

USS Ford joins Latin American buildup

The Washington Post

The USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier has entered waters near Latin America, joining a massive naval buildup that has fueled speculation the Trump administration intends to dramatically escalate its deadly counternarcotics campaign there, possibly through direct attacks on Venezuela.

The Ford and its three accompanying warships arrived in the region Tuesday, the Navy said in a news release. The ships were not yet in the Caribbean Sea but had crossed into the U.S. Southern Command's jurisdiction, a vast area that also includes part of the Atlantic Ocean and drug smuggling routes in the Pacific used by cartels based in Colombia and neighboring Ecuador.

"These forces will enhance and augment existing capabilities to disrupt narcotics traffick-

ing and degrade and dismantle transnational criminal organizations," Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said in a statement.

The development, though forecast weeks ago, appeared certain to deepen the sense of unease felt in some corners of Congress since President Donald Trump began to ruminate about a potential regime change in Venezuela. Last week, administration officials hoping to quash bipartisan legislation aimed at restraining the president's ability to unleash military force there told lawmakers no active preparations were underway for such an attack — a declaration that persuaded enough Republicans to vote down the measure.

The breadth of firepower inherent to an aircraft carrier strike group — the Ford typically travels with dozens of fighter jets and an assortment of other

lethal capabilities — would seem excessive for the type of strikes that U.S. forces have carried out on alleged drug boats since early September, experts said.

Carriers are strategic assets, and the United States uses its fleet of 11 — many of which are in scheduled maintenance and not available to sail at any given time — for power projection and deterrence in its top-tier security concerns, notably countering China in the Indo-Pacific region and maintaining a deterrent presence in the Middle East, said Mark Cancian, a senior defense adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"The only reason to move it there is to use it against Venezuela," Cancian surmised, adding that the Ford's arrival means "the shot clock has started because this is not an asset

they can just keep there indefinitely. They have to use it or move it. And moving it would mean they are standing down" from a potential attack on Venezuela, he said.

The Pentagon announced Oct. 24 that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had ordered the Ford to relocate to Latin America from Europe. It has been deployed from its home port in Virginia since June.

The Ford, which is the Navy's most modern and largest carrier, has 4,000 sailors on board. It is accompanied by the destroyers USS Bainbridge, USS Mahan and USS Winston S. Churchill. Cancian, the analyst, said it can cost as much as \$8.4 million a day to operate an aircraft carrier.

The carrier strike group's arrival pushes the number of U.S. troops in the region to about 15,000.

Bill to end government shutdown reaches House vote

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House lawmakers were making a long-awaited return to the nation's capital on Wednesday after nearly eight weeks away to potentially put an end to the longest federal government shutdown in U.S. history.

The House was scheduled to take up a bill to reopen the government that the Senate passed on Monday night. President Donald Trump called the measure a "very big victory," and it's expected to pass the Republican-led chamber. But the prospect of travel delays due to the shutdown could complicate the vote. Speaker Mike Johnson may need nearly perfect attendance from fellow Republicans to get

the measure over the finish line.

The House has not been in legislative session since Sept. 19. That's when it passed a short-term funding patch to keep the government open when the new budget year began in October. Johnson sent lawmakers home after that vote and put the onus on the Senate to act, saying House Republicans did their job.

Democrats seized on the opportunity to cast Republicans as going on vacation while the federal workforce went without paychecks, travelers experienced airport delays and food assistance benefits expired. Johnson, R-La., said members were doing important work in their districts.

The vast majority of Demo-

cratic lawmakers are expected to vote against the measure because it does not include an extension of Affordable Care Act tax credits that expire at the end of this year and make coverage more affordable.

"Our strong expectation is that Democrats will be strongly opposed," Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York said Tuesday night in previewing the vote.

But Johnson said of the pending legislation that "our long national nightmare is finally coming to an end, and we're grateful for that."

"After 40 days of wandering in the wilderness and making the American people suffer needlessly, some Senate Democrats

finally have stepped forward to end the pain," Johnson said.

The measure that passed the Senate included buy-in from eight senators who broke ranks with the Democrats after reaching the conclusion that Republicans would not bend on using the measure to continue the expiring health care tax credits. Meanwhile, the shutdown's toll was growing by the day. Wednesday was Day 43.

The compromise measure funds three bipartisan annual spending bills and extends the rest of government funding through Jan. 30. Republicans also promised to hold a vote to extend the health care subsidies by mid-December, but there is no guarantee of success.

CENTCOM: No US troops to be sent to Gaza

By LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

American troops will not be sent to Gaza, U.S. Central Command said Wednesday, denying news reports that the Pentagon plans to establish a nearby base while its forces oversee the delicate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

As part of the ceasefire agreement, the U.S. has been working with partners to develop an international stabilization force in Gaza made up of foreign troops, who could secure the area as residents seek to rebuild after two years of fighting.

Reports of the establishment of a U.S. military base near Gaza are inaccurate, CENTCOM spokesman Capt. Tim Hawkins said in a statement Wednesday.

"To be clear, no U.S. troops will be deployed into Gaza," Hawkins said in the statement. "Any reporting to the contrary is false."

The U.S. currently has about 200 troops in Israel as part of the newly established Civil-Military Coordination Center, which helps facilitate international humanitarian and security assistance into Gaza and monitors the ceasefire agreement.

