

Blast rocks Tehran after Israel threats

Hegseth says over 15K targets have been attacked during Iran campaign

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A large explosion rocked an area of Iran's capital where thousands were gathered Friday for an annual state-organized rally to support the Palestinians and call for Israel's demise. Israel had warned that it would target the area in central Tehran.

There were no immediate reports of casualties. But the decision to proceed with the mass demonstration that was attended by some senior government officials, and Israel's threat to target the area, underscored the fierce determination on both sides nearly two weeks into a war that has rattled the global economy and shows no sign of letting up.

In Washington, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said that over 15,000 enemy targets have been struck, which is more than 1,000 a day since the war began.

He also sought to address

concerns about the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, telling reporters: "We have been dealing with it and don't need to worry about it."

Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, added that the U.S. military has "made it a priority to target Iran's miscalculating enterprise." Iran has mainly used missiles and drones to disrupt traffic in the strategic waterway.

Iran has continued to launch widespread missile and drone attacks on Israel and neighboring Gulf states, and has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's traded oil passes, even as U.S. and Israeli warplanes pummel military and other targets across Iran.

The U.S. military confirmed on Friday that all six crew members of an American KC-135 refueling plane were killed when it crashed in Iraq.

With growing global con-

cerns about a possible energy crisis, the price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, hovered around \$100 per barrel. Brent prices are about 40% higher than Feb. 28, when Israel and the U.S. launched the war.

In an interview with Fox News, President Donald Trump said the war would end "when I feel it in my bones."

The explosion in Tehran rocked the Ferdowsi Square area midday, where thousands had gathered for an annual Quds Day rally in which they chanted "death to Israel" and "death to America."

Israel had issued a warning on a Farsi-language X account for people to clear the area shortly before the blast. But few Iranians would have seen it, as authorities have almost completely shut down the internet since the start of the war. Footage from the scene showed people chanting "God is greatest," as smoke rose in the area.

The hard-liner who leads Iran's judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, had been giving an interview on state television at the demonstration when the strike happened. His bodyguards encircled him, as he raised his fist and said Iran "under this rain and missiles will never withdraw."

Israel had earlier announced another wave of strikes in Iran targeting infrastructure, and said its air force had hit more than 200 targets in the last 24 hours, including missile launchers, defense systems and weapons production sites.

The Israeli military said it has struck more than 7,600 sites in Iran and more than 1,100 in Lebanon in the war. Spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said that the air force had struck an Iranian intelligence directorate while senior officials were present, as well as other command centers and missile production and storage sites.

DOD plan expands oversight of Stripes, limits content

By ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon has released a modernization plan for Stars and Stripes that affirms the publication's independence while expanding Defense Department oversight, introducing new restrictions on content and transitioning away from a print publication.

An eight-page memo, dated March 9 and effective immediately, limits the use of wire services, bars comics and other syndicated features and states

that content must be consistent with "good order and discipline," a phrase borrowed from the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

The memo is the first formal explanation since Pentagon Press Secretary Sean Parnell said in a Jan. 15 social media post that the Defense Department intended to "refocus" the news organization "from woke distractions that syphon morale."

On Friday, Parnell in a statement provided the first direct

comment to the organization since Jan. 15. He said the department is "returning S&S to its original mission: an independent news source for service members stationed overseas that is by the warfighter and for the warfighter."

Parnell said the effort includes "a transition from print to digital, transition to uniformed staff at locations outside the continental U.S., and other efficiency measures that will eliminate redundancies and ensure smart use of DOW resources."

es."

Stars and Stripes staff currently includes service members on one- to three-year assignments who are mentored by civilian journalists. The service members are typically trained by the services in public relations.

Parnell did not answer questions about how his office is coordinating with the news organization to implement these changes or if the decisions are

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Blaze in laundry injures 2 aboard USS Gerald R. Ford

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

Two sailors aboard the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford are in stable condition after being injured in a fire Thursday in the ship's main laundry spaces, according to the Navy.

The unidentified service members are receiving medical treatment for their injuries, which are not life-threatening, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet said in statement Thursday.

The fire was not related to combat, according to the statement. Ford is operating in the Red Sea in support of Operation Epic Fury, the campaign against Iran.

There was no damage to the carrier's propulsion plant and the ship remains fully operational, according to the state-

ment, which said the fire was fully contained.

The carrier has been in the Red Sea since transiting the Suez Canal March 5.

The Washington Post reported that Thursday's fire was the carrier's second major setback while at sea during what has become a high-intensity extended deployment. The Ford also has experienced repeat plumbing issues.

In February, the Navy acknowledged in a statement that the ship's "vacuum collection, holding, and transfer" system — which supports about 650 toilets on board — was experiencing maintenance issues that would be addressed once it returns home to Norfolk.

The carrier and its accompanying destroyers are overdue for maintenance, having been at

sea since June.

The strike group was deployed to Europe initially, but it was redirected to the Caribbean to support the administration's counternarcotics campaign around Latin America and the U.S. military raid that led to the capture of Venezuela's president, Nicolás Maduro.

Last month, as President Donald Trump attempted to pressure Iran into halting its nuclear program, the Pentagon extended the Ford's deployment and ordered it back across the Atlantic to the Middle East. At the time, the carrier and its escort ships had been at sea for nearly eight months.

Although the Ford is the Navy's newest and most advanced carrier, being deployed for that long takes a toll on the ship's systems.

