

Trump downplays Venezuela airspace threat

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump said Sunday that people shouldn't read much into a social media post where he said Venezuelan airspace should be considered closed.

His post from Saturday morning, addressed to airlines and "Drug Dealers," added to jitters in the region about possible U.S. strikes on Venezuelan territory.

"Don't read anything into it," he told reporters Sunday aboard Air Force One. He added, "We consider Venezuela to be not a very friendly country."

The U.S. is enacting a widening campaign in the Caribbean, one that began with fatal strikes on boats in international waters and continued when the U.S. deployed additional Navy ships, including an aircraft carrier, to the region, adding to speculation it may be about to strike Venezuela.

Trump confirmed he held a phone call recently with Presi-

dent Nicolas Maduro but declined to describe how it went. "I wouldn't say it went well or badly," he said.

He also downplayed concerns from Republican lawmakers about a potentially illegal fatal strike on a damaged boat in the Caribbean.

The Defense Department is facing mounting questions after a Washington Post report that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered a fatal strike on boats and demanded specifically that those strikes kill everyone on board.

That led to a second strike on the damaged hull of a boat on Sept. 2 to kill two people wounded in the first strike, the Post reported.

"I'm going to find out about it, but Pete said he did not order the death of those two men," Trump said.

Asked whether or not a potential second strike would be legal, he replied, "No, I wouldn't

have wanted that, not a second strike. The first strike was very lethal."

Analysts say that the naval strikes were already being carried out under dubious or shaky legal authority, and the strikes have been raising concerns among U.S. allies.

The administration argues the boats are legitimate targets because they are allegedly ferrying drugs that are intended for eventual distribution in the United States.

Trump said he wasn't concerned about any possible future legal challenges "because you can see the boats. You can see the drugs in the boats, and each boat is responsible for killing 25,000 Americans. So I think they do an amazing job."

The report of a follow-up strike to kill wounded people drew rare pushback against the president from a number of Republican lawmakers.

Ohio Rep. Mike Turner told

CBS on Sunday that such a strike would, if confirmed, amount to an "illegal act."

Meanwhile, Nebraska's Don Bacon told reporters at ABC that it would be a "clear violation of the law of war."

Sen. Roger Wicker, who currently serves as chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has said that the panel intends to launch an investigation into the strikes in the aftermath of the report.

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration warned airlines on Nov. 22 to "exercise caution" in Venezuela, prompting some to begin canceling flights.

The Trump administration recently designated Venezuela's Cartel de los Soles as a foreign terrorist organization — which the U.S. says is a legal basis for certain operations, but which Venezuela argues is actually just intended to serve as a pretense to carry out the strikes.

Gangs with American guns await US Marines in Haiti

Bloomberg News

Additional U.S. Marines being sent to Haiti to defend the embassy from gang attacks face a grim reality: They're increasingly being targeted by American-made, military-grade firearms.

Haiti doesn't manufacture weapons and has been under an arms embargo since 2022, but it's awash in guns. And the Government Accountability Office says 90% of all weapons in Haiti used in a crime were U.S.-sourced.

It's not just simple handguns.

During a chaotic shootout on the outskirts of Haiti's capital in

November police killed seven gang members and captured a Barret M82 .50-caliber sniper rifle, which is manufactured in Tennessee.

"That is a true military weapon," said Jonathan Lowy, president of Global Action on Gun Violence, which has been working with foreign governments to stem the flow of U.S. weapons. "It has a range of a mile. It can shoot down helicopters and can pierce reinforced concrete. It can cost around \$10,000. That is not a weapon that a law-abiding gun owner protecting their home or hunting deer is looking to buy."

And yet any 18-year-old with

a clean record can purchase one in most U.S. states.

Homeland Security Investigations in Miami flagged a "substantial increase" in gun trafficking to Haiti and the Caribbean earlier this year, including sniper rifles, .308 rifles and at least one belt-fed machine gun.

The chaos in Haiti — where gangs now control more than 85% of the capital and have forced 1.4 million to flee their homes — comes as Washington is flooding the southern Caribbean with military assets in what it claims is a push to stop drug trafficking and put pressure on Venezuela.

This weekend, heavily armed gangs attacked Haiti's central region, killing men, women and children as they set fire to homes and forced survivors to flee, the Associated Press reported.

On Monday, the U.S. State Department imposed visa restrictions on Fritz Alphonse Jean, a member of Haiti's transitional presidential council, "for supporting gangs and other criminal organizations." Jean has denied those accusations, but he's just one of several private sector and political actors who have been sanctioned in recent years for allegedly working with criminal groups.

Seoul: North may grow more hostile in 2026

By SETH ROBSON
AND YOOJIN LEE

Stars and Stripes

North Korea may grow more hostile next year unless diplomacy resumes, the South's unification minister has warned while urging renewed efforts to restart talks with Pyongyang.

Unification Minister Chung Dong-young delivered the assessment Friday during a session of the parliamentary foreign affairs committee, saying Seoul hopes to mend ties despite rising tensions.

"Based on their movements and indications, it seems more likely that they will strengthen their two states policy," he said

of Pyongyang, according to a video of the meeting posted on YouTube.

The minister said South Korea must work to clear confrontation, hostility and hate while restoring respect, acceptance, peaceful coexistence and reconciliation.

