

## USS Ford home after record deployment

By **KAYLYN BARNHART  
BATISTA**

*Stars and Stripes*

NORFOLK, Va. — Hundreds of family members and friends lined the pier at Naval Station Norfolk on Saturday to finally welcome home sailors from the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford after 326 days on a historic deployment.

“It feels unreal,” said Alexis Burgess, of Hampton, Va. “I didn’t think they were ever going to get back. I thought they were going to get extended again.”

“But we’re here. And it’s everything. I wish it could have been sooner.”

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who was part of the welcoming committee, presented the Presidential Unit Citation to the carrier group.

“The Ford Carrier Strike Group did an extraordinary job,” Hegseth said. “The only

story we can tell today is of the heroism and the skill and the professionalism of these sailors, who went three times around the globe to defend that flag right there.”

The Presidential Unit Citation is the military’s top award for valor by a unit in battle.

Adm. Daryl Caudle, the chief of naval operations, said the extended time at sea was difficult for sailors and their families.

“We thought it would be a seven-month deployment,” Caudle told CNN. “These were missed events from weddings to births.”

For many, that included giving birth while their spouse was deployed, including Burgess.

“This morning, 80 newborn children were held by their fathers, most for the very first time,” said Rear Adm. Gavin Duff, the commander of Carrier Strike Group 12. “While I cannot begin to count the number of

birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and milestones missed during this deployment, I can say this with absolute certainty: The sacrifice of our families is inseparable from the success of this carrier strike group.”

Ford’s guided-missile destroyer escorts USS Bainbridge and USS Mahan also returned to Norfolk on Saturday. The carrier’s air wing squadrons returned to their homeports in Virginia, Florida and Washington earlier in the week. The aircraft of Carrier Wing 8 conducted more than 11,800 launches throughout the deployment.

Ford left the Mediterranean Sea this month, concluding an 11-month deployment that took the strike group across the U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command and U.S. Southern Command areas of responsibility. Other ships assigned to the strike group include destroyers USS Mitscher, USS

Forrest Sherman and USS Winston S. Churchill.

The return to Norfolk was a long time coming for sailors and their families.

“He’s ready to go home and just relax,” said Brittanie Hyder of Mount Morris, Mich., about her husband. “The kids expected him to come home, and then he doesn’t. They’re just ready for him to be home and spend time with him.”

Ford and its more than 4,500 embarked sailors and personnel departed Norfolk on June 24 for what had been expected to be a routine deployment to Europe.

They spent 326 days deployed, setting a post-Vietnam War record for the longest deployment of an aircraft carrier. The previous record was held by USS Abraham Lincoln, which completed a 295-day deployment in January 2020.

**Stars and Stripes reporter  
Alison Bath contributed.**

## USS Gerald Ford’s long deployment presents questions

By **GARY WARNER**

*Stars and Stripes*

USS Gerald R. Ford returned to Norfolk Naval Station, Va., on Saturday, 326 days after leaving for what was supposed to be a standard deployment to Europe.

Instead, the Ford and its crew of 4,500 were at sea longer than any U.S. Navy carrier in over half a century. It crisscrossed the Atlantic four times, led attacks on two continents, launched hundreds of sorties, and its strike group fired scores of missiles.

A laundry room fire that burned for 30 hours left only minor injuries but forced 600 sailors out of their bedroom com-

partments and a port visit for repairs. The fire is still under investigation.

Saturday, however, is for celebration, said Adm. Daryl Caudle, the chief of naval operations.

“We’re going to give our heroes a welcome back ... and it’s just an extraordinary ship, extraordinary crew, an extraordinary strike group,” Caudle told the House Armed Services Committee last week. “And the sailors, I could not be more proud of.”

Navy officials in Norfolk on Saturday focused on the homecoming and deflected questions about what is next for the Ford.

But the end of the deployment

leaves the Pentagon with plenty of questions:

How much repair and maintenance will the fleet’s \$13.3 billion carrier require?

How should the Navy reward and retain a crew that was away from home for the better part of a year?

How will it pay for it all?

The money is mostly folded into the \$30 billion-and-rising cost of the war against Iran. The Navy has also asked for about \$377.5 billion of the more than \$1.5 trillion in military spending the Pentagon requested for 2027.

Mark Cancian, a Marine veteran who is an analyst for the Center for Strategic and Inter-

national Studies, said that though there may be questions about the policy rationale for the missions the Ford was ordered to undertake, the ship and crew did their part well.

“It showed how skilled they are at fighting a war,” Cancian said. “That may well help with deterrence in other areas of the world, for example, China.”

“I don’t think that the Ford deployment will have much of an impact on recruiting,” Cancian said. “There’s always going to be some 18- or 19-year-old who sees all this and wants to go to sea. But retention is different. They ask themselves, ‘Would I want to do that again?’”

# Nimitz stops in Rio for party, joint patrol

BY GARY WARNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The USS Nimitz celebrated its 51st anniversary with the Navy while at sea in the Atlantic before pulling into the waters off Rio de Janeiro this month for joint maneuvers and a “big top” reception on the carrier’s flight deck.

A cake shaped like an aircraft carrier was served as the crew celebrated the May 3, 1975, commissioning of the ship, the first of 10 nuclear-powered Nimitz-class carriers to enter the fleet over the following two decades.

“Fifty-one years in, Nimitz’s legacy isn’t something we merely remember — it’s something we carry forward through war-fighting readiness, operational excellence, and exceeding ex-

pectations in our current mission of partnership-building throughout the Americas,” said Rear Adm. Cassidy Norman, commander of Carrier Strike Group 11.

