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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Judge blocks transgender military ban

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge blocked enforcement of President Donald Trump's executive order banning transgender people from military service on Tuesday, the latest in a string of legal setbacks for his sweeping agenda.

U.S. District Judge Ana Reyes in Washington, D.C., ruled that Trump's order to exclude transgender troops from military service likely violates their constitutional rights. She was the second judge of the day to rule against the administration, and both rulings came within hours of an extraordinary conflict as Trump called for impeaching a third judge who temporarily blocked deportation flights, drawing a rare rebuke from Chief Justice John Roberts.

Reyes, who was nominated by President Joe Biden, delayed her order until Friday morning to give the administration time to appeal.

"The court knows that this opinion will lead to heated public debate and appeals. In a healthy democracy, both are positive outcomes," Reyes wrote. "We should all agree, however, that every person who has answered the call to serve deserves our gratitude and respect."

Army Reserve 2nd Lt. Nicolas Talbott, one of 14 transgender active-duty servicemembers named as plaintiffs in the lawsuit, said he was holding his breath as he waited to find out if he would be separated from the military next week.

"This is such a sigh of relief," he said. "This is all I've ever wanted to do. This is my dream job, and I finally have it. And I was so terrified that I was about to lose it."

The White House didn't immediately respond to a message seeking comment. Trump's deputy chief of staff, Stephen Miller, posted about the ruling on social media, writing, "District court

judges have now decided they are in command of the Armed Forces...is there no end to this madness?"

The judge issued a preliminary injunction requested by attorneys who also represent others seeking to join the military.

On Jan. 27, Trump signed an executive order that claims the identity of transgender service members "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an honorable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle, even in one's personal life" and is harmful to military readiness.

In response to the order, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth issued a policy that presumptively disqualifies people with gender dysphoria from military service. Gender dysphoria is the distress that a person feels because their assigned gender and gender identity don't match. The medical condition has been linked to depression and suicidal thoughts.

Plaintiffs' attorneys contend Trump's order violates transgender people's rights to equal protection under the Fifth Amendment.

Government lawyers argue that military officials have broad discretion to decide how to assign and deploy servicemembers without judicial interference.

Reyes said she did not take lightly her decision to issue an injunction blocking Trump's order, noting that "Judicial overreach is no less pernicious than executive overreach." But, she said, it was also the responsibility of each branch of government to provide checks and balances for the others, and the court "therefore must act to uphold the equal protection rights that the military defends every day."

Thousands of transgender people serve in the military, but they represent less than 1% of the total number of active-duty service members.

21,000 DOD workers to take deferred resignations

By CAITLYN BURCHETT

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Nearly 21,000 workers for the Defense Department have been approved to take deferred resignations offered as part of the Trump administration's federal workforce purge, a senior defense official said Tuesday.

The Defense Department is in the process of placing those employees on administrative leave leading up to their last day on the job as the agency looks to slash as many as 60,000 jobs, according to the official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The resignation directive

was offered by the Office of Personnel Management and the Department of Government Efficiency Service to help federal agencies substantially trim the civilian workforce.

The Pentagon had set a goal to cut 5% to 8% of its more than 900,000 civilian employees. However, the official said Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is now concerned uniformed troops will have to fill gaps left by ousted civilian workers.

As a result, applicants for deferred resignations deemed critical to national security and military readiness were denied that opportunity, known as the "Fork-in-the-Road" program.

The official was not authorized to share how many applicants were denied, only stating the Pentagon worked with the services and appropriate offices to ensure those who were approved to resign could do so "without negatively impacting the department's lethality and readiness."

"This wasn't just a totally open process where any employee could depart," one senior defense official said. "To ensure the department's ability to effectively function, it is important to consider things like which roles can be removed without losing effectiveness."

Those of the 21,000 who were

approved for the resignation program but are not yet eligible for retirement will end their DOD employment on Sept. 30, the last day of the fiscal year. Those workers who are retiring will be phased out by December, the official said.

"We are confident we could absorb those removals without detriment to our ability to continue the mission," the official said.

The Defense Department is aiming to add to the workforce cuts by not filling positions that are vacated. The hiring freeze, the official said, would eliminate about 6,000 positions each month.

Trump and Zelenskyy discuss ceasefire, power plant security

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday that they had a constructive call about moving toward a ceasefire between Kyiv and Moscow, with the White House suggesting that the U.S. take control of Ukrainian power plants to ensure their security.

Trump told Zelenskyy that the U.S. could be “very helpful in running those plants with its electricity and utility expertise,” according to a White House statement from Secretary of State Marco Rubio and national security adviser Mike Waltz that described the call as “fantastic.”

Trump added that “American ownership of those plants could be the best protection for that infrastructure.”

The call between Trump and Zelenskyy came a day after the U.S. leader held similar talks with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

Trump’s call with Zelenskyy was about half the length of his call Tuesday, during which Putin agreed not to target Ukraine’s energy infrastructure but refused to back a full 30-day ceasefire.

In a social media post, Trump said his call with Zelenskyy was to “align both Russia and Ukraine in terms of their requests and needs” as he seeks to bring a halt to fighting.

