

## AFRICOM to face hurdles if it enters Nigeria

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Africa Command could have a two-front battle against Islamic militants on its hands should President Donald Trump follow through on a threat to send the military into Nigeria.

AFRICOM on Monday declined to comment on any possible mission in Nigeria, saying that as a matter of policy it doesn't "discuss current or future posturing of forces, nor internal processes that drive planning or operations."

A day earlier, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth echoed Trump's comments regarding the west African country, where the Muslim militant group Boko Haram has long been waging a violent insurgency that includes a number of high-profile kidnappings.

"The Department of War is

preparing for action," Hegseth said in a statement, using an alternate name for the Defense Department. "Either the Nigerian Government protects Christians, or we will kill the Islamic Terrorists who are committing these horrible atrocities."

Hegseth's comments came after Trump on Saturday said he would halt all aid to Nigeria, accusing the country of allowing the killing of Christians.

He said he may "go into that now disgraced country, guns-ablazing."

"If we attack, it will be fast, vicious, and sweet, just like the terrorist thugs attack our **CHERISHED** Christians! **WARNING: THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT BETTER MOVE FAST!**," Trump wrote on the Truth Social platform.

Nigerian leaders pushed back against Trump's characterization

of the situation, saying that any unilateral strike on the country would be unjustified and that both Muslims and Christians have been subjected to attacks from extremists.

While the likelihood of an attack in Nigeria isn't clear, the Trump administration has demonstrated a willingness to go on the offensive against other Islamic extremists in Africa. But unlike AFRICOM's ongoing military campaign on the other side of Africa in Somalia, any similar effort in Nigeria would involve operations without an American-controlled base nearby.

From a military standpoint, a campaign aimed at wiping out Islamic militants in Nigeria — roughly the size of California, Nevada and Utah combined — would be a major logistical undertaking.

The U.S. also is not as well-posi-

tioned in the region as it used to be. In 2024, AFRICOM was ordered out of Niger, Nigeria's neighbor to the north, by a military junta that had seized power in the country.

The pullout upended the U.S. counterterrorism strategy in the region and came five years after the opening of a \$110 million base in Agadez that was touted as the largest U.S. Air Force-led construction project in history.

At one time, about 1,000 U.S. troops were in Niger, working at the base in Agadez and another drone installation in the capital city of Niamey.

While the U.S. military has long had smaller security cooperation locations in other countries to serve as launching pads for quick-reaction missions, AFRICOM currently lacks anything in the vicinity of Nigeria on the scale of the former base in Agadez.

## Hegseth visits DMZ with S. Korean counterpart before talks

By YOOJIN LEE  
*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth visited the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Koreas on Monday as he began a two-day visit to ally South Korea for security talks.

Hegseth and South Korean Defense Minister Ahn Gyu-back received a briefing from military officials at Observation Post Ouellette, a site near the military demarcation line that past U.S. presidents, including Donald Trump during his first term in 2019, had visited to peer across the border into North Korea and meet with American soldiers.

Hegseth and Ahn also visited the Panmunjom border village, where an armistice was signed to pause the 1950-53 Korean War.

Ahn's ministry said the visit "reaffirmed the firm combined defense posture and close coordination" between the allies.

Hegseth did not mention North Korea, which has ignored Washington and Seoul's calls for dialogue in recent years while accelerating the expansion of its nuclear weapons and missile programs.

South Korea's military also said Monday that the country's Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Jin Yong-sung and his U.S. counterpart, Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, oversaw a combined formation flight aboard South Korean and U.S. F-16 fighter jets above a major U.S. military base in Pyeongtaek.

The flight, conducted for the first time, was intended to demonstrate the allies' "ironclad com-

bined defense posture" and the "unwavering" strength of the alliance, Seoul's Defense Ministry said.

Hegseth and Ahn, who previously met on Saturday at a defense ministers' meeting in Malaysia, will attend the allies' annual defense talks in Seoul on Tuesday. The talks are expected to cover South Korea's commitment to increase defense spending and the implementation of a previous agreement to transfer wartime operational control of allied forces to a binational command led by a South Korean general with a U.S. deputy.

There are also concerns in Seoul that the Trump administration may demand much higher South Korean payments for the U.S. military presence in the country or possibly downsize

America's military footprint to focus more on China.

Hegseth's visit comes days after Trump traveled to South Korea for meetings with world leaders, including South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and Chinese President Xi Jinping, on the sidelines of this year's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Gyeongju.

During his meeting with Trump on Wednesday, Lee called for U.S. support in South Korean efforts to acquire nuclear-powered submarines. Trump later said on social media that the U.S. will share closely held technology to allow Seoul to build a nuclear-powered submarine, and that the vessel will be built in the Philly Shipyard, which was bought last year by South Korea's Hanwha Group.

# 3 men convicted of plotting attack on US forces in Bavaria

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE  
*Stars and Stripes*

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — A German man who prosecutors said was the ringleader of a spying trio that plotted attacks on American service members in Bavaria over U.S. support for Ukraine was handed a six-year prison sentence.

The man, identified only as Dieter S. in accordance with German privacy laws, was convicted Thursday in a Munich court of membership in a foreign terrorist group, preparation for a serious act of violence against the state, intelligence activities and spying for the purpose of sabotage.

