

## US military continues Iran onslaught

BY SHANNON RENFROE  
*Stars and Stripes*

MANAMA, Bahrain — A day of relative peace was shattered late Thursday afternoon in this capital city, home to U.S. sailors at Naval Support Activity Bahrain, as air sirens that have blared recurrently since Saturday warned of incoming Iranian attacks.

Moments earlier, Navy officials sent a text message to the military community, whose members were sheltering in place throughout the city.

“Seek hardened shelter immediately,” the emergency messaging system stated. “Real World.”

No U.S. casualties have been reported thus far in Bahrain, home to the U.S. 5th Fleet, as well as thousands of sailors and their families prior to the start of a war that has engulfed nations throughout the Middle East.

U.S. and Israel battered Iran with nationwide strikes Thursday. At least 2,000 positions have been attacked in Iran since Saturday, according to U.S. military figures.

The attacks have eliminated much of Iran’s senior military leadership, U.S. officials have said.

In Bahrain, an air warning around 1:45 a.m. gave way to one of the longest periods of calm — about 16 hours — since Iran’s counterattacks began early Saturday morning. The second warning came in the afternoon, with another an hour later.

One of the Iranian missiles struck a state-run oil refinery, Bahraini officials said in a statement. The fire was extinguished and the refinery is still operating, the statement said.

There also were unconfirmed reports of explosions in Manama and Riffa, the island’s sec-

ond-largest city, and a fire at the capital’s Salman Port, potentially from a missile impact.

U.S. sailors said they had hoped that the lull signaled a turning point. On Wednesday, Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in Washington that Iran’s ballistic missile fire was down 86% and drone attacks were down 73% since the start of the fighting.

On Thursday, Bahrain’s defense ministry said its forces had intercepted 75 Iranian ballistic missiles, destroying 65, since the Iranian counterstrikes began. Bahrain also has intercepted 124 drones, downing 88, while 36 landed inside the country, The Associated Press reported.

Earlier in the week, Bahraini Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa visited a supermarket, a hospital, shelters and other locations in Manama, the

government said Tuesday in a statement.

In between Thursday’s missile warnings, few people and cars were visible on the streets, except for grocery delivery drivers and essential workers.

Sailors and base community members texted one another during the day to stay connected, offer support and share their concerns.

Meanwhile, NSA Bahrain’s medical team sent a message saying it was still available “for acute and time sensitive concerns.”

Patients with acute care needs were directed to schedule virtual appointments through the Defense Department’s on-line health portal.

NSA Bahrain is one of multiple U.S. bases that have come under attack in the Middle East, including locations in Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

## GAO report says DOD readiness affected by shortfalls

BY PHILLIP WALTER  
WELLMAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

Years of delayed maintenance and staffing shortfalls continue to drag down overall readiness, according to a Defense Department watchdog agency report that acknowledged the military’s ability to carry out specific missions despite those limitations.

The Government Accountability Office report released Wednesday drew on years of studies examining issues such as the condition of ships and aircraft, personnel levels and training.

The report was assembled before the U.S. on Saturday launched its most recent attacks on Iran and makes no mention of the ongoing war. But its findings are less focused on the immediate needs of a major campaign than on long-term sustainability.

The GAO said the Pentagon has yet to fully implement more than 150 recommendations from earlier reviews intended to improve equipment availability, strengthen personnel pipelines and support better decision-making on readiness.

Many of those recommendations span multiple administra-

tions and remain open years after they were issued. The GAO said the Defense Department generally agreed with its recommendations.

“U.S. military readiness has been degraded over the last two decades due to a variety of challenges, including maintaining existing systems while acquiring new capabilities,” the report reads.

One of the most persistent problems involves a shortage of trained maintainers for ships and aircraft.

Technicians and mechanics are responsible for keeping complex systems operating

safely, and the GAO said many units lack enough qualified workers to keep up with required repairs.

Short staffing has contributed to long-running maintenance backlogs, with aircraft and ships spending extended periods out of service.

The Navy reported similar problems, the GAO found.

Executive officers surveyed by GAO said many ships did not have enough trained sailors to be able to complete required maintenance while the ship was underway, leaving some tasks to be deferred until vessels had been returned to port.

# Ukraine offers drone expertise in Iran fight

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Ukraine is prepared to send military experts to the Middle East to help the U.S. and its partners counter Iranian drones, the country's president said this week.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday that Ukraine has been consulting with the United States and countries under direct attack about the challenges posed by Iran's drones, which have been a major feature of Russia's war in Ukraine.

"Partners are reaching out to us," Zelenskyy said.

Ukraine is now exploring options for helping affected countries and providing aid in a manner that doesn't weaken its own

defenses at home given the ongoing war there, Zelenskyy said.

"Our military possesses the necessary capabilities," Zelenskyy said. "Ukrainian experts will operate on site, and teams are already coordinating these efforts. And we are ready to help protect lives, defend civilians and support real efforts to stabilize the situation and, in particular, restore safe navigation in the region."

In a follow-on statement Thursday, Zelenskyy suggested a weapons exchange with partners in the Middle East.

