

## Biden: US-Philippines ties 'ironclad'

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden reiterated U.S. commitment to the Philippines' security and noted the "deep friendship" of the two nations as he hosted Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. for White House talks Monday as concerns grow about the Chinese navy's harassment of Philippine vessels in the South China Sea.

Marcos' visit to Washington comes after the U.S. and the Philippines last week completed their largest war drills ever and as the two countries' air forces on Monday will hold their first joint fighter jet training in the Philippines since 1990. The Philippines this year agreed to give the U.S. access to four more bases on the islands as the U.S. looks to deter China's aggressive actions toward Taiwan and in the disputed South China Sea.

Meanwhile, China has angered the Philippines by repeatedly harassing its navy and coast guard patrols and chasing away fishermen in waters that are close to Philippine shores but that Beijing claims as its own.

But as Biden sat down with Marcos, the U.S. president went out of his way to note the progress in the U.S.-Philippine relationship —

one that has had ups and downs over the years and was in a difficult place when Marcos took office less than a year ago.

"We are facing new challenges and I couldn't think of a better partner to have than you," Biden told Marcos at the start of their Oval Office meeting. "The United States also remains ironclad in our commitment to the defense of the Philippines, including in the South China Sea, and we will continue to support the Philippines military modernization."

Marcos said the relationship was essential as Philippines and the Pacific finds itself in "possibly the most complicated geopolitical situation in the world right now."

Monday's Oval Office meeting is the latest high-level diplomacy with Pacific leaders by Biden as his administration contends with increased military and economic assertiveness by China and worries about North Korea's nuclear program. Marcos' official visit to Washington is the first by a Philippine president in more than 10 years.

The U.S. president last week hosted South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol for a state visit during which the two leaders introduced new steps aimed at deterring North Korea

from launching an attack on its neighbors. Biden is scheduled to travel to Japan and Australia in May.

Following the meeting, the White House announced the transfer of three C-130 aircraft and two coastal patrol vessels to the Philippines. The two countries also said they adopted defense guidelines aimed at deepening cooperation and interoperability between the two nations' militaries across land, sea, air, space and cyberspace.

The administration also said it is launching a new trade mission focused on increasing American investment in the Philippines' innovation economy, new educational programming and more.

Increased Chinese harassment of vessels in the South China Sea has added another dimension to the visit. On April 23, journalists from The Associated Press and other outlets were aboard the Philippine coast guard's BRP Malapascua near Second Thomas Shoal when a Chinese coast guard ship blocked the Philippine patrol vessel steaming into the disputed shoal. The Philippines has filed more than 200 diplomatic protests against China since last year.

## 1,500 additional troops heading to US-Mexico border

**BY ROSE L. THAYER**

*Stars and Stripes*

AUSTIN, Texas — An additional 1,500 military troops are deploying to the southern border with Mexico as the U.S. prepares for an expected surge of migrants next week when a pandemic-era policy that allows for swift deportation is lifted, the Pentagon said Tuesday.

The troops will join about 2,400 National Guard members authorized to serve at the border with U.S. Customs and Border Protection as part of a support mission that began in 2018. The mission has been primarily staffed with National Guard members on federal orders but has at times included active-duty troops.

More troops were requested by the Department of Homeland Security and were authorized by the Defense Department for 90 days, said Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon's top spokesman. The troops "will fill

critical capability gaps, such as ground-based detection and monitoring, data entry, and warehouse support, until CBP can address these needs through contracted support," he said.

They will not do law enforcement work, Ryder said.

The request is part of the federal government's preparations for the lifting of a public health policy on May 11 enacted during the coronavirus pandemic. Known as Title 42, the policy allowed U.S. border officials to quickly turn away migrants crossing the border from Mexico for fear that they would spread the coronavirus.

President Joe Biden has made changes to how migrants can seek asylum in hopes of decreasing the number of people expected to surge to the border. He also signed an order Thursday to allow the activation of reserve troops to address international drug trafficking.

Separately, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has about 5,000 Texas National Guard troops deployed to the border with Mexico to help the state Department of Public Safety patrol the areas between the legal ports-of-entry, including drug trafficking.

Abbott's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on whether he plans to increase his use of state troops next week.

In west Texas, El Paso declared an emergency over the weekend to allow for shelters to open and meet the expected increase of migrants crossing into the border city. El Paso Mayor Oscar Leeser said he expects up to 12,000 people to enter the city on May 11 and 12.

Speaking in a news conference Sunday, he said his concern is people preparing to cross think they will be able to do so without documentation.

# Marine general who led DIA dies at 64

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

The first Black director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the first Marine Corps officer to lead it, died Friday in Aldie, Va., the Marine Corps said in a news release Monday.

Retired Lt. Gen. Vincent Stewart, 64, died “peacefully in his sleep,” according to a brief obituary posted by the Colonial Funeral Home of Leesburg.

“I join many others in mourning the sudden loss of Vince Stewart,” Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger said in the release. “He was a trailblazer, a selfless leader, and a mentor and dear personal friend to me. His impact as a leader of Marines and the broader intelligence community cannot be understated. Words cannot express how much he will be missed.”

