

Hegseth: US and Israel in control of fight

By **MATTHEW ADAMS**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the United States and Israel are firmly in control of the fight against Iran as a barrage of strikes and counterstrikes continued for a fifth day Wednesday.

“I stand before you today with one unmistakable message about Operation Epic Fury — America is winning decisively, devastatingly and without mercy,” Hegseth said as part of his more than 10-minute opening statement during a press conference with Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. “More bombers and fighters are arriving today. We can sustain this fight easily for as long as we need.”

Hegseth said the U.S. and Israel will control Iranian airspace in less than a week.

“They are toast, and they know it. Or, at least soon enough, they will know it,” Hegseth said.

Hegseth’s comments came four days after the U.S. and Israel launched extensive strikes against Iran and following months of stalled negotiations over the country’s nuclear pro-

gram. President Donald Trump later that night announced the killing of Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, Iran’s supreme leader. In addition to the strikes on Iran, Israel has attacked the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon.

Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Central Command, said Tuesday in a video posted on X that the U.S. is sinking the “entire” Iranian navy, including 17 ships so far. Caine said the U.S. has destroyed more than 20 Iranian naval vessels.

The offensive has not gone unanswered. Iran has launched strikes on Israel, Bahrain and Kuwait. Turkey said NATO defenses intercepted a ballistic missile launched from Iran before it entered Turkey’s airspace. Iran has launched more than 500 ballistic missiles and 2,000 drones.

“To be clear, Iran is indiscriminately targeting civilians as they launch these missiles and drones. The evidence is crystal-clear and overwhelming,” Cooper added. “Having said this, we are seeing Iran’s ability to hit us and our partners is declining. While our combat power, on the

other hand, is building.”

Hegseth acknowledged Wednesday that the U.S. can’t stop every Iranian drone attack.

“We have pushed every counter-UAS system possible forward, sparing no expense or capability,” he said, referencing drones. “Like I said, this does not mean we stop everything.”

Hegseth’s comments came amid questions on whether the U.S. and its partners in the region have adequate stockpiles of munitions to counter attacks by Iran and its proxies spanning at least 10 nations. Iran is believed to have a large stockpile of relatively cheap, sophisticated one-way attack drones in addition to its missiles.

Caine said Iran’s shots-fired are down significantly from the start of the campaign, with ballistic missile fire down 86% and drone attacks down 73%.

“We will now begin to strike inland, striking progressively deeper into Iranian territory and creating additional freedom of maneuver for U.S. forces,” Caine said.

CENTCOM is shifting from standoff weapons to “stand-in” weapons, the chairman added.

“The throttle is coming up, as the secretary said, as opposed to ramping down,” Caine said.

Thus far, six U.S. service members have died in the fighting. They include Capt. Cody A. Khork, 35, of Winter Haven, Fla.; Sgt. 1st Class Noah L. Tietjens, 42, of Bellevue, Neb.; Sgt. 1st Class Nicole M. Amor, 39, of White Bear Lake, Minn.; and Sgt. Declan J. Coady, 20, of West Des Moines, Iowa. All four Army reservists were killed in a drone attack in Port Shuaiba, Kuwait, on Sunday.

The names of two other soldiers who died in the attack are being withheld until next of kin are notified.

“To the families of our fallen, we grieve with you today, and we look forward to welcoming your family members home to Dover (Air Force Base, Del.) in the coming days,” Caine said.

No U.S. ground troops have been acknowledged to be part of the attacks. Trump said Monday that he did not expect they would be necessary, but told the New York Post that he could change his mind and that he did not have the “yips with respect to boots on the ground.”

US sub sinks enemy vessel for first time since WWII

By **LARA KORTE**
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Navy struck and sank an Iranian warship in international waters off the coast of Sri Lanka on Tuesday, marking the first time a U.S. submarine has sunk an enemy ship with a torpedo since World War II.

The Sri Lankan navy said Wednesday that it recovered 87 bodies and rescued 32 people from the sunken ship, the IRIS Dena.

A single Mark 48 torpedo sank the ship, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Dan Caine said during a press briefing Wednesday alongside Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

The IRIS Dena, one of Iran’s newest warships, was a Moudge-class frigate that conducted ocean patrols. It was armed with heavy guns, surface-to-air missiles, anti-ship missiles and torpedoes. It also carries one helicopter.

Sri Lankan reports early Wednesday local time said rescue operations were underway about 40 miles from the coast of Galle.

Sri Lankan navy spokesman Commander Buddhika Sampath, as cited by The Associated Press, said by the time navy ships reached the location, there was no sign of the ship in distress and “there were only some oil patches and life rafts.”

The U.S. Treasury Depart-

ment sanctioned IRIS Dena in February 2023 along with eight executives of an Iranian drone manufacturer that supplied weapons to Russia for use against civilian targets in Ukraine.

Hegseth on Wednesday also said that U.S. forces sank Iran’s “prize ship,” which U.S. Central Command later told Stars and Stripes was a Soleimani-class warship struck off Iranian shores near the Strait of Hormuz.

US forces take out 20-plus Iranian ships

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

U.S. forces have wiped out more than 20 Iranian navy ships and put a hole in the side of Tehran's most operational submarine, U.S. officials said Wednesday.

Those vessels include the sinking Tuesday of an Iranian warship in the Indian Ocean by a U.S. fast-attack submarine using a single MK 48 torpedo, the first such action since World War II, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, said during a briefing Wednesday. They did

not name the ship.

