

US may need to secure Iran's uranium

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

U.S. special operations forces may be needed to secure Iran's uranium stockpiles, analysts say, as uncertainty over missing nuclear material persists amid American airstrikes on Iranian military targets.

Thousands of U.S. and Israeli attacks have destroyed warships, missile launchers, facilities and weaponry. But questions about the fate of canisters containing enriched uranium could trigger action on the ground.

In June, the U.S. carried out bunker-busting attacks on Iran's nuclear program that were believed to set the program back years.

Still, nuclear proliferation experts warn that nearly 1,000 pounds of uranium could be weaponized if centrifuges re-

main operational.

"It would take the mother of all commando raids — plus heavy equipment — to retrieve the canisters," Barbara Slavin, an expert on Iran with the Stimson Center think tank, wrote in response to a question from Stars and Stripes.

President Donald Trump on Saturday didn't rule out such a move in the future.

"Right now, we're just decimating them, but we haven't gone after it," Trump said aboard Air Force One, referring to Iran's nuclear sites. "But (it's) something we could do later on. We wouldn't do it now."

Suspected locations for the material include damaged tunnel complexes at Iran's Esfahan site and inside facilities at Fordow and Natanz.

Recovering the material

could require digging through rubble in harsh terrain while a war is underway, analysts say. Given uncertainty over who ends up controlling Iran's nuclear sites, the U.S. could face a scramble to seize enriched uranium and centrifuges.

"If the current conflict leads to the erosion and eventual loss of control by the Iranian regime, and the emergence of instability or a power vacuum, the security of nuclear materials, technology and knowledge will be a major issue," wrote Daniel Salisbury and Alexander Bollfrass, experts with the International Institute for Strategic Studies in an analysis.

A regime downfall could create an opening for theft of centrifuges and materials by groups like Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic State, Slavin wrote in a Stimson Center analysis co-

authored with proliferation experts Richard Cupitt and Christina McAllister.

Attempts by the U.S. military to recover the material likely would involve elite special operations forces supported by heavy equipment and technical experts, analysts say.

"To truly effect both regime change and secure the vulnerable WMD-relevant material in Iran, the United States may yet have to put boots on the ground," the Stimson Center report said.

"Verifying compliance with dismantling its nuclear enrichment, missile, and drone programs, and investigating potential biological and chemical weapons programs and, if confirmed, dismantling them, will certainly take large numbers of investigators and inspectors at the very least," the report said.

Iran drone strikes water desalination plant in Bahrain

By SHANNON RENFROE
Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — An Iranian drone damaged a water desalination plant in Bahrain on Sunday, raising fears about attacks on the region's drinking-water infrastructure as Operation Epic Fury stretches into its second week.

Bahrain's Ministry of Interior said the drone struck the plant Sunday morning and accused Tehran of "indiscriminately" attacking civilian targets. The Electricity and Water Authority confirmed that water and electricity services to residents were not affected.

The island kingdom of Bahrain is home to thousands of U.S.

service members and their families. Many live in the capital of Manama near a U.S. Navy base that has been attacked repeatedly since U.S. and Israeli forces began striking Iran on Feb. 28.

The desalination plant attack came a day after Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps accused the U.S. of striking an Iranian desalination plant on Qeshm Island, which is north of the United Arab Emirates and Oman in the Persian Gulf.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Sunday's strike on Bahrain's facilities was retaliation for the U.S. attack. The U.S. military has not confirmed striking the Iranian

plant.

Iran has fired counterstrikes at more than a dozen nations in the last week. The recent attacks have raised worries about the conflict expanding to critical civilian infrastructure.

Desalination plants convert seawater into drinking water for millions of people across the Middle East.

The region relies on over 400 Persian Gulf desalination plants run by Gulf Cooperation Council states, which produce about 40% of the world's desalinated water. Desalination provides roughly 90% of Kuwait's drinking water; 86% in Oman; 70% in Saudi Arabia; and 42% in the UAE, according to the Washing-

ton-based Arab Center.

Also in Bahrain on Sunday, the interior ministry said falling missile debris injured three people and damaged a university building in the Muharraq area, an island northwest of Manama. Air raid sirens warned residents to take shelter.

Missile fragments struck a main road, injuring one person and damaging several shops, causing evacuations.

On Friday, Iranian drones slammed into two high-rise residential buildings in Manama, sending residents scrambling down darkened stairwells as a separate drone targeted a building that houses the Israeli Embassy.

USS Ford in Mideast as rhetoric intensifies

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The Navy's newest and world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford is now operating in the Middle East's waterways, an arrival that could signal intensified U.S. attacks against Iran.

Ford, along with the destroyer USS Bainbridge, transited the Suez Canal on Thursday, according to photos released by the Defense Department on Friday. Ford had been operating in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea as part of Operation Epic Fury.

The aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and several destroyers are in the Arabian Sea.

On Saturday, President Donald Trump promised that the U.S. would pummel Iran even

more intensely along with potential strikes against other unidentified groups. Some Iranian-backed militias and groups, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, have entered the war in support of Iran.

"Today Iran will be hit very hard!" Trump wrote in a post to his Truth Social account. "Under serious consideration for complete destruction and certain death, because of Iran's bad behavior, are areas and groups of people that were not considered for targeting up until this moment in time."

