

Mold, corrosion seen on Guam base

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Major problems with Guam housing prompted the Navy secretary to open new barracks ahead of schedule and triggered a worldwide review of Navy housing conditions, according to a report released this week by a government watchdog.

Secretary of the Navy John Phelan visited Andersen Air Force Base's Palau Hall barracks during a May 1-2 trip to the U.S. territory.

He was left "appalled" and "very upset" by what he saw, including exposed electrical wires, corroded plumbing, deteriorating walls and mold that had been painted over, according to the Washington, D.C.-based Project on Government Oversight.

The barracks was housing sailors assigned to a helicopter

Barracks conditions spark global Navy housing inspections

squadron temporarily operating from Andersen, René Kladzyk, senior investigator on the report, said by email Thursday.

Phelan's visit prompted him to order new bachelor enlisted quarters on Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz to open about a month ahead of schedule, he told the nonprofit watchdog.

The 300-room facility, initially set to open in June, was directed to begin housing service members by May 16, Marine Corps Headquarters spokeswoman Capt. Brenda Leenders told Stars and Stripes on May 20.

As of May 22, 25 Marines and 48 sailors had been relocated from Palau Hall, according to the report.

The poor conditions also led to a fleetwide directive to inspect all Navy unaccompanied hous-

ing, according to a May 5 email from Vice Adm. Scott Gray to Navy leadership, cited by the watchdog group.

He described the living conditions as "clearly way outside any reasonable standard" and said they reflected a failure of leadership across multiple levels.

Gray, head of Navy Installations Command, wrote it was "baffling to discover Sailors living in these conditions," which he described as "clearly way outside any reasonable standard" and lacking "any sense of ownership or responsibility by the facility operators for the welfare of the tenants."

He ordered inspections of all single-sailor housing to be completed by May 28. However, a spokesperson for Naval Installations Command told the watch-

dog that some regions may need more time to conduct thorough reviews.

Attached to Gray's email were photos showing issues inside Palau Hall.

One image of exposed wiring, he noted, depicted a room that had been assigned earlier.

"The scope of this disrepair includes, but is not limited to the Palau building," he wrote. "That said, Andersen Sailors reside in no less than four different buildings — none of which are acceptable by today's living standards."

An Air Force spokesperson told the watchdog the service is committed to providing safe housing but cited Guam's harsh, corrosive environment as a contributing factor to infrastructure deterioration.

Trade court halts most of Trump's 'Liberation Day' tariffs

The Washington Post

A specialized federal court in New York on Wednesday ruled that most of President Donald Trump's tariffs — including those on Chinese goods — are illegal, upending negotiations with more than a dozen nations and creating fresh uncertainty for countless American businesses that depend upon foreign suppliers.

The decision by the little-known Court of International Trade neuters the president's signature trade initiative: the flurry of import taxes he announced on April 2 under the banner of "Liberation Day."

Those tariffs sent the value of U.S. stocks, bonds and the dollar

into sharp decline, causing global investors to rethink their habitual faith in the United States and raising questions about the U.S. economic outlook.

The trade court's ruling that Trump exceeded his authority in imposing tariffs on all imported goods brought an immediate, albeit perhaps temporary, halt to his signature trade war policy.

"The challenged Tariff Orders will be vacated and their operation permanently enjoined," a three-judge panel ruled.

Futures contracts on the S&P 500 stock index jumped 1.4% on the news. But a few hours later,

the Justice Department said in a federal court filing that it will appeal.

The trade court's decision in a pair of lawsuits filed last month against the government applies to the 10% tariffs Trump imposed on all foreign products as well as the much higher levies applied to goods from several dozen nations. The president invoked a 1977 law that granted him emergency powers over the economy, the International Emergency Economic Powers Act or IEEPA.

The trade court's ruling also freezes separate tariffs on Mexican, Canadian and Chinese goods, which Trump imposed to coerce those governments into

taking action to counter human and drug trafficking. But import taxes on specific products such as automobiles, auto parts, steel and aluminum will remain in effect.

"He took a big gamble doing this under emergency powers. That gamble lost," said Peter Harrell, a former Biden administration attorney who helped draft a brief from 148 House members supporting one of the lawsuits, which was filed by a group of 12 states.

The states, all with Democratic governors, said they suffered "direct financial harm" from the tariffs, which made imported goods used to provide public services more expensive.

Pentagon plan might result in fewer moves

By MATTHEW ADAMS

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON—The Pentagon on Wednesday announced defense officials are developing proposals that cut permanent change of station budgets in half by fiscal 2030, while also reducing the frequency of personnel moves.

The Defense Department spends about \$5 billion to move military personnel and their families between assignments, with moves typically occurring every two to four years.

“While these permanent change of station moves support mission requirements, the frequency can reduce quality of life for service members and their families, harm spousal employment, and disrupt functional communities, unit cohesion and long-term talent management,” Jules Hurst, who is performing the duties of the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, wrote in a memo dated May 22.

The memo calls for the development of a plan to reduce PCS “discretionary move” budgets. This includes operational travel in the United States, rotational travel overseas and training travel by 10% in fiscal 2027, 30% by 2028, 40% by 2029 and 50% by 2030.