Not a single Iranian ship was underway as of Tuesday in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz or the Gulf of Oman, Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Central Command, said in an update video posted earlier Wednesday on X.

The U.S. won't stop in its efforts to sink the entire Iranian navy and end its ability to harass international shipping, he said, adding that destroying Iran's missile capabilities is among objectives still being pursued under Operation Epic Fury.

"We're hunting Iran's last remaining mobile ballistic missile

launchers to eliminate, what I would characterize, is their lingering launch capability," Cooper said.

Iran has two naval forces: the Islamic Republic of Iran navy and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps navy. The former is focused on traditional maritime activities, the latter on asymmetric warfare.

Their combined fleet has more than 100 vessels and includes a variety of submarines, frigates, destroyers and fast-attack boats, The Economic Times, a prominent India-based publication of global business news, reported in June.

Many of those ships, including the largest, had not dispersed ahead of U.S. strikes and remained in predictable locations, such as the naval base at Bandar Abbas, open-source intelligence analyst H.I. Sutton wrote in a Feb. 27 blog post.

Cooper said the Navy's two aircraft carrier strike groups, including USS Gerald R. Ford in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, were squeezing the Iranians and "have them back into their own ports."

He characterized the U.S. military operations against Iran that began on Saturday as "ahead of our game plan."

Leaders, loved ones mourn US soldiers killed in Kuwait

Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon on Tuesday identified four Army Reserve soldiers killed in a drone attack in Kuwait, a strike that occurred amid Operation Epic Fury, the United States and Israel's military campaign against Iran.

The soldiers died Sunday in Port Shuaiba when an unmanned aircraft system struck their location, according to a Defense Department news release.

All four reservists were assigned to the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), a logistics unit based in Des Moines, Iowa. The soldiers were: Capt. Cody A. Khork, 35, of Winter Haven, Fla.; Sgt. 1st Class Noah L. Tietjens, 42, of Bellevue, Neb.; Sgt. 1st Class Nicole M. Amor, 39, of White Bear Lake, Minn.; and Sgt. Declan J. Coady, 20, of West Des Moines, Iowa. Two not yet identified soldiers also died in the attack.

"We honor our fallen Heroes, who served fearlessly and selflessly in defense of our nation," Lt. Gen. Robert Harter, chief of the

Army Reserve and commander of U.S. Army Reserve Command, said in a news release emailed Tuesday to Stars and Stripes. "Their sacrifice, and the sacrifices of their families, will never be forgotten."

Khork enlisted in the National Guard in 2009 as a multiple launch rocket system and fire direction specialist before commissioning as an Army Reserve military police officer in 2014, according to the Army Reserve.

Tietjens enlisted in the Army Reserve in 2006 as a wheeled vehicle mechanic and had two other deployments to Kuwait, according to the Army Reserve.

Amor enlisted in the National Guard in 2005 as an automated logistics specialist and transferred to the Army Reserve the following year, according to the service.

The youngest of the four soldiers, Coady enlisted in 2023 as an Army information technology specialist and was posthumously promoted from specialist to sergeant, according to the Army Reserve release.

St. Vincent PM: US gave no warning about boat strikes

Associated Press

SAN JOSÉ, Costa Rica — The prime minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines said Tuesday that his government did not give the U.S. authorization for a recent strike on an alleged drug boat in local waters that killed three people.

Prime Minister Godwin Friday said at a press conference that his administration found out about the deadly Feb. 13 strike through social media and online reports.

"There has been no direct communication with respect to the strikes with us," he said, adding that Caribbean leaders are concerned. "It was agreed that this is a serious matter because of the risk that it poses potentially to our people going about their normal business. ... People plying the waters want to know that they're safe."

The U.S. military said that three people were killed in the strikes but did not confirm their identities.

Relatives of a boat captain from St. Lucia recently told The Associ-

ated Press that they believe Ricky Joseph, a 35-year-old father of four, was killed in the strike because he remains missing and had departed in a boat like the one shown after the strike in pictures posted on social media.

Friday said that Caribbean leaders recently met to talk about security and safety concerns of U.S. drone strikes "in our waters." He said leaders who met last week in St. Kitts for a regional summit that U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio attended "agreed that this was a serious matter that will affect all of us" and that they would pursue it with U.S. authorities. Friday said officials also discussed with Rubio a request to use St. Vincent and other Caribbean nations as transit points for migrants intercepted at the U.S. southern border pending their repatriation.

"I emphasized that for any such transit program to proceed... that it must be clearly defined, transparent and manageable for ... a country of our size, with our limitations," Friday said.

Fictional war tests cyber and space teams

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

CAMP RED HORSE, Thailand — While thousands of troops taking part in the annual Cobra Gold exercise train in jungles and on beaches across Thailand, another group is fighting a simulated war from computer screens in an air-conditioned command post.

Now in its 45th year, Cobra Gold brings together about 8,000 service members from 30 countries for live-fire drills, amphibious landings and humanitarian exercises that began Feb. 24 and conclude Friday.

But many of those events are tied together through a larger fictional crisis that unfolds in a simulation from the command

post at Camp Red Horse in Rayong, Thailand.

The scenario imagines a continent called Pacifica east of Japan, where a coup in the country of Sonora triggers a regional conflict. Sonora allies with a neighboring state, Arcadia, forcing multinational forces to respond.

The objective is to expel enemy forces, restore pre-conflict borders and begin diplomatic negotiations.

Updates to the storyline are delivered through video briefings produced by the fictional World News Network, which adjusts the narrative based on the outcomes of training events across the exercise, said U.S. Army Col. Jeramy Hopkins, Co-

bra Gold's chief of staff.

