

## Report: Poland pivotal to US security

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

An American armored brigade should be permanently stationed in Poland as part of a broader military realignment designed to prepare the U.S. for simultaneous conflicts with Russia and China, according to a new think tank report.

Under the proposal, Europe would retain capabilities that are less relevant to a Taiwan conflict, such as armored formations, while more Navy and Air Force assets would shift to Asia given the need to maneuver over great distances.

“Without urgent and rapid changes, the United States risks losing the ability to deter major conflict — especially in the Indo-Pacific — and to fight and win a protracted war in one or more regions,” the Center for

Strategic and International Studies said in a June report.

The report focused on how to fight a two-front war with Russia and China, a topic that has emerged as a focal point for top U.S. military commanders and has already prompted changes in Pentagon planning.

U.S. European Command’s Gen. Alexis Grynkeiwich, who also serves as NATO’s top military commander, has repeatedly warned that Russia and China could launch coordinated military action aimed at overstretching American forces.

NATO has already adjusted some of its war plans to account for such a scenario, with the United States now providing fewer personnel to the alliance’s force model for response operations.

“There has been an unhealthy

co-dependence ... on U.S. forces,” Grynkeiwich said in a June 3 statement, adding that the “potential reality of simultaneous conflict in multiple theaters” demands that European allies handle a larger share of the combat burden.

Manned and unmanned aircraft and naval vessels are areas where allies can immediately step up, he said.

The CSIS report contends that Poland should be home to a permanently based armored brigade, an arrangement that it says would be more efficient than rotating forces into the country.

“Army ground forces — particularly U.S. armor — should provide the bulk of the U.S. contribution to support NATO allies in Europe, given the utility of these forces to a land fight

against Russian forces on the continent and their limited use in the Indo-Pacific beyond the Korean Peninsula,” the report said.

Capabilities that the authors say may shift to the Pacific include air refueling assets, which are critical for long-distance operations.

Other capabilities could be shifted as needed, such as Europe-based U.S. F-35s, which would likely be targets in the early stages of a conflict with China if they were positioned somewhere like Japan, according to the report.

But some of the CSIS recommendations are at odds with recent Pentagon moves in Europe. For example, the Pentagon’s decision last year to end rotating infantry brigades to Romania should be reinstated, the report said.

## Trump calls off strikes on Iran, cites progress on talks

By LARA KORTE  
*Stars and Stripes*

After two days of U.S.-Iran attacks and sharp rhetoric, President Donald Trump said Thursday he called off new strikes on Iran and signaled possible progress in ceasefire talks.

“Discussions with the Islamic Republic of Iran have been brought to the highest level of Iranian leadership and approved,” Trump said in social media post.

Trump earlier Thursday said the U.S. military would hit Iran “VERY HARD TONIGHT.” In a post on Truth Social, Trump also threatened to seize Kharg Island and “assume total control” of Iran’s country’s oil and

gas markets “at some point in the not too distant future.”

Iran had said earlier Thursday that the recent U.S. attacks on its military facilities had rendered the countries’ temporary ceasefire “practically meaningless.”

In a statement carried in state media, the Iranian foreign ministry said the U.S. strikes were “illegal and criminal.” Iranian officials also warned countries hosting U.S. forces that they now stand “alongside the aggressors” and could face retaliation.

Iran and the U.S. signed a temporary ceasefire agreement more than two months ago but have since struggled to settle on a diplomatic deal to

formally end the war.

In recent months, Trump has threatened on multiple occasions to take Kharg Island, which serves as the terminal for much of Iran’s oil exports, and launch devastating strikes on Iran’s energy infrastructure.

Iran’s parliamentary speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, warned in a social media post Thursday that “wrong strategies and impulsive decisions” would wreak havoc on energy markets and “create an endless quagmire that you will be stuck in for years,” The Associated Press reported.

U.S. Central Command said Wednesday it had conducted precision attacks against Iran’s

military surveillance capabilities, communication systems and air-defense sites across the country.

The operation followed days of escalating attacks between the United States and Iran that began with the downing of a U.S. Army Apache helicopter.

Iranian state media reported that its armed forces had targeted five U.S. military bases on Thursday, including Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan, Ahmed Al-Jaber and Ali Al Salem air bases in Kuwait and the U.S. 5th Fleet headquarters and Sheikh Isa Air Base in Bahrain.

CENTCOM has not confirmed any damage to U.S. bases or personnel.

# \$1.1 trillion DOD spending bill unveiled

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Republicans on the House Appropriations Committee unveiled a \$1.1 trillion Pentagon spending bill Wednesday that funds a military with 44,500 additional personnel and a range of pay raises for troops.

The legislation covers most of the Trump administration's \$1.15 trillion base defense budget request but does not include military construction, which is funded through a separate Department of Veterans Affairs appropriations bill, and other defense programs funded elsewhere.

The defense measure was to be considered and voted on by the committee's defense sub-panel on Thursday. The full committee is expected to take up the bill on June 24.

Republicans on Wednesday praised the legislation for strengthening support for service members and investing in munitions, weapons and technology that conflicts such as the war in Iran showed a pressing need for.

