

Trump threatens Europe exit over Greenland

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump on Tuesday threatened to pull all U.S. troops from Europe if Denmark refuses to relinquish Greenland, adding fresh uncertainty to the NATO-U.S. relationship as leaders gather for an annual alliance summit in Turkey.

Shortly after arriving in Ankara for the meeting, Trump reiterated his demand that Greenland come under U.S. control because of its strategic importance in the Arctic. He also complained about Europe's opposition to such a move.

"With all the money we spend to help them with Russia ... we don't have to spend any money. We could remove all of our soldiers out of Europe," Trump said.

Trump's broadside overshadowed a summit opening day that

many NATO leaders hoped would focus on demonstrating unity against Russia and bolstering Ukraine.

Instead, Trump's opening remarks revived questions about Washington's long-term military commitment in Europe even before he sat down with allied leaders.

Trump said he nearly skipped the summit altogether and repeated complaints over what he described as NATO allies' unwillingness to support the United States during its military campaign against Iran.

"We've invested trillions of dollars in NATO," Trump said. "Why? To protect European countries ... from, generally speaking, what used to be the Soviet Union. Now it's Russia."

Trump said he expected allies to be willing to assist the U.S. when needed.

"I say that's fine, but you

would think they'd be very willing to do something to help us, and they really weren't," he said.

The remarks point to a NATO summit centered on Trump's continued criticism of the alliance.

Trump singled out the United Kingdom, saying its government had offered support only after the conflict had ended, an offer he dismissed as unhelpful.

"I don't need that kind of help," Trump said. "We didn't need any help at all."

Trump's comments injected fresh uncertainty into the future of the roughly 80,000 U.S. troops stationed across Europe, whose presence has underpinned NATO's deterrence posture for decades.

The U.S. president has long criticized NATO, complaining that European countries do not spend enough on their own defense. Member states have re-

sponded by sharply increasing military spending.

NATO allies have agreed to at least \$50 billion in defense industry deals, according to Secretary-General Mark Rutte on Tuesday during a defense industry forum in Ankara. Some of the contracts included \$12 billion in deals to buy next-generation drones, surveillance planes and military aircraft, Bloomberg reported.

Notably, some of the contracts show Europe moving to locally source some equipment it previously bought from the U.S. Eleven countries, for instance, will now buy airborne radar-detection systems from Swedish aerospace firm Saab AB, replacing a U.S.-made Boeing Co. model. The deal is worth \$5 billion, according to a NATO diplomat.

Others deepen ties to U.S. manufacturers for crucial items.

Iran missiles reportedly hit ships in Strait of Hormuz

Bloomberg News

Iran fired at least two missiles at commercial ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz on Monday night, Axios reported, testing a late-June deal with the United States to halt attacks as the two sides work toward a peace agreement. On Tuesday, the British military reported three tankers were struck by projectiles in the Strait.

Two vessels suffered some damage, but no one was injured, and both continued on their way, the U.K. Maritime Trade Operations center said. The tanker traveling off the coast of Oman caught fire, The Associated Press reported that the U.K. agency said.

Iranian state television said the liquefied natural gas tanker came under attack after ignoring warnings, but did not directly claim the assault. The U.K. agency said Monday that it received a report of a tanker being struck by an unknown projectile about 8 nautical miles east of Limah, Oman.

Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesperson Majed Al-Ansari said the Qatari tanker Al Rekeyyat was targeted in an "unacceptable attack" on international navigation in the AP report. He called it a "serious and explicit violation" of international law. In a post on X, he said Qatar holds Iran "fully legally responsible" for the attack.

Tehran has repeatedly stated that only its approved route through the strait is safe, and is suspected of attacking other ships that have used another route close to the Omani shore, AP reported.

Location details provided by the U.K. agency show all three attacks occurred off the coast of Oman or the neighboring United Arab Emirates, making it likely that the ships were using the route near Oman.

The new assaults were the most in a single day since late April, according to U.N. International Maritime Organization figures. The fresh attacks threatened to choke off the flow of traffic in the strait just as

countries hoped to restore normal shipping practices, AP reported.

The attacks come as President Donald Trump attends a NATO leaders' summit in Ankara, Turkey. The U.S. conflict with Iran is expected to be a major topic of discussion, with Trump having expressed anger at several members of NATO for not doing more to help the U.S. against the Islamic Republic.

Talks between the U.S. and Iran were suspended as Iran began a mass funeral a few days ago for the late Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated on the first day of the conflict in late February.

Poland: US revives its troop rotation

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. troop deployment to Poland that was recently canceled will resume in the coming weeks, a senior Polish official said this week.

Defense Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz said he received confirmation of the decision from U.S. Deputy Ambassador to Poland Stephanie Holmes and a U.S. military attache in the country.

"The rotation that was suspended a few weeks ago is returning, it will continue and in the coming weeks the rotation of American troops in Poland will be filled," Kosiniak-Kamysz told reporters Monday during a defense industry event in northern Poland.

The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the situation.

