

US to shrink asset deployments for NATO

By **CHAD GARLAND**
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. is dramatically downsizing the contribution of forces it would send to Europe in a crisis, part of a larger push for other NATO members to take a larger role in defending the Continent, according to a media report citing current and former officials.

During a closed-door meeting at the alliance's headquarters in Brussels last week, Pentagon official Alexander Velez-Green notified NATO allies of plans to shrink the pool of military assets and capabilities the U.S. would make available to NATO in a conflict, *The Wall Street Journal* reported Tuesday.

Current and former officials briefed on the meeting told the newspaper that the Trump administration aims to cut the forces earmarked to defend NATO by one-third to one-half.

That includes cuts to U.S. commitments of long-range strike forces, such as strategic bombers, as well as some midair refueling tankers and warships.

The move affects the NATO force model, a system used to generate and assign military forces from the alliance's member states for various defense plans, part of which involves resources from the continental United States to be made available in the event of a major crisis within the first 10 days, 30 days and 180 days.

The long-anticipated cuts by the Trump administration are aimed at prodding NATO allies to carry more of the load of defending Europe as the U.S. adjusts its force posture to deter China in the Pacific.

The move comes as President Donald Trump is expected to attend a NATO leaders summit in Ankara, Turkey, in July, and

will likely pressure other allied leaders to do more to defend Europe, *The Wall Street Journal* reported.

The Pentagon confirmed in an emailed statement to *Stars and Stripes* that the Department of Defense had announced changes to its contribution at the meeting, citing Trump's longstanding push for European allies to do more.

"These changes represent an opportunity for allies to demonstrate that they have heard President Trump's call for them to step up and take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense," Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said in the statement.

At a news conference ahead of the Brussels meeting, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said a smaller U.S. contribution to the force-generating system was "to be expected."

"This is why Europe is spending so much more to basically end the overreliance on one ally when it comes to defense of the totality of NATO," Rutte said, citing increases in spending, capabilities and investments in the defense industrial base in both Europe and Canada.

Parnell's statement stressed that the issue is not just about increased defense spending, but spending focused on the "combat-credible capabilities most required for Europe's defense."

It also follows recent Pentagon decisions to scale back the U.S. military presence in Europe, including the cancellation earlier this month of an armored brigade's deployment to Poland — part of an effort to cut U.S. troops on the Continent by 5,000. Another unit affected was a long-range fires battalion slated to deploy to Germany later this year.

NDAA draft limits cuts in Europe, raises troops pay

By **SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The House Armed Services Committee on Tuesday released an initial draft of an annual defense policy bill that would authorize \$1.15 trillion in spending for fiscal year 2027, with pay raises for service members and restrictions on troop reductions in Europe.

The measure, known as the National Defense Authorization Act, will be debated and amended by the committee next week as Congress tackles a record \$1.5 trillion defense budget request from the Trump administration.

The panel's draft authorizes its portion of the total, \$1.15 trillion. The remaining \$350 billion is expected to be sought through a special budget reconciliation process that can bypass the Senate's 60-vote filibuster.

Of the \$1.15 trillion, \$1.1 trillion would go toward programs under the Pentagon, and \$41 billion would support the Department of Energy's nuclear weapons programs.

The focus of this year's policy bill, which will need to be funded by separate appropriations legislation, is on reviving the atrophied defense industrial base, according to senior majority and minority committee staff. But it also continues efforts to improve

quality of life for troops.

It authorizes the range of pay raises for troops requested by the Trump administration, including a 7% pay hike for ranks E-5 and below, a 6% pay boost for E-6 through O-3 and a 5% pay raise for ranks O-4 and higher.

The measure also matches the administration's requests to grow the force amid a recruiting boon for the services. The Army would add 15,000 soldiers, the Navy 13,000 sailors, the Air Force 8,900 airmen, the Space Force 2,800 guardians and the Marine Corps 1,400 Marines.

Guard and Reserve forces would add 8,600 personnel under the legislation.

Lawmakers notably pushed

back against the administration's efforts to reduce the U.S. military's presence in Europe, renewing a mandatory floor of 76,000 personnel on the Continent that was first enacted in last year's bill.

A new provision this year would require the Pentagon to assess whether it is feasible to redeploy troops to NATO's eastern flank before deciding to bring them home.

The bill also requires a report on global force posture, particularly pertaining to U.S. European Command, as well as a review of whether the rotational presence of two Army armored brigade combat teams in Poland could be made permanent.

Nimitz location sparks Cuba speculation

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

USS Nimitz wrapped up its circumnavigation of South America last week as part of its move from Naval Base Kitsap, in Bremerton, Wash., to its new homeport at Naval Station Norfolk, Va.

“Welcome to the Caribbean, Nimitz Carrier Strike Group!” U.S. Southern Command posted on X on May 20. “USS Nimitz has proven its combat prowess across the globe, ensuring stability and defending democracy from the Taiwan Strait to the Arabian Gulf.”

The Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, which includes the embarked Carrier Air Wing 17 and the Arleigh Burke-class de-

stroyer USS Gridley, has continued operations in the Caribbean as part of the Southern Seas 2026 multinational exercises.

