

Lawmakers challenge Navy's fleet plans

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers are resisting plans by the Navy to cut the size of its ship and submarine fleet, rallying behind a push to procure an additional attack submarine and raising alarm about impending ship retirements.

A bipartisan group of 120 House members urged defense appropriators in a letter Wednesday to force the Navy to procure two Virginia-class attack submarines in fiscal 2025, one more than included in the White House's budget request.

Members of the House Armed Services Committee then added to the pile-on during a hearing with top Navy and Marine Corps officials on Wednesday, criticizing proposals that would shrink U.S. sea power.

"Our sailors and Marines are great but until they can walk on water, we better be building them new ships," said Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va.

The Navy's budget for fiscal 2025, which begins Oct. 1, calls for the construction of six warships, the retirement of 19 ships and the reduc-

tion of a two-per-year buy rate of Virginia-class submarines to one.

Lawmakers singled out the submarines as an issue of particular concern due to increased undersea competition from China and Russia and the inking of a deal with Australia to sell the country three nuclear-powered, Virginia-class submarines.

"I don't see how cutting the size of our fleet and shorting our AUKUS commitment will deter China," said Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., chairman of the committee. AUKUS refers to a security pact between the U.S., the United Kingdom and Australia to counter China's growing power in the Indo-Pacific region.

Pentagon officials have said a procurement slowdown of Virginia-class submarines would allow for a "better, healthier dynamic" in the delay-plagued submarine production industry and pay for investments in supply-chain infrastructure.

Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro said Wednesday that the service would have five additional submarines in its fleet today if the defense industry, which is suffering from workforce shortages, was able to keep up with

demand.

"We're investing \$18 billion in the submarine industrial base to actually try to increase the production rates to where they need to be so that we could actually build more submarines and well into the future," he said.

Lawmakers said they were worried about having enough resources now. They pointed to recent testimony from combatant commanders who said their missions require more attack submarines than the U.S. has in its inventory. The Navy's attack submarine fleet is projected to decline to 47 boats in 2030 — a 19-boat deficit from the 66 boats required under the Navy's shipbuilding plan, according to the letter lawmakers sent appropriators. The fleet now numbers 50 submarines.

It is unclear whether lawmakers will challenge the Navy's other plans for its fleet. The service intends to retire 10 ships that have yet to reach the end of their service life, including two Ticonderoga-class cruisers, four expeditionary transports, two littoral combat ships and one expeditionary transport dock ship.

The cuts will drop the fleet to 287 ships in fiscal 2025 and 280 ships in fiscal 2027.

China's new carrier is likely years from deployments

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

China's newest and most advanced aircraft carrier began sea trials this week, but it is still likely years away from regular, routine deployments, according to two experts.

The Fujian, Beijing's third carrier, departed Shanghai Jiangnan Shipyard around 8 a.m. Wednesday to test the reliability and stability of its propulsion and electrical systems, according to the official China Military Online website that day.

The carrier — China's second built domestically and the first in its class — was launched in June 2022 and has since undergone "mooring trials, outfitting work and equipment adjustments," according to the report.

The Fujian is named for the Chinese mainland province opposite of Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing considers a breakaway province.

While sea trials typically mark one of the final milestones before a warship begins pa-

trols, the Fujian is likely several years away from regular deployment, according to an analysis published online Tuesday by Mike Sweeney, a nonresident fellow at Defense Priorities, a think tank in Washington, D.C.

He estimated the carrier will not achieve initial operating capability for approximately another year and routine deployments are likely several years away due to the ship's new technology.

"This assumes China encounters no major technical challenges with the new carrier's design, which would not be unexpected with a first-of-class ship of the Fujian's complexity," Sweeney wrote.

The carrier may not reach the Chinese navy for another two years, and even more time may be needed to make it a fully effective fighting ship, according to Sam Roggeveen, director of the international security program at the Australian think tank Lowy Institute.

The Fujian and its sister ships are powered by steam turbines rather than nuclear energy

like the United States' 11 aircraft carriers.

It does, however, feature significant improvements over its predecessors.

The Shandong, China's first domestically built carrier, and the Liaoning, a rebuilt Soviet vessel, both use "ski-jump" flight decks. That system requires aircraft to carry fewer weapons and fuel and "limits their combat efficacy and operational reach," Sweeney wrote.

The Fujian bridges that technological gap with an electromagnetic catapult system like the one aboard the United States' newest carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford, he said.

Roggeveen agreed.

"On the first aircraft carrier with that technology, the U.S. Navy had all sorts of problems with it," he told Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

"China is basically introducing the same technology, but from a standing start, if you like, without the decades of experience that the U.S. has with aircraft carrier technology."

Red Hill water trial hears testimony from psychiatrist

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

HONOLULU — The trauma of exposure to petroleum-contaminated tap water left a Navy spouse with neurological injuries, anxiety and fear of water, a psychiatrist testified in Hawaii federal court Wednesday.

