

## Intel: Iran used aid to hide weapons

*The Washington Post*

Iran and its proxies are enabling attacks on U.S. troops in Syria through clandestine weapons shipments hidden within humanitarian aid that has flowed into the region after a catastrophic earthquake killed tens of thousands earlier this year, according to classified U.S. intelligence and an Israeli military official familiar with the matter.

The findings, outlined in a leak of U.S. secrets circulated on the Discord messaging platform and obtained by The Washington Post, raise dire questions about the ability of the United States and its allies to intercept Iranian-sourced arms used routinely to target American personnel, partner forces and civilians in the Middle East. The top-secret document, which has not been previously disclosed, amplifies earlier reports of Iran's alleged efforts to conceal defensive military equipment within aid deliveries to Syria after the February disaster devastated that country and neighboring Turkey.

A U.S. defense official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive disclosures, declined to address the document's authenticity but said the activity it describes is consistent with past efforts by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to "use humanitarian aid going into Iraq and Syria as a way to get materials to IRGC-affiliated groups."

Iran's mission to the United Nations did

not return a request for comment. Last month, Iranian officials told the Reuters news agency that its report, detailing Tehran's alleged use of cargo planes to smuggle air defense systems into Syria under the guise of earthquake assistance, was "not true." Reuters attributed its reporting to nine people in Syria, Iran, Israel and the West. Iran's alleged smuggling of offensive weapons into Syria includes unspecified small arms, ammunition and drones, according to the leaked U.S. intelligence assessment. The document says those deliveries were made using vehicle convoys from Iraq coordinated through friendly militant groups there and the Quds Force, Iran's elite expeditionary unit that specializes in managing proxy fighters and intelligence gathering.

The Israeli military official, who like others interviewed for this report spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive information, affirmed the Quds Force was involved in such activity.

In the earthquake's immediate aftermath, Iran and its affiliates moved quickly to exploit the chaos, the leaked intelligence document contends. On Feb. 7, a day after the disaster leveled scores of homes and other buildings, setting off desperate rescue efforts, a militia group based in Iraq "allegedly orchestrated the transfer of rifles, ammunition and 30 UAVs hidden in aid con-

voys to support future attacks on U.S. forces in Syria," it says. UAV is military shorthand for unmanned aerial vehicle.

On Feb. 13, a Quds Force officer directed an Iraqi militia group to "embed weapons within legitimate earthquake aid," the leaked U.S. document indicates, noting that another Quds Force officer maintained a list of "hundreds" of vehicles and goods that entered Syria from Iraq after the earthquake, an apparent effort to manage where all of the trafficked weapons were headed.

The leaked U.S. assessment also implicates the "PMC chief of staff," an apparent reference to Abu Fadak Al-Mohammedawi, a senior official with Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces. The consortium of Shiite militias, aligned in many cases with Iran, receives Iraqi government funding through its formal state body, the Popular Mobilization Committee, or PMC.

The group denied claims that its affiliates have used humanitarian assistance shipments as a conduit for weapon deliveries. The aid packages were authorized by the Iraqi government and reached Syrian people in need, said Moayad Al Saadi, a spokesperson for the group. Such allegations, he said, "will not discourage the Iraqi people from helping the Syrian brothers and standing with them in their humanitarian ordeal, away from any political or other considerations."

## Navy lays out 'rights' on housing for sailors

BY ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

The U.S. Navy will implement a "Bill of Rights & Responsibilities" for sailors living in unaccompanied housing by the end of the month, a move intended to raise morale, the service announced. The document outlines a variety of guarantees and expectations that "succinctly" address sailors' concerns while "setting clear expectations" that sailors are also responsible for their housing conditions, Naval Installations Command said in a Thursday news release.

"This Bill of Rights & Responsibilities

makes it clear what guarantees we promise [unaccompanied housing] residents while establishing what their obligations are for maintaining their housing," said Steve Drumm, director of housing for the command, in the release.

The new document was developed after Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday and fleet commanders determined that improving unaccompanied housing would "positively impact sailor morale." The bill of rights is also "just the first in a series of efforts" the Navy plans to roll out soon, according to the release.

Among the rights guaranteed in the document are promises to provide safe housing that meets environmental and health standards, with working fixtures and utilities, clearly defined housing regulations and the ability to "report inadequate housing standards" without fear of reprisal.

The document also sums up what the Navy expects of its sailors, including the responsibility to "take pride and ownership" of their residences, maintain "daily living standards," allow access for inspections or repairs and provide a minimum 30-day notice prior to moving out.

# Revived ties bring US back to Subic Bay

By **SETH ROBSON**  
*Stars and Stripes*

SUBIC BAY, Philippines — More than three decades after the Navy vacated Subic Bay, the idyllic harbor north of Manila, U.S. forces are reappearing as President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. renews ties with his country's long-time ally.

Bound by a mutual defense treaty, the two nations have grown closer in recent years amid a large-scale Chinese military buildup, threats to nearby Taiwan and aggression in the South China Sea.

The revived partnership, previously downplayed by former President Rodrigo Duterte, who sought more cordial relations with China, is bringing the United States back in strength for highly publicized defense arrangements and big military exercises.