Chung emphasized that progress depends heavily on coordination with Washington.

"Without the resumption of U.S.-North Korea talks, it's hard to open South Korea-North Korea relations," he said.

Pyongyang has not responded to outreach since early 2023, when it declared inter-Korean ties to be those between

"two states hostile to each other."

North Korea's state media on Friday denounced U.S. military activity in the region as "gravely threatening" to "strategic stability" on the peninsula.

A series of U.S. and South Korean exercises, it said, encroaches on the North's "sphere of security," according to an unsigned commentary on the Korean Central News Agency website.

U.S. Forces Korea defended the drills. Joint exercises "ensure the readiness necessary to meet the expectations of those we lead and those we are sworn to protect," according to an

email Friday from command spokesman David Kim.

North Korea has carried out a steady run of missile tests this year, including an Oct. 28 launch of a sea-to-surface cruise missile while President Donald Trump was visiting South Korea for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, or APEC, summit and holding talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Trump repeatedly expressed willingness to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during the trip, though Kim offered no public response.

Trump and Xi are slated to meet again in Beijing in April.

Space Force to graduate in new dress uniform

By ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

A group of Space Force trainees was the first basic training class to receive the service's new dress uniform and will wear it during a graduation ceremony this month at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Air Force Base.

The trainees were fitted for the uniforms last week at Lackland's clothing issue in advance of the Dec. 18 ceremony, according to the 37th Training Wing, which oversees basic military training for the Space Force at the Texas Air Force base.

The uniforms feature a dark blue jacket that buttons diagonally from the Guardian's right shoulder and a tie of the same color.

It is matched with a collared shirt and a gray skirt or pants.

The Space Force, which has roughly 9,400 members, announced in September that siz-

ing for the service's first dress uniform would begin by the end of the year after the uniform spent about four years in development.

Since Space Force's establishment in 2019, its members have primarily worn the Air Force's dress uniform.

Guardians are not yet required to order the uniform, and a mandatory wear-date is still pending, according to the service.

Once the uniform is widely issued, Space Force officials will give members one year to order the uniform and prepare for its full implementation.

The first opportunity for pre-orders went to recruiters, training instructors, December graduates of the Reserve Officer Training Corps, Honor Guard members, White House social aides and senior leaders.

Ordering should open to all in January with delivery expected in June, the service said.

Troops with beards for faith fear Pentagon crackdown

By JANIQUA ROBINSON

Stars and Stripes

Some service members who wear beards for religious reasons worry the Pentagon may soon target their shaving waivers, a concern driven by recent policy shifts that have already tightened rules for troops with medical exemptions.

The Army announced in July it would re-evaluate all religious shaving waivers, part of a broader effort expected to extend across the services.

Then, on Sept. 30, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told the nation's top generals and admirals that medical waivers would be phased out within a year. The Pentagon also directed each branch to revise religious waivers by limiting them to "non-deployable roles" and requiring annual gas mask fit training.

The U.S. military accommodates beards worn as expressions of faith for adherents of several religions, including Sikhs, Christians, Muslims,

Jews, Heathens and Nordic Pagans.

Under Pentagon guidance, service members with medical shaving waivers have until next fall to seek treatment to resolve their condition. Many service members granted medical waivers suffer from pseudofolliculitis barbae, a skin condition exasperated by daily shaving that disproportionately affects Black men.

Since 2014, the military has permitted facial hair as an "expression of sincerely held beliefs," provided the installation's senior officer approves.

"A lot of people will say, 'We're seeing an increase in shaving waivers because the regulations got more lenient,' " a service member with a shaving waiver said. "There has always been a method for getting a religious accommodation letter; it's not a new thing. What happened was we started teaching people how to take care of themselves medically and spiritually."

4 killed in shooting at child's party in Calif.

Associated Press

STOCKTON, Calif. — Authorities in California urged witnesses of a deadly shooting at a child's birthday party to come forward as the search for a suspect stretched into another day.

Three children ages 8, 9 and 14 and a 21-year-old were killed Saturday when gunfire broke out at a banquet hall in Stockton where at least 100 people were gathered, San Joaquin County Sheriff Patrick Withrow said. Detectives believe the gunfire continued outside and there may have been multiple shooters.

Eleven people were also wounded, with at least one in critical condition, he said. No one was in custody by Sunday evening, and the sheriff urged anyone with information to contact his office with tips, cell-phone video or witness accounts.

"This is a time for our community to show that we will not put up with this type of behavior, when people will just walk in and kill children," Withrow said. "And so if you know anything about this, you have to come forward and tell us what you know. If not, you just become complacent and think this is acceptable behavior."

Sheriff's spokesperson Heather Brent said earlier that investigators believe it was a "targeted incident." She said investigators would welcome any information, "even rumors."

Roscoe Brown said the party was in honor of his brother's granddaughter, who turned 2 and was uninjured. Brown, who works for the city of Stockton's Office of Violence Prevention, was in Arizona when he learned about the shooting and drove

straight to the scene. He said a niece and nephew of his were shot, and he knows several other victims. He didn't have information about their conditions.

"Who would come and do that to some kids, you know?" Brown told The Associated Press following a vigil organized by faith leaders to honor the dead and pray for the wounded. "You can't shoot up a party. That's senseless. A kid's party, at that."

