

US, Iran trade new round of barrages

By LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

U.S. forces launched a second round of attacks against Iran, prompting retaliatory strikes from Tehran on Thursday and pushing the region back toward the brink of full-scale war.

The attack began just hours after President Donald Trump, speaking at a NATO summit in Turkey, said the ceasefire was over and warned that the U.S. would “probably hit them hard again.”

In a post on X, U.S. Central Command said the strikes were meant “to further degrade their ability to threaten freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.”

“The United States is holding Iran accountable for recent unjustified aggression against commercial shipping and civilian crews freely navigating a vital international waterway,” the CENTCOM statement added.

This marked the second day of U.S. attacks in response to Iranian strikes on tankers attempting to transit the Strait of Hormuz.

Vice President JD Vance said Iran’s actions were a direct violation of the deal made last month to end the war.

“The deal is very simple: if they shoot at ships, we’re going to knock the hell out of them,” Vance said at an event in Wisconsin on Wednesday.

Iranian state media reported explosions in several locations, including the port city of Bandar Abbas, the southern coastal city of Sirik and Bushehr, home to Iran’s nuclear power plant complex.

Axios, citing a senior official, reported that the U.S. Air Force also bombed two railway bridges in Iran.

In a follow-up post on X, CENTCOM said its forces struck approximately 90 tar-

gets, including “air defense systems, coastal surveillance assets, missile and drone storage sites, naval capabilities, and military logistics infrastructure.”

Meanwhile, authorities in Bahrain and Kuwait said they were intercepting projectiles. The two nations host major U.S. installations, including Naval Support Activity Bahrain and Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait.

Iranian state media claimed the country had made a direct hit against the U.S. 5th Fleet in Bahrain. U.S. Central Command did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the claim.

Iran’s parliamentary speaker, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, said in a post to X that the U.S. still hasn’t learned that “bullying and breaking promises are no longer cost-free.”

“Let me put it plainly: if you strike, you’ll get hit,” he said.

“The Strait of Hormuz will only open with ‘Iranian arrangements,’ not American threats.”

The U.S. has gradually ramped up the intensity and scale of its strikes in response to the Iranian attacks against tankers but has stopped short of resuming the kind of the level of hostilities seen at the start of the war, which began in late February.

On Tuesday, the U.S. struck over 80 targets overnight, including “Iranian air defense systems, command and control networks, coastal radar sites, anti-ship missile capabilities, and more than 60 Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps small boats in and near the strait,” CENTCOM said.

Iran in return fired on U.S. bases in Kuwait and Bahrain, though CENTCOM said no U.S. personnel were injured and there was no major damage done to facilities that day.

Navy carrier in Mideast at sea for more than 200 days

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The USS Abraham Lincoln has spent nearly seven months at sea, a grueling pace of operations that has kept the aircraft carrier and its crew on duty in the Middle East since January with no clear end in sight.

On Monday, Lincoln reached its 207th consecutive day at sea, breaking a previous record set by the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The only port call the Lincoln has made during its current de-

ployment was a brief stop in Guam on Dec. 11-12, according to the Navy.

The carrier departed San Diego on Nov. 21 for routine operations, the service said.

Lincoln and its crew of about 5,000 personnel have been on station in the Arabian Sea for months helping to sustain U.S. military operations aimed at compelling Iran to release its stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz and give up its nuclear ambitions.

The U.S. operations have included airstrikes against military facilities and other sites in Iran, protecting ships in the

strait and, until last month, maintaining a naval blockade against Iranian ports, among other operations.

There are signs that the operational tempo may be taking a toll on the physical and mental well-being of sailors who have had limited contact with their families and little respite from 24/7 operations.

“Our mental health and physical health is in danger,” one Lincoln sailor recently wrote to family members. “We need help.”

The family shared the message with Stars and Stripes on the condition of anonymity out

of concerns of retaliation.

That plea was especially worrisome for one family member who is concerned that their sailor may be among those potentially facing a mental health crisis.

“It’s worrisome and it’s kind of heartbreaking,” the family member said. “... you can’t do anything.”

The Navy and U.S. Central Command did not immediately respond to questions about how the service is addressing the health and mental well-being of sailors during the lengthy deployment.

USS Gerald R. Ford goes into maintenance

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

Aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford moved to Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, Va., on Tuesday for its first maintenance break since a record 326-day deployment that ended in May.

The first of a new carrier class, Ford was launched in 2013 and commissioned in 2017. It had prior maintenance in Virginia at HII Newport News Shipbuilding in 2021. The Planned Incremental Availability maintenance will be the ship's first at a Navy shipyard.

