property, engaging in physical violence against any person or property in a restricted building or grounds and assaulting, resisting or impeding federal officers.

The suspect faces up to 10 years in prison on each of the first two charges and up to 20 years on the third.

Federal prosecutors allege the Secret Service saw someone run along the front fence of

Vance's residence in Cincinnati's upscale East Walnut Hills neighborhood just after midnight on Jan. 5 and then breach the property line. The person later identified as DeFoor was armed with a hammer and tried to break out the window of an unmarked Secret Service vehicle on the way up the driveway. The person then moved toward the front of the home and broke 14 historic window panes, according to a federal affidavit.

DeFoor's attorney, Paul Laufman, has said in court that the situation represents “purely a mental health issue” and that his client was not motivated by politics.

Aurora lights up skies with stunning display

AK ANCHORAGE — Streaks of shimmering green and red bands exploded in the dark skies above Alaska's largest city Tuesday as the aurora provided a light show for early morning dog walkers, joggers and commuters.

Anchorage was not alone in seeing vivid displays of the aurora following a major disturbance in the Earth's magnetic field.

The aurora didn't disappoint, and its reach overnight Monday and into Tuesday was wide. Social media was lit up with stunning aurora photos from places including Alaska, San Francisco, Chicago, Canada and across Europe.

The intense displays came amid intense geomagnetic and solar radiation storms, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Space Weather Prediction Center.

—From wire reports

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Reporting World, National and Military News

Mets trade for Brewers pitcher Peralta

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The active New York Mets acquired ace pitcher Freddy Peralta and right-hander Tobias Myers from the Brewers on Wednesday night in a trade that sent two prized young players to Milwaukee.

The Brewers received pitcher Brandon Sproat and minor league infielder/outfielder Jett Williams. Both were rated among the game's top 100 prospects by Baseball America.

Peralta gives the new-look Mets a frontline starter after their rotation faltered in the second half of a hugely disappointing 2025 season. The move came hours after New York formally introduced free agent addition Bo Bichette at a Citi Field news conference, and one night after the team obtained talented center fielder Luis Robert Jr. in a trade with the Chicago White Sox.

"Acquiring Freddy adds another established starter to help lead our rotation," Mets president of baseball operations David Stearns said in a statement. "Throughout the offseason, we sought to complement our rotation with another front-end pitcher, and we're thrilled we are able to bring Freddy to the Mets."

Peralta went 17-6 with a 2.70 ERA in 33 starts last season, when he led the National League

in wins and finished fifth in Cy Young Award voting. He struck out 204 batters in 176 2/3 innings and earned his second All-Star selection.

The 29-year-old Peralta hasn't been on the injured list since 2022, when the right-hander was sidelined by a strained lat and later elbow inflammation. He is set to make \$8 million this season and can become a free agent following the World Series. He is the latest former Milwaukee player acquired by Stearns, who ran the Brewers' front office from 2015-23.

"He obviously knows the players well. Look, he and I have worked very well together for many, many years. I obviously care about him a lot," Milwaukee president of baseball operations Matt Arnold said. "Today's his anniversary and I was at his wedding. We go back a long way. I think I might have ruined his anniversary dinner. Look, he's a dear friend. Hopefully, again, these are the types of trades that work out for both guys."

Myers, 27, was 9-6 with a 3.00 ERA in 25 starts and two relief appearances as a rookie in 2024 before going 1-2 with a 3.55 ERA in six starts and 16 relief outings last year as the Brewers won their third consecutive division title and advanced to the NL Championship Series.

"Over the past two seasons,

Tobias has become an extremely valuable major league pitcher," Stearns said. "His ability to pitch out of both the rotation and bullpen allows him to help our team in multiple ways."

Arnold said Sproat and Williams will compete for spots on the opening-day roster.

