

US aims to counter Iran's drone gains

BY LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

Iran's expansive drone program is giving the United States and its allies a lopsided problem: cheap, expendable aircraft that can evade detection and cost much more to shoot down than to build.

The U.S. is relying on a mix of sanctions, interdictions and emerging defensive technologies to blunt the threat posed by Iran and proxy forces like Houthi militants in Yemen. But analysts have said the U.S. must move faster to stay ahead of Tehran's adaptations.

A recent example of Washington's strategy to counter Iran's ability to mass produce and export drones came July 31, when the Treasury Department sanctioned five companies and an executive accused of supplying

Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Co., or HESA, with technology.

HESA is a state-owned subsidiary of Iran's defense ministry that produces the Ababil series of one-way attack drones.

The sanctioned companies were enabling Iran's plans for attacks on American service members and allies in the Middle East, the agency said in a July 31 statement.

Drones are a relatively inexpensive way to deliver explosives over long distances, said Wolf-Christian Paes, a senior fellow for armed conflict at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

"And whatever we can do to defend against these weapons systems, in most cases, is a lot more expensive," he added.

Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen are perhaps the "most in-

novative users," Paes said, and have consistently used one-way attack drones to target both commercial vessels and U.S. Navy ships. Iranian drones have also shown up in Ukraine, where Russia has used them against military and civilian targets.

Iran has worked over the past several decades to master what analyst Behnam Ben Taleblu calls the "unmanned aerial threat spectrum," which spans mortars, drones and ballistic missiles.

The strategy allows Iran to launch layered attacks that, while often minimally effective, force adversaries to expend costly missiles, said Taleblu, director of the Iran Program at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Such was the case in April last year, when U.S. forces and their allies intercepted a barrage of

170 drones, along with dozens of cruise missiles, that were launched at Israel from Iran and Yemen.

"Even though, hypothetically, the U.S. or the Israelis may be very, very successful when it comes to deterrence by denial, the fact that the U.S. or Israel has to spend more to track, detect and destroy the systems is still notched, at least intellectually, as a win for the Islamic Republic," Taleblu said.

At the same time, the U.S. is scaling up its own unmanned aircraft programs and funneling resources toward anti-drone technology.

In December, the White House signed off on a strategy to develop counterdrone systems, which former Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin called an "urgent and enduring threat."

Putin, Trump envoy talk as US eyes end to war

Bloomberg

The White House is racing to beat another self-imposed deadline to resolve Russia's war in Ukraine, with President Donald Trump leaning hard on his special envoy, Steve Witkoff, to get Moscow to halt the fighting.

President Vladimir Putin met with Witkoff for almost three hours in the Kremlin on Wednesday, the Interfax news service reported, just two days before an Aug. 8 deadline Trump set for Russia to reach a truce or face potential sanctions. While Putin has said he won't abandon his campaign in Ukraine, people familiar with the situation said the Kremlin might offer the United States concessions that could include halting airstrikes in a bid to avert new economic penalties.

Witkoff's fifth meeting with the Russian leader this year follows an apparent shift in Trump's approach to the war, which initially saw him focus his pressure on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy only to increasingly express frustration with Putin in recent weeks. The barrage of Russian drones that have rained down on Ukrainian cities and the resulting images of destruction have made an impression on the U.S. president, according to people close to him.

Trump is now publicly betting that Putin's growing economic woes will eventually force him to end an invasion that is in its fourth year, saying in a CNBC interview Tuesday that "if energy goes down low enough, Putin's going to stop killing people."

"If you get energy down another \$10 a barrel, he's going to have no choice, because his economy stinks," Trump added.

The U.S. president has threatened so-called secondary sanctions on purchasers of Russian energy to ramp up the pressure on Putin. It's a risky gamble, as the Biden administration found. Penalizing purchasers of Russian oil without rocking global markets requires a delicate calculus that can hurt friends as well as foes. Even Trump has shared skepticism that the penalties could work, calling the Russians "wily characters" who are "pretty good at avoiding sanctions."

Meanwhile, Trump will be eager to avoid any economic fallout at home. U.S. consumers are

managing still-high prices at the pump this year, and domestic oil producers could struggle with supply constraints. Trump has insisted he isn't worried about the potential impact sanctions would have within the U.S., telling reporters on Air Force One last week that the U.S. could ramp up its own energy production.

"We have some oil in our country," Trump said. "We'll just step it up even further."

Short of Witkoff scoring an unlikely peace deal, Trump will face enhanced scrutiny as he decides whether to follow through on his latest sanctions threat. The U.S. president has floated tougher penalties on Russia before, but walked back to preserve negotiations.

5 soldiers wounded, shooter arrested

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

A gunman shot five soldiers Wednesday morning at Fort Stewart before being captured by law enforcement on the southeast Georgia Army post, according to an Army spokesman.

The shooter was apprehended just after 11:30 a.m., about 30 minutes after gunshots were first reported to installation officials, said Army Maj. Charlie Egan, a spokesman for the Fort

Stewart-based 3rd Infantry Division.

It was not immediately clear if the shooter was also a soldier or the motivation for the attack. CNN, quoting local law enforcement personnel, reported that the shooter was a male sergeant.

