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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US, Ukraine begin talks on ending war

Associated Press

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia—Senior officials from Ukraine and the United States opened talks Tuesday focused on ending Moscow's three-year war against Kyiv, hours after Russia shot down over 300 Ukrainian drones. It was Ukraine's biggest attack since the Kremlin ordered the full-scale invasion of its neighbor.

The talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah come after President Donald Trump paused U.S. military aid to Ukraine last week, along with some intelligence sharing, in an attempt to pressure Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to engage in negotiations to end the war against Russia.

Trump special envoy Steve Witkoff is expected to travel later this week to Moscow, where he could meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to a person familiar with the matter but not authorized to comment publicly. The person cau-

tioned that scheduling could change.

Journalists were briefly allowed in a room where a senior Ukrainian delegation met with America's top diplomat, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who smiled at the cameras and when asked about his expectations for the meeting, gave a thumbs-up and replied, "Good."

Across the table, Ukrainian officials, including the country's top diplomat and defense chief, showed no facial expressions as the meeting got underway at a luxury hotel. However, Ukrainian presidential aide Andriy Yermak told reporters that the most important thing was "how to achieve a just and lasting peace in Ukraine." He said security guarantees were important to prevent Russia from invading again.

It was the first meeting between the two sides since the Oval Office blowup between Trump and Zelenskyy last

month.

Saudi Arabia's foreign minister was also on hand as American, Saudi and Ukrainian flags could be seen in the background. Officials did not answer any of the journalists' shouted questions.

The delegations met for about three hours in the morning before taking a break, and officials said the talks continued in the afternoon.

There was also no immediate comment from Ukrainian or U.S. officials on the massive attack in which 343 drones targeted 10 Russian regions, leaving three people dead and 18 wounded, including three children, officials said.

Meanwhile, Russia launched 126 drones and a ballistic missile at Ukraine, the Ukrainian air force said, as part of Moscow's relentless pounding of civilian areas during the war.

In Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the

United States will inform Russia about the results of the Jeddah talks, which he described as "normal practice."

The meeting in Jeddah offered an opportunity for Kyiv officials to repair Ukraine's relationship with the Trump administration after an unprecedented argument erupted during Zelenskyy's Feb. 28 visit to the White House.

Critically, Ukraine needs to persuade Washington to end the U.S. suspension of military aid and intelligence sharing after the blowout. U.S. officials have said that positive talks in Jeddah could mean that the pause is short.

Ukrainian officials told The Associated Press on Monday that they will propose a ceasefire covering the Black Sea, which would bring safer shipping, as well as long-range missile strikes that have hit civilians in Ukraine, and the release of prisoners.

Judge rules Trump must release foreign aid funds

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump overstepped his constitutional authority in freezing almost all spending on U.S. humanitarian and development work abroad, a federal judge ruled, saying the administration could no longer simply sit on the tens of billions of dollars that Congress has appropriated for foreign aid.

But Judge Amir H. Ali stopped short of ordering Trump officials to use the money to revive the thousands of contracts they have abruptly terminated for U.S. aid and development work around the world.

Ali's ruling Monday evening came hours after Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced that the administration had finished what has been a six-week purge of programs of the six-decade-old U.S. Agency for International Development, cutting 83% of them. Rubio said he would move the remaining aid programs under the State Department.

Rubio made his announcement in a post on X, in one of his few public comments on what has been a historic shift away from U.S. foreign aid and development, executed by Trump political appointees at the State Department and Elon Musk's

Department of Government Efficiency teams.

Rubio in the post thanked DOGE and "our hardworking staff who worked very long hours to achieve this overdue and historic reform" in foreign aid.

Trump on Jan. 20 issued an executive order directing a freeze of foreign assistance funding and a review of all U.S. aid and development work abroad.

Trump charged that much of foreign assistance was wasteful and advanced a liberal agenda.

Rubio's social media post Monday said that review was now "officially ending," with

some 5,200 of USAID's 6,200 programs eliminated.

About 1,000 remaining contracts would now be administered through the State Department, he said.

Democratic lawmakers and others call the shutdown of congressionally funded programs illegal, saying such a move requires Congress' approval.

In his preliminary injunction Monday, Ali said Trump could not simply ignore most of what is roughly \$60 billion in foreign assistance funding that was given to USAID and State by Congress, which under the U.S. Constitution has the authority to spend federal money.

China, Iran, Russia hold Mideast naval drills

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — China, Iran and Russia conducted joint naval drills Tuesday in the Middle East, offering a show of force in a region still uneasy over Tehran's rapidly expanding nuclear program and as Yemen's Houthi rebels threaten new attacks on ships.

The joint drills, called the Maritime Security Belt 2025, took place in the Gulf of Oman near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all crude oil traded worldwide passes. The area around the strait in the past has seen Iran seize commercial ships and launch suspected attacks in the time since President Donald Trump first unilaterally withdrew America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers.

The drill marked the fifth year the three countries took part in

the drills.

This year's drill likely sparked a warning late Monday from the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center, which said there was GPS interference in the strait, with disruptions lasting for several hours and forcing crews to rely on backup navigation methods.