The 25-year-old Sproat made his major league debut in September and went 0-2 with a 4.79 ERA in four starts for New York, which selected him in the second round of the 2023 amateur draft from the University of Florida. He was rated the fifth-best prospect in the Mets' system by MLB.com.

"He's a guy we've liked going back to the draft. He's major-league ready. He's going to compete for a spot in our rotation," Arnold said. "This guy has incredible stuff. Very high octane, really good movement on his four-seamer and two-seamer. Really good secondary weapons and a really good changeup."

The 5-foot-7 Williams, 22, batted .261 with 17 homers, 34 doubles and 52 RBIs in 130 games combined at Double-A Binghamton and Triple-A Syracuse last year. He was drafted No. 14 overall by New York in 2022 out of high school in Texas and was its third-rated prospect, according to MLB.com.

"This kid's a gamer. He's not that big, but I can tell you he plays with a ton of heart and he's

got incredible tools," Arnold said. "He's one of the fastest players in the minor leagues. I think his versatility is something that's going to fit very, very well for this team."

To open space on their 40-man roster, the Mets designated right-hander Cooper Criswell for assignment.

Peralta's departure marks the third straight offseason in which cost-conscious Milwaukee has traded a star pitcher entering the final year of his contract.

Two years ago, the Brewers dealt 2021 NL Cy Young Award winner Corbin Burns to Baltimore for infielder Joey Ortiz and left-hander DL Hall. Last winter, they sent two-time All-Star reliever Devin Williams to the New York Yankees for left-hander Nestor Cortes and third baseman Caleb Durbin.

"These decisions are always tough," Arnold said. "We loved having Freddy Peralta here and everything he meant to this franchise. I just had an emotional call with him."

Burns and Williams both spent just one season with the teams that acquired them from Milwaukee before signing elsewhere in free agency. Burns agreed to a \$210 million, six-year contract with Arizona before the 2025 season, and Williams signed a \$51 million, three-year deal with the Mets last month.

Source: Bellinger staying with Yankees on 5-year, \$162.5M deal

Associated Press

Cody Bellinger became the last of the top free-agent hitters to reach a deal, agreeing Wednesday to stay with the New York Yankees for a \$162.5 million, five-year contract, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the agreement was subject to a successful physical.

Bellinger gets a \$20 million signing bonus payable April 1, \$32.5 million in the first two seasons, \$25.8 million in the next two and \$25.9 million in 2030. He also has a

full no-trade provision.

Bellinger has the right to opt out after the 2027 or 2028 seasons to become a free agent again, but if there is a work stoppage that leads to no games being played in 2027, the agreement specifies the opt outs will shift to after the 2027 and 2028 seasons.

A two-time All-Star acquired by the Yankees from the Chicago Cubs in December 2024, Bellinger hit .272 with 29 homers and 98 RBIs last year — including .302 with 18 homers and 55 RBIs at Yankee Stadium. A left-handed hitter, he played in 149 games

in the outfield and seven at first base in his first season since 2022 without a stint on the injured list.

Voted the 2017 National League Rookie of the Year and 2019 NL MVP, Bellinger has a .261 average with 225 homers and 695 RBIs in eight seasons with the Los Angeles Dodgers (2018-22), Cubs (2023-24) and New York.

He earned \$57.5 million from the \$80 million, three-year contract he reached with Chicago before the 2024 season. Bellinger declined a \$25 million option for 2026 in favor of a \$5 million buyout.

Djokovic nears 400 Grand Slam match wins

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Novak Djokovic and Stan Wawrinka made it a day for the ages at the Australian Open.

Djokovic improved to 399 wins in Grand Slam matches with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Francesco Maestrelli on Thursday, making the 38-year-old, 24-time major winner just one shy of becoming the first player ever to 400.

He's aiming to win an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam title. And if he does, he'll beat Ken Rosewall's record (aged 37 in 1972) as the oldest man in the Open era to win a major singles championship.