In a posting on the funeral home’s website, Lt. Gen. Dimitri Henry, director of intelli-

gence of the Joint Staff, wrote about how Stewart shaped his trajectory in the Corps.

“Vince Stewart is the example that we now try to emulate,” Henry wrote. “He saw my potential and he never let me forget that I had that potential, that if I did what is required, I could accomplish anything I chose to accomplish.”

Stewart retired in 2019 after 38 years in the Marine Corps. His last post was as deputy commander of U.S. Cyber Command.

Stewart was born May 11, 1958, in Kingston, Jamaica, and immigrated to America in 1971 at age 13. Football became his passion, and he earned an athletic scholarship to Western Illinois University, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in history, according to his obituary.

He received a master’s degree in national resource strategy from the National Defense University and a second master’s degree in national security and strategic studies from

the Naval War College.

He was commissioned in 1981 and served at all levels of command, his first a tank platoon in Alpha Company, 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division in 1982, according to the Marine Corps news release.

One former Marine intelligence officer remembered Stewart as “a true giant in the Intelligence Community,” in a post on the funeral home website.

“He is revered by everyone, from the most senior Intelligence Community leadership to the analysts on the deck plates,” wrote retired Lt. Gen. Michael Groen, who commanded the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center and served as deputy chief of computer network operations of the National Security Agency.

Stewart is survived by his wife, Phyllis; five children, Vincent, Robert, Nicole, Jennifer and Patrick; 15 grandchildren; and four brothers and sisters.

## Naumann now in key enlisted post for Army Special Operations Command

BY PHILLIP WALTER  
WELLMAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

Army Special Operations Command’s latest appointment puts a woman in the role of senior enlisted leader for the first time.

Command Sgt. Maj. JoAnn Naumann stepped into the job at a ceremony Monday at Fort Bragg, N.C.

The command oversees the Army’s various special operations forces. As sergeant major, Naumann will advise the unit’s commander and be responsible for addressing issues that arise among soldiers.

Before assuming the role, the New Jersey native had already earned the distinction of being the first woman promoted to a command team position in special operations history.

Naumann most recently served as the senior enlisted adviser for U.S. Special Operations Command-Korea.

After joining the Army as an Arabic linguist in 1996, she began working with special operations forces over two decades ago and completed 14 deployments throughout U.S. Central and Africa commands.

Her assignments have included stints as senior enlisted adviser for Joint Special Operations Command, command sergeant major for the 15th Military Intelligence Battalion and command sergeant major for the Joint Special Operations Command Intelligence Brigade.

She’s been awarded a Legion of Merit, two Bronze Stars and three Army Commendation Medals.

“When I came into the (special operations forces) community in 2002, there were very few women,” Naumann said in an Army interview released last year, adding that it was challenging at times because some people weren’t sure how to react.

## Air Force uses new JLTV in mission for first time

BY DOUG G. WARE  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Air Force for the first time used one of its new Joint Light Tactical Vehicles, an SUV-like vehicle intended to replace the Humvee, service officials said.

Two airmen drove a JLTV for an operational mission in western Nebraska to support launch facility maintenance near the town of Harrisburg, located about 15 miles east of the Nebraska-Wyoming border, the Air Force said. The airmen were from the 90th Missile Security Forces Squadron at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in southeastern Wyoming.

“It is built like a tank,” said Senior Airman Zion Hill, one of the airmen in the vehicle. “When you climb into the Humvee, you are stepping back in time 20 years. The JLTV is like driving the Batmobile into the future to better defend our na-

tion.”

“I like being first,” said Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Daniels, the other airman in the vehicle. “It’s kind of entertaining, especially driving around on base and off base. You see people taking pictures.”

First Lt. Joseph Struzik, 90th Missile Security Operations Squadron officer in charge of logistics and sustainment, said the new vehicles are ultra-modern.

“It is a night and day difference,” Struzik said. “When you climb inside a Humvee you are walking into a historical box ... old analog gauges, a classic steering wheel, a center console with a radio. Whereas the JLTV gives defenders a better tool to perform their nuclear-security duties.”

Though the military is now turning to the JLTV, officials have said the Humvee won’t be phased out of service until at least 2050.

# 360-degree defense system planned for Guam

By ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Defense Department is planning to install a 360-degree missile system on Guam to defend the strategic military waypoint in the Western Pacific against attacks, Guam's acting governor said Tuesday.

The 360-degree Enhanced Integrated Air and Missile Defense System is a response to perceived threats from potential adversaries like China and North Korea, including ballistic, cruise and hypersonic missiles.

The 360-degree system is expected to combine Army and Navy defensive missile systems with improved radar, Vice Adm. Jon Hill, director of the Missile Defense Agency, said during a press briefing on March 14.

Joint Region Marianas, the in-

stallation management command on Guam, notified the island government Tuesday of its plan to erect the system on the island, Guam Acting Gov. Joshua Tenorio said in a news release.

A notice of intent, published by the Missile Defense Agency, opens a 30-day window for public comments on the project's environmental impact statement, a requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act. Public comment is open from Wednesday through June 2.

Installation of a "360-degree, persistent, air and missile defense" system is the "most important action we can take to increase the joint force's lethality," now-retired Adm. Philip Davidson, the former head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command,

told the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 2021.