"The world has a way of exposing the consequences of complacency. We will not sit idle," said Rep. Tom Cole of Oklahoma, the Republican chairman of the committee. "Instead, thanks to this legislation, we are ensuring our armed forces remain equipped, prepared and ready for whatever threat emerges."

As requested by the Trump administration, the bill funds a pay raise of 7% for military personnel in grades E-5 and below, a 6% raise for those in grades E-6 to O-3 and a 5% raise for grades O-4 and above.

It funds a total end strength of 2,112,200

military personnel — an increase of 44,500 above the level authorized in fiscal 2026, which began in October 2025.

The legislation allocates \$248 billion for weapons procurement across the Defense Department, including \$10.6 billion for critical munitions such as Patriot interceptors and \$836 million for the first-time procurement of low-cost munitions systems.

It also provides \$56.7 billion for the Navy to purchase 21 new ships, including 11 warships.

The bill invests more than \$7.5 billion in hypersonic weapons and their testing and \$2 billion into several drone warfare initiatives. Golden Dome, the missile defense shield touted by President Donald Trump, would receive about \$400 million under the measure.

## Global War on Terrorism Memorial concept revealed

By MATTHEW ADAMS  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation on Wednesday revealed the initial concepts for a permanent tribute on the National Mall to honor the generations of Americans who served in Afghanistan and Iraq following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

"This design was shaped by history and held sacred from the beginning — forged by sacrifice and informed by the voices

of warriors and their families," Michael "Rod" Rodriguez, president and CEO of the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation and a retired U.S. Army Green Beret, said in a statement.

The foundation in 2018 began collecting design input from more than 20,000 citizens. World-renowned Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, whose designs include Japan National Stadium built for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, was selected to lead the design team.

A 23-member Design Advisory

Council consisting of Gold Star family members, service members, veterans and veteran families was formed to ensure that lived experience, not symbolism alone, would inform every element of the design.

The foundation's news release included a brief video showing the memorial located on Constitution Avenue near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial.

Steel and stone relics recovered from the sites of the Sept. 11 attacks stand at each of the memorial's three entrances,

marking where the journey began.

Rising above the site is a classically inspired amphitheater, including an arch formed from a ribbon of soil, affectionately called "the embrace." The arch is built of steel reclaimed from combat operations during the Global War on Terrorism and is covered in native vegetation.

The memorial's orientation intentionally aligns with Section 60 of Arlington National Cemetery, where many of the Global War on Terrorism fallen are laid to rest.

## Hegseth visits Gitmo and warns Cuba over weapons

*Bloomberg News*

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth warned Cuba not to acquire armaments that could put the U.S. military, or the U.S. mainland, at risk.

Hegseth, speaking to troops Wednesday at the U.S. military base at Guantanamo Bay, in eastern Cuba, urged the island's communist leadership to

be cautious.

"It would be unwise for the government of Cuba to try to procure or get access to the types of weapons that could reach this base or the American homeland," he said. "They would be inviting the kind of confrontation not only do they not want but they could not stand."

Last month, Axios reported that Cuba had acquired more than 300 military drones and had discussed plans to attack Guantanamo Bay or Key West, Fla., just 90 miles north. Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel denied that Cuba represented a threat, but said at the time the island had "an absolute and legitimate right to defend itself."

Hegseth's visit isn't unprecedented for a U.S. defense chief, but it is notable as President Donald Trump's administration escalates its threats toward the island's leadership. Hegseth previously visited Guantanamo in February 2025, and was deployed there during a 14-year tenure with the National Guard.

# Taiwan launch demonstrates HIMARS' reach

*Stars and Stripes*

Taiwan launched a U.S. rocket system in China's direction for the first time during military exercises on Wednesday, according to news reports.

The Taiwanese military fired its High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems westward into the Taiwan Strait, the 110-mile-body of water that separates the island from China, according to reports by The Associated Press and Reuters news agency.

Although Taiwan has previ-

ously test-fired the HIMARS, obtained from the United States, off its east coast, this is the first live-fire demonstration into the strait, the reports said.

"Due to the current enemy threat, we will continue HIMARS training with unwavering determination to protect Taiwan as the nation's strongest force," army Sgt. Wang Ming-hui said, according to AP.

China's ships and aircraft regularly drill around the island and test the limits of Taiwan's

military response.

President Xi Jinping has made a goal of uniting Taiwan with China, which regards the self-governing democracy as a renegade province. Taiwan's government rejects those claims.

The demonstration employed reduced-range practice rockets that didn't fly very far from the island before falling into the water, AP reported.

However, HIMARS, with a range of 190 miles, could strike

targets along the coast of Fujian province across the strait.

The exercise showed Taiwan's ability to "shoot and scoot" with its HIMARS — to fire at its target and then move before it's located by enemy radar, according to Reuters, which cited unnamed military officials.

"Our HIMARS demonstrated the solid combat capabilities of the unit and successfully completed this training," company commander Ko Ming-pin said.