Trump's post followed a pre-recorded address on Iranian state television the same day from Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian during which he apologized for the country's at-

tacks on its neighbors. He insisted that Tehran would halt them and suggested they were caused by miscommunication in the ranks, The Associated Press reported on Saturday.

Pezeshkian also said that a demand by the U.S. for an unconditional surrender is a "dream that they should take to their grave," according to the AP.

In his post on Saturday, Trump characterized Iran's apology as an admission of defeat to its Middle East neighboring countries that came only after "relentless U.S. and Israeli attack."

Ford's arrival in the Red Sea comes as Iran has continued attacking nearby countries and U.S. military installations in the region.

As of early Saturday after-

noon, air defense sirens in Bahrain's capital city of Manama had warned of incoming Iranian missiles or drones at least five times since early morning. On Friday, Iranian drone strikes in Manama targeted two residential buildings and a facility housing the Israeli Embassy.

The city is home to U.S. Naval Support Activity Bahrain, which hosts U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet. Thousands of sailors and their families reside in Manama.

The base is one of numerous U.S. installations that have come under attack across the Middle East since the war began a week ago. Bases in Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Jordan also have been targeted.

USS Nimitz not finished yet, deploys to SOUTHCOM area

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

BREMERTON, Wash. — USS Nimitz departed Friday for military exercises in the Southern Command area, the Navy said Saturday.

"Nimitz is deploying to the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility this spring as part of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet's Southern Seas 2026 deployment," Lt. Cmdr. Peter Pagano, spokesman for the carrier, said in an email from aboard the ship.

The Navy's oldest carrier, commissioned in 1975, had been scheduled to depart its homeport at Naval Base Kitsap near Seattle to arrive in mid-April to begin decommissioning. It arrived at Kitsap in December from Asia and the Middle East at the end of what the Navy at the time said was its final deployment.

Pagano said details of the de-

ployment are still under development. The Navy has not announced plans for South Seas 2026. The exercise last took place in 2024 and included port calls in Peru, Chile and Brazil by the carrier USS George Washington.

Nimitz will still shift homeports from Kitsap to Naval Station Norfolk, Va. The Nimitz is too large to use the Panama Canal, so it must make the estimated 12,400-nautical-mile voyage from Bremerton, around Cape Horn at the tip of South America, then north to Norfolk.

Pagano did not comment on how participation in the exercise might affect the timeline for decommissioning the Navy laid out last year.

The departure of the Nimitz leaves one carrier, USS Ronald Reagan, at Kitsap. The USS Ronald Reagan is undergoing a 17-month overhaul scheduled to end later this year.

Trump's grieve with families at dignified transfer for six

Associated Press

DOVER AIR FORCE BASE, Del. — President Donald Trump on Saturday joined grieving families at Dover Air Force Base at the dignified transfer for the six U.S. soldiers killed in the war in the Middle East.

The dignified transfer, a ritual that returns the remains of U.S. service members killed in action, is considered one of the most somber duties of any commander in chief. During his first term, Trump said bearing witness to the transfer was "the toughest thing I have to do" as president.

"It's a very sad day," Trump told reporters on Air Force One as he returned to Florida later Saturday afternoon, saying that he was "glad we paid our respects." He said the relatives of the deceased are "great people, great parents, wives, family" and said that the "parents were so proud."

Both Trump and Vice President JD Vance were present for the transfer, as were their spouses.

Those killed in action were Maj. Jeffrey O'Brien, 45, of Indianola, Iowa; Capt. Cody Khork, 35, of Winter Haven, Fla.; Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Marzan, 54, of Sacramento, Calif.; Sgt. 1st Class Nicole Amor, 39, of White Bear Lake, Minn.; Sgt. 1st Class Noah Tietjens, 42, of Bellevue, Neb.; and Sgt. Declan Coady, 20, of West Des Moines, Iowa, who was posthumously promoted from specialist.

As is protocol, Trump — wearing a blue suit, red tie and a white USA hat — did not speak during the transfer. The president saluted as each flag-draped transfer case was carried from the military aircraft to awaiting transfer vehicles, which would take them to a mortuary facility to prepare them for their final resting place.

Suspected tornadoes hit Michigan, Oklahoma

Associated Press

UNION CITY, Mich. — Authorities searched through rubble and debris in southern Michigan on Saturday after suspected tornadoes tore through the region and killed four people, including a 12-year-old boy, during powerful storms also blamed for two deaths in eastern Oklahoma.

First responders from multiple agencies in the Union Lake area near Union City looked for more possible victims and worked to clear roads, authorities said.

Photos and videos posted on social media showed flattened homes and downed trees in a lakeside neighborhood.

The National Weather Service

said an initial assessment confirmed that an EF3 tornado with winds of at least 150 mph had struck the Union Lake area Friday.

The weather service also reported seven preliminary tornado tracks in eastern Oklahoma that same day, according to the state's emergency operations center.

The threat of severe weather continued Saturday in the nation's midsection, with tornado watches posted in the afternoon for eastern Ohio, northern West Virginia and western Pennsylvania and New York.

Three people were killed and 12 were injured in the Union Lake

area, according to the Branch County (Mich.) Sheriff's Office.

About 50 miles southwest of Union Lake, a 12-year-old boy died and several other people were injured during a possible tornado, the Cass County Sheriff's Office said. Sheriff Clint Roach said in a Facebook post that Silas Anderson's parents found him injured and provided first aid, but he later died at a hospital.

