

## DOD adds to zone along south border

By ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

AUSTIN, Texas — The Defense Department has received more land to establish a second military zone along the U.S. border with Mexico, this one in El Paso as an extension of Fort Bliss to allow troops to detain and search anyone found trespassing, U.S. Northern Command said Thursday.

The El Paso National Defense Area in Texas is the second territory created as part of the military becoming more active in efforts to deter migrants from crossing between legal ports of entry at the U.S. southern border. The Army last month took ownership of a roughly 170-mile-long strip of land across the southern edge of New Mexico that is about 60 feet wide.

More than two dozen people were charged last Monday in federal court for trespassing on the New Mexico National Defense Area, which is part of Fort Huachuca in Arizona. Troops did not conduct those arrests, according to NORTHCOM, though court records do not state which agency did.

The El Paso defense area stretches about 53 miles east to the town of Fort Hancock, according to Maj. Geoffrey Carmichael, spokesman for the Joint Task Force — Southern Border.

It is considered part of Fort Bliss, which is in the west Texas city. Stryker armored combat vehicles deployed from Fort Carson, Colo., to work in the area will monitor the El Paso defense area using cameras at stationary points and on mobile pa-

trols, Carmichael said.

Soldiers have also begun to hang signs on the land to warn people they are entering a military base, he said.

“The establishment of a second National Defense Area increases our operational reach and effectiveness in denying illegal activity along the southern border,” said Air Force Gen. Gregory Guillot, NORTHCOM commander. “This is the second area in which Joint Task Force — Southern Border service members who are already detecting and monitoring through stationary positions and mobile patrols nearby can now temporarily detain trespassers until they are transferred to an appropriate law enforcement entity.”

The land in New Mexico is part of the Roosevelt Reserva-

tion and was acquired by the Army from the Department of the Interior. The Army will hold ownership for three years, the service said.

Troops working in these zones can detain, search and offer medical aid to those found in it and then contact federal agents to collect them.

Troops working outside the zones are only able to monitor and report potential illegal activity back to Customs and Border Protection.

Roughly 6,600 soldiers and Marines are working along the southwest border.

Trump ordered the creation of the military border zones last month to get around laws that prohibit the military from conducting civilian law enforcement.

## GOP: Trump’s proposed budget shortchanges military

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Republican leaders of the Senate and House Armed Services committees were critical of topline defense spending proposals outlined by President Donald Trump’s administration on Friday, describing the spending plan as too small of an investment in the military.

The fiscal 2026 budget outline — known as a skinny budget — released by the White House’s Office of Management and Budget touts a \$1 trillion defense budget, which has been foreshadowed recently in comments by Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. But top Republicans on Friday said the actual budget documents only indicate a plan to fund national defense

at \$892.6 billion, roughly in line with recent defense budgets under former President Joe Biden.

“President Trump successfully campaigned on a peace through strength agenda, but his advisers at the Office of Management and Budget were apparently not listening,” Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said in a statement. “For the defense budget, OMB has requested a fifth year straight of Biden administration funding, leaving military spending flat, which is a cut in real terms.”

The White House proposal did not outline specifically how much of the budget was slated for the Pentagon. National defense spending proposals typi-

cally include the Pentagon’s funding requests as well as money requested by other national security agencies, including certain nuclear programs run by the Department of Energy.

OMB Director Russell Vought indicated the \$1 trillion defense budget would include a separate funding package under consideration now in Congress that would provide the Pentagon about \$150 billion to invest in shipbuilding, a layered missile defense shield and other defense priorities.

Republicans are pushing that bill through Congress using the reconciliation process, which will allow them to bypass Democratic opposition and pass the legislation with a simple majority vote.

But Wicker and other Republicans blasted the Trump administration for including those funds in its \$1 trillion proposal. Wicker said he would work to increase Pentagon spending

“This budget would decrease President Trump’s military options and his negotiating leverage,” Wicker said in his statement. “We face an axis of aggressors led by the Chinese Communist Party, who have already started a trade war rather than negotiate in good faith. We need a real peace through strength agenda to ensure [China’s President] Xi Jinping does not launch a military war against us in Asia, beyond his existing military support to the Russians, the Iranians, Hamas, and the Houthis.”

# Army plans parade on Trump's birthday

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The Army on Friday confirmed there will be a military parade on President Donald Trump's birthday in June, as part of the celebrations around the service's 250th birthday.

Plans for the parade, as first detailed by The Associated Press on Thursday, call for about 6,600 soldiers, 150 vehicles and 50 helicopters to follow a route from Arlington, Va., to the National Mall. Until recently, the Army's birthday festival plans did not include a massive parade, which officials say will cost tens of millions of dol-

lars.

But Trump has long wanted a military parade, and discussions with the Pentagon about having one in conjunction with the birthday festival began less than two months ago.

The Army 250th birthday happens to coincide with Trump's 79th birthday on June 14. In a statement Friday, Army spokesman Steve Warren said the Army's birthday celebration will include "a spectacular fireworks display, a parade, and a daylong festival on the National Mall."

The pricey parade comes as Trump and his Department of

Government Efficiency, run by Elon Musk, have slashed federal government departments, personnel and programs, with thousands of workers losing their jobs, including civilians in the Defense Department.