6 killed in USAF tanker crash in Iraq

By LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

All six crew members who were aboard an Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker that crashed in western Iraq have been confirmed dead, U.S. Central Command said Friday.

The command said the identities of the service members are being withheld until 24 hours after the next of kin have been notified.

The refueler went down in friendly airspace at approximately 2 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday.

The circumstances of the crash are still under investigation, but CENTCOM said it was not due to hostile fire or friendly fire.

Including the tanker crew, 13 service members have now been killed as part of Operation Epic Fury.

Six Army reservists assigned to the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) were killed in a drone attack in Port Shuaiba, Kuwait, on the second day of Operation Epic Fury. Another soldier, Army Sgt. Benjamin N. Pennington, 26, died Sunday after being wounded during a March 1 attack on the Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia.

The tanker is the fourth U.S. aircraft reported lost since the conflict with Iran began. Three F-15s were mistakenly shot down by Kuwaiti forces in a friendly fire incident on March 1.

The KC-135, built by Boeing, is flown by the Air Force, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard. It can carry up to 200,000 pounds of fuel and typically operates with a crew of three: a pilot, copilot and boom operator.

ROTC students subdue, kill shooter

Associated Press

A former Army National Guard member who had spent eight years in prison for attempting to aid the Islamic State opened fire on a classroom at Virginia's Old Dominion University on Thursday before ROTC students subdued and killed him, authorities said.

He had yelled "Allahu Akbar" before the shooting, which left one person dead and two wounded, according to the FBI.

Dominique Evans, special agent in charge of the FBI's Norfolk field office, said at a news conference that the Reserve Officers' Training Corps students showed "extreme bravery and courage" and prevented further loss of life by

stopping the gunman, Mohamed Bailor Jalloh.

The students subdued him and "rendered him no longer alive," Evans said. "I don't know how else to say it." She confirmed Jalloh wasn't shot but didn't provide further details.

The campus shooting is being investigated as an act of terrorism, FBI Director Kash Patel said on social media.

Evans said Jalloh aspired to conduct a terrorist attack like the 2009 killings at Fort Hood.

Jalloh had pleaded guilty in 2016 to attempting to aid the Islamic State and was sentenced to 11 years in prison.

He was on supervised release, which is comparable to probation, when he carried out

the attack on Thursday. It wasn't immediately clear why his release from prison had been moved up. Inmates can get time off of their sentences for a variety of reasons, but it isn't known if that happened in this case.

Lt. Col. Jimmy Delongchamp, public information officer for the U.S. Army Cadet Command at Fort Knox, Kentucky, said two of the people who were shot were part of the Army ROTC at ODU.

The victim who died was Lt. Col. Brandon Shah. Shah was a leader for the college's ROTC program. In the Army, Shah had flown helicopters over Iraq, Afghanistan and Eastern Europe as a pilot.

Hackers linked to Iran taking aim at US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Pro-Iranian hackers are targeting sites in the Middle East and starting to stretch into the United States during the war, raising the risk of American defense contractors, power stations and water plants being swept into a wave of digital chaos that could expand if Tehran's allies join the fray.

Hackers supporting Iran claimed responsibility for a significant cyberattack Wednesday against U.S. medical device company Stryker. Since the war began Feb. 28, they also have tried to penetrate cameras in Middle Eastern countries to improve Iran's missile targeting. They have targeted data centers in the region, as well as industrial facilities in Israel, a school in Saudi Arabia and an airport in Kuwait.

Iran has invested heavily in its offensive cyber capabilities while cultivating ties to hacking groups. In recent years, groups working for Tehran have infiltrated the email system of President Donald Trump's campaign, targeted U.S. water plants and tried to breach the networks used by the military and defense contractors.

The goal is to wear down the American war effort, drive up the costs of energy, strain cyber resources and cause as much pain as possible for American companies that depend on the defense industry.

"Something is going to happen because the gloves are off," said Kevin Mandia, founder of the cybersecurity companies Mandiant and Armadin.

Pro-Iranian, pro-Palestinian hackers claimed credit for disrupting systems at Stryker, a

Michigan-based medical technology company. A group known as Handala said the attack was in retaliation for suspected U.S. strikes that killed Iranian schoolchildren.

Like other ideologically motivated hackers, profit is not Handala's goal, according to Ismael Valenzuela, vice president of threat intelligence at the cybersecurity company Arctic Wolf.

"What distinguishes this group is its clear focus on data destruction rather than financial extortion," he said in an email.

Polish authorities are investigating a recent cyberattack — on a nuclear research facility — that may have ties to Iran, though they acknowledge that another group could be behind the attack and using the Iran war to mask its identity.

Going forward, U.S. defense contractors, government vendors and businesses that work with Israel are likely targets, as is critical infrastructure such as hospitals, ports, water plants, power stations and railways.

Pro-Iranian hackers openly discuss their plans in Telegram and other online message boards.

"The datacenters need to be taken out," wrote one user, as uncovered by researchers at U.S.-based SITE Intelligence Group. "They host the brains of USAs military communication and targeting systems."

Cyber operations also gather intelligence — for example, Iran's effort to hack into cameras in neighboring countries to aid its missile targeting. Infiltrating U.S. networks, meanwhile, would offer view into military planning or supply chains.

Calif. governor sees no imminent threat from Iran

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California Gov. Gavin Newsom said there was no imminent threat to the state, despite a warning from the FBI that Iran could send drones to the West Coast in retaliation for war.

