

Navy names ship for Helmand province

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The next America-class amphibious assault ship will be named after the Helmand province campaign during America's 20-year conflict in Afghanistan, Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro announced Thursday.

"In keeping with the naval tradition of naming our Navy's amphibious assault ships after U.S. Marine Corps battles, I am honored to announce today that the future LHA-10 will be named USS Helmand Province," Del Toro said during a speech at the Modern Day Marine conference. "Recognizing the bravery and sacrifice of our Marines and sailors who fought

for almost 20 years in the mountains of Afghanistan."

In December 2022, Del Toro named another amphibious assault ship the USS Fallujah to commemorate the battles fought by U.S. forces during the war in Iraq.

Helmand province was the site of some of the fiercest fighting during the war in Afghanistan.

More than 20,000 Marines were based in the region during a military surge in 2010 that saw about 100,000 U.S. troops and 40,000 NATO allies deploy to the country.

Gen. Eric Smith, commandant of the Marine Corps, following Del Toro's announcement spoke about his experi-

ence in the region when he was deployed there as part of 8th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 8 during Operation Enduring Freedom.

"Helmand province holds a unique place in the hearts of this generation of Marines," he said. "From about 2009 to 2014, this region was the center of our efforts to bring stability and security to a troubled land. Helmand province, as many of you know, was not just any theater of war. It was the heart of the opium trade, a Taliban stronghold."

America-class warships are the largest amphibious assault vessels in the Navy's fleet. They carry Marines to the site of a conflict or disaster, where their

aircraft move them from ship to shore.

The ships can be used as small aircraft carriers and are designed to carry the F-35B Lightning II, a fighter capable of vertical takeoffs and short-landings, and the MV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft. America-class ships also provide a broader, more flexible command-and-control capability.

The Helmand Province will be the third Flight I America-class ship following the USS Bougainville and Fallujah.

The Bougainville is expected to join the fleet this year. The Helmand Province is still years away from joining the fleet. Del Toro said it takes two years to build a ship.

AI-controlled jet took Air Force leader for historic ride

Associated Press

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — With the midday sun blazing, an experimental orange and white F-16 fighter jet launched with a familiar roar that is a hallmark of U.S. airpower. But the aerial combat that followed was unlike any other: This F-16 was controlled by artificial intelligence, not a human pilot. And riding in the front seat was Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall.

AI marks one of the biggest advances in military aviation since the introduction of stealth in the early 1990s, and the Air Force has aggressively leaned in. Even though the technology is not fully developed, the service is planning for an AI-enabled fleet of more than 1,000 unmanned warplanes, the first of them operating by 2028.

It was fitting that the dogfight

took place at Edwards Air Force Base, a vast desert facility where Chuck Yeager broke the speed of sound and the military has incubated its most secret aerospace advances. Inside classified simulators and buildings with layers of shielding against surveillance, a new test-pilot generation is training AI agents to fly in war. Kendall traveled here to see AI fly in real time and make a public statement of confidence in its future role in air combat.

"It's a security risk not to have it. At this point, we have to have it," Kendall said in an interview with The Associated Press after he landed. The AP, along with NBC, was granted permission to witness the secret flight on the condition that it would not be reported until it was complete because of operational security concerns.

The AI-controlled F-16, called Vista, flew Kendall in lightning-fast maneuvers at more than 550 mph that put pressure on his body at five times the force of gravity. It went nearly nose to nose with a second human-piloted F-16 as both aircraft raced within 1,000 feet of each other, twisting and looping to try force their opponent into vulnerable positions.

At the end of the hourlong flight, Kendall climbed out of the cockpit grinning. He said he'd seen enough during his flight that he'd trust this still-learning AI with the ability to decide whether or not to launch weapons in war.

There's a lot of opposition to that idea. Arms control experts and humanitarian groups are deeply concerned that AI might one day be able to autonomously drop bombs that kill people

without further human consultation, and they are seeking greater restrictions on its use.

"There are widespread and serious concerns about ceding life-and-death decisions to sensors and software," the International Committee of the Red Cross has warned. Autonomous weapons "are an immediate cause of concern and demand an urgent, international political response."

Kendall said there will always be human oversight in the system when weapons are used.

The military's shift to AI-enabled planes is driven by security, cost and strategic capability. If the U.S. and China should end up in conflict, for example, today's Air Force fleet of expensive, manned fighters will be vulnerable because of gains on both sides in electronic warfare, space and air defense systems.

Official: US strikes on Houthi rebels not enough to deter

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. airstrikes against Houthi rebels in Yemen have been insufficient to deter the militant group's targeting of ships in the Red Sea and a cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war might not end the attacks, a senior intelligence official said Thursday.

Avril Haines, the director of national intelligence, said U.S.-led efforts to destroy Houthi weapons and storage facilities have had a limited impact as American service members continue to shoot down drones and missiles aimed at commercial and naval ships.

The threat from the group, which is partly financed by Iran, is going to "remain active for some time," she told the Senate Armed Services Committee during testimony on the intelligence community's 2024 assessment of threats facing the United States.

