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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

NATO chief: ‘Good luck’ without US

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte insisted Monday that Europe is incapable of defending itself without U.S. military support and would have to more than double current military spending targets to be able to do so.

“If anyone thinks here ... that the European Union or Europe as a whole can defend itself without the U.S., keep on dreaming. You can’t,” Rutte told EU lawmakers in Brussels. Europe and the U.S. “need each other,” he said.

Tensions are festering within NATO over President Donald

Trump’s renewed threats in recent weeks to annex Greenland, which is a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark.

Trump also said that he was slapping new tariffs on Greenland’s European backers, but later dropped his threats after a “framework” for a deal over the mineral-rich island was reached, with Rutte’s help. Few details of the agreement have emerged.

The 32-nation military organization is bound together by a mutual defense clause, Article 5 of NATO’s founding treaty, which commits every country to come to the defense of an ally

whose territory is under threat.

At NATO’s summit in The Hague in July, European allies — with the exception of Spain — plus Canada agreed to Trump’s demand that they invest the same percentage of their economic output on defense as the United States within a decade.

They pledged to spend 3.5% of gross domestic product on core defense, and a further 1.5% on security-related infrastructure — a total of 5% of GDP — by 2035.

“If you really want to go it alone,” Rutte said, “forget that you can ever get there with 5%.

It will be 10%. You have to build up your own nuclear capability. That costs billions and billions of euros.”

France has led calls for Europe to build its “strategic autonomy,” and support for its stance has grown since the Trump administration warned last year that its security priorities lie elsewhere and that the Europeans would have to fend for themselves.

Rutte told the lawmakers that without the United States, Europe “would lose the ultimate guarantor of our freedom, which is the U.S. nuclear umbrella. So, hey, good luck!”

US Navy warship makes rare visit to Cambodian port

By JOSEPH DITZLER

Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Navy warship made a port call this week at a Cambodian naval base whose recent expansion was largely paid for by China.

The head of Indo-Pacific Command, Adm. Samuel Paparo, on Monday visited the USS Cincinnati in Cambodia, where he met the country’s defense minister and armed forces chief, according to an INDOPACOM news release.

The Cincinnati, an Independence-variant littoral combat ship, is the first U.S. warship to dock at Ream Naval Base since its expansion was completed in April, and the first U.S. ship to visit Cambodia since the USS Savannah, another littoral combat ship, stopped at Sihanoukville Autonomous Port in December 2024.

“It is an honor to be welcomed by the Cambodian people at

Ream Naval Base,” Capt. Matt Scarlett, commodore of Destroyer Squadron 7, said in a squadron news release Monday. “We are always excited to work alongside our partners and continue to build a free and open Indo-Pacific for all nations.”

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet in an April 5 ceremony officially opened the expanded facilities at Ream Naval Base, including the China-Cambodia Ream Naval Base Joint Support and Training Center, the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative reported a month later.

Two Chinese navy corvettes, gifts to Cambodia, have been stationed in rotating pairs at the base since December 2023, according to the initiative, which is sponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

“The Cambodian military and government has close ties with

[China],” said Ian Chong, an associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore, in an email Tuesday to Stars and Stripes. “The Cambodian military procures weapons and receives training as well as assistance from the [Chinese military].”

Despite Manet’s education at West Point, Cambodia has had less military cooperation with the United States, Chong said.

“The United States helped build Ream as a port, but [China] put in additional funds to make it into a naval facility,” he said.

Cambodia maintained that Ream was open to navies of other countries and China had no exclusive rights, according to the maritime initiative, which noted that visiting Japanese and Vietnamese naval vessels docked far to the south of the pier where the Chinese corvettes were docked.

Welcoming the Cincinnati suggests Cambodia seeks closer ties with the United States, especially following the Trump administration’s role in pushing for a ceasefire after a border dustup between Cambodia and Thailand in July, Chong said.

The Pentagon in 2023 looked at Ream as China’s first overseas installation in the Indo-Pacific. Cambodia on Monday may have wanted to dispel suspicions attached to its relationship with China, Chong said.

Paparo at Ream discussed the U.S.-Cambodian defense relationship aboard the Cincinnati with Minister of National Defence Gen. Tea Seiha and Royal Cambodia Armed Forces Chief of Defense Gen. Vong Pisen, according to INDOPACOM.

“This visit demonstrates the deepening cooperation and expanding friendship between the U.S. and Royal Cambodian navies,” the release said.

Death toll from US strikes on boats at 126

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The death toll from the Trump administration's strikes on alleged drug boats is up to 126 people, with the inclusion of those presumed dead after being lost at sea, the U.S. military confirmed Monday.

The figure includes 116 people who were killed immediately in at least 36 attacks carried out since early September in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean, U.S. Southern Command said. Ten others are believed dead because searchers did not locate them following a strike.

Eight of the presumed dead had jumped off boats when

American forces attacked a trio of vessels accused of trafficking drugs on Dec. 30, the military said.