"This video is something that we receive in here daily that is built upon our actions and the enemy's actions that helps inform the command post exercise," he said Monday.

Training events linked to the scenario take place throughout Thailand and include amphibious assaults, jungle warfare drills and maritime strike exercises. Increasingly, however, commanders say the most advanced training is happening in the cyber and space domains.

Over the past decade, Cobra Gold has expanded its digital warfare components, with a growing emphasis on satellite communications, electronic warfare and cyber defense.

"The purpose of exercises like [the cyber drill] is to be able to train cyber defenders to detect and respond to cyberattacks," U.S. Air Force Maj. Paul Lucero, chief of operations for the cyber exercise, told Cobra Gold leaders Monday. "It is no longer a matter of if we'll be breached, it is when."

As Lucero spoke, teams from the United States, Thailand, Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea monitored computer networks for simulated activity.

Lucero highlighted the importance of cybersecurity for both military and civilian sectors, saying cybercrime costs are projected to reach \$14 billion globally by 2028.

Largest DOD hospital abroad closes its labor ward

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The ongoing conflict in the Middle East is squeezing some expectant mothers in the Kaiserslautern Military Community and beyond out of the labor and delivery ward at the largest Defense Department hospital overseas.

Social media forums abounded Tuesday with requests for advice stemming from a screenshot of a memo saying that

Landstuhl Regional Medical Center's services for labor and delivery were suspended until further notice.

The closure is "due to the hospital's primary objective," according to the memo, which was signed by Lt. Col. Elizabeth Gelnier, a doctor with the OB/GYN clinic at Landstuhl.

Although the primary objective is not specified, Landstuhl serves as a critical hub and evacuation point for U.S. service members wounded in

training or combat operations in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

It's expected to continue that role during the current conflict with Iran, in which six U.S. service members have been killed and 10 wounded so far, according to military officials.

The hospital will continue to see patients for prenatal appointments until 36 weeks. At 36 weeks and later, pregnant women should ask for guidance on what to do next, the memo says.

Hospital officials did not immediately address questions about its authenticity Wednesday.

Landstuhl is part of a sprawling network of places in southwestern Germany that form the largest overseas American military community.

"We are doing our utmost to assist you in transferring your labor care to the host nation," the note said, adding that the timeline for reopening labor and delivery is not known.

Army Emergency Relief opens site in Poland, first in over 20 years

By SHATYRA COX
Stars and Stripes

POZNAN, Poland — Retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Tony Grinston kicked off a new campaign for the service's nonprofit this week by opening the 70th Army Emergency Relief location, its first new site in more than 20 years.

Located at Camp Kosciuszko, headquarters of U.S. Army Garrison Poland, the new office allows soldiers to access financial

assistance and counseling locally rather than relying solely on remote support.

The new local presence comes as the Army footprint on NATO's eastern flank continues to expand.

Types of financial challenges soldiers face on arriving in Poland include upfront housing costs during permanent change of station moves, adjusting to a new currency, the cost of living and managing emergencies

while geographically separated from family members.

AER provides emergency financial assistance through interest-free loans, grants and scholarships to help those facing unexpected hardship.

The decision to establish a local office was driven by the size of the military population, Grinston said. He credited the opening in part to the persistence of Diane Hupko, U.S. Army Garrison Poland's personal financial

readiness program manager.

Hupko said the personal and financial demands on soldiers do not stop simply because they are placed on orders to Poland.

But Grinston said a persistent challenge is that many soldiers still don't know what AER offers or how to access it. During the campaign kickoff event at Camp Kosciuszko, senior leaders described AER as an operational enabler for troops serving overseas.

Trial ties Iran to assassination plot in US

Associated Press

NEW YORK — While the United States fights a widening war in Iran, American prosecutors are airing claims that Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard was entangled in a foiled 2024 assassination plot that eyed then-candidate Donald Trump as a possible target.

The alleged scheme is at the center of a criminal trial that started in a federal court in New York last week, days before the Mideast combat that now looms in the background.

"This trial is happening in interesting times," Judge Eric Komitee told lawyers this week in the case of Asif Merchant, a Pakistani national accused of try-

ing to hire hit men to kill a U.S. politician. Merchant didn't name a target but searched online for Trump rally locations, according to prosecutors, who introduced evidence Tuesday that Merchant's laptop contained photos of both Trump and then-President Joe Biden at a time when they were rivals for the presidency.

An FBI agent testified Tuesday that Merchant told her he had a Revolutionary Guard "handler" and believed the handler would help bankroll the plan. Merchant's lawyer suggested the purported statements might not be accurate.

Merchant, 47, has pleaded not guilty to attempted terrorism

and other charges. His attorneys have said prosecutors are trying to wedge evidence into a narrative that doesn't fit.

Merchant has children in Iran and has traveled there. His lawyers have portrayed his trips as religious pilgrimages and family time, but federal authorities have long suggested he had ties to Iran's theocratic government.

In court Tuesday, an FBI agent opened a window on the government's basis for pointing a finger at Tehran.

According to agent Jacqueline Smith, Merchant said one of his cousins introduced him to a Revolutionary Guard handler in Iran. Formally called the Islam-

ic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the force has been prominent under the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Merchant said he expected his handler would reimburse \$5,000 that Merchant had gotten from his cousin and had given to the supposed hit men, who actually were undercover FBI agents, Smith told jurors. She said Merchant also relayed some advice from the handler: "If he noticed he was being surveilled, he should act normal."