Dr. Steven Storage said Nastasia Freeman, one of 17 plaintiffs in *Feindt vs. United States*, suffered health problems that resulted from consuming water tainted by jet fuel in November 2021.

Traumatic events impede the flow of blood into the front part of the brain, which manages high-level functions such as planning, organizing and controlling responses, Storage said on the stand.

The group of plaintiffs, which does not include any uniformed service members, claims to have suffered medical, emotional and financial injuries from a jet fuel spill that contaminated the Navy's water system for military housing.

A spill at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility seeped into the groundwater and into one of the wells that served roughly 93,000 residents on and near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

More than 7,500 additional plaintiffs have joined several other lawsuits also seeking compensation.

Storage, who practices at Amen Clinics in Encino, Calif., began seeing Freeman in September 2022. She complained of dizziness, drowsiness, numbness, muscle spasms, tremors, brain fog and an impaired mem-

ory and slurred speech, he wrote in a declaration filed on behalf of the plaintiffs.

Freeman had moved to Hawaii in May 2021 with her husband, Koda Freeman, a Navy lieutenant, and their three children, according to a declaration she filed with the court.

The family moved into Aliamanu Military Reservation, one of the military housing communities closest to the Red Hill well.

Their problems with tainted water began on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 25, 2021, a meal that sickened several guests. Within a few days the Freeman children were vomiting and suffering from diarrhea.

For much of her life, Freeman had a condition called temporal lobe epilepsy, but her seizures had been dormant for about two years.

With exposure to the tainted water, the seizures returned, Freeman states in the declaration.

Among the tests and examinations performed under Storage's care, Freeman was given a SPECT brain scan, which detects altered blood flow and indicates which parts of the brain are most and least active.

"While there is one irregularity in Nastasia's SPECT scan that can be attributed to her seizure disorder, the other indications of brain injury, taken with the temporal nature of her symptoms, her exposure to contaminated water, and her medical history, indicate injury to the brain from toxic exposure and the resulting trauma," Storage wrote in his declaration.

Pilots head to Iwo Jima to train for USS Reagan patrol

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Naval aviators are scheduled for 11 days of carrier-landing practice on Iwo Jima ahead of the USS Ronald Reagan's final deployment before returning stateside.

The training — an annual requirement for Carrier Air Wing 5 before it leaves with the Ronald Reagan on its annual patrol — will run between Saturday and May 15, Naval Forces Japan announced Thursday.

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni-based pilots and crews of fixed-wing aircraft, including F-18 Super Hornets, EA-18G Growlers and C-2 Greyhounds, take part in the training.

Senior pilots fly at least six sorties — three during the day and three at night — and complete seven or eight touch-and-go landings. Junior pilots undergo more extensive training and may complete a dozen or more touch-and-goes.

This year's training will be the last before the Ronald Reagan relocates from Japan to Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Wash., sometime this summer.

Its replacement, the USS George Washington, departed Naval Station Norfolk, Va., on April 25 for a deployment to Central and South America, after which it will steam for its new homeport with the 7th Fleet.

Pentagon leaker set to face military justice proceeding

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Massachusetts Air National Guard member Jack Teixeira, who pleaded guilty to federal criminal charges for leaking highly classified military documents about the war in Ukraine and other national security secrets, will face a military justice proceeding later this month, officials said Wednesday.

Teixeira, of North Dighton, Mass., faces two charges in the military justice system, including obstructing justice and failing to obey a lawful order, Air Force officials said. Prosecutors will present evidence during the military proceeding on May 14 at Hanscom Air Force Base in Massachusetts. The case could then move to a court-martial, if it's determined that there's sufficient evidence of the charges.

The military proceeding comes nearly two months after Teixeira pleaded guilty in federal court to six counts of willful retention and transmission of national defense information under the Espionage Act. That was close to a year after he was arrested in the most consequential national security leak in years.

In court, he admitted illegally collecting some of the nation's most sensitive secrets and sharing them with other users on Discord, a social media platform popular with people playing online games.

Teixeira, who was part of the 102nd Intelligence Wing at Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts, worked as a cyber transport systems specialist, essentially an information technology specialist responsible for military communications networks.

Biden to visit families of fallen officers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden, who heads to Wilmington, N.C., on Thursday to talk about the economy, is detouring to Charlotte to meet with the families of law enforcement officers shot to death on the job — just a week after he sat down with the grieving relatives of two cops killed in Upstate New York.

The visit is expected to take place with little fanfare behind closed doors, as the White House aims to respect the privacy of grieving families and avoid the appearance of using their grief for political purposes.

The meeting was expected at

the airport, an option meant to be the least taxing for local law enforcement still reeling from the deaths but who would have a hand in securing the president's trip.

Once again, Biden will seek to be an empathetic leader for a community reeling from gun violence, while also calling for stricter rules around firearms and better funding for law enforcement on the front lines.

