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Officials: N. Korea fires missiles into sea

Latest launch by Kim is fifth in a little more than two weeks

BY KIM GAMEL
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Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea fired two more missiles into the sea off its eastern coast on Saturday in its latest protest against joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises, officials said.

The latest launch — the fifth in just over two weeks — came hours after President Donald Trump said North Korean leader Kim Jong Un sent him a “beautiful letter” in which he complained about the “war games.”

South Korea’s military warned it expects the North to conduct more weapons tests in connection with the drills.

The North fired the two projectiles presumed to be short-range ballistic missiles from Hamheung, according to South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The missiles flew more than 250 miles at a flight speed of Mach 6.1, reaching an altitude of nearly 30 miles, the military said.

The United States and South Korea were analyzing the launch for more details, it

President says Kim wants to meet again

Associated Press

BERKELEY HEIGHTS, N.J. — President Donald Trump said Saturday that North Korea’s Kim Jong Un wants to meet once again to “start negotiations” after joint U.S.-South Korea military exercises end. He also said Kim apologized for the flurry of recent short-range missile tests that has rattled U.S. allies in the region.

Trump is tweeting more details from the “beautiful”

three-page letter he told reporters on Friday that he’d received from Kim. Trump, who is on vacation at his golf club in New Jersey, said Kim spent much of his letter complaining about “the ridiculous and expensive exercises,” which North Korea sees as a threat.

He said Kim offered him “a small apology” for the recent tests and assured him “that this testing would stop when the exercises end.”

the presidential office.

But it called on Pyongyang “to stop its launches because it is feared that the consecutive launches can raise military tension on the Korean Peninsula.”

Trump has largely dismissed the latest round of weapons tests, saying the “short-range” missiles that were launched didn’t break Kim’s promise not to test long-range missiles or nuclear weapons.

He reiterated that on Friday, saying that Kim had sent him a three-page, “really beautiful letter” in which the North Korean leader expressed displeasure with the “war games” that began Monday in South Korea.

Trump also noted that he doesn’t like the drills but had agreed to let them go ahead to test South Korea’s capabilities.

“As you know I’ve never liked it either,” Trump said. “I’ve never been a fan. You know why? I don’t like paying for it.”

The North is banned from using any ballistic missile technology under U.N. Security Council sanctions resolutions.

added.

South Korea’s defense and national security officials convened a meeting to discuss the launch.

They said that Saturday’s launch was aimed at checking the performance of a new short-range ballistic missile developed on its own as well as an “armed protest” against the

exercise.

The allies began drills and preparations on Monday, but the officials said the main joint command post exercise is due to begin on Sunday.

The launches were part of a North Korean summer exercise and no unusual threat to the South was detected, according to the statement from

US servicemember dies on mission in Iraq

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The U.S. military says a U.S. servicemember has died during a combat mission with Iraqi security forces in Iraq’s north.

The statement by the U.S.

Central Command said the servicemember died Saturday in Iraq’s northern Nineveh province.

The servicemember was advising and accompanying the Iraqi Security Forces on a planned operation, according

to the statement. Iraqi forces have recently launched new operations in the country’s north to weed out remnants of Islamic State.

The U.S. said the identity of the servicemember was being withheld until notification of

the next of kin.

The U.S. Department of Defense established in 2014 a joint task force for Operation Inherent Resolve to deal with Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria.

Pentagon seeks to depoliticize cloud deal

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — In a discussion with reporters Friday in the Pentagon's media briefing room, two of the Defense Department's highest-ranking technology officials sought to depoliticize the JEDI cloud effort, a controversial cloud computing project that could be worth up to \$10 billion.

The briefing follows several weeks of relative turmoil for the small Defense Department team in charge of the project, in which President Donald Trump and three U.S. senators have lobbied newly confirmed Defense Secretary Mark Esper directly on the matter. Esper faces the challenge of moving forward with a long-planned military technology project while also establishing working relationships with the president and powerful members of Congress.

On Friday morning, Defense Department Chief Information Officer Dana Deasy, a former JP Morgan executive, was joined by Lt. Gen. John "Jack" Shanahan, who leads the Pentagon's new Joint Artificial Intelligence Center. Deasy insisted the president is playing no role in selecting which company wins the contract. He

said the long-awaited contract would not be awarded until Esper has had enough time to make a decision, and that they had scheduled a series of educational sessions in the coming weeks to fully brief him on the matter.

And they made a strong case for why the Defense Department needs to move forward with the so-called "enterprise cloud" as soon as possible, alluding to a not-so-distant future in which robots and algorithms could define how wars are fought and won. In a possible reaction to the president's interest, China was at the center of their pitch.

"We don't want to waste any time moving forward, because our adversaries are moving ahead at their own pace, whether it's with Alibaba, Baidu or Tencent," Shanahan said, referring to China's big tech companies. "With the level of investment and the amount of people [China] is throwing at the problem, they are moving forward at a very rapid pace."