Defense lawyer Avraham Moskowitz underscored that the interview wasn't recorded, and he described the agents' report as "someone's impression of what was said."

Takeaways from first elections of midterms

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The midterms are here.

The 2026 campaign kicked off Tuesday with high-profile primary elections in Texas, where Republican Sen. John Cornyn is heading toward a runoff vote against state attorney general Ken Paxton. Democrats chose state Rep. James Talarico over U.S. Rep. Jasmine Crockett to be their candidate.

For all the focus on Texas, elections in North Carolina could have a bigger impact on which party ultimately wins the Senate majority in the fall.

In the first election since President Donald Trump joined Israel in launching dramatic attacks on Iran, there were also contests in Arkansas.

By rallying behind Talarico, the party sided with someone who pledged to change Washington while finding consensus.

Crockett argued that Democrats need to focus on energizing their base. Talarico's campaign, meanwhile, took a more

expansive approach, often highlighting his faith in ways that could appeal beyond diehard Democrats.

That style is why many Republicans are worried about Talarico's candidacy. Though a Democrat hasn't won a statewide race in Texas since 1994, Talarico's campaign could prove potent depending on who emerges from the Republican runoff. Cornyn and Paxton will keep fighting for the Republican nomination through a May 26 runoff.

Regardless of what happens, expect more cash to be pumped into the race. Cornyn and well-funded allied groups spent at least \$64 million in television advertising alone since July.

For North Carolina Democrats, former Gov. Roy Cooper is an ideal candidate in one of the most politically competitive states. A former two-term governor, he has proved that he can win elections in one of three states the party is banking on to flip control of the Senate.

Trial on breakup of Ticketmaster parent company underway

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A high-stakes antitrust trial that could lead to the possible breakup of Live Nation, the parent company of Ticketmaster, got underway Tuesday in a case over whether the entertainment giant's dominance of the concert industry amounts to an illegal monopoly.

In opening statements, a U.S. Justice Department lawyer pointed to the company's infamously problem-plagued effort to sell Taylor Swift tickets in 2022 as he implored the Manhattan federal jury to end the company's hold on the market and reward artists and consumers with a competitive marketplace that will leave them with more money.

"This case is about power, the power of a monopolist to control competition," said attorney David Dahlquist. "Today, the concert ticket industry is broken."

David Marriott, arguing on

behalf of the companies, disputed the government's claims.

Judge Arun Subramanian has told jurors that evidence will be presented over the next six weeks before they'll be left to decide if Live Nation and Ticketmaster broke antitrust laws.

The trial stems from a lawsuit filed in 2024 that alleged the companies have dominated the industry by suffocating competitors and controlling everything from concert promotion to ticketing.

Ticketmaster, which was established in 1976 and merged with Live Nation in 2010, is the world's largest ticket seller across live music, sports, theater and more.

Dahlquist said Live Nation's anti-competitive practices include using long-term contracts ranging from five to seven years to keep venues from choosing rivals and blocking venues from using multiple ticket sellers.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man on death row since 1990 to get new trial

AL MONTGOMERY — One of Alabama's longest-serving death row inmates could soon receive a new trial after the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the state's appeal of a lower court's ruling that prosecutors violated his rights by intentionally rejecting potential Black jurors.

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday declined to review the summer ruling from the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The decision paves the way for Michael Sockwell, 63, to receive a new trial.

Sockwell was convicted in 1990 of killing Montgomery County Sheriff's Deputy Isaiah Harris. Harris was shot in the face in 1988 on his way to work in what prosecutors described as a murder-for-hire arranged by Harris' wife.

The appellate court in June issued a 2-1 opinion finding Alabama prosecutors violated Sockwell's 14th Amendment rights by intentionally rejecting potential Black jurors believed to be more sympathetic to him.

The jury that convicted Sockwell voted 7-5 to recommend that he receive life imprisonment, but a judge overrode that recommendation and handed down a death sentence. Alabama no longer allows judges to override a jury's sentence decision in capital cases.

Man who rammed into Chabad pleads not guilty

NY NEW YORK — A man who drove his car into the Chabad Lubavitch world headquarters in New York City earlier this year

pleaded not guilty Monday to federal charges of intentionally damaging religious property.

Dan Sohail, 36, was previously arrested on hate crime charges following the Jan. 28 incident, which damaged an entrance to the revered Jewish site but did not cause any injuries. He entered his federal not guilty plea Monday through lawyer Mia Eisner-Grynberg.

He is in the process of converting to Judaism and had visited the Chabad Lubavitch site before, she said.

In a court complaint, federal authorities said Sohail deliberately rammed the side of the building with his car five consecutive times after clearing away stanchions and urging people to move out of the way. He told police he had lost control of the vehicle and pressed on the gas.

Knight reveals she played Olympics with torn MCL

NY NEW YORK — U.S. women's hockey gold medal-winning captain Hilary Knight revealed Monday in a television appearance that she played in Milan with a torn medial collateral ligament in one of her knees.

"I'm not walking around the best, and I'm missing a few games for the (PWHL's) Seattle Torrent," Knight said on "CBS Mornings."

"To be able to play through injury was definitely a mental sort of gymnastic challenge for myself and also physical, but we've got some amazing support staff that did their best to get me out there and perform at my best — as best as I could."

Knight, playing at what she said was her final Olympics at

36, tied the final against Canada with just over two minutes left in regulation.