The number was not released previously, though the military said when announcing those strikes that the U.S. Coast Guard had searched for survivors. The two other people presumed dead were on boats that were attacked on Oct. 27 and last Friday.

President Donald Trump has said the U.S. is in "armed conflict" with cartels in Latin America and has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs. But his administration has offered little evidence to support

its claims of killing "narcoterrorists."

Critics have questioned the overall legality of the strikes as well as their effectiveness, in part because the fentanyl behind many fatal overdoses is typically trafficked to the U.S. overland from Mexico, where it is produced with chemicals imported from China and India.

The campaign also drew intense criticism following the revelation that the military killed survivors of the very first boat attack with a follow-up strike. The Trump administration and many Republican lawmakers said it was legal and necessary, while Democratic lawmakers and legal experts

said the killings were murder, if not a war crime.

The boat strikes began amid one of the largest buildups of U.S. military might in Latin America in generations, in a pressure campaign that culminated with the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. He was brought to the U.S. to face drug trafficking charges after the Jan. 3 raid by American forces.

There has been one boat strike since then, although the U.S. has been more focused on seizing oil tankers connected with Venezuela as part of the Trump administration's broader efforts to take control of the South American country's oil.

North Korea launches ballistic missiles into sea between Peninsula, Japan

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea launched short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters on Tuesday, according to its neighbors, as the North heightens animosities with rival South Korea ahead of a major political meeting.

South Korea's military said it detected liftoffs of several ballistic missiles from an area north of the North Korean capital Pyongyang before the missiles each flew about 217 miles.

Japan's Defense Ministry said two ballistic missiles launched from North Korea and landed off the eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula. The ministry condemned the launches. South Korea's military said it maintains a firm readiness to repel any provocations by North Korea.

The launches were the first

time North Korea fired weapons since testing what it called hypersonic missiles in early January. In December, the country test-fired what it called long-range, strategic cruise missiles and released photos showing apparent progress in construction of its first nuclear-powered submarine.

North Korea has engaged in a run of weapons launches to enlarge its nuclear and missile arsenals since talks with the U.S. and South Korea stalled in 2019. Experts say North leader Kim Jong Un believes a bigger weapons arsenal would give him greater leverage to win concessions from the U.S.

North Korea's recent displays were likely meant to demonstrate or review its weapons development achievements ahead of the upcoming Workers' Party congress, analysts said.

DOD policy chief talks priorities with S. Korea

By YOOJIN LEE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — A Pentagon undersecretary met with South Korea's defense minister this week to discuss alliance priorities, including the transfer of wartime operational control and Seoul's plans to pursue nuclear-powered submarines, according to the country's Ministry of National Defense.

Elbridge Colby, the U.S. undersecretary of defense for policy, met Monday in Seoul with Ahn Gyu-back, the ministry said in a news release Monday.

The visit marked Colby's first overseas trip since taking his office.

The talks included South Korea's plans to develop a nuclear-powered submarine fleet, an effort that gained momentum in November when the White House signaled approval for Seoul to build an unspecified num-

ber of vessels.

The project is "extremely nascent," Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Daryl Caudle said in Tokyo in November.

A nuclear-powered submarine fleet would give South Korea the ability to patrol for extended periods without refueling, creating a "global asset" that could fundamentally alter the security environment on the Korean Peninsula, he said at the time.

Colby and Ahn also discussed progress toward transferring wartime operational control of allied forces to South Korea in the event of a conflict on the peninsula.

Ahn emphasized that the transfer is necessary for the South Korean military to take the lead in defending the country and called for close communication and cooperation to accelerate the process, the ministry said.

Homan sent to Minn. to lead operation

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS—Border Patrol commander Gregory Bovino is expected to leave Minneapolis on Tuesday, according to a person familiar with the matter, as the Trump administration reshuffles leadership of its immigration enforcement operation and scales back the federal presence after a second fatal shooting by federal officers.

President Donald Trump said he was placing his border czar, Tom Homan, in charge of the mission, with Homan reporting directly to the White House, after Bovino drew condemnation for claiming the man who was killed, Alex Pretti, had been planning to “massacre” law enforcement officers, a characterization that authorities had not substantiated.

Saturday’s fatal shooting of Pretti, an ICU nurse at a Depart-

ment of Veterans Affairs hospital, by Border Patrol agents ignited political backlash and raised fresh questions about how the operation was being run.

Bovino’s leadership of highly visible federal crackdowns, including operations that sparked mass demonstrations in Los Angeles, Chicago, Charlotte and Minneapolis, has drawn fierce criticism from local officials, civil rights advocates and congressional Democrats.

A person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press that Bovino is among the federal agents leaving Minneapolis.

The departure accompanies a softer tone from Trump on the Minnesota crackdown, including the president’s touting of productive conversations with Democratic Gov. Tim Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey.

