

## USS Truman deploys to Middle East

By CAITLYN BURCHETT  
*Stars and Stripes*

NORFOLK, Va. — “Just one more!” Cecilia Gamboa shouted, throwing her arms around her daughter, Machinist’s Mate Gianna Rodriguez.

“Seven months is nothing compared to a lifetime,” Rodriguez said, hugging her mother.

Then, after smoothing out her dress whites and saying her final “I love you,” Rodriguez disappeared into a group of sailors making their way down the pier toward the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman.

Dozens of family members and friends gathered Monday at Naval Station Norfolk to wish the crew of the Truman fair winds and following seas ahead of a deployment that is expected to take the warship’s strike group into the Middle East.

Sailors stoically stood on the flight deck, manning the rails in their dress whites, as the carrier

was pushed off the pier. The warship will be joined at sea in the coming days by its strike group, which includes Carrier Air Wing 1 with nine aviation squadrons, guided-missile cruiser USS Gettysburg, and two guided-missile destroyers, the USS Stout and the USS Jason Dunham.

For now, the Truman strike group is deploying to the 6th Fleet area of responsibility, which spans approximately half of the Atlantic Ocean, from the North Pole to Antarctica, as well as the North, Adriatic, Baltic, Barents, Black, Caspian and Mediterranean seas, senior leaders said.

“This crew is ready to answer any call that our nation may have for us to answer,” said Capt. Dave Snowden, commanding officer of the Truman.

The last time that the Truman deployed was in 2022 to provide air support in response to Rus-

sia’s invasion of Ukraine. This time, the warship is potentially deploying for a different kind of battle — drone warfare. The strike group has spent recent months training in the western Atlantic Ocean for a rare, pre-planned deployment expected to take the ship into the hostile environment of the Red Sea.

U.S. sailors and allies have fought almost daily for months to down drones and missiles launched by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen as tensions in the Middle East have raged on for nearly a year.

“Our world is a dynamic place where threats are emerging everywhere, all across the globe,” said Rear Adm. Sean Bailey, commander of the Truman carrier strike group.

The Truman is deploying with a strike force of 90 aircraft, including F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter jets, E-2D Hawkeye command and control aircraft,

E/A18 Growler electronic warfare jets and MH-60 Seahawk helicopters.

The senior commanders said the Truman strike group trained for a broad spectrum of missions but confirmed the group has leveraged lessons learned from other carrier strike groups deployed recently in the region to prepare for a potential Red Sea mission.

“It has not necessarily changed how we focus our training,” Bailey said, referring to the Red Sea. “But what it has done is it’s given us more increased capability against those threats, as they emerge to ensure that we are fully trained to be ready wherever we may go.”

In the past year, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has twice ordered two carriers to the region, as well as bolstering U.S. forces with an amphibious ready group and a nuclear-powered submarine.

## IG: No plan to fix ‘digital quarterback’ deficiencies

By ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Navy’s battle manager in the sky has been crippled by scores of deficiencies and no plan to fix them, the Defense Department Inspector General said in a report that cast doubt on whether the service can accomplish critical missions at sea.

The E-2D Advanced Hawkeye aircraft, easily recognizable for the dish-shaped antenna mounted above its fuselage, delivers air and missile defense data to aircraft carrier groups, among other roles.

However, the Navy “is budgeted to spend \$22 billion to ac-

quire a total of 80 (E-2D) aircraft and has already fielded 62 aircraft that do not meet the required performance capabilities,” the IG said.

That’s because the Navy isn’t tracking problems found during operational testing, the report determined.

The IG found 141 operational deficiencies weren’t fixed as of February. That’s about two-thirds of the total deficiencies found during seven operational tests performed from 2011 to 2020, the report noted.

The critical shortfalls were mostly redacted but in citing one such problem, the IG noted that

“the radar is the aircraft’s primary means to detect and track land and sea contacts.”

The few deficiencies released publicly included problems with crew seats locking into place for landing aboard an aircraft carrier, and an obscured view on a tracking screen that affected the crew’s ability to detect an object as soon as possible.

The first E-2D was delivered to the Navy in 2007 by Northrop Grumman, which continues to manufacture and upgrade the aircraft it calls the Navy’s “digital quarterback.” Acquisition is expected to finish in 2026 with the Navy planning to fly the air-

craft into the 2040s, according to the IG report.

The Navy contracted with Northrop Grumman to provide software and hardware modifications from 2014 to 2027. Those modifications include improvements to radar, satellite communications and electronic protection, among other upgrades, the IG said.

The report also found that of the 141 unaddressed deficiencies, about 45% were considered to have a critical or serious impact to mission success. Another 34 deficiencies not covered by the IG’s report were reported in May.

# Navy discloses submarine visit to S. Korea

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — A U.S. fast-attack submarine and its crew of around 130 sailors arrived at South Korea's largest port on Monday, the first stop in Busan by a U.S. sub that's been disclosed since December.

The USS Vermont's visit to the city, about 200 miles south of Seoul, is a scheduled port visit, Submarine Group 7 spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Samuel Boyle said in an emailed statement Monday.