Nimitz’s arrival in the Caribbean was the first time a Navy carrier had operated in the area since February, when USS Gerald R. Ford was deployed to the Middle East following its role in the Jan. 3 raid to remove President Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela.

The arrival of Nimitz in the Caribbean comes as the Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group continues to operate in the region. USNI News reported March 25 that USS Iwo Jima was in port at Ponce, Puerto Rico.

The presence of a large con-

centration of U.S. forces in the Caribbean led to reports that President Donald Trump was seeking to increase pressure on Cuba.

“It hardly seemed coincidental that the Pentagon timed the arrival of the carrier into the southern Caribbean on the same day that the Justice Department announced charges against Raul Castro, the 94-year-old former president of Cuba,” the New York Times reported May 20.

Nimitz has continued operations consistent with its trip around South America, hosting foreign dignitaries and operating joint exercises with countries including Panama, Chile, Argentina and Brazil.

Last week, Nimitz hosted separate visits with leaders from Suriname and the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, on the northeastern coast of South America, between Venezuela and Brazil.

Nimitz continued flight training operations and also conducted a replenishment of supplies at sea with USNS Patuxent on May 15.

Nimitz was originally scheduled to arrive in Norfolk in mid-May to begin its decommissioning. However, the Navy has extended Nimitz’s active duty until at least March 2027 to coincide with the commissioning of the USS John F. Kennedy, the second Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier.

Naval Forces Japan loses control of its X account

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — U.S. Naval Forces Japan temporarily lost control of its official account on social media platform X on Wednesday when an unidentified person logged into it and changed some basic information.

The account, formerly under the handle of @CNFJ, was changed Wednesday morning to @hemma1931, according to posts on the account. The account typically posts in Japanese.

The command noticed the issue “first thing this morning,” and was able to secure the account after a few hours, according to Naval Forces Japan spokesman Cmdr. Joe Keiley.

“We are aware that the page was logged into by an unknown person, and we were able to recover and get back into the account,” he told Stars and

Stripes by phone Wednesday. “We’re working to update back to CNFJ, but it is in control and recovered by Naval Forces Japan.”

Keiley said he was not aware of any “inappropriate posts” and it didn’t appear the person tried to impersonate CNFJ or its commander, Rear Adm. Ian Johnson.

While hijacked, the page’s handle was changed, and the username was modified to “Em Blossom,” Yahoo! Japan reported Wednesday, citing screenshots circulating online. The page also changed its profile picture to a selfie of a woman, and its biography was changed to “pretty mess, devoted mutual / always follow back.”

While it was simple for the command to recover the account, Keiley said the process of updating the account name is taking more time.

Navy chooses 7 designs for its vessel competition

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

Seven entrants have been chosen to advance to the design prototyping phase for the Medium Unmanned Surface Vessel competition, the Navy said Tuesday.

“The selected industry partners must successfully complete at-sea demonstrations to prove the maturity of their systems,” said Capt. Ron Flanders, spokesman for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition.

The names of the designs chosen by the Navy will be released after all companies have confirmed their plans to move forward in the marketplace-style competition.

The seven designs were chosen from about two dozen submissions, the Navy said.

The unspecified shipbuilders will develop vessels that will be tested against Navy require-

ments for the robotic craft.

The Navy’s criteria call for a vessel with a range of at least 2,500 nautical miles and a speed of 25 knots.

The vessel must be able to operate in sea state 4, defined by the World Meteorological Organization as moderately rough seas with wave heights reaching up to 8 feet.

The vessel must be able to operate autonomously while carrying up to 25 metric tons of weapons or other cargo in at least two 40-foot-long shipping containers.

Shipbuilders that pass the benchmarks will receive \$15 million and be eligible for production, the Navy said.

Huntington Ingalls Industries plans to submit its Romulus design, according to USNI News.

Another firm, Saildrone, told Breaking Defense this year that it planned to submit a design to the competition.

Trump-backed Paxton wins Texas runoff

The Dallas Morning News

WASHINGTON — Texas Republicans on Tuesday chose Attorney General Ken Paxton's hard-charging MAGA style over Sen. John Cornyn's seasoned establishment conservatism after one of the state's most bruising races in years.

The outcome showed President Donald Trump's enduring sway over the GOP after he endorsed Paxton late in the runoff. It also demonstrated money isn't the final word in politics, as Paxton was vastly outspent by Cornyn.

Paxton, thanking his supporters at a celebration in Plano, singled out Trump. "When everyone in Washington told him to abandon me and abandon the people of Texas, he didn't lis-

ten," Paxton said.

He countered the advertising onslaught from Cornyn by rallying his base of supporters through interviews with conservative influencers, appearances before friendly audiences and a barrage of social media attacks.

His message that Cornyn has been disloyal to Trump and the conservative cause resonated with GOP voters angry over the senator's willingness to compromise with Democrats.

Waiting for Paxton is Democratic nominee James Talarico, a state representative from Austin whose approach to politics blends his Christian faith with progressive ideology.

Cornyn spoke to reporters shortly after polls closed, acknowledging his loss. He high-

lighted the many years he has spent on building the Republican Party and said he would stand by his pledge to support the "Republican ticket."

"I trust the voters of Texas and they've made their decision," Cornyn said. "I must respect it."

