

## High cancer rates in military pilots, crew

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Pentagon study has found high rates of cancer among military pilots and for the first time has shown that ground crews who fuel, maintain and launch those aircraft are also getting sick.

The data had long been sought by retired military aviators who have raised alarms for years about the number of air and ground crew members they knew who had cancer. They were told earlier military studies had found they were not at greater risk than the general U.S. population.

In its yearlong study of almost 900,000 service members who flew on or worked on military aircraft between 1992 and 2017, the Pentagon found air crew members had an 87% higher rate of melanoma and a 39% higher rate of thyroid cancer, while men had a 16% higher rate of prostate cancer and women a 16% higher rate of breast cancer. Overall, the air crews had a 24% higher rate of cancer of all types.

The study showed ground crews had a 19% higher rate of brain and nervous system cancers, a 15% higher rate of thyroid cancer and a 9% higher rate of kidney or renal cancers, while women had a 7% higher rate of breast cancer. The overall rate for cancers of all types was 3% higher.

There was some good news reported as

well. Both ground and air crews had far lower rates of lung cancer, and air crews also had lower rates of bladder and colon cancers.

The data compared the service members with the general U.S. population after adjusting for age, sex and race.

The Pentagon said the new study was one of the largest and most comprehensive to date. An earlier study had looked at just Air Force pilots and had found some higher rates of cancer, while this one looked across all services and at both air and ground crews. Even with the wider approach, the Pentagon cautioned that the actual number of cancer cases was likely to be even higher because of gaps in the data, which it said it would work to remedy.

The study “proves that it’s well past time for leaders and policy makers to move from skepticism to belief and active assistance,” said retired Air Force Col. Vince Alcazar, a member of the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association, which had lobbied the Pentagon and Congress for help. Alcazar serves on the association’s medical issues committee.

The study was required by Congress in the 2021 defense bill. Now, because higher rates were found, the Pentagon must con-

duct an even bigger review to try to understand why the crews are getting sick.

Isolating potential causes is difficult, and the Pentagon was careful to note this study “does not imply that military service in air crew or ground crew occupations causes cancer, because there are multiple potential confounding factors that could not be controlled for in this analysis,” such as family histories, smoking or alcohol use.

But aviation crews have long asked for the Pentagon to look closely at some of the environmental factors they are exposed to, such as jet fuels and solvents used to clean and maintain jet parts, sensors and their power sources in aircraft nose cones, and the massive radar systems on the decks of the ships they land on.

When Navy Capt. Jim Seaman would come home from a deployment aboard an aircraft carrier, his gear would reek of jet fuel, his widow Betty Seaman said. The A-6 Intruder pilot died in 2018 at age 61 of lung cancer.

She and others have wondered if there’s a link. She said crews would talk about how even the ship’s water systems would smell of fuel.

She said the data “has the potential to do a lot of good as far as early communication, early detection,” she said.

## Wagner advertises on Pornhub to find recruits

By ALEXANDER RIEDEL  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Wagner Group was trying to seduce men to join their mercenary war in Ukraine with an advertising campaign on one of the world’s most popular porn websites.

Pornhub reportedly hosted Wagner ads seeking people with “special skills” to join the ranks of the pro-Kremlin private military group, which had previously been recruiting Russian prisoners.

The ads have been removed, a Pornhub spokesperson told

Newsweek, adding that the website does not allow any politically related advertisements.

Pornhub did not return a message requesting comment on Friday. Stars and Stripes was able to verify that the phone number listed on the advertisement reached an operator who said they represented the Wagner Group.

Screen recordings published by Ukrainian online newspaper Ukrainska Pravda and other agencies show an advertisement seeking men from “all

Russian regions” to join their ranks and fight alongside Russian forces in Ukraine.

The video ad, later posted to Twitter, featured a woman twirling a lollipop in her mouth as a female voice encouraged viewers to join Wagner instead of watching pornography.

The advertisement drew criticism and mockery, but one person who seemed to approve was Wagner founder Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Russian businessman known as “Putin’s chef” for his close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Prigozhin was asked by pro-Kremlin Russian media outlet the Daily Storm whether Wagner was advertising on Pornhub and responded affirmatively in an audio recording on his Telegram social media channel, Prigozhin’s Cap.

“Advertising PMC Wagner on porn sites is a very good idea of our marketers,” Prigozhin wrote. “This advertisement says: ‘Go to fight in the Wagner PMC, stop (expletive) off.’ Who disagrees with this argument?”

# CENTCOM: ISIS-K capable of foreign hits soon

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Islamic State network in Afghanistan will be able to attack American or Western interests outside the country in less than six months “with little to no warning,” the top commander for U.S. forces in the Middle East said Thursday.

Army Gen. Michael Kurilla, who leads U.S. Central Command, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that ISIS’ Khorasan Province, commonly referred to as ISIS-K, is rapidly developing the ability to conduct “external operations” in Europe and Asia.

The terrorist group will not be able to strike the U.S. homeland in the near future, however.

“I think it is a higher probability overseas than it is in the homeland,” Kurilla said, acknowledging hundreds of thousands of U.S.

citizens living abroad could be in range of an attack.

The general’s assessment comes more than a year after U.S. troops withdrew from Afghanistan in August 2021 and adopted an “over-the-horizon” counterterrorism approach that collects intelligence and carries out strikes without a permanent military presence in the country.