Newsom said drone issues "have always been top of mind."

"We've been aware of that information. ... It's all about a posture of preparedness for worst-case scenarios," the governor said Wednesday.

The FBI recently warned police departments about Iran and a possible California strike, though the alert also said it was "unverified information."

"Iran allegedly aspired to conduct a surprise attack using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) from an unidentified vessel off the coast of the United States homeland, significant-

ly against unspecified targets in California, in the event the U.S. conducted strikes against Iran," the alert said.

"We have no additional information on the timing, method, target, or perpetrators of this alleged attack," the alert said.

The alert was posted on X by an FBI spokesperson after a report by ABC News. Separately, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said on X that the message to law enforcement was a tip based on "unverified intelligence."

"No such threat from Iran to our homeland exists, and it never did," Leavitt said Thursday.

President Donald Trump was asked about it Wednesday at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland.

"It's being investigated, but you have a lot of things happening. All we can do is take 'em as they come," Trump said.

Synagogue attacker lost family in Israeli airstrike

Associated Press

WEST BLOOMFIELD, Mich. — A man with a rifle who crashed into a large Michigan synagogue in what federal officials are saying was an attack had lost four family members in an Israeli airstrike in his native Lebanon last week, an official said Friday.

Ayman Mohamad Ghazali, 41, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Lebanon, was killed by security after ramming into Temple Israel in West Bloomfield Township near Detroit, Mich., and driving down a hallway in a vehicle that then caught fire, according to authorities.

The FBI, which is leading the investigation, described the attack on one of the nation's largest Reform synagogues as an act of violence targeting the Jewish community.

The synagogue's staff, teach-

ers and 140 children at its early childhood center were not injured, according to Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard.

Ghazali came to the U.S. in 2011 on an immediate relative visa as the spouse of a U.S. citizen and was granted U.S. citizenship in 2016, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

An Israeli airstrike killed four people in the eastern Lebanon town of Mashgharah on March 5, Lebanon's state agency and the Lebanese Health Ministry reported. A woman was also wounded.

A local official in Mashgharah told The Associated Press that Ghazali's two brothers and a niece and nephew were killed at their home in the airstrike just after sunset as they were having their fast-breaking meal during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Stripes: Plan would limit use of wire services

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based on any formal review or evaluation of Stars and Stripes operations.

No coordination

Stars and Stripes Publisher Max Lederer told U.S.-based staff of the memo Thursday and said he would begin meeting with the organization's leadership to discuss implementation of the memo.

Lederer said he has not been contacted directly by anyone from the Pentagon about the changes, despite reaching out to them. The memo, which was sent to Pentagon leaders and combatant commanders, was written without Stars and Stripes' input.

Stars and Stripes was not notified about publication of the memo, which was found during a search on a DOD website.

"It is unlikely that the Pentagon was aware of the extensive modernization that Stars and Stripes had already begun," Erik Slavin, Stars and Stripes editor in chief, said in a statement Thursday. "Over the past year, the changes to our digitally produced news and information have resulted in significant increases in pageviews, engagement and subscribers."

Reader feedback and real-world usage drove the efforts, said Slavin, who became the organization's top editor late last year after more than 20 years stationed with the company in Japan, Iraq, South Korea and Germany.

Business operations and funding remain largely unchanged by the memo.

'A threat to the First Amendment'

Press freedom advocates said the memo shifts authority over content decisions in a way that risks undermining the newsroom's independence.

"This clearly shows that the Pentagon is trying to increase its influence over content deci-

sions at Stars and Stripes," said Timothy Richardson, program director of journalism and disinformation for PEN America, a nonprofit that protects free expression.

"That's a threat to the First Amendment, certainly, and the independence that the Congress has long guaranteed for the newsroom," he said Thursday after reviewing the memo.

PEN America and five other press-freedom organizations sent a letter to Congress last month in support of Stars and Stripes' editorial independence.

Stars and Stripes, which is owned by the Defense Department, was first published by Union troops during the Civil War and has been published continuously since World War II. The newspaper publishes print editions overseas and a U.S. weekly edition. It distributes to combat zones as needed.

Its website and other digital offerings have gained readership among troops stationed across the U.S. and among veterans.

The news organization has been threatened with closure over the years but has repeatedly garnered support from veterans and bipartisan members of Congress.

The Pentagon in January withdrew a federal regulation that underpinned the mandate set by Congress for Stars and Stripes to provide independent journalism to the military community under the principles of the First Amendment.

The new memo confirmed that Stars and Stripes' editorial operations are "independent of the military chain of command, military public affairs activities or other external influences," but makes no mention of First Amendment freedoms.

It moves the defense secretary's public affairs office into an oversight role. Previous guidance gave it an administrative role to help with funding, military manning and other reg-

ulatory steps. It also calls for an advisory board of Defense Department personnel.

Content overhaul

The memo bars purchased content on the assumption that all service members overseas have online access to all commercially available news on their own. Exceptions for purchased content can be approved by Parnell, according to the memo.

Stars and Stripes uses wire services to provide more complete world coverage of interest to the military community.

Jacqueline Smith, Stars and Stripes' ombudsman, said wire services add value because they fill gaps and make a news outlet a "one-stop shop."

