

## Trump renews threats to strike Iran

BY LARA KORTE  
*Stars and Stripes*

President Donald Trump on Wednesday renewed his threats to strike Iran, one day after the White House claimed that Operation Epic Fury had ended.

In an early-morning post on his Truth Social platform, Trump said Epic Fury would end and the Strait of Hormuz would reopen if Iran agrees to give “what has been agreed to,” without providing further details.

“If they don’t agree, the bombing starts, and it will be, sadly, at a much higher level and intensity than it was before,” Trump added.

Later Wednesday, U.S. Central Command reported U.S. forces had disabled an Iranian-flagged oil tanker that was trying to run the blockade.

The M/T Hasna was transiting the Gulf of Oman when it ignored warnings to stop. Its rudder was then disabled by several 20 mm cannon rounds fired by an F/A-18

Super Hornet from the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, the command said in a statement.

Earlier, media reports suggested that the White House was nearing a deal with Iran on a one-page memo to formally end the war and establish a framework for broader negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program.

Axios, citing two U.S. officials and other sources briefed on the issue, reported that the proposed deal hinges on 14 points, including an Iranian commitment to a moratorium on nuclear enrichment, a U.S. agreement to lift sanctions and removal of restrictions around the Strait of Hormuz by both sides.

A spokesman for Iran’s parliamentary national security committee, reacting to the Axios report, said the memo was nothing more than a wish list for Americans.

“Iran has its finger on the trigger and is ready,” Ebrahim Re-

zaei said in an X post. “If they do not surrender and grant the necessary concessions... we will deliver a harsh and regret-inducing response.”

For weeks, the U.S. and Iran have issued conflicting statements about the prospects for a final agreement. Even under a temporary ceasefire, Trump has repeatedly threatened to renew strikes if Iran does not agree to his terms, including surrendering its nuclear material.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has worked to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, where shipping has slowed dramatically since the war began Feb. 28, driving up global fuel costs and rattling world leaders.

In an effort to pressure Iran economically, the U.S. Navy last month established its own maritime blockade aimed at preventing ships from entering or exiting Iranian ports.

On Tuesday, Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters at

the White House that Operation Epic Fury “is over,” saying the objectives of the offensive aspect of the operation had been achieved.

Trump administration officials have argued that the operation ended in April, an interpretation that could help avoid triggering limits under the War Powers Resolution, a law restricting prolonged military action without congressional approval.

Earlier on Tuesday, Trump said the U.S. was pausing Project Freedom, a mission to protect commercial ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

Axios reported that the president’s decision to back off the operation was based in part on progress in negotiations.

On Wednesday, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thanked Trump, saying the move would help advance “regional peace, stability and reconciliation during this sensitive period.”

## USS Ford enters the Atlantic Ocean on journey home

BY ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

NAPLES, Italy — The USS Gerald R. Ford left the Mediterranean Sea this week, a significant milestone in capping a record-breaking deployment that has seen the aircraft carrier on duty in a range of theaters.

Ford and its more than 4,500 embarked sailors and personnel transited the Strait of Gibraltar on Wednesday, presumably on its way back to Norfolk, Va., according to ship watchers.

The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group includes the destroyers USS Winston S. Churchill and USS Mahan along with

Carrier Air Wing 8.

A defense official confirmed Ford’s transit into the Atlantic Ocean on Wednesday, speaking on background because they were not authorized to comment publicly.

The Navy has not officially announced Ford’s expected return home, which was widely reported last month.

Ford’s departure from the Mediterranean comes as the carrier and its crew enter their 317th day of what had been expected to be a routine deployment to Europe that began nearly 11 months ago.

Since then, the carrier has

seen duty in the Eastern Mediterranean, Caribbean and Red seas, among other locations.

It also broke a post-Vietnam War record in April for lengthy carrier deployments and has eclipsed most of those same records established since 1964. The USS Saratoga was deployed for 308 days from 1972 to 1973.

Only USS Coral Sea, deployed for 329 days from 1964 to 1965, and USS Midway, deployed for 332 days from 1972 to 1973, have exceeded Ford, according to data compiled by USNI News.

During the deployment, Ford had a serious fire break out in its main laundry areas that affect-

ed several berthing compartments and displaced some 600 sailors while the carrier was on duty in the Red Sea.

Three service members were hurt in the blaze, although none suffered life-threatening injuries.

Shortly after the March 12 fire, Ford left the Middle East for repairs at Naval Support Activity Souda Bay on the Greek island of Crete and a port call in Croatia.

It returned to the Middle East in mid-April, leaving the Red Sea not long after the arrival of the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush.

# Watchdog to review Guard deployments

*Chicago Tribune*

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — The Pentagon's internal watchdog will conduct an evaluation "to determine the effectiveness" of President Donald Trump's deployment of National Guard troops to Chicago and other U.S. cities within the past year — moves the president said he made to either crack down on crime or assist immigration enforcement authorities in their mass deportation efforts, according to a Department of Defense memo.

Launched by the department's inspector general's office following requests for such an examination by Democratic U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, Illinois' senior senator, the review is expected to include an examina-

tion of the Republican president's activation last year of National Guard troops to the Chicago area during the federal immigration raids dubbed Operation Midway Blitz. Gov. JB Pritzker objected and fought the deployment in court.