The Polish defense chief didn't name the unit involved in the mission. But his statement that a previously suspended rotation has been reactivated suggests that it could involve a Fort Hood, Texas-based armored brigade that was previously tapped for a nine-month deployment to Poland.

If that is the case, the on-off-on-again mission points to significant upheaval for the nearly 5,000 soldiers assigned to the unit and many family members who would once again face the prospect of a lengthy separation.

In May, parts of the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, had already deployed to Poland when the Pentagon nixed the mission.

The decision caused consternation in Poland. Weeks after the announcement, President

Donald Trump intervened and said he was sending 5,000 service members back to the country.

The Defense Department has not explained how it intends to fulfill Trump's order. Some lawmakers have accused the Pentagon of moving too slowly.

In a statement last week on X, Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., said Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and his team reduced the Army's brigade strength by 40% in Europe "unilaterally without support from Congress."

Bacon also complained that while Trump has directed that a brigade be sent to Poland, "nothing has happened."

The Pentagon has multiple options for getting more troops to Poland in the coming weeks.

The Pentagon is still expected to reduce the number of troops in Germany by around 5,000. The details of that move have not been released, but shifting some of those forces to Poland, even on a rotational basis, could help achieve Trump's call for an immediate boost to the U.S. military presence in Poland.

The U.S. and Poland are also discussing the establishment of a new permanent base in the country. However, it would likely take several years to build the necessary facilities to house thousands more U.S. troops and their families.

Last month, Polish officials said they are searching for locations to build a new American base, likely in the western part of the country. Poland has said it is prepared to spend around \$3 billion to make it happen.

The merits of permanently basing a brigade-sized unit in Poland have been debated for years in military circles.

Air Force major could be dismissed due to protest

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

An Air Force major who stood on the U.S. Capitol steps and called for the impeachment of President Donald Trump could face dismissal from the service and loss of his security clearance.

Maj. Jason P. Watson, 40, is under investigation by the service and restricted to Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling in Washington, D.C., according to Jessica Denson, founder of the Removal Coalition, which hosted the news conference where Watson spoke prior to his protest Wednesday. The group lobbies members of Congress to impeach Trump.

"Who I am is immaterial," Watson said during the conference. "In the grand scheme of things, I'm just a nobody. What matters far more than who I am is what I have to say and the price I'm willing to pay to say it."

The 17-year logistics officer, dressed in his blue service uniform and flight cap, outlined the reasons he called for the im-

peachment of Trump and Vice President JD Vance, beginning with military involvement in Venezuela, Cuba and Iran.

Rep. Al Green, D-Texas, then escorted Watson to the Capitol steps, where the officer stood alone with a sign bearing the words "IMPEACH," "CON-VICT" and "REMOVE." Capitol Police officers arrested him after Watson refused to comply with their requests to move.

"It is generally against the law for the public to demonstrate on the House Steps unless they are with a member of Congress," according to a statement from the Capitol Police. There are other locations on the grounds where demonstrating is allowed.

In a video of his arrest, Watson calmly placed his sign on the ground and put his hands behind his back for the officers.

The civilian charges against him have since been dropped, but he could face punishment from the Air Force. The Uniform Code of Military Justice prohibits political activity while in uniform.

Death of USS Truman sailor ruled to be suicide

The Virginian-Pilot

A sailor whose body was found at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., died by suicide, according to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

Fireman Apprentice Isaac Morris, an engineman, disappeared the evening of June 14, and his body was found in the water near the piers five days later.

His cause of death was drowning, an OCME spokesperson confirmed Monday.

"The entire Truman team is grieving the loss of Fireman Ap-

prentice Isaac Morris," Capt. Daniel Prochazka, commanding officer of USS Harry S. Truman said after Morris' body was discovered. "Our hearts are with his family, friends and shipmates, and we are focused on supporting them with care and compassion during this difficult time."

Morris, who was from California, joined the Navy in October 2025 and reported to the Truman in April.

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service did not immediately respond to questions.

Platner mulls 'path forward', support erodes

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — As a chorus of Democrats demanded he withdraw from the race, Graham Platner, the Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate in Maine, said Monday that he was “taking time to reflect on the best path forward” as he denied a Politico report that he had sexually assaulted a woman he previously dated.

“Regardless of the inaccuracy of the reporting but mindful of the political reality it will inflict, we are taking the time to reflect on the best path forward for the state that I love, the people that I love, the movement I belong to, and the goal of defeating Susan Collins,” Platner said in a video posted Monday to social media.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, who leads the Democratic Senatorial Cam-

paign Committee, called the allegations “incredibly disturbing — violence, abuse and sexual assault are absolutely unacceptable.”

“Graham Platner needs to immediately withdraw as the Democratic nominee for Senate and allow Maine Democrats the opportunity to choose a new candidate who can defeat Susan Collins,” Schumer and Gillibrand said in a statement. “The DSCC will not invest in the Maine Senate race if Platner remains on the ballot.”

Also Tuesday, Vermont Independent Sen. Bernie Sanders, who has long backed Platner, said in a statement Tuesday that he had spoken with the candidate and that “in light of these very serious allegations, I have recommended that he step aside,” The Associated Press reported.