Former Trump secretary won't seek reelection

MT BILLINGS — Ryan Zinke, a Montana Republican who served as interior secretary during President Donald Trump's first administration, said Monday that he will not seek reelection to a fifth term in the U.S. House, citing health concerns.

The decision gives Democrats an outside chance to pick up a House seat this fall in a state that has veered to the right politically over the past decade. Republicans have a narrow 218-214 majority, with three seats vacant ahead of the November midterm elections.

Zinke, 64, a former Navy SEAL from Whitefish, Mont., said in a letter to constituents that he underwent multiple surgeries in recent years and faces more treatment for injuries sustained during more than two decades in the military.

He said his condition, which he did not specify, was not life-threatening but required considerable time for recovery.

Men face federal charges in nightclub shooting

OH COLUMBUS — Two men arrested Monday in connection with a weekend shooting that wounded nine people inside a Cincinnati nightclub now face federal charges, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the southern district of Ohio said Tuesday.

Franeek Cobb, 24, and Derrick Long, 29, each face federal charges for illegally possessing a firearm or ammunition as an

individual convicted of a felony.

Prosecutors said in a news release that surveillance footage from Riverfront Live, where the shooting took place, shows both men firing weapons early Sunday morning. Cobb observed Long inside the venue, pulled out a firearm and began firing at him, according to an affidavit the statement said. Long fell to the ground, then allegedly began firing at Cobb.

Earlier Tuesday, Cobb was arraigned in Hamilton County Municipal Court on local charges of felonious assault in the shooting. During the arraignment, Hamilton County Assistant Prosecutor Connor Wood said Cobb had a "long-standing grudge" against an unidentified victim in the case, and when Cobb saw the victim inside the venue, he "immediately" opened fire, causing injuries to multiple people.

People line up for ice cream in 6-degree cold

MN MOORHEAD — It's still winter in Minnesota, but for the people lined up Sunday in single-digit cold at the Moorhead Dairy Queen, spring is in the air.

The annual March 1 opening of the 77-year-old walk-up ice cream shop is a tradition, no matter the weather.

Heavy snow, subzero cold — people will brave a blizzard for a Blizzard.

"It just says that we're tough, and there are things that are really important to us," said Jerry Protector, a retired pastor standing in line for a butter-scotch milkshake and a chocolate-mint Blizzard. "It's just a part of community."

— From wire reports

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TCU gets bid-boosting win at Texas Tech

Associated Press

LUBBOCK, Texas — Xavier Edmonds had 20 points and 12 rebounds as TCU got another big win in its late push to get into the NCAA Tournament, winning 73-65 at No. 10 Texas Tech on Tuesday night.

Edmonds' putback layup with 31 seconds left pushed the lead to 71-65 for Horned Frogs (20-10, 10-7 Big 12), who have won seven of their last eight games. It was their third win this season against a top-10 team, including a win over then-No. 5 Iowa State during this stretch.

The Red Raiders (22-8, 12-5) had won three games in a row since losing standout post J.T. Toppin to a season-ending torn ACL in his right knee. Texas Tech, which finished 14-2 at home, had moved up six spots in this week's AP Top 25 poll, matching its season-opening ranking after going to the Elite Eight last season.

Micah Robinson scored 15 points for TCU, and Jayden Pierre had 14. David Punch, their leading scorer, was limited to six points while having foul issues, but still had 10 rebounds.

Donovan Atwell led the Red Raiders with 19 points and five 3-pointers, extending his single-season school record to 115. Jaylen Petty scored 17, while Christian Anderson had 11 points and nine assists.

No. 5 Florida 108, Mississippi State 74: Alex Condon scored 26 points, Xaivian Lee added 19 and the host Gators celebrated their first Southeastern Conference title since 2014 with a romp over the Bulldogs.

SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey presented Florida with the regular-season trophy before the home finale, and the Gators (24-6, 15-2) formally secured the outright championship when Georgia closed out No. 16 Alabama earlier in the night.

Nonetheless, coach Todd

Golden's team wanted to finish the season "the right way" — with a 10th consecutive win.

UCLA 72, No. 9 Nebraska 52: Trent Perry scored 20 points and the host Bruins led all the way in ending the Cornhuskers' three-game winning streak.

UCLA (20-10, 12-7 Big Ten) notched 20 wins for the seventh time in 10 years and closed its home schedule with a 17-1 mark at Pauley Pavilion.

Eric Dailey Jr. finished with 14 points and eight rebounds.

The loss knocked Nebraska (25-5, 14-5) out of a second-place tie with idle Michigan State in the Big Ten.

No. 11 Illinois 80, Oregon 54: Andrej Stojakovic had 21 points and 12 rebounds off the bench to lead the host Fighting Illini over the Ducks.

David Mirkovic added 19 points and seven rebounds, and Keaton Wagler had 11 points, six rebounds and five assists for Illinois (23-7, 14-5 Big Ten), which is a win away from triple-bye and berth in the quarterfinals next week in the Big Ten Tournament.

No. 13 Virginia 75, Wake Forest 70: Thijs De Ridder scored 16 points and the host Cavaliers outlasted the Demon Deacons to secure the No. 2 seed and a double-bye in the ACC tournament.

Jacari White added 14 points and Johann Grunloh had 12 points, nine rebounds and two blocks as Virginia (26-4, 14-3) beat Wake Forest for the 14th time in the last 16 meetings.

The Cavaliers missed their first eight 3-point attempts and went 3-for-17 from beyond the arc in the opening half. They were better after halftime and finished 10-for-32 from deep, including a 3 by Malik Thomas that made it 71-62 with 1:23 left.