While Ukraine has a shortage of Patriot batteries, it has ample supplies of small-drone interceptors that are effective at countering Iranian drones, the Ukrainian president said.

"When it comes to technology or weapons exchange, I believe our country will be open to it," Zelenskyy said.

For partners in the Middle East, it would be too expensive to rely on Patriots to deal with thousands of Iranian Shaheds, he added.

During the war with Russia, Ukraine's military has emerged as the world's most battle-tested force when it comes to countering swarms of drones.

Many of Russia's unmanned aerial systems, used against Ukrainian forces and civilians alike, have been provided by Iran.

The proliferation of such cheaply mass-produced weapons systems has challenged Western militaries' ability to

come up with affordable counter-drone alternatives.

Iran's Shahed drones, estimated to cost between \$20,000 and \$50,000 each, have been able to penetrate air defenses in numerous countries in the aftermath of the U.S.-Israel airstrike campaign launched last week.

While the U.S. and its partners have shot down most incoming missiles and drones, multimillion-dollar weapons systems and costly interceptors are being heavily relied on to do the job.

Ukraine also uses high-end systems, such as Patriot interceptors, to provide a layered air defense. But Ukraine makes heavy use of small interceptor drones, some costing as little as \$2,000 to produce, to take down drones such as the Shahed.

## DOD names final 2 victims of deadly attack in Kuwait

By JOSEPH DITZLER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The U.S. military has identified two more soldiers believed killed in a drone attack in Kuwait, bringing to six the number of American troops who have died during the U.S. campaign with Israel against Iran.

U.S. Army Reserve Command on Wednesday named Maj. Jeffrey R. O'Brien, 45, of Waukegan, Iowa, as among those killed Sunday at Port Shuaibu, the main industrial port in Kuwait.

In a separate statement, the Pentagon said it believes Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert M. Marzan, 54, of Sacramento, Calif., also died in the attack. His identification has yet to be confirmed by a medical examiner.

The Army Reserve provided no information on Marzan, saying Wednesday in an unsigned email it would wait until he is officially identified.

The Pentagon on Tuesday identified four other soldiers killed in the attack: 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 served with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), based in Des Moines, Iowa.

O'Brien commissioned as a Signal Corps officer in the Army Reserve in 2012 and previously deployed to Kuwait in 2019.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said at a news briefing Tuesday that the drone penetrated air defenses at an Army installation.

"Moments like that — as we remember them and we take care of them and take care of their families — only stiffen our resolve to ensure that we do this properly," he said.

## Israel, US hammer Iran as it launches new attacks

*Associated Press*

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran launched a new wave of attacks against Israel, American bases and countries around the region Thursday, while warning the U.S. would "bitterly regret" torpedoing an Iranian warship. Tehran's expanding retaliatory strikes came even as Israel and the U.S. hammered Iran for a sixth day.

The war has escalated each day, affecting an additional 14 countries across the Middle East and beyond. On Thursday, Azerbaijan accused Iran of attacking it with drones — though Tehran denied that. A day earlier, the U.S. said it sank an Iranian frigate in the waters off Sri Lanka.

Israel meanwhile issued a mass evacuation warning for all of Beirut's southern suburbs as the fighting escalated with Lebanon's Iran-allied Hezbollah militants. U.N. peacekeepers report-

ed ground combat in southern Lebanon as more Israeli troops crossed the border.

All the while, the U.S. and Israel have battered Iran with nationwide strikes, targeting their military capabilities, leadership and nuclear program. Israeli and American leaders have also suggested that toppling the government was a goal. Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed when they launched the war Saturday.

Iran's attacks have targeted their Arab neighbors, disrupted oil supplies and snarled air travel.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi accused the U.S. Navy of committing an "atrocious act at sea" for sinking the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena in the Indian Ocean, killing at least 87 people.

"Mark my words: The U.S. will come to bitterly regret (the) precedent it has set," he said on social media.

# N. Korea launches missiles in destroyer test

By YOOJIN LEE  
*Stars and Stripes*

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un oversaw a test launch of sea-to-surface strategic cruise missiles this week on the destroyer Choe Hyon, according to a report in the country's state-controlled media.

South Korea's military detected several cruise missile launches around 8:30 a.m. Wednesday over the Yellow Sea near Nampo, North Korea, according to a text message Thursday from the Ministry of

National Defense.

The launches occurred five days ahead of the Monday start of Freedom Shield, a combined, large-scale, annual military exercise by the United States and South Korea.

Intelligence agencies from the U.S. and South Korea are analyzing the details, the spokesman said.

The launch was a "core element in estimating the operational capabilities" of the North Korean warship and was successful, according to the

state-run Korean Central News Agency. "The arming of the Navy with nuclear weapons is making satisfactory progress," the report said.

The 5,000-ton destroyer was launched April 25.

Kim at the time hailed the Choe Hyon as a significant advancement toward his goal of expanding the range and preemptive strike capabilities of his nuclear-armed military, The Associated Press reported Thursday.

KCNA said the ship is de-

signed to handle nuclear-capable ballistic and cruise missiles along with anti-air and anti-naval weapons. South Korean military officials and experts said the destroyer was likely built with Russian assistance, but some have raised doubts about whether it's ready for active service, the AP reported.