Maine resident Jenny Rac-

icot told Politico that Platner, with whom she had an “on and off relationship,” forced her to have sex with him after arriving at her home intoxicated in late 2021.

He entered her home uninvited and allegedly assaulted her, ignoring her requests to stop, she said.

“Any accusation of nonconsensual behavior is categorically false,” Platner said in the video.

Maine is considered a must-win seat for Democrats seeking to flip the Senate this year. Collins, the only Republican in the chamber to represent a state that Kamala Harris carried in 2024, is a top Democratic target.

Platner’s announcement followed reporting Monday by the Bangor Daily News that his campaign had canceled a string of events Sunday and Monday as rumors swirled among

Maine Democrats that another potentially damaging story was coming.

Under Maine state law, Democrats could replace Platner on the ballot if he were to drop out by 5 p.m. on the second Monday in July, which falls on July 13.

The state party would then need to make a replacement by the fourth Monday of the month, July 27.

On Monday, the Maine Democratic Party called on Platner to withdraw as Senate nominee, citing the serious nature of the allegations and the high stakes of the race.

“This Senate race comes at a pivotal moment in the struggle against a government, supported by Senator Collins, that serves the interests of the wealthy and the powerful at the expense of ordinary Maine people,” party leaders said in a statement.

NYC fighting lawsuit that demands 9/11 toxin docs

New York Daily News

NEW YORK — Hours after Mayor Zohran Mamdani vowed to release New York City documents about the toxins swirling above ground zero in the days after 9/11 in time for the 25th anniversary of the attacks, city lawyers asked a judge to quash a lawsuit requesting the same papers, the New York Daily News has learned.

In court documents filed in Manhattan Supreme Court last Tuesday, city attorneys said the Freedom of Information Law lawsuit should be dismissed against the mayor’s office and the city Law Department because “both agencies conducted reasonable and diligent searches” and “no responsive records were located following those searches.”

The city’s response also claims that the lawsuit, filed by

attorney Andrew Carboy for 9/11 Health Watch, survivors of 9/11 illnesses and families of those who died of 9/11 illnesses, is premature because the search for the documents “remains ongoing.”

City officials said they filed the motion to dismiss after Carboy and his team wouldn’t agree to a continuance.

Carboy and his team filed the FOIL request three years ago, seeking to learn what city officials knew about the dangers of air quality at ground zero and when they knew it.

The dismissal was filed just hours after Mamdani announced that \$34 million had been added to the city’s budget so the law department could create an online portal for people to access documents about post-9/11 air quality and health risks.

DOJ to send election monitors to Michigan

The Detroit News

LANSING, Mich. — President Donald Trump’s Department of Justice has informed Michigan officials it intends to send election monitors to three cities in the battleground state for the Aug. 4 primary.

Letters from the federal department about the plans have mentioned Detroit, Lansing and East Lansing, said two sources who had knowledge of the messages but spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren’t authorized to discuss them publicly.

The Detroit News obtained a copy of the letter that was sent directly to Chris Swope, Lansing’s city clerk.

“As part of our assessment of your administration of the federal primary election, we plan to have election monitors at

your 2026 primary election,” wrote Timothy Mellett, deputy chief of the Department of Justice’s Voting Section. “We will contact you a week prior to election monitoring to discuss the particulars of the monitoring effort.”

All three cities are Democratic strongholds. Detroit is Michigan’s largest city. Lansing and East Lansing, which is home to Michigan State University, are located in the swing 7th U.S. House District, where Republican U.S. Rep. Tom Barrett of Charlotte is seeking a second term in November but faces no primary opponent.

The letters from the Department of Justice were delivered in recent weeks and marked an escalation of the Trump administration’s bid to scrutinize voting in Michigan.

Super Typhoon Bavi tears through Rota

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Super Typhoon Bavi battered the small Pacific island of Rota, leaving its 2,000 residents without power or running water, according to the island's mayor on Tuesday.

Bavi made a direct hit as a Category 5-equivalent storm Monday morning on the 33-square-mile island in the Northern Marianas, bringing heavy downpours and devastating 180 mph winds.

The storm damaged the island in "every aspect," Mayor Aubry Hocog said.

"Our public facilities, our government, our assets, our private residences and then even our port of entries — our airport and seaport — they have undergone damage," she said.

Hocog said the island had tapped into a reservoir to provide water.

The storm caused no deaths, and no missing were reported as of Tuesday afternoon, although two residents were injured, according to Auston Reyes, a spokesman for the mayor's operations center. Dozens of people on Rota were in shelters Tuesday, he said.

Bavi weakened to a Category 4-equivalent storm on Tuesday. It was about 420 miles west of the island and on track for Taiwan and the westernmost Nansei Islands of Japan.

Tinian and Saipan northeast of Rota and Guam to the southwest fared better. Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero on Facebook posts Tuesday said most buildings sur-

vived the storm unscathed and roads were mostly clear.