Disaster relief workers went door to door in the Union City and Three Rivers areas to offer meals and cleanup supplies.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said she would declare a state of emergency in Branch, Cass and St. Jo-

seph counties.

In Beggs, about 30 miles south of Tulsa, Okla., a tornado was blamed for the deaths of two people in a house on Friday, the Okmulgee County Sheriff's Office said. Two others were taken to a hospital.

The tornado cut a roughly 4-mile path of damage in Okmulgee County including Beggs, said Jeff Moore, the county's emergency manager.

Large trees toppled and power outages were reported.

Suspected tornadoes also were reported in northern parts of Tulsa, where a building at the Tulsa Tech Peoria campus was damaged.

US lost 92K jobs last month as unemployment ticked up

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — American employers unexpectedly cut 92,000 jobs last month, a sign that the labor market remains under strain. The unemployment rate blipped up to 4.4%.

Hiring deteriorated from January, when companies, nonprofits and government agencies added a healthy 126,000 jobs, the Labor Department reported Friday. Economists had expected 60,000 new jobs in February.

Revisions also cut 69,000 jobs from December and January payrolls.

The surprisingly weak employment picture in February adds to the economic uncertainty over the war with Iran, which has caused oil prices to surge and saddled business and consumers with unforeseen costs.

"The job market is struggling in the face of so many headwinds," said Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union. "Companies are going to be even more reluctant to hire this spring until the war ends and they can see consumers still spending. It's a tense

time for the U.S. economy."

The job market had been expected to rebound this year from a lackluster 2025 when it was buffeted by President Donald Trump's erratic tariff policies, his purge of the federal workforce and the lingering effects of high interest rates. In 2025, employers added just 15,000 jobs a month. Hopes for a 2026 rebound rose after January hiring came in above expectations.

"Just when it looked like the labor market was stabilizing, this report delivers a knock-down blow to that view," said Olu Sonola, head of U.S. economics at Fitch Ratings. "It's bad news whichever way you look at it."

The job losses were widespread.

Construction companies cut 11,000 jobs last month, which likely reflects frigid weather. And health care firms shed 28,000 jobs after a four-week strike by more than 30,000 nurses and other front-line workers at Kaiser Permanente in California and Hawaii. Health care has been one of the job market's strong points.

Judge: Moves by Trump pick that shut VOA illegal

Associated Press

A federal judge ruled Saturday that Kari Lake, President Donald Trump's choice to lead the U.S. Agency for Global Media, did not have legal authority to take the actions she's done to largely dismantle the Voice of America. The decision's effect on VOA operations was not immediately clear.

Lake called the decision by U.S. District Court Judge Royce C. Lamberth "bogus" and said it will be appealed.

Voice of America, which has transmitted news coverage to countries around the world since its formation during World War II, is operating with a skeleton staff in only a handful of languages after Lake terminated contracts and laid off most of its employees.

Lake had been chosen by Trump to effectively lead the agency that oversees Voice of America and other services like Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

But she has not received Senate confirmation for her role, and Lamberth said she did not

have authority to act in that capacity due to laws that guard against unqualified government appointments.

"Only the Appointments Clause or the Vacancies Act's exclusive structure may authorize service as a principal officer, and Lake satisfies the requirements of neither the statute nor the Constitution," Lamberth wrote.

Lamberth was ruling on a lawsuit filed by Patsy Widakuswara, Voice of America's White House bureau chief, and colleagues Kate Neeper and Jessica Jerreat. They were among the employees laid off by Lake and have been fighting the actions.

"We feel vindicated and deeply grateful," the journalists said in a statement. They said the ruling against Lake "is a powerful step toward undoing the damage she has inflicted on this American institution that we love." They said they are still trying to determine what the action effectively means for colleagues whose careers have been in limbo.

China seeks 'landmark year' for US relations

Associated Press

BEIJING — China said it hopes this year will be a “landmark year” for its relationship with its biggest competitor, the U.S., striking a largely positive tone ahead of an expected summit between the leaders of the two countries later this month.

China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi, speaking Sunday at a press briefing on the sidelines of an annual meeting of China’s ceremonial legislature, said that it was a “big year” for the relationship between the two world powers.

He said that while there are many differences, “the two heads of state have personally maintained good exchanges at the highest level,” providing a

level of “strategic guarantee” for the bilateral relationship.

President Donald Trump is due to visit Beijing for a summit with China’s President Xi Jinping at the end of March.

While Wang did not confirm the visit, he signaled that Beijing is looking for a less fraught relationship.

“The agenda for high-level exchanges is already on our table. What needs to be done now is for both sides to make thorough preparations for this, foster a suitable atmosphere, manage existing differences, and eliminate unnecessary distractions,” said Wang. “China’s attitude has always been positive and open, and the key is for the U.S. side to meet us halfway.”

The two countries have been at loggerheads for years, especially since Trump launched a trade war with China during his first term.

Last year, he hit China with the highest trade duties of his worldwide tariffs, citing a major trade imbalance with the country. Trump and Xi agreed to a temporary trade truce last October that hit pause on the highest of the tariffs but did not resolve any underlying issues.

The minister’s speech has set the overall tone for U.S.-China relations for the year, said George Chen of consultancy The Asia Group, indicating “a welcoming gesture from Beijing for Trump to come and visit.”