The South Korean ministry said the military is closely monitoring North Korea's movement and is able to respond "overwhelmingly" to any provocations.

## Generals say Iran war won't impact Freedom Shield

By YOOJIN LEE  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — U.S. and South Korean forces will proceed with a major joint military exercise next week despite the United States' involvement in the conflict with Iran, a pair of generals said this week.

The 10-day Freedom Shield exercise — one of the two largest drills conducted by the allies each year — is slated to begin Monday.

Brig. Gen. Moon Han-ok, a deputy commander of the 2nd

Infantry Division, which combines U.S. and South Korean units, said the training will continue as planned.

"Actually, we are strengthening readiness thinking North Korea might show some provocations," she said Wednesday at the division's headquarters on Humphreys. "We will conduct the exercise as planned and maintain readiness."

Freedom Shield comes as the U.S. and Israel are engaged in military operations against Iran, which began Saturday.

During a joint interview with

reporters, Moon and U.S. Army Brig. Gen. W. Bochat said the conflict in the Middle East would not affect the drills.

Bochat — commander of the 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives Command based at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. — traveled to South Korea to support the exercise.

"I don't think it's affecting what we are going to do, and I think we need to work on the [South Korea]-U.S. alliance right now and not get pulled into something else," she said.

During Freedom Shield, the 20th CBRNE Command will provide support across the exercise rather than focus on a single unit, Bochat said. The command will work with South Korea's Chemical, Biological, Radiological Defense Command to address potential threats that might arise during the training.

"We are here to provide as a staff for anything that happens during the exercise," she said. "I think the value proposition of our organization is that we have a persistent stare on the problem."

## Noem out at DHS, GOP Sen. Mullin set to replace her

*Associated Press*

President Donald Trump said he's replacing his embattled Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and will nominate Oklahoma Republican Sen. Markwayne Mullin in her place.

Trump made the announcement on social media Thursday, two days after Noem faced a grilling on Capitol Hill from GOP members as well as Democrats.

Trump said he'll make Noem a "Special Envoy for The Shield of the Americas," a new secur-

ity initiative he said would focus on the Western Hemisphere.

Noem is the first Cabinet secretary to leave during Trump's second term. Her departure caps a tumultuous tenure overseeing immigration enforcement tactics that have been met with protests and lawsuits.

Noem has faced waves of criticism as she's overseen Trump's immigration crackdown, especially since the shooting deaths of two protesters in Minneapolis at the hands of immigration enforcement officers. The former South Dako-

ta governor was also criticized over the way her department has spent billions of dollars allocated to it by Congress.

Frustrations over Noem's execution of the Republican president's hard-line immigration agenda — particularly her leadership after the shooting deaths of the two U.S. citizens in Minneapolis, as well as her handling of disaster response, paved the way for her downfall. She faced blistering criticism from Democrats, and some Republicans, in Congress hearings this week over those issues and others.

Aside from immigration, Noem also faced criticism — including from Republicans — over the pace of emergency funding approved through the Federal Emergency Management Agency and for the Trump administration's response to disasters.

Mullin would need to be confirmed by the Senate, but under a federal law governing executive branch vacancies, he would be allowed to serve as an acting Homeland Security secretary as long as his nomination is formally pending.

# Judge: Refunds due for overturned tariffs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a defeat for the Trump administration, a federal judge in New York ruled Wednesday that companies that paid tariffs struck down last month by Supreme Court are due refunds.

Judge Richard Eaton of the U.S. Court of International Trade wrote that “all importers of record” were “entitled to benefit” from the Supreme Court ruling that struck down sweeping double-digit import taxes President Donald Trump imposed last year under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

The Supreme Court found those tariffs to be unconstitutional under the emergency powers law, including the sweeping “reciprocal” tariffs he levied on nearly every other country. The majority ruled that the president could not unilaterally set and change tariffs because taxation power clearly belongs to Congress.

In his ruling, Eaton wrote that he alone “will hear cases pertaining to the refund of IEEPA duties.” The ruling offers some clarity about the tariff refund process, something the Supreme Court did not even mention in its Feb. 20 decision. Trade

lawyer Ryan Majerus, a partner at King & Spalding and a former U.S. trade official, said he expects the government to appeal or “seek a stay to buy more time for U.S. Customs to comply.”

The federal government collected more than \$130 billion in the now-defunct tariffs through mid-December and could ultimately be on the hook for refunds worth \$175 billion, according to calculations by the Penn Wharton Budget Model.

Eaton was ruling specifically on a case brought by Atmus Filtration, a Nashville, Tenn., company that makes filters and other filtration products, claiming a

right to a tariff refund.

All goods that go through U.S. Customs and Border Protection enter a process called “liquidation,” when the agency issues its final accounting of what is owed. Once liquidated, importers have 180 days to formally contest the duties. After that window closes, the liquidation is legally final.

The judge ordered customs to stop collecting the IEEPA tariffs the Supreme Court struck down last month on goods going through the liquidation process. And if the goods were past that part of the process, the agency would have to recalculate them without the tariffs.