A nonprofit news organization

in Israel, citing unidentified Israeli officials, reported this week that the U.S. was eyeing a \$500 million base near the border with Gaza that would accommodate 10,000 people, including American forces.

The U.S. military is acting in a planning capacity to develop potential options for basing the international troops who will be part of the stabilization force, Hawkins said.

The U.S. Navy was looking into options for a temporary base near Gaza whose staffing does not include U.S. troops, Bloomberg News reported Tuesday,

citing an internal contracting document.

The request for information, which is not a formal call for a bid, asked companies to submit cost estimates for a "temporary, self-sustaining military base of operations capable of supporting 10,000 personnel and providing 10,000 square feet of office space for a period of 12 months," according to Bloomberg.

White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt told the outlet that such a plan had not been approved by the administration and should not be deemed an official plan for the Middle East.

Potential targets in possible US attack on Venezuela

The Washington Post

The USS Gerald R. Ford, the world's largest aircraft carrier, has arrived in Latin America, bringing thousands of U.S. troops closer to Venezuela and potentially escalating a military campaign that has already killed more than 75 people aboard speedboats and semisubmersibles.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly suggested land strikes could be next but in recent days has denied that he is considering an imminent military attack inside Venezuela.

If the Trump administration decided to pursue land strikes, U.S. forces could pursue a range of options as targets. But the potential impact of such strikes remains uncertain.

Potential targets

Although Trump has signaled the potential for land strikes against drug traffickers in Venezuela, it remains unclear whether he would target cocaine smuggling sites or the Maduro government itself.

Trump has alleged that President Nicolás Maduro and his top security officials are leaders of a narcotics organization, the Cartel de los Soles, sending drugs to the United States. The administration has designated the Cartel de los Soles a narcoterrorist group and could use this as justification to target the government directly, in an attempt to pressure or forcibly remove Maduro from power.

Venezuela's military has "atrophyed" in more recent years, but it retains enough arms

and capability that it's unlikely the Trump administration would order any significant ground incursion, said James Stavridis, a retired U.S. admiral who oversaw operations in the region from 2006 to 2009.

"Look for precision kinetic strikes against narcotics targets and military capability and, if that doesn't have the desired effect, against leadership," Stavridis said.

In the face of such force, Maduro might hunker down, Stavridis said. That would leave the Trump administration to potentially deliberate whether to carry out strikes against Maduro's security or a special operations mission to capture or kill the authoritarian leader. Such an effort, Stavridis said, "would be pretty high-stakes, with a lot of potential risk."

Stavridis suggested the United States could begin with strikes on airports or seaports that it identifies as potential shipping hubs for drugs. It also could strike shipment points near Venezuela's border with Colombia, where significant quantities of cocaine originate. But the Pentagon also would want to attack Venezuelan air defenses to keep its own aircraft safe, the retired admiral said.

U.S. forces could also target clandestine airstrips, according to a former agent for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in Venezuela, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive details. Traffickers often stash cocaine near the "parking lots" where planes from Central America land and wait to load up the drugs.

U.S. forces could also target airstrips in the Catatumbo region, which has seen increased traffic amid the U.S. crackdown on drug boats, according to a former Venezuelan military captain now in exile, who spoke on the condition of anonymity out of security concerns.

Possible response

Venezuela's military is well-armed, with some advanced weapons it obtained under the leadership of former President Hugo Chávez, who died in office in 2013.

They are believed to include a Russian-made S-300VM air-defense system.

But this air defense system is only partially operational right now, and it was never intended to be used against the United States, said Andrei Serbin Pont of the Latin American research group CRIES.

According to Global Firepower, Venezuela has 109,000 active military personnel. But the former Venezuelan military official said it is probably fewer.

Venezuela opposition figures, political analysts and a former regime official told U.S. diplomats in the Bogotá-based Venezuela Affairs Unit that the Maduro government is increasingly concerned by U.S. military operations but believes it can ride out the tensions and cling to power, according to internal government documents obtained by The Post. The State Department did not respond to a request for comment.

Justices extend block on SNAP payments

Associated Press

The Supreme Court on Tuesday extended an order blocking full SNAP payments, amid signals that the government shutdown could soon end and food aid payments resume.

The order keeps in place at least for a few more days a chaotic situation. People who depend on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to feed their families in some states have received their full monthly allocations, while others have received nothing.

The order, which is three sentences long and comes with no explanation on the court's thinking, will expire just before midnight Thursday.

The Senate has approved a bill to end the shutdown and the House of Representatives planned to vote on it Wednesday evening. Reopening the government would restart the program that helps 42 million Americans buy groceries, but it's not clear how quickly full payments would resume.

The justices chose what is effectively the path of least resistance, anticipating the federal government shutdown will end soon while avoiding any substantive legal ruling about whether lower court orders to keep full payments flowing during the shutdown are correct.

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson was the only one of the nine

justices to say she would have revived the lower court orders immediately, but didn't otherwise explain her vote. Jackson signed the initial order temporarily freezing the payments.

The court's action doesn't do anything to settle uncertainty.

Beneficiaries in some states have received their full monthly allocations while in others they have received nothing. Some states have issued partial payments.

How quickly SNAP benefits could reach recipients if the government reopens would vary by state. But states and advocates say that it's easier to make full payments quickly than partial ones.

