

Iran vows revenge for strikes

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran's secretive new supreme leader on Thursday vowed to keep up attacks on Gulf Arab countries and use the effective closure of the strategic Strait of Hormuz as leverage against the United States and Israel. It was his first public statement since being chosen to succeed his father, who was killed in an Israeli strike.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, 56, who Israel suspects was wounded in the opening salvo of the war, has not appeared in public since then. In the statement read by a state TV anchor, he vowed to avenge those killed in the war, including in a strike on a school that killed over 165 people.

The statement signaled a will-

ingness to continue the war that has disrupted global energy supplies, international travel and the relative safety enjoyed by the Gulf Arab states. Iran's unrelenting attacks on shipping and energy infrastructure in the Persian Gulf had earlier pushed oil back above \$100 a barrel.

U.S. and Israeli strikes have exacted a heavy toll on Iran's leadership, military and ballistic missile program but have failed to topple the government, which President Donald Trump has at times suggested is his goal.

Iran is trying to inflict enough global economic pain to pressure the United States and Israel to halt their bombardment, which began on Feb. 28. Those strikes killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the

younger Khamenei's wife.

Trump has meanwhile promised to "finish the job," even though he claimed Iran is "virtually destroyed." He said in a social media post Thursday that ensuring Iran does not develop a nuclear weapon was a higher priority than soaring oil prices.

The U.S. military said Thursday that American forces have now struck more than 6,000 targets since the operation against Iran began, including more than 30 minelaying vessels.

The U.N. refugee agency said up to 3.2 million people in Iran have been displaced by the ongoing war. It said most have fled from Tehran and other major cities toward the north of the country or rural areas. Around 800,000 people have been internally displaced in Lebanon,

prompting fears of a humanitarian crisis.

Khamenei's first statement signaled a continuation of his late father's strategy in confronting the United States and Israel. He called on Gulf Arabs to "shut down" U.S. bases in the region, saying protection promised by Washington was "nothing more than a lie."

British officials said several U.S. personnel were injured in drone strikes in northern Iraq on Wednesday night.

Brig. Guy Foden said a number of drones hit a base in Irbil that houses both British and American troops. Another officer, Lt. Gen. Nick Perry, said there were no British casualties, while the U.S. sustained some casualties but "nothing too serious."

EUCOM chief sees Russians as long-term threat

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. allies in Europe should be strong enough to lead the defense of the Continent by 2035, according to a top U.S. commander, who warned on Thursday that Russia could challenge NATO before that time.

U.S. European Command's Gen. Alexis Grynkeiwich said in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee that any potential peace deal between Russia and Ukraine wouldn't end the threat that the Kremlin currently poses to Europe.

"From a purely military perspective, when 500,000 battle-hardened Russian troops are re-

positioned to other areas, we'll have to pay attention to that as a potential military threat and be cognizant of what it could pose to the alliance," Grynkeiwich said.

Questions about the future course of the Russia-Ukraine war, now in its fourth year, come as the Pentagon also is reviewing its force presence in Europe.

A new Defense Department strategy calls for NATO allies to develop militaries capable of handling the conventional defense of Europe.

What isn't clear is how fast the Pentagon expects that transition to happen and how high future American force levels could be in Europe, where the

U.S. has about 80,000 troops based.

"I worry the administration is singularly focused on the speed of transition and not the strategic implications of getting it wrong," Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., said during the hearing.

Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., who chairs the committee, echoed those concerns, saying now isn't the time for lowering U.S. troop levels on the Continent.

"The best way to reduce the need for defense in Europe is to degrade the threat posed by Russia's military," Wicker said, suggesting that the Pentagon should be directing more support to Ukraine and the ongoing fight there.

But Grynkeiwich said increased spending by NATO member countries, which have agreed to elevate their respective defense budgets to 5% of gross domestic product, should set them on a path to play the dominant role in the defense of Europe.

By the end of the decade, "they won't be all the way there, but certainly by 2035," Grynkeiwich said when asked when Europe would be able to be in a position to lead its own conventional defense across the continent.

Besides playing a role in the defense of Europe, Grynkeiwich tied the U.S. force presence there to the campaign against Iran.

Japan's missile moves boost defense strategy

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

Japan will deploy upgraded long-range antiship missiles to its southernmost main island this month, a move analysts say underscores Tokyo's growing effort to strengthen defenses against threats from China and North Korea.

The Type-12 surface-to-ship missile will deploy March 31 to Camp Kengun on Kyushu, according to a news release Monday from Japan's Ministry of Defense.

Security analysts say the deployment reflects Japan's push to expand its military capabilities while remaining within the bounds of its pacifist constitution.

The move is a "symbolically important step" as Tokyo increases its defense capabilities alongside Washington and Manila, said Mark Davidson, a former director of the U.S. Global Counterterrorism Communications Center and a professor at Temple University's Japan Campus.

Recent developments across the region show allied militaries strengthening their ability to counter Chinese naval forces along the First Island Chain, which stretch from the Kuril Islands to Borneo and include Japan, Taiwan and the northern Philippines.