The mayor said he asked Trump in a phone call to end the immigration enforcement surge, and Trump agreed the present situation cannot continue. Frey said he would keep pushing for others involved in Operation Metro Surge to go.

Homan will take charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations in Minnesota. Frey said he planned to meet Homan on Tuesday.

Trump and Walz spoke in a phone call and later offered comments that were a marked change from the critical statements they have exchanged in the past. Their conversation happened on the same day a federal judge heard arguments in a lawsuit aimed at halting the federal immigration enforcement surge in the state.

Trump said his administration

was looking for “any and all” criminals the state has in their custody. Walz said the state Department of Corrections honors federal requests for people in its custody.

Meanwhile, attorneys for the administration, the state and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul appeared Monday before U.S. District Judge Katherine Menendez, who is considering whether to grant requests to temporarily halt the immigration operation.

She said the case was a priority, but in an order later Monday, she told the federal government’s attorneys to file an additional brief by 6 p.m. Wednesday. She told them to address, among other things, the assertion by the state and cities that the purpose of Operation Metro Surge is to punish them for their sanctuary laws and policies.

Judge orders ICE chief to explain due process issues

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The chief federal judge in Minnesota says the Trump administration has failed to comply with orders to hold hearings for detained immigrants and ordered the head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement to appear before him Friday to explain why he should not be held in contempt.

In an order dated Monday, Chief Judge Patrick J. Schiltz said Todd Lyons, the acting director of ICE, must appear personally in court. Schiltz took the administration to task over its handling of bond hearings for immigrants it has detained.

“This Court has been extremely patient with respondents, even though respondents decided to send thousands of agents to Minnesota to detain aliens without making any provision for dealing with the hundreds of habeas petitions and other lawsuits that were sure to

result,” the judge wrote.

The order comes a day after President Donald Trump ordered border czar Tom Homan to take over his administration’s immigration crackdown in Minnesota following the second death this month of a person at the hands of an immigration law enforcement officer.

Immigration agents were active Tuesday across the Twin Cities region, and it was unclear if officials had changed tactics.

The streets appeared largely quiet in many south Minneapolis neighborhoods where unmarked convoys of immigration agents have been sighted regularly in recent weeks. But Associated Press staff saw carloads of agents in northeast Minneapolis, as well as the northern suburb of Little Canada.

The Associated Press left messages Tuesday with ICE and a DHS spokesperson seeking a response.

Families of 2 killed in strike on suspected drug boat sue US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Families of two Trinidadian men killed in a Trump administration boat strike in October sued the federal government Tuesday, calling the attack a war crime and part of an “unprecedented and manifestly unlawful U.S. military campaign.”

The lawsuit is thought to be the first wrongful death case arising from the three dozen strikes that the administration has launched since September on boats in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean. The complaint will test the legal justification of the Trump administration attacks; government officials have defended them as necessary to stem the flow of drugs into the United States but many legal experts say they amount to a brazen violation of the laws of armed conflict.

The complaint echoes many of the frequently articulated concerns about the boat strikes, noting for instance that they have

been carried out without congressional authorization and at a time when there is no military conflict between the U.S. and drug cartels that under the laws of war could justify the lethal attacks.

“These premeditated and intentional killings lack any plausible legal justification. Thus, they were simply murders, ordered by individuals at the highest levels of government and obeyed by military officers in the chain of command,” the lawsuit says.

The Defense Department said in an email that it does not comment on ongoing litigation.

The lawsuit was filed by the mother of Chad Joseph and the sister of Rishi Samaroo, two Trinidadian nationals who were among six people killed in an Oct. 14 missile strike on a boat traveling from Venezuela to Trinidad. The men were not members of any drug cartel, the lawsuit says, but had instead been fishing off Venezuela and were returning to their homes in Trinidad.

More arctic air expected in parts of US

Associated Press

When a massive winter storm descended on the Northeast and parts of the South over the weekend, Lisa Patterson planned to stick it out at her family's home in Nashville, Tenn.

But after she and her husband lost power, trees fell onto their driveway and their wood stove proved no match for the frigid temperatures, the couple and their dog had to be rescued and taken to a warming shelter.

"I've been snowed in up there for almost three weeks without being able to get up and down my driveway because of the snow. I'm prepared for that. But this was unprecedented," Patterson said.

The family was among many across Tennessee and other parts of the South that have fled to warming shelters as crews worked to restore power to hundreds of thousands of households in the face of a new influx of arctic air expected to spur

freezing temperatures Tuesday in places already covered in snow and ice.

At least 35 deaths have been reported in states afflicted with severe cold.

Three brothers ages 6, 8 and 9 died Monday after falling through ice on a private pond near Bonham, Texas, said Fannin County Sheriff Cody Shook in a news release Tuesday. The two older boys were pulled from the water by first responders and a neighbor then taken to a hospital, while the youngest was recovered after an extensive search of the pond.