Cornyn and Paxton spent more than a year tearing into each other through biting ads, hostile interviews and social media broadsides in one of the state's nastiest campaigns in years.

The runoff for the GOP Senate nomination shifted sharply in its final days after Trump's endorsement. In Tuesday's vote, Paxton cut deeply into Cornyn's metro strongholds while piling up lopsided margins in conservative rural areas.

Throughout the race, Cornyn emphasized experience and seniority and said Paxton's scandals, legal troubles and conduct made him unfit for the Senate and too risky for Republicans in a general election.

Paxton rejected that, running as an unapologetic "America First" conservative ready to confront both Democrats and Republicans he views as insufficiently loyal to Trump and his priorities.

The matchup became the most expensive Senate primary in U.S. history, topping \$130 million in spending by all candidates and their allies.

Paxton's victory sends Republicans into a high-stakes general election fight with control of the Senate on the line.

NASA unveils rover info for moon base mission

Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel

NASA announced which two companies would be tasked to build lunar rovers for its future moon base — as well as the company that will fly them there — among other plans during an event from its Washington headquarters Tuesday.

Blue Origin's uncrewed Blue Moon MK1 lander, which will launch from Cape Canaveral atop a New Glenn rocket, was given the go to carry a pair of "lunar terrain vehicles," or rovers, for missions that are part of NASA's plans to launch before 2030.

Those lunar rovers will be provided by Hawthorne, Calif.-based Venturi Astrolab with its FLEX rover, and Golden, Colo.-based Lunar Outpost with its Pegasus rover, a smaller version of the Eagle rover that made a stop at Kennedy Space Center Visitor Center in Florida last year.

Astrolab is partnered with Axion Space, Interlune and Odyssey Space Research while Lunar Outpost is partnered with Gener-

al Motors, Goodyear and Leidos.

"What we are embarking upon is extremely challenging, and we know so little from what is a combined 80 hours of lunar astronaut EVA time across the Apollo missions, and that was more than a half century ago," said NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman. "So we are not jumping right into the glass dome moon base as a service."

The rover awards were originally expected to be announced last fall, but the Artemis program and plans for a moon base have shifted since Isaacman's confirmation as the head of the agency in December. In March, he held an event called "Ignition" that outlined NASA priorities, including the moon base, which aims to spend an additional \$40 billion into the next decade.

The rovers are part of Phase 1 of the moon base plans, with missions through 2029 that aim to secure reliable access to the lunar surface and experiment with technology.

GOP-controlled SC Senate kills congressional redistrict map

The State (Columbia, S.C.)

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The South Carolina Senate killed a proposed congressional map for the 2026 election as thousands of voters went to the polls Tuesday, rebuking pressure from the White House to create seven reliably Republican districts.

With a record number of primary voters casting their ballots around the state Tuesday, the Senate's Republican supermajority could not muster enough support to limit debate and force a final vote on a new congressional map.

"The deadline has passed, voting has begun," said state Sen. Richard Cash, an Anderson Republican. "It is time to conclude the matter."

Senators voted 26-18 to "continue" the redistricting bill and adjourned without taking up amendments or giving it a final vote, effectively ending the effort for the year.

The Senate is scheduled to return to Columbia on June 10, the day after the June 9 primary, to

finish work on the budget and bills that have been sent to conference committees. The House, where all seats are up for reelection this year, has not set a date for a return.

The General Assembly spent eight days of a special session, and hundreds of thousands of state dollars, on the failed attempt to redraw the state's congressional maps. The vote to reject redistricting occurred 12 days after the end of the regular legislative session.

While several Republicans opposed rushed mid-decade redistricting from the beginning, many more jumped ship on the effort by Tuesday. Twelve Republicans joined all 12 Democrats to oppose limiting debate Tuesday. On Saturday, only seven Republicans voted against invoking cloture, a procedure to cut debate short.

State Sen. Larry Grooms, a Berkeley Republican who is the de facto leader of redistricting in the Senate, said he liked the proposed map and wanted to see it pass in an interview Saturday.

Trump: Nobody will control Hormuz

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said that no one nation would control the Strait of Hormuz, pushing back on Iranian demands to manage the vital energy waterway.

“Nobody’s going to control it. It’s international waters,” Trump said Wednesday at the White House. “The strait’s going to be open to everybody” and the U.S. will “watch over it.”

Trump was asked during a meeting of his Cabinet officials if he was comfortable with a short-term deal that would open the strait but under Iranian control.

He didn’t indicate what steps the United States would take to ensure free passage of vessels through the waterway, which

has been closed since the start of the war. Iran has maintained a blockade of the strait and commercial shippers have been hesitant to attempt transit.

Trump’s comments cast doubt on prospects for an immediate breakthrough between the U.S. and Iran, with markets optimistic for a deal after both sides reported progress in recent days.

The status of the strait is a key sticking point.

Oil remained lower on the day as traders stayed optimistic that a deal was in sight, even amid conflicting statements from the two sides.

Trump indicated the U.S. was “not satisfied” with negotiations to end the almost three-month war, noting that “maybe we

have to go back and finish it,” without elaborating on whether that meant further military action.

Trump’s remarks followed an Iranian state television report on a draft interim peace deal, which said maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz could return to normal within a month of it coming into effect. The White House cast the report as false.