Videos shot along Guam beaches showed debris washed ashore and blocking some roads.

By 3 p.m. Tuesday, 17% of the power system load on Guam was restored, according to a Guam Joint Information Center bulletin. Of 120 water wells, 68 were online.

On Saipan and Tinian, workers hoped to restore power, water and wastewater within 24 hours, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. said in a 3 p.m. post to its Facebook page. Rota's utilities were still being assessed, it said.

Joint Region Marianas, which manages all Defense Department installations on Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, moved to "all-clear" status —

Tropical Cyclone Condition of Readiness 4 — at 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, according to the Joint Information Center.

Initial assessments found "no reports of significant damage to critical infrastructure or injuries to personnel resulting from the storm," Joint Region Marianas spokeswoman Navy Lt. Cmdr. Kristina Wiedemann said.

"Recovery operations remain focused on clearing debris, assessing facilities, restoring services, and returning installations to normal operations as conditions safely allow," she said.

Rota's government plans an official survey on Wednesday, but the "majority of homes" were affected and nearly everyone on the island experienced some level of flooding, Hocog said.

Zelenskyy: Ukraine's drone skills vital to NATO security

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Ukraine's superior ability to defeat drone attacks on a massive scale makes the country indispensable to Europe's security, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday as NATO leaders gathered for the opening of a two-day summit in Turkey.

Addressing defense industry leaders and top NATO commanders, Zelenskyy said Ukraine has developed capabilities unmatched anywhere in the world after more than four years of fending off relentless Russian missile and drone barrages.

"We have raised our interception rate against Russian Shahed drones to more than 90%. That means thousands of Russian attack drones shut down every week," Zelenskyy said. "With all due respect, no other country has the capability to defend against attack drones at this scale."

He argued those lessons should now become part of NATO's collective defense, saying Ukraine's

experience has transformed it into a frontline security asset for Europe rather than simply a country seeking protection.

Zelenskyy's comments come as Ukraine has begun to regain the initiative in its war with Russia, which launched its full-scale invasion of the country in 2022.

On Wednesday, Zelenskyy is expected to meet with President Donald Trump during the NATO summit in Ankara. While much of the gathering is expected to center on some of Trump's priorities, Ukraine's war with Russia still looms over events.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, speaking on the eve of the summit, said one focus would be on shoring up allies' weapons support for Ukraine.

"Right now, Ukraine is changing the dynamics on the battlefield, thanks to the bravery, the dedication and ingenuity of their armed forces. But they need our continued support, especially when it comes to air defense," Rutte said.

Frustration boiling over as Cuba power grid again fails

The Herald (Rock Hill, S.C.)

Cuba's power grid failed again on Monday afternoon, leaving the entire island without electricity, following days of protests over the long blackouts amid the island's hot summer.

Shortly after noon, the state utilities company Electric Union of Cuba announced a "total disconnection of the national electric power system" and said it was investigating the cause.

About two hours later, the company said one generating unit at a gas plant in Jaruco, east of the capital city of Havana, was already working,

Cuba's power grid has collapsed multiple times since 2024, after decades of failure to maintain and modernize the Soviet-era power stations. The old power plants lack the reserve capacity to absorb glitches and breakdowns, which regularly cascade into the collapse of the entire grid or significant portions of it.

As recently as March the whole island went dark twice.

A de facto oil blockade imposed by the Trump administration to push the communist government to negotiate and make reforms has aggravated the situation. Cuba's leader, Miguel Díaz-Canel, has said the government has not been able to import fuel since January, except for one shipment from Russia. He said the government was speeding up the installation of solar panels, but that's unlikely to yield immediate relief for a population enduring a severe humanitarian crisis.

The energy crisis affects all aspects of daily life, because the lack of electricity and fuel affects water distribution, transportation, garbage collection and communications, including cell-phone and internet service.

Daily protests, a rarity for decades, are now common on the island. During evening blackouts, residents bang pots and pans, take to the streets to protest, or set the trash piling on the streets on fire.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

County's first human case of West Nile detected

CA SACRAMENTO — Sacramento County reported its first human infection of West Nile virus this year, county health officials announced Thursday.

According to Sacramento County Public Health officials, a woman in her 60s tested positive for the disease and is still recovering. The announcement marks the second case of the mosquito-transmitted West Nile Virus in California this year, following the first known human infection announced by Long Beach officials on June 26.

"This human case confirms that West Nile virus is active and the risk to residents is increasing," Gary Goodman, Sacramento-Yolo Mosquito & Vector Control District Manager, said in a recently released statement.

"It's important for residents to stay protected because all it takes is one bite from an infected mosquito to get the virus."

West Nile virus activity has increased since the onset of mosquito season, which typically spans May through October. Since May 20, Sacramento-Yolo Mosquito & Vector Control District officials have detected 31 dead birds and 20 mosquito samples that tested positive for the virus, which is considered endemic in Sacramento and Yolo counties.

Frozen fruit recalled over E. coli-linked illnesses

FL MIAMI — Frozen fruit sold under Publix's GreenWise brand has been recalled in Florida and

seven other states out of fears it might be contaminated with a deadly form of E. coli.

