

US hastens delivery of tanks to Ukraine

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is speeding up its delivery of Abrams tanks to Ukraine, opting to send a refurbished older model that can be ready faster, with the aim of getting the 70-ton battle powerhouses to the war zone in eight to 10 months, U.S. officials told The Associated Press.

The original plan was to send Ukraine 31 of the newer M1A2 Abrams, which could have taken a year or two to build and ship. But officials said the decision was made to send the older M1A1 version, which can be taken from Army stocks and will be easier for Ukrainian forces to learn to use and maintain as they fight Russia's invasion.

The officials spoke on Tuesday on the condition of anonymity because the plan has not yet been publicly announced. Pentagon officials are expected to make the announcement soon.

The Biden administration announced in January that it would send the tanks to Ukraine — after insisting for months that they

were too complicated and too hard to maintain and repair. The decision was part of a broader political maneuver that opened the door for Germany to announce it would send its Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine and allow Poland and other allies to do the same.

It's unclear how soon the U.S. would begin training Ukrainian forces on how to use, maintain and repair the tanks. That training pipeline could affect the amount of time it takes for the tanks to be used in battle. The Pentagon will also have to ensure that Ukrainian forces have an adequate supply chain for all the parts needed to keep the tanks running.

During a visit to the tank plant in February, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth met with officials there at length to determine the best options for getting the tanks to Ukraine.

"Part of it is figuring out — among the different options — what's the best one that can allow us to get the Ukrainians tanks in as timely a fashion as we can," without dis-

rupting foreign military sales, Wormuth said at the time.

Officials at the plant, which is owned by the Army and operated by General Dynamics, said production totals can vary, based on contract demands.

And while they are currently building 15-20 armored vehicles per month, including tanks, they can easily boost that to 33 a month and could add another shift of workers and build even more if needed.

Development of tanks for Ukraine would have to be squeezed in between the current contracts for foreign sales, which include 250 of the newest versions for Poland and about 75 for Australia.

Ukrainian leaders have persistently pressed for the Abrams, which first deployed to war in 1991 and has thick armor, a 120 mm main gun, armor-piercing capabilities and advanced targeting systems.

It runs on thick tracked wheels and has a 1,500-horsepower turbine engine with a top speed of about 42 mph.

Trump waits out grand jury as NYC fears protests

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Facing the possibility of criminal charges, Donald Trump waited it out in Florida on Tuesday as New York braced for disruptions that could follow an indictment. Republican contenders in the 2024 race sized up the impact a prosecution could have on a campaign in which the former president is a leading contender.

Trump over the weekend claimed without evidence that he would be arrested on Tuesday, but there was no indication that prediction would come true. A Manhattan grand jury did appear to take an important step forward on Monday by hearing from a witness favorable to Trump, presumably so prosecutors could ensure the panel had a chance to consider any testimony supporting his version of events.

The next steps were unclear, and it was uncertain if additional witnesses might be summoned. But a city mindful of the riot by Trump loyalists at the U.S. Capitol more than two years ago took steps to protect itself from any violence that could accompa-

ny the unprecedented prosecution of a former president.

Monday's testimony from Robert Costello, a lawyer with close ties to numerous key Trump aides, appeared to be a final opportunity for allies to steer the grand jury away from an indictment. Costello was invited by prosecutors to appear after saying he had information to undercut the credibility of Michael Cohen, a former lawyer and fixer for Trump who later turned against him and then became a key witness in the Manhattan district attorney's investigation.

Costello had provided Cohen legal services several years ago after Cohen himself became entangled in the federal investigation into the hush money payments.

In a news conference after his grand jury appearance, Costello told reporters he had come forward because he did not believe Cohen, who pleaded guilty to federal crimes and served time in prison.

"If they want to go after Donald Trump and they have solid evidence, then so be it," Costello said. "But Michael Cohen is far

from solid evidence."

Responding on MSNBC, Cohen said that Costello was never his lawyer and "he lacks any sense of veracity."

There were no signs that Costello's testimony had affected the course of the investigation. Cohen had been available for over two hours in case prosecutors wanted him to rebut Costello's testimony but he was told he was not needed, his attorney said.

The testimony came two days after Trump said he expected to face criminal charges and urged supporters to protest his possible arrest. In social media posts through the weekend, he criticized the investigation, directing particularly hostile rhetoric toward Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a Democrat.

New York officials have been monitoring online chatter of threats of varying specificity, but even as metal barricades were dropped off to safeguard streets and sidewalks, there were no immediate signs that Trump's calls for protests were being heeded.

Ukraine, Russia trade claims after Crimea blast

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian and Ukrainian officials on Tuesday gave conflicting accounts of what appeared to be a brazen attack on Russian cruise missiles being transported by train in the occupied Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula.

A Ukrainian military spokesperson indicated that Kyiv was behind the explosion late Monday that reportedly destroyed multiple Kalibr cruise missiles near the town of Dzhankoi in northern Crimea, while stopping short of directly claiming responsibility.

Natalia Humeniuk, the spokeswoman for Ukraine's southern operational command, described the strike as a signal to Russia that it should leave the Black Sea peninsula it illegally took from Ukraine in 2014.