"A PIA is a scheduled period for an aircraft carrier to undergo extensive maintenance, repairs and modernization to meet future operational demands, spanning a wide array of overhauls and inspections," the Navy said in a statement. "Additionally, a concurrent availability will be conducted to restore spaces damaged during a fire aboard the then-deployed carrier in March 2026."

At the time of the fire, Ford was

in the Eastern Mediterranean as part of the U.S. forces attacking Iran during Operation Epic Fury. Preliminary work on the damage was done at facilities in Croatia.

PIA maintenance normally takes several months. USS Dwight D. Eisenhower underwent PIA work at Norfolk in January 2026 after a combat deployment and returned to the fleet in April.

The Navy said Wednesday that a team from Norfolk Naval Shipyard had started a "continuum" of work on the carrier while it was still at Norfolk Naval Station.

Advance work included "early testing, preparations for temporary service installation, and jet blast deflector overhaul," the Navy statement said.

Project Superintendent George "BJ" Baker said the continuum allows for work before and after the window of opportunity (WOO) before and after Ford's allocated time in the shipyard.

"Capitalizing on these WOO

periods is the single most important key to returning carriers to their strict maintenance timelines," Baker said.

The Navy's four shipyards have been criticized by Congress and defense experts for backlogs on maintenance schedules.

Ford's arrival at Norfolk follows the early PIA completions for Nimitz-class aircraft carriers Eisenhower in April and USS George H.W. Bush in November 2024, the Navy said.

"USS Gerald R. Ford is positioned to become the third consecutive early finish of an aircraft carrier availability at 'America's Shipyard,'" said Rear Adm. Kavon Hakimzadeh, Norfolk Naval Shipyard's commanding officer.

Ford deployed from June 2025 to May 2026, steaming across the Atlantic four times as it moved from Norfolk to exercises in the North Sea before it was ordered to the Caribbean to take part in the Jan. 3 capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. The carrier then moved to the East-

ern Mediterranean to launch attacks on Feb. 28 against Iran. It returned to Norfolk on May 16.

Ford is the lead ship in the first newly designed aircraft carrier class in more than 40 years, beginning the phased replacement of Nimitz-class carriers that will stretch past 2050.

The 100,000-ton carrier is the first of 10 planned ships of the class to be built. The Ford class incorporates many advancements over the Nimitz class, including electromagnetic-powered aircraft catapults and elevators.

USS John F. Kennedy, the second Ford-class carrier, is scheduled to be commissioned in March 2017. Two other carriers, USS Enterprise and USS Doris Miller are under construction at HII Newport News Shipbuilding, with projected launching dates in 2031 and 2034. Two additional Ford-class carriers, USS William J. Clinton and USS George W. Bush, were announced in January 2025.

Navy directive removes permanent shaving waivers

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

Sailors with shaving-related conditions will get one year of medical treatment to meet the Navy's clean-shaven face standard or they will be removed from the service, according to new guidance.

The Navy will no longer issue permanent shaving waivers to sailors who suffer from skin conditions caused by shaving, including pseudofolliculitis barbae, according to a Navy memorandum published this week. The updated policy brings the service into line with guidance issued last year by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth banning most shaving accommodations for service members.

The Navy's July directive in-

structs all sailors with skin irritation or other conditions caused by shaving — including those with current medical shaving waivers — to report the issue to their supervisors and seek medical evaluation. If recommended for treatment, their commanding officer may issue a temporary shaving waiver, allowing them to maintain a beard up to ¼ inch in length.

Commanders may grant temporary waivers for up to 90 days, according to the guidance. Those waivers must "align with prescribed treatment." Commanders may only grant a 90-day shaving waiver four times before they must recommend a sailor for administrative separation.

Sailors who cannot meet shaving standards after one year of

treatment shall be deemed to have "an unmanageable permanent condition" and recommended for "separation due to failure to comply with grooming standards," according to the memo.

"Grooming standards add to sailor and mission safety and ensure the safe and proper utilization of protective equipment in all naval environments and operational conditions," the memo reads.

The policy says the Navy will not grant temporary medical waivers to recruits or others entering or reentering the service.

Pseudofolliculitis barbae, commonly known as razor bumps, is a condition that can cause a person to experience painful inflammation after shaving. The condition

disproportionately affects Black men, some 60% of whom may experience it, according to the American Osteopathic College of Dermatology.

Hegseth has lamented the increase in recent years of bearded troops, who he has said do not meet military standards. His September 2025 memorandum also instructed the military services to reevaluate religious beard waivers.

The Navy last month ordered sailors with religious-based accommodations, including for facial hair, to reapply for a grooming standard exemption and outlined its more stringent evaluation process.

The July memo allows sailors to continue to wear mustaches.