"This was likely GPS jamming to reduce the targeting capability of drones and missiles," wrote Shaun Robertson, an intelligence analyst at the EOS Risk Group. "However, electronic navigation system interference has been reported in this region previously during periods of increased tension and military exercises."

Russia's Defense Ministry identified the vessels it sent to the drill as the corvettes Rezky and the Hero of the Russian Federation Aldar Tsydenzhapov, as well as the tanker Pechenega. China's

Defense Ministry said it sent the guided-missile destroyer Baotou and the comprehensive supply ship Gaoyouhu. Neither offered a count of the personnel involved.

Neither China nor Russia actively patrol the wider Middle East, whose waterways remain crucial for global energy supplies. Instead they broadly cede that to Western nations largely led by the U.S. Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet. Observers for the drill included Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, South Africa, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates—with the Americans likely keeping watch as well.

However, both China and Russia have deep interests in Iran. For China, it has continued to purchase Iranian crude oil despite facing Western sanctions, likely at a discount compared to global prices. Beijing also remains one

of the top markets for Iranian imports.

Russia, meanwhile, has relied on Iran for the supply of drones it uses in its war on Ukraine.

The exercises come after an Iranian months-long drill that followed a direct Israeli attack on its air defenses and sites associated with its ballistic missile program. While Tehran sought to downplay the assault, it shook the wider populace and came as a campaign of Israeli assassinations and attacks have decimated Iran's "Axis of Resistance" — militant groups allied with the Islamic Republic. Syrian President Bashar Assad was also overthrown in December, further weakening Iran's grip on the region.

All the while, Iran has increasingly stockpiled more uranium enriched at near weapons-grade levels, something only done by atomic-armed nations.

US officials defend authority to hold immigrants at Gitmo

Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. — U.S. immigration and military authorities disclosed Monday that immigrants from 27 countries were being held at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, while revealing new details of conditions of confinement and defending the government's authority to transfer and hold immigrants at the military base.

Court filings on behalf of the Homeland Security and Defense departments indicated that 40 immigrants with final deportation orders were being held at Guantanamo Bay as of Friday — with 23 labeled "high risk" and held individually in cells. The remainder were held in another area of special housing for migrants, in groups of up to six.

Civil rights attorneys sued the Trump administration this month

to prevent it from transferring 10 migrants detained in the U.S. to Guantanamo Bay and filed statements from men held there who said they were mistreated in conditions that of one of them called "a living hell."

Responding to the lawsuit, Justice Department attorneys argued Monday that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has broad authority to hold immigrants with final removal orders at Guantanamo Bay "for only so long as their removal remains significantly likely to occur in the reasonably foreseeable future."

U.S. immigration and military authorities "do not need to show that (Naval Station Guantanamo Bay) is essential to that plan, logically uncomplicated, or that it is the least expensive option," the Trump administration argued in the court filings.

Greenland elections start in high-profile time for island

Associated Press

NUUK, Greenland — Polls opened in Greenland for early parliamentary elections Tuesday as U.S. President Donald Trump seeks control of the strategic Arctic island.

The self-governing region of Denmark is home to 56,000 people, most from Indigenous Inuit backgrounds, and occupies a crucial North Atlantic location. It also holds rare earth minerals key to driving the global economy.

Unofficial election results should be available soon after polls close at 2200 GMT Tuesday, but they won't be certified for weeks as ballot papers make their way to the capital from remote settlements by boat, plane and helicopter.

While the island has been on a path toward independence since

at least 2009, a break from Denmark isn't on the ballot — even though it's on everyone's mind. Voters will instead elect 31 lawmakers who will shape the island's future at a defining moment in history: Should Greenland declare independence?

The mood was festive Tuesday at the sole polling station in Greenland's capital city, Nuuk, as election workers opened the doors to cheers at 1100 GMT.

Opinion polls show most Greenlanders favor independence. Most say they don't dislike Americans, pointing to the good relations they have with the local Pituffik Space Base, formerly Thule Air Force Base, where U.S. military personnel have been stationed since 1951.

But Greenlanders show no sign of wanting to become Americans.

Republicans march ahead with spending bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republicans were facing a critical test of their unity as a spending bill that would avoid a partial government shutdown and keep federal agencies funded through September was coming up for a vote.

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., was teeing up the bill for a vote as soon as Tuesday despite the lack of buy-in from Democrats, essentially daring them to oppose it and risk a shutdown that would begin Saturday if lawmakers fail to act.

Republicans will need overwhelming support from their members in both chambers — and some help from Senate

Democrats — to get the bill to President Donald Trump's desk.

It's one of the biggest legislative tests so far of the Republican president's second term, prompting Vice President JD Vance to visit Capitol Hill on Tuesday morning to rally support.

The strategy has the backing of Trump, who is calling on Republicans to "remain UNITED — NO DISSENT — Fight for another day when the timing is right."

House Republicans said the bill would trim \$13 billion in non-defense spending from the levels in the 2024 budget year and increase defense spending

by \$6 billion, which are rather flat changes for both categories when compared with an overall topline of nearly \$1.7 trillion in discretionary spending.