The Nimitz is the oldest carrier in the fleet.

When it arrives at its new homeport of Naval Station Norfolk, Va., it will be sharing docking space with the newest carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford, which arrived in Virginia on Saturday after a record-breaking deployment that included Europe, South America and the Middle East.

Since it left its former homeport of Bremerton, Wash., in early March, the Nimitz has steamed about 9,000 miles down

the eastern Pacific, across the Equator, through the Strait of Magellan and past the southern tip of South America, before turning north into the western Atlantic.

Brazil’s military last week became the latest to join the Nimitz in joint exercises and visitor exchanges as part of the Southern Seas 2026 exercise. The Nimitz moved in formation with a Brazilian frigate and a diesel-powered submarine in the waters off Rio.

VIP guests watched as an F/A-18 strike fighter made a low supersonic pass, with the white vapor cone of condensation trailing the wings and nose as it broke the sound barrier. A Navy helicopter squadron showed off tight formation flying over the carrier.

Previous joint exercises on the trip included El Salvador, Panama, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay.

In Rio, the ship held a dress whites “big top” party in which VIPs are hosted on the flight deck — with another large carrier-shaped cake.

The Nimitz has about 4,000 miles to go at sea before reaching Norfolk, a journey that will bring the ship across the Equator and back into the Northern Hemisphere near Belem, Brazil, then into the Caribbean for the last leg of its trip.

The Navy plans to decommission the Nimitz in March 2027. It is scheduled to be replaced by the USS John F. Kennedy, the second Ford-class carrier.

## USCG’s newest icebreaker is back from Arctic deployment

BY GARY WARNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

SEATTLE — The U.S. Coast Guard cutter Storis, the first icebreaker to join the fleet in more than two decades, returned to its homeport on May 11 from a 36-day deployment to the Arctic.

The ship and crew logged 4,800 miles on the trip to the Bering Sea, which stretches between Alaska and the northeastern coast of Russia.

During the deployment from Coast Guard Base Seattle, the Storis crew assessed the vessel’s ice-breaking capabilities and carried out experimental operational exercises, the service said.

The Storis is 360 feet long, with a displacement of 15,000 tons. Equipped with four diesel engines generating 22,500 horsepower, Storis is rated as a medium icebreaker capable of navigating through 3 feet of ice at 5 knots.

Originally built as the commercial M/V Iviqv in 2012 to support

oil exploration in the Chukchi Sea, the icebreaker was purchased in December 2024 for \$125 million by the Coast Guard from Offshore Surface Vessels LLC. After modifications, it was commissioned into the Coast Guard in August 2025.

The Coast Guard currently operates two other icebreakers — the USCGC Healy, a medium icebreaker commissioned in 2000, and the USCGC Polar Star, a heavy icebreaker commissioned in 1976.

Missions for the Storis include patrolling polar regions, logistics, search and rescue, ship escort, environmental protection and enforcement of laws and treaties.

The Coast Guard is upgrading shore facilities at Juneau, Alaska, with plans to eventually homeport the Storis year-round in the arctic region.

The Coast Guard plans to add 11 new arctic security cutters, with the first ships delivered in 2028.

## Senators push abolishing Selective Service System

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan group of senators introduced legislation Thursday to abolish the government agency that keeps a list of men eligible for the military draft.

The senators say the agency, known as the Selective Service System, is costly and a relic of the past, operating with a budget of \$31 million per year to prepare for a draft that has not occurred since 1973.

“Our volunteer military forces are the strongest in the world, and there is no need to replicate the same draft that sent 2 million unwilling young men to war 50 years ago,” said Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.

Wyden cosponsored the bill with Republicans Rand Paul of Kentucky and Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming. Paul, a vocal advocate for congressional war powers, said Congress will declare

war if it is worth fighting, and people will volunteer to fight it.

“This outdated government program no longer serves a purpose and should be eliminated permanently,” he said.

The bill comes as the Selective Service will begin automating the registration of men ages 18 to 25 for a potential draft, removing a decades-old requirement that male U.S. citizens and most male residents register themselves.

News that the agency was moving forward with the automation sparked fears of a potential draft stemming from the current war against Iran. But lawmakers say the days of calling up young men to fight are over.

Americans “don’t want or need” the draft, Wyden said. Enacting one would require a president to get approval from Congress, and the last time a president sought one was during the Vietnam War. The military became all-volunteer in 1973.

# Little clarity on China's Iran role after talks

BY LARA KORTE  
*Stars and Stripes*

President Donald Trump said the U.S. and China both want to see an end to the war with Iran, but there was little indication of a breakthrough as he departed Beijing on Friday following a two-day summit with President Xi Jinping.

The Xi-Trump talks focused primarily on trade and Taiwan, though the war in the Middle East loomed heavily over the summit. Disruptions to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz have strained global fuel supplies, including in China, which has recently dipped into its strategic oil reserves to offset shortages.

Sitting alongside Xi on Friday before boarding Air Force One, Trump told reporters the two leaders “feel very similar” on the war in Iran.

“We want that to end. We don’t want them to have a nuclear weapon. We want the straits open,” he said.

China is one of the largest buyers of Iranian oil and has long maintained close economic ties with Tehran despite U.S. sanctions. Separately, U.S. officials have accused some Chinese firms of providing Iran with intelligence and other support during the conflict. Earlier Thursday, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington hoped Beijing could use its influence with Tehran to push Iran toward de-escalation.

