

N. Korea: Missile simulated nuclear attack

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea—North Korea said Monday that it simulated a nuclear attack on South Korea with a ballistic missile launch over the weekend that was its fifth missile demonstration this month to protest the largest joint military exercises in years between the United States and South Korea.

The North's leader Kim Jong Un instructed his military to hold drills to sharpen the war readiness of his nuclear forces in the face of "aggression" by his enemies, state media reported.

The South Korean and Japanese militaries detected the short-range missile being launched Sunday into waters off the North's eastern coast, which reportedly came less than an hour before the U.S. flew long-range B-1B bombers for training with South Korean warplanes. The North has consistently characterized the U.S.-South Korea exercises as a rehearsal to invade, though the allies have insisted they are only defensive in nature. Some experts have said the North uses the exercises as a pretext to advance its weap-

ons programs.

Pyeongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said the missile, which flew about 500 miles, was tipped with a mock nuclear warhead. It described the test as successful, saying that the device detonated as intended 800 yards above water at a spot that simulated an unspecified "major enemy target," supposedly reaffirming the reliability of the weapon's nuclear explosion control devices and warhead detonators.

The report said the launch was the final step of a two-day drill that also involved nuclear command and control exercises and training military units to switch more quickly into nuclear counterattack posture, properly handle nuclear weapons systems and execute attack plans.

The exercise was also a "stronger warning" to the U.S. and South Korea, who are "undisguised in their explicit attempt to unleash a war" against the North, KCNA said.

Photos published by state media showed Kim walking through a forest with his daugh-

ter and senior military officials and a missile the North described as a tactical nuclear weapon system soaring from the woods spewing flames and smoke.

Saying his enemies are getting "ever more pronounced in their moves for aggression," Kim laid out unspecified "strategic tasks" for further developing his nuclear forces and improving their war readiness, KCNA said. This indicated the North could up the ante in its weapons demonstrations in coming weeks or months.

Jeon Ha Gyu, spokesperson of South Korea's Defense Ministry, said it's clear North Korea is making "considerable progress" in nuclear weapons technology with its ramped-up testing activity. He did not provide a specific assessment about the North's claim about the successful warhead detonation.

North Korean photos indicated the latest launch was of a solid-fuel missile apparently modeled after Russia's Iskander mobile ballistic system that the North has been testing since 2019. The missiles are built to

travel at low altitudes and be maneuverable in flight, which theoretically improve their chances of evading South Korean missile defenses.

While these missiles have been mostly fired from wheeled vehicles, North Korea has also tested them or their variants from railcars, a submarine and a platform inside a reservoir. Photos of the latest test suggested the missile was possibly fired from a silo dug into the ground, highlighting the North's efforts to diversify its launch options and make it harder for opponents to identify and counter them.

South Korea's military said the launch took place at a mountainous northwestern region near Tongchangri, which hosts a site where the North conducted long-range rocket and satellite launches in previous years.

North Korea likely has dozens of nuclear warheads, but there are differing assessments on how far the North has advanced in miniaturizing and engineering those weapons so they could fit on the newer weapons it tested in recent years.

China's Xi visits Moscow to bolster Putin amid war

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin warmly welcomed Chinese leader Xi Jinping to the Kremlin on Monday, a visit that sent a powerful message to Western leaders allied with Ukraine that their efforts to isolate Moscow have fallen short.

Xi's trip — his first abroad since his re-election earlier this month — showed off Beijing's new diplomatic swagger and gave a political lift to Putin just days after an international arrest warrant was issued for the Kremlin leader on war crimes charges related to Ukraine.

The two major powers have described

Xi's three-day trip as an opportunity to deepen their "no-limits friendship." China looks to Russia as a source of oil and gas for its energy-hungry economy, and as a partner in standing up to what both see as U.S. domination of global affairs.

The two countries, which are among the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, have also held joint military drills.

They shook hands before sitting down and making brief statements at the start of their meeting, calling each other "dear friend" and exchanging compliments. Putin congratulated Xi on his re-election and

voiced hope for building even stronger ties.

"China has made a colossal leap ahead in its development in recent years," Putin said, adding that "it's causing genuine interest all around the world, and we even feel a bit envious," as Xi smiled.

He welcomed China's proposals for a political settlement in Ukraine and noted Russia is open for talks.

"We will discuss all those issues, including your initiative that we highly respect," Putin said. "Our cooperation in the international arena undoubtedly helps strengthen the basic principles of the global order and multipolarity."

Female pilots testing bladder relief system

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The days of diapers and sponges on long, toiletless flights could be numbered for female service members, thanks to a new cup designed for women.

The in-flight bladder relief system, now being tested by female pilots from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., is intended to replace systems that were originally designed with male anatomy in mind, the Air Force said in a statement Friday.

Lack of comfortable bladder relief has made it difficult for female crew members on long missions, the service said.

"The current options are adult diapers, holding it, or using a bag

system to take the urine away. Some air crew have been found to practice 'tactical dehydration,'" the 4th Fighter Wing statement said.

Each of those methods presents complications. Besides producing discomfort, holding urine can cause infections and weaken bladder muscles.