"This system is critical for defending the homeland, including our most important American operating location in the Western Pacific," he said, according to a transcript.

The 360-degree system is a collaboration between several Defense Department agencies, including the Missile Defense Agency, the Army, Navy and Air Force.

The project is expected to include a new version of the AN/TPY-2 radar system, the AN/TPY-6, alongside the Army's Integrated Air and Missile Defense Battle Command System, or IBCS, and a command suite, Hill said in March.

"So, it really is a combined, at the simple level, Aegis and IBCS

working together on the island," he said, according to a transcript, referring to the Aegis Combat System commonly deployed on Navy guided-missile destroyers.

The notice of intent will also begin the "scoping process," in which the missile agency and Guam residents can "define the range of issues and potential alternatives" addressed in the environmental impact statement.

The scoping meetings are scheduled from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the University of Guam Fieldhouse on June 14, Okkodo High School on June 15 and Southern High School on June 16.

Representatives of Guam's Governor's Office and Joint Region Marianas did not immediately respond to requests for comment Tuesday afternoon.

## China blasts US aircraft's trip through Taiwan Strait

By ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Chinese military went on "high alert" Friday as a U.S. Navy reconnaissance aircraft flew through international airspace in the Taiwan Strait, according to statements from both countries.

A P-8A Poseidon flew southwest through the 110-mile-wide channel that separates mainland China from Taiwan as it transited from the East China Sea to the South China Sea, U.S. 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. j.g. Luka Bakic told Stars and Stripes by email Tuesday. The Navy described the transit as a demonstration of the "United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," according to a news release Friday.

China, however, viewed the flight as proof that the United States is a "disruptor of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and a creator of security risks," Senior Col. Shi Yi, spokesman for China's Eastern Theater Command, said in a news release Saturday.

Beijing views self-ruling Taiwan, which split from China in 1949, as a breakaway province that must be reunified with the mainland.

China also scrambled fighter jets to "follow and monitor" the Poseidon, the defense ministry said.

China's response didn't affect the operation, Bakic said, and "all interactions with foreign military forces during the transit were consistent with international norms." He described the trip as a "routine transit" on a route that Navy ships and aircraft have consistently used "for many years."

The Navy regularly sends warships through the strait as a means of upholding "the navigational rights and freedoms of all nations." Navy flyovers of the strait, while less common, are intended to deliver the same message, according to 7th Fleet's news release. Beijing, in return, typically condemns the transits as provocative.

## Japan ministry free to station Ospreys near southern airport

By MATTHEW M. BURKE  
AND KEISHI KOJA  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japan's Ministry of Defense has passed the final hurdle for stationing tiltrotor aircraft permanently on Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands, after local landowners agreed to sell 80 acres to facilitate the move.

The unnamed landowners' association agreed Monday by a two-thirds vote to sell a tract of farmland along the western fence line of Kyushu Saga International Airport, a spokesman for Saga city's base countermeasures division said by phone Tuesday.

Terms of the deal were not immediately available. A spokesman for the Kyushu Defense Bureau declined to comment Tuesday. Some government spokespeople in Japan speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

The Defense Ministry hopes to have a new base for the Ground Self-Defense Force built there by July 2025, when the V-22 Os-

preys' temporary deployment ends at Camp Kisarazu, east of Tokyo in Chiba prefecture, the city spokesman said.

Japan has received 11 of the 17 tiltrotor aircraft it ordered from Bell Boeing in 2015. Plans for the new base accommodate all 17 Ospreys, along with 50 helicopters from Camp Metabaru, 15 miles north of Saga city, and around 750 personnel. The facility plans call for offices, an aircraft parking apron, hangars, fuel tanks, ammunition storage facilities and two runway access roads.

The idea of basing Ospreys on Kyushu dates to discussions in 2013 with then-Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima on reducing the military presence in Okinawa prefecture. Saga was attractive due to its proximity to Japan's Amphibious Rapid Mobile Deployment Brigade at Camp Aino in Sasebo, 45 miles to the west. Discussions picked up steam in 2015 and were agreed upon by Saga prefecture Gov. Yoshinori Yamaguchi in 2018.



# Treasury Secretary: US could default by June 1

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen notified Congress on Monday that the United States could default on its debt as early as June 1, if legislators do not raise or suspend the nation's borrowing authority before then and avert what could potentially become a global financial crisis.

In a letter to House and Senate leaders, Yellen urged congressional leaders "to protect the full faith and credit of the United States by acting as soon as possible" to address the \$31.4 trillion limit on its legal borrowing authority.

She added that it is impossible to predict with certainty the exact date of when the U.S. will run out of cash.

"We have learned from past debt limit impasses that waiting until the last minute to suspend or increase the debt limit can cause serious harm to business and consumer confidence, raise short-term borrowing costs for taxpayers, and negatively impact the credit rating of the United States," Yellen said in the letter.

Also Monday, the Congressional Budget

Office reported that it saw a greater risk of the U.S. running out of funds in early June. CBO Director Phillip L. Swagel said because of less-than-expected tax receipts this filing season and a faster IRS having processed already received returns, "Treasury's extraordinary measures will be exhausted sooner than we previously projected."