Officials said the soldiers shot in the incident were treated for their wounds at the scene and transported to Winn Army Community Hospital on Fort Stewart. Their conditions were not imme-

diately available, Egan said.

Officials did not report any fatalities in the incident on Wednesday.

The shooting occurred in the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team complex, which houses the brigade's headquarters, its barracks and facilities for its subordinate units.

The 2nd Brigade area is in a secured complex that is separated from Fort Stewart's main garrison area where the division

headquarters and most of its other subordinate units are located.

Installation officials locked down the Army base just after 11 a.m., amid reports of the incident. Officials said the 2nd Brigade area remained locked down just before 1 p.m., but the lockdown had been lifted across the rest of the massive installation.

Egan said an investigation had been launched and no other information about the incident was immediately available.

Destroyer named for Marine Medal of Honor recipient

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

The Navy will name its newest Arleigh Burke-class, guided-missile destroyer for the youngest living Marine to receive the Medal of Honor for bravery in combat.

The USS Kyle Carpenter will honor the Marine from South Carolina who was 21 in 2010 when he shielded a fellow Marine from a grenade on a rooftop in Afghanistan. He was severely wounded

but survived to become a veterans advocate and motivational speaker.

Navy Secretary John Phelan, who holds the authority to choose ship names, made the announcement Monday that the service would follow through with former Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro's plan in January that a future destroyer would carry Carpenter's name.

Carpenter was a lance corporal

with the 2nd Battalion of the 9th Marine Regiment when he was deployed to Helmand Province on Nov. 21, 2010.

Two Marine squads and one Afghan army squad were sent to the Marjah District to reinforce a patrol base. Carpenter and Lance Cpl. Nick Eufrazio were assigned to the rooftop to monitor the perimeter for enemy forces.

The pair came under attack, and a grenade was thrown onto

the roof. Carpenter jumped between the grenade and Eufrazio, taking the force of the blast on his right side, according to Marine reports. Fragments tore into Carpenter's torso, blew out his right eye, most of his teeth and part of his jaw, and fractured bones in his face and torso. He was in a coma for five weeks.

In 2014, he received the Medal of Honor from former President Barack Obama.

Army: US drone vessel on Okinawa to stay indefinitely

By BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — An unmanned, semisubmersible vessel designed to move supplies and weapons across oceans will stay on Okinawa indefinitely following an 11-month trial with the Marine Corps, a spokesman said Wednesday.

The Autonomous Low-Profile Vessel arrived at Naha Port in October and was scheduled to operate in Okinawa's coastal waters through August, the III Marine Expeditionary Force said at the time. The Marines

now plan to keep the vessel on Okinawa "indefinitely," III MEF spokesman 2nd Lt. James T. Selcke said.

The drone vessel is designed to resupply troops on contested islands in the Indo-Pacific as part of the island-fighting doctrine described in the Marines' Force Design plan.

Brig. Gen. Simon Doran, commander of the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory in Quantico, Va., at a conference Sept. 4 described it as "just a narco-boat" — low-profile boats used by drug runners in Central and South America.

The Marine Corps has deployed one of the vessels to Okinawa and is not planning to add more, an Okinawa Defense Bureau spokesman said. The vessel may operate outside the coastal waters of Okinawa's main island, he added.

Okinawa prefecture made no complaint about the vessel when the bureau, an arm of Japan's Ministry of Defense, notified the prefecture Tuesday in Naha of the vessel's indefinite deployment, according to a spokeswoman with the prefecture's Military Base Affairs Division.

The vessel will continue oper-

ating in the waters around Okinawa, but the U.S. has no plans to transport missiles or ammunition in it, the spokeswoman said.

Some Japanese government officials may speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

The Marines plan to employ the vessel during the joint exercise Resolute Dragon scheduled Sept. 11 to 25 across Japan and Okinawa, according to a fact sheet provided Wednesday by the Ministry of Defense. The exercise is meant to enhance cooperation between the two militaries during remote island defense operations, it said.

RFK Jr. pulls \$500M from vaccine development

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Department of Health and Human Services will cancel contracts and pull funding for some vaccines that are being developed to fight respiratory viruses like COVID-19 and the flu.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced in a statement Tuesday that 22 projects, totaling \$500 million, to develop vaccines using mRNA technology will be halted.

Kennedy's decision to terminate the projects is the latest in a string of decisions that have put the longtime vaccine critic's doubts about shots into full effect at the nation's health department. Kennedy has pulled back recommendations around the COVID-19 shots, fired the panel that makes vaccine rec-

ommendations and refused to offer a vigorous endorsement of vaccinations as a measles outbreak worsened.

The health secretary criticized mRNA vaccines in a video on his social media accounts, explaining the decision to cancel projects being led by the nation's leading pharmaceutical companies, including Pfizer and Moderna, that offer protection against viruses like the flu, COVID-19 and H5N1.

Infectious disease experts say the mRNA technology used in vaccines is safe, and they credit its development during the first Trump administration with slowing the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. Future pandemics, they warned, will be harder to stop without the help of mRNA.

"I don't think I've seen a more dangerous decision in public health in my 50 years in the business," said Mike Osterholm, a University of Minnesota expert on infectious diseases and pandemic preparations.