The Philippine marine corps introduced its BrahMos missile system in November. U.S. Marines deployed the Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System, known as NMESSIS, to Japan's Ishigaki Island near Taiwan in September and to the Philippines in April. The U.S. Army also fired its Typhon missile sys-

tem during last year's Talisman Sabre drills in Australia.

Together, these steps represent a "synchronized series of capability upgrades among the three militaries that will allow joint defense of the First Island Chain and denial of sea access to the Chinese Navy," Davidson said.

The upgraded Type-12 missile has a range of roughly 620 miles, compared with about 62 miles for its predecessor, the Type-88. From Kyushu, the upgraded weapon could reach parts of China's coastline and North Korea.

Beijing disputes Tokyo's control of the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, while Pyongyang continues to expand its ballistic missile and nuclear programs.

Former U.S. Navy officer Luke Collin, principal at the Asia Group advisory firm in Washington, D.C., described the deployment as a stabilizing development.

"Japan has interpreted its constitution as permitting the maintenance of Self-Defense Forces for national defense, and this capability is part and parcel of that," he wrote in an email Wednesday.

The Type-12's standoff capability could deter attempts to alter the status quo around Taiwan, said Junjiro Shida, a senior associate professor of international politics at Meio University in Nago city.

Beijing has said it will reunify self-governing Taiwan with mainland China, by force if necessary.

"The Japanese government has strengthened its stance of first contributing to its own stability and the stability of the region through its own efforts," Shida said.

Navy orders last Japan-based cruiser to return to San Diego

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The last U.S. Navy cruiser based in Japan will soon depart for the United States, closing out a decade-long deployment with the U.S. 7th Fleet.

The guided-missile cruiser USS Robert Smalls, formerly known as the USS Chancellorsville, will relocate to San Diego as part of a permanent change of station, according to a Tuesday news release from the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Replacing the cruiser is the guided-missile destroyer USS Mustin, which departed Naval Base San Diego for Japan on Feb. 23, Naval Forces Japan also announced Tuesday.

Spokespeople for the 7th Fleet directed all questions to Naval Surface Forces Pacific in San Diego, which did not immediately respond to an email request for comment.

The Robert Smalls is one of 10 remaining Ticonderoga-class cruisers in active service and

the last to be homeported overseas. Its departure and the arrival of the Mustin are part of a routine force rotation, Naval Forces Japan said in its release.

Congress in the 2019 Defense Department budget set a 10-year limit for Navy ships deployed overseas following back-to-back collisions of the destroyers USS Fitzgerald and USS John S. McCain in 2017. Both were based at Yokosuka for over a decade when they collided with commercial vessels in separate incidents.

The Mustin previously deployed to Yokosuka between July 2006 and June 2021. It returned to San Diego that year for a maintenance and modernization period that was estimated to last about two years, Pacific Fleet said.

The Mustin's arrival will support "the United States' commitment to the defense of Japan" and the Pentagon's policy to deploy "the most capable units" to the region, according to Naval Forces Japan.

China tracks US Navy plane over Taiwan Strait

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Navy surveillance aircraft flew over the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday, just weeks ahead of an anticipated visit to China by President Donald Trump.

The P-8A Poseidon — a long-range aircraft equipped with advanced sensors — flew through international airspace over the 110-mile-wide waterway that separates mainland China from Taiwan, according to the U.S. 7th Fleet.

"The aircraft's transit of the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment

to a free and open Indo-Pacific," Cmdr. Matthew Comer, 7th Fleet spokesman, said Thursday. "The United States flies, sails and operates anywhere international law allows."

Comer acknowledged requests for additional details on the flight, including whether it was prompted by a specific event or if the aircraft interacted with foreign military forces.

The Poseidon's passage comes less than three weeks before Trump's visit to China from March 31 to April 2, where he's expected to meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Trump seeks to replace tariff revenue

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Wednesday opened a new trade investigation into manufacturing in foreign countries — an effort that comes after the Supreme Court struck down President Donald Trump's previous use of tariffs by declaring an economic emergency.

Trump and his team have made clear that they're seeking to replace the hundreds of billions of dollars in lost revenues after the Supreme Court's February ruling by using different laws to establish new tariffs.

In this case, the administration is starting investigations under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which could eventually lead to new import taxes. But

U.S. Trade Representative James Greer, in a Wednesday call with reporters, said he didn't want to prejudge the outcome of the process.

"The policy remains the same — the tools may change depending on, you know, the vagaries of courts and other things," said Greer, stressing that the goal was to protect American jobs.

The start of the process to fully replace Trump's prior tariffs could invite a return of much of the drama that rattled the global economy last year. The since-overturned tariffs led to new frameworks with U.S. trade partners — and it's unclear what impact a new set of import taxes could have on those agreements. Greer described the trade frameworks as standing on their

own and suggested they were separate from the new investigation.

This new set of tariffs could play out against the backdrop of a war in Iran and midterm elections in which Democrats are running against Trump's Republican allies by emphasizing that the public is owed tariff refunds following the Supreme Court decision.