In comments to Fox News Digital, White House officials confirmed a commemorative parade would take place and said it would be one of the first events to kick off a yearlong celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary.

When asked about the parade Thursday, the White House did not respond, and Army officials said no decision had been made.

While officials said there has now been a formal decision to proceed with the parade, there is still no specific cost estimate.

Warren said that given the significance of the Army birthday, they are looking at options "to make the celebration even bigger, with more capability demonstrations, additional displays of equipment, and more engagement with the community."

Army planning documents, obtained last week by the AP and dated April 29 and 30, said the parade will include soldiers from at least 11 corps and divisions nationwide.

## Trump seeks to rename Veterans Day to honor WWI

**By JOHN VANDIVER**

*Stars and Stripes*

President Donald Trump wants to change the name of Veterans Day to "Victory Day for World War I," saying it would better highlight American military achievement.

In a late-night post Thursday on Truth Social, Trump also said he would make May 8 "Victory Day for World War II." The war ended in Europe on May 8, 1945, and on Sept. 2 that same year in

the Pacific.

"We won both Wars, nobody was close to us in terms of strength, bravery, or military brilliance, but we never celebrate anything," Trump said. "That's because we don't have leaders anymore, that know how to do so! We are going to start celebrating our victories again!"

Trump did not say whether he intends to designate May 8 as a new federal holiday, which would require approval by Congress.

Veterans Day, celebrated on Nov. 11, was established in 1938 as Armistice Day.

It was broadened in 1954 to honor Americans who fought in World War II and the Korean War. Congress that year passed legislation to change the name of the holiday to Veterans Day. The bill was signed into law by President Dwight Eisenhower.

It was made a federal holiday in 1968, and in the years since, veterans of subsequent wars have been

honored on that day.

Across Europe, countries will celebrate V-E Day on Thursday, marking 80 years since the end of WWII in Europe.

Some 416,000 U.S. troops died across theaters during WWII, according to the National World War II Museum.

The Soviet Union also lost roughly 10 million troops in combat during the war. The defeat of Nazi Germany is celebrated on May 9 in Russia.

## Landings aborted as Army helo flies near DC airport

*The Washington Post*

Two airliners abandoned landing attempts at Washington's Reagan National Airport on Thursday afternoon when an Army Black Hawk took a "scenic route" near the flight path and circled the Pentagon before landing at a military heliport, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

The National Transportation Safety Board said it would investigate the incident.

The helicopter was part of the

same brigade that was involved in the deadly Jan. 29 crash with an American Airlines jet. The unit had only resumed flights in the Washington region a little over week ago, according to Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash. Since the midair crash, the FAA has taken several steps designed to keep airliners and helicopters separate in the busy skies around National.

An FAA summary of Thursday's incident obtained by The Washington Post says the heli-

copter was not within newly restricted airspace and was following new rules requiring it to broadcast its location using a satellite-based system.

But Cantwell, the top Democrat on the committee that oversees aviation, said the incident raises new questions about safety at the airport.

"It is outrageous that only three months after an Army Black Hawk helicopter tragically collided with a passenger jet, the same Army brigade again flew a

helicopter too close to passenger jets on final approach at DCA," Cantwell said in a statement. "It is far past time for [Defense] Secretary [Pete] Hegseth and the FAA to give our airspace the security and safety attention it deserves."

Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., who chairs an aviation subcommittee, said officials needed to explain to lawmakers how they could ensure safety at the airport.

The Army did not respond to a request for comment on the incident.

# US strike in Yemen appears to have killed dozens

*The Washington Post*

A U.S. airstrike in northwest Yemen on April 28 appears to have killed at least three dozen people in a Houthi-run compound that human rights researchers say has been used for years as a detention center and at times for military purposes, according to images of the aftermath reviewed by *The Washington Post*.

Houthi rebels say at least 68 people were killed and dozens more were injured in what they said was a U.S. strike on a prison holding African migrants. The *Post*'s analysis of visuals found at least 38 people who appeared to

be dead and 32 injured, numbers that are almost certainly an undercount given the limited available imagery.

It is not clear from the videos who among the dead are civilians; no military equipment or garb is visible in any visuals reviewed by *The Post*. Visuals could be located from only one of the two buildings that were destroyed in the attack.

The Houthis have targeted American military forces in the Red Sea, as well as commercial vessels and Israeli military sites to protest the ongoing war in Gaza, which has killed many thousands of civilians. In mid-March,

the Trump campaign launched "Operation Rough Rider," targeting Houthi rebel leadership and infrastructure.

U.S. Central Command, which oversees U.S. operations in the Middle East, has not said what it was targeting in the recent strike but is "aware of the claims of civilian casualties" and is assessing them, a defense official has said.

The current functions of the compound in Yemen could not be independently determined.

After Monday's strike, video released by the Houthi-owned al-Masirah television channel showed remnants of munitions

and what appeared to be at least two craters where the building once stood. The visual evidence indicates multiple U.S.-manufactured GBU-39s were dropped, said Trevor Ball, a former Army explosive ordnance disposal technician. The guided munitions are designed to be capable of reducing risk to civilians with precision targeting and a relatively small size.

There are no clear signs in the images that the damaged building had any military use, Ball said. The foundation is basic concrete, and the inside appeared to be sleeping quarters.