The memo also addresses proposed modifications to the career development models for officers and noncommissioned officers to prioritize geographic stability and permit some officers and NCOs to specialize in place of gaining generalized experience across a range of functions.

The service branches are to provide information and implementation plans no later than 120 days from the date of the memo, Hurst wrote.

“It’s clear that it’s time for the department to look at reducing the frequency of those moves, especially if we want to maintain the momentum that we have today, both in recruiting and the

retention of our service members,” Tim Dill, the acting deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, told reporters Wednesday.

Some moves occur because a service member needs certain accreditation or additional training requirements for career advancement, and some moves considered discretionary, Dill added. The Pentagon estimates about 80% of the department’s PCS moves are in the discretionary category, and 20% are mandatory.

“What we are directing the [services] to do is purely to examine potential reductions in things that would be defined as discretionary,” he said. “So, if they see that as mandatory for mission need, we’re not even asking them to come back with a plan to reduce it. We want them to continue that course of action and do the mandatory moves.”

The announcement comes after Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth last week ordered the for-

mation of a Pentagon task force to improve the workflow behind permanent change of station moves under the Global Household Goods Contract, or GHC.

Moves under the contract began with a slow rollout more than a year ago but ramped up in earnest this year.

GHC was created because of service member complaints over the performance of the legacy system. But GHC has been plagued by late pickups and deliveries, and several U.S. senators commenced inquiries in the spring into its shortcomings.

The Army suspended the use of GHC for all moves “pending further leadership review,” the service said in an April 30 memo.

Hegseth’s memo last week also directed the government’s reimbursement rate for do-it-yourself moves be increased by 30%. The secretary said, in some cases, the reimbursements for personally procured moves were so low that service members were paying out of pocket.

Marine subdues man trying to open jet door

By SETH ROBSON
AND HANA KUSUMOTO

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A Japanese airline has thanked a U.S. Marine for subduing a disruptive passenger who allegedly attempted to open an exit door during a flight from Tokyo to Houston on Saturday.

Sgt. Maj. Jody Armentrout, the senior enlisted adviser at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni south of Hiroshima, intervened during the incident on All Nippon Airways Flight 114.

The flight departed Tokyo’s Haneda Airport around 10:49 a.m. Saturday. A passenger “tried to open a door while in flight and another passenger ap-

prehended the person,” an ANA spokeswoman told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday. Some Japanese officials speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

The Marine’s actions were detailed in an interview with NBC News on Sunday.

Armentrout said he grew suspicious after observing a passenger with a backpack enter and exit multiple restrooms.

“He came out of that one and began pacing up and down the aisle, so that just threw my radar on,” he told the network.

When the man began staring at an exit door, Armentrout said he got up and stood in his path.

The man then ran through the galley toward a different exit on the other side of the aircraft.

“He grabbed a strap around the door, pulled it off, and about that time is when I took him and slammed him, put him on the ground,” Armentrout said in the report. “And then there was an older gentleman sitting on that side that woke up, and he got up and kind of helped me.”

Flight attendants provided zip ties that Armentrout used to restrain the man in a seat, he said.

“His eyes—you could definitely tell there was something going on,” he told NBC.

The flight was diverted to Seattle-Tacoma International Air-

port, where it landed at 4:35 a.m. that day.

No injuries were reported, and the unruly passenger was handed over to local authorities, the airline said.

The plane later continued to George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston, arriving at 12:55 p.m., approximately four hours behind schedule.

“We would like to express our gratitude to the person, who cooperated on the airplane,” the ANA spokeswoman said. “Safety of customers and staff is our highest priority.”

Marine Corps officials in Japan did not immediately respond to a request for comment Thursday.

Rubio to revoke some Chinese student visas

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Wednesday the U.S. will begin revoking the visas of some Chinese students, including those studying in “critical fields.”

China is the second-largest country of origin for international students in the United States, behind only India. In the 2023-2024 school year, more than 270,000 international students were from China, making up roughly a quarter of all foreign students in the United States.

“Under President Trump’s leadership, the U.S. State Department will work with the Department of Homeland Security to aggressively revoke visas for Chinese students, including those with connections to the Chinese Communist Party or studying in critical fields,” Ru-

bio wrote.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington didn’t immediately respond to a message seeking comment Wednesday night.

The action comes at a time of intensifying scrutiny of the ties between U.S. higher education and China. House Republicans this month pressed Duke University to cut its ties with a Chinese university, saying it allowed Chinese students to gain access to federally funded research at Duke.

Last year, House Republicans issued a report warning that hundreds of millions of dollars in defense funding was going to research partnerships linked to the Chinese government, providing “back-door access to the very foreign adversary nation whose aggression these capabilities are necessary to protect against.”

The Department of Homeland Security raised similar issues in a letter barring international students at Harvard University last week. Secretary Kristi Noem accused Harvard of “coordinating with the Chinese Communist Party,” citing research collaborations with Chinese scholars. It also accused Harvard of training members of a Chinese paramilitary group.