Greer said that the investigation would examine excess industrial capacity and government backing that could give foreign companies an unfair advantage over U.S. companies.

The entities subject to the investigation include China, the European Union, Singapore, Switzerland, Norway, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand,

South Korea, Vietnam, the self-governing island of Taiwan, Bangladesh, Mexico, Japan and India. The government is looking for what it deems to be persistent trade surpluses with the U.S. and policies such as subsidies and the suppression of workers' wages, among other factors.

The administration is also rolling out a Section 301 investigation to ban the importing of goods made by forced labor.

Greer indicated that there could be additional Section 301 investigations over issues such as digital service taxes, pharmaceutical drug pricing and ocean pollution, among other possibilities. The Commerce Department has separate trade investigations under Section 232 of the 1962 Trade Expansion Act.

Trump touts cutting drug prices, slams Rep. Massie

Associated Press

HEBRON, Ky. — President Donald Trump on Wednesday touted lowering prescription drug prices in Ohio and campaigned in the Kentucky district of Rep. Thomas Massie, calling his fellow Republican a "nutjob" he said should lose their party's upcoming primary.

It was a full day on the road as Trump attempted to project economic and political strength even as war in Iran has scrambled financial markets and hurt his poll numbers.

Massie is one of the few remaining Republicans who has dared defy Trump in Congress, and the president took the unusual step of holding a rally in Massie's northern Kentucky district. He told the crowd, "I just can't stand this guy," and called him "stupid" and a "disaster."

"We've got to get rid of this loser," said Trump, who has endorsed Massie's challenger, Ed Gallrein, in Kentucky's primary

on May 19.

The event felt like vintage Trump from his reelection bid in 2024 — so much so that he briefly called Gallrein, a farmer, business owner and retired Navy SEAL, to the stage. There, Gallrein declared, "Tom Massie stands with the ladies of 'The View.' Mr. President, we stand with you!"

The trip was a test of Trump's ability to cleanse his party of those who oppose him, but also to try to stay on an economic message increasingly strained by the military action launched by the U.S. and Israel against Iran.

Trump's swing began with a tour of Thermo Fisher Scientific in suburban Cincinnati. There, he discussed his administration's efforts to persuade major manufacturers to lower prescription medication prices so that they are closer to what is charged abroad.

"I used some very strong negotiating talent to get every single country to almost immediately approve," he told reporters.

President's sons target federal drone contracts

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Among dozens of companies competing for Pentagon contracts to supply attack drones, one stands out.

Powerus is flush with cash and ballooning in size as it buys up rivals and has one other advantage: It is partly owned by President Donald Trump's two oldest sons.

The Trump family has drawn criticism for expanding its real estate business into foreign countries that are trying to curry favor with the president and for making billions of dollars off cryptocurrency ventures benefiting from his policies. Grabbing less attention are new ownership stakes in federal contractors providing everything from rocket parts and rare earth magnets to AI chips and computer hardware.

"It's corruption," said Kathleen Clark, a government ethics expert at Washington University School of Law in St. Louis. "Government decision makers will feel pressure to use contract

awards to enrich the president's family."

The latest Trump venture is hoping to win some of the \$1.1 billion set aside by the Pentagon to build up a U.S. manufacturing base for armed drones now that the Trump administration put a ban on importing them from China.

Powerus says there is no problem with it bidding for government money that could make the president's sons richer.

"There's no conflict there. Whatever they're doing, is what they're doing," said co-founder Brett Velicovich, referring to Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump. "Our focus at the company has nothing to do with politics."

Founded by U.S. Army Special Operations veterans about a year ago, Powerus makes drones mostly for commercial uses. But it is bulking up fast to supply the Defense Department with armed drones like the ones being used by Ukraine and Russia and Iran.

States rush to set penny-free rounding rules

Associated Press

Months after the last of the United States' 1-cent coins were pressed, some states are beginning to offer their own 2 cents on the penny problem by setting rounding guidance for cash purchases.

President Donald Trump announced early last year an end to penny production, saying it was wasteful. It cost 3.7 cents to make each 1-cent coin in 2024, according to the U.S. Mint. The move led to a shortage of pennies in cash registers last summer, forcing consumers and businesses to confront a penniless future in which making exact change would be difficult.

The Treasury Department has said it will continue circulating the roughly 114 billion pennies that exist for "as long as possible." Pennies must still be accepted as payment.

One solution to the penny problem is rounding to the nearest nickel, using a practice called symmetrical rounding. If the final price, after taxes, ends in one, two, six or seven cents, payment in cash rounds down. For example, \$1.91 or \$1.92 becomes \$1.90. If the price ends in three, four, eight or nine, cash payment rounds up. For \$1.98 or \$1.99, the consumer pays \$2.

A bill introduced last year in Congress and passed out of the

House financial services committee would apply symmetrical rounding across the country. The bill hasn't been voted on in the House and would still need to move through the U.S. Senate before reaching Trump's desk.