He noted mRNA technology offers potential advantages of rapid production, crucial in the event of a new pandemic that requires a new vaccine.

The shelving of the mRNA projects is short-sighted as concerns about a bird flu pandemic continue to loom over the nation, said Dr. Paul Offit, a vaccine expert at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

"It's certainly saved millions of lives," Offit said of the existing mRNA vaccines.

Scientists are using mRNA for more than infectious disease

vaccines, with researchers around the world exploring its use for cancer immunotherapies.

At the White House earlier this year, billionaire tech entrepreneur Larry Ellison praised mRNA for its potential to treat cancer.

Traditionally, vaccines have required growing pieces of viruses, often in chicken eggs or giant vats of cells, then purifying that material.

The mRNA approach starts with a snippet of genetic code that carries instructions for making proteins.

Scientists pick the protein to target, inject that blueprint and the body makes just enough to trigger immune protection — producing its own protection against the disease.

Texas gov. asks court to remove House Dem leader

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott on Tuesday asked the state's highest court to remove the Democratic House leader from office, escalating efforts to end the holdout that is blocking redrawn U.S. House maps sought by President Donald Trump.

Bypassing lower courts, Abbott filed a rare emergency petition straight to the all-Republican Texas Supreme Court just three days into a walkout by Democrats. It hinges on a legal theory that even some Republicans have acknowledged is untested, arguing that absent legislators have effectively forfeited their seats.

The move intensifies Republicans' attempts to compel dozens of Democrats back to Texas, including signing civil arrest warrants and mobilizing state troopers. U.S. Sen. John Cornyn asked the FBI earlier Tuesday to help find and arrest Demo-

crats, and Trump later told reporters that federal agents "may have to" get involved, though he did not elaborate.

The lawsuit from Abbott, a former state Supreme Court justice, seeks the removal of state House Democratic Caucus Chairman Rep. Gene Wu, who is one of dozens of members of his caucus staying in Chicago. The governor asked the court to respond by Thursday.

Wu, a former prosecutor in Houston, said leaving Texas to halt the maps was not "an abandonment of my office" but a fulfillment of his oath.

Legal experts and even Republican state Attorney General Ken Paxton say it would be difficult to enforce consequences against the Democratic lawmakers while they are safely camped out in sympathetic Democratic-controlled states and effectively out of reach of Texas law enforcement looking to bring them home.

Trump gives himself chair role for LA Olympics 2028

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — In past Olympic Games held on American soil, sitting presidents have served in passive, ceremonial roles. President Donald Trump may have other plans.

An executive order signed by Trump on Tuesday names him chair of a White House task force on the 2028 Games in Los Angeles, viewed by the president as "a premier opportunity to showcase American exceptionalism," according to a White House statement.

At the White House, speaking in front of banners adding the presidential seal to the logo for LA28, Trump said he would send the military back to Los Angeles if he so chose in order to protect the Games. In June, Trump sent the National Guard and U.S. Marines to the city amid widespread immigration enforcement actions, despite condemnation from Mayor Karen Bass and other local offi-

cials.

Trump's executive order establishes a task force led by him and Vice President JD Vance to steer federal coordination for the Games. The task force will work with federal, state and local partners on security and transportation.

Those roles have been fairly standard for the federal government in past U.S.-hosted Olympic Games. But Trump's news conference could present questions about whether a president with a penchant for showmanship might assume an unusually active role in planning the Olympics, set to take place in the twilight of his final term.

There is ample precedent for military and National Guard forces providing security support during U.S.-hosted Olympic Games. But coming on the heels of the recent military deployment to Los Angeles, Trump's comments may prove contentious.

Watchdog: ChatGPT advice may harm teens

Associated Press

ChatGPT will tell 13-year-olds how to get drunk and high, instruct them on how to conceal eating disorders and even compose a heartbreaking suicide letter to their parents if asked, according to new research from a watchdog group.

The Associated Press reviewed more than three hours of interactions between ChatGPT and researchers posing as vulnerable teens.

The chatbot typically provided warnings against risky activity but still went on to deliver startlingly detailed and personalized plans for drug use, calorie-restricted diets or even self-injury.

The researchers at the Center for Countering Digital Hate also repeated their inquiries on a large scale, classifying more

than half of ChatGPT's 1,200 responses as dangerous.

"We wanted to test the guardrails," said Imran Ahmed, the group's CEO. "The visceral initial response is, 'Oh my Lord, there are no guardrails.' The rails are completely ineffective. They're barely there — if anything, a fig leaf."

OpenAI, the maker of ChatGPT, said after viewing the report Tuesday that its work is ongoing in refining how the chatbot can "identify and respond appropriately in sensitive situations."

"Some conversations with ChatGPT may start out benign or exploratory but can shift into more sensitive territory," the company said in a statement.

OpenAI didn't directly address the report's findings or how ChatGPT affects teens, but

said it was focused on "getting these kinds of scenarios right" with tools to "better detect signs of mental or emotional distress" and improvements to the chatbot's behavior.

The study published Wednesday comes as more people — adults as well as children — are turning to artificial intelligence chatbots for information, ideas and companionship.

