

USS Ford shows off high-tech in Iran fight

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford's support of Middle East operations that began over the weekend likely is showcasing — and testing — its cutting-edge technology and capabilities, which older carriers lack.

Ford, the Navy's newest and the world's largest aircraft carrier, is more than eight months into a deployment that has seen the ship go from Europe to the Caribbean Sea and back.

The carrier was ordered to the Mediterranean Sea last month, part of a U.S. military buildup as President Donald Trump threatened Iran that an "armada" was on its way to the region.

Among Ford's features is the electromagnetic aircraft launching system, or EMALS, which replaces the more than 70-year-old technology behind the steam-powered system used on the service's Nimitz-class carriers.

EMALS provides a smoother, more controlled launch that puts less stress on aircraft, officials say. It also offers greater flexibility in launching a range of aircraft, including aerial drones, although it's unclear whether Ford has used it to launch unmanned aircraft.

Together, Ford and counterpart aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln carry about 150 aircraft, according to analysts. Those range from F/A-18 Super Hornets to EA-18G Growler airborne electronic attack planes and E-2 Advanced Hawkeye airborne control and command aircraft.

There also is a Marine Corps F-35C Lightning II fighter jet squadron aboard Lincoln, which is now in the Arabian Sea as part of Operation Epic Fury.

The U.S.-Israeli campaign launched Saturday killed Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and other top Iranian officials.

Ford's flight deck design in conjunction with EMALS and an advanced arresting gear system used to stop aircraft "have contributed to an increased sortie generation rate compared to that of a Nimitz-class carrier," the Navy said in a statement Thursday.

Electromagnetic motors are used in the ship's 11 advanced weapons elevators that can carry up to 24,000 pounds of ordnance at 150 feet per minute, according to the Navy.

Other capabilities include six in-deck fuel positions that allow quick aircraft refueling without the need to drag hoses across the flight deck.

Lifestyle improvements such as private bathrooms in officers' state rooms and higher-output air conditioning make sailors more comfortable.

The Navy acknowledged that Ford's current deployment would require "sacrifice" from sailors who already have en-

dured extended time away from their families.

Service officials also gave assurances that the ship's sewage and water purification systems were running within normal parameters and that problems were quickly fixed.

Efforts to improve morale and ensure that sailors could stay connected to family included expanded internet availability, the Navy said.

"Our sailors understand the importance of their service," Adm. Daryl Caudle, chief of naval operations, said in the statement. "They are away from home longer than planned because the nation needs them forward and ready. I want them to take great pride in that calling."

After a stop at Naval Support Activity Souda Bay on the Greek island of Crete for resupply and a chance for the crew to rest, Ford is on station in the Eastern Mediterranean in support of Operation Epic Fury.

Hegseth says Iran fight won't be another 'endless war'

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth spoke for the first time Monday about the U.S. strikes against Iran on Saturday, quickly addressing concerns that America could be drawn into another "endless war" in the Middle East.

"This is not Iraq," the secretary said early in the briefing conducted with Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "This is not endless. I was there ... our generation knows better, and so does this president. Don't listen to the outside noise."

Hegseth began his remarks

by stating the U.S. case for taking action.

"For 47 long years, the expansionist and Islamist regime in Tehran has waged a savage, one-sided war against America," Hegseth said. "They didn't always declare it openly, except for constant chants of death to America ..."

"We didn't start this war, but under President (Donald) Trump we are finishing it."

Hegseth said Iran was building powerful missiles and drones to create a conventional shield for their "nuclear blackmail ambitions."

The attacks, launched jointly with Israel, killed Iranian Su-

preme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"This is not a so-called regime change war, but the regime sure did change," Hegseth said. "And the world is better off for it."

U.S. Central Command received a final order from Trump at 8 p.m. EST on Friday, saying Operation Epic Fury was approved.

"No aborts. Good luck," Caine said.

Caine said CENTCOM will receive additional forces Monday. The chairman did not get into specifics but said more tactical aviation is "flowing into the theater" and believes they are where they want to be in terms of

total combat capability.

The chairman said that, similar to a strike in June that dropped massive bunker-buster bombs on Iranian nuclear facilities, Epic Fury also utilized B-2 stealth bombers, which made a 37-hour round trip.

"The military objectives that CENTCOM and the Joint Force have been tasked with will take some time to achieve, and in some cases, will be difficult," Caine said.

Hegseth said there currently were no boots on the ground in Iran but did not rule anything out: "We're not going to go into the exercise of what we will or will not do."

20 systems hit over 1K targets in Iran

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

American forces have used more than 20 types of aircraft, ships, missiles and other weapons systems to hit more than 1,000 targets in the joint U.S.-Israeli attack on Iran, U.S. Central Command said.

“Operation Epic Fury involves the largest regional concentration of American military firepower in a generation,” the command said in a statement.

The Israel Defense Forces said Sunday that it had dropped more than 1,200 munitions across Iran during the attacks that killed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country’s supreme leader, and other top political and defense officials.

The U.S. has used more than 20 different systems, including Air Force B-2 Spirit stealth bombers, F-22 Raptor and F-35 Lightning II jets, EA-18G Growler electronic warfare planes, MQ-9 Reaper un-

manned missile-launching drones and the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS).

