

Xi warns Trump on Taiwan mishandling

Bloomberg News

After Xi Jinping regaled Donald Trump with goose-stepping soldiers and flag-waving children, the Chinese leader's warning that Taiwan could lead to "clashes" between the superpowers amounted to a thunderclap in the choreographed world of Communist Party politics.

Cautioning American presidents against interfering with the self-ruled island is standard practice for China. But Xi's assertion that it could trigger a "highly dangerous situation" for the world's biggest economies marked his bluntest language yet on the topic. Beijing's decision to release Xi's remarks before the nearly two-and-a-half hour huddle in Beijing had even wrapped underscored the gravity of the message.

Trump must now grapple with whether Xi will actually allow Taiwan to derail the broader relationship, particularly with the Chinese leader set to

visit the White House in September — the second of four planned meetings this year. Any effort by the Republican leader to quash a planned \$14 billion U.S. arms sale to Taipei would likely unleash a bipartisan backlash in Washington, at a time when he already faces voter unhappiness over the Iran war. If the deal is approved, Trump will face Beijing's wrath.

"We want President Trump to fully understand the extreme importance of this issue for us," said Wu Xinbo, director at Fudan University's Center for American Studies in Shanghai, who previously advised China's Foreign Ministry. Xi spoke out in such a "strong and direct way" to urge the U.S. to stop arms sales to Taiwan and declare that it opposes independence for the island, Wu added.

Trump was uncharacteristically quiet in the immediate aftermath of the warning. The president didn't brief reporters

on the outcome and a U.S. readout hours later making no mention of Taiwan — a chip hub the Communist Party considers its own despite never having ruled it.

A senior administration official later said both sides reiterated their long-stated stances on the island's status and everyone understands each other's position.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told NBC that American arms sales to Taiwan "did not feature prominently" in the Trump-Xi talks.

"From our perspective, any forced change in the status quo and the situation that's there now would be bad for both countries," Rubio said.

For the U.S., it shouldn't have come as a surprise. In the weeks before the summit, China dialed up pressure on Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te, whose party supports independence. Last month, Xi hosted the chairwoman of the island's Beijing-

friendly opposition party, marking the first such meeting in a decade. Weeks later, China blocked Lai's overseas travel by pressuring three African nations to prevent his plane from safely transiting their airspace.

Xi's strong words over Taiwan stood out during an otherwise cordial summit. The two leaders smiled as they toured the Temple of Heaven on Thursday afternoon, and reaffirmed their commitment to stable trade. Trump brought with him a delegation of 30 corporate executives — including well-known figures like Elon Musk, Tim Cook, and Jensen Huang — with the intention of securing greater market access.

Forex investors seemed to relish the overall stability. The offshore yuan edged up as much as 0.1% to its strongest level in over three years, as the currency extended its gain into an 11th straight session, its longest winning streak since 2017 — the year Trump last visited China.

Seoul seeks US support in nuke-powered sub project

By **JULIE MASSON**
AND **YOOJIN LEE**
Stars and Stripes

South Korea's defense minister wants "active support" from the U.S. Navy for Seoul's effort to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, a project greenlit by President Donald Trump last year as part of expanding bilateral defense cooperation.

Defense Minister Ahn Gyu-back raised the question Tuesday during a meeting in Washington with acting U.S. Navy Secretary Hung Cao, according to a Ministry of National Defense news release Wednesday.

Ahn said the nuclear submarine initiative would strengthen the allies' shared security interests and further advance the U.S.-South Korea alliance, though the ministry did not specify what type of support Seoul is seeking from the Navy.

Seoul makes an ideal partner for U.S. naval cooperation, Ahn said. He cited his country's advanced shipbuilding capabilities and recent legislation establishing a legal framework for Korean investment in the United States.

South Korea's National Assembly passed the Special Act

for Korea — U.S. Strategic Investment Management bill on March 12.

Seoul agreed to invest \$200 billion in "strategic industries" in the U.S., as well as an additional \$150 billion shipbuilding cooperation package approved by Washington, according to a statement that month by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Resources.

Washington formally approved Seoul's bid to build nuclear-powered attack submarines in November. In a joint fact sheet published by the White House that month, Wash-

ington said it would work closely with South Korea to "advance requirements for this shipbuilding project, including avenues to source fuel."

Following his meeting with Ahn, Cao wrote Wednesday on X that interoperability, collaboration and cooperation are all "necessary to deter aggression and maintain a free and open maritime domain."

Militaries use "interoperability" to describe the ability of a country's armed forces to use another country's training methods and military equipment.

Army is testing AI to speed up resupplies

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

WAIKIKI BEACH, Hawaii — The Army is testing artificial intelligence tools that track ammunition, fuel and other supplies across the battlefield, a shift officials say could transform one of warfare's slowest processes into an advantage.

Army leaders and defense technology experts, during an hourlong panel discussion Tuesday, described AI as a way for commanders and logistics officers to move faster in future wars by replacing cumbersome paperwork and written requests with technology that monitors — and even predicts — when supplies are needed.

The panel — part of the three-day Land Forces Pacific, or LANPAC, symposium — highlighted how the Army's near-

term AI push may be less about futuristic weapons than about simplifying complicated battlefield tasks.