Carolyn Vega, a policy analyst at the advocacy group Share Our Strength, also said there could be some technical challenges for states that have issued partial benefits to send out the remaining amount.

The Trump administration chose to cut off SNAP funding after October due to the shutdown. That decision sparked lawsuits and a string of swift and contradictory judicial rulings that deal with government power — and impact food access for about 1 in 8 Americans.

After Tuesday's ruling, Attorney General Pam Bondi posted on social media: "Thank you to the Court for allowing Congress to continue its swift progress."

Epstein email: Trump 'spent hours' with victim

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein wrote in a 2011 email that Donald Trump had "spent hours" at Epstein's house with a victim of sex trafficking and said in a separate message in 2019 that Trump "knew about the girls," according to communications released Wednesday.

The emails made public by Democrats on the House Oversight Committee add to the questions about Trump's friendship with Epstein and about any knowledge he may have had in what prosecutors call a yearslong effort by Epstein to exploit underage girls. The Republican president has consistently denied any knowledge of Epstein's alleged crimes and has said he ended their relationship years ago.

The messages are part of a batch of 23,000 documents provided by Epstein's estate to the Oversight Committee. The release resurfaces a storyline that had shadowed Trump's presidency during the summer when

the FBI and the Justice Department abruptly announced they would not be releasing additional documents that investigators had spent weeks examining, disappointing conspiracy theorists and online sleuths who had expected to see new revelations.

In an April 2, 2011, email to Ghislaine Maxwell, an Epstein girlfriend now imprisoned for conspiring to engage in sex trafficking, Epstein wrote, "I want you to realize that that dog that hasn't barked is Trump. (Redacted name) spent hours at my house with him, he has never once been mentioned. police chief. etc. im 75 % there."

Maxwell replied: "I have been thinking about that."

The name of the person said to have spent time with Trump was blacked out of the email, but House Democrats identified the person as a "victim."

White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt accused the Democrats of having "selectively leaked emails" to "create a fake narrative to smear President Trump."

Suit challenges TSA's ban on trans officers pat-downs

Associated Press

A Virginia transportation security officer is accusing the U.S. Department of Homeland Security of sex discrimination over a policy that bars transgender officers from performing security screening pat-downs, according to a federal lawsuit.

The Transportation Security Administration, which operates under DHS, enacted the policy in February to comply with President Donald Trump's executive order declaring two unchangeable sexes: male and female.

According to internal documents explaining the policy change that The Associated Press obtained from four independent sources, including two current and two former TSA workers, "transgender officers will no longer engage in pat-down duties, which are conducted based on both the traveler's and officer's biological sex. In addition, transgender officers will no longer serve as a TSA-required witness when a

traveler elects to have a pat-down conducted in a private screening area."

Until February, TSA assigned work consistent with officers' gender identity under a 2021 management directive.

The agency told the AP it rescinded that directive to comply with Trump's Jan. 20 executive order.

Although transgender officers "shall continue to be eligible to perform all other security screening functions consistent with their certifications," and must attend all required training, they will not be allowed to demonstrate how to conduct pat-downs as part of their training or while training others, according to the internal documents.

A transgender officer at Dulles International Airport, Danielle Mittereder, alleges in her lawsuit filed Friday that the new policy — which also bars her from using TSA facility restrooms that align with her gender identity — violates civil rights law.

Philadelphia mint strikes its final penny

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Back in 1793, a penny could get you a biscuit, a candle or a piece of candy. These days, many sit in drawers or glass jars and are basically cast aside or collected as lucky keepsakes.

But their luck has run out.

The U.S. Mint in Philadelphia struck its last circulating penny on Wednesday as the president has canceled the 1-cent coin as the cost of making them has become more than their value.

President Donald Trump has ordered its demise as costs climb to nearly 4 cents per penny and the 1-cent valuation becomes somewhat obsolete.

The U.S. Mint has been mak-

ing pennies in Philadelphia, the nation's birthplace, since 1793, a year after Congress passed the Coinage Act. Today, there are billions of them in circulation, but they are rarely essential for financial transactions in the modern economy or the digital age.

"For far too long the United States has minted pennies which literally cost us more than 2 cents," Trump wrote in an online post in February, as costs continued to climb. "This is so wasteful!"

Still, many people have a nostalgia for them, seeing them as lucky or fun to collect.

And some retailers have voiced concerns in recent

weeks as supplies ran low and the last production neared. They said the phase-out was abrupt and came with no guidance from the federal government on how to handle customer transactions.

Some rounded prices down to avoid shortchanging people, others pleaded with customers to bring exact change and the more creative among them gave out prizes, such as a free drink, in exchange for a pile of pennies.

"We have been advocating abolition of the penny for 30 years. But this is not the way we wanted it to go," Jeff Lenard of the National Association of Convenience Stores said last month.

Some banks, meanwhile, began rationing supplies, a somewhat paradoxical result of the effort to address what many see as a glut of the coins. Over the last century, about half of the coins made at U.S. Mints in Philadelphia and Denver have been pennies.

On Wednesday, U.S. Treasurer Brandon Beach told reporters that they would auction off the final pennies printed in Philadelphia. The Treasury Department expects to save \$56 million per year on materials by ceasing to make them.

But they still have a better production-cost-to-value ratio than the nickel, which costs nearly 14 cents to make.