Meanwhile, the bag systems air crews use require them to unstrap from their seats and gear, a process that can take over 45 minutes, the statement said.

"Tactical dehydration" also is dangerous because it can lower a person's ability to withstand high G-forces by 50%, the Air Force said.

The alternative, designed by the company Airion Health, involves a cup liner system that is docked to the body.

"You wear that under the underwear that comes out of the flight suit, which then connects to our pump system and controller that will pump the liquid out and away from the body into a collection bag," Colt Seman, Airion Health's chief of design, said in the statement.

The goal is for air crew members to be able to relieve themselves without unstrapping.

The bladder relief initiative began in 2020 when the Air Force began offering cash prizes for ideas while asking companies to design a system especial-

ly for women.

The service announced in December 2021 that it would field a system involving a pump, an inflatable pad and a collection bag the following spring. The statement Friday didn't mention what happened to those plans.

Seymour Johnson Air Force Base is the first to "ground test" the new cups, and four other Air Force bases will follow suit before test flights are launched. A date hasn't been announced.

"We brought in a lot of female experts to really take a look at what this is and how to make a system for women from women versus being a male-driven design," said Cam Chidiac, Airion Health's managing member.

Japan-based USS America docks in Philippine capital

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Navy amphibious assault ship capable of operating with F-35B Lightning II stealth fighters docked in Manila over the weekend.

Photographs of the 844-foot USS America in the Philippines' capital were tweeted by the Manila Bulletin on Sunday. The Sasebo, Japan-based flagship of 7th Fleet's Amphibious Squadron 11 is in the islands ahead of next month's annual Balikatan drills involving U.S. and Philippine forces.

The exercise involves thousands of U.S. troops from multiple service branches training alongside their Filipino counterparts. The drills will kick off April 11 and run through April 28, according to a Philippine Star report citing anonymous Armed Forces of the Philippines officials.

The Navy did not immediately respond to phone and email queries about the port call, and it

is unclear if the warship will be taking part in the exercise.

Commissioned in 2014, the America has a crew of nearly 1,000 sailors and can embark about 1,700 Marines. Instead of a well deck to carry landing craft, it has a large hangar bay that provides 30% more storage space and can carry 250% more aviation fuel than a traditional flat-deck ship. It was designed to maximize the capabilities of the Marine Corps' F-35B, which is capable of short takeoffs and vertical landings, allowing flat-deck ships like the America to act as small aircraft carriers.

In 2019, the USS Wasp became the first amphibious assault ship to take part in the joint Balikatan exercise in the Philippines with F-35Bs aboard.

Photographs released by the service show F-35Bs from the Iwakuni, Japan-based Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 122 on the ship's deck in the East China Sea on Thursday.

Court dismisses Okinawa challenges to US runway

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

NAHA, Okinawa — A Japanese court on Thursday struck down a pair of legal challenges brought by Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki to stop the construction of a Marine Corps runway at Camp Schwab.

A three-justice panel of the Fukuoka High Court's Naha branch dismissed two lawsuits seeking to block changes to construction permits required by Japan's Ministry of Defense to finish the project. The judges disregarded Okinawa's argument and held instead that Tamaki's denial of the change request was "illogical" and an abuse of power, according to a copy of the decision released after the hearing. The court "dismisses this appeal," Presiding Justice Yutaka Taniguchi told the packed courtroom Thursday. The hearing lasted less than a minute.

Runway construction at Camp

Schwab on Okinawa's rural northern coast is decades behind schedule. It is meant to replace Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Ginowan, which Japanese officials consider inherently dangerous due to its central location in a densely populated area.

Tamaki disagreed with the court's decision and promised an appeal, he said in a statement posted Thursday afternoon to the prefecture's website.

"I don't think that my decision to deny the change of plans was wrong," Tamaki wrote. He called the ruling unacceptable and said it violated local autonomy.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defense did not respond to an emailed request for comment Friday. The lawsuits, filed Aug. 12 and Aug. 24, challenged a series of decisions in April by Tetsuo Saito, the minister of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism, that struck down Tamaki's denial of the permit changes and forced his approval.

Lost TNT, gunshot spark probes on Okinawa

By **MATTHEW M. BURKE**
AND **KEISHI KOJA**

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Marine Corps says it is investigating a pair of unrelated incidents in which a part containing a small amount of explosive went missing from an attack helicopter and a gate guard inadvertently fired his pistol while on duty.

A device containing about 0.16 ounces of TNT went missing from an AH-1Z Viper attack helicopter Thursday, a spokeswoman for the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing told Stars and Stripes by email Friday. The missing device, an ejection system part, was reported during a post-flight inspection, according

to Capt. Tess LaBossiere.

The Viper returned to Marine Corps Air Station Futenma shortly before noon Thursday from a flight off Okinawa's southern coast, she said. The device measures 1.47 by 1.15 inches and weighs less than 1/10th of one pound.

Neither of the two-person crew saw the part fall from the aircraft, LaBossiere said. The Viper's flight path took it mostly over water.

The device presents no risk of detonating, and if found should be reported to the Okinawa Defense Bureau, according to a statement on the bureau's website.

"1st MAW takes all aviation related events

seriously and is conducting a thorough assessment of the incident," LaBossiere said.