"A complete newspaper should include national sports and entertainment ...," she said. "Stripes does not have the resources to do its own reporting in those areas. Yet sports and entertainment contribute to the morale of troops."

Losing this "will reduce the quality and breadth of information available to readers," Slavin said.

The memo calls on Stars and Stripes to be a "'hometown-style' publication for the increasingly niche U.S. military community" and says it "should" republish content created by the Defense Department public affairs offices with a label describing its origin, though it grants the publisher latitude to determine whether such content serves readers' needs.

The memo does not specify which publications should include public affairs content.

"We have no plans to commingle military public relations offerings with our independent reporting," Slavin said. "Stars and Stripes remains committed to balanced and accurate reporting on behalf of the military community we serve."

Other changes require the

ombudsman to send information bound for Congress through the Defense Department Legislative Affairs Office.

"The House Armed Services Committee created the independent position in 1990-91 with the requirement the ombudsman report to the committee on matters of importance to maintaining Stripes editorial independence," Smith said. "If that report must go through the Pentagon's legislative affairs staff, then there is no assurance it would be complete and unchanged and there would be no opportunity to ask the ombudsman questions."

The memo also bars reporters from requesting public records through the Freedom of Information Act in an official capacity and prohibits the organization from publishing "controlled unclassified information." This label has often been used to limit the release of information under broadly defined terms.

Last year, the Pentagon asked all reporters working within the building to sign a pledge that included a similar demand. Dozens of journalists turned in their access badges, while a new group of reporters signed the agreement and replaced them.

"The obstacles that the Pentagon continues to throw in the way of credible reporting are growing, and this is another clear example of that," Richardson said.

As plans to change the publication come together, Slavin said readers will be informed at each step.

"We will let readers, particularly print readers in remote locations and situations where unsecure internet is spotty or prohibited, know that comics, national sports, state-by-state roundups and other content may soon no longer be published due to the limits of the memo. Feedback from deployed troops tells us that this will not be a popular decision," he said

Vikings sign Murray, add depth at QB

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The Minnesota Vikings found in Kyler Murray an ideal addition to their quarterback depth chart, setting up stiff competition for incumbent J.J. McCarthy for the starting job this season — and perhaps beyond.

Murray visited Vikings headquarters and signed a one-year contract on Thursday, after the first overall pick from the 2019 NFL draft was released by the Arizona Cardinals. Because he's already owed \$36.8 million in guaranteed salary by the Cardinals for this season, Murray was able to sign for the veteran minimum of \$1.3 million and give the Vikings a no-risk opportunity.

"Contractually, it doesn't really make a difference to me. Every year to me is a go-out-

there-and-prove-it year," Murray said on a video call with reporters.

Murray, despite being sidelined recently by injuries and dogged by questions about his work ethic, has two Pro Bowl selections, a 67% career completion percentage, a 2-to-1 ratio of touchdown passes to interceptions — and a bonus of 3,193 rushing yards with 32 scores.

McCarthy, the Vikings' 2024 first-round draft pick whose injuries and inconsistency have raised the question of how long they can afford to wait for him to develop, missed his rookie season while recovering from knee surgery. Last year, he had an ankle sprain, a concussion and a broken hand that limited him to 10 starts and only eight games finished. Even when he was healthy, his struggles with accu-

racy were pronounced enough to force the Vikings to consider alternatives despite his significant potential.

"I talked to him this week. We had a great conversation about the things he's been working on," coach Kevin O'Connell said. "He's focused on what's out in front of him personally, and he's attacking that every single day. He's doing great."

Murray, as if he were sliding away from a pass rusher in the pocket, smoothly sidestepped a question about whether he believes he was targeted to compete with McCarthy or was promised the job. O'Connell declined to dive into what will be the primary storyline throughout the offseason until a starter is declared.

"I don't believe we have to name one of those currently,"

O'Connell said.

Murray, 28, will have the opportunity to rejuvenate his career and set up a big payday next year, much like Sam Darnold did in 2024 with O'Connell and the Vikings after McCarthy was sidelined. Though Murray has not played in a system like the one O'Connell runs, his ability is such that finding a way to be productive with him ought not to be difficult for the 2024 AP NFL Coach of the Year.

"I don't want to put any limitations on what that looks like. He's had a tremendous amount of success with different quarterbacks. I know what my skill set brings to the game. I know what I'm capable of," said Murray, who won the Heisman Trophy at Oklahoma and the AP NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year award.

DeRosa owns 'overly confident' WBC remark

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Manager Mark DeRosa says his premature comment about the U.S. having already punched its ticket to the World Baseball Classic quarterfinals before facing Italy was just an "overly confident statement" and reiterated Thursday he knew nothing was guaranteed at that point.

DeRosa had made that remark on MLB Network's "Hot Stove" before the 8-6 loss to Italy on Tuesday that caused the U.S. to lose control of its WBC fate.

The U.S. advanced to a Friday quarterfinal matchup with Canada anyway, after Italy's 9-1 win

over Mexico on Wednesday.

"It's just an overly confident statement on 'Hot Stove,' period, the end," DeRosa said. "And it's my fault. I felt good about where we were after Mexico."

DeRosa also talked about the fresh start the star-studded U.S. team has now that its loss to Italy didn't kill its title hopes.

"New lease on life for the boys, certainly," he said. "I put ourselves in a tough spot. Tip our hat to Vinnie Pasquantino and Italy, truly. Went into that game a little overly confident and got a huge wake-up call."