Low temps shock southeast; snow covers northeast

Associated Press

The first major cold spell of the season plunged parts of the southeastern U.S. into record-low temperatures Tuesday, delivering a shock for 18 million people under a freeze warning across Alabama, Florida and Georgia. Meanwhile, several inches of snow blanketed areas along the eastern Great Lakes as the blast of cold air moved through.

The direct shot of Arctic air affecting the eastern two-thirds of the country migrated east — and far southeast — from the Northern Plains, which was hit with gusty chills and snow over the weekend. For much of the Southeast on Tuesday, that meant an abrupt transition into wintry temperatures after reaching well into the 70s and 80s in recent days.

Some daily records were "absolutely shattered," said meteorologist Scott Kleebauer, including a low of 28 degrees Fahrenheit at the airport in Jacksonville, Fla., on Tuesday morning. That broke the previ-

ous record low of 35 degrees set in 1977.

The southeastern U.S. will face a few more colder-than-normal days before warming up later in the week.

Iguanas begin to "freeze" and fall from trees when temperatures dip to 40 degrees or below, according to Kleebauer, a forecaster with the National Weather Service.

Across West Virginia, a pre-dawn coating of snow and ice contributed to dozens of accidents Tuesday before the sun came out and road conditions improved.

More than 14 inches of snow on Monday and Tuesday enabled the White Grass Ski Touring Center in the northern mountain's Canaan Valley to open for cross-country skiing.

The cold air over the Great Lakes' relatively warmer waters created ripe conditions for significant snowfall in some communities along the Great Lakes and downwind, farther inland in Pennsylvania and New York.

Colombia stops sharing with US over boat strikes

Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia — Colombian President Gustavo Petro ordered his nation's security forces Tuesday to stop sharing intelligence with the United States, until the Trump administration stops its strikes on suspected drug traffickers in the Caribbean, as relations deteriorate between the once close partners in the fight against drug trafficking.

In a message on X, Petro wrote that Colombia's military must immediately end "communications and other agreements with U.S. security agencies" until the U.S. ceases its attacks on boats suspected of carrying drugs, that critics have called extrajudicial executions.

Petro wrote that "the fight against drugs must be subordinated to the human rights of the Caribbean people." It wasn't immediately clear what kind of information Colombia will stop sharing with the United States. The White House had no immediate response to Petro's latest statements.

At least 75 people have been killed by the U.S. military in strikes in international waters since August, according to figures supplied by the administration. The strikes began in the southern Caribbean, near Venezuela's shores, but have shifted recently to the eastern Pacific.

Petro has called for President Donald Trump to be investigated for war crimes over the strikes, which have affected citizens of Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The leftist leader has long been a critic of U.S. drug policy, and has accused the Trump administration of going after peasants growing coca, the base ingredient of cocaine, instead of targeting major drug traffickers and money launderers.

The Trump administration has accused Petro of being soft on traffickers and has criticized the Colombian president's decision to spare Colombian rebel leaders involved in the drug trade from extradition to the United States.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

New council member served time for slaying

ME PORTLAND — A woman who was sworn in Monday as a city council member in Bangor, Maine, served time in prison for manslaughter.

The election of Angela Walker sparked outrage on conservative social media and concern from some Maine Republicans, such as Bobby Charles, a Republican candidate for governor.

But Walker, who is not a member of a political party, spoke openly during her campaign about how she is a changed person and believes she can bring a unique perspective to city government as someone who has been through addiction recovery and the criminal justice system.

Walker was sentenced to 10 years in prison after she and her brother, Benjamin Humphrey, pleaded guilty in the 2002 death of Derek Rogers. The Canadian tourist had allegedly called Walker a derogatory term for Native American women before a fight broke out. He was later found severely beaten and suffocated with sand.

18 sent to hospital after tram crashes at airport

VA DULLES — A vehicle transporting passengers at a Washington, D.C.-area airport hit a dock at the building Monday afternoon, sending 18 people to the hospital, according to officials.

A mobile lounge, which transports passengers between the terminal and aircraft, struck the dock at an angle at about 4:30 p.m. at Washington Dulles International Airport as it was pulling up to the building, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority said in a statement. The dock is where the vehicle stops to let people into the concourse.

The passengers who were hurt have non-life-threatening injuries and were taken to the hospital by the fire department, according to the authority.

Trump pardons man who cheated on record run

CO FORT COLLINS — President Donald Trump on Monday pardoned a trail runner who briefly took a prohibited trail on his way to a record time up and down the tallest peak in the Teton Range of western Wyoming.

The pardon for Michelino Sunseri, unlike recent pardons of Trump allies, appeared apolitical.

Sunseri, 33, ran up and down Grand Teton, the 13,775-foot centerpiece of the iconic Teton Range, in 2 hours, 50 minutes, 50 seconds in 2024.

But on the way down, Sunseri left a switchback to avoid casual hikers. Going off-trail in a national park is considered a no-no because it can cause erosion, especially when a shortcut over time becomes a popular way to go.

Sunseri got a misdemeanor conviction from a judge in September.

Families say Camp Mystic ignored flooding risks

TX AUSTIN — The operators of Camp Mystic in Texas, where 25 girls and two teenage counselors died in catastrophic flooding on July 4, failed to take necessary

steps to protect the campers as life-threatening floodwaters approached, families of the victims allege in a lawsuit.