Emmanuel Lopez told the Los Angeles Times his brother, 21-year-old Susano Archuleta, was shot in the neck and died at the scene. Lopez said his 9-year-old daughter was shot in the head but survived. He didn't share details about what led up to the shooting.

Stockton is a city of 320,000 residents about 80 miles east of San Francisco. With 54 homi-

cides in 2024, Stockton's homicide rate was significantly higher than the state average. As of October, there had been 34 this year, according to city data.

Hours after the shooting, the Stockton Police Department arrested five people, including a juvenile, on weapons and gang-related charges. There was no indication that the arrests were connected to the killings at the banquet hall, the sheriff said.

Mayor Christina Fugazi expressed anguish over the loss of victims so young.

"They should be writing their Christmas lists right now. Their parents should be out shopping for them for Christmas. And to think that their lives are over. I can't even begin to imagine what these families are going through. Breaks my heart," Fugazi said on Sunday.

Northeast US preps for snow; Midwest flight delays linger

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — Black ice, snow showers and fog pestered post-holiday travelers in the Midwest on Monday while the Northeast geared up for its first major snowstorm of the season.

More than 8 inches of snow fell at Chicago O'Hare International Airport this weekend, setting a record for the highest single calendar day snowfall in November at the airport, according to the National Weather Service. The previous record was set in 1951.

About 300 flights into and out of O'Hare had been canceled by early Sunday evening, while about 1,600 had been delayed, according to the tracking site FlightAware.

Dozens remained canceled or delayed there into Monday, and commuting conditions on roads were expected to remain dangerous in some areas well into Monday night.

In the Northeast, some parts of

northern New England were expecting up to 10 inches of snow. A windy, potentially icy storm was headed to the region, and could soak some parts of the six states while piling snow in others, forecasters said.

And with plowable snow expected to coat large parts of Pennsylvania, crews began to treat snow lanes along the 565-mile Pennsylvania Turnpike system on Monday, said the agency's press secretary, Marissa Orbanek. Vehicle restrictions on the turnpike system's Northeast Extension, from the Lehigh Valley to Clarks Summit, will be imposed at 5 a.m. Tuesday.

"We really prepare for snow all year long," Orbanek said.

Planes were being de-iced at several airports across the country on Sunday, including at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

Ruling disqualifying Habba as federal prosecutor upheld

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer Alina Habba, whom the administration has maneuvered to keep in place as New Jersey top federal prosecutor, is disqualified from serving in the role, an appeals court said Monday.

A panel of judges from the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sitting in Philadelphia sided with a lower court judge's ruling after hearing oral arguments at which Habba herself was present on Oct. 20.

"It is apparent that the current administration has been frustrated by some of the legal and political barriers to getting its appointees in place. Its efforts to elevate its preferred candidate for U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey, Alina Habba, to the role of Acting U.S. Attorney demonstrate the difficulties it has faced — yet the citizens of New Jersey and the loyal employees in the

U.S. Attorney's Office deserve some clarity and stability," the court wrote in a 32-page opinion.

It concluded: "We will affirm the District Court's disqualification order."

The ruling comes amid the push by Trump's Republican administration to keep Habba as the acting U.S. attorney for New Jersey. It also comes after the judges questioned the government's moves to keep Habba in place after her interim appointment expired and without her getting Senate confirmation.

Habba said after that hearing in a statement posted to X that she was fighting on behalf of other candidates to be federal prosecutors who have been denied a chance for a Senate hearing.

A lower court judge said in August that Habba's appointment was done with a "novel series of legal and personnel moves" and that she was not lawfully serving as U.S. attorney for New Jersey.

Russia, Ukraine mull revised peace deal

Associated Press

Diplomats face an uphill battle to reconcile Russian and Ukrainian “red lines” as a renewed U.S.-led push to end the war gathers steam, with Ukrainian officials attending talks in the U.S. over the weekend and Washington officials expected in Moscow early this week.

President Donald Trump’s peace plan became public last month, sparking alarm that it was too favorable to Moscow. It was revised following talks in Geneva between the U.S. and Ukraine a week ago.

Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said the re-

vised plan could be “workable.” Russian President Vladimir Putin called it a possible “basis” for a future peace agreement. Trump said Sunday “there’s a good chance we can make a deal.”

Officials on both sides indicated a long road ahead as key sticking points — over whether Kyiv should cede land to Moscow and how to ensure Ukraine’s future security — appear unresolved.

Trump representatives met the Ukrainian officials over the weekend and plan to meet with the Russians in coming days.

Ukraine’s national security council head Rustem Umerov, the head of Ukraine’s armed forces

Andrii Hnatov, presidential adviser Oleksandr Bevez and others met with U.S. officials for about four hours on Sunday. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the session was productive but more work remains. Umerov praised the U.S. for its support but offered no details.

Zelenskyy’s former chief of staff and former lead negotiator for Ukraine, Andrii Yermak, resigned Friday amid a corruption scandal and is no longer part of the negotiating team. It was only a week ago that Rubio met with Yermak in Geneva, resulting in a revised peace plan.

Trump said last week that he

would send his envoy Steve Witkoff to Russia. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed Monday that Putin will meet Witkoff on Tuesday afternoon.

Trump suggested he could eventually meet with Putin and Zelenskyy, but not until there has been more progress.