Platner drops out of Maine Senate race

New York Daily News

Maine Democrat Graham Platner Wednesday ended his Senate campaign over a sex assault allegation, a move that clears the way for Democrats to pick a new candidate to take on Republican Sen. Susan Collins in the critical midterm showdown.

The progressive oysterman dropped out of the marquee race after the claim by ex-girlfriend Jen Racicot that he forcibly had sex with her during a drunken incident in 2021, even though he denies the allegation.

“What comes next needs to come from the people, needs to come from the people of

Maine,” Platner said in a video message posted on social media. “It needs to be open, transparent and democratic. It needs to be reflecting the will and the values of the people that built this movement.”

Platner, 41, won a sweeping victory in the Democratic primary just a few weeks ago but pressure had been building on him to quit.

Maine Democratic Party leaders need to determine a process to select a new nominee, a process that must be completed by July 27. Some have proposed a caucus system like the one used in presidential primaries in the state.

Leading candidates to replace Platner include ex-state lawmaker Troy Jackson, public health official Nirav Shah; and Secretary of State Shenna Bellows.

Some Platner supporters are pushing for him to have a say in his replacement, whom they hope would have similar progressive views. Others say he should stay out of the process.

The political stakes could hardly be higher.

Republicans hold a 53-49 majority in the Senate, meaning Democrats would need to flip four seats to retake control.

Maine remains one of the top targets for Democrats, who

would also need to win an open seat in North Carolina and some combination of red states like Alaska, Ohio, Iowa and Texas.

Collins has long been seen as the most vulnerable Republican incumbent, mostly because Maine is a Democratic-leaning state that voted for Kamala Harris over President Trump by about 6%.

Platner, who has no previous political experience, took the race by storm when he entered the contest last year. He ran on a populist message that won a receptive audience among voters angry over President Donald Trump’s perceived failure to improve the economy.

GOP leaders fail to quell McConnell health questions

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — As online speculation swirls over Sen. Mitch McConnell’s hospitalization and scant public updates from his staff, the Kentucky Republican’s top allies spoke up this week, insisting he remains alert. But those assurances have done little to quash demands for proof of life, including from the state’s governor.

The episode has reignited a debate over lawmakers’ medical privacy in an era when experts warn that silence can quickly turn into misinformation and spiral out of control.

McConnell, 84, was hospitalized on June 14 with unspecified health issues.

His office has said he “continues to improve” but disclosed no details.

Paramedics performed CPR on an individual experiencing a “cardiac arrest” at a known address for McConnell, multiple news outlets reported, citing police scanner audio.

Since then, it’s mostly been crickets from his office.

Kentucky’s Gov. Andy Be-

shear on Wednesday sent a letter to McConnell’s office requesting an update on the “current status” of his health.

“Allowing speculation to continue in the media is not fair to the Senator or to Kentuckians,” Beshear, a Democrat, said in a statement.

Lawmakers are not bound by ethics rules to share any medical records with the public, and a hush-hush culture around their health is nothing new in D.C. But the recent absences of McConnell and Rep. Thomas H. Kean Jr. have frustrated transparency advocates and highlighted how politicians are struggling to control today’s AI-supercharged online ecosystem.

Rumors have continued to spread wide. One post from conservative activist Laura Loomer claimed the senator is in a “vegetative state” — resulting in a factcheck page from Snopes calling it “unproven” — while others proposed reasons his wife, Elaine Chao, would have remained in China while McConnell was hospitalized.

Judge orders release of \$5M Trump owes in Carroll abuse case

New York Daily News

NEW YORK — A federal judge in Manhattan on Wednesday ordered the immediate release of more than \$5 million owed to E. Jean Carroll by Donald Trump despite the president’s eleventh-hour bid to the U.S. Supreme Court to try to delay the payout once again.

Judge Lewis Kaplan’s order directing that the money be disbursed from a court-controlled account came a week after the Supreme Court refused to hear Trump’s appeal of the 2023 verdict that found him liable for sexual assault and defamation.

Carroll’s legal team did not immediately comment. Moments after the order came down, Trump’s lawyers filed a notice of appeal.

Following a weekslong civil trial in the spring of 2023, Trump was found liable for sexually assaulting Carroll inside a Midtown department store in 1996 and defaming her as a

mentally unstable liar decades later.

Jurors heard extensive testimony about the violent attack from Carroll, a bestselling author and former TV host, from friends she confided in about the assault, and from other women who alleged Trump had sexually assaulted them in similar incidents.

After the verdict, the damages were deposited in a court-controlled account, where they remained as Trump petitioned one judge after another to overturn the verdict.

After accruing interest, the sum is now closer to \$6 million.