The commander confirmed Thursday that the United States has only conducted one “kinetic” counterterrorism operation so far, a drone strike last year that killed al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahri in Kabul. But Kurilla said the U.S. has also performed two “non-kinetic” operations involving more than five combatant commanders that have disrupted terrorist activity.

He acknowledged the quality of U.S. intelligence has degraded since the pullout from Afghanis-

tan, with the U.S. being able to see the “broad counters” of an attack but lacking the “granularity to see the full picture.”

Counterterrorism operations are now more difficult, but not impossible, Kurilla said. He said his command is working to close the intelligence gap by increasing investment into long-duration, high-altitude technology that can stay in the air for days and weeks.

“Right now, I’m spending 80% of my time transiting to the region to be able to collect over-the-top [intelligence],” Kurilla said.

The general also impressed on lawmakers that he needs more support for the analysts, linguists and other parts of the “analytical backside” that are critical for decision-making. There has been a “significant decrease” in their numbers in the Middle East as the U.S. military has reoriented

to higher-priority targets, he said.

Kurilla said CENTCOM has shrunk by 85% since its peak in 2008, when the U.S. was at war in Afghanistan and Iraq. The command’s size was reduced by 15% after the 20-year war in Afghanistan ended.

Sen. Roger Wicker, of Mississippi, the top Republican on the committee, said the U.S. left a security vacuum in Afghanistan that has been filled by the Taliban, al-Qaida and ISIS and emboldened their affiliates around the world. Republicans have repeatedly criticized the effectiveness of the “over-the-horizon” strategy.

Kurilla countered Thursday that the ISIS threat in Syria is contained compared to Afghanistan, but conceded the ideology remains “uncontained and unconstrained.”

## Airman exonerated in attack on US base in Syria last year

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

An Air Force noncommissioned officer accused of detonating bombs on a U.S. base in Syria last year was cleared of all charges by a military jury on Wednesday, Air Force officials said.

The jury found Tech. Sgt. David D. Dezwaan Jr. not guilty of charges levied against him last year after an eight-day court-martial at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, where he had been stationed with the 75th Air Base Wing, according to an Air Force statement issued Thursday.

Dezwaan — an explosive ordnance disposal technician — had faced charges of dereliction of duty, destroying military property, reckless endangerment and aggravated assault after military officials accused him of being in-

involved in an April 2022 bombing at Syria’s Green Village base. The attack injured four American service members.

Air Force officials arrested Dezwaan in June and held him in pretrial confinement at a jail near Hill AFB. The service announced in August that it had charged Dezwaan with the series of crimes based on an Army Criminal Investigation Division and Air Force Office of Special Investigations probe of the April 7 bombing on the base in eastern Syria, where Dezwaan was deployed.

Pentagon officials initially blamed enemy rocket fire for the attack. Days later, U.S. military officials said they had discovered evidence that explosive devices had been intentionally placed in an ammunition storage room and a shower area on the post, suggesting an insider attack.

## Ex-Navy captain sentenced to 2.5 years in ‘Fat Leonard’ case

By ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

A former assistant chief of staff for U.S. 7th Fleet who accepted lavish gifts and prostitution services in the largest and longest-running bribery scandal in Navy history was sentenced to 2 ½ years in prison, according to federal prosecutors.

Retired Capt. Jesus Vasquez Cantu was also ordered to pay a \$75,000 fine and \$100,000 restitution to the Navy as part of a plea agreement, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of California said Feb. 23, the day Cantu was sentenced.

Cantu admitted he had given proprietary information to wealthy Malaysian defense contractor Leonard Glenn “Fat Leonard” Francis in return for drinks and dinners at top-notch restaurants, nightclubs and karaoke

bars and the services of sex workers in 2012 and 2013, according to the statement. At the time, Cantu was the deputy commander of Military Sealift Command Far East in Singapore and oversaw logistical sustainment to Navy ships in 7th Fleet.

Cantu also admitted in the plea agreement that he and others participated in a bribery conspiracy with Francis in 2007, when he was assistant chief of staff for logistics for the 7th Fleet commander aboard the amphibious command ship USS Blue Ridge, prosecutors said.

Francis’ bribery scheme took place from 2006 to 2014, mostly targeting Navy officials and others associated with the Japan-based U.S. 7th Fleet. That ultimately allowed him to overcharge for servicing Navy ships by at least \$35 million.

# N. Korea fires missile amid US-South drills

*Associated Press*

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea launched a short-range ballistic missile toward the sea on Sunday, its neighbors said, ramping up testing activities in response to ongoing U.S.-South Korean military drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal.

The North's continuation of missile tests showed its determination to not back down despite the U.S.-South Korea exercises, which are the biggest of their kind in years. But many experts say the tests are also part of North Korea's bigger objective to expand its weapons arsenal, win global

recognition as a nuclear state and get international sanctions lifted.

The missile launched from the North's northwestern Tongchangri area flew across the country before it landed in the waters off its east coast, according to South Korean and Japanese assessments. They said the missile traveled a distance of about 500 miles, a range that suggests the weapon could target South Korea.

The chief nuclear envoys from South Korea, Japan and the U.S. discussed the launch on the phone and strongly condemned it as a provocation that threatens peace on the Korean Peninsula and in

the region. They agreed to strengthen their coordination to issue a firm international response to the North's action, according to Seoul's Foreign Ministry.