Separately, Marine Corps Installations Pacific is investigating after a Japanese guard at Camp Foster inadvertently fired his weapon Feb. 14 while on duty at No. 1 Gate.

No injuries or damage resulted when the guard accidentally fired his sidearm in front of the headquarters for the installation command and Camp Butler, Yoshii Higa, a spokesman for the All Japan Garrison Forces Labor Union, said by phone Friday.

The guard said he did not pull the trigger, according to Higa, who said he did not know where the round struck.

F-22 Raptors make their first appearance at Clark

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptor stealth aircraft have been training out of a Philippine air base that was once part of America's largest overseas military community.

Photographs of the Raptors — the first deployed by the Air Force to Clark Air Base — were tweeted Wednesday and Thursday by numerous accounts in the Philippines, including by the U.S. Embassy in Manila.

"For the first time in history, two F-22 'Raptor' stealth fighter jets from @PACAF (Pacific Air Forces) landed at Clark Air Base to reinforce commitment to the Mutual Defense Treaty," the embassy tweeted Thursday.

U.S. and Philippine pilots discussed training, aircraft capabilities and future collaboration, the embassy wrote.

The planes belong to the 525th Fighter Squadron at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, PACAF spokeswoman Capt. Alli-

son Delury wrote in an email Friday to Stars and Stripes.

"This exchange emphasizes the strong military relationship between historic allies and confirms our commitment to our partnership with the Philippines," she said.

The visit to Clark was not the first time F-22s have been in the Philippines, Delury said, without providing details of the earlier visits.

The fifth-generation fighters are worth \$143 million each and can fly more than twice the speed of sound with a range of more than 1,850 miles, according to the Air Force. Its inventory includes 183 of the air superiority fighters.

Clark and nearby Subic Bay Naval Base formed the largest U.S. overseas military community before both were damaged in the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo and, soon after, returned to the Philippines.

Late last year, a pair of Japanese F-15J Ea-

gle fighters visited Clark, the first time the Japan Air Self-Defense Force deployed its fighters to a member of the Association of South-east Asian Nations, the service said in a Dec. 8 tweet.

Raptors from Tinian, near Guam, also took part in the Agile Reaper exercise, which recently concluded, according to an Air Force news release Wednesday.

The exercise, on Guam and Tinian, involved airmen from the 673rd Air Base Wing and 3rd Wing at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, the release said.

The training focused on agile combat employment, the ability to move aircraft rapidly to a network of smaller airfields in the Western Pacific to avoid being targeted by Chinese missiles in the event of war.

The F-22s involved in Agile Reaper were assigned to the 525th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, which is deployed to Kadena Air Base, Japan, according to the news release.

4 Chinese vessels repeatedly enter Japanese waters

By **MATTHEW M. BURKE**
AND **KEISHI KOJA**

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Tokyo lodged a series of diplomatic protests with Beijing last week after China sent several coast guard vessels, including one armed with a deck-mounted machine gun, near its islets in the East China Sea.

Four Chinese coast guard ships passed the 12-mile territorial limit around the Senkakus eight times in three separate incidents on

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, a Japanese coast guard spokesman told Stars and Stripes by phone Monday. Each ship stayed in those waters for less than 24 hours and left without incident.

Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs complained to the Chinese Embassy in Japan and to officials in Beijing on all three days, a ministry spokesman said by phone Monday.

"We asked them to leave the area," the spokesman said. Some government officials in Japan are required to speak to the media

only on condition of anonymity.

In each case, the Chinese ships were met by a larger contingent of Japanese coast guard vessels, according to the coast guard spokesman, who declined to provide the exact number. They positioned themselves between the Chinese and Japanese vessels to prevent contact and warned the Chinese to leave the area.

The three incidents bring the number of Chinese intrusions into Japan's territorial waters this year to nine, the spokesman said. The last incident occurred Feb. 24.

Reaction muted to Trump's call for protests

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former President Donald Trump's calls for protests ahead of his anticipated indictment in New York have generated mostly muted reactions from supporters, with even some of his most ardent loyalists dismissing the idea as a waste of time or a law enforcement trap.

The ambivalence raises questions about whether Trump, though a leading Republican contender in the 2024 presidential race who retains a devoted following, still has the power to mobilize far-right supporters the way he did more than two years ago before the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. It also suggests that the hundreds of arrests that followed the Capitol

riot, not to mention the convictions and long prison sentences, may have dampened the desire for repeat mass unrest.

Still, law enforcement in New York is continuing to closely monitor online chatter that has warned of protests and violence if Trump is arrested, with threats varying in specificity and credibility, four officials told The Associated Press. Mainly posted online and in chat groups, the messages have included calls for armed protesters to block law enforcement officers and attempt to stop any potential arrest, the officials said.

The New York Young Republican Club has announced plans for a protest at an undisclosed location in Manhattan on Monday,

and incendiary but isolated posts surfaced on fringe social media platforms from supporters calling for an armed confrontation with law enforcement at Trump's Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago.

But nearly two days after Trump claimed on his Truth Social platform that he expected to be arrested Tuesday and exhorted followers to protest, there were few signs his appeal had inspired his supporters to organize and rally around an event like the Jan. 6 gathering.