The National Weather Service had warnings for extreme, dangerous cold in effect Tuesday morning from Texas to Pennsylvania, where some areas were forecast to see wind chills as low as minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit. Much of the U.S. wasn't forecast to get above freezing all day Tuesday, with temperatures plunging again

overnight. Thermometers in northern Florida were forecast to sink to 25 F late Tuesday into early Wednesday.

The brutal cold lingered after storms over the weekend and Monday dumped deep snow across more than 1,300 miles from Arkansas to New England and left parts of the South coated in treacherous ice.

In Kentucky, Gov. Andy Beshear warned that the temperatures could be so frigid that as little as 10 minutes outside "could result in frostbite or hypothermia."

And forecasters said it's possible another winter storm could hit parts of the East Coast this weekend.

There were still nearly 550,000 power outages in the nation Tuesday morning, according to poweroutage.com. Most of them were in the South, where weekend blasts of freezing rain caused tree limbs and power lines to snap, inflicting crippling

outages on northern Mississippi and parts of Tennessee. Officials warned that it could take days for power to be restored.

In Mississippi, Gov. Tate Reeves said Monday at least 14 homes and 20 public roads had major damage in the aftermath of the state's worst ice storm since 1994. The University of Mississippi canceled classes for the entire week as its Oxford campus remained coated in treacherous ice.

New York City saw its snowiest day in years, with neighborhoods recording 8 to 15 inches of snow, forcing the nation's largest public school system to shut down.

Meanwhile, bitter cold followed in the storm's wake. Communities across the Midwest, South and Northeast awakened Monday to subzero weather. The entire Lower 48 states were forecast to have their coldest average low temperature of minus 9.8 since January 2014.

TikTok settles in case over youth addiction claims

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — TikTok agreed to settle a landmark social media addiction lawsuit just before the trial kicked off, the plaintiff's attorneys confirmed.

The social video platform was one of three companies — along with Meta's Instagram and Google's YouTube — facing claims that their platforms deliberately addict and harm children.

A fourth company named in the lawsuit, Snapchat parent company Snap Inc., settled the case last week for an undisclosed sum.

Details of the settlement with TikTok were not disclosed, and the company did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

At the core of the case is a 19-year-old identified only by

the initials "KGM," whose case could determine how thousands of other, similar lawsuits against social media companies will play out. She and two other plaintiffs have been selected for bellwether trials — essentially test cases for both sides to see how their arguments play out before a jury and what damages, if any, may be awarded, said Clay Calvert, a nonresident senior fellow of technology policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

A lawyer for the plaintiff said in a statement Tuesday that TikTok remains a defendant in the other personal injury cases, and that the trial will proceed as scheduled against Meta and YouTube.

Jury selection starts this week in Los Angeles County Superior Court. It's the first time the companies will argue

their case before a jury, and the outcome could have profound effects on their businesses and how they will handle children using their platforms. The selection process is expected to take at least a few days, with 75 potential jurors questioned each day through at least Thursday.

KGM claims that her use of social media from an early age addicted her to the technology and exacerbated depression and suicidal thoughts.

Importantly, the lawsuit claims that this was done through deliberate design choices made by companies that sought to make their platforms more addictive to children to boost profits.

This argument, if successful, could sidestep the companies' First Amendment shield and Section 230, which protects

tech companies from liability for material posted on their platforms.

"Borrowing heavily from the behavioral and neurobiological techniques used by slot machines and exploited by the cigarette industry, Defendants deliberately embedded in their products an array of design features aimed at maximizing youth engagement to drive advertising revenue," the lawsuit says.

Executives, including Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, are expected to testify at the trial, which will last six to eight weeks.

Experts have drawn similarities to the Big Tobacco trials that led to a 1998 settlement requiring cigarette companies to pay billions in health care costs and restrict marketing targeting minors.

Iran crackdown toll climbs as its currency plunges

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates—Iran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests has killed at least 6,126 people while many others still are feared dead, activists said Tuesday, as a U.S. aircraft carrier group arrived in the Middle East to lead any American military response to the crisis. Iran's currency, the rial, meanwhile fell to a record low of 1.5 million to \$1.

The arrival of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and guided missile destroyers accompanying it provide the U.S. the ability to strike Iran, particularly as Gulf Arab states have signaled they want to stay out of any attack despite hosting American military personnel.

Two Iranian-backed militias in the Mideast have signaled their willingness to launch new attacks, likely trying to back Iran after President Donald

Trump threatened military action over the killing of peaceful protesters or Tehran launching mass executions in the wake of the demonstrations.

Iran has repeatedly threatened to drag the entire Mideast into a war, though its air defenses and military are still reeling after the June war launched by Israel against the country. But the pressure on its economy may spark new unrest as everyday goods slowly go out of reach of its people — particularly if Trump chooses to attack.

Ambrey, a private security firm, issued a notice Tuesday saying it assessed that the U.S. "has positioned sufficient military capability to conduct kinetic operations against Iran while maintaining the ability to defend itself and regional allies from reciprocal action."