The announcement came a day after Rubio halted the scheduling of new visa interviews for international students as the department prepares guidelines for increased vetting of their activity on social media.

The crackdown on visas adds to uncertainty for international students

Together, the announcements from the State Department added to uncertainty for

America’s international students, who have faced intensifying scrutiny from President Donald Trump’s administration.

University of Wisconsin student Vladyslav Plyaka was planning to visit Poland to see his mother and renew his visa, but he doesn’t know when that will be possible now that visa appointments are suspended. He also doesn’t feel safe leaving the U.S. even when appointments resume.

“I don’t think I have enough trust in the system at this point,” said Plyaka, who came to the U.S. from Ukraine as an exchange student in high school and stayed for college. “I understand it probably is done for security measures, but I would probably just finish my education for the next two or three years and then come back to Ukraine.”

Court: Trump wrongly ended parole protections

Associated Press

A federal judge ruled Wednesday that the Trump administration wrongly ended humanitarian parole for hundreds of thousands allowed to live in the United States temporarily.

The decision is another legal setback for President Donald Trump’s plans for mass deportation, but it may prove temporary and the impact is unclear.

U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani in Boston sided with people who were already admitted to the United States but were unable to renew their short-term permits. They cover parole policies that benefited Afghans, Ukrainians, Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, Venezuelans and children from Central American countries trying to join their parents in the U.S., among others.

Talwani, who was appointed by President Barack Obama,

said two orders by Department of Homeland Security officials to suspend renewals pending review were unlikely to survive a challenge. One of the orders “gives no reasoned explanation” for the actions, she wrote.

“The ‘pause’ has now been in place for three months; the pause is, in effect, an indefinite suspension,” she wrote.

The humanitarian parole programs allowed in 875,000 migrants who have legal U.S. residences as sponsors.

Trump has been ending legal pathways for immigrants to come to the U.S. and implementing campaign promises to deport millions of people who are in the U.S. illegally.

The plaintiffs include eight immigrants who entered the U.S. legally before the Trump administration ended what it called the “broad abuse” of humanitarian parole.

\$14B in clean energy projects canceled in US

Associated Press

More than \$14 billion in clean energy investments in the U.S. have been canceled or delayed this year, according to an analysis released Thursday, as President Donald Trump’s pending megabill has raised fears over the future of domestic battery, electric vehicle and solar and wind energy development.

Many companies are concerned that investments will be in jeopardy amid House Republicans’ passage of a tax bill that would gut clean energy credits, nonpartisan group E2 said in analysis of projects it and Atlas Public Policy tracked.

The groups estimate the losses since January have also cost 10,000 new clean energy jobs.

The tax credits, bolstered in the climate bill passed under former President Joe Biden in 2022, are crucial for boosting renewable technologies key to

the clean energy transition. E2 estimates that \$132 billion in plans have been announced since the so-called Inflation Reduction Act passed, not counting the cancellations.

Last week’s House bill effectively renders moot many of the law’s incentives. Advocacy groups decried the impact that could have on the industry after the multitrillion-dollar tax breaks package passed.

“The House’s plan coupled with the administration’s focus on stomping out clean energy and returning us to a country powered by coal and gas guzzlers is causing businesses to cancel plans, delay their plans and take their money and jobs to other countries instead,” E2 executive director Bob Keefe said.

The Senate is now reviewing the bill with an informal July 4 deadline to get it to the president’s desk.

US officials seek air traffic control overhaul

Associated Press

The problems that disrupted flights at New Jersey's largest airport this spring could be repeated anywhere across the country, so Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy is trying to sell Congress on his plan to overhaul the nation's air traffic control system that will cost "tens of billions."

Duffy provided an update Wednesday on the repairs and staffing efforts that are underway to help eliminate the problems affecting Newark Liberty International Airport, which has been running more smoothly in the past few weeks since the airlines started to cut the number of flights they operate there.

And Duffy emphasized that the Newark radar outages and air traffic control shortage are a prime example of why the antiquated system needs to be improved.

"I'm concerned that we could have more Newarks. And again, why it's so important that we actually begin this build with the money that Congress is going to send us," he said.

Duffy still wouldn't give a price tag of his expensive overhaul of the air traffic control system that he said is clearly needed after the deadly midair collision over Washington,

D.C., in January that killed 67 people and all the problems affecting Newark this spring. But he said the \$12.5 billion the House included President Donald Trump's massive bill won't be enough because "it's going to be tens of billions of dollars."

Duffy has been meeting privately with lawmakers since he unveiled the plan. But he said he wants to let Congress "do the dance the way the Congress dances" to develop a plan to pay for the program.

The problems that led to hundreds of cancellations and delays at Newark do seem to have improved since the Federal Aviation Administration limited the number of flights at the airport so they could handle it with the number of controllers available. The already short-staffed air traffic control facility in Philadelphia that directs planes in and out of Newark lost five controllers to trauma leave after the first radar and communications outage on April 28 and another one is out on medical leave.

That left the facility with only 16 certified controllers and five supervisors. But Duffy said there are another 16 experienced controllers in training that he hopes will start to

get certified between now and October.