## F-35C pilot named Marine Corps' aviator of the year

BY BRIAN McELHINEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

Maj. Zachary Sessa didn't expect to fly combat missions when he deployed last summer aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln with the Marine Corps' first F-35C Lightning II squadron.

But on Nov. 9 and 10, Sessa led the stealth fighter's first combat sorties, targeting Houthi weapons storage facilities in Yemen. The Iranian-backed group had been attacking military and civilian vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Sessa's role in the mission earned him the Alfred A. Cunningham Award, named for the Marines' first aviator, and the title of Marine Aviator of the Year, according to an April 23 news release from the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

His unit — Fighter Attack Squadron 314, based at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif. — was also named Marine Fighter Attack Squadron of the Year. It was embarked with Carrier Air Wing 9 aboard the Abraham Lincoln between July 11 and Dec. 14.

After leaving its homeport, the carrier was informed it would operate in the 5th Fleet's area of re-

sponsibility, Sessa told *Stars and Stripes* by phone Tuesday. The fleet oversees operations in the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Arabian Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean.

That was when "the possibility of combat operations certainly came to the table," he said from Yuma, Ariz., where he is now an F-35 instructor pilot.

"This wasn't my first deployment in an F-35," he said, "but it was my first flying combat sorties, so it was a challenging experience to learn a completely different [area of responsibility]."

Sessa, 33, of Butler, Pa., also served as the Marines' first F-35C weapons and tactics instructor during the deployment, according to the release.

During the deployment, Sessa said he helped train six F-35 section leads, three division leads, two air combat maneuvering instructors, one Lightning tactics instructor, two low-altitude tactics instructors and one F-35 mission commander.

"It's not just a couple pilots out there flying an F-35," he said. "There is a massive network of assets and efforts that [are] taking place to allow these sorties to occur."

## Army to revamp force following Hegseth order

BY JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Army will cut 1,000 jobs from its main headquarters, shrink attack helicopter formations and lighten the load for infantry brigades, the service's top leaders said in a message to the force last week.

A letter sent to Army commands Thursday details a series of changes to force structure in line with a directive issued the day before by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

"This initiative will reexamine all requirements and eliminate unnecessary ones, ruthlessly prioritize fighting formations to directly contribute to lethality, and empower leaders at echelon to make hard calls to ensure resources align with strategic objectives," Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George and Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll wrote in the joint letter. A second round of initiatives will be announced in the coming months, the Army leaders said.

Called the Army Transformation Initiative, the effort is part of a plan to prepare soldiers for a battlefield where drones and emerging technologies are expected to dominate.

"Sensors and decoys are everywhere," the letter said. "Dual-use technologies are continuously evolving and outpacing our processes to defeat them. To maintain our edge on the battlefield, our Army will transform to a leaner, more lethal force by adapting how we fight, train, organize, and buy equipment."

At the tactical level, that means incorporating more drones into combat unit formations and less emphasis on manned aircraft.

To that end, the Army will reduce one aerial cavalry squadron per aviation brigade in the active component, George and Driscoll said. It also will consolidate aviation sustainment requirements.

All infantry brigade combat teams will be converted to mobile brigade combat teams, resulting in a leaner formation, according to the letter.

"We are trading weight for speed, and mass for decisive force," it said.

The letter didn't specify what the exact changes to brigade configurations would look like. However, trading weight and mass for speed means that such units are likely to have fewer tanks and other armored vehicles.



# Protests over military misconduct on Okinawa

By BRIAN McELHINEY  
AND KEISHI KOJA

*Stars and Stripes*

NAHA CITY, Okinawa — Okinawa's prefectural government lodged formal protests Friday with Japanese and U.S. authorities following a Marine's indictment in an alleged sexual assault — the fourth such case involving American service members on the island in the past year.

Vice Gov. Takekuni Ikeda delivered protest letters signed by Gov. Denny Tamaki to Shinya Ito, director of the Okinawa Defense Bureau and Ambassador Manabu Miyagawa of the Min-

istry of Foreign Affairs' Okinawa Liaison Office. Ikeda, Ito and Miyagawa made statements but did not take questions from reporters.

Later in the day, Ikeda presented a similar letter to Maj. Gen. Brian Wolford, commander of Marine Corps Installations Pacific, and U.S. Consul General Andrew Ou during a meeting at Camp Foster, a spokeswoman for the prefecture's Military Base Affairs Division said by phone Friday.

The protests were spurred by Wednesday's indictment of Marine Pfc. Austin R. Wedington on charges of sexually assault-

ing a Japanese woman on Foster in March and injuring another woman who tried to intervene.

The first woman is a civilian employee on a U.S. base, Japanese public broadcaster NHK reported April 24.

The letter to U.S. officials demands a review of military training and educational programs, enhanced disciplinary measures, implementation of further preventative steps, protection for base employees, and compensation for the victims.

"This incident has had a tremendous impact on [Japanese employees], questioning wheth-

er they can go to work safely," Ikeda said.

Roughly 9,000 Japanese are employed at American bases on Okinawa.

Friday's protest is the latest in a series of official objections raised by Japanese authorities since June.

Prior efforts included petitions from governors across Japan, meetings with U.S. diplomats, and direct communications from Tamaki to U.S. commanders.

