

USAF to deny retirement pay to trans troops

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Air Force said Thursday it would deny all transgender service members who have served between 15 and 18 years the option to retire early and would instead separate them without retirement benefits. One Air Force sergeant said he was “betrayed and devastated” by the move.

The move means that transgender service members will now be faced with the choice of either taking a lump-sum separation payment offered to junior troops or be removed from the service.

An Air Force spokesperson told The Associated Press that “although service members with 15 to 18 years of honorable service were permitted to apply for an exception to policy, none

of the exceptions to policy were approved.” About a dozen service members had been “prematurely notified” that they would be able to retire before that decision was reversed, according to the spokesperson who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal Air Force policy.

A memo issued Monday announcing the new policy, which was reviewed by the AP, said that the choice to deny retirement benefits was made “after careful consideration of the individual applications.”

All transgender members of the Air Force are being separated from the service under the Trump administration’s policies.

The move comes after the Pentagon was given permission in early May by the Supreme

Court to move forward with a ban on all transgender troops serving in the military. Days later, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced a policy that would offer currently openly serving transgender troops the option to either volunteer to leave and take a large, one-time separation payout or be involuntarily separated at later date.

A Pentagon official told reporters in May that they viewed the policy as treating “anyone impacted by it with dignity and respect.”

However, in late July, transgender troops told Military.com that they were finding the entire separation process, which has included reverting their service records back to their birth gender, “dehumanizing” or “open cruelty.”

Shannon Leary, a lawyer who

represents LGBTQ+ people in employment discrimination cases, says she expects lawsuits to challenge Thursday’s decision. “It seems quite arbitrary on its face and cruel,” she said. “These military members have dedicated their lives to serving our country.”

Normally, Leary said, when early retirement is offered in the military, it’s available to all members who have served over 15 years. She said she expects other service branches to follow the Air Force’s path.

Officials have said that as of Dec. 9, 2024, there were 4,240 troops diagnosed with “gender dysphoria” on active duty, National Guard and Reserve. Pentagon officials have decided to use the condition and its diagnosis as the main way to identify troops who are trans.

Trump’s deadline for Ukraine ceasefire arrives

Associated Press

DNIPROPETROVSK, Ukraine — Ukrainian soldiers on the battlefield expressed little hope for a diplomatic solution to the war, as President Donald Trump’s deadline arrived Friday for the Kremlin to make peace and he eyed a possible summit meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss Moscow’s invasion.

Exasperated that Putin did not heed his calls to stop bombing Ukrainian cities, Trump almost two weeks ago moved up his ultimatum to impose additional sanctions on Russia and introduce secondary tariffs targeting countries that buy Russian oil if the Kremlin did not move toward a settlement.

It was unclear what steps

Trump intended to take Friday. When asked Thursday whether his deadline would hold, Trump said of Putin: “It’s going to be up to him. We’re going to see what he has to say. It’s going to be up to him. Very disappointed.”

Trump’s efforts to pressure Putin into stopping the fighting have so far delivered no progress. Russia’s bigger army is slowly advancing deeper into Ukraine at great cost in troops and armor while it relentlessly bombards Ukrainian cities. Russia and Ukraine are far apart on their terms for peace.

Ukrainian forces are locked in intense battles along the 600-mile front line. The Pokrovsk area of the eastern Donetsk region is taking the brunt of punishment as Russia seeks to

break out into the neighboring Dnipropetrovsk region.

Intense fighting is also taking place in Ukraine’s northern Sumy border region, where Ukrainian forces are engaging Russian soldiers to prevent reinforcements being sent from there to Donetsk.

In the Pokrovsk area of Donetsk, a commander said he believes Moscow isn’t interested in peace.

“It is impossible to negotiate with them. The only option is to defeat them,” Buda, the Spartan Brigade commander, told The Associated Press. He used only his call sign, in keeping with the rules of the Ukrainian military.

In the Zaporizhzhia region, a howitzer commander using the

call sign Warsaw, said troops are determined to thwart Russia’s invasion.

“We are on our land; we have no way out,” he said. “So we stand our ground, we have no choice.”

The Kremlin said Friday that Putin had a phone call with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, during which the Russian leader informed Xi about the results of his meeting earlier this week with Trump envoy Steve Witkoff. Kremlin officials said Xi “expressed support for the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis on a long-term basis.”

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on X that he also had a call with Putin to speak about the latest Ukraine developments.

Israel plans offensive to retake Gaza City

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel said Friday it will intensify its 22-month war with Hamas by taking over Gaza City, drawing a dismissal from the militant group and renewed international calls to end the conflict, while stirring fears for Palestinian civilians and Israeli hostages still held in Gaza.