That is an example of how the FAA remains about 3,000 short on the number of air traffic controllers it wants, so Duffy has also tried to speed up the hiring and training process while offering incentives to keep experienced controllers from retiring early.

The FAA has said that it expects to be able to bump up the number of flights daily in Newark to 34 arrivals and 34 departures once a runway construction project is completed in mid-June. That is also about the time that some of the controllers on a 45-day trauma leave might be scheduled to return. The FAA will revisit the limits in October because it hopes to have more controllers trained by then.

The government also upgraded the software at the air traffic control facility after a second radar outage on May 9. That helped prevent a repeat problem on May 11.

The FAA is also working on the telecommunications problems. Duffy said Verizon worked quickly to install a new fiber optic line between Philadelphia and New York over the past month, but the FAA wants to thoroughly test it out before switching over, so that likely won't be available until July.

Layoffs still low, more in US file for jobless aid amid tariff uncertainty

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Filings for U.S. jobless aid jumped last week but American workers broadly remain secure in their jobs despite economic uncertainty over global trade.

Jobless benefits applications rose by 14,000 to 240,000 for the week ending May 24, the Labor Department said Thursday. Analysts had forecast 226,000 new applications.

Weekly applications for jobless benefits are seen as representative of U.S. layoffs and have mostly settled in a historically healthy range between 200,000 and 250,000 since COVID-19 throttled the economy in the spring of 2020, wiping out millions of jobs.

A sense of relief swept over financial markets early Thursday after a federal court blocked President Donald Trump from imposing sweeping tariffs on imports under an emergency-powers law. Wednesday's decision threw into doubt Trump's signature economic policy that has rattled global financial markets, frustrated trade

partners and raised fears about inflation intensifying and the economy slumping.

The Trump administration quickly filed notice of appeal and the Supreme Court will almost certainly be called upon to decide the issue. It remains unclear whether the White House will respond to the ruling by pausing all of its emergency power tariffs in the interim.

Trump had already paused or dialed down many of his tariff threats, but concerns lingered about a global economic slowdown upending a robust U.S. labor market.

In early May, the Federal Reserve held its benchmark lending rate at 4.3% for the third straight meeting after cutting it three times at the end of last year.

Fed chair Jerome Powell said the potential for both higher unemployment and inflation are elevated, an unusual combination that complicates the central bank's dual mandate of controlling prices and keeping unemployment low. Powell said that tariffs have dampened consumer and business sentiment.

US economy falls 0.2% in 1st quarter

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. economy shrank at a 0.2% annual pace from January through March, the first drop in three years, as President Donald Trump's trade wars disrupted business, the government said Thursday in a slight upgrade of its initial estimate.

First-quarter growth was brought down by a surge in imports as companies in the United States hurried to bring in foreign goods before the president imposed massive import taxes.

The January-March drop in gross domestic product — the nation's output of goods and services — reversed a 2.4% gain in the fourth quarter of 2024. Imports grew at a 42.6% pace, fastest since third-quarter 2020, and shaved more than 5 percentage points off GDP growth. Consumer spending also slowed sharply.

And federal government spending fell at a 4.6% annual pace, the biggest drop in three years.

The first-quarter import surge likely won't be repeated in the April-June quarter and therefore shouldn't weigh on GDP.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Hotel tax signed into law to combat climate change

HONOLULU — Hawaii's governor signed legislation Tuesday that boosts a tax imposed on hotel room and vacation rental stays in order to raise money to address eroding shorelines, wildfires and other consequences of climate change.

The signing, which comes nearly two years after a Maui wildfire killed 102 people and wiped out almost all of Lahaina town, marks the nation's first such levy to help cope with a warming planet.

Officials estimate the tax will generate nearly \$100 million annually. The money will be used for projects like replenishing sand on eroding Waikiki beaches, promoting the use of hurricane clips to secure roofs during powerful storms and clearing flammable invasive grasses like those that fueled Lahaina's wildfire.

Gov. Josh Green, speaking at a bill signing ceremony, said Hawaii needs to build more firebreaks and pay a fire marshal, a new position created after Lahaina that Green expects to be staffed within the next two months. The measure adds an additional 0.75% to the daily room rate tax starting Jan. 1. Green said this amounts to an extra \$3 tax on a \$400 hotel room rate.

Man indicted after incident with M-60 A-3 Army tank

FL TAMPA — A Minnesota man convicted of making violent threats tried to set a U.S. Army tank on fire on Valentine's Day with a "Molotov cocktail," federal prosecutors in Central Florida said.

Now Trang Johnny Nha Phan, 25, has been indicted, according to a Tuesday news release from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida. He faces one count of attempted arson of federal property, one count of possessing a Molotov cocktail as a convicted felon and one count of "using a firearm" in furtherance of a crime of violence, his indictment shows. Phan pleaded not guilty to the charges in Tampa federal court on May 16, according to court records.

When Phan tried to ignite what prosecutors said was a memorial M-60 A-3 Army tank on Feb. 14, he had been convicted of prior offenses. Prosecutors didn't mention where the arson attempt occurred.