Speaking on Ukrainian TV, Humeniuk pointed out Dzhankoi's importance as a railway junction and said "right now, the

way ahead (for Russian forces in Crimea) is clear — they need to make their way out by rail already."

A vague statement by Ukraine's military intelligence agency Monday said multiple missiles carried by rail and destined for submarine launch had been destroyed, without saying outright that Ukraine was responsible or what weapon had been used. The agency implied Kyiv was behind the blast, however, saying it furthers "the process of Russia's demilitarization and prepares the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea for de-occupation."

Moscow-installed authorities in Crimea on Tuesday offered a different version of events, saying Ukrainian drones attacked civilian facilities in Dzhankoi.

Sergei Aksenov, the Kremlin-appointed head of Crimea, said the attack left one civilian wounded, but caused "no serious damage."

Aksenov's adviser, Oleg Kryuchkov, rejected Ukraine's claims and said Ukrainian drones had targeted residential areas rather than the railway. Igor Ivin, head of the local administration in Dzhankoi, said the attack damaged power lines, a private house, a store and a college building.

Unconfirmed social media reports late Monday claimed Russia's anti-aircraft defenses shot down multiple drones over Crimea. None of the statements could be independently verified.

Throughout the current war, reports have surfaced of attacks on Russian military bases and other infrastructure in Crimea, with Ukraine rarely explicitly claiming responsibility but greeting the incidents with jubilation.

In August, powerful explosions rocked a Russian air base in western Crimea, with Ukraine later saying nine warplanes were destroyed. Satellite photos showed at least seven fighter

planes had been blown up and others probably damaged. Ukrainian officials initially steered clear of taking credit, while mocking Russia's explanation that a careless smoker might have caused ammunition at the Saki base to catch fire and blow up. Unusually, Ukraine's top military officer weeks later announced he had ordered the strikes.

Russian-appointed authorities have also previously reported repeated Ukrainian drone attacks on Crimea, most of which targeted the port of Sevastopol that hosts the main Russian naval base there.

These incidents in Crimea, as well as reported drone attacks on Russian territory far from the war's front lines, have exposed major weaknesses in Moscow's defenses and embarrassed Russian President Vladimir Putin, who reportedly believed the invasion of Ukraine would be quick and easy.

Navy to begin laser testing project after space station launch

BY DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — An experimental military project that will test laser beaming technology has arrived at the International Space Station and will spend a year in orbit, Navy officials said.

A SpaceX flight last week carried the laser package — part of the Pentagon's Space Test Program — which will carry out various experiments to test power beaming, a technology that transfers energy instantaneously through electromagnetic waves. It's also known as wireless power transfer.

Power beaming has already proven to be safe and feasible on Earth, the Navy said. The new project — officially known as the Space Wireless Energy Laser Link, or SWELL — will test its effectiveness in low Earth orbit in zero gravity.

Power can be transferred on electromagnetic waves through multiple techniques, such as lasers and microwaves. If it works in

low Earth orbit, naval officials said the technology could offer significant potential for space defense applications.

"With this modest experiment, we will identify key focus areas for developing links of greater power and longer distance for space," said Paul Jaffe, electronics engineer and SWELL principal investigator. "By employing laser transmitters ... power beaming links will be established that will pave the way for rapid, resilient and flexible energy delivery systems."

The Naval Research Laboratory demonstrated laser power beaming on the Earth during an event at the Naval Surface Warfare Center near Washington in 2019. The laser, which transferred 400 watts of power more than 1,000 feet between two 13-foot-high towers, is invisible to the naked eye.

"By eliminating the need for moving fuel or batteries, or for stringing wires, SWELL could be a compelling option for the utilization of lunar resources and development on the moon,"

the Naval Research Laboratory said.

Officials said the SWELL project will collect and study data the Navy expects will shed light on how power transfer equipment behaves in space. The project is also expected to uncover any issues that could create problems with the technology later.

The Navy isn't the only service experimenting with wireless power beaming in space. Last year, the Air Force said its researchers were testing beaming technology with energy collected from the sun and transmitted back to Earth for military use on the ground.

"There is a high possibility this technology could be a highly valued asset in the commercial sector as well," the Air Force Research Laboratory said at the time. "Much like the Global Positioning System, which started out as a military asset and transitioned to a technology now used by people everywhere, this solar power beaming system could transition to broader usage, providing solar energy regardless of weather, time of day or latitude."

Yellen: Banking situation is ‘stabilizing’

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is trying to project calm after regional bank failures, saying the U.S. banking system is “sound” but additional rescue arrangements “could be warranted” if any new failures at smaller institutions pose a risk to financial stability.

Yellen, in an excerpt of remarks prepared for delivery to the American Bankers Association on Tuesday, says that overall “the situation is stabilizing.”

“And the U.S. banking system remains sound,” Yellen says.

Yellen’s remarks come after a series of troubling bank developments this month.