But as the summit came to a close, leaders in Beijing offered little in the way of tangible commitments.

A statement from China’s foreign ministry mentioned neither the strait nor Iran, stating instead that the two leaders had exchanged views on major international and regional issues, “such as the Middle East situation, the Ukraine crisis, and the Korean Peninsula.”

Chinese leaders have condemned the conflict from the start, deriding the initial U.S.-Is-

rael attacks on Tehran as an “unacceptable” violation of Iran’s sovereignty. Chinese media on Friday reiterated those calls for an end to the violence, saying there is no point in continuing a conflict that never should have started in the first place.

“China always believes that dialogue and negotiation is the right way forward, and the use of force is a dead end,” a spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry told the state-run China Global Television Network.

Following Friday’s final meeting, the White House said Xi reiterated China’s opposition to the militarization of the strait, including any effort to charge tolls, and expressed interest in purchasing more U.S. oil to reduce dependence on the strait in the future.

On Thursday, Iranian state media reported the country was allowing some Chinese vessels to pass through the strait after diplomatic outreach from Beijing. Chinese firms have also been ac-

cused by the State Department of providing satellite images to Tehran to help it better target U.S. forces in the region.

Trump, speaking to Fox News’ Sean Hannity on Thursday, said he had received reassurance from Xi that Beijing would not provide Tehran with any military equipment while the U.S. is at war.

“He said he’s not going to give military equipment, that’s a big statement,” Trump said. “He said that today, that’s a big statement, said that strongly. But at the same time, he said, you know, they buy a lot of their oil there, and they’d like to keep doing that. He’d like to see Hormuz Strait open.”

China has not independently confirmed that commitment, but at a congressional hearing Thursday, Adm. Brad Cooper, the head of U.S. Central Command, acknowledged that the Iranian military “is largely made up of Russian and Chinese equipment.”

## CENTCOM head: Iran still retains some capabilities

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The head of U.S. forces in the Middle East said Thursday that every military objective in the war against Iran has been met, describing a diminished enemy that nonetheless retains some residual capabilities to strike at troops and American allies in the region.

Adm. Brad Cooper, the commander of Central Command, provided this assessment at his first appearance before Congress since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28. He said the mission has now shifted to enforcing a naval blockade of Iranian ports.

The bombing campaign, now in a ceasefire, has weakened Iran “across all measures of na-

tional power,” he told the Senate Armed Services Committee. He said 90% of its defense industrial base has been destroyed and predicted that it would take Tehran a generation to reconstitute its navy to its prewar level.

“We have significantly degraded their drone, missile and naval capabilities,” he said, naming what he said were the three military objectives of the war. “We fractured their command and control. We’ve eliminated the large preponderance of their space program.”

The destruction has “dramatically” diminished Iran’s ability to launch large-scale volleys at surrounding countries in the Persian Gulf, which host American bases. Cooper acknowledged, however, that Iran has “a very moderate, if not small” capability to strike at neighbors

and oil infrastructure.

“We, of course, have accordingly prepared for such a contingency,” he said.

Cooper declined to comment on reports that Tehran has retained roughly 70% of its prewar missile stockpile and about 70% of its mobile launchers but said the numbers he had seen in open sources “are not accurate.”

He also said he would not discuss the status of Iran’s nuclear program in a public setting, only confirming that its nuclear breakout time has been set back. The Trump administration has said it went to war to prevent Tehran from having a nuclear weapon.

Cooper’s testimony came as Democrats on the committee remained skeptical of the war’s strategic goals, pointing to the

ongoing closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital conduit for oil that has sent fuel prices soaring.

“It is hard to say, sitting here with the Strait of Hormuz closed, and every American feeling a deep, deep spike in the price of gas ... that we are overall better off until that strait is opened,” said Sen. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich.

Cooper described the situation in the strait as “complex” but suggested that Iran’s ability to attack shipping in the waterway is exaggerated. In previous crossings through the strait, Iran would send 20 to 40 fast boats, he said. Lately there have been two or three.

“But their voice is very loud,” Cooper said. “And those threats are clearly heard by the merchant industry and the insurance industry.”

# Mistrial in Weinstein NYC rape case retrial

*New York Daily News*

NEW YORK — A Manhattan judge declared a mistrial Friday at Harvey Weinstein's rape retrial after a jury became "hopelessly deadlocked" over whether the disgraced producer was guilty of an attack on Jessica Mann, less than a year after his last trial ended in the same result.

The eight men and four women on the jury, who got the case Wednesday, told the court they were unable to come to an unanimous decision shortly into Friday's deliberations. Justice Curtis Farber directed them to keep trying, but the panel soon after sent another note saying "no one is going to change where they stand."

Farber granted the request for a mistrial from Weinstein's lawyers over the wishes of prosecutors, saying it was evident the jury was "hopelessly deadlocked" and that to make them keep trying could be viewed as coercive.

Mann, among the first two women Weinstein was charged with assaulting after his 2018 arrest, spent five days testifying about the alleged March 18, 2013, attack at a hotel. It was her third time taking the stand this decade as a result of Weinstein's 2020 conviction for raping her being overturned.

She has long alleged that the Miramax founder violently attacked her in Manhattan weeks after they first met by chance at

a party in Los Angeles and that he later sexually assaulted her in California. Only the Manhattan incident was charged.