The cost of those deployments has been routinely questioned.

In late January, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that deploying 375 Illinois National Guard troops cost \$21 million to protect federal property and federal immigration enforcement personnel, a figure that didn't include many other costs or the roughly 200 Texas National Guard members who were sent to Illinois for 41 days.

The Illinois troops sat idle on

a state-owned military base some 75 miles southwest of Chicago and never went on any missions, while a contingent of Texas troops was deployed into Chicago suburbs for one day.

In early January, the Chicago Tribune estimated the overall cost of Operation Midway Blitz at \$59 million, which included National Guard costs.

In the memo detailing the examination, Bryan Clark — an assistant inspector general for evaluations programs, combatant commands, and operations for the Department of Defense — said that the "objective of this evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the (department's) planning and execution of these domestic deployments, and to assess any corresponding

impact on (the department's) readiness."

But the memo doesn't specify how that effectiveness will be measured or how long the evaluation will take.

"We will examine the effectiveness of these deployments in accomplishing the stated objectives," Clark said. "We may revise the objective as the evaluation proceeds, and we will also consider suggestions from management for additional or revised objectives."

Clark also said the inspector general's office would perform the evaluation at "the offices of active duty and National Guard units with completed or ongoing deployments to U.S. cities" and may identify more locations during the evaluation.

## Papers: Marines told to use force as 'last resort' in LA

*Los Angeles Times*

WASHINGTON — Before being deployed to Los Angeles during anti-ICE protests last summer, U.S. Marines were given 12 rules for engaging with protesters, and Rule 1 was clear: Force "of any kind" was allowed only as a last resort.

If force were used, the rule stated, it "should be the minimum necessary to accomplish the mission."

That detail is among 178 pages of federal documents released by the Marine Corps to the nonprofit watchdog group American Oversight through the Freedom of Information Act and shared with The Times.

The documents paint a thorough picture of how Marines prepared to deploy in Southern California, where they stood alongside National Guard members and agents with the Department of Homeland Security.

The documents also illuminate a glaring contrast between

the training of Marines and that of immigration agents, who have been accused repeatedly of using unnecessary force against peaceful protesters, bystanders and immigrants during enforcement operations.

"Ironically, I would've felt much safer with Marine engagement than with DHS because of the depth of training," said Ryan Schwank, a former instructor for Immigration and Customs Enforcement recruits at the ICE Academy within the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Georgia.

Schwank is a whistleblower who resigned in February after revealing that the Trump administration had slashed immigration officer training. After reviewing the documents obtained by American Oversight, he said the training given to Marines on crowd control was "significantly more in-depth and longer than training given to an ICE officer, even under the best

of circumstances."

The Department of Homeland Security did not respond to questions and instead pointed to a February news release that said training has not been cut back and that new hires receive additional training after leaving the academy.

Schwank noted that the Marines and ICE officers came to Southern California with different objectives: As protectors of people and property, the Marines had a more limited, reactive mission, while ICE officers were charged with making arrests, a confrontational role.

The audit by the Homeland Security inspector general found that only seven of 63 officers reviewed had received any level of riot and crowd control training. Some officers told investigators that they needed additional training, and many "questioned their involvement in the operation" due to the lack of preparation.

"Without the necessary policies, training, and equipment, DHS will continue to face challenges securing Federal facilities during periods of civil disturbance that could result in injury, death, and liability," the audit concluded.

As of spring 2025, Homeland Security records show, the department had not corrected the training failures flagged earlier.

Liz Hempowicz, deputy executive director of American Oversight, said the Marine Corps' emphasis on de-escalation and on using force only as a last resort stands in stark contrast to what happened on the ground in Los Angeles with immigration agents.

Internal Homeland Security emails also obtained by American Oversight revealed that the agency's lead attorney said federal agents in Los Angeles should have "just started hitting the rioters and arresting everyone that couldn't get away."

# Ohio voters give wins to Brown, Ramaswamy

*Bloomberg News*

Voters in Ohio handily backed former presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy's bid to be the Republican nominee for governor, while Democrat Sherrod Brown will get another shot at returning to the Senate after being defeated in 2024.

With the war in Iran dragging on and fuel prices soaring, Ramaswamy and Brown will test whether voters in the one-time bellwether state stick with the largely Republican leadership they've backed in recent elections or drift back toward Democrats in frustration over President Donald Trump's economic stewardship.

Ramaswamy, a biotech entrepreneur who was initially part of

the government-efficiency effort led by billionaire Elon Musk, was projected to easily win the GOP primary Tuesday, according to NBC News and Decision Desk HQ. In the November race to replace term-limited Republican Gov. Mike DeWine, Ramaswamy will face Democrat Amy Acton, a doctor who was DeWine's health director during the pandemic.

Brown, who as a lawmaker embraced the Democratic party's working-class base and opposed free trade deals, won his party's nomination for the state's Senate seat. He'll face Republican Jon Husted, the former Ohio lieutenant governor who was appointed to replace JD Vance when he became vice president.

While historically seen as a swing state, Ohio has become more reliably Republican under Trump. He won the state three times, by 8 percentage points in 2016 and 2020 and by 11 points in 2024. The last Democrat to win a governor's race in Ohio was Ted Strickland in 2006.