Trump has separately been ordered to pay Carroll \$83.3 million for additional instances of defamation, which were central to the original lawsuit she filed against him in 2019 and decided separately from the sexual abuse case.

The president fought Carroll’s cases vigorously.

Trump: High court should rehear case involving birthright

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said he would ask the Supreme Court to rehear a case over birthright citizenship, a long-shot bid to undo a ruling that went against his administration.

Trump has assailed the court over last month's 6-3 ruling, which invalidated an executive order the president issued last year that sought to restrict birthright citizenship to babies with at least one parent who is a U.S. citizen or green-card holder.

The "Supreme Court's ruling is wrong," Trump wrote on social media Wednesday. "I will be asking for a Rehearing by the

United States Supreme Court, IMMEDIATELY."

Trump is unlikely to see his request granted. The justices almost never allow such rehearings.

Trump's order, part of a broader effort to crackdown on immigration, would have affected an estimated 250,000 children born to undocumented immigrants and temporary visitors each year.

A request for rehearing is possible under Supreme Court rules, but such requests are rarely granted, cleveland.com reported. A majority of justices would need to agree to revisit the case before it could move forward.

ACA premiums likely to surge again in '27

Stateline.org

Health insurance premiums are likely to grow more expensive next year for those who buy Marketplace plans, after increases this year.

Affordable Care Act Marketplace insurers are proposing a median premium increase of 14% for 2027, which would be a double-digit hike for the second year in a row, according to a new analysis of preliminary rate filings.

Insurers must submit their requested premium changes to state regulators by July 15, per Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services deadlines. Rates should be finalized later this summer.

Released Wednesday by the Peterson Center on Healthcare

and health care research group KFF, the analysis looked at proposed rate changes among 77 Marketplace insurers across 16 states and Washington, D.C., that have made proposed rates publicly available. Those are Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont and Washington state.

The majority of insurers across those states are proposing a median ACA Marketplace premium increase between 10% and 20%, while 20 insurers are requesting premium increases of more than 20%. None included in the analysis proposed a decrease in premiums.

Japan's southern islands brace for Typhoon Bavi

BY BRIAN McELHINEY,
KEISHI KOJA
AND ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Japan's Ishigaki island, a popular southwestern tourist destination and home to a Japanese army base, is battenning down for Typhoon Bavi's expected arrival early Saturday.

Bavi is forecast to pass over the island as a Category 2-equivalent storm, with sustained winds up to 110 mph, and about 280 miles southwest of Kadena Air Base on Okinawa. The storm's wind field stretches across 230 miles.

A much stronger, Category 5-equivalent Super Typhoon Bavi left parts of the Northern Marianas Islands and Guam, all U.S. territories, in tatters Monday.

It struck Rota, a 33-square-mile island with about 2,000 residents, head on with 180 mph sustained winds. The storm left many of the island's homes damaged or destroyed and its approximately 2,000 residents without water or power.

Ishigaki city's Disaster Prevention Division "has been holding meetings and coordinating on evacuation shelter arrangements and public relations for the past three days," a spokesman said Thursday.

A spokesman for the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force's 15th Brigade on Okinawa declined comment Thursday on preparations at Camp Ishigaki, citing operational security.

The city closed its popular Painuham Beach through Sunday and canceled medical checkups scheduled for residents on Friday, according to the city's website.

It advised residents to store water in tanks and bathtubs for flushing toilets and showering and to keep about one gallon of potable water per person on hand.

The city's official Facebook page on Thursday also urged residents to remain alert for landslides, flooding in low-lying ar-

reas and rising or overflowing rivers.

Some Japan Airlines and all ANA flights in and out of Ishigaki and Naha airports on Friday were canceled due to the storm, according to the airlines' websites. Ferry service in and out of Ishigaki Port was canceled through Saturday, according to its website.

Relief supplies and personnel started to arrive Wednesday in the Marianas, according to social media posts from the U.S. military and American Red Cross.

Two C-130 Hercules airlifters from Yokota Air Base, Japan, landed on Rota to "position personnel and resources in support of disaster relief operations" for the island and its neighbors, Andersen Air Force Base said in a Facebook post Thursday.

The Navy's Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25 from Andersen is providing "critical aerial assessments" in the region, Joint Task Force-Micronesia spokeswoman Army Capt. Christy Hanson said Thursday.

The joint task force's role is to "support civil authorities and provide assistance to those in need" and work with government partners to "ensure a unified and effective response," Rear Adm. Josh Lasky, the task force commander, said in Hanson's email.

The American Red Cross sent teams from Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey and South Carolina to the Marianas to help with the recovery effort, according to Red Cross posts on Facebook.