# Judge declines family’s request to close Camp Mystic

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — A Texas judge on Wednesday ordered Camp Mystic to preserve damaged cabins but stopped short of blocking reopening plans after a family of one of the 25 girls and two counselors who died last summer sued to keep the camp closed.

The family of 8-year-old Cile Steward, who was swept away in the flood last Fourth of July and whose body still has not been recovered, had asked District Judge Maya Guerra Gamble to prevent the owners from reopening the facility and to halt any construction while the lawsuit is pending. Their request

for a temporary injunction maintains that any changes at the camp could destroy evidence needed for their lawsuit.

Gamble ruled that Camp Mystic’s owners must not alter or demolish the cabins where campers were housed during the floods and said they must not use the portion of the camp closest to the Guadalupe River where those cabins were located.

“What we’re trying to do is preserve the evidence that’s there so that we can understand, so that future campers will never be put in a situation like this again,” Will Steward, Cile’s father, told reporters after the

hearing.

The campers and counselors were killed when the fast-rising floodwaters roared through a low-lying area of the summer camp before dawn on the Fourth of July. All told, the destructive flooding killed at least 136 people, raising questions about how things went so terribly wrong.

The camp, established in 1926, did not evacuate and was hit hard when the river rose from 14 feet to 29.5 feet within 60 minutes.

“The worst thing you can do is put a bunch of 8-year-olds on a bus and try to drive them out of there. They all would have

drowned,” said Mikal Watts, an attorney for Camp Mystic and its family of owners.

In a packed courtroom Wednesday, family members of the deceased girls wore buttons depicting their images as lawyers for Camp Mystic displayed pictures of trees planted in their memory and architectural renderings of plans to rebuild parts of the camp outside a 1,000-year flood zone.

Attorneys for Camp Mystic have expressed sympathy for the girls’ families but maintained there was little they could have done during the catastrophic flooding that quickly overcame the camp.

# Orphan baby macaque now making monkey friends

Associated Press

ICHIKAWA, Japan — Punch the baby orphan macaque is outgrowing the orangutan plushie that comforted him through early rejection from his mother and other monkeys.

Images of Punch dragging around the toy bigger than him drew attention to the residents of a zoo near Tokyo. When other

monkeys shooed the baby away, Punch rushed back to the toy orangutan, hugging it for comfort.

But he’s been using the toy less. On a recent day, Punch was seen climbing on the back of another monkey, sitting with adults and sometimes getting groomed or hugged.

Punch was abandoned by his

mother after his birth. Zookeepers nursed him and gave him the toy to train to cling, an ability newborn macaques need to survive.

“Helping Punch learn the rules of monkey society and being accepted as a member is our most important task,” said Kosuke Kano, a 24-year-old zookeeper.

Punch was so popular after images of him and his toy showed up online last month, the zoo had to set rules to make visitors be quiet and to limit viewing to 10 minutes to reduce stress for the more than 50 other monkeys.

Punch eschewing the toy most of the time now is a good thing.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Prosecutors appeal new trial for famous inmate

**FL** MIAMI — Miami prosecutors appealed a judge's order granting a new murder trial for an inmate who made national headlines when she became pregnant while behind bars.

Miami-Dade Circuit Court Judge Lody Jean granted Daisy Link, 30, a new trial because Link was "prejudiced" by photos that prosecutors showed jurors — hoping to discredit her self-defense claim — despite the photographs not being introduced as evidence, according to an order filed in court. Jean presided over the trial.

Prosecutors appealed Jean's order to the 3rd District Court of Appeal, according to a document filed in court on Feb. 27.

In October, a jury convicted Link of second-degree murder for killing her husband, Pedro Jimenez, 33, outside her Homestead residence in June 2022. Link shot Jimenez once in the leg.

During closing arguments, prosecutors used the four photographs at the center of the controversy to discredit the testimony of Link's mother, the order says. The photos showed Link's home with no broken windows or damage. Link's mother, however, testified that Jimenez had broken into Link's house through a window.

In her order, Jean said "the errors deprive of a fair and impartial trial and likely materially contributed to the jury's finding of guilty."

Link was at the center of a media storm after she became pregnant while at the Turner Guilford Knight Correctional

Center in 2023. In June 2024, she gave birth to a daughter, conceived by Link and inmate Joan DePaz after Link inseminated herself with DePaz's sperm, which was passed through an air vent. DePaz is now in prison serving a 25-year sentence for murder.

### 'Deadliest Catch' member dies after overboard fall

**AK** JUNEAU — A deckhand on the reality television show "Deadliest Catch," which documents the lives of crab fishermen working in one of the world's harshest environments, died after he was reported to have fallen overboard, the U.S. Coast Guard said Tuesday.

The Coast Guard received a notification shortly after 5 p.m. Feb. 25 from the Aleutian Lady that crew member Todd Meadows had fallen overboard about 170 miles north of Dutch Harbor, Alaska, Chief Petty Officer Travis Magee, a spokesperson with the Coast Guard's Arctic District, said by email Tuesday.

"He was recovered unresponsive by the crew approximately ten minutes later," Magee wrote. Efforts to resuscitate Meadows were unsuccessful, and the crew brought his body to Dutch Harbor, he said.