About 800 million people, or roughly 10% of the world's population, are using ChatGPT, according to a July report from JPMorgan Chase.

"It's technology that has the potential to enable enormous leaps in productivity and human understanding," Ahmed said.

"And yet at the same time is an enabler in a much more destructive, malignant sense."

Ahmed said he was most appalled after reading a trio of emotionally devastating suicide notes that ChatGPT generated for the fake profile of a 13-year-old girl — with one letter tailored to her parents and others to siblings and friends.

"I started crying," he said in an interview.

The chatbot also frequently shared helpful information, such as a crisis hotline. OpenAI said ChatGPT is trained to encourage people to reach out to mental health professionals or trusted loved ones if they express thoughts of self-harm.

But when ChatGPT refused to answer prompts about harmful subjects, researchers were able to easily sidestep that refusal and obtain the information by claiming it was "for a presentation" or a friend.

India faces steep tariffs over buying Russian oil

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump signed an executive order Wednesday to place an additional 25% tariff on India for its purchases of Russian oil, bringing the combined tariffs imposed by the United States on its ally to 50%.

The tariffs would go into effect 21 days after the signing of the order, meaning that both India and Russia might have time to negotiate with the administration on the import taxes.

Trump's moves could scramble the economic trajectory of India, which until recently was seen as an alternative to China by American companies looking to relocate their manufacturing.

China also buys oil from Russia, but it was not included in the order signed by the Republican president.

As part of a negotiating period with Beijing, Trump has placed

30% tariffs on goods from China, a rate that is smaller than the combined import taxes with which he has threatened New Delhi.

The Indian government on Wednesday called the additional tariffs "unfortunate."

"We reiterate that these actions are unfair, unjustified and unreasonable," Foreign Ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said in a statement, adding that India would take all actions necessary to protect its interests.

Jaiswal said India has already made its stand clear that the country's imports were based on market factors and were to ensure energy security for its 1.4 billion people.

The U.S. and China are currently in negotiations on trade, with Washington imposing a 30% tariff on Chinese goods and facing a 10% retaliatory tax from Beijing on American products.

Epstein's ex girlfriend wants grand jury records kept secret

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jeffrey Epstein's former girlfriend, Ghislaine Maxwell, wants to keep grand jury records secret in the sex trafficking case that sent her to prison, her lawyers said Tuesday as prosecutors continued urging a court to release some of those records in the criminal case-turned-political fireball.

Maxwell hasn't seen the material herself, her attorneys said — the grand jury process is conducted behind closed doors. But she opposes unsealing what her lawyers described as potentially "hearsay-laden" transcripts of grand jury testimony, which was given in secret and without her lawyers there to challenge it.

"Whatever interest the public may have in Epstein, that interest cannot justify a broad intrusion into grand jury secrecy in a case where the defendant is alive, her legal options are via-

ble and her due process rights remain," attorneys David O. Markus and Melissa Madrigal wrote.

Prosecutors declined to comment.

Government attorneys have been trying to quell a clamor for transparency by seeking the transcripts' release — though the government also says the public already knows much of what's in the documents.

Most of the information "was made publicly available at trial or has otherwise been publicly reported through the public statements of victims and witnesses," prosecutors wrote in court papers Monday. They noted that the disclosures excluded some victims' and witnesses' names.

Prosecutors made clear Monday that they're seeking to unseal only the transcripts of grand jury witnesses' testimony, not the exhibits that accompanied it.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Land-speed driver dies in crash during event

UT WENDOVER — The head of the organization that runs an annual land-speed event at Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats said Monday that an investigation is ongoing into the death of veteran driver Chris Raschke.

Bonneville Nationals Inc. chairman Heather Black confirmed via email reports that the vehicle Raschke was piloting Sunday went airborne as he lost control of it at approximately the 2½-mile mark. The vehicle, Speed Demon 3, was traveling at nearly 300 mph at the time, according to a report by Hot Rod magazine.

Raschke, 60, was treated by medical personnel at the scene before he died from his injuries, the BNI-affiliated Southern California Timing Association said Sunday in a statement. He was said to have been in pursuit of a speed record.

At last year's Bonneville Speed Week, Raschke reportedly posted the fastest speed, 446.716 mph, over the 5-mile course. His performance then, at the helm of the previous Speed Demon, reportedly included a recorded exit speed of 459.734 mph, the fastest of that week. That earned him a coveted "black hat," given to members of the 400-mph club.

Fatal shooting erupts following festival

CA LOS ANGELES — Shooting erupted during a music festival after-party in downtown Los Angeles, killing two people and wounding six others early Monday, authorities said.

Authorities first responded around 11 p.m. Sunday to shut down a "big party" after officers saw a person possibly armed with a gun go inside a building in a downtown warehouse district, said Officer Norma Eisenman. That person was arrested at the scene, she said.

The party had been promoted on social media as an unofficial after-party for Hard Summer, a weekend techno-music festival held at Hollywood Park, about 9 miles away in Inglewood, KTLA-TV reported.

Shortly after officers had cleared the area, police received a report of shots fired around 1 a.m. When the officers returned, they found one person dead and learned multiple people had been struck by gunfire, Eisenman said in an email.