“This report from Iranian controlled media is not true and the MOU they ‘released’ is a complete fabrication,” the White House said in a social media post. “Nobody should believe what Iranian state media is putting out.”

Further damping prospects for an agreement, Trump down-

played the possibility of Iranian sanctions relief.

“We’re not talking about any easing of sanctions, no money, no nothing,” he said.

Other key points in negotiations reported by Iran’s IRIB News included the U.S. lifting its naval blockade on Iranian ports and the American Navy leaving waters surrounding Iran.

The draft also said Iran and Oman will have a mechanism in place to oversee shipping in the strait. That’s one of the most contentious issues holding up a deal, with the U.S. saying vessels must be allowed free passage. Oman has not commented in recent weeks on Iran saying the two are in discussions about managing the strait.

Russian port tackles fire after drone strike

Bloomberg News

A fire broke out at Russia’s Black Sea port of Tuapse after another Ukrainian drone attack overnight, as authorities continue to clear up damage to coastline following multiple strikes in recent weeks.

The blaze at a marine terminal in the Tuapse district of Krasnodar region began after drone debris fell on the facility, the regional task force said Wednesday on Telegram. More

than 80 people and 25 pieces of equipment, including Emergency Ministry units, were involved in putting out the conflagration, it said, without elaborating further.

Ukraine is intensifying strikes on Russian energy infrastructure in an effort to curb the Kremlin’s revenues amid higher oil prices linked to the Iran war. Tuapse has been targeted multiple times since early April, forcing Russia to declare

a regional emergency in the city of more than 60,000 people that’s home to one of the country’s largest Black Sea ports and a refinery owned by Rosneft PJSC.

Cleanup operations in Tuapse following an oil spill caused by earlier drone attacks are still going on, local authorities said. As of May 26, more than 113,700 cubic feet of contaminated soil and oil-water mixture had been collected and removed.

Separately, Ukraine launched a massive drone attack overnight on Enerhodar, the town that hosts the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, with more than 50 explosions recorded, the occupied plant’s spokeswoman Yevgenia Yashina told Russia’s Interfax newswire on Wednesday. Parts of Enerhodar, in Russian-occupied southeastern Ukraine, lost power and communications were severely disrupted, she

Low response to questionnaire plagues fuel spill registry

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

The University of Hawaii is seeking the community’s help in increasing the number of people who complete the enrollment process for the Red Hill Registry.

The registry was created to track the long-term effects of the 2021 fuel spill that contaminated the Navy’s drinking wa-

ter system serving military housing around and on Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

The registry has pre-enrolled more than 2,600 participants since late 2024, but only 423 have completed the expanded questionnaires that are part of the complete process, the registry said in a release Tuesday.

Roughly 93,000 water consumers were affected when

JP-5 jet fuel spilled from the underground Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility. The Navy is in the process of permanently closing the World War II-era facility.

A March report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine emphasized the importance of the long-term collection of data related to those exposed to the

Red Hill jet fuel contamination. Little is known of the risks of specific long-term health outcomes associated with exposure to JP-5 jet fuel, the report stated.

The low completion rate by registry participants comes despite robust follow-up by staff, Mackenzie Walsh, the registry’s communications manager, said by phone Tuesday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

ICE worker sentenced after sex sting at hotel

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A man assisting Immigration and Customs Enforcement during the federal government’s Twin Cities immigration enforcement crackdown has pleaded guilty and was sentenced for being among many people snared in a prostitution sting in Bloomington.

Brashad A. Johnson, 36, of St. Michael, Minn., admitted in Hennepin County District Court to a misdemeanor count of trying to hire a woman for sex on Feb. 5. Judge Gary Larson set aside a 90-day jail term and sentenced Johnson on May 19 to a year’s probation and \$1,500 in fines.

Johnson worked for the Department of Defense doing security clearances for federal agencies, said Bloomington Police Chief Booker Hodges.

According to the criminal complaint: Police placed sex-oriented decoy ads on a personals website. Johnson sent text messages to a phone number in one ad to an undercover officer, offering to pay \$100 for sex. Johnson went to the Best Western Hotel in Bloomington as arranged. When he entered one of the rooms, he was arrested with \$100 on him and a cellphone.

Kids on e-dirt bikes ‘terrorizing’ Tacoma

WA TACOMA — North-east Tacoma residents have reported “marauding packs of juvenile delinquents terrorizing our neighborhoods” on electric dirt bikes and scooters.

They told The News Tribune of Tacoma that groups of kids on

electric dirt bikes have been speeding around neighborhoods, cutting people off on sidewalks and zooming past stop signs into traffic. None of the residents wanted to share their names, fearing the retaliation some of their neighbors have experienced: their houses egged, their doorbells rung and kids flipping them off and cursing them out.

Shelbie Boyd with the Tacoma Police Department confirmed Friday that the department has received calls about that kind of activity. Most of the cases she’s heard about involve youth around 14 or 15 years old.

In a Facebook post May 12, the Tacoma Police Department said electric dirt bikes, mopeds and motorcycles are “increasingly being advertised to youth & their families — but the combination of young, inexperienced riders and devices capable of high speeds on neighborhood streets can have dire consequences.”