In a statement, Mann said she had nothing to gain from testifying at all of the trials except for establishing the truth.

"Today's decision to declare a mistrial doesn't in any way detract from the truth I told and the violent crimes Harvey Weinstein committed upon me and so many others," she said. "For years I have had to relive some of the hardest moments of my life while facing attempts to shame, humiliate and discredit me in open court. I submitted myself to the highest standards, transparency and accountability in coming forward through

the justice system — choosing integrity even when the process flayed me open."

Outside the courthouse, defense attorney Marc Agnifilo said he was disappointed not to win an acquittal but gratified that the majority wanted to find Weinstein not guilty.

Weinstein's 2020 conviction for raping Mann and sexually assaulting Miriam Haley at his SoHo loft in 2006, was tossed by New York's highest court in 2024 for reasons unrelated to either woman's testimony. When the case was tried again last year, he was convicted again of the attack on Haley, but after fraught deliberations, the panel couldn't agree on Mann and Farber declared a mistrial.

## Raúl Castro indictment to be unsealed in Miami

*Miami Herald*

MIAMI — A federal indictment charging Raúl Castro for the murders of four people in the shoot-down of two Brothers to the Rescue planes in 1996 is expected to be unsealed Wednesday, set to coincide with a symbolic event at Miami's Freedom Tower on Cuba's independence day.

Two sources in Miami told the Miami Herald that the grand jury indictment is expected to be presented at a May 20 event by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida to honor the victims, Armando Alejandro, Mario de la Peña, Carlos Costa and Pablo Morales.

The indictment of Castro, Cuba's ultimate authority who is turning 95 next month, comes amid unprecedented pressure from the Trump administration on the Cuban government to make major reforms and heightened expectations among Cubans in Miami about regime change

on the island. News of the indictment was first reported Thursday, the same day the director of the CIA traveled to the island to deliver a warning to Cuban officials, including Raúl Castro's grandson, Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro, that the time to make fundamental changes is now.

"The indictment is symbolic, the symbolism of indicting one of the arch enemies of the Cuban American community and the architect of the Cuban revolution, which failed," said Brian Fonseca, vice provost for defense and national security research and director of the Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy at Florida International University.

The indictment also may serve to "unlock new instruments of American power, like enhanced U.S. law enforcement operations" in Cuba, and is all part of a pressure campaign on Cuban leaders to make changes, Fonseca added.

## Supreme Court preserves access to abortion drug

*CQ-Roll Call*

The Supreme Court on Thursday allowed access to medication abortion via telemedicine and by mail to continue, blocking a decision at the appellate court level that had restricted the drug.

The justices granted emergency requests from the makers of mifepristone, Danco Laboratories LLC and GenBioPro Inc., after the New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on May 1 established an in-person requirement for dispensing the medication, ruling distribution by mail violates Louisiana's abortion ban.

The stay retains the status quo in the United States and remains in effect pending disposition of the appeal at the 5th Circuit.

Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel A. Alito Jr. dissented.

The case has the potential to upend a Biden-era pandemic policy and make it much more

difficult for women in Republican-led states to access abortions.

Mifepristone has been widely available in the U.S. for 25 years, and in 2023 medication abortion accounted for 63% of all abortions in the U.S., according to the Guttmacher Institute. And the share of that prescribed through telehealth has become much more common since the pandemic, now accounting for about one in four abortions, according to the Society for Family Planning.

Danco and GenBioPro argued that the Supreme Court had to intervene in the case to prevent "regulatory chaos" of the court system contradicting existing Food and Drug Administration policy.

The decision comes two days after FDA Commissioner Marty Makary stepped down. While he was commissioner, the FDA approved a generic version of mifepristone — a move that caused antiabortion groups to call for his ouster.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Judges: Woman in attack at Rihanna home not unfit

**CA** LOS ANGELES — The Florida woman who allegedly raked Rihanna's West LA home with rifle fire earlier this year may be mentally unfit to stand trial, her attorney said in court Wednesday.

Deputy Public Defender Derek Dillman "expressed a doubt" that his client, speech pathologist Ivanna Ortiz, 35, was competent to stand trial on charges of attempted murder and assault with a deadly weapon after she allegedly opened fire on the singer's Bevelly Crest property on March 8.

But after a brief closed-door hearing, Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Shannon Cooley did not find there was substantial evidence of Ortiz's mental "incompetence" and ordered criminal proceedings to continue.

### Teen will head to trial after arrest in ICE protest

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — A Bucks County judge on Tuesday denied a request to dismiss the case against a 15-year-old girl charged during an anti-ICE protest in Quakertown, setting the case on course for a possible trial in June, according to her attorney.

The girl is the only one of five teenagers arrested after the February protest — which ended in a chaotic confrontation involving several teens and Quakertown Police Chief Scott McElree — whose case remains unresolved. Prosecutors have already withdrawn the most serious charge against the girl, aggravated assault, which had stemmed from allegations that

she struck McElree, 72, on the shoulder during the confrontation.

Her attorney, Ed Angelo, said the teen denies hitting the chief. The remaining charges against her are misdemeanors, he said.

### Plea deal coming for boat captain in fatal crash

**FL** MIAMI — The operator of a tugboat pushing a barge that crashed into a summer-camp sailboat in Biscayne Bay last summer, killing three young girls, is negotiating a guilty plea with prosecutors to spare the victims' families from a trial, his attorney told the Miami Herald on Tuesday.

