

## Hegseth cutting top generals, admirals

BY MATTHEW ADAMS

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced Monday that he has directed the Defense Department to cut at least 20% of its four-star generals and admirals, along with other reductions across the military.

“We’re back with more [Defense Department] reforms, this one is general and flag officer reductions. That’s the official title,” Hegseth said in a video posted on X. “My title is less generals, more GIs.”

Hegseth, in a memorandum signed Monday, also called for cuts of at least 20% of general officers in the National Guard and at least 10% of its general and flag officers across the military, which could include one-stars or above. In Hegseth’s video message, he said the cuts would occur in two phases, the first being among the four-stars and the National Guard.

The memo does not address when these cuts will take place. A defense official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, did not have more information on a timeline and referred to the memo.

The Pentagon is under pressure to slash spending and personnel as part of the broader federal government cuts pushed by President Donald Trump’s administration and the Elon Musk-run Department of Government Efficiency.

The directive also comes after Hegseth last week ordered the Army to cut 1,000 jobs from its main headquarters, shrink attack helicopter formations and shed weapons and units that have long been part of its identity.

Hegseth on Monday cited that the United States had 17 four- and five-star generals and admirals during World War II. Today, there are 44 four-stars across the military. When Hegseth began

his first week as secretary at the end of January, there were 42 four-stars.

Trump’s administration has already taken steps to purge the military of some top leaders, firing Air Force Gen. Charles “CQ” Brown, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Adm. Lisa Franchetti, the former chief of naval operations; Air Force Gen. James Slife, the service’s vice chief of staff; and Air Force Gen. Timothy Haugh, who led the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command.

“More generals and admirals does not equal success,” Hegseth said.

As of September 2023, there are also about 800 general and flag officers across the military.

Sweeping changes at the Pentagon have not happened since the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. The act increased the power of the Joint Chiefs chairman and streamlined

the military chain of command.

“This could be the most comprehensive review since the Goldwater-Nichols Act,” Hegseth said. “It’s going to be done carefully, but it’s going to be done expeditiously. We have to be lean and mean. And in this case, it means general officer reductions.”

He has argued before, including during his confirmation hearing, that there are too many senior generals in the military.

Hegseth, a 44-year-old Army National Guard veteran and former Fox News host, told radio host Hugh Hewitt in the summer that he believes roughly one-third of the military’s most senior officers are “actively complicit” in the politicization of the armed forces. Speaking about his new book, Hegseth railed against what he described as “woke, [critical race theory], [diversity, equity, and inclusion] things, gender stuff” that has “seeped into” the military.

## Trump says US will cease bombing Yemen’s Houthis

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he’s ordering a halt to nearly two months of U.S. airstrikes on Yemen’s Houthis, saying the Iran-backed rebels have indicated that “they don’t want to fight anymore” and have pledged to stop attacking ships along a vital maritime corridor.

“We’re going to stop the bombing of the Houthis, effective immediately,” Trump said at the start of his Oval Office meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney.

Trump said the Houthis had indicated to U.S. officials that

“they don’t want to fight anymore. They just don’t want to fight. And we will honor that, and we will stop the bombings.”

That likely means an abrupt end to a bombing campaign that began in March, when Trump promised to use “overwhelming lethal force” after the Houthis said they would resume attacks on Israeli vessels sailing off Yemen in response to Israel’s mounting another blockade on the Gaza Strip.

At the time, they described the warning as affecting the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Arabian Sea.

Trump said the Houthis had “capitulated but, more importantly, we will take their word that they say they will not be blowing up ships anymore. And that’s what the purpose of what we were doing,” Trump said.

“I think that’s very positive,” Trump added. “They were knocking out a lot of ships.”

Asked how the Houthis had communicated that they were looking to stop being targeted by U.S. bombs, Trump offered few details, saying only with a chuckle that the information came from a “very good source.”

The broad-based missile

strikes Trump ordered were similar to ones carried out against the Houthis multiple times by the administration of his predecessor, President Joe Biden, in response to frequent attacks against commercial and military vessels in the region.

The Trump-ordered airstrikes gained a higher profile in the public consciousness when The Atlantic revealed that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had texted sensitive plans for a military strike against the Houthis on a group chat in the messaging app Signal that mistakenly included the magazine’s editor-in-chief.

# IG: Multiple faults in Gaza pier effort

By CAITLYN BURCHETT  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Army and Navy units who worked on the U.S. military's humanitarian effort to move supplies into Gaza using a floating pier were ill-equipped, undermanned and lacked training for the mission, the Pentagon's inspector general has concluded.

The report, which was dated Friday, pointed to a breakdown in joint training and years of divestment in mission-essential watercraft.

"The [Defense Department] repeatedly encountered challenges and inefficiencies during [Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore] operations and exercises, including during Operation Neptune Solace in Gaza," according to the IG report.