In fact, a prominent organizer of rallies that preceded the Capitol riot posted on Twitter that he intended to remain on the sidelines.

Ali Alexander, who as an organizer of the "Stop the Steal"

movement staged rallies to promote Trump's baseless claims that Democrats stole the 2020 election from him, warned Trump supporters they would be "jailed or worse" if they protested in New York City.

"You have no liberty or rights there," he tweeted.

One of Alexander's allies in the "Stop the Steal" campaign was conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, who amplified the election fraud claims on his Infowars show. Alexander posted that he had spoken to Jones and said neither of them would be protesting this time around.

"We've both got enough going on fighting the government," Alexander wrote. "No billionaire is covering our bills."

Biden's appeals court nominee faces scrutiny

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — One of President Joe Biden's nominees to a federal appeals court has generated rare concern from some Democrats and outside groups over his signature on a legal brief defending a parental notification law in New Hampshire, injecting the issue of abortion into his confirmation fight from an unexpected flank.

Michael Delaney, nominated for the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, based in Boston, said in written testimony to senators that he did not write the 2005 brief and otherwise had "extremely limited involvement" in the case that was brought while he was deputy attorney general in New Hampshire.

But the signing of the brief, along with scrutiny of his representation of St. Paul's School, a private boarding school in New Hampshire that was sued in connection with a sexual assault, is complicating a confirmation fight in which the White House has little room for error.

At issue is a New Hampshire law, passed in 2003 but repealed in 2007, that required minors to tell their parents before they obtained an abortion. As the state's deputy attorney general, Delaney was among those who signed a brief submitted to the U.S. Supreme Court that defended the law because it "does not present a substantial obstacle to any woman's right to choose an abortion."

The law, according to the brief filed in the case, *Ayotte vs. Planned Parenthood of Northern New England*, "promotes compelling state interests, not the least of which is protecting the health of the pregnant minor by providing an opportunity for parents to supply essential medical history information to the physician."

Delaney's involvement is detailed in response to written questions from Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., that he submitted after his confirmation hearing last month.

Miami Beach sets curfew after 2 fatal shootings, crowd issues

Associated Press

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. — Miami Beach officials imposed a curfew beginning Sunday night during spring break after two fatal shootings and rowdy, chaotic crowds that police have had difficulty controlling.

The city said in a news release the curfew would be from 11:59 p.m. Sunday until 6 a.m. Monday, with an additional curfew likely to be put in place Thursday through next Monday, March 27.

The curfew mainly affects South Beach, the most popular party location for spring breakers.

The release said the two separate shootings Friday night and early Sunday that left two people dead and "excessively large and unruly crowds" led to the decision. The city commission was to hold a meeting Monday to discuss potential further restrictions next week.

Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber said in a video message posted Sunday that the crowds and presence of numerous fire-

arms has "created a peril that cannot go unchecked" despite massive police presence and many city-sponsored activities meant to keep people busy.

"We don't ask for spring break in our city. We don't want spring break in our city. It's too rowdy, it's too much disorder and it's too difficult to police," Gelber said.

The latest shooting happened at about 3:30 a.m. Sunday on Ocean Drive in South Beach, according to Miami Beach police.

A male was shot and died later at a hospital, and officers chased down a suspect on foot, police said on Twitter. Their identities were not released, nor were any possible charges.

In the Friday night shooting, one male victim was killed and another seriously injured, sending crowds scrambling in fear from restaurants and clubs into the streets as gunshots rang out.

Police detained one person at the scene and found four firearms, but no other details have been made available.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

LGBT protections added to anti-discrimination law

MI LANSING — Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed legislation Thursday codifying LGBTQ protections into the state's civil rights law, permanently outlawing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in the state.

The legislation follows a state Supreme Court ruling last year that Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, which outlaws discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and education on the basis of sex, extended to sexual orientation as well.

Whitmer's signature Thursday ensures the high court's ruling cannot be reversed in the future and goes one step further in extending protections to include gender identity or expression. It comes at a time, Whitmer said, when there's a "nationwide assault on our LGBTQ+ community, especially our trans neighbors, family and friends."

State mulls abortion rights in constitution

NV CARSON CITY — Nevada Senate Majority Leader Nicole Cannizzaro introduced a constitutional amendment Thursday that — over more than three years — could enshrine existing abortion rights in the state constitution, which would offer the highest level of state protection.

Abortion rights up to 24 weeks are already codified into state law through a 1990 ballot measure, and it could be changed with another referendum vote.

The standards are higher for

amending the constitution — either approval from two legislative sessions and an election, or two consecutive elections with a simple majority of votes. A governor is unable to veto a constitutional amendment.

Cannizzaro led a group of 40 Democratic lawmakers in co-sponsoring the measure.

55 more white sharks counted off Cape Cod

MA BARNSTABLE — The scientific nonprofit that tracks the white shark population in Cape Cod waters identified 55 sharks never before documented in the area during its most recent research season. Experts have said, however, that it's no reason for tourists who flock to the vacation hotspot every summer to be afraid of going in the water.