The “Chinese side is prepared to talk,” he said, adding that Beijing wants to be clear that China is ready to host Trump.

Wang’s comments also reflected a China that views itself on the ascendant. In this role, it would defend the position of the United Nations, which is undergoing layoffs and reductions after the U.S. withdrew from multiple U.N. initiatives.

Beijing is one of the five members of the U.N. Security Council that holds a permanent seat and veto power, and has been able to leverage its position to build relationships, while also filing a diplomatic void left by the U.S. since Trump’s first term.

Police investigating explosion outside US Embassy in Oslo

Associated Press

OSLO — Police in Norway were investigating an explosion early Sunday outside the U.S. Embassy in Oslo, the capital of the Scandinavian country, officials said.

No injuries were reported. Police received reports of a “loud bang” or explosion around 1 a.m., Oslo police said in a news release.

The explosion was caused by some sort of incendiary device, according to Frode Larsen, leader of the Oslo police joint unit for investigation and intelligence.

Investigators believe the embassy was the target and are searching for the perpetrators and their motive.

Larsen said that the embassy’s entrance had damage, but no arrests have been made so far.

Local media reported that

people nearby said that the street was blanketed in thick smoke following the blast.

Police are currently seeking to gather more information and speak with any potential witnesses.

PST, the Norwegian police security service, called in additional personnel following the incident but hasn’t changed the country’s terror threat level, according to a statement from communication adviser Martin Bernsen.

“This is an unacceptable incident that is being treated with the utmost seriousness,” said Astri Aas-Hansen, Norway’s minister of justice and public security.

“The police have stated that they are investigating the case with significant resources, and that nothing indicates the situation poses any danger to the public.”

Iranian cleric says new supreme leader selected

The Washington Post

BEIRUT — Iranian officials have chosen the next supreme leader to replace Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed Feb. 28 in the U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran, a senior Iranian cleric said Sunday without naming the person. Overnight, Israeli forces expanded their attacks to Iran’s energy infrastructure, setting fuel depots ablaze in Tehran, and a strike on a hotel in central Beirut brought the war with Hezbollah to the middle of the Lebanese capital.

“The election regarding the leadership has been held and the leader has been determined,” said Ayatollah Ahmad Alam al-Hoda, a senior member of the deciding body — known as the Assembly of Experts — according to Iran’s semiofficial Mehr news agency. A public announcement is expected.

There had been intense speculation that the assembly would choose one of Khamenei’s sons, Mojtaba Khamenei. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

had been pushing his candidacy but had encountered resistance from other power brokers, including Ali Larijani, the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, a Western security official told The Washington Post.

It is unclear how many figures from Khamenei’s inner circle have been killed in the expanding U.S.-Israeli operation.

The announcement came just hours after the Israel Defense Forces warned ahead of the Assembly of Experts meeting that “Israel will continue to follow any successor and anyone who seeks to appoint a successor,” warning that it would “not hesitate to target” any of the dozens of members participating in the meeting.

“Iran having a new leader would help them advance their war against us,” IDF spokesperson Nadav Shoshani said. “Iran not having a leader,” he said, “is something that makes it hard for them to operate the war machine against us.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man sentenced for fire in congressman's office

WI MADISON — A Wisconsin man who allegedly told police he tried to set fire to a Republican congressman's office last year because he was angry that the lawmaker backed a bill requiring TikTok's Chinese owner to sell off its U.S. operations was sentenced Thursday to seven years in prison.

Caiden Stachowicz, 20, of Menasha, pleaded no contest to an arson charge in November. Prosecutors dropped burglary and property damage counts in exchange for Stachowicz's no contest plea, which isn't an admission of guilt but is treated as such for the purposes of sentencing.

According to a criminal complaint, a police officer responded to a fire outside Republican Rep. Glenn Grothman's office in Fond du Lac, about 55 miles northwest of Milwaukee, at around 1 a.m. on Jan. 19, 2025, and saw Stachowicz standing nearby.

He told the officer that he started the fire because he doesn't like Grothman, according to the complaint. He initially planned to break into the office and start the fire inside. But he couldn't break the window, so he poured gas on an electrical box behind the building and around the front of the building, lit a match and watched it burn, according to the complaint.

He said he wanted to burn down the office because the federal government was shutting down TikTok in violation of his constitutional rights and peace was no longer an option, the complaint states.

Hospital settles claim of religious discrimination

NC RALEIGH — Rex Healthcare has agreed to pay \$150,000 to settle a federal lawsuit that claimed the medical center discriminated against an employee who refused to get vaccinated against COVID-19 for religious reasons.

Rex had granted the employee a religious exemption for the flu vaccine in 2019 and 2020, according to the lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. But Rex denied four requests for an exemption for COVID-19, according to the EEOC, "rejecting her sincerely held religious belief that receiving vaccines is inconsistent with God's will."

Rex fired the employee, Heather Goeller, in 2021 for refusing to get vaccinated, according to the EEOC's lawsuit. Goeller was working remotely during the pandemic and did not have direct contact with patients, according to the lawsuit.

Students get guaranteed bathroom, water breaks

PA PHILADELPHIA — For the first time, Philadelphia School District students have guaranteed bathroom and water breaks. Recess is promised. Silent lunches and collective punishment are forbidden.