"Shelters are open, and volunteers from across the country are standing by to provide comfort, meals and recovery supplies as soon as it's safe," according to an American Red Cross post Wednesday.

"Even more of our volunteers will arrive in the coming days as teams assess the impact of the storm and ensure people have the support they need during this difficult time," the post states.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Trump issues pardons for Clean Air Act violations

DC WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump recently pardoned a series of western Michigan businesses and individuals for violations of the Clean Air Act in connection with an emissions manipulation scheme.

The individuals included Ryan Lalone, owner of truck supply company Diesel Freak LLC in Gaylord, and Wade Lalone, his brother and employee. The businesses included Diesel Freak, Accurate Truck Service LLC and Griffin Transportation Inc., both in Grand Rapids.

The parties involved were convicted and eventually sentenced in late 2023 and early 2024 for their involvement in a scheme to disable the emissions controls on hundreds of semi-trucks. Their penalties included a year of probation and fines from the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan totaling \$1.8 million.

DMV could revoke licenses for ‘anomalies’

CA LOS ANGELES — Thousands of Californians have received letters from the Department of Motor Vehicles informing them that irregularities were found in their written test results and that they will lose their licenses unless they retake the exam within 30 days.

The letters have left many Californians scratching their heads as to what went wrong and scrambling to reschedule their tests to ensure they don't lose the ability to drive.

“It's a major headache for people who maybe don't have

reliable transportation,” said Sacramento resident David Specht.

A spokesperson for the California DMV wrote in an email that the agency had “identified anomalies in the results of certain knowledge tests” and that as a result about 11,000 people are being notified that they must retake the exam.

The spokesperson said the letters were a result of the DMV's regular internal monitoring process and did not respond to questions on the nature of the irregularities detected.

Specht, 36, said he took the written test in January after relocating to Sacramento from Chicago. He was then very confused when he received the warning letter last month and initially thought that the DMV had suspected him of cheating because he completed the test very quickly.

Specht said he called the DMV and asked for further details on what issues were detected with his test, but the representative did not know.

Candidates vow to end nuclear power plant ban

MN MINNEAPOLIS — Minnesota's next governor could play a pivotal role in deciding whether the state ends its 32-year ban on new nuclear power plants, a proposal that has drawn renewed attention amid rising energy demand.

Momentum has been building to revisit the moratorium, which the state enacted in 1994 to address concerns about storing radioactive waste. This year, state lawmakers approved \$500,000 to study the possibility of building new nuclear reac-

tors in Minnesota.

The debate has become a top energy issue in the governor's race, with leading Republican candidates saying they support repealing the moratorium.

Minnesota House Speaker Lisa Demuth, R-Cold Spring, said the state needs an “all-of-the-above approach” to lowering energy costs.

Retired health care executive Kendall Qualls, the GOP-endorsed candidate for governor, has said he supports advancing “next-generation nuclear power for clean, reliable, affordable energy.”

City weighs prediction market ban for staff

IL CHICAGO — Chicago employees and elected officials could soon be banned from using insider knowledge to place bets on online prediction markets like Kalshi and Polymarket.

The gambling-like markets that are soaring in popularity allow users to wager on a huge, diverse, growing number of questions, ranging from sports and elections outcomes to war ceasefires and even local policy: Will the Chicago Bears move? Will self-driving Waymo cars come to the city?

City leaders and staff must be clearly blocked from using their confidential information to place bets, argued the ban's top proponent, Alderman Timmy Knudsen.

“The work that we do within City Hall and within all of our offices is innately sensitive and often confidential,” Knudsen said. “We just need to be sure that people aren't using any of that information for profit or for playing games.”

Aldermen advanced Knudsen's measure in a unanimous voice vote Tuesday during a City Council Ethics Committee meeting. It will likely face a final vote next week.

Knudsen told the Tribune ahead of the Tuesday vote that city law already blocks elected officials and employees from using insider information to enrich themselves. City attorneys would argue prediction market bets are already against the law if a case went to court, he predicted.

Former gubernatorial candidate is arrested

AL DAPHNE — Former Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum, who ran for Florida governor against Ron DeSantis in 2018, was arrested last week in Alabama on drug charges, according to jail records.

Police in the town of Daphne arrested Gillum, 46, on July 2 on charges of possession of dangerous drugs, possession of drug paraphernalia and marijuana possession, according to Baldwin County jail records.

Chief Brian Gulsby said officers pulled over Gillum around 10:45 p.m. on U.S. Highway 98 because he was driving erratically. Police saw a glass pipe on the center console of Gillum's car, along with three packages of what turned out to be methamphetamines, Gulsby said.

According to Gillum's arrest report, officers found 3 grams of meth, eight marijuana cigarettes, several “blunts,” which are cigar-paper-wrapped marijuana joints, a bong, three glass pipes and four cut straws in his car.