The contract, called the Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure or 'JEDI' has attracted intense interest from four of America's West Coast tech giants: Amazon, Microsoft, Ora-

cle and IBM. The opportunity could be worth up to \$10 billion over a 10-year period, giving the winner tremendous influence moving forward. Defense Department officials have insisted on the need to give the contract to only one provider, and have thrown out initial bids from Oracle and IBM.

DOD also hopes the project will bring order to a sprawling worldwide information network in which sensitive intelligence is stored in hundreds of mainframes and smaller clouds, often walled off from deployed troops who could use that information.

"We have a bunch of siloed solutions we have built, we work with a lot of vendors currently, but we have never stepped back and tried to create an enterprise cloud," Deasy said.

Deasy said there has been "no pause" in the work of evaluating the two remaining proposals, a highly technical process that is expected to conclude in "a number of weeks." Esper's JEDI review is part of a parallel process, Deasy said. He said there will be no contract award until Esper's review is complete, and declined to estimate when it might conclude.

Oracle and IBM have sharply

criticized the Pentagon's winner-take-all strategy for JEDI, arguing that approach will hamper innovation. They have charged that the process is rigged in favor of Amazon Web Services, and have unsuccessfully sued to block the award.

Amazon executives have praised the single-award approach, arguing that such an approach will allow the Defense Department to move more quickly with its limited tech workforce.

For 18 months, that dispute played out mostly in closed-door hearings at the Government Accountability Office and Court of Federal Claims, which handle disputes over federal money. But in recent weeks the contract has seen a level of political scrutiny that is exceedingly rare for procurement matters.

Trump recently asked Esper, during his first days on the job, to reexamine the process because of concerns the contract would go to Amazon. Esper said in an interview last week he was "taking a hard look" at the contract, and confirmed that he had heard from the administration as well as lawmakers from both parties.

Trump's plan to cut foreign aid draws bipartisan fire

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican and Democrats in Congress teamed up Friday to oppose what appears to be a Trump administration plan to cut the foreign aid budget.

The administration hasn't announced whether it plans to seek the cut. But the Office of Management and Budget instructed the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development last weekend to freeze unspent money in their budgets. That would be a first step in seeking cuts to funding already approved by Congress.

The amount involved could be as much as \$4 billion and includes money appro-

priated for United Nations peacekeeping, development assistance, global health programs and military training.

The top members of the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations committees sent a letter to the OMB seeking to head off such a move and threatening a response if the administration moves ahead with one. Their letter points out that Congress appropriates the money under the Constitution and the money is "essential" to U.S. global leadership and security.

"Slashing crucial diplomacy and development programming would be detrimental to our national security while also undermining Congress's intended use for these funds," said the letter, signed by Sens. James Risch, R-Idaho, and Robert

Menendez, D-N.J., and Reps. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., and Michael McCaul, R-Texas.

"It would be inappropriate for any administration, under any circumstance, to attempt to override Congress's most fundamental power," they wrote. "Such action would be precedent-setting and a direct affront to the separation of powers principle upon which our nation was built."

Last Saturday, OMB directed that unspent money in 15 different State Department and USAID accounts be identified and frozen. Under federal rules, most funding approved by Congress must be spent within the budget year intended or returned to the Treasury unless specific provisions are made. The current budget year ends Sept. 30.

Epstein found dead of apparent suicide

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jeffrey Epstein, the well-connected financier accused of orchestrating a sex-trafficking ring, killed himself while awaiting trial in a New York prison, officials said Saturday.

Epstein was found unresponsive in his cell Saturday morning at the Metropolitan Correctional Center, according to a statement from the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

The Fire Department said it received a call at 6:39 a.m. Saturday that Epstein was in cardiac arrest, and he was

pronounced dead at New York Presbyterian-Lower Manhattan Hospital.

Epstein, 66, had been denied bail and faced up to 45 years behind bars on federal sex trafficking and conspiracy charges unsealed last month. Prosecutors accused him of sexually abusing dozens of underage girls. He had pleaded not guilty.

His arrest last month launched separate investigations into how authorities handled his case initially when similar charges were first brought against him in Florida

more than a decade ago. U.S. Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta resigned last month after coming under fire for overseeing that deal when he was U.S. attorney in Miami.

The Bureau of Prisons confirmed that he had been housed in the jail's Special Housing Unit, a heavily secured part of the facility that separates high-profile inmates from the general population.

Until recently, the same unit had been home to the Mexican drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, who is now serving a life sentence at the so-called

Supermax prison in Colorado.

A little over two weeks ago, Epstein was found on the floor of his jail cell with bruises on his neck, according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity.

At the time, it was not clear whether the injuries were self-inflicted or from an assault.

Epstein's death is likely to raise questions about how the Bureau of Prisons ensures the welfare of high-profile inmates. The FBI is investigating Epstein's death, the Bureau of Prisons said.

Man with gun, body armor at Mo. Walmart charged

Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. — Prosecutors on Friday filed a terrorist threat charge against a 20-year-old man who said he walked into a Missouri store wearing body armor and carrying a loaded rifle and handgun to test whether Walmart would honor his constitutional right to bear arms.