Three other sexual assault cases involving U.S. service members have been handled by Okinawa courts in the past year.

## Putin says no need yet to use nukes in Ukraine

*Associated Press*

Russian President Vladimir Putin said in comments broadcast Sunday that the need to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine had not arisen and that he hopes it will not.

In a preview of an upcoming interview with Russian state television, published on Telegram, Putin said Russia has the strength and the means to bring the conflict in Ukraine to a "logical conclusion."

Responding to a question about Ukrainian strikes on Russian territory, Putin said: "There has been no need to use those (nuclear) weapons... and I hope they will not be required."

"We have enough strength and means to bring what was started in 2022 to a logical conclusion with the outcome Russia requires," he said.

Putin signed a revamped version of Russia's nuclear doctrine in November 2024, spelling out circumstances that allow him to use Moscow's atomic arsenal, the world's largest.

That version lowered the bar, giving him that option in response to even a conventional

attack backed by a nuclear power.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said a ceasefire is possible "even from today" if Moscow is serious about ending the war.

Speaking Sunday at a joint news conference with Czech President Petr Pavel, Zelenskyy noted that Russia has ignored a U.S. proposal for a full ceasefire for 54 days and thanked the Czech Republic for backing Ukraine's call for a 30-day ceasefire.

"Putin is very eager to show off his tanks at the (Victory Day) parade," Zelenskyy said, "but he should think about ending his war."

Putin on Monday declared a unilateral 72-hour ceasefire in Ukraine to mark Victory Day in World War II, as the U.S. presses for a deal to end the 3-year-old war. The Kremlin said the truce, ordered on "humanitarian grounds," will run from the start of May 8 and last through the end of May 10 to mark Moscow's defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 — Russia's biggest secular holiday.

## May the 4th marked as Star Wars Day

*Associated Press*

It didn't begin a long time ago or in a galaxy far far away, but every May 4 it feels like images, memes and promotional deals involving "Star Wars" have an inescapable gravity.

May 4 — or May the 4th, as fans say — has evolved over the years into Star Wars Day, an informal holiday celebrating the space epic and its surrounding franchise.

Star Wars Day was created by fans as a sly nod to one of the films' most popular catchphrases, "May the force be with you." Get it? Good, now May the 4th be with you too.

It's not an official holiday but has become so well-known that even former President Joe Biden marked it last year when "Star Wars" actor Mark Hamill dropped by the White House a day beforehand.

The phrase "May the 4th be with you" was used by fans in the years after the first film was released in 1977.

May the 4th caught on informally among fans through inside jokes shared in person and

on social media and with viewings of the films to mark the occasion.

Disney, which acquired Lucasfilm in 2012, embraced the day as a way to further promote the franchise with merchandise, special screenings and other events.

The day is being celebrated on a large and small scale this year. Disney+ is launching the new series "Star Wars: Tales of the Underworld" on the date, and it comes as the second season gets underway for another franchise series, "Andor."

Most Major League Baseball teams have marked the day in recent years with special events incorporating "Star Wars" characters.

It's a town-wide celebration in New Hope, Pa., which shares its name with the subtitle of the first "Star Wars" film.

The town of about 2,600 people, located 30 miles northeast of Philadelphia, plans to have costumed characters throughout town with restaurants serving themed items like a "YodaRita."

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Discovery of dead animals spoils house sale

**GA** ATLANTA — A home in northwest Georgia attracted some potential buyers, likely with the modest price tag of \$275,000.

“Welcome home to this amazing 1919 Farm in Layette, GA sitting on 10 acres of beautiful land,” the Zillow listing states. “This is a perfect spot for horses and livestock.”

But it turns out, the home wasn’t fit for animals and definitely not humans, according to Walker County investigators. The five people living in the home were arrested and charged with multiple counts of animal cruelty, and the house has been condemned.

The couple visiting the home with their real estate agent saw a dead ferret inside a crate and multiple dogs and cats living in “deplorable” conditions. They alerted an animal control officer, launching an investigation.

Outside, investigators found the dead ferret, crates containing two dead goats and a decomposing bunny. The sheriff’s office assisted animal control officers with the investigation.

Nine dogs, four cats, two horses, two goats, two donkeys, a sheep and a pony were removed from the property, investigators said.

### Pastor notified books at museum may be returned

**DC** WASHINGTON — A veteran activist of the Civil Rights Movement said he was notified by the Smithsonian Institution that items he loaned to the National Museum of African American History and Culture may be returned,

amid a potential review of the museum’s collections ordered by President Donald Trump.

Rev. Amos C. Brown, pastor of Third Baptist Church in San Francisco, loaned two books to the Smithsonian, which have been displayed since the museum opened nearly a decade ago. One of his items is an edition of “The History of the Negro Race in America” by George Washington Williams, which was written in 1880 and is among the first books to document Black American history and racism in the U.S. The other is a Bible that Brown carried during protests alongside the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

The reasons given for the items’ return initially raised alarms that the Trump administration had begun to make visible changes to a museum considered to be a crown jewel of Black American culture.

### Town’s sugary soda tax is first to defy state ban

**CA** SAN FRANCISCO — A tax on sugary drinks took effect Thursday in the beachside community of Santa Cruz, seven years after California banned cities and counties from implementing local grocery taxes as part of a reluctant deal with the powerful beverage industry.