"Supporting or avenging Iranian protesters in punitive strikes is assessed as insuffi-

cient justification for sustained military conflict," Ambrey wrote. "However, alternative objectives, such as the degradation of Iranian military capabilities, may increase the likelihood of limited U.S. intervention."

Tuesday's new figures came from the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which has been accurate in multiple rounds of unrest in Iran. The group verifies each death with a network of activists on the ground in Iran.

It identified the dead as including at least 5,777 protesters, 214 government-affiliated forces, 86 children and 49 civilians who weren't demonstrating. The crackdown has seen over 41,800 arrests, it added.

Iran's government has put the death toll at 3,117, saying 2,427 were civilians and security forces, and labeled the rest "terrorists."

Russia hits Ukraine with drones

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A heavy Russian drone bombardment of Ukraine's southern city of Odesa injured 23 people, including two children and a pregnant woman, officials said Tuesday as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for U.S. efforts to end Russia's almost 4-year-old invasion of his country to move faster.

The Odesa attack involved more than 50 drones, some of them models recently upgraded by Russia to improve their range and strike power, according to Ukrainian authorities. The drones targeted the power grid, which Russia has repeatedly bombarded during the coldest winter in years, and also hit five apartment blocks, officials said.

A diplomatic push by the Trump administration to end the war has made progress, according to officials, but has delivered no breakthrough on the key issue of what happens to Russian-occupied Ukrainian land and other territory that Moscow is demanding.

Analysts say that Russian President Vladimir Putin is in no rush to find a settlement, despite his army's difficulties on the roughly 600-mile front line. He believes that time is on his side, that Western support for Kyiv will fade and that Ukraine's resistance will eventually break under pressure, according to analysts.

To replenish its forces and keep up the pressure on Kyiv, Moscow is offering cash bonuses, freeing convicts from prison and luring foreigners to its army.

France honors soldiers killed in Afghanistan after Trump comment

Associated Press

PARIS — A senior French government official said Monday the memory of the French soldiers who died in Afghanistan should not be tarnished following President Donald Trump's false assertion that troops from non-U.S. NATO countries avoided the front line during that war.

Alice Rufo, the minister delegate at the Defense Ministry, laid a wreath at a monument in downtown Paris dedicated to those who died for France in overseas operations.

Speaking to reporters, Rufo said the ceremony had not been planned until the weekend, adding that it was crucial to show that

"we do not accept that their memory be insulted."

In an interview with Fox Business Network in Davos, Switzerland, Trump on Thursday claimed that non-U.S. NATO troops stayed "a little off the front-lines" in Afghanistan.

Ninety French soldiers died in the conflict.

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Sabalenka, Svitolina advance Down Under

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — A searing hot day turned into a sweltering night at the Australian Open and eventually Coco Gauff let off steam, shattering her racket after a lopsided loss to Elina Svitolina that cost her a place in the semifinals.

Day 10 of the season-opening major began with top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka beating 18-year-old Iva Jovic 6-3, 6-0 on Tuesday before the Extreme Heat Policy was activated and the roof was closed on Rod Laver Arena.

The center court was still under cover when No. 12 Svitolina stunned the third-seeded Gauff 6-1, 6-2 in 59 minutes to earn a semifinal berth against Sabalenka.

The men's quarterfinals were split into day and night sessions, with one played under a roof and the other under the stars.

Top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz moved within two wins of completing a career Grand Slam after a 7-5, 6-2, 6-1 victory over Australia's Alex de Minaur to close play.

In his first semifinal in Australia, Alcaraz will take on 2025 runner-up Alexander Zverev, who beat 20-year-old Learner Tien 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-1, 7-6 (3) under cov-

er in an afternoon match.

They're 6-6 in head-to-heads, with Zverev winning the quarterfinal here in 2024, their only meeting in Australia.

"It's going to be a great battle," Alcaraz said. "I'm looking forward to playing him here, taking revenge."

Svitolina's streak

Weeks into a return from a mental health break, Svitolina is in the semifinals here for the first time, and is on a 10-match winning streak after starting the season with a title in Auckland, New Zealand.

The series of wins will put her back into the Top 10 next week.

"Very pleased with the tournament so far and, of course, always been my dream to come back after maternity leave in the Top 10," said Svitolina, a 31-year-old Ukrainian who is playing her 12th major tournament since taking a break in 2022.

She and Gael Monfils, the French player who is retiring this year, are parents to Skai.

Svitolina lost quarterfinals here in 2018, 2019 and last year, but she dominated Gauff from the outset. The 21-year-old American struggled with her serve and recorded five double-

faults in the first set, when she was broken four times.

She finally held in the fourth game of the second set, but by then it was too late. After leaving the court, the two-time major winner smashed her racket into the floor of a concrete ramp seven times on her way back to the player area.

Gauff said she tried to find a place where there was no cameras to let out her frustrations, and went to the quietest area she could find.