Witkoff’s role in the peace efforts came under scrutiny last week following a report that he coached Yuri Ushakov, Putin’s foreign affairs adviser, on how Russia’s leader should pitch Trump on the Ukraine peace plan. Both Moscow and Washington downplayed the significance of the revelations.

Death toll rises in Asia as flood recovery efforts begin

Associated Press

PADANG SIDEMPUAN, Indonesia — Indonesia’s president told survivors of last week’s devastating floods that help was arriving to those in need Monday as Asian governments scaled up their responses to a disaster that has left more than 1,000 dead in three countries.

Hundreds more are missing following flooding and landslides in the past week, which killed at least 604 people in Indonesia, 366 in Sri Lanka and 176 in Thailand, authorities said.

Indonesia President Prabowo Subianto pledged to rebuild infrastructure while visiting areas impacted by floods and landslides on Sumatra island that left thousands homeless and over 800 people missing as of Monday.

Some areas of Indonesia remained unreachable Monday after the disaster damaged roads and downed communications lines, with residents in impacted areas relying on aircraft delivering supplies. Flooding displaced 290,700 people in North Sumatra, West Sumatra and Aceh provinces, the National

Disaster Management Agency said.

Prabowo, who visited North Sumatra on Monday and was expected to West Sumatra and Aceh during the day, said the government’s response is reaching those in need.

“We need to confront climate change effectively,” Prabowo told reporters after visiting survivors. “Local governments must take a significant role in safeguarding the environment and preparing for the extreme weather conditions that will arise from future climate change.”

Sri Lanka authorities said Monday that rescuers are still searching for 367 missing people. Nearly 218,000 people are housed in temporary shelters after being battered in the past week downpours that flooded homes, fields and roads and triggered landslides, primarily in the tea-growing central hill country.

In Thailand, the first batch of compensation payments are set to be distributed Monday, beginning with \$7.4 million for 26,000 people, government spokesperson Siripong Angkasakulkiat said.

‘Rage bait’ is Oxford University Press word of year

Associated Press

LONDON — Oxford University Press has named “rage bait” as its word of the year, capturing the internet zeitgeist of 2025.

The phrase refers to online content that is “deliberately designed to elicit anger or outrage by being frustrating, provocative or offensive,” with the aim of driving traffic to a particular social media account, Oxford said in a statement.

“The person producing it will bask in the millions, quite often, of comments and shares and even likes sometimes,” lexicographer Susie Dent told the BBC. This is a result of the algorithms used by social media companies, “because although we love fluffy cats, we’ll appreciate that we tend to engage more with negative content and content that really provokes us.”

Rage bait topped two other

contenders — “aura farming” and “biohack” — after public comment on a shortlist compiled by lexicographers at Oxford University Press.

“Aura farming” means to cultivate a public image by presenting oneself in “a way intended subtly to convey an air of confidence, coolness or mystique.” “Biohack” is defined as “an attempt to improve or optimize one’s physical or mental perfor-

mance, health or longevity.”

The word of the year is selected by lexicographers at Oxford University Press who analyze new and emerging words, as well as changes in the way language is being used, to identify words of “cultural significance.”

Oxford University Press, publisher of the Oxford English Dictionary, has selected a word of the year annually since 2004.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

County fair brings back pig wrestling; no men

WY TETON COUNTY — A Wyoming county fair is bringing back pig wrestling after a six-year hiatus, though it's adding a new rule: No men allowed.

The ban is meant to protect the swine after concerns about animal cruelty rippled through Teton County this fall and pleas for humane treatment of the animals surged into county commissioners' email inboxes.

The commissioners struck a compromise by voting 3-1 last month to eliminate the adult men's category of the event and require participants to complete a program about caring for animals. Mark Newcomb, Teton County commission chairman, said commissioners surmised that women and children would be less likely than men to harm the pigs. (The only woman commissioner was absent from the vote.)

Pig wrestling is a staple at some county fairs across the nation and a misdemeanor at others. The rules are simple: Four to five people hop in a muddy pit, sprinkled with bentonite to ensure maximum slickness, and try to place a free pig inside a padded barrel.

Delayed heating aid funds released to states, tribes

CT HARTFORD — Approximately \$3.6 billion in delayed funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, was released Friday to states and tribes, according to the National Energy Assistance Direc-

tors Association.

The federal funding for LIHEAP, which helps millions of low-income households pay to heat and cool their homes, has been held up during the beginning of the cold-weather season because of the federal government shutdown, which ended Nov. 12.

"This release of LIHEAP funding is essential and long overdue," Mark Wolfe, executive director of NEADA, said in a statement. "Families can finally begin receiving the support they need to keep the heat on as winter begins."

States typically receive their allocations at the beginning of November.

City has highest snowfall in November day since '51

IL CHICAGO — As Chicagoans woke up to "Winter Wonderland"-like conditions Sunday, snowfall recorded at Chicago O'Hare International Airport on Saturday was confirmed as a record 8.4 inches, the highest snowfall on a single calendar day in November since 1951, according to the National Weather Service.

The snow was likely to taper out by 11 a.m. Sunday and the temperature was expected to warm up to around 32 degrees at noon, with 25 to 30 mph winds that will decrease throughout the day. A Winter Weather Advisory was in place until noon Sunday with snow contributing to slippery roads and low visibility, according to NWS.