The incident, just days after 22 people were killed during an attack at another Walmart in El Paso, Texas, caused a panic at the Springfield, Mo., store. Dmitriy Andreychenko walked through filming him-

self with his cell phone Thursday afternoon.

No shots were fired and Andreychenko was arrested after he was stopped by an armed off-duty firefighter at the store.

"Missouri protects the right of people to open carry a firearm, but that does not allow an individual to act in a reckless and criminal manner endangering other citizens," Greene County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Patterson said in a statement announcing the charge. Patterson compared the man's actions to "falsely shouting fire in a theater causing a panic."

If convicted, the felony charge

of making a terrorist threat in the second degree is punishable by up to four years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000, according to the prosecutor's office. The charge means he showed reckless disregard for the risk of causing an evacuation or knowingly caused fear that lives were in danger.

"I wanted to know if Walmart honored the Second Amendment," a probable cause statement released Friday with the charges quoted Andreychenko as saying.

Andreychenko started to record himself with his phone while he was still in the car

parked at Walmart. He got the body armor from the trunk of his car and put it on before grabbing a shopping cart and walking into the store, according to the statement.

Andreychenko said his intention was to buy grocery bags. The rifle had a loaded magazine inserted, but a round was not chambered. A handgun on his right hip was loaded with one round in the chamber.

He said he bought the rifle and body armor because of three recent shootings and a stabbing, and said he wanted to protect himself.

Officials say car bomb killed 2 UN staff at mall in Libya

Associated Press

BENGHZI, Libya — A bomb-laden vehicle exploded Saturday outside a shopping mall in Libya's eastern city of Benghazi, killing at least two U.N. security staff, health officials said.

The attack came even as the country's warring sides said they accepted a cease-fire proposed by the U.N. aimed at halting combat in the capital Tripoli during an upcoming Muslim holiday.

The officials said the blast took place outside Arkan Mall in the Hawari neighborhood, where people were gathering for shopping a day before the Eid al-Adha holiday begins. The Benghazi municipal council said the attack targeted a convoy for the U.N. Support Mission in Libya.

The site of the attack is close to offices of the U.N. support mission in Libya. The officials said the two dead hailed from Libya and Fiji. The blast also

wounded nine people, including a 3-year-old child and a U.N. staff member from Jamaica, the health officials said.

Footage circulated online shows what appears to be burnt U.N.-owned vehicles, as thick smoke bellows into the sky.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief reporters.

A spokeswoman for the U.N. mission in Libya did not answer

phone calls seeking comment. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, which came just a month after two bomb-laden vehicles went off in Benghazi, the stronghold for the self-styled Libyan National Army. The July attack killed at least four people and wounded 33 others.

The warring sides, meanwhile, said they accepted a multiday truce for the Eid holiday, which begins Sunday.

Unseasonal storms hit northern Europe

Associated Press

BERLIN — A rare tornado injured 19 people, two of them severely, in Luxembourg, while 15 soccer players were injured by a lightning strike in southern Germany as unseasonal storms hit northern Europe late Friday.

The tornado in the southwestern Luxembourg communities of Pettingen and Kaerjeng left a path of destruction that made up to 100 homes uninhabitable, local media reported Saturday. Debris and damaged cars were left strewn around the area, while at least four power poles were destroyed.

“Architects are going to come and survey the damage. Meanwhile, we will coordinate to cover the roofs,” Paul Schroeder, director general of Luxembourg’s fire and rescue service, told residents, according to Luxembourg French-language newspaper L’Essentiel.

In nearby eastern France, the tornado was less severe, but local media there reported that dozens of roofs were destroyed and cars were damaged in the communities of Longwy and Herserange. Tornadoes are a very rare weather condition in Europe, which is more typically hit by gales.

Southern Germany was also hit by severe thunderstorms late Friday. Lightning struck a soccer field in Rosenfeld-Heiligenzimmern where 15 players were exercising. They were injured only slightly but were taken to the hospital as a precaution.

In Bavaria, thousands of music fans were asked by police to leave an open-air concert in Rothenburg early due to the weather, while gusty winds led to the collapse of a circus tent in Neckarsulm. One horse had to be euthanized, while 15 other horses and camels ran away and had to be rounded up by police.

Millions of Muslims descend on Mecca for hajj

Associated Press

MOUNT ARAFAT, Saudi Arabia — More than 2 million Muslims gathered Saturday at the sacred hill of Mount Arafat in Saudi Arabia for an intense day of worship and reflection on what’s considered the climax of the Islamic hajj pilgrimage.

Many had tears streaming down their faces as they raised their hands in worship on the slopes of the rocky hill where the Prophet Muhammad delivered his final sermon some 1,400 years ago, calling for equality and unity among Muslims. Thousands had walked there through the pre-dawn darkness.

As one of the largest religious gatherings on earth, this second day of the hajj is often the most memorable for pilgrims. They stand shoulder to shoulder with Muslims from around the world, all considered

equal in Islam before God, seeking mercy, blessings, good health, bounty and healing.