In January, Yellen sent a letter to congressional leaders, stating that her department had begun resorting to "extraordinary measures" to avoid a federal government default.

The Treasury said Monday that it plans to increase its borrowing during the April to June quarter of this year, even as the federal government is close to breaching the debt limit.

The U.S. plans to borrow \$726 billion during the quarter.

That's \$449 billion more than projected in January, due to a lower beginning-of-quarter cash balance and projections of lower-than-expected income tax receipts and higher spending.

# Ill. dust storm leaves at least 6 dead in crashes

*Associated Press*

DIVERNON, Ill. — An interstate highway in Illinois reopened Tuesday after a wind-storm that kicked up clouds of blinding dust from farm fields and led to crashes that killed at least six people and injured dozens more, police said.

More than 70 vehicles, including dozens of commercial vehicles and passenger cars, were involved in crashes late Monday morning along a 2-mile stretch of Interstate 55 in Montgomery County, 75 miles north of St. Louis. The highway was closed in both directions after the crashes, but northbound and southbound lanes reopened around 6 a.m. Tuesday, Illinois State Police said.

The crashes involved 40 to 60 cars, along with tractor-trailers, two of which caught fire, Maj. Ryan Starrick said. The six people who died were all in northbound lanes, while 37 people on both sides of I-55 were taken to hospitals.

Those hurt in the crash range in age from 2 to 80 and have injuries from minor to life-threatening, police said. One of the six people killed was Shirley Harper, 88, of Franklin, Wis. Efforts to identify the five others continued.

Starrick told reporters that Monday's wind-driven dust storm was a spring version of a "whiteout situation" typically seen in winter snowstorms. Gov. J.B. Pritzker described the scene as "horrific."

"The only thing you could hear after we got hit was crash after crash after crash behind us," said Tom Thomas, 43, who was traveling south to St. Louis.

Dairon Socarras Quintero, 32, who was driving to St. Louis to make deliveries for his custom frame company based in Elk Grove Village, said that after his truck hit the vehicle in front of him, he exited and moved to the side of the road, then returned after the chain reaction of crashes ended behind him.

Socarras Quintero said the dust continued to blow ferociously as he checked on other motorists and emergency crews arrived. He held up his backpack, caked with dust even though it was inside a closed truck cab.

Winds at the time were gusting between 35 and 45 mph, the National Weather Service said.

"It's very flat, very few trees," meteorologist Chuck Schaffer said. "It's been very dry across this area, really, for the last three weeks."

# Sudanese fleeing battles flood port city, borders with Egypt

*Associated Press*

CAIRO — Exhausted Sudanese and foreigners joined growing crowds at Sudan's main seaport Tuesday, waiting to be evacuated from the chaos-stricken nation. After more than two weeks of fighting, areas of the capital of Khartoum appear increasingly abandoned.

The battle for control of Sudan erupted on April 15, after months of escalating tensions between the military, led by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and a rival paramilitary group called the Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo.

Other nations have tried to convince the two generals to stop the fighting and come to the negotiating table. The government of South Sudan, which officially split from Sudan in 2011, said Tuesday that the two rival

generals will engage in talks, after which there could be a weeklong cease-fire.

South Sudan President Salva Kiir spoke with both Burhan and Dagalo over the phone, the government said in a statement. There was no immediate comment from either the army or the paramilitary.

Meanwhile, civilians were packing buses and trucks for Sudan's northern border with Egypt. Many others headed to Port Sudan, on the country's Red Sea coast. The relative calm of the port city, from which many foreign governments have evacuated their citizens, seemed the safer option.

"Much of the capital has become empty," said Abdalla al-Fatih, a Khartoum resident who fled with his family to Port Sudan on Monday. He said they had been trapped for two weeks, and that by now, everyone on his street had left.

**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**Vehicle crashes into cellphone store, 5 hurt**

**WI** FOND DU LAC — A vehicle crashed into a central Wisconsin cellphone store, injuring five people, including one critically, authorities said.

The vehicle crashed into a Verizon store in Fond du Lac, the city’s police and fire departments reported.

The vehicle, which was driven by a 20-year-old man, traveled about 100 yards off-road through parts of a terrace and parking lot before jumping a curb and slamming into the store’s showroom.

A 29-year-old woman was airlifted to a hospital with life-threatening injuries. The vehicle’s driver, a 49-year-old woman and two other men, ages 30 and 23, were taken to a hospital with non-life-threatening injuries, authorities said.

The driver was arrested on suspicion of operating while impaired causing great bodily harm.

**Court reinstates charges against vet home leaders**

**MA** BOSTON — Massachusetts’ highest court overruled a lower court judge and reinstated criminal neglect charges against two top former officials at a veterans’ home. Nearly 80 veterans died at the Veterans’ Home in Holyoke after contracting the coronavirus in one of the worst COVID-19 outbreaks in a long-term care facility in the nation.

The ruling allows the case against Bennett Walsh, the former superintendent at the facility, and Dr. David Clinton, its

former medical director, to move forward.

In their ruling, the majority of the justices found that the facts presented to the grand jury constituted probable cause to believe that Walsh and Clinton violated the elder abuse statute and that Hampden Superior Court Judge Edward McDonough Jr. erred in dismissing the charges.