"To compete in the 21st century, we need to move beyond 20th-century tools and 20th-century processes, and that's where AI and machine learning can be leveraged," said Tom Goter, chief AI and data officer for Govini, a defense software company developing logistics tools for the military.

One application the Army is exploring is Govini's flagship product, Ark, a suite of AI-enabled applications. Its logistics application uses live data, Army doctrine and tracking software to monitor supplies such as ammunition for real-time inventory and logistics awareness.

"As we learned in lessons from Ukraine and other regions

in the world that are in conflict, things move quick — they move in seconds," Army Col. Matthew Skaggs, director of intelligence for United Nations Command, said. "And the data latency that we have on our legacy mission command systems is hours, and sometimes days."

Skaggs, who serves as director of intelligence for U.S. Forces Korea and deputy director of intelligence for Combined Forces Command, clarified Wednesday that AI command-and-control systems in development are not designed to let AI make targeting decisions. Instead, he said, they reduce the manual and cognitive workload for soldiers and commanders.

Skaggs described the complexity of manual logistics requests — something he experienced during his early career as

a tank officer.

"We would fill out these handwritten, little reports estimating how many rounds I shot, how many rounds I would need," he told Stars and Stripes in a follow-up interview. Those estimates would then be passed through numerous steps in the chain, "and then we would get what we get," he said.

Using AI for logistics, however, means fuel, ammunition and other supplies are automatically scheduled for delivery "at the right level and the right type," he added.

Skaggs compared the emerging military applications of AI to major inventions such as the machine gun, tanks, fighter planes and drones, noting that each of those "totally changed how war was fought and how the enemy viewed us."

Army recovers remains of second missing soldier

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

The remains of the second U.S. Army soldier who went missing May 2 while off duty from military training in Morocco have been recovered, military officials said Wednesday.

The Army identified the soldier as Spc. Mariyah Symone Collington, 19, of Tavares, Fla.

Royal Moroccan Armed Forces flew her remains by helicopter to the Moulay El Hassan Military Hospital in Guelmim, Morocco, according to a statement from Europe and Africa Command.

Collington served as an air and missile defense crew member with Charlie Battery, 5th Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command,

according to the Army.

"The loss of Spc. Collington is a profound loss for the 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command," unit commander Brig. Gen. Curtis King said. "Her recovery closes the search for our two missing Soldiers, but our commitment to caring for their Families, friends and teammates continues."

The announcement follows the May 9 recovery of the remains of another soldier, 1st Lt. Kendrick Lamont Key Jr., a 14A Air Defense Artillery officer.

The two soldiers fell off an oceanside cliff during an off-duty recreational hike in Morocco, according to the Army. They were reported missing May 2 after participating in African Lion, an annual multinational military exercise held in Morocco.

Officials downplay canceled deployment

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Polish defense officials are downplaying the effects of a canceled U.S. Army tank brigade rotation to the country, saying the decision is in line with a broader Pentagon plan to rearrange forces in Europe.

Polish Defense Minister Wladyslaw Marcin Kosiniak-Kamysz said late Thursday that the plan to halt the deployment of a Fort Hood, Texas-based brigade to his country was more about a U.S. decision to reduce troop levels in Germany.

"This issue does not concern Poland — it relates to the previously announced change in the presence of some U.S. Armed Forces in Europe. The rapidly

developing capabilities of the Polish Armed Forces and the presence of U.S. forces in Poland strengthen NATO's eastern flank," he said on X.

Cezary Tomczyk, another top Polish official, also said the developments were linked to the plan to cut forces elsewhere.

"This message concerns Germany. It does not concern Poland. Poland is consistently seeking to increase the presence of U.S. troops," he said.

The officials did not elaborate on what basis they were able to draw such conclusions. However, the situation underscores a broader sense of uncertainty in Europe as questions swirl around the United States' plans for positioning troops on the Continent.

Mildenhall airmen in new Jack Ryan film

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

RAF Mildenhall and some of its airmen will soon appear on screen in “Jack Ryan: Ghost War,” the latest installment in the long-running franchise created by author Tom Clancy.

The film is set for release later this month, and its storyline includes the Air Force base in the United Kingdom. As such, about 50 U.S. airmen at the installation teamed up with filmmakers there to lend authenticity to the story, the Air Force confirmed.

Support for the production was coordinated by the Department of the Air Force Entertainment Liaison Office, which worked with the airmen to advise filmmakers on scenes involving the Air Force, Lt. Col. Gina McKeen, the office’s director, told Stars and Stripes in an

email Thursday.

“They were open to our inputs, asked lots of questions about how to ensure the Air Force aspects were presented correctly on screen, and were very supportive of the military folks involved,” McKeen said of the film’s crew.

The airmen gave advice on uniform and appearance standards, military protocols and customs and courtesies. They also provided background information on how the Air Force counters terrorism and the role of U.S. intelligence capabilities in global defense, McKeen said.

Some of that expertise made it directly into the film. Mildenhall Honor Guard members supported a scene depicting a solemn ramp ceremony on the flightline, while several other airmen appeared as extras. Airmen also

served as extras in two additional scenes filmed at the base, according to McKeen.

The airmen extras volunteered and were hired by the production at the standard day rate, McKeen said, adding that each completed an Air Force off-duty employment form before participating.