The bill does not cover the majority of government spending, including Social Security and Medicare.

Funding for those two programs is on autopilot and not regularly reviewed by Congress.

Democrats are mostly worried about the discretion the bill gives the Trump administration on spending decisions.

They are already alarmed by the administration's efforts to make major cuts through the Department of Government Ef-

ficiency, run by billionaire Trump adviser Elon Musk. And they have said the spending bill would fuel the effort.

"This is not a clean CR. This bill is a blank check," said Rep. Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee. "It's a blank check for Elon Musk and President Trump."

Spending bills typically come with specific funding directives for key programs.

But hundreds of those directives fall away under the legislation, according to a memo released by Senate Democrats. That means the administration will have more leeway to reshape priorities.

Musk eyes Social Security, benefits programs for cuts

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Elon Musk pushed debunked theories about Social Security on Monday while describing federal benefit programs as rife with fraud, suggesting they will be a primary target in his crusade to reduce government spending.

The billionaire entrepreneur, who is advising President Donald Trump, suggested that \$500 billion to \$700 billion in waste needed to be cut.

"Most of the federal spending is entitlements," Musk told the Fox Business Network. "That's

the big one to eliminate."

The comments on the popular program and other benefits provided to Americans could rattle politicians on both sides of the aisle as Musk works to downsize the federal government, especially as he already faces blowback for his chainsaw-wielding approach to laying off workers and slashing programs.

Musk's estimate for the level of fraud in entitlements far outpaces figures from watchdogs like Social Security's inspector general, who previously said there was \$71.8 billion in im-

proper payments from fiscal years 2015 through 2022. That's less than 1% of benefits paid out during that time period.

Musk also said there were "20 million people who are definitely dead marked as alive in the Social Security database." The leader of the agency, however, has rejected claims about payments to dead people.

The interview was a reminder of Musk's skepticism and hostility toward the program, which provides benefits to retirees and some children.

Trump has promised to de-

fend Social Security from cuts, but the administration is shutting down some of the agency's offices.

About half of Americans said it's "a bad thing" that Trump has given Musk a prominent role in his administration, according to a mid-February CNN/SSRS poll.

Another mid-February survey found that Americans were divided on whether Musk is mainly cutting wasteful spending or necessary programs, with about a third falling into each camp.

DC begins removing 'Black Lives Matter' plaza lettering

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Crews started work Monday to remove the large yellow "Black Lives Matter" painted on the street one block from the White House.

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser announced the change last week in response to pressure from Republicans in Congress. The work is expected to take

about six weeks and the words will be replaced by an unspecified set of murals.

The painting of those words was an act of government-sponsored defiance during President Donald Trump's first term. The removal is a public acknowledgment of just how vulnerable the district is now that Trump is back in the White House and Republicans control

both houses of Congress.

Bowser, a Democrat, ordered the painting and renamed the intersection Black Lives Matter Plaza in June 2020. It came after days of chaotic protests at that location following the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer; Bowser had clashed with Trump over her handling of the protests.

But now Bowser has little

power to fend off encroachments on D.C.'s limited autonomy. Bowser said last week on X that, "The mural inspired millions of people and helped our city through a painful period, but now we can't afford to be distracted by meaningless congressional interference. The devastating impacts of the federal job cuts must be our number one concern."

Trump doubles planned tariffs on Canadian steel, aluminum

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he will double his planned tariffs on steel and aluminum from 25% to 50% for Canada, escalating a trade war with the United States' northern neighbor and showing an indifference to recent stock market turmoil and rising recession risks.

Trump said on social media that the increase of the tariffs set to take effect Wednesday is a response to the price increases that the provincial government of Ontario put on electricity sold to the United States.

"I have instructed my Secretary of Commerce to add an ADDITIONAL 25% Tariff, to 50%, on all STEEL and ALUMINUM COMING INTO THE UNITED STATES FROM CANADA, ONE OF THE HIGHEST TARIFFING NATIONS ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD," Trump posted Tuesday on Truth Social.

After a brutal stock market selloff Monday and further jit-

ters Tuesday, Trump faces increased pressure to show he has a legitimate plan to grow the economy instead of perhaps pushing it into a recession. But so far the president is doubling down on the tariffs he talked up repeatedly during the 2024 campaign and throwing a once stable economy into utter turmoil as investors expected him to lead with deregulation and tax cuts instead of colossal tax hikes.

The president has given a variety of explanations for his antagonism toward Canada, saying that his separate 25% tariffs are about fentanyl smuggling and voicing objections to Canada putting high taxes on dairy imports that penalize U.S. farmers. But he continued to call for Canada to become part of the United States as a solution, a form of taunting that has infuriated Canadian leaders.

"The only thing that makes sense is for Canada to become our cherished Fifty First State," Trump posted on Tuesday.

"This would make all Tariffs, and everything else, totally disappear."

Ontario Premier Doug Ford, after responding to Trump by raising electricity prices, said Tuesday on MSNBC that the American people and its business leaders needed to speak up against the "chaos" caused by Trump's launching of a trade war.