“We are very much on track,” Trump added, saying Secretary of State Marco Rubio and National Security Advisor Michael Waltz would provide further de-

tails of the conversation.

Prior to his call with Trump, Zelenskyy said Putin’s limited ceasefire pledge was “very much at odds with reality” following an overnight barrage of drone strikes across the country.

“Even last night, after Putin’s conversation with ... Trump, when Putin said that he was allegedly giving orders to stop strikes on Ukrainian energy, there were 150 drones launched overnight, including on energy facilities,” Zelenskyy said at a news conference in Helsinki with Finnish President Alexander Stubb.

The Kremlin says Kyiv isn’t upholding its end of the bargain. Russia responded by saying it had halted its targeting of Ukraine’s energy facilities and accused Kyiv of attacking equipment near one of its pipelines.

“Unfortunately, we see that for now there is no reciprocity on the part of the Kyiv regime,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

The White House described the call between Trump and Putin as the first step in a “movement to peace” that Washington hopes will include a maritime ceasefire in the Black Sea and eventually a full and lasting end to the fighting.

But there was no indication that Putin backed away from his conditions for a prospective peace deal, which are fiercely opposed by Kyiv.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said that Putin’s demands during the call with Trump would amount to “Ukrainian capitulation.”

Israel launches operation to retake corridor in Gaza

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Israel said Wednesday it launched a “limited ground operation” in northern Gaza to retake part of a corridor that bisects the territory, and the country’s defense minister warned that the army plans to step up the attacks that shattered a two-month ceasefire “with an intensity that you have not seen.”

The military said it had retaken part of the Netzarim corridor, which bisects northern Gaza from the south and from where it had withdrawn as part of the ceasefire that began in January.

Defense Minister Israel Katz warned Palestinians in Gaza that the army would again order evacuations from combat zones soon and that its attacks against Hamas would become more

fierce if dozens of hostages held for more than 17 months weren’t freed.

As Israel continued its airstrikes on Gaza Wednesday, the United Nations said an international United Nations staffer was killed and five others were wounded in a strike Wednesday on a U.N. guesthouse in Gaza.

Jorge Moreira da Silva, head of the U.N. Office for Project Services, declined to say who carried out the strike in the city of Deir al-Balah but said the explosive ordnance was “dropped or fired” and the blast was not accidental or related to demining activity.

He did not provide the nationalities of those killed and wounded. The U.N. body, known as UNOPS, carries out infrastructure and development projects around the world.

Sea Dragon drills near Guam test anti-sub skills

By ALEX WILSON

Stars and Stripes

The United States and four partner nations have concluded two weeks of intensive anti-submarine training near Guam, the U.S. 7th Fleet announced Wednesday.

The Sea Dragon exercise, held annually since 2019, brought together the U.S. Navy, the Australian air force, and the Indian, Japanese and South Korean navies for a series of drills, including mobile target training and the pursuit of a U.S. submarine.

The exercise features an annual competition assessing each nation’s anti-submarine warfare tactics and response effectiveness, with the winner receiving the Dragon Belt award, according to a 7th Fleet news release. The Australian air force

won this year’s contest, ending Japan’s three-year winning streak.

Sea Dragon began on March 6 with a training format designed to progressively develop aircrews’ anti-submarine warfare expertise while ensuring seamless international mission coordination, according to the news release.

Hosted by Task Force 72, which leads the 7th Fleet’s patrol, reconnaissance and surveillance forces, Sea Dragon included about 200 U.S. sailors and two U.S. P-8A Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft, Merrill said Wednesday.

Other participating aircraft included two Australian P-8A Poseidons, a Japanese P-1, a South Korean P-3 Orion, and an Indian P-81 Neptune, she said.

Judge: USAID cuts may violate Constitution

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development by billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency likely violated the Constitution, a federal judge ruled Tuesday as he indefinitely blocked DOGE from making further cuts to the agency.

The order requires the Trump administration to restore email and computer access to all employees of USAID, including those put on administrative leave, though it stops short of reversing firings or fully resurrecting the agency.

In one of the first DOGE lawsuits against Musk himself, U.S. District Judge Theodore Chuang in Maryland rejected the Trump

administration's position that Musk is merely President Donald Trump's adviser.

Musk's public statements and social media posts demonstrate that he has "firm control over DOGE," the judge found pointing to an online post where Musk said he had "fed USAID into the wood chipper."

The judge said it's likely that USAID is no longer capable of performing some of its statutorily required functions.

"Taken together, these facts support the conclusion that USAID has been effectively eliminated," Chuang wrote in the preliminary injunction.

The lawsuit filed by USAID employees and contractors argued that Musk and DOGE are wielding power the Constitution

reserves only for those who win elections or are confirmed by the Senate. Their attorneys said the ruling "effectively halts or reverses" many of the steps taken to dismantle the agency.

The administration has said that DOGE is searching for and rooting out waste, fraud and abuse in the federal government, consistent with the campaign message that helped Trump win the 2024 election.