Filming at Mildenhall took place in April 2025.

Located in Suffolk in eastern England, the base is one of the key hubs for U.S. air operations in Europe. It is home to the 100th Air Refueling Wing, the only permanently based U.S. air refueling wing in the European theater, which refuels U.S. and allied aircraft mid-air, extending their range.

“Jack Ryan: Ghost War” is scheduled to be released on Amazon Prime Video on May 20.

54 Mount Whitney sailors receive off-ship housing

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Junior sailors assigned to a Navy ship based in Italy no longer must live on the vessel when it’s not at sea, part of a broader service-wide quality-of-life campaign.

Naval Support Activity Naples recently transitioned 54 unaccompanied sailors assigned to the command-and-control ship USS Mount Whitney to housing within the local community, the base said in a recent statement. The ship is homeported in Gaeta, Italy, about 66 miles northwest of NSA Naples, which is home to U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet. Mount Whitney is the flagship of 6th Fleet.

The move is part of a Navy-wide effort to improve quality of life for junior sailors, typically ranked E-4 and below, by ensuring they have access to clean, comfortable and safe housing while in port, the base said May 6.

“Providing our sailors with a place to decompress away from their workspace is fundamental to their mental readiness and overall well-being,” Capt. Colin Price, commanding officer of Mount Whitney, said in the statement. He added that sailors who are well-rested and have a sense of home are better prepared for 6th Fleet missions.

The NSA Naples effort follows a directive last year by chief of naval operations Adm. Daryl Caudle that ended the practice of having junior sailors live on ships year-round.

At the time, the Navy estimated that some 7,500 to 10,000 sailors were living on ships. In February, Caudle said that number had been reduced to between 2,500 and 3,000.

The directive is also in line with recommendations in a 2023 Navy investigation into the suicides of several sailors assigned to the aircraft carrier USS George Washington.

That investigation found that junior service members were living in poor conditions on

and off the ship while the carrier was undergoing a grueling, yearslong overhaul. The report included 48 recommendations to better the quality of life for sailors, including improving off-ship housing and no longer having sailors stay on ships when not underway.

In the case of Mount Whitney, it took more than two months to transition the sailors into local housing, an effort that included expanding the search for available residences into communities near Gaeta, the base said.

It wasn’t clear Thursday if Mount Whitney sailors’ living arrangements included shared homes or apartments, or exactly how they were covering costs. The base did not immediately answer those or other questions, including how many sailors remained living on the ship. But an unaccompanied E-2 living in Gaeta and approved for living off-base is eligible for nearly \$2,780 in rental and utilities allowances each month, according to the Defense Department Travel Management Office.

Little Debbie snacks will soon return to commissaries

By LYDIA GORDON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military has seen its share of battlefield victories and legendary returns, but this may be the sweetest comeback yet: Little Debbie snack cakes are finally returning to commissary shelves after a four-year hiatus.

Zebra Cakes, Oatmeal Creme Pies, Swiss Rolls and other Little Debbie favorites can begin making their way back into commissary inventories starting Saturday, the Defense

Commissary Agency told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday.

Brokers White Dairy and EURPAC, which service overseas and stateside commissaries respectively, were awarded an ordering agreement April 27 to help bring the snack cakes back to store shelves, commissary officials added.

The drought began in 2022 when family-owned McKee Foods Corp., maker of the beloved line of treats, could no longer meet the

supply and cost demands required to keep the products stocked in base stores.

While commissaries can begin placing orders on Friday, Mike Gloekler, a spokesperson for the company, said in an email last month that the “full slate” of Little Debbie snacks is expected to return to shelves by mid-June.

In addition to longtime favorites, shoppers can expect new and limited-edition flavors, Gloekler said.

Warsh confirmed as Fed chairman

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The Senate confirmed Kevin Warsh on Wednesday to become chairman of the Federal Reserve for a four-year term.

The 54-45 vote concluded the process two days before Fed Chair Jerome Powell's term ends. The Senate confirmed Warsh on Tuesday to a 14-year term on the board, effective as of Feb. 1. He fills a board position previously held by Stephen Miran, who has been a consis-

tent voice for monetary policy easing.

Sen. John Fetterman, D-Pa., crossed the aisle to join the Republican majority for the confirmation.

Warsh's path to the Fed had been temporarily obstructed because of a Justice Department investigation of renovation costs at the central bank's headquarters. The probe was seen as part of President Donald Trump's effort to pressure Powell to lower interest rates. Sen.

Thom Tillis, R-N.C., a member of the Senate Banking Committee, took that view and vowed to block any Fed nominees until the probe was dropped.

Tillis voted with other Republicans on the committee to recommend Warsh for confirmation after the DOJ said it would end the investigation. But the department could reopen it and Powell says he will remain on the board because of the uncertainty. His term ends in 2028.

Warsh's arrival at the Fed

comes as inflation is accelerating, driven largely by rising fuel prices since the start of the war with Iran. Consumer prices rose 3.8% in April from a year earlier, well above the Fed's 2% target. The Federal Open Market Committee's next monetary policy meeting will be June 16 and 17.

Democrats warn that Warsh could bow to Trump's pressure to lower interest rates even when inflation data doesn't justify such a move.

Prosecutors eye a swift Murdaugh murder retrial

The Herald (Rock Hill, S.C.)