Pasquantino had the WBC's first three-homer game in Italy's victory over Mexico.

DeRosa's comment prior to the Italy game garnered plenty of scrutiny after that loss, particularly since he had kept usual starters Bryce Harper, Cal Raleigh, Alex Bregman, Brice Turang and Byron Buxton out of his starting lineup. The U.S. needed to beat Italy to guarantee a spot in the quarterfinals. Losing left it subject to a series of tiebreakers, pending the result of Italy-Mexico.

DeRosa said he wanted to start Ernie Clement and Paul Goldschmidt because they could play major roles off the bench at some point. He also said he was limited in which pitchers he could use because of

"guardrails" set by MLB teams, who typically restrict how much their players throw at the WBC due to injury concerns.

"When I looked at the lineup, I felt confident going in — bottom line," DeRosa said. "I mean, I also look at it from a player's perspective. Like, Bryce Harper was struggling a little bit. I know it's three games, but from the dugout — I played with him for a long time — so it's like, 'OK, maybe we get him off his feet a day. We get Goldy in there. We allow (Harper) to work with Sean Casey, Matt Holliday, maybe something clicks. And we get him right back in there and going.'"

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No. 2 Arizona wins Big 12 tourney opener

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Brayden Burries had 21 points, Tobe Awaka had 12 points and 12 rebounds, and No. 2 Arizona blew most of a big first-half lead before pulling away again for an 81-59 victory over UCF in the quarterfinals of the Big 12 Tournament on Thursday.

Koa Peat also had 12 points for the No. 1 seed Wildcats (30-2), who will take a seven-game winning streak into a matchup with No. 7 Iowa State — which beat No. 16 Texas Tech in its quarterfinal — on Friday night for a spot in the conference championship game.

Themus Fulks had 14 points to lead UCF (21-11). Jordan Burks had 10.

In other Big 12 quarterfinals:

No. 5 Houston 73, BYU 66: Kingston Fleming scored 17 points as Houston (27-5) held off AJ Dybantsa and BYU (23-11).

Dybantsa played all 40 minutes, finishing with 26 points, but he was held to 3-of-10 shooting in the second half. He came into the game just 25 points shy of Kevin Durant's record of 92, set in the 2007 Big 12 tournament. His 3-pointer with 4 seconds left gave him the record.

No. 7 Iowa State 75, No. 16 Texas Tech 53: Joshua Jefferson had 18 points and 13 rebounds, Tamin Lipsey scored 20 and the Cyclones used a big second-half run to bury the Red Raiders.

The fifth-seeded Cyclones (27-6) fell behind by 12 early, pulled ahead by halftime, then used a 19-3 run shortly out of the break to earn a Friday date against Arizona for a spot in the title game.

LeJuan Watts had led the Red Raiders (22-10) with 12 points.

No. 14 Kansas 78, TCU 73: Darryn Peterson scored 24 points as the Jayhawks beat the Horned Frogs.

Kansas will face Houston, which beat BYU on Thursday, in the semifinals Friday.

Flory Bidunga added 13 points and 10 rebounds for Kansas (23-9). Bryson Tiller and Elmarko Jackson also had 13 points.

David Punch scored 24 points for TCU (22-11).

ACC

No. 1 Duke 80, Florida State 79: Isaiah Evans made seven 3-pointers and finished with a career-high 32 points, Atlantic Coast Conference player of the year Cameron Boozer added 23 points and 10 rebounds, and the Blue Devils survived a scare from the Seminoles in the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament quarterfinals.

The Seminoles had a chance at an upset after Chauncey Wiggins blocked Boozer with seven seconds remaining, but Robert McCray V's 3 at the buzzer rimmed out.

Duke (30-2) outrebounded Florida State 46-25 but needed to overcome 28 points from Lajae Jones and 25 from McCray for their ninth straight win.

The Seminoles (18-15) were 11 of 28 on 3s. Duke will play Clemson in the semifinals. In other ACC quarterfinals:

No. 10 Virginia 81, N.C. State 74: Malik Thomas scored 16 points, Thijs De Ridder added 15 and the Cavaliers defeated the Wolfpack for the third time this season.

Jacari White added 13 points as Virginia (28-5) shot 54.8% from the field in the second half to pull away.

Paul McNeil Jr. had 26 points and Van-Allen Lubin added 14 for N.C. State (20-13).

Clemson 80, No. 19 North Carolina 79: Nick Davidson scored 17 points, and the Tigers nearly allowed an 18-point second-half lead to slip away before holding on to beat the Tar Heels.

Dillon Hunter had 14 points and went 4-for-4 from the free throw line in the final minute for the Tigers (24-9), who had six players finish in double figures in scoring.

Henri Veesaar had 28 points and 17 rebounds for the Tar Heels (24-8).

Miami 78, No. 24 Louisville 73: Malik Reneau scored 18 of his 24 points in the second half, Tru Washington added 17 and the Hurricanes (25-7) beat the Cardinals.

Miami will face Virginia in Saturday's semifinals.

Ryan Conwell had 22 points and nine rebounds and J'Vonne Hadley added 19 points for Louisville (24-10).

Big East

No. 6 UConn 93, Xavier 68: Tarris Reed Jr. had 17 points and 14 rebounds as the Huskies cruised past the Musketeers in the quarterfinals of the Big East Tournament.