Israel's air and ground war has already killed tens of thousands of people in Gaza, displaced most of the population, destroyed vast areas and pushed the territory toward famine. The timing of another major ground operation remains unclear since it will likely hinge on mobilizing thousands of troops and forcibly evacuating civilians, almost certainly

exacerbating the humanitarian catastrophe.

Mediators from Egypt and Qatar are working on a new framework that will include the release of all hostages — dead and alive — in one go in return for an end of the war in Gaza and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the strip, two Arab officials said.

Before Israel's Security Cabinet approved the plan to take over Gaza City, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had outlined more sweeping plans Thursday in an interview with Fox News, saying Israel planned to take control of all of Gaza. Israel already controls around three-quarters of the territory.

Hamas rejected Israel's plans

in a statement. "Expanding of aggression against our Palestinian people will not be a walk in the park," the group said.

An expanded offensive could widen discord between Israel and international powers, which have stepped up criticism of the war amid mounting shock over media reports showing starvation.

Britain urged Israel to reconsider, and Germany said it would not authorize the export of military equipment that could be used in Gaza until further notice.

"The even harsher military action by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip, approved by the Israeli Cabinet last night, makes it increasingly difficult for the German government to see how

these goals will be achieved," Chancellor Friedrich Merz said.

Tensions could rise further if Netanyahu follows through on sweeping plans to take control of the entire territory, two decades after Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the strip.

Asked in the interview with Fox News ahead of the Security Cabinet meeting if Israel would "take control of all of Gaza," Netanyahu replied: "We intend to, in order to assure our security, remove Hamas there." He added that Israel did not intend to "keep it."

Israel's new plan stopped short of that, and may be aimed in part at pressuring Hamas to accept a ceasefire on Israel's terms.

NY attorney general subpoenaed as DOJ probes whether she violated Trump rights

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal prosecutors have issued subpoenas to New York Attorney General Letitia James for records related to a civil fraud case against President Donald Trump and a case against the National Rifle Association, people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

The two people could not publicly discuss specific details of the investigation and spoke to the AP on Friday on condition of anonymity.

Geoff Burgan, a spokesperson for the attorney general's office, declined to confirm the subpoenas but issued a statement that said, "Any weaponization of the justice system should disturb every American. We stand strongly behind our successful litigation against the Trump Organization and the National Rifle Association, and

we will continue to stand up for New Yorkers' rights."

In a separate statement, James' personal attorney, Abbe D. Lowell, said "if prosecutors carry out this improper tactic and are genuinely interested in the truth, we are ready and waiting with the facts and the law."

James, a Democrat, has sued Trump and his Republican administration dozens of times over his policies as president and over how he conducted his private business empire.

Trump is appealing the multimillion dollar judgment she won against him in a lawsuit alleging that he defrauded banks and other lenders by giving them financial statements that inflated the value of his properties, including his golf clubs and penthouse in Trump Tower.

Trump says his financial statements actually understat-

ed his wealth and that any mistakes in the documents were harmless errors that played no role in banks' lending decisions. He and his lawyers have repeatedly accused James of engaging in "lawfare" for political purposes — a claim she has denied.

The subpoenas were issued as part of an investigation into whether James violated Trump's civil rights, another person familiar with the matter told the AP.

The person could not discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The subpoenas mark an escalation of the Trump administration's ongoing efforts to scrutinize perceived adversaries of the president, including those like James who had investigated Trump before his election win last November.

Court tosses judge's finding of contempt

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An appeals court on Friday tossed out a judge's contempt finding against the Trump administration in a case over deportations to an El Salvador prison.

The decision from a divided three-judge panel based in the nation's capital vacates a finding from U.S. District Judge James E. Boasberg. Boasberg found in April there was probable cause to hold President Donald Trump's administration in criminal contempt of court.

Boasberg had accused Trump administration officials of rushing deportees out of the country under the Alien Enemies Act before they could challenge their removal in court and then willfully disregarding his order that planes already in the air should return to the United States.

Judge orders pause in building at Florida's 'Alligator Alcatraz'

Associated Press

MIAMI — A federal judge on Thursday ordered a two-week halt to construction at an immigrant detention center in the Florida Everglades dubbed “Alligator Alcatraz” as she considers whether it violates environmental laws.

The facility was quickly built two months ago at a lightly used, single-runway training airport and can hold up to 3,000 detainees in temporary tent structures. The site was continuing to be built out, but the order by U.S. District Judge Kathleen Williams temporarily bars the installation of any new industrial-style lighting, as well as any paving, filling, excavating or fencing. The order also prohibits any other site expansion, including placing or erecting any additional buildings, tents, dormitories or other residential or administrative facilities.

The order doesn't include any restrictions on law enforcement or immigration enforcement activity at the center, which is currently holding hundreds of detainees. Williams issued the temporary restraining order during a hearing and then followed up with a written order later Thursday.