In the meantime, bills to deal with penniless cash transactions have passed both chambers and await the governor's signature in Arizona, Florida, Oregon, Tennessee, Virginia and Washington.

Rounding bills have been introduced in about two dozen states since late last year, according to an Associated Press analysis.

The Treasury wrote online

that prices would be "rounded down just as often as they will be rounded up, so there should be no overall effect on consumer prices."

But researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond used a 2023 survey to show prices that didn't end in zero or five were especially likely to end in eight or nine. Payment amounts could be different when multiple items are purchased or depending on the tax rate, but overall, prices more often being rounded up would lead to millions of dollars gained by businesses and lost by consumers collectively, amounting to a few pennies lost per person.

Epstein accountant testifies on wealth

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House lawmakers were digging into Jeffrey Epstein's sprawling financial portfolio on Wednesday as a committee deposed his former accountant and tried to understand his connections to some of the world's wealthiest men.

Richard Kahn, who worked closely with Epstein for years and now serves as an executor of his estate, appeared for the closed-door deposition on Capitol Hill. He told lawmakers that he had not personally seen evidence of Epstein's sexual abuse but provided a fuller picture of how Epstein acquired his wealth. The wealthy financier made hundreds of millions of dollars over two decades, during which he struck up friendships with some of the world's most powerful men.

Kahn "was under the impression that Epstein made his money as a tax adviser and a financial planner," said Rep. James Comer, the Republican chair of the House Oversight Commit-

tee. Lawmakers argued that a fuller picture of Epstein's finances could help the public understand how he was able to get away with trafficking and sexually abusing underage girls.

"Jeffrey Epstein's sex trafficking ring would not have been possible without Richard Kahn, who managed Epstein's money for years, authorized payments, including payments to victims and survivors," said Rep. James Walkinshaw, D-Va., who added that Kahn told them he was unable to recall details of some of the transactions he was asked about.

Kahn has said that he was unaware of Epstein's abuse and had not seen any of his victims.

Comer, R-Ky., also said that lawmakers confirmed during the deposition that Epstein received significant amounts of money from former retail shopping chain executive Les Wexner, hedge fund manager Glenn Dubin, tech entrepreneur Steven Sinofsky, investor Leon Black and the Rothschilds, a wealthy banking family.

Zelenskyy hopes US approves drone deal

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine is awaiting White House approval for a major drone production agreement proposed by Kyiv last year, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday, as countries scramble to modernize their air defenses after the Iran war exposed shortcomings.

The proposed U.S.-Ukraine deal would cover various types of drones and air defenses that operate as a single system capable of protecting against swarms of hundreds or even thousands of Iranian-designed Shahed drones and missiles, Zelenskyy said in a message on social media.

Russia has fired tens of thousands of Shahed drones at Ukraine since it invaded its neighbor just over four years ago. It launched a swarm of more than 800 drones and decoys in its biggest nighttime barrage. Iran has responded to joint U.S.-Israeli strikes by firing the same type of drones at targets in the Middle East.

Ukraine has pioneered the development of cut-price drone killers, some of which cost a few thousand dollars, that have rewritten the air defense rule book.

The conflict unfolding in the Middle East might prompt American officials to sign the drone production proposal, Zelenskyy said.

Ukraine is keen to lock in future foreign support for its ongoing effort to thwart Russia's invasion, and drone production agreements could bring Kyiv some diplomatic leverage in negotiations with Moscow.

U.S.-mediated talks seeking to stop Europe's biggest conflict since World War II are on hold due to the Iran war.

Zelenskyy arrived in NATO member Romania on Thursday, a day before he visits French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris, as new research indicated Russian oil revenue that helps drive its invasion of Ukraine has risen since the Iran war began.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

IndyCar to race around Mall, not Capitol grounds

DC WASHINGTON — The IndyCar race planned for this summer as part of America's 250th anniversary won't go through the Capitol grounds, but will instead follow a 1.66-mile, seven-turn street circuit course around the National Mall, event organizers announced Monday.

It comes after President Donald Trump signed an executive order in January establishing the Freedom 250 Grand Prix of Washington, D.C.

Some involved with the race had initially hoped it would zip even closer to the Capitol, but organizers described facing headwinds.

"Because we're racing on Capitol Hill, you're violating a lot of situations for the branding, speed, decibel levels, all things you can't do on Capitol Hill and require a congressional bill," said Bud Denker, president of Penske Corp. and chair of the event.

The Freedom250 Grand Prix will take place Aug. 22-23 as the first auto race ever held in the nation's capital around the museums and monuments. The event will be free to the public.

Registered sex offender fails to qualify for ballot

CA FRESNO — Rene Campos, a registered sex offender who brought national attention to Fresno's City Council race, will not appear on the June primary ballot.

Campos failed to obtain the 20 nomination signatures required from residents before the filing deadline, which was last Friday.

James Kus, Fresno County Clerk and Registrar of Voters, confirmed to The Fresno Bee that Campos will not be among the crowded list of candidates for the District 7 City Council seat on the June ballot.