The Atlantic White Shark Conservancy has now documented more than 600 of the apex predators since it began monitoring the population in 2014, staff scientist Megan Winton said Wednesday. Many of the sharks return to the area to feed on the abundant seals that call Cape Cod home.

"It's not necessarily indicative of there being more sharks off of Cape Cod," Winton said. "What we've seen the last couple years in terms of activity and sightings has been par for the course of what we've been seeing for the past several years."

Workers reject union at big Nissan plant

TN NASHVILLE — Several dozen workers among thousands at a Nissan factory in Tennessee voted not to unionize Thursday, another loss

in tough territory for organized labor at a foreign-owned auto assembly plant in the traditionally anti-union South.

The 62-9 vote against the union at Nissan's Smyrna plant followed two years of legal wrangling in front of the National Labor Relations Board that spanned two presidential administrations.

In a statement, the machinists union said the delayed decision from the federal labor board had a "chilling effect" on the campaign. A machinists union representative noted earlier in the week that some employees from the original drive had quit, left for other jobs or retired since the push began.

In a statement after the vote, Nissan spokesperson Lloryn Love-Carter said the workers "elected to maintain their direct relationship with the company."

Stanford worker charged with lying about rapes

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A 25-year-old Stanford University employee was arrested Wednesday and charged with felony perjury for allegedly lying about being raped twice last year on campus, authorities said.

Jennifer Ann Gries, of Santa Clara, first reported a false sexual attack in August when she told a nurse at Valley Medical Center in San Jose that a man grabbed her while she was at a campus parking lot, dragged her to a restroom and sexually assaulted her, the Santa Clara County District Attorney's office said.

In October, she went to Stanford Hospital to get another rape examination and told the nurse conducting the exam that she was returning to her office from lunch

when a man grabbed her arm, forced her into a basement storage closet and raped her, prosecutors said. She again declined to speak with police, they said.

Both of Gries' sexual assault examination kits were analyzed quickly "given the extreme public safety risk of a potential sex offender," prosecutors said, adding that the lab results "were not consistent with her story."

In January, during an interview with a District Attorney's Office investigator, Gries is said to have admitted to lying about the rapes and written an apology letter to the man who was the target of her allegations. Gries was charged with two felony counts of perjury and two misdemeanor counts of making a false crime report to nurses at two different hospitals, prosecutors said.

Republicans float bill to designate state rifle

WI MADISON — Republican lawmakers began circulating a bill Thursday that would designate a lever-action rifle produced in northwestern Wisconsin as the state's official rifle.

The bill from state Reps. Dave Armstrong, Treig Pronschinske and James Edming and Sen. Romaine Quinn would designate the Henry All-Weather .45-70 as Wisconsin's official state rifle.

The bill is symbolic only. The state rifle designation would not force anyone to purchase or use the weapon.

But it would give the rifle and its manufacturer, Rice Lake-based Henry Repeating Arms, plenty of publicity and help the bill's authors score points with gun supporters.

— From wire reports

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US cruises to World Baseball Classic title game

Associated Press

MIAMI — Trea Turner, Paul Goldschmidt and an unrelenting U.S. lineup kept putting crooked numbers on the scoreboard, a dynamic display of the huge gap between an American team of major leaguers and Cubans struggling on the world stage as top players have left the island nation.

Turner homered twice to give him a tournament-leading four, driving in four runs to lead the United States to a 14-2 rout Sunday night and advance the defending champion Americans to the World Baseball Classic final.

Goldschmidt also homered and had four RBIs, and Cedric Mullins went deep in a game interrupted three times by fans running on the field to display protest signs.

“The team kind of represents the government over there, and people aren’t too happy about it,” U.S. manager Mark DeRosa said.

The U.S. will play Japan or Mexico in Tuesday night’s championship, trying to join the Samurai Warriors as the only nations to win the title twice.

“I think it took us a little bit of time, but now we kind of found our stride a little bit,” Turner said.

Turner has a tournament-leading 10 RBIs. He followed his go-ahead, eighth-inning grand slam a night earlier against Venezuela with a solo homer in the second inning off Roenis Elias (0-1) and a three-run drive in the sixth against Elian Leyva.

“I kept saying every time he went deep, who is the idiot that’s hitting him ninth?” DeRosa said.

Cuba went ahead when its first four batters reached off Adam Wainwright (2-0) without getting a ball out of the infield. After forcing in a run with a walk to Alfredo Despaigne, the 41-year-old right-hander recovered to strand the bases loaded.

“I put myself in that situation

in the first place by making horrible PFP plays—or not making PFP plays,” Wainwright said in a reference to pitchers’ fielding practice and two grounders he failed to come up with.

American batters had 14 hits, including eight for extra bases, and seven walks as they scored in seven of eight innings — five with multiple runs. Goldschmidt hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the first on a 112 mph rocket high over the left-field wall. He added a two-run single in the fifth.

“For me, that was one of my favorite home runs I’ve ever hit in my entire life,” Goldschmidt said.

St. Louis third baseman Nolan Arenado left after he was hit on his right hand by a pitch in the fifth inning, briefly raising another injury concern before X-rays came back as negative. Mets closer Edwin Díaz sustained a season-ending knee injury during the celebration that

followed Puerto Rico’s win on Wednesday and Houston second baseman Jose Altuve broke a thumb when hit by a pitch while playing for Venezuela on Saturday.