The lawsuit, filed Monday in state court in Austin, seeks more than \$1 million in damages but does not specify an exact amount. It was filed as Camp Mystic has drawn renewed outrage over plans to reopen the camp next summer.

Among the claims in the lawsuit is that a groundskeeper was directed to spend more than an hour evacuating equipment while girls and counselors in cabins closest to the Guadalupe River were ordered to remain there, even as floodwaters overwhelmed the property.

The suit also alleges the operators of the camp chose not to make plans to safely evacuate campers, despite state rules requiring such plans, and instead ordered campers and counselors to remain in their cabins.

Sheriff not to be charged after turbulent town hall

ID BOISE — The Idaho Attorney General's Office has declined to file charges against a northern Idaho sheriff after investigating a turbulent legislative town hall meeting during which a woman was forcibly removed by security dressed in plainclothes.

The chaos at the February meeting in Coeur d'Alene drew widespread attention with videos posted online going viral showing the woman being pulled from the audience after heckling the speakers. The video showed Kootenai County Sheriff Bob Norris telling Teresa Borrenpohl to leave, and then stepping back and recording on his cellphone as multiple uni-

identified men approached and began grabbing her, dragging her out of the meeting. The men were security officers with LEAR Asset Management, but were not wearing any identification or uniforms, and witnesses said they repeatedly refused to identify themselves.

After the incident, Kootenai County Undersheriff Brett Nelson released a statement saying the agency will have a "complete and independent investigation of the incident conducted by an outside agency."

"The investigation did not uncover any evidence to suggest the sheriff acted in bad faith or with malice, and criminal charges would not be appropriate," the attorney general's office wrote.

Suit challenges program allowing killing of bears

AK JUNEAU — Conservation groups sued Monday over a state program in Alaska that authorizes killing brown bears and black bears as a way to increase the size of a once-significant caribou herd in the southwest part of the state. The groups allege the program lacks a scientific basis and is unconstitutional.

The lawsuit filed in state court said the program adopted by the Alaska Board of Game in July doesn't require the Department of Fish and Game to monitor bear populations to ensure their numbers remain sustainable. It also said the program — carried out by department employees and allowing them to shoot from helicopters — sets no limits on how many bears can be killed in an area that's roughly the size of Indiana.

— From wire reports

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Miami moves up CFP rankings, top 5 stands pat

Associated Press

Not surprisingly, Ohio State stayed at the top of the rankings, and there was a healthy debate about whether last weekend's action warranted keeping Indiana at No. 2, one spot ahead of Texas A&M.

But while those top three remained the same in the Week 2 rankings released Tuesday, it was a game back in August that led the College Football Playoff selection committee to its biggest shakeup.

The committee vaulted Miami to No. 15, one spot ahead of Georgia Tech, to hand the Hurricanes the Atlantic Coast Conference's only spot in this week's projected bracket.

That decision came not so much on the strength of last weekend's action — when Mia-

mi easily handled Syracuse and the Yellow Jackets were idle — but rather, thanks to the Hurricanes' season-opening win against Notre Dame.

"Certainly, the win versus Notre Dame was a key factor for placing Miami ahead of Georgia Tech," committee chair Mack Rhoades explained. "In general, with the ACC, I think their lack of nonconference signature wins other than Miami over Notre Dame" hurts the conference.

Following the trio of undefeated teams — Ohio State, Indiana and Texas A&M — were Alabama and Georgia, who rounded out the same top five as in last week's season-opening rankings.

Texas Tech jumped two spots to No. 6 on the strength of its win

over BYU, moving one notch ahead of Mississippi, which dropped to 7 despite a romp over Citadel in a nonconference game.

At No. 8 was Oregon, followed by the Fighting Irish and Texas.

No. 11 Oklahoma and No. 12 BYU would be the first two teams out in this week's bracket due to the automatic spots handed to the ACC (Miami) and the highest-ranked league leader out of the Group of 5 conferences, which is now an honor that belongs to South Florida, ranked at No. 24.

"They've always been part of (the conversation)," Rhoades said of the Bulls. "South Florida is the most consistent of the Group of 5, to date."

The final bracket comes out Dec. 7, with the 12-team playoff

beginning Dec. 19 and closing a month later with the title game.

Rhoades said the decision to keep Indiana at No. 2 over Texas A&M provoked the committee's second-longest conversation.

The Hoosiers needed last-second heroics to win at Penn State, while the Aggies got a romp on the road at Missouri.

"Certainly, discussion about those two games, but also discussion about body of work," Rhoades said. "There was conversation about Missouri. Missouri is a really good team but not the team they've been," due to injuries at quarterback.

The longest conversation involved moving Texas Tech a spot past Ole Miss.

"Texas Tech's win this last weekend — really convincing," Rhoades said.

Murphy, Vogt repeat as baseball's top managers

Associated Press

Milwaukee Brewers manager Pat Murphy grew up going to minor league games at MacArthur Stadium in Syracuse, N.Y. In those days, the local team tried to retrieve all the baseballs that went over the fence during batting practice, but Murphy would pocket a souvenir or two before he was run off.

He was often chased away by Bobby Cox or a member of his staff.

That long-running connection came full circle Tuesday night when Murphy won the NL Manager of the Year award for the second straight season. The only other NL manager to take home the honor in consecutive years was Cox for Atlanta in 2004 and 2005.