Four officers were killed earlier this week in North Carolina, when a wanted man opened fire on a joint agency task force that had come to arrest him on a warrant for possession of a firearm as an ex-felon, and fleeing to elude capture.

They were: Sam Poloche and William Elliott of the North Carolina Department of Adult Corrections; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Officer Joshua Eyer; and Deputy U.S. Marshal Thomas Weeks.

Four other officers were wounded in the gunfire; the suspect was killed. An AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, a 40-caliber handgun and ammunition were found at the scene.

An AR-15 is among the weapons most often used in mass shootings, and it's the type of gun Biden is talking about when he says the U.S. should ban "assault weapons." Congress passed the most comprehensive gun safety legislation in dec-

ades in 2022, after a horrific school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. But it didn't go far enough, Biden often says.

And as he campaigns for the 2024 election, Biden has made curbing gun violence a major campaign platform, elusive to Democrats even during the Obama era, as he fends off attacks from Republican challenger Donald Trump that he is soft on crime and anti-police.

Biden said this week in a statement after the North Carolina killings that the U.S. must "do more to protect our law enforcement officers. That means funding them — so they have the resources they need to do their jobs and keep us safe."

Police shot, killed student outside Wisconsin school after reports of weapon

Associated Press

MOUNT HOREB, Wis. — Police shot and killed a student outside a Wisconsin middle school Wednesday after receiving a report of someone with a weapon, the state's attorney general said in the first law enforcement briefing on gunshots that sent children fleeing and prompted an hourslong lockdown of local schools.

Authorities had previously said an active shooter who never got inside the building was "neutralized" outside Mount Horeb Middle School.

State Attorney General Josh Kaul told reporters Wednesday evening no one else was harmed and that an investigation is ongoing.

"This incident took place outdoors. The subject in this case never gained entry," he said.

Authorities described the student as a juvenile male but didn't provide an age or indicate which of the Mount Horeb district's schools he attended.

Kaul declined to answer several questions about what happened once police responded, including whether the student had fired a weapon, what type of weapon he had, and whether he tried to get inside the school. Authorities said multiple Mount Horeb officers, wearing body cameras, had fired weapons but they did not say how many.

Police remained on the scene hours afterward while students were kept locked down in buildings late into the afternoon before slowly being released to relatives.

The district used Facebook posts throughout the day to give updates, with the earliest around 11:30 a.m. reporting all district schools were on lockdown.

Authorities in Mount Horeb said the "alleged assailant" was the only person harmed, and witnesses described hearing gunshots and seeing dozens of children running.

Lawyer tells of shock at likely role in Trump win

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A lawyer who negotiated a pair of hush money deals at the center of Donald Trump's criminal trial recalled Thursday his "gallows humor" reaction to Trump's 2016 election victory and the realization that his hidden-hand efforts might have contributed to the win.

"What have we done?" the attorney, Keith Davidson, texted the then-editor of the *National Enquirer*, which had buried stories of extramarital sexual encounters to prevent them surfacing in the final days of the bitterly contested presidential race. "Oh my god," came the response from Dylan Howard.

"There was an understanding that our efforts may have in some way — strike that — our activities may have in some way assisted the presidential campaign of Donald Trump," Davidson told jurors.

The testimony from Davidson was designed to directly connect the hush money pay-

ments to Trump's presidential ambitions and to bolster prosecutors' argument that the case is about interference in the 2016 election rather than simply sex and money.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg has sought to establish that link not just to secure a conviction but also to persuade the public of the significance of the case, which may be the only one of four Trump prosecutions to reach trial this year.

"This is sort of gallows humor. It was on election night as the results were coming in," Davidson explained.

"There was sort of surprise among the broadcasters and others that Mr. Trump was leading in the polls, and there was a growing sense that folks were about ready to call the election."

Davidson is seen as a vital building block for the prosecution's case that Trump and his allies schemed to bury unflattering stories in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election.

Holocaust survivors take on denial, hate

Associated Press

DUESSELDORF, Germany — Herbert Rubinstein was 5 years old when he and his mother were taken from the Jewish ghetto of Chernivtsi and put on a cramped cattle wagon waiting to take them to their deaths. It was 1941, and Romanians collaborating with Germany's Nazis were rounding up tens of thousands of Jews from his hometown in what is now southwestern Ukraine.

"It was nothing but a miracle that we survived," Rubinstein told The Associated Press during a recent interview at his apartment in the western Ger-

man city of Duesseldorf.

The 88-year-old Holocaust survivor is participating in a new digital campaign called #CancelHate. It was launched Thursday by the New York-based Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, also referred to as the Claims Conference.

It features videos of survivors from around the globe reading Holocaust denial posts from different social media platforms. Each post illustrates how denial and distortion can not only rewrite history, but perpetuate antisemitic tropes

and spread hate.

"I could never have imagined a day when Holocaust survivors would be confronting such a tremendous wave of Holocaust denial and distortion, but sadly, that day is here," said Greg Schneider, executive vice president of the Claims Conference.