"The case will be worked out. My client will not put the families through a trial and expose them to relive this terrible tragedy," Walter Reynoso, the Coral Gables defense attorney for Yussiel Lopez Insua, said in an email.

WPLG-Local 10 reported that the deal is expected to be made in July.

Federal prosecutors charged Lopez Insua, 46, with seaman's manslaughter in March for operating the barge with obstructed visibility and without a proper lookout.

### Judge stays rule against deporting Abrego Garcia

**MD** BALTIMORE — On Tuesday, U.S. District Court Judge Paula Xinis left in place two injunctions against the re-arrest or detention of Maryland resident and immigrant Kilmar Abrego Garcia.

In March, the Trump administration sought to deport Abrego Garcia a second time, this time to Liberia and "in a matter

of days." He was deported in March 2025 to El Salvador and returned in June due to a protective order preventing him from being sent to El Salvador due to fears of gang persecution. He had agreed to be deported to Costa Rica, but the government has not accepted that request.

"The government is unwilling to send Mr. Abrego to Costa Rica for unexplained reasons," Kilmar's attorney Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg said in a news release from the advocacy group We Are CASA. "Since they're not allowed to deport him to Africa, the case remains at a stalemate caused by the government. What the judge pointed out is that this demolishes the government's argument that what they're trying to do is deport Mr. Abrego Garcia from the United States."

### Man accused in \$2.8M SNAP fraud scheme

**FL** FORT LAUDERDALE — A Davie man is facing seven felonies stemming from a \$2.8 million scheme to defraud the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the federal program that helps low-income families buy nutritious food, state officials said.

Abbas Rehman, 33, was arrested April 30 by the Department of Financial Services Criminal Investigations Division.

Rehman was identified as a suspect during an investigation into allegations of SNAP fraud at a market in Miami called Seven Stars Market, according to an arrest warrant affidavit.

Rehman allegedly acted in the scheme by using his position as a sales agent for MBD Noah

Inc. and Elite Card Services — two Independent Sales Organizations, which act as middlemen to help retailers "establish the ability to accept electronic payments through a payment processor," according to the warrant.

The investigation found that Rehman allegedly submitted fraudulent merchant applications and "manipulated" bank deposit information by using stolen identities of four USDA-authorized retailer businesses, according to a news release from the office of Chief Financial Officer Blaise Ingoglia.

### Senator suggests 'I-47' in Trump endorsement bid

**DC** WASHINGTON — In today's Texas Republican politics, the road to President Donald Trump's heart might just run down a Texas highway.

Sen. John Cornyn unveiled legislation last week to rename a future interstate across Texas as "I-47," honoring President Donald Trump as the nation's 47th president. The move comes as Cornyn seeks Trump's endorsement in advance of his bruising Senate runoff May 26 against Attorney General Ken Paxton.

The proposal would upgrade U.S. Highway 287, which runs from Port Arthur to Amarillo before continuing north into Montana, into a future interstate corridor Cornyn wants branded as the "Trump Interstate." Cornyn cast the proposal as both an economic development measure and a tribute to Trump, calling him "the most consequential president of our lifetime."

— From wire reports

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# Smalley leads by 2 with veterans on heels

Associated Press

NEWTOWN SQUARE, Pa. — Alex Smalley kept his composure amid pure chaos Saturday in the PGA Championship, when he vanished from the leaderboard with a shaky start and when he surged back in front with sublime shots along the back nine at Aronimink Golf Club.

His voice was calm and steady after signing for a 2-under 68 for a two-shot lead. He recognizes the stakes and the stage for someone who has yet to win on tour.

"I'm trying to downplay that as much as I possibly can just to make it seem like any other golf tournament, because essentially that's all it really is," Smalley said.

One look at the leaderboard would illustrate this PGA Championship is wildly different. Fourteen players had at least a share of the lead at some point Saturday. There was a seven-way tie for the lead with an hour left in the third round until Smalley's big finish.

And he's still left with an All-Star cast of contenders within five shots, a list that includes Masters champion Rory McIlroy and world No. 1 Scottie Scheffler, Jon

Rahm and Xander Schauffele.

"I've never seen anything like this," Scheffler said when he finished with a 71, leaving him five shots behind. "I've never seen a leaderboard like this, this bunched up. Going into tomorrow, it's quite literally anybody's tournament."

Smalley at least gets a head start thanks to six birdies over his last 10 holes that helped him recover from the rough start to become the only player to break par in all three rounds of the tournament.

His finishing kick kept this PGA Championship from having the largest 54-hole logjam in major championship history. Midway through the third round, 28 players were separated by two shots.

Rahm and McIlroy were among those tied for the lead at one point. Schauffele and Patrick Reed were right behind. About the only one who failed to seize on the moment was Scheffler, who missed six putts inside 10 feet, four of them for birdie.

Smalley's final birdie putt from just inside 15 feet put him at 6-under 204, two shots ahead of the

group that includes Rahm and three ahead of McIlroy, Schauffele and Reed.

It starts with Smalley, a 29-year-old who spent three years in the Wannamaker dormitory at Duke, the name on the heavy PGA Championship trophy to be awarded Sunday. He is playing only his fifth major, never cracking the top 20. He's also winless on the PGA Tour, but he showed up for his first major of the year off three straight finishes in the top 20.

Key to his round was a 15-foot par putt on the sixth hole to stop the slide. He took the lead with a 25-foot birdie putt on the par-4 15th stretched it two shots by reaching the par-5 16th in two for another birdie and then had a bogey-birdie finish.