"They continue to indigenously produce a fair amount of [drones], other weapons systems and so on and of course, they're also getting assistance from the Iranians in this respect," Haines said.

"Neither of those things are likely to change in the near future."

The Houthis launched their campaign against international shipping after Israel began bombing the Gaza Strip in response to a Hamas-led attack on Israel in October. The rebels said their actions are in solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza.

The group has carried out

more than 50 assaults on shipping since November, seizing one vessel and sinking another, according to the U.S. Maritime Administration. The pace of attacks dropped recently amid U.S.-led airstrikes in Yemen but picked back up again at the end of last month.

Haines said the Houthis have resumed near daily maritime attacks and intend to escalate their strikes and expand them to the Indian Ocean.

U.S. Central Command, which oversees military activity in the Middle East, said it destroyed one drone that was on flight path toward the Navy cruiser USS Philippine Sea and the destroyer USS Laboon in the Red Sea.

The USS Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group deployed to the region in October as part of a multinational coalition, led by the U.S., to protect maritime commerce.

Haines said Thursday that the Houthis' leader, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, is likely to keep up the attacks on military and commercial vessels to burnish his regional reputation. It is unclear if a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas would change that, she said.

Though the group tamped down its activity during a temporary cease-fire in late November, its rationale for attacking shipping has repeatedly shifted and grown more complex, Haines said.

"It's possible" the Houthis will continue their campaign in the Red Sea as well as the Gulf of Aden even if fighting in Gaza comes to an end, she said.

DOD: US drone in Syria didn't kill terrorist leader

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. military drone strike last year that targeted a top al-Qaida leader in Syria killed a civilian instead, the Pentagon admitted Thursday.

An investigation launched in the wake of the May 3, 2023, attack determined the U.S. military mistook a civilian, Lufti Hasan Masto, for the senior al-Qaida leader it tried to kill in the strike in Qorqanya in northeastern Syria, U.S. Central Command officials said in a statement.

Army Gen. Michael Erik Kurilla, CENTCOM's commander, ordered the internal probe into the strike in June after The Washington Post published a story asserting the strike killed Masto, who was not affiliated with al-Qaida.

"U.S. Central Command ac-

knowledges and regrets the civilian harm that resulted from the airstrike," reads the statement from the command that oversees U.S. military operations in the Middle East. "We take all reports of civilian harm caused by U.S. military operations seriously and continue to employ thorough and deliberate targeting and strike processes to minimize civilian harm. This process includes a thorough review and vetting of lawful targets prior to a strike and another review after each strike."

Despite admitting to killing a civilian in the strike, the CENTCOM probe did not recommend punishment for any individuals involved. The investigation concluded the strike "was conducted in compliance with the law of armed conflict" and followed Pentagon and CENTCOM policies.

New commander takes charge of INDOPACOM

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — Flanked by the nation's top defense officials, Adm. Samuel Paparo took the reins of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command during a ceremony Friday in Hawaii.

Paparo relieved Adm. John Aquilino, who is retiring after 40 years in the Navy.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Air Force Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, took turns at the dais praising Aquilino's tenure and welcoming Paparo, who most recently commanded U.S. Pacific Fleet.

"You know, we ask a lot of INDOPACOM these days, but every day over the past three

years, this command has stepped up under the extraordinary leadership of Adm. Aquilino," Austin said.

Paparo, a naval aviator, formerly commanded U.S. 5th Fleet and Naval Forces Central Command in Bahrain. He is a graduate of the Navy Fighter Weapons School and has flown the F-14 Tomcat, F-15 Eagle and F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets, among others, according to his official Navy biography.

"Our world faces a complex problem set in the troubling actions of [China] and its rapid buildup of forces," Paparo told the audience. "We must be ready to answer [China's] increasingly intrusive and expansionist claims in the Indo-Pacific region."

Hundreds rescued from Texas flooding

Associated Press

More storms were moving through the already saturated Houston area Sunday, where flooding from heavy rains has led to the rescue of hundreds of people from homes, rooftops and roads.

"It's going to be raining through the day and some of the storms could be producing the heavier downpours," said National Weather Service meteorologist Hayley Adams.

Over the last week, areas near Lake Livingston, located northeast of Houston, have gotten upward of 20 inches of rain, she said, while there has been as much as 12 inches of rain in that period in areas of northeastern Harris County, the nation's third-largest county that includes Houston.

Adams said the storms coming through Sunday were expected to

bring up to 3 inches of rainfall, with up to 8 inches possible in some areas.

"It's going to keep rising this way," said Miguel Flores Jr., who lives in the northeast Houston neighborhood of Kingwood. "We don't know how much more. We're just preparing for the worst."

Houston authorities have not reported any deaths or injuries as a wide region from Houston to rural East Texas has been swamped.

Most weekends Flores' father, Miguel Flores Sr., is mowing his huge backyard on a 2.5-acre lot behind his home in Kingwood. But on Saturday, he and his family loaded several vehicles with clothes, small appliances and other items. Water from the San Jacinto River already had swallowed his backyard and was con-

tinuing to rise, from about 1 foot high in the yard Friday to about 4 feet the following day.