The Claims Conference's new digital campaign comes at a time when antisemitic incidents, triggered by Hamas' deadly attack on Israel on Oct. 7 and Israel's ensuing military campaign in Gaza, have increased from Europe to the United States and beyond, to levels not seen in dec-

ades, according to major Jewish organizations.

The launch of the Claims Conference campaign also comes days before Yom HaShoah — Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day — next Monday.

Even at his old age, Rubinstein, who calls himself an optimist, says he will continue fighting antisemitism every single day. And he has a message, especially for the young generation of Jews.

"Don't panic," Rubinstein says. "The good will win. You just have to do something about it."

New mpox that may spread easier is found in Congo

Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo — Congo is struggling to contain its biggest mpox outbreak, and scientists have said a new form of the disease detected in a mining town might more easily spread among people.

Since January, Congo has reported more than 4,500 suspected mpox cases and nearly 300 deaths, numbers that have roughly tripled from the same period last year, according to the World Health Organization. Congo recently declared the outbreak across the country a health emergency.

An analysis of patients hospitalized between October and January in Kamituga, eastern Congo, suggests recent genetic mutations in mpox are the result of its continued transmission in humans. It's been happening in a town where people have little contact with the wild animals thought to carry it.

"We're in a new phase of mpox," said Dr. Placide Mbala-Kingebeni, the lead researcher of the study, who said it will soon be submitted to a journal for publication. Mbala-Kingebeni heads a lab at Congo's

National Institute of Biomedical Research, which studies the genetics of diseases.

The lesions reported by most patients are milder and on the genitals, Mbala-Kingebeni said, making the disease trickier to diagnose. In previous outbreaks in Africa, lesions were mostly seen on the chest, hands and feet. He also said the new form seems to have a lower death rate.

In a report on the global mpox situation this week, WHO said the new version of the disease might require a new testing strategy to pick up the mutations.

As Hamas mulls cease-fire, Israel's endgame unclear

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Hamas on Thursday was considering the latest proposal for a cease-fire with Israel that the United States and other mediators hope will avert an Israeli attack on the Gaza town of Rafah. But chances for the deal are entangled with the question of whether Israel can accept an end to the war without reaching its stated goal of destroying Hamas.

The stakes in the cease-fire negotiations were made clear in a new U.N. report that said if the war in Gaza stops today, it will still take until 2040 to rebuild all the homes that have been de-

stroyed by nearly seven months of Israeli bombardment and ground offensives in the territory. It warned that the impact of the damage to the economy will set back development for generations and will only get worse with every month fighting continues.

Hamas has insisted it won't sign onto the deal without assurances that, if it eventually releases all its hostages, Israel will end its onslaught in Gaza and pull its troops out of the territory.

The proposal that U.S. and Egyptian mediators have put to Hamas — apparently with Israel's acceptance — sets out a

three-stage process that will bring an immediate six-week cease-fire and partial hostage release, but also negotiations over a "permanent calm" that includes some sort of Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, according to an Egyptian official.

If Israel does agree to end the war in return for a full hostage release, it would be a major turnaround. Since Hamas' bloody Oct. 7 attack stunned Israel, its leaders have vowed not to stop their bombardment and ground offensives until the militant group is destroyed. They have also said Israel must keep a military presence in Gaza and se-

curity control after the war to ensure Hamas doesn't rebuild.

Publicly at least, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has continually insisted that is the only acceptable endgame.

He has vowed that even if a cease-fire is reached, Israel will eventually attack Rafah, which he has said is Hamas' last stronghold in Gaza.

The deal's immediate fate hinges on whether Hamas will accept uncertainty over the final phases to bring the initial six-week pause in fighting — and at least postpone what it is feared would be a devastating assault on Rafah.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

1 dead, 14 hurt after SUV crashes into thrift store

NM LAS CRUCES — One person died and 14 others were injured Tuesday after an SUV crashed through the front glass wall of a thrift store in Las Cruces, authorities said.

First responders said 10 of the injured in Tuesday's crash were taken to hospitals for treatment and a 67-year-old woman was critically injured and died.

The 69-year-old woman who was driving the SUV was not injured, Las Cruces police said.

The woman apparently was trying to park her vehicle and stepped on the accelerator instead of the brake, police said.

The vehicle entered the Savers store near a self-checkout area and went all the way to the back side of the building, police said.

Dems retain US House seat in special election

NY BUFFALO — Democratic state Sen. Timothy Kennedy won a special election Tuesday for the New York congressional seat vacated by Democrat Brian Higgins.

Kennedy easily defeated Republican Gary Dickson for the upstate New York seat, helped by a 2-to-1 Democratic registration advantage in the district, which includes Buffalo, Niagara Falls and several suburbs.

Kennedy has been in the state Senate since 2011. Describing Washington as "chaotic and dysfunctional," he said he would focus in Congress on reproductive rights, immigration and stronger gun laws like those passed in New York after a 2022 mass shooting at a Buffalo su-

permarket.

