

Trump to patrol DC; feds use checkpoints

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump planned to join a Thursday evening patrol in the nation's capital as federal authorities deployed checkpoints around the city.

"I'm going to be going out tonight with the police and with the military," the Republican president told Todd Starnes, a conservative commentator.

Trump's presence during his controversial crackdown, which has lasted for two weeks, would be the latest show of force from the White House. Hundreds of federal agents and National Guard soldiers have surged into Washington this month, leaving some residents on edge and creating tense confrontations in the streets.

Vice President JD Vance and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Wednesday visited some of the troops at Union Station, showing

their support while protesters chanted "free D.C."

Although the city has historically struggled with crime, statistics show the problem was declining before Trump declared there was a crisis that required his intervention.

Immigration enforcement has been a core part of the crackdown, rattling people in some of the city's neighborhoods. A day care was partially closed on Thursday when staff became afraid to go to work because they heard about federal agents nearby. An administrator asked parents to keep their children at home if possible.

Other day cares have stopped taking kids on daily walks because of fears about encountering law enforcement.

Since Aug. 7, when Trump began surging federal agents into the city, there have been 630 arrests, including 251 people who

are in the country illegally, according to the White House. Trump has been ratcheting up the pressure since then, seizing control of the D.C. police department on Aug. 11 and deploying more National Guard troops, mostly from Republican-led states.

Soldiers have been largely stationed in downtown areas, such as monuments on the National Mall and transit stations.

However, federal agents are operating more widely through the city. D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser acknowledged the proliferation of traffic checkpoints on Thursday.

"The surge of federal officers is allowing for different types of deployments, more frequent types of deployments, like checkpoints," Bowser said.

The Supreme Court has upheld the use of law enforcement and government checkpoints for specific purposes, such as for polic-

ing the border and for identifying suspected drunk drivers.

But there are restrictions on that authority, especially when it comes to general crime control. Jeffrey Bellin, a former prosecutor in Washington and professor at Vanderbilt Law School who specializes in criminal law and procedures, said the Constitution doesn't allow "the government to be constantly checking us and stopping to see if we're up to any criminal activity."

He said checkpoints for a legally justifiable purpose — like checking for drivers' licenses and registrations — cannot be used as "subterfuge" or a pretext for stops that would otherwise not be allowed. And though the court has affirmed the use of checkpoints at the border, and even some distance away from it, to ask drivers about immigration status, Bellin said it was unlikely the authority would extend to Washington.

2 sailors injured in USS New Orleans fire off Okinawa

BY BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA

Stars and Stripes

WHITE BEACH NAVAL FACILITY, Okinawa — U.S. sailors extinguished a blaze aboard the USS New Orleans, an amphibious transport dock ship anchored off Okinawa's southeastern coast, early Thursday after a 12-hour battle alongside Japanese sailors and the country's coast guard.

Sailors aboard the New Orleans finally put out the fire at 4 a.m. with assistance from the crew of its sister dock ship USS San Diego moored at White Beach.

The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, Japan coast guard and Navy commands across Okinawa also helped fight the fire,

U.S. 7th Fleet said in an unsigned statement issued around 6 a.m.

Two sailors were treated for minor injuries aboard the ship, the fleet said.

The fire started in the forward area of the 684-foot-long vessel, a coast guard spokesman said Wednesday. The cause is under investigation, the fleet said.

Seventh Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Tommy Groves declined in an email Thursday to answer further questions, saying he had no additional information.

The ship may be carrying munitions, and the fire "has caused great anxiety" to Okinawa, Gov. Denny Tamaki said Thursday during his regular morning news conference, a prefecture spokesman said by phone.

"One wrong move could have led to a major disaster involving the local residents, which is extremely regrettable," the governor said, according to the spokesman.

Two tugboats with the Maritime Self-Defense Force and two commercial tugboats did most of the firefighting on the Japanese side, a coast guard spokeswoman said Thursday. The Navy on Okinawa provided logistics and communications through its emergency operations center.

The Harbor Boat Unit at White Beach helped take personnel to the tugboats and the New Orleans, spokeswoman Candice Barber wrote in an email Thursday.

The coast guard vessel Ishigaki

briefly stepped in after one of the tugboats experienced mechanical issues at 10:40 p.m. but stood down after another tugboat arrived about an hour later, according to coast guard news releases.

Another undisclosed Japanese navy vessel responded to the fire after Camp Foster called for assistance at 5 p.m. Wednesday, but it left the scene sometime after 5:55 p.m. when the request was withdrawn, the coast guard spokeswoman said. The call was reinstated at 7:28 p.m.

Three coast guard vessels — the Ishigaki, the Shimagumo and the Awagumo — were surveilling the area as of 9:30 a.m. Thursday.

No oil spills from the New Orleans have been reported, the spokeswoman said.

Pilot health care program for civilians in Japan extended

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Defense Department has extended a pilot program to help its civilian employees in Japan find health care, but their family members are still not permitted to take advantage of its services.

The program, which connects civilians with Japanese health care providers and issues payment guarantees, begins its second phase Sept. 30 and continues until Sept. 29, 2026, according to an Aug. 8 memorandum obtained by Stars and Stripes.