## Navy plans to fly P-8 recon flights from remote Wake Island

**BY WYATT OLSON**

*Stars and Stripes*

The U.S. Navy wants to use the airfield on tiny Wake Island for operations involving P-8 Poseidon reconnaissance aircraft, according to a contract solicitation by the service.

The Navy is planning to use the island's airfield for two 60-day periods between Friday and Nov. 30 for what the solicitation describes as "Navy Summer Exercise 2026."

The P-8 aircraft will be operated by Task Force 72, which leads reconnaissance and surveillance forces in support of the Navy's Japan-based 7th Fleet, according to the contract solicitation documents.

Wake Island, just under 3 square miles, lies about 2,300 miles west of Honolulu and 1,500 east of Guam.

It has no permanent residents.

The U.S. Air Force maintains and operates the island's 9,800-foot-long runway.

The scope of work being contracted by the Navy includes extensive airfield operations support, such as extending airfield

hours for the P-8 missions, providing air traffic control, fueling support and daily weather observations.

The contractor would also process and screen passengers, manage cargo operations and provide meals and berthing for up to 150 personnel.

The 7th Fleet declined to provide details on the exercise in a statement emailed Tuesday.

"The Navy continues to maintain the operational use of the airfield on Wake Island to include support for the P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft," the fleet said.

The Navy's massive Rim of the Pacific exercise will take place in waters around Hawaii from June 24 through the end of July.

Other Navy exercises in the Pacific this year include Pacific Vanguard in the late summer in the Philippine Sea and Malabar in late fall in the Western Pacific or Indian Ocean.

Wake Island was held by the Japanese through the entirety of World War II after capturing it on Dec. 23, 1941.

## Soldier admits to using recruits' identities to defraud Navy Federal

**BY CHAD GARLAND**

*Stars and Stripes*

An Army recruiter in New Jersey who tried to profit from stealing the identities of people she sought to enlist is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to crimes her lawyer called "an aberration."

Former Sgt. 1st Class Jane Crosby, 35, pleaded guilty in federal court in Newark to one count of bank fraud and one count of aggravated identity theft, the Justice Department said Monday.

She used the stolen identities to open Navy Federal Credit Union accounts, deposit fraudulent checks and apply for over \$250,000 in loans and credit cards, according to court records.

Prosecutors will not pursue additional charges of bank fraud or identity theft, according to an agreement Crosby signed with the Justice Department in February.

She faces up to 30 years in prison for the bank fraud charge and a minimum two-year sentence for the charge. She could receive leniency for accepting responsibility, the agreement

states.

Crosby was working at an Army recruiting station in East Orange, N.J., in late 2023, when she used the prospective recruits' personal information to open "pre-active duty membership" accounts in their names, court records say.

"Such accounts are intended to facilitate the direct deposit of soon-to-be service members' salaries once they join the military," the DOJ statement said.

All told, she sought more than \$266,000 in loans or lines of credit and tried to deposit thousands of dollars in fraudulent checks, according to prosecutors.

The credit union canceled or denied most of the applications and rejected many of the checks.

But after making some deposits, Crosby managed to withdraw thousands of dollars.

And while only two credit cards appeared to have been approved and issued, she used one with a limit of nearly \$15,000 to buy plane tickets for herself and a relative to travel from Las Vegas to New York, the complaint said.

# US refunds \$22 billion in tariff revenue

*Bloomberg News*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Treasury refunded nearly \$22 billion in tariff revenue collected from importers in May, the first swath of such repayments since the Supreme Court struck down a major component of President Donald Trump's trade policy.

The amount was roughly equal to tariffs taken in during the month, according to a Treasury Department statement Wednesday, meaning that refunds essentially canceled out the government's duties revenue.

Overall, the deficit narrowed

to \$1.25 trillion for the first eight months of the fiscal year, representing a 9% decline from the same period last year.

The administration began processing refunds in April after the Supreme Court ruled that President Donald Trump didn't have the authority to impose tariffs using the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. But the eventual extent of the reimbursements remains uncertain after the administration appealed a court order to refund every importer who paid the \$166 billion collected under IEEPA authority.

When Treasury Secretary

Scott Bessent was asked about the tariff refund case during a congressional hearing last week, he said the money would be returned to the companies that imported the tariffed goods.

Revenue from tariffs, which peaked in October, made a significant contribution to the Treasury's coffers during the 2025 fiscal year, resulting in the smallest deficit in three years. Bessent has said revenue collected through tariffs imposed using other authorities will result in the same amount hitting the government's coffers in 2026 but some of those measures are not fully in place.

The interest the U.S. paid on its debt was \$133 billion in May, an increase of 44% over the same month last year. Individual tax withholdings plus Social Security and Medicare taxes collected increased to \$286 billion in May from \$247 billion last year, while corporate tax receipts were down by 67%.

For the full fiscal year, the U.S. deficit is expected to widen, based on Congressional Budget Office projections. The nonpartisan outfit said in its February outlook that the deficit would reach \$1.85 trillion for the 2026 fiscal year and \$1.89 trillion for 2027.