The 2-cent-per-ounce tax, approved by voters in November, is the first in the state since lawmakers approved the 2018 deal. The American Beverage Association spent heavily to campaign against the ballot measure in the small city of 60,000.

Santa Cruz officials are prepared to challenge the state’s preemption law in court, and despite the legal uncertainty,

hope their new tax will spur other states and cities to act. The measure aims to reduce sugar consumption, especially among children and teens, and raise money for health programs and other community initiatives.

### Academy grad granted probation after flag flap

**MD** ANNAPOLIS — A Naval Academy graduate accused of ripping down a pride flag from an Annapolis tattoo shop was given probation before judgment following a bench trial last week.

Benjamin Michael, 44, was given probation before judgment, meaning he can avoid further penalties if he meets the terms of his one year of unsupervised probation. He was facing four misdemeanor charges, including two counts for a hate crime, according to court records. One of the hate crime counts was dropped, according to court records.

Michael graduated from the academy in 2004 and served in the Marines from 2004 to 2013, according to the Marine Corps.

### Glowing caterpillars released to aid butterflies

**FL** TALLAHASSEE — Biologists waded through knee-high vegetation in Florida until they reached a spot where purple flowers grew in cone-like formations — then the team got out the glow-in-the-dark caterpillars.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission announced April 30 that biologists had released caterpillars of the frosted elfin butterfly in Ichetucknee Springs State Park earlier in the month.

“This handsome butterfly is

now rare or has disappeared from most of its historic range in the eastern U.S. and southern Canada,” the FWC said in a news release. “Florida has the largest remaining population in the Southeast.”

FWC staff visited the springs about an hour’s drive from Gainesville to deposit the small, green caterpillars onto their host plant, the purple sundial lupine. Biologists waited until the caterpillars were old enough that they were nearly ready to begin metamorphosis, then they placed them onto the plant to eat and shortly after choose a leaf to build a chrysalis.

### Overdose deaths dropped by nearly a third last year

**KY** FRANKFORT — The number of overdose deaths in Kentucky last year dropped by 30.2% — down to 1,410 lives lost — giving state leaders a surge of confidence that prevention and treatment efforts are making progress against an addiction epidemic they say is shattering families across the state.

This was the third straight yearly decrease in drug overdose deaths for the state, although prior declines were substantially smaller. Kentucky has long been plagued by high rates of addiction to opioid painkillers, and fatal overdoses surged during the COVID-19 pandemic, when treatment was hard to get and people were socially isolated.

Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear called the results a “watershed moment” reflecting years of painstaking work to combat the spread and use of drugs.

— From wire reports

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# Rantanen, Stars rally past Avs in Game 7

Associated Press

DALLAS — Mikko Rantanen really took over for the Dallas Stars when they needed him the most against this former team — in the third period of Game 7.

Rantanen assisted on Wyatt Johnston's tiebreaking power-play goal with 3:56 left before completing his third-period hat trick with an empty-netter as the Stars overcame a two-goal deficit to beat the Colorado Avalanche 4-2 on Saturday night to wrap up the first-round Western Conference playoff series.

"He just decided that we were not going to go home," Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said. "What you witnessed there was special."

Rantanen, who was in the playoffs with the Avalanche the past seven seasons and part of their 2022 Stanley Cup title, had a four-point period for the second game in a row. He is only the second player in NHL history to have four points in the third period of a Game 7.

"The series was probably exactly what I expected," Rantanen said. "I expected a seven-game series even before Game 1. I think belief was there with the group the whole time."

The Stars move on to the second round to face the top-seeded Jets or Blues, who played their own Game 7 on Sunday night.

Colorado had a 2-0 lead when Nathan MacKinnon made a short snap shot only 31 seconds into the third period. It was the first goal he has scored in five Game 7s, but all of those are losses.

Traded twice in a six-week period earlier this season, first from the Avs to the Hurricanes and then to Dallas in a deadline deal that included a \$96 million, eight-year contract extension, Rantanen had five goals and seven assists in the series against his original team.

"A difficult year personally, mentally, tough overall. To be traded twice, it's not fun ever to get traded even once, but twice in a season," said Rantanen, who said the handshake line with his former teammates after the game was emotional for him.

"They're my brothers for sure. Most of them I know really well and played with them for 10 years," Rantanen said. "Obviously we're enemies this series on the ice, but I'll always love them off the ice. It's emotional for sure because everything happened so quick."

Rantanen got the Stars' first goal with 12:11 left on a shot from above the middle of the circles. He tied the game at 2 on a power play with 6:14 left when he skated behind the net and took a wrap-around shot that ricocheted off the skate of Colorado defenseman Samuel Girard behind goalie Mackenzie Blackwood. Rantanen then sealed the win with an empty-netter with 3 seconds remaining to complete his first career playoff hat trick.

"You saw a switch flip I think in Game 6 for him. He just decided that he was going to take over, and he's big enough, strong enough, skilled enough to do that," said Matt Duchene, who had two assists.

Dallas goalie Jake Oettinger, playing in a Game 7 for the fourth postseason in a row, had 24 saves. He is 3-1 in those games.