Musk, his team and Trump political appointee Pete Marocco have played a central role in the two-month dismantling of USAID. In an email obtained by The Associated Press on Wednesday, Marocco said that he will serve as the State Department's head of foreign assistance.

Marocco disclosed the change

in the email to State Department staff. It comes after Marocco and DOGE oversaw the gutting of 83% of USAID contracts, shifting the remaining programs under the State Department.

Marocco wrote that Secretary of State Marco Rubio will "effective immediately" designate Jeremy Lewin as deputy administrator for policy and programs at USAID and as chief operating officer. Lewin is a DOGE official.

Rubio also designated Kenneth Jackson as administrator for management and resources who will also serve as the agency's chief financial officer. Trump appointed Jackson as acting president of the U.S. Institute for Peace, a government think tank meant to promote conflict resolution.

Judge blocks cuts of \$14B in federal climate grants

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge on Tuesday blocked the Trump administration from terminating \$14 billion in grants awarded to three climate groups by the Biden administration, saying the government's "vague and unsubstantiated assertions of fraud are insufficient."

The order by U.S. District Judge Tonya Chutkan prevents — for now — the Environmental Protection Agency from ending the grant program, which totaled \$20 billion. The judge also blocked Citibank, which holds the money on behalf of EPA, from transferring it to the government or anyone else.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin accused the grant recipients of mismanagement, fraud and self-dealing and froze the grants. But after reviewing arguments in the case, Chutkan said Zeldin's allegations fell short.

"At this juncture, EPA Defendants have not sufficiently ex-

plained why unilaterally terminating Plaintiffs' grant awards was a rational precursor to reviewing" the green bank program, Chutkan wrote.

She was the third judge of the day to rule against the Trump administration. The trio of rulings came within hours of an extraordinary conflict, as President Donald Trump called for the impeachment of another judge who had temporarily blocked deportation flights. Trump's message drew a rare rebuke from Chief Justice of the United States John Roberts.

Climate United Fund and other groups had sued the EPA, Zeldin and Citibank, saying they had illegally denied the groups access to \$14 billion awarded last year through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, commonly referred to as a "green bank." The program was created by the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act to finance clean energy and climate-friendly projects.

EPA to ax scientific research team, may fire over 1K others

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Environmental Protection Agency plans to eliminate its scientific research office and could fire more than 1,000 scientists and other employees who help provide the scientific foundation for rules safeguarding human health and ecosystems from environmental pollutants.

As many as 1,155 chemists, biologists, toxicologists and other scientists — 75% of the research program's staff — could be laid off, according to documents reviewed by Democratic staff on the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology.

The planned layoffs, cast by the Trump administration as part of a broader push to shrink the size of the federal government and make it more efficient, were assailed by critics as a massive dismantling of the EPA's long-standing mission to protect public health and the environment.

The plans were first reported by The New York Times.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin

has said he wants to eliminate 65% of the agency's budget, a huge spending cut that would require major staffing reductions for jobs such as monitoring air and water quality, responding to natural disasters and lead abatement, among many other agency functions. The EPA has also issued guidance directing that spending items greater than \$50,000 require approval from billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency.

The Office of Research and Development — EPA's main science arm — currently has 1,540 positions, excluding special government employees and public health officers, according to the memo. A majority of staff — ranging from 50% to 75% — "will not be retained," the memo said.

The plan calls for dissolving the research office and reassigning remaining staff to other parts of the agency "to provide increased oversight and align with administration priorities," the memo says. Officials have presented the plan to the White House for review.

Violent attacks on Tesla dealerships spike

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Cybertrucks set ablaze. Bullets and Molotov cocktails aimed at Tesla showrooms.

Attacks on property carrying the logo of Elon Musk's electric-car company are cropping up across the U.S. and overseas. While no injuries have been reported, Tesla showrooms, vehicle lots, charging stations and privately owned cars have been targeted.

There's been a clear uptick since President Donald Trump took office and empowered Musk to oversee a new Department of Government Efficiency that's slashing government spending. Experts on domestic extremism say it's impossible to know yet if the spate of incidents will balloon into a long-term pattern.

In Trump's first term, his properties in New York, Washington and elsewhere became a natural place for protest. In the early days of his second term, Tesla is filling that role.

"Tesla is an easy target," said

Randy Blazak, a sociologist who studies political violence. "They're rolling down our streets. They have dealerships in our neighborhoods."

Musk critics have organized dozens of peaceful demonstrations at Tesla dealerships and factories across North America and Europe.

Some Tesla owners, including a U.S. senator who feuded with Musk, have vowed to sell their vehicles.

But the attacks are keeping law enforcement busy.

Prosecutors in Colorado charged a woman last month in connection with attacks on Tesla dealerships, including Molotov cocktails — crude bombs filled with gasoline or another flammable liquid — thrown at vehicles and the words "Nazi cars" spray-painted on a building.

And federal agents in South Carolina last week arrested a man they say set fire to Tesla charging stations near Charleston.

An agent from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and

Explosives wrote in an affidavit that authorities found writings critical of the government and DOGE in his bedroom and wallet.