## Man pleads guilty in 2025 Minn. lawmaker shootings

*Pioneer Press*

Vance Boelter admitted in federal court Thursday to the targeted shootings of two Minnesota state lawmakers at their homes nearly one year ago, an admission that spares the assassin from a possible death penalty sentence.

Boelter's plea in U.S. District Court at the Minneapolis courthouse came after negotiations with federal prosecutors, who agreed not to pursue the death penalty against him in the June 14 shootings that killed state Rep. Melissa Hortman and husband, Mark, at their Brooklyn Park home, and that wounded state Sen. John Hoffman and wife, Yvette, at their home in Champlin about an hour and a half earlier.

Boelter pleaded guilty to all six federal charges against him: two counts each of stalking, murder and discharge of a firearm during a crime of violence.

As part of the plea agreement, Boelter agreed to two consecutive life terms in prison.

Boelter, wearing an orange jail jumpsuit, entered his plea before Judge John Tunheim in a full

courtroom that included John and Yvette Hoffman, along with the Hortmans' two adult children, Colin and Sophie.

A sentencing date was scheduled, but Tunheim said the plan is for it to be held next month.

Boelter, 58, was captured near his home in rural Green Isle nearly 48 hours later, in what prosecutors have called the largest search for a suspect in Minnesota history. He also faces state charges, including first-degree premeditated murder, which carries life in prison without the possibility of parole. That case has been on hold pending the resolution of his federal charges.

In the early morning hours of June 14, Boelter carried out his calculated plan "to inflict fear and violence upon Minnesota elected officials and their families," prosecutors said.

A two-day manhunt, coordinated among federal, state and local law enforcement agencies across the state, ensued. About 9:15 p.m. on June 15, law enforcement located Boelter in a field in Green Isle, approximately one mile from his family residence. He was taken into custody.

## EU, South Korea: North will 'never' get nuke recognition

*Bloomberg News*

South Korea and the European Union said North Korea will "never" be recognized as a nuclear-weapon state, reaffirming their commitment to denuclearization days after China and North Korea pledged closer ties at a summit that made no public mention of the issue.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung held talks with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa in Brussels on Wednesday, where they agreed to step up defense ties, including efforts to facilitate the exchange of classified information.

"[North Korea] will never be accepted as a nuclear-weapon state," the EU and South Korea said in a joint statement.

Lee is on a European tour that will also include stops in Italy and France, where he'll join the G-7 summit next week.

The statement follows a meeting between U.S. and Japanese officials in Tokyo earlier this week where they reaffirmed their commitment to seeking the denuclearization of North Korea.

The back-to-back calls for denuclearization come after Chinese leader Xi Jinping skipped any public mention of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula during his visit to Pyongyang this week. Beijing has in the past routinely called for "denuclearization" — it was Xi's main message during a previous trip to North Korea in 2019. The latest visit was being watched for signs he might use his influence over Pyongyang to reassert that message.

That phrase has been missing from official Chinese statements since North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visited Beijing in September, fueling speculation that China has tacitly accepted North Korea as a de facto nuclear power.

South Korea and the EU also condemned the military cooperation between Russia and North Korea. European leaders have urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to agree to an immediate and complete ceasefire after he rejected Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy's call to meet and negotiate an end to the war that began more than four years ago.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Full funding for schools with drops in enrollment

**NY** NEW YORK — New York City schools with falling enrollment will not face budget cuts this fall, continuing a policy that guarantees each school in the system receives at least as much funding as it did the year before, even if they're expecting fewer students.

Staring down a multibillion-dollar budget gap, Mayor Zohran Mamdani faced pressure from fiscal watchdogs to rein in costs associated with the push known as "hold harmless," which was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure financial stability during a crisis. He was ultimately able to avoid those contentious cuts with the help of Gov. Kathy Hochul, who provided state aid and budget flexibility for the city.

"We need to ensure that our schools are well-funded, despite the fact that we've seen enrollment declines," Chancellor Kammar Samuels told the City Council on Monday during a hearing on the education budget.

### Pastor loses fight to get on ballot for governor

**MI** LANSING — The Michigan Supreme Court on Monday rejected Republican Pastor Ralph Rebandt's last-ditch bid to get put on the August primary ballot as a candidate for governor.

On May 21, the bipartisan Board of State Canvassers determined that Rebandt, of Elmira, hadn't met the required 15,000-signature threshold based on a sample of 750 of his petitions.

Rebandt challenged the sam-

pling process and his disqualification, losing first in the Court of Appeals. Then, on Monday, the state's high court declined to intervene on his behalf. The decision means there will be four GOP candidates for governor on the Aug. 4 primary ballot.

In a statement, Rebandt said, "A grassroots campaign got kept off the ballot by a process built to protect insiders. We're disappointed not done — and we'll have more to say soon."

Rebandt submitted 18,214 petition signatures, 3,214 above the 15,000 required of candidates for governor. However, the Bureau of Elections sampled 750 signatures under its review process. He needed 618 of them to be valid to make the Aug. 4 ballot. However, only 533 of them were found to be valid.