— From wire reports

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Muchova ends Gauff's run in tiebreaker

Associated Press

LONDON — Karolina Muchova ended Coco Gauff's run at Wimbledon in a drama-filled tiebreaker to reach the final Thursday.

Muchova won 6-2, 1-6, 7-6 (10) to become the fourth Czech woman in the last six years to reach the championship match of the grass-court Grand Slam.

"It was such a big fight," Muchova said. "It was a roller coaster."

Gauff wasted a match point in the tiebreaker when she dinked an attackable forehand into the net to follow a powerful first serve.

Muchova then produced a lob winner to set up her first match point, which she lost when she slipped to the grass and a passing shot from Gauff sailed by her.

But Muchova quickly set up another match point and produced a series of shots to the corners. Gauff, on the full run, reached the last ball but her forehand response landed in the net and Muchova covered her hands in disbelief.

"You're up and down in 10 seconds. You have a match point, then match point down. It's no time to think, but very nerve-wracking," Muchova said. "I'm really kind of shaking and trying to sink it in."

Earlier in the tiebreaker, Muchova produced a diving

forehand volley winner at full stretch that brought back memories of the way three-time Wimbledon champion Boris Becker used to play. She ended up face down on the grass, her racket lying next to her, as the crowd roared.

Czech representation

It will be the ninth-ranked Muchova's second Grand Slam final after losing to Iga Swiatek in the 2023 French Open championship match.

Muchova will face another Czech player in Saturday's final. Linda Noskova beat Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine in the other semifinal next on Centre Court, 6-4, 6-4.

The other Czech women in the Wimbledon final recently were Karolina Pliskova (runner-up in 2021), Marketa Vondrousova (champion in 2023), and Barbora Krejickova (champion in 2024).

While Muchova has been slowed by injuries to both wrists over the past two years, she has now reached the semifinals or better at all four Grand Slams but is still searching for her first win.

Gauff's history

For Gauff, it was still her most successful Wimbledon. Previously, the seventh-

ranked American had gone only as far as the fourth round three times — including during her breakthrough run as a 15-year-old in 2019.

Gauff had won six of her seven previous matches against Muchova.

But Muchova has been nearly unbeatable on grass this year and extended her record this season on the surface to 11-1 after a title in Bad Homburg, Germany. Her only loss on grass this year came against Madison Keys in the Berlin Open round of 16.

Muchova beat Gauff for the first time in April on clay in Stuttgart, Germany.

It was another hot day in London with the temperature soaring to 91 degrees Fahrenheit, prompting spectators to fan themselves in the stands in an attempt to keep cool.

Muchova appeared to be struggling physically as the match wore on, bending over in exhaustion after one long rally and holding her abdomen in apparent pain during the final game.

"I'm OK," Muchova said. "I just was trying to catch a breath."

Muchova said she took a photo of Centre Court when she came to practice on the famed lawn ahead of her first career match on the most revered court in tennis.

nis.

"There are so many of us tennis players and I don't think many of us get to play on this court," she said. "It's just a nice moment to experience all of this and this court is beautiful."

The men's semifinals Friday feature top-ranked and defending champion Jannik Sinner against seven-time Wimbledon winner Novak Djokovic, and French Open champion Alexander Zverev against British wild card Arthur Fery.

Fery grew up five minutes from the All England Club and now the 114th-ranked player is a semifinalist at the grass-court Grand Slam.

The 23-year-old British player beat ninth-seeded Flavio Cobolli 6-4, 7-6 (4), 6-0 on Centre Court in front of roaring home fans and a Royal Box contingent that included Britain's Queen Camilla on Wednesday.

His run has been dubbed a "Ferytale" and has included a viewing by Kate, the Princess of Wales, earlier in the tournament.

"It gets better and better every match," Fery said in an on-court interview. "I just can't believe it."

The only other wild card to have reached the men's singles semifinals at the All England Club was Goran Ivanisevic in his run to the Wimbledon title in 2001.

Pulisic fractured leg while trying to score against Belgium

Associated Press

U.S. star Christian Pulisic fractured his right leg during the Americans' World Cup loss to Belgium and will be sidelined for several weeks.

Pulisic has a bone bruise and a microfracture of his tibia and fibula, the U.S. Soccer Federation said Thursday.

The diagnosis was made after an X-ray and MRI on Tuesday.

He would not have been able to play during the remainder of the tournament had the U.S. advanced.

Pulisic is expected to resume training before AC Milan's Serie A opener at Torino

on Aug. 23.