Judge: Permits aren't 2nd Amendment issue

RI PROVIDENCE — A federal judge says Rhode Island's gun permit system, which requires residents to show "a need" to openly carry a firearm throughout the state, does not violate the Second Amendment.

In a ruling handed down Friday, U.S. District Judge William Smith granted Rhode Island Attorney General Peter Neronha's motion to dismiss a lawsuit filed by a coalition of gun owners in 2023.

The lawsuit stems from a Rhode Island law dictating how the state issues firearms permits. According to the statute, local officials are required to issue concealed-carry permits to anyone who meets the specific criteria outlined in the statute. However, it also allows the attorney general's office to issue

open-carry permits "upon a proper showing of need." Unlike municipalities, the attorney general is not required to issue such permits.

Chemical makers to pay \$2B PFAS settlement

NJ TRENTON — DuPont and two other companies will pay New Jersey up to \$2 billion to settle environmental claims stemming from PFAS, commonly referred to as "forever chemicals," the companies announced Monday.

State Environmental Commissioner Shawn LaTourette said the deal with DuPont, Chemours and Corteva is the largest such settlement in the state's history. It calls for the companies to pay \$875 million over 25 years and create a remediation fund of up to \$1.2 billion. The companies will split the costs under the deal, which must still be approved by the courts.

Copter ride-share firm sale tops \$125M

CA SANTA CRUZ — Joby by Aviation Inc said it plans to buy the helicopter ride-share business of Blade Air Mobility Inc. for as much as \$125 million in stock or cash as the electric aviation pioneer seeks to expand its battery-powered air taxis into a ready-made market for its aircraft.

The acquisition encompasses all of Blade's passenger business, including operations in the U.S. and Europe, as well as the Blade brand, Joby said in a statement. Blade's medical division will remain a public company and rebrand, while partnering with Joby on medical transportation.

Blade sells per-seat helicopter trips from New York City to nearby airports and resort towns. The company, which went public through a merger with a special purpose acquisition company in 2021, hasn't reported an annual profit since it listed. The company's shares have fallen 10% this year, giving it a market value of \$309 million.

Backed by Toyota Motor Corp., Joby expects to have five aircraft in one of the final phases of certification next year as it aims to start commercial flights in early 2026.

U-Va. picks interim leader after resignation

VA CHARLOTTESVILLE — The University of Virginia's board of visitors has selected longtime law professor Paul G. Mahoney to lead the school following the resignation of its former president amid intense pressure from the Trump administration.

The board met Monday to discuss how it would select interim and permanent leaders during a time of tumult for the flagship in Charlottesville. U-Va. has been the target of a Justice Department investigation over alleged racial preferences in the school's admissions and what officials called a failure to cut DEI initiatives completely, among other allegations.

Former president James E. Ryan resigned from his post in June — a decision he said he made to avoid a fight with the federal government. But his departure has prompted concerns about transparency and the role the governing board may have played in the resignation.

— From wire reports

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Fritz, Shelton set up all-US semifinal

Associated Press

TORONTO — Taylor Fritz and Ben Shelton won Tuesday in the quarterfinals of the National Bank Open, setting up the first all-American semifinal in an ATP Masters 1000 tournament in 15 years.

The second-seeded Fritz beat No. 6 seed Andrey Rublev 6-3, 7-6 (4). He hit 20 aces, including one that finished off the match.

"It was clean," Fritz said of his performance. "I'm happy with everything."

Shelton, the No. 4 seed, then beat No. 9 Alex de Minaur of Australia 6-3, 6-4. The 22-year-old reached the semifinals of an ATP Masters 1000 tournament for the first time.

The matchup Wednesday between Fritz and Shelton will be the first time since Andy Roddick beat Mardy Fish at Cincinnati in 2010 that two Americans meet in an ATP Masters 1000 semifinal.

Fritz won their only previous meeting in 2023 at Indian Wells.

"He's a big-match player," Shelton said. "He's been carrying the flag for the United States in the big tournaments as of late. He's clutch, serves well. We're

great friends.

"It's a match that I'm really excited about."

Wednesday's other semifinal will see top-seeded Alexander Zverev of Germany, the 2017 tournament winner in Montreal, take on No. 11 Karen Khachanov of Russia. The final is Thursday.

Fritz came out firing in hazy and breezy conditions with three aces to win the first game. He then broke Rublev in securing the match's first eight points.

The 27-year-old American, who sits fourth in the ATP Tour rankings and lost last year's U.S. Open final to No. 1 Jannik Sinner, fired two more aces to go up 4-1 before serving out the set.

Looking for his 11th ATP Tour title — and second Masters 1000 crown — Fritz broke Rublev with the second set tied 4-4, but the Russian returned the favor to stay alive in the next game and went up 6-5 before Fritz forced the tiebreaker.

In the WTA National Bank Open in Montreal, Naomi Osaka powered into the semifinals, beating No. 10 seed Elina Svitolina 6-2, 6-2 on Tuesday night.

Osaka advanced to face No. 16

seed Clara Tauson, who eliminated sixth-seeded Madison Keys 6-1, 6-4 in the first quarterfinal of the night.