### Feds probing police over revoking gun permits

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — The Justice Department has opened an investigation into whether the Philadelphia Police Department has been improperly revoking people's gun permits, officials announced Tuesday — a remarkable development that puts one of the nation's largest police forces under the scrutiny of federal law enforcement.

In a letter addressed to Mayor Chelle L. Parker — which the Justice Department published online — Assistant Attorney General Harmeet K. Dhillon said the investigation "will evaluate the PPD's policies and practices regarding issuance and revocation of licenses to carry firearms."

If prosecutors determine those policies violate the Constitution, Dhillon said, the Justice

Department could take the city to court.

The announcement came weeks after news reports detailed that police had revoked the gun permits of five members of a Philadelphia-based Black armed citizens group.

Members of the group, The Panthers, received letters from the city police department's permitting unit in February, alerting them that their gun permits had been terminated and offering little explanation beyond saying the decision was based on "good cause" as well as "character and reputation." The notifications came shortly after some members got into a verbal altercation with police officers in North Philadelphia.

Panthers members such as the group's leader, Paul Birdsong, have appealed the decision.

### Church fined \$1,000 a day over homeless shelter

**MD** BALTIMORE — An Ocean City church is now facing daily \$1,000 fines for operating an indoor homeless shelter that town officials say violates local zoning regulations, escalating a months-long dispute over how the resort should address homelessness.

Church officials said the first daily citation was delivered by Ocean City's planning director Monday while volunteers and staff were serving lunch at the church's Outreach Center. The church now faces a June 28 deadline to pay the fines and bring the property into compliance, or the city will issue a warrant.

"The town has a responsibility to ensure that all facilities

comply with established zoning, building, occupancy, and safety codes," City Manager Terry McGean told The Baltimore Sun.

In a statement Monday, church officials said their legal counsel is preparing to file an action in federal court seeking to protect the shelter's continued operation.

"For us, this is not simply a question of zoning. It is a question of faith," Rev. Jill Williams, rector of St. Paul's By-the-Sea Episcopal Church, said in the statement.

### City: 'Human error' led to errant tornado siren

**CO** DENVER — The errant tornado siren that sounded across Denver during thunderstorms Monday afternoon was caused by "human error," a spokesperson for the city's Office of Emergency Management said.

There was no technology failure or malfunction, Loa Esquilín García said in a statement Tuesday. Rather, one or more employees did not understand the protocol for sounding the siren, Esquilín García said.

"As a result, the city is implementing corrective actions, including a comprehensive review of alerting policies and procedures and enhancements to training and exercises for personnel involved in emergency alerting and warning operations," the statement read.

The false alarm sounded for about 5 minutes shortly after 4 p.m. Monday as thunderstorms moved through the city and during a tornado watch that covered the Front Range and much of the eastern half of the state.

— From wire reports

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# Knicks take 3-1 lead on Spurs with record rally

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A record-breaking comeback, capped off by what could go down as a legendary play.

The long road back to the top of the NBA is almost complete for the New York Knicks, and the step they took Wednesday night was unforgettable.

The Knicks came from 29 points down and moved to the brink of their first championship since 1973 by beating the San Antonio Spurs 107-106 in Game 4 of the Finals on OG Anunoby's tip-in with 1.2 seconds remaining.

"That has to be the most iconic shot in the history of New York basketball," Knicks coach Mike Brown said.

It's certainly high on the list — as high as Anunoby leaped when Jalen Brunson's long 3-point shot bounced off the front of the rim, with his right hand stretching high to softly flick it in.

"Right hand from God," New York center Karl-Anthony Towns said.

The Knicks, who have just two titles in their 80-year history and hadn't even been to the NBA Finals since 1999, have a 3-1 lead and three chances to win the best-of-seven series — starting with the Spurs hosting Game 5 on Saturday night.

It looked impossible early, when San Antonio rolled to a 27-point halftime lead. But Brunson helped bring New York back with 36 points and Anunoby finished with 33.

No team had come from more than 24 points down in a Finals game, when the Boston Celtics did it against the Los Angeles Lakers in 2008, since the NBA began keeping detailed play-by-play for all four quarters in 1997. The Spurs led 81-52 in the third quarter.

"We're a resilient group. We've been through a lot," Anunoby said.

"We've come back plenty of times when we're behind. Just staying with it, weathering the storm, not being too down or angry or frustrated."

The only bigger comeback on record in any playoff game was 31 points by the Los Angeles Clippers against the Golden State Warriors in Game 2 of a first-round series in 2019.

"You look at it when you're down 29 of, 'OK, let's get it to 20.' There's three minutes left in the third quarter, we're down 18, you're thinking, 'Let's get it to 10,'" forward Josh Hart said. "In the fourth quarter, you're like, this is winning time. Anything can happen."

And it did.

The Knicks had their 13-game winning streak snapped in Game 3 and seemed headed for a second straight defeat throughout the first half, when Victor Wembanyama and San

Antonio opened the biggest halftime lead by a visiting team in the Finals.

But the young Spurs, who made 11 of their first 16 3-pointers, went cold in the second half, going 3 for 17 behind the arc as New York outscored them 58-30.