Fans in the sellout crowd of 35,779 at loan Depot Park sounded evenly split between the U.S. and Cuba. Several hundred people gathered before the game outside the ballpark in Miami’s Little Havana section to protest the presence of the Cuban team, whose country has been under communist rule since 1959.

Play was briefly interrupted in the sixth, seventh and eighth innings when fans ran onto the field. The first held a banner that read “Libertad Para Los Presos Cubanos del 11 de Julio (Freedom for the Cuban Prisoners of July 11)” referring to the date of 2021 demonstrations.

“There were provocations, but we never paid attention to it,” Cuba manager Armando Johnson said.

Nowell’s huge 2nd half leads Kansas State past Kentucky

Associated Press

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Markquis Nowell never lost faith, not when Kansas State had hardly anyone left on the roster for a new coach nor when the Wildcats were picked last in the Big 12.

“He always believed,” coach Jerome Tang said, “And he helped me believe.”

And that led Kansas State to this decidedly hard-to-believe moment: headed for New York’s Madison Square Garden, ticket in hand for the NCAA Tournament’s Sweet 16.

Nowell scored 23 of his 27 points after half-time, and Kansas State overcame a horrid start from outside by hitting a couple of clutch three-pointers while topping Kentucky 75-69 in Sunday’s second round.

Tang has gone from having just two players on the roster to having a matching number of NCAA wins — sending the Wildcats (25-9) to their first Sweet 16 since 2018.

“Dudes,” Tang said. “We got dudes. That’s what it takes. I mean, people get all caught up in the coaching and all of that stuff. It’s dudes.”

Kansas State faces No. 7 seed Michigan State in the East Region semifinals Thursday.

Michigan State 69, Marquette 60: Tyson Walker scored 23 points and the No. 7 seed Spartans beat the second-seeded Golden Eagles in Columbus, Ohio, sending coach Tom Izzo’s squad back to the Sweet 16 for the first time in four years.

Joey Hauser — a Marquette transfer — had 14 points and A.J. Hoggard had 13 as Michigan State (21-12) took over in the last three minutes. The Spartans advanced to play third-seeded Kansas State.

Midwest Region

Xavier 84, Pittsburgh 73: Jack Nunge scored 18 points, Adam Kunkel added 15 on five first-half three-pointers, and the No. 3 seed Musketeers beat the 11th-seeded Panthers in Greensboro, N.C., to reach their first Sweet 16 since 2017.

Xavier (27-9) moves on to play No. 2 seed Texas on Friday in the Midwest Region semifinals in Kansas City, Mo.

Miami 85, Indiana 69: Isaiah Wong and Jordan Miller led a decisive second-half spurt for the Hurricanes, who beat the Hoosiers in Albany, N.Y., to reach their second straight

Sweet 16.

Miami will face top-seeded Houston in the Midwest Region semifinals in Kansas City, Mo., on Friday.

West Region

UConn 70, Saint Mary’s 55: Adama Sango scored 24 points and Jordan Hawkins delivered from the three-point line in the second half as the Huskies pulled away from the Gaels in Albany, N.Y., to reach the Sweet 16 for the first time in nine years.

Gonzaga 84, TCU 81: Drew Timme extended his one-of-a-kind college career by at least one more game, finishing with 28 points and eight rebounds to help the third-seeded Bulldogs rally past the Horned Frogs in Denver and make their eighth straight Sweet 16.

South Region

Creighton 85, Baylor 76: Ryan Nembhard scored a career-high 30 points and the No. 6 seed Bluejays found their shooting touch to beat the third-seeded Bears in Denver and earn a spot in the Sweet 16 for the second time in three seasons.

Ole Miss upsets No. 1 seed Stanford

Associated Press

STANFORD, Calif. — Madison Scott hit a pair of free throws with 23 seconds left that gave Mississippi the lead for good, Angel Baker scored 13 points, and the Rebels delivered on their declaration to get defensive, stunning top-seeded Stanford 54-49 on Sunday night to reach the NCAA Tournament's Sweet 16 for the first time in 16 years.

Behind the entire game, Stanford called a timeout with 28 seconds left then Hannah Jump turned the ball over and Scott converted. Haley Jones lost the ball out of bounds on the Cardinal's last possession with a chance to tie then again in the waning moments.

Marquesha Davis hit a pair of free throws with 15.4 seconds to play as Ole Miss overcame not making a field goal over the final 5:47, going 0-for-8.

Greenville 1 Region

No. 1 South Carolina 76, No. 8 South Florida 45: Zia Cooke

scored 21 points and Aliyah Boston had her 81st career double double as the Gamecocks shook off a slow start.

South Carolina improved to 34-0 with its 40th straight win overall and moved four victories away from a second straight national title. The Gamecocks will head to Greenville, where they won the Southeastern Conference Tournament two weeks ago, to play for a spot in the Final Four.

No. 2 Maryland 77, No. 7 Arizona 64: Diamond Miller scored 13 of her 24 points in the third quarter to help the Terrapins to a victory.