The sub's visit "reflects our commitment to the region and complements the many exercises, training, operations, and other

military cooperation activities," he wrote.

No additional details were provided. The Navy and U.S. Forces Korea do not disclose how long U.S. warships are docked in South Korea as a matter of policy, citing operational security.

The Vermont was docked in Busan to replenish its supplies and allow its crew to rest, South Korean navy spokesman Choi Jong-il said during a news conference Tuesday.

The Vermont was commissioned in 2020 and is homeported at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

At least three U.S. submarines

made port calls on Busan last year. The USS Missouri, Kentucky and Michigan last docked there on Dec. 16, July 17, 2023, and June 16, 2023, respectively.

One of those, the Ohio-class USS Kentucky, is capable of carrying nuclear-tipped strategic ballistic missiles.

The Navy does not disclose whether its subs are carrying nuclear weapons.

Earlier this year, President Joe Biden reaffirmed to South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol that Seoul is "backed by the full range of U.S. capabilities, including nuclear," according to a White House news release July

11.

"Any nuclear attack by [North Korea] against the [South] will be met with a swift, overwhelming and decisive response," the release said.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un earlier this month called for his country to boost its nuclear weapons production, citing threats from the United States and South Korea.

Pyongyang is forced to bolster its nuclear arsenal because it is "constantly exposed to a serious nuclear threat," Kim said in a speech in Pyongyang, according to a Sept. 9 report by the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

## Former destroyer captain offers plan to defend Guam

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Pentagon should rethink its plans for missile defense on Guam and consider less expensive technology with a lighter footprint, according to a former Navy destroyer captain.

Retired naval officer J.D. Gainey called for a pause on plans for Guam's Enhanced Integrated Air and Missile Defense System during an online forum Friday.

Gainey, who specializes in Indo-Pacific security, commanded the USS Hopper, an Aegis-equipped destroyer, and was part of a 2018 effort to plan to defend Guam from air and missile attacks, according to the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, the group that sponsored the forum.

After retiring from the Navy, Gainey joined the board of the Virginia-based nonprofit that lobbies for missile defense, deployment and development, according to its website. The threat to Guam includes ballistic, cruise and hypersonic missiles, Gainey said, noting that China has dem-

onstrated the ability to target forces at a range of 2,000 miles.

The Missile Defense Agency's plan to defend Guam calls for up to 20 new military sites across the island, to be operational by 2027.

"The MDA and the Army need to strategically locate and integrate various system components, including a command and control center, radars, sensors, missile launchers, missile interceptors, and support facilities, at multiple sites around Guam," the agency states on its website.

However, Gainey said the cost of the dispersed missile defense system will be astronomical.

"We need to take a pause," he said, before adding that the requirement to defend the island remains the same, along with the need to be ready by 2027.

The U.S. military projects air and sea power from Guam, its westernmost Pacific territory. The cost of planned military construction on the island will likely increase beyond a projected \$60 billion, alliance chairman Riki Ellison said during the forum.

## 3rd service member charged with sex assault on Okinawa

By BRIAN McELHINEY  
AND KEISHI KOJA  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japanese prosecutors last week charged a U.S. Marine on Okinawa with sexually assaulting and injuring a woman this summer, the third such case on the island since December.

Lance Cpl. Michael Hofmaster, 20, was charged Friday by the Naha District Public Prosecutors Office in connection with a June 21 incident in Nago city, according to the indictment.

Prosecutors allege Hofmaster grabbed the woman by the shoulders, pushed her onto a bed and sexually assaulted her, according to the indictment. He also "caused lacerations in her vagina that required a month to heal, including seven days of hospitalization."

Hofmaster is with the 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 3rd Marine Logistics Group at Camp Hansen, III Marine Expeditionary Force spokesman 1st Lt. Owen Hitchcock said by email Monday. Hofmaster is in

Japanese custody, he said.

The Marine Corps is "cooperating with all appropriate local authorities throughout the process," Hitchcock wrote.

Okinawa Prefectural Police forwarded Hofmaster's case to the prosecutor's office on Sept. 5, a spokesman for the office said that day. Hofmaster at the time was confined to military installations in Japan, according to III MEF.

The woman is older than 20 and was an acquaintance of Hofmaster, a spokesman for the police investigation team said Sept. 5. Medical personnel who treated the woman reported it to police, the spokesman said.

This case follows indictments of two U.S. service members by Japanese prosecutors on separate charges of sexual assault and attempted sexual assault that came to light over the summer and roiled Okinawa. Those cases led to formal complaints from the prefecture and calls for changes to the status of forces agreement governing the U.S. military population in Japan.

# Trump says he'd handle Ukraine situation 'differently'

*Bloomberg News*

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said he would approach Ukraine policy "differently" and marveled at Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's requests for security assistance.

"I see Zelenskyy is here. I think Zelenskyy is the greatest salesman in history — every time he comes into the country, he walks away with \$60 billion," Trump said during a rally Monday in Pennsylvania ahead of the United Nations General Assembly.