Campos visited the elections office on the morning of the filing deadline, flanked by TV news cameras, and completed the base paperwork required to begin a candidacy, Kus said. Campos was then provided with nomination signature petition pages and directions when he needed to collect and return those signatures, Kus said. But Campos never returned to the elections office before the deadline with sufficient nomination signatures to qualify as a candidate on the ballot.

Judges say they face more threats than ever

WA SEATTLE — The rule of law is protected by a thin, black-robed elite, and it's in trouble.

That's according to experienced judges in Washington state, who say threats against the judiciary are at an all-time high, fed by a presidential administration that vilifies dissent and scoffs at the separation of powers.

A trio of judges from both sides of the Cascades spoke on the issue at a March 4 town hall at the offices of the law firm K&L Gates, where security to attend was tighter than that in many Washington courthouses.

In Stevens County, for instance, there are no deputies or marshals to protect judges. If something amiss happens in a courtroom, the judge has to call 911. The same holds true in Adams County.

"Judges can't defend themselves," said King County Superior Court Judge Andrea Robertson, who sits on the court's security committee. Her talk on judicial independence and security was underscored by a PowerPoint presentation containing excerpts from obscene, horrific and mostly unprintable threats received by judges there. It's worse now than ever before, she said.

120 more women join unnecessary-surgery suit

VA NORFOLK — More than 100 additional women have joined a lawsuit against Chesapeake Regional Medical Center and its executives that alleges they allowed an obstetrician and gynecologist to perform unnecessary surgeries on his patients.

In two separate lawsuits filed in Chesapeake City Court since Dec. 29, the plaintiffs — now totaling more than 900 — claim the hospital and its executives are responsible for allowing Dr. Javaid Perwaiz to continue operating there after hospital staff continuously sounded alarms.

"This is the largest civil rights violation in health care in recent U.S. history," said Anthony DiPietro, co-counsel for the plaintiffs.

Some were told they had cancer to justify the removal of their reproductive organs, when they did not, the lawsuit states. Others were forced to deliver their children prematurely, at times resulting in infant deaths, life-altering injuries and disabilities.

The lawsuit alleges that staff — including nurses, administrators and physicians — repeatedly elevated their con-

cerns about Perwaiz's practices to the hospital's executives, who either did not respond or asked staff to stay quiet.

Perwaiz is serving a 53-year federal prison sentence after a jury found him guilty in 2021 of defrauding private and public insurance programs of over \$20.3 million by performing unnecessary procedures, including irreversible sterilizations, on female patients.

Police officer wounded, gunman killed during call

MD BALTIMORE — A police officer responding to a burglary call in Baltimore was shot in the leg Tuesday by a gunman who was killed by another officer, authorities said.

A woman jumped out of a window during the tense confrontation and another woman was held at gunpoint by the man before he was shot, Police Commissioner Richard Worley said.

"It was relatively quick because he was firing on our officers," Worley said.

The officer with a leg wound was in stable condition at University of Maryland Shock Trauma Center. Dr. Thomas Scalea praised a "buddy" who applied a tourniquet at the scene.

"We're just so thankful that the officer or any other folks in that neighborhood were not severely harmed," Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott told reporters. "Our thoughts are with him and his family, and even the family of the deceased."

The man who died was related to people at the home, Worley said.

No names were released.

— From wire reports

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Angel City's King makes healthy return

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — That Savy King not only survived a life-threatening on-field cardiac event but is now poised to return this season for Angel City is nothing short of miraculous, and she knows it.

During the second half of Angel City's home match against the Utah Royals last May 9, King sat on the field in the 74th minute, appearing dazed. Then everything went black.

The 20-year-old's heart had stopped.

Trainers rushed to King's side and she was given CPR. Fans and fellow players were shaken as she was treated on the field for some 11 minutes before she was rushed away. Once at the hospital, King underwent surgery to repair an anomalous left coronary artery, a rare congenital defect that had previously gone undetected.

Ten months later, King is preparing for the National Women's Soccer League sea-

son.

"I for sure have gone through ups and downs, but for the most part, I just am grateful that I'm able to play again," she said.

While King was hospitalized, there was a controversy brewing. The NWSL Players Association was among those that said Angel City's match should have been suspended after King's collapse. Instead, the game was continued with some 12 minutes of stoppage time.

The league said later the match should have been suspended.

NWSL Commissioner Jessica Berman said the league learned from this experience and new procedures were put in place to determine the best course of action when such incidents arise.

Long recovery

King spent the summer at home watching her teammates on television and relearning to do the things that had once

come naturally to her.

She had six weeks of physical therapy to get back on her feet, then went into a cardiac rehabilitation process. Three days a week for three months she exercised while doctors closely monitored her heart. By September she was able to do limited training with her team.

As she worked her way back, she was also hatching a plan. Through King's leadership, all 16 NWSL teams gave their players, coaches and staff training this year on hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation and use of an automatic external defibrillator (AED).