Chilean company Frutas y Hortalizas del Sur S.A. recalled only lot No. 60401 of GreenWise Organic Whole Blueberries, which had a best by date of Feb. 9, 2028, and came in 10-ounce bags.

This covers Publix stores in Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Georgia, Alabama, Virginia and Tennessee. Customers should also check their freezers.

Man charged with theft of Smokey Bear signs

FL ORLANDO — A Florida man faces up to 10 years in prison for federal charges related to the theft of Smokey Bear signs from the Panhandle to Orlando in order to sell them on Facebook Marketplace.

A federal grand jury on Monday indicted Hunter Drake Lovett, 30, of Pace, for theft of government property, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Florida.

The indictment charges that starting in June 2025, Lovett obtained signs "belonging to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Forest Service, National Park Service, United States Air Force, and United States Army Corps of Engineers."

Number of Legionnaires' disease cases now at 10

NY NEW YORK — The number of New Yorkers diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease on the Upper East Side has jumped to 10, offi-

cials said Saturday.

Council Speaker Julie Menin and other city officials were alerted to the significant increase as the city continues to check cooling towers in the affected areas to see if the potentially deadly bacteria has spread.

So far, no deaths have been linked to the outbreak. Public health officials have said they intend to begin increasing outreach throughout the area to decrease the spread.

Black bear looking for food in neighborhoods

MA BOSTON — How do bears handle this brutal heat and humidity?

Well, at least one black bear appears to be wicked hungry, as a bear south of Boston has been roaming communities looking for food.

Several Avon and Randolph residents have seen the black bear in recent days, with police and animal control urging residents to "remain alert" and "use caution."

In Avon, DW Field Parkway was closed on Friday after the bear was seen in the area.

"For your safety, please stay out of the park and avoid the area until further notice," Avon Police posted. "This will allow authorities and wildlife officials to safely handle the situation and do what they need to do."

Blue crab population increased this year

MD BALTIMORE — The Chesapeake Bay's blue crab population saw an increase this year, despite still facing a concerning decline

over the past decade, according to a news release Thursday from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

May's winter dredge survey, conducted by Maryland and Virginia fisheries, predicted a jump in crabs to 349 million, compared with last year's record low population of 238 million.

For reference, there were about 50% fewer crabs in the bay in 2023 compared with the crustacean's population back in 2011 of 452 million.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation emphasized the need for pollution prevention, habitat restoration and methods to suppress the growth of invasive blue catfish — which eat the crustaceans — despite the "encouraging" population increase.

Budget cuts hit schools hard, with 568 layoffs

MA BOSTON — Mayor Michelle Wu's \$4.9 billion city budget cuts nearly 570 positions from Boston Public Schools, a trade-off her office said is "necessary" to save nearly \$75 million annually but has sparked public outcry.

Wu's office released a statement last Wednesday that provides a full accounting of job cuts included in the \$1.7 billion BPS budget and defends the decision, in response to a letter from Councilor Ed Flynn, who called the layoffs "disproportionate," given that Wu "worked to preserve jobs" in other city departments.

All in all, 568.5 positions have been reduced across the school district for the upcoming school year, per the mayor's office.

— From wire reports

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and Military News

Belgium tops US to reach quarterfinals

Associated Press

Images told the story of the United States' World Cup downfall.

Christian Pulisic sprawled on the field in agony after hurting an ankle.

Matt Freese holding his hands on his head after his gaffe gifted a goal.

Chris Richards crumpling to the ground, his face pressed on the grass.

Mauricio Pochettino kicking a rack in front of the American bench, sending four water bottles flying.

American hopes for a deep World Cup run at home ended when Charles De Ketelaere scored twice and assisted on another goal, helping Belgium expose the U.S. defensive liabilities in a 4-1 win Monday night that earned a quarterfinal berth.

"It stinks," Tyler Adams said. "This was a moment to have an opportunity to advance and really try and do something special. We fell short."

While the U.S. was boosted by the presence of star forward Folarin Balogun, whose one-game red-card suspension was controversially lifted by FIFA, American defenders were at fault in two first-half goals and Freese's how-

ler that gave the Red Devils a third early in the second half.

Second-half substitute Romelu Lukaku added Belgium's final goal in stoppage time after Richards' giveaway. The U.S. hadn't allowed that many goals in a World Cup game since a 5-1 loss to Czechoslovakia in the Americans' 1990 opener, when they returned to soccer's biggest stage after a 40-year absence.

"A very bad day," said Pochettino, the U.S. coach. "It's not like you are in a rocket and you improve and you grow. ... It's not linear."

This loss was a painful reckoning for a team that hoped to boost the sport but instead failed to shake a quarter-century of stagnation since 20-year-old Landon Donovan led the Americans to the 2002 quarterfinals. Since then, the U.S. has lost four times in the round of 16.

"Everyone had nerves, right, because we knew how much this meant for the whole country, not just our team," said 21-year-old defender Alex Freeman, the youngest U.S. player.