Arizona State 70, No. 14 Kansas 60: Moe Odum scored 23 points, Massamba Diop added 19 and the host Wildcats

pulled away late to beat the Jayhawks in what could be coach Bobby Hurley's final home game.

Hurley is the final year of his contract and the administration hasn't given any indications it will be extended amid a fourth mediocre season in the past five years.

Arizona State (16-14, 7-10 Big 12) jumped on Kansas (21-9, 11-6) early, withstood a big run and made the key plays down the stretch to beat the Jayhawks for the third time in the Hurley era.

Georgia 98 No. 16 Alabama 88: Kanon Catchings scored a career-high 32 points and the host Bulldogs ended the Crimson Tide's eight-game winning streak.

Catchings ignited Georgia (21-9, 9-8 Southeastern Conference) with 20 points before halftime, leading its fourth win in five games. He was 7-for-13 from 3-point range and delivered a signature highlight with a behind-the-back pass to Somto Cyril for a thunderous slam.

Alabama (22-8, 12-5) wasted a chance to bolster its seeding for the tournament, despite a spirited back-and-forth down the stretch as the teams traded 3 after 3. Labaron Philon Jr. led the Tide with 26 points.

No. 17 North Carolina 67, Clemson 63: Luka Bogavac hit six 3-pointers and scored a career-best 20 points as the Tar Heels set a program record by going 18-0 at home.

Henri Veesaar scored 13 points before fouling out in the final minute and Jarin Stevenson had nine points and 10 rebounds as North Carolina (24-6, 12-6 Atlantic Coast Conference) won its fourth straight game heading into a weekend rematch with No. 1 Duke.

RJ Godfrey scored a career-high 22 points on 10-for-13 shooting for the Tigers (21-9, 11-6).

No. 18 St. John's 72,

Georgetown 69: Zuby Ejiofor scored 23 points, Joson Sanon added 15 off the bench — all after halftime — and the Red Storm rallied from 12 down in the second half to beat the skidding Hoyas.

With a gritty comeback on Senior Night at Madison Square Garden, St. John's (24-6, 17-2 Big East) tied No. 4 UConn atop the conference standings with one regular-season game remaining.

Dylan Darling had 12 points for the Red Storm, who have won 15 of 16 overall.

No. 19 Miami (Ohio) 74, Toledo 72: Pete Suder scored 19 points, Antowne Woolfolk added 14 and the host RedHawks won their 30th straight game and closed within a victory of a perfect regular season.

Miami (17-0 Mid-American Conference) is the only undefeated team in Division I men's basketball and boasts the best start and longest winning streak ever in the MAC.

No. 23 Tennessee 78, South Carolina 59: J.P. Estrella scored 22 points, Felix Okpara added 20 and the visiting Volunteers rolled past South Carolina to stop a two-game skid.

Tennessee (21-9, 11-6 Southeastern Conference) was a force inside, even without injured starter and second-leading scorer Nate Ament. Post players Estrella and Okpara dismantled South Carolina's defense with dunks and layups.

No. 24 Vanderbilt 89, Mississippi 86 (OT): Tyler Tanner scored 34 points, including 10 of the Commodores' 13 in overtime, and visiting Vanderbilt beat the Rebels.

The Commodores (23-7, 10-7 SEC) never trailed in overtime, with Tanner's steal leading to a three-point play that snapped a 74-all tie. Tanner had another three-point play in the extra period and finished it off for Vanderbilt with two free throws with 16 seconds remaining.

Cavaliers hold off East-leading Pistons

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Jaylon Tyson scored 22 points, James Harden added 18 and the Cleveland Cavaliers avenged a recent loss in Detroit by beating the East-leading Pistons 113-109 on Tuesday night despite playing without injured star Donovan Mitchell.

Evan Mobley also had 18 points and Dennis Schroder 15 for Cleveland, which split its four regular-season games with Detroit.

Mitchell sat out his fourth straight game with a nagging groin strain. Coach Kenny Atkinson said the seven-time All-Star is “trending better” but doesn’t know when he’ll be back to build chemistry for the postseason with Harden, who was acquired at the trade deadline.

Jalen Duren added 24 points and 14 rebounds and Tobias Harris scored 19 points — all after halftime — for the Pistons, who had their road winning streak stopped at six games. Cade Cunningham dished out 14 assists but scored only 10 on 4-of-16 shooting for Detroit.

The Pistons cut an 11-point deficit to one in the fourth, but Sam Merrill hit a big 3-pointer to help the Cavaliers hang on.

Thunder 116, Bulls 108: Jared McCain scored 20 points, Isaiah Joe added 19 and visiting Oklahoma City — playing without star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander — beat Chicago.

The defending NBA champion Thunder held out Gilgeous-Alexander to manage an abdominal strain that sidelined him for most of last month. But even without the reigning MVP, they had more than enough to win for the sixth time in seven games. They lead the Western Conference at 48-15.

McCain made four 3-pointers. Aaron Wiggins scored 18 points. Jaylin Williams had 17 points and 16 rebounds. Cason

Wallace had 17 points, and Chet Holmgren added 12 points and 11 rebounds.

Collin Sexton scored 20 points for the Bulls, including a 3 in the closing minute that cut it to 112-106. But Chicago got back to losing after stopping an 11-game skid with a lopsided win over Milwaukee on Sunday.

Hornets 117, Mavericks 90: Brandon Miller scored 17 points, and host Charlotte routed Dallas for its fifth straight victory.