Trump added that he believed the Ukrainian leader wanted his Democratic opponent, Kamala Harris, to win the election "so badly" and said he would look to push Ukraine and Russia to the negotiating table if he won the election.

"If I win this election, the first thing I'm going to do is call up

Zelenskyy and call up President Putin and I say, 'You got to make a deal, this is crazy,'" Trump said at the event in Indiana, Pa.

Trump's comments came as Zelenskyy is set to meet with Harris and President Joe Biden on Thursday to present his "victory plan" to end the war started by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Zelenskyy plans to ask the United States to support another push to join the NATO alliance and commit to a sustained supply of advanced weapons.

Zelenskyy, who toured a Pennsylvania ammunition plant Sunday, suggested in an interview that Trump did not understand the complexity of the conflict and had made "political statements" during his debate against Harris, in which the Republican sidestepped a question about whether he wanted Kyiv to prevail in the

conflict.

"My feeling is that Trump doesn't really know how to stop the war even if he might think he knows how," Zelenskyy told *The New Yorker*. "With this war, oftentimes, the deeper you look at it the less you understand."

The Ukrainian leader also called Trump's running mate, JD Vance, "too radical" and criticized the U.S. senator from Ohio for advocating for a demilitarized zone between Ukraine and Russia.

"The idea that the world should end this war at Ukraine's expense is unacceptable," Zelenskyy said. "But I do not consider this concept of his a plan, in any formal sense. This would be an awful idea, if a person were actually going to carry it out, to make Ukraine shoulder the costs of stopping the war by giving up its territories."

# Severe obesity climbed in last decade

*Associated Press*

Obesity is high and holding steady in the U.S., but the proportion of those with severe obesity — especially women — has climbed since a decade ago, according to new government research.

The U.S. obesity rate is about 40%, according to a 2021-23 survey of about 6,000 people. Nearly 1 in 10 of those surveyed reported severe obesity, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found. Women were nearly twice as likely as men to report severe obesity.

The overall obesity rate appeared to tick down vs. the 2017-20 survey, but the change wasn't considered statistically significant; the numbers are small enough that there's mathematical chance they didn't truly decline.

That means it's too soon to know whether new treatments for obesity, including blockbuster weight-loss drugs such as Wegovy and Zepbound, can help ease the epidemic of the chronic disease linked to a host of health problems, according to Dr. Samuel Emmerich, the CDC public health officer who led the latest study.

"We simply can't see down to that detailed level to prescription medication use and compare that to changes in obesity prevalence," Emmerich said.

Most telling though, the results that show that the overall obesity rate in the U.S. has not changed significantly in a decade, even as the rate of severe obesity climbed from nearly 8% in the 2013-14 survey to nearly 10% in the most recent one.

Before that, obesity had increased rapidly in the U.S. since the 1990s, federal surveys showed.

# Calif. is latest to limit phones in school

*AP/Report for America*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — School districts in California will have to create rules restricting student smartphone use under a new law Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Monday.

The legislation makes California the latest state to try to curb student phone access in an effort to minimize distractions in the classroom and address the mental health impacts of social media on children.

Florida, Louisiana, Indiana and several other states have passed laws aimed at restricting student phone use at school.

"This new law will help students focus on academics, social development, and the world in front of them, not their

screens, when they're in school," Newsom said.

But some critics of phone restriction policies say the burden should not fall on teachers to enforce them. Others worry the rules will make it harder for students to seek help if there is an emergency or argue that decisions on phone bans should be left up to individual districts or schools.

"We support those districts that have already acted independently to implement restrictions because, after a review of the needs of their stakeholders, they determined that made the most sense for their communities with regards to safety, school culture and academic achievement," said Troy Flint, a spokesperson for the California School Boards Association. "We

simply oppose the mandate."

The law requires districts to pass rules by July 1, 2026, to limit or ban students from using smartphones on campus or while students are under the supervision of school staff. Districts will have to update their policies every five years after that.

The move comes after Newsom signed a law in 2019 authorizing school districts to restrict student phone access. In June, he announced plans to take on the issue again after the U.S. surgeon general called on Congress to require warning labels on social media platforms and their effects on young people.

The governor then sent letters to districts last month, urging them to limit student device use on campus.



# In UN farewell, Biden hopeful on peace

Associated Press

NEW YORK — President Joe Biden declared that the United States must not retreat from the world, as he delivered his final address to the U.N. General Assembly on Tuesday as Israel and Hezbollah militants in Lebanon edged toward all-out war and Israel's bloody operation against Hamas in Gaza neared the one-year mark.

Biden used his wide-ranging address to speak to a need to end the Middle East conflict and the 17-month-old civil war in Sudan and to highlight U.S. and Western allies' support for Kyiv since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

His appearance before the international body also offered Biden one of his last high-profile opportunities as president to make the case to keep up robust support for Ukraine, which

could be in doubt if former President Donald Trump, who has scoffed at the cost of the war, defeats Vice President Kamala Harris in November. Still, Biden insisted that despite global conflicts, he remains hopeful for the future.