Operation Neptune Solace,

which spanned from March 2024 to July 2024, was an Army-Navy mission to build a temporary pier to funnel humanitarian aid into Gaza after Israeli forces launched a military campaign into the enclave in response to the October 2023 surprise attack on Israel by Hamas militants. As the war raged, world health officials warned millions of Gazans were facing extreme hunger as Israel retaliated against Hamas.

The purpose of the pier was to deliver aid without putting U.S. troops in harm's way in the war-torn region. But the mission was hampered by bad weather and logistical issues that resulted in the loss or damaging of vessels and equipment, numerous personnel injuries and the death of one soldier.

The Navy reported 27 watercraft and equipment were damaged during the Gaza mission, totaling approximately \$31 million in repairs and maintenance costs, according to the report. U.S. Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, reported 62 injuries among U.S. personnel supporting the mission, though the inspector general was unable to determine whether the injuries occurred while on-duty, off-duty or due to pre-existing health conditions. The report did not say whether the 62 injured includes service members and Defense Department contractors.

The mission was short lived. The pier became operational May 14, 2024, but just two weeks after it was in service, officials were forced to suspend

operations and remove the pier from the shore to repair damage caused by rough weather. The pier again was removed from the Gaza shore at the end of June due to bad weather and was kept at the Israeli port of Ashdod for weeks when officials announced July 17 that the operation was ending.

The Pentagon's inspector general was directed in late June by the Senate Armed Services Committee to review the Gaza pier mission. The report concluded the Army and Navy did not meet service-level standards for equipment and unit readiness to perform JLOTS operations.

"We identified that the Army and Navy faced low equipment mission-capable rates and low manning and training levels," the report reads.

## Supreme Court allowing ban on transgender troops

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed President Donald Trump's administration to enforce a ban on transgender people in the military, while legal challenges proceed.

The court acted in the dispute over a policy that presumptively disqualifies transgender people from military service.

The court's three liberal justices said they would have kept the policy on hold.

Just after beginning his second term in January, Trump moved aggressively to roll back the rights of transgender people.

In response, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth issued a policy that gives the military ser-

vices 30 days to figure out how they will seek out and identify transgender service members to remove them from the force.

Three federal judges had ruled against the ban.

U.S. District Court Judge Benjamin Settle in Tacoma, Wash., had ruled for several long-serving transgender military members who say that the ban is insulting and discriminatory and that their firing would cause lasting damage to their careers and reputations.

The policy also has been blocked by a federal judge in the nation's capital, but that ruling has been temporarily halted by a federal appeals court.

In a more limited ruling, a judge in New Jersey also has barred the Air Force from removing two transgender men.

## CBO: Space-based missile defense could cost \$542B

*Bloomberg News*

WASHINGTON — The United States may need to spend up to \$542 billion over 20 years to develop and launch a network of space-based interceptors, the Congressional Budget Office said, putting a rough cost estimate on an unproven part of President Donald Trump's proposed "Golden Dome" defense system.

The network for space-based interceptors could cost \$161 billion at the low end, the office said in an assessment prepared for a subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The price tag will depend on launch costs and the number of weapons put into orbit, it said.

The report updates earlier studies by the CBO and the National Research Council on the

cost of space-based missile defenses. Those reviews considered potential intercontinental ballistic missile attacks from U.S. adversaries.

The estimates are so rough in part because space-based interceptors are an unproven technology.

Trump's plan hearkens back to President Ronald Reagan's unfulfilled quest for a space-based missile defense system widely known as "Star Wars."

"Although launch costs are lower now, threats and U.S. policies have changed since those studies were published in ways that could increase the overall size and cost of an SBI constellation," says the seven-page report, the first authoritative independent government review of Trump's vision.

# United cuts Newark flights, cites controllers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Passengers with flights to or from Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey encountered long delays and cancellations Saturday due to an air traffic controller shortage, a nationwide problem the Trump administration has pledged to fix.

The busy airport outside New York City experienced disruptions all week. Faulting the Federal Aviation Administration's alleged failure to address "long-simmering" challenges related to the air-traffic control system, United Airlines cut 35 daily flights from its Newark schedule starting Saturday.

United CEO Scott Kirby said the technology used to manage planes at the New Jersey airport failed more than once in recent days. The flight delays, cancella-

tions and diversions the equipment problems caused were compounded when more than one-fifth of Newark's traffic controllers "walked off the job," he said.

"This particular air traffic control facility has been chronically understaffed for years and without these controllers, it's now clear — and the FAA tells us — that Newark airport cannot handle the number of planes that are scheduled to operate there in the weeks and months ahead," Kirby wrote in a letter to customers.

Airport status reports from the FAA said staffing issues were causing average delays of nearly two hours and ones as long as five hours for flights scheduled to arrive at Newark on Saturday morning. Departures were delayed by an average of 45 minutes, according to the status

reports.

By late afternoon, arriving flights were running more than three hours behind schedule, while the delay for departing flights had shortened to a half-hour on average. The "misery map" maintained by flight tracking company FlightAware showed the ripple effect on airports in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, Miami, Dallas and other cities.