"We got on our heels — we missed some shots," San Antonio coach Mitch Johnson said. "It's disappointing, to say the least."

Delirious fans inside Madison Square Garden sang along to Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'" a few minutes after watching something that seemed almost impossible.

Wembanyama had 24 points and 13 rebounds but shot just 9 for 25 from the field.

Road teams had won the first three games, only the second time that had happened in the Finals. The Spurs were well on their way to making it 4 for 4.

## US thinking big at World Cup even if lacking pedigree

Associated Press

Mauricio Pochettino was blunt in his assessment of American soccer talent.

"We are USA and competing against Belgium, Portugal," the U.S. coach said after a pair of March losses in friendlies. "I think for sure Belgium and Portugal have in the top 100 players few, or some players playing in that top 100. I think we don't have."

No Americans were listed among the top 100 when The Guardian published its annual list in December. Christian Pulisic was 116th in the voting by a panel of 219 former players, coaches, technical staff and media. Tim Weah was next at 183rd.

Spain placed 14 in the top 100, France had 10, Brazil and England had nine each, and Argentina and Portugal had eight apiece.

"I don't think our talent is far — or much less than any other country in my humble opinion," retired American forward Jozy Altidore said. "I think we're just as talented. So for me, I'm that crazy guy. I believe and I know the players believe, but, why not? Why not us?"

U.S. players and staff are thinking big, hoping the red-white-and-blue can win its first World Cup title or at least reach the semifinals for the first time since 1930.

Americans still have to prove themselves to much of the soccer world.

"We want to do this for ourselves. We want to do this for our own country. We don't need to prove to anyone else," Pulisic said. "We have good players, really good players playing in top clubs in the world. We have a good team and, yeah, we're going to do the best we can to prove ourselves right more than anything."

Tyler Adams, the captain in 2022 and the team's top defensive midfielder, sees the goal as to go as far as any team has before.

"It's just been a while, I feel like, since we've knocked off a big boy," he said. "I think we need to try and find that in our character and I think that we will."

### Just one knockout win

Dreams and reality have collided for the United States in the World Cup. The Americans are 1-7 in World Cup knockout games, their only win over regional rival

Mexico in 2002 before a quarterfinal loss to Germany.

Since then, they lost in the round of 16 in 2010, 2014 and 2022, failed to advance from the group stage in 2006 and didn't even qualify for 2018.

Despite the lack of pedigree, Pochettino told players in March that they can win the title.

"Why not us? Why not us? Why not us?" he said. "We need to really believe that we can be there. We need to dream."

### Not many on top European clubs

Pulisic in 2021 became the first American to play in and win a European Champions League final, helping Chelsea to the title. He is one of six American World Cup-bound players on clubs ranked among the top 40 by UEFA coefficient, spending the past three seasons with No. 30 AC Milan.

That list includes midfielder Malik Tillman (No. 9 Bayer Leverkusen), midfielder Weston McKennie (No. 25 Juventus), defender Sergiño Dest and forward Ricardo Pepi (No. 26 PSV Eindhoven) and defender Alex Freeman (No. 39 Villarreal).

# Vegas has issues to fix on road to Game 5

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The Golden Knights find themselves in the same spot as they were in the first two rounds of the NHL playoffs, and Vegas certainly would love for it to be the same outcome.

But the situations are notably different.

Vegas had home-ice advantage against Utah and Anaheim, winning both series in six games after they were each 2-2.

Now the Golden Knights have to figure out a way to win two of the next three games in the Stanley Cup Final with the possibility that two will be at Carolina, including what would be a winner-take-all Game 7.

Game 5 is there Thursday night.

But the Golden Knights have more issues to confront against the Hurricanes than trying to sneak out a win in one of the NHL's most daunting atmospheres.

Whether the Golden Knights address these issues will go a

long way toward determining whether they hoist the Cup for the second time in four seasons or rue the missed opportunities of what could have been.

## Eichel struggles

Jack Eichel has 20 points in the postseason, second only in the NHL to teammate Mitch Marner's 29.

But Eichel has scored just two goals in the playoffs and none in the past six games going back to the Western Conference Final against Colorado.

He always has been a pass-first player, but even there Eichel has just two assists against the Hurricanes.

If it's true the stars have to be a team's best players in the playoffs, the Golden Knights badly need Eichel to get back on the scoresheet. He almost did in Tuesday night's 5-3 loss, hitting the puck just over the crossbar on what would have been the tying goal late in the third period. If that had gone in, Vegas might be heading to Carolina for a poten-

tial closeout game.

"I know Jack doesn't have the goals," Golden Knights coach John Tortorella said after the game.

"He was close tonight. He had the game on his stick on the face-off there, just missed, hit the crossbar, one-timer. I think they're developing chances, but we do need to finish when we have some opportunities."

## Hart not so dominant

It's not all on goalie Carter Hart, who was lights out in the first three rounds. He has been the victim of numerous defensive breakdowns in front of him. But it's still hard to dispute the numbers.