Silicon Valley Bank, based in Santa Clara, Calif., failed on March 10 after depositors rushed to withdraw money amid anxiety over the bank’s health. It was the second-largest bank collapse in U.S. history. Regulators convened over the following weekend and announced that New York-based Signature Bank had also failed. They said all depositors at both banks, including those holding uninsured funds, those exceeding \$250,000, would be protected by federal deposit insurance.

And last week, a third bank, San Francisco-based First Republic Bank, was fortified by \$30 billion in funds raised by 11

of the biggest U.S. banks in an attempt to prevent it from collapsing.

The government is now determined to restore public confidence in the banking system and to prevent any more turmoil. The Justice Department and the Securities and Exchange Commission have launched investigations into the Silicon Valley Bank collapse, and President Joe Biden has called on Congress to strengthen rules on regional banks and to impose tougher penalties on executives of failed banks.

Yellen, in her prepared remarks, says the government’s intervention was necessary to

“protect the broader banking system” and more rescue efforts could be necessary.

“Similar actions could be warranted if smaller institutions suffer deposit runs that pose the risk of contagion,” she says.

Yellen faced the Senate Finance Committee last week and offered upbeat reassurances to rattled bank depositors and investors that the U.S. banking system “remains sound” and Americans “can feel confident” about the safety of their deposits.

She will appear in front of congressional panels twice more this week, in the Senate and the House.

Wyoming becomes 1st state to specifically ban abortion pill

Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. — Wyoming has pushed to the front of state efforts to prohibit the most common type of abortion by instituting the nation’s first explicit ban on pills that terminate pregnancies.

Medication abortions, which usually involve taking two prescription medications days apart at home or in a clinic, became the preferred method for ending pregnancy in the United States even before the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* — and now account for more than half of all abortions according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights.

More than a dozen states now effectively ban abortion pills by prohibiting all forms of abortion, moves made after the *Roe* reversal last year.

Fifteen states restrict access to the pills. Of those, six — Arizona, Indiana, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota and South Carolina — require a doctor to administer them in person. Arizona also bans mailing abortion pills.

But before a law signed Friday by Wyoming Republican Gov. Mark Gordon, no state specifically banned abortion pills. The law passed alongside a new abortion ban that seeks to sidestep issues with an earlier state ban that’s been held up in court.

With two new abortion laws, the Wyoming Legislature was “kind of trying to cover all its bases” to prohibit abortions, said Elizabeth Nash with the Guttmacher Institute.

Gordon allowed the new broad abortion ban to take effect Sunday without his signature. Whether the abortion pill ban he signed takes effect July 1 as planned remains to be seen. It could be delayed in the courts if an abortion provider in the state sues over it. Meanwhile, a federal judge in Texas is considering a case with implications for abortion pill access nationwide.

Even before the ban, many women in Wyoming drove to Colorado and elsewhere to get abortions because it was more convenient. There’s no prohibition on women in Wyoming continuing to go out of state to seek abortions.

Missouri AG will bar minors getting gender-affirming care

Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Missouri’s Republican attorney general on Monday said he will limit access to gender-affirming care for minors, sidestepping the GOP-led Senate as it struggles to pass a law banning the practice for children completely.

As hundreds of activists rallied at the Capitol to pressure lawmakers to act on the bill, Attorney General Andrew Bailey announced plans to file an emergency rule.

The rule will require an 18-month waiting period, 15 hour-long therapy sessions and treatment of any mental illnesses before Missouri doctors can provide that kind of care to transgender children, according to Bailey’s office.

“I am dedicated to using every legal tool at my disposal to stand in the gap and protect children from being subject to inhumane science experiments,” Bailey said.

The emergency rule also requires disclosure of information about puberty blocker drugs, including that they are experimental, not approved by the FDA and that the FDA has warned they can

lead to brain swelling and blindness, Bailey said.

While puberty blockers and hormones often prescribed in transgender treatment are not FDA-approved for transgender care, they are used in those cases “off-label,” which is an accepted and permitted practice.

This is not the first time Bailey has weighed in on transgender health care since taking office in January. In February, Bailey announced an investigation of a transgender youth clinic in St. Louis run by Washington University, following allegations of abuse by a former employee. He asked the university to shut down the clinic, but it refused.

Bailey’s spokeswoman did not say when the new health care rule will be filed and did not provide a copy.

Maysa Akbar, chief diversity officer for the American Psychological Association, said the emergency order “flies in the face of the scientific consensus, which is that, with appropriate psychological screening, treatment approaches should affirm an adolescent’s gender identity, not deny it.”

Biden issues first veto as he takes on new GOP House

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden issued the first veto of his presidency Monday in an early sign of shifting White House relations with the new Congress since Republicans took control of the House in January — a move that serves as a prelude to bigger battles with GOP lawmakers on government spending and the nation's debt limit.

Biden sought to kill a Republican-authored measure that would ban the government from considering environmental impacts or potential lawsuits when making investment decisions for people's retirement plans. In a video released by the White House, Biden said he vetoed the measure because it "put at risk the retirement savings of individuals across the country."

His first veto represents a

more confrontational approach at the midway of Biden's term in office, as he faces a GOP-controlled House that is eager to undo parts of his policy legacy and investigate his administration and his family.