The Coast Guard is investigating.

Meadows, from Montesano, Wash., was in his first year as a cast member of the Discovery Channel show. He joined the series last May, but no episodes for the new season have aired.

"We lost our brother," Aleutian Lady Capt. Rick Shelford said in a social media post that did not detail how Meadows

died. Shelford called it the "most tragic day in the history of the Aleutian Lady on the Bering Sea."

### Immigration camp closed to visitors due to measles

**TX** EL PASO — A large immigration detention camp in Texas has been closed to visitors and attorneys due to a measles outbreak, a lawmaker said Tuesday.

There are 14 active measles cases at the detention center on the Fort Bliss Army base and 112 people are being isolated, said U.S. Rep. Veronica Escobar, an El Paso Democrat whose district includes the facility, known as Camp East Montana. It will remain closed to visitors and attorneys until March 19 or March 20.

"While on one hand, it is a good thing that the measles outbreak is being taken seriously, on the other hand, I am alarmed that a preventable crisis has created conditions where detainees can only access their lawyers virtually," Escobar said in a statement.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Department of Homeland Security did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The camp opened last year after the Trump administration awarded a contract worth up to \$1.3 billion to Acquisition Logistics LLC, a Virginia contractor that had previously not operated an ICE facility. Detainees have described a camp where an average of about 3,000 people per day live in loud and unsanitary quarters, diseases spread easily and sleep is a luxury.

Measles, an easily preventable disease that was declared eliminated in the United States in

2000, ripped through Texas communities last year, in part because health departments were starved of the funding needed to run vaccine programs. West Texas was hit especially hard.

### Suit challenges program's block on Islamic schools

**TX** HOUSTON — A Houston-area parent is suing state officials, accusing them of religious discrimination for barring Islamic schools from participating in Texas' private school voucher program.

The plaintiff, Mehdi Cherkaoui, alleges the state has "systematically targeted Islamic schools for exclusion" from the \$1 billion tuition support program, preventing Muslim families from applying and using the state money at a school of their choice.

His suit appears to be the first legal challenge to the voucher program that Republican lawmakers pitched last year as a way to help families afford private education, including at religious schools.

Hearst Newspapers reported in early February that no Islamic institutions had been approved for the program even as families began applying to the program. Three Islamic schools had previously been approved, but were later removed from the state's map of approved campuses.

The continued freeze on at least two dozen Islamic schools started in December, when acting Comptroller Kelly Hancock, whose office oversees the program, sought legal approval to block what he has said are foreign terrorism-linked schools from accessing the program.

— From wire reports

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# Holtz, who led Irish to title, dies at 89

Associated Press

Lou Holtz never met an opponent that couldn't beat him. Somehow, he squeaked out nearly 250 wins and a national title while cementing himself both as one of the most lovable but also unlikable characters in college football — a one-of-a-kind iconoclast in a profession brimming with originals.

The pint-sized motivator who restored greatness at Notre Dame and demanded it everywhere else he went died in Orlando, Fla., Notre Dame announced Wednesday. He was 89.

Spokeswoman Katy Loneragan said the family did not provide a cause of death.

"Notre Dame mourns the loss of Lou Holtz, a legendary football coach, a beloved member of the Notre Dame family and devoted husband, father and grandfather," Fighting Irish president the Rev. Robert A. Dowd said in a statement.

His son, Skip, who followed Holtz into coaching, said in a post on X that his father had passed away and was "resting peacefully at home."

"He was successful, but more important he was Significant," Skip Holtz wrote.

Lou Holtz went 249-132-7 over a career that spanned 33 seasons and included stops at Minnesota, Arkansas, South Carolina and, most notably, Notre Dame.

It was there that he won his lone national championship, in 1988, capped with a win over West Virginia in the Fiesta Bowl but highlighted by a 31-30 victory earlier in the season over Miami — one of the notable meetings in the so-called "Catholics vs. Convicts" rivalry of the '80s.

For all the big personalities coursing through college football during the day, none stood bigger than Holtz. He was only 5-foot-10, but commanded the sideline like someone much bigger. The lead-up to the big

games were sometimes his best theatre.

Armed with a homespun brand of folksiness that could trickle into corny but always contained a kernel of truth, Holtz lit up bulletin boards and motivational posters with dozens of memorable quotes and pithy observations, virtually all of them constructed to inspire:

■ "Life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you respond to it."

■ "When all is said and done, more is said than done."

■ "You're never as good as everyone tells you when you win, and you're never as bad as they say when you lose."

He could make any team — from Akron to Army to Alabama — sound like a world beater on any given week. More often than not, his Fighting Irish figured out a way to scratch out the wins.

## Bringing Notre Dame back to greatness

Before Holtz arrived in South Bend, the Irish were wallowing in mediocrity — a mere shell of the program built on a foundation of Knute Rockne, Ara Parseghian, the Golden Dome and Touchdown Jesus. Holtz turned things around quickly and had Notre Dame in the Cotton Bowl in Year 2 and winning the national title the season after that.

His 1988 and 1989 teams won a school-record 23 consecutive games and he beat three teams ranked No. 1 — Miami in 1988, Colorado in 1989 and Florida State in 1993.