The first phase began Jan. 1 with a \$4.2 million budget and was originally scheduled to conclude Sept. 29.

The memorandum, signed by Anthony Tata, undersecretary of defense personnel and readiness, identified two “gaps” in the program’s services: interpreter services and coverage for DOD civilian dependents.

The program already offers written translation services and

a bilingual customer service call center but will add interpreter services for medical appointments, “subject to their availability,” according to Tata’s memo and an email Tuesday from Pete Graves, spokesman for the Military Health System.

Assistance for dependents is left for further study during the second phase, according to the memo.

The Japan Civilian Medical Advocacy group, a grassroots organization established to help DOD civilians navigate Japan’s often complex health care system, said it was “encouraged to see this valuable medical resource extended for civilians in Japan,” according to a statement provided Wednesday by group member Alexandra Cummings.

“However, we are disappointed that the service does not extend to dependents and civilian employees continue to be asked to put their families at risk,” the group said.

The group also identified a “critical gap” in accessible emergency care for all Americans in Japan, a topic Tata’s memo does not address.

“Because this program often takes days or longer to provide services, it does not address the urgent risks our community faces in emergencies,” the group said in the statement.

Graves said the program’s first year was intended to establish a structure and explore its benefits.

The second year, he said, will “monitor participant feedback and utilization rates to determine if the contract will expand to include dependents of DoD Civilians.”

Access to health care became a concern for DOD civilians in Japan in December 2022, when DHA limited civilians to space-available appointments only at military health care facilities and encouraged them instead to seek care from local providers, most of which do not accept foreign health insurance.

Army OKs new facility for artillery shells

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Army has greenlit a new facility to support production of in-demand artillery shells, after stockpiles shrank following shipments to Ukraine and Israel.

MSM Group North America Inc. was awarded a \$635 million contract on Aug. 15 to design and build the Future Artillery Complex at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant, the Army said Wednesday.

The facility is slated for completion in August 2029. It will rely on robotics and technology to load, assemble and pack 155 mm munitions, an Army statement said.

The award is part of the service’s effort to modernize and expand production of the shells, which are used in platforms like the M777 Howitzer and the M109 Paladin.

The Army had aimed to have 100,000 shells per month in production by October. The goal has since been pushed back to mid-2026, Warren told reporters in July.

It has also delivered tens of thousands of shells to Israel since its 2023 conflict with Hamas began.

The Army supplies ammunition for all U.S. military services and numerous allies, the Wednesday statement said.

An Army statement in February called the 155 mm shell the “backbone of U.S. and allied field artillery.” It features a high-fragmentation steel body and about 24 pounds of explosive material.

The Army awarded a \$435 million contract in November to build a TNT production facility in Kentucky, a statement said at the time.

Pilot rescued off Virginia coast after Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet crash in Atlantic

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

A Navy pilot based at Naval Air Station Oceana was rescued from the Atlantic Ocean off Virginia’s coast Wednesday after ejecting from an F/A-18E Super Hornet, according to a service statement.

The pilot from Strike Fighter Squadron 83 ejected just before 10 a.m. and was rescued about an hour and 20 minutes later, said Lt. Jackie Parashar, a

spokeswoman for Naval Air Force Atlantic. The pilot was transported to a local hospital “for further medical evaluation,” though the pilot’s condition was not disclosed.

Parashar said the fighter jet remained in the ocean late Wednesday afternoon.

It was not clear what led the pilot to eject during the “routine training flight.” Authorities were beginning an investigation into the incident, Parashar said.

Strike Fighter Squadron 83, known as the Rampagers, flies F/A-18Es out of NAS Oceana and deploys aboard aircraft carriers. It last deployed in late 2023 for nine months aboard the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower. During that deployment, its pilots flew more than 1,000 combat flight hours in the Red Sea against Iran-backed Houthi militants in Yemen who were attacking commercial and military vessels, according to the Navy.

Calif. acting fast on congressional map

Associated Press

The national redistricting battle entered its next phase Thursday as California Democrats were scheduled to pass a new congressional map that creates five winnable seats for their party, a direct counter to the Texas House's approval of a new map to create more conservative-leaning seats in that state.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom has engineered the high-risk strategy in response to President Donald Trump's own brinkmanship. Trump pushed Texas Republicans to reopen the legislative maps that they passed in 2021 to squeeze out up to five new GOP seats to help the party stave off a midterm defeat.

Unlike in Texas, where passage by the Republican-controlled state Senate and signature by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott are now all that's needed to make the maps official, California faces a more uncertain route.

Democrats must use their legislative supermajority to pass the map by a two-third margin. Then they must schedule a special election in Novem-

ber for voters to approve the map that Newsom must sign by Friday to meet ballot deadlines.

The added complexity is because California has a voter-approved independent commission that Newsom himself backed before Trump's latest redistricting maneuver. Only the state's voters can override the map that commission approved in 2021.

But Newsom said extraordinary steps are required to counter Texas and other Republican-led states that Trump is pushing to revise maps.