**Court: State election law didn’t target Black voters**

**FL** TALLAHASSEE — A federal appeals court upheld a Florida election law that a lower court had ruled was aimed at suppressing Black voters.

The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals said U.S. District Judge Mark Walker’s March 2022 ruling was flawed. The three-judge panel said in a 2-1 split decision that evidence did not show that lawmakers deliberately targeted Black voters.

The law tightens rules on mailed ballots, drop boxes and other popular election methods — changes that made it more difficult for Black voters who, overall, have more socioeconomic disadvantages than white voters, Walker wrote in his ruling.

**\$2.3B awarded in abuse suit with Mormon church**

**CA** RIVERSIDE — A woman who was molested for years by her stepfather has been awarded \$2.28 billion by a California jury in a lawsuit that also implicated her mother and the local Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in which both parents were active, her attorneys an-

nounced.

The panel in Riverside County Superior Court awarded damages to a woman described in court papers only as Jane Doe, who said she was sexually assaulted by her stepfather from age 5 until she was 14, according to an announcement by the law firm of Gary A. Dordick.

The lawsuit alleged that beginning in the 1980s, the stepfather sexually abused the girl.

In addition to the stepfather, the negligence and sexual abuse suit also named the church and the woman’s mother. It alleged that the woman repeatedly told church officials, including local bishops, about the sexual abuse but that they failed to report it to law enforcement in violation of church policy and also used “intimidation and shaming tactics” to keep her from telling anyone outside the church.

**Ex-sheriff indicted on bribery, ammo charges**

**MS** JACKSON — A former acting sheriff in Mississippi’s largest county has been indicted on federal charges of soliciting bribes and providing ammunition to a convicted felon.

Marshand Crisler, 54, of Jackson, who was interim sheriff of Hinds County for part of 2021 and is running for a full term this year, pleaded not guilty during an appearance before a U.S. magistrate judge in Jackson.

Crisler is charged with soliciting and accepting thousands of dollars in exchange for agreeing to provide information about criminal investiga-

tions to an unidentified person who paid the bribes, according to a statement from the U.S. attorney’s office and the FBI.

Crisler allegedly agreed to protect a jailed relative of that person and to give them a job with the Hinds County Sheriff’s Department.

The release also said Crisler gave ammunition to a person he knew to be a convicted felon.

**Governor says he plans to sign gun-control bills**

**MD** ANNAPOLIS — Maryland Gov. Wes Moore said he is planning to sign gun-control measures approved by lawmakers in response to a U.S. Supreme Court ruling last year.

The high court’s ruling in *New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen* ended a requirement similar to a Maryland law for people to demonstrate a particular need to get a license to carry a concealed gun in public.

One of the measures removes the “good and substantial reason” language from Maryland law that the court found unconstitutional in the Bruen case. But the Maryland General Assembly, which is controlled by Democrats, also tightened gun laws in other respects. For example, lawmakers passed a bill that would prevent someone from carrying a concealed handgun in certain areas.

The bill generally would prohibit a person from wearing, carrying, or transporting a handgun in an “area for children or vulnerable individuals” or in a “special purpose area.”

— From wire reports



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# Harden scores 45 as 76ers top Celtics

Associated Press

BOSTON — James Harden was asked for most of this season to be a facilitator for a 76ers team built around big man Joel Embiid.

With the MVP finalist sidelined for the opener of his team's second-round playoff series with the Celtics, Philadelphia called on a vintage version of Harden.

He happily obliged.

Harden matched his playoff career high with 45 points and hit a go-ahead, step-back three-pointer over Al Horford with 8.7 seconds left as the 76ers rallied without Embiid to beat Boston 119-115 in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference semifinals on Monday night.

"We didn't come into the game expecting to lose. We came in here to win," Harden said. "Whether Jo comes back or not, we're going to be ready to go."

Tyrese Maxey added 26 points and Tobias Harris finished with 18 for the Sixers, who

made 17 three-pointers with Embiid watching from the bench. He sprained his right knee in Game 3 of Philadelphia's first-round sweep of the Brooklyn Nets.

After the Sixers endured an early scoring onslaught from the Celtics, 76ers coach Doc Rivers said Harden was patient and knew when to attack and when to pass.

Rivers said having a week to prepare for the likelihood Embiid would be out was key.

"That's the difference between this year's team and last year's team. We have a bunch of street fighters," Rivers said. "If we could get to the fourth quarter, we were going to win the game. That's how we felt."

Jayson Tatum led the Celtics with 39 points and 11 rebounds. Jaylen Brown added 23 points and Malcolm Brogdon finished with 20.

"They hit big shots and I think they were just in a rhythm throughout the whole game,"

Tatum said.

Boston hosts Game 2 on Wednesday night.

Harden previously scored 45 points for the Houston Rockets in a Western Conference Finals win over Golden State on May 25, 2015.

Trailing 117-115, the Celtics had one final chance and got the ball to Tatum, but he lost the ball to Paul Reed, who was fouled and hit a pair of free throws.

The game was tied at 87-all entering the back-and-forth final period.