United Airlines operates the most flights out of Newark by far, and 35 flights represents about 10% of the round-trip domestic schedule operated by the carrier and its regional United Express network, according to information on the company's website.

Newark Liberty International Airport pointed to both staffing issues and "construction" when it warned travelers about delays on

Thursday.

The Trump administration says it's been trying to "supercharge" the air traffic controller workforce and make moves to address the nation's shortage of controllers. The U.S. transportation secretary, Sean Duffy, on Thursday announced a program to recruit new controllers and give existing ones incentives not to retire.

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association, a workers' union, said at the time that those moves could help address staffing shortages, but it also said the system is "long overdue for technology and infrastructure upgrades."

Duffy said on Friday that he visited with "our hard working air traffic controllers as we work to fix these equipment outages caused by outdated technology."

## Trump escalates Harvard battle as grants are halted

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Harvard University will receive no new federal grants until it meets a series of demands from President Donald Trump's administration, the Education Department announced Monday.

The action was laid out in a letter to Harvard's president and amounts to a major escalation of Trump's battle with the Ivy League school. The administration previously froze \$2.2 billion in federal grants to Harvard, and Trump is pushing to strip the school of its tax-exempt status.

Harvard has pushed back on the administration's demands, setting up a closely watched clash in Trump's attempt to force change at universities that he says have become hotbeds of liberalism and antisemitism.

In a press call, an Education Department official said Harvard will receive no new federal grants until it "demonstrates responsi-

ble management of the university" and satisfies federal demands on a range of subjects. The ban applies to federal research grants and not to federal financial aid that helps students cover college tuition and fees.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity to preview the decision on a call with reporters.

The official accused Harvard of "serious failures." The person said Harvard has allowed antisemitism and racial discrimination to perpetuate, it has abandoned rigorous academic standards, and it has failed to allow a range of views on its campus.

The White House says it's targeting campus antisemitism after pro-Palestinian protests swept U.S. college campuses last year.

Harvard sued last month to halt the government's funding freeze.

A statement Monday reiterated Harvard's refusal to acquiesce and said the government was retaliating for Harvard's lawsuit.

## US is ordered to admit roughly 12,000 refugees

Associated Press

SEATTLE — A judge on Monday ordered the Trump administration to admit some 12,000 refugees into the United States under a court order partially blocking the president's efforts to suspend the nation's refugee admissions program.

The order from U.S. District Judge Jamal Whitehead followed arguments from the Justice Department and refugee resettlement agencies over how to interpret a federal appeals court ruling that significantly narrowed an earlier decision from Whitehead.

During a hearing last week, the administration said it should only have to process 160 refugees into the country and that it would likely appeal any order requiring it to admit thousands. But the judge dismissed the government's analysis, saying it required "not just reading between the lines" of the 9th Circuit's ruling, "but hallucinating new text that simply is not

there."

"This Court will not entertain the Government's result-oriented rewriting of a judicial order that clearly says what it says," Whitehead wrote Monday. "The Government is free, of course, to seek further clarification from the Ninth Circuit. But the Government is not free to disobey statutory and constitutional law — and the direct orders of this Court and the Ninth Circuit — while it seeks such clarification."

The refugee program, created by Congress in 1980, is a form of legal migration to the U.S. for people displaced by war, natural disaster or persecution — a process that often takes years and involves significant vetting. It is different from asylum, by which people newly arrived in the U.S. can seek permission to remain because they fear persecution. President Donald Trump issued an executive order suspending the program in January.



# Ukraine drones briefly halt Moscow airports

Associated Press

All four international airports around Moscow temporarily suspended flights Tuesday as Russian forces intercepted more than 100 Ukrainian drones fired at almost a dozen Russian regions, the Defense Ministry in Moscow said.

Nine other regional Russian airports also temporarily stopped operating as drones struck areas along the border with Ukraine and deeper inside Russia, according to Russia's civil aviation agency, Rosaviatsia, and the Defense Ministry. It was the second straight night that the Moscow region reportedly was targeted.

The drone assault threatened a planned unilateral 72-hour

ceasefire in the more than three-year war announced by President Vladimir Putin to coincide with celebrations in Moscow marking Victory Day in World War II.

The day celebrating Moscow's defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 is Russia's biggest secular holiday. Chinese President Xi Jinping, Brazilian leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and others will gather in the Russian capital on Thursday for the 80th anniversary and watch a parade featuring thousands of troops accompanied by tanks and missiles.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry urged foreign countries not to send military representatives to take part in the parade, as some

have in the past.

None is officially confirmed for this year's event.

Ukraine will regard the participation of foreign military personnel as "an affront to the memory of the victory over Nazism, to the memory of millions of Ukrainian front-line soldiers who liberated our country and all of Europe from Nazism eight decades ago," a statement on the ministry's website said.

Security is expected to be tight. Russian officials have warned that internet access could be restricted in Moscow during the celebrations and have told residents not to set off fireworks.

Putin last week declared the brief unilateral truce "on hu-

manitarian grounds" from May 8. Ukraine has demanded a longer ceasefire.