"I've seen a remarkable sweep of history," Biden said. "I know many look at the world today and see difficulties and react with despair but I do not.

"We are stronger than we think" when the world acts together, he added.

Biden came to office promising to rejuvenate U.S. relations around the world and to extract the U.S. from "forever wars" in Afghanistan and Iraq that consumed American foreign policy over the last 20 years.

"I was determined to end it, and I did," Biden said of the Afghanistan exit, calling it a "hard

decision but the right decision." He acknowledged that it was "accompanied by tragedy" with the deaths of 13 American troops and hundreds of Afghans in a suicide bombing during the chaotic withdrawal.

But his foreign policy legacy may ultimately be shaped by his administration's response to two of the biggest conflicts in Europe and the Middle East since World War II.

"There will always be forces that pull our countries apart," Biden said, rejecting "a desire to retreat from the world and go it alone." He said, "Our task, our test, is to make sure that the forces holding us together are stronger than the forces pulling us apart."

The Pentagon announced Monday that it was sending a small number of additional U.S. troops to the Middle East to sup-

plement the roughly 40,000 in the region. All the while, the White House has insisted that Israel and Hezbollah still have time to step back and de-escalate.

Biden has seemed more subdued in recent days about the prospects of Israel and Hamas agreeing to a temporary ceasefire and hostage deal. But he has insisted he hasn't given up.

Biden used his remarks to condemn the "horrors" of the Hamas attack on Oct. 7 and said hostages taken by the group are "are going through hell." He added, "Innocent civilians in Gaza are also going through hell." Biden also condemned settler violence against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank.

Biden reiterated his call on the parties to agree to a ceasefire and hostage release deal, saying it's time to "end this war" — even as hopes are fading.

## Israeli military says it killed top Hezbollah commander

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Israel said it killed a top commander with Hezbollah's missile and rocket unit Tuesday, as the Israeli military traded fire with Hezbollah again and the death toll from a massive Israeli bombardment climbed to nearly 560 people.

Military officials said Ibrahim Kobeisi, who joined Hezbollah in the 1980s, was responsible for launches toward Israel and planned a 2000 attack in the Mount Dov region in which three Israeli soldiers were kidnapped and killed.

He was killed in a strike on Beirut, the military said, adding that "other key commanders" were with Kobeisi at the time of the strike. But officials did not say whether any of the others were killed or wounded.

Meanwhile, thousands of people fled from southern Lebanon with the two sides on the brink

of all-out war. Displaced families slept in shelters hastily set up in schools in Beirut and the coastal city of Sidon. With hotels quickly booked to capacity or rooms priced beyond the means of many families, those who did not find shelter slept in their cars or in parks.

Issa Baydoun fled Shihine in southern Lebanon when it was bombed and came to Beirut in a convoy with his extended family. They slept in their vehicles on the side of the road after discovering shelters were full.

"We struggled a lot on the road just to get here," he said. Baydoun rejected Israel's contention that it hit only military targets.

"We evacuated our homes because Israel is targeting civilians and attacking them," he said. "That's why we left our homes, to protect our children."

## Swiss police detain several, use of 'suicide capsule' likely

Associated Press

GENEVA — Police in northern Switzerland said Tuesday that several people have been detained and a criminal case opened in connection with the suspected death of a person in a new "suicide capsule."

The "Sarco" suicide capsule, which has never been used before, is designed to allow a person sitting in a reclining seat inside to push a button that injects nitrogen gas into the sealed chamber. The person is then supposed to fall asleep and die by suffocation in a few minutes.

Prosecutors in Schaffhausen canton were informed by a law firm that an assisted suicide involving the Sarco had taken place Monday near a forest cabin in Merishausen, regional police said in a statement. It said "several people" were taken into custody and prosecutors opened an investigation on suspicion of incitement and acces-

sory to suicide.

Exit International, an assisted suicide group based in the Netherlands, has said it is behind the 3D-printed device that cost over \$1 million to develop.

In a statement, the group said a 64-year-old woman from the U.S. Midwest — it did not specify further — who had suffered from "severe immune compromise" had died Monday afternoon near the German border using the Sarco device.

It said Florian Willet, co-president of The Last Resort, a Swiss affiliate of Exit International, was the only person present and described her death as "peaceful, fast and dignified."

Philip Nitschke, an Australian former physician behind Exit International, has previously told the AP that his organization received advice from lawyers in Switzerland that use of the Sarco would be legal in the country.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Eight bulls escape rodeo being held in parking lot

**MA** NORTH ATTLEBORO — This is no bull: First responders in a Massachusetts city had to exercise some impromptu roundup skills when eight bulls escaped from a rodeo being held in the parking lot of a mall on Sunday.

Video posted online captured the moment when the bulls escaped from the rodeo in North Attleboro. The animals charged through the crowded parking lot, knocked down fencing, bumped against a tent and tumbled toward busy U.S. Highway 1. They eventually headed for some nearby woods for short-lived freedom. No one was hurt during the breakout.