"If we go into a recession it's self-made by one person. It's called President Trump's recession," Ford said.

Trump condemned the use of electricity "as a bargaining chip and threat," saying in a separate social media post Tuesday that Canada "will pay a financial price for this so big that it will be read about in History Books for many years to come!"

The stock market's vote of no confidence over the past two weeks puts the president in a bind between his enthusiasm for taxing imports and his brand as a politician who understands business.

Former Philippines president arrested

Bloomberg News

Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte is under police custody after the International Criminal Court ordered his arrest following a probe into his deadly drug war that defined his rule.

Duterte was arrested by police at the Manila airport shortly after his arrival on Tuesday from Hong Kong, where he had addressed supporters only days earlier. Interpol Manila received a copy of the arrest warrant from the ICC, according to a statement from President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s communications office.

Duterte, 79, is the first Philippine former leader to be served an ICC arrest warrant and the detention followed days of speculation. It's a stunning blow to Duterte, once known as the Donald Trump of Asia for his radical leadership style, and marks a new turn in his family's escalating feud with Marcos.

Duterte's daughter Sara was impeached as vice president by Marcos' allies in the House of Representatives last month on charges she plotted to kill Marcos and misused public funds — accusations she's denied. A Senate trial, which would determine if she will be removed from office, is scheduled to begin in July.

Duterte's anti-narcotics campaign during his 2016-2022 presidency killed more than 6,000 people, according to government data. Human rights groups estimate the death toll to have been higher, with most of those killed among the poor.

"I feel he has been deprived of his legal rights," former Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello, a member of Rodrigo Duterte's legal team, told reporters.

Feds warn 60 universities to protect Jewish students from harassment

The Detroit News

Sixty higher education institutions were sent a letter by federal officials, warning them of "potential enforcement actions if they do not ... protect Jewish students on campus," the U.S. Department of Education announced Monday.

The letter, from the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, came three days after the Trump administration on Friday canceled \$400 million in grants and contracts to Columbia University because of the New York City university's "continued inaction in the

face of persistent harassment of Jewish students."

More grant and contract cancellations at other colleges and universities were expected to follow, the federal announcement said, because President Donald Trump has said higher education institutions will lose federal funding if they allow "illegal protests" and fail to protect Jewish students from antisemitic harassment.

The government said 60 institutions are under investigation for potentially violating Title VI of the Civil Rights Act,

prohibiting discrimination among institutions receiving federal funds on the basis of race, color and national origin, including Jewish ancestry.

Tensions escalated between Jewish and pro-Palestinian students following the Oct. 7, 2023, surprise attack by Hamas on Israel that led to 1,200 deaths and the kidnapping of about 250 individuals. An Israeli counterattack on Gaza left tens of thousands of people dead and an estimated \$18.5 billion in infrastructure damage before a ceasefire was reached in January.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Single-engine airplane crashes near an airport

PA LANCASTER COUNTY — A single-engine airplane carrying five people crashed and burst into flames Sunday in the parking lot of a retirement community near a small airport in suburban Pennsylvania, and everyone on board survived, officials and witnesses said.

The fiery crash happened around 3 p.m. just south of Lancaster Airport in Manheim Township, police chief Duane Fisher told reporters at an evening briefing. All five victims were taken to hospitals in unknown condition. Nobody on the ground was hurt, the chief said.

Brian Pipkin was driving nearby when he noticed the small plane climbing before it suddenly veered to the left.

"And then it went down nose first," he told The Associated Press. "There was an immediate fireball."

Civilian aircraft violates restricted airspace

FL WEST PALM BEACH — Air Force fighter jets intercepted a civilian aircraft flying in the temporarily restricted airspace near Donald Trump's Florida home Sunday, bringing the number of violations to more than 20 since the president took office on Jan. 20.

North American Aerospace Defense Command said in a statement that Sunday's incident, which took place as Trump finished a round of golf at his West Palm Beach golf course, saw F-16s deploy flares to get the attention of the civilian pilot. Jets also conducted an

intercept on Saturday morning shortly after Trump arrived at the course from his private Mar-a-Lago club and residence.

Severe storm flips an RV, killing 1 and injuring 3

TX ENNIS — One man died and three of his family members were injured when their RV flipped over several times at the Texas Motorplex during a strong thunderstorm that caused widespread damage in an area about 25 minutes south of Dallas on Saturday.

Strong winds of up to 90 mph ripped the roof off a Days Inn along Interstate 45, damaged homes throughout Ellis County and toppled at least seven semi-tractor-trailer trucks on Interstate 35. The strong storms also knocked out power to nearly 20,000 people but didn't generate any tornadoes. Some quarter-sized hail also fell in the area.

China is ordered to pay \$24B in COVID dispute

MO JEFFERSON CITY — A federal judge in Cape Girardeau has ordered Chinese defendants to pay Missouri over \$24 billion after finding they hoarded personal protective equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senior U.S. District Judge Stephen Limbaugh Jr. said in a 32-page order that Missouri showed defendants, including the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party, hoarded PPE, violating federal law against monopolization or attempted monopolization of trade.