As storms forced numerous high-water rescues, including some from the rooftops of flooded homes, officials redoubled urgent instructions for residents in low-lying areas to evacuate, warning the worst was still to come.

Greg Moss, 68, stood late Saturday afternoon by a golf cart as he eyed the several feet of water covering the road that leads to his home in Channelview, a community in eastern Harris County near the San Jacinto River.

Moss had managed to pack up many of his belongings and leave before the road flooded Saturday.

"I would be stuck for four days," Moss said. "So now at least I can go get something to eat."

He moved his belongings and vehicle to a neighbor's home,

where he will stay until the waters recede. Moss said he is not worried his home will flood because it's located on higher ground.

Houston is one of the most flood-prone metro areas in the country. The city of more than 2 million people has long experience dealing with devastating weather.

Rain in the area was expected to taper off by evening, said Adams. But residents recovering from the floods will have heat and humidity to contend with.

With a combination of the lingering moisture from the rains and temperatures upward of 90 degrees, the area may be looking at heat index values in the triple digits this week, she said.

"We want people to be mindful of the increasing temperatures, and heat exhaustion, heat stress," she said.

Group of Republicans seeks to defend election legitimacy

Associated Press

ATLANTA — It was Election Day last November, and one of Georgia's top election officials saw that reports of a voting machine problem in an eastern Pennsylvania county were gaining traction online.

So Gabriel Sterling, a Republican who had defended the 2020 election in Georgia amid an onslaught of threats, posted a message to his nearly 71,000 followers on the social platform X explaining what had happened and saying that all votes would be counted correctly.

He faced immediate criticism from one commenter about why he was weighing in on another state's election while other responses reiterated false claims about widespread fraud in the 2020 presidential election.

Sterling, the chief operating officer for the Georgia Secretary of State's Office, is part of an effort begun after the last presidential

election that seeks to bring together Republican officials who are willing to defend the country's election systems and the people who run them. They want officials to reinforce the message that elections are secure and accurate. With six months to go before the likely rematch between Democratic President Joe Biden and former Republican President Donald Trump, concerns are running high among election officials that public distrust of voting and ballot counting persists, particularly among Republicans.

The effort is coordinated by the SNF Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University and the center-right think tank R Street Institute.

"This has never been and will never be about Trump specifically," said Matt Germer, director of governance for the R Street Institute and a lead organizer of the effort. "It's about democratic principles at a higher level."

Boeing ready for Starliner launch after costly delays

Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Boeing has spent more than \$1.5 billion to develop its CST-100 Starliner amid years of delays, but the payoff on its deal with NASA is on the horizon with the first human test flight set for launch Monday night.

Veteran NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams will climb aboard the capsule for the Crew Flight Test atop a United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket. It's set to lift off from Canaveral's Space Launch Complex 41 at 10:34 p.m. to the International Space Station.

The duo will return after eight days with a landing in the Western United States.

"The success of this mission has always been very important for us as a program for a lot of reasons," said Mark Nappi, Boeing's Starliner program manager during a recent launch readiness re-

view. "Number one, we have humans flying on this vehicle. We always take that so seriously — human spaceflight. ... Second is, this is an important capability for NASA, and so you know we signed up to go do this, and we're going to go do it and be successful at it."

Boeing's road to human spaceflight has been tortuous since NASA awarded the company alongside SpaceX the Commercial Crew Program contracts in 2014 to provide U.S.-based launches for its astronauts to the ISS.

Each company was required to perform one successful uncrewed test flight to the ISS followed by a crewed flight, after which the spacecraft could be certified for use on up to six missions each under the initial contract. Both companies faced development hurdles that pushed their first crewed test flights to 2019.

Russia places Zelenskyy on its wanted list

Associated Press

Russia has put Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on its wanted list, Russian state media reported Saturday, citing the interior ministry's database.

As of Saturday afternoon, both Zelenskyy and his predecessor, Petro Poroshenko, featured on the ministry's list of people wanted on unspecified criminal charges. The commander of Ukraine's ground forces, Gen. Oleksandr Pavlyuk, was also on the list.

Russian officials did not immediately clarify the allegations against any of the men. Mediazona, an independent Russian news outlet, claimed

Saturday that both Zelenskyy and Poroshenko had been listed since at least late February.

In an online statement published that same day, Ukraine's foreign ministry dismissed the reports of Zelenskyy's inclusion as evidence of "the desperation of the Russian state machine and propaganda."

Russia's wanted list also includes scores of officials and lawmakers from Ukraine and NATO countries. Among them is Kaja Kallas, the prime minister of Estonia, who has fiercely advocated for increased military aid to Kyiv and stronger sanctions against Moscow.

Russian officials in February

said Kallas is wanted because of Estonia's efforts to remove Soviet-era monuments to Red Army soldiers in the Baltic nation, in a belated purge of what many consider symbols of past oppression.

Fellow NATO members Latvia, Lithuania and Poland have also pulled down monuments that are widely seen as an unwanted legacy of the Soviet occupation of those countries.