South Korea's military said it will thoroughly proceed with the rest of the joint drills with the U.S. and maintain a readiness to "overwhelmingly" respond to any provocation by North Korea. As part of the drills, the U.S. on Sunday flew long-range B-1B bombers for joint training with South Korean warplanes, according to South Korea's Defense Ministry. North Korea is highly sensitive to the deployment of

B-1Bs, which are capable of carrying a huge conventional weapons payload. It responded to the February flights of B-1Bs by test-launching missiles that demonstrated potential ranges to strike some air bases in South Korea.

Japanese Vice Defense Minister Toshiro Ino said the missile landed outside Japan's exclusive economic zone and there were no reports of damage to vessels or aircraft. He said the missile likely showed an irregular trajectory, a possible reference to the highly maneuverable, nuclear-capable KN-23 missile that was modeled on Russia's Iskander missile.

## US military hospitals in Japan easing access for DOD civilians

**BY KELLY AGEE**

*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Three military hospitals in Japan are relaxing their rules on access to medical care for Defense Department civilian employees and other clients not covered by Tricare Prime, the military's highest level health care plan.

Health care providers at Yokota, the airlift hub in western Tokyo; Camp Zama, the headquarters of U.S. Army Japan southwest of Tokyo; and Naval Hospital Okinawa at the Marine Corps' Camp Foster all freed additional time for DOD civilians to make space-available appointments for chronic medical conditions.

Starting March 27, patients limited to space-available appointments at Yokota's 374th Medical Group may schedule visits up to three days in advance for routine care like annual checkups, urgent-care follow-ups and care for chronic issues like diabetes and high blood pressure. The medical group announced the change Wednesday on its Facebook page.

Space-available patients at Yokota have been checking a morning Facebook post for avail-

able slots, then dialing quickly before they're filled. The change announced Wednesday yields additional time.

Starting Jan. 1, DOD civilian employees in the Indo-Pacific region on health care tiers below Tricare Prime were restricted to space-available appointments for acute, or immediate, health care only.

The Defense Health Agency on March 3 retreated from that policy after hundreds of DOD employees unleashed torrents of criticism at visiting Pentagon executives during January town halls at bases across Japan. DHA amended the rule, based on a congressional mandate, and permitted DOD civilians to schedule chronic care to the extent base hospitals can accommodate them.

"It is progress but still not good enough," Kristin Pine-Duarte, a fourth-grade teacher at Yokota West Elementary School, told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday over Facebook. "As teachers, we have meetings and plan weeks ahead so the inability to plan our medical as well, especially for chronic conditions, continues to negatively impact us as well as our students."

## Student debt relief plan back to aid Air Force recruitment

**BY JONATHAN SNYDER**

*Stars and Stripes*

The Air Force has revived a recruiting incentive that pays off student debt in an effort to attract new recruits and meet the service's yearly enlistment quota.

The service is bringing back the Enlisted College Loan Repayment Program that it curtailed nine years ago, Air Force spokeswoman Leslie Brown told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday.

The program offers repayment of up to \$65,000 per active-duty recruit and remains open until annual funds are exhausted, according to an Air Force press release from March 10.

"Since Air Force Recruiting Service is experiencing a recruitment deficit, we have been examining all programs, old and new, to spark interests while remaining relevant and competitive with the rest of the Department of Defense," Brown said.

This fiscal year's goal is 26,877 active-duty recruits, she said. The Air Force barely met last year's mark of 26,141.

The Army and Navy offer similar programs, while the Marine

Corps, Coast Guard and Space Force do not.

"Air Force Recruiting is excited to see the return of the Enlisted College Loan Repayment Program and continued work on the Reserve Student Loan Repayment Program," Brig. Gen. Lisa Craig, deputy commander of the recruiting service, said in a statement emailed to Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

The average federal student loan debt in the United States is \$37,574 per borrower, according to educationdata.org. On average, 19% of Air Force enlistees have some level of college and student debt along with it, Brown said.

The Air Force understands the importance and value of continuing education and lifelong learning, Craig's statement said.

"Having this as an incentive for those who have incurred debt provides relief if they qualify for the program," she added.

Last year, the Biden administration attempted to roll out a three-part plan to cancel student debt up to \$20,000 for qualified students but was met with opposition. The legal challenge to the program is before the Supreme Court.



# Russia to honor pilots who crashed US drone

By **DOUG G. WARE**  
*Stars and Stripes*

Two Russian pilots who harassed a U.S. drone over the Black Sea this week and caused it to crash into waters near Ukraine will receive military awards for their actions, a top Russian official said Friday.

Russian defense minister Sergei Shoigu said the pilots will be decorated with state awards for refusing to allow a U.S. MQ-9 Reaper drone on Tuesday to “violate the airspace restricted for use during the special military operation” in Ukraine. Special military operation is the phrase that the Russian government has used to describe its war in Ukraine, which was a former Soviet Union republic before the fall of the

USSR in the early 1990s.

The Pentagon has rejected Moscow’s claims. U.S. defense officials have said the drone was flying through international airspace on a regular surveillance mission when a pair of Russian Su-27 fighter jets intercepted it.