The measure vetoed by Biden would have effectively reinstated a Trump-era ban on federal managers of retirement plans considering factors such as climate change, social impacts or pending lawsuits when making investment choices.

The veto could also help calm some anger from environmentalists who have been upset with the Biden administration for its recent decision to greenlight the Willow oil project, a massive and contentious drilling project in Alaska.

"The president vetoed the bill because it jeopardizes the hard-earned life savings of cops, fire-

fighters, teachers, and other workers," White House spokesperson Robyn Patterson said.

But critics say so-called environmental, social and governance investments allocate money based on political agendas, such as a drive against climate change, rather than on earning the best returns for savers. Republicans in Congress who pushed the measure said environmental or social considerations in investments by the government are just another example of being "woke."

"In his first veto, Biden just sided with woke Wall Street over workers," House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., tweeted on Monday. "Tells you exactly where his priorities lie." He said "it's clear Biden wants Wall Street to use your retirement savings to fund his far-left political causes."

Dodge unveils last gasoline muscle car

Associated Press

DETROIT — The last gas-powered muscle car from Dodge isn't leaving the road without some squeals, thunder and crazy-fast speed.

The 2023 Challenger SRT Demon 170 will deliver 1,025 horsepower from its 6.2-liter supercharged V-8, and the automaker says it will be the quickest production car made. Stellantis says it can go from zero to 60 miles per hour in a scary 1.66 seconds, making it faster than even electric supercars from Tesla and Lucid.

It's what the performance brand from Stellantis is calling the last of the rumbling cars that for decades were a fixture of American culture on Saturday night cruises all over the country.

Stellantis will stop making gas versions of the Dodge Challenger and Charger and the Chrysler 300 big sedan by the end of this year, squeezed out by stricter government fuel-economy regulations and an accelerating shift to electric vehicles to fight climate change.

The Canadian factory that makes all three cars will be retooled to make electric versions of larger cars starting next year. Stellantis hasn't said whether all three models will survive, but it did show off a Charger Daytona SRT electric concept muscle car back in August.

Tim Kuniskis, CEO of the Dodge brand and the unofficial spokesman for America's gas-powered rubber-burners, said that, while he'll miss the traditional muscle, he's excited about making electric performance vehicles.

"It's the end of an era, for sure," he said Monday.

Ringling Bros. to tour, minus animals

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus has been reimagined and reborn without animals as a high-octane family event with highwire tricks, soaring trapeze artists and bicycles leaping on trampolines.

Feld Entertainment, which owns the "Greatest Show on Earth," revealed to The Associated Press what audiences can expect during the show's upcoming 2023 North American tour kicking off this fall.

The 75 performers from 18 countries will include performers on a triangular high wire 25 feet off the ground, crisscrossing flying trapeze artists, a spinning double wheel powered by acrobats and BMX trail bikes,

unicycle riders and skateboarders doing flips and tricks.

The tour kicks off in Bossier City, La., from Sept. 29-Oct. 1 and then goes to Ohio, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, Maryland, Michigan, Indiana and ends the year in Oklahoma. It restarts in 2024 in Florida, home to Feld Entertainment.

The show is a complete rethink of a modern circus. Feld Entertainment has been working on everything from how to integrate clowns, the branding and the merchandise over the past four years.

"We knew we were going to come back. We didn't know exactly how," says Kenneth Feld, chair and chief executive officer of Feld Entertainment. "It

took us a long time to really delve in and take a look at Ringling in different ways. It became a reimagining, a rethinking of how we were going to do it."

The circus took down its tents after years of declining ticket sales as customers became conflicted about the treatment of circus animals. Costly court battles led to the end of elephant acts in 2016. People for Ethical Treatment of Animals have praised the "animal-free revamp."

The rebirth extends the circus' long run that dates back to a time before automobiles, airplanes or movies, when Ulysses S. Grant was president and minstrel shows were popular entertainment.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Anti-abortion monument allowed at state Capitol

AR LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders has signed a new law that will allow a monument near the state Capitol marking the number of abortions performed in Arkansas before the U.S. Supreme Court struck down Roe v. Wade.

Sanders' office said Friday night that the Republican governor signed the bill allowing for the creation of a privately funded "monument to the unborn" on the Capitol grounds. The bill, approved by lawmakers this month, requires the secretary of state to permit and arrange the placement of the monument.

It also requires the Capitol Arts and Grounds Commission to oversee the selection of the artist and the design of the monument, with input from anti-abortion groups.

A law Arkansas approved in 2019 banning nearly all abortions took effect last year when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the 1973 Roe decision. Arkansas' ban only allows abortions to save the life of the mother in a medical emergency.

State may ban period talk before 6th grade

FL TALLAHASSEE — Legislation moving in the Florida House would ban discussion of menstrual cycles and other human sexuality topics in elementary grades.

The bill sponsored by Republican Rep. Stan McClain would restrict public school instruction on human sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases and related topics to grades 6 through 12.

McClain confirmed at a recent committee meeting that discussions about menstrual cycles would also be restricted to those grades.