The North Attleboro Fire Department issued a warning: These rodeo bulls weren't playing around.

Seven of the eight were corralled by late Sunday afternoon, but the last one remained on the lam. The eighth bull was lassoed and led into a trailer on U.S. Highway 1 in North Attleboro on Monday night. The Festival Rodeo at the Emerald Square Mall was shut down, officials said.

How the bulls escaped was under investigation.

### Lawmaker arrested on domestic violence charge

**AL** WINFIELD — An Alabama lawmaker was arrested on a domestic violence charge after his wife accused him of threatening to beat her.

Rep. Tracy Estes, 57, a Republican from Winfield, was jailed Friday night on a misdemeanor charge of third-degree domes-

tic violence, news outlets reported. Marion County jail records online did not show him still in custody Saturday afternoon.

The lawmaker's wife, Christina Estes, said in a legal filing that her husband began cursing at her during an argument Friday evening at their home.

After she shut herself in a bedroom, she said, he spent two hours pounding on the door and threatening to beat her.

"This type of behavior has occurred numerous times since they have been married," the court record said.

### Boxing training halted after recruit's death

**MA** NEW BRAintree — The Massachusetts State Police have suspended full-contact boxing training activities among recruits until further notice after a trainee died, a police spokesperson said.

Enrique Delgado-Garcia, 25, of Worcester, died at a hospital on Sept. 13, a day after the exercise in the boxing ring at the Massachusetts State Police Academy in New Braintree, in Worcester County, about 80 miles west of Boston.

Delgado-Garcia was wearing boxing gloves and headgear during the exercise. The medical team determined he required urgent care and took him to the hospital, where he died. His manner and cause of death have not been released. Family members told reporters that he suffered broken teeth and a neck fracture.

"The Academy suspended full-contact boxing training ac-

tivities between trainees until further notice," Tim McGuirk, a state police department spokesperson, said in a statement Sunday night.

### Pilot killed in midair collision of two planes

**CA** LANCASTER — One pilot was killed and another pilot escaped without injuries when two single-engine airplanes collided in midair on Sunday in Southern California, authorities said.

The collision between a Nan-chang CJ-6 and a Yakovlev Yak-52 occurred around 1 p.m. in Lancaster, a desert city about 65 miles north of downtown Los Angeles, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

One person on one of the small planes died, the LA County Fire Department said. Only the pilots were on board both aircraft, the FAA said.

It wasn't immediately clear which plane was carrying the victim who died.

The FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board will investigate.

### Man accused in shootings near homeless camps

**MN** MINNEAPOLIS — A man has been charged in shootings near Minneapolis homeless encampments that killed one man and injured another.

Anthony Jones, 36, was charged with one count of second-degree murder and one count of attempted second-degree murder, the Hennepin County Attorney's Office said in a news release.

Jones also is under investiga-

tion for another killing that happened the same day as the other shootings, the news release said.

Police used surveillance video to identify Jones as the person who fatally shot a man at point-blank range. Additional investigation connected him to the other "targeted" shootings in the same area of south Minneapolis, the news release said.

Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty said the shooting spree "does not appear to have been targeted at the broader unhoused community," but called the attacks "horrific."

### No election security after posts about yard signs

**OH** RAVENNA — A local Ohio elections board says the county sheriff's department will not be used for election security following a social media post by the sheriff saying people with Kamala Harris yard signs should have their addresses recorded so that immigrants can be sent to live with them if the Democratic vice president wins the November election.

In a statement on the Portage County Democrats' Facebook page, county board of elections chair Randi Clites said members voted 3-1 Friday to remove the sheriff's department from providing security during in-person absentee voting.

Clites cited public comments indicating "perceived intimidation by our sheriff against certain voters" and the need to "make sure every voter in Portage County feels safe casting their ballot for any candidate they choose."

— From wire reports

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# Daniels impressive in Commanders' win

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Jayden Daniels stood in the pocket against an all-out blitz, took a hit from Bengals safety Geno Stone and launched a perfect ball toward Terry McLaurin in the corner of the end zone. McLaurin hauled it in and kept both feet in bounds while being tackled.

In his third NFL game and first in prime time, Daniels couldn't miss.

The No. 2 overall draft pick threw for two touchdowns and ran for a score in a remarkably efficient performance, and the Commanders stunned Joe Burrow and the Cincinnati Bengals 38-33 on Monday night.

"He's a real cool customer, and he's got a real poise about him," Washington coach Dan Quinn said of his quarterback.

Daniels finished 21-for-23 for 254 yards, setting an NFL rookie record for completion percentage at 91.3%. The Commanders (2-1) scored on every possession except for kneel-

downs at the end of each half and have not punted or turned the ball over in their last two games.

"That's crazy," Daniels said of the record. He said he couldn't remember being that efficient in his passing at any level.

Neither Washington nor Cincinnati punted or had a turnover, the first time that's happened in a game in the Super Bowl era.

Burrow threw for a season-best 324 yards and three scores, but the Bengals (0-3) simply couldn't keep up. Cincinnati is off to its worst start since dropping its first 11 games on the way to a 2-14 finish in 2019.