Shoigu did not name the pilots who were involved in the incident or specify exactly what award they will receive. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said he’s spoken to Shoigu by phone and promised American aircraft will continue to fly anywhere that’s allowed by international law.

U.S. officials said the Russian jets initially dumped fuel on the drone. Almost an hour later, one of the pilots clipped the drone’s rear propeller with his aircraft,

damaging it enough that U.S. Air Force officials had to let it crash into the Black Sea. The Pentagon said Thursday that U.S. defense officials aren’t certain whether the pilot wanted to hit the drone.

“But it clearly demonstrates either poor airmanship or reckless behavior because, just from an airman standpoint, why would you hit another aircraft with your aircraft in the sky?” Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon’s top spokesman, asked reporters on Thursday at the Pentagon.

The top two U.S. military leaders on Wednesday also condemned the Russian intercept. Austin called it “reckless” and Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said it

was “unsafe” and “unprofessional.”

The Pentagon officials said they took unspecified measures to keep another country such as Russia from mining information from the downed drone. Milley said the unmanned aircraft is likely at the bottom of the Black Sea in many pieces.

CNN reported on Friday that another U.S. military drone has been detected over the Black Sea — this one identified as an RQ-4 Global Hawk. The report cited data from the website *flightradar24.com* that indicated the drone flew in international airspace southeast of Crimea and west of the Russian city of Sochi. The RQ-4 is larger than the MQ-9 Reaper.

## Putin makes unannounced trip to occupied Mariupol

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the occupied port city of Mariupol, his first trip to Ukrainian territory that Moscow illegally annexed in September and a show of defiance after the International Criminal Court issued a warrant for his arrest on war crimes charges.

Putin arrived in Mariupol late Saturday after visiting Crimea, southwest of Mariupol, to mark the ninth anniversary of the Black Sea peninsula’s annexation from Ukraine, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Sunday. He was shown chatting with Mariupol residents and visiting an art school and a children’s center in Sevastopol, Crimea.

Mariupol became a worldwide symbol of resistance after outgunned and outmanned Ukrainian forces held out in a steel mill there for nearly three months before Moscow finally took control of it in May. Much of the city was pounded to rub-

ble by Russian shelling.

Putin has not commented on the arrest warrant, which deepened his international isolation despite the unlikelihood of him facing trial anytime soon. The Kremlin, which does not recognize the authority of the ICC, has rejected its move as “legally null and void.”

Putin arrived in Mariupol by helicopter and then drove himself around the city’s “memorial sites,” concert hall and coastline, Russian news reports said. The state Rossiya 24 channel on Sunday showed Putin chatting with locals outside what looked like a newly built residential complex, and being shown around one of the apartments.

Following his trip to Mariupol, Putin met with Russian military leaders and troops at a command post in Rostov-on-Don, a southern Russian city about 112 miles farther east, and conferred with Gen. Valery Gerasimov, who is in charge of the Russian military operations in Ukraine. Peskov said.

## Trump says he expects to be arrested, calls for protesting

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — Donald Trump claimed on Saturday that his arrest is imminent and issued an extraordinary call for his supporters to protest as a New York grand jury investigates hush money payments to women who alleged sexual encounters with the former president.

Even as Trump’s lawyer and spokesperson said there had been no communication from prosecutors, Trump declared in a post on his social media platform that he expects to be taken into custody Tuesday.

His message seemed designed to preempt a formal announcement from prosecutors and to galvanize outrage from his base of supporters in advance of widely anticipated charges. Within hours, his campaign was sending fundraising solicitations to his supporters, while influential Republicans in Congress and even some declared and potential rival candidates issued statements in his defense.

In a later post that went beyond simply exhorting loyalists to protest about his legal peril, the 2024 presidential candidate directed his overarching ire in all capital letters at the Biden administration and raised the prospect of civil unrest: “IT’S TIME!!!” he wrote. “WE JUST CAN’T ALLOW THIS ANYMORE. THEY’RE KILLING OUR NATION AS WE SIT BACK & WATCH. WE MUST SAVE AMERICA! PROTEST, PROTEST, PROTEST!!!”

District Attorney Alvin Bragg is thought to be eyeing charges in the hush money investigation, and recently offered Trump a chance to testify before the grand jury. Local law enforcement officials are bracing for the public safety ramifications of an unprecedented prosecution of a former American president.

In an internal email following Trump’s statements, Bragg said law enforcement would ensure that the 1,600 people who work in his office would remain safe, and that “any specific or credible threats” would be investigated.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Man pleads guilty to killing 3, cooking heart

**OK** CHICKASHA — An Oklahoma man has been sentenced to life in prison after pleading guilty to killing three people, including a woman whose heart was cut from her body.

Lawrence Paul Anderson, 44, pleaded guilty in Grady County District Court to three counts of murder and single counts of maiming and assault and battery.

Investigators said Anderson broke into the home of Andrea Blankenship, 41, fatally stabbed her and cut out her heart, taking it to the home of his uncle and aunt, Leon Pye and Delsie Pye.

Anderson then cooked and tried to serve the heart to the Pyes, then fatally stabbed Leon Pye, 67, and his 4-year-old granddaughter, Kaeos Yates. He also wounded his aunt, Delsie Pye, authorities said.

### Police: Resident fatally stabs home invader

**IL** ROCKFORD — A man trying to force his way into a home died after one of the residents stabbed him, police said.

The man was trying to enter the home at about 1:50 a.m., the Rockford Police Department said.