"This is a new Democratic Party, this is a new day, this is new energy out there all across this country," Newsom said Wednesday on a call with reporters. "And we're going to fight fire with fire."

Texas Democratic lawmakers, vastly outnumbered in that state's legislature, delayed approval of the new map by 15 days by fleeing Texas earlier this month in protest. They were assigned round-the-clock police monitoring upon their return to ensure they attended Wednesday's session.

That session ended with an 88-52 party-line vote approving

the map after more than eight hours of debate. Democrats have also vowed to challenge the new Texas map in court and complained that Republicans made the political power move before passing legislation responding to deadly floods that swept the state last month.

In a sign of Democrats' stiffening redistricting resolve, former President Barack Obama on Tuesday night backed Newsom's bid to redraw the California map, saying it was a necessary step to stave off the GOP's Texas move.

"I think that approach is a smart, measured approach," Obama said during a fundraiser for the Democratic Party's main redistricting arm.

The incumbent president's party usually loses congressional seats in the midterm election, and the GOP currently controls the House of Representatives by a mere three votes.

Trump is going beyond Texas in his push to remake the map. He's pushed Republican leaders in conservative states like Indiana and Missouri to also try to create new Republican seats. Ohio Republicans were already revising their map before Texas

moved. Democrats, meanwhile, are mulling reopening Maryland and New York's maps as well.

However, more Democratic-run states have commission systems like California's or other redistricting limits than Republican ones do, leaving the GOP with a freer hand to swiftly redraw maps. New York, for example, can't draw new maps until 2028 and even then only with voter approval.

Texas Republicans openly said they were acting in their party's interest. State Rep. Todd Hunter, who wrote the legislation formally creating the new map, noted that the U.S. Supreme Court has allowed politicians to redraw districts for nakedly partisan purposes.

There was little that outnumbered Democrats could do other than fume and threaten a lawsuit to block the map. Because the Supreme Court has blessed purely partisan gerrymandering, the only way opponents can stop the new Texas map would be by arguing it violates the Voting Rights Act requirement to keep minority communities together so they can select representatives of their choice.

Court throws out civil fraud penalty against Trump

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A New York appeals court on Thursday threw out President Donald Trump's massive civil fraud penalty while upholding a judge's finding that he exaggerated his wealth for decades. The ruling spares Trump from a potential half-billion-dollar fine but bans him and his two eldest sons from serving in corporate leadership for a few years.

The decision came seven months after the Republican returned to the White House. A panel of five judges in New York's mid-level Appellate Division said the verdict, which stood

to cost Trump more than \$515 million and rock his real estate empire, was "excessive."

After finding Trump engaged in fraud by flagrantly padding financial statements that went to lenders and insurers, Judge Arthur Engoron ordered him last year to pay \$355 million in penalties. With interest, the sum has topped \$515 million.

The total — combined with penalties levied on some other Trump Organization executives, including Trump's sons Eric and Donald Jr. — now exceeds \$527 million, with interest.

"While the injunctive relief ordered by the court is well crafted

to curb defendants' business culture, the court's disgorgement order, which directs that defendants pay nearly half a billion dollars to the State of New York, is an excessive fine that violates the Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution," Judges Dianne T. Renwick and Peter H. Moulton wrote in one of several opinions shaping the appeals court's ruling.

Engoron's other punishments, upheld by the appeals court, have been on pause during Trump's appeal, and he was able to hold off collection of the money by posting a \$175 million bond.

The court, which split on the merits of the lawsuit and Engoron's fraud finding, dismissed the penalty in its entirety while also leaving a pathway for an appeal to the state's highest court, the Court of Appeals. Trump and his co-defendants, the judges wrote, can seek to extend the pause on any punishments taking effect.

The panel was sharply divided, issuing 323 pages of concurring and dissenting opinions with no majority. Rather, some judges endorsed parts of their colleagues' findings while denouncing others, enabling the court to rule.

Gabbard to slash intel workforce

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Office of the Director of National Intelligence will dramatically reduce its workforce and cut its budget by more than \$700 million annually, the Trump administration announced Wednesday.

The move amounts to a major downsizing of the office responsible for coordinating the work of 18 intelligence agencies, including on counterterrorism and counterintelligence, as President Donald Trump has tangled with assessments from the intelligence community.

His administration also this week has revoked the security

clearances of dozens of officials, while last month declassifying documents meant to call into question long-settled judgments about Russian interference in the 2016 election.

“Over the last 20 years, ODNI has become bloated and inefficient, and the intelligence community is rife with abuse of power, unauthorized leaks of classified intelligence and politicized weaponization of intelligence,” Tulsi Gabbard, the director of national intelligence, said.

She added: “Ending the weaponization of intelligence and holding bad actors accountable are essential to begin to

earn the American people’s trust which has long been eroded.”

Among the changes are to the Foreign Malign Influence Center, which is meant to track influence operations from abroad and threats to elections. Officials said it has become “redundant” and that its core functions would be integrated into other parts of the government.