Delta tunnel for water unnecessary, groups say

CA LOS ANGELES — A coalition of conservation groups wants Southern California to get 85% of its water locally, up from the 50% it gets now, by 2045, and says a new plan shows how.

It’s urging state leaders to scrap plans for a 45-mile tunnel beneath the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and consider asking voters to approve a bond measure to fund local water solutions. The 34-page strategy was released as critical decisions loom for local officials, California’s next governor and legislators.

Over the last century, South-

ern California has grown and thrived thanks to giant aqueducts it built to bring water from hundreds of miles away — the Eastern Sierra, the Colorado River and Northern California.

But with water costs rising and climate change jeopardizing these distant sources, there is growing interest in finding ways to get more water locally.

The allied groups are calling for recycling more wastewater, capturing more stormwater, improving efficiency and cleaning up contaminated groundwater.

The state estimated in 2024 the tunnel would cost \$20.1 billion, but opponents say it could cost three to five times more.

Authorities say spas were fronts for prostitution

NJ TRENTON — A 44-year-old woman who ran multiple spas in three New Jersey counties was using the businesses for prostitution, authorities said.

Kelly Jahnke-Gonzalez was charged following a months-long investigation into unlicensed Joha’s Spa locations in Brick, Jackson, Millstone and Sayreville, according to Sayreville police and charging documents.

Investigators went undercover, ran surveillance and examined financial documents starting in October 2025, eventually learning Jahnke-Gonzalez laundered more than \$75,000, according to court papers.

Then on May 12, they executed search warrants at multiple businesses, corporate offices and Jahnke-Gonzalez’s home in Jackson. She was charged with four counts of promoting prosti-

tution, maintaining a nuisance, money laundering and misconduct by a corporate official. An attorney for Jahnke-Gonzalez is not listed in court records.

More arrests are expected as the investigation continues. Among the agencies who assisted Sayreville police were Homeland Security Investigations and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (Naval Weapons Station Earle).

Driver crashes into garage, attacks owner

PA EASTON — A driver lost control of his SUV, drove over two lawns before crashing into a garage and attacking a homeowner early Monday in Williams Township, police said.

The 23-year-old male driver from Bethlehem had a 27-year-old female passenger from Phillipsburg, N.J., in the SUV at the time of the 2:30 a.m. crash, state police said. The driver’s 2020 Chevrolet Trax crossed into the oncoming lanes at a curve and went off the road, state police said.

The vehicle hit the garage and was heavily damaged, state police said. The driver then attacked the homeowner and ran away.

Both the driver and passenger were not injured, police said.

The driver is charged with simple assault, resisting arrest, harassment, driving with a suspended license, fleeing the scene of a crash and other summary offenses. He was arraigned early Monday and sent to Northampton County Prison after failing to post 10% of \$10,000 bail.

— From wire reports



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Thunder top Spurs, close to Finals return

Associated Press

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 32 points, Alex Caruso led another strong bench effort with 22 and the Oklahoma City Thunder moved one win away from a return trip to the NBA Finals by beating the San Antonio Spurs 127-114 on Tuesday night.

Jared McCain — getting the call with Jalen Williams and Ajay Mitchell both sidelined — scored 20 in his first playoff start for defending NBA champion Oklahoma City, which leads the Western Conference finals 3-2.

Chet Holmgren had 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Thunder, while Isaiah Hartenstein had a 12-point, 15-rebound night in OKC.

The Thunder, who were held to 82 points in a Game 4 loss two days earlier, had 82 points Tuesday before the third quarter was 3½ minutes old.

“We obviously played a lot better, in terms of our process and then also the outcome,” Ok-

lahoma City coach Mark Daigneault said. “It’s a playoff series. If you look at any playoff series that goes to six games, at least, there’s going to be some tough games. We had a tough game the other night. This team does a great job of just coming back in the next day in a very neutral way, taking whatever the lessons are, applying them forward and getting into the next opportunity.”

Stephon Castle scored 24 points for San Antonio, which got 22 points from Julian Champagne and 20 points from Victor Wembanyama — who was held to 4-for-15 shooting.

Keldon Johnson scored 15 off the bench for the Spurs, who missed 29 of their 41 3-point tries.

“It just felt like it was a little bit of everything in terms of we did not put ourselves in position enough to be successful on each possession,” San Antonio coach Mitch Johnson said.

The Spurs host Game 6 on

Thursday. If there’s a Game 7, the Thunder will be hosting again Saturday — and while this series winds down, New York is waiting to see who emerges.

The Knicks will visit either OKC or San Antonio in Game 1 of the NBA Finals on June 3.

The Thunder scored 40 points in the second quarter to take control and kept the lead the rest of the way.

It took nearly 10 minutes for the first free throws to be awarded. But when the parade to the foul line started, it didn’t stop.

The teams combined to make 29 free throws in the second quarter alone, the most in the second quarter of any NBA game since the bubble playoffs nearly six years ago. It wasn’t a one-sided thing — the Spurs were 15-for-17 in the quarter, while Oklahoma City was 14-for-14.

The Thunder went up by 20 in the third, before San Antonio closed within eight. The Spurs

might have had some chances to cut even further into the deficit, but were fuming — and rightly so, it seemed — over some missed calls in the final minute of the quarter.