Daniels' first career touchdown pass was a 1-yard toss to eligible tackle Trent Scott to start the second half, the second straight game in which the Bengals gave up a TD to a line-man.

"They were all discombobulated on defense," Daniels said.

"We got a sneaky one."

The Commanders were clinging to a 31-26 lead when Daniels connected with McLaurin from 27 yards out with 2:10 remaining for the game-sealing score.

"I put in the work," said Daniels, last year's Heisman Trophy winner at LSU. "What's done in the dark will always come to light. I just know that I prepare for these moments week in and week out. I just have to go out there and play football and execute."

In the first half, Washington got rushing touchdowns from Brian Robinson Jr., Austin Ekeler and Daniels.

McLaurin had four receptions for 100 yards.

The Bengals couldn't reach the end zone on three first-half drives, with Evan McPherson kicking two field goals and missing another.

Meanwhile, Washington didn't have a drive that fell short of the end zone until early

in the fourth quarter, when Austin Seibert kicked a 42-yard field goal to make it 31-20.

Cincinnati got within five points on Burrow's second TD pass to Ja'Marr Chase, but the 2-point conversion failed.

Daniels then led a drive that ate up 7½ minutes and ended with the toss to McLaurin, which had a completion probability of 10.3%, according to the NFL's Next Gen Stats.

Cincinnati scored on a 1-yard run by Zack Moss to cut the deficit to 38-33 with 40 seconds left, but McPherson's onside kick was unsuccessful.

Chase had six receptions for 118 yards and two TDs for the Bengals.

"I knew that would be a difficult football team," Bengals coach Zac Taylor said. "They scored on every possession last week, and they scored on every possession this week. It was a dangerous team. They were ready for us. They dictated the flow of the game."

## Allen throws 4 touchdown passes as Bills rout Jags

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Any concerns Josh Allen had about how the Bills would perform following a 10-day break were eased during a 10-play opening drive that ended with James Cook scoring on a 6-yard touchdown run.

Buffalo kept on scoring. Allen threw four touchdown passes and the Bills scored TDs on each of their five first-half drives in a 47-10 win over a misfiring Trevor Lawrence and the unraveling Jacksonville Jaguars on Monday night.

"It feels good, I'll tell you that," said Allen, whose 11 games with four TD passes set a team record, surpassing Hall of Famer Jim Kelly.

"I think this could have easily been a game where we had 10 days off and let up on the gas.

But didn't sense that from our guys. A lot of urgency throughout the week," he said of a team that hadn't played since a 31-10 rout of Miami on Sept. 12. "We didn't win it today. We won it in the last 10 days."

Allen went 22-for-28 for 247 yards in the first 30 minutes alone, with completions to nine receivers. He only attempted two passes after halftime, finishing 23-for-30 for 263 yards before Mitchell Trubisky relieved him.

And he spread the wealth, completing touchdown passes to Dalton Kincaid, Keon Coleman, Khalil Shakir and Ty Johnson.

"Freak of nature, all those things," Shakir said of Allen, whose 230 touchdowns (passing, rushing and receiving) are one short of matching Patrick

Mahomes for most by a player in his first seven NFL seasons.

Buffalo's defense limited Jacksonville to 70 yards, five first downs and a field goal in five first-half possessions. The game was essentially over when Allen completed a 16-yard TD pass to Johnson 19 seconds before halftime.

Safety Damar Hamlin contributed to the rout with his first career interception. He easily picked off Lawrence's overthrown pass intended for rookie Brian Thomas Jr. Five plays later, Allen completed a 27-yard TD pass to Shakir, who caught the ball at the 22 and broke two tackles running up the right sideline.

Hamlin's interception came about 21 months after he went into cardiac arrest and had to be resuscitated on the field in a

Monday night game at Cincinnati.

"We all know my last game and how that game went," said Hamlin, a starter after spending last season as a backup. "So to be able to come all the way back from that, and have a special moment, it's all God."

The four-time defending AFC East champions are off to their first 3-0 start since 2020 and third since coach Sean McDermott took over in 2017. They have topped 30 points in each game.

The Jaguars are in free fall. They last opened 0-3 in 2021 under coach Urban Meyer, who was fired before the end of the season.

And if things couldn't go any worse for the Jaguars, mechanical issues led to their flight being delayed out of Buffalo.



# Sources: Utah St. latest to join Pac-12

Associated Press

The Pac-12 is adding Utah State as its seventh member and is in discussions with basketball powerhouse Gonzaga to join the rebuilding conference in 2026, multiple people with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press on Monday.

In a whirlwind day of maneuvering by three leagues, Utah State and UNLV of the Mountain West became prime targets for the Pac-12 after a group of American Athletic Conference schools decided to stay put, following a pitch to join the rebuilding Conference of Champions.

Utah State, based in Logan, accepted the Pac-12's invitation, according to two people, but UNLV's decision was uncertain Monday night as Mountain West Commissioner Gloria Nevarez worked to keep the conference's remaining schools together.