Russia has laws criminalizing the "rehabilitation of Nazism" that include punishing the "desecration" of war memorials.

Also on Russia's list are cabinet ministers from Estonia and Lithuania, as well as the International Criminal Court prose-

cutor who last year prepared a warrant for President Vladimir Putin on war crimes charges. Moscow has also charged the head of Ukraine's military intelligence, Kyrylo Budanov, with what it has deemed "terrorist" activities, including Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian infrastructure.

The Kremlin has repeatedly sought to link Ukraine's leaders to Nazism, even though the country has a democratically elected Jewish president who lost relatives in the Holocaust, and despite the aim of many Ukrainians to strengthen the country's democracy, reduce corruption and move closer to the West.

Israel closes Gaza crossing after Hamas attack

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel closed its main crossing point for delivering badly needed humanitarian aid for Gaza on Sunday after Hamas militants attacked it, while the defense minister claimed Hamas wasn't serious about a cease-fire deal and warned of "a powerful operation in the very near future in Rafah and other places across all of Gaza."

Both struck blows to ongoing cease-fire efforts in Cairo mediated by Egypt and Qatar after reported signs of progress. Israel hasn't sent a delegation, unlike Hamas, and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said "we see signs that Hamas does not intend to go to any agreement."

Another threat to the talks came as Israel

ordered the local offices of Qatar's Al Jazeera satellite news network to close, accusing it of broadcasting anti-Israel incitement. The ban did not appear to affect the channel's operations in Gaza.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, under pressure from hard-liners in his government, continued to lower expectations for a cease-fire deal, calling the Hamas demands "extreme" — including the withdrawal of Israel forces from Gaza and an end to the war. That would equal surrender after the Hamas attack on Oct. 7 that triggered the fighting, Netanyahu said.

Hamas didn't immediately respond to Gallant's comments. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in a statement earlier said the militant group was serious and positive about

the negotiations, and stopping Israeli aggression in Gaza is the main priority.

But Israel's government again vowed to press on with a military operation in Rafah, the southernmost Gaza city on the border with Egypt where more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million residents now seek shelter from Israeli attacks. Rafah is a key entry point for aid.

Kerem Shalom, now closed, is another. The Israeli military reported 10 projectiles were launched at the crossing in southern Israel and said its fighter jets later struck the source. Hamas said it had been targeting Israeli soldiers in the area. Israel's Channel 12 TV channel said 10 people were wounded, three seriously. It was unclear how long the crossing would be closed.

Australian police fatally shoot teen after he stabbed man

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — A 16-year-old boy armed with a knife was shot dead by police after he stabbed a man in the Australian west coast city of Perth, officials said Sunday.

The incident occurred in the parking lot of a hardware store in suburban Willetton on Saturday night.

The teen attacked the man and then rushed at police officers before he was shot, Western Australian Premier Roger Cook told reporters on Sunday.

"There are indications he had been radicalized online," Cook told a news conference. "But I want to reassure the community at this stage it appears that he acted solely and alone."

A man in his 30s was found at the scene with a stab wound to his back. He was taken to a hospital in serious but stable condition, according to a police statement.

Police and Australian Security Intelligence Organization agents have been conducting a counterterrorism investigation in the east coast city of Sydney

since another 16-year-old boy stabbed an Assyrian Orthodox bishop and priest in a church on April 15.

That boy has been charged with committing a terrorist act. Six of his alleged associates have also been charged with a range of offenses, including conspiring to engage in or planning a terrorist act. All remain in custody.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Maui sues cell carriers over wildfire warnings

HONOLULU — Had emergency responders known about widespread cellphone outages during the height of last summer's deadly Maui wildfires, they would have used other methods to warn about the disaster, county officials said in a lawsuit.

Alerts the county sent to cellphones warning people to immediately evacuate were never received, unbeknownst to the county, the lawsuit said.

Maui officials failed to activate sirens that would have warned the entire population of the approaching flames. That has raised questions about whether everything was done to alert the public in a state that possesses an elaborate emergency warning system for a variety of dangers including wars, volcanoes, hurricanes and wildfires.

Major cellular carriers were negligent in failing to properly inform Maui police of widespread service outages, county officials said in the lawsuit filed Wednesday in state court against Verizon Wireless, T-Mobile USA, Spectrum Mobile and AT&T.

Army officer allegedly smuggled firearm parts

TN NASHVILLE — A U.S. Army lieutenant colonel was arrested Thursday on charges of illegally importing firearms parts from foreign countries including Russia and dealing weapons without a license, federal prosecutors said.

Lt. Col. Frank Ross Talbert, 40, has been indicted on 21

charges including importing defense articles without a license, smuggling firearms parts into the United States, firearms trafficking, possession of unregistered machine guns, transporting a machine gun without a license and dealing in firearms without a license, the U.S. attorney's office in Nashville said in a news release.

Talbert pleaded not guilty during a Thursday hearing in federal court in Nashville, records showed. Talbert, a lieutenant colonel with the Army's Explosives Ordinance Disposal at Fort Campbell, Ky., was arrested after federal law enforcement agents executed multiple search warrants during their investigation, prosecutors said.