Kennedy will serve in Congress for the rest of the year. He is on the ballot, along with Republican attorney Anthony Marrecki, for the general election.

Elimination of 'X' for sex on licenses spurs suit

AR LITTLE ROCK — Several transgender, intersex and nonbinary Arkansas residents sued the state of Arkansas on Tuesday over its decision to no longer allow "X" instead of male or female on state-issued driver's licenses or identification cards.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Arkansas asked a Pulaski County judge to halt the state's decision to reverse a practice that had been in place since 2010. The new emergency rule will also make it harder for a person to change their sex on the cards.

The state Department of Finance and Administration announced the change last month, and a legislative panel approved an emergency rule carrying it out. The lawsuit argues that the state did not follow the proper steps for implementing the rule.

All previously issued Arkansas licenses and IDs with the designation will remain valid through their existing expiration dates, the department said last month.

Homeless families face limits on shelter stays

MA BOSTON — Massachusetts will begin limiting how long homeless families can stay in shelters as the state continues to grapple with an influx of homeless migrants.

Beginning June 1, the total

length of stay will be limited to nine months, at the end of which families will be eligible for up to two 90-day extensions, under a supplemental budget approved by state lawmakers and signed by Democratic Gov. Maura Healey on Tuesday.

The law also requires the state Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to create a rehousing plan and provide case management for all individuals in shelters after they leave the program and requires the plan to be recertified every 60 days so that families can remain eligible.

Extensions would be based on circumstances that include employment or participation in a workforce training program, veteran status, imminent placement in housing, avoiding educational interruptions for children in public school and pregnancy or having recently given birth.

Bill dies, mobile sports betting to remain illegal

MS JACKSON — Mobile sports betting will remain illegal in Mississippi after legislative negotiators failed to advance a final proposal Monday.

The House and Senate passed versions of the Mississippi Mobile Sports Wagering Act earlier in the state's legislative session. The bill would have allowed Mississippi to join the 30 other states where mobile sports betting is legal. Sports wagering has been permitted in the state for years, but online betting has remained illegal amid fears the move could harm the bottom line of the state's casinos.

To assuage the concerns of

casinos and lawmakers who represent areas where gambling is big business, the bill would have required betting companies to contract with brick-and-mortar establishments.

During legislative debates, some lawmakers raised concerns that gambling platforms would have no incentive to partner with smaller casinos, and most of the money would instead flow to the Mississippi Gulf Coast's already bustling casinos.

Vote backs punishing stalkers using Bluetooth

PA HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania took a step Tuesday toward becoming the latest state to punish someone for using a Bluetooth-connected device to track someone without their permission.

The state House of Representatives voted 199-1 to approve legislation that would make using a tracking device to secretly track another person part of Pennsylvania's laws against stalking. The crime would be punishable as a third-degree misdemeanor, or up to 90 days in jail. The bill goes to the Senate, where a separate bill is pending that would make the crime a second-degree misdemeanor, or punishable by up to two years in jail. Most states have a provision in state law that prohibits remote tracking.

The House bill's passage comes a few weeks after a federal judge denied Apple's motion to dismiss a class-action lawsuit contending that the tech giant hasn't done enough to prevent stalkers from using its AirPods to track victims.

— From wire reports

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Celtics rout short-handed Heat to advance

Associated Press

BOSTON — If this playoff run is about redemption for the Boston Celtics, it had to start with exacting some revenge against the Miami Heat.

A year ago, Miami embarrassed Boston in a Game 7 showdown at TD Garden.

This time, the Celtics returned the favor.

Jaylen Brown and Derrick White each scored 25 points and the Celtics advanced to the Eastern Conference semifinals, beating the short-handed Heat 118-84 in Game 5 on Wednesday night.

Boston will face the winner of the Cleveland-Orlando series. The Cavaliers lead 3-2, with Game 6 in Orlando on Friday night.

Brown said they went into the game with a business-like approach.

"It is a lot of history, back and forth. But it didn't matter who it was," Brown said. "We just had to get the job done."

That was echoed by teammate Jayson Tatum.

"I think this is my fourth time playing them in playoffs," Tatum said. "They all count the same. ... We did our job. We took care of business."

Brown also had six assists, and White hit five 3-pointers. Sam Hauser added 17 points and Tatum had 16 points and 12 rebounds. The top-seeded Celtics never trailed and led by 37 points.

Bam Adebayo scored 23 points and Tyler Herro had 15 for Miami, which made its first exit from the playoffs prior to the conference finals since 2021. The Heat struggled throughout, going 3-for-29 from 3-point range.

Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said it was clear early that the Celtics were playing with some extra energy from the opening tip.

"They probably had something to motivate them even more against us," he said.

Despite the lopsided loss and the way their season ended, Adebayo said he is taking lessons into the offseason.

"We've gained a lot of mental toughness," he said. "Going through that as a captain, it helped me understand that the ship's going to get rocky sometimes."