Two accomplices, Alexander J. and Alex D., received 18-month suspended sentences with probation for their convictions on charges related to illegal intelligence gathering. All three are dual German-Russian nationals and were accused of spying for Russia.

"All three defendants denied the charges," Laurent Lafleur, a spokesman for the Higher Regional Court in Munich, said in a statement Thursday after a five-judge panel found the men guilty. "The court found (their) explanations completely refuted by the evidence."

The men had surveilled U.S. military facilities, including the Army training area in Grafenwoehr, with the intention of disrupting the logistical support provided by NATO to Ukraine, German news magazine *Der Spiegel* reported previously.

The high-profile saga began on April 17, 2024, when Dieter S. and Alexander J. were arrested

by German special police in the town of Bayreuth, the German federal prosecutor's office said at the time.

Alex D. was arrested later, and the circumstances behind his detention remain unclear.

Tower Barracks is located about 20 miles southeast of Bayreuth. Ukrainian soldiers get combined arms and weapons training at the base.

The convictions and sentencing came a day before the first of two incidents of drone activity was reported over Kleine-Brogel Air Base in Belgium, an incident the country's defense minister called an act of espionage.

The base is believed to host U.S. nuclear weapons as part of NATO's nuclear sharing agreements.

In the Bavaria case, prosecutors said Dieter S. became acquainted with a Russian intelligence agent while battling Ukrainian forces in 2014 as a member of self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, according to the statement.

After returning home to Germany, he began exchanging information with the agent in September 2023 about the possibility of committing acts of sabotage for payment and scouted potential targets, the court statement said.

Dieter S. told his handler he was willing to carry out bomb and arson attacks against military and industrial sites. He also promised to attack railway lines used to move military equipment, a previous statement from the German federal prosecutor's office said.

## Navy warns scammers may target hotel guests

BY ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

NAPLES, Italy — The Navy is warning people that they may be targeted by online scams when making reservations for the service's hotels if they do not use official phone numbers and websites.

Navy lodging reservations only should be booked through the toll-free number 1-877-628-9233 or by using local phone numbers listed by individual property at [www.dodlodging.net](http://www.dodlodging.net), U.S. Naval Support Activity Naples said in a post Friday to its official Facebook page.

"Patrons should exercise caution when using phone numbers or websites found through online searches or social media, as fraudulent sites may attempt to collect personal or financial information," the

base said in the post.

The Navy didn't say how it became aware of potential scams or how many complaints it may have received. The service offers Navy Lodge and Navy Gateway Inns & Suites accommodations on-site at its bases worldwide.

It's not clear how many people may have been victimized by the scam, which has been reported to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, Coleen San Nicolas-Perez, a spokeswoman for Navy Installations Command, said in an email Friday.

Personnel and their families should double-check reservation details directly through official Navy lodging channels and verify the legitimacy of any website or phone number used for booking the service's lodging, San Nicolas-Perez said.

## Trump: Xi said no action on Taiwan during term

*Associated Press*

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — President Donald Trump says that Chinese President Xi Jinping has given him assurances that Beijing would take no action toward its long-stated goal of unifying Taiwan with mainland China while the Republican leader is in office.

Trump said that the long-contentious issue of Taiwan did not come up in his talks with Xi on Thursday in South Korea that largely focused on U.S.-China trade tensions. But the U.S. leader expressed certainty that China would not take action on Taiwan, while he's in office.

"He has openly said, and his people have openly said at meetings, 'We would never do anything while President

Trump is president,' because they know the consequences," Trump said in an excerpt of an interview with the CBS' program "60 Minutes" that aired Sunday.

U.S. officials have long been concerned about the possibility of China using military force against Taiwan, the self-ruled island democracy claimed by Beijing as part of its territory.

Asked if he would order U.S. forces to defend Taiwan if China attacked, Trump demurred. The United States, both Republican and Democratic administrations, have maintained a policy of "strategic ambiguity" on Taiwan — trying not to tip their hands on whether the U.S. would come to the island's aid in such a scenario.

# Shutdown close to becoming longest ever

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The government shutdown is poised to become the longest ever this week as the impasse between Democrats and Republicans has dragged into a new month. Millions of people stand to lose food aid benefits, health care subsidies are set to expire and there are few real talks between the parties over how to end it.

President Donald Trump said in an interview aired on Sunday that he “won’t be extorted” by Democrats who are demanding negotiations to extend the expiring Affordable Care Act subsidies. Echoing congressional Republicans, the president said on CBS’ “60 Minutes” he’ll negotiate only when the government is reopened.

Trump’s comments signal the shutdown could drag on for

some time as federal workers, including air traffic controllers, are set to miss additional paychecks and there’s uncertainty over whether 42 million Americans who receive federal food aid will be able to access the assistance. Senate Democrats have voted 13 times against reopening the government, insisting they need Trump and Republicans to negotiate with them first.

The president also reiterated his pleas to Republican leaders to change Senate rules and scrap the filibuster. Senate Republicans have repeatedly rejected that idea since Trump’s first term, arguing the rule requiring 60 votes to overcome any objections in the Senate is vital to the institution and has allowed them to stop Democratic policies when they’re in the mi-

nority.

With the two parties at a standstill, the shutdown, now in its 34th day and approaching its sixth week, appears likely to become the longest in history.