With voters nationally souring over the economy, health care and concerns about artificial intelligence, Ohio will play a pivotal role in the battle for control of the Senate. And Republicans this cycle are defending just one seat — Maine — where Kamala Harris won in 2024.

That means that Democrats' path to the majority hinges on flipping seats in states that backed Trump for president. So

the party is going on offense in places like Ohio, North Carolina, Iowa, Alaska and Texas.

The Cook Political Report recently shifted its rating of the Senate contest in Ohio to "toss-up" from "lean Republican," while the rating of the state's governor's race shifted to "lean Republican" from "likely Republican."

The state's economy has long relied on auto-making, steel production and other manufacturing but lost 40% of its factory jobs between 1990 and 2010 as factory jobs moved offshore, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Since then, Ohio has attracted more technology-related development in recent years, including data centers.

## New Fla. map will cost taxpayers, add work for elections supervisors

*Tampa Bay Times*

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — County elections officials across Florida are scrambling to notify voters that their congressional district has changed. It's an effort that will cost taxpayers statewide millions.

In Tampa Bay alone, the notifications, which are required by law, could cost taxpayers nearly \$1.6 million.

Gov. Ron DeSantis on Monday signed into law a redrawn congressional map that is expected to be in effect when voters go to the polls for the August primaries and November midterm elections.

It cuts the state's reliably Democratic districts, including one in Tampa Bay, from eight to four. The map changes the majority of the state's congressional districts — 21 out of 28.

In Florida, 67 county elections supervisors administer

elections and register voters.

Those supervisors must provide updated voter information cards to residents whose congressional districts and local voting areas, called precincts, have changed.

The cards must reflect a voter's new precinct, districts and polling location, according to state law.

In Pasco County, voters are being split into three different districts instead of two.

Sending out tens of thousands of cards to affected voters in an election year is an unexpected expense, said Brian Corley, supervisor of elections in Pasco County. He estimated that sending those cards out alone would cost his office \$300,000.

He flagged that figure in a letter to state lawmakers representing Pasco County before they approved the map last week.

## Poll: Dem Xavier Becerra catching up to Hilton in California governor race

*The Orange County Register*

Former California Attorney General Xavier Becerra is rapidly gaining ground on political commentator Steve Hilton in the California governor's race, according to new polling from the California Democratic Party.

In the California Voter Opinion, Trend & Engagement Research Index survey released Monday, Becerra has about 18% of voters supporting him, polling the same as Republican candidate Hilton.

The result could foretell a turn in Democrats' fortunes, as recent gubernatorial race polls have put the two main Republican contenders, Hilton and Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco, as the leaders going into the June 2 primary.

The previous survey, released two weeks ago, had Hilton leading the pack at 16%, with Bianco in second, at 14%.

Becerra, also a former U.S. Health and Human Services secretary, was polling at just 4% a month ago. But he has quickly become one of the Democrats' strongest polling candidates after Eric Swalwell dropped his bid and resigned from Congress last month amid sexual assault allegations.

The latest poll puts Bianco in third place at 14%, followed by Tom Steyer, the billionaire hedge fund founder and environmental advocate, at 12%.

Former U.S. Rep. Katie Porter remains in fifth place but saw a slight dip in support, from 10% to 8%, since the last polling. San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan, in sixth place, saw his support rise from 5% to 7%.

Trailing in the pack of candidates are former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who's polling at 2%, and Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond at 1%.

# Ukraine: Russia attacks show truce rejected

*Bloomberg News*

Ukraine said drone and missile attacks showed the Kremlin had rejected Kyiv's offer of a truce, raising the stakes ahead of Russian President Vladimir Putin's demand for a ceasefire during the annual May 9 Victory Day parade in Moscow.

The Russian army continued hostilities and shelling throughout Wednesday after overnight attacks against Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Kramatorsk and other cities, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a post on X. "Russia's choice is an obvious spurning of a ceasefire and

of saving lives," Zelenskyy said.

The overnight Russian attacks included 108 drones and three missiles, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said earlier in a post on X. "This shows that Russia rejects peace and its fake calls for a ceasefire on May 9th have nothing to do with diplomacy."

Russia hadn't said it would abide by a truce from midnight that Zelenskyy proposed in response to Putin's earlier announcement of a unilateral May 8-9 ceasefire to mark the World War II victory over Nazi Germany.

The Russian Defense Ministry on Monday threatened "a massive missile strike on the center" of Kyiv if Ukraine disrupted the annual military parade on Red Square. It announced last week that the parade would take place without heavy military equipment for the first time since 2007, amid the threat from Ukrainian drones.

Zelenskyy on Tuesday said there had been no coordination with his government on Russia's ceasefire announcement.

He hasn't said whether Ukraine will refrain from strikes on May 9. "Based on the reports

from our military and intelligence, we will decide on our further actions," Zelenskyy said on Wednesday.

Ukraine has intensified attacks in Russia in recent weeks, including on targets deep inside the country. A drone hit a residential tower in an upscale district of Moscow on Monday, a rare failure of the capital's air defenses.

A Russian strike hit a kindergarten in Ukraine's Sumy region killing one person, though no children were in the building at the time, the local military administration said on Telegram.