The Fighting Irish finished No. 2 in the AP poll in 1993. Holtz left South Bend after the 1996 season with a record of 100-30-2.

"Lou and I shared a very special relationship," said current Notre Dame coach Marcus Freeman, who led the Irish back to the national title game in 2025 — a contest Holtz attended and spiced up with some trolling of the Ohio State program that

beat Notre Dame that day. "Our relationship meant a lot to me as I admired the values he used to build the foundation of his coaching career: love, trust and commitment."

## Detour to NFL, then back to college

The Fighting Irish were the highlight of a head-coaching career that began at William & Mary and North Carolina State and also included a one-year stop in the NFL.

Like so many who mastered the college game, he failed up there, resigning with one game left in a 3-10 campaign with the New York Jets in 1976 and proclaiming "God did not put Lou Holtz on this earth to coach in the pros."

That opened the door at Arkansas, which was one of the four schools he led into the AP Top 25. His teams made 18 appearances there, with eight of those being in the top 10.

After Notre Dame, Holtz transitioned into the TV booth with CBS, promising he would never coach again.

"I said, 'You could put it in granite.' I've got the granite stone," Holtz said. "It wasn't very good granite."

He took an open job at South Carolina, where he had once served as an assistant coach. Despite posting a career-worst 0-11 mark in his first season with the Gamecocks, Holtz went 17-7 over the next two seasons, beat then No. 9 Georgia in the second game of 2000 and also beat Ohio State twice in the Outback Bowl.

He left the sideline for good following the 2004 season and returned to the airwaves, working 11 more seasons with ESPN.

## Core values of trust, getting best from players

On the field, each program he led reached new heights in part because he never wavered from his core values of trust, a commitment to excellence and caring for others.

"I think you have to go in there with a vision of where you want to go and a plan of how you're going to get there," Holtz once said. "You have to hold people accountable, and you have to believe it can be done."

The results were impressive, even if he sometimes used unconventional methods.

He once tackled quarterback Tony Rice following a failed play in practice and was widely critiqued in 1991 when he grabbed a player by the face-mask, pulling him to the sideline and yelling at him the entire way after the player committed a personal foul. Holtz later apologized.

Holtz suspended his leading rusher, Tony Brooks, and leading receiver, Ricky Watters, in 1988 because they were 40 minutes late to a team meal the night before Notre Dame faced then No. 2 USC. The Irish still won 27-10.

At Arkansas, he once suspended three starting offensive players for disciplinary reasons before facing then No. 2 Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl. Arkansas, an 18-point underdog, still won 31-6.

As demanding as Holtz could be, though, he used his charm and eye for good players to recruit top talent. Notre Dame's 1990 class included five future first-round NFL draft picks, and he found unique ways to motivate his team.

"The first thing I said at every practice was, 'Boy, what a great day to work,'" Holtz recounted. "It could be raining. It could be whatever. I'd be, 'Boy, am I glad to be here. No place I'd rather be than here.' I used to say to them, 'I travel all over the world speaking to every major corporation and they'd pay me money. I speak to you for free and you don't have to take notes.'"

In 2008, Holtz was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame and Notre Dame placed a statue of him outside its home stadium.

# Thunder edge Knicks for 4th straight win

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Chet Holmgren had 28 points and eight rebounds, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 26 points and the Oklahoma City Thunder edged the New York Knicks 103-100 on Wednesday night.

Holmgren tied a career high with six 3-pointers and Lu Dort added 16 points for Oklahoma City, which recovered after New York took the lead with a 40-point third quarter, going back ahead early in the fourth and nursing a small advantage the rest of the way.

Jalen Brunson and OG Anunoby missed tying 3-point attempts on the final possession as the Thunder won their fourth straight and snapped the Knicks' three-game winning streak.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 17 points and 17 rebounds for New York. Brunson had 16 points and a season-high 15 assists, but shot just 5 for 18. Anunoby also had 16 points.

**Hornets 118, Celtics 89:** Kon Knueppel scored 20 points

and visiting Charlotte extended its win streak to six games with a win over Boston.

Brandon Miller and LaMelo Ball each added 18 points. Coby White finished with 17 points and six assists to help the Hornets move above .500 for the first time since Oct. 26.

Charlotte never trailed and led by as many as 29 points while committing only five turnovers.

Derrick White led the Celtics with 29 points. Jaylen Brown added 20 points and 11 rebounds as Boston's win streak was stopped at three games.

**76ers 106, Jazz 102:** Quentin Grimes hit two tiebreaking free throws with 16.4 seconds remaining, Tyrese Maxey scored 25 points and short-handed Philadelphia beat visiting Utah.

Grimes finished with 16 points and Jabari Walker had 22 points for the 76ers, who were without Joel Embiid, VJ Edgecombe and suspended Paul George.

Keyonte George scored 30

points for the Jazz, who have lost seven in a row.

**Trail Blazers 122, Grizzlies 114:** Jrue Holiday had 35 points and 11 assists, and Jerami Grant added 30 points as visiting Portland snapped a two-game skid with a win over Memphis.