Call it a victory for joy. Philadelphia's school board just adopted the district's first-ever comprehensive wellness policy, two years after a group of parents began pushing a "joy campaign" because, parent Jamilya Carter said, "we refused to accept the unacceptable."

In the past, members of Lift

Every Voice — a grassroots, Black-led parent organization growing in numbers and clout in the city — said students inside some district schools weren't allowed to drink water during the day. Entire classes were punished for the misdeeds of one or two students. And sometimes, parents sent their children to school in diapers because children weren't always allowed to use the bathrooms.

The group of moms weren't trained advocates, but they learned quickly, pushing the school board and district to codify rights that weren't always guaranteed.

Now they are — on Thursday night, the school board signed off on bathroom and water breaks and mandatory recess and movement breaks for every 90 minutes of seated time for elementary school students.

Jury awards \$24M in suit against stem cell center

WA SEATTLE — A King County jury has awarded \$24 million to the family of a man who died a day after treatment at a Seattle stem cell center.

Mike Trujillo was 62, a long-time electrician who ran an electrical company in Colorado. After being diagnosed with ALS in 2017, he continued to work full time, and hike and exercise often.

In early 2019, he heard about Seattle Stem Cell Center through online marketing, which promoted stem cell treatments for many serious medical conditions, including ALS. Trujillo participated in a free consultation with the center, and became hopeful the therapy could help treat or cure the dis-

ease.

At the time, Trujillo was taking Coumadin, a blood-thinning medication, which the lawsuit, filed in King County Superior Court, says he told the center about.

In February 2019, he underwent his first treatment. His second procedure was in early April. He was never told to stop taking his medication during either of the procedures, the complaint says. The April spinal injection ended up causing significant brain bleeding, the complaint alleges, and he was pronounced dead a day later.

Lawmakers consider statewide weed sales tax

AK JUNEAU — A Fairbanks lawmaker is pushing to overhaul Alaska's marijuana tax structure, as cultivators and retailers say the current structure is an "existential threat" to their business.

HB 91 would phase out the existing \$50 per ounce tax levied on cultivators to replace it with a 6% sales tax paid by consumers, modeled after the "sin tax" in place for alcohol and cigarettes. The bill's sponsor, Fairbanks Democratic Rep. Ashley Carrick, argued that the flat per-ounce tax puts Alaska growers at a structural disadvantage, especially as retail prices fall and illegal sellers undercut licensed businesses.

Alaska has among the highest cultivation tax rates in the nation for marijuana.

Anchorage Democratic Sen. Matt Claman is sponsoring a separate bill that cuts the current excise tax from \$50 per ounce to \$12 per ounce, without introducing a sales tax.

— From wire reports



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Boozer scores 26 as Duke tops UNC

Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — Cameron Boozer had 26 points, 15 rebounds and five assists to help No. 1 Duke beat No. 17 North Carolina 76-61 on Saturday night in a rivalry rematch.

Maliq Brown added 15 points as Duke led by a single possession early after halftime before taking over with 16 unanswered points in what ballooned to a 24-2 surge.

The Blue Devils (29-2, 17-1) completed a second straight one-loss run through ACC regular-season play, this one coming a month after losing at North Carolina on Seth Trimble's last-second 3-pointer. Duke has won eight straight, including a neutral-court victory over then-No. 1 Michigan and a romp against No. 13 Virginia.

The loss capped a rough 24 hours for the Tar Heels (24-7, 12-6). They appeared on the verge of getting star Caleb Wilson back from a fractured left hand just in time for March Madness — and maybe this game — only for him to suffer a season-ending broken right thumb during a non-contact drill Thursday.

Derek Dixon had 17 points for North Carolina, which trailed just 47-44 on Trimble's drive with 16:45 left before Duke made its decisive push. The Tar Heels went six minutes without a point and managed one basket over more than 10 minutes as Duke blew the game open.

No. 2 Arizona 89, Colorado 79: Brayden Burries scored 22 of his season-high 31 points in the second half, fellow freshman Koa Peat had 25 points and visiting Arizona rallied from 11 down to beat Colorado.

Arizona (29-2, 16-2), which clinched its first Big 12 Conference title with a victory over No. 6 Iowa State on Monday night, finished with the most regular-season wins in program history.

Peat made 12 of 15 shots and

kept the Wildcats in the game with 19 points in the first half. Arizona was 0 of 6 from 3-point range in the first half and trailed 36-25 with 4:25 left in the period.

Marquette 68, No. 4 UConn 62: Nigel James Jr. scored 19 points and UConn coach Dan Hurley was ejected in the final second as host Marquette hung on for a victory that prevented the Huskies from claiming a share of the Big East regular-season title.

UConn (27-4, 17-3) trailed 64-62 when the Huskies' Silas Demary Jr. drove to the basket while being defended by Ben Gold. Demary's shot hit the glass and the rim before the ball bounced off a couple of players and hit the floor.

Marquette's Chase Ross won the battle for the loose ball and got fouled with one second left. Hurley argued the lack of a foul call and was whistled for two technical fouls before heading to the locker room while shaking his head.

No. 5 Florida 84, Kentucky 77: Thomas Haugh had 20 points and nine rebounds as visiting Florida beat Kentucky to end the regular season with an 11-game winning streak.

Boogie Fland added 16 points and six assists for the Gators (25-6, 16-2 Southeastern Conference).