Russia has effectively rejected a U.S. proposal for an immediate and full 30-day halt in the fighting by insisting on far-reaching conditions. Ukraine has accepted that proposal, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says.

President Donald Trump said Monday that the brief truce "doesn't sound like much, but it's ... a lot if you knew where we started from."

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday that ceasefire orders had been issued to Russian troops but soldiers would retaliate if fired upon.

## Those with no REAL ID can fly for now with extra steps

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Travelers who aren't REAL ID compliant by the upcoming deadline this week will still be able to fly but should be prepared for extra scrutiny, the head of Homeland Security said Tuesday.

Kristi Noem told a Congress-

sional panel that 81% of travelers already have IDs that comply with the REAL ID requirements.

She said security checkpoints will also be accepting passports and tribal identification when the deadline hits Wednesday.

Those who still lack an identi-

fication that complies with the REAL ID law "may be diverted to a different line, have an extra step," Noem said.

"But people will be allowed to fly," she said. "We will make sure it's as seamless as possible."

REAL ID is a federally com-

pliant state-issued license or identification card that Homeland Security says is a more secure form of identification.

It was a recommendation by the 9/11 Commission and signed into law in 2005, but implementation has been repeatedly delayed.

## DOJ asks judge to toss suit restricting abortion medication

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has asked a judge to toss out a lawsuit from three Republican-led states seeking to cut off telehealth access to the abortion medication mifepristone.

Justice Department attorneys on Monday stayed the legal course charted by the Biden administration, though they didn't directly weigh in on access to the drug, which is part of the nation's most common method of abortion.

Rather, the government argued the states don't have the legal right, or standing, to sue.

The lawsuit from Idaho, Kan-

sas and Missouri argues that the Food and Drug Administration should roll back access to mifepristone.

They filed their complaint after the Supreme Court preserved access to mifepristone last year.

They want the FDA to prohibit telehealth prescriptions for mifepristone, require three in-office visits and restrict the point in a pregnancy when it can be used.

The case is being considered by U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, a Trump nominee who once ruled in favor of halting approval for the drug. Kacsmaryk's original ruling came

in a lawsuit filed by anti-abortion groups.

It was narrowed by an appeals court before being tossed out by the Supreme Court, which found the plaintiffs lacked the legal right to sue.

The three states later moved to revive the case, arguing they did have legal standing because access to the drug undermined their abortion laws.

But the Department of Justice attorneys said the states can't just piggyback on the earlier lawsuit as a way to keep the case in Texas. Nothing is stopping the states from filing the lawsuit someplace else, attorney Daniel Schwei wrote, but

the venue has to have some connection to the claims.

Besides, Schwei wrote, the states are challenging actions the FDA took in 2016, when it first loosened restrictions. That's well past the six-year time limit to sue, he said.

Abortion is banned at all stages of pregnancy in Idaho. Missouri had a strict ban, but clinics recently began offering abortions again after voters approved a new constitutional amendment.

Abortion is legal up to 22 weeks in Kansas, where voters rejected an anti-abortion ballot measure in 2022, though the state does have age restrictions.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## 32 people rescued from yacht that was sinking

**FL** MIAMI — Thirty-two people were safely rescued when a Lamborghini yacht began sinking off Miami Beach over the weekend, the U.S. Coast Guard said.

The 63-foot boat with more than 30 social media influencers on board began taking on water off Monument Island late Saturday afternoon. The people were taken to the Miami Beach Marina and checked out by Miami Beach Fire Rescue.

"We saw, like, a bunch of cop boats, like police boats, and there was another yacht that was flipped over, completely vertical in the water," Rachel Miller, who witnessed the incident, told Miami television station WSVN.

Authorities said they don't yet know why the yacht began taking on water. According to a for-sale listing for the boat — named TNT — on the Yacht World vessel broker site, its maximum capacity is 12 people. It is not immediately known who owns the boat, which is listed for sale at \$4.7 million.

## Union members go on strike at jet engine maker

**CT** EAST HARTFORD — About 3,000 labor union members went on strike early Monday at jet engine maker Pratt & Whitney in Connecticut, as negotiations over wages, retirement benefits and job security broke down.

Members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers were picketing at manufacturing locations in East Hartford and Middletown, after about 77% of

nearly 2,100 union members voted to approve their first strike since 2001, union officials said. Their contract expired late Sunday.

"Pratt & Whitney is a powerhouse in military and commercial aerospace products because our membership makes it so," David Sullivan, the union's eastern territory vice president, said in a statement. "This offer does not address the membership concerns, and ... we will continue to fight for a fair contract."

The company, a subsidiary of Arlington, Va.-based RTX Corp., called its latest wage and retirement proposal competitive, and said its workforce is among the most highly compensated in the region and industry.

## 23andMe users' genetic data is at risk, AGs warn

**DC** WASHINGTON — The fate of more than 15 million customers' genetic data remains in limbo after popular DNA testing company 23andMe filed for bankruptcy in March. The data is up for sale, stoking fears about how it might be used and prompting attorneys general from more than a dozen states to warn 23andMe users: Delete your data.