Rahm had a careless three-putt bogey on the final hole that slightly soiled his 3-under 67 and was part of the five-way tie for second with Ludvig Aberg of Sweden (68), Matti Schmid of Germany (65), Nick Taylor of Canada (65) and Aaron Rai of England (67).

McIlroy began the third round five shots behind but with 29

players ahead of him. He blasted his way to a 4-under 66. His target was to reach 5 under, and it looked like he might get there until failing to birdie the par-5 16th and having to scramble for bogey from a plugged lie in the bunker on the 17th.

Schauffele had a 66 and Reed bounced back with a 67, two shots behind along with McNealy, who bogeyed the final hole for a 71.

The pin positions were far more accessible than the previous two days, as McIlroy had predicted. No one shot better than 65, though Chris Kirk had a double bogey on the 18th for one of those rounds. Justin Rose was outside the cut line on Friday until holing a chip from deep rough for eagle on his last hole to make it with one shot to spare. He shot 65 and was among those four shots behind.

"When you have a set of greens like this, you can start to frustrate people pretty easily," McIlroy said. "It's frustrating to us, but at the same time, it creates a hell of an entertaining championship. If I wasn't playing this tournament, I'd love what's going on this week.

"But watching and playing are two different things."

## Luukkonen, Sabres force Game 7 after routing Canadiens

Associated Press

MONTREAL — Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen made 18 saves after starter Alex Lyon stopped only one of the four shots he faced, and the Buffalo Sabres roared back to beat the Montreal Canadiens 8-3 on Saturday night and force a Game 7 in the Eastern Conference semifinal series.

The winner Monday night in Buffalo will face Carolina for the conference title and a chance to play for the Stanley Cup. The Hurricanes swept both of their series, last playing May 9.

"I think if you would have asked every guy in here in September if they would have taken being in Game 7 in Round 2, we all would have signed up for that,"

Buffalo forward Tage Thompson said. "So, we're in a great spot. Now it's just one game. That's all that matters."

Sabres captain Rasmus Dahlin had a goal and four assists for a team playoff-record five points.

Buffalo came back after trailing 3-1 midway through the first period.

"We believed in it from the beginning and (Luukkonen) came in and gave us a little boost," Dahlin said. "It was a mix of everything, but I'm super happy with the character from today's game."

Jack Quinn scored twice and added an assist, Thompson had three assists and an empty-net goal, and Zach Benson and Jack Quinn each had a goal and an as-

sist. Konsta Helenius and Zach Metsa also scored.

Arber Xhekaj, Ivan Demidov and Jake Evans scored for Montreal, which won a Game 7 at Tampa Bay in the first round. Jakub Dobes stopped 27 of 33 shots, and Jacob Fowler made a save and allowed a goal in relief.

"Pretty shocked," Canadiens captain Nick Suzuki said. "We're up 3-1 in the first period and we lose 8-3."

After Dahlin opened the scoring 32 seconds in, Montreal chased Lyon with the three-goal burst. Xhekaj tied it at 1:40, Demidov scored on a power play at 8:12 and Evans made it 3-1 on a short-handed break with 9:46 left. Luukkonen then took over in goal,

and Zucker got one back for Buffalo on a power play with 6:04 to go in the period.

Benson tied it a minute into the second, slipping in a short backhand from the left side. Quinn put Buffalo ahead on a power play with 9:06 left in the second, slapping a one-timer from the top of the right circle past Dobes. Helenius made it 5-3 with 7:01 remaining in the period, striking from short range.

Quinn added his second of the night on a power play midway through the third. Thompson scored into the empty net, and Metsa capped the scoring on a late power play.

Buffalo was 4-for-6 on the power play. Montreal was 1-for-3.

# Sánchez throws shutout as Phillies top Pirates

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Christopher Sánchez struck out a career-high 13 while picking up the second shutout of his big league career as the Philadelphia Phillies beat the Pittsburgh Pirates 6-0 on Saturday to reach .500 for the first time since mid-April.

Sánchez (5-2), the National League Cy Young Award runner-up a year ago, allowed five hits and didn't issue a walk while extending his scoreless streak to 29⅓ innings. He dropped his ERA to 1.82 with the fifth complete game and third shutout in the major leagues this season.

Bryce Harper hit a 457-foot three-run homer off the batter's eye in the first inning off Bubba Chandler (1-5). Trea Turner and Alec Bohm had two hits apiece. Kyle Schwarber, baseball's leading home run hitter, added an RBI single as the Phillies gave Sanchez an early five-run lead and cruised.

While Sanchez was crisp, Chandler was not. The hard-throwing 23-year-old, considered an important part of Pittsburgh's future, continued to struggle with his command. Chandler issued four walks in his three innings of work, pushing his total on the season to a major league-leading 31.

**Blue Jays 2, Tigers 1 (10):** Daulton Varsho drove in the go-ahead run with a single in the 10th inning and Yohendrick Pinarango homered to lead visiting Toronto over Detroit.

Blue Jays reliever Louis Varland (2-1) pitched the final two innings, allowing two hits and striking out two. Toronto used six pitchers who struck out 14.

The Tigers, who were 0 for 7 with runners in scoring position, had a chance to win it in the ninth inning with Riley Greene on third and two outs, but Varland struck out Colt Keith.

**Red Sox 3, Braves 2:** Willson Contreras hit a two-run home run in the eighth inning to help visiting Boston beat Atlanta.