Prosecutors will move "aggressively" to retry Alex Murdaugh on murder charges by the end of the year, S.C. Attorney General Alan Wilson told a news conference Wednesday.

Wilson and Creighton Waters, the lead prosecutor who tried Murdaugh for the murders of his wife, Maggie, and son Paul, addressed the media just hours after the S.C. Supreme Court struck down Alex Murdaugh's murder conviction from that 2023 trial.

While Wilson said he disagreed with the court's decision, and it had left prosecutors who worked to convict Murdaugh "disappointed," the attorney general said his office would "look to the future" to ensure justice is done for Maggie and Paul.

"There will be little surprises for the public as this case is retried again," Wilson said before a bank of cameras in the state grand jury room.

The Supreme Court had not faulted the prosecution's case against Murdaugh in the initial trial. Instead, the court faulted the actions of former Colleton County Clerk of Court Becky Hill that the justices decided had improperly influenced the jury, he

said. Hill has since pleaded guilty to perjury and misconduct charges related to the case.

Now the Attorney General's office intends to bring a broadly similar case against Murdaugh in a retrial, pointing to the same evidence that secured a conviction before. Wilson even said they would seek to retry the case at Hill's former courthouse in Colleton County were the first trial played out.

"Colleton County is not the reason the former clerk did what she did," Wilson said, and Hill — who resigned her office when allegations about her conduct came to light — won't play a role in any retrial, the attorney general said.

Murdaugh was convicted of murdering his wife and son after a six-week trial in March 2023. Maggie and Paul were found shot to death at the family's country home between Hampton and Walterboro in June 2021. Murdaugh says he found their bodies after returning from a visit to his mother's.

He will remain in prison pending trial, after pleading guilty in state and federal court to stealing millions of dollars from his former clients and law partners at the family firm.

Former Spirit workers sue airline over shutdown

South Florida Sun Sentinel

Spirit Airlines' abrupt shutdown this month was too abrupt under the law, a group of terminated employees allege in a proposed class-action lawsuit.

Their complaint, filed in U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York, asserts that management misled its workforce about its prospects for staying in business and still owes employees back pay and benefits after going out of business.

The workers are six laid-off Spirit employees who seek to represent a class of approximately 17,000 people who were terminated when the airline ceased flying in the early morning hours of May 2. The lack of advance notice violated the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act, according to the complaint filed Tuesday.

News of the airline's shutdown, the suit says, came from CEO David Davis in an email to employees stating the Dania Beach-based budget airline was immediately halting operations. Those left without jobs included more than 4,800 direct and indirect employees in South and Central Florida, according to a

WARN notice the company belatedly filed with the state of Florida on May 4.

The company shutdown announcement, the suit says, stated that employees would be paid "for hours worked through May 2, 2026."

"However, to date, employees have not received their final paychecks, accrued vacation time, or unused sick time," the suit alleges.

A Spirit spokesperson said the company does not comment on litigation.

New York attorney Todd Duffy, who filed the suit late Tuesday on the employees' behalf, did not immediately respond to a voicemail seeking comment.

The lawsuit was brought on behalf of five Spirit former employees who live in Florida and one in South Carolina. They held positions including software engineer, DOT compliance specialist, flight attendant, senior maintenance planner, heavy maintenance project manager, and senior software engineer.

All were terminated without cause and without prior notice, the suit says. The airline failed after filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in August 2025.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Fugitive in 1993 murder captured in Panama

MI DETROIT — A fugitive wanted in the 1993 murder of a Detroit man was caught in Panama and returned to the United States, officials said.

Richard Werstine will be turned over to authorities in Wayne County, the U.S. Marshals Service said.

Police in Panama City arrested Werstine at a dog park on April 29, according to the Marshals Service.

Officers said they found fake identification on him, but determined his true identity after analyzing the 56-year-old's fingerprints.

U.S. Marshals retrieved Werstine from Panama on Saturday.

Officials said Werstine was wanted in the Sept. 15, 1993, murder of his roommate, Rodney Barger, 23, in Detroit. Police arrested Werstine days after the crime, but he failed to appear for his trial, according to investigators.

Barger was a member of a Detroit rock band called Cold as Life when he was killed, according to media reports.

Simultaneous blazes hit in peak of wildfire season

FL MIAMI — Wildfires continued to burn up large areas of Florida's Broward and Miami-Dade counties on Monday.

While there have been no reported injuries, the smoke from the fires is reducing visibility on the roads, officials said.

The larger fire is burning on U.S. 27 west of Pembroke Pines. State officials are calling it the Max Road Fire.

As of Monday morning, it was burning around 4,800 acres and was only 20% contained, according to the Florida Department of Agriculture's interactive wildfire map.

The fire in Miami-Dade is in Florida City, the last mainland town before the Florida Keys. As of Monday, it was burning around 210 acres and was 30% contained, officials said.

The two fires burn as Florida is in the peak of wildfire season, according to the state's Department of Emergency Management. This is because of the dry, windy conditions that tend to dominate this time of year.

State agencies clash in court over water rights

NV LAS VEGAS — Two Nevada agencies are in court over a water rights decision that could have major implications for a state-run fish hatchery in rural Lyon County during times of drought.