"So if little girls experience their menstrual cycle in 5th grade or 4th grade, will that prohibit conversations from them since they are in the grade lower than sixth grade?" asked state Rep. Ashley Gantt, a Democrat who taught in public schools and noted that girls as young as 10 can begin having periods.

"It would," McClain responded.

The Republican-backed legislation cleared the House Education Quality Subcommittee by a 13-5 vote, mainly along party lines.

GOP proposes police force for immigration

TX AUSTIN — Republican lawmakers in Texas are proposing legislation that would make it a state felony to cross the border from Mexico illegally, and create a new border police force that could deputize private citizens, the latest in the state's continued push to test the limits of the federal government's authority over immigration.

Civil rights organizations, immigration advocates and Democrats decried the proposals, which began drawing attention after Friday's deadline for filing bills in Texas' ongoing biennial legislative session.

"I think the underlying fact that it is going to allow people to question our being American in our border communities and across Texas is unacceptable," said Texas state Rep. Victoria Neave Criado, chairwoman of the Mexican American Legislative Caucus.

Since President Joe Biden took office, illegal crossings have soared. Many migrants have turned themselves in to U.S. Border Patrol agents and were released in the United States to pursue their cases in federal immigration court.

The Republican proposals in the Texas Legislature would continue pushing Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's massive, \$4 billion border mission known as Operation Lone Star.

Reporter says she's OK after fainting on air

CA LOS ANGELES — A TV meteorologist in Los Angeles was recovering Sunday after fainting on the air during a weekend newscast.

Alissa Carlson was starting her forecast Saturday on CBS Los Angeles when she suddenly slumped onto the desk and then collapsed to the floor. News co-anchor Rachel Kim exclaimed "Oh!" and the broadcast cut to a commercial break.

"Our team jumped in to help and comfort her while waiting for medical help to arrive," CBS LA said in a statement.

In a post on Facebook, Carlson thanked viewers for "all the texts, calls, and well wishes."

The news station and Carlson did not disclose any details about why she fainted.

Parental input on school materials gains approval

KY FRANKFORT — The Kentucky House has given final passage to a bill that's designed to give parents a pathway to challenge school instructional materials they consider unfit for children.

The bill — part of a push to boost parental input over school policies — would require Kentucky school districts to create a process to challenge instructional materials that parents deem "harmful" to children.

The Republican-dominated House voted 80-18 last week to send the bill to Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear.

Supporters said the measure aims to ensure the right for parental responses to books and other school materials containing explicit sexual content. Opponents countered that the measure could lead to the banning of books and create added burdens for local school boards.

Man charged after backing over officer

IL CHICAGO — A man faces a charge of attempted murder after backing over a Chicago police officer with his car, police said Sunday.

Officers on Friday night saw a vehicle wanted in connection with an aggravated battery of an officer earlier in the month and attempted to pull over the vehicle, Chicago police said.

Tajze Mullins, 23, of Chicago, put the car in reverse and ran over a 39-year-old officer who was approaching on foot, police said. Another officer fired his weapon, but no one was struck.

Mullins fled and was arrested a short time later, police said. He faces one count of attempted first-degree murder, two counts of aggravated assault on a peace officer and fleeing from a peace officer.

The injured officer was taken to a nearby hospital with a broken leg, police said. The officer was listed in good condition.

— From wire reports



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Miami shocks Indiana in March Madness

Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — Destiny Harden made a shot in the lane with 3.5 seconds left to send ninth-seeded Miami past top-seeded Indiana 70-68 on Monday night, lifting the Hurricanes to their first Sweet 16 since 1992.

The Hoosiers (28-4) became the second No. 1 seed to be eliminated in two nights. Stanford was upset Sunday on its home court. It's the second time since the bracket expanded to 64 teams in 1994 that two No. 1 seeds didn't make the Sweet 16. It also happened in 1998.

Harden finished with 18 points and Lola Pendade had 19 points for the Hurricanes (21-12), who never trailed.

Indiana tied the score at 68 on Yarden Garzon's three-pointer with 6.6 seconds left but couldn't get the defensive stop it needed and turned the ball over on the final possession to seal its only home loss of the season.

Following a timeout, Harden got the ball into the middle of the lane and made the tie-breaking shot.

"It was the exact same play as

last year, so I should have known it was coming to me," Harden said. "I just thank the coaches for trusting me, the players for trusting me and it feels good to come through and get to the Sweet 16."

No. 4 Villanova 76, No. 12 Florida Gulf Coast 57: Maddy Siegrist scored 31 points and sent the winningest team in Wildcats history into the Sweet 16 for the second time in program history.

Fourth-seeded Villanova (30-6) won its record 30th game and celebrated the March Madness milestone in front of another packed house at the Pavilion. Siegrist, the first-team AP All-American, made 13 of 24 shots in what was likely her final home game. The four-year star has left some wiggle room that she could return for a fifth season, but all signs point toward her playing in the WNBA this summer.

Seattle 3 Region

No. 4 Tennessee 94, No. 12 Toledo 47: Reserves Sara Puckett and Jillian Hollingshead led five Lady Vols in double figures with 13 points apiece

in a rout of the Rockets.