In Phan's indictment, prosecutors wrote the tank he's accused of trying to burn is owned by the U.S. Army Tank-Automotive and Armaments Command, which is headquartered in Michigan.

Billionaire's mansion is scene of violent break-in

CA LOS ANGELES — A woman was left in a coma after a chaotic incident at the Montecito mansion of Beanie Babies billionaire Ty Warner last week that officials said involved a violent break-in and an attempted kidnapping.

Warner, the creator of Beanie Babies — the stuffed toys that became a huge fad in the late 1990s — was home at the time of the midday attack, according to a criminal complaint, but he was not hurt. The injured woman, identified in the complaint as L. Malek-Aslanian, was left in a coma after a serious brain injury.

Warner is known as a reclusive executive who expanded his business empire from toys to luxury hotels in the early 2000s.

Russell Maxwell Phay, 42, was arrested in the May 21 attack after a standoff with law enforcement that ended when he jumped from a second-floor window of the mansion and was arrested, according to a news release from the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office.

Mayor seeks a spark amid loss of federal jobs

DC WASHINGTON — With the nation's capital facing a pair of overlapping budget crises, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser has unveiled a budget proposal that bets heavily on business-friendly policies designed to boost investment and move the city away from dependence on a dwindling number of federal jobs.

In the short term, Bowser has been scrambling to fill an immediate budget shortfall that was essentially created by Congress. She announced Tuesday that her team had managed to navigate that sudden deficit without the mass layoffs that had been originally feared.

In the longer term, her government faces an estimated \$1 billion shortfall over the next three years created by President Donald Trump's ongoing campaign to radically shrink the federal workforce. The city's chief financial officer has estimated that 40,000 jobs for District of Columbia residents will ultimately be lost.

The more immediate budget crisis started in March when the House of Representatives approved a federal government funding bill with an obscure

change that forces the District government to revert to its 2024 budget parameters — effectively cutting \$1.1 billion from its previously balanced budget midway through the financial year. The Senate approved that bill, but also immediately approved a simple fix that would make the D.C. budget whole again. That fix has languished in the House for two months without a vote.

Groundwater deal stalls as session nears end

AZ PHOENIX — Arizona's governor and the GOP-controlled Legislature are at odds over regulating groundwater pumping in the state's rural areas — and time is running out.

Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs stood with GOP leaders at the start of this year's session, optimistic that Republicans in the Legislature would embrace her proposal to create rural groundwater management areas. But talks have stalled and frustration has mounted as both sides try to find a solution to conserve water that's increasingly becoming more scarce amid a prolonged drought.

Negotiators have not met since early April, Hobbs' office said. Around the same time, Republicans and some interest groups grew frustrated with a separate proposal by the Arizona Department of Water Resources to slash overdraft in the Willcox Basin by a percentage that is "unattainable," said Sen. Tim Dunn, one of the Republican negotiators. Overdraft refers to when groundwater extraction exceeds what is being replenished.

— From wire reports

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SGA stars as Thunder advance to Finals

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Thunder tried their best to balance the euphoria of the moment with the fact that they haven't completed their mission.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 34 points, and Oklahoma City routed the Minnesota Timberwolves 124-94 on Wednesday night to win the Western Conference finals series 4-1 and advance to the NBA Finals for the first time since 2012.

After the win, the league MVP was measured in his excitement. The Thunder will play the Indiana Pacers or New York Knicks in the finals. Indiana leads the Eastern Conference finals series 3-1 with Game 5 to be played in New York City on Thursday.

"We've got a lot of growing to do," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "We've got a lot of work to do to get to our ultimate goal, and this is not it, so that's all that I'm focused on."

Still, the young OKC players had some of their usual fun.

During a postgame interview, coach Mark Daigneault began complimenting his young squad.

"These guys are uncommon. They do everything right. They're high character."

Several players then started draping towels over Daigneault, as they often do to local sideline reporter Nick Gallo during postgame interview sessions.

"They're idiots," Daigneault said without breaking focus.

Chet Holmgren had 22 points, seven rebounds and three blocks, and Jalen Williams added 19 points and eight rebounds for the Thunder.

A fanbase that had suffered through losing Kevin Durant in free agency in 2016 and a rebuild that had the team near the bottom of the league's standings just four years ago let loose in the fourth quarter when Oklahoma City sat its starters with 5:14 remaining and a 108-74 lead.

"I know I wanted two

things," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "I didn't want to go back to Minnesota. And then I wanted the fans to be able to enjoy the moment with us."

The league scoring champion did his part to make those things possible, and now he's got a shot at an NBA title. It was another example of how playoff basketball appears to have slowed down for him. He forced things at times in the first round against Memphis and in the second round against Denver. Against Minnesota, he was back to making the game look easy. He made 14 of 25 shots and committed just two turnovers in Game 5.

Julius Randle scored 24 points and Anthony Edwards added 19 for the Timberwolves, who shot just 41.2% from the field and committed 21 turnovers.

It was a tough loss for Minnesota point guard Mike Conley. The 37-year-old point guard said these opportunities are rare.