Blackwood stopped 15 shots, including one in the second period to keep the game scoreless with his right leg fully extended to the post while Mikael Granlund tried a wide sweeping shot from the front of the crease.

Stars coach Pete DeBoer became the first player or coach in NHL history to be part of nine Game 7 victories. He is 9-0 in

Game 7s, a record accumulated with four different teams since 2012. His first came with New Jersey, and he has since had three each with San Jose and Dallas and two with Vegas. The Stars have won a seven-game series in each of his first three seasons with them.

The Avalanche have now lost seven Game 7s in a row since 2002, the last four with coach Jared Bednar. They are the only NHL, NBA or MLB team to lose seven consecutive Game 7s, according to OptaSTATS.

"It's tough because you put your heart and soul into the whole year, the series, all of it and then you're in a good position and then it slips away on you," Bednar said. "It's tough because I know how hard these guys worked and how bad they wanted it and that's all you really think of at this point."

Dallas has won all four Game 7s it has played against Colorado, and reached the Stanley Cup Final after each of the first three. They went to seven games in the Western Conference final in both 1999 and 2000, and the Stars won a seven-game series in the second round of the pandemic-impacted 2020 playoffs.

## Sovereignty outduels Journalism at Kentucky Derby

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Sovereignty gave trainer Bill Mott a second Kentucky Derby victory. This time there was no doubt about it and no asterisk.

The 3-year-old colt outdueled 3-1 favorite Journalism down the stretch to win the 151st Derby in the slop on Saturday, snapping an 0-for-13 skid by owner Godolphin.

Mott won his first Derby in 2019, also run on a sloppy track, when Country House was elevated to first after Maximum Security crossed the finish line first and was disqualified during a 22-minute delay.

It took a few minutes for Saturday's results to be made official while the stewards sorted out a photo for second and reviewed a traffic-choked start.

Mott knew all the while who earned the gar-

land of red roses.

"This one got there the right way," the Hall of Fame trainer said. "I mean, he's done well, he's a great horse, he comes from a great organization and I can't say enough about the horse and the organization that started him out and made this happen."

Godolphin is the racing stable of Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

It was quite a weekend for the sheikh. His filly, Good Cheer, won the Kentucky Oaks on Friday and earlier Saturday, Ruling Court — a son of 2018 Triple Crown winner Justify — won the 2,000 Guineas in Britain.

Sovereignty splashed through 1¼ miles in 2:02.31 and paid \$17.96 to win at 7-1 odds.

"It's great," Mott said. "I think it will take a little while to sink in."

Journalism didn't have the cleanest of trips in the 19-horse field, but rallied to stay in the fight. He found trouble early before jockey Umberto Rispoli swung him outside to get him in the clear. They made a move at the leaders with Sovereignty and jockey Junior Alvarado right behind them.

"He was saying to me, 'Listen, I'm ready,' so from there I started picking up," Alvarado said.

The two colts hooked up for a sixteenth of a mile for a thrilling battle against the backdrop of 147,406 roaring and rain-soaked fans before Sovereignty surged ahead inside the eighth pole and drew clear.

"I saw the blue silks (of Godolphin) coming at us and I knew that was the one we were going to have to be concerned about," said Michael McCarthy, Journalism's trainer. "The winner ran a better race."



# Nuggets surge to rout Clippers in Game 7

Associated Press

DENVER — Not this time.

Nikola Jokic got plenty of help from his teammates and Denver's scoring surge held up in a 120-101 blowout of the shell-shocked Los Angeles Clippers in a Game 7 laughter on Saturday night.

The Nuggets led by as many as 35 and while the franchise's biggest blowout in a win-or-go-home scenario won't make up for last year when Denver blew a 20-point fourth-quarter lead over Minnesota at home in Game 7 of its Round 2 series, it certainly exorcised some of those demons.

"It feels good," interim Nuggets coach David Adelman said, "but I also know we're flying to OKC tomorrow."

No. 4 seed Denver advanced to take on the No. 1 seeded and well-rested Oklahoma City Thunder, which swept Memphis in the first round and has had a week off heading into the

second-round series that begins Monday night.

When Adelman reminded a friend recently that the reward for surviving this gritty series with the Clippers was a date with the team that went an NBA-best 68-14, his buddy retorted that what actually awaited the winner was a 72-14 team.

"OK, that's right," Adelman replied. "Appreciate that, bro."

The Nuggets and Thunder split their season series 2-2 and if Denver can reproduce its effort from Saturday night, the next series could be a tight one, too.

Jokic had 16 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists in 33 minutes but for a change he was overshadowed by his teammates. Aaron Gordon led Denver with 22 points, Christian Braun had 21, Jamal Murray and Russell Westbrook chipped in 16 each and Michael Porter Jr. scored 15.

"In playoffs we know that ev-

erybody needs to step up, offensively, defensively, whatever, energy-wise. And everybody who plays needs to contribute something," Jokic said. "It was special today the guys did that."

Braun also played terrific defense on James Harden, who was held to 7 points on 2-for-8 shooting.

"Everybody behind me allowed me to guard him. But I think maybe the biggest part was Russ," Braun said. "He's played against James, he's played with James, so he knows his game. ... The coaches trusted me tonight. We didn't want to switch. They kept me on him all night. So credit goes to those guys and the coaches."