Connecticut (28-4) led by 22 in the first half against Xavier (15-18), which got as close as 13 early in the second before coach Dan Hurley's team pulled away again and left no doubt.

Xavier's Filip Borovicinan led all scorers with 22 points.

UConn will play Georgetown in the semifinals Saturday.

In another Big East quarterfinal:

No. 13 St. John's 85, Providence 72: Zubey Ejiyofor had 21 points, 10 rebounds and five assists as the Red Storm opened its defense of last year's Big East Tournament ti-

tle by blowing out the Friars (15-18).

Bryce Hopkins added 14 points and 13 rebounds against his former team, helping top-seeded St. John's (26-6) advance to play Seton Hall in the semifinals Friday.

Big Ten

No. 18 Purdue 91, Northwestern 68: Braden Smith had 16 assists to climb into second on the NCAA career list, and the Boilermakers outmuscled the Wildcats in the Big Ten Tournament.

Trey Kaufman-Renn and Oscar Cluff each scored 19 points for Purdue (24-8), and Cluff also grabbed 10 rebounds.

Smith is up to 1,045 assists in 142 career games, passing Ed Cota (1,030) and Chris Corchiani (1,038) with another smooth performance for the Boilermakers. Bobby Hurley is No. 1 with 1,076 assists in 140 games for Duke from 1989-93.

Purdue plays Nebraska in the quarterfinals on Friday.

Nick Martinelli had 25 points for Northwestern (15-19).

In another Big Ten matchup:

No. 23 Wisconsin 85, Washington 82: John Blackwell scored a career-high 34 points and the Badgers hung on to beat the Huskies in the third round.

Nick Boyd added 23 points with five 3-pointers while Andrew Rohde hit two free throws in the closing seconds to stretch it to a three-point game after Wisconsin (23-9) let an 18-point lead in the second half shrink to one. Washington's Zoom Diallo missed a pull-up 3 just before the buzzer.

Wisconsin will face Illinois in the quarterfinals on Friday.

Mid-American

UMass 87, No. 20 Miami (Ohio) 83: The RedHawks (31-1) dropped their Mid-American Conference Tournament opener to UMass (17-15), spoiling the last perfect record in Division I men's basketball.

Daniel Hankins-Sanford made a tie-breaking layup with 29 seconds remaining, and the Minutemen escaped with victory in a quarterfinal game that had 12 lead changes and 10 ties.

SEC

No. 25 Tennessee 72, Auburn 62: Nate Ament scored 27 points as the Volunteers rallied from an 11-point deficit and beat the Tigers to reach the Southeastern Conference Tournament quarterfinals.

The Volunteers (22-10) will play Vanderbilt on Friday.

Gilgeous-Alexander breaks scoring record

OKLAHOMA CITY — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander broke Wilt Chamberlain's record for consecutive games with 20 points or more, scoring 35 points in the Oklahoma City Thunder's 104-102 win over the Boston Celtics on Thursday night.

Oklahoma City's Chet Holmgren was fouled on a rebound with 0.9 seconds remaining and made two free throws to break a 102-all tie. Boston's Payton Pritchard missed a long 3-pointer as time expired.

Gilgeous-Alexander has scored at least 20 in 127 consecutive games, topping Chamberlain's mark that had stood since 1963. He hit a midrange jumper with 7:04 left in the third quarter that gave him 21 points and tied the game at 69-all. He finished with nine assists and six rebounds and made 13 of 18 field goals.

The Thunder won their seventh straight game — all since Gilgeous-Alexander returned from an abdominal strain that kept him out of the All-Star Game.

Jaylen Brown scored 34 points for the Celtics. Boston's Jayson Tatum sat out as he works his way back from surgery to repair his right Achilles tendon. He's played in three games since his return.

Nuggets 136, Spurs 131: Nikola Jokic had 31 points, 20 rebounds and 12 assists, Jamal Murray scored 39 points and Denver rallied to beat San Antonio, snapping its five-game winning streak as Victor Wembanyama sat out with an injury.

San Antonio guard Stephon Castle had 30 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his third career triple-double.

With the Spurs trailing 132-129, Castle had a 3-pointer rattle off the rim with 20 seconds remaining. Murray sealed the victory with four straight free throws.

Wembanyama was questionable due to right ankle soreness

and ruled out after going through pregame warmups. He must play in 13 of San Antonio's final 16 games for end-of-season award eligibility.

The Spurs are 10-5 without Wembanyama, who watched from the second row of the team's bench. San Antonio lost for the first time in 22 games when holding a 20-point lead.

Suns 123, Pacers 108: Devin Booker scored 43 points, Jalen Green had 36 and Phoenix beat NBA-worst Indiana for its fourth straight victory and the Pacers' 11th loss in a row.

Seventh in the Western Conference, the Suns played the second game of a six-game trip they opened Tuesday night with a victory over Milwaukee.

Booker was 14 of 31 from field, hit 4 of 7 3-pointers and made 11 free throws without a miss. He also had seven rebounds and five assists. Green shot 14 of 23, making three 3-pointers. Royce O'Neale had 15 points on 5-of-8 3-point shooting.

Andrew Nembhard led the Pacers with 23 points — all in the first half after he was questionable because of a lower-back problem.

Pistons 131, 76ers 109: Duncan Robinson scored 19 points and Eastern Conference-leading Detroit beat Philadelphia for its second straight victory after a season-worst four-game losing streak.