Limbaugh said the state's evi-

dence showed that defendants "engaged in monopolistic actions to hoard PPE through both the nationalization of U.S. factories and the direct hoarding of PPE manufactured or for sale in the United States."

Agents shoot an armed man near White House

DC WASHINGTON — An armed man believed to be traveling from Indiana was shot by U.S. Secret Service agents near the White House after a confrontation early Sunday, according to authorities.

No one else was injured in the shooting that happened around midnight about a block from the White House, according to a Secret Service statement.

The Secret Service received information from local police about an alleged "suicidal individual" who was traveling from Indiana and found the man's car and a person matching his description nearby.

"As officers approached, the individual brandished a firearm and an armed confrontation ensued, during which shots were fired by our personnel," the Secret Service said in a statement.

Teacher's body found after he vanished on lake

GA ATLANTA — The body of an Atlanta teacher and coach who vanished last month while boating on Georgia's Lake Oconee has been recovered from waters not far from where his fiancee was found dead shortly after their outing, a sheriff told news outlets Sunday.

Sheriff Howard Sills of Putnam County told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution that Gary

Jones' body was found on Sunday afternoon in about 45 feet of water on the popular tourist lake southeast of Atlanta.

The discovery was made not far from where the body of Jones' fiancee, Spelman College instructor Joycelyn Wilson, was found a day after the two went missing on Feb. 8, the newspaper reported. It comes a month to the day that Wilson's body was recovered in the vicinity of where Jones' empty two-seater fishing boat and his sneakers were found floating.

Sills said Jones' body was found by Wisconsin search-and-recovery expert Keith Cormican, who was brought in by Jones' family over the weekend and used sophisticated underwater sonar in his effort, the newspaper reported.

Lawsuit claims utility's equipment sparked fire

CA LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles County said that it's suing Southern California Edison, alleging the utility's equipment sparked January's Eaton Fire, which destroyed more than 9,400 structures and killed 17 people in the Altadena area.

The lawsuit seeks to recover costs and damages sustained from the blaze that damaged "essential community infrastructure" and "massively impacted the County's natural resources, harmed the environment and wildlife, and threatened public health," LA County said in a statement.

Costs and damage estimates were expected to total hundreds of millions of dollars, the county said, adding that assessments were ongoing.

—From wire reports

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NFL free agency starts with signing flurry

Associated Press

The NFL champion Philadelphia Eagles are losing two of their defensive disruptors who pressured Patrick Mahomes in the Super Bowl.

Defensive tackle Milton Williams agreed to a deal with New England worth \$26 million annually and edge rusher Josh Sweat is heading to the Arizona Cardinals on a four-year, \$76.4 million contract, people with knowledge of the terms told The Associated Press.

Williams and Sweat combined for 4½ sacks, four quarterback hits, four tackles for loss, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery in the Eagles' 40-22 rout of the Kansas City Chiefs in the Super Bowl.

The NFL's 52-hour legal tampering period arrived Monday with a slew of stars getting big contracts following a weekend flurry that featured league MVP Josh Allen's record-setting \$330 million extension and Myles Garrett set to become the highest-paid non-quarterback in history.

The QB carousel kept turning Monday with the Seattle Seahawks grabbing Sam Darnold (three years, \$100.5 million) following his bounce-back season in Minnesota and Justin Fields landing with the New York Jets

(\$40 million, two years) to replace Aaron Rodgers.

Among the other headliners were Carolina Panthers star Jaycee Horn, who became the highest-paid cornerback in the NFL with a four-year, \$100 million deal that includes \$70 million guaranteed. The Panthers also agreed to terms with Las Vegas Raiders safety Tre'von Moehrig on a three-year, \$51 million contract.

Along with Williams, the Patriots also agreed to contracts with linebacker Robert Spillane, cornerback Carlton Davis and offensive tackle Morgan Moses.

The Washington Commanders made two big splashes, agreeing to terms with defensive tackle Javon Kinlaw (three years, \$45 million) and acquiring standout offensive tackle Laremy Tunsil in a trade with the Houston Texans.

Quarterback carousel

Darnold went 14-3 in Minnesota before ending the season with back-to-back duds that contributed to the decision by the Vikings to let Darnold hit the open market and turn the team over to J.J. McCarthy, who was drafted 10th overall last year.

Aside from Darnold, who is heading to his fourth team in

four seasons, two other veteran QBs are among the most intriguing names on the market: Russell Wilson and Aaron Rodgers.

Rodgers isn't technically a free agent, but the Jets said they're going to release him this week following a disappointing two-year stint in the Meadowlands.

A torn Achilles tendon ended Rodgers' 2023 season after a handful of snaps and he went 5-12 last year, coming nowhere near the 9-7 mark another former Packers great, Brett Favre, posted with New York in 2008 before a rebound season with Minnesota.

Rodgers hopes to land somewhere so he can have a similar bounce-back at age 41, and so does Wilson, who lost his last five starts for Pittsburgh last season.