The Nevada Department of Wildlife has maintained a permit to pump 861.5 acre-feet of groundwater for its Mason Valley Fish Hatchery for decades, representing one of 13 permits that contributes about 15% of the facility's water supply. The hatchery is north of Yerington, about 60 miles southeast of Carson City.

Now, after its water rights permit was canceled and later reinstated by the state engineer's office due to a lapse in paperwork, the wildlife department worries for its ability to produce tens of thousands of trout each year to stock bodies of water in western Nevada. That's because the reinstatement came with a new priority date.

In Nevada and much of the American West, water rights follow a "first in time, first in right" principle, or the prior appropriation doctrine.

The original 1967 date for the permit is much more desirable than the new 2025 date; if the state engineer ordered curtailment for the Lyon County basin, more junior water rights holders would be the first to experience cuts.

State Senate approves bill regulating AI chatbots

CO DENVER — A bill that would regulate AI-powered chatbots cleared the Colorado Senate on Monday, while the legislation faces renewed calls for a veto from a mother whose daughter died by suicide following sexual grooming by one of the chatbots.

House Bill 1263 would require chatbots to announce to users regularly that they operate on artificial intelligence. Their developers also must implement measures to prevent emotional dependence and to refer users to a crisis services provider if the user exhibits any suicidal ideation. The bill passed the Senate 24-11.

The original version required companies to try to prevent artificial intelligence bots from producing sexually explicit content. Sen. Kyle Mullica, a Thornton Democrat, sought to toughen that language by requiring chatbots to shut down any conversation that veered in that direction; that also would apply if the bot's programming led it to produce that content without being directly spurred by the user. That amendment passed.

Mullica invoked the death of

Juliana Peralta, a 13-year-old girl whose mother still lives in his district. Cynthia Montoya, Peralta's mother, said her daughter was sexually groomed by a chatbot and the AI agent did nothing when Peralta shared suicidal thoughts with it.

Peralta died in November 2023. Montoya has fought the bill on the grounds it does not go far enough.

Former lawmaker likely to plead guilty to solicitation

MN MINNEAPOLIS — Former Minnesota state Sen. Justin Eichorn has signaled his intent to plead guilty this week to a federal charge of attempted enticement of a minor following his arrest last year in an underage prostitution sting.

The change of plea notice for Eichorn was filed in Minnesota U.S. District Court on Monday. The Grand Rapids father of four resigned from the Senate last year. He was charged with attempted coercion and enticement of a minor after Bloomington police set up the underage sex sting operation in March 2025.

The notice comes three weeks before Eichorn's federal trial was scheduled to begin.

According to prosecutors, an undercover detective posing as a teen told Eichorn she was 17 multiple times during text exchanges, despite Eichorn's contention that she appeared to be in her 20s. Eichorn responded he was still interested and would meet her in a Bloomington parking lot. Police arrested Eichorn in the lot and recovered two cellphones, a condom and about \$130 in cash.

— From wire reports

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Harden scores 30 as Cavs top Pistons in OT

Associated Press

DETROIT — James Harden scored a playoff-best 30 points and Donovan Mitchell had 21, helping the Cleveland Cavaliers come back from a nine-point deficit late in regulation and beat the Detroit Pistons 117-113 in overtime on Wednesday night to take a 3-2 lead in their Eastern Conference semifinal series.

The Pistons led by 15 points in the first half and 103-94 with two-plus minutes left. The Cavs rallied and pulled into a 103-all tie on Evan Mobley's free throws with 45.2 seconds left.

"That stretch right there says a lot about our progress — mental performance progress and mental toughness progress,"

Cavs coach Kenny Atkinson said.

Just before the buzzer, Cleveland's Jarrett Allen and Detroit's Ausar Thompson got tangled up and no call was made.

"He fouled Ausar — clearly," Pistons coach J.B. Bickerstaff said. "He tripped him when he was going for a loose ball."

Cleveland went on a 13-0 run and held Detroit scoreless for five minutes from late in fourth quarter to midway through overtime. The Cavs went ahead by seven with 2:39 left in OT on Mitchell's 3-pointer.

Cade Cunningham, who had 39 points and nine assists, made a jumper to pull the Pistons within two points with 25 sec-

onds left.

Harden made one free throw on the ensuing possession and rebounded his missed second attempt. He made another free throw to help seal the win.

Game 6 is Friday night in Cleveland, where the fourth-seeded Cavs will get the first of two chances to advance to face the New York Knicks in the East finals.

If the top-seeded Pistons win, they will host Game 7 on Sunday.

Cleveland won the first road game of the series — and its first as a visitor this postseason.

The Pistons had won four straight games at home since Orlando put them on the brink of

elimination in Game 5 of the first round.

Harden had eight rebounds and six assists. Max Strus made six 3-pointers and scored 20 points for the Cavs, Mobley added 19 points and Jarrett Allen had 16 points and 10 rebounds.

"It wasn't our best night offensively, but I think that's what speaks volumes to getting this win was we found a way" Strus said.

Starting in place of the injured Duncan Robinson, Daniss Jenkins scored 19 points for the Pistons. Tobias Harris missed 13 of 19 shots and scored 13 points, and Jalen Duren was limited to nine points and five rebounds.