"Your genetic data is your most personal, confidential data, and you should be able to protect who has access to it," North Carolina Attorney General Jeff Jackson, a Democrat, said in a March statement.

"You have the power to delete your data now — please act quickly."

23andMe has said the bankruptcy will not change how it stores, manages or protects its

trove of sensitive customer information. In a news release issued shortly after the bankruptcy announcement, the company said any potential buyers would have to agree to comply with 23andMe's consumer privacy policy and all applicable laws.

## Restoration project is in peril amid controversy

**LA** BATON ROUGE — An ambitious project to restore a rapidly vanishing stretch of Louisiana coast that was devastated by the 2010 Gulf oil spill has been thrown deeper into disarray amid claims by Gov. Jeff Landry that his predecessor concealed an unfavorable study that it was feared could imperil the \$3 billion effort.

It's a controversy that was even predicted by the previous administration as it grappled with how to handle conflicting environmental analyses for the project, according to a confidential memo obtained by The Associated Press.

The nine-page document, prepared by five attorneys working for then-Gov. John Bel Edwards' administration, sheds new light on a study Landry says was improperly withheld from the public and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as it was approving a permit for the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion.

## Hotel tax to help islands cope with climate change

**HI** HONOLULU — Hawaii lawmakers passed first-of-its-kind legislation that will increase the state's lodging tax to raise money for environmental protection and strengthening defenses against climate change-fueled natural

disasters.

Gov. Josh Green supports the bill, indicating he will sign it. The bill adds a 0.75% levy to the state's existing tax on hotel rooms, timeshares, vacation rentals and other short-term accommodations. It also imposes a 11% tax on cruise ship bills, prorated for the number of days the vessels are in Hawaii ports.

Officials estimate the tax will generate nearly \$100 million annually. They say the money will be used for projects like replenishing sand on eroding Waikiki beaches, promoting the use of hurricane clips to secure roofs during storms and clearing flammable invasive grasses like those that fed the deadly Maui wildfire that destroyed downtown Lahaina in 2023.

## Students weigh protest of honorary doctorate award

**SD** MADISON — Dakota State University hasn't experienced the student protests taking place at other U.S. colleges. Nestled in rural South Dakota, most of the nearly 4,000 students have been focused on their studies or job hunts, avoiding politics and partisan groups.

Until now.

The university administration decided to award an honorary doctorate to Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and invited her to give a commencement speech May 10, bringing politics to the campus.

In response, students have planned a graduation day rally opposing the former South Dakota governor and the Trump administration and expect protesters from across southeast South Dakota to join them.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

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

Reporting  
World, National  
and Military News

# Gordon, Jokic lead Nuggets over Thunder

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Nikola Jokic showed why he's a finalist for another MVP award with his historic stat line. But with Game 1 of the Western Conference semifinals at stake, the ball again found Aaron Gordon's hands.

Gordon hit a 3-pointer with 2.8 seconds remaining, supporting Jokic's 42-point, 22-rebound effort and giving the Denver Nuggets a stunning 121-119 comeback win over the top-seeded Oklahoma City Thunder on Monday night.

It was the kind of finish one might expect of a team that won the NBA title just two seasons ago.

"We just didn't want to miss the moment, didn't want to miss the opportunity," Gordon said. "We knew that if we waited, it may be too late. I'm glad we showed our mettle, our grit, but we're not satisfied."

It was Gordon's second game-winner of the playoffs. His dunk on a Jokic miss as time expired lifted the Nuggets past the Los

Angeles Clippers in Game 4 of their first-round series.

Gordon did much more than hit the deciding shot against Oklahoma City.

"Aaron's going to be a hero again," Denver interim coach David Adelman said. "But I'm also looking at 14 rebounds. I'm looking at 22 points. Looking at ball-handling responsibilities, leadership. He is a Denver Nugget, man. Like, he is the soul of our team. So, cool to see him have two moments that no one will forget."

Jokic became just the fourth player to have at least 40 points, 20 rebounds and five assists in a playoff game.

The Nuggets' Russell Westbrook, who started his career with the Thunder, assisted on Gordon's game-winner. It was his first playoff game in OKC as an opposing player.

Jamal Murray added 21 points for fourth-seeded Denver, which stole the opener after closing out a seven-game series against the Clippers on Saturday.

The Nuggets' opportunity came after the Thunder's Chet Holmgren missed two free throws with Oklahoma City leading by a point.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, the other MVP finalist in the game, had 33 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists for the Thunder, who hadn't played in more than a week after sweeping the Memphis Grizzlies in the first round. Alex Caruso added 20 points, six assists and five steals.

Jokic picked up three fouls during a two-minute stretch in the third quarter after committing just one foul in the first half. He stayed in the game with OKC leading 73-64.

Denver closed the gap to 90-85 by the end of the third quarter.