Environmental groups and the Miccosukee Tribe have asked Williams to issue a preliminary injunction to halt operations and further construction. The suit argues that the project threatens environmentally sensitive wetlands that are home to protected plants and animals and would reverse billions of dollars' worth of environmental restoration.

“We're pleased that the judge saw the urgent need to put a pause on additional construction, and we look forward to advancing our ultimate goal of

protecting the unique and imperiled Everglades ecosystem from further damage caused by this mass detention facility,” said Eve Samples, executive director at Friends of the Everglades.

A spokesperson for Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis decried the ruling but said it “will have no impact on immigration enforcement in Florida.”

“Alligator Alcatraz will remain operational, continuing to serve as a force multiplier to enhance deportation efforts,” spokesperson Alex Lanfranconi said in a statement.

The order is temporary, since arguments in the case are still pending.

Plaintiffs presented witnesses Wednesday and Thursday in support of the injunction, while attorneys for the state and federal government were scheduled to present next week.

Trump puts more federal police on streets of DC

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House said Thursday night that there will be increased presence of federal law enforcement in the nation's capital to combat crime for at least the next week, amid President Donald Trump's suggestions that his administration could fully take over running the city.

“Washington, DC is an amazing city, but it has been plagued by violent crime for far too long,” White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement. “President Trump has directed an increased presence of federal law enforcement to protect innocent citizens.”

She added that the increased federal presence means “there will be no safe harbor for violent criminals in D.C.”

Trump has repeatedly suggested that the rule of Washington could be returned to federal authorities. Doing so would require a repeal of the Home Rule Act of 1973 in Congress, a step Trump said lawyers are examining — but could face steep pushback.

“We have a capital that's very unsafe,” Trump told reporters at the White House this week. “We have to run D.C.”

The White House said the increased law enforcement would “make D.C. safe again,” starting Thursday.

The push will last the next seven days with the option to extend “as needed,” under the authority of Trump's previous executive order establishing the Making DC Safe and Beautiful Task Force.

The added federal officials will be identified, in marked units and highly visible, the White House said.

Redistricting fight mushrooms with Vance in Indiana and Florida joining the action

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS, Indiana — As President Donald Trump ramps up pressure on Republican-run states to redraw congressional boundaries, he has dispatched Vice President JD Vance to Indiana and called for a new federal census — moves reflecting his intent to maximize the GOP's partisan advantages in coming elections.

Separately, a GOP leader in Florida announced plans Thursday to begin redistricting efforts in the president's adopted home state. And U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said FBI Director Kash Patel had granted his request for the agency to get involved in corralling Texas Democratic lawmakers who left

the state to deny the Republican majority a quorum necessary to vote on a U.S. House redistricting plan at the forefront of Trump's initiative.

The FBI has not detailed what role it might attempt to play. Indiana Gov. Mike Braun was mum after a private Thursday morning session with Vance. And Florida's plans are in their opening phase.

The developments reflect rising intensity in a fight that began in GOP-dominated Texas, spread to Democratic-run California and now seems to be mushrooming. The dynamics could embroil the 2026 midterm campaign in legislative and court battles testing Trump's power over the Republican Par-

ty, Democrats' ability to mount opposition and the durability of the U.S. system of federalism that balances power between Washington and individual states.

Texas has been the epicenter of Trump's push to gerrymander congressional maps to shore up Republicans' narrow House majority in 2026. At a time when competitive House districts number just several dozen, Democrats are three seats short of a House majority under the current maps. Trump wants five more seats out of Texas to potentially avoid a repeat of the 2018 midterms, when Democrats reclaimed the House and proceeded to thwart his agenda and impeach him twice.

Intel's stock tumbles after Trump says CEO must resign

Associated Press

Shares of Intel slumped Thursday after President Donald Trump said in a social media post that the chipmaker's CEO needs to resign.

"The CEO of Intel is highly CONFLICTED and must resign, immediately," Trump posted on Truth Social. "There is no other solution to this problem. Thank you for your attention to this problem!"

Trump made the post after Sen. Tom Cotton sent a letter to Intel Chairman Frank Yeary expressing concern over CEO Lip-Bu Tan's investments and ties to semiconductor firms that are reportedly linked to the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Liberation Army, and asked the board whether Tan had divested his interests in these companies to eliminate any conflicts of interest.

It's not immediately clear if Tan, who took over as Intel's CEO in March, has divested his interests in the companies.

In a statement, Intel said it's

"deeply committed to advancing U.S. national and economic security interests and are making significant investments aligned with the President's America First agenda."