Knicks still have time to wait for Anunoby's full recovery

Associated Press

GREENBURGH, N.Y. — OG Anunoby could only participate in some parts of practice when the New York Knicks returned to work Wednesday.

Luckily for them, they still have time to wait.

With at least a few more days before the Knicks would start the Eastern Conference finals, they can be patient with Anunoby's recovery from a hamstring injury that forced him to miss the last two games of their second-round sweep of Philadelphia.

Coach Mike Brown said the starting forward did some things, though not when the Knicks went full speed. He said Anunoby looked fine with what he did, though it certainly sounds like there's a gap between what that was and the intensity of an NBA postseason game.

Brown added that he isn't sure when Anunoby can do more — and the Knicks don't even know how soon that would need to be. Game 1 against Detroit or Cleveland could be Sunday, though the series wouldn't

begin until next week if those teams, who were tied 2-2 entering Game 5 on Wednesday, go the distance.

"They told me what he could do today. They have not told me what he could do tomorrow, so I don't know what he'll be able to do for Game 1," Brown said.

Anunoby is one of the Knicks' most important players, a top defender whose offensive game has hit its peak during this playoff run. The Knicks were able to win two games without him against a tired Philadelphia team that never recovered after needing seven games to beat Boston in the first round, but it would be difficult to beat the top-seeded Pistons or Cavaliers without him.

Brown isn't thinking that far ahead. The Knicks plan to take Thursday off and practice again Friday, and he said only then will he ask for his next Anunoby update.

"At least for me, I'm taking it one game at a time," Brown said. "I don't want to know from medical or anybody else anything beyond that, because when I do that stuff I get my hopes up and I

don't like doing that at all."

The Knicks have plenty of reason for hope after a dominant run through the first two rounds. They have won seven straight games since falling behind 2-1 against Atlanta in the first round and outscored the Hawks and 76ers by a combined 194 points, the largest margin ever through a team's first 10 postseason games.

They finished off the Hawks on April 30 and were back on the court against the 76ers on May 4. They could be idle more than twice as long this time.

"The first series we had what, four days' break I think it was? That was good enough," forward Josh Hart said.

"This right now, I think at least a week if not nine days, that's a long time. So obviously it's good for recovery, but mentally I'm watching the games, I'm just like just waiting, just waiting to get back out there."

Brown has some experience. His Cleveland Cavaliers swept the first two series in 2009, then were off more than a week before the opener of an East finals series they lost to Orlando. He

replaced an ailing Steve Kerr for most of the 2017 postseason as the Golden State Warriors swept their first three series, leaving them a 10-day gap between the end of the West finals and the start of the NBA Finals.

"I've been part of sweeps, I've been part of getting swept and been part of long layoffs and short turnarounds, so you worry about different stuff at different times," Brown said. "Like, quick turnaround you're like: 'Oh my God, we can't prepare. Oh my god, guys are tired.' And long layoffs, you're like, 'Oh my gosh, we got too much time, we're not going to stay sharp.'"

He said the key during long layoffs is to manufacture ways to keep players' minds sharp and the Knicks believe it will work.

"I think we have our plan," All-Star Jalen Brunson said. "Obviously utilize rest, but then when we're in the gym we're doing everything that we need to do to stay in rhythm, stay having the edge that we need to have, focusing on the things that we need to focus on and continuing to prepare."

Kulak's OT goal pushes Avs into West final

Associated Press

DENVER — Brett Kulak's first goal since January will certainly be one to remember — for him, of course, and a building packed with fans who witnessed, in dramatic fashion, the Avalanche end a series at home for the first time in 18 years.

The Colorado defenseman scored 3:52 into overtime after Nathan MacKinnon tied it late in regulation and the Avalanche advanced to the Western Conference final with a 4-3 victory over the Minnesota Wild in Game 5 on Wednesday night.

Kulak capped a wild comeback for the Avalanche, who trailed 3-0 midway through the second period. Colorado moves on to the conference final for an eighth time since relocating to Denver in 1995-96.

"You always like to dream about it," Kulak said.

"The player I am, I'm not the guy everyone's looking down the bench, like, 'All right, get out

there, go win it for us.'"

The Avalanche will face the Vegas-Anaheim winner. Vegas leads that series 3-2.

With Minnesota up 3-1, Jack Drury scored with 3:33 remaining to set the stage for MacKinnon's goal with 1:23 left with the Colorado goal empty. The star forward sent a shot from the left side past Jesper Wallstedt and into a small space in the top left corner.

In overtime, Martin Necas took the puck, glided behind the net and back out front, where he found an open Kulak. Without missing a stride, Kulak lined it past Wallstedt.

Kulak was one of several late additions this season as he joined the Avalanche on Feb. 24 as part of a deal that sent Samuel Girard to Pittsburgh. Kulak became the 16th Avalanche player to score in the Minnesota series.

He also was an unlikely OT hero. This was his first goal since Jan. 19 when he was with the Penguins, which also was his only

goal of the regular season.

"For us to play the way we did and get the job done, and just for me, a special goal in my career, for sure," said Kulak, who started the season with Edmonton before being dealt to Pittsburgh in December. "We just clawed back into it and got the job done."

It was a rare series-ending win at home for Colorado, too. The last time the Avalanche won a series on home ice was 2008 against the Wild, when the team had Hall of Famers Joe Sakic and Peter Forsberg.