Tatum gave the Celtics their final lead, 115-114, on a pair of free throws with 26.1 seconds left.

Before that, Boston took the shot clock down before Maxey intercepted a pass by Brogdon and drove in for a layup to put the 76ers in front, 114-113.

"I was about to pick the ball up, but I'm glad I kept running," Maxey said.

Reed took Embiid's place in the starting lineup, like he did

with Embiid out for the final game of the Nets series. As expected, Embiid's absence in the middle contributed to a faster pace.

Both teams used it to their advantage.

The Celtics attacked the paint, connecting on 13 of their first 14 shots. The 76ers made eight of their first 10 attempts, spacing the floor and spreading out Boston's defense.

Harden led the attack early for Philadelphia, hitting his first five attempts, including two threes. Brown started 6 for 6 from the field for a Boston team that thrived without Embiid protecting the rim, going on an 11-0 run at one point.

Boston shot 74% for the half but took only a 66-63 lead into halftime after the 76ers went 11 for 19 (55%) from the three-point line.

"It was a dogfight," Maxey said. "Everybody that stepped on the court for us was a fighter and we came out on top."

## Jokic's 39 points leads Nuggets past Suns in Game 2

Associated Press

DENVER — Nikola Jokic scored 39 points and pulled down 16 rebounds on the eve of the NBA MVP announcement to rally the Denver Nuggets to a 97-87 win over Phoenix on Monday night, giving them a 2-0 lead over the Suns in the Western Conference semifinals.

"I love an aggressive Nikola Jokic," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said after Jokic knocked down 17 shots to offset an off-night by Jamal Murray and Michael Porter Jr., who combined to miss 17 of 22 shots.

"Nikola's an MVP for a reason," Malone said. "He can take over a game. He can beat you in a lot of ways. ... I love a guy who's getting to the basket, imposing his will upon the other team. And that fourth quarter, man, 14 points for that team, 28% from the field, 0-for-9 from three?"

Devin Booker led Phoenix with 35 points and Kevin Durant added 24 but they combined to miss a whopping 32 shots, including 14 from long range.

Jokic shined a night before he learns if he's edged Joel Embiid and Giannis Antetokounmpo for his third consecutive NBA MVP award, recently renamed for Michael Jordan.

"I can't think about that," Jokic said.

Malone said that's because Jokic isn't motivated by winning more MVPs but by leading the Nuggets to their first NBA title.

"If he wins, it, we will be celebrating and very happy for him because it'd be a huge accomplishment — three years in a row. Only a few guys in NBA history have done that," Malone said. "If he doesn't win it, I'm still gonna give him a hug and tell him he's the MVP in my eyes."

He sure showed why Monday night when 26 of his points and 12 of his rebounds came after halftime, when he dominated at both ends of the floor, denying the Suns a shot at tying the series that shifts to Phoenix for Game 3 Friday night.

"It was that kind of game," Jokic said. "My team needed me to be aggressive."

The Suns have been outscored by 30

points from long range this series.

"You've got to believe that it's going to come our way here soon," Suns coach Monty Williams said. "We've got to go home and take care of business. That's where we are right now."

The Suns held Murray to 10 points 48 hours after he went off for 34, but they had no answers for Jokic.

"Slowed down Murray a bit," Durant said. "He obviously got it going in the first game. But Jokic was doing a little bit too much. I think we held them to 97 points total. Usually that's a win for us."

Jokic's big night was necessary as Murray shot 3-for-15 and missed all nine of his three-pointers after sinking six of 10 in the opener, and Porter scored five points on 2-for-7 shooting.

Aaron Gordon added 16 points and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope added 14 points and went 4-for-4 from beyond the arc, including back-to-back swishes that erased the 73-70 deficit and put the Nuggets ahead for good early in the fourth quarter.



# Devils shut out Rangers to win Game 7

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — The New Jersey Devils surprised a lot of hockey experts this past season in going from an NHL also-ran to one of the top teams in the league.

The Devils unleashed another stunner to open the playoffs against their river-rival New York Rangers — 22-year-old Swiss goaltender Akira Schmid.

Schmid rebounded from his only bad game and made 31 saves in Game 7 to lead the Devils to a 4-0 victory over the Rangers on Monday night in a wildly entertaining series.

“We believe in each other,” Devils captain Nico Hischier said. “We knew even last year didn’t go our way, lots of injuries, we have a good group here. We

got a lot of good characters here. We’re a team that plays with a lot of speed and it’s hard to handle if you do that.”

Coming off a franchise-best 52-win season, the Devils will open the Eastern Conference semifinals on Wednesday against the Metropolitan Division-winning Hurricanes in Raleigh, N.C. Game 2 in the best-of-seven series is on Friday night.

The major reason the Devils advanced was Schmid, who had played in a total of 24 regular-season games over the last two seasons.

After New York had a pair of 5-1 wins in the opening two games in New Jersey against starter Vitek Vanecek, Devils coach Lindy Ruff switched to Schmid and the youngster was

unbelievable.

Over the next five games, Schmid went 4-1, allowing a total of two goals in his wins. He was driven from the net in Game 6 of a 5-2 loss in Madison Square Garden after giving up all five goals, but the Devils went with him in Game 7 and he delivered his second 4-0 shutout of the series.