Subic, once a formidable Navy installation, and nearby Clark Air Base, formerly the largest Air Force installation overseas, have changed since their old tenants vacated. Both are run by government organizations — Clark De-

velopment Corp. and Subic Bay Metropolitan Corp. — that are looking for ways to make money in the civilian sector.

At Subic, guards are posted at the port's gates but they wave traffic through unless they spot a suspicious vehicle. Inside, American visitors may find familiar, but repurposed landmarks.

The Royal supermarket operates in what was once a commissary. A bank occupies the former base theater. What used to be a Marine Corps barracks is the Subic Bay Peninsular Hotel. Across the road, locals run laps on a former Navy running track.

Subic's main chapel still holds services. Marines saved the building from the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo by climbing on the roof and shoveling away accumulating ash, according to Norman Tuzon, who served there as a Marine and retired in the area more than a decade ago.

In the old days, 7th Fleet ships were regular visitors, and the military population swelled when they pulled in. For young sailors and Marines, a trip outside the

gate to Olongapo city was like traveling to Tijuana from San Diego, Tuzon said.

"We wouldn't go out in town when those guys came in for liberty," he said. "There was always a bar fight."

A former transportation worker at Subic Bay, Victorio Vizcocho, recalled Filipinos bringing their families to the base in the 1980s for July 4 celebrations and Christmas gifts of apples and oranges from the Navy.

"It was looked forward to by families," he said over coffee beside the harbor on a sunny morning in April.

In 1994, Vizcocho restarted the Subic Bay News, the former base weekly newspaper, which he still operates.

There's still a red-light district with a variety of night clubs featuring adult entertainment just outside the port.

"What hasn't changed is that people here are pro-American," Vizcocho said. "They want to see more of them coming over and boost the economy."

The port operates a container

terminal, among other enterprises, but its biggest revenue generator is fuel imports, pumped to old Navy underground tanks or new, above-ground tanks, each capable of holding 10 million gallons.

Subic Bay International Airport, once Naval Air Station Cubi Point, is home to Relyant Global, a Tennessee-based defense contractor that provides services for visiting U.S. forces.

The increased American military activity is noticeable, said the company's local manager, Nina Manikan-Wight.

"It used to be just Balikatan and Kamandag," she said of annual exercises involving the U.S. Marines and Filipino troops. "But now we are hearing about four or five exercises in between."

Subic Bay locals are excited about the economic impact of more American troops visiting, but Tuzon said some worry the U.S. will use the Philippines as a staging ground for a war over Taiwan.

"They don't want to be affected by that," he said.

## McConville: 'Peace through strength' stabilizes Pacific

By **SETH ROBSON**  
*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO—The U.S. Army's top general, during meetings Monday with Japan's top military officials in Tokyo, pointed to the war in Ukraine as a warning about the dangers of regional conflicts.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville spoke to Minister of Defense Yasukazu Hamada and the chief of the Japan Self-Defense Forces Joint Staff, Gen. Yasunori Morishita, at the ministry.

"We have seen with the attack on Ukraine that it not only affects Europe, but it affects all our partners around the world," McCon-

ville told Hamada at the start of their meeting, with reporters present. "That is why it is so important that we don't have any regional conflicts."

Many U.S. defense leaders take seriously a possible Chinese effort to reunify Taiwan by force.

"I believe in peace through strength, and that strength comes from a strong alliance like we have," McConville told Hamada. "We all benefit from having a free and open Indo-Pacific."

Training such as the annual Yama Sakura exercise involving U.S. and Japanese forces help build relationships, he said.

## Navy pilots going to Iwo Jima for carrier landing practice

By **ALEX WILSON**  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Navy aviators from Carrier Air Wing 5 are slated to fly to Iwo Jima on Tuesday for 10 days of carrier landing practice ahead of the USS Ronald Reagan's summer deployment, Naval Forces Japan announced Monday.

Pilots and crew of fixed-wing aircraft based at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, such as F/A-18 Super Hornets and EA-18 Growlers, must complete the required practice before the aircraft carrier can get underway.

On the island, senior pilots will fly at least six sorties — three dur-

ing the day and three at night — and complete seven to eight touch-and-go landings. Junior pilots will undergo more extensive training and may complete 12 or more touch-and-goes per sortie.

The Navy has conducted carrier-landing training on Iwo Jima, also known as Iwo To, for Carrier Air Wing 5 since 1991, but it considers Iwo Jima unsuitable for the training due to difficulty in maintaining its remote facilities and a lack of alternate landing fields.

In the event of bad weather, pilots will relocate to other U.S. airfields in Japan, such as Yokota Air Base or Misawa Air Base, according to the announcement.

# China tells US to ‘reflect deeply’ on ties

Associated Press

China’s foreign minister told the U.S. ambassador on Monday that Washington is responsible for the downturn in relations between the two countries and must “reflect deeply” before ties can return to a healthy track, an official said.

Qin Gang’s comments follow a suspension of serious dialogue on a range of issues between the world’s largest economies, increasingly at odds over tariffs, attempts by Washington to deprive China of cutting-edge technology, and China’s claims to self-governing Taiwan and large parts of the South and East China Seas.