Wawrinka, at 40 years, 310 days, became the first man over 40 to reach the third round of a major since Rosewall in 1978. It took a 4½-hour 4-6, 6-3, 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (3) comeback victory over 21-year-old qualifier Arthur Geras. That's the longest match of

the 2026 tournament so far.

Wawrinka, who is retiring at the end of the year, will next face No. 9 Taylor Fritz.

Before then, he told the crowd at John Cain Arena: "I think I'll pick up a beer. I deserve one!"

His was one of three high-profile matches that finished around the same time, with Jannik Sinner beating James Duckworth 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena.

Day and night

With Sinner facing an Australian wild card, he got the prime-time night slot and bumped 10-time Australian Open winner Djokovic into the afternoon session.

That didn't bother Djokovic as much as the dropped service game in the third set — his first of the tournament. It stung Djokovic, who broke the Italian qualifier at love in the next game and finished on an eight-point roll.

He said he took extra time out in the offseason and fine-tuned some skills as he chases his biggest goals.

"When I have more time, then I obviously try to look at my game and different elements that I can really improve. Otherwise, what's the point?" he said. "That's the kind of mentality I try to nurture. It's been allowing me to play at the highest level at this age."

Iga Swiatek beat Marie Bouzkova 6-2, 6-3 and later said she's been trying to take lessons from Djokovic's attitude to sustained success and longevity.

"It's good to look at people like that and find inspiration," the six-time major winner said. "For sure I've got to learn to appreciate every single match," she said.

Keys to success

Defending champion Madison Keys was down a double

break in the second set before rallying to beat Ashlyn Krueger 6-1, 7-5 and advancing to a third-round match against former No. 1 Karolina Plíšková.

Melbourne is where Keys made her Grand Slam breakthrough 12 months ago and since her return, people have been asking her how confident she is about retaining the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup.

"Whether or not I do repeat it," she said, "I still get to keep Daphne at home!"

In that tough quarter of the draw, No. 4 Amanda Anisimova fended off doubles champion Katerina Siniakova 6-1, 6-4 and sixth-seeded Jessica Pegula won 6-0, 6-2 over McCartney Kessler, her doubles partner.

No. 5 Elena Rybakina advanced over Varvara Gracheva and No. 10 Belinda Bencic was ousted by Nikola Bartunkova.

No. 7 Nebraska tops Washington, extends win streak to 23

Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Pryce Sandfort scored 23 points to lead No. 7 Nebraska past Washington 76-66 Wednesday night, extending the unbeaten Cornhuskers' winning streak to 23 games.

Nebraska (19-0, 8-0), which earned its highest ranking in program history this week, was in control throughout against the injury-plagued Huskies and is alone in first place in the Big Ten. Washington (10-9, 2-6) lost for the fifth time in six games.

Sandfort had his third straight game with at least 20 points. Sam Hoiberg added 14 points, Rienk Mast had 12 and Jamarcus Lawrence scored 11.

Hannes Steinbach had his 11th double-double with 21 points and 12 rebounds for the Huskies, who were playing their fourth top-15 opponent in 15 days and have used nine different starting lineups because of a run of injuries. Zoom Diallo added 18 points and six assists.

No. 1 Arizona 77, Cincinnati 51: Motiejus Krivas scored 17 points, Ivan Kharchenko added 14 and the host Wildcats

pulled away late to beat the Bearcats and remain one of three unbeaten teams in the country.

Cincinnati (10-9) tested Arizona with an early 14-1 run to take a 20-16 lead midway through a rugged first half, but Arizona responded for a 33-27 halftime advantage. The 7-foot-2 Krivas thrived in the physical environment with 8 points, five rebounds and a block before the break.

The Bearcats were led by Baba Miller's 14 points. Cincinnati couldn't overcome a tough shooting night, finishing just 17 of 56 (30.1%) from the floor.