Through her foundation, Savy King of Hearts, King wants to amplify the message that "you can be a hero with just two hands." Her partner in the initiative, the American Heart Association, says hands-only CPR can double and even triple survival chances.

Her foundation is also bringing AEDs to communi-

ties that don't have them and she's putting on soccer camps that include CPR training for the kids and their parents.

Comeback kid

A Southern California native, King's mother, Karrie King, was a professional bi-athlete. King herself ran track in high school before playing at North Carolina under coach Anson Dorrance for a season.

She was the second-overall pick in the 2024 NWSL draft by expansion Bay FC and played 18 games for the club.

This Valentine's Day, she was removed from Angel City's season-ending injury list and appeared in two of the Los Angeles-based team's pre-season matches. Angel City opens the regular season on Sunday at home against the Chicago Stars.

King said there are no restrictions on her and she does not need special monitoring or tests. She has no fear about continuing her playing career.

Undefeated Texas credits pitching for fast start to season

Associated Press

Texas has produced its fastest start in more than two decades thanks largely to a dominant pitching staff.

The unbeaten Longhorns also are producing at the plate and on the basepaths as they get ready to open Southeastern Conference play.

Texas gave up more than four runs in a game for the first time on Saturday in an 11-9 victory over USC Upstate. It hardly mattered because the Longhorns were so dominant offensively.

Texas (15-0) has scored at least 10 runs in each of its last five games, the first time the Longhorns have accomplished that feat since 1989. They've outscored opponents 147-36.

The Longhorns visit Texas State on Tuesday before starting their SEC schedule on Friday against Mississippi.

"We're still an evolving team," Texas coach Jim Schlossnagle told reporters after a 13-3 win over USC Upstate on Sunday. "We just need to stay healthy."

The last time the Longhorns remained unbeaten this deep into a season is 2005, when they started 16-0 and went on to win the national championship.

Right-hander Ruger Rojas (4-0, 1.23 ERA) and lefty Dylan Volantis (2-0, 1.54) lead an outstanding pitching staff. Volantis has moved into a starting role after making 12 saves and being named Baseball America's freshman of the year last season.

Yet Texas showed this weekend it can win in plenty of different ways.

Texas hit five home runs in a 14-2 win over USC Upstate on Friday and stole 14 bases in the three-game series.

USC's pitching prowess

The only other undefeated Division I team is Southern California (15-0), which has matched its best start to a season. USC's 1988 team also won its first 15 games.

USC posted back-to-back shutouts in a three-game sweep of Illinois that opened its Big Ten schedule and lowered the Trojans' team ERA to 1.47.

LSU's struggles

LSU's visit to Vanderbilt this

weekend pits two national powers seeking to find their footing.

Vanderbilt (10-7) won three straight before falling to North Dakota State in the finale of a three-game series Sunday, but the Commodores had dropped four consecutive games before that stretch.

LSU, which has won two of the last three College World Series, has dropped four of its last five games.

The Tigers (12-5) lost to Northeastern and Louisiana-Lafayette before dropping two of three games to Sacramento State.

An inconsistent lineup has hurt LSU. The Tigers opened the Sacramento State series with a 15-4 victory and they lost 13-10 to Northeastern.

Jones returns to Colts with \$100M deal

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Daniel Jones is back with the Indianapolis Colts, and Alec Pierce couldn't be happier.

Two days after the 25-year-old Pierce — Jones' top target — agreed to a four-year contract extension worth \$116 million, the Colts brought back their quarterback on a two-year deal worth up to \$100 million, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press on Wednesday. The person requested anonymity because the deal had not been announced.

Later Wednesday, Pierce explained why he never intended to leave the team that drafted him.

"I believe in what we have going on here, I believe in our team, I believe in the players we have in place," he said. "I think last year in the beginning of the season — just that first half of the

season — I think we truly had something special going. And I know we didn't finish the way we wanted to finish, but I think I'm able to look back to that and look at how we were playing, and know we can be the best team in the NFL."

Pierce and Jones helped the Colts' offense get off to a hot start, but things went awry when Jones tried to play through a hairline fracture in his left leg before suffering a season-ending torn right Achilles tendon in early December. Indy lost its final seven games to miss the playoffs for a fifth consecutive season.

It's unclear when Jones will be fully recovered from surgery to repair the tendon, though general manager Chris Ballard and coach Shane Steichen continue to express optimism that Jones could be ready to participate in training camp. And even if he's

not, it became clear Indy was eager to run it back with Jones, Pierce and running back Jonathan Taylor.

Pierce's contract puts him among the league's 10 highest-paid receivers. Jones' deal includes \$88 million in salary, incentives that could push the value to \$100 million and guarantees of \$50 million.

Getting there required some salary cap maneuvering.

To fit Pierce under the cap, Ballard traded longtime No. 1 receiver Michael Pittman Jr. to the Pittsburgh Steelers for a late-round draft pick. Then the focus turned to Jones, the No. 6 overall draft pick in 2019, who was given the transition tag by Indy last week.