Belgium knocked out the U.S. in the round of 16 for the second time in 12 years and extended its unbeaten streak to 18 games. The Red Devils play 2010 champion

Spain on Friday at Inglewood, Calif., for a semifinal berth against France or Morocco.

All six CONCACAF nations have been eliminated, with the three co-hosts falling in the round of 16.

Malik Tillman tied the score 1-1 midway through the first half when he became the first player since France's Bernard Genghini in 1982 to have two free kick goals in a World Cup, but the Americans conceded less than a minute after the ensuing kickoff.

American star Christian Pulisic could only watch the end from the bench after injuring his right ankle when he hit Youri Tielemans' boot on a 52nd-minute shot attempt. Pulisic was replaced seven minutes later, finishing the tournament with no goals.

After winning three World Cup games for the first time in this expanded 48-nation tournament, the U.S. lost its seventh straight match to Belgium. The Americans have dropped 11 of their last 12 games against European opponents, winning only their round of 32 match against Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Belgium pressed from the start and exposed a defense regarded as the Americans' weak spot. Do-di Lukébakio made a long diag-

onal pass to the opposite corner, leading to the opening goal. Leandro Troussard controlled the ball and his cross was blocked by Freeman and popped into the air. Freeman headed the ball into the penalty area and Timothy Castagne charged after it and hooked a centering pass around Richards. De Ketelaere split Antonee Robinson and Tim Ream. Then with his right foot redirected the ball into an open net.

Tillman scored after Brandon Mechele knocked down Balogun about 25 yards from goal. Tillman's kick deflected off Hans Vanaken's head and deflected to the left of goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, who had dived right.

Troussard got around Sergiño Dest for a cross and De Ketelaere outjumped Ream and headed the ball past Freese in the 33rd minute for his eighth international goal.

Belgium built a two-goal lead when Mechele lofted a long ball that Freese chested after two hops. Freese hesitated with a touch, then scrambled and kicked the ball off De Ketelaere. Vanaken one-timed a shot from 35 yards that deflected in off Ream.

Lukaku entered in the 67th minute and scored his 93rd international goal.

Merino lifts Spain past Portugal with stoppage-time goal

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Mikel Merino was still on the bench in the final minutes of regulation, with Spain coach Luis de la Fuente worried about hanging on to his substitutes as long as possible because of looming extra time.

The Arsenal forward made all that fretting moot.

Merino scored in the first minute of second-half stoppage time, and Spain beat Portugal 1-0 on Monday to end the World Cup career of superstar Cristiano Ronaldo.

Merino had just been

knocked down, and a foul was called. While Portugal's Bernardo Silva argued, Merino played the ball back in, ran toward the goal and easily beat goalkeeper Diogo Costa after a series of passes capped by Ferran Torres' nifty ball through the middle.

"He's one of the best in his position worldwide, and he has given us a fantastic result and a fantastic goal," de la Fuente said through a translator. "I want to express the importance of substitutes that came in later in the game. Not just today, but the contribution in other games

has been enormous."

Spain, which has a 35-game unbeaten streak, advanced to the quarterfinals for the first time since winning its only World Cup title in 2010. La Roja will play Belgium, a 4-1 winner over the United States, on Friday in Inglewood, Calif.

Ronaldo was trying to get Portugal to the quarterfinals in a second consecutive tournament for the first time. Instead, the career on soccer's biggest stage is over for the all-time leader in international goals (146) and appearances (233).

Merino didn't enter until the

85th minute, and his heads-up play showed some of the versatility that helped Arsenal win its first Premier League title in more than 20 years this spring.

This was Mikel Merino's first World Cup goal, and 11th for the national team.

The latest meeting of Iberian Peninsula rivals that first played in a friendly in Madrid 105 years ago was quite the contrast to their most recent World Cup match.

The other World Cup meeting was Spain's 1-0 victory — also in the round of 16 — when La Roja won the title in South Africa.

Gauff tops Pegula to reach Wimbledon semis

Associated Press

LONDON — There's no panic in Coco Gauff.

Down a set after untimely double-faults, Gauff rallied past Jessica Pegula 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 on Tuesday to reach the Wimbledon semifinals for the first time.

The two-time major champion raised her arms in the air after Pegula sent a weak backhand into the net on the first match point in an all-American quarter-final on Centre Court.

"I've been going three sets almost every match. I feel like when you have that faith in yourself as a competitor, when the match goes a distance, you know when you lose one set, you're not panicking," Gauff said in an on-court interview.

With the victory, the 22-year-old Gauff became the youngest player to reach the semifinals at all four Grand Slams since Maria Sharapova, who completed the feat at the 2007 French Open.

Gauff will face 10th-seeded Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic for a spot in Saturday's final. Muchova, the 2023 French Open runner-up, eliminat-

ed Naomi Osaka 7-6 (4), 6-4 on No. 1 Court.

In Gauff's six previous appearances at the All England Club, she had never gotten past the fourth round. But perhaps the experience at the grass-court major is starting to pay off.