No. 6 Iowa State 86, Arizona State 65: Joshua Jefferson, Tamin Lipsey and Milan Momcilocic had 16 points apiece, and host Iowa State scored 24 straight points to break open a victory over Arizona State.

Iowa State (25-6, 12-6 Big 12) outscored ASU 49-24 in the second half, the Sun Devils' fewest points after half since they managed just 21 in a loss to the Cyclones last season.

No. 7 Houston 82, Oklahoma State 75: Reserve Chase McCarty scored 14 of his 20 points in the second half and visiting Houston rallied for a win over Oklahoma State.

Kingston Flemings added 13 points, five rebounds and nine assists for Houston (26-5 overall, 14-4 Big 12 Conference), which clinched the No. 2 seed in the Big 12 Tournament and a spot in the quarterfinals on Thursday in Kansas City.

BYU 82, No. 10 Texas Tech 76: Robert Wright III scored 23 of his 27 points in the second half, rallying BYU to a victory over visiting Texas Tech.

Wright made his first seven shots after halftime to help the Cougars (21-10, 9-9 Big 12) snap a three-game losing streak and beat a top-10 opponent at home for the second time this season.

AJ Dybantsa added 21 points, six rebounds and four assists for BYU.

No. 13 Virginia 76, Virginia Tech 72: Ugo Onyenso and Malik Thomas each had 16 points, Sam Lewis scored 15 and host Virginia held off Virginia Tech.

The Cavaliers (27-4, 15-3) had already clinched the No. 2 seed in next week's Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament, and are all but assured of a spot in the NCAA Tournament field. The Hokies (19-12, 8-10) entered squarely on the NCAA bubble were in need of an AP Top 25 win.

No. 14 Kansas 104, Kansas State 85: Freshman star Darryn Peterson scored 27 points in his likely Allen Fieldhouse finale, Tre White and Melvin Council Jr. had memorable senior send-offs of their own, and Kansas routed Kansas State.

Peterson, the potential No. 1 pick in this year's NBA draft, was an efficient 10 of 15 from the field for the Jayhawks (22-9, 12-6 Big 12).

Wisconsin 97, No. 15 Purdue 93: John Blackwell made five 3-pointers and scored 25 points, Nick Boyd added 23 and Wisconsin set a school-record with 18 3-pointers in a road game in a win over Purdue.

The Badgers (22-9, 14-6 Big Ten) have won three straight overall and six of their last eight

after going 18-for-34 from beyond the arc.

Fletcher Loyer had 23 points and six 3-pointers, and Braden Smith had 20 points and nine assists for Purdue.

No. 16 Alabama 96, Auburn 84: Labaron Philon and Aden Holloway each scored 21 points and host Alabama beat Auburn in the regular-season finale for both teams.

Alabama (23-8, 13-5 Southeastern Conference) never trailed, making its first six shots — three by Philon, who scored his 1,000th career point in the game.

No. 20 Arkansas 88, Missouri 84 (OT): Arkansas beat host Missouri in overtime to make John Calipari the fifth Division I men's basketball coach to win 900 games.

Meleek Thomas scored 28 and Trevon Brazile had 19 points and nine rebounds for Arkansas (23-8, 13-5 Southeastern Conference).

Mark Mitchell scored a career-best 32 for Missouri (20-11, 10-8), which has lost two straight heading into the conference tournament.

Louisville 92, No. 22 Miami 89: Ryan Conwell scored 18 of his 24 points in the first half, Adrian Wooley hit the go-ahead 3-pointer with 18.4 seconds remaining and visiting Louisville wasted a 12-point lead before hanging on to beat Miami.

J'Vonne Hadley scored 16 for the Cardinals, while Wooley and Isaac McKneely each scored 15.

No. 24 Vanderbilt 86, No. 23 Tennessee 82: Tyler Tanner scored 25 points to lead visiting Vanderbilt past Tennessee.

The Commodores (24-7, 11-7 in Southeastern Conference) led by double digits most of the game.

George Mason 86, No. 25 Saint Louis 57: Jahari Long had 21 points and nine assists, and host George Mason routed Saint Louis in the regular-season finale for both teams.

Russell wins F1's opener in Australia

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Mercedes' George Russell won a thrilling season-opening Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix, with teammate Kimi Antonelli following him home, after a double-stacked pit stop under the virtual safety car outmaneuvered a lightning quick start by Ferrari.

It was McLaren's 61st one-two result and first since 2024's Las Vegas Grand Prix.

"We knew it was going to be challenging," Russell said. "I go onto the grid; I saw my battery level. I have nothing in the tank, made a bad start and honestly some really tight battles with Charles (Leclerc).

"I was really glad to cross the finish line, but honestly, thank you so much for the whole team because it's been a long time coming to have this car beneath us, and I'm yeah, going to start off in a better way."

Pole sitter Russell had a sluggish start, as did Antonelli who dropped to seventh, allowing Ferrari's Leclerc — making best use of his smaller turbo for a quicker spool-up and getaway — to take the lead into turn one.

The Monégasque then diced for the top spot with Russell, passing and repassing, before the lap 12 deployment of the virtual safety car to cover the stopped Red Bull car of Isack Hadjar saw both Mercedes cars take an opportunistic pit stop — a move that proved decisive.