The reorganization is part of a broader administration effort to rethink how it tracks foreign threats to American elections, a topic that has become politically loaded given Trump’s long-running resistance to the intelligence community’s assessment

that Russia interfered on his behalf in the 2016 election.

In February, for instance, Attorney General Pam Bondi disbanded an FBI task force focused on investigating foreign influence operations, including those that target U.S. elections.

The Trump administration also has made sweeping cuts at the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which oversees the nation’s critical infrastructure, including election systems. And the State Department in April shut down its office that sought to deal with misinformation Russia, China and Iran have been accused of spreading.

Judge refuses to unseal grand jury transcripts

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A federal judge on Wednesday rejected the Trump administration’s request to unseal grand jury transcripts from Jeffrey Epstein’s sex trafficking case, joining two other judges who declined to release similar records from investigations into the late financier’s sexual abuse.

Judge Richard Berman, who presided over the 2019 case, ruled a week after another Manhattan federal judge turned

down the government request to release transcripts from the grand jury that indicted Epstein’s longtime confidante Ghislaine Maxwell.

Barring reversal on appeal, Berman’s decision appears to foreclose the possibility of federal courts releasing Epstein-related grand jury testimony. A federal judge in Florida declined to release grand jury documents from an investigation there in 2005 and 2007, though some material from a state case

against Epstein was made public last year.

The rulings were a resounding repudiation of the Justice Department’s effort to unlock the records, a move the administration undertook amid a fierce backlash over its refusal to release documents.

Berman and the judge in Maxwell’s case, Paul A. Engelmayer, made clear in their rulings that the grand jury transcripts contain none of the answers likely to satisfy public in-

terest in the case.

President Donald Trump had called for the release of transcripts amid rumors and criticism about his long-ago involvement with Epstein. Trump promised to release files related to Epstein, but he was met with criticism when the small number of records released by his Justice Department lacked new revelations.

Each of the judges who declined to release transcripts cited grand jury secrecy rules.

State Department employee fired over talking points on Israel

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The State Department has fired a press officer who was responsible for drafting Trump administration talking points about policy toward Israel and Gaza after complaints from the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem.

Officials said Shahed Ghoreishi, a contractor working for the Bureau of Near East Affairs, was terminated following two incidents last week in which his loyalty to Trump policies was

called into question.

Ghoreishi, who is Iranian American, also was targeted Wednesday by right-wing personality Laura Loomer, who accused him of not being fully supportive of the administration’s policies in the Middle East.

According to Ghoreishi and two current U.S. officials, Ghoreishi drew the ire of a senior official at the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem and then top aides to Secretary of State Marco Rubio for drafting a response to a que-

ry from The Associated Press last week. The question related to discussions between Israel and South Sudan about relocation of Palestinians from Gaza to South Sudan.

The draft response included a line that said the U.S. does not support the forced relocation of Gazans, something that President Donald Trump and his special envoy Steve Witkoff have said repeatedly.

However, according to Ghoreishi and the officials, that line

was rejected by the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem, leading to questions about policy back in Washington.

Ghoreishi also said he questioned a statement from the embassy that referred to the West Bank as “Judea and Samaria,” the Biblical name for the Palestinian territory that some right-wing Israeli officials prefer. Mike Huckabee, U.S. ambassador to Israel, also has repeatedly backed referring to the West Bank by Judea and Samaria.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

DC unemployment rate again highest in country

DC WASHINGTON — The seasonably adjusted unemployment rate in Washington, D.C., was the highest in the nation for the third straight month, according to new data released Tuesday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

D.C.'s jobless rate reached 6% in July, a reflection of the mass layoffs of federal workers, ushered in by President Donald Trump's Department of Government Efficiency, earlier this year. An overall decline in international tourism — which is a main driver of D.C.'s income — is also expected to have an impact on the unemployment rate in the District.

Neighboring states also saw an uptick in unemployment rates in July — with Maryland at 3.4% (up from 3.3%) and Virginia at 3.6% (up from 3.5%), according to the state-by-state jobless figures.

In July, the Supreme Court cleared the way for Trump administration plans to downsize the federal workforce further, despite warnings that critical government services will be lost and hundreds of thousands of federal employees will be out of their jobs.

Reporter: Mayor's ex-aide gave her a cash-filled bag

NY NEW YORK — A longtime adviser to New York City Mayor Eric Adams who resigned from his administration while under FBI scrutiny gave a reporter a potato chip bag filled with cash Wednesday following a campaign event, a gift her lawyer later insisted wasn't an attempt-

ed bribe.

The local news site The City reported the episode hours after one of its reporters said Winnie Greco had pressed a bag of potato chips into her hands containing a red envelope with a \$100 bill and several \$20 bills. The reporter, Katie Honan, had scrutinized Greco's conduct in the past as a major fundraiser for Adams in the Chinese American community.

Greco's attorney, Steven Brill, said the situation was being "blown out of proportion."

"This was not a bag of cash," Brill wrote in an email. "In the Chinese culture, money is often given to others in a gesture of friendship and gratitude. And that's all that was done here. Winnie's intention was born purely out of kindness."

Asked why Greco wanted to make such a gesture to Honan, Brill said, "She knows the reporter and is fond of her."