Osaka, the four-time Grand Slam champion who reached No. 1 in the rankings, continued her best performance in a WTA 1000 tournament since reaching the final in Miami in 2022. She stepped away from tennis for 15 months toward the end of that season and had daughter Shai in July 2023.

The native of Japan is seeking her eighth career title and her first since the 2021 Australian Open.

"I'm really happy. I'm also really excited," Osaka said. "After Wimbledon (a third-round loss), I was really disappointed, and then I just kind of let go of my expectations. And now we're here."

"I find it kind of ironic, but I'm happy about it."

Osaka got to the final of the ASB Classic final in Auckland to begin this season and faced Tauson but had to retire due to an abdominal injury after winning the first set 6-4.

Canadian teenager Victoria Mboko takes on ninth seed Ele-

na Rybakina of Kazakhstan in the other semifinal Wednesday. Mboko, who's playing in her first main draw at the National Bank Open, will rise into the WTA's top 50 after beginning the year outside the top 300.

Tauson dedicated her victory to her grandfather, Peter, during an on-court interview at IGA Stadium.

"I really wanted to win for him today," she told the crowd before breaking down in tears. "I really wanted to come out here and show my best tennis for him, and hopefully he's watching."

Tauson said she only found out about her grandfather's death Monday, a day after she eliminated Wimbledon champion and No. 3-ranked Iga Swiatek 7-6 (1), 6-3.

She spoke of him as one of the biggest supporters of her career.

"He used to coach me a little bit playing tennis and drove me to almost every single practice from my school," the 22-year-old native of Denmark said. "It was tough news yesterday morning when I woke up, but I think it's for the better. He was not feeling great for a while."

South Korean star Son signing with MLS club LAFC

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Son Heung-min agreed to a contract with Los Angeles FC on Tuesday, finalizing his move to Major League Soccer after a decade at Tottenham Hotspur.

The 33-year-old South Korean superstar forward is joining LAFC three days after he formally announced his decision to leave Tottenham.

Son attended LAFC's Leagues Cup match against Tigres at BMO Stadium on Tuesday night, watching from a luxury suite. LAFC will formally introduce Son at a news conference Wednesday, but the club

showed the forward on the stadium video board late in the first half as he waved to roaring fans thrilled by their team's landmark acquisition.

LAFC, a deep-pocketed club with significant team success in its first eight seasons of existence, reportedly paid a transfer fee of more than \$20 million, which could end up being the most ever for an MLS move.

Son was a beloved presence at Spurs, scoring 173 goals in 454 competitive appearances for the North London club while rising to global prominence with his combination of speed, playmaking skill and finishing acumen.

The captain was given a memorable farewell last week in Seoul during Tottenham's exhibition match against Newcastle, getting a guard of honor from both teams and tearfully exiting in the second half while nearly 65,000 fans roared.

Vonn hires former ski great Svindal as coach

KENNELBACH, Austria — Lindsey Vonn has added former ski great Aksel Lund Svindal to her coaching team as she prepares for next year's Winter Olympics.

The 40-year-old American skier, who won the gold medal in

the downhill at the 2010 Games, returned to the sport last year with a new titanium knee and plans on competing at the Milan-Cortina Olympics in Italy from Feb. 6-22.

Vonn had to cut her career short in 2019 due to a series of crashes and injuries, but then she had two titanium pieces inserted into her right knee before her comeback.

Svindal, a two-time Olympic champion, will begin coaching Vonn at a training camp in Chile later this summer, according to a statement released Wednesday by Head, her equipment supplier.

RB Skattebo still out as Giants' injuries mount

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Cam Skattebo is not practicing with the New York Giants after experiencing a setback, fellow rookie Beaux Collins has also been sidelined by an undisclosed injury and standout left tackle Andrew Thomas has yet to make an appearance on the field at training camp after landing on the physically unable to perform list.

While there is still a month to go before the NFL season begins, the injuries are starting to pile up for the Giants on offense. Skattebo, their fourth-round pick out of Arizona State who was expected to be part of the running back rotation, was among those not participating Monday because of a hamstring injury.

"With all the guys that are hurt, they're all making progress," coach Brian Daboll said when asked about Skattebo. "If they can be out there, they'll be out there. ... Well see where we're at each day. Everybody is day by day."

Thomas appears further

away than that as he works back from surgery in October for a Lisfranc injury in his right foot. Asked about Thomas ramping up this week with the stated goal of him being ready for the opener Sept. 7 at Washington, Daboll said only, "He'll just keep working his rehab and continue to get better."

Going into his sixth pro season, the concern for Thomas is more about getting him fully healthy and less about the snaps he is missing. That is not so much the case for rookies such as Skattebo and Collins — the latter of whom is an undrafted free agent wide receiver trying to make the team at a crowded position.

"Any time you can't be out there, it doesn't help you," Daboll said. "Take advantage of the meeting time, but there's no substitute for being out on the field playing, particularly young players that are trying to earn a spot."

With Collins and veteran Darius Slayton not taking part in team practice and Bryce Ford-Wheaton on injured reserve af-

ter tearing an Achilles tendon, 26-year-old Montrell Washington has impressed when given the opportunity to run with the first- and second-team offenses.