## Trump: Pope 'endangering a lot of Catholics' on Iran

*NJ.com*

President Donald Trump renewed his criticism of Pope Leo XIV this week, saying the pontiff is "endangering a lot of Catholics" just days before Secretary of State Marco Rubio's journey to the Vatican.

Trump's latest attack came Monday during a discussion about the Iran war on Salem News Channel's "The Hugh Hewitt Show."

"Well, the Pope would rather talk about the fact that it's OK for Iran to have a nuclear weapon," Trump said. "I don't think that's very good.

"I think he's endangering a lot of Catholics and a lot of people, but I guess, if it's up to the Pope. He thinks it's just fine for Iran to have a nuclear weapon."

Leo's record directly undercuts Trump's claim. The pope has repeatedly called for a world free from nuclear threat and appealed for peace between Iran and Israel. "May the nuclear threat never again dictate the future of humanity," he said in March.

Trump has repeatedly clashed with Leo since the U.S. launched strikes against Iran on Feb. 28, angered by the pontiff's calls for

peace and an end to the conflict.

The president's latest attack comes as Rubio, a Catholic, prepares to meet Leo at the Vatican on Thursday.

The Vatican meeting comes after weeks of rising tensions.

The feud ignited in April when Trump accused the pope of being "weak" on crime and terrorism over the pope's criticism of the administration's deportation policies and the Iran war.

Leo responded by declaring that God does not hear the prayers of those who "manipulate religion and the very name of God for their own military, economic, and political gain."

Trump then posted an AI-generated image depicting himself as a Christ-like figure. In response to backlash, Trump said he thought the image showed him as a doctor and has refused to apologize.

Leo has fired back in kind, lamenting that the world is "being ravaged by a handful of tyrants" — without naming names.

The controversy has drawn condemnation from across the political spectrum. Religious leaders, MAGA supporters and Democrats all condemned Trump's AI post.

## Report: ICE facility rife with abuses lowers standards

*The Seattle Times*

SEATTLE — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has lowered detention standards at the Northwest ICE Processing Center under a new short-term contract, even as newly released internal records reveal more than 170 reported incidents of sexual abuse and assault occurred there over a roughly 10-year period, according to a new report by the University of Washington Center for Human Rights.

Researchers found ICE and GEO Group, the private company that owns and operates the facility, ignored key evidence when conducting internal investigations, failed to incorporate federally mandated preventive measures and did not report crimes.

The findings come as the Tacoma immigration detention center is under likely the weakest standards ever applied to the facility since its opening in 2004, researchers said. In late March, ICE issued a seven-month "bridge" contract to GEO Group set to run until Oct. 27 while the federal agency determines future plans for the facility.

"We see that they're essentially acting as a lawless space, and now they've written a new contract saying, basically, they intend to continue to do so," said Angelina Snodgrass Godoy, director of the UW center. The center has published extensive research on human rights concerns at the jail-like facility, including medical neglect allegations, sanitation issues and the use of solitary confinement.

Of particular concern, researchers said in Tuesday's report, is a clause in the new contract directing the facility to ignore state and local laws when they demand higher standards than federal law.

That language appears to invalidate local efforts to provide oversight, such as a state law requiring the facility to allow the state's Department of Health to conduct inspections. Those inspections are the subject of an ongoing legal battle.

The new contract also mandates additional capacity above local zoning limits, up to 1,635 beds from 1,575, and includes provisions that could further delay medical care in emergency situations.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Beaver bites boy, 8, who was fishing at lake

**NJ** MAHWAH — A beaver bit an 8-year-old boy who was fishing at a lake in Mahwah on Sunday, authorities said.

The boy was casting a line from along the shoreline at Lake Henry in Continental Soldiers Park at about 6 p.m. when a beaver emerged from the lake and charged at him, Mahwah police said. The boy tried to run away, but tripped and the beaver bit him in the upper thigh and continued to attack him before a nearby family acquaintance intervened, according to police.

The adult hit and kicked the beaver several times, causing the animal to retreat.

Emergency workers brought the boy to an area hospital, where he was treated for minor injuries, according to police.

Meanwhile, animal control workers were called in to capture the beaver, which continued to circle the area. The animal, which exhibited signs of illness, will be sent for testing.

### Ocean temperatures off coast worry scientists

**CA** LOS ANGELES — Over the past several months, an intense marine heat wave has developed in the Pacific from Washington state to Baja California, with a particularly extreme hot spot between the Bay Area and San Diego. Ocean temperatures have spiked to as much as 7 degrees hotter than average, with many places breaking records for this time of year.

The heatwave off the California coast is already causing starving birds to wash ashore

and could increase the risk of thunderstorms and dry lightning that could worsen the wildfire season, scientists say.

Researchers at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at University of California San Diego have recorded 38 days since Jan. 1 when the surface temperature off their La Jolla pier in San Diego broke records going as far back as 1916. On March 20, the ocean there reached 71 degrees Fahrenheit, the hottest ever recorded in March and a level normally seen in August.

### Leaders defiant on city's ban on assault weapons

**CO** DENVER — The U.S. Department of Justice last week demanded Denver end its long-standing ban on assault weapons and threatened to sue should officials fail to comply, prompting defiance from city leaders who on Monday vowed to defend the decades-old municipal law.