The indictment said Talbert illegally imported parts for AK-style firearms without the proper license and authorization. Talbert was also accused of illegally importing 55 inert rifle grenades, illegally possessing AK-47 machine guns, and illegally selling a partially destroyed AK-47 kit.

The imported parts came from Russia, Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic, the indictment said.

Governor rejects federal rules on trans students

AR LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders declared Thursday that the state won't comply with a federal regulation that seeks to protect the rights of transgender students in the nation's schools, joining other Republican-led states that are defying the new rules.

Sanders signed an executive order stating that Arkansas

schools will continue to enforce restrictions on which bathrooms and pronouns transgender students can use, laws that could be invalidated by the new regulations on how to enforce Title IX.

The regulation finalized last month seeks to clarify Title IX, a landmark 1972 sex discrimination law. The regulations spell out that Title IX bars discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, too. Sanders called those changes a complete reinterpretation of the law.

Lawmakers OK bill to ensure Biden on ballot

AL MONTGOMERY — Alabama officials on Thursday approved legislation to ensure President Joe Biden will appear on the state's November ballot.

The House of Representatives voted 93-0 for the legislation. Republican Gov. Kay Ivey signed the bill into law the same day, a spokeswoman said.

The issue of Biden's ballot access has arisen in Alabama and Ohio because the states' early certification deadlines fall before the Democratic National Convention begins on Aug. 19. Republican secretaries of state warned that Biden might not appear on state ballots.

District will pay families to drive kids to school

MO ST. LOUIS — St. Louis' school district is offering to pay some families to drive their kids to school as part of an effort to offset a shortage of bus drivers.

Under the plan, families who have experienced "chronic bus absenteeism" this school year

will receive gas cards for the next two weeks. Starting May 13, all families in the district "willing to transport their children" can receive \$75 for each of the last two weeks of school.

The funding will be available to families whose students are not tardy or absent more than once a week.

In March, Missouri Central School Bus Co. announced it would terminate its contract with the district at the end of the school year. The relationship between the company and district grew strained after a noose was found near the workstation of a Black mechanic and an ensuing driver walkout snarled bus service for one of Missouri's largest school systems.

Wrongly imprisoned man gets \$3M compensation

MD ANNAPOLIS — Maryland officials approved more than \$3 million in compensation Wednesday for a Baltimore man who spent 31 years in prison on a wrongful murder conviction.

Gov. Wes Moore apologized to Gary Washington during a Board of Public Works meeting where the compensation was approved.

Washington was a 25-year-old new father when he was convicted in 1987 of first-degree murder and a gun crime in the fatal shooting of Faheem Ali the year before. No physical evidence linked him to murder, according to Moore, and multiple witnesses said he was not the shooter.

Multiple people also accounted for his whereabouts at the exact time of the crime, Moore said.

— From wire reports

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Pastrnak's OT goal lifts Bruins in Game 7

Associated Press

BOSTON — With the Boston Bruins' season on the brink and the team's top scorer mired in a scoring slump, coach Jim Montgomery didn't hesitate to publicly challenge David Pastrnak to do more in Game 7 against the Toronto Maple Leafs.

It helped bring out some of his best hockey at the perfect moment.

Pastrnak scored on a feed from Hampus Lindholm 1:54 into overtime and the Bruins beat the Maple Leafs 2-1 in Game 7 on Saturday night to clinch their first-round series and advance in the NHL playoffs.

"He's trying to bring the best out of every single player. He expects more," Pastrnak said. "I admitted I needed to be better."

It was redemption for Pastrnak, who entered the night with two goals and two assists through the first six games.

"I thought he was dynamic tonight," Montgomery said.

Jeremy Swayman finished with 30 saves and Lindholm had the tying goal in regulation to help the Bruins avoid losing their second straight first-round series after holding a 3-1 lead. They have now defeated the rival Maple Leafs in Game 7 of the first round of the playoffs three times in the last seven years.

"This was our best game of the series," Montgomery said. "This was the opportunity to seize the moment and be a difference maker."

Boston will meet the Florida Panthers, who upset the Bruins in seven games in the first round last year and spoiled a season in which they posted NHL records for the most wins and points in a season. Game 1 is set for Monday night in Florida. The Panthers have been resting since Tuesday, when they eliminated Tampa Bay in five games.

William Nylander scored and Auston Matthews had an assist in his return from a two-game absence for the Maple Leafs, who are now 0-6 in Game 7s since the 2013 conference quarterfinals. They are 0-4 on the road in those games — all in Boston. Matthews missed Games 5 and 6 with an undisclosed ailment.

He declined to elaborate on what sidelined him.

"I don't think there was any doubt we could get to this point and climb our way back into the series," Matthews said. "It was really hard to watch those two games. But just really proud of how the guys to fight and battle back and give ourselves a chance."

Ilya Samsonov started in goal for the first time since Game 4 and finished with 29 saves. James van Riemsdyk and Justin Brazeau also had assists.

"It's a tough one to lose. Tough way to go," Maple Leafs coach Sheldon Keefe said.