"In March 2025, Intel appointed Lip-Bu Tan as its new CEO," Cotton wrote in the letter. "Mr. Tan reportedly controls dozens of Chinese companies and has a stake in hundreds of Chinese advanced-manufacturing and chip firms. At least eight of these companies reportedly have ties to the Chinese People's Liberation Army."

Cotton specifically called out Tan's recent leadership of Cadence Design Systems in the letter.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Cadence, in July, agreed to plead guilty to resolve charges that it violated export controls rules to sell hardware and software to China's National University of Defense Technology, which is linked to the Chinese military.

Tan was the CEO of Cadence when the company violated the rules between 2015 and 2021.

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security also fined Cadence \$95 million for the same breaches, saying Cadence admitted that "employees of its Chinese subsidiary knowingly transferred sensitive U.S. technology to entities that develop supercomputers in support of China's military modernization and nuclear weapons programs."

Cadence did not immediately respond to AP requests.

Tan previously launched the venture capital firm Walden International in 1987 to focus on funding tech startups, including chip makers. China's state media has described Tan as "actively" devoted to Chinese and Asian markets, having invested not only in the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company but also China's state-owned enterprise SMIC, which seeks to advance China's chip-making capabilities.

Colleges told to prove race isn't considered

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Colleges will be required to submit data to prove they do not consider race in admissions under a new policy ordered Thursday by President Donald Trump.

In 2023, the Supreme Court ruled against the use of affirmative action in admissions but said colleges may still consider how race has shaped students' lives if applicants share that information in their admissions essays.

Trump is accusing colleges of using personal statements and other proxies to consider race, which conservatives view as illegal discrimination.

The role of race in admissions has featured in the Trump administration's battle against some of the nation's most elite colleges — viewed by Republicans as liberal hotbeds. For example, the new policy is similar to parts of recent settlement agreements the government negotiated with Brown University and Columbia University, restoring their federal research money. The universities agreed to give the government data on the race, grade point average and standardized test scores of applicants, admitted students and enrolled students. The schools also agreed to be audited by the government and to release admissions statistics to the public.

The memo directs Education Secretary Linda McMahon to require colleges to report more data "to provide adequate transparency into admissions." The National Center for Education Statistics will collect new data, including the race and sex of colleges' applicants, admitted students and enrolled students, the Education Department said in a statement.

JD Vance went kayaking for his birthday. Secret Service had the river level raised

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Vice President JD Vance's security detail had an Ohio river's water level raised last weekend to accommodate a kayaking trip he and his family took to celebrate his 41st birthday.

The U.S. Secret Service said it requested the increased water-flow for the Little Miami River to ensure motorized watercraft and emergency personnel "could operate safely" while protecting the Republican vice president, whose home is in Cincinnati.

The Army Corps of Engineers declined to address any financial impact of raising the river.

Vance spokesman Taylor Van Kirk said the vice president was unaware the river had been raised.

The Vance family has already become accustomed to certain accommodations being made as they move about the world.

During a recent trip to Italy, the Roman Colosseum was closed to the public so that his wife, Usha, and their children could take a tour, sparking anger among some tourists. The

Taj Mahal also was closed to visitors during the Vance family's visit to India.

Such special treatment isn't reserved for one political party.

When Democratic Vice President Al Gore, then a presidential candidate, paddled down the Connecticut River for a photo opportunity in 1999, utility officials had opened a dam and released 4 billion gallons of water to raise the river's level.

That request, too, came after a review of the area by the Secret Service — and Gore also experienced political pushback.

Fire north of LA prompts evacuation order

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A brush fire in a mountainous area north of Los Angeles ignited and spread quickly Thursday, forcing thousands of evacuations.

The Canyon Fire ignited around 1:30 p.m., growing to over 2.3 square miles in five hours, according to Ventura County emergency response. It remained zero percent contained late Thursday and was spreading east, the county said.

The fire is burning just south of Lake Piru, a reservoir in the Los Padres National Forest. It's close to Lake Castaic, a popular recreation area burned by the

Hughes Fire in January. That fire burned about 15 square miles in six hours and put 50,000 people under evacuation orders or warnings.

In LA County, around 4,200 residents and 1,400 structures are under an evacuation order, and another 12,500 residents are under an evacuation warning, said spokesperson Andrew Dowd for the Ventura County Fire Department.

The evacuation zones in nearby Ventura County are relatively unpopulated, Dowd said. Fifty-six people were evacuated from the Lake Piru recreation area.

Dowd said the fire was a “very dynamic situation” caused by hot, dry weather, steep and rugged terrain and dry fuel. There were 250 firefighters on the ground coordinating with helicopters and other air support, he said.

LA County Supervisor Kathryn Barger urged residents to evacuate.