“And special capabilities that can’t be listed,” the command said in a statement.

Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of CENTCOM, said all branches of the U.S. armed forces — Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, Space Force and Coast Guard — were involved in the attack on Iran and defense of U.S. installations and allies.

Iran has retaliated against U.S. bases and Israel by firing a mix of medium-range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones — often in coordinated waves, military and media sources said Sunday.

CENTCOM has released video and photos of the destroyer USS Thomas Hudner firing Tomahawk cruise missiles at Iranian targets and the USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. firing a

volley of Standard Missiles, which are used to knock down enemy aircraft, missiles and drones.

“If you are firing a Standard missile, you are firing at a moving target — an aircraft, missile, cruise missile or drone,” said Michael Fabey, an analyst in the Washington bureau of Janes USA, a defense information company.

Fabey said the U.S. has learned to fight missiles and drones built by Iran during previous fights with Iran and its proxies.

The fight with Houthi-backed rebels in the Red Sea last year “was the most kinetic warfare the U.S. has fought since World War II,” he said.

The Aegis Combat System on U.S. destroyers was designed to counter missiles with an arcing trajectory toward targets. The Houthis also used drones, which can attack in circling or

curving patterns.

“The Navy learned a lot from the experience in the Red Sea and have certainly incorporated those lessons in its countermeasures,” Fabey said. “I don’t think they are facing anything this weekend they haven’t seen before from the Iranians.”

Fabey said the U.S. Navy’s EA-18G Growlers are exceptionally efficient at knocking out missile and air defense systems in the early days of conflict with Iran.

“But Iran has a large missile force, and I wouldn’t expect them to use everything they have immediately,” Fabey said. “So, this could go on for a while.”

Most of the missiles and drones fired by Iran have been knocked down by U.S., Israeli and Gulf State anti-missile systems, though dozens of others have made it through to strike targets.

Unpredictable drones add realism to Cobra Gold drill

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

HAT YAO, Thailand — Small-arms fire cracked across the shoreline Saturday as U.S. Marines and their Thai and South Korean counterparts braced for a simulated counterattack, defending a stretch of sand they had seized just days before during the opening phase of Cobra Gold, the annual multinational exercise in Thailand.

This time, the threat was not only from the sea.

As marines took up positions, unmanned aerial and surface drones joined the assault, skimming the water and buzzing overhead.

“Trigger Line Red, Trigger Line Red,” U.S. Marine 1st Lt.

Karl Specht, a company commander assigned to Task Force Ashland, called into his radio, signaling the start of simulated fire.

The counter-landing drill used no live ammunition — only blanks — but its targets were substantial. Instead of static markers, marines tracked a remote-controlled drone boat, the Hammerhead USV-T, capable of shifting speed and direction, as well as aerial drones, including the MQM-170 Outlaw and a swarm of smaller unmanned aircraft.

The scenario followed a much larger amphibious landing on the same beach Thursday. Though small in scale, the defensive phase offered a different kind of challenge, said

Master Sgt. Matthew Hall of Task Force Ashland, about 200 Marines and sailors from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

The Thai beach was “new terrain” for the Camp Pendleton, Calif.-based Marines, he said by phone Sunday. “But just by the proficiency of our Marines and our partners, they were able to be flexible and adjust as marines do and were able to develop a very capable defense.”

Cobra Gold has long included beach defense drills, but the presence of drones this year increased the exercise’s realism. The unmanned vessels did not simply approach in straight lines; they maneuvered unpredictably, forcing marines to

reassess how and when to engage.

“[The drones] were able to move laterally with increased and decreased speed,” Hall said. “It made the marines think more critically on how they would engage those and when they should fire specific trigger lines — which weapons systems would be best employed against these targets.”

For Hall, the drill’s most lasting takeaway was not technological, but human.

“Being able to integrate with [the Thai and South Korean marines] was probably the greatest lesson,” he said. “Because in the end, we’re all here for the same thing ... we’re here to ensure a safe and secure, stable Indo-Pacific.”

ICE inflated number of 'criminals' detained

The Minnesota Star Tribune

MINNEAPOLIS — Federal immigration officials inflated the number of dangerous criminals they claimed to have taken off the streets during Operation Metro Surge, a Minnesota Star Tribune analysis found. In some instances, they also made inaccurate claims about the criminal backgrounds of those on the list.

At the height of the surge, on Jan. 19, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem accused Gov. Tim Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey of failing to protect Minnesotans from immigrants in the country illegally who were “killing Americans, hurting children and reigning terror.”

Noem said immigration

agents in the Twin Cities were arresting “vicious murderers, rapists, child pedophiles, and incredibly dangerous individuals.” She called the surge “A huge victory for public safety.”

Yet about half of the people Immigration and Customs Enforcement took credit for detaining in Minnesota, who are featured on a Trump administration website titled “worst of the worst,” were already in federal, state or county custody or had recently been released.