This year, more than 1.8 million people from more than 160 countries came to Saudi Arabia to perform the hajj, according to Saudi officials. Some 20,000 are U.S. citizens and residents. Around 200,000 additional pilgrims are Saudi residents or citizens.

The five-day hajj pilgrimage is required of all Muslims once in their lifetime, if they are financially and physically able to make the demanding pilgrimage. Because the Islamic calendar is a lunar one, the time of year when the hajj takes place varies, and when it falls in the hot summer months, temperatures can soar to more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

Most pilgrims also save up money for years to afford the trip, which takes them to Islam’s holiest sites to perform a series

of ancient rituals that date back thousands of years.

While following a route the Prophet Muhammad once walked, Muslims trace the rites of hajj back to the prophets Ibrahim and Ismail, or Abraham and Ishmael as they are named in the Bible.

The oldest pilgrim this year is 103-year-old Noah Lanai from Thailand, according to Saudi Arabia’s state-run media. The woman came to the hajj with her son and was quoted in local media saying she’d long dreamed of performing the hajj and praying in Mecca.

Muslims believe the hajj is a chance at atonement and an opportunity to erase past sins. It’s also a chance to pray for unity and peace among Muslims as conflicts rage in Syria, Yemen and Libya, and Muslim minorities face increased threats around the world.

Hong Kong protesters march in defiance of police ban

Associated Press

HONG KONG — Protesters marched in two Hong Kong neighborhoods Saturday in defiance of a ban by police who have clashed repeatedly with government critics.

Hong Kong is in its ninth week of demonstrations that began in response to a proposed extradition law but have expanded to include other grievances and demands for more democratic freedoms.

Protesters are calling for the resignation of the territory’s leader, Chief Executive Carrie Lam, and an investigation into complaints of abuses by police.

Police refused permission for two rallies Saturday, but they went ahead despite

that. Reporters saw officers in riot gear on a road where hundreds of people gathered for one of the rallies.

That followed a separate march earlier Saturday, which received police approval, by parents who called for greater protection for children following incidents in which ordinary people have been caught in clashes between police and protesters.

“It’s dangerous to bring my child to participate in any protest,” said Natalie Lee, who was with her 2-year-old daughter. “Today’s march provides a good opportunity for us to bring our children to voice our demands, and I hope more peaceful protesters will come out, too.”

Demonstrators complain China’s ruling

Communist Party and Hong Kong leaders are eroding the liberties promised to the former British colony when it was returned to China in 1997.

Opponents of the proposed extradition law said it would hurt the independence of Hong Kong courts and expose residents to political cases. The government suspended consideration of the proposed law.

Beijing has criticized some protesters as violent radicals spurred on by foreign forces bent on containing China’s development.

For their part, protesters say police have used excessive force and ignored calls for help when thugs attacked civilians in a commuter rail station.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Court OKs traffic stop after obscene gesture

NC RALEIGH — A North Carolina appeals court said a state trooper acted appropriately when he chased and stopped a vehicle after its passenger flashed an obscene hand gesture at the law officer.

A divided panel of the state court of appeals ruled Tuesday there was no legal error in charging Shawn Patrick Ellis with resisting or delaying the trooper during the Stanley County stop. Ellis initially refused to turn over identification. He argued in court the traffic stop was illegal.

Judge Chris Dillon wrote for the court that while Ellis' middle-finger wave was protected free speech, the trooper had reason to believe that the crime of disorderly conduct was being committed.

Bus driver charged with trapping woman

MA SPRINGFIELD — The Massachusetts bus company that employs a driver charged with intentionally locking a passenger in the vehicle's luggage compartment is coming to the driver's defense.

Christopher Crean, head of safety and security at Springfield-based Peter Pan Bus Lines, said driver Wendy Alberty is an "exemplary" employee who has "received many customer commendations" for safe driving and service.

Crean said he doesn't think Alberty intentionally locked the woman, 32, of Long Beach, N.Y., in the luggage area.

Connecticut State Police pulled over the bus in Union, Conn., on Sunday after getting a 911 call from the trapped

woman. Alberty is charged with unlawful restraint.

Police find drugs, guns, gator in raid

IL CHICAGO — Chicago isn't quite ready to say, "See you later, alligator."

The Chicago Sun-Times reported that officers serving a search warrant at a northwest-side house found a 3-foot alligator along with some guns and drugs. They turned the alligator over to animal control.

The discovery comes about a month after an alligator swimming around a park lagoon captured the attention of the city for about a week before the alligator, dubbed Chance the Snapper, was captured by a gator hunter who was flown in from Florida.

Boy calls 911 for pizza, gets lesson, pie

FL SANFORD — A 5-year-old boy who called 911 to report he was hungry and wanted a pizza got a lesson in proper emergency-call etiquette, but he also got a pie.

The Sanford Police Department said in a Facebook post that the hungry grade-schooler called 911 last Friday.

Three officers responded to the home in suburban Orlando for a well-being check.