Svitolina, meanwhile, wanted to win for millions of people watching from afar.

"It's very close to my heart to see a lot of support from Ukrainians," she said. "Right now it's very — it was one of the toughest winters for Ukrainian people and without electricity and everything."

"So I feel like (I) bring this light, a little light, you know, even just positive news to Ukrainian people."

Heat rule

The main stadium roof was retracted for the last match after the temperature dropped from a peak of just over 108 F at 5 p.m. local time. At least at the Australian Open site, the temperature didn't

reach the forecast top of 113 F.

Sabalenka-Jovic

Sabalenka is aiming for her third Australian Open crown in four years. She won back-to-back titles in 2023 and 2024 and lost the final last year to Madison Keys.

The first of the quarterfinals was played outdoors, despite predictions of extreme heat. It was closed for subsequent matches after the tournament's heat index hit the threshold.

"I guess, yeah, as a woman, we are stronger than the guys," Sabalenka said at her news conference. "They had to close the roof for the guys so they don't suffer!"

Jovic had three breakpoint chances in the ninth game, which lasted 10 minutes, but wasn't able to convert against the world's No. 1-ranked woman.

Sabalenka has back-to-back wins over up-and-coming teenagers following her fourth-round victory over 19-year-old Canadian Vicky Mboko.

"These teenagers have tested me in the last couple of rounds, incredible player," Sabalenka said of Jovic. "It was a tough match. Don't look at the score. She played incredible tennis and pushed me to a one-step better level. It was a battle."

'Emotional' Gauff smashes racket after quarterfinal loss

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Coco Gauff smashed her racket into the concrete floor once for every time she dropped serve, and another one for good measure, after her Australian Open quarterfinal loss to Elina Svitolina on Tuesday.

The third-seeded Gauff, a two-time major winner, struggled with her serve and recorded five double-faults in the first set, when she was broken four times.

There were two more service breaks in the second set and, once the match was over — in 59 minutes — Gauff stayed composed as she left the center court and tried to find somewhere quiet to vent her frustrations.

Turns out, there's pretty much no place in Rod Laver Arena except for the locker rooms

that is beyond the scope of the cameras. So the seven times she pounded her racket into a concrete ramp were far from a private moment following her 6-1, 6-2 defeat.

"Certain moments — the same thing happened to Aryna (Sabalenka) after I played her in the final of the U.S. Open — I feel like they don't need to broadcast," Gauff said in her post-match news conference. "I tried to go somewhere where I thought there wasn't a camera because I don't necessarily like breaking rackets."

"I broke one racket (at the) French Open, I think, and I said I would never do it again on court because I don't feel like that's a good representation. So, yeah, maybe some conversations can be had."

Gauff hit just three clean winners across 15

games, made 26 unforced errors and won 2 of 11 points on her second serve. She got 74% of her first serves into play, but only won 41% of those points.

It was an usually bad day for a player who made her Grand Slam debut at 15 and won her first major, the 2023 U.S. Open, at 19. She's still only 21.

Gauff said she felt it was better to shatter a racket than to take out any frustrations on her support team.

"They're good people. They don't deserve that, and I know I'm emotional," Gauff said. "So, yeah, I just took the minute to go and do that."

"I don't think it's a bad thing. Like I said, I don't try to do it on court in front of kids and things like that, but I do know I need to let out that emotion."

Oilers hold off Ducks in Pacific battle

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Mattias Ekholm scored a hat trick and the Edmonton Oilers rode a dominant second period to a 7-4 victory over the Anaheim Ducks on Monday.

Zach Hyman and Connor McDavid each added a goal and an assist for Edmonton, Spencer Stastney scored his first in an Oilers jersey and Darnell Nurse also scored.

Leon Draisaitl contributed four assists and Tristan Jarry stopped 36 of the 40 shots he faced.

Three of Anaheim's four goals came from Mikael Granlund on the power play, starting with his 10th tally of the season 3:24 into the game.

His linemate Alex Killorn added an even-strength tally 55 seconds into the middle frame, Beckett Sennecke notched two

assists and Ville Husso made 25 saves in the loss.

Lightning 2, Mammoth 0:

Andrei Vasilevskiy made 28 saves for his second shutout of the season and 42nd of his career, Darren Raddysh scored on a power play late in the second period and host Tampa Bay beat Utah.

Brandon Hagel added a power-play goal in the final minute for the Lightning, who have won 15 of 17 and swept the season series against the Mammoth. Tampa Bay moved atop the Eastern Conference standings with 70 points, one ahead of Carolina and Detroit.

Vasilevskiy, who leads the league in goals-against average, improved to 2-0-0 against Utah, both shutouts. He blanked them last season, the inaugural campaign for the Mammoth franchise.

Vejmelka made 25 saves for Utah, which lost in regulation for only the second time in its past 12 games.