“Denver’s law has stood for 37 years because it works, it saves lives and it reflects the values of our community,” Mayor Mike Johnston said in a statement Monday. “No demand or lawsuit from Washington is going to change that.”

Since 1989, Denver has restricted the possession and sale of guns with magazines carrying more than 15 rounds — which includes AR-15-style rifles as well as other types of guns.

In an April 28 letter to Johnston and Denver City Attorney Miko Brown, Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon demanded that Denver stop enforcing the ban, acknowledge

the law is unconstitutional and enter into a consent decree to ensure the ban is not enforced.

Should the city fail to take those steps, the Justice Department will sue to protect Denver residents’ Second Amendment right to bear and keep arms, Dhillon wrote in the two-page letter.

“The Ordinance bans many weapons, including AR-15 style semiautomatic rifles,” the letter reads. “Law-abiding Americans own and use for lawful purposes literally tens of millions of AR-15 style rifles. ... The city has banned an arm in common use for lawful purposes by law-abiding citizens. Therefore, the Ordinance violates the Second Amendment.”

City officials wholly rejected the DOJ’s stance in a response letter Monday.

Brown noted that six different federal courts have upheld bans on assault weapons or large-capacity magazine bans and that other legal challenges to Denver’s ban have failed.

### Schools get lousy grade on student data privacy

**NY** NEW YORK — NYC public schools suffer from glaring omissions in student data privacy policies, a new audit by State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli found, raising fresh concerns about the embrace of artificial intelligence in the classroom.

For example, auditors found the city’s school system doesn’t have written policies on risk assessment and data backups, or keep a full list of all applications used by local schools. More than a quarter of school employees skip annual cybersecurity train-

ings, according to the comptroller’s office — and if a breach does occur, local education officials may fail to report the incident or notify families in a timely manner.

In 141 breaches and inadvertent data releases between 2023 and 2025, the comptroller’s office found officials delayed reporting 48% of incidents to the New York State Education Department, and held up notifying families about 11% of the time. Delayed notifications ranged from 1 to 460 days.

### Man accused of stealing jewelry from suitcase

**NC** CHARLOTTE — A man accused of stealing \$5,000 worth of jewelry from a woman’s suitcase at Charlotte Douglas International Airport later tried selling it on Facebook Marketplace, police said.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg police charged Alonys Reyes-Garcia, 22, with larceny, possession of stolen goods and carrying a concealed gun on April 14, according to court records.

The woman said her jewelry, which included multiple David Yurman pieces with precious stones and some that were diamond-encrusted, was stolen from her luggage during a layover on April 11, a police affidavit said.

Police found the same pieces listed in a Facebook Marketplace ad by Reyes-Garcia, who detectives learned worked for a contracting company at the airport that handled luggage, the affidavit said.

Officers arranged a meeting with Reyes-Garcia under the guise of purchasing the jewelry.

— From wire reports

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# Cunningham, Pistons turn back Cavs in Game 1

Associated Press

DETROIT — Cade Cunningham scored 23 points, Tobias Harris had 20 and the Detroit Pistons beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 111-101 on Tuesday night in Game 1 of their second-round series.

Duncan Robinson added 19 points for top-seeded Detroit, which ended an NBA record-tying 12-game postseason losing streak against a single opponent, a drought that dated to the 2007 Eastern Conference finals.

The Pistons host Game 2 on Thursday night.

Detroit forced 20 turnovers that led to 31 points in a strong performance against Cleveland's potent backcourt of Donovan Mitchell and James Harden.

"That's what this series presents, but we're up for a challenge," Harris said. "I thought

tonight we did a great job of that."

Mitchell scored 23 points, ending his NBA-record streak of scoring 30-plus points in nine straight series openers.

Harden had 22 points and Max Strus scored 19 for the No. 4-seeded Cavaliers, who pulled into a tie midway through the fourth quarter after trailing for most of the night and by as much as 18 points.

Harden committed seven turnovers and pointed the blame at himself.

"You look within first," he said. "Look at my turnovers and a lot of them are just on me and nothing they did."

Cleveland center Jarrett Allen was limited to two points and three rebounds, coming off a 22-point, 19-rebound performance in an elimination game against Toronto.

Two days after both teams won a Game 7, the Pistons started strong and led 37-31 after a quarter.

Detroit took a 59-46 lead into the second half, when the cushion was no longer comfortable.

The Cavs pulled within three points late in the third and Ron Holland hit a buzzer-beating 3-pointer to end the quarter and put the Pistons up 83-76.

After Cleveland cut its deficit to three again early in the fourth, Detroit responded with eight consecutive points to restore a double-digit lead.

The Cavaliers, though, wouldn't go away.

Harden, playing the Pistons for the first time since Cleveland acquired him, scored seven straight points to pull the Cavs into a 93-all tie with 5:28 left.

Jalen Duren blocked Hard-

en's next shot and dunked on Detroit's next three possessions — each off Cunningham assists.

The Pistons won the Central Division this year by eight games ahead of defending champion Cleveland, splitting four games during the regular season.

Detroit earned 60 victories and the top seed in the East just two years after losing 68 games and setting a single-season NBA record with 28 straight losses.