The officers explained that the 911 system is only for emergencies. Then they went to Pizza Hut and brought a large pizza back to the house.

Man finds an inactive bomb in his garage

IN CHARLESTOWN — A southern Indiana man stumbled onto an inactive military bomb while cleaning out his garage, prompting an

hourlong street closure as police assessed the device.

Parker Jones found the 25-pound bomb Saturday in the garage of a Charlestown home he purchased last year. He said the rusted, 2-foot-long device looked "suspicious," so he called police.

Man broke into police cars, stole equipment

NJ CRANFORD — Authorities said a man broke into several police cars parked at a northern New Jersey municipal complex, stealing bulletproof vests and other gear on two occasions.

Cranford police said Jake Fichiera, 19, faces multiple counts of criminal mischief, burglary and theft.

Authorities said Fichiera allegedly smashed the rear windows of six police vehicles on July 28 at the town's municipal complex. He allegedly stole a police jacket, rummaged through police equipment kept in the trunk and removed a gun vault that was bolted to the vehicle. As investigators identified Fichiera through video surveillance, authorities said he struck again Friday at the municipal parking lot. He allegedly stole three bulletproof vests, an entry tool kit and a police gear bag.

Vet reunited with dog tag lost during WWII

ND BISMARCK — A World War II veteran from Bismarck has been reunited with a dog tag he lost in New Guinea about 75 years ago.

Ed Boger, 97, has the dog tag back thanks to a stranger who found it while digging a hole for a school flagpole in Lemieng, Papua New Guinea. The Bismarck Tribune said Kenneth

Muo knew that only American soldiers wore dog tags and felt the need to return it. So he posted his find on World War II Facebook groups and years later made contact with Ed's son, Charles Boger.

Woman fined after dog attacks pony

MO JOPLIN — A Missouri woman has been fined \$600 and ordered to pay another \$500 in restitution after her dog mauled a retired circus pony so severely that it had to be euthanized.

The Joplin Globe reported that Taylor Harris also was placed on probation after pleading guilty in Joplin Municipal Court to allowing a dog to run free. The restitution must be paid by June 19, 2020. That will be the one-year anniversary of the deadly attack on Gunther, a white pony who was retired from Ringling Bros. Three other horses were also bitten but survived.

Woman who lied about spreading HIV charged

GA AMERICUS — Police said a Georgia woman has been charged with a misdemeanor after she lied in a viral Facebook Live rant about being HIV positive and intentionally infecting others.

Americus police said in a news release Friday that a recent blood test showed Brandi Yakeima Lasiter did not have HIV. She was charged with a misdemeanor count of making harassing communications.

Americus police began investigating after receiving links to the video that showed Lasiter naming men she claimed to have infected, along with their wives and girlfriends.

From wire reports

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Reporting
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and Military News

SEC has stable of veteran quarterbacks

Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — It is the year of the veteran quarterback in the Southeastern Conference.

Tua Tagovailoa and Jake Fromm are the headliners, but the league is loaded with experienced passers with double-digit starts under their belts at their current school or elsewhere.

The SEC has eight returning starters at quarterback and could have as many as five graduate transfers leading offenses. The teams are hoping that's a recipe for success in a league that hasn't produced a first-round pick at quarterback since Johnny Manziel in 2014.

"I think it's unique that you would have five graduate transfer quarterbacks possibly starting in our conference, and it's also a really good year for the quarterback in the SEC," said Kirby Smart, Fromm's coach at Georgia. "It seems in my experience having been in the SEC for a lot of years, whether as a coach or a player, I don't know that there's been a year where there's been so many quarterbacks that have the experience they have."

"Some of them may not have the experience at that university, but they have experience. That's usually not a good sign for defensive coordinators in our conference. ... It makes it really tough because that position determines a lot of the outcomes of games. That's your leader and the guy that touches the ball every play."

There's little true star power beyond Fromm and Alabama's Tagovailoa, the Heisman Trophy runner-up last season. Either or both could snap that first-round QB drought for a league that routinely sends a bounty of talent into the NFL at other positions. Both are also surrounded by talented playmakers and blockers.

Florida's Feleipe Franks, LSU's Joe Burrow and Kentucky's Terry Wilson all are back after helping lead their teams to 10-win seasons.

South Carolina's Jake Bentley has started 32 games over the past three seasons. Texas A&M's Kellen Mond (20 starts) and Tennessee's Jarrett Guarantano (18) have started in multiple seasons, as well.

"I think it's great for the league," Fromm said. "You get great competition week in

and week out, and that's what everybody wants. That's what everybody wants to see. We're excited about it."

Even most of the teams with new starters have seasoned vets, though Auburn and Mississippi will be starting freshmen.

The biggest name among the new guys is Missouri's Kelly Bryant, who led Clemson to the national championship game two seasons ago. Bryant started 18 games but left after losing the starting job to talented freshman Trevor Lawrence.