Boston played for the first time this postseason without center Kristaps Porzingis after he strained his right calf in the Celtics' Game 4 victory. His teammates filled in the gaps, as the Celtics' lead reached 30 points in the first half.

Boston exploited a Heat team that was the most injured it'd been in the series. Jaime Jaquez Jr. sat out after suffering a hip injury in Game 4. He was replaced in the lineup by Delon Wright, marking the 37th starting five the Heat used this season. Jaquez joined Jimmy Butler (knee) and Terry Rozier (neck), who had both been sidelined since the start of the series.

It made for unique rotations for Miami, which included veteran Patty Mills logging minutes for just the third time in

the series.

Boston seized on the vulnerabilities in the Heat's defense, spreading them out and knocking down eight 3-pointers in the opening period. It helped the Celtics carry an 18-point lead into the second quarter.

The highlight of the opening 12 minutes came courtesy of White, who pulverized Miami from long distance with eight 3s in Game 4. He stayed on the attack early Wednesday, faking a 3-point attempt and then driving in for an uncontested one-handed dunk.

White played to the home crowd afterward, holding his hand in front of his face as he backpedaled up the court. After the Heat called a timeout, a courtside fan near the Celtics' bench could be seen pantomiming fanning White on the sideline.

"I think that's when I'm at my best, when I'm having fun out there," White said. "But at the same time realizing this is a best moment and we're all locked into it."

Doncic leads Mavericks to 3-2 series lead over Clippers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Luka Doncic is playing on a sprained right knee that would probably sideline him in the regular season. The Dallas star has also been congested and ill for several days, fighting a bug that's forcing him to blow his nose during timeouts.

Doncic simply refused to be slowed in Game 5 — not by multiple ailments, and certainly not by any Los Angeles Clippers during a blowout victory that put his Dallas Mavericks on the brink of the second round.

Doncic scored 20 of his 35 points in the second half and added 10 assists and seven rebounds, propelling the Mavericks to a 123-93 victory Wednesday night and a 3-2 lead in the first-round series.

Maxi Kleber hit five 3-pointers and Kyrie Irving added 14 points for the Mavericks, who clamped down on the Clippers defensively and handed Los Angeles the biggest margin of defeat in its playoff history. Dallas needs one more win to claim its first playoff

series victory since 2022 and only its third since winning the NBA title in 2011.

"I think it was a very big game," Doncic said. "We win, and now we've got to win one out of two. We've got to go back to Dallas and play the same way."

Game 6 is Friday night in Dallas. If necessary, Game 7 will be back in Los Angeles on Sunday.

Doncic's injured knee has limited him at times in the series, and the symptoms of his apparent illness are slowing him down as well. But he clearly got more comfortable and more dangerous as the night went on in downtown Los Angeles.

He had 14 points in the third quarter while the Mavs stretched their lead to 25 and eventually took an 89-69 advantage into the fourth, where the Clippers never threatened to do an imitation of Dallas' rally from a 31-point deficit in Game 4.

Doncic said his illness made things "tough," and his knee is "not really good."

"But you talk about adrenaline in a playoff game," he added. "Once you get started, you want to do everything you can to help your team win. I just wanted to keep going."

Paul George and Ivica Zubac scored 15 points apiece for the Clippers, who played their second straight game and third of the series without Kawhi Leonard. LA's leading scorer has right knee inflammation at the most critical point in the season, and his teammates were unable to win without him in Game 5 after doing it twice earlier in the series.

Leonard's fellow stars couldn't step up in Game 5, although Dallas' defense deserved much of the credit. The Clippers hit went 9 for 35 on 3-point attempts in Game 5 after making 18 3s in Game 4.

"I think it was just the carryover from Game 4, talking about it, watching it," Dallas coach Jason Kidd said. "Being able to play with pace on offense, but just doing a good job of taking the 3 out of the game."

Draisaitl helps Oilers eliminate Kings again

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — The Edmonton Oilers and Los Angeles Kings played a tight-checking series at even strength. The special teams matchup, however, was lopsided — and that's why it ended in five games.

"That was a difference in this series," Oilers head coach Kris Knoblauch said.

Leon Draisaitl scored twice, and the Edmonton Oilers beat the Los Angeles Kings 4-3 in Game 5 on Wednesday night to win their first-round NHL playoff series.

The Oilers power play went 1-for-5 on the night but scored twice just after time had expired on a penalty. Edmonton finished 9-for-20 with the man-advantage in the five games. Los Angeles, meanwhile, was 0-for-1 in this game, going scoreless on 12 power plays in the series.

"It's pretty simple to write this one," Kings interim head coach Jim Hiller said. "You saw

one team execute, and one team not, on special teams."

Zach Hyman — with his seventh goal of the postseason — and Evander Kane also scored for Edmonton, which only dropped a 5-4 loss in overtime of Game 2 in the best-of-seven series.