Trump’s push on the filibuster could prove a distraction for Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., and Republican senators who’ve opted instead to stay the course as the consequences of the shutdown become more acute.

Trump’s administration said Monday that it will partially fund the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program after two judges issued rulings requiring it to keep the nation’s largest food aid program running.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which oversees SNAP, had planned to freeze payments

starting Nov. 1 because it said it could no longer keep funding it during the federal government shutdown.

The program serves about 1 in 8 Americans and is a major piece of the nation’s social safety net. It costs more than \$8 billion per month nationally. The government says an emergency fund it will use has \$4.65 billion — enough to cover about half the normal benefits.

Exhausting the fund potentially sets the stage for a similar situation in December if the shutdown isn’t resolved by then.

It’s not clear exactly how much beneficiaries will receive, nor how quickly they will see value show up on the debit cards they use to buy groceries. November payments have already been delayed for millions of people.

## Key moments from Trump’s ‘60 Minutes’ interview

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump appeared on “60 Minutes” for a wide-ranging interview, discussing hot-button topics including Venezuela, immigration raids in Democratic-led cities and the government shutdown.

The interview, which aired Sunday night, was conducted by correspondent Norah O’Donnell at Mar-a-Lago on Friday. CBS aired a 27-minute segment of the nearly 73-minute-long interview. The transcript of the interview was posted online.

Here are some of the key moments from the interview:

**Trump won’t say if U.S. will strike Venezuela, but says Maduro’s reign may soon end**

As the United States masses warships and fighter jets off Venezuela’s coast, Trump would not say whether the U.S. will carry out land strikes on the country but answered in the af-

firmative when O’Donnell asked whether Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro’s days as president were “numbered.”

**Trump says ICE raids ‘haven’t gone far enough’**

O’Donnell noted that illegal crossings at the southern U.S. border were at a 55-year low but questioned whether Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids had gone too far.

Trump defended the operations, saying, “I think they haven’t gone far enough because we’ve been held back by the judges, by the liberal judges that were put in by Biden and by Obama.”

**Trump blames Democrats for government shutdown**

Trump said he would not be “extorted” by Democrats who want to extend subsidies for Affordable Care Act plans before they agree to reopen the government.

## Judge bars sending National Guard to Portland again

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — A federal judge in Oregon on Sunday barred President Donald Trump’s administration from deploying the National Guard to Portland, Ore., until at least Friday, saying she “found no credible evidence” that protests in the city grew out of control before the president federalized the troops earlier this fall.

The city and state sued in September to block the deployment.

It’s the latest development in weeks of legal back-and-forth in Portland, Chicago and other U.S. cities as the Trump administration has moved to federalize and deploy the National Guard in city streets to quell protests.

The ruling from U.S. District Court Judge Karin Immergut, a Trump appointee, followed a three-day trial in which both sides argued over whether pro-

tests at the city’s U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement building met the conditions for using the military domestically under federal law.

In a 16-page filing late Sunday, Immergut said she would issue a final order on Friday due to the voluminous evidence presented at trial, including more than 750 exhibits.

The purpose of the deployment, according to the Trump administration, is to protect federal personnel and property where protests are occurring or likely to occur. Legal experts said that a higher appellate court order that remains in effect would have barred troops from being deployed anyway.

Immergut wrote that most violence appeared to be between protesters and counter-protesters and found no evidence of “significant damage” to the immigration facility at the center of the protests.



# UK police charge man in train stabbing

Associated Press

LONDON — U.K. police on Monday charged a 32-year-old man with attempted murder over a mass stabbing attack on a train that wounded 11 people, and said he also tried to kill someone at a London transit station earlier the same day.

British Transport Police said Anthony Williams is charged with 10 counts of attempted murder, one of actual bodily harm and one of possession of a bladed article over the attack on Saturday.

Police said he is also charged with attempted murder over an earlier incident at Pontoon Dock light rail station in London just before 1 a.m. on Saturday, in which a victim “suffered facial injuries after being attacked with

a knife” by an assailant who fled the scene.

Police said investigators are also “looking at other possible linked offenses.”

Police say they are not treating the train stabbings as an act of terror and are not looking for other suspects.

Williams, a British citizen from the city of Peterborough in eastern England, made a brief appearance at Peterborough Magistrates’ Court on Monday.

Williams was ordered detained until his next hearing on Dec. 1. He was not asked to enter pleas.

The minutes-long stabbing spree spread fear and panic through a train bound from Doncaster in northern England to

London on Saturday evening. The train was about halfway through its journey and had just departed from a stop at Peterborough when police began receiving calls about people being stabbed onboard.

Passengers described scenes of panic as bloodied travelers raced down the train to get away from the knifeman. Eleven people were treated in hospital. The most seriously wounded victim is a member of railway staff who tried to stop the attacker. Police called his actions “nothing short of heroic.”

He is hospitalized in a critical but stable condition. Four other victims remained in hospital on Monday.

Williams was arrested when

the train made an emergency stop in the town of Huntingdon in eastern England. Police say he was detained within eight minutes of officers receiving the first emergency calls.

Authorities said the attack was an isolated incident but stepped up security on the railway, with armed police officers on patrol Monday at major train stations.