Since leaving Seattle for Denver in 2022, Wilson is 17-25.

The Seahawks' move for Darnold came three days after the Seahawks agreed to a deal to send Geno Smith to Las Vegas for a third-round draft pick. Seattle is undergoing major changes on offense, having also agreed to trade star receiver D.K. Metcalf to the Steelers for a second-round pick and having cut receiver Tyler Lockett.

Well-traveled

Two-time Pro Bowl edge rusher Haason Reddick is on the move again, this time to Tampa Bay, where he'll make \$14 million in 2025 with \$12 million guaranteed.

Before a holdout ruined his 2024 season with the Jets, Reddick had 27 sacks in two seasons in Philadelphia. He also had double-digit sacks for Arizona in 2020 and Carolina in 2021. The Buccaneers are his fifth team in nine seasons.

Other deals

■ Tampa re-signed Chris Godwin, who is returning from a gruesome ankle injury, for \$66 million (\$44 million guaranteed) over three years. The 29-year-old had 50 catches for 576 yards in seven games last season.

■ Denver bolstered its stellar defense, agreeing to keep run-stuffer D.J. Jones (three years, \$39 million) and to sign former San Francisco 49ers safety Talanoa Hufanga (three years, \$45 million).

■ The Green Bay Packers shored up their cornerback depth by signing Nate Hobbs away from the Raiders. Hobbs agreed to terms on a four-year, \$48 million contract that includes \$16 million guaranteed.

Yankees ace Cole to miss season after Tommy John surgery

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Yankees ace Gerrit Cole's season is over before it could begin, with the New York starter getting Tommy John surgery on his right elbow Tuesday.

The Yankees said the 34-year-old right-hander was examined Monday by Dr. Neal ElAttrache at the Cedars-Sinai Kerlan-Jobe Institute in Los Angeles. ElAttrache, the Dodgers' head team physician, performed the operation.

"This isn't the news any athlete wants to hear, but it's the necessary next step for my career," Cole said in a statement. "I have a lot left to give, and I'm fully committed to the work ahead. I'll attack my rehab every day and support the 2025 Yankees each step

of the way. ... I can't wait to be back on the mound — stronger than ever."

Cole experienced discomfort following his second spring training outing Thursday.

New York is also missing another starting pitcher in AL Rookie of the Year Luis Gil, who will be sidelined for at least three months because of a strained lat muscle. Designated hitter Giancarlo Stanton is sidelined indefinitely because of tendon pain in both elbows, and infielder DJ LeMahieu is out with a calf strain.

"You've got to be able to handle it and deal with it and maneuver," manager Aaron Boone told the YES Network before the team announced Cole's surgery. "It's not a death sentence for us by any means, so it's

an opportunity for someone else. ... The reality is Gerrit still has a lot of pitching in front of him in his career and pitching with the Yankees and we want that to be as successful as it's been already."

A six-time All-Star, Cole threw a perfect first inning Thursday and reached 97.6 mph in the second, when he allowed Matt Wallner's three-run homer on a fastball in the middle of the strike zone. He also surrendered Brooks Lee's solo homer in the third on a 94 mph fastball with a 3-0 count.

Max Fried now heads a rotation that includes Carlos Rodón, Clarke Schmidt and Marcus Stroman.

Will Warren and Carlos Carrasco are among the options for a fifth starter.

SGA, Jokic both show MVP form in split

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Nikola Jokic, two favorites for NBA MVP, showed why in exciting games on back-to-back days in Oklahoma City.

Neither emerged as a clear favorite to claim the award.

Jokic, a three-time winner, stuffed the stat sheet as usual. In a 127-103 loss to the Thunder on Sunday, he had 24 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists.

On Monday, he appeared more determined and assertive, finishing with 35 points, 18 rebounds and eight assists in a 140-127 victory that moved Den-

ver into second place in the Western Conference.

“Some people use the line, ‘Some people are playing checkers and some are playing chess,’” Nuggets coach Michael Malone said.

“I mean, he (Jokic) is just a brilliant person, has a brilliant mind. And he sees things and he reads them at real speed. He’s not a guy that needs to watch the game film after it. He can pick it up as it’s going on. Tonight he was awesome.”

Jokic was dominant, despite injuries to his right elbow and left ankle that Malone thought might keep his star center out

of the game.

Jokic refused to rest.

“There’s a reason that he’s the best player in the world, because you know the guy just can dominate in so many different ways and forms,” Malone said.

Gilgeous-Alexander, the NBA scoring leader who has OKC at the top of the West standings, also delivered. He scored 40 points on Sunday and 25 on Monday.

Gilgeous-Alexander said after Sunday’s victory that he appreciated the energy the two-game series created and all that came with it.

“It’s like, what you get out of

bed for as a competitor, as a basketball player,” he said. “It adds a little bit more pop and excitement to the games, without a doubt. Just walking out there pregame, you can feel it in the building.”

Denver was happy to ‘hold’ Gilgeous-Alexander eight points below his average.

“He’s definitely one of the top players in this league,” Jokic said. “He’s really talented. He’s so crafty. His mid-range has really, really, really, historical accuracy. He’s a great player. We tried to make him take bad shots or just get rid of the ball.”