Washington made a dazzling one-handed catch on a pass from first-round pick Jaxson Dart during 7-on-7 drills Monday, adding to his growing list of camp highlights.

"My motto is, 'A play a day keeps the coaches away,' so I'm trying to make as many plays as I can," said Washington, who signed as a free agent after stints with Kansas City and Denver. "We don't like when guys go down, but I'm just trying to be there to show the guys I'm available, I'm locked in (and) I can be that guy to make a play for you guys when y'all need me to."

Runningbacks have also been thinned, with Eric Gray also on the PUP list and Rushawn Baker waived with an injury designation. With the first preseason game set for Saturday at Buffalo, the Giants signed Jonathan Ward after a workout Monday.

Ward, like Washington, is a

newcomer. Devin Singletary is very familiar with Daboll's system from their time together in Buffalo and has embraced getting more carries in practice.

"Every day you've got to prove yourself," Singletary said. "Every day, we like to say, the rent is due, so for me, it doesn't matter if it's one opportunity or 30. I'm trying to make the most of every opportunity because nothing is given. Everything is earned in the league, and when you get an opportunity, you want to make the best of it every time and that's how you get more opportunities."

Daboll called Singletary "a vet that's having a really good camp" by keeping his head down and working.

Usurped for the starting job last year by Tyrone Tracy in part because of a groin injury that hampered him, Singletary feels he's back to 100% now and ready to contribute.

"Me, personally, I'm feeling good," Singletary said. "Just trying to make plays when my number is called. That's the name of the game."

Vikings' Addison suspended for 3 games over DUI case

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Jordan Addison was suspended for three games by the NFL on Tuesday for violating the league's personal conduct policy for a drunken driving case last year.

Addison avoided a trial by pleading no contest to a lesser charge last month, after facing two misdemeanor DUIs for his arrest July 12, 2024, when a California Highway Patrol officer found him asleep in his vehicle that was blocking a lane on an interstate exit near Los Angeles International Airport.

Addison will be permitted to practice and play in exhibition games before the suspension kicks in for games against Chicago, Atlanta and Cincinnati.

Addison, the 23rd pick of the 2023 draft, has 19 touchdowns and 1,786 receiving yards in his first two seasons to form a dominant duo with two-time All-Pro Justin Jefferson. But he was arrested for excessive speeding

the week before training camp of his rookie year, and the drunken driving arrest last offseason came after another dangerous off-the-field decision. Addison was contrite and remorseful upon reporting to training camp last year, praising the Vikings for their support after he said he was in a "dark place" after the arrest.

Rams extend Williams for 3 years

LOS ANGELES — Kyren Williams agreed to a three-year, \$33 million extension with the Los Angeles Rams on Tuesday, wrapping up months of contract negotiations with a deal through 2028.

Williams has been a productive starter in the Rams' backfield for two years, producing back-to-back 1,100-yard seasons. Los Angeles resolved its most significant contract issue before the new season with a deal that includes \$23 million in guaranteed money.

Williams made the Pro Bowl in 2023 while finishing third in the NFL in yards rushing, and he has rushed for 2,582 yards and 26 touchdowns while adding 464 yards receiving and five more TDs over three seasons as a versatile component of Sean McVay's offense.

Chargers bringing Allen back

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. — The Los Angeles Chargers agreed Tuesday to terms with six-time Pro Bowl wide receiver Keenan Allen.

Allen returns to the team that drafted him in 2013 after one season with the Chicago Bears.

He is second in Chargers history for both receptions (904) and receiving yards (10,530) for a wide receiver.

Los Angeles traded him to Chicago last offseason for a fourth-round draft pick. Allen had 70 catches for 744 yards and seven TDs with the Bears.

Rangers spoil Judge's Yankees return

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Nathan Eovaldi pitched eight sharp innings, Rowdy Tellez blooped a two-run single on a 10-pitch at-bat in the eighth and the Texas Rangers spoiled Aaron Judge's return with a 2-0 victory over the New York Yankees on Tuesday night.

Judge was 0 for 3 with two strikeouts as the designated hitter after being activated from the 10-day injured list. The All-Star slugger has a tendon strain in his right elbow, and New York plans to start a throwing program Wednesday to see how soon Judge can return to the outfield.

The Yankees have lost five in a row, one shy of their season worst, and 19 of their past 24 road games.

Anthony Volpe was the only baserunner against Eovaldi, reaching on a hustling double in the third when his soft liner landed behind shortstop Corey Seager in shallow left field.

Eovaldi (10-3) has allowed just two runs total in his past six starts. It was his seventh start since returning from right elbow inflammation.

Tellez fouled off four two-strike pitches from Devin Williams with the bases loaded and one out before dumping a ball in front of center fielder Trent Grisham.

Phillies 5, Orioles 0: Max Kepler and Brandon Marsh homered and Taijuan Walker pitched six scoreless innings as NL East-leading Philadelphia beat visiting Baltimore and extended its winning streak to three games.

Kepler hit a two-run homer in the second inning, his 12th of the season, and Bryson Stott hit an RBI triple off the top of the wall in right field to score Kepler in the fourth.