Hart was 12-4 with a .924 save percentage and 2.22 goals-against average before the final. He was in the conversation for the Conn Smythe Trophy that goes to the top player in the postseason before allowing four goals in each of the first four games of the final.

Against the Hurricanes, he has

an .861 save percentage and 3.60 GAA.

Hart has shined at times. His play in double overtime in Game 3 in which he turned back some dangerous chances was critical in helping the Golden Knights win. But Hart also has given up goals in bunches at times when his team could use at least one big save to minimize the damage. And some help from the defense would be timely. The Golden Knights had just 12 blocked shots on Tuesday, tying their lowest this postseason.

## Special teams

Vegas entered the final converting on 23.9% of its power plays, part of a special teams unit that was largely responsible for winning the West. But against the Hurricanes, that number is 8.3%.

On one power play Tuesday, the Golden Knights spent a minute and a half in the offensive zone passing the puck looking for the perfect shot that never came.

That did the Hurricanes' work for them.

# Source: Chiefs extend Mahomes' contract with \$504.75M deal

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Patrick Mahomes is set to be the quarterback of the Kansas City Chiefs well into the next decade.

The Chiefs and the two-time MVP agreed to a restructured contract Wednesday that adds two years to his deal and pushes the total compensation past a half-billion dollars, a person familiar with the terms told The Associated Press. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the Chiefs do not disclose financial terms of their contracts.

The Chiefs later posted a photo of Mahomes signing his extension on social media.

The extension ties the two-time MVP to the Chiefs through the 2033 season, when Mahomes will be 38, and it comes in at \$504.75 million, with incentives and escalators that could push the value to \$522.25 million.

"Over the last decade, Patrick has become one of the most iconic, beloved sports figures of all time," Chiefs chairman Clark Hunt said. "He has helped lead our franchise to five Super Bowl appearances and three

championships, he has been instrumental in shaping the Chiefs brand and putting Kansas City on the world stage, and on top of it all he has been an outstanding role model.

The Chiefs and Mahomes regularly rework his contract in the offseason, giving the team the financial flexibility to surround him with enough talent to compete for championships.

The latest deal, though, includes a massive pay increase after recent deals done for other quarterbacks had reset the QB market.

Mahomes will now average \$63.1 million. Mahomes underwent season-ending surgery last December after tearing ligaments in his left knee in the waning minutes of a loss to the Chargers. He has spent the entire offseason rehabbing the injury in Kansas City, and he has been on the field for the entirety of the Chiefs' offseason program, which concludes Thursday with the final day of their mandatory three-day minicamp.

"I like what I've seen. He's working hard," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said earlier in offseason workouts. "This is good for him, I

mean getting out there and throwing. It's good rehab as he continues to rehab, so he keeps the feel with the wide receivers. Or he's doing partial practice and — but it's important that he keeps his timing up. He's busting his tail to put himself in this position."

Mahomes has insisted ever since his injury that his goal was to be ready for Week 1 of the coming season.

The Chiefs play their preseason opener against the Rams on Aug. 15, but their regular-season opener is not until Sept. 14, when they face defending AFC West champion Denver in a marquee Monday night matchup at Arrowhead Stadium.

"I want to be out there with my guys," Mahomes said recently, "but I know that's still a long ways away, and so all I can do is execute the day and do whatever I can do to be better that day. We've done that up until now, and we've set these checkpoints and these goals of where I want to be at, and I've gotten to those. So now I just have to continue to do that at the right pace."

# Eldridge's grand slam lifts Giants past Nats

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Bryce Eldridge hit a game-winning grand slam in the bottom of the ninth to cap an incredible comeback by the San Francisco Giants, who scored 10 runs over the final two innings of an 11-10 victory against the Washington Nationals on Wednesday.

San Francisco trailed 9-1 before rallying for five runs in the eighth and five more in the ninth to stun the Nationals and avert a three-game sweep.

Big league teams trailing by at least eight runs in the eighth inning or later had lost 4,291 consecutive games since Cleveland stormed back from 10-2 down to beat Tampa Bay 11-10 on May 29, 2009, per Sportradar.

Matt Chapman had four hits, including two home runs — his second coming as part of back-to-back homers with Rafael Devers in the eighth to set up the comeback.

Jung Hoo Lee singled to extend his hitting streak to 18 games for the Giants, the longest active stretch in the majors.

Luis Arraez and Chapman hit consecutive doubles to begin the ninth. Devers walked and Lee singled to load the bases before Eldridge, who grew up a Nationals fan in Northern Virginia, drove a 2-0 slider from Mitchell Parker (2-3) into the right-field arcade for the rookie's fourth home run.

Lee raised his arms in celebration before the ball went over the wall.

**Yankees 8, Guardians 4:** Jazz Chisholm Jr. drove in three runs, Carlos Rodón shook off a leadoff homer to pitch six solid innings and visiting New York completed a three-game sweep over Cleveland.

José Caballero had two RBIs as the Yankees stopped Cleveland's streak of not being swept at 31 consecutive series, ending the longest current stretch in the AL. The Guardians hadn't been swept since losing three to Texas in August 2025.