Russell's teammate was again relieved to fight back to second, having dropped down to seventh at the start before weaving his way back into the podium positions.

"Yeah, the racing was incredible," Antonelli said. "The first few laps, the overtake is so powerful that you can give a lot of action. So, it was really good fun at the begin-

ning and yeah, now, a bit of rest and looking forward to China."

Leclerc was third for his first podium for Ferrari since Mexico last year, with the 28-year-old frustrated to not go one place higher after the Scuderia erred by failing to follow Mercedes' quick thinking for a cheap pit stop under the virtual safety car, as the rest of the field drove at a slower pace.

But Leclerc says Ferrari's failure to take the stop, too, was not a mistake; instead that Ferrari's decision was based on the fact the team believed there would be more safety car appearances as the race went on.

"I don't regret it," Leclerc said at the official post-race press conference. "It was a wanted choice, a wanted and conscious choice. Looking from (Free Practice 1) to now, there's been at every session a car that was stopped, at least one car.

"We knew that there were very

high chances that this was not going to be the only VSC of the race, and so we thought that it was better for us to maybe wait for another one — and that's always a gamble. Of course, we didn't know that this will happen.

Leclerc, though, didn't think the win was possible.

"I don't think so, but maybe I'm wrong," he said. "Yeah, it looked like Mercedes maybe had a bit more pace than us today. But, maybe not as much as what we saw yesterday, so that's a good thing. But I don't think we could have won."

Leclerc's teammate Lewis Hamilton was fourth, 0.6 seconds behind at the flag, having chased him hard in the closing laps. The seven-time world champion was vocal over the radio at Ferrari's strategic blunders.

"At least one of us should have come in," Hamilton said as both Mercedes pitted.

Thunder defeat Warriors for a fifth straight victory

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 27 points, and the Oklahoma City Thunder defeated the Golden State Warriors 104-97 on Saturday night for their fifth straight win.

Gilgeous-Alexander made just 6 of 15 field goals, but he made 14 of 15 free throws to maintain his usual production. He has scored at least 20 points in 125 consecutive games. He can tie Wilt Chamberlain's record of 126 straight games with at least 20 points Monday at home against Denver.

Oklahoma City is 5-0 since Gilgeous-Alexander returned from an abdominal strain. The defending champion Thunder have the league's best record and became the first team in the league to win 50 games this season.

Isaiah Joe added 18 points and Jaylin Williams had nine points

and 14 rebounds for Oklahoma City.

Gui Santos had 22 points and 11 rebounds, Brandin Podziemski scored 17 points and Draymond Green added 16 for the Warriors.

Magic 119, Timberwolves 92: Desmond Bane scored 30 points, Paolo Banchero added 25 points and 15 rebounds, and visiting Orlando won its third straight game by beating Minnesota.

Jalen Suggs added 14 points and Tristan da Silva had 11 points for the Magic, who moved atop the Southeast Division.

Minnesota's Anthony Edwards scored 34 points, including 13 of 14 from the free-throw line.

Nets 107, Pistons 105: Ziaire Williams made two 3-pointers in the final three minutes and visiting Brooklyn ended a 10-game losing streak by rallying to beat Detroit.

Brooklyn trailed by 23 points in the third quarter and were still down by double figures with 5:29 left, but outscored Detroit 18-6 down the stretch.

Michael Porter Jr. had 30 points and 13 rebounds for the Nets, while Williams finished with 23 points.

Tobias Harris had 18 points and 10 rebounds for Detroit.

Hawks 125, 76ers 116: Jalen Johnson had 35 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists and Nickeil Alexander-Walker added 24 points as host Atlanta beat Philadelphia for its season-best sixth straight victory.

CJ McCollum scored 13 of his 17 points in the first half and added seven assists, Dyson Daniels finished with 15 points and nine rebounds, and Onyeka Okongwu had 10 points as the Hawks overcame a seven-point halftime deficit.

Tyrese Maxey led the 76ers

with 31 points.

Bucks 113, Jazz 99: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 27 points, nine rebounds and eight assists as host Milwaukee snapped a four-game skid by beating Utah.

Antetokounmpo did all that while playing just 27 minutes as the Bucks continue to monitor the two-time MVP's workload in his return from injury.

Clippers 123, Grizzlies 120: Kawhi Leonard had 28 points, Darius Garland scored 11 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter and visiting Los Angeles held on for a victory over Memphis.

Benedict Mathurin finished 21 points and 10 rebounds, and Derrick Jones Jr. added 16 points as the Clippers won for the fourth time in five games despite hitting only four 3-pointers, a season low. Los Angeles was 4 for 17 from distance.

Ty Jerome led Memphis with 23 points and seven assists.

Thompson, Sabres extend streaks

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Tage Thompson and Jason Zucker scored less than two minutes apart in the second period and the Buffalo Sabres held on to win their sixth game in a row, 3-2 over the Nashville Predators on Saturday.

Josh Doan scored 16 seconds into the third period for a 3-1 lead and Alex Lyon made 23 saves for Buffalo, which played the first of a five-game homestand and has now earned a point in 13 of its last 15 games.

Thompson extended his point streak to a career-best 10 games (six goals, five assists) with his goal with 7:21 to play in the second period. Zucker made it 2-1 with 5:43 to play in the period.