Maryland (27-6) advances to the Sweet 16 for a third straight year and the 11th time under coach Brenda Frese. Maryland trailed by a point after two quarters but ran past Arizona (22-10) in the second half.

No. 3 Notre Dame 53, No. 11 Mississippi State 48: Lauren Ebo had 10 points, 18 rebounds and four blocks to help the Irish beat the Bulldogs.

Maddy Westbeld added nine points and 15 rebounds for Notre Dame, which blew an eight-point lead in the fourth quarter.

Mississippi State scored eight straight points to open the fourth quarter and tie the game at 41.

The Irish regained the lead for good on a pair of KK Bransford free throws with 3:49 left.

Greenville 2 Region

No. 2 Utah 63, No. 10 Princeton 56: Alissa Pili had 28 points and 10 rebounds to lead the Utes over the Tigers.

Jenna Johnson added 15 points for Utah, which made only one three-pointer but still advanced to its first Sweet 16 since 2006.

Kaitlyn Chen scored 19 points, Grace Stone had 16 and Ellie Mitchell finished with 18 rebounds for Princeton (24-6).

No. 3 LSU 66, No. 6 Michigan 42: Angel Reese dismantled the Wolverines on both ends of the court with 25 points,

24 rebounds, six blocks and three steals to help the Tigers win.

Reese, a 6-foot-3 All-America forward, did most of her damage with gauze wedged under her upper lip after a shot to her mouth drew blood in the opening minutes of the game.

Seattle 3 Region

No. 1 Virginia Tech 72, No. 9 South Dakota State 60: Georgia Amoore scored 21 points and the Hokies held off the Jackrabbits.

Elizabeth Kitley added 14 points and 14 rebounds for Virginia Tech (29-4), which won its 13th consecutive game.

Seattle 4 Region

No. 2 Iowa 74, No. 10 Georgia 66: Caitlin Clark had 22 points and 12 assists while Monika Czinano added 20 points to help the Hawkeyes beat the Lady Bulldogs.

Iowa (28-6) advances to the ninth Sweet Sixteen in program history.

Jokic's triple-double lifts slumping Nuggets past Nets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Nikola Jokic had 22 points, 17 rebounds and 10 assists in his 28th triple-double of the season, Michael Porter Jr. had 28 points and nine rebounds, and the Denver Nuggets beat the Brooklyn Nets 108-102 on Sunday.

Jamal Murray scored 20 of his 25 points in the first quarter for the Nuggets, who looked nothing like the slumping team that had dropped five of six. Denver shot 62.5% in the first half and led comfortably most of the game while playing for the second straight afternoon.

The Nuggets let a 20-point lead after three quarters get cut to 100-93 with 3:44 to play. Porter answered with one of his five three-pointers, and the Nuggets

got the lead back up to 14.

Mikal Bridges scored 23 points and Nic Claxton had 19 for the Nets, who have lost three straight.

Clippers 117, Trail Blazers 102: Paul George had 29 points and visiting Los Angeles handed Portland its sixth straight loss.

Kawhi Leonard added 24 for the Clippers as they fight for home-court advantage in the playoffs.

Heat 112, Pistons 100: Tyler Herro scored 10 of his 19 points in the final 3:20 and visiting Miami won for the third time in four games.

Jimmy Butler had 26 points and 10 assists and Bam Adebayo added 22 points and 10 rebounds for the Heat.

Spurs 126, Hawks 118: Kel-

don Johnson and Devin Vassell had 29 points each, and host San Antonio rallied from a 24-point deficit to spoil Dejounte Murray's homecoming.

Murray had 22 points, eight assists and six rebounds in his first game in San Antonio since being traded to Atlanta.

Bucks 118, Raptors 111: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 22 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists, Brook Lopez scored 17 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter and host Milwaukee improved to an NBA-best 51-20.

Khris Middleton added 20 points and Bobby Portis had 14 for the Bucks.

Thunder 124, Suns 120: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 40 points, and host Oklahoma City got its fourth win in

five games as it tries to earn at least a play-in spot.

Devin Booker scored 46 points and Chris Paul had 14 points and 13 assists for the Suns.

Lakers 111, Magic 105: Austin Reaves scored a career-high 35 points and host Los Angeles hung on to beat Orlando.

Anthony Davis had 15 points and 11 rebounds on another rough shooting night.

Pelicans 117, Rockets 107: Brandon Ingram and CJ McCollum each scored 26 points and visiting New Orleans closed the gap to a half-game behind Utah for the final spot in the play in tournament with 11 games left.

Jalen Green scored 40 points, his fourth game scoring at least 40 points this season.

Bratt gets trick; Devils rally past Lightning

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Jesper Bratt scored three goals for his first NHL hat trick as the New Jersey Devils rallied from two goals down and beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 5-2 on Sunday night to end a three-game skid.

Nico Hischier and Nolan Foote also scored to help the Devils improve their league-leading road record to 26-5-4. Vitek Vanecek finished with 22 saves to help New Jersey get a win after losing at home to the Lightning on Tuesday and Thursday before blowing a 2-0 lead in a 4-2 loss at Florida on Saturday.

“We played way better today,” Hischier said. “It would have been a tough one to swallow if we’d given up the lead again, but we all-around played our game. You just have to learn from those games. We know that if we play our game, we can beat those teams. That’s what we have to understand.”