Kawhi Leonard led Los Angeles with 22 points and Ivica Zubac had his quietest game of the series with 10 points.

"I don't think this team was 30 points better than us," Leonard said. "We saw that throughout the first six games of this series,

but you've got to give them credit. They came out, ran hard in transition, got easy points and they made shots."

Hanging over the Nuggets all season, one that included the firings of their head coach and their general manager, was their Game 7 fiasco in Round 2 last year just when it looked like they were primed to defend the franchise's first NBA championship.

And after frittering away a 22-point fourth-quarter advantage in Game 4 of this series — only to be saved by the first buzzer-beating dunk in NBA playoff history, courtesy of Gordon — Denver and the Ball Arena crowd only grew more energized instead of anxious as the lead kept growing and the Clippers kept missing.

"The rebounding and defense was amazing," Jokic said. "We had a lot of opportunities to run and a lot of guys stepped up and a lot of guys made baskets."

## Popovich's eye for global talent helped forever change NBA

Associated Press

Gregg Popovich understood the world.

That goes back long before the basketball world knew who he was. It can probably be traced to at least Popovich's time at the U.S. Air Force Academy, where he majored in Soviet studies and was on his way to becoming a spy.

He became an icon instead.

Popovich's time as coach of the San Antonio Spurs ended Friday, six months after a stroke essentially ended his tenure — in that capacity, anyway — without him knowing it. He stepped down, Mitch Johnson was promoted from acting coach to head coach, and just like that, the Spurs started a new chapter.

Popovich isn't going anywhere. He's still the team president. He'll be around. He'll have influence. His role going forward is probably largely up to him, a right that he's earned over the last 30 or so years. His view of the world shaped many of the things San Antonio is today. Same goes for the rest of the league as well, and as proof, look at any roster these days.

Some of the best players in the game — Nikola Jokic, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, Luka

Doncic, Giannis Antetokounmpo and the Spurs' own franchise player in Victor Wembanyama among them — were born outside the United States. Would they have been in the league without Popovich? Almost certainly, yes. But did Popovich and San Antonio help create the path that saw more international players get into the league? Most definitely.

"They were a pioneer around the international game," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said of the Spurs — specifically Popovich and his longtime right-hand man, team CEO R.C. Buford — earlier this year. "They were scouting internationally in a deep way long before many other teams."

Basketball is played all over the world, and Popovich — forever the student — wanted to learn about all of it. He was finding players in Europe in the late 1980s, long before it became common. Just look at the roster of all-time San Antonio greats: France's Tony Parker and Argentina's Manu Ginobili formed one of the league's all-time Big Threes with Tim Duncan — another player whose worldview as perhaps a bit different, having grown up in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Boris Diaw, Tiago Splitter, Marco Belinelli,

Beno Udrih, Jakob Poeltl, Fabricio Oberto, Pau Gasol and many more were part of the Spurs program as well. Popovich had international coaches — Italy's Ettore Messina made big headlines in Europe when he joined San Antonio, for example. And Popovich picked the brains of others when he was coaching the U.S. national team, including former French national team coach (and Wembanyama's coach) Vincent Collet, someone he went head-to-head with for Olympic gold at the Tokyo Games in 2021.

Popovich is a Basketball Hall of Famer. The NBA's all-time win leader. A five-time champion with the Spurs. He coached the U.S. to Olympic gold. The Air Force Academy — a place Popovich would return to many times after his graduation — taught him countless lessons, including to embrace different views and to never stop evolving.

"What you learn there is to get over yourself," Popovich said. "It's not about you."

Popovich never stopped learning, either. He changed the Spurs. Changed the NBA, too. Forget the championships and records and one-liners and everything else. He helped change the NBA. That's his legacy.

# Marlins walk off Athletics with grand slam

Associated Press

MIAMI — Kyle Stowers hit a game-ending grand slam for his second homer of the day, sending the Miami Marlins to a 9-6 victory over Mason Miller and the Athletics on Saturday.

The Marlins were down to their last out when Stowers drove a 101.7 mph fastball from Miller deep to left-center for his sixth homer of the season. He also hit a tying two-run shot in the third against Osvaldo Bido.

It was Stowers' second multi-homer performance in the last three games. He also went deep twice in a 12-7 loss at the Dodgers on Wednesday.

Javier Sanoja had two hits and scored two runs for Miami, which had lost six in a row. Lake Bachar (2-0) pitched two innings for the win.

Brent Rooker, JJ Bleday and Luis Urias homered for the A's, who had won five of six. Jacob Wilson had two hits and scored twice.

**Guardians 5, Blue Jays 3:** Daniel Schneemann hit his first career grand slam and added a solo shot, leading visiting Cleveland to a come-from-behind victory over Toronto.

With the Blue Jays leading 3-1 and two outs in the ninth inning, Schneemann pulled an 0-1 pitch from Yimi Garcia into the stands in right field for his first multi-homer game and fourth long ball of the season. Schneemann gave the Guardians their first run with a solo homer off Chad Green in the eighth.

Bo Bichette hit his first home run of the season for Toronto, but it wasted six shutout innings from right-hander Kevin Gausman and lost for the first time in four games.