"It's going to take a while

just to kind of dissect what we just did and what we weren't able to accomplish," he said. "But at the same time, I'm proud of my team, proud of these guys, man. They really fought. Not just for me, but for the whole team."

The Thunder opened the game on an 11-3 run and extended the advantage throughout the first quarter. Cason Wallace drained a 3-pointer as the first quarter expired to put OKC up 26-9 at the end of the period. The game was never close after that.

"We just struggled to find a rhythm," Timberwolves coach Chris Finch said. "Everyone was kind of trying to do it all by themselves. We lost our connectivity. But all credit to the Thunder. They certainly deserve this. They played outstanding. And we came up short in a lot of ways."

"They're a really good team," Edwards added. "Everyone here knows it. It's no surprise to nobody here that this team is pretty good."

Gauff uses breaks to overcome poor serving in win

Associated Press

PARIS — Coco Gauff kept getting herself in some trouble with shaky serving in the French Open's second round, and she kept putting herself back in position to win by breaking right back Thursday.

The second-seeded Gauff, pursuing her first title at Roland-Garros, eliminated 172nd-ranked qualifier Tereza Valentova of the Czech Republic 6-2, 6-4 in 75 minutes on a partly cloudy, warm afternoon in Court Suzanne-Lenglen.

Amid a soundtrack of sirens from nearby streets and roars from nearby courts, 2023 U.S. Open champion Gauff only managed to produce 11 winners, five fewer than her far-less-experienced opponent. She also

finished with 23 unforced errors, a total that included a half-dozen double-faults.

Against Valentova, an 18-year-old who won the junior title at the French Open last year and was competing in the main draw at a major tournament for the first time, Gauff got broken five times. Four of those came in the second set — and each time, the 21-year-old Floridian managed to immediately rebound to claim Valentova's very next service game.

"There is a sense of urgency after getting broken, for sure. You don't want to get too far behind. You don't want to get two breaks down. You can live with one break. But she's definitely got to serve better and do a better job of holding as the tourna-

ment progresses," said Gauff's father, Corey. "She's probably been one of the best returners of serve on the tour the last two to three months. But that's not what you want. You want to hold first, for sure. It's not really a break until you hold."

On Saturday, 2022 runner-up Gauff will try to reach the fourth round in Paris for the fifth consecutive appearance, facing another Czech player, Marie Bouzkova.

Other winners in the women's bracket included No. 3 Jessica Pegula, who was the runner-up at last year's U.S. Open, 18-year-old Mirra Andreeva, and 2023 Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova, who reached the 2019 final at Roland-Garros.

Vondrousova, who is unseed-

ed this year, eliminated No. 25 Magdalena Frech 6-0, 4-6, 6-3 on Court 6 and then went to sit in the stands to watch Gauff vs. Valentova.

In men's play, No. 1 Jannik Sinner ended the career of 38-year-old Richard Gasquet by beating the Frenchman 6-3, 6-0, 6-4. No. 3 Alexander Zverev and No. 14 Arthur Fils won, while 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic was in late action against Corentin Moutet of France.

No. 1-ranked Aryna Sabalenka will begin third-round play at Court Philippe-Chatrier on Day 6 by facing Olga Danilovic, while the night match in the main stadium features defending champion Carlos Alcaraz against Damir Dzumhur.

Led by captain Barkov, Panthers back in Final

Associated Press

The entire play took eight seconds and basically summed up why the Florida Panthers have enormous, nonstop belief in Aleksander Barkov.

Game 5 of the Eastern Conference finals was tied at 3 in the third period. Barkov picked up the puck in the right corner. He skated around the end boards, as Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Dmitry Orlov tried to use his entire 214-pound frame to move Barkov one direction or the other. Orlov had no chance.

Barkov stopped on a dime, turned around, ducked back toward the net and slid the puck to a place that only the Panthers' Carter Verhaeghe could reach. Verhaeghe turned that pass into the winner, and with that, Florida was headed back to its third consecutive Stanley Cup Final.

In Barky they trusted. Again. "Such a great player," Verhaeghe said. "It was such a great play by him. It was all him."

The funny part is that Barkov would hate hearing such praise, and he surely would never say anything like that about himself. He is a most unassuming super-

star, someone who doesn't care about the spotlight, someone who was legitimately surprised when fans recognized him last year at a Florida Atlantic basketball game in Boca Raton — about 20 minutes north of where the Panthers play their home games.

But he is Florida's best player. And he has led the defending Stanley Cup champions back to the title round for a third consecutive season.

"He's one of the best in the world at that, if not the best," Panthers forward Sam Reinhart said. "He's got so much strength. Big players make big plays at the biggest moments when you need them, and he's certainly the leader of this team."

Florida moves on to face either Edmonton or Dallas in the Stanley Cup Final. There will be intrigue either way.

If the Oilers — who lead the Stars 3-1 in the Western Conference finals — get there, it'll be the 11th title-round rematch in the Stanley Cup era and the first since Pittsburgh and Detroit played for the trophy in 2008 and 2009.