China’s Foreign Ministry quoted Qin as telling Ambassador Nicolas Burns that a “series of erroneous words and deeds by the U.S.” since a meeting in November between President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi

Jinping “have undermined the hard-won positive momentum of Sino-U.S. relations.”

“The U.S. side should reflect deeply, meet China halfway, and propel China-U.S. relations out of the difficulties and back on the right track,” Qin was quoted as saying.

The United States should “correct its understanding of China and return to rationality,” Qin said, repeating his earlier accusation that the U.S. is attempting to suppress and contain China. Beijing routinely cites U.S. political and military support of Taiwan as infringing on its sovereignty.

Qin said ties had “grown icy” and the priority was to stabilize them “and avoid a downward spiral and unanticipated events.”

The U.S. should stop “undermining China’s sovereignty, security, and development interests,” particularly through support of

Taiwan’s independent identity, Qin said.

China says Taiwan must come under its rule, by force if necessary, while the United States says the relationship between the sides must be resolved peaceably. U.S. law requires it to treat threats to Taiwan, including a military blockade, as a matter of “grave concern,” though it remains ambiguous under what conditions U.S. forces could be dispatched to defend the island.

Despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations, the U.S. is Taiwan’s largest supplier of military hardware and diplomatic support, even while it continues to maintain relations with Beijing. Biden has been seen as going a step further by repeatedly saying that the U.S. would back Taiwan militarily, and America has been upgrading basing arrangements with the Philippines, located just south of Taiwan.

## Driver in deadly Texas crash near border charged

Associated Press

BROWNSVILLE, Texas — The driver in a deadly crash that killed 8 people in Brownsville, Texas, has been charged with manslaughter, police said Monday.

Authorities believe driver George Alvarez, 34, lost control after running a red light Sunday morning and plowed into a crowd of Venezuelans outside a migrant center.

The police chief said Alvarez was charged with eight counts of manslaughter and 10 counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Shelter director Victor Maldonado said

the SUV ran up the curb, flipped and continued moving for about 200 feet. Some people walking on the sidewalk about 30 feet from the main group were also hit, Maldonado said. Witnesses detained the driver as he tried to run away and held him until police arrived, he said.

Before the collision, the Range Rover ran a traffic light about 100 feet away, said Maldonado, who reviewed the shelter’s surveillance video.

Victims struck by the vehicle were waiting for the bus to return to downtown Brownsville after spending the night at the

overnight shelter, said Sister Norma Pimentel, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley.

Most of the victims were Venezuelan men, Maldonado said. Brownsville has seen a surge of Venezuelan migrants over the last two weeks for unclear reasons, authorities said. On Thursday, 4,000 of about 6,000 migrants in Border Patrol custody in Texas’ Rio Grande Valley were Venezuelan.

The driver was taken to the hospital for injuries sustained when the SUV rolled over, Sandoval said. There were no passengers in the SUV, Sandoval said Sunday.

## Source: Investigators probe ideology of Texas gunman

Associated Press

ALLEN, Texas — Federal officials are looking into whether the gunman who killed eight people at a Dallas-area mall expressed an interest in white supremacist ideology Sunday as they work to discern a motive for the attack, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press. The official cautioned the investigation is in its early stages.

Federal agents have been reviewing social media accounts they believe were used by Mauricio Garcia, 33, and posts that expressed interest in white supremacist and neo-Nazi views, said the official, who could not discuss details of the investigation pub-

licly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Garcia also had a patch on his chest when he was killed by police that read “RWDS,” an acronym for the phrase “Right Wing Death Squad,” which is popular among right-wing extremists and white supremacy groups, the official said.

In addition to reviewing social media posts, federal agents have interviewed family members and associates of Garcia to ask about his ideological beliefs, the official said. Investigators are also reviewing financial records, other online posts they believe Garcia made and other electronic media, according to the official.

Allen Police Chief Brian Harvey declined Sunday evening to answer questions from the AP, saying of the investigation, “we actually don’t have a lot.”

The Texas Department of Public Safety identified Garcia as suspected of killing eight people at a Texas outlet mall, a day after the attack turned an afternoon of shopping into a massacre.

Garcia was fatally shot Saturday by a police officer who happened to be near the suburban Dallas mall.

A law enforcement official said investigators have been searching a Dallas motel near an interstate where Garcia had been staying.

# Ukraine downs 35 drones; attacks kill at least 4

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine air defenses shot down 35 Iranian-made drones over Kyiv in Russia's latest nighttime assault, as attacks across Ukraine by the Kremlin's forces killed four civilians, officials said Monday.

Five people in the capital were injured by falling drone debris, according to Serhii Popko, head of the Kyiv City Military Administration. Air raid alarms sounded for more than three hours during the night.

Drone wreckage struck a two-story apartment building in Kyiv's western Svyatoshynskiy district, while other debris struck a car parked nearby, setting it on fire, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said in a Telegram post.

Facing economic sanctions and limits on its supply chains due to its invasion of Ukraine in

February 2022, Russia has routinely turned to Iranian Shahed drones to bolster its firepower.

Russian shelling of 127 targets across northern, southern and eastern parts of Ukraine killed three civilians, the Ukrainian defense ministry said.

The Kremlin's forces used tanks, drones, mortars, warplanes, multiple rocket launchers and surface-to-air missiles to bombard Ukraine, the report said.