The government rejected calls for increased security measures such as airport-style passenger and baggage screening to be introduced at Britain’s 3,500 railway stations, saying that wouldn’t be “proportionate or practical.” In the U.K, which has strict gun-control laws, almost half of all homicides involve a knife or sharp instrument.

## More Patriot air defense systems sent to Ukraine

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine has received more American-made Patriot air defense systems to help it counter Russia’s daily barrages, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, as Russian drones killed a man and injured five of his family members, including two children, in the latest nighttime attack.

Russia’s relentless pounding of urban areas behind the front line following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly four years ago has killed thousands of civilians. It has also targeted the energy supply to deny civilians heat and running water in winter, as well as disrupt industrial production of Ukraine’s newly developed drones and missiles.

The sophisticated Patriot systems are the most effective weapon against Russian missiles. Zelenskyy has pleaded with Western partners to provide more of them, but production limitations and the need to maintain stockpiles have slowed their delivery.

“More Patriots are now in Uk-

raine and being put into operation,” Zelenskyy said on social media late Sunday. “Of course, more systems are needed to protect key infrastructure sites and our cities across the entire territory of our state.”

He thanked Germany and its Chancellor Friedrich Merz for the Patriots. Germany said three months ago it would deliver two more Patriot air defense systems to Ukraine.

It agreed to the move after securing assurances that the U.S. will prioritize the delivery of new Patriots to Germany to backfill its stocks. Patriot systems are made only in the U.S.

NATO is coordinating regular deliveries of large weapons packages to Ukraine. European allies and Canada are buying much of the equipment from the United States, which has greater stocks of ready military materiel, as well as more effective weapons. The Trump administration is not giving any arms to Ukraine, unlike the previous Biden administration.

## Drone flights in Belgium draw fears of espionage

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — Belgium’s defense minister expressed concern on Monday about a series of unidentified drone flights over the weekend near a military base where U.S. nuclear weapons are stored, saying that they seem to be part of a spying operation.

Defense Minister Theo Francken confirmed that drones had flown into the area near the Kleine Brogel air base in northeast Belgium in two phases on Saturday and Sunday night.

The first phase involved “small drones to test the radio frequencies” of Belgian security services, then later came “big drones to destabilize the area and people,” Francken told public broadcaster RTBF.

“It resembles a spy operation. By whom, I don’t know. I have a few ideas but I’m going to be careful” about speculating, he said. Last month, several drones were spotted above another Belgian military base

near the German border. The operators were not identified.

Russia has been blamed for a number of airspace violations, notably in Estonia and Poland. But the perpetrators of mysterious drone flights in Denmark and Germany have been harder to pin down.

A late evening drone sighting at Berlin’s Brandenburg airport on Friday suspended flights for nearly two hours. It was not clear who was responsible.

He said that the security services’ “jammer didn’t work because they tested our radio frequency, and they changed frequency. They have their own frequencies. An amateur doesn’t know how to do that.”

Asked why it wasn’t possible to shoot the drones down, Francken said: “When they’re over a military base we can shoot the drones down. When it’s nearby, we have to be very careful because they can fall on a house, a car, a person. That’s completely different.”

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Deputy kills teen wanted in grandmother's death

**NC** RAEFORD — A North Carolina deputy shot and killed a 13-year-old boy wanted in the killing of his grandmother when the teenager charged toward the officer with a piece of lumber the boy had picked up during a chase, authorities said Friday.

The events began in Raeford, about 90 miles southwest of Raleigh, where the Hoke County Sheriff's Office said 68-year-old Connie Linen was pronounced dead in her home. Authorities said she was a victim of a homicide but haven't released details about how she was killed.

Detectives determined Linen's grandson to be a suspect, the Hoke Sheriff's Office said in a news release.

The Lee County Sheriff's Office found the boy behind an abandoned mobile home in the Cameron area.

When deputies approached the boy, he ran away, authorities said. The teenager grabbed a two-by-four from a yard during the pursuit and charged toward an officer, who shot the teen, the Lee County Sheriff's Office said. The office's news release described the boy as 5 feet, 11 inches tall and 150 pounds.

## JetBlue flight forced to land after drop in altitude

**FL** FORT LAUDERDALE — At least 15 JetBlue passengers were injured and taken to the hospital after a sudden drop in altitude on a flight from Mexico forced an emergency landing in Florida, officials said Friday.

The Thursday flight from Cancun was headed to Newark, N.J., when the altitude dropped. The Federal Aviation Administration said the plane was diverted to Tampa International Airport around 2 p.m. "after the crew experienced a flight control issue."

"We will conduct a full investigation to determine the cause," JetBlue said in a statement. The FAA says it is also investigating.

Medical personnel met the passengers and crew on the ground at the airport. Between 15 and 20 people were taken to hospitals with non-life-threatening injuries, according to Vivian Shedd, a spokesperson for Tampa Fire Rescue.

Pilots reported "a flight control issue" and described injuries including a possible "laceration in the head," according to air traffic audio recorded by LiveATC.net.

## Blast at Harvard Medical School was intentional

**MA** BOSTON — There was an explosion early Saturday at Harvard Medical School that appears to have been intentional, but no one was injured, authorities said.