Rangers 4, Bruins 3 (OT):

Matthew Robertson scored at 3:53 of overtime as host New York beat Boston to snap a three-game losing streak.

Will Cuylle, J.T. Miller and Will Borgen also scored for the Rangers, and Jonathan Quick got his 408th career win—passing Hall of Fame goalie Glenn Hall for 12th place on the NHL list. Quick made 21 saves and assisted on the overtime winner.

New York, last in the Eastern Conference, took two of three against the Bruins this season. The Rangers improved to 6-13-4 at home and won for only the third time in 14 games overall.

Elias Lindholm had two goals

and Morgan Geekie also scored for Boston. David Pastrnak added three assists to reach 900 career points. He has nine assists in his last five games. Joonas Korpisalo stopped 24 shots.

Islanders 4, Flyers 0:

Ilya Sorokin stopped 21 shots for his NHL-best sixth shutout of the season and Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored two goals to lead host New York over Philadelphia.

Mathew Barzal and Tony DeAngelo also scored for the Islanders, who scored power-play, short-handed and even-strength goals.

A game after they were shut out for the first time this season, Pageau snapped the scoreless streak with his ninth goal of the season on a short-handed shot past Samuel Ersson.

The Flyers allowed their fifth short-handed goal of the season.

Sources: Bills promote OC Brady to take over as coach

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — The Buffalo Bills are staying in-house by promoting offensive coordinator Joe Brady as their new head coach, two people with knowledge of the decision told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The people spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the team has not announced Brady's hiring. One of the people said Brady has agreed to a five-year contract to take over a Josh Allen-led perennial winner that's accomplished everything short of reaching a Super Bowl.

The 36-year-old Brady just completed his fourth season in Buffalo, and his second full season as coordinator. He previously served as the Bills' quarterbacks coach before taking over the offense after Ken Dorsey was fired midway through the 2023 season.

Brady's promotion brings

continuity to Buffalo a little over a week after Sean McDermott was fired following a nine-year tenure.

Brady has no previous head-coaching experience over his eight NFL seasons. He broke into the league with New Orleans by spending two seasons as an offensive assistant under Sean Payton. He left the Saints to serve as passing game coordinator on LSU's 2019 national championship team.

Islanders get Soucy in rare trade with Rangers

NEW YORK — The New York Rangers' sell-off that general manager Chris Drury warned fans would be coming as part of a retooling process is now underway.

They traded defenseman Carson Soucy to the crosstown-rival New York Islanders on Monday in exchange for a third-round pick in this year's draft. None of Soucy's \$3.25 million

salary was retained.

The Islanders have been looking for a left-shooting defenseman since Alexander Romanov injured his right shoulder and had surgery in November, sidelining him for five to six months.

Duke settles with departing QB Mensah

Duke and Darian Mensah have reached a settlement in their legal fight over the quarterback's plan to transfer, clearing the way for him to move on.

The school and Mensah's agency released statements Tuesday confirming a deal without providing any details. It came roughly a week after the Blue Devils filed a lawsuit seeking to block Mensah's efforts to transfer and reach a contract with another school to play elsewhere next season.

Mensah, who transferred from Tulane and led Duke to an unexpected Atlantic Coast Conference title last month, had

signed a two-season contract in July 2025 running through 2026 that paid him for exclusive rights to market his name, image and likeness tied to playing college football.

Indiana WR Cooper declares for NFL draft

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — Indiana wide receiver Omar Cooper Jr. is entering April's NFL draft, he announced Monday on social media.

In the six-paragraph post, Cooper thanked his family, coaches and teammates among others for their help and support during his four-year journey from Indianapolis prep star through two losing seasons with the Hoosiers before becoming a national champion.

This season, Cooper led Indiana in receptions (69) and yards receiving (937) and finished second on the team and tied for third in the Football Bowl Subdivision with 13 TD catches.

Hawks ride second-half run past Pacers

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Led by CJ McCollum's 23 points, the Atlanta Hawks used a 17-0 run in the second half to take the lead and beat the Indiana Pacers 132-116 on Monday.

Dyson Daniels scored 22 points with nine assists, Nickeil Alexander-Walker added 21 points and Atlanta earned its third straight win.

Indiana led by 15 points midway through the third quarter and was up 92-85 late in the period before the Hawks scored 17 unanswered points in a run that carried into the fourth quarter. Luke Kennard's 3-pointer from the corner capped the run and gave Atlanta a 102-92 lead.

Pascal Siakam led the Pacers with 26 points. Aaron Nesmith scored 18 and Benedict Mathurin returned from a thumb injury to add 16. T.J. McConnell also had 16 points.

Tipoff had been scheduled for Monday night but was moved to early afternoon because of the possibility of icing on the roads as the result of a winter storm gripping the South and Northeast.

The Hawks' Kristaps Porzingis (left Achilles tendinitis) and Zaccarie Risacher (left knee bone contusion) each missed his ninth straight game. Atlanta said Porzingis will be evaluated

in about a week and Risacher could return for the team's next game.