“You’ve got to be ready if you get the chance, you know,” Schmid said. “And then you’ve got to take the opportunity and play well. Obviously the team helped me out a lot, making the transition a lot easier for me.”

Schmid admitted he surprised himself a little with how well he played.

Michael McLeod and Tomas Tatar scored second-period

goals in the series decider and Erik Haula and Jesper Bratt added insurance goals in the third in the game between the long-time Hudson River rivals.

“Outstanding! Stone cold,” Tatar said of Schmid. “He just seems so patient in his crease, playing so well. He was a big part of this series. Coming in as a young goalie, it’s not easy but he stood tall.”

Schmid stopped a pair of Mika Zibanejad power-play blasts in the first period and made a great glove save on Vincent Trocheck with the score still 2-0 in the third period.

Igor Shesterkin was outstanding in defeat, stopping 20 shots, including Jack Hughes’ break-away late in a scoreless first period.

# Álvarez helps Mets split doubleheader with Braves

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Francisco Álvarez hit a go-ahead, two-run double in the sixth inning and the New York Mets beat Atlanta 5-3 to split a doubleheader Monday after Braves star Ronald Acuña Jr. exited the nightcap early with a bruised shoulder.

Sean Murphy had a pair of three-run homers in the opener and Acuña launched a 448-foot home run into the rarely reached third deck at Citi Field, powering the Braves to a 9-8 victory after the teams were rained out the previous two days.

The win was just the second in eight games for the Mets, who snapped a six-game losing streak to their NL East rivals. The Braves won their fifth straight division title last year after sweeping New York on the final weekend of the regular season.

“They’re a good team,” Mets manager Buck Showalter said. “We know they’re going to be there all year.”

Daniel Vogelbach hit an RBI

double in the nightcap and Starling Marte had a run-scoring single to stake the Mets to a 2-0 lead. Drew Smith (2-1) tossed 1 ½ hitless innings in relief of Tyler Megill, who carried a shutout into the sixth before giving up a three-run double to Eddie Rosario.

Vogelbach and Mark Canha drew one-out walks from Charlie Morton (3-3) in the bottom half before Álvarez, who is hitting .212 with 18 strikeouts in his first 52 big league at-bats, doubled to left field off Michael Tonkin.

“It feels really good because I was able to put the team ahead there,” Álvarez said through an interpreter. “And it motivates me to keep on trying to do the same and working to do the same.”

**Guardians 3, Yankees 2:** Josh Naylor hit a two-run single and Mike Zunino drew a go-ahead, bases-loaded walk in a three-run, ninth-inning rally that lifted visiting Cleveland over reeling New York.

Domingo Germán took a one-

hitter and a 2-0 lead into the ninth. But New York lost for the sixth time in eight games and dropped to 15-15.

Steven Kwan singled with one out in the ninth off Germán.

Reliever Clay Holmes bobbled Amed Rosario’s dribbler for an error and allowed a single to José Ramírez. Naylor singled to right for Holmes’ second blown save in six chances.

**Red Sox 6, Blue Jays 5:** Alex Verdugo belted a leadoff homer in the ninth inning against Jordan Romano (2-2) for his third walk-off hit this season, and host Boston ended a nine-game losing streak to Toronto.

Emmanuel Valdez hit his first major league home run, a two-run drive, and Jarren Duran added a solo shot for the Red Sox. Masataka Yoshida had two hits with an RBI and extended his hitting streak to 11 games.

Bo Bichette hit a three-run homer and went 5 for 5 for the Blue Jays.

**Padres 8, Reds 3:** Fernando Tatis Jr. had three hits, scored once and fired up the crowd in

his return to Petco Park, and Ha-Seong Kim hit a tiebreaking three-run homer as host San Diego beat Cincinnati for its third straight win.

The crowd was already in a festive mood for Tatis’ first home game since Sept. 26, 2021, when Kim sent fans into a frenzy by connecting off Alex Young in the fifth inning for a 6-3 lead.

**Dodgers 13, Phillies 4:** Mookie Betts had three hits, including a two-run homer, as host Los Angeles went deep four times in a victory over Philadelphia.

David Peralta hit a three-run homer, and Will Smith and Jason Heyward had solo shots as the Dodgers extended their winning streak to four.

**Astros 7, Giants 3:** Mauricio Dubón had three hits, highlighted by a tiebreaking double in a five-run seventh inning, and host Houston beat San Francisco.

**Cubs 5, Nationals 1:** Dansby Swanson hit a two-run homer and Drew Smyly delivered seven solid innings as visiting Chicago beat Washington.

# Truex wins 3rd Dover race on Monday

Associated Press

DOVER, Del. — Martin Truex Jr. grew up in New Jersey wanting to follow his dad into racing. Martin Truex, though, mostly raced on free weekends when he wasn't running Sea Watch International, which harvests and processes clam products.

The Joe Gibbs Racing driver worked as a teenager on his dad's clamming boat, often rising before dawn ahead of a day spent on choppy waters, knowing even then that life at sea wasn't for him.

"I'm glad I figured out how to go fast so I could get the hell off that boat," Truex said.