A man and a woman inside the home were able to block the door and prevent the intruder from entering, but the suspect broke out a window and began hitting one of the residents with a piece of lumber, police said.

As the suspect continued trying to enter the home, the male resident retrieved a kitchen

knife and was able to strike the suspect in the area of his neck and a shoulder, police said. The suspect fled the scene but was found in the street outside, where he was pronounced dead.

The Winnebago County Coroner's Office identified the suspect as Troyle Aube, 44, of Rockford.

### Push for medical weed appears done for year

**KS** TOPEKA — Kansas legislators aren't likely to legalize marijuana for medical uses this year following a vote last week.

A Senate committee tabled a bill that would allow doctors to sign off on patients using marijuana products to treat 21 illnesses or conditions, including cancer, epilepsy, spinal cord injuries or chronic pain, starting in July 2024. Committee Chair Mike Thompson, a Shawnee Republican, said he has no plans to bring the bill back up this year.

Thirty-seven states allow the medical use of marijuana. Of those, 21 also allow recreational use.

Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly supports legalizing medical marijuana, but opposition from law enforcement officials bolstered the skepticism of Thompson and other conservative Republicans in the GOP-controlled Legislature.

### Electric vehicle rebates halted due to demand

**OR** SALEM — Oregon will temporarily suspend rebates for buying or leasing an electric vehicle for a year starting in May because too many people are applying and the program is running out

of money, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

A growing number of Oregonians are buying or leasing electric vehicles, with over 60,600 registered in the state.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality announced the suspension of the Clean Vehicle Rebate Program that has disbursed more than \$71 million over five years to help people buy or lease roughly 25,000 vehicles.

Since the end of 2018, the state has offered two cash rebates for Oregon drivers who buy or lease electric vehicles or plug-in hybrids under \$50,000. The standard rebate of up to \$2,500 is available regardless of income and can be received at participating dealers. The "charge ahead" rebate of \$5,000 is aimed at low- or moderate-income households and must be accessed via a mail-in application. The two rebates can be combined for up to \$7,500 cash back.

### Firing urged in wake of comptroller's \$3.5B error

**SC** COLUMBIA — South Carolina's state comptroller should be fired over a \$3.5 billion accounting error and the office he runs should be gutted, lawmakers investigating the mistake said in a report.

Republican Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom has attracted mounting scrutiny since he first told lawmakers last month that he had unintentionally exaggerated the state's cash position by \$3.5 billion by overstating the amount the state had sent to colleges and universities.

A \$12 million coding error in 2007 got compounded by a shift beginning in 2011 from one accounting system to another, Eckstrom has said. The reporting confusion then led to a double counting of state cash transferred to colleges and universities. By 2017, the sum of overstated funds had grown to \$1.3 billion. That number has nearly tripled in the following years as South Carolina sent more and more money to higher education.

### Man guilty in shooting over disabled parking

**MO** ST. CHARLES — A suburban St. Louis man has been convicted of shooting an Amazon delivery truck driver during a dispute over a disabled parking spot.

Larry Thomlison, 70, of St. Charles, was found guilty of first-degree assault and armed criminal action in the March 2019 shooting of Jaylen Walker, 21, who was paralyzed from the waist down, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

Prosecutors said Walker had illegally parked his delivery van in a disabled parking spot and was talking to another Amazon driver when Thomlison confronted him. When Thomlison, who was driving a car with a disabled permit placard, tried to photograph him, Walker pushed the phone away and Thomlison punched him, police said.

When the two men fell to the ground during their fight, Thomlison pulled out a gun and shot Walker in the back, prosecutors said. From wire reports

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# 15th-seeded Princeton makes Sweet 16

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — As the final minute ticked off the clock, the Princeton fans started chanting “Sweet 16! Sweet 16!” and coach Mitch Henderson cleared the bench with the victory easily in hand.

This upset was no small-school fluke against a more heralded team. It was a thoroughly dominating performance that sent Princeton to a place it hadn’t been in more than a half-century.

Blake Peters made five three-pointers in the second half and Princeton shocked another power conference team to reach the NCAA Tournament regional semifinals for the first time in 56 years by beating Missouri 78-63 on Saturday.

“The world looks at us as two upsets,” forward Tosan Evbuomwan said. “But I feel like we’re supposed to be here. We have a lot of confidence in one another, what we’re doing. There’s definitely no letup with this group.”

No. 15 seeded Princeton (23-8) followed up a first-round win over Pac-12 tournament champion Arizona by overwhelming seventh-seeded Missouri (25-10) of the Southeastern Conference from the start.

The Ivy League school known for giving powerhouses scares and occasionally pulling off upsets a generation ago has reached the round of 16 for the first time since 1967 when only 23 teams made the tournament.

“I have no words for you,” Peters said. “We have such an unbelievable section (of fans) here. I have the best teammates in the world. I love each and every one of them. When we go out and believe in each other, anything is possible. I know it’s cliché, but anything is possible.”

Princeton will play the winner of Sunday’s game between Baylor and Creighton in the Sweet 16 in Louisville, Ky., on Friday night.

The Tigers will be the second Ivy League school to make the Sweet 16 in the past 43 tourna-

ments, joining Cornell in 2010. No team from the academically prestigious league that doesn’t give athletic scholarships has gone further since Penn made the Final Four in 1979.