**Rays 3, Yankees 2:** Curtis Mead and José Caballero had RBIs in a two-run eighth inning, and visiting Tampa Bay overcame Aaron Judge's 11th home run to beat New York and stop a four-game losing streak.

Judge homered in the first against Zack Littell (2-5), who

retired his next 11 batters before Austin Wells started the fifth with his sixth homer for a 2-1 lead.

Judge has four homers in his last six games. The two-time AL MVP is hitting a major league-leading .432 and has a 29-game on-base streak. He is 26 for 52 during a 13-game hitting streak.

**Astros 8, White Sox 3:** Jake Meyers homered twice and set a career high with seven RBIs, helping visiting Houston beat Chicago.

Batting ninth, Meyers had four hits in his third career multi-homer game.

Hunter Brown (5-1) struck out nine in six innings, winning his fifth straight decision. The right-hander allowed three runs — all in the first inning — and four hits.

**Giants 6, Rockies 3:** Matt Chapman hit a grand slam to help host San Francisco beat lowly Colorado.

Chapman connected against Jake Bird (0-1) with one out in the sixth, capping a five-run inning after the Rockies scored three times in the top of the frame. It was Chapman's third career grand slam, and the first for the Giants this season.

Colorado dropped to a major league-worst 6-27.

**Angels 5, Tigers 2:** Kyle Hendricks pitched into the eighth inning for his first win with host Los Angeles, Luis Rengifo and Kyren Paris each had a two-run single and the Angels stopped a seven-game losing streak by defeating Detroit.

The 35-year-old Hendricks (1-3) allowed one run and four hits over 7⅔ innings in his sixth start for LA after spending his first 11 seasons with the Chicago Cubs. He entered with a 6.65 ERA but faced only one batter more than the minimum through seven innings.

Spencer Torkelson ended Hendricks' shutout bid with his 10th home run — a one-out shot in the eighth.

**Padres 2, Pirates 1:** Fernan-

do Tatis Jr. sprinted home on a wild pitch by Pittsburgh closer David Bednar in the top of the ninth inning to lift visiting San Diego to a rainy win.

Tatis, who exited Friday night's win in the third inning after taking a 93 mph pitch off his left forearm, led off the ninth with a double. He stole third and took off when a pitch from Bednar (0-3) to Xander Bogaerts skipped in front of catcher Joey Bart. The ball squirted to Bart's right and Tatis' slide just beat Bart's lunging tag to give the Padres their fourth straight victory.

Pirates starter Bailey Falter dominated San Diego for seven innings. The left-hander limited the Padres to two hits and at one point retired 11 straight before Manny Machado tied the game with a one-out homer in the seventh.

**Twins 4, Red Sox 3:** Kody Clemens hit a two-run homer in his first game at Fenway Park — with his famous father in attendance — and visiting Minnesota beat Boston.

With former Red Sox ace Roger Clemens watching from a luxury box along the first-base line, his son drove an 0-1 slider from Hunter Dobbins (2-1) over the short wall in the right-field corner to push the Twins ahead 3-1 in the sixth inning.

**Phillies 7, Diamondbacks 2:** Aaron Nola (1-5) pitched six shutout innings with eight strikeouts in his first win of the season, and host Philadelphia beat Arizona.

J.T. Realmuto and Max Kepler homered for the Phillies in their sixth win in seven games. Philadelphia went for a sweep of the weekend series Sunday.

**Cubs 6, Brewers 2:** Pete Crow-Armstrong and Dansby Swanson hit back-to-back homers off Jose Quintana in the fourth inning as visiting Chicago defeated Milwaukee.

Kyle Tucker also went deep to help the NL Central-leading Cubs beat the two-time defend-

ing division champions for a second straight night. Chicago's Jameson Taillon (2-1), Julian Merryweather and Brad Keller combined on a four-hitter.

**Mariners 2, Rangers 1:** Rowdy Tellez hit a tiebreaking RBI single in the ninth inning, and visiting Seattle beat Texas for its sixth consecutive victory.

Jorge Polanco led off the ninth with a pinch-hit double off Chris Martin (0-4). Polanco advanced to third on Ben Williamson's grounder before scoring on Tellez's pinch-hit liner into center.

**Nationals 11, Reds 6:** Amed Rosario homered and drove in four runs to propel visiting Washington to a victory over Cincinnati.

Rosario, who hit a two-out RBI double in the fourth inning off Reds starter Nick Lodolo (3-3) to tie it at 3, connected on a three-run shot for his second homer this season to put the Nationals up 6-3 in the sixth.

**Royals 4, Orioles 0:** Kris Bubic made it through five innings despite an early rain delay, and visiting Kansas City hit three solo homers in a victory over Baltimore.

Cavan Biggio, Kyle Isbel and Vinnie Pasquantino went deep for the Royals, who have won 10 of their last 12. KC has pitched four shutouts in its last eight games.

**Dodgers 10, Braves 3:** Freddie Freeman homered and drove in four runs, Shohei Ohtani also went deep and Roki Sasaki earned his first major league win as visiting Los Angeles beat Atlanta for its seventh straight victory.

Sasaki (1-1) allowed three runs and six hits over five innings in a game pushed back more than three hours because of rain. The 23-year-old right-hander gave up a home run to Ozzie Albies but received plenty of offensive support in his seventh big league start since arriving from Japan to much fanfare.