Of the remainder, just over half were accused or convicted of a violent crime, the analysis found. The most common charges the rest faced were drug crimes, theft and illegal re-entry into the country, a felony. Only a few had outstanding war-

rants and were actively wanted.

To justify sending thousands of agents to Minnesota, officials at the Department of Homeland Security have repeatedly pointed to their “worst of the worst” website, which has listed more than 500 arrests in the state.

That represents a fraction of the 11,000 people who federal immigration officials claim were detained in Minnesota since the start of President Donald Trump’s second term.

The Minnesota Star Tribune reviewed the criminal histories of nearly every immigrant detained in Minnesota who has been showcased on the DHS website and those identified in news releases. In several instances, the federal government listed inaccurate criminal histo-

ries, duplicated entries and people already freed.

More than a third of those on the worst of the worst site for Minnesota were released from federal, state or county custody before the surge started in December.

“Everyone on this website was arrested under President Trump,” a DHS spokesperson said. “We never claimed everyone on the website or every arrest in Operation Metro Surge was made at large in the community.”

Federal officials recently acknowledged to CNN their website was riddled with errors and inaccuracies. They say “a minor glitch was promptly resolved,” but the Star Tribune found significant errors remain.

FBI investigates deadly Texas bar shooting as possible terrorist act

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — A gunman wearing clothes with an Iranian flag design and the words “Property of Allah” killed two people and wounded 14 early Sunday at a Texas bar, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press. The FBI is investigating the shooting as a potential act of terrorism.

Police in Austin shot and killed the gunman, who used both a pistol and a rifle to carry out the attack, police said.

The shooting happened outside Buford’s Backyard Beer Garden just before 2 a.m. along Sixth Street, a nightlife destination filled with bars and clubs only a few miles from the University of Texas at Austin.

The suspect drove past the bar several times before stopping and shooting from the window of his SUV at people on a patio and in front of the bar, ac-

cording to Austin Police Chief Lisa Davis.

He then parked, got out with a rifle and began shooting at people walking along the street before officers rushed to the intersection and shot him, Davis said.

Three of the injured were in critical condition Sunday morning, she said.

The gunman was identified as 53-year-old Ndiaga Diagne, the Department of Homeland Security said in a statement.

Authorities haven’t provided a clear motive for the attacks but have found “indicators” on the gunman and in his vehicle leading them to look into the possibility of terrorism, said Alex Doran, the acting agent in charge of the FBI’s San Antonio office.

“It’s still too early to make a determination on that,” Doran said.

Rev. Jackson returns home to SC to lie in state

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — After a long career of fighting for civil rights, the Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. is visiting his home for one last time to lie in state at the South Carolina Capitol on Monday.

The final full honors from the state where he was born is a far cry from his childhood in segregated Greenville, where in 1960 he couldn’t go inside the local library’s much better funded whites-only branch to check out a book he needed.

Jackson led seven Black high school students into that segregated branch, where they sat down and read books and magazines until they were arrested. The branches closed, then quietly reopened for all.

With that action, Jackson launched his career — and crusade — fighting for equality for all. He would catch the attention of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and join the voting rights march King led from Selma to

Montgomery, Ala.

Jackson died Feb. 17 at age 84 after battling a rare neurological disorder that affected his mobility and ability to speak in his later years.

The South Carolina services are part of two weeks of events. It began with Jackson’s body lying in repose and the public invited last week to his Rainbow PUSH Coalition’s Chicago headquarters.

After South Carolina, Jackson will be returned to Chicago for a large celebration of life gathering at a megachurch and the final homegoing services at the headquarters of Rainbow PUSH. Plans for a service in Washington, D.C., to honor him have been postponed until a later date.

Jackson is just the second Black man to lie in state at the South Carolina Capitol. State Sen. Clementa Pinckney was honored in 2015 after he was shot and killed in the Charleston church shooting.

Macron says France to increase nukes

Associated Press

L'ILE LONGUE, France — French President Emmanuel Macron announced Monday that France will increase its nuclear arsenal and for the first time allow the temporary deployment of its nuclear-armed aircraft to allied countries, in a new strategy aimed at strengthening Europe's independence.

Macron made the announcements during a speech outlining his country's nuclear strategy at a military base at L'Ile Longue in northwestern France that hosts the country's ballistic mis-

sile submarines.

"To be free, one needs to be feared," Macron said.

Macron said the new posture could "provide for the temporary deployment of elements of our strategic air forces to allied countries," but said there would be no sharing of decision-making with any other nation regarding the use of the nuclear weapons.

Talks about such arrangements have started with Britain, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Sweden and Denmark, Macron said.

Macron's long-planned speech, scheduled before the most recent outbreak of hostilities in Iran, was aimed at spelling out how French nuclear weapons fit into Europe's security amid concerns raised on the Continent by recurring tensions with President Donald Trump and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

France also will allow partners to participate in deterrence exercises and allow allies' non-nuclear forces to participate in France's nuclear activities, said Macron, who is the

commander in chief of the armed forces under the French constitution.

European partners welcomed the new strategy of France, which has been the only nuclear power in the European Union since Britain's exit from the bloc in 2020.