He was appreciative of the effort Matthews made to be on the ice.

"He did all he could to get himself ready and to be ready and to play at less than 100%," Keefe said. "He wanted to be there."

Samsonov got the nod in place of Joseph Woll, who was ruled out prior to the game for what the team said was an injury he sustained in Game 6.

Samsonov allowed 12 goals over the first four games. Woll stepped in and gave up just two in Toronto's Game 5 and 6 victories.

The Maple Leafs broke the scoring drought at 9:01 of the third period when Matthews corralled a loose puck that was mishandled by Tyler Bertuzzi in the zone and flipped it to a cutting Nylander, who beat Swayman for his third goal of the series.

But the Bruins responded just over a minute later when Lindholm muscled in a ricochet in front of the net to tie it back up at 1-all.

Edwards, Timberwolves take Game 1 over Nuggets

Associated Press

DENVER — Anthony Edwards' decision-making was as spot-on as his shot-making.

When he drew a crowd, he passed. When he was open, he shot — and usually swished.

Edwards scored a playoff career-high — and franchise post-season-record — 43 points, Naz Reid had 14 of his 16 points in the fourth quarter and the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the defending NBA champion Denver Nuggets 106-99 in Game 1 of their second-round series Saturday night.

Edwards was unstoppable in the first half, scoring 25 points, and Reid took over in the fourth quarter. Karl-Anthony Towns had 20 points despite dealing with foul trouble. The Timberwolves shot a blistering 71.1% from the floor in the second

half.

"The whole team, we trust each other," said Edwards, who was 17-for-29 from the floor as he posted his third career playoff game with 40 or more points. "It doesn't matter down the stretch who takes the shot."

All part of Edwards' evolution on the court.

"I'm proud of the way he's accepted the kind of growth he needed to have to be where he is," said Conley, who finished with 14 points and 10 assists. "It's not easy for a 22-, 23-year-old to make that adjustment so quickly."

"Twenty-two," Edwards playfully chimed in.

Game 2 is Monday night in Denver.

Three days after undergoing knee surgery, Timberwolves coach Chris Finch was on the

bench in the second row, next to the scorer's table and behind assistant coach Micah Nori, who did the instructing, roaming and switching. Finch ruptured the patellar tendon in his right knee last week when Wolves point guard Mike Conley collided with him late in Minnesota's Round 1 clincher at Phoenix.

"All the plays we scored on were my calls and the ones that we didn't were his," cracked Nori. "(Finch) was great. He was like, 'We don't want to make it clunky,' is the term he used. We did a good job of that."

Two-time NBA MVP Nikola Jokic had 32 points, eight rebounds and nine assists for Denver, but also had seven turnovers. Jamal Murray scored 17 points after being held scoreless in the first half.

Murray, the hero for the Nuggets in Round 1 with a pair of game-winners that allowed Denver to eliminate the Lakers in five games, finished 6-for-14 from the floor.

"We need to do a better job of making them make tough shots, maybe make the extra pass," Jokic said.

Tied at 84, the Timberwolves went on an 18-7 run to break it open. Reid had 10 straight points for the Timberwolves at one point during the pivotal stretch. Reid was the beneficiary of the Nuggets making sure Edwards was constantly covered.

"When (Edwards) draws three people, he makes the right play all the time," Reid said. "I've seen him grow from Day 1 to where he is — a superstar in the making, if he's not now."

López, Twins extend winning streak to 12

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Pablo López struck out eight in six strong innings, Max Kepler homered and the Minnesota Twins extended their winning streak to 12 games with a 3-1 win over the Boston Red Sox on Saturday.

The Twins have the longest winning streak in the majors this season. Minnesota's run matches the team's winning streak from late in the 1980 season, which is the second-longest in Twins history. The club record for consecutive wins in 15, from June 1991, which is the last season Minnesota won the World Series.

"It's been fun, and I think you are not seeing guys try to do more than we know what to do. That's always the biggest thing," López said.

Kepler and Willi Castro each had two hits, Carlos Correa had two RBIs. Closer Jhoan Duran pitched a scoreless eighth inning against the middle of the Red Sox order, and Cole Sands pitched a scoreless final inning for his second save.

"From the outside, people probably wouldn't have guessed it would be Cole closing it there," reliever Steven Okert said. "Coaching staff having confidence in all of us is great."

Wilyer Abreu and Dominic Smith had two hits apiece for Boston, which has lost three straight games.

Yankees 5, Tigers 3: Aaron Judge was ejected for the first time in his career in the seventh inning, Anthony Rizzo hit a three-run homer to cap a four-run third and host New York beat Detroit.

Judge had two hits, including an RBI double to start New York's rally in the third before getting ejected by plate umpire Ryan Blakney for arguing a called third strike. Judge thought a full count fastball by Tyler Holton was slightly out-side and he was quickly tossed after looking back at Blakney.

Cubs 6, Brewers 5: Nico

Hoerner hit his first career lead-off home run, Christopher Morel hit his third homer in as many games and Patrick Wisdom sent one into the stands as host Chicago beat Milwaukee.