Russian long-range bombers launched up to eight cruise missiles at Ukraine's southern Odesa region, authorities said. One person was killed and three wounded.

Some of the Soviet-era cruise missiles fired against the Odesa region self-destructed or fell into the sea before reaching their targets, according to Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuri Ihnat.

In addition, six Russian rockets struck the eastern Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk during the night, a regional official reported Monday.

The missiles targeted the city's industrial zone and caused no casualties, Donetsk regional governor Petro Kyrylenko said in a Telegram post.

Meanwhile, Russian-installed authorities have begun evacuating residents of Tokmak, a town in the front-line southern Zaporizhzhia region, toward the Black Sea coast, Ukraine's General Staff said.

Those working for Kremlin-appointed local authorities, as well as children and educational workers, are being relocated to Berdyansk, a Russian-occupied seaside city some 62 miles southeast, it said.

The report came just days after Yevhen Balitsky, the Russian-appointed governor of the

partially occupied Zaporizhzhia region, ordered the evacuation of civilians from 18 settlements there on Friday, including Enerhodar which neighbors the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

Speculation has been mounting for months about the timing and focus of Ukraine's expected spring offensive, with some analysts saying Kyiv might try to strike south into Zaporizhzhia in order to split Russian forces and cut Moscow's land link to occupied Crimea.

In a separate development, the Russian military command has promised the Wagner Group, a private military company, additional ammunition and equipment for its offensive in the eastern city of Bakhmut, Wagner founder Yevgeniy Prigozhin said in an audio statement published by his press service Sunday.

## Russia bans jet skis, ride-hailing ahead of Victory Day

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia enacted a major security clampdown ahead of Tuesday's annual commemorations marking the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, curbing the use of drones, jet skis and car-sharing services in its largest cities amid its 14-month war with Ukraine.

At least 21 Russian cities canceled May 9 military parades — the staple of Victory Day celebrations across Russia — for the first time in years, Russian media said.

Regional officials blamed unspecified "security concerns" or vaguely referred to "the current situation" for the restrictions

and cancellations. It was not clear whether their decisions were taken in coordination with the Kremlin.

Last week, Russia — which hasn't witnessed the carnage endured by Ukraine during the invasion — was rattled by ambiguous official reports that two Ukrainian drones flew into the heart of Moscow under the cover of darkness and reached the Kremlin before being shot down.

Media and local officials have blamed other sporadic drone attacks, especially targeting oil depots near the two countries' border, on the Ukrainian military. Kyiv officials decline to comment on such claims.

The fears of a possible Ukrainian attack appeared real, even though parades will go ahead in Russia's largest cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg. But the use of drones has been banned in both cities ahead of Victory Day.

In St. Petersburg, often referred to as "Venice of the north" for its network of rivers and canals, using jet skis in certain parts of the city is prohibited through May 10. In the Russian capital, car sharing services have been temporarily barred from the city center — drivers will not be able to start or finish rides there — amid preparations for the traditional Red Square parade.

## French president leads observance of WWII's end in Europe

Associated Press

PARIS — French President Emmanuel Macron led the traditional ceremony on Paris' Champs-Elysees Monday commemorating the day that marked the end of World War II in Europe in 1945.

Flanked by Prime Minister

Elisabeth Borne, Macron laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe monument. A brass band played the Marseillaise.

To limit disruptions amid ongoing opposition to Macron and his contested pension re-

forms, police banned gatherings around the area of the ceremony in the French capital, and in Lyon, where the president planned to travel to later in the day.

Authorities are being vigilant that a "casserolade" or the loud banging of pots and pans

in protest will not distract from the memorial ceremonies.

In Lyon, Macron was to pay tribute to the French Resistance movement and one of its leaders, Jean Moulin. Macron is visiting Montluc prison, where Moulin was detained and tortured by the Gestapo.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Girl, 17, killed in shooting at party that wounds 5

**CA** CHICO — A 17-year-old girl was killed and five other people were wounded in a shooting early Saturday at a party near California State University in Chico, police said.

Officers responding around 3:30 a.m. to reports of gunfire found six people shot at an apartment building in Chico, police Chief Billy Aldridge said.

All the victims were taken to hospitals, and the teenager died at a hospital, he said.

Two men, ages 21 and 19, and a 17-year-old girl remained hospitalized in stable condition with non-life-threatening injuries, the chief said. Two other men, ages 18 and 20, were treated at the hospital and released, Aldridge said.

The shooting appeared to be an isolated incident, and there was no ongoing threat to the community, police said. They released no information on the shooter.

### Tips pour in after nurse charged with sex crimes

**IA** AMES — More than 70 tips have poured in after an Iowa nurse practitioner who is accused of photographing a teen's genitals during an exam was arrested on sex crime charges, police said.

Several districts and one university also have issued alerts that Carl Markley, 44, performed school physicals for their students, although none of the charges against him allege that crimes occurred during those exams.

Markley, who is free on bond, is charged with sexual exploitation of a minor, pimping, prostitu-

tion and human trafficking. The charges were filed in two batches, and police in Ames arrested him the second time last week. WHO-TV reported that police believe the allegations against Markley date back to 2008.