This is the first time since 2015 and 2016 that Tennessee (25-11) has reached consecutive Sweet 16s and the first in coach Kellie Harper's fourth season. The Lady Vols have now reached the Sweet 16 for the 36th time as the only program to play in all 41 NCAA Tournaments.

No. 3 Ohio State 71, No. 6 North Carolina 69: Jacy Sheldon made a tiebreaking jumper in the lane with 1.8 seconds left to lift the Buckeyes to a win over the Tar Heels and into the Sweet 16 for the second straight season.

Ohio State (27-7) saw its 12-point lead with 7:02 to go erased as the Tar Heels went on a 13-2 run midway through the fourth quarter. Trailing 66-63, Deja Kelly made two free throws before Paulina Paris made a layup in transition to give the Tar Heels (22-11) their first lead of the game with 2:09 left.

No. 2 UConn 77, No. 7 Baylor 58: Azzi Fudd scored 16 of her 22 points in a decisive third quarter, leading the Huskies over the Bears and into a 29th

straight Sweet 16.

Aaliyah Edwards added 19 points and Nika Muhl had 10 assists for UConn (31-5). Dorka Juhasz chipped in with 11 points and Caroline Ducharme added 10.

Seattle 4 Region

No. 5 Louisville 73, No. 4 Texas 51: Hailey Van Lith scored 21 points and the Cardinals rolled on the Longhorns' home court to advance to the Sweet 16 for the sixth NCAA Tournament in a row.

No. 6 Colorado 61, No. 3 Duke 53: Quay Miller had 17 points and 14 rebounds, and Aaronette Vonleh converted two overtime baskets in the lane after picking up her fourth foul, helping the Buffaloes beat the Blue Devils.

Greenville 1 Region

No. 4 UCLA 82, No. 5 Oklahoma 73: Charisma Osborne scored a career-high 36 points in her final game at Pauley Pavilion and the Bruins rallied in the fourth quarter after blowing an 18-point lead to defeat the Sooners.

Walk-off double lifts Japan over Mexico, into WBC final

Associated Press

MIAMI — When Shohei Ohtani reached second base after hitting a leadoff double in the bottom of the ninth inning, he immediately looked up at the crowd and waved his arms, in a rare sign of emotion, as if he knew what was coming next.

Ohtani's clutch hit sparked a late rally, and moments later, Munetaka Murakami delivered a walk-off, two-run double to lift Japan over Mexico 6-5 Monday night and into the World Baseball Classic final.

Two-time champion Japan faced the defending champion United States in Tuesday night's title game. Shota Imanaga was to start for Japan — Yu Darvish had been set to pitch before a change was announced post-game. Merrill Kelly was likely to start for Team USA, which has won the WBC once.

After the game, members of Team Japan rushed the field in triumph, as Mexico

players exited with their heads bowed and hands on their hips.

"These games are really critical and the foundation of baseball," Japan manager Hideki Kuriyama said through an interpreter.

Ohtani went 2-for-4. The Los Angeles Angels star scored in the seventh when Masataka Yoshida hit a tying, three-run homer off reliever JoJo Romero.

Ohtani's double off losing pitcher Giovanny Gallegos was his fourth of the tournament. He's batting .450 with nine hits, nine runs and eight RBIs. After Ohtani got the rally started, Yoshida walked to bring up Murakami.

In front of a crowd of 35,933 that chanted "¡Si Se Puede!" — translating to "Yes We Can!" — throughout the night, left fielder Randy Arozarena had a signature performance for Mexico. He made a leaping catch in the fifth to preserve a 3-0 lead, signed a

few mid-inning autographs, then doubled and scored in the eighth to make it 4-3.

"Randy was incredible today," Mexico manager Benji Gil said. "He gave us the opportunity to come back to the game after a home run that many teams facing this kind of team with so many stars, they could have given up, but, no, he started this rally. We fought. Again, we took the lead. They are warriors."

The game began as a pitching duel between Roki Sasaki and Patrick Sandoval, but Japan's offensive power proved too much for Mexico's relievers.

Sasaki struck out three in four innings in his first appearance on a global stage, with 26 of his 64 pitches reaching at least 100 mph.

Sandoval struck out six and allowed just four hits in four scoreless innings before he was replaced by José Urquidy.

Pitino accepts job as St. John's coach

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Rick Pitino is back in the Big East Conference.

St. John's hired the Hall of Fame coach Monday to boost a storied program that's been mired in mediocrity for much of this century. The school announced that Pitino was to be introduced during a news conference Tuesday at Madison Square Garden.

Following a successful run at nearby mid-major Iona, the 70-year-old Pitino was plucked away to replace Mike Anderson, who was fired after four seasons in charge of the Red Storm without making the NCAA Tournament.

Reports quickly surfaced that St. John's planned to target Pitino, who grew up on Long Island not far from the school's Queens campus in New York City.

"Coach Pitino is one of the most brilliant minds in the history of the game and has won at the highest levels everywhere he has coached," athletic direc-

tor Mike Cragg said in a press release. "There is no doubt in my mind he will restore a championship-level program and culture for St. John's Basketball."