Javonte Green added 17 points, and Jalen Duren had 14 points and 10 rebounds. The Pistons didn't trail in either victory, beating Brooklyn and Philadelphia by an average of 30 points.

Cade Cunningham, who was double-teamed for much of the game, only took six shots from the floor, matching the third-lowest total of his career. He finished with eight points, but had 13 assists and five rebounds in 28 minutes.

Marjon Beauchamp scored 17 points, and Cam Payne had 15 for Philadelphia. The 76ers

have lost five of seven.

Magic 136, Wizards 131, OT: Jalen Suggs scored a season-high 28 points and made a tiebreaking 3-pointer with 1:27 remaining in overtime as Orlando extended its longest winning streak of the season to six games with a victory over Washington.

Two nights after being embarrassed when Miami's Bam Adebayo scored 83 points against them, the second-highest performance in NBA history, the Wizards fought back from 17 points down in the fourth quarter to tie it when Bilal Coulibaly banked in a 3-pointer with 5.8 seconds remaining.

Coulibaly made another 3 to tie it at 131 with 1:39 to play in OT, but Suggs answered with his 3 and then added two free throws with 56 seconds left.

Tristan da Silva added 26 points, seven rebounds, four steals and two blocks for the Magic, including one on Coulibaly's drive to the basket in OT. Desmond Bane scored 22 points, Wendell Carter Jr. had 19 points and 11 rebounds, and Paolo Banchero finished with 18 points and 10 boards.

Heat 112, Bucks 105: Bam Adebayo scored 21 points in the game following his 83-point performance, Pelle Larsson had a career-high 28 points and Miami beat Milwaukee for its season-best seventh consecutive victory.

Adebayo scored 12 of his points in the fourth quarter for the Heat, who remained No. 6 in the Eastern Conference — just percentage points behind No. 5 Orlando, which has won six straight.

The Heat and Magic meet on Saturday night.

Kasparas Jakucionis scored 18 points, Davion Mitchell scored 13 and Kel'el Ware grabbed 13 rebounds for Miami.

Giannis Antetokounmpo led all scorers with 31 points for the Bucks, who got 19 from Bobby Portis Jr. and a 16-point, 10-as-

sist game from Ryan Rollins.

Hawks 109, Nets 97: Jalen Johnson had 21 points, nine rebounds and nine assists, Zacharie Risacher scored 19 and Atlanta extended the NBA's longest current winning streak to eight games, beating Brooklyn.

Nickeil Alexander-Walker added 18 points and CJ McCollum had 14 for Atlanta, which began the streak with a win over Brooklyn on Feb. 22. The Hawks moved into eighth in the Eastern Conference, 1½ games behind seventh-place Toronto.

Josh Minott scored a career-high 24 points for the Nets, who have lost 12 of 14. Brooklyn was without leading scorer Michael Porter Jr., who has a sprained right ankle.

Mavericks 120, Grizzlies 112: Khristian Middleton scored 22 of his season-high 35 points in the fourth quarter, Daniel Gafford added a season-best 22 points and Dallas snapped an eight-game losing streak with a victory over Memphis.

Max Christie and Cooper Flagg added 13 points apiece for Dallas. Middleton was 10 of 17 for the game, including 8 of 10 from 3-point range. Gafford added 14 rebounds.

Jaylen Wells led Memphis with 23 points and GG Jackson finished with 20. Javon Small had 19 points and nine assists. Taylor Hendricks had 17 points and 10 rebounds.

Lakers 142, Bulls 130: Luka Doncic had 51 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists, LeBron James added 18 points in his return after missing three games because of injuries and Los Angeles used a strong third quarter to defeat Chicago.

Doncic scored 50 points for the first time as a Laker following the blockbuster trade that sent him from Dallas to Los Angeles in February 2025. It was Doncic's 13th 40-point game in 82 appearances for Los Angeles, moving into ninth in franchise history.

Late goal lifts Capitals, ends Sabres' streak

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Jakob Chychrun scored with 1:33 left to play, Charlie Lindgren made 29 saves, and the Washington Capitals beat Buffalo 2-1 on Thursday night to snap the Sabres' eight-game win streak.

Chychrun's goal came when forward Aliaksei Protas passed to the defenseman in the circle and he fired it past Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen for his 23rd goal of the year.

Ryan Leonard also scored for the Capitals, who won for the second time in three games.

Sam Carrick scored for the Sabres and Luukkonen made 20 saves.

Blues 3, Hurricanes 1: Jimmy Snuggerud scored twice to lead St. Louis over Eastern Conference-leading Carolina.

Snuggerud scored a tying goal in the second period and added a go-ahead score in third for the Blues, who were coming off an overtime loss to the New York Islanders on Tuesday.

Jordan Binnington starred for St. Louis, stopping 31 of the 32 shots he faced. Pavel Buchnevich scored his 15th of the season into an empty net in the final minute and Dylan Holloway assisted on both goals by Snuggerud, who has been on an offensive tear recently as the Blues won for the sixth time in eight games.

Sharks 4, Bruins 2: Colin Graf scored a short-handed goal and Alex Nedeljkovic stopped 38 shots to help San Jose win and hand the Bruins their first loss in Boston since Christmas.

Tyler Toffoli assisted on Michael Misa's goal in the first period and was credited with their second when Macklin Celebrini's shot bounced off Jeremy Swayman's blocker, off Toffoli and into the net. Graf made it 3-0 at 3:13 of the third period when Alexander Wennberg led him through the neutral zone for the breakaway.