“Extreme heat and low humidity in our north county have created dangerous conditions where flames can spread with alarming speed,” Barger said in a statement. “If first responders tell you to leave, go—without hesitation.”

The new blaze comes as a massive wildfire in Central California became the state's largest blaze of the year, threatening hundreds of homes and burning out of control in the Los Padres National Forest.

The Gifford Fire had spread to 154 square miles by Thursday afternoon and was at 15% containment. It grew out of at least four smaller fires that erupted last Friday along State Route 166, forcing closures in both directions east of Santa Maria, a city of about 110,000 people. It has injured at least four people. The causes of the fires are under investigation.

Japanese warships visit New Zealand's capital

Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — Japanese warships docked in New Zealand's capital Friday for the first time in almost 90 years amid efforts by Tokyo to deepen its strategic ties in the South Pacific Ocean.

Two destroyers with more than 500 crew on board sailed into Wellington harbor accompanied by the New Zealand navy ship HMNZS Canterbury.

The JS Ise and destroyer JS Suzunami were on an Indo-Pacific deployment and arrived from Sydney, where Japan's military took part this month in war games involving New Zealand, Australia and other countries.

The Wellington visit was a ceremonial one, but it came as Japan, whose only treaty ally is the United States, has increas-

ingly sought to deepen bilateral military cooperation amid ongoing regional tensions.

“Our defense force are developing cooperative work, not only with New Zealand and Australia but also many Pacific Island countries,” Japan's envoy to Wellington, Makoto Osawa, told reporters Friday. “Our main goal is the free and open Indo-Pacific.”

The ambassador's remarks followed the announcement Tuesday by Australia's government that Japanese firm Mitsubishi Heavy Industries had won the bid for a contract to build Australian warships, beating out a German firm.

While officials in Canberra said the Japanese proposal was the best and cheapest, they also hailed it as the biggest defense industry agreement between the countries.

Lawsuit seeks records of Epstein communications

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A legal organization challenging President Donald Trump's administration on multiple fronts filed a lawsuit on Friday seeking the release of records detailing the handling of the sex trafficking investigation into Jeffrey Epstein.

The group Democracy Forward sued the Justice Department and the FBI for senior administration officials' communication about Epstein documents and any regarding correspondence between him and Trump.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Washington, appears to be the first of its kind. The group says it submitted requests under the Freedom of Information Act for the records related to communications about the case in late July that have not yet

been fulfilled.

“The court should intervene urgently to ensure the public has access to the information they need about this extraordinary situation,” said Skye Perryman, the president and CEO of the Democratic-aligned group, in a statement. The federal government often shields records related to criminal investigations from public view.

Democracy Forward has filed dozens of lawsuits against the administration, challenging policies and executive orders in areas including education, immigration and health care.

The Epstein case has been subject to heightened public focus since the Justice Department said last month it would not release additional documents from the case, despite assurance from Attorney General Pam Bondi.

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WNBA struggles with thrown sex toys

Associated Press

The WNBA is still struggling with a string of sex-toy disturbances.

In the past week and a half, sex toys have been thrown on court during games in Atlanta on July 29, Chicago on Aug. 1, Los Angeles on Aug. 5 and Chicago again on Thursday night, with the most recent object hitting the court in the closing seconds of the Atlanta Dream's victory over the Sky.

The sex toy that landed on the court in Los Angeles nearly hit Fever guard Sophie Cunningham during Indiana's game against the Sparks. Sex toys were also thrown at games in New York and Phoenix last Tuesday but didn't reach the court. Police say another toy was thrown at a game in Atlanta on Aug. 1, although it's unclear if that one reached the court.

The distractions have created unexpected challenges for the league, the teams and the players, but also for arena security. Here's what to know:

Are arrests being made?

A man was arrested Saturday in College Park, Ga., after he was accused of throwing a sex toy onto the court during the Atlanta Dream's July 29 matchup with the Golden State Valkyries, according to a police report. The report said he threw another sex toy during the Dream's Aug. 1 game against the Phoenix Mercury, but that instance did not seem to result in a delay of play.

He is charged with disorderly conduct, criminal trespassing, public indecency and indecent exposure. All four charges are misdemeanors in the state of Georgia, meaning that if he is convicted, the punishment for each can be a fine of up to \$1,000 or jail time of up to 12 months. A misdemeanor for public indecency and indecent exposure may also require registration on the state's sex offender list.

The report said the man told police "this was supposed to be a joke and the joke (was) supposed to go viral."

Another man in Phoenix was arrested after police say he threw a sex toy in the crowd at a Mercury game on Tuesday. Police say the 18-year-old pulled the sex toy from his sweater pocket and threw it toward seats in front of him, striking a spectator in the back.

The man later told police it was a prank that had been trending on social media and that he bought the toy a day earlier to take to the game. He was later tackled by a volunteer at the arena who had witnessed the in-

cident and began following him as the man tried to leave the arena.