No. 8 Gonzaga 84, Pepperdine 60: Davis Fogle scored 17 points and the host Bulldogs pounded the Waves, beating Pepperdine for the 51st consecutive time despite missing their top two scorers because of injuries.

Tyson Grant-Foster and Mario Saint-Supery each scored 12 points for Gonzaga (20-1, 8-0 West Coast Conference) which won its 13th straight game overall. This is also the 29th consecutive season the Zags have won at least 20 games. They rank second to only Kansas, which has a streak

of 37 20-win seasons.

Styles Phipps scored 13 points and Aaron Clark 10 for the Waves (6-15, 1-7 West Coast), which lost to Gonzaga by 40 points at home this season. Pepperdine has not won in Spokane since 1998. Its last victory in the series was in 2002 in Malibu, Calif.

No. 11 Illinois 89, Maryland 70: Andrej Stojakovic had 30 points and nine rebounds to lead the host Fighting Illini to a victory over the Terrapins.

David Mirkovic had 15 points and nine rebounds, Keaton Wagler scored 13 points and Jake Davis had 12 points for Illinois (16-3, 7-1 Big Ten), which won its eighth straight.

No. 22 North Carolina 91, Notre Dame 69: Caleb Wilson had 22 points while frontcourt mate Henri Veesaar added a double-double to help the host Tar Heels beat the Fighting Irish.

The 7-foot Veesaar had 15 points and 12 rebounds for North Carolina (15-4, 3-3 Atlantic Coast Conference), which had lost three of four amid an abrupt defensive downturn — notably against shots from behind the arc.

Knicks defeat Nets to end losing streak

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The New York Knicks broke a four-game losing streak without breaking a sweat, crushing the Brooklyn Nets 120-66 on Wednesday night in the most lopsided victory in franchise history.

Jalen Brunson scored 20 points and Landry Shamet was 6 for 6 on 3-pointers and added 18 for New York, which led by as much as 59 points before the 54-point victory that surpassed the previous largest victory margin of 48 points.

The Knicks had lost nine of their last 11 games so this was a good time to play Brooklyn, because they never lose to the Nets these days. New York won its 13th straight meeting in the local rivalry.

The Knicks were already on track to win this one easily before outscoring Brooklyn 16-0 to open the fourth quarter, extending a 32-point lead to 104-56.

Michael Porter Jr. shot 4 for 14 and was limited to 12 points, but was still the leading scorer for a Nets team that has lost eight of nine.

Two days after the Knicks were booed frequently while trailing by 30 points in the first half of their 114-97 loss to Dallas, the scoreboard was crooked in their favor.

A 14-0 run gave New York an 18-6 lead midway through the first quarter, and it closed the period with a 14-3 spurt to open a 38-20 lead after Shamet finished the period with consecutive 3-pointers.

The Knicks led 60-38 at the break. They then outscored Brooklyn 60-28 in the second half.

Cavaliers 94, Hornets 87: Donovan Mitchell scored 24 points, Evan Mobley added 14 points and 14 rebounds, and Cleveland jumped out to 21-point first-quarter lead and held on to beat Charlotte for its fifth road win in the last six games.

The Cavaliers bolted to a big lead in the first quarter after making 11 of 15 shots from the field to open the game.

Cleveland's stifling on-ball pressure defense repeatedly forced the Hornets into uncharacteristic turnovers and

hurried shots.

Celtics 119, Pacers 104:

Jaylen Brown had 30 points and 10 rebounds and host Boston opened a 23-point first-half lead before coasting to a victory over Indiana.

Pascal Siakam had 32 points and 10 rebounds for the Pacers, who had won four of seven games since losing 13 in a row in December and January. Jarace Walker scored 19 points off the bench for Indiana.

Hawks 124, Grizzlies 122:

Jalen Johnson had 32 points and 15 rebounds and a key basket in the closing minute as visiting Atlanta used a fourth-quarter burst and held on to defeat Memphis.

