

USS Boxer joins buildup in Middle East

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

A second amphibious ready group joined U.S. Navy forces in the Middle East this week as President Donald Trump weighs military options amid uncertain peace talks with Iran.

The amphibious assault ship USS Boxer and the amphibious transport dock ship USS Portland, with the embarked 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, were transiting the Indian Ocean on Tuesday, U.S. Central Command said in an X post.

The transport dock ship USS Comstock, part of the Boxer ARG, has been in the Middle East since early May, CENTCOM noted.

The Tripoli Amphibious Ready Group, including the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, is operating in the Arabian Sea, according to the U.S. Naval Institute News fleet tracker published Monday.

Boxer's arrival puts at least 24 Navy warships — including the aircraft carriers USS Abraham Lincoln and USS George H.W.

Bush and 15 destroyers — in the Middle East, according to USNI News.

That number excludes oilers, supply ships and other support vessels as well as two destroyers positioned in the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

In all, slightly less than half of the Navy's battle force ships currently deployed and operating at sea worldwide are in the Middle East, according to USNI News data. That figure excludes ships on local operations.

Additionally, about 50,000 U.S. service members are operating in the Middle East, CENTCOM said Monday.

Those forces remain in place as U.S.-Iran negotiations to end the war, dismantle the Iranian nuclear program and reopen the Strait of Hormuz continued this week in Qatar.

U.S. negotiators arrived Tuesday in the Qatari capital of Doha for indirect talks with Iran, according to The Wall Street Journal.

The meeting followed a series

of Iranian attacks on commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz and U.S. military installations in the Middle East over the weekend. Those attacks were answered by U.S. strikes against Iranian military sites in and around the strait.

Though the exchange of fire threatened to upend a 60-day ceasefire agreement reached in June, both sides recently agreed to end hostilities.

Earlier this week, Trump threatened that if Tehran could not be reasonable, the U.S. would be forced to "militarily complete the job that we very successfully started."

"If that happens, the Islamic Republic of Iran will no longer exist!" Trump said Sunday on Truth Social, repeating a threat he has made repeatedly in recent months.

Trump has kept diplomacy as his primary option in dealing with Iran but has not completely ruled out returning to armed conflict if talks fail, according to the WSJ report.

The Strait of Hormuz remains

a key sticking point in those negotiations, with Iran insisting it has the right to charge tolls for ships transiting the strategic waterway. Before the Feb. 28 start of the war, it carried 20% of the world's daily petroleum consumption.

The U.S. maintains that traveling through the strait should be free, as it was previously.

That stance may be challenged by an Iranian-Omani plan to charge fees for transiting the strait.

Oman says the fees would be voluntary but Iranian officials have said they are obligatory. The New York Times reported Tuesday.

On Tuesday, the multinational Joint Maritime Information Center said traffic in the strait remained steady, with some 46 vessels transiting the waterway on Sunday and Monday facilitated by the U.S.

An additional 43 ships also went through the strait during those same two days, according to the report.

US: Witkoff, Kushner talks on Iran deal were positive

Bloomberg News

U.S. negotiators Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner held positive discussions in Qatar and progress is being made on technical talks with Iran, according to a senior administration official, as the countries seek to turn an interim peace deal into a permanent end to the war.

The two Americans were in Doha on Tuesday as part of ongoing indirect talks between Washington and Tehran.

An agreement signed last month opened the door to a 60-day negotiating period, but those efforts faced a rocky start after a

series of clashes over the Strait of Hormuz and debates over the future management of the critical waterway.

Talks between U.S. and Iranian officials via mediators are continuing on Wednesday, AFP reported, citing a diplomat it didn't identify.

Witkoff and Kushner aren't taking part, the news agency said.

Tehran has formed working groups to discuss the implementation of the current agreement and negotiating a final peace deal, but no talks have yet taken place, state-run Islamic Repu-

blic News Agency reported, citing Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi.

President Donald Trump's two top envoys had traveled to Qatar after the U.S. and Iran agreed to halt renewed attacks over Hormuz late last week. Still, uncertainty hangs over control of the strait, with Iran's state TV reporting that a foreign vessel ran aground in shallow waters on an "unapproved route."

Qatari officials had downplayed expectations for the new round of negotiations, saying that Witkoff and Kushner would not meet directly with their Ira-

nian counterparts.

The senior administration official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to provide an update on the discussions, said progress continued to be made in the separate technical talks, which are being carried out by lower-level representatives.

The Wall Street Journal, citing unnamed U.S. officials, reported Tuesday evening that Trump had decided against resuming a broad military campaign, and told his staff that he didn't mind if the negotiations extended beyond the Aug. 18 deadline.

B-2 fires new anti-ship missile in drill

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

American and allied forces sank a decommissioned U.S. warship during a recent live-fire exercise in the western Pacific, the first publicly acknowledged use of a new anti-ship missile from a B-2 Spirit stealth bomber.

The decommissioned amphibious transport dock ship USS Juneau sank on Saturday about 200 miles from Guam after a barrage of live fire during exercise Valiant Shield, Pacific Air Forces said in a news release Monday. The exercise concluded on Wednesday, according to a news release from the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

As part of Valiant Shield, a B-2 Spirit fired an AGM-158C Long Range Anti-Ship Missile, or LRASM, marking the first time the Defense Department has publicly acknowledged the bomber's use of the weapon, Air and Space Forces Magazine reported Wednesday.