New York improved to 11-4 since May 24 and swept the Guardians at Progressive Field for the first time since 2007.

Cleveland has dropped six of seven.

**Padres 5, Reds 4:** Fernando Tatis Jr. hit just his second home run of the season with two outs in the ninth inning to lift San Diego to a home win against Cincinnati.

Tatis lined a 2-1 pitch from Chase Petty (0-1) into the first row of seats in left field, with a launch angle of just 18 degrees. He spread his arms wide in celebration as he approached second base and did an exaggerated stutter step around third. His jersey was torn off during a wild celebration.

The Padres took two of three Cincinnati, who scored all their runs Wednesday on three home runs.

**Orioles 7, Mariners 2:** Jackson Holliday hit his third career grand slam, Brandon Young pitched seven scoreless innings and host Baltimore beat Seattle to snap a four-game losing streak.

Holliday became the first player in franchise history with three grand slams before turning 23. The 22-year-old infielder has 25 major league home runs.

Holliday's slam extended it to 7-0 in the seventh before Seattle got two runs in the eighth. Miles Mastrobuoni scored on a groundout by Julio Rodríguez, and Josh Naylor singled home Patrick Wisdom.

**Rays 7, Red Sox 5:** Drew Rasmussen struck out a career-high 13 and two-hit the Boston over seven scoreless innings, leading Tampa Bay to a home victory.

Nick Fortes, Yandy Díaz and Taylor Walls had multiple hits for the Rays, who swept the Red Sox for the first time since 2023.

**Pirates 9, Dodgers 8:** Tyler Callihan hit the first two home runs of his career, a solo shot off Shohei Ohtani in the fourth inning and a go-ahead, three-run

blast off reliever Kyle Hurt in the eighth as host Pittsburgh rallied past Los Angeles.

Ohtani gave up season highs in runs (four), earned runs (three), and hits (six) in 6  $\frac{2}{3}$  innings as his ERA ticked up to 1.06. The four-time MVP struck out six and walked three before being removed following Brandon Lowe's two-out, two-run double in the seventh.

**Twins 6, Tigers 4:** Byron Buxton hit his 20th home run of the season, Royce Lewis also connected and visiting Minnesota beat Detroit.

The game was delayed for 1 hour, 7 minutes in the middle of the first inning due to inclement weather.

**Marlins 8, Diamondbacks 0:** Kyle Stowers and Owen Caissie homered and host Miami beat Arizona for their seventh victory in eight games.

Otto López had two singles and two RBIs and increased his major league-leading batting average to .342. He also leads the majors with 28 multi-hit games.

**Phillies 7, Blue Jays 4:** Alec Bohm hit a three-run home run, Kyle Schwarber and Bryce Harper also went deep, and visiting Philadelphia beat Toronto.

Jesús Luzardo (5-4) allowed one run in 5  $\frac{2}{3}$  innings and Jhoan Duran finished for his 17th save in 18 chances as the Phillies won for the seventh time in nine games.

**Cardinals 9, Mets 2:** Jordan Walker homered and drove in four runs, his latest big game in a breakout season, and visiting St. Louis beat New York to match a season high with their sixth straight victory.

St. Louis starter Andre Pallante (7-4) allowed two runs and three hits in six innings. Pallante earned his third straight win and surpassed his win total from 2025 when he finished 6-15.

**Rangers 6, Royals 4:** Kansas City's Jac Caglianone went 3 for 3 with two home runs and three RBIs, but visiting Texas erased

an early deficit to defeat the Royals.

Caglianone, who missed Kansas City's previous game with right shoulder soreness, ended Nathan Eovaldi's no-hit bid with a leadoff homer in the fifth inning that sailed into the right-field bullpen.

**White Sox 2, Braves 1:** Davis Martin threw six scoreless innings for his ninth win as host Chicago beat Atlanta to move into first place in the AL Central.

The White Sox have won seven straight at home and nine of 13 overall, including two straight against the major league-best Braves. Chicago moved one-half game ahead of Cleveland, which lost to the New York Yankees earlier Wednesday. This is the latest in the season the White Sox have led their division since 2021.

**Rockies 3, Cubs 2:** Sterlin Thompson hit a pinch single off Daniel Palencia's 100-mph fastball in the ninth inning to give Colorado a home victory over Chicago.

It was the seventh career RBI for Thompson, the 24-year-old rookie from nearby Longmont.

**Athletics 4, Brewers 3:** Carlos Cortes and Lawrence Butler hit towering home runs in the seventh inning to rally the Athletics to a home victory over Milwaukee and win the series.

The A's took two of three at Las Vegas Ballpark, home to their Triple-A affiliate. They are playing this week before their future fans as a stadium is scheduled to open on the Strip in 2028.

**Angels 3, Astros 2:** Jose Siri hit a game-winning single in the 10th inning, Mike Trout and Logan O'Hoppe homered, and host Los Angeles beat Houston.

Angels starter Reid Detmers retired his first 15 batters before Shay Whitcomb homered leading off the sixth. Chase Silseth replaced Detmers to begin the eighth and gave up a leadoff homer to Cam Smith that tied it 2-all.