LaMelo Ball added 15 points and nine assists to help the Hornets (31-31) reach .500 for the first time since Oct. 28 when they were 2-2.

Brandon Williams had 18 points for the sputtering Mavericks. They’ve lost 14 of 16.

Charlotte, playing on the first night of a back-to-back, got tremendous production from its bench, with the backups shooting 12 of 21 from 3-point range. Grant Williams made four 3s, Josh Green and Sion James had three each and Pat Connaughton had two.

Magic 126, Wizards 109: Paolo Banchero equaled a season high with 37 points, Desmond Bane scored 25 and host Orlando eased to a victory over Washington.

Banchero went 15 of 21 from the field as the Magic shot 55.3% and dominated with its starters on the floor to end a two-game skid. Orlando is seventh in the Eastern Conference.

Jett Howard scored 12 points and Jalen Suggs, Jevon Carter and Moritz Wagner had 10 apiece for a Magic team that was missing injured regulars Anthony Black (quad), Wendell Carter Jr. (ankle) and Franz Wagner (ankle).

Rookie Will Riley scored 19 points and Jaden Hardy added 18 for the Wizards, who had nine healthy players available and lost their sixth straight.

Knicks 111, Raptors 95: Ja-

len Brunson had 26 points and 10 assists, Karl-Anthony Towns added 21 points and 12 rebounds, and visiting New York beat Toronto for its fifth win in six games.

The Knicks (40-22) became the third Eastern Conference team to reach 40 wins, joining Detroit and Boston. OG Anunoby scored 15 points against his former team, Landry Shamet and Josh Hart each had 12 and Mikal Bridges added 11 for New York.

Brandon Ingram scored 31 points and RJ Barrett had 20 for the Raptors, who lost their fourth straight at home and dropped to 4-10 against Atlantic Division opponents.

Heat 124, Nets 98: Bam Adebayo had 23 points, nine rebounds and six steals, and host Miami beat Brooklyn in the opener of a two-game series.

Tyler Herro added 22 points and Jaime Jaquez Jr. had 20 for the Heat, who won for the fifth time in seven games.

Noah Clowney scored 17 points for the Nets, who lost their ninth straight. Ziaire Williams had 16 points and Nolan Traore added 14.

Spurs 131, 76ers 91: Dylan Harper scored 22 points and Victor Wembanyama needed only 10 to help visiting San Antonio bounce back from its first loss in 12 games and rout Philadelphia.

Devin Vassell hit six 3-pointers and scored 22 points for the Spurs, who never trailed and led by 49 points at the end of the third quarter.

Tyrese Maxey scored 21 points for the 76ers. They scored only 11 points total in the third quarter.

Timberwolves 117, Grizzlies 110: Anthony Edwards scored 41 points as host Minnesota overcame a sluggish first half to beat Memphis.

The Timberwolves, who moved into fourth in the Western Conference over the week-

end, have won four in a row and seven of eight. The Grizzlies saw their two-game winning streak end.

Jaylen Wells led Memphis with 19 points and Cedric Coward added 15. The Grizzlies went on a 12-2 run to cut it to four points in the final minute but couldn’t complete the rally.

Lakers 110, Pelicans 101: Luka Doncic had 27 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists, LeBron James added 21 points and host Los Angeles rallied past New Orleans for its third straight victory.

Deandre Ayton had 13 points and eight rebounds for the Lakers, who overcame a fourth-quarter deficit and 21 turnovers by scoring 14 straight points down the stretch and finishing on a 24-7 run. Their late surge was led by Doncic and Austin Reaves, who missed his first eight shots of the night before ending up with 15 points.

Zion Williamson scored 24 points in his return from a one-game absence after hurting his ankle last Saturday for the Pelicans, who lost for only the second time in six games on the fourth outing of their six-game West Coast trip. Trey Murphy III scored 21 points and Saddiq Bey had 18.

Suns 114, Kings 103: Jalen Green scored 20 points, Grayson Allen had 18 and visiting Phoenix beat NBA-worst Sacramento to sweep the four-game season series.

Seventh in the West at 35-26, the Suns won their second straight and got back Devin Booker after the star guard missed four games because of a right hip injury. He scored 14 of his 17 points in the first half.

Maxime Raynaud had 22 points — on 10-of-12 shooting — and 10 rebounds for the Kings in the opener of a five-game homestand. Sacramento dropped to 14-49 and is 2-3 following a franchise-worst 16-game losing streak.

Kaprizov, Wild cruise past Lightning

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Kirill Kaprizov broke the franchise career goals record with 220, Mats Zuccarello, Brock Faber and Quinn Hughes each had a goal and assist and the Minnesota Wild beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 5-1 Tuesday night.

Kaprizov's empty-netter, a backhander from center ice for his 35th of the season, pushed him past Marian Gaborik for the most in Wild history.

Yakov Trenin also scored to help Minnesota end a two-game slide and continue its home dominance of Tampa Bay. The Wild are 16-3-0 at home against the Lightning.

Matt Boldy added a season-high three assists, extending his points streak to a career-high-tying 10 games. Filip Gustavsson stopped 26 shots, improving to 5-1-0 in his past six starts.

Opening a four-game road trip, Tampa Bay got a goal from Nikita Kucherov but lost its third straight game after a 20-1-1 stretch. Andrei Vasilevskiy made 17 saves.

Hughes also scored in the third period, resulting in a brief "U-S-A! U-S-A-!" chant for the member of the recent gold-medal winning squad.

Trenin scored a fluky goal at 17:10 of the second period for a 3-1 Minnesota lead.