With the Thunder leading 104-95 and just under seven minutes remaining, Jokic elbowed Oklahoma City's Lu Dort in the head on a drive, and the play was reviewed. The play was ruled a flagrant 1 on Jokic — his fifth foul — and Dort made two free throws.

The Nuggets spent the rest of

the game closing the gap, and Jokic never picked up the sixth foul.

The Thunder helped Denver by fouling intentionally while leading, and the Nuggets took advantage by making all four free throws in the final 12.9 seconds.

OKC coach Mark Daigneault said he didn't regret the strategy that ultimately kept the Nuggets close.

"It didn't go our way tonight, but it's worked out well for us in the past," Daigneault said. "We'll continue to look at it and learn from it, but I don't think that's why we lost the game."

The Thunder led 113-102 with 4:31 remaining. Oklahoma City, normally one of the best closing teams in the league, fell apart against the veteran Denver squad.

"I never felt like anybody wavered," Adelman said. "And that doesn't mean you're going to win the game. But we all know in the NBA playoffs these games are so long. You just try to give yourself a chance. We did that."

## Knicks rally from 20-point deficit to top Celtics in OT

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Knicks grew accustomed to facing big deficits against the Celtics this season.

New York faced another one to open its Eastern Conference semifinal matchup against the defending NBA champions. This time, the Knicks found a way to overcome it.

Jalen Brunson and OG Anunoby each scored 29 points before Mikal Bridges stole the ball from Jaylen Brown with a second left in overtime, and New York stunned Boston 108-105 in Game 1 of their series Monday night.

Karl-Anthony Towns added 14 points and 13 rebounds for the Knicks, who lost all four games against their longtime rival during the regular season and trailed by 20 points in the second half of this game.

"We told each other just keep believing. Just keep fighting and sticking together, and keep chipping away. There wasn't going to be a 20-point shot," Brunson said.

Jayson Tatum and Brown both had 23 points for the Celtics, who had an NBA playoff-record 45 missed 3-pointers to blow a game they appeared to have in control. Derrick White added 19 points and 11 rebounds.

"In those spots where they have momentum, we can't just fire up 3s," Brown said. "I felt like we just settled in the second half a lot."

Jrue Holiday returned to the starting lineup after a strained right hamstring caused him to miss the final three games of Boston's first-round series against Orlando. He finished with 16 points in 39 minutes, but center Kristaps Porzingis played only 13 minutes and didn't return after halftime because of an illness.

Game 2 is Wednesday night.

Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said missing Porzingis impacted Boston's approach.

"Obviously it impacts the game with his ability on both ends of the floor," Mazzulla said. "It's no excuse. We had plenty of opportunities. ... Hopefully he's ready for Game 2."

New York struck first in OT, taking a 106-100 edge via a three-point play by Anunoby, followed by 3-pointer by Bridges.

Brown connected on a 3-pointer from the wing with just over a minute left — his only make in 10 attempts behind the arc — to cut it to 108-105.

It stayed that way when Josh Hart misfired on a deep 3. Tatum missed a jumper, but the Celtics were able to retrieve the rebound. After a foul on Towns, Boston called timeout with 3 seconds showing on the clock.

But Bridges ripped the inbound pass away from Brown to preserve the win.

The Celtics finished 15-for-60 on 3-pointers. Of the 49 shots they took in the second half and OT, 37 were 3-pointers. They connected on only 10 of them.

Brunson said Monday's win was a good start, but hardly a roadmap to win this series.

"I don't think there is a blueprint per se," Brunson said. "But as long as we stick together, anything is possible."



# Nylander, Maple Leafs beat Panthers

Associated Press

TORONTO — William Nylander got the Toronto Maple Leafs off to a fast start in the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Nylander scored twice in the first period before adding an assist as Toronto built a big lead before holding on to beat the Florida Panthers 5-4 on Monday night in the series opener.

Matthew Knies and Chris Tanev each had a goal and an assist, and Morgan Rielly also scored for the Maple Leafs. Max Pacioretty and Jake McCabe each had two assists.

"We've been in tight games throughout the season," Nylander said. "We dug into that and tried to bear down."

Anthony Stolarz stopped eight of the nine shots he faced before leaving in the second period after he took an elbow to the head from Florida forward Sam Bennett, who wasn't penalized on the play. Toronto said the 31-year-old was being evaluated, but provided no further update.

"Elbow to the head," Maple Leafs coach Craig Berube said. "Clear as day. ... I get it, they

miss calls. But it's clearly a penalty."

Joseph Woll stopped 17 shots in relief.

Seth Jones, Eetu Luostarinen, Uvis Balinskis and Sam Bennett scored for the Panthers, and Brad Marchand and Carter Verhaeghe each had two assists. Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 24 shots.

Florida beat Toronto in five games in the second round in the 2023 playoffs on the way to reaching the Stanley Cup Final. The Panthers went one step further last year when they won the Cup for the first time in franchise history.

Game 2 is Wednesday back at Scotiabank Arena, before shifting to South Florida for two games.