"I think after seven years playing this tournament, it's finally the first time I can walk on Centre Court and I didn't feel nervous," she said. "So I don't know if I'm becoming a vet."

The "vet" was undone by early double-faults, though, putting herself in a hole to start the match. She led 40-0 right away but lost the next five points — including two on double-faults — to go down 1-0. After breaking Pegula in the sixth game, Gauff was immediately broken to love with two more double-faults.

Gauff called the last two sets "really great tennis."

"Jess' ball is so flat and low. So I think I just needed to address that ... be in there in the rallies and just play the tennis that I wanted to play. And I think I started to land more first serves in the

court," said Gauff, who cranked up one serve to 126 mph in the third game of the second set. "So I think that also helped and just trusting my shots."

Sinner beats Struff

On No. 1 Court, defending champion Jannik Sinner kept his title defense on track by beating Jan-Lennard Struff 7-5, 7-6 (4), 6-3 to advance to the semifinals.

The top-ranked Sinner continues to put his French Open meltdown behind him. He needed five sets to get past 50th-ranked Miomir Kecmanovic in the first round, but since then they've been straight-set victories, allowing the 24-year-old Italian to avoid marathon sessions.

Sinner will next face either seven-time Wimbledon singles champion Novak Djokovic or third-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime. The men's final is Sunday.

In the completion of a fourth-round match, second-seeded Alexander Zverev beat Jiri Lehecka 6-4, 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (6) to set up a quarterfinal Wednesday against sixth-seeded Taylor Fritz.

Cavaliers' Mitchell agrees to 4-year, \$273M extension

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Donovan Mitchell has agreed to a four-year, \$273 million contract extension with the Cleveland Cavaliers, a person familiar with the deal told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the extension had not been announced. Tuesday was the first day that Cleveland could offer Mitchell the extension. The seven-time All-Star had two seasons remaining on his contract and could have waited to re-sign until next summer, when he would be eligible for a five-year supermax deal worth \$350 million.

The extension includes a \$76 million player option for the 2030-31 season and a full trade kicker, the person said.

For now, it is the fourth-biggest contract in terms of total value in NBA history behind the

\$314 million contract Boston gave to Jayson Tatum, the \$285 million deal the Celtics gave to Jaylen Brown and the \$276 million deal Nikola Jokic currently has with Denver.

Mitchell's extension is the first in what is likely to be a series of moves for the Cavaliers. There is the possibility LeBron James could return to his hometown franchise, which he led to its first championship in 2016. James Harden — whom Cleveland acquired at the trade deadline — also is considering a new deal to remain with the Cavs after turning down his player option for 2026-27.

Winter Olympic events added and dropped

LAUSANNE, Switzerland — Bonjour to the Winter Olympics synchronized figure skating and freeride skiing and snowboard.

Au revoir Nordic combined.

The 2030 French Alps Winter Games program agreed by the International Olympic Committee on Tuesday adds two new disciplines, reprieves snowboard parallel giant slalom, and removes Nordic combined, which is currently for only men.

The IOC executive board had a gender parity option by adding women's and team events, but instead cut completely a sport that has a 102-year Olympic history yet struggled to find a modern audience for its mix of ski jumping and cross-country skiing.

The governing body studies the popularity of disciplines in 14 ways, including broadcast coverage, digital media and ticket sales. The IOC said Nordic combined ranked last in 11 of 14 indicators during the Milan Cortina Winter Games this year.

IOC ends neutral status vetting for Russians

LAUSANNE, Switzerland — The IOC advised Olympic sports bodies Tuesday to end a program vetting Russians for neutral status ahead of qualifying events for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

The move was expected since the International Olympic Committee advised two months ago that athletes from Belarus, Russia's military ally in the full military invasion of Ukraine, should be allowed again to compete with their full national identity.

The IOC eased entry requirements for Russian athletes and teams while lifting its suspension since October 2023 of the Russian Olympic Committee.

The terms of that suspension — imposed when the Russian Olympic body incorporated regional sports councils from occupied regions of Ukraine — no longer applied, the IOC said.

Torrens, Mets rally to defeat Braves in 10

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Luis Torrens doubled in two runs with two outs in the 10th inning and the last-place New York Mets beat the NL East-leading Atlanta Braves 7-6 on Monday night to split the four-game series.

Matt Olson hit two homers for Atlanta, including a game-tying two-run shot in the ninth.

New York right-hander Luke Weaver gave up a run-scoring double to Michael Harris II in the 10th, but earned his first save.

Juan Soto hit a go-ahead, three-run homer off Braves All-Star closer Raisel Iglesias with two outs in the ninth to give the Mets a 5-3 lead.

New York closer Devin Williams blew the lead without recording an out. Ozzie Albies doubled to lead off the ninth and scored on Olson's opposite-field homer to left field to tie the game. Brooks Raley (3-3) recorded the final out in the ninth.

Dodgers 8, Rockies 7 (11): Dalton Rushing singled in the winning run against a drawn-in infield in the 11th inning, rallying host Los Angeles over Colorado in the Dodgers' first extra-innings game of the season.