Jones has struggled with injuries, playing six games in 2023 for the New York Giants. He then started 10 games for the Giants in

2024 before he was benched, leading to his release.

But Jones revived his career in Indy.

He completed 68% of his throws last season for 3,101 yards — his highest total since leading the Giants to the playoffs in 2022. He also threw 19 touchdown passes, his highest total since 2019, and had eight interceptions.

Ballard also reached a deal with edge rusher Arden Key, traded for defensive tackle Colby Wooden and is likely still in the market for a pass rusher. He could also be seeking a backup quarterback after Anthony Richardson was granted permission to seek a trade.

Richardson, the No. 4 overall draft pick in 2023, lost the starting job to Jones in training camp last season and then suffered an eye injury during a freak pregame accident in October.

Louisville rallies, keeps SMU from getting off bubble

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C.— Ryan Conwell hit two key shots in the final 1:17 and finished with 16 points as No. 24 Louisville battled back to beat SMU 62-58 on Wednesday and advanced to the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament quarterfinals.

Adrian Wooley added 14 points and Isaac McKneely had 10 for the Cardinals (23-9), who'll face Miami on Thursday.

Jarron Pierre Jr. had 17 points and Jaden Toombs added 13 points and nine rebounds for SMU (20-13), which led by six in the second half before Louisville stormed back behind three inside baskets from Vangelis Zougris.

After a defensive struggle in the first half ended in a 26-all tie, SMU built its biggest lead at 41-35 on back-to-back 3s by Sam Walters and Pierre from the same spot in right corner.

The Mustangs, playing their second game in two days, appeared content to patiently work

time off the shot clock, extending every possession and shortening the game.

But Louisville worked its way back after SMU's 7-foot-1 rim protector Samet Yigitoglu picked up his fourth foul with 7:51 left and was forced to the bench. That freed up Zougris to work in the middle, where he scored three key baskets in a two-minute stretch.

Yigitoglu returned with the game tied at 56 and three minutes left and Pierre briefly put the Mustangs ahead with a driving layup.

But after SMU's Corey Washington went down with a shoulder injury, Conwell took over.

He hit a 3 to give the Cardinals the lead for good at 60-58 with 1:17 left. SMU's Boopie Miller missed a 3 at the other end and Conwell drove the left side of lane and scored on a left-handed layup with 29.4 seconds left to make it a two-possession game.

Louisville played without star

freshman Mikel Brown Jr., who is out for the tournament with a back injury.

Idaho 77, Montana 66: Isaiah Brickner had 23 points and 10 rebounds — his first double-double of the season — and Brody Rowbury scored 12 points to help seventh-seeded Idaho beat No. 4 seed Montana to win the Big Sky Conference Tournament and clinch a berth in the NCAA Tournament for the first time in nearly 40 years.

Idaho (21-14) has won five in a row and won the Big Sky Conference Tournament for the first time since 1990.

Under third-year coach Alex Pribble, the Vandals have their most victories since they also won 21 games in 2015-16.

McNeese 76, Stephen F. Austin 59: Javohn Garcia scored a career-high 31 points and made five 3-pointers, and No. 2 seed McNeese beat top-seeded Stephen F. Austin 76-59 to claim the Southland championship and a

bid to the NCAA Tournament.

McNeese (28-5) became the first team in 10 years to reach and win three straight Southland Tournament title games since Stephen F. Austin did so from 2013-16.

McNeese did not trail in the game, jumping out to a 29-20 lead behind five 3-pointers from Garcia. The Cowboys went into the break ahead 42-25.

Lehigh 74, Boston University 60: Nasir Whitlock scored 18 points, Joshua Ingram and Edouard Benoit each added 15, and second-seeded Lehigh beat No. 4 seed Boston University to win the Patriot League Tournament and clinch its first NCAA Tournament berth since 2012.

Hank Alvey added 14 points, nine rebounds, five assists and two blocks for Lehigh (18-16).

Ingram hit a 3-pointer and Whitlock followed with a step-back jumper to make it 13-12 and the Mountain Hawks led the rest of the way.

Magic beat Cavs for 5th straight win

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Desmond Bane had a 3-pointer and two free throws in the final 17.4 seconds to cap a 35-point night and help the Orlando Magic hold off the Cleveland Cavaliers 128-122 on Wednesday for their fifth straight victory.

Paolo Banchero added 25 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for the Magic. Tristan da Silva scored nine of his 23 points in the fourth quarter.

James Harden had 30 points and eight assists for Cleveland. Donovan Mitchell added 25 points, hitting a 3-pointer that brought the Cavaliers within two after Orlando led by 13 midway through the fourth quarter.

Bane countered with a 3-pointer as he was falling out of bounds with 17.4 seconds left, then added two free throws with eight seconds remaining.

Three 3-pointers by Keon Ellis, who finished with 20 points, keyed the late comeback of the Cavaliers. Evan Mobley had 18 points and 13 rebounds for Cleveland. The Cavaliers have lost five of nine after winning seven straight.