The City said it interviewed Greco later Wednesday and she apologized, saying she made "a mistake."

Settlement mandates education up to age 22

MT HELENA — A federal district court approved a settlement dictating that Montana students with individualized education programs are eligible for public education up to the age of 22.

In the Aug. 13 settlement between Disability Rights Montana and the state, the Montana Office of Public Instruction must offer students with disabilities access to public education past the age of 18.

A 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals case in Hawaii from 2013 established a parallel prece-

dent. Most states maintain a similar policy.

Montana federal Judge Dana Christensen approved the settlement, which mandates that the Montana Office of Public Instruction offer re-enrollment to students with individualized education plans who graduated without a diploma in the spring of 2025.

Carrying some weapons now won't bring charges

DC WASHINGTON — Federal prosecutors in the nation's capital will no longer bring felony charges against people for possessing rifles or shotguns in the District of Columbia, according to a new policy adopted by the leader of the nation's largest U.S. attorney's office.

That office will continue to pursue charges when someone is accused of using a shotgun or rifle in a violent crime or has a criminal record that makes it illegal to have a firearm.

Local authorities in Washington can prosecute people for illegally possessing unregistered rifles and shotguns.

U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro said in a statement that the change is based on guidance from the Justice Department and the Office of Solicitor General and conforms with two Supreme Court decisions on gun rights.

Prosecutor under review after warning amid arrest

RI NEWPORT — A Rhode Island prosecutor is under review after police body camera footage recorded her warning officers "you're gonna regret this" while she was being arrested.

Devon Flanagan, a special assistant attorney general, was arrested outside a restaurant by Newport police Aug. 14 for trespassing, according to law enforcement.

Body camera footage provided by the police department shows Flanagan asking an officer multiple times to turn off his body camera and then repeatedly saying "I'm an AG."

Eventually, Flanagan is put in a patrol vehicle and says, "Buddy, you're gonna regret this. You're gonna regret it."

Shrimp recalled over potential contamination

DC WASHINGTON — Walmart has recalled frozen, raw shrimp sold in 13 states because federal health officials say it could have potential radioactive contamination.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration asked Walmart to pull three lots of Great Value brand frozen shrimp from stores after federal officials detected Cesium-137, a radioactive isotope, in shipping containers and a sample of breaded shrimp imported from Indonesia.

The products could pose a "potential health concern" for people exposed to low levels of Cesium-137 over time, FDA officials said.

"If you have recently purchased raw frozen shrimp from Walmart that matches this description, throw it away," FDA officials said in a statement.

The risk from the recalled shrimp is "quite low," said Donald Schaffner, a food safety expert at Rutgers University.

— From wire reports

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Sinner, Alcaraz still rule as US Open arrives

Associated Press

NEW YORK — OK, sure, maybe it wouldn't be rational to say there's no point in actually holding the full U.S. Open and instead just fast-forwarding to the inevitable matchup for the men's championship between Jannik Sinner — assuming he's healthy — and Carlos Alcaraz on Sept. 7.

Seems reasonable, though.

"We know," Novak Djokovic acknowledged, "they're the dominant force right now."

When singles action begins Sunday at Flushing Meadows, a change from the usual Monday start, there are cases to be made for various players to make their way to the women's final. The top three in the rankings — No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka, No. 2 Iga Swiatek and No. 3 Coco Gauff — have won the past three U.S. Open titles, for example. Other past major champions such as Naomi Osaka or Elena Rybakina have performed well lately; maybe a new face will emerge.

When it comes to the men, however, there really is just one name that matters in this post-

Big Three era, and that name is "Sincaraz," the silly, made-up, "Fedal"-style mashup of the guys who are ranked No. 1 (Sinner) and No. 2 (Alcaraz) and have claimed seven Grand Slam trophies in a row and nine of the last 12.

Djokovic took the other three in that span.

There is nothing quite like it in the women's game at the moment. The past five Slams were won by five players: Swiatek (Wimbledon in July), Gauff (French Open in June), Madison Keys (Australian Open in January), Sabalenka (last year's U.S. Open) and Barbora Krejickova (last year's Wimbledon).

"Sinner and Alcaraz," said Marcos Giron, an American who has been ranked 37th and faced both, "are bringing a ridiculous level, week in and week out."

Look at the ATP rankings, which either could lead after the U.S. Open. Look at the titles. Look at the past two Grand Slam finals, with Alcaraz erasing a two-set deficit and saving three championship points to win the French Open in June, before

Sinner won in four sets at Wimbledon in July. Look at the most recent Masters 1000 tournament, the Cincinnati Open, where Sinner didn't drop a set en route to Monday's final but quit because he was feeling ill, ceding the trophy to Alcaraz.

That ended Sinner's 26-match winning streak on hard courts; Alcaraz was responsible for the previous defeat, too. Alcaraz collected his tour-leading sixth trophy this season and has won 39 of his most recent 41 contests.

Since Sinner returned in May from a three-month doping ban, Cincinnati was the fourth event both entered — and they met to decide the title in all four.