The Pistons rallied from a 3-1 deficit in the first round against Orlando to advance in the playoffs for the first time since 2008.

The Cavaliers outlasted the Raptors in seven games to reach the second round for the third straight year, a run that started with coach J.B. Bickerstaff, who was fired by Cleveland and hired a month later by Detroit.

## Holmgren scores 24, Thunder shake rust to roll past Lakers

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Chet Holmgren had 24 points and 12 rebounds, and the Oklahoma City Thunder routed the Los Angeles Lakers 108-90 on Tuesday night in Game 1 of their Western Conference semifinal series.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Ajay Mitchell each added 18 points for Oklahoma City. The defending champions improved to 5-0 in the playoffs, despite missing 2025 All-Star Jalen Williams with an injured left hamstring for the third straight game. The Thunder shot 49.4% from the field and made 13 of 30 3-pointers.

OKC will host Game 2 on Thursday.

Los Angeles struggled to find offense

without scoring champion Luka Doncic, who has missed the past month with an injured left hamstring. LeBron James scored 27 points and Rui Hachimura added 18 for the Lakers. Austin Reaves, who averaged 23.3 points in the regular season, was held to eight on 3-for-16 shooting.

The Thunder won all four regular-season matchups by an average of 29.3 points, and this one was only slightly closer. Oklahoma City held the Lakers to 41.7% shooting and forced 17 turnovers.

LA ran out to a 7-0 lead, with James scoring five of the points. Eventually, the Thunder shook off the rust from an eight-day break and went up 31-26 at the end of the first quarter, despite 12 points from James.

Holmgren's two-handed alley-oop dunk on a lob from Isaiah Hartenstein put OKC up 48-39. Lakers forward Jarred Vanderbilt injured the pinkie finger on his right hand on the play, left the game and did not return.

The Thunder led 61-53 at halftime, despite 16 points from James.

Mitchell, who started in Williams' place, made a corner 3-pointer and was fouled by Marcus Smart in the final minute of the third quarter. His free throw put Oklahoma City up 84-72, a score that held up until the end of the period.

Alex Caruso's fast-break dunk early in the fourth put the Thunder up 88-73, and they maintained control from there.

## Celtics' Brown fined \$50K for criticism of playoff officiating

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The NBA fined Boston All-Star Jaylen Brown \$50,000 for public criticism of game officials following the Celtics' first-round exit from the playoffs.

The fine was announced by NBA Executive Vice Presi-

dent and Head of Basketball Operations James Jones on Tuesday night, two days after Brown said in a livestream he hosts that game officials "clearly had an agenda" to call fouls against him for "pushing off" when he drove toward the basket while handling the ball.

"There's some referees that need to be investigated," Brown said on the livestream Sunday, a day after Boston's 109-100 loss to the Philadelphia 76ers in Game 7 of their first-round playoff series.

"Every good basketball player does this. What are

y'all talking about? They clearly had an agenda," Brown said.

Brown was previously fined \$35,000 in January after a two-minute postgame rant about the officiating following the Celtics' loss to San Antonio.

# MacKinnon, Avs defeat Wild for 2-0 lead

Associated Press

DENVER — Nathan MacKinnon scored a goal and assisted on two more as the Colorado Avalanche rolled through Minnesota's newest netminder, Filip Gustavsson, on their way to a 5-2 win over the Wild on Tuesday night, grabbing a 2-0 lead in the second-round playoff series.

The Avalanche have now won six straight postseason games, which ties the 2021 squad for the franchise's longest win streak to begin the playoffs.

This game featured a little more defense than the 9-6 eruption in Game 1. The 14 goals for the Avalanche are the most in the first two games of a playoff series since the Calgary Flames had 15 against the Los Angeles Kings in 1988.

Martin Necas, Gabriel Landeskog and Nicolas Roy all scored their first goals of the series. Valeri Nichushkin added

an empty-netter in the closing seconds. Twelve different Avalanche players have scored in the series, an NHL record for the first two games of a series.

"It's great. I mean, right now, that's what you need," defenseman Cale Makar said. "You need everybody contributing and we're finding ways to do that. There's a lot of jelling minds right now."

Scott Wedgewood made 29 saves on a night where he drew contact — he was knocked into the net on one occasion — and took a puck off the mask, leading to some quick repairs. It was a bounceback performance after giving up six goals in Game 1.

"He's been unbelievable for us," Roy said. "You can feel the confidence he's got and it bleeds through the lineup."

The Wild went with Gustavsson in net after Jesper Wallstedt

gave up eight goals in the 9-6 loss. Gustavsson got off to a rocky start by giving up goals on the opening two shots of the first period and the first shot of the second. He settled down and finished with 18 saves.

The series shifts to Minnesota for Game 3 on Saturday.

The Avalanche are 18-2 in best-of-seven playoff series when winning the first two games since moving to Denver in 1995-96.

Kirill Kaprizov and Marcus Johansson had goals for the Wild. Tempers flared in the third, with Parker Kelly getting into a scuffle with Matt Boldy and hitting the linesman with his glove. No penalties were called.

Colorado weathered a late rush by the Wild after they pulled Gustavsson for an extra skater late in the game. Boldy took a big hit from MacKinnon

along the boards.