Pulisic hit a leg of Belgium captain Youri Tielemans while attempting a shot in the 52nd minute of Monday's 4-1 round-of-16 loss at Seattle. He remained in the game but was hobbling, and Sebastian Berhalter replaced him in the 59th minute.

Pulisic failed to score in the World Cup, missing one of the Americans' five matches because of a calf injury and leaving two other games early. He has 30 goals in 90 international appearances.

Pulisic, who turns 28 in September, is entering his fourth season with Milan.

Verlander to retire after over 20 seasons

Associated Press

DETROIT — Justin Verlander plans to call it a career later this year.

The three-time Cy Young Award winner, two-time World Series champion and 2011 AL MVP will retire after this season with the Detroit Tigers.

Verlander made the announcement Wednesday, shortly after he was added as a Legend Pick to the American League All-Star roster.

“While I’m fully committed to giving my team everything I have for the rest of this season, I’ve decided this will be my last,” Verlander shared on social media. “It’s fitting that I get to finish where it all started — with the Detroit Tigers, the organization that drafted me and gave me my first opportunity.”

The 43-year-old Verlander is the oldest player in Major League Baseball. He signed a one-year, \$13 million contract to rejoin Detroit in February.

Verlander allowed five runs in 3⅓ innings during a 9-6 road loss at Arizona on March 30.

That was his only start this year.

“It’s time for the next chapter,” Verlander said. “But first, I’m excited to finish this season the only way I know how — with everything I’ve got.”

Verlander went on the injured list with hip inflammation early in the season and when the right-hander was nearing a return last month, he pulled a hamstring during a bullpen session.

“It just felt like I was plugging holes in a boat,” Verlander said at Wednesday’s news conference. “When you kind of put everything together and consider everything, I’ve been kind of trending toward this decision for quite a while.”

He was scheduled to pitch in June and make what would have been his first start with the Tigers at Comerica Park since August 30, 2017 — the day before he was traded to Houston.

He still intends to make that start, and is scheduled to throw a bullpen before Thursday’s game against the Athletics.

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“I do want to focus on playing the rest of the season,” he said. “I think there will be a time to really sit here and reminisce and focus more on the actual retirement. Right now, my focus is still to get out there and be the best version of myself I can be for this team. We are playing great baseball right now, and things are going well, and we’re trending in the right direction.”

“I’m champing at the bit to be part of it.”

Verlander went 183-115 from 2005 to 2017 with Detroit. He won the American League Rookie of the Year award in 2006 and both the AL MVP and Cy Young Award in 2011. He helped the Tigers reach the World Series in 2006 and 2012, winning in ’06, along with four straight division titles from 2011 to 2014.

Verlander was the 2017 ALCS MVP with the Astros, helped them win the World Series that year and was a key player for them when they won another title in 2022. He won

his second and third Cy Young Awards in 2019 and 2022.

“I’ve been fortunate to play with and against incredible players, for outstanding organizations, and compete in front of fans who deeply appreciate the game,” Verlander said.

While he will not play in the All-Star Game, MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred said Verlander will be at the game in Philadelphia on Tuesday and will be honored during the festivities.

“The opportunity to attend once again is something I’ll cherish and it will be an incredibly special moment for me and my family,” said Verlander, who is married to model Kate Upton and has two children.

Verlander has a career record of 266-159 with a 3.33 ERA in 556 starts across 21 Major League seasons with the Detroit, Houston, the New York Mets and San Francisco Giants. He has 3,554 strikeouts while tossing 26 complete games, including nine shutouts.

Blackhawks’ Bedard to miss start of season after surgery

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Chicago Blackhawks center Connor Bedard will miss the start of the season after he had surgery on his left shoulder on Wednesday.

Team physician Michael Terry said Bedard is expected “to make a full recovery in an approximate timeline of four months.” The NHL hasn’t announced its regular-season schedule, but the Blackhawks played their first game last season on Oct. 7.

Bedard, who turns 21 on July 17, got hurt while skating with a group of NHL players last week in western Canada. It’s a major blow for a Blackhawks team trying to

emerge from a painful rebuilding process.

Bedard set career highs with 30 goals and 45 assists in 69 games in his third NHL season.

He missed 12 games after he hurt his right shoulder on a draw during a 3-2 loss at St. Louis on Dec. 12.

“He’s so important to our team,” general manager Kyle Davidson said in April. “He took such a big step forward this year in every facet.”

Bedard is a restricted free agent, and it remains to be seen if the injury has any effect on the negotiations for his next contract. He missed nearly six weeks of his rookie season with a broken jaw.

Chicago went 29-39-14 last season, an 11-point improvement and still nowhere near playoff contention. It has finished No. 31 in the NHL each of the past three years.