A university police officer who responded to a fire alarm tried to stop two unidentified people who ran from the Goldenson Building before going to where the alert was triggered, university police said in a statement.

The Boston Fire Department determined that the explosion was intentional and officers did not find additional devices in a sweep of the building, police said.

Police released grainy photos of two people wearing face coverings.

## School official had second education job out of state

**VA** ALEXANDRIA — Alexandria City Public Schools is reviewing its policy on outside employment after a senior-level administrator was found to have another full-time job in a different state.

Ayanna Harrison started her job as executive director of support operations for the Alexandria district in July 2024. It was a full-time job, meant to oversee day-to-day operations of safety and security, nutrition and transportation services.

In July, Harrison started another job as chief operations officer at Kindezi Schools, a charter district in Atlanta.

Harrison's employment at both districts ended Wednesday after the Alexandria Times published an article with details of both her roles.

The Alexandria school board said it will hire an external auditor to review compliance with policies on outside employment and telework practices.

## Police, Guard troops clear rowdy Halloween crowd

**DC** WASHINGTON — A crowd of young people gathered on Halloween night in Washington's Navy Yard neighborhood was run out of a park area by police and National Guard members after authorities said some people were engaged in disorderly conduct.

The Metropolitan Police Department said young people converged on the park Friday

night and that the gathering remained peaceful as the crowd grew to several hundred.

But as the night wore on, some people took part in fights, disrupted the flow of traffic and ignored instructions to remain on sidewalks, leading authorities to close streets and restore order, police said.

At least five people ranging in age from 14 to 18 were arrested, including one suspected of possessing a knife and two suspected of failing to obey officers and resisting arrest.

## FBI: Church shooter driven by Mormon faith hatred

**MI** LANSING — The former Marine who opened fire in a Michigan church and set it ablaze last month was motivated by "anti-religious beliefs" against The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the FBI confirmed Friday.

While friends of the gunman in the deadly shooting have said he harbored hatred for what is widely known as the Mormon church, the FBI had previously declined to specify the motivation behind the attack that left four people dead and the church burned to the ground, except to say it was a "targeted" act of violence.

The gunman, Thomas Jacob Sanford, 40, was killed by law enforcement responding to the shooting.

"I am confirming this is a targeted act of violence believed to be motivated by the assailant's anti-religious beliefs against the Mormon religious community," Jennifer Runyan, special agent in charge of the FBI Detroit field office, said.

— From wire reports

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# Little kicks record FG as Jags win in OT

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Trevor Lawrence scored on a quarterback sneak in overtime for his second rushing touchdown of the game, and the Jacksonville Jaguars held on to beat Las Vegas 30-29 on Sunday when nose tackle DaVon Hamilton batted down Geno Smith's pass to deny the Raiders a winning 2-point conversion.

Jacksonville's Cam Little broke an NFL record with a 68-yard field goal at the end of the first half, and his 48-yarder with 16 seconds left sent the game to OT.

"You kick it long enough and you kick it straight enough, it's gonna go in," Little said. "Me and (holder) Logan (Cooke) kind of had a one-on-one right before the kick, and I said, 'Kick the ball as hard as I can.'"

With 3:24 left in the extra period, Lawrence jumped over the pile and stretched the ball just over the goal line for a 30-23 lead with 3:24 left. Smith responded by hitting Brock Bowers for a 2-yard TD, but his throw on the 2-point try never even reached the end zone because the 335-pound Hamilton got his hands up and swatted it away.

**Bills 28, Chiefs 21:** Josh Allen threw a touchdown pass and ran for two scores to outduel Patrick Mahomes and host Buffalo defeated Kansas City in a rematch of last season's AFC championship game.

James Cook had 114 yards rushing and the Bills' defense did the rest in harassing Mahomes, who was sacked three times, hit 15 more and finished with the worst completion percentage of his career.

The game was decided in the final 17 seconds, when Mahomes threw three straight incompletions from Buffalo's 40. The last throw fell short of the end zone and was batted down by rookie Maxwell Hairston. The drive began at the Chiefs' 42 after Matt Prater's 52-yard

field goal attempt for Buffalo struck the right upright.

**Seahawks 38, Commanders 14:** Sam Darnold threw four touchdown passes before his first incompleting, and visiting Seattle played a near-perfect first half offensively on its way to a rout of Washington, who again lost Jayden Daniels to an injury.

Daniels, the Commanders' second-year quarterback, left in the fourth quarter after his non-throwing arm bent gruesomely while he was being tackled near the Seahawks goal line.

Darnold completed his first 17 passes. At halftime, he was 16 for 16 for 282 yards and four TDs against Washington's beleaguered defense. Rookie Tory Horton had the first two touchdown catches for Seattle, and even practice squad elevation Cody White got in on the action before the half was over. It was 31-7 at halftime.

**Steelers 27, Colts 20:** Jaylen Warren ran for two touchdowns, and host Pittsburgh forced Indianapolis into six turnovers while securing the win.

The Steelers (5-3) snapped a two-game losing streak by harassing Colts quarterback Daniel Jones into the kind of mistakes he'd largely avoided during Indianapolis' scorching-hot start.

Jones threw three interceptions and fumbled twice, including a strip-sack by Pittsburgh's T.J. Watt in the second quarter that seemed to shake the Steelers out of a weeks-long funk in which the NFL's highest-paid defense gave up yards and points at an alarming rate.