Losing the puck as he tried to split a pair of defenders in the Lightning zone, Trenin finished his drive to the net and capitalized when Vasilevskiy struggled to cover the slow sliding puck.

Just over two minutes earlier, Kucherov completed a pretty passing play with Brayden Point and Jake Guentzel to get Tampa Bay on the board.

Faber scored less than four minutes into the game for a 1-0 lead. Zuccarello made it 2-0 with a 4-on-3 power-play goal early in the second period, the eighth straight game Minnesota has scored with the man advantage.

Avalanche 5, Ducks 1: Cale Makar had a goal and two assists, Nathan MacKinnon secured his fourth consecutive 100-point season with a third-period assist, and NHL-leading Colorado snapped host Anaheim's five-game winning streak.

Parker Kelly scored two goals and Scott Wedgewood made 27 saves for the Avs, who have won three straight and four of five since the Olympic break.

Cutter Gauthier scored his 29th goal and Lukas Dostal stopped 21 shots for the Ducks, whose eight-game home winning streak since Jan. 2 also ended.

Anaheim would have moved into first place in the Pacific Division with a point, but the loss kept Vegas one point ahead. The Ducks are in a playoff race down the stretch for the first time since 2018.

Devils 5, Panthers 1: U.S. Olympic golden goal-scorer Jack Hughes extended his points streak to four games since returning from Milan, and host New Jersey dealt Florida's playoff hopes another blow by beating the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions.

Hughes' shot that went wide banked right to Dougie Hamilton for his goal. Hughes has four assists — one in each game — since the NHL season resumed.

Florida is in danger of becoming the first Cup-winning team to miss the playoffs the following season since the Los Angeles Kings in 2014-15. The Panthers have lost three of four games since the Olympics ended, all of those coming in regulation.

Sabres 3, Golden Knights 2: Tage Thompson scored after being honored for helping the U.S. win an Olympic gold medal in hockey, and host Buffalo won its fourth straight game by beating Vegas.

Owen Power and Jason Zucker also scored for the surging Sabres. Buffalo improved to 25-

5-2 in its past 32, and its 35 wins through 61 games are the team's most since having 41 over the same span in 2006-07.

Pavel Dorofeyev, with his team-leading 29th goal, and Ivan Barbashev scored and Vegas matched a season-low by losing three straight in regulation. The slumping Golden Knights also dropped to 4-8-2 in their past 14.

Bruins 2, Penguins 1: Marat Khusnutdinov and Casey Mittelstadt scored less than a minute apart early in the first period and Boston held on for a home victory over Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh's Erik Karlsson scored just 42 seconds into the game, but Khusnutdinov tied it at 1-1 when he snapped the puck high inside the far post past Penguins goalie Stuart Skinner for his 13th goal of the season at 5:10 of the first.

Mittelstadt added his 13th of the season 50 seconds later when he gathered in the rebound of Nikita Zadorov's shot and fired past a diving Skinner and into an open net. Jeremy Swayman made 34 saves.

Blue Jackets 3, Predators 2: Damon Severson broke a tie with a snap shot from the point through traffic at 6:07 of the third period and Columbus beat Nashville to open a four-game homestand.

Jet Greaves made 20 saves for Columbus in 51:44, missing an 8:16 stretch of the first period because of concussion protocol after Nick Blankenburg caught him with an elbow on the side of the head on a rush.

Filip Forsberg had a power-play goal for Nashville, and Ryan O'Reilly was credited with a goal in the second that a Columbus player put in.

Sharks 7, Canadiens 5: Macklin Celebrini had a goal and three assists, Kiefer Sherwood scored the tiebreaking goal on a power play with 3:26 remaining, and host San Jose beat Montreal.

Alex Newhook had two pow-

er-play goals for the Canadiens. Oliver Kapanen, Phillip Daulton and Ivan Demidov also scored for Montreal, and Mike Matheson added three assists.

The Canadiens lost in regulation for the first time since Jan. 24 at Boston.

Mammoth 3, Capitals 2: JJ Peterka scored in the second period on a bizarre bounce, and visiting Utah beat Washington.

Dylan Guenther and Mikhail Sergachev scored for the Mammoth, who took an early 2-0 lead and held off the Capitals in a matchup of teams near the playoff cutoff lines. Utah entered the night tied with Edmonton for the top wild card in the Western Conference.

Jets 3, Blackhawks 2 (OT): Mark Scheifele scored at 2:06 of overtime to lift Winnipeg to a home victory over Chicago.

Cole Perfetti forced the extra frame for Winnipeg, tying the game 2-2 with just 38.6 seconds remaining in regulation. Dylan Samberg, who assisted on Scheifele's winner, also scored in the first period for the Jets, who went to overtime for the fourth consecutive game.

Stars 6, Flames 1: Sam Steel scored twice and added an assist and visiting Dallas extended its franchise-record winning streak to 10 games with a romp over Calgary.

Jamie Benn, Mavrik Bourque, Nathan Bastian and Wyatt Johnston also scored to help Dallas improve to 38-14-9. Matt Duchene had four assists giving him a team-best 17 points (eight goals, nine assists) during the winning streak.

Oilers 5, Senators 4 (OT): Leon Draisaitl had two goals and three assists, Evan Bouchard scored on a power play at 1:50 of overtime and host Edmonton rallied to beat Ottawa.

With Brady Tkachuk in the penalty box for tackling Connor McDavid in overtime, Edmonton got it back to Bouchard and he blasted in his 18th of the season.