Red Sox rookie left-hander Payton Tolle (2-2) gave up two runs over a season-high eight innings, allowing four hits and striking out three. The Red Sox are 15-1 when their starters pitch at least six innings.

Aroldis Chapman moved into a tie for 10th place with his 377th career save. Chapman escaped a bases-loaded jam after a throwing error from shortstop Andruw Monasterio and two walks.

**Cardinals 4, Royals 2:** Alec Burleson drove in two runs and host St. Louis beat Kansas City in the second game of the annual I-70 series.

Kyle Leahy (5-3) pitched six innings in his first career start against the Royals. He allowed one run on five hits. George Soriano got his second save despite giving up a leadoff homer to Jac Caglianone in the ninth.

The Cardinals have won four of their last five games, while Kansas City has lost six in a row. Since interleague play began in 1997, St. Louis is 81-55 against the Royals.

**Rockies 4, Diamondbacks 1:** Jake McCarthy singled twice and drove in a run against his former team, helping host Colorado beat Arizona.

McCarthy, who played for the Diamondbacks from 2021-25, singled in the second inning to make it 3-1. He had at least one hit for the 14th time in the Rockies' past 18 games. Over that stretch, he's hitting .375.

Hunter Goodman, Brenton Doyle and Willi Castro also had two hits apiece for Colorado, and Mickey Moniak had his team-leading 27th and 28th RBIs. The Rockies had lost 11 of their previous 14 games, including five of their past six.

**Marlins 10, Rays 5 (10):** Liam Hicks had a two-run RBI single in an eight-run 10th inning and Miami ended Tampa Bay's 11-game home winning streak with a victory.

Jakob Marsee added three hits and Javier Sanoja had four

RBIs for the Marlins.

**Nationals 13, Orioles 3:** Cade Cavalli (2-2) took a shutout into the seventh inning, Keibert Ruiz homered and drove in a career-high five runs and host Washington reached the .500 mark for the first time in two years with a victory over Baltimore.

Jacob Young and Brady House also homered for the Nationals, who were 0-15 in games in which they were a win away from a .500 record after being 20-20 on May 14, 2024.

**Guardians 7, Reds 4:** Angel Martínez hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the seventh inning, José Ramírez moved into sixth place in franchise history for hits and host Cleveland beat Cincinnati.

Ramírez tied Lou Boudreau for sixth in franchise history in hits at 1,706 with a leadoff single in the fifth before claiming sole possession of sixth with another single in the eighth.

**Astros 4, Rangers 1:** Yordan Alvarez hit his 15th homer and host Houston matched a season high with four longballs in a win over Texas that left the Rangers' Jacob deGrom (3-3) stuck at 99 career wins.

Jose Altuve sent deGrom's third pitch of the game into the Crawford Boxes in left field for the 42nd leadoff homer of his career. Christian Walker opened the third inning with his 11th homer, and with two outs, Zach Cole homered to make it 4-0.

**White Sox 8, Cubs 3:** Muntaka Murakami homered twice and drove in three runs, helping the host White Sox beat the Cubs.

Miguel Vargas, Colson Montgomery and Andrew Benintendi also connected as the White Sox improved to 6-2 on a nine-game homestand. Davis Martin (6-1) struck out seven while pitching six innings of one-run ball.

**Brewers 2, Twins 1:** Jackson Chourio hit a go-ahead solo homer in the sixth inning and

made a run-saving catch in the seventh, Logan Henderson (1-1) struck out seven in five innings and visiting Milwaukee beat Minnesota.

It was the 13th come-from-behind victory for the Brewers, who were outhit 7-5 but improved to 8-1 in their last nine games.

**Mets 6, Yankees 3:** Luke Weaver escaped a seventh-inning, bases-loaded, no-outs jam when he entered to face his former team for the first time, and the host Mets beat the Yankees to even their weekend Subway Series at one game apiece.

Mark Vientos had three RBIs and Juan Soto two hits and two walks as the Mets won for the fourth time in five games.

**Padres 7, Mariners 4:** Nick Castellanos hit a three-run homer, Rodolfo Durán went deep for his first career hit and Gavin Sheets also connected in visiting San Diego's win over Seattle.

Durán, a 28-year-old catcher who spent 11 seasons in the minors, hit a two-run shot in the seventh. In the ninth, Durán hit a deep fly to center and Julio Rodríguez made a leaping catch above the wall to deny the rookie a second homer.

**Giants 6, Athletics 4:** Casey Schmitt hit two home runs and drove in three, Trevor McDonald struck out five in 6⅓ innings, and visiting San Francisco beat the Athletics.

McDonald (2-0) surrendered five hits and one run in his fifth major league start. Matt Gage pitched a scoreless ninth to earn his first career save.

**Dodgers 15, Angels 2:** Shohei Ohtani had five RBIs, Mookie Betts homered and the visiting Dodgers pummeled the Angels for their fourth straight win.

Justin Wroblewski (6-1) allowed two runs in six innings, taking pressure off the Dodgers' pitching staff after an unscheduled bullpen game Friday following Blake Snell's late scratch.

# Napoleon Solo wins subdued Preakness

Associated Press

LAUREL, Md. — Napoleon Solo reemerged as a colt to watch with a victory in the Preakness Stakes.

Now trainer Chad Summers wants a shot at Kentucky Derby winner Golden Tempo, whose absence left an underwhelming field at Laurel Park this weekend.

“We wish he was here in the Preakness. We were rooting for them when they were thinking about it,” Summers said. “Unfortunately they didn’t make it here. That’s fine. Hopefully we can see him down the road somewhere.”