**Broncos 18, Texans 15:** Bo Nix threw two touchdown passes and Wil Lutz made a 34-yard field goal as time expired and visiting Denver rallied to beat Houston, extending its winning streak to six games.

The Broncos (7-2) had punted three times in a row before a 25-yard scramble by Nix got them

to their 39 with less than a minute to go. J.K. Dobbins followed with a 9-yard scamper and a 9-yard run by Nix two plays after that set up the game-winning field goal.

Nix couldn't do much in the first three quarters against Houston's top-ranked defense, but RJ Harvey's 27-yard TD reception and Troy Franklin's 2-point conversion grab tied it at 15-all early in the fourth quarter.

**Bears 47, Bengals 42:** Caleb Williams connected with Colston Loveland for a 58-yard touchdown with 17 seconds left, and visiting Chicago beat Cincinnati in a wild game that featured three touchdowns in the last two minutes and two lead changes in the final minute.

After Joe Flacco put the Bengals ahead 42-41 with a 9-yard touchdown pass to Andrei Iosivas, the Bears took over on their own 28 with 54 seconds left. Four plays later, on first down from the 42, Williams found Loveland down the middle. The rookie tight end caught it at the Cincinnati 36, bounced off Bengals defensive backs Jordan Battle and Geno Stone and ran to the end zone to give Chicago its fifth win in six games.

**49ers 34, Giants 24:** Christian McCaffrey caught a touchdown pass from Mac Jones, rushed for another score and visiting San Francisco got back on track by running all over New York on the way to a victory.

McCaffrey accounted for 173 scrimmage yards — 106 on the ground on his 28 carries and 67 receiving on five catches.

**Panthers 16, Packers 13:** Rico Dowdle rushed for 130 yards and two touchdowns, and his big run in the final minute set up Ryan Fitzgerald's last-second 49-yard field goal as visiting Carolina beat Green Bay to snap the Packers' three-game win streak.

The loss could prove especially costly for Green Bay (5-

2-1), as star tight end Tucker Kraft was carted off the field with a knee injury in the third quarter.

**Patriots 24, Falcons 23:** Drake Maye threw two touchdown passes and had a pair of turnovers in an uneven performance, and host New England held on for its sixth straight victory over Atlanta after Parker Romo missed a potential tying extra point for the Falcons.

Atlanta has lost its last eight meetings with the Patriots. The Falcons haven't won in Foxborough since 1998.

**Vikings 27, Lions 24:** J.J. McCarthy threw two touchdown passes and ran for a score in his return from an ankle injury, leading visiting Minnesota to a win over Detroit.

McCarthy, who had missed the previous five games, sealed the victory by throwing a 16-yard pass to Jalen Nailor on third-and-5 from the Vikings 28, a play that allowed Minnesota to run out the clock.

**Chargers 27, Titans 20:** Justin Herbert threw for 250 yards and two touchdowns and ran for another score and visiting Los Angeles beat Tennessee for its third win in four games.

Herbert, who came in leading the NFL with 2,140 yards passing, shook off an early pick-6 and losing both his tackles to injuries before halftime. Right tackle Bobby Hurt hurt a groin in the first quarter, and left tackle Joe Alt was carted off in the second after reinjuring his right ankle.

**Rams 34, Saints 10:** Matthew Stafford threw for 281 yards and hit Davante Adams with two of his four touchdown passes in host Los Angeles' victory over struggling New Orleans.

Puka Nacua had seven catches for 95 yards and a touchdown in his return from an ankle injury, and the star receiver came back to the Rams' sideline after briefly leaving with a chest injury in the second half.



# Thunder rout Pelicans to stay undefeated

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 30 points and seven assists in three quarters, and the Oklahoma City Thunder defeated the New Orleans Pelicans 137-106 on Sunday to extend their season-opening winning streak to seven games.

Gilgeous-Alexander made 8 of 14 field goals and all 13 of his free throws in 30 minutes to keep the Pelicans winless.

Isaiah Hartenstein had 14 points, 14 rebounds and eight assists for the Thunder, who shot 56% from the field and had eight players score in double figures. Oklahoma City's largest lead was 36 points in the fourth quarter.

The Thunder entered the game ranked last in the NBA in 3-point percentage at just under 30%, but made 20 of 48 (41.7%) against the Pelicans.

Zion Williamson had 20 points and nine rebounds and Trey Murphy III added 19 points for New Orleans, which fell to 0-6.

**Raptors 117, Grizzlies 104:** RJ Barrett scored 27 points, Brandon Ingram added 26 and

host Toronto won consecutive games for the first time this season by beating short-handed Memphis.

The Grizzlies were without two-time All-Star guard Ja Morant, who was suspended one game Saturday for what Memphis described as conduct detrimental to the team.

Scottie Barnes had 19 points and 12 rebounds, and rookie Collin Murray-Boyles scored 15 as the Raptors won their second straight after losing the previous four.

**76ers 129, Nets 105:** Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 29 points, Tyrese Maxey had 26 and visiting Philadelphia defeated Brooklyn.

Oubre made 9 of 11 field goals and had 22 points in the first quarter, but limped off the court after injuring his ankle at the buzzer in the third. The forward was cleared to return to the bench with 10 minutes remaining in regulation but did not reenter the game.