“I’ve always dreamed of playing deep into the tournament,” said Henderson, a player on Princeton’s teams in 1996 and ’98 that won first-round games. “As a player, got to the second round a couple times. Never got beyond it.”

This marks the third straight year a team seeded 15th made it to the Sweet 16, following Oral Roberts in 2021 and fellow New Jersey school Saint Peter’s last year. The only other time a 15 seed made it this far came in 2013 when Florida Gulf Coast did it.

Ryan Langborg led Princeton with 22 points and Peters added 17.

DeAndre Gholston scored 19 points and Noah Carter added 14 for Missouri, which was seeking its first berth in the Sweet 16 since 2009.

“We were able to get the lead

one time,” coach Dennis Gates said. “We held the lead for 30 seconds in the entire game. Every time we got the lead or when they had the lead, we cut it to six, they came back down and did what a good team would do: Make a shot or make a play.”

Princeton showed no signs of being outclassed against another power conference team, controlling the play from the start. Keeshawn Kellman had two dunks and a blocked shot in a span of 16 seconds midway through the half.

Princeton built the lead to 10 points on a corner three by Zach Martini and went up 33-19 on a drive by Evbuomwan.

Missouri responded by scoring the final seven points of the half to go into the break down seven.

Every time Missouri threatened early in the second half, Princeton had an answer with Peters hitting five three-pointers. The fourth gave Princeton a 62-43 lead and Missouri never threatened after that.

## Another top seed falls: Arkansas stuns Kansas

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Eric Musselman and his players rushed across the floor at the final buzzer to celebrate with their joyfully delirious friends from Arkansas.

The 58-year-old coach jumped onto the press table, ripped off his red polo shirt and waved it over his head, shouting all the while to the fans’ delight, as has become his tradition after the biggest of his wins.

And this was a really big one.

Kansas’ national title defense ended in the second round of the NCAA Tournament on Saturday when Arkansas’ Ricky Council IV made five free throws in the closing seconds and the eighth-seeded Razorbacks beat the No. 1 seed Jayhawks 72-71.

“I would love to lie and say that I felt composed, but we only led for 1:43,” he said. “This has been as challenging and as up-and-down a season as I’ve ever been a part of.”

“For these guys to be rewarded for sticking with it and being able to go to Las Vegas and participate with only 16 teams still standing. ... It’s really hard to make this tournament. It’s really hard to win a game in this tournament. It’s really hard to beat defending champions, No. 1 seed. We did it.”

Arkansas was playing a No. 1 seed for the third straight year. Last year, the Razorbacks knocked out Gonzaga on the way to their second straight Elite Eight. This time, the Razorbacks survived shaky offensive

play early and foul trouble late. They became the first team to beat a No. 1 seed with three players fouling out, according to OptaSTATS.

“That’s such an unbelievable win for our program,” Musselman said. “I keep telling people that we’re getting better. Not many teams can get better this time of year. I’ve never been prouder of a team like tonight.”

Davonte Davis scored 25 points and Council added 21 as Arkansas rallied from a 12-point second-half deficit. Kansas, playing without ailing coach Bill Self, became the second top seed not to escape the tournament’s first weekend after Purdue lost on Friday night to No. 16 seed Fairleigh Dickinson.

Arkansas (22-13) is in the

Sweet 16 for the third straight year and will play either Saint Mary’s or UConn in the West Region semifinals in Las Vegas on Thursday.

Self has been with the Jayhawks (28-8) since they arrived in Des Moines and has attended practices and meetings, but he still didn’t feel well enough to coach a game after having a heart procedure March 8 to clear clogged arteries.

Longtime assistant Norm Roberts was acting coach for a fifth straight game in Self’s absence.

Kansas, bidding to become the first repeat national champion since Florida in 2006-07, was ahead 35-27 at halftime and lost for the first time in 27 games when entering the second half with a lead.



# Turner's slam sends US into semifinals

Associated Press

MIAMI — Trea Turner hit a go-ahead grand slam in the eighth inning that lifted the United States over Venezuela 9-7 Saturday night and into the World Baseball Classic semifinals.

The defending champion U.S. faced Cuba on Sunday night for a spot in the WBC final against Japan or Mexico. St. Louis Cardinals right-hander Adam Wainwright was scheduled to start for the U.S. against Cuba.

Venezuela second baseman and Houston Astros star Jose Altuve left in the fifth with a right hand injury after he was hit by a pitch from Daniel Bard. The Astros said there would be an update on his status Sunday.

Trailing 7-5, the United States loaded the bases in the eighth on a walk, single and hit by pitch against losing pitcher Jose Quijada. Silvino Bracho relieved and Turner, the No. 9 batter in the U.S. lineup, sent his 0-2 changeup 407 feet to deep left field for the third grand slam in American WBC history.

“Individually, I think this is probably the biggest hit that I’ve had ... probably right up there with any hit I’ve ever had,” Turner said.

U.S. manager Mark DeRosa said Saturday’s win was one of the three greatest games he’s ever been a part of — including winning the World Series with the San Francisco Giants in 2010.

“I told the guys before the game, I wanted to match their passion,” said DeRosa, who once played for the Venezuelan professional team Leones del Caracas. “I had played over there. I had been a part of that, coming out of the dugout and jumping around. ... When Trea clipped that ball, honestly, I saw about 35 guys, including the coaches, kind of black out and lose their minds for a minute. So it was just an awesome moment.”