The Mountain West received

commitments from Air Force and San Jose State earlier in the day, according to two other people with knowledge of that conference's situation, but it was unclear if anything was binding if the rest of the remaining members were not on board. Air Force had been drawing interest from the AAC to join Army and Navy in that conference.

The other Mountain West schools include New Mexico, Wyoming, Nevada and Hawaii for football only.

The people all spoke on condition of anonymity because both Pac-12's and Mountain West's strategy and internal discussions were not made public.

The Pac-12's latest expansion addition, which was not immediately confirmed by the league, came hours after four American Athletic Conference schools announced they remained committed to the AAC.

Memphis, Tulane, South Florida and UTSA released a

statement that made no mention of the Pac-12, but several people with knowledge of those talks told AP the conference had targeted those schools as potential members.

"While we acknowledge receiving interest in our institutions from other conferences, we firmly believe that it is in our individual and collective best interests to uphold our commitment to each other," the schools said. "Together, we will continue to modernize the conference, elevate the student-athlete experience, achieve championship-winning successes and build the future."

The Pac-12 needed at least two more members in all sports to reach the eight required to be a recognized conference with access to NCAA championships and the College Football Playoff in 2026.

With Utah State on board, that's down to one, and the conference is exploring options be-

yond UNLV.

## Zags

Adding Gonzaga would give the Pac-12 one of the best men's basketball programs in the country. The Bulldogs have thrived in the West Coast Conference, reaching the NCAA Tournament every year it has been played since 1998, with two Final Four appearances and eight seasons of at least 30 victories. Gonzaga does not have a football program.

The school has talked to the Big East about conference affiliation, and the Big 12 has discussed potentially adding Gonzaga to its strong men's basketball lineup, as it did with UConn earlier this year.

The Zags have also become a perennial tournament team in women's basketball.

Adding Gonzaga would leave the Pac-12 in need of another football-playing member for CFP purposes.

# QB Ewers still questionable for Texas' SEC opener

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas quarterback Quinn Ewers practiced Monday but remains questionable to play with an abdominal strain when the No. 1 Longhorns face Mississippi State in their Southeastern Conference opener, coach Steve Sarkisian said.

Ewers sat out last weekend's 51-3 win over Louisiana-Monroe, and Arch Manning threw two touchdowns and two interceptions in earning his first career victory as a starter.

And if Ewers can't play Saturday against Mississippi State (1-3, 0-1), it will be Manning leading the Longhorns (4-0) into the program's first game in the SEC.

Ewers was injured in the first half of Texas' win over UTSA. He at first laid on the field, then walked slowly to the sideline

medical tent before leaving the field. He was on the sideline with the Longhorns on Saturday but was not in uniform.

The injury came on a long pass and was not caused by contact, Sarkisian has said.

"He (Ewers) has got to do enough to show me he can play. Can he execute the game plan?" Sarkisian said. "I want to make sure he's healthy enough to play at a high level."

Ewers "keeps getting incrementally better," Sarkisian said.

Sarkisian said he trusts Ewers to be honest with him about any pain he feels when deciding whether to play this week or continue to rest.

"The beauty of it for Quinn and I is our time together (and) him having to come back from injuries previously," Sarkisian said.

Ewers has missed two games each of the previous two seasons with sternum and shoulder injuries. After playing Mississippi State, Texas will have a week off before facing rival Oklahoma.

Ewers may be anxious to get back on the field. He opted to return to Texas this season instead of entering the NFL draft last spring, and has garnered early-season attention as a Heisman Trophy contender after Texas dominated Michigan in Week 2.

"Him being honest with me, is in his best interest, in our best interest," Sarkisian said. "I'll do everything in my power to put him in the best position to be successful if he plays. And if he doesn't, what does that look like moving forward?"

Manning, a second-year freshman, has shown he is more than capable of leading Texas if

Ewers remains out another week. He dazzled with five touchdown passes and a 67-yard touchdown run against UTSA.

Manning's game against Louisiana-Monroe was an uneven follow-up with two interceptions and some missed throws in a night with a 52% completion rate. Several other passes were thrown into tight coverage.

After the game, Manning rated his first career start as a "C-plus."

Sarkisian has noted that when Ewers is healthy enough to return, he remains the starter.

"Arch believes in his ability and he's going to take his (deep) shots. And we've reaped the benefits of it," Sarkisian said. "But he'll learn some of those explosive plays are check-downs."

# Phillies win first NL East title since 2011

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Trea Turner shouted for his booze-soaked Phillies teammates to clear a path — the clouds of smoke formed from puffs of his celebratory cigar certainly opened a hole — as he rode into the clubhouse on a platform truck also stacked with cases of beer.

Hoodie up, googles on, Turner jumped and splashed into the swirl of beer and bubbly that sopped the clubhouse floor, the All-Star shortstop ready to crash the bash that had circled him.

The Phillies are used to the party, though this one came with a twist — for the first time in 13 years, they are headed to the postseason as NL East champs.