Truex got off the boat, into stock cars and — after a bumpy start to his career — became one of the more dominant drivers of his era. He had achieved just about all he could — except celebrate with his brother as winners on a NASCAR weekend.

With dad at the track, Truex mastered the Monster Mile on a Monday for the third time in his career, the former NASCAR champion snapping a 54-race winless streak overall in the Cup Series at Dover Motor Speedway.

Thanks to a race postponed a day because of rain, it was a long weekend sweep for the Truex brothers. Younger brother Ryan Truex won the second-tier Xfinity Series race on Saturday for his first NASCAR victory across all three national series in 188 career starts.

Ryan Truex was unable to attend Monday's race.

"We would love to have Ryan in the car," team owner Joe Gibbs said. "He does a lot of simulation work for us. He's a dedicated young guy, and as everybody knows, it's hard to get sponsorship."

Gibbs made repeated phone calls and FaceTimed friends in victory lane — "I'm going to talk

to my wife first," he said as he momentarily rejected one interview request — and told everyone on the other line "it was a Truex weekend!"

"We just won the race at Dover with ol' Martin Truex!" the team owner nicknamed Coach bellowed into his phone.

Truex Jr. certainly knows how to get to victory lane on the concrete-mile track about 130 miles from his hometown of Mayetta, N.J. Truex, who contemplated retirement last season, has long considered Dover his home track.

Who knew it would be the setting for a victorious family reunion?

The 2017 Cup champion has the blueprint on how to win at the Monster Mile on a Monday. Truex raced to his first NASCAR Cup win on June 4, 2007, at Dover and 12 years later used another rainout to take the checkered flag on May 6, 2019.

He held strong on the outside

lane Monday off the final restart to hold off runner-up Ross Chastain by a half-second. Ryan Blaney, William Byron and Denny Hamlin completed the top five.

Byron fell short after he led a race-high 193 laps in the No. 24 Chevrolet.

"In our history, this hasn't been our best track," he said. "We came with something a little bit different to try and help that. I think it did for the majority of the race, but just got too loose."

Truex bristled at questions that suggested he was in a bit of a long losing streak. The 42-year-old driver had been winless since his last Cup victory on Sept. 11, 2021, at Richmond Raceway.

"You have all these races throughout that period where you're like, 'We were good enough to win, we should have won,'" Truex said. "It's not like we can't do that, we just need to put it all together."

## Forte draws No. 15 post, is made 3-1 Derby favorite

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Todd Pletcher-trained colt Forte and Brad Cox's filly Wet Paint are the morning line favorites, respectively, for the 149th Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks at Churchill Downs.

Forte, the 2-year-old champion whose 190 points led the Derby qualifying trail, drew the No. 15 post at 3-1 odds on Monday for the \$3 million premier race for 3-year-olds. He brings in a five-race winning streak and has won six of seven starts including last month's Florida Derby won by a length over Mage, who will start from the No. 8 post at 15-1 odds.

Stablemate Tapit Trice is the 5-1 second choice after drawing the No. 5 post on Monday, with Cox's Angel of Empire (154 points) the 8-1 third choice after

drawing the No. 14 post.

Wet Paint will lead Friday's \$1.25 million Oaks from the No. 7 post at 5-2 odds. One of three fillies trained by Louisville-born Cox among 14 entrants, she has won all three starts this year and enters with consecutive Grade 3 stakes wins in the Fantasy and Honeybee respectively at Oaklawn Park.

Stablemate Botanical is the 4-1 second choice from the No. 6 post with trainer Norm Casse's Southlawn the 8-1 third choice from the No. 4 post.

Any suspense over where Forte would start the 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile race was gone quickly when the son of Violence and Queen Caroline by Blame was called out with the first pill drawn. That also relieved Pletcher, a Hall of Famer, of stress after Mo Donegal and Known Agenda started

the last two Derbys from the rail. They finished fifth and ninth, respectively.

The two-time Derby winner had no complaints either with draws for Tapit Trice and Kingsbarns, a 12-1 choice from the No. 6 post. Both are 3-0 as 3-year-olds and coming off wins in the Blue Grass (Keeneland) and Louisiana Derby, respectively.

"I do think it's different with the one (post) with the new starting gate," Pletcher said. "But still, I felt like it cost us a position or two last year and the year before. So just happy to get out of there and pretty pleased with all three post positions."

Meanwhile, Cox hopes strength in numbers earns his first outright Derby victory just over 15 months since Mandaloun was elevated to the 2021

win following Medina Spirit's failed postrace drug test.

Angel of Empire certainly has the credentials after his 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ -length victory in the Grade 1 Arkansas Derby. He has two wins and a second as a 3-year-old and a solid post just two spots right of stablemate Jace's Road (50-1). Those posts might offset Cox's dread after Hit Show (30-1) and Verifying (15-1) drew the Nos. 1 and 2 posts, forcing both to avoid getting bunched against the rail out of the gate.

"Angel of Empire, I think it's a good draw," Cox said. "(Jockey) Flavien (Prat) will be able to break running and get a good spot mid-pack. That's what I'm envisioning. Jace's Road will probably be more forwardly placed as opposed to Angel of Empire. Hopefully he can get himself up into the mix."