Cleveland's Stephen Vogt also was a repeat winner as AL Manager of the Year, receiving 17 of 30 first-place votes in balloting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Toronto's John Schneider got 10 first-place votes and finished second, followed by Seattle's Dan Wilson. Voting was conducted before the postseason.

The previous AL manager to win in consecutive seasons was Tampa Bay's Kevin Cash in 2020 and 2021.

"He's well-deserving. Does a great job with his club," Murphy said of Vogt. "He's going to be a Hall of Fame manager, I really

believe that."

Murphy got 27 first-place votes. Cincinnati's Terry Francona was second, followed by Philadelphia's Rob Thomson.

The folksy Murphy, who turns 67 on Nov. 28, was coaching Arizona State University when he formally introduced himself to Cox in the early 2000s.

"I said, 'I've always wanted to meet you,' and he looked at me, and he goes, 'So now you have,'" a chuckling Murphy said. "And it was dead silent. I'm like, I don't know if this guy's messing with me or what, but I interrupted something."

The Cy Young Award winner for each league was set to be announced Wednesday, and the MVPs will be revealed Thursday.

The Guardians trailed Detroit by 15½ games in early July and by 11 games in early September before storming back to clinch the AL Central title on the final day of the season. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, it was the largest in-season comeback in MLB history.

Cleveland also became the fourth big league team to reach the playoffs despite having a losing streak of at least 10 games during the regular season, joining the 2017 Dodgers, 1982 Braves and 1951 New York Giants. Vogt's club dropped 10 in a row from June 26 to July 6.

"The messaging was, we can't control yesterday, and we can't control tomorrow," Vogt said. "We have to lean in on today. We have to win the game today and then we'll worry about tomorrow tomorrow. I think that was really a mantra that we all kind of owned."

Asked what he will remember when he looks back on this season, Vogt pointed to the resilience of the team.

"It's one thing to make a comeback and play well down the stretch and fall short, but we were able to come back and win the division and get in the playoffs," he said.

Murphy directed Milwaukee to a major league-best 97-65 record this year, setting a franchise record for wins. The Brewers were second in the NL Central in early July before overtaking the Chicago Cubs with a remarkable 29-4 stretch that included a 14-game win streak, another franchise record.

Milwaukee eliminated Chicago in a memorable Division Series before it was swept by the Los Angeles Dodgers in the NLCS. The five-game victory over the rival Cubs was the Brewers' first postseason series win since sweeping Colorado in a 2018 NLDS.

"We had the right who," Murphy said. "We had guys that are aware and hungry, and that makes the manager look good at the end of the day."

Brown leads Louisville past Kentucky

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Freshman Mikel Brown Jr. scored 20 of his 29 points in the first half and No. 12 Louisville held on to defeat No. 9 Kentucky 96-88 on Tuesday night.

The Cardinals led 78-58 with 12:24 remaining before the Wildcats attempted a comeback.

Collin Chandler's 3-pointer made it 88-84 with 4:02 left. Brown, however, scored Louisville's next five points to keep Kentucky from drawing any closer.

The Wildcats are the highest-ranked opponent the Cardinals have beaten since a win over then-No. 3 Duke on Jan. 18, 2020.

Brown showcased the skills that made him a five-star point guard recruit, leading Louisville (3-0) to its first victory over Kentucky (2-1) since Dec. 26, 2020.

His 29 points, on 8-for-16 shooting and 10-for-11 from the foul line, were the most by a Cardinals freshman since Edgar Sosa scored 31 in a 2007 NCAA tournament game against Texas A&M.

No. 4 Duke 114, Army 59: Dame Sarr had 19 points and Isaiah Evans added 16 points, and the host Blue Devils beat the Black Knights.

Duke played on Veterans Day at West Point in honor of former coach Mike Krzyzewski, who was a cadet there and a basketball player under legendary coach Bobby Knight.

Patrick Ngongba added 16 points and nine rebounds and Darren Harris had 15 points on 5-for-7 3-pointers for the Blue Devils (3-0).

No. 5 Arizona 84, Northern Arizona 49: Dwayne Aristode scored 18 points on six 3-pointers, Jaden Bradley added 13 points and the host Wildcats routed the Lumberjacks.

Arizona (3-0) was sloppy at times offensively, particularly

early, but locked down Northern Arizona (1-2) to win its 36th straight game in the series.

No. 6 Michigan 85, Wake Forest 84 (OT): Elliot Cadeau scored 17 points, including a go-ahead free throw with 13.8 seconds left in overtime, and Nate Calmese missed a shot in the lane just before the buzzer that allowed the host Wolverines to hold off the Demon Deacons.

Aday Mara had 18 points, 13 rebounds, six assists and five blocks for Michigan (2-0) at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit.

Juke Harris scored 19 points and Mekhi Mason added 16 for Wake Forest (2-1). Myles Colvin had 13 points off the bench and Calmese finished with 11 on 3-for-16 shooting.

The Wolverines led by 13 at halftime, but started 0 for 12 on 3-pointers in the second half.

Preseason All-America forward Yaxel Lendeborg was held to nine points in his second game at Michigan, ending his streak of scoring in double figures at 23 games.

No. 7 BYU 85, Delaware 68: Robert Wright III and Richie Saunders each scored 26 points to lead the host Cougars to a victory over the Blue Hens.