The Maple Leafs opened the scoring just 33 seconds after puck drop when Nylander beat Bobrovsky through the five-hole from a tight angle for his fourth goal of the playoffs.

Toronto, which beat Ottawa in six games in the first round to register just the second series win for the Original Six franchise in more than two decades,

went up 2-0 with 7:09 left in the first when Nylander scooped up a rebound before deking Bobrovsky to the ice and roofing his second of the period.

"He came out and was feeling it," Rielly said of the slick winger. "That helps set the tone."

Jones got the Panthers on the board with a shot from the point through traffic on a power play with 3:03 remaining for his second of the postseason.

The Maple Leafs restored their two-goal lead just 19 seconds later when Nylander sent Rielly off to the races on a 2-on-1 with John Tavares. The defenseman and longest serving member of the current roster looked Bobrovsky off before firing past the goalie's blocker for his third of the postseason.

"Obviously it wasn't a great start by us," Florida forward Aleksander Barkov said. "We knew they were going to come hard and strong."

The Panthers got a man advantage in the second that saw Stolarz make a couple of stops, but Bennett caught him with a sneaky elbow to the back of the head.

Toronto made it 4-1 at 7:50 when Tanev's knuckling shot from distance fooled Bobrovsky for his first.

Stolarz, who backed up Bobrovsky on the way to Florida's Cup win a year ago, was seen on television vomiting by the bench a few minutes later before getting replaced by Woll.

Nylander had a chance to complete the first playoff hat trick of his career on a shot that knocked the stick out of Bobrovsky's hand but the puck stayed out as the Maple Leafs headed to the locker room up three.

Luostarinen cut the deficit back to two on a redirection 1:41 into the third, and Balinskis then made it 4-3 at 4:30 after a Panthers push inside a suddenly tense building.

"We didn't look like ourselves," Florida head coach Paul Maurice said of his team's opening period. "And then (we) righted it in the second and after that had a pretty good push in the third."

Toronto failed to connect on two power plays later in third before Bobrovsky denied Max Domi on a break.

## Islanders jump 9 spots in lottery for No. 1 draft pick

Associated Press

New York Islanders pro scouting director Ken Morrow knows a thing or two about so-called hockey miracles.

Witnessing New York win the NHL draft lottery Monday and vault nine other teams in the order for the right to have the No. 1 pick represented yet another memorable moment for the four-time Stanley Cup champion and member of the 1980 gold-medal-winning "Miracle on Ice" U.S. Olympic team.

"I've had a lot of thrills in my hockey life, but this is right up there at the top," Morrow said. "The hockey gods smiled on us. I can't tell you how thrilled I am

for Islanders fans, for our ownership, for the entire Islanders organization."

New York, which missed the playoffs for the second time in four seasons, is in the midst of a front-office shakeup after not renewing general manager Lou Lamoriello's contract April 22. And it earned a remarkable lottery win by entering the day with a 3.5% shot — the 10th-best odds — of seeing its numbers come up.

The Islanders weren't the only team to buck the lottery odds. The Utah Hockey Club won the second round of the lottery, and made the jump from 14th to fourth under the rules limiting

teams from moving up no more than 10 spots in the draft order.

"A couple of seconds ago, we were just like 10 back, so it still hasn't sunk in," Utah GM Bill Armstrong said of a first-year franchise that finished just seven points out of a playoff spot. "This is an exciting moment for us. It's a game-changer for us."

The San Jose Sharks will pick second after entering the day with the best odds, 18.5%, to win the lottery and a 25.5% chance of landing the No. 1 choice. San Jose, which finished last for a second consecutive year, was seeking to become the NHL's first team to win the lottery and pick first in consecutive years.

"We definitely lucked it out last year to be able to select Mac," Sharks GM Mike Grier said in referring to selecting Boston University center Macklin Celebrini first overall. "This year would have obviously been nice to have the pick and have the choice of all the players. But picking two, we're still in a pretty good spot so we're happy."

The Chicago Blackhawks had the second-best chances to win the lottery and will pick third. The remaining 12 teams moved two spots back in the order, starting with Nashville dropping from third to fifth. The final 16 draft spots will be determined following the playoffs.

# Padres win sixth straight with late rally

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Manny Machado hit a two-run double and Xander Bogaerts followed with a two-run single in an eighth-inning comeback against Devin Williams and Luke Weaver, and the San Diego Padres rallied past the New York Yankees 4-3 on a soggy Monday night for their sixth straight victory.

Carlos Rodón allowed three hits in 6½ scoreless innings, leaving with a 3-0 lead.

San Diego loaded the bases with two walks and a hit off Williams, who had three hitless outings after being dropped as closer but faltered in his fourth. Weaver (0-1) gave up two-out hits to Machado and Bogaerts as the Yankees lost their third game in a row.

Padres manager Mike Shildt and Fernando Tatis Jr. were ejected during the rally by plate umpire Adrian Johnson. Tatis said something when he struck out swinging, a pitch after a called second strike at the bottom of the zone. Tossed for the 15th time in his managerial career, Shildt threw his lineup card and glasses while arguing.