David Bednar, the fifth of seven U.S. pitchers, got the win and Ryan Pressly finished with three straight outs for the save.

Luis Arraez, playing in the ballpark that he’ll soon call home with the Miami Marlins,

had the first multihomer game of his professional career and drove in four runs for Venezuela.

The U.S. team boasts a roster of big names that many picked to repeat as WBC champions.

All nine batters in the U.S. starting batting order were All-Stars, including Los Angeles Dodgers right fielder Mookie Betts, Los Angeles Angels center fielder Mike Trout, Cardinals first baseman Paul Goldschmidt and third baseman Nolan Arenado.

The U.S. is in the top six in the tournament in batting average (.296), RBIs (34) and hits (48), and every American starter had a hit against Venezuela, which had gone 4-0 in group play.

# No drama for No. 1 seed Tide in win over Maryland

Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Before Alabama took the court, two No. 1 seeds had fallen and a third had to rally from a double-digit deficit.

By comparison, the Crimson Tide had a drama-free night.

Jahvon Quinerly scored 22 points, Brandon Miller heated up with 19 and top overall seed Alabama brushed aside Maryland 73-51 behind a dominant second half Saturday.

The second-round romp followed a 21-point blowout of Texas A&M-Corpus Christi in the Tide’s tournament opener.

“I feel like our job’s not done,” Miller said. “We’re here to win a national championship.”

The Crimson Tide (31-5) advanced to their second Sweet 16 in the past three tournaments and ninth overall. Alabama will face fifth-seeded San Diego State in the South Region semifinals Friday in Louisville, Ky.

Before the late-night game, Purdue and defending national champion Kansas had lost, and No. 1 seed Houston trailed Tide rival Auburn by 10 points at half-

time earlier at Legacy Arena before pulling away.

“Of course we watched those games and that was crazy,” Quinerly said. “But Coach (Nate Oats) didn’t really address the team.

“We all know anybody can win in March. We just kind of focused on the task at hand.”

Alabama and Miller got off to a slow start, but the All-America freshman and top NBA prospect wound up with a more typical performance after going scoreless in the first-round game.

Quinerly had a big game on the one-year anniversary of his left knee injury early in a second-round loss to Notre Dame. He shot 4-for-6 on three-pointers.

**San Diego State 75, Furman 52:** The Aztecs had little trouble ending the run of the March Madness darling Paladins, getting 16 points from Micah Parish to pace a balanced scoring attack.

Darrion Trammell had 13 points, Lamont Butler added 12 and leading scorer Matt Bradley finished with 10 for San Diego

State (29-6).

Mike Bothwell led 13th-seeded Furman (28-8) with 15 points. The Paladins had eliminated Virginia in the first round.

## West Region

**UCLA 68, Northwestern 63:** Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 24 points and the Bruins withstood a second-half push from the Wildcats to get back to the Sweet 16.

Second-seeded UCLA (31-5) turned up the defensive intensity late, holding Northwestern to 1-for-12 shooting during a key late-game stretch.

## East Region

**Tennessee 65, Duke 52:** Olivier Nkamhoua tied his career high with 27 points, including 13 straight for his team during a decisive span in the second half, and the fourth-seeded Volunteers beat the Blue Devils to advance to the Sweet 16 for the first time since 2019.

Tennessee (25-10) ended Duke’s 10-game winning streak.

The Volunteers set the tone early, clearly wanting to push around Kyle Filipowski and get

hands in the faces of guards Jeremy Roach and Tyrese Proctor. Filipowski took an elbow to his face and ended up with a small cut under his left eye.

## Midwest Region

**Houston 81, Auburn 64:** Marcus Sasser looked just fine, scoring 22 points, and the top-seeded Cougars stifled the Tigers in the second half.

Houston (33-3) overcame a 10-point halftime deficit. Essentially shutting down the lane, Houston played with the desperation of a national championship contender that wasn’t ready to suffer the same fate as Purdue and Kansas — No. 1’s that already were sent home.

**Texas 71, Penn State 66:** Dylan Disu had a season-high 28 points on 14-for-20 shooting and steadied the Longhorns down the stretch to reach their first Sweet 16 in 15 years.

Second-seeded Texas (28-8) made just one of 13 three-point shots, so Disu turned this one into a midrange game. He went 5-for-5 in the final 4½ minutes and finished with 10 rebounds.

# Brunson powers Knicks past Nuggets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jalen Brunson felt good enough to blow by the Denver Nuggets early and hang around to make some big plays at the end.

The New York Knicks needed their point guard to get by the best in the West and Brunson was glad his sore left foot was healthy enough to deliver.

He had 24 points in his return to the court, leading the Knicks to a 116-110 victory on Saturday.

“Everything feels good when you win,” Brunson said.

Brunson had 16 points in the first quarter to get the Knicks off to a quick start, then finished strong to help them come back after trailing by 13 in the second half. New York was protecting a two-point lead when he made two free throws with 43 seconds remaining, then pushed the ball up the court and threw a lob that Mitchell Robinson slammed down to make it 116-110 with 24 seconds to go.

“He started the game, that

was probably more adrenaline than anything else,” Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. “But a little rust, but then he got a good rhythm late so it was good.”