Macron announced that France will increase its number of nuclear warheads from the current level of below 300, but did not give a figure for the increase. It will be the first time France increases its nuclear arsenal since at least 1992.

Deadly raid launched on a village in South Sudan

Associated Press

JUBA, South Sudan — At least 169 people were killed after insurgents raided a village in a remote area of South Sudan, a local official said Monday.

It's the latest bout of sporadic violence that has left the country teetering on the verge of full-blown civil war.

The victims, including 90 civilians, were attacked on Sunday in Abiemnom county, said James Monyluak, information minister for the administrative area of Ruweng.

He said women and children were among the dead, in addition to dozens of combatants.

The U.N. Mission in South Sudan, known as UNMISS, said in a statement that 1,000 people sought shelter at its base after the attack.

"Such violence places civilians at grave risk and must stop immediately," Anita Kiki Gbeho, a UNMISS official, said in a statement. "I urge all involved to cease hostilities without delay and engage in constructive dialogue to address their grievances."

"Our peacekeepers will continue to do everything within their capabilities to protect ci-

vilians seeking refuge at our base," she added.

The UNMISS statement cited 23 wounded in the attack in Ruweng, as well as concern over "reports indicating that dozens of civilians and some local officials have lost their lives."

The killings are part of an escalating wave of violence gripping South Sudan as government forces loyal to President Salva Kiir battle armed men who are believed to be loyal to opposition leader Riek Machar.

The armed youths who carried out the latest attack are believed to have ties with Machar's group, known as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In-Opposition.

Machar was Kiir's deputy until September, when he was removed after he faced criminal charges. He is under house arrest in Juba, the South Sudan capital, as his trial progresses.

The U.S. is urging talks between Kiir and Machar.

Ongoing violence threatens a fragile peace reached in 2018 after a five-year civil war. After that agreement, Machar was named South Sudan's first vice president in a government of national unity.

Latest Russia-Ukraine talks may change venue

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — U.S.-brokered talks between Russia and Ukraine expected later this week may take place in Switzerland or Turkey if a planned meeting in Abu Dhabi is not possible due to the war in the Middle East, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Monday.

He also noted that Western countries have given no indication so far that their delivery to Kyiv of vital air defense missiles could be disrupted by commitments to Middle East defense.

U.S.-led diplomatic efforts to end the war that began with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 are continuing. But the American and Israeli attacks on Iran, and the response of Iran and Iranian-backed militias firing missiles at Israel and Arab states, may divert international attention from the 4-year-old conflict in Europe.

"Due to hostilities, as of today we cannot confirm (the talks) will take place in Abu Dhabi," Zelenskyy told reporters in a WhatsApp chat. He said last week that the United Arab Emirates capital would be this week's venue.

Previous Russia-Ukraine

talks have been held in Abu Dhabi, Istanbul and Geneva. They have not produced a breakthrough on key issues.

Zelenskyy said there has been no immediate change in American and European supplies of air defense weapons, especially American-made Patriot systems, to Ukraine. However, he noted that the volume of deliveries could fall if the Middle East attacks continue.

Russia's effort to knock out Ukraine's power grid over the winter failed, Zelenskyy said, though it caused much damage. Russian aerial attacks are now turning to other infrastructure, including the water supply, he added.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Sunday that the United Kingdom would bring experts from Ukraine to help Persian Gulf countries shoot down Iranian drones. Ukraine has built expertise in drone operations during the war, as Russia launches daily bombardments with Shahed drones developed in Iran. But Zelenskyy said he had not received any direct requests either from the United Kingdom or other countries about that possibility.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bill brings slavery exhibits back to President's House

PA PHILADELPHIA — Rep. Brendan Boyle, D-Pa., announced legislation Friday that would permanently restore all exhibits to the President's House site that were removed by the Trump administration in January.

The proposed Protecting American History Act comes as the future of the President's House, which memorializes the nine people George Washington enslaved in Philadelphia, remains in limbo as a legal battle between the City of Philadelphia and the federal government continues to play out.

The National Park Service removed educational panels from the site in January under President Donald Trump's executive order forbidding displays at national parks that "inappropriately disparage Americans past or living."

Some of that material was restored last month after a judge ruled in favor of the city, but those efforts were paused by a federal appeals judge while considering the Trump administration's motion for stay.

Millionaire charged with lifelong tax evasion

MN MINNEAPOLIS — The owner of a Minnesota construction company who has earned millions of dollars in recent years from his business and gambling success has allegedly avoided paying taxes for much of his life.

Richard Ray Hoffman, 48, of St. Louis Park, faces 12 felony counts in Hennepin County District Court alleging he failed to

file and pay his taxes in Minnesota from 2019-2025.

The charges allege that from 2019-2024, Hoffman earned \$5.2 million in gross income and owes \$356,910 in state income tax for those years. But the charges also allege that Hoffman "has only ever filed one individual income tax return" in 2005 for his 2004 taxes.

Sheriff's Office rescues more than 100 cats

MD BALTIMORE — Wicomico County Sheriff's Office is leading a large-scale animal cruelty investigation in Delmar after authorities seized more than 100 cats from a residential property on Wednesday morning.