Ames and Gilbert public school districts both contracted Markley to provide pre-activity physical examinations. Both school districts are now urging potential victims within the schools to come forward.

Grand View University President Rachelle Keck said in an email Friday that Markley also performed physicals there.

### Governor rolls back limits on police chases

**WA** SEATTLE — With the stroke of a pen Wednesday, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee rolled back some requirements for police to chase people in vehicles, a partial reversal of a controversial pursuit policy first enacted in the state at the height of racial injustice protests following George Floyd's murder.

Under the new law, police no longer need probable cause to initiate a pursuit. Instead, reasonable suspicion that a person inside a vehicle has committed or is committing a crime would be enough to give chase.

The bill reflects a call for a return to more flexibility for law enforcement after Washington lawmakers passed an array of reforms to reduce violence and death in police response, covering everything from background checks officers undergo before they're hired to the circumstances under which they can pursue vehicles.

Historically in the state, police

have been authorized to use force to briefly detain someone if they have reasonable suspicion — a commonsense notion based on specific facts — that someone might be involved in a crime. Probable cause, however, is based on evidence that the person committed the crime and is considered a higher standard.

### Off-duty police officer fatally shot after shift

**IL** CHICAGO — An off-duty Chicago police officer was shot and killed early Saturday as she headed home on the city's Southside after her shift. Relatives identified the slain officer to the Chicago Sun-Times as Arianah Preston, 24.

The officer was shot about 1:42 a.m. in the city's Avalon Park neighborhood, police said.

She was found wounded by another officer who responded to an alert from the city's gunshot detection system, the Chicago Sun-Times reported.

The second officer rushed her to a hospital where she was pronounced dead. The slain officer had been with Chicago police about three years. No arrests have been made.

### Hundreds of pounds of pasta left near stream

**NJ** OLD BRIDGE — Authorities in a central New Jersey town said they are no longer noodling over the mystery of how hundreds of pounds of pasta were dumped near a stream.

Old Bridge Mayor Owen Henry said Friday that the pasta, including spaghetti and macaroni, was cleaned up last week by public works crews, shortly after offi-

cials learned about the oodles of noodles that quickly drew national attention when photos of the pasta were posted on social media.

The estimated 500 pounds of pasta was apparently raw when it was dumped, but subsequent heavy rains softened the food and made the mounds look like they had been cooked, officials have said. It's unclear who dumped the pasta there or why, but it's not believed the pasta had been at the site for long before it was discovered.

Henry said the pasta did not cause any environmental damage or health issues and he considers the matter closed.

### Researchers radio-collar 1st bear in LA mountains

**CA** LOS ANGELES — For the first time, researchers have captured and radio-collared a bear in the Santa Monica Mountains near Los Angeles where mountain lions have been studied for two decades, the National Park Service said Wednesday.

The 210-pound black bear dubbed BB-12 was caught April 23 in a natural area south of U.S. Route 101 on the western end of the range, the park service said in a statement.

It's the first time in 20 years that scientists have encountered a bear that has taken up residence in the mountains northwest of downtown LA, according to Jeff Sikich, a park service biologist who studies cougars.

BB-12, a male estimated to be about 3 or 4 years old, was measured, given a physical exam and outfitted with a GPS radio collar around its neck.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit [www.stripes.com](http://www.stripes.com).

Reporting  
World, National  
and Military News

# Harden's three helps Sixers even series

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — James Harden had a new friend he called his good-luck charm in the arena and the grit he needed to turn in a vintage effort — in the form of tying and winning shots — for the 76ers.

Looking down-and-out in the previous two games, Good Game James saved the 76ers in Game 4.

Harden hit the floater with 16 seconds left in regulation that tied the game, buried the go-ahead three-pointer with 18 seconds remaining in overtime and scored 42 points to help the Sixers stave off a wild Boston Celtics comeback in a 116-115 victory on Sunday.

“I just want to win,” Harden

said. “Today was do-or-die for us.”

The 76ers tied their playoff series at 2-2 with Game 5 set for Tuesday.

Harden won the game in front of John Hao, a paralyzed Michigan State shooting survivor who developed a long-distance friendship with the 10-time All-Star. Harden invited Hao to a game as soon as he was able to travel.

“He’s strong, he’s bouncing back, he’s recovering very well,” Harden said. “I feel like it’s my job to give him that light, that smile that he deserves. Hopefully today was one of those days where he can smile.”

Harden waved over Hao and signed his game-worn sneakers

moments after Marcus Smart’s potential winner was a tick too late.

**Suns 129, Nuggets 124:** Devin Booker had 36 points and 12 assists, Kevin Durant also scored 36 points and host Phoenix beat Denver to even their Western Conference semifinal playoff series at two games apiece.

Backup guard Landry Shamet made four crucial three-pointers in the fourth quarter to keep the Suns ahead. Denver lost despite a huge game from MVP runner-up Nikola Jokic, who poured in 53 points on 20-for-30 shooting.

Jokic used his physical play to knock down several big buckets, even ripping the ball away

from Suns owner Mat Ishbia at one point after the ball went out of bounds, which earned the Nuggets All-Star a technical foul.

The series returns to Denver for Game 5 on Tuesday.