"The statement made mention of sending a message based on these beliefs," the agent wrote.

Some of the most prominent incidents have been reported in left-leaning cities in the Pacific Northwest, like Portland, Ore., and Seattle, where anti-Trump and anti-Musk sentiment runs high.

An Oregon man faces charges after allegedly throwing several Molotov cocktails at a Tesla store in Salem, then returning another day and shooting out windows.

In the Portland suburb of Tigard, more than a dozen bullets were fired at a Tesla showroom last week, damaging vehicles and windows, the second time in a week that the store was targeted.

Four Cybertrucks were set on fire in a Tesla lot in Seattle earlier this month.

On Friday, witnesses reported a man poured gasoline on an unoccupied Tesla Model S and started a fire on a Seattle street.

In Las Vegas, several Tesla vehicles were set ablaze early Tuesday outside a Tesla service center where the word "resist" was also painted in red across the building's front doors.

Authorities said at least one person threw Molotov cocktails and fired several rounds from a weapon into the vehicles.

Tesla didn't respond to a request for comment.

Musk briefly addressed the vandalism Monday during an appearance on Sen. Ted Cruz's podcast, saying "at least some of it is organized and paid for" by "left-wing organizations in America, funded by left-wing billionaires, essentially."

Prices for used Cybertrucks, Tesla's most distinctive product, have dropped nearly 8% since Trump took office, according to CarGurus, which aggregates used-car vehicle listings. The market as a whole remained steady over the period.

2 astronauts finally back on Earth after 9 months

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Stuck in space no more, NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams returned to Earth on Tuesday, hitching a different ride home to close out a saga that began with a bungled test flight over nine months ago.

Their SpaceX capsule parachuted into the Gulf of America in the early evening, just hours after departing the International Space Station. Splashdown occurred off the coast of Tallahassee in the Florida Panhandle, bringing their unplanned odyssey to an end.

Within an hour, the astronauts were out of their capsule, waving and smiling at the cam-

eras while being hustled away in reclining stretchers for routine medical checks.

It all started with a flawed Boeing test flight last spring.

The two expected to be gone just a week or so after launching on Boeing's new Starliner crew capsule on June 5. So many problems cropped up on the way to the space station that NASA eventually sent Starliner back empty and transferred the test pilots to SpaceX, pushing their homecoming into February. Then SpaceX capsule issues added another delay.

Wilmore and Williams spent 286 days in space — 278 days longer than anticipated when they launched.

US births rose last year, experts don't see a trend

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. births rose slightly last year, but experts don't see it as evidence of reversing a long-term decline.

A little over 3.6 million births were reported for 2024, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention preliminary data. That's 22,250 more than the final tally of 2023 U.S. births, which was released Tuesday.

The 2024 total is likely to grow at least a little when the numbers are finalized, but another set of preliminary data shows birth rates rose only for one group: Hispanic women.

The rise — less than 1% — may just be a small fluctuation in a broader trend, said Hans-

Peter Kohler, a University of Pennsylvania sociologist who studies family demographics.

U.S. births and birth rates have been falling for years. They dropped most years after the 2008-09 recession, aside from a 2014 uptick. They also dropped in 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, then rose for two straight years after that, an increase experts partly attributed to pregnancies put off amid the pandemic.

A 2% drop in 2023 put U.S. births at the lowest one-year tally since 1979. Vermont had the lowest birth rate that year, and Utah had the highest, according to Tuesday's 86-page report on 2023 birth data.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

13-year-old charged with murder in fatal bike crash

NM ALBUQUERQUE — Police have charged a 13-year-old with murder, taken an 11-year-old into custody and are continuing to search for a 15-year-old in the apparently deliberate hit-and-run of a bicyclist in Albuquerque that was recorded on video inside a stolen car last year.

The detained 13-year-old boy is believed to be the driver of the car involved in the May 2024 hit-and-run that killed 63-year-old physicist Scott Dwight Habermehl while he was biking to his job at Sandia National Laboratories. The other boys are believed to have been passengers.

The crash was filmed from inside the car and circulated on social media. In the recording, a voice believed to be the 13-year-old can be heard saying he is about to hit the bicyclist, according to law enforcement. The car appears to accelerate and a voice believed to be the 15-year-old says, "Just bump him, brah."

The driver asks, "Like bump him?"

A passenger says, "Yeah, just bump him. Go like...15...20."

Loud sounds can then be heard in the recording, including "metal flexing," according to law enforcement.

Apartment complex holds vigil for slain alligator

SC DANIEL ISLAND — Several dozen people gathered over the weekend at an apartment complex along the coast to remember a longtime resident who died Friday — an alligator named Walter who

sunned beside a pond on the property for more than a decade.

Walter was killed on the property after several complaints over the past week, the management of Daniel Island Village told WCIV-TV in a statement.

Vigil organizer Rebekah Cole told the TV station that people with pets and children could walk right past Walter and not be bothered.

"He was a piece of the community. Even though he was a cold-blooded animal, we all loved him and it tore us all up," Cole said.