The game boiled down to special teams. The Avalanche were 2-for-5 on the power play while the Wild finished 0-for-2.

Necas gave the Avalanche a 1-0 lead in the first period but just six seconds later Kaprizov tied it. The six-second gap between the goals was tied for the fifth-fastest two goals by both teams in postseason history, according to NHL Stats.

Landeskog later added a power-play score on a pass from MacKinnon, who notched two assists in the first period for his 21st career multipoint playoff period.

"Just excited to play playoff hockey," said MacKinnon, whose team has scored five or more goals in three straight postseason games for the fifth time in franchise history.

"Obviously, the best time of year."

## Leafs win lottery for No. 1 pick; Sharks move up to No. 2

Associated Press

SECAUCUS, N.J. — The Toronto Maple Leafs won the lottery for the first pick in the NHL draft on Tuesday night, a significant victory that could change the trajectory of the storied franchise at a critical time.

The Maple Leafs got some lottery luck a little more than 48 hours after hiring John Chayka as general manager and bringing back franchise legend Mats Sundin to serve as a hockey operations adviser. Chayka and Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment president and CEO Keith Pelley got some harsh questions at the introductory news conference, but it was all smiles at Toronto's facility after getting the No. 1 pick.

"I'm extremely happy for the Toronto Maple Leafs fanbase, of course," Sundin said. "Certainly this is really going to help when you're looking into the future and try to help this team and what

we're looking for the future for the Toronto Maple Leafs, so it's great to get the first pick."

Penn State's Gavin McKenna and Swedish winger Ivar Stenberg are rated as the top North American and European prospects by NHL Central Scouting. McKenna has been considered the prospective top choice for quite some time.

"I've kept track of him for a number of years now, and the skill level, the creativity, obviously the puck ability and then his shot and release is all pretty special," Chayka said. "A good package, and it'll be good to get with the scouts and talk through it all, but I know there's a lot of passion for a lot of players, including Gavin."

The most immediate question for the Leafs under new management is the future of captain and best player Auston Matthews after they missed the playoffs for the first time in his career. It's the

first time they've won the lottery since taking Matthews with the No. 1 pick in 2016, and the draft is back in Buffalo where they made that selection.

Toronto had the fifth-highest odds of winning it at 8.5%. Vancouver had the highest at 18.5%, has never had the first pick and dropped to third. Chayka called moving up a fortuitous bounce.

"Long road ahead, of course: Lots of work to do still, but when you get a first overall pick, it's a monumental type of opportunity," Chayka said.

"You don't know what's going to occur in these types of situations, but you do know you need some luck and it happened. I don't think it changes the vision or the strategy, but certainly when these things happen it can change course and timelines, etc. But it's not something that we're going to change how we think about things."

The Leafs get to keep the pick

this year but lose their first-round pick in 2027 and '28 to Philadelphia and Boston. There is some uncertainty as to which order for the Flyers and Bruins, and deputy commissioner Bill Daly called it a complicated situation that would need to be worked out.

The San Jose Sharks won the lottery for the second pick. With yet another top-five pick, GM Mike Grier and his staff can augment a young group already led by Macklin Celebrini and including Will Smith and Michael Misa.

"There's lots of options there," Grier said.

"There's centers, there's 'D,' there's wingers, so to have the opportunity to add another very talented player to our young core is very exciting."

Chicago has the No. 4 pick and the New York Rangers No. 5.

"We're going to get a great player," Blackhawks GM Kyle Davidson said. "It's all about accumulating talent."

# Cubs walk off Reds for 7th straight win

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Michael Busch singled in the winning run in the 10th inning after hitting a tying homer in the eighth and the Chicago Cubs won their seventh straight by rallying again to beat the Cincinnati Reds 3-2 on Tuesday night.

Busch won it when his grounder up the middle leading off the 10th against Sam Moll (1-2) handcuffed shortstop Elly De La Cruz. Dansby Swanson scored from second, giving Chicago its 17th win in 20 games. The Cubs have won 13 straight at home, their best streak at Wrigley Field since a 14-game run in 2008.

The Cubs scored two in the ninth on Monday to beat the Reds, who have lost a season-high five in a row.

Reds closer Emilio Pagán came in to start the ninth and fell to the ground clutching his left hamstring after throwing one pitch to Nico Hoerner. He stayed down for several minutes before leaving the field on a cart.

**Red Sox 10, Tigers 3:** Cedanne Rafaela homered and drove in four runs, and visiting Boston beat Detroit for the second straight night.

Framber Valdez (2-2) allowed a career-high 10 runs before being ejected in the fourth inning for hitting Trevor Story, which caused both benches to empty, though no punches were thrown. He also matched a career worst by allowing three homers.

Willson Contreras and Wilyer Abreu also homered for the Red Sox, who had lost four of five before playing the Tigers. Boston is 4-2 against Detroit this season.

**Rays 4, Blue Jays 3:** Ben Williamson drove in the winning run with a single after Yandy Díaz tied it with an RBI single and host Tampa Bay rallied in the eighth inning to beat Toronto for its fifth straight victory.