The Suns took a 98-92 lead into the fourth quarter after a scoring flurry from Booker, who had 17 points in the third. Phoenix didn’t trail in the fourth, though Denver didn’t go quietly.

Booker — averaging 36 points on 60% shooting in these playoffs — was hot once again, shooting 14-for-18 from the field, including 3-for-4 on three-pointers. Shamet finished with 19 points, shooting 5-for-8 on threes.

# Horse deaths cast pall over last 2 Triple Crown races

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — A raging thunderstorm that washed out activities Sunday morning at Churchill Downs symbolized the dark clouds hanging over the Triple Crown after a troubling string of horse deaths.

Seven horses have died following injuries at the track since April 27, including Derby entrant Wild On Ice. Freezing Point and Chloe’s Dream were euthanized after injuries before Saturday’s Kentucky Derby that was ultimately won by Mage. Four sustained catastrophic leg injuries, two succumbed suddenly from causes yet to be determined and another sustained a neck injury after flipping in the paddock.

This spate of incidents comes four years after more than 30 horses died at Santa Anita racetrack in California. Those deaths shook up the industry and resulted in safety reforms such as the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act (HISA), which established a similarly lettered organization that set uniform safety and doping rules

for thoroughbreds. A set of regulations are scheduled to take effect May 22.

The question for now is how the stunning occurrence of fatal injuries at the cathedral of horse racing affects the sport during its height of visibility with the Preakness and Belmont Stakes following over the next month. And, how horse racing responds.

“Everyone in the industry wants to make racing as safe as possible,” Hall of Fame trainer Todd Pletcher said Sunday. “And even in situations like that where right now everyone is doing everything they can to make sure the horses are going out there in the safest possible conditions, we still had two fatal breakdowns yesterday. It’s something as a trainer that keeps you up at night.”

Churchill Downs said in a statement Saturday night that it is working with the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission and Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority to investigate each death. A subsequent statement from the HISA organization

said Chloe’s Dream and Freezing Point “passed all inspections without incident” while being observed in the paddock and post parade.

An examination of factors including necropsies, preexisting health conditions, training sessions and inspection of track surfaces will take several weeks. Racetrack surface expert Mick Peterson, who has worked with Churchill Downs since 2008 and was once retained by HISA, said Sunday that the surface was consistent.

The director of the University of Kentucky’s racetrack safety program added that the evaluation is ongoing to keep the track condition uniform and make needed improvements.

“We’ve got to look at every factor on that and get it so that we reduce the risk further and further and further to protect them,” Peterson said. “But we need to learn more in order to understand whether this consistency is going to get us to the safety we need. And we need to keep improving it.”

Concerns still hovered over

the 149th Derby, which went off with the field reduced to 18 horses following five scratches in the days leading up. That list of defections included Pletcher-trained Forte, the initial favorite, on Saturday morning because of a bruised foot.

“I think he would have performed well (Saturday),” the trainer said. “Unfortunately, that wasn’t an option.”

Lying ahead for many trainers and ownership is whether to run horses in the Preakness on May 20 in Baltimore. The Triple Crown’s second jewel is shorter at 1 $\frac{1}{16}$  miles but occurs just two weeks after the Derby compared to the typical one-month layoff.

Ramiro Restrepo, Mage’s part-owner and a bloodstock agent, will watch the colt’s workouts this week and consult trainers and other owners before deciding his immediate plans.

His colt’s safety and well-being is always the priority, particularly after a tragic week of loss with the animals they’re devoted to.

# Reinhart, Panthers top Maple Leafs in OT

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Florida briefly limited ticket sales for its series against Toronto to fans with U.S. credit cards, a decision that some opposing fans thought was designed keep them from coming to Games 3 and 4.

The Panthers might be able to keep them from a Game 5 in Toronto, too.

Sam Reinhart scored 3:02 into overtime and the Panthers — who had to fight just to squeak into the playoffs, then stunned Boston in Round 1 — are on the brink of their first conference finals appearance since 1996. Florida topped Toronto 3-2 on Sunday night, taking a 3-0 lead in

their Eastern Conference semifinal series.

“We’ve had a lot of guys stepping up at big moments,” Reinhart said.

None bigger than he did to win it. Reinhart dumped the puck off the boards behind the net to set up his game-winner, then headed behind the goal to take a pass back from Anton Lundell. Reinhart twirled his way to the front, tapped the puck home and just like that, Florida had its first 3-0 series lead in 27 years.

“There’s a lot of things going our way,” said Florida defenseman Aaron Ekblad, whose team has won six consecutive playoff games for the first time in fran-

chise history. “We’re just trying to take it day by day ... just doing the right things to make us successful.”

Game 4 is Wednesday night, with Florida in position for a sweep and a spot in the conference finals against Carolina or New Jersey.

**Kraken 7, Stars 2:** Jordan Eberle sparked a five-goal outburst in the second period outburst with his fourth goal of the playoffs, Philipp Grubauer made 24 saves and host Seattle took a 2-1 series lead in the Western Conference semifinal.

Alex Wennberg, Matty Beniers, Eeli Tolvanen and Justin Schultz each had a goal and an

assist, and Carson Soucy and Yanni Gourde also scored for the second-year Kraken. Soucy became Seattle’s 16th different goal scorer this postseason.