His presence greatly eases the worries about replacing four-year starter Drew Lock. Even South Carolina coach Will Muschamp, who faced Bryant at Clemson, predicts "a very smooth transition." Muschamp praised Bryant's accuracy and mobility.

"But I probably think his best attributes as a player is his intangible qualities," the Gamecocks coach said. "The guy is an outstanding leader. He positively affects people around him. He gets guys going and believing in what you need to do to be successful."

At Arkansas, graduate transfer Ben Hicks was a three-year

starter at SMU while Nick Starkel is a former Texas A&M starter.

Vanderbilt has Riley Neal, who passed for 7,393 yards and 46 touchdowns over three seasons at Ball State.

Mississippi State grad transfer Tommy Stevens spent two seasons under coach Joe Moorhead at Penn State. He's battling Keytaon Thompson for the starting job.

LSU's Burrow started last year as a grad transfer from Ohio State. He finished a solid debut season with 394 passing yards and four touchdowns in a Fiesta Bowl win over Central Florida.

He's the first LSU quarterback to pass for 2,500-plus yards and rush for at least 350 in the same season. LSU coach Ed Orgeron expects to free him up for more runs this season.

"He reminds me of Bobby Hebert, a quarterback that I played with who was a tremendous football player that had all of the intangibles of a leader," Orgeron said. "Joe's very tough. Joe's going to lead by example. His team believes in him. We expect him to have a great year."

Purdue QB Sindelar narrowing focus to just football

Associated Press

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Purdue quarterback Elijah Sindelar sees a whole new world of opportunities opening up this fall.

The annual competition he waged against David Blough is finally over, his problematic left knee finally seems healthy and his class load finally is a little lighter now that he has an engineering degree.

So the next goal for the strong-armed Sindelar is simple: Show everyone how well he can play when he focuses on football.

"My decision-making has definitely gotten a lot better, being able to check it down," he

said after a recent practice. "A lot of times where the first read might not be there and I still tried to kind of force it when I was younger; today I actually got through my fourth progression in one play, which was really nice to go 'one, no; two, no; three, no; four, yes,' and throw the ball. That's what I'm most proud of right now."

Coaches also appreciate Sindelar's toughness, especially in a college football world where a lack of instant gratification has created a whirlwind of transfers.

Sindelar is different, an old-school guy who just keeps fighting, studying and improving.

And while Kentucky's 2014 Mr. Football award winner

won't make every throw, he looks like a perfect fit for coach Jeff Brohm at the Cradle of Quarterbacks.

Sindelar knows what must improve. He wants to cut down on the turnovers and complete 70% of his attempts.

But the fact he's still chugging along in West Lafayette might be more remarkable given the way things have not gone according to script.

Sindelar enrolled at Purdue in January 2015, expecting Danny Etling and Austin Appleby to battle for the starting job while he and Blough fought to be the backup to the backup.

Things changed when Etling transferred to LSU in the summer, essentially ceding the job

to Appleby. Four weeks into the season, Blough relieved the struggling Appleby and wound up starting the next 20 games before Appleby left for Florida amid a coaching change.

Blough lost his lock on the starting job when Brohm reopened the competition in 2017 and Sindelar and Blough essentially played to a draw. Eventually, Brohm decided to use the close friends in a rotation that ended when Blough suffered a season-ending dislocated right ankle in early November.

Then, less than one half into Sindelar's first game as the undisputed starter, he tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee.

NFL preseason roundup

Cousins solid as Vikes unveil new offense

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Kirk Cousins enjoyed his first true taste of Minnesota's new offense — both from under center and watching from the sideline.

Cousins was flawless in his lone series in Minnesota's new offensive scheme, backup Sean Mannion delivered a scoring pass under a heavy rush, and the Vikings defeated New Orleans 34-25 in the preseason opener for both clubs Friday night.

The game marked the Vikings' first test of their new offense directed by coordinator Kevin Stefanski and influenced by adviser Gary Kubiak.

"To be able to rotate that many different players in at so many different positions throughout four quarters and continue to have sustained success moving the football, I think it does say a lot about Kevin's play calling and about the system and about the execution," Cousins said. "So many guys got involved in

the game and made plays."

During the one series in which the first-team offense played, Cousins drove the Vikings 81 yards for a touchdown in eight plays, completing all four passes for 65 yards. Cousins connected on a pair of short passes before finding Adam Thielen for 35 yards down the right side, setting up a 1-yard scoring pass to third-round draft choice Alexander Mattison.

"If you're only going to play one series ... it could have been three-and-out, so to be able to go down there and score, you can't draw it up much better than that," Cousins said. "It's not a lot to build on, so you take from it what it is. But if we're going to have a drive, better to go down there and score and be that efficient than to do anything else."

With Saints record-setting QB Drew Brees getting the night off, ex-Viking Teddy Bridgewater started. He played throughout the first half, com-

pleting 14 of 19 passes for 134 yards and one touchdown on an 18-yard pass to tight end Dan Arnold.

But Arnold essentially gave that score right back early in the second half when he was unable to secure a pass from Taylor Hill and the ball squirted straight into the arms of defensive back Nate Meadors, who easily returned his interception 30 yards for a touchdown.