The Grizzlies held a 110-108 lead with 5:39 left, but the Hawks scored eight straight points, capped by a pair of free throws from Johnson. Memphis never overtook Atlanta the rest of the way, but was within 122-121 on a Cedric Coward 3-pointer with 1:09 left.

Pistons 112, Pelicans 104:

Jalen Duran scored 20 points and grabbed 15 rebounds, Da-

niss Jenkins added 17 points and visiting Detroit never trailed while cruising to its fourth straight victory, beating New Orleans.

Saddiq Bey scored 20 points to lead the Western Conference-worst Pelicans, who have lost 14 of their last 16.

Thunder 122, Bucks 102:

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 40 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds and visiting Oklahoma City withstood multiple injury-related absences to trounce Milwaukee.

The Thunder's Ajay Mitchell scored 18 points in the first half and ended up playing 25 minutes before leaving with a hip bruise. Kenrich Williams also scored 18 points for OKC, which shot 54.4% from the floor.

Raptors 122, Kings 109:

Scottie Barnes scored 14 of his 23 points in the third quarter and visiting Toronto beat Sacramento.

Barnes shot 8 of 17 and had eight rebounds, seven assists and four steals while posting his season-high fifth consecutive game with 22 or more points.

Larkin scores in OT as Red Wings beat Maple Leafs

Associated Press

TORONTO — Dylan Larkin scored at 3:07 of overtime as the Detroit Red Wings downed the Toronto Maple Leafs 2-1 on Wednesday night.

Simon Edvinsson also scored for Detroit. John Gibson made 30 saves. Larkin added an assist for a two-point performance.

Scott Laughton scored for Toronto, and Joseph Woll stopped 39 shots.

The Red Wings improved to 7-1-0 over their last eight games. The Maple Leafs fell to 1-2-2 across their last five contests following an 8-0-2 run.

Laughton opened the scoring at 4:46 of the first period before Edvinsson replied with 17.7 seconds remaining on the clock,

moments after Woll made a huge pad save during a scramble.

Larkin won it in the extra period after Detroit defenseman Moritz Seider stole the puck from Toronto winger Easton Cowan.

Mammoth 5, Flyers 4 (OT): Clayton Keller scored two twice to help host Utah rally from a three-goal deficit and beat Philadelphia in overtime.

Christian Dvorak had two goals and an assist another to lead the Flyers. Cam York and Bobby Brink also scored. Samuel Ersson made 22 stops for Philadelphia, which lost for the seventh time in eight games.

Ducks 2, Avalanche 1 (SO): Mikael Granlund and Cutter Gauthier scored in the shootout

and Lukas Dostal stopped 40 shots as visiting Anaheim defeated NHL-leading Colorado for its fifth straight win.

Alex Killorn played in his 1,000th career NHL game. He spent 11 years with Tampa Bay, winning the Stanley Cup twice, before signing with the Ducks as a free agent in 2023.

Penguins 4, Flames 1: Tommy Novak and Evgeni Malkin each had a goal and an assist as visiting Pittsburgh beat Calgary.

Yegor Chinakhov and Bryan Rust also scored for the Penguins (24-14-11). Pittsburgh has points in five straight games (3-0-2) and is 9-2-2 in its last 13 games.

Kraken 4, Islanders 1: Vince Dunn and Jared McCann had a

goal and an assist each, and host Seattle snapped a four-game skid by beating New York.

Dunn gave the Kraken the lead for good with his seventh goal on the season with 6:23 to play in the second. He scored on a wrist shot with Ryan Winterton and Ben Meyers each getting an assist on the goal.

Canucks 4, Capitals 3: Brock Boeser had a goal and an assist as host Vancouver erased an early-two goal deficit and held on to end its 11-game losing streak with a win over Washington.

Dylan Strome and Justin Sourdif scored power-play goals a little over a minute apart in the first period to give the Capitals a 2-0 lead. But Boeser and Evander Kane knotted it at 2 after one.