Police say the man was arrested on suspicion of assault, disorderly conduct and publicly displaying explicit sexual material.

The New York Liberty told The Associated Press on Thursday night that there is an ongoing investigation into the throwing in New York and the team is cooperating with law enforcement.

What difficulties do arena security face in stopping this?

The types of sex toys being thrown onto the court generally do not include metal elements, meaning that arena metal detectors are not able to sense them. When carried on a spectator's body, they become even more difficult to detect.

Arena security teams face challenges in catching these items, according to Ty Richmond, the president of the event services division at Allied Universal Security, a company that provides security services to certain NBA, WNBA, NFL, MLB and MLS arenas across the country.

"Not all stadiums are using a screening process that's consistent and can detect (the sex toys) because of what it would require — pat-down searches, opening the bags, prohibiting bags," he said. "The conflict of expediency, of getting fans into the arena and into the venue, which is an important issue, and security and safety."

The limits of arena security make legal action one of the strongest deterrents for this kind of behavior, Richmond said.

"The decision to prosecute and show examples of how people are being handled is very important," he said. "Without a doubt, I think it will make a difference. The application of it is important, and publicizing that is important."

There have not been any arrests made yet in Los Angeles and Chicago. In a statement to the AP, the Sparks said they are "working with arena personnel to identify the individual responsible and ensure appropriate action is taken."

The WNBA has said that any spectators throwing objects onto the court will face a minimum one-year ban and prosecution from law enforcement.

How is it affecting players?

As the disturbances pile up, those on the court have become increasingly frustrated.

"Everyone is trying to make sure the W is not a joke and it's taken seriously, and then

Thomas becomes WNBA's 1st with 3 straight triple-doubles

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Alyssa Thomas had 18 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists to become the first WNBA player with three straight triple-doubles as the Phoenix Mercury beat the Indiana Fever 95-60 on Thursday night for their third consecutive victory.

Thomas secured her 19th career triple-double with 3:47 left on a pass to the corner for DeWanna Bonner's 3-pointer. Thomas has 41 points, 33 rebounds and 32 assists in her past three games.

Bonner finished with a season-high 23 points. Satou Sabally had 15 points and eight rebounds, and Kahleah Copper scored 11 for Phoenix (19-11).

Sophie Cunningham scored 18 points for Indiana (17-14). Caitlin Clark (right groin) missed her ninth straight game.

that happens," Cunningham said on her podcast after nearly being hit by one of the sex toys on Tuesday. "I'm like, 'How are we ever going to get taken seriously?'"

No other professional sports leagues have faced sex-toy disturbances like this. It has started a conversation online about the perpetrators' choices to throw them during games in a women's league and a league with a high-profile number of lesbian and queer players.

"This has been going on for centuries, the sexualization of women. This is the latest version of that. It's not funny. It should not be the butt of jokes," Minnesota Lynx coach Cheryl Reeve said Thursday. "The sexualization of women is what's used to hold women down, and this is no different."

Despite the criminal behavior leading to arrests, at least one crypto-based predictions market is offering trades essentially allowing users to wager on whether sex toys will be thrown at future WNBA games.

Players have also been sounding off on social media, echoing concerns about arena security protocols.

Liberty forward Isabelle Harrison posted on X last week, saying "ARENA SECURITY?! Hello?! Please do better. It's not funny. Never was funny. Throwing ANYTHING on the court is so dangerous."

Mariners win in 11, sweep White Sox

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Dominic Canzone singled home the winning run in the 11th inning and the Seattle Mariners completed a three-game sweep of the Chicago White Sox with a 4-3 victory Thursday.

Randy Arozarena hit an early two-run homer for the Mariners, who swept a series for the first time since July 11-13. They moved within 1½ games of first-place Houston in the AL West.

Michael A. Taylor and Brooks Baldwin each had a solo homer for the White Sox, who lead the majors with 37 home runs since the All-Star break.

Each team scored in the 10th.

Lenyn Sosa raced home on a wild pitch from Seattle reliever Eduard Bazarzo with the bases loaded to give Chicago a 3-2 lead. But in the bottom half, a throwing error by third baseman Josh Rojas on Miles Mastrobuoni's sacrifice bunt allowed Arozarena to score the tying run.

Athletics 6, Nationals 0: Jacob Lopez struck out a career-high 10 batters in 7⅓ innings, Colby Thomas hit his first major league home run and drove in three, and the Athletics won at Washington.

Tyler Soderstrom also ho-

mered for the Athletics, who took two of three from Washington and have won nine of their past 13.

The Nationals have lost seven of eight and at 45-69 are tied for a season-high 24 games under .500. Washington was outscored 61-23 during its six-game home stand against Milwaukee and the A's.