The recently developed missile features a range of over 230 miles, semi-autonomous navigation and a 1,000-pound penetrating blast fragmentation warhead, according to developer Lockheed Martin's website.

The Juneau, commissioned in 1969, the following year carried Marines returning from the Vietnam War. In 1989, the ship responded with the dock land-

ing ship USS Fort McHenry to the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska; and in 1990, the Juneau sailed in operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, according to the Naval History and Heritage Command website.

Aircraft like the B-1B Lancer heavy bomber and the F-18 Super Hornet fighter jet can carry the LRASM, and efforts to integrate the missile with the F-35 Lightning II stealth fighter, F-15 Eagle fighter and the P-8 Orion maritime patrol aircraft are "ongoing," according to Lockheed Martin.

Additional aircraft, warships and submarines also participated in coordinated strikes on the Juneau. The sinking exer-

cise was meant to "sharpen critical skills in weapons employment and target engagement under realistic conditions that no simulator can fully replicate," Task Force 70 and Pacific Air Forces said in a separate news release Tuesday.

Among them were F-18 Super Hornets assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan's Carrier Air Wing 5 and a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force submarine, according to photo captions in the news releases.

Spokespeople for Valiant Shield acknowledged Stars and Stripes' request for comment in a Wednesday email but provided no responses as of Wednesday evening.

Former home for Navy families returned to Japan's government

By ALEX WILSON
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

The United States has returned a former U.S. Navy housing area in Yokohama to the Japanese government, one of the final steps in a \$500 million initiative to restructure the Navy's presence in Kanagawa prefecture.

Naval Housing Annex Negishi was officially returned on Tuesday, closing out nearly eight decades as home to U.S. Navy families beginning with its requisition by the U.S. military in 1947.

As many as 2,000 people lived in the annex across 400 homes but it has been vacant since its last residents moved out in 2015.

Japan's Ministry of Defense plans to host a ceremony in September to commemorate the return alongside local government officials and U.S. representatives, Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said during his news conference Tuesday, according to the Defense Ministry website.

Negishi is one of six properties — about 1,035 acres in the Yokohama area — that Washington agreed to return to Japanese control in 2004 in return for Japan building 700 housing units at the Navy's Ikego Hills Family Housing Area.

"This return — realized 79 years after the site was requisitioned in the immediate postwar period — marks a fresh start for urban development in the area," Yokohama Mayor Takeharu Yamamata said in a news release posted on city's website Tuesday.

An approximately 2.5-acre portion of Ikego is the only remaining site left to be returned under that agreement, according to the South Kanto Defense Bureau website.

In exchange for the return of Negishi, the Japanese government is helping the Navy build 13 facilities throughout Kanagawa — including a new food court and parking garages at Yokosuka Naval Base.

Judge halts escort policy for journalists at the Pentagon

By PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

A federal judge has blocked the Pentagon from enforcing a policy requiring credentialed journalists to be escorted inside its headquarters, ruling that the restriction likely violates the First Amendment.

U.S. District Judge Paul Friedman granted a preliminary injunction Tuesday barring enforcement of the escort policy while a lawsuit filed by The New York Times moves forward. It marks the latest development in an ongoing legal fight over Pentagon press access.

"Those who drafted the First Amendment believed that the nation's security requires a free press and an informed people and that such security is endangered by governmental suppression of political speech," Friedman wrote in his opinion.

Friedman found that the policy

was likely adopted in retaliation for the Times' successful challenge to the Pentagon's earlier press credentialing rules. The Defense Department had not justified the escort requirement on national security grounds, he concluded.

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said in a statement Tuesday on X that the ruling would make it easier for sensitive and classified information to reach U.S. adversaries and that the department will appeal the decision.

"Unescorted access to the Pentagon allowed journalists to observe activity patterns and develop relationships that contributed to repeated unauthorized disclosures of operational plans and intelligence," Parnell said.

The legal dispute in the District of Columbia federal court began late last year when the Times challenged Pentagon rules governing media credentials and access to the building.

Incumbents lose in Dems' socialist shift

CQ-Roll Call

The anti-establishment wave surging through the Democratic Party reached Colorado on Tuesday, when democratic socialist Melat Kiros dislodged 15-term Rep. Diana DeGette, and state Attorney General Phil Weiser thwarted Sen. Michael Bennet's quest to become governor.

In the Denver-anchored 1st District, Kiros, a lawyer and doctoral student, was leading DeGette, 51% to 42% just after midnight Wednesday, when The Associated Press called the race. University of Colorado Regent Wanda James trailed with 7%.

Kiros' win marks another victory for the progressive group Justice Democrats and the Democratic Socialists of America, which backed two candidates who ousted a pair of House members from New York last week.

Colorado was also the latest testing ground for many of the themes roiling Democratic politics this year, including debates over age and the advantages of

incumbency, whether the United States should curtail or end military support for Israel, and questions of how aggressively the party ought to push back against President Donald Trump's agenda.