Deputies served a search and seizure warrant around 7 a.m., working through snow-covered conditions as part of what officials described as a complex operation.

Responders reported finding cats outdoors in frigid temperatures, some huddled together in the snow, while others were discovered inside unsanitary sheds and outbuildings. Several deceased cats and skeletal remains were also found on the property, authorities said.

The rescued cats are being transported to a secure, undisclosed location where they will receive veterinary treatment and ongoing care. The investigation remains active.

Detainee being held dies while in ICE detention

FL MIAMI — A 27-year-old man from Guatemala died in South Florida in the custody of U.S. Immigration

and Customs Enforcement last month, federal authorities said.

Jairo Garcia-Hernandez "collapsed unexpectedly" and died on Feb. 16 at Larkin Community Hospital in South Florida, ICE said in a news release.

The cause of death is under investigation, said ICE, describing Garcia-Hernandez as an "immunocompromised" man with a "long history of severe medical complications."

The Trump administration has defended its medical care for detainees. The chief medical officer for the Department of Homeland Security said in a recent statement that "the medical care in ICE detention is the best care they have received in their entire lives."

Federal authorities maintain that people receive medical, dental and mental screenings shortly after being taken into custody as required under ICE detention policies.

State: Feds to reimburse for immigration measures

FL MIAMI — Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier on Friday defended the state's front-loaded spending on immigration enforcement, saying he expects the Trump administration to fully reimburse Florida despite ongoing legal fights and the absence of a formal repayment commitment.

The attorney general's remarks come just days after Florida filed a court document in related litigation outlining the state's position that it was acting under federal delegation and expects to be repaid for costs associated with detention facilities and other enforcement ef-

forts. The filing underscored that reimbursement remains unresolved as the case moves through the courts.

The attorney general said he has "no reason to believe" that Washington will fail to cover the costs, even as the dispute continues to bounce between trial and appellate courts.

Man 'doesn't remember' boot blaze incident

NY NEW YORK — One of the two social media trolls accused of trying to set a Black woman's boot on fire during a clash on a Manhattan street filled with racist insults claimed Friday he had no memory of the crime — even though he recorded the entire thing.

"I don't remember the incident," Michael Santiago, 31, told the Daily News in Manhattan Criminal Court after he was arraigned on a slew of hate crime charges, including attempted assault, criminal mischief and menacing. "I'm not denying I was there, but I don't remember the incident."

Santiago is accused of filming his friend Michael James torch a 54-year-old woman's furry boot during a hate-fueled tirade in Chelsea on Feb. 19, then posting the video online.

Prosecutors said that Santiago recorded James, 33, approaching and trying to kiss the victim. When she rebuffed him, he launched into a racist rant, prosecutors said.

At one point, James asks to kiss the victim's boots. She agrees, but when he kneels down, he sets one of her boots on fire with a handheld blowtorch.

— From wire reports

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Reddick makes history, wins first 3 races

Associated Press

Tyler Reddick's latest win drove him straight into the NASCAR record books.

Reddick held off hard-charging Shane van Gisbergen over the final 20 laps at the Circuit of the Americas on Sunday to become the first Cup Series driver to win the first three races of the season.

Driving a Toyota co-owned by Michael Jordan, Reddick won the season-opening Daytona 500 and a week later at Atlanta, then won from the pole in the first road course race of the year.

Jordan, the basketball Hall of Famer and six-time NBA champion, was with Reddick's 23XI pit crew exchanging high fives as Reddick crossed the finish line.

"It's one race, but it was so important," Reddick said. "It's so fitting to get three in a row and make history."

History made for a team and ownership group that has been making a lot of it.

They took on NASCAR with a federal antitrust lawsuit. The settlement in December was considered a major legal victory that secured a permanent franchise-style model and ensured the team would remain in business for the long-term.

They've been unbeatable on the race track ever since.

He credited co-owner Denny Hamlin, who is also a driver for Joe Gibbs Racing,

with being the "mastermind" behind its racing success.

"I just put up the money," Jordan said. "Denny's done an incredible job building this team."

Jordan also said he'll be at the next race in Phoenix to see if Reddick can extend the winning streak that has built a commanding 70-point lead in the drivers' championship.

Van Gisbergen, who won five of six road course races in 2025, lost his bid for a record-tying sixth consecutive road win. The only road course race the Trackhouse driver didn't win last season was in Austin.

Reddick was just too good all weekend in pursuit of history. His 11th career victory was also his second at COTA, a track built for Formula 1, and the first time he's had multiple victories at a track. He won at COTA in 2023.

It was far from easy, even if Reddick looked like he was in complete control. Van Gisbergen was on his bumper for several laps in the final stage but never found the pace to pass before falling farther and farther behind over the final six laps.

Rough day for Zilisch

Trackhouse Cup Series rookie Connor Zilisch came into the weekend with the expectation that he might be the one to end van Gisbergen's dominance on road courses.

But Zilisch's weekend began with a surprisingly poor qualifying position of 25th and got worse Sunday when he got spun on the restart for stage two.

Zilisch fought back into contention for the win in the final stage, but his race effectively ended when he was spun again in a restart out of a caution with 16 laps to go. He finished 14th.