Game 4 is Tuesday night.

**Devils 8, Hurricanes 4:** Jack Hughes had two goals and two assists to help host New Jersey cut its series deficit to 2-1.

Nico Hischier and Ondrej Palat each had a goal and an assist, and Timo Meier, Damon Severson, Michael McLeod and Miles Wood also scored for the Devils. Dawson Mercer had three assists, and Jesper Bratt, John Marino and Luke Hughes each added two. Vitek Vanecek returned to the net and made 26 saves.

# Goldschmidt’s 3 homers help Cardinals stop 8-game skid

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Paul Goldschmidt homered three times, Brendan Donovan hit a three-run drive and the St. Louis Cardinals stopped an eight-game losing streak with a 12-6 win over the Detroit Tigers on Sunday.

Goldschmidt had four hits and four RBIs in his third three-homer game, the first since March 29, 2019, against Milwaukee. He hit solo homers in the first and third innings off Alex Faedo and a two-run drive in the eighth against Tyler Holton.

Lars Nootbaar added a two-run single to cap off a seven-run sixth inning for the Cardinals, who had been on their longest skid in 16 years.

Jake Rogers hit a grand slam for the Tigers, whose five-game winning streak was stopped. Spencer Torkelson also homered for Detroit.

St. Louis sent 12 batters to the plate in the sixth to take control 10-6. The Tigers committed three errors in the frame.

All three of Goldschmidt’s home runs came with two strikes.

“I’m always trying to hit it hard, but there’s a little adjustment with two strikes,” Goldschmidt said. “You can’t just be up there free swinging. Sometimes, it works out like today and other times they strike you out three times.”

**Rockies 13, Mets 6:** Brenton Doyle’s first big league home run capped visiting Colorado’s seven-run fifth inning and New York lost for the 11th time in 14 games to fall to 17-18 —

dropping under .500 for the first time since it was 3-4.

**Rays 8, Yankees 7 (10):** Gerrit Cole failed to hold a six-run lead, allowing his first two home runs of the season, and Isaac Paredes’ 10th-inning single off Albert Abreu (1-1) gave host Tampa Bay two wins in the three-game series.

**Braves 3, Orioles 2 (12):** Michael Harris II hit a game-ending double off Cionel Pérez (1-1) as host Atlanta won two of three from Baltimore, which lost consecutive games for the first time since April 8-9.

**Dodgers 5, Padres 2 (10):** Mookie Betts hit a game-tying homer with two outs in the ninth inning and James Outman hit a two-run shot in the 10th to lead visiting Los Angeles over San Diego.

**Phillies 6, Red Sox 1:** Kyle Schwarber homered after being dropped from leadoff to fifth in the batting order, and host Philadelphia stopped a six-game skid and ended Boston’s eight-game winning streak.

**Guardians 2, Twins 0:** Host Cleveland’s Cal Quantrill had a no-hit bid broken up by Alex Kirilloff’s two-out single in seventh.

**Royals 5, Athletics 1:** Salvador Perez went 3-for-4 with a 462-foot homer over the left-field fountains and host Kansas City avoided being swept in the series between teams with the worst records in the majors. The Royals (9-26) lost two of three to Oakland (8-27).

**Blue Jays 10, Pirates 1:** Whit Merrifield had four RBIs, three on his first home run this season, and visiting Toronto finished a three-

game sweep that extended Pittsburgh’s losing streak to seven following a 20-8 start.

**Marlins 5, Cubs 4 (14):** Garrett Hampson scored on a 14th-inning balk by Adbert Alzolay (1-2), ending the longest game in the major leagues this season and stopping visiting Miami’s five-game losing streak.

**White Sox 11, Reds 4:** Hanser Alberto had four hits with a career-high four RBIs and visiting Chicago opened a big lead with an 11-run second, its biggest inning since an 11-run fifth at Kansas City on Sept. 17, 2007.

**Mariners 3, Astros 1:** Bryce Miller (1-0) gave up two hits in six shutout innings for his first major league win, Justin Topa worked around a leadoff single in the ninth for his first big league save and host Seattle took two of three from the World Series champions.

**Brewers 7, Giants 3:** Willy Adames and William Contreras hit two-run homers, and visiting Milwaukee ended a six-game losing streak while stopping San Francisco’s four-game winning streak.

**Rangers 16, Angels 8:** Leody Taveras had a career-high four hits along with four RBIs and Adolis García hit his team-leading ninth homer as visiting Texas overcame a 3-0 deficit and won its second straight after losing the series opener. Garcia leads the major leagues with 36 RBIs.

**Nationals 9, Diamondbacks 8:** Joey Meneses hit a three-run homer in the ninth inning off Miguel Castro (1-1) and had four RBIs after visiting Washington rallied from a four-run deficit to take an 8-6 lead.

# Hamlin bumps Larson on last lap to win

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — Denny Hamlin had walked out of victory lane after winning a thrilling NASCAR Cup Series duel over Kyle Larson with a last-lap pass at Kansas Speedway on Sunday just in time to hear his crew chief, Chris Gabehart, make a bold proclamation.

“He’s the most talented race car driver in the world,” Gabehart was saying.

Awkward, because Gabehart wasn’t talking about his own driver.