"Denver voters of all ages, of all races, of all religions sent a clear message: We will not wait," Kiros told supporters in Denver after she was declared the winner. "We will not wait to take the fight to Donald Trump and the oligarchy, we will not wait to abolish ICE and pass 'Medicare for All.' ... And no, we will not wait to end the genocide in Palestine."

In the battleground 8th District, state Rep. Manny Rutinel, who campaigned on a populist message and was boosted by spending by the campaign arm of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, won the Democratic nomination to take on vulnerable Republican freshman Gabe Evans in a contest that could determine which party controls the House.

Rutinel decisively defeated

former state Rep. Shannon Bird, who was backed by the centrist Blue Dog PAC. Rutinel was leading Bird 61 to 34% early Wednesday with 88% of the vote in, according to the AP. Evans was unopposed for the Republican nomination.

Bennet's defeat was a stunning reversal of fortune for Colorado's senior senator and former presidential candidate, who held a 31-point lead over Weiser a year ago.

With about 85% of votes in, Weiser was leading the senator 55% to 45%, the AP reported. Despite his defeat, Bennet will remain in the Senate, where he is not up for reelection until 2028.

One notable Colorado Democrat survived a primary challenge from his left flank. Sen. John Hickenlooper, a pillar of the state's political establishment and a former governor and Denver mayor, defeated state Sen. Julie Gonzales, who ran on a progressive platform.

Other races

The GOP gubernatorial race

remained uncalled early Wednesday, with state Sen. Barb Kirkmeyer narrowly ahead of pastor and Marine veteran Victor Marx.

Meanwhile, the fall matchups are set in two other competitive Republican-held House seats.

In the 5th District, Army veteran Jessica Killin won the Democratic nomination to take on Republican freshman Jeff Crank. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has added Killin to its "Red to Blue" program, a signal that it sees the Colorado Springs-based seat as flippable in November.

And in the 3rd District, which includes the state's Western Slope, GOP freshman Jeff Hurd, who briefly lost Trump's support for reelection, fended off former state Rep. Ron Hanks in a primary rematch.

He will next face Democrat Dwayne Romero, an Army veteran and former Aspen City Council member.

Inside Elections rates both House races Likely Republican.

House recess starts early as GOP frustrations grow

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — House Republican leaders are giving up on trying to put the pieces back together for a rule needed to take up a raft of pre-recess legislative priorities after a group of GOP rebels blocked the procedural measure earlier, largely over lack of movement on voter ID requirements.

The decision to send members home early for the July Fourth recess after Tuesday afternoon votes came after Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., huddled in his office with Rules Chairwoman Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., and others on how to reconstruct a path forward.

Rejection of the rule earlier in the day stymied consideration of the fiscal 2027 defense authorization bill, National Security-State

spending bill and more. The plan earlier had been to try to bring the rule back up for a vote after persuading opponents to reconsider, rather than closing up shop and heading home early for the July Fourth recess.

"We'll work on that over the next day and a half, and we'll get everybody to yes. It's too important to stop progress," Johnson said after the 198-224 vote, which saw defections from more than a dozen Republicans.

Fourteen GOP lawmakers in all voted "no," but House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-La., voted that way purely as a procedural maneuver, allowing Republican leaders to bring the rule back up for a do-over vote.

The defeat marked the second time this month that House lead-

ers watched their legislative agenda get derailed.

Last week, leaders abruptly postponed a vote on a rule to take up two appropriations bills after President Donald Trump canceled a signing ceremony for bipartisan housing legislation until Congress passed the so-called SAVE America Act, which would require proof of citizenship to register to vote and photo ID at the polls.

The most prominent dissenter, Florida Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, was insisting on an amendment to the defense bill to incorporate the voting measure.

Johnson, in a bid to win her support, had tweaked the rule to include a provision that would automatically attach the voter ID measure to the defense authoriza-

tion bill after passage of the latter bill.

But Luna on Tuesday slammed that maneuver as a "procedural head fake," saying on X that it would be too easy for the Senate to remove the voter measure from the bill.

Johnson told reporters the rule would have placed the text of the voting measure directly into the defense bill, as Luna sought. And even if Luna's amendment had been adopted, a House-Senate conference committee on a compromise defense bill could easily strip out the voting restrictions.

Democrats have vehemently opposed the voter measure, saying it could disenfranchise many eligible voters who may not have access to a birth certificate or U.S. passport.

Trump reports making \$1.4B in 2025 from crypto businesses

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump reported earning at least \$1.4 billion in 2025 from crypto and memecoin-related businesses, according to his latest annual financial disclosure.

Trump reported making more than \$588 million from sales by World Liberty Financial, the crypto firm whose co-founders include Trump, his sons and Steven Witkoff, a top diplomat in his administration. Zach Witkoff, the special envoy's son, serves as chief executive officer.

CIC Digital LLC, Trump's memecoin business, generated \$636 million in income. Almost all of it came in the form of royalties from a license agreement with Celebration Coins.

CIC Digital also held various cryptocurrencies in digital wallets worth at least \$60 million. He also made nearly \$197 mil-

lion from an equity sale of Stabcoin Holdco.

The 927-page filing, released Tuesday by the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, provides a view into his sprawling empire, including income from his hotels, golf resorts and cryptocurrency ventures.