Nikita Kucherov reached the 100-point mark for the third

time in his career with a goal in the first period and Alex Killorn also scored for the Lightning, who had won three straight. Andrei Vasilevskiy made 34 saves.

“We have to go back to keeping it simple,” defenseman Zach Bogosian said after the Lightning committed 16 turnovers. “We are a very successful team on the forecheck and getting pucks behind them and then going to work.”

Canucks 2, Ducks 1: Elias Pettersson had a power-play goal and an assist to extend his point streak to eight games, Quinn Hughes had two assists to give him 60 for the season, and visiting Vancouver beat Anaheim.

Ryan Strome scored and John Gibson had 38 saves for the Ducks, who were eliminated from playoff contention.

Wild 5, Capitals 3: Matt Boldy scored three goals for his second career hat trick to lead host Minnesota.

Alex Ovechkin scored twice

on the power play and Dylan Strome once for Washington, 2-4-1 in its past seven games.

Blues 3, Jets 0: Kasperii Kapanen, Nathan Walker and Jakub Vrana each scored to lead host St. Louis past Winnipeg.

Rookie goalie and Winnipeg native Joel Hofer started in his first home appearance with St. Louis and stopped 33 shots in his fourth NHL start to help the Blues win for the fourth time in six games. He didn’t get the shutout because he had to leave the ice for a skate repair in the second period. Thomas Greiss had a save while filling in.

Rangers 7, Predators 0: Defenseman K’Andre Miller had two goals and two assists in his team’s six-goal first period, and Jaroslav Halak made 22 saves for his first shutout of the season to lead host New York.

The Rangers scored six times on their first eight shots, chasing Nashville starting goalie Kevin Lankinen after he gave up four goals on five

shots. He was replaced by Juuse Saros.

Bruins 7, Sabres 0: Jeremy Swayman stopped 26 shots to post his second consecutive shutout, David Pastrnak matched a career-high by scoring his team-leading 48th goal, and NHL-leading Boston routed reeling host Buffalo.

Boston improved to 19-1-1 in its past 21 meetings against the Sabres, and 9-0-1 in the past 10. The Bruins won their 26th road game to match a franchise record set in 1971-72. Boston’s 53 wins through 69 games match the team’s fourth-highest total, and are four short of the franchise record set during a 78-game season in 1970-71.

Golden Knights 7, Blue Jackets 2: Jack Eichel scored three goals for his second hat trick of the season and fourth of his career to lead host Vegas.

Phil Kessel and Pavel Doro-feyev each had a goal and an assist, and Paul Cotter and Zach Whitecloud also scored for the Golden Knights.

Logano passes Keselowski to give Atlanta win to Ford

Associated Press

HAMPTON, Ga. — Joey Logano and Brad Keselowski gave Atlanta and NASCAR a rare clean last-lap battle.

For a change, there was no late wreck.

No overtime.

Just a clean finish between hard racers.

Logano dominated early and then passed Keselowski on the final lap to win NASCAR’s race at Atlanta Motor Speedway on Sunday and end the early season domination of Chevrolet and Hendrick Motorsports.

Logano won the pole and led a strong showing of three straight Team Penske drivers in qualifying, but Keselowski looked like the Ford driver to beat late in the race. Keselowski had help from Corey La-

Joie, but Logano got a push from Christopher Bell that proved decisive on the final lap.

“It was lane versus lane, that’s what it was, inside versus outside,” Logano said, adding that it was natural to expect conflict would inevitably lead to contact.

“Yeah, because it happens just about every time,” Logano said of Cup drivers’ propensity to wreck late in races.

Bell finished third in a Toyota and LaJoie finished a career-best fourth in a Chevrolet.

“The first win of the season always feels better,” said Logano, the reigning Cup champion, who led 141 of the 260 laps.

Logano’s win ended a streak of four consecutive victories by Chevrolet to open the NASCAR Cup season, including back-to-

back wins by William Byron of Hendrick.

Pushed by his Team Penske teammates Ryan Blaney and Austin Cindric, Logano passed Keselowski to regain the lead with 34 laps to go. Keselowski regained the lead to set up the last-lap drama.

“The bottom row came with a huge run,” said Keselowski. “I don’t know how and I thought I had it blocked and Joey just kept shaking and his car didn’t stall out. I couldn’t get the push down the back. We were right there. I’m glad a Ford won. It was a heck of a battle.”

It was Logano’s first win at the track he calls his second home. Logano is from Middletown, Conn. He calls NASCAR’s facility in Loudon, N.H.,

his home track, but Logano’s family moved to Georgia when he was a child. He competed in Legends races at Atlanta Motor Speedway as a child who dreamed of driving on the big track.

“We’ve been so close so many times here, and to finally get a win here means so much,” he said.

After no cautions during the second stage, the competition — and crashes — picked up late in the race.

Kevin Harvick, who won in Atlanta in 2001, 2018 and 2020, was leading late when he lost control while being pushed by Ross Chastain. Replays indicated Chastain’s Chevrolet didn’t hit Harvick’s Ford, but Harvick’s spin caused a major crash.