Pitino has been to seven Final Fours and won a pair of NCAA championships, one each at Kentucky (1996) and Louisville (2013).

He was dismissed at Louisville in 2017 after an FBI investigation into college basketball corruption led to allegations of NCAA violations. It was the third scandal, professional and personal, in an eight-year period with the Cardinals — but Pitino was eventually exonerated in the FBI-related case.

Pitino has been coaching college basketball so long that he was on the opposing bench with Big East rival Providence when St. John's was a national power in the mid-1980s under Lou Carnesecca.

Now, he's tasked with invigorating a Red Storm squad that hasn't won an NCAA Tourna-

ment game — or even reached the Big East semifinals — since 2000. The school has made only three NCAA appearances in the past two decades, the most recent coming in 2019.

During that time, through several conference reconfigurations, St. John's has fallen behind Big East foes with similar profiles such as Villanova, Providence and Seton Hall.

"One of my great coaching memories was having the distinct privilege of coaching against Lou Carnesecca and St. John's, a Hall of Fame coach and historic program that I have always respected," Pitino said. "It is surreal to now have this opportunity to bring St. John's back to prominence. I'm honored, humbled and grateful."

The Red Storm went 18-15 during a turbulent 2022-23 season, including 7-13 in Big East play to finish eighth in the conference standings. They blew a 14-point lead against sixth-ranked and top-seeded Marquette in the Big East Tourna-

ment quarterfinals, ending the season with a 72-70 loss in overtime that left Anderson with a 68-56 record at St. John's, including 30-46 in Big East regular-season games.

Pitino has a .740 winning percentage in 35 seasons as a college basketball head coach. He has guided five schools to the NCAA Tournament, including Boston University (1983) and Iona (2021, 2023).

He took a surprising Providence team on a memorable run to the 1987 Final Four, but the 2013 national title Pitino won at Louisville (then in the Big East) was later vacated by the NCAA after an investigation found that an assistant coach paid escorts and exotic dancers to entertain players and recruits in campus dorms.

Pitino went 64-22 in three years with the Gaels, guiding them to two regular-season titles in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference and a pair of NCAA Tournament appearances.

Davis ends chase for Maravich's NCAA scoring record

Associated Press

Antoine Davis has ended his pursuit of "Pistol" Pete Maravich's NCAA scoring record.

The Detroit Mercy guard finished four points shy of breaking Maravich's mark earlier this month in a loss during the Horizon League Tournament.

While it looked like Davis' college career was over when the College Basketball Invitational did not extend an invitation to the Titans, he held out hope until Monday that he would get another chance to play, possibly in an inaugural College Hoops Postseason 8.

"I'm upset about it," Davis said in a phone interview with The Associated Press. "I feel like I got cheated out of something that they can't ever give

back to me. I think it's selfish — and weird — that people emailed or called the CBI to say we shouldn't be in the tournament because they didn't want me to break the record.

"But there's nothing to hold my head down about. I still feel like I'm the best scorer in my generation, especially finishing No. 2 behind him."

The CBI, which started Saturday, posted pictures on its Twitter account of Maravich and Davis shortly after Detroit Mercy lost at Youngstown State and had talks with the school about a potential invitation. Ultimately, the CBI decided not to give the Titans (14-19) an opportunity to pay \$27,500 to play in the 16-team tournament.

"We did receive unsolicited

emails and voicemails about Detroit Mercy and some said we don't ever want Pete Maravich's record broken," said Rick Giles, president of the Gazelle Group that runs the CBI. "The decision we made wasn't based purely on whether we wanted him to break the record or not."

Jaeson Maravich said he did not have a personal problem with Davis, but he wasn't happy that his father's record had a chance to be broken in a lower-tier, pay-to-play tournament.

"I think it's a terrible look," Jaeson Maravich told the AP. "Your season should be over if you're 14-19."

In mid-March of last year, the Titans were below .500 and still played in the postseason. Davis scored 24 points in a loss to Flor-

ida Gulf Coast in The Basketball Classic.

Maravich closed his three-season, 83-game career at LSU with 3,667 points in 1970.

Davis scored 22 points in a 71-66 loss at Youngstown State in the 144th game of his five-year career. He missed four three-pointers in the final two minutes of his last college game.

"I had opportunities to do it in the Youngstown game," Davis said. "I can't be mad about it, but I just don't get why people would go out of their way to say we shouldn't have an opportunity."

Davis, like all NCAA athletes enrolled when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States, was granted a fifth year of eligibility.

Warriors end road skid, top Rockets

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Stephen Curry scored 30 points and Klay Thompson added 29 as the Golden State Warriors snapped an 11-game road skid with a 121-108 win over the Houston Rockets on Monday night.

The game was close most of the way before the Warriors used a 12-2 spurt early in the fourth quarter to pull away and hold on for their first win away from home since Jan. 30 at Oklahoma City.

“It’s been a long time,” coach Steve Kerr said. “I don’t remember the last road game we won. It’s been a while.”

When told that it had been almost three months since the Warriors last got a victory on the road, Kerr continued.