The season series ended 2-2.

Daniels leads surging Hawks past short-handed 76ers

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Dyson Daniels scored 25 points, and the surging Atlanta Hawks beat the short-handed Philadelphia 76ers 132-123 on Monday night.

Atlanta shot 54.1% from the field and had six players score in double figures. Zaccharie Rissacher had 22, including 20 in the first half, and Terance Mann added a season-high 19.

The Hawks have won three straight and four of five overall.

Quentin Grimes scored 35 for the 76ers, who have lost four of five.

Philadelphia had only nine players in uniform because of injuries for several notable players, including point guard Tyrese Maxey and forwards Paul George and Kelly Oubre Jr.

Celtics 114, Jazz 108: Sam Hauser made nine 3-pointers — seven in the third quarter — and finished with a career-high 33 points to lead short-handed Boston past visiting Utah.

Hauser became the fourth Celtics player to make nine 3s in a game in 2024-25, joining Jayson Tatum, Payton Pritchard and Derrick White — the first time in NBA history that four

teammates have done that in a season.

John Collins scored 28 and Collin Sexton had 16 for the Jazz, who lost their sixth straight.

Nets 111, Lakers 108: Noah Clowney scored 19 points and host Brooklyn beat Los Angeles in the Lakers’ first game since losing LeBron James to a strained left groin.

Luka Doncic had 22 points, 12 rebounds and 12 assists for LA, but he shot only 8-for-26. Gabe Vincent scored 24 points for the Lakers.

Cam Johnson and Keon Johnson each added 18 points for the Nets, who snapped a seven-game losing streak.

Hornets 105, Heat 102: Miles Bridges scored 35 points, Mark Williams added 24 points and 10 rebounds and visiting Charlotte got its first divisional win of the season by beating reeling Miami, which has lost four straight.

It was the third time in March the Heat lost a game after leading by at least 17 points — all those collapses coming at home. Miami led New York by 19 on March 2, led Chicago by 17 on Saturday and led the Hornets by 17 in the first half.

Bam Adebayo finished with 23 points, 14 rebounds and eight assists for the Heat.

Raptors 119, Wizards 104: Toronto native A.J. Lawson made seven 3-pointers while scoring a career-high 32 points, and he also had 12 of the Raptors’ franchise-record 73 rebounds in a victory over visiting Washington.

Alex Sarr had 16 points and 11 rebounds for the NBA-worst Wizards (13-50), who had won their previous two games.

Bulls 121, Pacers 103: Josh Giddey had a season-high 29 points along with 10 rebounds before leaving midway through the fourth quarter with a right ankle injury, and host Chicago won its third straight game.

Myles Turner scored 15 points to lead Indiana, which has lost three straight.

Rockets 97, Magic 84: Javarri Smith Jr. had 20 points and tied a career high with five 3-pointers, helping host Houston beat Orlando for its third consecutive victory.

Paolo Banchero led the Magic with 25 points. Franz Wagner had 15 points, and Wendell Carter Jr. grabbed 12 rebounds.

Grizzlies 120, Suns 118: Ja

Morant had 29 points and 12 assists, and host Memphis overcame an early 16-point deficit against Phoenix.

Kevin Durant scored 35 points and Devin Booker added 26 for the Suns, who jumped out to a 25-9 lead that evaporated before halftime.

Mavericks 133, Spurs 129: Spencer Dinwiddie scored 28 points, and visiting Dallas stopped a five-game slide by edging San Antonio.

The Spurs dropped their third straight game. Harrison Barnes scored 29 points for San Antonio, and Keldon Johnson had 28.

Warriors 130, Trail Blazers 120: Stephen Curry scored 24 points and moved within two 3-pointers of becoming the first player in NBA history with 4,000, Jimmy Butler had a triple-double and Golden State won its fifth straight game by beating visiting Portland.

Deni Avdija returned from a two-game absence with a leg injury to record season-bests of 34 points, 16 rebounds and six assists in the Trail Blazers’ fourth straight defeat. He’s the first Portland player since Clyde Drexler on March 20, 1990, with that stat line.

Sabres snap skid with win over Oilers

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Tage Thompson scored two goals and led the Buffalo Sabres to a 3-2 win against the Edmonton Oilers on Monday night.

Thompson's goals upped his team-leading goal total to 33 and Alex Tuch also scored to help the Sabres end a six-game losing streak in which they went 0-5-1. Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen made 32 saves.

Evan Bouchard and Darnell Nurse scored, and Leon Draisaitl had two assists for the Oilers, who have lost seven of their last 10. Stuart Skinner made 19 saves.

Draisaitl's secondary assist on Nurse's goal 1:35 into the second extended his point streak to 15 games. He has 11 goals and 12 assists during the streak.

Thompson has 16 points in his past 13 games including 11 goals.

He leads Buffalo with five multi-goal games this season.

Avalanche 3, Blackhawks 0: Artturi Lehkonen and Martin Necas scored in the third period, Nathan MacKinnon topped 1,000 points for his career and host Colorado beat Chicago for its sixth straight win.