If Dallas gets there, it'll pit Panthers coach Paul Maurice against Stars coach Peter DeBoer, his former assistant in the Ontario Hockey League and one of his closest friends. It'll also be the first times Florida and Dallas play each other in the United States this season; their two matchups this year were in Finland back in November, the Panthers winning both.

"The most important step is ahead of us," goalie Sergei Bobrovsky said.

The Panthers are the ninth franchise in NHL history to make the Stanley Cup Final in at least three consecutive seasons. Barkov became the first Finnish captain to get the honor of having the inaugural hoist of the Cup when Florida won the title last year, and he was there through a lot of lean years for the Panthers. Forget the Cup final; Florida couldn't make the playoffs for much of its history.

That seems so long ago now. No team has played more post-season games in the last four years than the Panthers, and there's at least four more games this season left to go.

"I think it was a long time

coming," Barkov said. "Obviously, there's been a lot of work put in by this organization to become better and reach the level where we want to win Stanley Cups, we want compete for Stanley Cups every single year. There are 31 other teams in the league and it's hard every single year. They want to do that too, so it's not easy. But we've managed to do it three years in a row, which is, I think, an incredible achievement so far."

Aaron Ekblad is in his 11th season as a Panther — one behind Barkov — and he remembers those tough times. Florida once missed the playoffs by a point during their tenure; some years, they missed by five or six wins. They weren't terrible. They just weren't that good.

But Ekblad remembers why he always remained steadfast in the belief that the franchise would get to this point.

"We've always had Sasha Barkov," Ekblad said. "So there was always hope, especially in those down years. We always had Barky to lead the way."

Barkov led then. He led now. And another trip to the final awaits.

Coaches opt to sit out player handshakes after East final

Associated Press

Florida coach Paul Maurice did not shake hands with Carolina when the Eastern Conference final ended. And he asked Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour not to shake hands with the Panthers, either.

It wasn't out of disrespect.

Quite the contrary, really.

The handshake line at the end of a playoff series is one of hockey's sacred traditions, no matter how physical the series was before one team eventually prevailed. And Maurice thinks the handshakes are part of what makes the game great to hockey fans, and he's all for it happening.

Maurice has just said repeatedly throughout this postseason that he thinks the coaches shouldn't be part of it — reiterating that after Florida eliminated Carolina on Wednesday night, even going as far as con-

vincing Brind'Amour to sit it out himself. In that moment, Maurice said, nothing should take the attention off the players on the two teams that just played a series.

"I don't believe that the coaches should shake players' hands at the end," Maurice said. "There's this long list of people in suits and track suits. We had like 400 people on the ice. They're all really important to our group. But not one of them was in the game."

So just as he did after the Round 2 win over Toronto, Maurice and his staff shook hands with Brind'Amour and other members of the Hurricanes staff. That happened near the benches, while the players partook in the traditional handshake line down the center of the ice.

Maurice said several weeks ago that he isn't sure when the post-round handshake expanded to include coaches, and figures

someone years ago did it just to either be seen or grab some television time. He said when he started coaching, people in the suits weren't in those handshake moments.

This season, Maurice has been trying to amend the tradition. And he thanked Brind'Amour for taking a risk, as Maurice said, in agreeing with him.

"There's something for me visually, with the camera on just the men who played, blocked shots, fought for each other, it's end of one's season, it's excitement for the other," Maurice said. "The last thing that a player on the Carolina Hurricanes deserves is 50 more guys in suits, they have no idea who they are and that's not a negative. There's something really kind of beautiful about just the camera on those men who played shaking hands. And we should respect that."

Astros rally in 7th for win over Athletics

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Zach Dezenzo homered and Victor Caratini drove in two runs in the seventh inning to help the Houston Astros rally for a 5-3 victory over the Athletics on Wednesday.

The A's led by 1 when rookie Justin Sterner (1-1) took over for Luis Severino to start the seventh. Dezenzo sent his fourth pitch 416 feet to center field for his second homer this season to tie it at 3-all.

There were runners on second and third with two outs in the inning when Caratini lined a single to center field to score both.

Houston's Lance McCullers Jr. allowed five hits and three runs in a season-long six innings in his fifth start after missing more than two seasons with injuries.

Shawn Dubin (2-0) struck out two in a scoreless seventh for the win and Josh Hader converted his 14th save in 14 opportunities with a scoreless ninth.

Brewers 6, Red Sox 5 (10): Caleb Durbin's sacrifice fly drove in the winning run for host Milwaukee, which earned its first sweep of the season with a victory over Boston.

Durbin's late-game heroics capped off a two-hit, three-RBI day and included a two-run double that gave the Brewers their first lead of the day.

The Red Sox tied the game in the seventh on Willyer Abreu's 13th home run of the season and pulled ahead in extra innings when Nick Sogard scored against Milwaukee left-hander Tyler Alexander (3-5).

Guardians 7, Dodgers 4: Angel Martínez hit a three-run, go-ahead homer as host Cleveland scored five times in the eighth inning to rally for a victory over Los Angeles.