Judge: Willis violated open records law

GA ATLANTA — A judge has ordered Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis to pay more than \$54,000 in attorneys' fees and to turn over documents after finding that her office violated Georgia's Open Records Act.

Attorney Ashleigh Merchant represents former Trump campaign staffer Michael Roman, one of the 18 people indicted in August 2023 along with President Donald Trump on allegations that they illegally tried to overturn Trump's 2020 election loss in Georgia. Merchant sued in January 2024, alleging that the district attorney's office had failed to turn over public records she had requested.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Rachel Krause found that the failures to comply with the records law "were intentional, not done in good faith, and were substantially groundless and vexatious." Because Willis and her office "lacked substantial justification" for not complying, Merchant is entitled to attorney

fees and litigation expenses totaling just over \$54,000, Krause found.

Krause ordered Willis to search for and turn over all records responsive to Merchant's requests.

Bus carrying bagpipers crashes into truck

PA MOUNT COBB — Bagpipers returning from a St. Patrick's Day parade were taken to hospitals after their charter bus crashed into a tractor-trailer, officials said.

The bus was exiting west-bound Interstate 84 in northeastern Pennsylvania shortly before 6:30 p.m. Sunday when it ran into the tractor-trailer, which had no one inside it, Jefferson Township Volunteer Fire Department Chief Mike Shaffer said, according to WBRE-TV/WYOU-TV.

Seventeen people on the bus had minor injuries, according to Pennsylvania State Police spokesperson Trooper 1st Class Robert Urban. The crash was not weather related and is under investigation, he said.

The bus was carrying the Greater Scranton Black Diamonds Pipe Band back from a parade in Milford, according to Bill Hetherson, the band's business manager. The band expects everyone to make a full recovery. They canceled group St. Patrick's Day events on Monday.

Airman charged in death of woman on his base

SD SIOUX FALLS — A 24-year-old airman has been charged with killing a Native American woman who went missing in South Dakota about seven months ago.

Quinterius Chappelle, 24, made his first court appearance Monday on one count of second-degree murder in the killing of Sahela Sangrait, 21. The court documents in the case are sealed, but authorities said Sangrait was killed in August on Ellsworth Air Force Base in western South Dakota, where Chappelle was stationed as an active-duty airman.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said he pleaded not guilty.

Chappelle is an aircraft inspection journeyman assigned to the 28th Maintenance Squadron at Ellsworth, according to a statement from the base. He began serving in April 2019.

Suit: ICE violated rights of US citizen, 21 others

IL CHICAGO — Federal immigration agents violated the rights of 22 people, including a U.S. citizen, in immigration enforcement arrests during the first weeks of President Donald Trump's second term, Chicago activists and attorneys alleged Monday.

The arrests allegedly violate a 2022 agreement between Chicago groups and the federal government detailing how Immigration Customs and Enforcement officers make "collateral arrests," where agents detain others besides those being targeted.

The NIJC detailed alleged violations in a federal complaint filed last week on behalf of advocacy groups in Chicago. Among other things, the agreement says ICE agents can make a warrantless arrest only when they have evidence that an individual is likely to escape.

— From wire reports

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Davis, Tar Heels make big statement

Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — RJ Davis and his North Carolina teammates certainly looked as though they belonged in the NCAA Tournament on Tuesday night.

Davis scored 26 points and shot 6 of 6 from 3-point range to help the Tar Heels silence some skeptics with a dominant 95-68 victory over San Diego State in their First Four matchup.

UNC was a controversial NCAA selection on Sunday, but the Tar Heels played like a team with something to prove.

"We know we deserved to be here," junior guard Seth Trimble said.

North Carolina coach Hubert Davis said his players were simply focused on the task at hand.

"I don't think it was a weight on us to try to get into the NCAA Tournament," he said. "My communication with them is to focus on us. It's not the noise on the outside in terms of com-

ments and critics. Focusing on our preparation, our practice and our play."

Some hot shooting from long range didn't hurt.

RJ Davis' six 3-pointers tied Caleb Love's program record for an NCAA Tournament game. Love had six against UCLA in 2022.

Hubert Davis went 5 for 5 from deep against Eastern Michigan in 1991.

"As a head coach, I don't know what it looks like to exist without him on the sideline and on the floor, and I don't want to think about it," Hubert Davis said about RJ Davis.

The 14 made 3-pointers were the most for the Tar Heels in an NCAA Tournament game. UNC drained 13 against Marquette in 2022.

"I know that we hit a record number of 3s here, but made shots come and go," Hubert Davis said. "The thing I was most proud of is we were getting

steals and deflections, and I thought our defense was real good."

Trimble had 16 points for the Tar Heels in a matchup of No. 11 seeds. They advanced to play No. 6 seed Mississippi on Friday in Milwaukee.

Nick Boyd and Wayne McKinney III each scored 12 for the Aztecs (21-10).

North Carolina shot 61% in the first half and went 7 of 9 from 3-point range. RJ Davis' long 3 just before the halftime buzzer gave the Tar Heels their largest lead to that point, 47-23.

"I think we did a good job of sticking to our game plan and playing Carolina basketball," he said. "We got out in transition, we shared the ball."