The crypto haul was by far the largest source of the president's income. The crypto earnings far exceed the \$77 million he made in resort-related revenue from his Mar-a-Lago resort or the \$25 million from his Northern Virginia golf club.

Trump, who's worth an estimated \$7.6 billion according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, valued more than two dozen assets at more than \$50 million, including Mar-a-Lago; his Turnberry, Scotland, golf resort; and his stake in Trump Media & Technology Group Corp., which owns his Truth Social platform.

Officials disclose the values of their holdings in broad ranges with "over \$50 million" the highest, which means they can't be used to calculate an individual's net worth.

The disclosure reignites concerns that Trump, who didn't divest or move his assets into a blind trust with an independent overseer, may be profiting from his presidency. Critics have regularly accused him of mixing his official duties with his financial interests, as his sprawling business empire is managed by two of his sons and operates in areas that intersect with presidential policy.

The documents show Trump paid off three mortgages in 2025, including one at 40 Wall Street that was at one point valued at over \$50 million. The mortgage there was taken out in 2015 and carried an interest rate of 3.665%, according to the documents.

Kean cites depression as reason for absence

New York Daily News

New Jersey Rep. Tom Kean Jr. resurfaced Tuesday on Capitol Hill and said treatment for depression was the cause of his four-month absence from public view.

Kean, 57, the scion of a famed Garden State political family, said in a speech on the floor of the House that he was hospitalized to treat the condition, but now expects to return to a full work schedule and to campaign for another term in office.

"I was given the diagnosis of depression," Kean said. "The doctors recommended I remain in the hospital to address my illness."

Kean, a two-term incumbent, said he did not know that depression can have such a debilitating physical and emotional impact.

"Until you experience it yourself, it is difficult to fully understand how powerful this illness can be," he said.

The GOP lawmaker said he had kept quiet about his condition because he is "a private person by nature."

He said he is not ashamed of joining the nearly 50 million Americans who deal with depression and insisted he did not mislead the public when he repeatedly missed self-imposed deadlines to return to the public eye.

"There is no timeline for healing," Kean said. "Today I stand before you healthier, stronger and excited to return to the work that I love."

Kean faces a tough reelection fight in his affluent suburban battleground district that is expected to be a marquee matchup in the fall midterms as Democrats seek to retake the House of Representatives.

State board votes to ban undocumented students from Florida's public colleges

Orlando Sentinel

The State Board of Education voted Tuesday to ban undocumented students from enrolling in state colleges, a move that brings the state one step closer to becoming the largest in the nation to shut these immigrants out of publicly financed higher education.

The board, which oversees 28 state colleges, voted 6-1 without discussion in favor of a proposal to make those colleges, as well as Florida's adult education programs, off-limits to immigrants without legal status.

The sole dissenting vote on the board came from Daniel Foganholi, who was born to Brazilian immigrant parents.

Tuesday's decision follows a similar proposal by the Florida Board of Governors, which oversees the state's 12 universities, to bar undocumented students from enrolling in the state's colleges.

If approved at that board's next meeting in September, Florida would then join Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina in adopting "prohibitive enrollment" policies, in which students without legal status are barred from enrolling in some or all public higher education institutions.

"Education is not meant to be a policing system for immigrants," said Alex Liberman, one of more than 50 people who

spoke out during public comment, including students, parents, teachers and immigrant rights groups.

The vast majority of speakers argued the rule would create bureaucratic barriers and discourage not only undocumented students from higher education, but fearful legal immigrants as well.

"I came from Colombia when I was 8 years old, and our public education system turned me from an undocumented student to a proud job-creating entrepreneur," said Luisa Santos, a school board member in Miami-Dade County. "None of that would have been possible if today's rules ... existed."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bear spray released during quarrel, 8 hurt

NY NEW YORK — Eight people needed medical attention after a woman released bear spray during an argument in a lower Manhattan hotel Monday morning, police said.

The woman released the powerful spray about 8 a.m. inside the Double Tree by Hilton New York Downtown on Stone Street near Broadway in the Financial District before running off. She has not been caught.

A man and a woman, both 39, were taken to the hospital to be treated for minor injuries, while three men and three women were treated at the scene, mostly for itching and eye irritation, cops said.

Court: Dan J. Sullivan can appear on ballot

AK ANCHORAGE — Three hours after hearing oral arguments, the Alaska Supreme Court on Monday ruled that the namesake challenger to Sen. Dan Sullivan can appear on the Aug. 18 primary ballot.

Four justices heard the case. The court decided that Friday's order by Anchorage Superior Court Judge Thomas Matthews, allowing Dan J. Sullivan to appear on the ballot, should stand.

Dan J. Sullivan, 70 and a retired teacher from Petersburg, registered to run for the Senate seat in late May.

He asked to appear on the ballot as a Republican, the same party as Sen. Dan Sullivan, though he hadn't previously affiliated as a Republican in 40-

plus years of registering to vote in Alaska, the state asserted.

Last month, Alaska Division of Elections Director Carol Beecher, a Republican, determined that Dan J. Sullivan's declaration of candidacy was not filed in good faith.