“Tells you what he thinks about me,” Hamlin said with a wry grin.

Gabehart was talking about Larson, who was leading in the closing laps on a sizzling day in the heartland. But it was Hamlin who was better this time. He spent about 30 laps stalking Larson before making a couple of failed attempts at the lead in the closing laps. Finally, heading onto the backstretch on the final one, Hamlin pulled alongside Larson and made the slightest of contact, sending him bumping

into the outside wall and giving Hamlin a clear path to the finish line.

The victory ended a 33-race winless drought for Hamlin dating to last year’s Coca-Cola 600.

“I was sideways. He was sideways. I knew it was going to be close whether he could clear me,” Hamlin said. “I was grinding his left side, trying to keep the side-draft as much as I could. It’s such a super-sensitive part and I hooked him at the end.”

Hamlin said he planned to speak with Larson at some point.

“I was really loose,” Larson said. “He was able to finally get my inside off two. It seemed he was side-drafting me aggressively. I don’t know if he finally got me turned sideways, but turned me into the outside wall and he got the win.”

So what does Gabehart think of his own driver?

“I’m so proud of Denny to work over — in my view — the most talented race car driver in the world,” he said.

Larson finished second and William Byron, who was two

laps down for more than 50 laps during the middle portion of the race, rallied to join his Hendrick Motorsports teammate in the top three. Bubba Wallace, who won the fall race at Kansas, was fourth while Ross Chastain rounded out the top five before tempers flew on pit road.

Chastain, who has drawn the ire of many drivers this season with his aggressiveness on the track, found himself in another heated confrontation Sunday. He got into Noah Gragson with about 60 laps to go and sent him for a spin, and Gragson walked up to the Trackhouse Racing driver afterward to make his displeasure known.

Gragson put his hands on Chastain, who responded with a sweeping right hook that appeared to connect. Gragson tried to return the punch, but he was pulled away by security and NASCAR officials.

“I’m sick and tired of it,” Gragson said of Chastain’s driving style. “The guy runs into everyone. When you have guys like Chase Elliott and other guys tell-

ing you to beat his ass, everyone is just sick of him.”

Chastain accepted some of the blame for the spin, but didn’t say much about the punch.

“I got tight off four for sure,” Chastain said. “Noah and I have a very similar attitude on the race track. We train together, we prepare together, we know every little bit about each other. I definitely crowded him out of four.”

Kyle Busch had railed against Chastain over the radio before crashing out of the race on a restart. Afterward, Busch seemed to take aim at the performance of the Next Gen car, which he said made it too difficult to pass.

“Not racing like it once used to be,” he said after dropping an on-air expletive. “You’re faster than a guy, you run him down three-tenths a lap and you stall when you get there. Part of it’s the car. They can aero block you, pinch you, burn up your tires and do everything else to hold their position and then you get passed from behind. Very frustrating.”

## Verstappen’s Miami victory keeps Red Bull unbeaten

Associated Press

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — Max Verstappen used an easy Sunday drive to keep Red Bull undefeated on the season, as the reigning two-time Formula One champion drove from ninth to the victory at the Miami Grand Prix.

Red Bull has won all five races so far this season, and teammate Sergio Perez’s second-place finish in Miami was the fourth 1-2 finish for Red Bull this year. Verstappen has three wins this season, while Perez, the pole sitter in Miami, has two.

The win was the 38th of his career for Verstappen, who tied Sebastian Vettel for most victories for Red Bull. At this pace, he’ll smash Vettel’s record by the end of what many critics are

already complaining is a boring Red Bull-dominated season.

“I call that simply (expletive) lovely,” Verstappen said on his radio. “That was a good race, a good race all around, so thank you very much. That was really, really good, also good for the team, again.”

Red Bull boss Christian Horner praised Verstappen’s poise over the 57-lap race that gave him his second consecutive victory in Miami.

“Well done, Max. That was a mighty middle stint, really impressive on the hard tire and thanks for racing cleanly with your teammate,” Horner said.

Red Bull has said it will allow Verstappen and Perez to cleanly race for the championship, and Perez seemed poised to

take the points lead in Miami by starting from the pole. Verstappen held a six-point lead in the standings over Perez at the start of the race, but was relegated to a ninth-place starting position because qualifying was cut short before his final qualifying attempt by a Charles Leclerc crash.

But the Dutchman had no problem driving through the field. He went from ninth to sixth in the first four laps, using a pass of two cars in one corner to gain ground. He was fifth by the ninth lap, fourth on Lap 12 and finally behind Perez in second on Lap 15.

Verstappen took the lead when Perez pitted on Lap 20 and he held nearly an 18-second lead with 15 laps remaining. When

he finally made his pit stop, Verstappen returned to the track in second but only 1.6 seconds behind Perez.

It took him just minutes to pass Perez for the win, taking the lead in a wheel-to-wheel battle with nine laps remaining. Although Verstappen has won from a lower starting position before, he becomes the first driver since Niki Lauda in 1984 at the French Grand Prix to win from ninth.

The victory also came on the anniversary of the 2016 announcement that Verstappen was being promoted from the junior team to Red Bull ahead of the fifth round of that season.

Verstappen now holds a 14-point lead over Perez in the standings.