LA improved to 60-32, the first team in the majors this season with 60 wins. The Dodgers were

the only team in the majors not to have played extras. It was also their first extra-inning game since Game 7 of last year's World Series, when they beat Toronto for their second straight championship.

Los Angeles tied the game 7-7 in the 10th after the Rockies took the lead on an RBI groundout from Jake McCarthy in the top of the inning. Andy Pages started the inning at second and took third on Freeman's groundout to first off Brennan Bernardino. Pages scored on second baseman Edouard Julien's fielding error of Mookie Betts' ground ball.

Nationals 12, Astros 11: James Wood hit a grand slam in the fifth inning and host Washington overcame a five-run deficit and held off Houston in the opener of a three-game series.

CJ Abrams and Curtis Mead each homered and drove in three runs as part of three-hit games for the Nationals. Nasim Núñez also had three hits and his major league-leading 33rd stolen base.

Jose Altuve, Yainer Diaz and Brice Matthews homered for the Astros. They scored four runs in the eighth off reliever Cole Henry to pull within 12-11, a rally capped by Matthews' three-run shot to left.

Giants 10, Blue Jays 1: Heliot Ramos homered twice and drove in five runs to back Landen Roupp's first win in more than two months, and host San Francisco beat Toronto.

Ramos, who tripled and scored on an error leading off the game, had a three-run homer off reliever Tommy Nance in the sixth. Ramos then got to Adam Nacko for a two-run blast in the eighth.

Kazuma Okamoto hit his 20th home run for the Blue Jays, ending their 29-inning scoreless streak.

Diamondbacks 8, Padres 0: Max Kepler homered and drove in four runs to lead visiting Arizona to a win over slumping San Diego.

It was Kepler's first home run since returning from an 80-game suspension after testing positive for a performance-enhancing substance. Kepler was activated by the Diamondbacks on June 25.

The Padres are in freefall, losing nine of their past 10 games and 28 of their last 43.

Royals 15, Phillies 1: Salvador Perez, Luke Maile, Lane Thomas and Tyler Tolbert homered and host Kansas City tagged Philadelphia ace Cristopher Sánchez for a career-

worst nine earned runs in a rout over the Phillies.

The Royals (36-54), who entered the game with the second-worst record in baseball, scored in every inning and banded out a season-high 15 runs on 22 hits. Tyler Tolbert had his first career five-hit game, and the first by a Kansas City player since 2022.

Yankees 5, Rays 1: Cam Schlichter pitched eight innings for the second time this season, José Caballero homered twice and visiting New York beat Tampa Bay in the opener of a four-game series.

Schlichter (9-5), who allowed a career-high six runs to Detroit in his last start, struck out eight, allowed four hits and walked none. It was his longest start since tossing eight innings April 23 to beat Boston.

Brewers 4, Cardinals 3: David Hamilton and Brice Turang drove in two runs each during a four-run seventh inning and visiting Milwaukee rallied from a three-run deficit to beat St. Louis.

Turang's fielding error led to two unearned runs off Shane Bieber (4-2) in the third as the Cardinals jumped in front. Nelson Velázquez had a leadoff double in the sixth and scored on a single by Masyn Winn for a 3-0 advantage.

Phillies ace Sánchez unable to explain road struggles

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Philadelphia Phillies ace Cristopher Sánchez summed up one of the worse outings of his career with one word: crap.

Sánchez could have used much stronger language after giving up a career-worst nine earned runs in just 3⅓ innings in Monday's 15-1 loss to the Kansas City Royals.

Asked after the game if he could pinpoint something that led to the bad outing, the 29-year-old left-hander was lost for a cause.

"Nothing really," he said through an interpreter. "I mean, it's just a game. As I learn from the good things that we have on the field, and the things when we perform well, the same thing when I don't perform. I just

try to learn from it."

Sánchez, whose previous worst outing for earned runs allowed was seven against the Cubs in April, gave up three of Kansas City's four home runs — all on his changeup, one of his signature pitches. Again, he had no answer as to why.

"I don't really know," he said. "Maybe it wasn't doing as it always does. You gotta get credit to them, because they got me today. They made me pay, and you just have to keep going."

Whatever the reason, Sánchez has pitched far worse on the road than he has at home. He is 7-1 with a 0.86 ERA and 85 strikeouts in 73 innings at Citizens Bank Park, where he may have a chance to start the All-Star Game on

Tuesday. Away from Philadelphia, however, he is just 3-3 with a 5.32 ERA in 47⅓ innings.

Sánchez was not helped by his defense. With the Phillies leading 1-0 in the bottom of the first, Sánchez faced runners on first and third with one out. Jac Caglianone hit a grounder to second for a force at the base, but shortstop Trea Turner's relay throw to first was wild, allowing Bobby Witt Jr. to score the tying run. The Royals went on to score five more runs in the first, and the rout was on.

"You've got to make (that play)," Turner said. "Who knows how that game ends up. (If) he gets out of it clean, and then gets on a roll, who knows how it turns out. That was a game-changer."