The last time O'Hare Airport saw so much snow on a single day in November was 74 years ago, Nov. 6, 1951, when 8 inches

fell, according to the NWS. Snowfall reached 8.6 inches at O'Hare by 6 a.m. on Sunday.

Amid the record-breaking snowfall, O'Hare airport had 1,322 flight cancellations and Midway airport had 250 cancellations, according to FlightAware data as of Sunday morning.

Republican lawmaker says he will retire in 2026

TX AUSTIN — Republican U.S. Rep. Troy Nehls of Texas announced Saturday that he will retire from Congress after his term ends in 2026 to focus on family.

Nehls, a staunch supporter of President Donald Trump who has sported his mug shot on a T-shirt, said he called Trump to inform him of his plans.

"President Trump has always been a strong ally for our district and a true friend, and I wanted him to hear it from me first," Nehls said on X.

Nehls added via social media that he was endorsing his twin brother to succeed him in Congress. Trever Nehls said on Facebook that he would run for the seat and "stand shoulder-to-shoulder with President Trump."

College to fight hazardous dust effects from mines

AZ TUCSON — The University of Arizona has received a five-year federal grant of \$14.8 million to help understand and mitigate health threats of dust from mine tailings and associated hazardous fungal spores, specifically within mining communities.

The grant was issued by the

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, a division of the National Institutes of Health, to UA's Superfund Research Center. Also known as the DUST Center: Hazardous Dust in Drylands — Exposure, Health Impacts, and Mitigation.

The center's work is focused on "mining towns and Native Nations across the Arizona-Sonora border region, where residents face chronic inhalation of arsenic-rich dust from mine tailings — waste left over from mining operations," a UA news release says.

"The Southwest is hot and dry, so we generate a lot of dust that gets carried by the wind," Maier said. "These conditions also make it challenging to establish plants. We are working to determine the minimum inputs and best seasonal timing to effectively establish plants on a site. Mining companies spend a lot of money revegetating their sites and informed research like this helps them reduce these costs."

Mall shooting wounds 2 and prompts evacuation

CA SAN JOSE — Police in California evacuated a shopping mall Friday, one of the busiest shopping days of the year, after a shooting left two people with gunshot wounds.

The shooting was an isolated incident, the San Jose Police Department said on X.

Officers evacuated and cleared Valley Fair Mall in Santa Clara to confirm there was no threat to public safety.

The wounded were taken to a hospital, police said.

— From wire reports

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Seahawks get 1st shutout in over a decade

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Ahead of the season, Ernest Jones IV set a goal of finishing the year with six interceptions.

With six games left, the Seattle linebacker already has a career-high four picks, including the one he returned 85 yards Sunday for the first touchdown of his career. That was the first of five takeaways by the Seahawks' dominant defense as Seattle blanked Minnesota 26-0 for its first shutout victory in over a decade.

"I was so tired," Jones said of his TD run. "Luckily the next drive, I think, was a short one. But it was worth it."

The Vikings were shut out for the first time since Green Bay beat them 34-0 on Nov. 11, 2007. The Seahawks' most recent shutout win was 26-0 over Chicago on Sept. 27, 2015.

This one was a mismatch, with Seattle (9-3) going against an undrafted rookie quarterback in Max Brosmer, who was making his first NFL start for free-falling Minnesota (4-8). Brosmer, who went 19-for-30 for 126 yards, became the first player to throw four interceptions in his first career start since Buffalo's Nathan Peterman had five against the Los Angeles Chargers on Nov. 19, 2017.

The Seahawks moved into a first-place tie with the Los Angeles Rams in the NFC West.

The Vikings lost their fourth straight and had their second-fewest total yards (162) in a game this season. Seattle defensive end DeMarcus Lawrence — who pressured Brosmer into throwing the ball that Jones turned into a pick-6 — said this is the best defense he's played for in his 12 NFL seasons.

"Yes, and I mean that wholeheartedly," Lawrence said. "But I feel like there's another level we're going to reach. Y'all haven't seen the best of us, and we're going to capitalize on our opportunities."

49ers 26, Browns 8: Brock Purdy rushed for a touchdown

and passed for another score in the second half, and visiting San Francisco spoiled Shedeur Sanders' first home start by defeating Cleveland.

The Browns took an 8-7 lead late in the second quarter when Sanders hooked up with Harold Fannin for a 34-yard touchdown and Quinshon Judkins' run added the 2-point conversion. But the 49ers (9-4) scored the next 19 points in their third consecutive win.

Sanders was 16-for-25 passing for 149 yards and a touchdown for Cleveland (3-9). He was sacked three times. Judkins had 91 yards rushing on 23 carries.

Jaguars 25, Titans 3: Trevor Lawrence threw for 229 yards and two touchdowns and visiting Jacksonville beat Tennessee for its third straight victory.

With the win, the Jaguars (8-4) improved their AFC playoff hopes while chasing their first division title since 2022. Jacksonville still has two games left against Indianapolis, which fell to 8-4 with a 20-16 loss to Houston.

The Titans (1-11) lost their seventh straight overall and 11th consecutive at home, matching the longest such skid since the franchise moved to Tennessee. They also lost 11 in a row at Nissan Stadium in a stretch over the 2014 and 2015 seasons.