Quentin Grimes added 22 off the bench and VJ Edgecombe had 16 points for the 76ers, who

have won five of their first six games.

**Hornets 126, Jazz 103:** Miles Bridges scored 29 points, Kon Knueppel added a career-high 24 and host Charlotte routed Utah to snap a three-game losing streak.

High-energy backup center Moussa Diabate provided a huge spark for the Hornets with 17 points and 12 rebounds. Sion James, Knueppel's college teammate at Duke, also had a career-high 15 points.

Collin Sexton added 10 points and 12 assists for Charlotte, which played without Brandon Miller (shoulder subluxation) and LaMelo Ball (ankle impingement).

**Cavaliers 117, Hawks 109:** Donovan Mitchell made eight 3-pointers and scored a season-high 37 points in his return to Cleveland's lineup, leading the host Cavaliers to a win over Atlanta, which is navigating the early season without injured star guard Trae Young.

Mitchell was back after missing Friday's home loss to Toronto with hamstring tightness. The

six-time All-Star finished 8-for-15 from long range, adding 24 points in the second half. It was his 200th game with Cleveland, which is 139-61 when he's on the floor.

**Knicks 128, Bulls 116:** Jalen Brunson scored 31 points as host New York snapped a three-game losing streak and handed Chicago its first loss of the season.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 20 points and 15 rebounds for his fifth double-double of the season, while Josh Hart had 14 points and nine rebounds for the Knicks, who scored the most points they've had in a game this season and avoided their first four-game losing streak since Feb. 8-14, 2024.

**Lakers 130, Heat 120:** Luka Doncic had 29 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists, Austin Reaves scored 26 points and host Los Angeles beat Miami to extend its winning streak to three games.

Jake LaRavia had 25 points off the bench for the Lakers and Jaxson Hayes scored a season-high 15 points, hitting all seven of his shots.

## Lightning top Mammoth for fifth consecutive win

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Jake Guentzel snapped a tie in the third period, and the Tampa Bay Lightning beat the Utah Mammoth 4-2 on Sunday for their fifth consecutive win.

Yanni Gourde, Anthony Cirelli, and Brandon Hagel also scored for Tampa Bay, and Jonas Johansson stopped 25 shots. It was Cirelli's team-high seventh goal this season.

Lawson Crouse and Kailer Yamamoto scored for Utah, which dropped a home game for the first time this season after opening with four straight wins in Salt Lake City. Ian Cole had two assists, and Karel Vejmelka made 22 saves.

The Mammoth jumped in front 5:55 into the first when Crouse

snapped the puck home on a breakaway.

The Lightning responded with 4:43 left in the period. Gourde finished off a series of precision passes with an easy tap-in after drawing Vejmelka out of position.

Cirelli made it 2-1 at 2:47 of the second, beating Vejmelka from just outside the face-off circle.

After Yamamoto scored his first goal of the season 2:21 into the third, Tampa Bay countered with Guentzel's unassisted goal with 7:54 remaining. Guentzel attacked from the backside and snapped the puck in from close range.

Hagel's empty-netter with 16 seconds left capped the scoring.

**Flames 2, Flyers 1:** Jonathan Huberdeau scored a pair of goals and visiting Calgary defeated Phi-

ladelphia in a game that lacked a lot of activity with both teams playing their fourth game in six nights.

Huberdeau broke through 2:15 into the second period when he snapped a wrister from the left circle through a screen set by Yegor Sharangovich to put the Flames ahead.

**Islanders 3, Blue Jackets 2:** Rookie Matthew Schaefer and Simon Holmstrom scored 29 seconds apart late in the third period, helping host New York rally for a win over Columbus.

David Rittich made 20 saves in the Islanders' second straight win.

Miles Wood and defenseman Denton Mateychuk scored for the Blue Jackets, who beat St. Louis 3-2 on Saturday for their fourth

consecutive win. Elvis Merzlikins made 36 saves.

**Ducks 4, Devils 1:** Cutter Gauthier and Beckett Sennecke each had a goal and an assist, goalie Lukas Dostal made 32 saves and host Anaheim beat New Jersey.

The Ducks have won three straight and five of the last six to move into a first-place tie with Las Vegas and Edmonton in the Pacific Division.

**Red Wings 3, Sharks 2 (OT):** James van Riemsdyk scored in the fourth round of a shootout, lifting visiting Detroit past San Jose.

Moritz Seider and Lucas Raymond both had goals as the Red Wings won their fourth in five games. Goalie Cam Talbot made 16 saves and stopped all four shots by the Sharks during the shootout.

# Larson beats Hamlin for 2nd NASCAR title

Associated Press

AVONDALE, Ariz. — Kyle Larson knew he wasn't going to catch Denny Hamlin in the final laps Sunday, not without the sort of help that only a caution flag can bring.

Larson got his lucky break.

Hamlin only got heartbreak.

Larson is now a two-time NASCAR champion after denying Hamlin what would have been his first career title when a late caution at Phoenix Raceway sent the championship-deciding finale into overtime.

Without that caution, which came with three laps to run, Hamlin had it locked up and was ready to finally shed the label of greatest NASCAR driver to never win a championship. But fellow title contender William Byron got a flat tire and hit the wall to bring out the caution, and a few minutes later, it was over.