Hill played throughout the second half, going 8-for-14 for 80 yards and one touchdown on Lil'Jordan Humphrey's 33-yard, tackle-breaking catch and run.

Steelers 30, Buccaneers 28: Josh Dobbs and Mason Rudolph led the offense on four scoring drives as hos Pittsburgh defeated Tampa Bay in the preseason opener for both teams.

Two-time Super Bowl winner Ben Roethlisberger gave way to recent draft picks Dobbs and Rudolph to battle for the backup quarterback job.

Jameis Winston led the Bucs' first-team offense to a touchdown in his only offensive series against a Steelers defense that featured few regulars.

Dobbs started and played two series, going 5-for-8 for 85 yards and throwing an interception that was nullified because of offsetting penalties. Dobbs, a fourth-round draft pick in 2017, also had two third-down scrambles for 44 yards, including a 36-yarder that set up a 33-yard field goal by Chris Boswell.

Rudolph entered on the third series and played into the third quarter. He finished 5-for-8 for 91 yards and two touchdowns.

Rudolph, the Steelers' third-round pick in 2018, completed all three attempts during his first series, including an 8-yard touchdown to James Washington, his college teammate at Oklahoma State. In the third quarter, a 59-yard catch-and-run by Johnny Holton set up a 3-yard score to Zach Gentry, the Steelers' fifth-round pick.

Kaepernick eager for chance to play again in NFL

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Colin Kaepernick is eager to prove he's good enough to play in the NFL.

A person close to Kaepernick told The Associated Press on Friday: "Colin has always been prepared to compete at the highest level and is in the best shape of his life." The person spoke anonymously because of the confidential nature of discussions with teams.

The 31-year-old Kaepernick hasn't played since 2016 with the San Francisco 49ers. He helped start a wave of protests about social and racial injustice that season by kneeling during the national anthem at games. He drew strong criticism from President Donald Trump.

But Trump on Friday told

reporters when asked if Kaepernick should play in the NFL: "Only if he's good enough. I know the owners, I know Bob Kraft. They will do anything they can to win games."

Kaepernick released a video earlier this week saying: "5 a.m. 5 days a week. For 3 years. Still Ready."

The Philadelphia Eagles lost backup Nate Sudfeld to a broken left wrist suffered Thursday night, raising speculation the team would be in the market for an experienced quarterback. Sudfeld was scheduled for surgery, but coach Doug Pederson said it's not a season-ending injury and the team was content with No. 3 quarterback Cody Kessler and rookie Clayton Thorson.

However, Eagles starting quarterback Carson Wentz

has sustained season-ending injuries each of the past two seasons. Nick Foles led Philadelphia to four playoff wins in two years and was 2018 Super Bowl MVP, but signed an \$88 million, four-year deal with Jacksonville in free agency.

Sudfeld has thrown 25 passes in the NFL. Kessler is 2-10 as a starter in three seasons with Cleveland and Jacksonville.

Kaepernick led the 49ers to consecutive NFC championship games in 2012-2013 and was 4-2 in the playoffs. He threw for 302 yards and one touchdown and ran for 62 yards and one score in a 34-31 loss to Baltimore in the 2013 Super Bowl.

The Ravens considered signing Kaepernick in the summer of 2017 when starting quarterback Joe Flacco was dealing with a back injury that would

keep him out for the entire preseason. Owner Steve Bisciotti said he consulted with fans and the team ultimately passed.

Kaepernick met with Seattle a couple of years ago, but Seahawks coach Pete Carroll said he should be a starter in the league and the team only wanted a backup for Russell Wilson.

Former 49ers coach Jim Harbaugh said he has told teams who've asked him about Kaepernick that he's a "great competitor" and he'll "have a great career and be a great quarterback, win championships."

While he has been away from the playing field, Kaepernick has become an advocate for social and racial justice and became the face of Nike's "Just Do It" campaign.

Blue Jays end Yankees' streak at nine

Associated Press

TORONTO — Brett Gardner was at a loss for words to describe his latest ejection.

That was ironic, considering Gardner insisted he hadn't opened his mouth before getting tossed.

Gardner lost his cool and the New York Yankees lost their nine-game winning streak, beaten by the Toronto Blue Jays 8-2 Friday night.

"Just super frustrating," Gardner said. "Just when you think you've seen it all. I don't even know what to say."

Teoscar Hernandez homered twice, Danny Jansen hit a three-run blast and Randal Grichuk added a two-run shot. Toronto connected three times off homer-prone lefty J.A. Happ (9-7).

Blue Jays rookie Bo Bichette went hitless for the first time in his 12-game career, ending a major league record streak that

saw him hit at least one double in nine consecutive games. Instead of contributing with his bat, the 21-year-old shortstop bailed the Blue Jays out with his glove, making a run-saving catch on Didi Gregorius' bases-loaded liner to end the fifth.