Texans 20, Colts 16: Nico Collins scored the tiebreaking touchdown on a 7-yard run with 12:38 to play, Nick Chubb also ran for a score and visiting Houston's top-ranked defense came up with a late stop on to seal a victory over slumping Indianapolis.

The Texans (7-5) won their fourth straight, moving within one game of AFC South-leading Indianapolis (8-4), which has lost three of four. C.J. Stroud improved to 3-0 at Lucas Oil Stadium by going 22-for-35 for 276 yards with one interception in his first game in four weeks. He cleared the concussion protocol Friday.

Houston sealed the win by forcing a turnover on downs with 1:45 to play after Daniel Jones had taken the Colts to the Texans' 31-yard line. Indy has lost two straight for the first time this season, and this was the first time it was held under 20 points.

Broncos 27, Commanders 26 (OT): Nik Bonitto batted away Marcus Mariota's pass in overtime to deny Washington a winning 2-point conversion, and visiting Denver held on for its ninth straight victory.

Bo Nix threw for 321 yards with a touchdown and an interception for the AFC West-leading Broncos (10-2), who have eight victories in one-score games this season.

Jets 27, Falcons 24: Nick Folk lined a 56-yard field goal through a heavy mist as time expired to lead host New York over Atlanta.

In a game between two struggling teams that was anything but pretty, Folk's kick was also far from it. But in tough conditions, the 41-year-old got just enough on the football to bounce back from an earlier miss and was mobbed at midfield by his teammates as the Jets fans in a drenched and half-empty MetLife Stadium went wild.

Panthers 31, Rams 28: Bryce Young completed 15 of 20 passes for 206 yards and three touchdowns, two of them coming on fourth down, and host Carolina forced three turnovers by Matthew Stafford to beat Los Angeles and snap the Rams' six-game winning streak.

The Panthers intercepted Stafford twice with Mike Jackson returning one for a 48-yard touchdown and ended the 37-year-old's NFL record of 28 straight TD passes without an interception. Derrick Brown, who tipped a ball resulting in one of Stafford's first pick, came up with a key strip-sack with 2:25 left in the game to preserve the win.

Dolphins 21, Saints 17: De-

Von Achane rushed for 134 yards and a touchdown, and host Miami won its third straight game by holding off New Orleans.

The Dolphins (5-7) trail first-place New England and Buffalo in the AFC East but kept their slim playoffs hopes alive, while the Saints (2-10) have lost six of seven.

Buccaneers 20, Cardinals 17: Baker Mayfield tossed a 2-yard touchdown pass to All-Pro left tackle Tristan Wirfs, Tampa Bay's defense held in the final two minutes and the host Buccaneers beat Arizona to snap a three-game losing streak.

Mayfield, who started after sitting out the second half of a 34-7 loss to the Los Angeles Rams because of a left shoulder injury, threw for 194 yards and ran for 27 to help Tampa Bay (7-5) remain first in the NFC South.

Chargers 31, Raiders 14: Justin Herbert threw two touchdown passes while playing through an injury to his non-throwing hand, and Kimani Vidal made a 59-yard scoring run during host Los Angeles' victory over spiraling Las Vegas.

Quentin Johnston and Ladd McConkey had TD catches and Vidal rushed for a career-high 126 yards for the Chargers (8-4), who snapped back from an embarrassing loss at Jacksonville for their fourth win in five games to keep pressure on Denver atop the AFC West.

Bills 26, Steelers 7: Josh Allen threw for a touchdown and ran for another, Joey Bosa sacked Aaron Rodgers to spring Christian Benford for a game-tilting, 17-yard scoop-and-score, and visiting Buffalo pushed Pittsburgh around.

The Bills (8-4) bounced back from a loss at Houston by whipping the Steelers (6-6) up front. James Cook ran for 144 yards as Buffalo piled up 249 yards on the ground and controlled the clock for nearly 42 minutes inside blustery Acrisure Stadium.

Kiffin leaves Ole Miss for LSU before CFP

Associated Press

Lane Kiffin left his one-loss Ole Miss team to become the coach at LSU on Sunday, taking over a program that has won national titles under three of its previous four coaches while saying he would have stayed to coach the Rebels in the postseason had he been allowed to.

The move comes two days after No. 6 Mississippi's victory over Mississippi State in the annual Egg Bowl rivalry game that all but guaranteed the Rebels a playoff berth when the bracket is announced Dec. 7.

"I was hoping to complete a historic six-season run with this year's team by leading Ole Miss through the playoffs, capitalizing on the team's incredible success and their commitment to finish strong," Kiffin wrote in a social media post. He said Rebels athletic director Keith Carter denied his request "despite the team also asking him to allow me to keep coaching them so they could better maintain their high level of performance."

"Unfortunately, that means Friday's Egg Bowl was my last game coaching the Rebels," he added.

Mississippi promoted defensive coordinator Pete Golding to succeed Kiffin. A former college player at Delta State in Mississippi, Golding is in his third season on the Rebels' staff after serving five years as a top defensive assistant at Alabama.

"Coach Kiffin and I met yesterday, and he informed us that he is accepting the head coaching position at another school," Carter said. "For our program to begin preparing for its future — both the short and long term, he will be stepping away from the team immediately."