"Just unbelievable," Larson said. "I cannot believe it."

Neither could Hamlin.

"I really don't have much for emotion right now. Just numb about it 'cause just in shock," Hamlin said after consoling his crying daughters on pit road. "We were 40 seconds away from a championship. This sport can drive you absolutely crazy because sometimes speed, talent, none of that matters."

When the caution for Byron came out, Hamlin led the field down pit road and got four new tires on his Toyota; Larson only took two tires on his Chevrolet. It meant Larson was fifth for the two-lap sprint to the finish, with Hamlin back in 10th.

With so little time to run down Larson, Hamlin came up short with a sixth-place finish as Larson finished third. Ryan Blaney, who was eliminated from title contention last week, won the race.

It is the second championship for Larson, who won his first title in 2021 when he joined Hendrick Motorsports. It is the 15th Cup title for the organization and came on the 30th anniversary of Jeff Gordon giving Hendrick its first championship in 1995.

As Larson celebrated, Hamlin sat in his car motionless for several seconds, then wiped his face with a white towel, never showing any emotion.

Larson, who has been in a slump since his disastrous Memorial Day attempt to race both the Indianapolis 500 and Coca-Cola 600 on the same day, was also in shock.

"We didn't lead a lap and won the championship," Larson said. "We had an average car at best and had the right front (tire) go

down, lost a lap and got the wave around, saved by the caution with the wave around. It's just unbelievable. What a year by this motorsports team."

Team owner Rick Hendrick, Gordon and Larson crew chief Cliff Daniels all said they did not believe Larson still had a chance at the championship after so many problems during the race.

"I have to acknowledge that it was a pretty ugly day for us," Daniels said. "I think we were beat on raw pace, and after we had the flat tire, there wasn't a lot of good things coming our way. The way the team stuck together and continued to believe in each other, Kyle continued to believe if we just had a shot we could close it out."

It is the sixth shot at a title to slip away from Hamlin in his 20 years driving for Gibbs. He led 208 of the 319 laps and started from the pole.

"Nothing I could do different. I mean, prepared as good as I could coming into the weekend and my team gave me a fantastic car," Hamlin said. "Just didn't work out. I was just praying 'no caution' and we had one there. What can you do? It's just not meant to be."

He said crew chief Chris Gayle made the correct call with four tires, but too many others

only took two, which created too big of a gap for Hamlin to close on Larson in so little time.

The 44-year-old Virginia native had been jinxed in five previous championship finales, breaking his heart in 2010, 2014, 2019, 2020 and 2021. Sunday marked his first time eligible in the winner-take-all race in four seasons.

Hamlin was remarkably loose and calm all week, rented three houses in Scottsdale for 30 friends and family, won the pole and then dominated Sunday's race.

He was the sympathetic favorite, the betting favorite, and who most of the industry was pulling for — largely based on how much heartbreak he has faced. Hamlin burst onto the NASCAR scene in 2006, winning rookie of the year and finishing third in the championship.

"Man, if you can't win that one, I don't know which one you can win," Hamlin said of his latest defeat.

Hamlin teammate Chase Briscoe finished 18th in his debut in the championship finale, while Larson teammate Byron was 33rd after his late issue. He felt awful for ruining Hamlin's chance even though his Hendrick Motorsports teammate won the championship.

## Auburn fires Freeze after losing 12th of 15 SEC games

Associated Press

Auburn fired coach Hugh Freeze on Sunday, a day after the Tigers lost for the 12th time in their last 15 Southeastern Conference games.

The 56-year-old Freeze failed to fix Auburn's offensive issues in three years on the Plains, scoring 24 or fewer points in 17 of his 22 league games. He also ended up on the wrong end of too many close matchups.

Defensive coordinator DJ Durkin will serve as interim coach for the team's remaining four games.

Freeze became the eighth Power Four coach fired this season, following moves at Arkansas, Florida, LSU, Oklahoma State, Penn State, UCLA and Virginia Tech. Stanford also has a vacancy after firing Troy Taylor in March.

Freeze's finale was a 10-3 home loss to unranked Kentucky on Saturday night in which Jackson Arnold and Ashton Daniels were sacked a combined seven times. It was the third consecutive loss for the Tigers (4-5, 1-5 SEC) at Jordan-Hare Stadium.

Freeze received much of the

blame for the team's skid. He missed on hand-picked portal quarterbacks Payton Thorne (Michigan State), Arnold (Oklahoma) and maybe even Daniels (Stanford). Freeze also went 1-12 against ranked teams.

The Tigers owe Freeze \$15.8 million, with no mitigation, from a six-year, \$39 million deal he signed to replace Bryan Harsin in 2022.

Now, the "Auburn Family" is looking for its fourth football coach in seven seasons.

Freeze and Auburn showed

promise by winning at Baylor to open the season. They were 3-0 and tied with Oklahoma when things started to unravel. The SEC acknowledged that officials missed what should have been a flag before Sooners quarterback John Mateer connected with Isaiah Sategna for a touchdown. Sategna appeared to run off the field before he stopped outside the numbers and ran a pattern for the score. The league said simulated replacements or substitutions cannot be used to confuse opponents. The Tigers lost 24-17.