Napoleon Solo held off Iron Honor down the stretch Saturday, rebounding from a pair of fifth-place showings for his first victory of the year. Golden Tempo was held out of the race, leaving a wide-open field of 14 horses to contest the middle jewel of the Triple Crown, which was held at Laurel Park this year because Pimlico in Baltimore is being rebuilt.

Taj Mahal was the top choice at 9-2 — the longest odds for a Preakness favorite since the race moved to its current distance of

1 $\frac{1}{16}$  miles in 1925.

Iron Honor had been the morning line favorite at 9-2, but he was an 8-1 shot by the time the horses entered the starting gate.

Taj Mahal broke to the lead early and covered the first quarter-mile in 22.66 seconds, but the pace quickly slowed and trainer Brittany Russell’s unbeaten colt couldn’t hold on. He was passed by Napoleon Solo (7-1) near the top of the stretch. Iron Honor was a threat late but came up 1 $\frac{1}{4}$  lengths short.

“He was a bit wide on both turns and it probably took the starch out of him a little bit when it mattered late,” said Chad Brown, Iron Honor’s trainer.

Chip Honcho (11-1) was third.

Previously a rowdy event with throngs of fans and live music on the infield, the Preakness was contested in a subdued atmosphere this year at Laurel, with attendance capped at 4,800. The track’s future is uncertain — it may be converted into a training facility.

“It’s a shame and it’s a tragedy that racetracks like Aqueduct and Laurel are no longer going to be

around, because they’re foundation racetracks,” Summers said. “I would just hope that we get the opportunity as an industry to rally and save some of these tracks. We can’t allow this to keep happening, and there’s only going to be three or four tracks left at the end of the day.”

The Preakness has long served multiple purposes: It’s obviously a necessity for a horse to win the Triple Crown, but it’s also a second chance of sorts for those that didn’t make it to the Derby for one reason or another. This time, it was primarily the latter when only three horses that ran in the Derby showed up.

So it came to be that Napoleon Solo and Iron Honor, who hadn’t raced since finishing fifth and seventh in the Wood Memorial in early April, went head to head again for much higher stakes.

Third-place Chip Honcho was coming off its own fifth-place finish in the Louisiana Derby in March.

Napoleon Solo finished in 1 minute, 58.69 seconds and paid \$17.80 on a \$2 bet. It was the first victory in a Triple Crown race for

both Summers and jockey Paco Lopez.

The colt won his first two starts last year by impressive margins, prevailing in the Champagne Stakes by 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  lengths in October. He couldn’t maintain that form, however, finishing fifth in both the Fountain of Youth and Wood Memorial this year.

Now Napoleon Solo is being pointed toward the Haskell Stakes at Monmouth Park in July.

The three horses who did race in both the Derby and Preakness this year — Ocelli (7-1), Incrediblebolt (5-1) and Robusta (25-1) — finished fourth, fifth and ninth Saturday.

The race included its maximum of 14 horses, marking its largest field since 14 also ran in the 2011 edition.

Taj Mahal had run all three of his races at Laurel, which likely played a role as bettors made him the slight favorite over Incrediblebolt.

Russell was trying to become the first female trainer to win the Preakness, but Taj Mahal fell back to 10th after leading much of the way.

# Rousey defeats Carano fast in double comeback bout

Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — When Ronda Rousey finally got back into a mixed martial arts cage after 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  years away from her sport, she couldn’t wait even one more minute to collect another arm — and to have her own arm raised one last time.

Rousey stopped Gina Carano with her signature armbar just 17 seconds into the two iconic fighters’ double comeback bout Saturday night.

After finishing the 44-year-old Carano with a ferocity that evoked her famous heyday, the 39-year-old Rousey reaffirmed that this was only the epilogue on her historic MMA career. She insists she is headed into retirement after ending on a dom-

inant victory.

“I was hoping to come out as unscathed as possible,” Rousey said. “I didn’t really want to hurt her. Luckily it was beautiful martial arts, that’s what I think that was. It was art.”

Rousey (13-2) didn’t waste an instant after the opening bell, immediately charging and tackling Carano. Rousey quickly moved into position and applied her famous finishing move, wrenching Carano’s arm as the fight was stopped.

Rousey famously won eight fights in less than a minute during her meteoric rise through MMA in the 2010s. When asked if she considered waiting a bit longer to go for the finish in this comeback fight, since it was so many years

in the making, Rousey laughed.

“Hell no,” she said. “My husband and my kids are watching me. I don’t want to put them through anything more than I have to.”

Carano, who hadn’t fought in 17 years, was all smiles even after the swift end to one of the longest layoffs in pro sports history. Rousey and Carano hugged and shared warm words after the finish, raising each other’s arms in victory.

This improbable double comeback bout united two of the most important fighters from MMA’s past two decades. Rousey left the sport after consecutive losses, while Carano moved on to an acting career after taking her first loss.

After having two children and settling into post-fighting life on her farm in Riverside, Rousey seriously began to consider an MMA return last year. She immediately focused on a fight with Carano. Carano was happy to finally accept the comeback she had occasionally considered, saying she used her preparations as a way to overcome multiple health problems from recent years.

Rousey had repeatedly said this will be her final fight, while Carano has said she doesn’t know what the future holds. Afterward, Carano said she hasn’t closed the door on another bout, and promoter Nakisa Bidarian said he would be eager to put Carano on another show.