LSU trumpeted its new hire, with athletic director Verge Ausberry calling Kiffin the best coach in the country.

"Lane is a proven winner who has thrived in an era of college athletics that requires coaches to adapt and innovate," he said. "His passion, creativity and authenticity make him the ideal leader to guide LSU into the future and consistently position us among the sport's elite."

Ausberry — a Louisiana native, former Tigers football player and long-time LSU administrator — led a search for a

new coach that focused primarily on Kiffin. LSU offered him a seven-year contract with an average annual salary of around \$13 million and pledged to ensure the football program has ample financial backing to pay players.

Kiffin's decision played out for days, contributing to an already-busy hiring cycle that saw several moves earlier Sunday, including three in the SEC alone. While players have transferred away from playoff-bound teams, a coach leaving a team that is 11-1 and all but certain to make the playoff is something new.

Kiffin and Carter had agreed last week that a decision had to be made this weekend as negotiations dragged on. Carter could not afford to wait until after critical recruiting periods in December and transfer periods in January had passed before starting his coaching search. The CFP begins Dec. 19, the semifinals don't occur until Jan. 8-9 and the final is Jan. 19.

Kiffin is considered one of the top offensive coaches in college football. He went 55-19 in six seasons at Ole Miss, success that

made him a target of several major programs seeking new coaches. Kiffin was also pursued by Florida, which fired coach Billy Napier a week before LSU cut ties with Brian Kelly.

While the Tigers offered Kiffin a raise over his current \$9 million annual salary, the decision was presumably about more than money.

LSU has a championship brand in multiple sports; state-of-the-art facilities; a rabid, regional fan following; and a legendary, historic home football venue in Tiger Stadium (nicknamed Death Valley), which towers over the banks of the Mississippi River and holds 102,000 spectators — 38,000 more than Mississippi's Vaught-Hemingway Stadium.

The lone football coach of LSU's past four who did not win a national championship was Kelly. He was fired in late October during his fourth season, a seismic development that also led then-athletic director Scott Woodward to resign under pressure from Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry.

Florida hires Tulane's Sumrall as coach with \$44.7M contract

Associated Press

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — Florida hired Tulane's Jon Sumrall as football coach Sunday, settling for its second choice after Lane Kiffin picked LSU over the Gators.

Sumrall finalized a six-year, \$44.7 million contract that comes with incentives, according to a person familiar with the search. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because financial details were not released. The deal averages \$7.45 million annually.

The 43-year-old Sumrall will remain with the 22nd-ranked Green Wave for the American Conference title game next week and through the College Football Playoff if Tulane makes the 12-team field.

Florida also agreed to terms with longtime NFL executive Dave Caldwell as its general manager. Caldwell won a Super Bowl during his five seasons with the Philadelphia Eagles and built a roster that made the AFC title game in eight years (2013-20) with the Jacksonville Jaguars. He also spent time with Atlanta, Indianapolis and Carolina.

Caldwell is expected to help manage the Gators' salary cap and evaluate talent — essentially taking some things off Sumrall's plate as college football moves closer to adopting NFL-style front offices.

Sumrall played linebacker at Kentucky (2002-04) and returned to his alma mater for a three-year stint before becoming

Troy's head coach in 2022. He won consecutive Sun Belt championships in two seasons with the Trojans and then enjoyed similar success at Tulane.

Sumrall is 19-7 in two years in New Orleans and led the Green Wave to the American championship game both seasons, so he has made four league title games in four years as a head coach. Florida is hoping he's Urban Meyer 2.0 and not Billy Napier 2.0.

"Not many coaches win big at two different non-Power programs, and even fewer do it as quickly as Jon has done it," Gators athletic director Scott Stricklin said. "He joins rare company — coaches like Urban Meyer, Brian Kelly and Willie Fritz —

who've delivered immediate success at multiple stops. Jon's track record of rapid turn-arounds speaks directly to his leadership and the culture he establishes."

Sumrall had been considered a possibility at Auburn, Arkansas and Ole Miss. Florida made a late push when Kiffin's interest in the Gators waned. Florida fans are likely to view him as a consolation prize, another gamble from a Group of Five conference.

Sumrall replaces Napier, who was fired in mid-October and went 22-23 over four seasons in Gainesville. Napier was nicknamed "Sun Belt Billy" because he often looked over his head in the powerhouse Southeastern Conference.

Celtics win after near collapse vs. Cavs

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Payton Pritchard scored a season-high 42 points, Jaylen Brown got his fourth career triple-double and the Boston Celtics barely held on to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 117-115 on Sunday night after giving up most of their big lead.

Boston led by 21 points in the third quarter and was still up by 11 with less than two minutes left before Cleveland's Donovan Mitchell made consecutive 3-pointers to pull the Cavaliers within 114-112 with 20.5 seconds left.

Pritchard, who made several big buckets down the stretch, then made two free throws to put the Celtics ahead 116-112 with 5.9 seconds remaining.

Cleveland guard Darius Garland buried a 3-pointer with 1.2 seconds to go, and the Cavs fouled Brown on the ensuing inbounds pass following a timeout. Boston's All-Star guard could only split a pair of free throws, giving Cleveland a final chance. But Evan Mobley's jumper was short at the final horn, allowing the Celtics to escape.