Wright also had nine assists and nine rebounds. Saunders added 10 rebounds and went 6-for-11 from 3-point range. AJ Dybantsa chipped in with 18 points and seven boards for BYU (3-0).

The Cougars trailed by 13 in the first half before lighting up Delaware (0-3) from the perimeter after halftime. BYU went 11-for-20 from long distance in the second half.

No. 10 Florida 78, Florida State 76: Thomas Haugh had 20 points and 13 rebounds, Bogie Fland added 18 points and the host Gators handed the rival Seminoles their first loss under new coach Luke Loucks.

The defending national champions nearly squandered a nine-point lead in the final six-plus minutes before making

enough plays down the stretch to extend their winning streak in the series to five.

Fland hit two free throws with 15.8 seconds remaining to put Florida (2-1) up 76-73, and Robert McCray V missed a 3-point attempt on the other end.

No. 14 Illinois 81, No. 11 Texas Tech 77: Andrej Stojakovic scored 23 points and blocked a potential tying 3-pointer in the final seconds as the host Fighting Illini defeated the Red Raiders.

Kylan Boswell had 22 points and David Mirkovich, Keaton Wagler and Zvonimir Ivisic each scored 11 for Illinois (3-0), which let a 13-point halftime lead slip away before rallying to win.

All-American and reigning Big 12 player of the year J.T. Toppin had 35 points and 11 rebounds for Texas Tech (2-1). It was his 33rd career double-double. LeJuan Watts scored 21 for the Red Raiders.

No. 18 North Carolina 89, Radford 74: Luka Bogavac had 19 points in his first college start to help the host Tar Heels beat the Highlanders.

Henri Veesaar had added 18 points for North Carolina (3-0), while freshman Caleb Wilson had 13 points and 14 rebounds. Jarin Stevenson shook off an first-half injury scare to finish with 15 points.

The Tar Heels didn't fully take control until the latter stages of the first half in their first game since learning senior guard Seth Trimble would be out after surgery for a broken left arm, leading to Bogavac's start.

UNC sputtered early with a 1-for-11 start from 3-point range.

No. 19 Gonzaga 90, No. 23 Creighton 63: Graham Ike had 20 points and 10 rebounds as the host Bulldogs smothered the Bluejays in the second half.

Braden Huff added 14 points, Mario Saint-Supery scored 13 off the bench and Gonzaga (3-0) earned its fourth straight win

over Creighton (1-1), tying the all-time series at 6-all.

Blake Harper and Nik Graves finished with 12 points apiece for the Bluejays, who committed 18 turnovers and shot 37% from the field — including 7-for-25 (28%) from 3-point range.

No. 21 Arkansas 93, Central Arkansas 56: Darius Acuff Jr. scored 21 points, leading four Razorbacks in double figures, and host Arkansas beat the Bears.

Karter Knox added 19 points and 10 rebounds, and Meleek Thomas had 17 points.

No. 22 Auburn 93, Wofford 62: Keyshawn Hall had 20 points, 11 rebounds and six assists, Elyjah Freeman scored 21 and the host Tigers overwhelmed the Terriers.

Hall topped 20 points for the third time in as many games. The 6-foot-7 forward racked up 28 points in the season opener and then had 25 in Auburn's most recent outing. Freeman, however, reached double figures for the first time.

No. 24 Wisconsin 86, Ball State 55: Nolan Winter had 19 points and 10 rebounds as the host Badgers never trailed in a blowout of the Cardinals.

Winter played only 20 minutes but was still just one point off his career high.

Nick Boyd and Braeden Carrington had 12 points each for Wisconsin (3-0).

No. 25 Kansas 77, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi 46: Kohl Rosario scored 16 points to help make up for the absence of fellow freshman Darryn Peterson, and the host Jayhawks bounced back from last week's loss to North Carolina with a rout of the Islanders.

Flory Bidunga added 12 points while Bryson Tiller and Tre White had 11 apiece for Kansas (2-1).

Peterson, the nation's No. 1 recruit, sat out after hurting his hamstring in a shootaround earlier in the day.

Pastrnak, Bruins top Leafs for 7th straight win

Associated Press

BOSTON — David Pastrnak scored twice to move past 400 goals for his career and added an assist as the Boston Bruins won their seventh consecutive game, 5-3 over the Toronto Maple Leafs on Tuesday night.

Pavel Zacha, Hampus Lindholm and Alex Steeves also scored for the Bruins while Jeremy Swayman made 30 saves. Charlie McAvoy had a pair of assists.

Steven Lorentz had a short-handed goal for the Maple Leafs, who have lost three in a row. Bobby McMann and Oliver Ekman-Larsson also scored for Toronto.

Pastrnak's goal 49 seconds into the second period was the 400th of his career and gave Boston a 4-1 lead. He added a power-play goal at 9:48 of the third. He is the sixth player to score 400 or more goals in a Bruins jersey and is now one goal behind fifth-place Rick Middleton.

Avalanche 4, Ducks 1: Gabriel

Landeskog scored his first goal of the season, Nathan MacKinnon had three assists and host Colorado beat Anaheim in a matchup of the Western Conference's points leaders.