"That was fun," MacKinnon said. "A lot of fun."

Marcus Johansson scored 34 seconds into the game and Nick Foligno added two goals to give the Wild a 3-0 lead after the first period. It led Colorado to take out Mackenzie Blackwood after the first and insert Scott Wedgewood, who made seven saves.

Late in the game, Cale Makar collided with Mats Zuccarello and was grabbing his right arm. Ma-

kar went down the tunnel before returning to the ice.

The Avalanche overcame a three-goal deficit to win a playoff game for just the third time in 53 tries since moving to Denver. The Wild had been 21-0 when leading a playoff game by at least three goals before the elimination loss.

"Just anger and frustration," Minnesota defenseman Brock Faber said.

"You work all year for one thing, and just feels like it closes like that. It's just done."

Wallstedt stopped 30 shots for the Wild. Matt Boldy and Nico Sturm each had two assists for a banged-up Wild team that was missing center Joel Eriksson Ek and defenseman Jonas Brodin all series.

"When you go after something like this, there's going to be two sides of the coin," Wild coach John Hynes said. "One is you're going to win, which is a great feeling. And when you lose, it's an empty feeling."

Leafs fire coach Berube after last-place Atlantic finish

Associated Press

TORONTO — The Toronto Maple Leafs fired coach Craig Berube on Wednesday, John Chayka's first major move since taking over as general manager following the team finishing last and missing the playoffs for the first time in a decade.

The move ended Berube's two-year run with the Maple Leafs. They had 108 points in 2024-25 and reached the second round of the playoffs before struggling this past season.

Chayka said the decision was made shortly after he met with Berube.

"This was the right decision on the path ahead," Chayka said at a news conference. "It was a difficult decision. It was not a verdict on Craig's coaching. I think it stands for itself."

Chayka suggested that Berube hoped to return next season.

"I think Craig, his heart's in it," Chayka said. "That's the kind of guy he is. I think he felt like he had a lot of unfinished business, and I think he's got a lot of great connections with the players here — and it was only a discussion about the path ahead."

The path ahead is clouded by the uncertain future of captain and top player Auston Matthews, who has two years left on his contract and a full no-movement clause to control his next destination, if he so chooses.

Asked what impact Matthews' status had on the decision to fire Berube, Chayka said: "None. Zero."

Chayka said he didn't "make this decision in a vacuum" and that the coaching change was part of a broader restructuring with senior executive director of hockey operations Mats Sundin.

"Mats and I have spent the last

10 days or so meeting with everyone from the chefs to talking with some of the players and everything in between," Chayka said. "Just feel like there's some things we need to change and do better."

Chayka was hired earlier this month. He succeeded Brad Treliving, who was fired in March, and said he will conduct a "wide-ranging" search for Berube's replacement.

"We'll take our time and try to get it right," Chayka said. "It's the most critical decision as a general manager."

Toronto won the NHL draft lottery last week. The Maple Leafs are expected to pick either Gavin McKenna or Ivar Stenberg with the first overall pick on June 26 at the NHL draft in Buffalo.

Berube, 60, went 84-62-18 with Toronto, but the Maple Leafs were just 32-36-14 this season. The drop in points — from 108 to

78 — was the team's largest year-over-year points decline.

The Maple Leafs had embraced Berube's straightforward, no-nonsense, north-south approach in 2024-25 after Keefe was unable to get the same talented group over its playoff hump but didn't come close to duplicating that success a second time.

Defensive deficiencies also caused glaring problems for a club that finished with the second-worst goals-against mark and was outshot a league-worst 66 times.

"They played with more passion than we did," Berube told reporters in December after a particularly ugly 4-0 road loss to the Washington Capitals.

"That's what it boils down to. It looked to me like they had way more urgency in their game, more passion in their game. That's the difference."

Yastrzemski's pinch-hit double lifts Braves

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Mike Yastrzemski drove in the tiebreaking run with a pinch-hit double in the eighth inning, and Mauricio Dubón finished off Chicago with a two-run homer that carried the Atlanta Braves to a 4-1 victory over the Chicago Cubs on Wednesday night.

The Braves extended baseball's best record to 30-13 and made it two in a row over the Cubs, who arrived in Atlanta with the NL's second-best mark but now have lost a season-high four in a row.

Shota Imanaga (4-3) was the hard-luck loser for Chicago. He pitched into the eighth, surrendering a homer to Drake Baldwin but left with the score tied at 1 after giving up an infield single to Michael Harris II leading off the decisive inning.

Ha-Seong Kim followed with his first hit of the season, a single to left against Phil Maton. Pinch-hitter Dominic Smith struck out, but manager Walt Weiss got the hit he needed when he sent up Yastrzemski to bat for José Azócar.

Robert Suarez (4-0) earned the win with a scoreless eighth and Raisel Iglesias remained scoreless on the season with his eighth save.

Guardians 4, Angels 2: Angel Martinez's leadoff homer got Cleveland started and rookie Parker Messick had another strong outing as the host Guardians beat Los Angeles to finish a three-game series sweep.

Martinez homered off Reid Detmers (1-4) and the Guardians improved to 30-4 against the Angels at Progressive Field since 2015. Cleveland's home record over Los Angeles in that 11-year span is the best by any major league team.