Zachary L'Heureux scored his first goal of the season to give the Predators a 1-0 lead at 1:17 of the second period and Matthew Wood added a power-play goal with less than four minutes to play to pull Nashville within 3-2. Juuse Saros made 21 saves.

With an assist on L'Heureux's goal, Nashville's Jonathan Marchessault now has 300 career NHL assists.

The Sabres are now 29-2-0 this season when they have the lead after two periods.

The Predators, coming off a 6-3 win over Boston, have now lost four of their last five games.

Bruins 3, Capitals 1: Viktor Arvidsson scored the go-ahead goal on a breakaway 4:28 into the third period and Boston beat Washington for its 12th straight

home victory.

Pavel Zacha also scored for the Bruins, Jeremy Swayman made 22 saves and Elias Lindholm added an empty-netter.

Aliaksei Protas scored for Washington in its first game since trading longtime defenseman John Carlson to Anaheim before Friday's trade deadline. He was with the team for nearly 17 seasons and it affected the locker room.

Devils 6, Rangers 3: Jack Hughes had a hat trick and an assist, Nico Hischier scored the go-ahead goal, and host New Jersey beat New York for its fourth straight win.

Hischier scored a power-play goal at 8:05 of the third — his team-leading 21st — to give the Devils a 4-3 lead before Hughes scored twice, including one into an empty net, for his fourth career hat trick.

Jesper Bratt and Dawson Mercer also scored for the Devils, who are nine points out of a playoff spot.

Flyers 4, Penguins 3 (SO): Trevor Zegras scored the only goal of the shootout to help visiting Philadelphia defeat Pittsburgh.

Owen Tippett, Alex Bump and Denver Barkey scored for the Flyers, and Dan Vladar stopped 20 shots.

Tommy Novak, Rickard Rakell and Erik Karlsson scored for the Penguins, and Stuart Skinner stopped 12 shots a day after Pittsburgh's Evgeni Malkin was suspended for five

games.

Canadiens 4, Kings 3: Juraj Slafkovsky scored his second goal 49 seconds before he set up captain Nick Suzuki for the tie-breaker with 4:33 to play, leading Montreal's rally for a victory over host Los Angeles.

Jake Evans also scored and Jakub Dobes made 35 saves for the Canadiens, who salvaged the final stop of their three-game California road trip with a late surge led by their offensive stars.

Montreal had its NHL-leading 20th comeback victory one night after making a late rally — and then blowing a lead — in a wild 6-5 loss to Anaheim.

Lightning 5, Maple Leafs 2: Nikita Kucherov had three assists in a four-goal first period and added another in the third to give him 100 points on the season as visiting Tampa Bay cruised past listless Toronto.

Jake Guentzel and Brandon Hagel had a goal and an assist for Tampa Bay, which snapped a four-game slide.

The Maple Leafs have dropped seven straight since returning from the NHL's Olympic break.

Mammoth 5, Blue Jackets 4 (OT): Logan Cooley scored his second goal of the game at 2:08 of overtime and visiting Utah overcame Columbus' tying third-period burst to notch its third straight victory.

Utah holds the first wild-card spot in the Western Conference.

Jets 3, Canucks 2 (OT): Josh

Morrissey scored 1:49 into overtime to become the highest-scoring defenseman in franchise history, lifting host Winnipeg to a victory over NHL-worst Vancouver.

Mark Scheifele also scored in regulation and had two assists and Connor Hellebuyck made 21 saves for the Jets, who extended their points streak to six games.

Senators 7, Kraken 4: Shane Pinto had a goal and two assists in Ottawa's four-goal spree in the first and second periods in a win over host Seattle.

Linus Ulmark made 17 saves to help Ottawa improve to 3-1 on a five-game trip. The Senators are four points behind Boston for the final wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference.

Seattle holds the second wild card in the West after San Jose's overtime loss to the New York Islanders.

Islanders 2, Sharks 1 (OT): Bo Horvat scored with 39.6 seconds left in overtime, lifting visiting New York to a win over San Jose.

Macklin Celebrini scored his 32nd goal of the season for the Sharks.

Flames 5, Hurricanes 4: Joel Farabee scored twice and had an assist to lead host Calgary to a victory over Carolina.

Morgan Frost had a goal and two assists for the Flames, who snapped a four-game winless skid.

Seth Jarvis had a goal and two assists for the Eastern Conference-leading Hurricanes.

Schwarber homers as US rolls past Britain in WBC

Associated Press

Kyle Schwarber hit a two-run homer and Gunnar Henderson had four hits and two RBIs as the United States rolled to a 9-1 victory over Britain on Saturday at the World Baseball Classic.

Team USA improved to 2-0 in Pool B at Houston, while Britain

dropped to 0-2.

Nate Eaton homered on Tarik Skubal's first pitch to give Britain a quick lead it held until the fifth inning. But his teammates couldn't muster anything else at the plate.

U.S. hitters had managed just one line when Ernie Clement

reached on an error by third baseman Ivan Johnson to start the fifth. Pete Crow-Armstrong doubled before Clement scored on a wild pitch by Andre Scrubb to tie it at 1.

Schwarber followed with a 427-foot drive that landed near the back of the second deck in

right field to put the United States on top 3-1.

There were two outs in the inning when Henderson's two-run single made it 5-1.

Reigning NL Cy Young Award winner Paul Skenes pitched for the U.S. on Monday night against Mexico.