UNC (23-13) seemed a long shot to make the tournament with a 1-12 record in Quadrant 1 games, but was chosen Sunday thanks to a strong nonconference schedule and other metrics.

The Tar Heels were out to show the world they belonged, and San Diego State took the brunt of it.

"Obviously, we wish we'd have given them more of a game," Aztecs coach Brian Dutcher said. "We hang our hat on our defense, and we couldn't get stops. We knew we had to play in the 70s to have a chance, and they were up in the 90s."

San Diego State led the nation in field goal percentage defense, but had no answer for North Carolina. It was the most points the Aztecs allowed all season. The previous high was 80 in a loss to then-No. 3 Gonzaga on Nov. 18.

The Tar Heels shot 52.6% from the field, and 58.3% from 3-point range.

"We know who we are on the offensive end," Trimble said. "We know what we're capable of. This doesn't surprise me, what we did tonight. It's what I expect every single night."

Knox's last-second layup lets Alabama St. advance

Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — Amarr Knox's layup with a second left lifted Alabama State to its first NCAA Tournament win Tuesday night, 70-68 over Saint Francis (PA) in a matchup of No. 16 seeds at the First Four.

Knox scored 16 points to help the Hornets (20-15) earn a date with No. 1 overall seed Auburn on Thursday in a South Region game at Lexington, Kentucky.

"You just said it: March Madness," said Alabama State coach Tony Madlock. "I think I've talked about this with all of the media, that all of our games end just like this, either we have to get a bucket or we have to get a stop. Fortunately enough we were able to get a bucket to finish this game off."

After forcing a turnover in the final seconds, the Hornets had

the ball out of bounds under their own basket. With the score tied, Micah Simpson threw a long pass nearly the length of the court toward a scrum of players in the lane at the other end—not unlike a Hail Mary in football.

The ball deflected off a teammate and right into Knox's hands near the rim, giving him a simple layup for the winning points.

"We put our tallest athletic person to go get the ball," Knox said. "And fortunately everybody tipped the ball, and it landed to me, and I got the rebound and made the layup."

The Red Flash chose not to pressure Simpson on the in-bounds pass.

Officials determined there was 1 second remaining after Knox's layup, but a desperation heave by Saint Francis fell short.

The Red Flash, who lost their season opener at Dayton, made an unlikely return to the arena as the 19th team to enter the NCAA Tournament with a losing record. Those teams are now 0-19.

"These guys for 34 games left it all out on the court for us," coach Rob Krimmel said. "I know that they're disappointed. That's the thing that I love about them. They're champions, and nothing can take that away from our group."

Alabama State is making its fifth tournament appearance.

Micah Octave's steal and dunk put the Hornets ahead by four with 1:36 left, but Saint Francis tied the score at 68 on Chris Moncrief's 3-pointer with 40 seconds remaining.

Juan Cranford Jr., playing in his hometown, led the Red Flash

with 18 points. Valentino Pinedo scored 17 for Saint Francis (16-18), which squandered a nine-point lead.

The Red Flash shot 59% and went 6-for-12 from 3-point range to take a 39-34 lead into halftime.

"We've been in that moment, that situation, a few times this year, and we knew we just had to come out and play ball," Knox said. "We stayed positive. We knew as soon as the next half started that we would come out, fly around, play aggressive and just do whatever it takes to win the game."

Saint Francis committed 15 turnovers, leading to 26 points for Alabama State.

"We turned the ball over too many times," Cranford said. "We turned the ball over that many times, you can't expect to come out with a good outcome."

Ohtani homers, Dodgers sweep Cubs in Japan

Associated Press

TOKYO — Shohei Ohtani hit a solo homer in his return to the Tokyo Dome, Roki Sasaki threw three eventful innings in his big-league debut and the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Chicago Cubs 6-3 on Wednesday night to sweep the two-game series in Japan.

Kiké Hernández hit a two-run homer and Tommy Edman added a solo shot. Ohtani's homer in the fifth barely cleared the right-center fence and the call was reviewed by umpires before being confirmed, giving the Dodgers a 6-2 lead.

Ohtani's shot initially fell back onto the field after bouncing off the hands of fans trying to catch the ball. Cubs center fielder Pete Crow-Armstrong then tossed it back into stands, where it was caught by 10-year-old fan Sota Fujimori.

"I thought I missed out at first," he said, doing an interview afterward in Japanese to explain with a small group of reporters.

Sasaki gave up one run and one hit while striking out three, but also walked five batters, including a free pass that forced in a run. The first six pitches of his MLB career registered 99.5,

99.5, 100, 100.5, 99.4 and 98.9 mph on the radar gun. Landon Knack (1-0) got the win, pitching two scoreless innings of relief.

Alex Vesia handled the ninth to earn the save after working out of a two-out jam. Shortstop Miguel Rojas made a stellar defensive play for the final out, ranging far to his right to grab a grounder from Matt Shaw before making a strong throw to first.

Chicago left-hander Justin Steele (0-1) was tagged for five runs in four innings, giving up the homers to Hernández and Edman. Jon Berti had three of

the Cubs' eight hits.