Kyle Schwarber and J.T. Realmuto went deep. Phillies fans went wild. And pitcher Aaron Nola provided a taste of just how great it would feel for the entire franchise if Philly went all the way.

The Phillies won the NL East for the first time since 2011, clinching the division title with a 6-2 victory over the Chicago Cubs on Monday night.

“That was our main goal in spring training, to win the division and get that first-round bye,” slugger Bryce Harper said. “Do all the things we can to kind of set us up for the postseason. The division was the first thing.”

The Phillies had rolled tarp pinned above clubhouse locker stalls before the game, a familiar protective sight for the bottle-popping ahead for a team that’s made the playoffs each of the past three seasons under manager Rob Thomson.

They went wild moments after Carlos Estévez retired Michael Busch on a fly ball to end the game. Phillies players swarmed each other in excitement on the infield. The Phillie Phanatic stormed the celebration waving a 2024 flag as fans stood and filmed it all.

“We know there’s a really big

picture ahead of us,” Schwarber said before the game. “Winning the division is a big thing. If we go out there and do our thing tonight, it’s going to be well deserved. It’s not an easy division to win. It definitely will be a cool thing.”

Oh, it was cool in Philly for an announced sellout crowd of 42,386, with temperatures in the 60s — a sneak peek of October weather.

That suits this squad just fine.

With a postseason berth already clinched last week, Schwarber, Harper, Turner & Co. earned the franchise’s 12th division championship — and have their sights set on the top seed in the National League playoffs.

The Phillies (93-64) hold the No. 2 spot just behind the Los Angeles Dodgers (93-63) and would earn a first-round bye should the standings hold.

“The biggest things for me, really, are winning the division

and getting the bye,” Thomson said. “If we get home field throughout, that’s a bonus. But I won’t put our players in danger to get there.”

It seemed fitting the 31-year-old Nola was on the mound for the clincher. He was a first-round draft pick by the Phillies in 2014, debuted the next year and has been with them his entire career. He’s been one of baseball’s most dependable pitchers — a valuable commodity with the modern stress on big league bullpens.

Nola only briefly tested the free-agent market last offseason before signing a \$172 million, seven-year deal to stick with the Phillies.

His reward — another postseason opportunity to bring home a World Series title now 16 years in the making.

“I think that says a lot about our club. We stayed hungry after the losses in the World Series and the CS last year,” Nola said. “We hope we can keep that going.”

## Giants top D-backs, who lose more ground in playoff race

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Matt Chapman hit an inside-the-park homer, Casey Schmitt and Michael Conforto both added solo shots and the San Francisco Giants continued to be a problem for teams with postseason aspirations, beating Arizona 6-3 on Monday night.

The Diamondbacks (87-70) lost more ground in the National League playoff race as they try to claim one of three wild cards. They’re in sole possession of the final wild card, 1½ games ahead of the Atlanta Braves (85-71). The San Diego Padres (90-66) and New York Mets (87-69) are in the first two spots.

The Mets and Braves play each other in a crucial three-game series that began Tuesday in Atlanta.

“I don’t think there’s any pressing,” D-backs center fielder Jake McCarthy said. “We’ve had our foot on the gas pedal the whole season, so just chalk it up to baseball. We’re going to bounce back tomorrow.”

San Francisco is out of the playoff race, but

has played extremely well the past week against teams that are in contention. The Giants have a 6-1 record against the Baltimore Orioles, Kansas City Royals and Diamondbacks.

It was another frustrating loss for Arizona, which coughed up an 8-0 lead on Sunday and fell to the Milwaukee Brewers 10-9.

“Today, we got beat,” D-backs manager Torey Lovullo said. “Their pitcher was making quality pitches, we weren’t able to generate the offense we normally have and we got beat.”

**Mariners 6, Astros 1:** Bryce Miller threw seven shutout innings and Julio Rodríguez had three hits and two RBIs to help visiting Seattle to a win over Houston that prevented it from clinching the AL West title.

The Astros entered needing only a victory over the second-place Mariners to secure their fourth straight division crown.

Instead, they struggled against Miller (12-8), managing just two singles while playing without injured slugger Yordan Alvarez.

Seattle has won four of five to move within 1½ games of the final American League wildcard spot in a crowded race that also includes Detroit, Kansas City and Minnesota.

**Red Sox 4, Blue Jays 1:** Tanner Houck pitched five strong innings, Wilyer Abreu reached base three times and Boston extended its winning streak to three games with a victory over Toronto.

The Red Sox opened their final road trip — a three-game set in Toronto — by improving to 4-0 in Canada this season.

Abreu walked and scored on Vaughn Grissom’s sacrifice fly in the second, hit an RBI double in the third, and singled in the fifth, joining Jarren Duran as the only Boston players with multiple hits.

Houck (9-10) carried a perfect game into the fifth inning before walking Addison Barger with two outs. Ernie Clement followed with a single, but the 28-year-old right-hander got Jonatan Clase to fly out. Houck threw just 57 pitches, 36 strikes, in his first winning start since July 11 against Oakland.