Evan Bouchard added three assists, and Connor McDavid and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins had two each as Edmonton's offense broke out at Rogers Place. McDavid extended his points total to a playoff-leading 12 (one goal, 11 assists).

Stuart Skinner made 18 saves after posting a shutout in Edmonton's 1-0 win at Los Angeles in Game 4.

The Oilers move on to the second round, where they'll face the winner of a matchup between the Vancouver Canucks and Nashville Predators. Vancouver leads the series 3-2 heading into Game 6 on Friday in Nashville.

The Oilers now get some rest

while waiting for their next opponent.

"Rest is always a good thing, rest is a weapon this time of year," McDavid said. "That being said, we have to make sure we're ready to roll. Practice hard against each other ... make sure there's no change in our game."

Adrian Kempe, Alex Laferriere and Blake Lizotte scored for Los Angeles, and David Rittich stopped 22 shots in his second straight start.

Edmonton eliminated Los Angeles in the opening round for the third straight year after coming out on top in six games in 2023 and seven in 2022.

"You're out of the playoffs regardless of who beats you, but definitely not a great feeling getting the worst of it three years in a row," the Kings' Anze Kopitar said. "We've just got to play better, really. Special teams hurt us a lot, obviously, this series. There were parts of the games where we were good, we were

dictating the game, but you've got to do it, obviously, more often and every game, too, in order to win the series."

Down 2-1 in the second period, the Oilers scored three consecutive goals to take a 4-2 lead and control of the game.

Draisaitl had a power-play goal at 7:44 after a couple of exchanges with McDavid to tie it. Rittich appeared to rob Draisaitl with a desperation glove save, but fans cheered as if it was a goal upon seeing the replay and officials ruled the puck crossed the line after a video review.

McDavid and Draisaitl connected again just after a penalty expired with 7:39 left in the period for the German forward's fifth of the playoffs.

"When he's got his feet moving, when he's playing hard on both sides of the puck, there's not many guys better than him in the whole world," McDavid said. "He always seems to bring that game this time of year."

Stars hold serve at home, take lead over Knights

Associated Press

DALLAS — Jason Robertson scored on a power play after Tyler Seguin was smacked in the face, Jake Oettinger had another flawless finish and the Dallas Stars finally got a home win in these NHL playoffs.

Robertson's goal late in the second period put the Stars ahead to stay and they beat the Vegas Golden Knights 3-2 in Game 5 on Wednesday night. They now lead the series after the visitors had won each of the first four games.

"The resilience ... I think it's great how we've been able to battle back," said Wyatt Johnston, the 20-year-old forward who had two assists.

Evgenii Dadonov and Matt Duchene also scored for the Stars, who have won three in a row after dropping the first two games at home last week as the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference.

"A credit to our group. You know, there wasn't a lot of believers at that point," Stars coach Pete DeBoer said. "We went on the road into a tough environment, and kind of

rolled up our sleeves and went to work. And you look up and six days later you've got a 3-2 lead and a chance to close out the Stanley Cup champions."

Seguin was down on the ice and a bit dazed after Alex Pietrangelo took a big backhanded swing and connected to the face of the Stars forward when they were together against the boards.

The play was initially called a five-minute major, but changed to a minor penalty after replay review.

Still, it was a major hit against the Knights. Robertson's third goal of the series came after he got his own ricochet and knocked the puck through traffic and past Adin Hill, the goalie starting his first game for the Knights this series.

Pietrangelo's hit was certainly some retaliation against Seguin, who had taken a penalty for an illegal check to the head of Shea Theodore earlier in the second period, another call that was initially a major penalty but was downgraded after replay review.

"A veteran guy should know better," Ve-

gas coach Bruce Cassidy said of Pietrangelo, while acknowledging his team wasn't happy about the hit on Theodore. "You're going to be upset, but that's playoff hockey. You've got to find a way to channel it."

Stars goalie Jake Oettinger stopped 25 shots, including a nearly full-split save to deny Chandler Stephenson on a breakaway with about 2½ minutes left in the game.

"I was on the ice watching that breakaway and said a prayer, but I should have just trusted in Jake," Seguin said.

"He really has the ability to go to another level at the most important time of the game," DeBoer said. "That was the third period tonight, that was the third period the other night."

Oettinger had 11 saves in the third period, and has stopped all 55 shots he has faced in the third period or overtime in this series.

Hill had 22 saves after Logan Thompson had started the first four games.

Mark Stone and William Carrier scored the goals for Vegas.

Game 6 is Friday night in Las Vegas.

Injuries taking away from Trout's talent

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Mike Trout never had a significant injury in his charmed baseball career until May 2017, when he tore a thumb ligament sliding headfirst into second base.

On his first day back from a 39-game absence, the superstar slugger stole second — and he slid headfirst again.

"I'm not changing the way I play," a grinning Trout said that night in the Los Angeles Angels' clubhouse, a singular young athlete confident in his exceptionalism.

Less than seven years later in the hallway outside that same Anaheim clubhouse, Trout repeatedly fought back tears Tuesday while he publicly addressed his fourth major injury in the past four seasons.