Los Angeles was without Freddie Freeman (ribs) and Mookie Betts (illness) for a second straight game. Roberts is hopeful Freeman and Betts will both be ready for the domestic season opener.

Both teams return home, though the Dodgers will go directly to LA while Chicago returns to its spring training home in Mesa, Ariz. The Dodgers open the domestic regular season schedule at home against the Detroit Tigers on March 27 while the Cubs are on the road at the Arizona Diamondbacks on the same day.

Young, Hawks rout Hornets to sweep season series

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Trae Young scored 31 points, Dyson Daniels added 22 points, seven rebounds and seven assists and the Atlanta Hawks clobbered the short-handed Charlotte Hornets 134-102 on Tuesday night to sweep the four-game season series.

Zaccharie Risacher knocked down four 3s in the second half to finish with 21 points for the Hawks, who snapped a two-game skid.

DaQuan Jeffries and Seth Curry each had 19 points for the Hornets, who played without LaMelo Ball and Miles Bridges.

Atlanta led 70-57 at halftime, then Risacher hit four 3s in the third quarter — including three on three consecutive possessions — to quickly push the lead to 26. The Hawks' lead ballooned to 100-65 late in the third quarter after Young hit a deep 3.

Risacher finished the third quarter with 16 points on 6-for-7 shooting, along with three rebounds, a block and an assist.

Onyeka Okongwu had 10 points in the first four minutes to set the tone as Atlanta bolted to a 20-7 lead and never looked back. Okongwu finished with 15 points and 10 rebounds.

Celtics 104, Nets 96: Baylor Scheierman scored 13 of his career-high 20 points in the fourth quarter, Kristaps Porzingis had 25 points and 13 rebounds

and host Boston beat Brooklyn.

Scheierman took advantage of some bonus playing time as the Celtics rested injured stars Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown against the struggling Nets. Boston still had plenty down the stretch to hold off Brooklyn, which couldn't stop Scheierman's second-half surge.

After beating the buzzer at the end of the third with a 3-pointer that put Boston up 71-70, Scheierman hit three more from beyond the arc in the fourth before leaving to a standing ovation with about four minutes left. Scheierman, a rookie out of Creighton, had never scored more than 15 points before Tuesday.

Derrick White scored 18 points, Jrue Holiday had 12 points and eight assists and Payton Pritchard added 10 points for the Celtics, who won their third straight.

D'Angelo Russell led the Nets with 18 points. Ziaire Williams scored 15 and Cameron Johnson and Trendon Watford added 11 points apiece.

Warriors 104, Bucks 93: Jimmy Butler had 24 points, eight rebounds and 10 assists and host Golden State, playing without Stephen Curry, beat Milwaukee.

Curry, who recently became the first player in NBA history to make 4,000 3-pointers, was given the night off for a mental and emotional break by Warriors coach Steve Kerr.

Buddy Hield had 15 points and six rebounds off the bench to help Golden State improve to 5-1 on a seven-game

homestand. Brandin Podziemski started in place of Curry and had 17 points and seven rebounds.

With 13 games remaining in the regular season, the Warriors are 40-39 and remain in the No. 6 slot in the Western Conference.

Kyle Kuzma made five 3-pointers and scored 22 points to pace the Bucks. Giannis Antetokounmpo added 20 points, nine rebounds and seven assists. Damian Lillard and Brook Lopez each scored 16.

Clippers 132, Cavaliers 119: Kawhi Leonard scored 33 points and host Los Angeles handed East-leading Cleveland its second straight loss.

Ivica Zubac had 28 points and 20 rebounds and James Harden added 22 points and nine assists in the Clippers' fourth straight victory.

Max Strus scored a season-high 24 points for the Cavaliers, whose 16-game winning streak ended Sunday against Orlando. Their NBA-best road record dropped to 26-7 after they led by 12 in a 45-point first quarter.

Donovan Mitchell had 18 points and 11 assists and Evan Mobley scored 17 points in his return from a one-game absence with a foot contusion.

LA put together a 20-3 run over the end of the third and start of the fourth, turning a one-point back-and-forth into a 12-point lead in the final quarter. Bogdan Bogdanovic scored seven in the spurt and finished with 20 points off the bench.

Canadiens snap Senators' win streak at 6

Associated Press

MONTREAL — Nick Suzuki's power-play goal late in the third period lifted the Montreal Canadiens over Ottawa 6-3 on Tuesday night, snapping the Senators' six-game winning streak.

Josh Anderson scored twice, including an empty-netter, while Lane Hutson and Christian Dvorak also had goals for Montreal. Brendan Gallagher added a second into the empty net and Sam Montembeault stopped 22 shots.

Travis Hamonic had a goal and an assist for Ottawa while Michael Amadio and Drake Batherson also found the back of the net. Linus Ullmark made 27 saves.

Suzuki buried his shot into an open cage at 15:23 after Ullmark failed to properly cover the puck, helping the Canadiens take a 4-3 lead. Montreal has now won three of its last four games.