Bowman had to bail out

Hendrick Motorsports driver Alex Bowman had to get out of his car with about 20 laps to go after complaining about being sick.

He was replaced by Myatt Snider, who had been working as a pit spotter for the Fox broadcast. Snider had to scramble to put on his race suit and get in the car.

Keselowski finishes race

Brad Keselowski had a reserve driver, Joey Hand, on hand to take over in case his recently broken leg hurt too much.

Keselowski didn't need the reserve and was able to finish the race in 20th place.

The RFK Racing driver has been able to race in all three events this season despite breaking his right leg in December. The road course in Austin was of particular concern because of the physical strain through the left and right turns.

Schumacher crashes out; Palou dominates season opener

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — It was a rough fresh start for two-time IndyCar champion Will Power in his first race with a new team and same for Mick Schumacher in his series debut.

Schumacher didn't even complete a lap Sunday in the season-opening IndyCar race on the downtown streets of St. Petersburg, where he could not escape a crash in the opening minutes when Sting Ray Robb and Santino Ferruci collided.

The son of seven-time Formula 1 champion Michael Schumacher had nowhere to go as he drove his Honda for Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing into turn 4 and had two crashed cars directly in front of him. Robb received a 30-second penalty for avoidable contact

and continued the race, while Ferruci and Schumacher got a car ride to the medical center.

Alex Palou, winner of the past three IndyCar championships and three of the past four, opened the season back on top of the podium and in a race-record fashion.

The Spaniard won St. Petersburg for the second consecutive year by a record 12.4948 seconds, the largest winning margin in race history.

Power, on his 45th birthday, had a short debut race for Andretti Global when he brushed the wall on the 21st lap.

He was replaced in the Penske lineup by David Malukas, who at 24 years old made his team debut for the most storied organization in the series.

Power spent a long time on his

timing stand speaking with Ron Ruzewski, the team principal at Andretti, before putting on his helmet and safety gear and walking down pit road back to his garage. Andretti crew members repaired the car and he was able to return to the race 31 laps behind the leaders.

Schumacher — and Ferruci — were not as fortunate as their days ended with Robb's aggressive, early contact.

Schumacher said his debut weekend wasn't a wash because he was still able to learn over three days on the track. Schumacher indicated he won't dwell on the results and is already mentally preparing for next Saturday's oval debut at Phoenix Raceway.

He made the move away from

F1 after three seasons without a ride. He drove for Haas in F1 and became a Mercedes reserve driver after losing that seat at the end of 2022.

He hasn't made an F1 start since 2022 and instead competed in the World Endurance Championship. It led the 26-year-old German to give North American open wheel racing a try this season.

Palou won this race a year ago to open the most dominant season in decades, the first of eight victories that included the Indianapolis 500 and a third consecutive IndyCar title. The win comes two days after team owner Chip Ganassi and Palou said they have settled the breach of contract lawsuit Palou fought with McLaren Racing the past two-plus years.

Bulls rout Bucks to snap 11-game slide

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Josh Giddey had 20 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists for his eighth triple-double this season, and the Chicago Bulls used a 27-0 run to beat the Milwaukee Bucks 120-97 on Sunday and stop an 11-game losing streak.

Giddey had his 15th triple-double as a member of the Bulls, tying Scottie Pippen for second on the franchise list.

Collin Sexton added 22 points, and Matas Buzelis had 20, helping Chicago come out on top after matching the third-worst skid in franchise history. The Bulls were 0-11 in February and had not won since Jan. 31 at Miami.

Bobby Portis scored 18 points for the Bucks. Milwaukee missed 17 straight shots down the stretch in its second straight blowout loss.

Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo missed his 15th consecutive game because of a strained right calf. The two-time MVP has not played since Jan. 23.

Chicago trailed by 16 in the second quarter following a 17-0 run by Milwaukee and was down 66-51 at halftime. It was 89-81 late in the third when Tre Jones made two free throws for the Bulls to start the decisive rally.

Buzelis hit a tying floater to start the fourth and Collin Sexton gave Chicago a 91-89 lead with a pull-up jumper just under a minute into the quarter.

Lakers 128, Kings 104: Luka Doncic had 28 points and nine assists, LeBron James added 24 points and host Los Angeles finished a back-to-back set with a victory over Sacramento.

Doncic made four 3-pointers as the NBA's leading scorer played only the first three quarters, while James, Marcus Smart and Luke Kennard hit three 3s apiece. The Lakers made 17 of their first 33 3-point attempts while the starters

were still playing, flirting with the franchise record for 3-point shooting percentage before finishing 18 of 39.

The 41-year-old James had a pair of rim-shaking dunks that he celebrated with zeal during a comfortable win for LA, which never trailed again after the Kings scored the game's opening basket.

Knicks 114, Spurs 89: Mikal Bridges had 25 points, Jalen Brunson scored 24 and host New York snapped San Antonio's 11-game winning streak with a victory.

After going unbeaten in February, the Spurs were shut down to open March, never recovering from the Knicks' 26-2 run in the first half and losing for the first time since Jan. 31 in Charlotte.