The Trail Blazers (30-33), making a push to qualify for the postseason, used a 24-19 scoring edge over the final nine minutes to seal the win. They had lost three of their last four and four of their last six games entering Wednesday.

The Grizzlies got double-figure scoring from seven players, but it wasn't enough as they lost their second straight and for the ninth time in 12 games.

**Hawks 131, Bucks 113:** Nickeil Alexander-Walker scored 23 points and visiting Atlanta defeated slumping Milwaukee to win its fifth straight game and move above .500 for the first time since December.

Onyeka Okongwu had 21 points and Jalen Johnson added 20 points and nine assists as the

Hawks erased an early 16-point deficit. CJ McCollum scored 18 points, while Dyson Daniels had 14 points and 10 rebounds.

The Bucks fell five games behind 10th-place Atlanta in the Eastern Conference standings, putting their bid for a 10th straight playoff berth in serious jeopardy. Milwaukee has lost its last four games by a combined 97 points.

**Clippers 130, Pacers 107:** Kawhi Leonard scored 29 points, Bennedict Mathurin scored 23 on 8-for-11-shooting and host Los Angeles won its third in a row, beating Indiana.

Brook Lopez had 17 points for the Clippers while Darius Garland had 12 in his first home game since being acquired in a trade from Cleveland last month.

Pascal Siakam had 29 points in his return after sitting out three games with a left wrist sprain to lead the Pacers, but they lost their seventh in a row and fell to the bottom of the Eastern Conference standings with a 15-47 record.

## Acuff, Brazile each score 28 as No. 20 Arkansas tops Texas

Associated Press

Darius Acuff Jr. had 28 points and 13 assists, Trevon Brazile scored a career-high 28 and No. 20 Arkansas beat Texas 105-85 on Wednesday night to clinch a double bye into the quarterfinals of the SEC Tournament.

After securing a top-four finish in the Southeastern Conference standings, the Razorbacks (22-8, 12-5) will bypass the first two rounds next week in Nashville.

Acuff became the first player in Arkansas history with at least 25 points and 10 assists in a game. He had 19 points and eight assists by halftime as the Razorbacks took a 22-point lead into the break.

Matas Vokietaitis led Texas (18-12, 9-8) with 21 points. He was one of four Longhorns players in double figures.

**No. 7 Houston 77, Baylor 64:** Kingston Flemings had 21 points and seven assists, Emanuel Sharp added 19 points and the host Cougars rallied for a win over the Bears.

Flemings and Sharp combined to shoot 13 of 26 from the field, and Sharp was 5 of 10 on 3-pointers.

Joseph Tugler finished with 14 points and six rebounds and Milos Uzan had 12 points for Houston (25-5, 13-4 Big 12), which used a big second-half run to overcome Baylor (15-15, 5-12).

**No. 15 Purdue 70, Northwestern 66:** C.J. Cox scored 21 of his 27 points in the second half, including a go-ahead 3-pointer with 48 seconds left that helped the visiting Boilermakers edge Nick Martinelli and the Wildcats.

Cox outlasted Martinelli in a memorable duel in the final minutes, sending Purdue to a sorely needed victory. The Boilermakers (23-7, 13-6 Big Ten) had lost two in a row and three of four overall.

Martinelli, a senior playing his final home game, scored 19 of his 28 points in the second half. The Big Ten's leading scorer moved into seventh on the school's

career list with 1,687 points, passing Northwestern assistant coach Bryant McIntosh.

**No. 22 Miami 77, SMU 69:** Tre Donaldson scored 17 points, Malik Reneau had a double-double and the visiting Hurricanes beat the Mustangs, ensuring Miami a double bye in next week's ACC Tournament.

Reneau had 12 points and 11 rebounds while Tru Washington scored 15 for the Hurricanes (24-6, 13-4), who got their seventh win in eight games since the start of February.

**No. 25 Saint Louis 79, Loyola Chicago 65:** Amari McCottry scored 18 points, Dion Brown added 15 and the host Billikens clinched the top seed in the Atlantic 10 Tournament by beating the Ramblers.

Saint Louis (27-3, 15-2) finished unbeaten at Chaifetz Arena for the first time in the building's 18-year history and tied the school record with its 22nd consecutive home win, 19 coming this season.

# Australia, S. Korea win in WBC openers

Associated Press

Australia opened the World Baseball Classic by beating Taiwan 3-0 on Travis Bazzana's homer in the seventh inning and a two-run home run in the fifth by Robbie Perkins at the Tokyo Dome on Thursday.

Bazzana was the first pick in the 2024 MLB amateur draft and is expected to be in Triple-A this season in the Cleveland Guardians organization.

"If you think of the two things I thought about most growing up it was, like, playing in the WBC and being in the Tokyo Dome cause we'd always come here — and playing the World Series and MLB. It's special," Bazzana said.

Of course, his World Series dream is yet to come.

He also credited Perkins for getting Australia in front, removing some pressure.

"It makes slowing down the

environment a touch easier when you have two runs already," Bazzana said. "I was feeling good in the box and got a good pitch to hit."

The two big swings were enough in a tight game dominated by pitching. Taiwan managed only three hits and Australia had seven.