Chicago tied its first divisional series of the year at one apiece in manager Craig Counsell's first series against his former team. Brewers manager Pat Murphy also returned to the dugout after serving a two-game suspension for his role in a brawl with Tampa Bay on Tuesday.

Pirates 1, Rockies 0: Pinch-hitter Jack Suwinski singled home Connor Joe with two outs in the ninth inning to lift host Pittsburgh to a victory over Colorado.

Joe led off the ninth against Nick Mears (0-3) with a single and eventually moved to third after walks to Jared Triolo and Oneil Cruz. Suwinski followed with a single to left as the Pirates snapped a five-game losing streak.

Blue Jays 6, Nationals 3: Kevin Gausman pitched 5½ scoreless innings, Kevin Kiermaier hit a two-run homer in his return from the injured list and visiting Toronto beat Washington to end a three-game losing streak.

Gausman (2-3) allowed three hits while striking out eight. He walked two batters in the first inning, but settled in and later retired 10 straight — seven by strikeout.

Guardians 7, Angels 1: Bo Naylor hit his first career grand slam, Austin Hedges had his first homer since June 14 and host Cleveland beat Los Angeles.

Naylor's two-out blast in the sixth inning came off Angels starter Reid Detmers (3-3), who had loaded the bases on three walks.

White Sox 6, Cardinals 5 (10): Tanner Banks came on after a three-hour rain delay to strike out pinch-hitter Iván Herrera in the bottom of the 10th in-

ning, and visiting Chicago beat St. Louis to snap a four-game losing streak.

Tommy Pham drove in the go-ahead run with a single in the top of the 10th and the White Sox were an out away in the bottom half when crew chief Dan Iassogna stopped play and called out the grounds crew after John Brebbia threw his first pitch to Nolan Gorman. After the delay of 3 hours, 3 minutes, Banks came on to get Herrera for his first save of the season.

Orioles 2, Reds 1: John Means pitched seven shutout innings in his season debut and visiting Baltimore beat Cincinnati.

Means (1-0) underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery on April 27, 2022. He returned to make four starts last September before landing back on the IL with a left forearm strain to begin this season. He made six rehab starts before being reinstated May 1.

Mariners 5, Astros 0: Logan Gilbert threw eight dominant innings, Luis Urias and Cal Raleigh homered and visiting Seattle beat Houston.

Gilbert (3-0) allowed two hits and four walks and struck out six. He has allowed two runs or fewer in six of his seven starts. The right-hander retired 16 of 17 at one point.

Rays 3, Mets 1: Pinch hitter Austin Shenton's bases-loaded walk scored a tiebreaking run in the eighth inning and host Tampa Bay beat New York.

Adam Ottavino (1-1) was on the verge of getting out of a bases-loaded jam with one out in the eighth after shortstop Francisco Lindor made a leaping throw to home for a forceout at the plate on Randy Arozarena's high hopper. Shenton walked to complete a nine-pitch plate appearance, however, and José Caballero drew a free pass from Sean Reid-Foley to make it 3-1.

Rangers 15, Royals 4: Nathaniel Lowe had four hits and two RBIs, and visiting Texas routed

Kansas City.

Adolis García, Evan Carter and Travis Jankowski also drove in two runs each. Carter scored on a wild pitch after a two-run triple in the third inning. Garcia extended his hitting streak to six games.

Athletics 20, Marlins 4: Brent Rooker became the first Oakland player in nearly 30 years to homer twice in an inning, accomplishing the feat in the third to help the Athletics pound visiting Miami for their sixth consecutive victory.

Oakland's only All-Star a year ago, Rooker drilled a two-run drive off Marlins starter Trevor Rogers (0-5), then added a three-run shot off Darren McCaughan in the 10-run inning. Oakland set season highs for runs and hits with 21.

Phillies 14, Giants 3: Ranger Suárez pitched six strong innings, Whit Merrifield homered and streaking Philadelphia routed visiting San Francisco.

Kyle Schwarber, Johan Rojas and Bryson Stott each drove in two runs, and every starter had at least one hit. The Phillies have won 15 of 18.

Padres 13, Diamondbacks 1: Luis Arraez had four hits and an RBI in his first game after being traded from Miami and Ha-Seong Kim hit a three-run homer in an eight-run seventh inning as visiting San Diego routed listless Arizona.

Jurickson Profar had a two-run homer in the seventh inning among his four hits and Kim followed with a three-run shot.

Dodgers 11, Braves 2: Max Muncy had the first three home run game of his career along with four RBIs, Shohei Ohtani had three hits and became the franchise leader for most home runs by a Japanese-born player and host Los Angeles rolled to a victory over Atlanta.

Freddie Freeman also had three hits for the Dodgers, who have won four of five. Rookie Andy Pages also went deep as Los Angeles had five homers.

Messi scores goal, notches 5 assists

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Lionel Messi had a record-setting night for Inter Miami.

He scored a goal and had five assists as Inter Miami trounced the New York Red Bulls 6-2 on Saturday night — with the Argentine great and eight-time Ballon d'Or winner as the game's best player setting no fewer than three Major League Soccer records.