Hornets 130, 76ers 93:

Brandon Miller scored 30 points, and host Charlotte took a 50-point lead for the second time this month on the way to rolling past Philadelphia.

All five Hornets starters finished in double figures. Kon Knueppel and Moussa Diabate scored 12, LaMelo Ball added 11 and Miles Bridges finished with 10 for Charlotte, which has won three straight games for the first time this season.

Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 17 for Philadelphia. Jared McCullum added 16 and Quentin Grimes had 14 for the 76ers, while Tyrese Maxey was held to a season-low six points on 3-for-12 shooting in 25 minutes.

Cavaliers 114, Magic 98:

Donovan Mitchell scored 45 points and host Cleveland beat Orlando for its fourth straight win.

Mitchell was 15 of 25 from the field, including five 3-pointers, in 35 minutes. He had a season-high 26 first-half points, a great start for a player that came into the game leading the NBA in second-half scoring average at 17.6 points per game.

Paolo Banchero scored a season-high 37 points for the Magic, who have dropped three straight. The fourth-year for-

ward also grabbed 10 rebounds. Desmond Bane added 19 points, including 15 in the first half.

Celtics 102, Trail Blazers 94:

Payton Pritchard scored 23 points, hitting buzzer-beaters to end each of the first two quarters, and Jaylen Brown added 20 to lead host Boston over Portland.

Derrick White scored 18 points, making a 3-pointer after the Trail Blazers cut what had been a 23-point deficit to five in the final minute. White also stole the ball on Portland's next possession.

Jerami Grant scored 19 and former UConn star Donovan Clingan had 15 rebounds for the Blazers, who had won four of their previous five games to briefly climb above .500 for the first time since November.

Lakers 129, Bulls 118:

Luka Doncic had 46 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds, and visiting Los Angeles cooled off Chicago with a victory.

LeBron James scored 20 of his 24 points in the first half as the Lakers improved to 3-1 on an eight-game trip. Rui Hachimura added 23 points on 9-for-11 shooting.

Coby White scored 23 points for the Bulls, and Ayo Dosunmu had 20. Chicago had won four in a row and five of six overall.

Rockets 108, Grizzlies 99:

Alperen Sengun and Kevin Durant each scored 33 points as host Houston broke open a close game in the fourth quarter and beat Memphis.

The Rockets trailed by a point at the start of the fourth before going on a 21-9 run in the first seven minutes of the period to seize control and win for the fifth time in six games.

Jaren Jackson Jr. and Santi Aldama scored 17 points apiece for the Grizzlies, who lost their third straight, for the fourth time in five games and for the 10th time in 13 games. GG Jackson added 14 points, Jaylen Wells had 12 and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope 11.

Timberwolves 108, Warriors 83:

Rudy Gobert had 15 points and 17 rebounds as host Minnesota defeated Golden State in a game missing much of its usual star power.

The Warriors were playing without starters Stephen Curry (knee) and Draymond Green (back), while the Timberwolves' Anthony Edwards was a late scratch to rest an recurring right foot injury.

Quinten Post led Golden State with 13 points. Brandin Podziemski scored 12 points and grabbed seven rebounds, while Gui Santos had 11 points and 10 rebounds for the Warriors, who shot a season-low 23.1% (9 for 39) on 3-pointers.

No. 1 Arizona holds off rally from No. 13 BYU to stay perfect

Associated Press

PROVO, Utah — Brayden Burries scored 29 points and made the game-saving block in the final seconds as top-ranked Arizona remained unbeaten by holding off a furious rally from No. 13 BYU for an 86-83 victory Monday night.

Jaden Bradley added 26 points for the Wildcats (21-0, 8-0 Big 12), who matched the best start in school history.

The Cougars trailed by 19 midway through the second half before trimming the deficit to one with a 12-2 run that began with just over a minute left. Keba Keita's putback dunk pulled them to 84-83 with 16

seconds to go, and they forced a turnover on the ensuing inbounds play.

Robert Wright III drove toward the rim and wriggled free for a good look near the basket, but Burries came flying over from the weak side to block the shot from behind.

No. 4 Duke 86, No. 20 Louisville 52:

Cameron Boozer had 19 points and 10 rebounds to help the host Blue Devils roll past the Cardinals, giving the preseason Atlantic Coast Conference favorite a sweep of its projected top challenger.

Isaiah Evans and Patrick Ngongba II each contributed 15 points for Duke (19-1,

8-0 ACC), which scored 13 unanswered points spanning halftime to assert control after leading by just a single point shortly before the break.

That spurt was merely the start of turning this into a romp, with Louisville struggling to make much of anything while the Blue Devils dominated the glass and the paint and shot 50.8%.

Ryan Conwell scored 18 points to lead the Cardinals (14-6, 4-4), which went 3-for-22 from the field over a roughly 15-minute stretch that carried into the second half. Louisville finished the game shooting 29.6%.