It was a critical victory for Australia, which also won its first game in 2023, defeating South Korea en route to reaching the quarterfinals and a narrow 4-3 loss to Cuba.

Australian starter Alex Wells pitched three no-hit innings and Jack O'Loughlin negotiated the next three and allowed only two hits, setting the stage for the bullpen.

O'Loughlin got the victory with a save for Jon Kennedy. Po-Yu Chen was the losing pitcher.

Following Perkins' homer,

Taiwan put two runners on in the sixth with two out but failed to score. The second to reach base was Chieh-hsien Chen, who was hit by a pitch on the his right hand and left the game.

Meanwhile, South Korea hit four home runs and overpowered the Czech Republic 11-4 in Pool C in the day's second game at the Tokyo Dome.

Shay Whitcomb of the Houston Astros hit two home runs in back-to-back plate appearances, teammate Bo Gyeong Moon pounded a grand slam and Jahmai Jones of the Detroit Tigers added a solo shot in the eighth inning.

Moon's grand slam came in the first inning with one out that chased starter Daniel Padysak, who picked up the loss. Hyeon Jun So got the victory.

Whitcomb hit a solo home run in the third and added a two-run homer in the fifth.

The Czech Republic's Terrin Vavra connected on a three-run homer in the fifth off Woo Joo Jeong to narrow the lead to 6-3, only to be overshadowed by Whitcomb's second homer in the bottom of the inning.

Vavra, the only Czech player with MLB experience, played a handful of games for the Baltimore Orioles.

South Korea is deep in major league talent led by Los Angeles Dodgers infielder Hyesong Kim and San Francisco Giants outfielder Jung Hoo Lee.

South Korea is trying to advance from the pool stage in the WBC after three straight failures.

On Friday in Pool C, Australia faces the Czech Republic and Japan plays Taiwan.

The top two teams in the group advance to the quarterfinals in the United States, joining the top two in the other three groups.

# Hertl, Golden Knights rally past Red Wings in OT

Associated Press

DETROIT — Tomas Hertl scored a power-play goal with 2:49 remaining in overtime and the Vegas Golden Knights rallied from a two-goal, third-period deficit to edge the Detroit Red Wings 4-3 on Wednesday night.

Hertl scored in front off a pass from Mitch Marner as Vegas snapped a three-game losing streak. Marner scored the tying goal with 3:24 left in regulation and had two assists.

Reilly Smith and Ivan Barbashev had the other goals for the Golden Knights, who wrapped up a five-game road trip. Adin Hill made 23 saves in Vegas' third game in four nights.

Simon Edvinsson and Alex DeBrincat each had a goal and an assist for Detroit, which is now 24-1-3 when leading after two periods. Emmitt Finnie also scored for the Red Wings and Cam Talbot made 21 saves.

The Golden Knights' second-leading scorer, Mark Stone, missed the game due to an upper-body injury.

**Devils 4, Maple Leafs 3 (SO):** Paul Cotter and Jesper Bratt scored in the shootout, Connor Brown forced overtime with a tying

goal with 2:21 left in the third period and host New Jersey beat Toronto, sending the Maple Leafs to their fifth straight loss.

Timo Meier and Arseny Gritsyuk also scored in regulation for the Devils, who have won three in a row and improved to 25-8-1 when scoring at least three goals. Jacob Markstrom made 24 saves.

William Nylander, Matias Maccelli and Matthew Knies had goals for Toronto, which hasn't won since beating Edmonton 5-2 on Feb. 3 — its last game before the Olympic break. Anthony Stolarz made 44 saves.

**Ducks 5, Islanders 1:** Cutter Gauthier scored twice in a span of just over three minutes in the first period, backup Ville Husso stopped 42 shots and host Anaheim beat New York.

Beckett Sennecke, Ryan Poehling and Frank Vatrano also had goals to help the Ducks to their 13th win in 16 games.

David Rittich had 20 saves for the Islanders, who had their five-game winning streak snapped despite outshooting Anaheim 43-25. Anders Lee scored the 304th goal of his career, tying Clark Gillies for the fourth-most in franchise history.

**Blues 3, Kraken 2:** Dylan Holloway scored the go-ahead goal in the second period, Brayden Schenn had three assists and visiting St. Louis beat Seattle.

Robert Thomas added a goal and an assist, and defenseman Logan Mailloux also scored as the last-place Blues improved to 9-17-3 on the road with their second consecutive victory away from home against a playoff contender.

Kraken defenseman Vince Dunn had a goal and an assist. Jaden Schwartz also scored for Seattle, which had won five in a row at home without giving up more than two goals in any of them. Philipp Grubauer stopped 24 shots.

**Hurricanes 6, Canucks 4:** Nikolaj Ehlers sealed his seventh career hat trick with an empty-net goal and visiting Carolina held off Vancouver for a victory.

Sean Walker, Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho each added a goal and an assist for the Hurricanes. Seth Jarvis had two assists and Brandon Bussi stopped 18 shots.

Filip Hronek had a goal and two assists for the Canucks, who have lost seven straight and have just two wins in their last 23 games (2-17-4).