The six goal contributions, five assists and five assists in a half were all MLS records.

Messi, who earned the MLS Player of the Month Award for April, has now scored and assisted in six consecutive league matches.

"It has become redundant but it appears that he is always making history," Inter Miami coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said. "If something was missing, it was this — to contribute in six goals."

Luis Suárez had three goals

and Matias Rojas scored twice as Inter Miami got six unanswered goals to come back from a 1-0 halftime deficit. Messi and Suárez now have a league-leading 10 goals each, helping keep Inter Miami (7-2-3, 24 points) atop the Eastern Conference.

The win extended Miami's unbeaten string to six. The streak began after a 4-0 loss at New York on April 20, in which Messi did not play because of an injury.

"When he is not available, obviously, the team feels it," Martino said.

Miami began the rout with Rojas' equalizer in the 48th minute. Messi centered a pass to Rojas whose left-footed shot landed under the crossbar.

Suárez then fed a charging Messi with a touch pass and he beat New York goalkeeper Carlos Coronel with a shot from 15 yards.

Rojas made it 3-1 with his second goal in the 62nd minute on

an assist from Messi. The 28-year-old Rojas joined Inter Miami on April 23 and entered the match to start the second half.

"This is the ultimate satisfaction for a goal scorer," Rojas said. "It makes it even more special because we accomplished it at home."

Messi then contributed on former Barcelona teammate Suárez's first goal in the 69th minute.

"Leo makes it easier for all of us," Suárez said. "We know each other long enough. When we are on the pitch, we know how to spot each other without looking."

Suárez also struck in the 75th and 81st minutes before the Red Bulls (4-2-5, 17 points) closed the scoring on Emil Forsberg's penalty kick in stoppage time.

"We have many players that are capable of scoring," Martino said. "At some points in the match we are going to find fav-

orable moments. The issue is how we limit the unfavorable moments."

New York controlled possession early and eventually capitalized on a Miami defensive breakdown that resulted in Dante Vanzeir's goal in the 30th minute. José Carmona ran deep into the right wing of the large area and blasted a shot that bounced off the far post. An unmarked Vanzeir retrieved the deflection and converted from 15 yards.

Messi had his only scoring opportunity of the first half in the 24th minute, when Coronel stopped his shot from the edge of the penalty area.

Messi's former Barcelona teammate Jordi Alba missed his third straight game because of a hamstring injury.

Both clubs will continue MLS play next Saturday. Inter Miami visits CF Montreal while the Red Bulls play host to New England.

Alvarez retains undisputed super middleweight title

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The question of whether Canelo Alvarez can any longer knock out anyone likely won't go away with his unanimous victory Saturday night, but he remains the undisputed super middleweight champion because he was the stronger and more effective boxer.

Alvarez (61-2-2), who closed as a minus-380 favorite at BetMGM, overcame a somewhat slow start to dominate and hand Jaime Munguia (43-1) his first loss.

The champ took full control after knocking down Munguia in the fourth round before the announced crowd of 17,492, which was fairly evenly split between the two competitors.

Tim Cheatham scored the fight 117-110, David Sutherland had it 116-111 and Steve Weisfeld 115-112.

"When I retire, my numbers will say what position I'm in," Alvarez said. "I know there's a lot of great Mexican fighters in the past, but I'm the best fighting right now."

This is the second straight time that Alvarez left no doubt who was the better fighter and showing why, even at 33, he remains one of the sport's all-time greats. Alvarez also had his way with Jermell Charlo in September to win by even wider margins.

These two fights followed two victories and a loss that were anything but impressive. While Alvarez showed he still is the class of his division, he still hasn't delivered a knockout since defeating Caleb Plant in 2021 — a span of five matches.

Alvarez was circumspect regarding what he might do next, saying he'll return to the ring "if the money is right."

"I've fought everyone and I can do what I want," he said.

The lead-up to the bout was unusually civil, with both fighters saying they were proud to represent Mexico on Cinco de Mayo weekend.

"This win means a lot," Alvarez said. "I'm glad that I gave him this opportunity. Munguia is a great guy and a great cham-

pion. He's going to have a great career. I'm very proud that all the Mexicans are here watching us."

In the other main-card fights:

■ San Antonio's Mario Barrios (29-2) successfully defended his WBC interim world welterweight title by defeating Argentinian Fabian Maidana (22-3) by unanimous decision in the co-main event. Each judge scored the bout 116-111.

Barrios prevailed despite fighting with his right eye nearly completely closed.

"Maidana fought hard for 12 rounds like I expected," Barrios said.

■ WBC interim world featherweight champion Brandon Figueroa (25-1-1, 19 KOs) of Welasco, Texas, knocked out Jessie Magdaleno (29-3) of Las Vegas with a left uppercut to his kidney with one second left in the ninth round ended.

■ Lithuania's Eimantas Stanionis (15-0) easily retained his WBA welterweight title by claiming a unanimous decision over Venezuelan Gabriel Maestre (6-1-1) with scores of 117-111, 118-10 and 119-109.