Landeskog's second-period goal, which gave the Avalanche a 2-1 lead, was his first in the regular season since March 5, 2022. The 32-year-old left wing had missed the entire 2022-23 and 2023-24 seasons, as well as the 2024-25 regular season, after undergoing a series of knee surgeries.

Stars 3, Senators 2 (OT): Visiting Dallas scored three straight goals and Roope Hintz scored at 3:04 of overtime to beat Ottawa.

Linus Ullmark made a couple big saves but Hintz capped off the come-from-behind victory.

Capitals 4, Hurricanes 1: Jakob Chychrun scored his 100th career goal, Alex Ovechkin got his 901st into the empty net and visiting Washington defeated Carolina.

Brandon Duhaime and Dylan Strome also scored, and Logan Thompson made 30 saves for the Capitals, who have won just two of their last eight. John Carlson added two assists to extend his points streak. He has two goals and four assists over four games.

Kings 5, Canadiens 1: Joel Edmundson and Quinton Byfield each had a goal and an assist as visiting Los Angeles scored three quick goals in the second period to beat Montreal.

Joel Armia and Kevin Fiala also scored for the Kings (8-5-4), who won their second straight game on the road. Warren Foegele added an empty-net goal and Darcy Kuemper stopped 21 shots.

Jets 5, Canucks 3: Josh Morrissey had a goal and two assists as visiting Winnipeg beat Vancouver.

Alex Iafallo added an empty-net goal and an assist for the Jets in his 600th regular-season game. Jonathan Toews, Nino Niederreiter and Gabriel Vilardi

also scored for Winnipeg.

Blues 3, Flames 2: Nathan Walker scored the game-winning goal and Oskar Sundqvist added two assists, lifting host St. Louis to a victory over Calgary.

The Blues improved to 6-8-3, good for 15 points. The Flames fell to 4-12-2, good for 10 points.

Sharks 2, Wild 1 (OT): Collin Graf scored 2:41 into overtime and surging San Jose came back to beat host Minnesota.

Macklin Celebrini fed Graf the puck in the middle near the goal mouth. Graf deked Wild goaltender Filip Gustavsson, leaving an open net to put away the winner for just his second goal of the season.

Blue Jackets 2, Kraken 1 (SO): Charlie Coyle scored the winning goal in the shootout and visiting Columbus beat Seattle.

Kirill Marchenko also converted in the shootout as the Blue Jackets snapped their four-game losing streak in the finale of a five-game trip.

Knicks defeat Grizzlies to remain undefeated at home

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jalen Brunson had 32 points and 10 assists, Karl-Anthony Towns added 21 points and 13 rebounds, and the New York Knicks continued their sizzling offensive start under new coach Mike Brown by beating the Memphis Grizzlies 133-120 on Wednesday night to improve to 7-0 at home.

Mikal Bridges scored 22 for the Knicks, who have averaged 130.2 points during a five-game winning streak, all at home. They are off to their best start at Madison Square Garden since winning their first 10 in the 2012-13 season, when they won their last Atlantic Division title.

OG Anunoby had 16 points and Jordan Clarkson came off the bench for 13. New York has scored at least 77 points in a half in three straight games.

Jaren Jackson Jr. and Santi Aldama each scored 19 points for the Grizzlies, who lost for the sixth time in seven games. Ja Morant had 16 points and 10 assists but shot 4 for 14.

Thunder 126, Warriors 102: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 28 points and 11 assists in

three quarters, Chet Holmgren had a perfect shooting performance and league-leading Oklahoma City rolled past visiting Golden State.

Holmgren had 23 points and 11 rebounds. He made all nine of his field goals, both 3-pointers and all three of his free throw attempts.

Isaiah Joe scored 18 points and Ajay Mitchell added 17 for the defending champion Thunder, who improved to 11-1.

Jazz 152, Pacers 128: Lauri Markkanen scored 35 points, rookie Ace Bailey added 20 points and host Utah scored the most points in an NBA game this season with a win over reeling Indiana.

Bailey, the No. 5 pick in this summer's draft, started the season slowly as he recovered from illness but had his full repertoire of dunks, midrange jumpers and 3-pointers on display in his second start.

The injury-ravaged Pacers, last season's Eastern Conference champions, fell to 1-10 and matched the 1988-89 team for the worst start in franchise history. Pascal Siakam, who had 27 points, and Aaron Nesmith, who

scored 17, returned after missing Indiana's last game.

Raptors 119, Nets 109: Brandon Ingram scored 25 points to help visiting Toronto beat Brooklyn.

Immanuel Quickley had 24 points for the Raptors, including 10 in the fourth quarter. Scottie Barnes finished with 15 points and 11 rebounds, and Jakob Poeltl had 12 points and 10 boards.

76ers 102, Celtics 100: Tyrese Maxey scored 21 points and Kelly Oubre Jr. secured the game-winning basket on a follow with 8.7 seconds left to lead host Philadelphia to a win over Boston.

Justin Edwards had a team-high 22 points for the 76ers, who played without Joel Embiid (right knee soreness). Edwards made 8 of 9 shots, including 5 of 6 on 3-pointers.

Nuggets 122, Kings 108: Nikola Jokic scored 35 points and had 15 rebounds, Jamal Murray added 23 points and visiting Denver won its fifth game in a row, beating Sacramento.

Aaron Gordon scored 17 points for the Nuggets and Bruce Brown added 14 off the bench.