Blue Jays 10, Rockies 4: Daulton Varsho hit a pair of two-run homers and a two-run double, and visiting Toronto went deep five times in a victory over

Colorado.

Varsho homered after Alejandro Kirk's two-out single off Anthony Molina in the fourth to give the Blue Jays (67-48) a 3-2 lead.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. (three hits) and Addison Barger both homered for the 17th time. Kirk walked and scored on Varsho's 11th homer to cap the four-run inning. Varsho's double came in a three-run ninth to complete the scoring.

Tommy Nance pitched a scoreless ninth to end the game.

Dodgers 12, Cardinals 6: Max Muncy and Teoscar Hernandez each homered twice and Mookie Betts had three hits as host Los Angeles shook off its offensive struggles with a win over St. Louis.

Muncy, in just his second game following a month-long break due to a bone bruise injury from a collision, went 4 for 5 with four RBIs and three runs scored.

Hernandez was 4 for 5 with four RBI and two runs scored for the NL West-leading Dodgers.

Padres 10, Diamondbacks 5 (11): Luis Arráez had the go-ahead single in the 11th inning, Ramón Laureano added three hits and three RBIs, and visiting San Diego beat Arizona.

Arráez was hitless in five at-bats before hitting a bloop single into short left field. It was enough to score Fernando Tatis Jr. from second base for a 6-5 lead.

The Padres would tack on four more runs in the 11th.

Giants 8, Pirates 0: Logan Webb struck out 10 in six innings, and visiting San Francisco hit three home runs on its way to a victory over Pittsburgh.

Webb (10-8) allowed one run while scattering seven hits.

Koss opened the scoring with a drive into the left-field bleachers in the third inning. Jerar Encarnación's solo shot increased the Giants' lead to 3-1 in the fourth, and Willy Adames' 18th homer of the season made it 6-1 in the fifth.

Astros 7, Marlins 3: Jose Altuve and Yainer Diaz homered to

help visiting Houston beat Miami.

Jeremy Peña drove in two runs as the AL West-leading Astros won their second straight game.

Altuve hit a two-run drive off Cal Quantrill in the first for his 19th homer. Peña made it 4-1 with a two-run triple in the fourth, and Diaz hit a three-run shot in the fifth for his 16th homer.

Guardians 3, Mets 2: Steven Kwan singled home the tiebreaking run with two outs in the seventh inning, and visiting Cleveland beat New York.

Kyle Manzardo and Gabriel Arias each had an RBI single off starter Clay Holmes in the fourth as the Guardians erased an early 2-0 deficit.

Pete Alonso had a sacrifice fly in the first for the Mets, who have dropped seven of eight and are 1-4 on their six-game homestand. They fell 2½ games behind first-place Philadelphia in the NL East.

Reds 5, Cubs 1: Zack Littell struck out eight in seven crisp innings in his Cincinnati debut, and the visiting Reds beat Chicago.

Littell (9-8) allowed three hits and walked two in his first start since he was acquired in a trade with Tampa Bay last week.

Spencer Steer hit a tiebreaking three-run homer in Cincinnati's four-run seventh. The Reds (60-54) won for the third time in four games.

Rays 7, Angels 3: Brandon Lowe hit a two-run homer and Jake Mangum had a two-run single during visiting Tampa Bay's seven-run fourth inning in a victory over Los Angeles.

Yandy Diaz scored a run and drove in another during the decisive inning in the Rays' third win in 13 games.

Jo Adell homered and drove in all three runs for the Angels, who dropped to 6-6 on their 13-game homestand.

Athletics 16, Nationals 7: Shea Langeliers homered three times and finished with five hits

in his first game batting in the leadoff spot, and the visiting Athletics pounded slumping Washington.

Langeliers opened the game with a drive to center off MacKenzie Gore for his 20th homer. The 27-year-old catcher hit another leadoff shot in the fifth and the seventh.

Brewers 7, Braves 2: Freddy Peralta allowed only one run in five innings, Andrew Vaughn singled in two runs in Milwaukee's four-run fourth and the visiting Brewers beat Atlanta.

Milwaukee (69-44) extended its winning streak to five games to improve the majors' best record. The NL Central-leading Brewers began the day three games ahead of the second-place Chicago Cubs.

Twins 6, Tigers 3: Luke Keaschall hit his first homer in the majors and Trevor Larnach also cleared the fences against former teammate Chris Paddack, helping visiting Minnesota beat Detroit.

The AL Central-leading Tigers lost for just the third time in nine games. The rebuilding Twins had dropped seven of their previous nine games.

Mariners 8, White Sox 3: Eugenio Suárez homered and Bryan Woo pitched seven sparkling innings, helping host Seattle beat Chicago.

Josh Naylor and Dominic Canzone also went deep for the Mariners in their fourth win in five games. Jorge Polanco finished with two hits and two RBIs.

Red Sox 6, Royals 2: Garrett Crochet scattered four hits over seven innings and Trevor Story hit a bloop into center field to break a sixth-inning tie and lead host Boston over Kansas City.

Crochet (13-4) struck out eight to win his ninth consecutive decision and help the Red Sox win for the ninth time in 10 games. Story drove in two runs in the sixth and added another RBI single in the three-run seventh, when Boston took a 6-2 lead.