The Dodgers built a 4-1 lead before Lou Trivino gave up an RBI single to Carlos Santana in the bottom of the seventh. Nolan Jones tied it in the eighth with a two-run single off Tanner Scott

(0-1) and Martínez followed with his 394-foot blast off Alex Vesia.

Matt Festa (1-0) pitched the eighth and Emmanuel Clase worked a perfect ninth for his 11th save. The Guardians salvaged the third and final game of the series.

Rays 5, Twins 0: Brandon Lowe and Junior Caminero hit fourth-inning home runs, and Drew Rasmussen allowed one hit in six innings to lead host Tampa Bay over Minnesota.

Lowe led off the fourth with his 11th home run. Caminero hit his 10th with Jonathan Aranda aboard.

Aranda added an RBI single and the Rays also scored on a balk. Lowe, Aranda and Caminero had two hits each. Chandler Simpson stole two bases for 16 this season.

Tigers 4, Giants 3: Justyn-Henry Malloy hit a go-ahead single in a four-run fifth inning to help host Detroit rally to beat San Francisco.

The AL-leading Tigers swept the three-game series and closed their homestand with a four-game winning streak.

Detroit generated all of its offense in the fifth with Colt Keith's two-run double and Malloy's two-out, two-run single.

White Sox 9, Mets 4: Andrew Benintendi had a season-high four RBIs and finished a double shy of the cycle, powering visiting Chicago to a win over New York that prevented a three-game sweep.

Benintendi laced a two-run single in the first inning and an RBI triple in the sixth before hitting his sixth homer in the eighth. Lenyn Sosa also had three hits and Mike Tauchman provided a two-run double for the White Sox, who avoided being swept for the seventh time this season.

Brandon Eisert (2-0), the second of five Chicago pitchers, earned the win with 1½ hitless innings.

Pirates 10, Diamondbacks 1:

Paul Skenes dominated in six-plus scoreless innings, O'Neil Cruz hit a two-run homer and visiting Pittsburgh rolled over Arizona.

Skenes (4-5) allowed four hits, struck out seven and walked none in 6⅓ innings. He has not allowed more than six hits in an MLB-record 35 starts to open his career.

The Pirates took two of three from the Diamondbacks for their first road series win and second overall since April 22-24 against the Los Angeles Angels.

Marlins 10, Padres 8: Agustín Ramírez had the first four-hit game of his career including a home run and a go-ahead two-run single as visiting Miami beat San Diego.

Ramírez went 4 for 5 with four RBIs and two runs scored. Eric Wagaman and Otto Lopez added three hits each with Lopez hitting a three-run homer. Javier Sanoja hit two doubles.

Ronny Henriquez (3-1) went two innings for the win and Calvin Faucher pitched the ninth for his third save. Marlins starter Sandy Alcantara lasted four innings and gave up six runs. He had lost his previous seven starts.

Cardinals 6, Orioles 4: Brendan Donovan hit a two-run homer, Masyn Winn had four hits and visiting St. Louis beat Baltimore.

The Cardinals trailed 3-0 in the second inning and 4-2 in the fourth before coming back to win the deciding matchup of the three-game series.

Jordan Walker's two-run single provided St. Louis with its first two runs and Donovan's drive off Cade Povich in the fifth put the Cardinals ahead 5-4.

Royals 3, Reds 2: Noah Cameron pitched into the seventh, scattering six singles as host Kansas City beat Cincinnati to salvage the final game of the series.

Cameron (2-1) allowed a run on six hits and two walks with two strikeouts in 6⅓ innings.

Maikel Garcia singled with one out in the fourth, extending his hitting streak to 13 games, then scored from first on Drew Waters' deflected single.

Cubs 2, Rockies 1: Pete Crow-Armstrong hit his 15th home run, Matthew Boyd tossed six innings of four-hit ball and host Chicago edged Colorado for its fourth straight win.

Seiya Suzuki doubled in a run and rookie Matt Shaw had two hits for the NL Central leaders, who have won 10 of 12.

Boyd (5-2) allowed just an unearned run while striking out eight and walking none. Three relievers followed, with Daniel Palencia pitching a perfect ninth for his fourth save.

Blue Jays 2, Rangers 0: Bo Bichette hit a pinch-hit, two-run homer in the ninth inning, five Toronto pitchers combined on a one-hitter and the visiting Blue Jays beat Texas.

Brendon Little (3-0), the fourth Toronto pitcher, struck out the only two batters he faced. Jeff Hoffman then had a strikeout in a perfect ninth for his 12th save in 15 chances to close out the Blue Jays' third shutout this season.

Nationals 9, Mariners 0: Robert Hassell III had three hits and two RBIs, including his first major league home run, and James Wood also went deep as visiting Washington routed Seattle.

Luis García Jr. and Josh Bell launched consecutive homers to help back Trevor Williams (3-5), who tossed six splendid innings. Bell finished with three hits and Wood drove in three runs.

Yankees 1, Angels 0: Clarke Schmidt allowed four hits over six sharp innings and visiting New York made a first-inning run stand up in a victory over Los Angeles.

Schmidt (2-2) struck out four and walked one in a 99-pitch effort to help the Yankees complete a three-game sweep and win for the ninth time in 10 games.