Nuggets 129, Rockets 93: Nikola Jokic had 16 points, 13 as-

sists and 12 rebounds for his 25th triple-double of the season, and host Denver beat Houston in a Western Conference showdown.

The Nuggets moved within a half-game of Houston in the bunched-up Western Conference standings.

It was the first time since mid-November Denver has won with its opening-night lineup together. The Nuggets had lost six of 10 out of the All-Star break as head coach David Adelman practices caution with workloads as players return to the lineup.

Jokic completed his 187th career triple-double with his 10th rebound with 4:14 left in the third. It is the 15th time this season he has secured a triple-double before the fourth quarter.

The Rockets, who finished 4 of 33 from behind the arc, were outscored 40-22 in the third. Kevin Durant finished with just 11 points on 5-of-8 shooting, his fewest field goal attempts this season.

Pelicans 122, Raptors 111: Trey Murphy III scored 28 points, Dejounte Murray added 27 and host New Orleans beat Toronto, spoiling Brandon Ingram's return to the city where he played for six seasons.

Murray had his highest-scoring game since his return from a torn right Achilles tendon that sidelined him for more than a year. Zion Williamson added 19 points for the Pelicans, who have won seven of 10.

Immanuel Quickley scored 25 points for Toronto, which has lost six of eight. This defeat dropped the Raptors from fifth to seventh in the Eastern Conference, one-half game behind Orlando and Miami.

Knicks 134, Jazz 117: Jalen Brunson scored 28 points, Jordan Clarkson had 27 and visiting New York rallied to beat Utah to snap a two-game losing streak.

Brunson also had eight assists and three steals in a game the Knicks trailed 49-31 early in the second quarter.

OG Anunoby added 22 points, and Karl-Anthony Towns had 21 points, seven rebounds and seven assists. New York made 17 3-pointers and shot 52% from the field.

Brice Sensabaugh led Utah with 29 points. Ace Bailey added 21, and Keyonte George had 14 points and five assists before leaving midway through the third quarter with a right hamstring injury.

Hornets 117, Kings 109: LaMelo Ball scored 20 of his 30 points in the first half and visiting Charlotte beat Sacramento.

Miles Bridges had 26 points as Charlotte won at Sacramento for the first time in more than two years. Standout rookie Kon Knueppel added 24 points and Brandon Miller scored 20.

Nique Clifford had 18 points and seven assists for the Kings, who were attempting to win their third straight for the first time since early January.

Clippers 153, Timberwolves 128: Kawhi Leonard scored 45 points and host Los Angeles routed Minnesota, moving above .500 with their third straight victory and sixth in seven games.

Eighth in the Western Conference at 33-32 after opening 6-21, the Clippers had their highest points total of the season. They blew out Minnesota after beating New York on Monday night to open a five-game homestand.

Minnesota dropped to sixth in the tight Western Conference, but only a half-game behind the third-place Lakers. The Timberwolves have lost three in a row after winning five straight. They lost to the Lakers on Tuesday night to open four-game trip.

Konecny, Zegras rally Flyers to cruise past Capitals

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Travis Konecny and Trevor Zegras scored in the second period and the Philadelphia Flyers rallied to beat the Washington Capitals 4-1 on Wednesday night.

Washington has lost four of its last five games and is tied with Philadelphia at 71 points. Both teams are seven points behind Boston in the race for the final Eastern Conference playoff spot.

The Flyers fell behind early when Washington's Ryan Leonard took a pass from 40-year-old Alex Ovechkin and shot it through a screen past goalie Sam

Ersson 9:21 into the game.

Through 64 games this season, it was the 44th time the Flyers had allowed the first goal. And, Philadelphia was 6-15-5 this season when trailing after the first period.

Konecny, celebrating his 29th birthday, took a pass from Travis Sanheim in the right circle and scored past Washington's Logan Thompson at 4:23 of the second for a 1-all tie.

Owen Tippett then picked off a pass, stepped around Washington's Tom Wilson and broke, 2-on-none, with Zegras. The two passed back and forth before Ze-

gras lifted the puck in for a 2-1 lead.

Philadelphia added to its lead in the third period on a terrific play by Noah Cates. Tied up behind the Capitals' net during a 4-on-4 situation, he one-handed a pass into the slot, where defenseman Jamie Drysdale shot it past Thompson for a 3-1 lead.

Tippett finished up the scoring with an empty-net goal with 1:03 left. Ersson stopped 21 shots for the Flyers.

Canadiens 3, Senators 2: Ivan Demidov broke a tie with 7:20 left, Jacob Fowler made 32 saves and visiting Montreal beat

Ottawa for their third straight victory.

Demidov scored off Alex Newhook's rebound and Montreal held on a night after beating Toronto 3-1 at home.

Juraj Slafkovsky and Alexandre Texier also scored for Montreal, with Demidov assisting on Slafkovsky's power-play goal in the first period.

Texier tied it at 2 on a wrap-around with 2:31 left in the second.

Drake Batherson scored twice for Ottawa. Linus Ullmark stopped 20 shots.

Montreal's Jake Evans played his 400th NHL game.