Messick (5-1) allowed two runs and four hits in 6½ innings. The left-hander settled in after walking two in the first two innings. Eric Sabrowski struck out the side in the eighth, and Cade Smith did the same in the

ninth for his 13th save.

Orioles 7, Yankees 0: Kyle Bradish pitched six one-hit innings, Adley Rutschman homered and Baltimore beat New York after it lost left-hander Max Fried to a sore elbow.

Fried (4-3) was pulled after only three innings with the score 3-0. He is expected to be examined by the team physician Thursday.

New York has lost five of six games.

Red Sox 3, Phillies 1: Pinch-hitter Ceddanne Rafaela had a tiebreaking, two-run homer over the Green Monster and host Boston beat Philadelphia while ending the home run streak of the Phillies' Kyle Schwarber at five games.

Rafaela hit a fastball from Orion Kerkering, who replaced Tanner Banks (0-3) with two outs in the sixth.

Rockies 10, Pirates 4: Mickey Moniak doubled, tripled, and homered on his 28th birthday, Jake McCarthy had the first unassisted double play by a left fielder in the majors since 2013, and visiting Colorado beat Pittsburgh.

The Rockies ended a three-game losing streak and snapped a five-game skid against the Pirates dating to last Aug. 3.

White Sox 6, Royals 5: Jarred Kelenic had two hits and two RBIs, and host Chicago beat Kansas City for its fourth straight win.

Colson Montgomery homered during a three-hit performance, helping Chicago improve to 15-8 in its last 23 games. Tyler Davis (1-1) pitched 1½ scoreless innings for his first major league win.

Blue Jays 5, Rays 3: Daulton Varsho hit a grand slam with one out in the 10th inning to give Toronto a home victory over Tampa Bay.

Varsho sent a 2-2 pitch from Aaron Brooks (0-1) into the Toronto bullpen in left to end the Blue Jays' three-game losing streak. Varsho has six career

gland slams and has a .321 career average (18 for 56) with the bases loaded.

Nationals 8, Reds 7 (10): Daylen Lile hit a tiebreaking, two-run homer in the 10th inning, Keibert Ruiz also went deep and visiting Washington rallied from an early five-run deficit to beat Cincinnati.

With his father in the stands at Great American Ball Park, Lile hit a 409-foot drive to right-center off Tony Santillan (1-2) to score automatic runner CJ Abrams. It was the third homer in two games and sixth of the season for the 23-year-old Lile, a second-year player from Louisville, Ky.

Marlins 9, Twins 5: Leo Jiménez had three hits and Xavier Edwards doubled, tripled and scored three runs as visiting Miami beat Minnesota.

Owen Caissie hit a two-run homer for the Marlins, and Liam Hicks drove in three runs to give him an MLB-leading 38 RBIs on the year. Max Meyer (3-0) gave up four runs and struck out nine in 5½ innings to earn the win.

Mets 3, Tigers 2 (10): Rookie Carson Benge delivered his first big league walk-off hit, a 10th-inning single that atoned for a first-inning misplay and lifted the host Mets past Detroit after New York star Juan Soto left the game with an ankle injury.

New York trailed 2-0 in the first after Benge dropped Dillon Dingler's catchable fly ball near the right-field warning track, which fell for a double, and Riley Greene followed with a two-run single off Christian Scott.

Padres 3, Brewers 1: Gavin Sheets hit a three-run homer off Abner Uribe with two outs in the ninth inning, and visiting San Diego overcame Jacob Misiorowski's third straight scoreless outing to beat Milwaukee and snap its five-game winning streak.

Misiorowski struck out 10 batters over seven innings while allowing four hits and

walked none. He threw 40 pitches of 100 mph or higher, his third straight game with 40 or more.

Rangers 6, Diamondbacks 5: Danny Jansen had a game-ending single with two outs as Texas rallied for a home win over Arizona in a frantic ninth inning that included three-run rallies by both teams.

Jansen capped the Rangers comeback when he grounded the only pitch thrown by Juan Morillo into the left-field corner. Morillo relieved Paul Sewald (0-4), who had converted his first nine save opportunities.

Astros 4, Mariners 3 (10): Christian Walker homered and Zach Cole hit an RBI single in the 10th inning that lifted Houston to a home win over Seattle.

Brice Matthews started the 10th as the automatic runner on second base and moved to third on a wild pitch by Alex Hoppe (0-1). Cole, who tied a career high with three hits, singled on a grounder to right field to send Matthews home.

Athletics 6, Cardinals 2: Nick Kurtz hit a grand slam, J.T. Ginn pitched six innings of one-run ball and the host Athletics beat St. Louis.

Kurtz' slam got over Victor Scott II's glove in deep center field to give the A's the lead for good. It was the third career grand slam for the reigning American League Rookie of the Year, and extended his on-base streak to 36 games.

Dodgers 4, Giants 0: Shohei Ohtani tossed four-hit ball over seven shutout innings and Los Angeles backed the four-time MVP with his most run support of the season in a home victory over San Francisco.

The Dodgers snapped their season-high skid at four games on a night when Ohtani only pitched and wasn't in the lineup as the designated hitter for the fourth time this season. The two-way superstar also won't be in the lineup Thursday to give him two days' rest from hitting.