Hawks 142, 76ers 134 (2OT): Jalen Johnson hit consecutive 3-

pointers late in the second overtime and finished with 41 points and 14 rebounds to help visiting Atlanta spoil Joel Embiid's return in a victory over Philadelphia.

Johnson snapped a tie with his third 3 of the game and hit another on the next possession to send the Hawks to their fourth win in five games. Nickeil Alexander-Walker added 34 points, including two shots to tie the game at 126 and send it to the second OT.

Tyrese Maxey scored 44 points for the 76ers and hit a pair of clutch shots, one that forced OT and another that gave them the late lead in the first overtime. Maxey, an 88% free throw shooter, missed two from the line that could have stretched the lead to four, but instead cost Philadelphia in the final seconds of OT.

Embiid scored 18 points in 30 minutes in his return for the Sixers after he missed nine games because of injuries.

Rockets 129, Jazz 101: Kevin Durant scored 25 points in his return from a two-game absence, leading visiting Houston to a victory over Utah.

Alperen Sengün had 27 points to help the Rockets to their fifth

straight road victory.

Knicks 116, Raptors 94: Josh Hart had 20 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists, Karl-Anthony Towns added 22 points and eight rebounds and host New York beat Toronto for its fourth straight victory.

Jalen Brunson had 18 points, seven assists and six rebounds, and Mikal Bridges and Miles McBride each scored 14 points. The Knicks improved to 10-1 at home and 13-6 overall. They are perfect since Hart joined the starting lineup last week.

Timberwolves 125, Spurs 112: Anthony Edwards scored 32 points to become Minnesota's all-time leader in games with 30 or more points, Julius Randle added 22 points, 12 assists and six rebounds, and the host Timberwolves pulled away from San Antonio in the fourth quarter.

Donte DiVincenzo scored 18 points and Naz Reid added 15 for Minnesota, which went 2-0 at home on the weekend after losing three straight on the road. The Spurs fell to 5-2 without Victor Wembanyama, who missed another game with a left calf strain.

Thunder 123, Trail Blazers

115: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 26 points, Chet Holmgren had 19 points and nine rebounds, and visiting Oklahoma City beat Portland for its 12th straight victory.

In his second game back from wrist surgery, Oklahoma City's Jalen Williams had 16 points and eight rebounds in 34 minutes.

Lakers 133, Pelicans 121: Luka Dončić scored 20 of his 34 points in the first quarter and host Los Angeles raced to its seventh straight victory, this one over New Orleans.

Dončić also had 12 rebounds and seven assists to help the Lakers win for the 13th time in 15 games. Austin Reaves added 33 points and eight assists, and Deandre Ayton had 22 points and 12 rebounds.

Grizzlies 115, Kings 107: Zach Edey had a career-high 32 points and 17 rebounds to help visiting Memphis hold off Sacramento.

Edey recorded his third double-double of the season in 29 minutes, shooting 16-for-20 from the floor. He scored six points in the final 3½ minutes to lead the Grizzlies to their fourth straight road win.

Blackhawks snap 5-game skid with win over Ducks

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Connor Bedard scored the tie-breaking goal at 9:55 of the third period, added an empty-net score and had two assists as the Chicago Blackhawks rallied from an early three-goal deficit to top the Anaheim Ducks 5-3 on Sunday and snap a five-game slide.

Tyler Bertuzzi, Ryan Greene and Colton Dach also scored as Chicago tied it at 3-all by 12:34 of the second. Chicago converted two of four power-play chances and killed all three Anaheim advantages.

Bedard beat Ville Husso with a nifty move from the front of the crease to put Chicago ahead 4-3 following a turnover by Alex Kil-

orn. Husso had entered the game 44 seconds earlier after starter Petr Mrazek exited with an undisclosed injury.

Bedard fired into an empty net with 1:55 remaining to seal it.

Cutter Gauthier had a goal and an assist as the Ducks jumped out a 3-0 lead midway through the first period.

Chris Kreider scored for the second straight game to give him 600 career points.

Stars 6, Senators 1: Wyatt Johnston's fourth career hat track included two power-play goals, giving him an NHL-best 12, and Jason Robertson had the winning goal and two assists in his 400th career NHL game as host Dallas beat Ottawa.

The Stars have won four consecutive games and are 10-1-1 in their last 12 games.

Robertson's goal came 44 seconds after Jake Sanderson tied the score 1-1. Dallas outscored Ottawa 3-1 in the second period following a scoreless first.

Capitals 4, Islanders 1: Tom Wilson had two goals and an assist, and visiting Washington beat New York.

Alex Ovechkin and Aliaksei Protas each scored an empty-net goal as the Capitals extended their win streak to four games. Logan Thompson made 30 saves.

The Islanders have lost three straight and four of five overall. They dropped to 1-3-2 in matinee games this season with six re-

maining.

Wilson opened the scoring when he tapped in a pass from Ovechkin on the power play at 7:37 of the first period.

The Islanders' Bo Horvat buried a bouncing puck near the top of the crease to make it 2-1 with 6:17 remaining in the third.

Hurricanes 1, Flames 0 (OT): Carolina rookie Brandon Bussi made 15 saves for his first NHL shutout, Nikolaj Ehlers scored at 2:52 of overtime and Carolina beat Calgary for its second straight victory.

The Flames lost for just the second time in their last six games. They were shutout victims for the third time this season.