A tip-in try by San Antonio’s Luke Kornet with about 56 seconds left was knocked off the rim by OKC’s Cason Wallace and should have been goaltending.

And on the next Spurs possession, an out-of-bounds call that should have gone their way did not. Johnson tried to challenge the call, got ignored, then got a technical foul for arguing.

“They just said they didn’t see me,” Johnson said.

After all that, the Thunder’s lead was 101-91 going into the fourth. They kept a double-digit lead for all but 25 seconds of the final quarter — a huge turnaround from a 21-point loss in San Antonio on Sunday.

“We definitely got better from the last game,” Gilgeous-Alexander said.

American team announces roster for World Cup

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Tim Ream was filled with anxiety, right up until 1 p.m. Friday.

“Leaving the training ground and walking to my car with a box full of bobbleheads to take home to my kids,” the 38-year-old defender recalled, “my WhatsApp started to go a little bit crazy.”

Ream was among 26 players who received a video in a group chat from Sam Zapata, the U.S. national team administrative manager, informing those selected for the World Cup roster.

“Guys, if you are watching that video, it is because you are in,” U.S. coach Mauricio Pochettino told them. “I am so excited to communicate that you are going to be on the roster for the World Cup 2026, in the World Cup that you are going to host.”

“It made me stop on my

tracks,” said Ream, hoping to become the oldest U.S. player to appear in soccer’s top tournament.

Midfielders Gio Reyna and Sebastian Berhalter, sons of a former captain and an ex-coach, were picked by along with forward Alejandro Zendejas.

Midfielders Diego Luna and Tanner Tessmann were left off.

Holding American jerseys with wavy red and white stripes, players were introduced Tuesday at a made-for-TV event on the roof of the South Street Seaport’s Pier 17 with the Brooklyn Bridge as a backdrop. They were announced in the numerical order of jersey numbers assigned by equipment manager Kyle Robertson, taking seniority into account. All were on hand except for defender Chris Richards, who was in Germany

with Crystal Palace for Wednesday’s UEFA Conference League final.

“We want this so bad,” said forward Christian Pulisic, the biggest American star. “If you’re not a little bit nervous, you don’t feel a little, you don’t care. So we care so much.”

Defender Sergiño Dest, midfielder Tyler Adams and forward Haji Wright were added after missing March friendlies because of injuries. Zendejas was bypassed for the March roster after a knee injury last fall.

Luna missed the March matches because of a knee injury after playing in 17 of 18 international games last year.

“During two weeks, I didn’t sleep,” the coach said. “And today still I cannot enjoy the 26 guys that are in front of me because I am thinking of players

that are out.”

Reyna, a son of former U.S. captain Claudio Reyna, was nearly sent home from the 2022 World Cup by then-coach Gregg Berhalter for lack of hustle and made just four starts this season for Borussia Mönchengladbach — none since Dec. 19.

Sebastian Berhalter, a 25-year-old son of the former coach, made his national team debut last June and became the Americans’ best corner-kick taker.

Richards and Miles Robinson were picked after injuries sidelined them ahead of the 2022 tournament. Richards is a health concern again after tearing two left ankle ligaments on May 17. Pochettino said he won’t know Richards’ status until he arrives in the United States for training because clubs “hide things.”

Knights top Avs, head to Stanley Cup Final

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Brayden McNabb hit Mark Stone in stride with a lob pass in the first period for a highlight reel of a play, but it was the gritty work of the Vegas defense that ultimately put the Golden Knights in the Stanley Cup Final.

Vegas limited Colorado's high-powered offense all series and then suffocated it Tuesday night.

That defense, aided by goals from Stone and Cole Smith, led to a 2-1 win and an unthinkable sweep of the Avalanche for the Knights' third Final in nine seasons.

"It's by far our best game," said Vegas coach John Tortorella, whose team was 30-1 at Caesars Sportsbook at the beginning of the series to sweep. "(Checking is) something we've been concentrating on, and I think we've gotten better and better through the rounds. But tonight's game was our best checking effort, and that's a hell of a hockey team we played over there."

The Golden Knights will get a break while they watch to see whether Carolina or Montreal emerges from the Eastern Conference final.

This is a crushing end for a Colorado team that won the Presidents' Trophy and had blown through the playoffs with an 8-1 record. Chicago in 2013 was the last team to claim the Presidents' Trophy and the Stanley Cup in the same season.

"We ran into a buzz saw in Vegas," Avalanche coach Jared Bednar said. "I think they deserved the credit. It's not a knock on how hard they played, but they're a well-oiled machine right now, peaking at the right time. I look at their series and man-to-man they're playing at the top of their game. We'll have to regroup and reassess and reflect on our season and the series and go from there."

The Golden Knights got on the scoreboard when McNabb delivered a perfect pass to Stone. Not known for elite skating ability, Stone nevertheless

got behind Colorado, caught the puck and scored.

That was the only goal until Smith tipped in Dylan Coghlan's shot from the point with 5:45 left for a critical two-goal margin.

Carter Hart stopped 20 shots, coming within 2:03 of his first playoff shutout in six years.

Gabriel Landeskog ended that shutout, one of the few highlights of the night for the Avs, who went the final 14:23 of the second period without a shot on goal and more than 25 minutes with just one shot.