Flames 2, Rangers 1: Nazem

Kadri and Matt Coronato scored first-period goals and visiting Calgary beat New York.

Defenseman MacKenzie Weegar added two assists and Kadri also had an assist for the Flames, who snapped a three-game losing streak. Dan Vladar made 12 saves.

Islanders 4, Penguins 2: Pierre Engvall scored the tie-breaking goal in New York's four-goal third period, and the visiting Islanders rallied to beat Pittsburgh.

Kyle Palmieri had a goal and two assists, Noah Dobson added a goal and an assist, and Simon Holmstrom also scored to help New York get four goals in the third after trailing 2-0 for the second straight game. Ilya Sorokin finished with 20 saves.

Capitals 4, Red Wings 1: Dylan Strome had a goal and an assist and host Washington beat Detroit.

Pierre-Luc Dubois, Tom Wilson and Connor McMichael also scored for the Capitals, winners

of seven of their last eight.

Blues 4, Predators 1: Jordan Kyrou scored two goals, Joel Hofer made 22 saves and visiting St. Louis defeated Nashville.

Justin Faulk and Jake Neighbours each had a goal and an assist and Dylan Holloway had three assists for the Blues, winners of three straight.

Stars 4, Ducks 3 (OT): Mikael Granlund's second goal of the game 2:32 into overtime gave him 600 career points and lifted host Dallas to a come-from-behind win over Anaheim.

Defenseman Thomas Harley had a goal and two assists and Wyatt Johnston also scored for the Stars, who have won eight consecutive home games for the first time since January-March 2006. Jake Oettinger made 22 saves.

Kraken 6, Blackhawks 2: Shane Wright scored twice, Adam Larsson had a goal and two assists, and visiting Seattle beat Chicago.

Matty Beniers had a goal and

an assist, Jordan Eberle and Jared McCann also scored, and Andre Burakovsky had two assists for the Kraken, who trailed by two late in the first period. Joey Daccord stopped 26 shots to move to 23-18-4 on the season.

Oilers 7, Utah 1: Zach Hyman had two goals and an assist and Calvin Pickard stopped 29 shots as host Edmonton beat Utah.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Connor McDavid and Mattias Ekholm each had a goal and two assists, and Vasily Podkolzin and Viktor Arvidsson also scored for the Oilers, who pulled two points behind first-place Vegas in the Pacific Division.

Canucks 6, Jets 2: Brock Boeser scored twice and had an assist as host Vancouver handed Winnipeg a drubbing.

Pius Suter added two goals, including one into an empty net, while Nils Hoglander and Drew O'Connor had one goal each and Quinn Hughes contributed two assists. Kevin Lankinen stopped 19 of the 21 shots he faced.

Pens, Preds to play Global Series games in Stockholm

Associated Press

MANALAPAN, Fla. — The Country Music Association Awards ceremony kicks the Nashville Predators out of their arena for a long stretch every November. This year, they'll use that absence to travel to Sweden.

The NHL announced Tuesday that the Predators will face the Pittsburgh Penguins in regular-season games in Stockholm on Nov. 14 and 16 as part of the league's Global Series.

"I think it'll be a good event for us," Nashville general manager Barry Trotz told The Associated Press. "We're either going on a long trip out West or we can go to Europe."

The games at newly renovated Avicci Arena are set to be the 47th and 48th games the league has held in Sweden and make it the 15th season with regular-season action outside North America.

The visit is perhaps one last chance for aging Pittsburgh captain Sidney Crosby and Swedish defenseman Erik Karlsson to play in Scandinavia. The Predators have a prominent Swede in top-line winger Filip

Forsberg, with starting goaltender Juuse Saros hailing from neighboring Finland.

"It's going to be really fitting for us," Trotz said after a session at the NHL GMs meeting in South Florida. "Not only we have some Swedish players — a guy like a Filip and a couple others that are really proud that they will go back and showcase their country, and I think Filip's going to try to showcase his hometown. I think for our players, there's not a better learning environment than travel and going to another country to learn more about the culture and understanding of that."

The Penguins have not played in Europe since 2008, fresh off winning the third Stanley Cup championship in franchise history. They have since won it twice more, in 2016 and '17.

For Trotz, it will be a return overseas a quarter-century after he coached Nashville against Pittsburgh for two-season opening games in Saitama, Japan, in 2000. He wants his players to look forward to and enjoy the trip while also appreciating they

will be meaningful games.

"You'll have the excitement of the start of the season and then you get into November and it starts to get into a little bit of the grind," Trotz said. "It might be a really good thing for us just to focus on that. But we've got to focus on it's not a vacation."

The NHL is returning to Sweden for the first time since 2023 after staging games in Finland and Czechia this season. Stockholm has hosted more NHL games than any other European city.

Predators CEO Sean Henry said being selected to participate in a marquee event like this is a testament to the organization's support at home and abroad.

"This event will be particularly special for Filip Forsberg, who adores his home country, and the other Sweden natives on our team and in our organization," Henry said in a statement. "We had such an incredible time with our fans at the 2022 Global Series in Bern and Prague, and we can't wait for them to bring even more energy and enthusiasm in November."