Victor Wembanyama bounced back from two quiet offensive games with 25 points, 13 rebounds and four blocks, but a San Antonio team that became the first in NBA history to go unbeaten and score at least 110 points in every game while playing at least 10 in a month fell flat after a fast start.

Cavaliers 106, Nets 102: James Harden scored 22 points in his return to the lineup with a broken thumb and visiting Cleveland snapped a two-game skid with a victory over Brooklyn.

Jarrett Allen scored 20 points and Evan Mobley added 16 points and 13 rebounds as the Cavaliers improved to 12-1 in their last 13 games against the Nets.

Michael Porter Jr. scored 26 points on 10-for-17 shooting, and Danny Wolf added 23 points and nine rebounds for Brooklyn, which lost its eighth straight game and for the 11th time in 13 games. The Nets slipped to 15-45 overall.

Timberwolves 117, Nuggets 108: Anthony Edwards scored 21 points, Bones Hyland had 15 of his 18 points in the first half against his former team, and

visiting Minnesota moved a game ahead of Denver in the Western Conference with a win over the Nuggets.

The Timberwolves swept their three-game trip to improve to 38-23 and jump into fourth in the West, beating Denver for the first time in four games this season.

Nikola Jokic finished with 35 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists but couldn't carry the Nuggets over their Northwest Division rivals. Jamal Murray had 25 points on 9-of-22 shooting, including 4 of 6 from 3-point range.

Grizzlies 125, Pacers 106: Taylor Hendricks scored 19 points, Jaylen Wells had 18 and visiting Memphis beat Indiana.

Jarace Walker led the Pacers with 21 points, and Micah Potter had 18.

The Grizzlies were without guard Ja Morant for the 17th consecutive game because of a left elbow injury. Rookie Cedric Coward sat out with a knee injury.

Hawks 135, Trail Blazers 101: Onyeka Okongwu scored 25 points, CJ McCollum added 19 and host Atlanta rode a huge first quarter to an easy win over Portland.

The Hawks have won four straight games by an average of 26.5 points and moved into ninth place in the Eastern Conference.

Kuminga played his third game for Atlanta since being traded by Golden State. He is averaging 21.3 points and 7.7 rebounds with the Hawks after barely playing for the Warriors. He soared for a windmill dunk on a breakaway late in the fourth quarter that ignited the home crowd.

Pistons 106, Magic 92: Cade Cunningham had 29 points and 11 assists, Tobias Harris scored 23 points and NBA-leading Detroit beat Orlando for its sixth straight road victory.

The Pistons improved to 45-

14, winning for the eighth time in nine games. They have won 10 of 11 on the road and are 21-7 overall away from home.

Jalen Duren added 16 points and 10 rebounds for Detroit.

Celtics 114, 76ers 98: Neemias Queta scored a career-high 27 points and added 17 rebounds to help host Boston recover from a slow start and rally to beat Philadelphia.

Jaylen Brown added 27 points, eight rebounds and eight assists, and Derrick White finished with 21 points and eight assists as the Celtics became the fourth team to reach 40 victories. They have won six of seven.

Tyrese Maxey led the 76ers with 33 points and six assists. VJ Edgecombe added 23 points as Philadelphia's three-game win streak was snapped.

Thunder 100, Mavericks 87: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 30 points, Chet Holmgren had 19 points and nine rebounds, and visiting Oklahoma City beat Dallas.

Gilgeous-Alexander has scored at least 20 points in 59 consecutive road games, the longest streak in NBA history. The reigning NBA MVP played his second game after missing nine because of an abdominal strain.

The defending champion Thunder are 47-15, a half-game behind Detroit for the NBA lead. They have a three-game lead in West over second-place San Antonio.

Clippers 137, Pelicans 117: Kawhi Leonard scored 23 points and host Los Angeles beat New Orleans to end a three-game losing streak.

Tenth in the Western Conference, the Clippers improved to 28-31. The Pelicans are 13th in the West at 19-43.

LA never trailed. The Clippers led 43-32 after a quarter and had a 76-70 advantage at the half. It was 107-94 after three, and they stretched the margin to 26 in the fourth.

Surging Penguins rout Golden Knights

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Bryan Rust, Ben Kindel and Justin Brazeau each had a goal and an assist, helping the Pittsburgh Penguins beat the Vegas Golden Knights 5-0 on Sunday.

Rickard Rakell and Egor Chinnakhov also scored as Pittsburgh improved to 10-1-3 in its last 14 games. Erik Karlsson had two assists, and Arturs Silovs made 22 saves in his first shutout since opening night Oct. 7 at the New York Rangers.

Vegas goaltender Adin Hill stopped 17 shots. The Golden Knights dropped to 4-7-2 in their last 13 games.

Vegas captain Mark Stone left late in the first period with an undisclosed injury. Penguins defenseman Kris Letang gave Stone a seemingly harmless shove to the left arm with his stick in the neutral zone, though it may have caught him in the gap between his elbow and shoulder pads. Stone grimaced in pain, went down to one knee and skated off.

Kindel, a first-round pick in the 2025 draft who turns 19 on April 19, scored his 15th goal with 5:04 left in the first.