They hit the ball as hard as anyone. Sinner's returns rival Djokovic's for best in the game. Alcaraz's drop shots are unrivaled. The athleticism displayed by both is remarkable. Alcaraz might be the fastest guy around. Sinner's long limbs reach everything.

What sets them apart from others?

"Their confidence. Their ball-striking. Their movement is ba-

sically perfect," said Sam Querrey, a former player who made it to Wimbledon's semifinals and the U.S. Open's quarterfinals. "It seems like they hit the ball with just a little extra force when they need to."

It leaves other elite players such as Ben Shelton, the 22-year-old American who is ranked No. 6, so-close-yet-so-far at majors.

Shelton's 2025 Grand Slam resume includes losses to Sinner at the Australian Open, to Alcaraz at the French Open and to Sinner at Wimbledon.

"Frustrating," Shelton said. "Two very different players and challenges."

The sample size is, admittedly, small, but these two are producing the sort of riveting points and thrill-a-minute matches that Roger Federer vs. Rafael Nadal, or Nadal vs. Djokovic, used to.

"The rivalry is real. It's there," said Darren Cahill, one of Sinner's two coaches. "And hopefully it's going to be there and real for the next 10 or 12 years."

Schedule strength to play bigger role in CFP selections

Associated Press

The College Football Playoff selection committee announced Wednesday that it will place more emphasis on strength of schedule this year when determining which teams make the 12-team field.

The committee said in a statement that the schedule strength metric has been adjusted to apply greater weight to games against strong opponents. An additional metric, record strength, has been added to go beyond a team's schedule strength to assess how a team performed against that schedule.

"This metric rewards teams defeating high-quality opponents while minimizing the penalty for losing to such a team," the committee said. "Conversely, these changes will provide minimal reward for defeating a lower-quality opponent while imposing a greater penalty for losing to such a team."

The adjustment to the evaluation process comes after some in the Southeastern Conference complained about last season's inclusion of — at the time of selections — an 11-2 SMU of the Atlantic Coast Conference over a 9-3 Alabama or even a 9-3 South Carolina or 9-3 Mississippi.

The Mustangs' losses were to an unranked BYU and a ranked Clemson in the ACC championship game. The Crimson Tide had bad losses against Vanderbilt and Oklahoma, both .500 at the time, but also had wins over a second-ranked Georgia, No. 21 Missouri and No. 14 LSU.

Prompted by concerns about how teams that don't play in conference championship games are judged, the committee reviewed the movement of idle teams from the second-to-last ranking to final ranking. The selection committee reaffirmed that movement in the final week should be evidence-based, and did not recommend creating a

formal policy prohibiting such movement.

The committee also updated its policy on recusal of selection committee members.

A member will be fully recused from the evaluation of a team if they receive direct compensation from the school in question or has an immediate family member who is a football player, football staff member or senior administrator at the school. A fully recused member is not allowed to participate in any deliberations or vote concerning that school.

A member will be partially recused if they have a secondary relationship with the school in question, such as an immediate family member employed by the institution but outside of the football program or senior administration. A partially recused member may remain present and participate in discussions related to the team in question, but is not allowed to participate in votes involving the team.

Maher wants to hook Americans on rugby

Associated Press

SUNDERLAND, England — Iona Maher's mission at the Women's Rugby World Cup is about more than just winning games.

Heading into the United States' tournament opener on Friday, the world's most followed rugby player on social media wants to get more eyeballs on the sport as it ramps up attempts to crack the market in America.

"Not many people know that there's a Women's Rugby World Cup going on, so we try to get as many people as we can to spread that knowledge," Maher said ahead of the match against host England in the World Cup curtain-raiser in Sunderland.

"We want the fans in America to see us play here because we've got a World Cup there in eight years and we need to start building for that."

Rugby authorities see Amer-

ica as a vital new market for the sport. The United States will stage the men's Rugby World Cup in 2031 and the women's tournament in 2033.

The presence of Maher is key to attracting attention on rugby in the U.S., given she has 5.2 million followers on Instagram and 3.6 million on TikTok — platforms on which she promotes body positivity.

The 29-year-old Vermont native believes she and her teammates are "changing the game on and off the field a lot.

"This is a time where women's rugby is in a state where it could grow massively," she said, "and I do believe this team is at the forefront with how we present ourselves and people's perception of us."

Maher certainly stands out, having been named as the best breakthrough athlete at the ESPYs last month.

She used that opportunity to urge a theater full of fellow

American sports glitterati to try and catch the Women's Rugby World Cup.

"You're not going to understand it the first time you watch it," Maher said.

"You're not going to understand the second time either, but just keep watching."

What she was promising any perseverer was a rousing show — with Americans in it! — in an era-defining World Cup that has set records even before it kicks off.

Rugby fans anticipating the 10th and best Women's World Cup yet have gobbled up tickets at a stunning rate.

Faraway New Zealand hosted the last tournament in 2022 and sold a record 150,000 tickets.

This year more than 375,000 tickets — 80% of the total — have gone, and the Sept. 27 final is sold out, guaranteeing the largest crowd ever for a one-day women's rugby event.