"It's just frustrating," he said quietly, his eyes downcast. "But we'll get through it. ... I play the game hard, and (stuff) happens."

Trout still might be the greatest baseball player produced by his generation, but he'll never again be that 25-year-old who seemed pretty sure he was invincible. Like Ken Griffey Jr. before him, Trout's mid-career injury problems have waylaid a meteoric career and stalled his historic rate of production at the plate.

The 32-year-old Trout's tal-

ent and passion still shine when he's on the field, but they haven't kept him healthy in his second decade in baseball.

Since the start of the 2021 season, Trout has played in 266 games. The Angels' loss to Philadelphia on Wednesday was the 251st game he has missed in that stretch.

Trout had 285 career homers when he won his third AL MVP award in 2019. The Angels' center fielder has hit just 93 homers in the four-plus seasons since then, with COVID-19 shortening his 2020 campaign and injuries doing the rest.

Trout had 1,324 hits after the 2019 season, but he has compiled just 324 since, greatly slowing his march toward 2,000 or 3,000. His batting average (.277) and OPS (.958) since 2019 are also significantly below his career marks.

While Trout's bat speed remains among the fastest in the majors, he has acknowledged several struggles with his mechanics for the past two seasons, including a declining contact rate and troubles with high-velocity pitching. Trout still led the majors with 10 homers when he got hurt this week, but his batting average was down to .220 — even dipping his career average below .300 shortly before his injury.

Trout now has a torn menis-

cus in his left knee. Compounding his frustration, he doesn't know how it happened — perhaps while running in the outfield, perhaps while simply walking to the dugout.

"Nobody wants to play more than Mike does," Angels general manager Perry Minasian said. "He loves this. He loves everything about this. He wakes up thinking about it. He goes to bed thinking about it. He eats, sleeps and breathes baseball. I really feel for him."

Trout was baseball's breakout star of the 2010s, a strapping slugger from small-town southern New Jersey who dazzled the sport when he landed in Orange County. He's an electrifying hitter, an exciting fielder and a fiery competitor often described as the spiritual heir to Mickey Mantle.

Trout seemed capable of anything, even if he only got the Angels to the playoffs once in 2014. But as the Halos' losing seasons piled up, he gradually became familiar with pain, sleepless nights and interminable medical procedures.

Trout missed all but 36 games of the 2021 season with a strained calf that healed confoundingly slowly. He missed five weeks of the 2022 season with a back injury, although he still hit 40 homers.

Trout then broke a bone in his

hand on a foul ball July 3 last season. He tried to return in August when it briefly looked like the Angels might make a post-season run, but he played only one painful game before shutting it down for the year.

Trout had been in "a good frame of mind" this season, new Angels manager Ron Washington said. "He was loving coming to the ballpark, and he was loving going out there, trying to get in the swing of things of the season, and then this happened."

The Angels have provided no timeline for Trout's recovery from surgery, but most athletes with the injury miss at least a couple of months, often more.

Trout is older and more fragile than that golden youth of the previous decade, but he's also wiser: When he slides these days, he tries to go feet-first — and he wears a bulky sliding mitt.

His \$426.5 million contract runs through 2030, and he has repeatedly said he isn't interested in leaving Anaheim. Trout still wants to turn the Angels into a winner, believing it will be even sweeter because it took so long.

But first, another surgery and another recovery await.

"It's a pretty simple procedure," Trout said. "I'll have it right away and get back as fast as I can. (But) this is tough."

Some teams consider bigger arenas when Clark visits

Associated Press

WNBA teams have started making moves to capitalize on the popularity of Caitlin Clark.

Some are booking bigger venues for when Clark and the Indiana Fever come to town.

The Las Vegas Aces and Washington Mystics have moved their games against the Fever to bigger arenas. The numbers Clark generated in college indicate it's a smart move.

While at Iowa, when the No. 1 pick in the draft and the Hawkeyes went on the road this past season, there were sellout crowds and attendance records.

"She helps ticket sales, so I think it's a really great time to have eyes. She's going to be an elite player," Aces coach Becky Hammon said. "She has been in college. She's done stuff in college that nobody else has. She's going to be a great player in the W. There's no doubt about it.

"So the more people we can pack into the building to cheer against her, we'll take it, although I don't know if they'll be cheering against her," Hammon quipped. "I guess they might be cheering for her."

The two-time reigning WNBA champion Aces relocated their game on May 25 from the 12,000-seat Michelob Ultra Arena to the 18,000-seat T-Mobile Arena.

Clark will make her presea-

son debut on Friday night at Dallas — a game that is already sold out.

The Mystics' game against Indiana on June 7 will be played at Capital One Arena — Washington's old home. Their normal home can seat up to 4,200 fans, but Capital One Arena has a maximum basketball capacity of more than 20,000.

Nearly half of WNBA teams play in NBA arenas, so there's no need to move those games.