Lopez (5-6) didn't allow a runner past second in the longest outing of his career. He allowed three hits and no walks, and retired his last 11 batters.

Thomas, who debuted June 30 and was playing his 17th career game, ripped Mitchell Parker's elevated fastball to center for a two-run homer in the second inning. Shea Langeliers hit a sacrifice fly three batters later to make it 3-0.

Darell Hernaiz hit a triple into the corner in left to lead off the fourth, then scored on Thomas' sacrifice fly.

Soderstrom opened the eighth with a shot into the Nationals' bullpen in right off PJ Poulin.

Parker (7-12) allowed four runs and struck out four in five innings.

Pirates 7, Reds 0: Paul Skenes struck out eight in six shutout innings, Bryan Rey-

nolds and Henry Davis homered and Pittsburgh defeated visiting Cincinnati.

Skenes (7-8) allowed seven hits, the highest mark of his career, and remained undefeated against Cincinnati in four career starts. His record streak of allowing six or fewer hits to open an MLB career ended at 46 games. The longest such streak to begin a career (excluding openers), according to OptaStats, had belonged to Shohei Ohtani, who went 31 starts from 2018-21 for the Los Angeles Angels.

Skenes extended his scoreless streak to 27⅓ innings; he last allowed a run June 8 against Philadelphia. He lowered his ERA to a MLB-best 1.94.

Reynolds opened the scoring with solo homer with two-out in the bottom of the first, and Jared Triolo drove in two more runs. In their last seven games, the Pirates have scored 18 runs in the first.

Spencer Horwitz extended Pittsburgh's lead with an RBI single in the fourth. Two batters later, Reynolds' two-out single chased Cincinnati's Brady Singer (9-9), who allowed six hits and four runs in 3⅓ innings.

Oneil Cruz added an RBI single in the sixth, and Davis hit a

two-run shot in the seventh.

Ke'Bryan Hayes went 1 for 3 in his return to Pittsburgh after a deadline trade sent him to Cincinnati.

Braves 8, Marlins 6: Drake Baldwin homered twice and drove in five runs, Marcell Ozuna also went deep and Atlanta rallied past visiting Miami.

Ozuna and Baldwin each had three hits for the Braves, who snapped a three-game skid after trailing 6-2 in the sixth inning.

Miami has dropped three of four since winning five straight and nine of 11.

Baldwin and Ozuna launched back-to-back solo homers with two outs in the first, the seventh time Atlanta has hit consecutive home runs this season and first since June 5.

Miami answered quickly, scoring five runs in the second capped by Eric Wagaman's two-run triple and Graham Pauley's two-run homer. Jakob Marsee had an RBI single.

Agustín Ramírez added an RBI single for the Marlins in the fourth.

Atlanta's comeback began in the sixth with Baldwin's three-run shot to right-center off starter Eury Pérez that gave the rookie catcher his first career multihomer game.

NBA MVP given key to hometown of Hamilton, Ontario

Associated Press

HAMILTON, Ontario — NBA MVP Shai Gilgeous-Alexander received the key to the city of Hamilton from Mayor Andrea Horwath at a public rally Thursday at Hamilton Stadium.

Horwath also announced the Oklahoma City star will have a street named after him after capping an epic season by leading the Thunder to the NBA title.

"Growing up as I traveled across the world, to countless states, cities and countries peo-

ple always asked where I was from," Gilgeous-Alexander told a raucous gathering after hoisting the NBA championship trophy over his head. "I took pride in letting everyone know I was from Hamilton.

Gilgeous-Alexander was honored before the second quarter of the CFL game between the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and the B.C. Lions.

Canadian teen wins 1st WTA title in Montreal

MONTREAL — Canadian

teenager Victoria Mboko completed a dream run to the National Bank Open title Thursday night, overcoming a swollen right wrist start to beat Japanese star Naomi Osaka 2-6, 6-4, 6-1. The 18-year-old Mboko — who will jump from 85th to 25th in the world — won her first WTA Tour title and joined Faye Urban in 1969 and Bianca Andreescu in 2019 as the only Canadians to win the event in the open era. Born in Charlotte, N.C., to Congolese parents, Mboko grew up in Toronto. She

upset top-seeded Coco Gauff 6-1, 6-4 to reach the quarterfinals.

Shelton rallies to beat Khachanov in Toronto

TORONTO — Ben Shelton won the National Bank Open on Thursday night for the third and biggest title of his young career, rallying to beat 11th-seeded Karen Khachanov of Russia 6-7 (5), 6-4, 7-6 (3). The 22-year-old Shelton, seeded fourth, became the first American winner in the Masters 1000 hard-court event

Raiders tie Seahawks as Carroll returns to Seattle

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Pete Carroll's Seattle return ended without a winner when Jalan Gaines blocked Daniel Carlson's 55-yard field-goal try for Las Vegas as time expired, leaving the Raiders and Seahawks tied at 23 on Thursday night.