In an interview with the BBC ahead of the World Cup, she said she has been approached by the WWE — joking that her ring name would be "Mahervellous" if she ever became a wrestler — and that she'd love to get into acting.

First, though, she wants to deliver at the World Cup, starting with a match against England, the tournament favorite.

A star in rugby sevens, in which she won a bronze medal with the U.S. team at the Paris Olympics last year, Maher also had a three-month stint at English club Bristol in the 15 players-a-team format at the start of 2025.

"I think it's so cool," Maher said, "that we're up here, so far away from maybe where rugby union is big, and yet we're getting 40,000 people out to a game."

The Americans also will play Australia and Samoa in Pool A at the World Cup.

Sex testing to be required for next month's worlds match

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The governing body for Olympic-style boxing will require sex testing for all fighters wishing to compete in the women's division at its world championships next month.

World Boxing already had announced its plan to require competitors to undergo a polymerase chain reaction test or an equivalent genetic screening test to determine their sex at birth. The rules will be implemented ahead of the World Boxing Championships in Liverpool, England, in early September, the organization announced Wednesday.

The tests identify the presence or absence of Y chromosome genetic material as the indicator of biological sex.

"World Boxing respects the dignity of all individuals and is keen to ensure it is as inclusive as possible," World Boxing presi-

dent Boris Van Der Vorst said.

"Yet in a combat sport like boxing, we have a duty of care to deliver safety and competitiveness fairness, which are the key principles that have guided the development and creation of this policy."

Paris Olympic champion Imane Khelif of Algeria declined to enter a World Boxing tournament in the Netherlands in June, shortly after the governing body initially announced its plans to introduce sex testing.

Van Der Vorst later apologized for specifically naming Khelif, who initially planned to fight in the tournament, while outlining World Boxing's future testing plans.

Khelif and fellow gold medalist Lin Yu-ting from Taiwan excelled in Paris under a harsh spotlight of widespread scrutiny and misconception about their sex.

The 26-year-old Khelif repeatedly has said she was born a woman, and she has competed at all levels of women's amateur boxing for nearly a decade.

Chromosome testing was common in Olympic sports during the 20th century but was largely abandoned in the 1990s because of numerous ambiguities that couldn't be easily resolved by the tests, collectively known as differences in sex development. Many sports switched to hormone testing to determine sex eligibility, but those tests require governing bodies to make difficult decisions on the eligibility of women with naturally high testosterone levels.

World Boxing said athletes with DSD in which male androgenization occurs will be eligible to compete only in the men's category.

But the governing body also said it would offer extensive addi-

tional analysis and evaluation for athletes with Y chromosome genetic material who wish to compete in the women's categories, including genetic screening, hormonal profiles, anatomical examination and further evaluation of endocrine profiles by medical specialists. An appeals process also is available.

National federations are responsible for conducting the tests and submitting the results, World Boxing said.

Earlier this year, World Athletics — the governing body for track and field — became the first Olympic sport to reintroduce chromosome testing, requiring athletes who compete in the women's events to submit to the test once in their careers. World Athletics has set a deadline of Sept. 1 for athletes to submit to the gene tests ahead of the world championships.

Diamondbacks rally to beat Guardians

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Lourdes Gurriel Jr. led off the ninth inning with a tying homer, Adrian Del Castillo had a broken-bat RBI single in the 10th and the Arizona Diamondbacks beat the Cleveland Guardians 3-2 on Wednesday.

Gurriel hit his 17th home of the season, a 424-foot shot to left off Cade Smith. The Arizona outfielder also had an RBI single off Parker Messick in the first.

Making his major league debut, Messick allowed a run on seven hits in 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings, leaving with a 2-1 lead. The left-hander struck out six and walked one.

In the bottom of the 10th, Alex Thomas led off with sacrifice bunt to move automatic runner Pavin Smith to third, and Del Castillo followed with the broken-bat single to left.

Brandon Pfaadt allowed two runs on five hits in seven innings for Arizona.

Pirates 2, Blue Jays 1: Johan Oviedo earned his first major league win since 2023 and host Pittsburgh beat Toronto to take the three-game series.

Oviedo (1-0) struck out six, allowed two hits, one run and had a walk in five innings. Dennis Santana struck out one in a perfect ninth for his ninth save.

Toronto, first in the AL East, dropped two of three to Pittsburgh, last in the NL Central.

Phillies 11, Mariners 2: Trea Turner had five hits and a pair of RBIs, Kyle Schwarber homered and drove in five runs, and Philadelphia completed a three-game sweep of Seattle with a home win.

Turner has six multi-hit games in his last seven. He led off the game with a triple and collected four singles.

Schwarber hit a National League-leading 45th homer and had an RBI double, a run-scoring single and a sacrifice fly.

Max Kepler had three hits, including a homer, and Bryson Stott had three hits and two RBIs for the Phillies, who have won four straight.

Jesús Luzardo (12-6) allowed one run on three hits.

Julio Rodríguez and Eugenio Suárez each hit solo homers for Seattle, which has lost five straight and seven of eight.