Hart said he thought the Vegas defense "100%" frustrated Colorado.

"I think once we scored that first goal, in the second and third period we just kind of locked it down and kept pressure on them," Hart said. "We did a great job. We had some huge blocks tonight."

It wasn't just this night. Avalanche center Nathan MacKinnon, who led the NHL with 53 goals in the regular season, failed to hit the back of the net in

any of the four games. Martin Necas, who had 100 points, totaled just two in this series.

Colorado averaged a league-high 3.63 goals during the regular season and in the first two rounds upped that to 4.11. Against the Knights? It was 1.75.

"I think you look back at the four games, there are definitely times where we found our game," Landeskog said. "I think the problem was we found ways to lose hockey games. I think over the course of the regular season, in the first two rounds, it was the opposite. Even if we didn't have our A-game, we were finding different ways to win hockey games, and against this good of a hockey team in the Golden Knights, they'll make you pay for your mistakes."

Mackenzie Blackwood, making his first start in the series, gave the Avs a chance to win with several dazzling saves en route to 24 saves overall. His best stop came late in the second period when he lunged to glove a power-play shot from Pavel Dorofeyev.

Starodubtseva knocks out No. 2 Rybakina in three sets

Associated Press

PARIS — Second-ranked Elena Rybakina was beaten by 55th-ranked Ukrainian opponent Yuliia Starodubtseva 3-6, 6-1, 7-6 (4) in the second round of the French Open on Wednesday.

Rybakina started the year by winning the Australian Open.

On a big day for Ukraine, also advancing were Elina Svitolina and Marta Kostyuk, who are coming off trophies at the Madrid Open and Italian Open, respectively.

The seventh-seeded Svitolina beat Kaitlin Quevedo 6-0, 6-4 to extend her winning streak to eight matches. The 15th-seeded Kostyuk beat Katie Volynets 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-3 to extend her winning streak to 13 matches.

Swiatek improves mark

Four-time champion Iga Swiatek improved her career record at Roland Garros to 42-3 by eliminating 35th-ranked Sara Bejlek 6-2, 6-3.

Swiatek won Roland Garros in 2020, 2022,

2023 and 2024. Swiatek next faces Magda Linette in the first all-Polish meeting at Roland Garros in the professional era (since 1968). Linette eliminated 2017 champion Jelena Ostapenko 6-2, 2-6, 6-2.

Meanwhile, 11th-seeded Belinda Bencic beat American opponent Caty McNally 6-4, 6-0.

Djokovic pushed to 4 sets

Novak Djokovic placed ice packs around his neck and on top of his head during changeovers to keep cool amid the Paris heat wave Wednesday.

The 39-year-old Djokovic was pushed by 74th-ranked French player Valentin Royer — who is 15 years younger than him — for more than 3½ hours before he reached the third round with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-7 (7), 6-3 victory.

For the fourth straight day of this year's tournament, the temperature rose beyond 90 Fahrenheit.

When Djokovic won a key point early in the

fourth set with a forehand that he whipped around the net post from far off the court, the 24-time Grand Slam champion waved his arms toward the crowd inside Court Philippe-Chatrier. Djokovic wasted a chance to close out the match earlier when he missed a backhand long in the third-set tiebreaker, then required four more match points in his final service game before a forehand from Royer finally landed in the net to conclude a long rally.

Before arriving in Paris, Royer had earned only one tour-level win across 11 tournaments he played this season.

Djokovic came to Roland Garros with questions over his form after getting beat in his only clay-court match before the tournament. He lost to Croatian qualifier Dino Prizmic at the Italian Open after two months out due to a right shoulder injury. But Djokovic is playing himself back into form after coming back from a set down to beat Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard, another Frenchman, in a first-round match that lasted nearly three hours.

Yankees make team history, rout Royals

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — New York clubbed six home runs and every starter in the lineup had at least two hits for the first time in franchise history, sending the Yankees to a 15-1 rout of Kansas City on Tuesday night and their 12th consecutive win over the Royals.

Amed Rosario homered twice and Cody Bellinger, Anthony Volpe, Trent Grisham and Jazz Chisholm Jr. also went deep for New York, which has hit a league-leading 82 home runs this season. Kansas City, by comparison, has hit just 51.

“It feels good to be part of history,” Rosario said through a translator. “It’s a team effort and being part of it is great.”

The Yankees finished with 24 hits against Kansas City, their most since a game against Baltimore on July 30, 2011.

Cam Schlitler (7-2) allowed his third homer of the year, a solo shot by Bobby Witt Jr., but little else over six innings. It was the seventh time in his last eight starts that Schlitler allowed one earned run or fewer, and he struck out six without issuing a walk.

Twins 5, White Sox 3 (11): Brooks Lee hit a bases-loaded double in the 11th inning and visiting Minnesota beat Chicago.

The Twins improved to 4-1 on their 10-game road trip and have won seven of nine overall. They had lost seven straight against the White Sox, last winning on Aug. 22, 2025.

Minnesota had nearly taken the lead in the 10th inning on Orlando Arcia’s two-out single, but Kody Clemens was thrown out at home by Rikuu Nishida to end the inning.