Pittsburgh grabbed control with three more goals in the second. Rust and Rakell each scored on the power play.

Brazeau made it 5-0 with 5:01 left in the third. It was his 16th on the season, extending his career high.

Blues 3, Wild 1: Pavel Buchnevich scored late in the third period and St. Louis snapped a 10-game road losing streak by beating Minnesota.

Kirill Kaprizov scored to tie Marian Gaborik for the most goals in Wild franchise history with 218. Filip Gustavsson made 21 saves, but Minnesota lost its second straight after six straight wins. The Wild lost 5-2 Friday in Utah.

It was the first time in 42 games this season that Minnesota lost when allowing three or fewer goals in regulation.

With the game tied at 1, Buchnevich scored with 3:39 remaining. He took a backhand pass from Jimmy Snuggerud and beat Gustavsson with a wrist shot from near the right dot, extending his scoring streak to five games.

Ducks 3, Flames 2 (SO): Cutter Gauthier scored twice in

regulation, Leo Carlsson and Mason McTavish both converted in the shootout, and host Anaheim beat Calgary.

Lukas Dostal made 32 saves and denied Matvei Gridin on the final shot of the tiebreaker to seal the Ducks' eighth straight win at home. Anaheim improved to 14-3 in games that have gone to overtime.

McTavish slid the puck through Devin Cooley's legs for the shootout winner.

Joel Farabee and Yegor Sharangovich scored for the Flames in regulation, and Cooley stopped 34 shots.

Sharks 2, Jets 1 (OT): Michael Misa scored 1:40 into overtime, and host San Jose topped Winnipeg for its second straight win.

Misa scored for the second straight game when he drove down the slot before beating Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck. It was the fourth goal of the season for the No. 2 overall pick in last year's NHL draft.

Morgan Barron scored for Winnipeg, and Hellebuyck finished with 31 saves. The Jets lost for fourth time in five games.

Blackhawks 4, Mammoth 0: Teuvo Teravainen scored twice, Arvid Soderblom made 22 saves for his first NHL shutout and visiting Chicago beat Utah to end a three-game losing streak.

Teravainen opened the scoring on a power play with 55 seconds left in the first period. He controlled the puck off a blocked shot and snapped it around Vejmelka's side.

Karel Vejmelka stopped 24 shots for the Mammoth. Utah was shut out for the first time at home this season and the fifth time overall.

Islanders 5, Panthers 4: Anders Lee scored the go-ahead goal in the final minute, rookie Matthew Schaefer had two more goals and an assist and host New York edged Florida.

The 18-year-old Schaeffer has 20 goals, three behind Hall of Famer Brian Leetch for the most by a rookie defenseman in NHL history.

Sergei Bobrovsky made 21 saves for the two-time defending Stanley Cup champion Panthers, who are eight points out of a wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference.

Mobley, Ohio State beat No. 8 Purdue to renew playoff run

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — John Mobley Jr. scored 21 points to lead Ohio State to an 82-74 win over No. 8 Purdue on Sunday.

A crowd that included a loud contingent of Boilermakers fans watched the Buckeyes revive their fading NCAA Tournament hopes and beat Purdue for the third time in a row.

The Boilermakers (22-7, 12-6 Big Ten) led by as many as seven in the first half, but Ohio State (18-11, 10-8) used a 14-3 run to open up a 23-19 lead on Amare Bynum's 3-pointer with 6:44 to go.

The Buckeyes led by five at

the half despite Purdue making 8 of 14 from 3-point range, a deficit Ohio State made up at the free-throw line. The Buckeyes made 8 of 11 from the charity stripe while Purdue was 1-for-2.

Ohio State took a 16-point lead on a pair of free throws by Devin Royal with 7:41 to go in the second half.

The Boilermakers went on a 12-2 run to get within six, but Bynum hit a 3-pointer and Royal added a put-back slam to stop the bleeding and put the Buckeyes back up 11.

Thornton finished with 20 points while Bynum added 14 points and Royal finished with 12.

No. 13 Michigan State 77, Indiana 64: Jaxon Kohler scored a season-high 21 points and Jeremy Fears Jr. added 21 points and nine assists to lead the visiting Spartans past the Hoosiers.

Kur Tang finished with a career-high 18 points, making 6 of 8 from 3-point range — nearly half of Michigan State's 13 3s. Kohler also grabbed 13 rebounds, his 12th double-double of the season as the Spartans (24-5, 14-4 Big Ten) won their fourth straight.

Michigan State never trailed in winning at Assembly Hall for just the second time in six trips to complete a road sweep this

week. The Spartans also won at No. 8 Purdue 76-74 on Thursday. It was coach Tom Izzo's first trip to Bloomington since he broke the league record for conference wins in February 2025, breaking the mark held by former Indiana coach Bob Knight.

Lamar Wilkerson scored 19 of his game-high 29 points in the second half, but it wasn't enough to prevent the Hoosiers (17-12, 8-10) from a fourth consecutive loss. Tucker DeVries finished with 20 points and six rebounds, while Sam Alexis added eight points in a game Indiana's bench players were shut out.