Tigers 7, Astros 2: Dillon Dingler tripled in a six-run first inning and Detroit swept Houston with a home win.

Dingler added a double and scored twice as the Tigers won for the seventh time in eight games. The Astros have lost four straight.

Framber Valdez (11-7) gave up seven runs, matching a season high, in five innings.

The Tigers scored five runs before Valdez recorded an out.

Marlins 6, Cardinals 2: Sandy Alcántara pitched two-run ball for seven innings, rookie Máximo Acosta homered for his first career hit and host Miami beat St. Louis.

Alcántara (7-11) scattered five hits and struck out a season-high nine.

Acosta hit a fastball from Cardinals starter Andre Pallante 418 feet over the wall in center in the sixth inning to increase Miami's lead to 5-2.

Nationals 5, Mets 4: Josh Bell homered and drove in two runs, rookie reliever Cole Henry pitched out of a jam in the sixth inning and host Washington held on to beat New York 5-4, ending their three-game winning streak.

Rookie Brad Lord (4-6) pitched five sharp innings for the Nationals before losing his command in the sixth. He walked the first two batters, then gave up back-to-back one-out doubles to Pete Alonso and Jeff McNeil that got the Mets within 5-4.

Braves 1, White Sox 0: Hurston Waldrep struck out a career best-tying seven in seven innings as host Atlanta beat Chicago.

Marcell Ozuna scored from third base in the fourth inning on an infield error as Atlanta took the rubber game of the three-game series. Raisel Iglesias pitched the ninth for his 21st save.

Chicago has now lost six of its

last seven games and 13 of its last 16.

Yankees 6, Rays 4 (10): Giancarlo Stanton hit a pinch-hit, two-run home run in the top of the 10th inning to lift the Yankees to a road win over Tampa Bay.

The late power surge came after Rays catcher Hunter Feduccia doubled off Yankees closer David Bednar with two outs in the ninth, driving in two runs to tie the game. Bednar (4-5) stole the win from rookie Cam Schlichter.

Schlichter held the Rays scoreless and to one hit over a career-high 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings.

Rangers 6, Royals 3: Kyle Higashioka had a three-run double in the ninth inning after a two-out error by Vinnie Pasquantino, and visiting Texas rallied to beat Kansas City.

Wyatt Langford drew a two-out walk from Sam Long (1-3) and Corey Seager was safe when Pasquantino misplayed his slow roller at first.

Hoby Milner (2-3) got the final four outs for the win.

Athletics 4, Twins 2 (10): Shea Langeliers hit a two-run homer in the 10th inning and the visiting Athletics beat Minnesota.

Langeliers hit a 401-foot shot to right-center off Génesis Cabrera (0-1) with automatic runner Nick Kurtz on second. The Athletics finished 1 for 9 with runners in scoring position.

Michael Kelly (3-2) got the final two outs in the ninth for the victory, and Tyler Ferguson worked the 10th for his second save.

Minnesota tied it in the fifth on Trevor Larnach's RBI single and Brooks Lee's run-scoring double to center.

Cubs 4, Brewers 3: Michael Busch hit a three-run double off Jacob Misiorowski, and host Chicago beat Milwaukee for their third consecutive victory over the NL Central leaders.

Matt Shaw added a solo homer as Chicago won for the fifth time in six games. Colin Rea (10-5) pitched three-hit ball into the sixth inning.

The Cubs improved to 7-5 against the Brewers this year, clinching the season series. They trail Milwaukee by six games going into the series finale on Thursday.

Rockies 8, Dodgers 3: Hunter Goodman had three hits and three RBIs, Tanner Gordon gave up one run in six innings, and MLB-worst Colorado roughed up Shohei Ohtani in his first pitching start at Coors Field in a home victory over Los Angeles. The reigning National League MVP got hit on the right leg off the bat of Colorado's Orlando Arcia in the fourth inning.

The Rockies, who are 37-90 and 35 games behind the Dodgers in the NL West, have won seven of their last nine. The Dodgers had won 28 of their previous 35 games against Colorado.

Gordon (4-5) earned the win for the Rockies after surrendering 26 earned runs across 15 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings in his previous four starts.

Angels 2, Reds 1: Yusei Kikuchi threw seven strong innings, Luis Rengifo hit a tiebreaking RBI single in the eighth and host Los Angeles beat Cincinnati.

Bryce Teodosio doubled off reliever Graham Ashcraft (7-5) to open the eighth and took third on a wild pitch. Oswald Peraza grounded out, with Teodosio holding, and Rengifo fisted an RBI single over third baseman Ke'Bryan Hayes' head for the lead.

Padres 8, Giants 1: Gavin Sheets hit two of host San Diego's four home runs and drove in four runs, and Fernando Tatis Jr. robbed San Francisco's Rafael Devers of a homer as the Padres beat the Giants.

Manny Machado and Ryan O'Hearn also homered for the Padres, who pulled within one game of the Los Angeles Dodgers in the NL West.

Tatis made a sensational leaping catch to rob Devers in the first after the left-hander hit a high fly ball to right field off left-hander JP Sears.