**Jazz 118, Celtics 117:** Lauri Markkanen scored 28 points and Walker Kessler had a game-saving block to help host Utah to a comeback win over Boston.

Grant Williams, who had 23 points and a career-high seven three-pointers, was driving for a potential game-winner but ran into Kessler, who blocked his shot just before the final buzzer.

**Raptors 122, Timberwolves 107:** Pascal Siakam had 27 points and 10 rebounds and host Toronto extended its season-high home winning streak to seven by beating Minnesota.

Rudy Gobert had 14 points and 12 rebounds and Naz Reid scored 22 points for the Timberwolves, who were playing the second game of a back-to-back. Minnesota lost in double over-

time at Chicago on Friday.

**76ers 141, Pacers 121:** Joel Embiid and Tyrese Maxey each scored 31 points and Tobias Harris added 24 as visiting Philadelphia routed Indiana to match its season high with an eighth consecutive victory.

Aaron Nesmith led the Pacers with 25 points and six rebounds, Andrew Nembhard scored 20 points, and Myles Turner finished with 20 points.

**Magic 113, Clippers 108:** Markelle Fultz scored 12 of his 28 points in the fourth quarter, Wendell Carter Jr. had 27 points and 12 rebounds, and visiting Orlando snapped its two-game skid with a victory over Los Angeles.

Paul George scored 30 points for the Clippers, whose four-game winning streak ended on the last contest of a five-game homestand. Ivica Zubac had 16 points and 16 rebounds for LA on his 26th birthday, grabbing his 3,000th career rebound in the first half.

**Kings 132, Wizards 118:** Domantas Sabonis had 30 points, nine rebounds and nine assists, and Terence Davis II provided an early spark off the bench and added 21 points as visiting Sacramento beat Washington.

Kyle Kuzma scored 33 points and Bradley Beal added 20 for the Wizards, who have lost seven of their last nine.

**Grizzlies 133, Warriors 119:** Jaren Jackson Jr. had 31 points and four blocks and host Memphis used a fourth-quarter push to defeat Golden State.

Jonathan Kuminga matched his season high with 24 points to lead the Warriors. Jordan Poole had 21 points, and Stephen Curry scored 16, but was 5-for-15 from the field.

**Bulls 113, Heat 99:** DeMar DeRozan scored 24 points to lead a balanced Bulls offense and host Chicago held off a late surge by Miami.

DeRozan shot 9-for-12 from the floor to help the Bulls sweep the season series from the Heat.

## Kane lifts Oilers over with second hat trick of season

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Evander Kane only needed three shots to show the Edmonton Oilers can be more than just Connor McDavid. And the timing couldn't be better with the playoffs on the horizon.

Kane recorded his second hat trick of the season and the Oilers gained some cushion in the Western Conference playoff chase with a 6-4 win over the Seattle Kraken on Saturday.

Kane capped the sixth three-goal game of his career by scoring on an odd-man rush with 9:40 remaining just after a power play for Seattle ended. Kane also scored Edmonton's first goal less than two minutes into the game, and his second goal came 43 seconds into the second period.

McDavid still did his part with a goal and two assists, giving him 134 points for the season.

**Hurricanes 5, Flyers 4 (OT):** Sebastian Aho had a hat trick, including the winning goal 28 seconds into overtime after Martin Necas tied it with 0.3 seconds left in regulation, as visiting Carolina rallied to beat Philadelphia.

**Maple Leafs 5, Senators 4 (SO):** Alexander Kerfoot scored the deciding goal in the ninth round of the shootout to lift visiting Toronto to its second straight win.

**Canucks 3, Kings 2 (SO):** J.T. Miller and Andrei Kuzmenko scored in the shootout and visiting Vancouver won for the sixth time in seven games.

**Stars 6, Flames 5 (OT):** Jason Robertson scored his second

goal of the game at 4:47 of overtime to lift visiting Dallas.

**Panthers 4, Devils 2:** Sam Reinhart scored two of Florida's four third-period goals and the host Panthers rallied to beat New Jersey.

**Coyotes 4, Blackhawks 2:** Juuso Valimaki broke a tie with 3:12 left and host Arizona extended its point streak to eight games.

**Lightning 5, Canadiens 3:** Brandon Hagel had his second NHL hat trick, Steven Stamkos reached the 30-goal mark for the eighth time and host Tampa Bay rallied in the third period to beat Montreal.

**Islanders 4, Sharks 1:** Jean-Gabriel Pageau had a goal and an assist, Ilya Sorokin stopped 29 shots for his 25th win of the season, and visiting New York

beat San Jose.

**Rangers 6, Penguins 0:** Artemi Panarin scored twice, Mika Zibanejad had a goal and two assists, and Igor Shesterkin made 33 saves as host New York beat Pittsburgh for the second time in three nights.

**Avalanche 5, Red Wings 1:** Nathan MacKinnon scored a tie-breaking goal with a burst of speed and a slick wrist shot midway through the second period to help visiting Colorado win its fifth straight.

**Bruins 5, Wild 2:** David Pastrnak scored his 47th goal of the season and Linus Ullmark made 29 saves in visiting Boston's win over Minnesota.

**Jets 3, Predators 2 (OT):** Neal Pionk scored 55 seconds into overtime to lead visiting Winnipeg over Nashville.