Student sues OpenAI for negligence in shooting

FL TALLAHASSEE — In April of last year, Alianna Grant was walking back to her dorm near the student union at Florida State University when she made eye contact with a young man who would fire three bullets into her chest, stomach and finger.

Wearing an AirPods in one ear, she managed to tell her iPhone to call her mother in Miami.

Grant, 22, who graduated in May, said she's still living with the physical and psychological trauma of that day, when an FSU classmate fatally shot two people and injured her and six others around the school's student union.

Grant not only blames the alleged gunman, Phoenix Ikner, 21, who has been charged in the mass shooting and awaits trial in October. She also faults the tech behemoth OpenAI for allegedly guiding him with its artificial intelligence chatbot right up until the campus shooting around 12 noon on April 17, 2025.

She filed a negligence and product liability suit against OpenAI and CEO Samuel Altman last week, marking the second individual legal action brought against the San Francisco-based company stemming from the FSU shooting.

The other case was filed in May by the widow of a slain FSU

food-service executive. The Florida Attorney General's Office has also launched a criminal investigation and pursued a civil action against OpenAI and ChatGPT.

In her suit, which asks for damages in excess of \$50,000, Grant claims that OpenAI and its related companies "actively aided" Ikner, the son of a Leon County sheriff's deputy.

"ChatGPT and the Defendants were Ikner's confidants and accomplices when they helped him research school shootings, which prison he would end up in after, how many people to kill to get the most media attention, the busiest times on campus, and finally, how to operate his firearms in the minutes before the school shooting," Grant's 34-page suit says.

In a statement, OpenAI said the mass shooting at FSU was a tragedy but denied any wrongdoing, saying "ChatGPT is not responsible for this terrible crime."

Kids get serious burns roasting marshmallows

CA LOS ANGELES — A tabletop fireplace that was recalled after it was linked to two deaths in the United States is apparently still injuring consumers, with two children in Southern California rushed to the hospital over the weekend with serious burns, according to officials.

Officials said that several children outside in a patio area were roasting marshmallows on a device called Flickr Fire, a tabletop fireplace kit that uses rubbing alcohol for fuel and was recalled in 2024. Adults were also present.

"During use, the device suddenly flashed, sending flames toward the children and igniting their clothing," officials said.

According to the department, adults nearby extinguished the flames by pouring water on the children until paramedics arrived.

Fetterman stumps for Trump Accounts for kids

PA PHILADELPHIA — In a rare public appearance in Philadelphia, Democratic Sen. John Fetterman joined Republican Sen. Dave McCormick at a youth basketball camp in Nicetown on Monday to promote Trump Accounts, the new federally backed savings accounts for kids that became law with the president's signature One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

Fetterman — who did not vote for the GOP-led initiative last year but has more frequently supported President Donald Trump's policies since then — said he was urging families in deeply Democratic Philadelphia to look past Trump's name on the program.

"Do not fall into that political trap," Fetterman said. "This isn't some radical thing. ... Do this for your child."

The accounts, which launch on July 4, are available to children under 18 — with children born between Jan. 1, 2025, and Dec. 31, 2028, receiving \$1,000 in seed money.

All accounts will also receive \$250 because of a \$6.25 billion donation from tech CEO Michael Dell and wife Susan Dell. Families, businesses and nonprofits can add up to \$5,000 annually.

— From wire reports

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Mbappé scores 2 as France tops Sweden

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Kylian Mbappé and France are sizzling — and not just because of MetLife Stadium's broiling conditions.

Mbappé had his third two-goal game of this World Cup and set a career scoring record for the tournament's knockout rounds, leading Les Bleus over Sweden 3-0 on Tuesday to set up a round of 16 match against Paraguay.

"I personally haven't seen a better team," Sweden coach Graham Potter said. "The quality they have all over the pitch and then the options for them off the bench are very, very strong, so they've got as good a chance as anybody, I would suggest."

France's 27-year-old star scored the first goal with a brilliant crossover step in the 45th minute and added his sixth goal of the tournament in the 74th to tie Lionel Messi for the tournament lead. He has 18 goals in 18 World Cup games, one behind the Argentine's career scoring record of 19.

In between, Bradley Barcola

had a 53rd-minute goal for France, which became the first nation to score three or more goals in five consecutive World Cup matches.

"I'm very aware of who I am, how I play, what I shall do, but it's not just about me," Mbappé said through a translator. "The entire team is aware of what should be done. It is a new competition that has started today. We did play well, but we were timid. We could have done better at the beginning."

Mbappé's 10 knockout round goals are two more than the previous high by Brazilian greats Leonidas and Ronaldo.

France coach Didier Deschamps bowed when Mbappé came to the bench after he was substituted in the 85th minute.

"We're on a mission — so am I with them," Deschamps said through a translator.

France has outscored opponents 13-2. Michael Olise has five assists, the most in a World Cup since Germany's Thomas Hassler had five in 1994.

"They are skilled at knowing when to change the pace and in-

crease it, when to possess the ball, went to fall back," Sweden captain Victor Lindelöf said through a translator.

Seeking to reach its third straight World Cup final, France plays Paraguay on July 4 in Philadelphia. The winner advances to a quarterfinal against Canada or Morocco five days later at Foxborough, Mass.