Lightning 4, Red Wings 1: Jake Guentzel and Gage Gon-

calves each scored twice, Andrei Vasilevskiy made 23 saves and Tampa Bay beat Detroit.

Tampa Bay won for just the third time in the past nine games since the Olympic break to move two points behind Buffalo for the Atlantic Division lead. Brayden Point and Nikita Kucherov each had two assists.

J.T. Compher scored for the Red Wings, and John Gibson stopped 24 shots. Detroit has just one win in the past five games (1-3-1), but remained in the No. 1 wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference standings.

Panthers 2, Blue Jackets 1, OT: Sam Reinhart scored 2:20 into overtime to lift Florida over Columbus.

Sam Bennett also scored for the Panthers. His power-play wrist shot 1:28 into the third period sent the game to overtime. Sergei Bobrovsky made 30 saves in the Panthers' win.

The Blue Jackets dominated the first two periods, outshooting the Panthers 24-10. Florida came back strong in the third and dominated in overtime.

Flames 5, Devils 4: John Beecher scored his first two goals for Calgary, and Mikael Backlund recorded his 600th career NHL point with a third-period goal in the Flames' 5-4 win over New Jersey.

Former Devils Kevin Bahl and Yegor Sharangovich each also scored for Calgary. Dustin Wolf made 26 saves, and the Flames blocked 21 shots, claiming just their second win in their past eight games.

Luke Hughes had one goal and one assist, and Jack Hughes, Maxim Tsyplakov and Simon Nemec each scored for New Jersey. Jacob Markstrom made 24 saves and had an assist.

Maple Leafs 6, Ducks 4: William Nylander broke a tie on a power play 36 seconds into the third period and Toronto beat Anaheim to end an eight-game losing streak.

The victory was tempered by the loss of captain Auston Mat-

thews on a knee-on-knee hit from Ducks defenseman Radko Gudas with four minutes left in the second period. Matthews stayed down favoring his left leg before being helped off the ice. Gudas was assessed a major penalty and game misconduct. Matthews scored earlier to end a 12-game goal drought.

Stars 7, Oilers 2: Jason Robertson had two goals and two assists to tie a career high in points and Jamie Benn also scored twice as surging Dallas beat Edmonton.

The Stars are 13-0-1 in their last 14 games. The franchise's only longer point streak is a 15-game run during the 1998-99 season (12 wins, three ties).

Wyatt Johnston had a power-play goal and two assists, and Sam Steel had a goal and an assist. Matt Duchene closed the scoring for Dallas with 1:03 left.

Flyers 3, Wild 2, SO: Travis Konecny scored the lone goal in a shootout to give Philadelphia a victory over Minnesota.

After Flyers goalie Dan Vladar stopped all three Wild attempts, Konecny ended it with a wrister over Jesper Wallstedt's shoulder.

Emil Andrade and Owen Tippett scored in regulation, and Vladar made 21 saves for the Flyers. They have won six of eight.

Rangers 6, Jets 3: Alexis Lafreniere had a goal and an assist to lead New York to a victory over Winnipeg.

Adam Edstrom, Gabe Perreault, Tye Kartye and Adam Fox also scored, and Noah Laba added an empty-net goal for New York, which scored five goals on only 16 shots. Igor Shesterkin stopped 24 shots.

Gabriel Vilardi, Kyle Connor and Isak Rosen scored for Winnipeg. Connor Hellebuyck made 11 saves as the Jets slipped to 3-2 on their eight-game homestand.

Blackhawks 3, Mammoth 2, OT: Connor Bedard scored off a rebound off a post at 3:57 of

overtime to give Chicago a victory over Utah.

Bedard, Tyler Bertuzzi and Frank Nazar each had a goal and an assist and Spencer Knight stopped 29 shots to help the Blackhawks sweep the season series in their third meeting with Utah in 12 days.

In the 3-on-3 overtime, Alex Vlasic blasted a shot off the post, Bedard controlled the rebound and snapped it into the net. The young star then pounded on the glass in celebration.

Avalanche 5, Kraken 1: Nazem Kadri scored his first goal since rejoining Colorado and Nathan MacKinnon added his NHL-leading 44th score of the season as the Avalanche beat Seattle.

Kadri, acquired from the Calgary Flames on March 6, gave Colorado a 4-1 lead when he tipped a shot by Sam Malinski past Seattle goalie Philipp Grubauer, who replaced Joey Daccord to start the second period. Kadri spent three seasons with the Avalanche, and won the Stanley Cup with Colorado in 2022.

Golden Knights 6, Penguins 2: Pavel Dorofeyev had two goals and an assist and Vegas beat Pittsburgh.

Vegas, which had lost six of seven, snapped a three-game losing streak that dropped them to third place in the Pacific Division.

With Edmonton losing 7-2 in Dallas earlier in the night, the Golden Knights moved into sole possession of second place. The Penguins remained tied with the New York Islanders in the Metropolitan Division.

Canucks 4, Predators 3, SO: Vancouver scored a pair of third-period goals to erase a two-goal deficit, then got a shootout goal from Jake DeBrusk to beat Nashville.

The Canucks trailed 3-1 after two periods, but Marco Rossi scored with 4:05 to play to make it 3-2 and Filip Hronek tied it at 3-3 all with 1:01 left in regulation.