Bichette walked and scored in the first, grounded out in the third and fourth and struck out in the seventh. His average dropped from .408 to .385.

Gardner was ejected and had to be restrained from going after home plate umpire Chris Segal in the fourth inning.

Segal called Cameron Maybin out on a third strike that appeared to miss low but was lifted into the strike zone by catcher Danny Jansen. Yankees manager Aaron Boone, bench coach Josh Bard and Gardner protested from the dugout before Segal ejected Gardner following another low strike during Mike Tauchman's at-bat.

"He just wanted to assume or wanted to take a guess, and he was wrong," Gardner said of Segal. "Then he lied to me about it which was a huge problem, and that's what made me a little upset."

At first, Boone came out alone to talk to Segal, who is normally a Triple-A umpire. Initially calm when he left the dugout, Gardner soon lost his temper when he learned he'd been ejected and had to be restrained by Boone, Tauchman and crew chief Dan Iassogna. Gardner had doubled and struck out earlier in the game.

"Gardy is as competitive and as fiery as they come," Boone said. "If you're going to get kicked out of a game you want it to be justified and warranted, so I understand how fired up he was, and I found out how strong he was trying to hold him back."

Television replays appeared

to show that Maybin, who was seated next to Gardner on the bench, made the comment that led to the ejection.

"I didn't even open my mouth, which is unusual for me," Gardner joked.

Iassogna told a pool reporter: "It will be put on our report and we will put in what happened on the field, and we will watch the tape."

Last month at Yankee Stadium, Gardner became upset with the strike zone in a game against Tampa Bay and used the bat to repeatedly pound the bat rack and the underside of the dugout roof. Boone took off on a profane rant against the umpire after Gardner was called out on strikes.

Gardner admitted banging his bat on the dugout roof again Friday.

"The last time I checked, that wasn't against the rules," he said.

MLB roundup

Frazier's three-run homer powers Mets past Nationals

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Todd Frazier clobbered a tying three-run homer and Michael Conforto lined a game-ending single as the New York Mets stormed back in the ninth inning to stun the Washington Nationals 7-6 Friday night for their seventh straight win.

Trailing 6-3, the Mets rallied against Sean Doolittle to win for the 14th time in 15 games at pulsating Citi Field. The Nationals hold the top spot in the NL wild-card race, and the Mets are 1½ games behind them.

Mets rookie Pete Alonso homered in his fourth straight game, hitting his 38th of the season off Stephen Strasburg. J.D. Davis also connected.

Doolittle (6-4) blew his fifth save in 30 chances.

Luis Avilan (3-0) got two outs for the win.

Indians 6, Twins 2: Shane Bieber (12-4) pitched into the eighth inning, Jose Ramirez had three hits and visiting Cleveland pulled into a tie with Minnesota for the AL Central lead.

Braves 8, Marlins 4: Ronald Acuna Jr. hit a pair of two-run homers for NL East-leading Atlanta, and Julio Teheran (7-7) extended his scoreless streak against host Miami this season to 24 innings before allowing a run in the seventh.

Phillies 9, Giants 6: Bryce Harper homered twice for visiting Philadelphia, including a towering three-run drive into McCovey Cove.

Diamondbacks 3, Dodgers 2 (11): Carson Kelly hit a tying two-run homer in the ninth inning and a tiebreaking solo shot in the 11th, sending visiting Arizona past Los Angeles.

Padres 7, Rockies 1: Fer-

nando Tatis Jr. hit a two-run double to extend his hitting streak to a career-best 13 games and fellow San Diego rookie Cal Quantrill (5-3) pitched seven scoreless innings against visiting Colorado.

Astros 3, Orioles 2: Wade Miley (11-4) pitched impressively against his former team and Jose Altuve hit a pivotal RBI triple in the seventh inning, leading visiting Houston to its seventh straight victory.

Brewers 6, Rangers 5: Eric Thames hit a game-ending homer to lift host Milwaukee to the win after Josh Hader blew a save opportunity for the fourth time this season.

Reds 5, Cubs 2: Trevor Bauer fanned 11 batters in his home debut, and Aristides Aquino homered again as Yasiel Puig's replacement to lead Cincinnati past Chicago.

Red Sox 16, Angels 4: J.D.

Martinez homered twice and just missed hitting a third out of Fenway Park, powering Boston to the runaway win over Los Angeles.

Rays 5, Mariners 3: Pinch-hitter Ji-Man Choi drew a bases-loaded walk that snapped a ninth-inning tie, and visiting Tampa Bay ended its nine-game losing streak in Seattle.

Cardinals 6, Pirates 2: Paul Goldschmidt hit a tiebreaking single in the eighth inning and Marcell Ozuna followed with a two-run homer, lifting host St. Louis to the victory.

Athletics 7, White Sox 0: Oakland right-hander Mike Fiers (11-3) tossed seven sparkling innings against host Chicago to extend his career-best winning streak to nine consecutive decisions.

Tigers 5, Royals 2: Edwin Jackson (2-5) pitched neatly into the seventh inning to lead to Detroit past Kansas City.