It was 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius), sunny and humid at the 5 p.m. kickoff with poor air quality at the site of the July 19 final. Many fans in the club areas stayed inside their air-conditioned suites.

France outshot Sweden 25-7 in the first World Cup meeting between the nations, including 15-3 in the first half.

Mbappé hit a post in the 32nd minute, raising both hands in disgust, and France nearly went ahead four minutes later on Olise's spectacular bicycle kick from just inside the penalty area, which also clanked off a post. Mbappé scored after goalkeeper Jacob Widell Zetterström tipped Olise's shot just outside the post.

Olise played a short corner kick to Ousmane Dembélé, who passed to Mbappé near the byline. Mbappé took a crossover step to get around Viktor Gyökeres and from just outside the 6-yard box sent a diagonal shot inside the far post.

Mbappé ran up the center of the field to celebrate, colliding with Dembélé, and jogged to the bench to hug Deschamps, who returned for the match after going to France for his mother's funeral.

Gustaf Lagerbielke lost the ball ahead of France's second goal. Aurélien Tchouaméni passed to Olise, who nutmegged Lagerbielke, and Barcola took a centering touch and sent the ball past Zetterström's outstretched right hand.

Mbappé entertained the crowd with a backheel pass to Barcola in the buildup to France's third goal, the 62nd of his international career. Barcola passed to Olise, who sent the ball forward as Mbappé sprinted into the penalty area, took a touch and fired the ball inside the far post.

Mexico beats Ecuador to end 40-year knockout drought

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — The 40-year wait is over. Mexicans had learned to live with defeats in the knockout stages of the World Cup. On seven occasions, El Tri fans were left heartbroken at this stage.

Not anymore.

Julián Quiñones and Raúl Jiménez scored within a nine-minute span in the first half and Mexico defeated Ecuador 2-0 on Tuesday night to break a four-decade drought in the knockout stage and progress to the round of 16.

Quiñones opened the scoring in the 22nd minute and Jiménez added a goal in the 31st for the Mexicans, who had not won a knockout-stage match since de-

feating Bulgaria in the round of 16 when they hosted the tournament in 1986. Mexico coach Javier Aguirre was one of the starting midfielders in that '86 team.

"It means a lot to me because I am one of those who could not progress in the knockout stage," Aguirre said. "We are in the round of 16 and it is happening a great connection with the fans. We are like a family. It is spectacular."

Mexico lost seven consecutive times at that same stage from 1994 to 2018 and didn't advance past the group stage in 2022.

Aguirre, who returned as Mexico's head coach in August of 2024, was an assistant in 1994

and was the coach in 2002 and 2010.

In the expanded, 48-team World Cup, there's an extra round in the knockout phase — the round of 32 was inserted for this tournament between the group stage and the round of 16.

Quiñones goals

A third goal in the tournament makes Quiñones El Tri's second-highest scorer in World Cup history behind Luis "Mataador" Hernández and Javier "Chicharito" Hernández, who scored four each.

Quiñones has become the spark in the attack that Mexico lacked in previous World Cups.

"I am just happy with the result, that is all that matters

now," said Quiñones, who is playing in his first World Cup with Mexico.

The 29-year-old forward arrived in the country from Colombia at age 17 and became a naturalized citizen in 2023.

Jiménez scored his second goal of the tournament and has 47 with the national team to break a tie with Jared Borgetti. He is five away from tying "Chicharito" Hernández as the all-time leading scorer for Mexico.

Mexico will play another home match Sunday against the winner of Wednesday's match between England and Congo.

With the win, Mexico extended its unbeaten run to 12 games, dating back to a friendly loss against Paraguay in November.

Serena 'enjoys moment' despite 3-set loss

Associated Press

LONDON — The roars began even before Serena Williams stepped on Centre Court. Then they grew louder when the 23-time Grand Slam champion arrived to play her first singles match in nearly four years.

And when it was all over and the 44-year-old Williams had performed admirably in a three-set defeat to an opponent less than half her age in the opening round of Wimbledon with her two daughters cheering her on, Williams smiled as she walked off to a loud round of applause.

"It was really great to be back at Wimbledon. I never expected to be here," Williams, who did not meet with media after the match, said in a statement released by Wimbledon organizers. "The atmosphere was amazing. Walking out was amazing. I definitely relished it and missed it and enjoyed the moment more than anything."

In a 6-3, 6-7 (6), 6-3 loss to 20-year-old Maya Joint of Australia on Tuesday, Williams showed

she can still crank out serves faster than 120 mph and dictate points with her heavy groundstrokes.

Movement was an issue for Williams, though, and the 87th-ranked Joint was able to handle Williams' pace and win more of the big points by hitting beyond the American's reach.

While Williams played two doubles matches just before Wimbledon to announce her comeback to the sport she once dominated, she hadn't played a singles match since the 2022 U.S. Open.

"She has such an aura, she's just a legend and this court has so many huge names that have played on it," Joint said.

Williams has 98 career victories and seven titles in singles on the hallowed grass of the All England Club. By contrast, it was Joint's first Wimbledon victory in just her second appearance at the All England Club after losing in the opening round last year.

But Joint won a Wimbledon warmup in nearby Eastbourne

last year and knows how to play on grass.