Nationals 6, Guardians 3: James Wood hit a two-run homer and Keibert Ruiz had a two-run single in the second inning as visiting Washington beat Cleveland.

The Nationals won their fourth straight and improved to

19-11 on the road. Washington (29-27) has outscored the Guardians 16-5 in the series and matched its best record of the season by moving two games over .500.

Cade Cavalli (3-3) struck out seven in six innings and allowed one run on five hits. Mitchell Parker worked the final three innings, allowing a two-run single in the ninth to rookie Travis Bazzana before earning his first save of the season.

Orioles 6, Rays 1: Shane Baz struck out a season-high nine, and Samuel Basallo hit a three-run homer as host Baltimore beat Tampa Bay.

Baz (2-5), who joined the Orioles in a trade from the Rays in December, pitched seven innings of one-run ball. The 26-year-old right-hander allowed seven hits and walked two.

Basallo scored in the second inning on a fielding error by Rays second baseman Richie Palacios. Jackson Holliday added an RBI single, and Taylor Ward knocked in another run with a sacrifice fly to make it 3-1.

Angels 10, Tigers 6: Vaughn Grissom hit a grand slam and drove in six runs as visiting Los Angeles beat Detroit.

Detroit led 6-4 going into the eighth, and Will Vest (1-4) got the first two outs with a runner on second. Logan O’Hoppe’s double made it a one-run game, Zach Neto singled and Mike Trout walked to load the bases before Grissom stepped up.

Pirates 12, Cubs 1: Esmerlyn Valdez hit a two-run home run to cap a five-run first inning as host Pittsburgh routed skidding Chicago to extend the Cubs’ losing streak to 10 games.

Valdez became the seventh player in Pirates history to hit two home runs within the first four games of his major league career and the first since Austin Meadows in 2018.

Braves 7, Red Sox 6: Michael Harris II had four hits, including a two-run home run,

Matt Olson added another two-run homer and visiting Atlanta held on to beat Boston.

Isiah Kiner-Falefa closed the gap to a run in the ninth with a two-run single, followed by a single by Jarren Duran. Cedanne Rafaela and Wilyer Abreu then hit back-to-back ground balls to end the game.

Blue Jays 8, Marlins 1: Jesús Sánchez hit his first career grand slam, Ernie Clement and Yohendrick Piñango had solo home runs, and host Toronto beat Miami, snapping the Marlins’ winning streak at four.

Spencer Miles (2-0) got the win after taking over for opener Braydon Fisher. Miles allowed one run on three hits in 4½ innings.

Reds 7, Mets 2: Chase Burns (7-1) allowed two runs and struck out eight in 5½ innings for visiting Cincinnati, which beat New York, dropping the Mets 11 games under .500 — tying a season-high.

Eugenio Suárez and Elly De La Cruz each had two-run doubles off David Peterson (3-5), who also gave up a pair of RBI hits to Tyler Stephenson. Sal Stewart added a run-scoring single in the eighth.

Brewers 6, Cardinals 0: Garrett Mitchell hit a three-run homer and Kyle Harrison tossed six innings of four-hit ball to lead host Milwaukee over St. Louis.

Harrison (6-1) allowed two singles to open the third and two singles in the sixth, but did not allow a runner past second. He struck out two and walked none, lowering his ERA from 1.77 to 1.57. Harrison improved to 4-0 in five starts in May, allowing three runs in 28 innings.

Rangers 10, Astros 7: Joc Pederson hit a three-run homer to cap an eight-run first inning in host Texas’ win over Houston, a day after three Astros pitchers combined to throw a no-hitter against the Rangers.

The first Texas hit was a single by No. 3 hitter Brandon

Nimmo, while Jake Burger had a two-run single and Evan Carter drove in two more with a bouncing triple past first baseman Christian Walker into the right-field corner.

Mariners 4, Athletics 1: Emerson Hancock (4-2) allowed one hit in six innings, Victor Robles had three hits and visiting Seattle beat the Athletics.

Josh Naylor and Mitch Garver each had two hits, and the Mariners had 11 as a team. They were 5-for-10 with runners in scoring position, and stranded eight on base.

Phillies 4, Padres 3: Bryce Harper, J.T. Realmuto and Trea Turner hit home runs and visiting Philadelphia beat San Diego.

Aaron Nola (3-4) struck out five, gave up three hits and two earned runs in six innings for the Phillies. Jhoan Duran earned his 11th save of the season with two strikeouts in the ninth inning.

Diamondbacks 7, Giants 5: Ketel Marte hit a two-run homer in the seventh inning, Adrian Del Castillo had a solo shot and visiting Arizona beat San Francisco for its ninth win in 10 games.

The Giants tried to rally as Eric Haase hit a solo home run in the seventh inning and Rafael Devers had an RBI double in the eighth. Willy Adames then had a solo homer in the ninth, but closer Paul Sewald eventually shut the door for his 14th save of the season.

Dodgers 15, Rockies 6: Mookie Betts homered twice, driving in five runs, and Kiké Hernández, Andy Pages and Will Smith went deep as host Los Angeles routed Colorado.

The Dodgers’ 15 runs tied a season high. They pounded out 17 hits and limited the Rockies to four until the ninth. That’s when the Rockies scored five runs and had eight hits off position player Miguel Rojas, who came in to pitch.