The Rays won for the 11th

time in 12 games and ran their winning streak at home to nine. They haven't allowed more than three runs in 12 straight games, tying a team record set in 2013.

Jonathan Aranda had a one-out double off Tyler Rogers (1-2) to get the rally started. Díaz singled to tie it 3-3. He took second on Jake Fraley's single before Williamson drove him in.

**Phillies 9, Athletics 1:** Bryce Harper homered twice, Christopher Sánchez struck out 10 batters in eight strong innings and streaking Philadelphia defeated the visiting Athletics.

Bryson Stott also went deep, J.T. Realmuto drove in two runs and Brandon Marsh had three singles for the Phillies, who have won seven of eight since interim manager Don Mattingly replaced fired Rob Thomson.

Sánchez (3-2) limited the A's to just three hits while reaching double-digit strikeouts for the ninth time in his career. The NL Cy Young runner-up last season walked one and hit a batter.

**Orioles 9, Marlins 7:** Adley Rutschman had a go-ahead, pinch-hit single and Leody Taveras followed with a run-scoring single in the ninth inning to lift visiting Baltimore past Miami, snapping a five-game skid.

The switch-hitting Rutschman replaced the lefty-swinging Samuel Basallo — who tripled, doubled and singled earlier — to face lefty Andrew Nardi (2-2). Rutschman hit a liner to left that scored Taylor Ward from second. Taveras' single to right scored Pete Alonso. Both Ward and Alonso had reached on walks.

Basallo drove in four runs and Alonso doubled and walked twice and scored four times for the Orioles. Rico García (3-0) got the last four outs for the win.

**Twins 11, Nationals 3:** Byron Buxton hit a three-run homer, Brooks Lee drove in three runs and Taj Bradley (4-1) struck out eight in six two-run innings to help visiting Minnesota beat Washington.

Buxton's homer, his sixth in the last eight games and 11th this season, made it 10-3 in the eighth. Lee was 3 for 5 with two doubles and Trevor Larnach added two hits and two RBIs.

**Yankees 7, Rangers 4:** Jazz Chisholm Jr. hit a go-ahead homer off Jacob deGrom in the sixth inning, and host New York beat Texas for its fifth straight win and 15th in 17 games.

Ryan McMahon hit a tying two-run homer off deGrom in the second inning after the Yankees trailed 3-0 before their first at-bats. McMahon joined teammate Giancarlo Stanton, Freddie Freeman and Austin Riley as the only players with at least three homers off deGrom (2-2).

**Royals 5, Guardians 3:** Michael Massey hit a go-ahead two-run homer, Isaac Collins also went deep and host Kansas City pushed its winning streak to five with a victory over AL Central-rival Cleveland.

Stephen Kolek (1-0) allowed a three-run shot by Rhys Hoskins, but little else over six innings in his season debut. The right-hander strained his oblique in his first start of spring training, but Kolek had pitched well in four rehab starts at Triple-A Omaha before the Royals had him make a spot start for Noah Cameron, who's dealing with some lower back tightness.

**Astros 2, Dodgers 1:** Shohei Ohtani (2-2) allowed his first two home runs of the season to Christian Walker and Braden Shewmake, and Peter Lambert pitched seven strong innings to give host Houston a win over Los Angeles.

Lambert (2-2) allowed three hits and walked four with four strikeouts in his longest outing of the season. Bryan King gave up a run in the eighth before pitching a scoreless ninth for his third save.

**Angels 4, White Sox 3:** Mike Trout, Jorge Soler and Zach Neto hit home runs, Ryan Zeferjahn worked out of a bases-load-

ed jam in the ninth inning and host Los Angeles held on over Chicago.

Zeferjahn hit a batter and walked two in the ninth before retiring Edgar Quero on a groundout for his first save this season and his third in 10 career opportunities. The right-hander struck out rookie home run leader Munetaka Murakami — tied with the Yankees' Aaron Judge at 14 — with a runner on first to get the final out in the eighth.

**Diamondbacks 9, Pirates 0:** Eduardo Rodriguez (3-0) gave up just two hits and struck out seven over seven strong innings, Geraldo Perdomo added a two-run double and host Arizona cruised past Pittsburgh.

The D-backs used a five-run sixth inning to take a 7-0 lead. Gabriel Moreno hit an RBI double down the right-field foul line, Perdomo added his two-run double, Ketel Marte hit an RBI groundout and Corbin Carroll brought home the final run on a sacrifice fly.

**Braves 3, Mariners 2:** Matt Olson hit the go-ahead homer in the ninth, Bryce Elder pitched six innings of two-run ball and visiting Atlanta beat Seattle.

Mauricio Dubón had a two-run double and Ozzie Albies extended his hit streak to 17 games to tie the franchise record. He is tied for the league lead in hits with 47.

**Padres 10, Giants 5:** Jackson Merrill had three hits and drove in two runs, Xander Bogaerts homered and visiting San Diego tied its season highs for hits with 14 and runs in a victory over San Francisco.

Sung-Mun Song had a two-run double — his first MLB hit — with two outs in the fourth, advanced to third on a throwing error and scored on Merrill's single to cap the Padres' five-run inning and make it 6-4. Miguel Andujar singled, doubled and tripled and had an RBI, and Bogaerts and Nick Castellanos each drove in two runs.