Doubles still to come

Williams, who has no singles ranking after being out for so long, was given wild card invitations by Wimbledon organizers to play singles and also doubles with older sister Venus.

Serena tweaked her right knee Tuesday, but still hopes to play doubles later in the week.

Williams has said that having her two daughters off from school inspired her comeback and it marked the first time that her youngest daughter, Adira, who is almost three, saw her play singles. Adira sat next to her 8-year-old sister, Olympia in the front row of Serena's players' box.

Standing ovation

Fans started cheering when Williams' name was announced as the next match on Centre Court, and then they gave her a standing ovation as she walked out before the match started under a closed roof. Several sup-

porters held up signs with messages like "Welcome Back" and one wore a T-shirt that said "Unstoppable Queen."

Williams executed a delicate topspin lob winner early on and then cranked out a 121 mph ace to hold for 3-3 in the first set. But she also had a costly double-fault which led to the only break of the first set.

In the second set, Williams came back from 0-40 and saved four break points to hold for 6-5. Then she saved a match point in the tiebreaker with a big serve down the T followed by a forehand approach winner. Another big serve — clocking in at 122 mph — set up her first set point, which she converted when Joint missed a forehand long.

After winning the set, Williams pumped her fist calmly. But Joint took control early in the third and a forehand from Williams sailed long on Joint's third match point to conclude the encounter after 2 hours, 22 minutes.

Williams and Joint both had 37 unforced errors, while Joint led 40-26 in winners.

Haaland scores deciding goal as Norway tops Ivory Coast

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Erling Haaland savored the moment after Norway won a knockout game at the World Cup for the first time, a celebration that included a horned helmet atop his head and again sitting on the field with teammates to do the Viking Row in sync with their red-clad fans.

"This is unbelievable. This is history," Haaland said on the field after the game.

A slight tap from Haaland's left foot in the 86th minute was the difference as Norway beat Ivory Coast 2-1 on Tuesday, setting up another World Cup match against five-time champion Brazil — 28 years after a victory many consider the greatest ever for the Norwegians.

For now, they prefer to enjoy their latest accomplishment.

"What we're going to think about now is to enjoy the win today. We're really happy and proud of ourselves," said Martin Odegaard, the team's captain who banged the drum to set the pace for the postgame row. "Hopefully we can keep dreaming and keep believing and keep performing like we did."

Antonio Nusa scored the opening goal in the first half with a curling kick for Norway, which in its fourth World Cup will next play in the round of 16 against Brazil on Sunday at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J.

"This is really a dream come true," Nusa said in translated remarks.

Norway is in its first World

Cup since that 1998 appearance, when the team got to the knockout round only after scoring goals in the 83rd and 89th minutes for an incredible 2-1 comeback win over then-reigning World Cup champion Brazil in the group finale.

Amad Diallo, who had prevented Norway from taking a two-goal lead earlier in the second half, evened the match for Ivory Coast with a left-footed kick in the 74th minute.

Even after Haaland's go-ahead goal, his Norway-record 60th in 53 matches, Ivory Coast kept pressing and had a chance to equalize with a direct free kick by Diallo in the sixth minute of stoppage time. Orjan Nyland made a leaping stop, the last of his four saves, when he deflect-

ed the ball away as he extended his left hand across his body.

Haaland's 27 touches were the fewest of any Norway player who played the full match, but he was open after three defenders converged when Patrick Berg moved into the penalty area with the ball before making a quick pass. It was a slow roll over the line after coming off the foot of Haaland, who lunged forward as if he might have to kick it again.

It was Haaland's fifth goal in three games at this year's tournament.

The youthful Elephants, ranked 31st by FIFA, had never before won twice in the same World Cup. This was the fourth World Cup appearance for the West African nation, the same as Norway.

Nationals top Red Sox after benches clear

Associated Press

BOSTON—Cade Cavalli gave up one hit in seven innings and had a career-high 13 strikeouts in the Washington Nationals' 8-1 victory over Boston on Tuesday night, snapping the Red Sox's five-game winning streak.

Cavalli, who was at the center of a scuffle in the fourth inning, yelled at Boston first baseman Willson Contreras after striking him out, causing the benches to clear. Contreras, along with Red Sox interim manager Chad Tracy, teammate Nate Eaton and Washington pitcher Miles Mikolas, were all ejected.

Cavalli (5-4) threw 100 pitches and gave up one unearned run in the first inning, when third baseman Curtis Mead bobbled Contreras' grounder, allowing Anthony Seigler to score.

James Wood hit an RBI single to tie the game in the fifth. Wood added an RBI double in the eighth for the eighth run of the game.

White Sox 9, Orioles 3: Colson Montgomery and Junior Perez homered during Chicago's seven-run third inning and the visiting White Sox pounded Baltimore.

Erick Fedde (3-6) allowed three runs in five innings for Chicago, which extended its lead atop the AL Central to two games over Cleveland. Tyler Schweitzer worked the final four innings for his first career save.

Chicago went 13-12 in June, making this the first time the White Sox have managed back-to-back winning months since 2021. They had a winning record in every month that year.