Joel Kiviranta added an empty-netter in the final minute, and Scott Wedgewood stopped 20 shots for his eighth career shutout and second this season. The Avalanche finished a perfect 6-0-0 homestand.

Spencer Knight finished with 18 saves as the Blackhawks lost for the eighth time in 11 games.

MacKinnon reached the milestone 31 seconds into the third on Lehkonen's goal, and then got another assist nearly 3 minutes later when Necas made it 2-0.

MacKinnon appeared to get No. 1,000 earlier in the game

with a first-period assist on a goal by Necas, but it was negated after a challenge for offside — knocking MacKinnon back to 999 points.

Senators 2, Red Wings 1: Linus Ullmark demonstrated why Ottawa traded for him last year as the gifted netminder turned away 48 shots on Monday night in a win over visiting Detroit.

Ullmark, making his eighth consecutive start, was at his best in the second period when he stopped all 27 shots he faced, tying a franchise record.

Dylan Cozens got his first goal as a Senator, and David Perron also scored.

Dylan Larkin beat Ullmark short side in the third period. Cam Talbot made 21 saves.

Petr Mrazek, acquired from Chicago on Friday, dressed for his first game back with Detroit. Craig Smith made his Red

Wings debut.

Maple Leafs 4, Utah 3 (SO):

Mitch Marner scored the deciding goal in the shootout and visiting Toronto beat Utah.

William Nylander, Calle Jarnkrok and Steven Lorentz scored in regulation for the Maple Leafs, and Joseph Woll finished with 30 saves. Toronto had lost three straight (0-2-1).

Nick Schmaltz, Barrett Hayton and Michael Carcone scored for Utah, which had won four of its previous six games.

Auston Matthews also scored in the tiebreaker for the Leafs, and Clayton Keller tied it for Utah.

Toronto was involved in a shootout for only the second time this season, and this was its first win. Carolina (0-2), Boston (0-1) and Edmonton (0-1) are the only remaining teams without a shootout victory.

Wofford uses 15-2 run to top Furman, earn NCAA bid

Associated Press

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Jackson Sivils scored a career-high 20 points and hit a go-ahead 3-pointer in a game-ending 15-2 run as Wofford rallied to beat Furman 92-85 in the Southern Conference Tournament championship game on Monday night.

Wofford trailed 83-79 with 2:34 remaining. Kyler Filewich then made a layup and Sivils drilled his 3-pointer to put the Terriers (19-15) on top for good.

Sivils, a fifth-year senior, made 6 of 9 shots with four 3-pointers for No. 6 seed Wofford, which earned an automatic berth to the NCAA Tournament for the sixth time. The Terriers won four conference titles between 2009-15 and last won it in the 2018-19 season.

Justin Bailey added 19 points and seven rebounds for Wofford. Dillon Bailey scored 15 and teamed up with Justin — no relation — to make 7 of 12 from beyond the arc. Filewich added 13 points and six boards. Corey Tripp had 11 points, eight assists and six rebounds.

Pjay Smith Jr. led the fifth-seeded Paladins (25-9) with 27 points. He made four 3-pointers and all 11 of his foul shots. Nick An-

derson had 15 points and Garrett Hien and Charles Johnston scored 13 and 12, respectively, before fouling out. Cooper Bowser scored 11.

Wofford scored the first eight points and maintained a lead until Johnston buried a 3-pointer with 63 seconds left in the first half to help Furman go up 37-35 at halftime. Smith had a four-point play and did not miss a shot, leading all scorers with 12. Sivils hit three 3-pointers and scored 11.

Sun Belt

Troy 94, Arkansas State 81: Conference player of the year Tayton Conerway scored 16 of his 21 points in the second half, Myles Rigsby added 20 points and No. 3 seed Troy beat fourth-seeded Arkansas State at Pensacola, Fla., on Monday night to clinch a spot in the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2017.

Troy (23-10) won the tournament championship to earn a spot in the NCAA Tournament for just the third time in program history.

Arkansas State (24-10) was in the championship game for the second year in a row,

battling for its first NCAA berth since 1999 and second in school history.

Troy trailed 66-58 with 10 minutes to go before going on 24-4 run, sparked by Conerway's 12 points, to go ahead 82-70 with 2:12 left. It was the first double-digit lead of the game.

The Trojans made seven straight shots at the end of the run, while Arkansas State went 2-for-13 from the field.

Troy shot 65% from the field in the second half, getting 16 points from Rigsby and 11 from Thomas Dowd.

Dowd finished with 14 points and nine rebounds, and Jackson Fields added 10 points for Troy, which won its sixth straight game.

Dyondre Dominguez led Arkansas State with 19 points and Derrian Ford added 17. Terrance Ford Jr. had 11 points and seven assists, and Kobe Julien and Joseph Pinion each scored 10.

Conerway finished the tournament with 61 points after scoring 18 in quarterfinals against Old Dominion and 22 in semifinals against No. 2 seed James Madison.

He was 8-for-17 from the field against the Red Wolves.