“Shifty came down the tunnel and he was still chirping,” said Bogaerts. “I think he was ready to fight.”

Ryan Bergert (1-0) earned his first major league win with a hitless seventh and Robert Suarez

struck out two in a perfect ninth for his major league-high 14th save.

**Braves 4, Reds 0:** AJ Smith-Shawver took a no-hitter into the eighth inning and host Atlanta beat Cincinnati.

Santiago Espinal led off the eighth with a clean single to center field for Cincinnati's lone hit. He was later erased on an inning-ending double play.

Smith-Shawver (2-2) was trying for the first no-hitter in the majors this season. The rookie right-hander struck out five and walked four in eight innings, throwing 60 of his 99 pitches for strikes.

**Dodgers 7, Marlins 4:** Shohei Ohtani and Freddie Freeman homered and visiting Los Angeles roughed up Sandy Alcántara again for a win over Miami.

Mookie Betts and Teoscar Hernández each had two hits for the Dodgers, who have won eight of nine and began a 10-game road trip.

In his first major league start, Los Angeles' Hyeeseong Kim had two hits and drove in a run.

Alcántara (2-4) gave up five runs and six hits in five innings six days after the 2022 NL Cy Young Award winner was tagged for seven runs and seven hits in 2½ innings against the defending World Series champions.

**Brewers 5, Astros 1:** Chris-

tian Yelich hit a two-run homer, Tobias Myers pitched 5⅓ strong innings and host Milwaukee defeated Houston.

After lasting just two innings in his last start against the White Sox, Myers (1-0) carried a shutout into the sixth inning.

The Brewers broke a scoreless tie by getting three runs in the third inning.

Joey Ortiz hit a leadoff double and came home on William Contreras' two-out single. Yelich, playing in his 1,500th career game, followed by delivering a 413-foot shot over the wall in right-center.

**Athletics 7, Mariners 6 (11):** Jacob Wilson singled home the winning run in the 11th inning to give the host Athletics a victory over Seattle in the opener of a three-game series between the top two teams in the AL West.

Wilson finished with three hits and three RBIs, including a tying single against Mariners closer Andrés Muñoz leading off the 10th that scored automatic runner JJ Bleday.

One inning later, a sacrifice bunt by Gio Urshela and two intentional walks loaded the bases for Wilson. He smacked a one-out single off Casey Legumina (2-1) through the middle of a drawn-in infield as the Athletics pulled within a game of first-place Seattle.

**Cubs 9, Giants 2:** Ian Happ

homered and drove in three runs, helping Matthew Boyd and host Chicago beat San Francisco.

Carson Kelly also went deep, sparking the Cubs' five-run sixth inning with a leadoff drive for his eighth homer. Happ added a sacrifice fly and Seiya Suzuki singled in two more runs in the decisive outburst.

**Royals 3, White Sox 0:** Bobby Witt Jr. scored the first run and drove in the second to back five overpowering innings and 11 strikeouts from Cole Ragans as host Kansas City stayed hot with a victory over Chicago.

The Royals (20-16) took the opener of a four-game series to begin a seven-game homestand. They have won three straight and 11 of 13.

**Cardinals 6, Pirates 3:** Willson Contreras hit a go-ahead home run in a four-run sixth inning and host St. Louis beat Pittsburgh for its third straight victory.

Contreras' fifth home run came off Pirates reliever Chase Shugart, who walked Nolan Arenado after coming in with the bases empty, one out and a 3-2 lead.

**Mets 5, Diamondbacks 4:** Francisco Lindor hit a three-run homer, Pete Alonso launched a two-run shot and visiting New York held on late to beat Arizona.

# Ravens release five-time All-Pro kicker Tucker

Associated Press

The Baltimore Ravens are describing it as a football decision, and it came before the NFL completed its investigation into Justin Tucker.

Whatever the underlying reasons, the team is moving on from its star kicker.

Baltimore announced Monday that they've decided to release Tucker, months after reports that he was accused of inappropriate sexual behavior by

massage therapists. A five-time All-Pro, the 35-year-old Tucker has played his entire 13-year career with the Ravens.

The Baltimore Banner has reported that over a dozen massage therapists have accused Tucker of inappropriate sexual behavior. The NFL said it would investigate, and Baltimore drafted kicker Tyler Loop.

“Sometimes football decisions are incredibly difficult, and this is one of those instanc-

es,” Ravens general manager Eric DeCosta said in a statement issued by the club. “Considering our current roster, we have made the tough decision to release Justin Tucker.”

That comment was consistent with what coach John Harbaugh said at rookie camp Sunday, when he indicated a decision on Tucker might come before the NFL completed its investigation.

“Every decision we make has

to be based on football,” Harbaugh said. “You’ve got a rookie kicker in here. You took him in the sixth round, early in the sixth round. He’s a talented guy. Just from a football standpoint — salary cap, all the different things that you just take into consideration — whatever we decide to do over the next few weeks will be based on football.”

Tucker has maintained he did not act inappropriately.