Rangers 4, Guardians 2: Jacob deGrom (7-5) pitched seven strong innings of two-run ball and visiting Texas took advantage of a big mistake by rookie outfielder Cooper Ingle to beat Cleveland and extend its winning streak to six games.

Joc Pederson hit a two-run homer and Josh Jung added a solo shot as the AL West-leading

Rangers improved to 7-2 on their road trip.

They got a big assist in the seventh inning when Ingle, making just his second major league start in the outfield, lost track of the number of outs and tossed a live ball into the stands, allowing Texas to take a 3-2 lead.

Phillies 8, Pirates 0: Christopher Sánchez (10-3) returned to form after a couple of shaky outings, allowing only three hits in seven innings with nine strikeouts as host Philadelphia beat Pittsburgh.

Sánchez was supported by rookie Justin Crawford's two-run single in the second inning, then a three-run seventh inning outburst that included an RBI double by Trea Turner and RBI single by Bryce Harper.

Tigers 9, Yankees 3: Tarik Skubal pitched six innings of one-hit ball and Riley Greene hit two of Detroit's four homers off Cam Schlichter as the visiting Tigers sent New York to its season-worst sixth straight loss.

Skubal (4-4), making his fourth start since returning from elbow surgery, allowed only Ben Rice's 23rd homer in the first inning and an unearned run in the sixth. The two-time defending AL Cy Young Award winner struck out nine and walked none after allowing four runs to the Yankees last week in Detroit.

Mets 3, Blue Jays 0: Nolan McLean (5-5) and three relievers combined on a six-hitter, Francisco Alvarez and Luis Torrens both hit solo home runs and visiting New York beat Toronto.

Brooks Raley pitched the seventh, Luke Weaver worked the eighth and Devin Williams finished for his 12th save in 13 chances.

Cardinals 5, Braves 3: Nathan Church hit a three-run homer, Nelson Velázquez added a solo shot and Matthew Liberatore (4-5) struck out nine in five innings of one-run ball as visiting St. Louis beat NL East-leading Atlanta.

Velázquez started a four-run fourth inning with his third homer of the year—a 444-foot shot to center field that tied the game at 1. Church followed later in the inning with his sixth homer of the season to increase the lead to 4-1.

Rays 10, Royals 4: Junior Caminero homered for the fifth straight game, a three-run shot that highlighted a six-run second inning, and visiting Tampa Bay rolled from there to a victory over Kansas City.

Caminero, the reigning AL player of the week, announced earlier in the day that he would participate in the All-Star Home Run Derby after finishing second to Seattle's Cal Raleigh last year. The 22-year-old third baseman then crushed a pitch from Noah Cameron over the left-field wall for his 23rd homer of the season and the eighth in his last seven games.

Brewers 7, Reds 2: Jake Bauers went 3 for 4 with a homer and Jackson Chourio also went deep in host Milwaukee's victory over Cincinnati.

The Brewers' Brandon Sproat (3-4) threw a career-high 106 pitches and allowed two runs and four hits in 5½ innings. He struck out seven and walked two.

Cubs 9, Padres 7: Dansby Swanson hit two of host Chicago's five home runs and the Cubs held on to beat San Diego for their fourth straight victory.

Alex Bregman, Michael Busch and Pete Crow-Armstrong added homers to help Chicago win for the 10th time in 12 games.

Astros 6, Twins 4: Yordan Alvarez's grand slam highlighted a six-run fourth inning and host Houston beat Minnesota.

With the Astros facing a three-run deficit after three innings, Cam Smith and Taylor Trammell singled in the fourth. With runners at the corners, Yainer Diaz hit an RBI single. Raynel Delgado walked, loading the bases. Jose Altuve challenged

his strikeout call with a full count. The call was overturned and another run scored. Alvarez then hit his 26th home run of the season to right-center field.

Marlins 14, Rockies 3: Javier Sanoja and Owen Caissie each hit three-run homers, and Joe Mack added a two-run shot as visiting Miami routed Colorado to claim its franchise-best 20th win of June.

The Marlins, who have the second-lowest payroll in MLB, have outscored opponents 133-80 in June, their best calendar month in franchise history. They are also the first team in MLB to win 20 games in a month this year.

Dodgers 9, Athletics 3: Tommy Edman had four hits including his first home run of the season, and Dave Roberts became the fastest manager in history to reach 1,000 career wins after visiting Los Angeles beat the Athletics.

Roberts became the 69th manager in history to reach 1,000 wins and the quickest to do it. Roberts achieved his milestone managerial victory in 1,606 games. Cap Anson, the next fastest, needed 1,641 games and won his 1,000th in 1893.

Diamondbacks 8, Giants 2: Ketel Marte homered in his fourth straight game, Lourdes Gurriel Jr. added a three-run homer and host Arizona extended its dominance against San Francisco with a win.

The Diamondbacks are 8-0 against the Giants this season, winning five times in Arizona and three times in San Francisco.

Mariners 8, Angels 3: Julio Rodriguez had three hits and scored twice, Bryan Woo (7-6) took a shutout into the seventh inning and host Seattle put together a five-run sixth to beat Los Angeles.

Rodriguez and Colt Emerson both had three of the Mariners' 13 hits. Randy Arozarena and Cole Young scored two runs apiece.