“Thanks,” he said. “That doesn’t make me feel any better. We needed it.”

Added Thompson: “It’s nice to snap an ugly streak like that.

That (was) gross.”

The Rockets used an 11-2 run, led by six points from Kevin Porter Jr., later in the fourth to get within seven with about two minutes to go. But Thompson made a three-pointer to start a 5-0 run that made it 118-106 with a minute remaining.

The Warriors, who moved into sixth place in the Western Conference with the win, have been great at home this season (29-7) but have struggled on the road, where Monday’s win improved them to just 8-29.

Monday was the fourth game of a season-high-tying five-game road trip that started with losses against the Clippers, Hawks and Grizzlies.

“We know we still have to play better,” Curry said. “Nobody’s really celebrating anything.”

Kerr was disappointed with the way the Warriors played in

the first half, when they had 14 turnovers.

“We were not focused at all,” he said. “The second half we did a better job of taking care of the ball and getting some better possessions offensively.”

Timberwolves 140, Knicks 134: Julius Randle scored 57 points to tie the third-highest total in Knicks history, but visiting Minnesota rode a sizzling start and a steady finish to beat New York.

Taurean Prince scored a season-high 35 points and went 8-for-8 from three-point range for the Timberwolves, while Mike Conley added 24 points and 11 assists. His three free throws gave Minnesota the lead for good with 2:17 remaining.

Bulls 109, 76ers 105 (2 OT): Zach LaVine scored 26 points, DeMar DeRozan had 25 and visiting Chicago defeated Joel Embiid and Philadelphia

in double overtime to snap its eight-game winning streak.

Nikola Vucevic added 21 points and 12 rebounds for the Bulls, who have won three games in a row and five of six. Chicago is fighting for the final playoff spot in the East.

Grizzlies 112, Mavericks 108: Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 28 points, including a key layup with 17 seconds left as host Memphis defeated Dallas in Ja Morant’s first game back with the team after an eight-game NBA suspension, though he didn’t play.

Jazz 128, Kings 120: Ochai Agbaji scored a career-high 27 points, including six three-pointers, to lead host Utah over Sacramento.

Hornets 115, Pacers 109: Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 28 points and Charlotte erased a 21-point first-half deficit to beat Indiana and stop a six-game home losing streak.

Ferguson tops 48 shots as Senators edge Penguins

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Drake Batherson scored a power-play goal from in front with 2:09 left in regulation, Dylan Ferguson stopped 48 shots in his first NHL game in more than five years, and the Ottawa Senators beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 2-1 on Monday night.

Thomas Chabot also scored to help the Senators snap a five-game skid.

Rickard Rakell spoiled Ferguson’s shutout bid with 5:21 to play, before a hooking penalty by Penguins defenseman Chad Ruhwedel put the Senators on the man-advantage. Batherson then took advantage with his 21st goal of the season.

Tristan Jarry had 19 saves for Pittsburgh, which fell one point behind Florida for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference after the Panthers beat Detroit.

Oilers 5, Sharks 4 (OT): Darnell Nurse scored at 4:45 of overtime to give host Edmonton its fourth straight win.

Mattias Ekholm had two goals, Kailer Yamamoto had a goal and an assist, and

Nick Bjugstad also scored to help the Oilers win for the sixth time in seven games. Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins each had two assists, and Jack Campbell had 28 saves.

Erik Karlsson scored twice, Alexander Barabanov had a goal and an assist, and Steven Lorentz also scored for the Sharks, who lost their seventh straight (0-4-3) and fell to 2-11-4 in their last 17 games.

Panthers 5, Red Wings 2: Aleksander Barkov set the franchise record for most career points, Carter Verhaeghe scored two goals and visiting Florida beat Detroit for the ninth consecutive time.

Barkov recorded a second-period assist, giving him 614 points, breaking a tie with Jonathan Huberdeau for the Panthers’ team record. Matthew Tkachuk had a goal and two assists, giving him 14 points over the last five games. Eric Staal and Gustav Forsling also scored as Florida improved to 6-0-1 over its last seven games. Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 20 shots.

Pius Suter and Dylan Larkin scored for the Red Wings, who have lost 10 of their

last 12 games. Ville Husso had 20 saves.

Avalanche 5, Blackhawks 0: Alexander Georgiev made 27 saves and Denis Malgin had two goals and an assist to lift host Colorado to its sixth straight win.

Mikko Rantanen got his 47th goal and an assist, and Logan O’Connor and Kurtis MacDermid also scored.

Georgiev’s fifth shutout of the season and No. 13 of his career lifted Colorado (41-22-6) into a tie with idle Minnesota for second place in the Central Division with 88 points, one behind Dallas. The Avalanche have played one fewer game than the Wild and Stars.

Kings 8, Flames 2: Drew Doughty and Viktor Arvidsson scored in their team’s four-goal first period, Adrian Kempe had two goals and an assist, and host Los Angeles cruised into a first-place tie in the Pacific Division.

Carl Grundstrom had two goals and Gabriel Vilardi and Mikey Anderson also scored for the Kings, who pulled even with Vegas atop the division by extending their points streak to 10 games.