Carroll, 73, coaching his first preseason game with the Raiders, was narrowly denied the victory in his return to Seattle, where he led the Seahawks to some of their highest moments.

The Raiders did lead a late comeback to secure the tie, with Carlson kicking a 51-yard field goal with about a minute left. It was the third field goal of the game for Carlson, who had a long of 56 yards. He also missed a 55-yarder to end the first half.

"We started really poorly," Carroll said.

"We didn't run the ball well in the first half; we didn't really do anything very well. But we stayed close, and it was the opportunity for us to face that and then come back and see what you can do in the second half, and it was a marvelous second half."

Carroll coached the Seahawks for 14 years, going 137-

89-1 and putting together double-digit victories eight times over a nine-year stretch. He led Seattle to its only Super Bowl victory in 2013.

Carroll showed the energetic, outgoing personality he was known for in Seattle before the game, talking with many Seahawks players during warmups.

Raiders starting quarterback Geno Smith, who was Seattle's starter the past three seasons, played the opening series for Las Vegas along with most of the offensive starters. Smith completed one of his three passes for 15 yards before making way for Aiden O'Connell, who played into the fourth quarter. O'Connell led all passers, going 18 for 30 for 205 yards with a touchdown and two interceptions.

"We started out really slow, and that's to be expected for a preseason game," Smith said. "But in that second half, we played inspired football. I saw Coach Carroll running up and down the sidelines just out of his mind a little bit."

Most of the Seahawks' starters didn't play, including quarterback Sam Darnold, running

back Kenneth Walker III and wide receivers Cooper Kupp and Jaxon Smith-Njigba.

"You never want to tie a football game," Seattle coach Mike Macdonald said. "That kinda stinks, but there was a lot of great stuff on both sides of the ball."

Drew Lock opened the game at quarterback for Seattle and played the first half, going 12 for 22 for 147 yards with a touchdown and an interception. Rookie Jalen Milroe, the Seahawks' third-round draft pick, came on for the second half, going 6 for 10 for 61 yards.

The Seahawks opened the scoring with a 24-yard touchdown run by George Holani in the final minute of the first quarter, and Lock threw a 10-yard touchdown to Tory Horton in the second quarter, giving the Seahawks a 13-3 lead after the extra point was blocked.

Las Vegas got in the end zone for the first time in the third quarter, as O'Connell found Dylan Laube for a 6-yard touchdown pass.

Undrafted rookie Jacardia Wright had a 1-yard touchdown run with nine minutes left in the fourth quarter for Seattle.

Patriots to unveil 1st statue: Tom Brady

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Tom Brady left his imprint all over the New England Patriots' record books during his stellar two-decade run with the team.

Now, he is set to become the first player in franchise history to be honored with a statue.

During a star-studded Patriots Hall of Fame induction last June, at which Brady's No. 12 was also retired by the team, Patriots owner Robert Kraft announced a 12-foot bronze likeness of the quarterback was being commissioned from a local sculptor "to perpetuate the legendary legacy of the great Tom Brady."

What Kraft promised would be a "larger than life" ode to Brady will be unveiled on Friday prior to New England's exhibition against the Washington Commanders.

Brady will be on hand for the ceremony, which is scheduled to include remarks by Kraft and an address by Brady to fans, who are being allowed into the plaza in front of Gillette Stadium four hours before the game to accommodate an expected large crowd.

Drafted 199th overall in 2000, Brady rose to become the face of the Patriots dynasty as he led the team to six Super Bowl titles and 17 division championships in 18 seasons as a starter. He won another Super Bowl with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 2021.

Chargers tackle suffers season-ending leg injury weeks after signing extension

Associated Press

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. — Los Angeles Chargers tackle Rashawn Slater suffered a torn patellar tendon in practice Thursday and will miss the upcoming season.

He'll undergo surgery and be placed on injured reserve, the team said.

Slater was hurt less than two weeks after signing a multiyear

contract extension last month.

Slater's teammates came up to hug him before he was carted off the field.

"We're praying for him, man. We hope he's doing well," outside linebacker Tuli Tuipulotu said. "That's just something you don't want to see."

Slater has started all 52 career games at left tackle since being drafted 13th overall by the

Chargers in the first round in 2021. Slater has been Justin Herbert's main protector, allowing the quarterback to set several league-wide passing records.

Last season, Slater's presence helped the offense commit a franchise-record eight turnovers, tying for the second-fewest offensive turnovers in a single season in NFL history.