Defenseman Bowen Byram was acquired in a trade with Buffalo on June 23, and the Blackhawks signed forward Cole Smith and defenseman Ian Cole on the first day of NHL free agency.

Bedard reached out to Byram, Smith and Cole after they were brought in by the team.

“Obviously a superb young talent,” Cole said Wednesday when asked about sharing the ice with Bedard. “Unfortunately, yeah, it sounds like

it’s going to be a little later than originally anticipated, but you know he seems like a great guy.”

The Blackhawks haven’t made a postseason appearance since the NHL used an expanded playoff format after the 2020 season was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bedard has been the centerpiece of the team since he was the No. 1 overall pick in the 2023 draft. He made his anticipated NHL debut that October and won the Calder Trophy as the league’s rookie of the year. He had 23 goals and 44 assists while appearing in all 82 games in his second season.

Cease loses no-hit bid in 9th, Jays rout Giants

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Toronto's Dylan Cease worked eight no-hit innings against the San Francisco Giants on Wednesday before allowing a single to Heliot Ramos leading off the ninth as the Blue Jays rolled to a 10-0 victory.

Cease (6-4) was pulled after Ramos' clean line-drive single to center and got a standing ovation from the San Francisco crowd. The All-Star right-hander threw a career-high 118 pitches, 81 for strikes. Former Giants reliever Tyler Rogers got the final three outs on four pitches.

Kazuma Okamoto's opposite-field grand slam off Logan Webb (5-7) capped Toronto's five-run first inning. The Blue Jays scored two unearned runs off Spencer Bivens in the eighth. Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit a two-run homer off Ryan Walker in the ninth and the next batter, George Springer, also took Walker deep to left.

Reds 11, Phillies 5: Sal Stewart hit two homers — including one when host Cincinnati went deep four times in the fourth inning — Noeivi Marte drove in four runs and the Reds defeated Philadelphia.

Chase Burns (11-1) picked up his 10th straight winning decision for Cincinnati, which is 3-7 in its last 10 games.

Kyle Schwarber hit his major league-leading 32nd homer for the Phillies. J.T. Realmuto also went deep.

Braves 3, Pirates 0: Joey Bart hit a two-run home run with two outs in the eighth inning, lifting NL East-leading Atlanta to a win over his former team after Jared Jones pitched six perfect innings for host Pittsburgh before being lifted.

Bart, traded to the Braves from the Pirates on June 18, followed a double by Mike Yastrzemski with a 422-foot drive to left-centerfield off a slider from Dennis Santana (2-4). Drake Baldwin added an RBI single to

center in the ninth.

Jones struck out eight on 77 pitches, including 53 strikes, to lower his ERA from 5.28 to 4.37. His bid was nearly ended by Bart with one out in the third, but a long drive to left was caught at the wall by Bryan Reynolds.

Rays 3, Yankees 0: Jonathan Aranda drove in three runs, Shane McCann pitched 6½ innings and host Tampa Bay beat New York to extend its AL East lead to five games.

McCann (8-5) scattered four hits and struck out five without a walk on 85 pitches. He had his longest outing of the season and his second consecutive start without giving up a run. Bryan Baker struck out the side in the ninth inning for his 25th save.

The Rays have struck out the Yankees 45 times in the first three games of the series.

Marlins 2, Mariners 0: Kyle Stowers homered, major league batting leader Otto López had his 40th multi-hit game and host Miami beat Seattle.

Tyler Phillips (2-3) pitched five sharp innings, allowing four hits on 71 pitches, before three relievers finished off the Marlins' fifth straight victory. They are a major league-best 25-8 since June 1.

López went 2 for 4, increasing his average to .345 and becoming the first player since Houston's Jose Altuve in 2014 with 40 multi-hit games before the All-Star break. His fifth-inning double tied Luis Arraez in 2023 for the most hits by a Miami player before the All-Star break at 126.

Tigers 6, Athletics 1: Jake Rogers and Spencer Torkelson homered and host Detroit won its fourth straight game, beating the Athletics.

Troy Melton (5-1) allowed one unearned run on four hits and a walk in 5½ innings. He struck out nine as the Tigers won for the seventh time in eight games.

Jeffrey Springs (3-9) took the loss for the A's, who have lost

five straight and nine of 10. He gave up six runs in 4½ innings to fall to 0-9 in his last 15 starts.

Cubs 9, Orioles 7: Pete Crow-Armstrong hit two of visiting Chicago's five home runs and the Cubs outslugged Baltimore.

Michael Conforto and Carson Kelly also went deep on the first two pitches of the fifth inning for Chicago, tying the game immediately after Pete Alonso's two-run shot had given the Orioles a 3-1 lead. The Cubs then scored five runs in the seventh, including a three-run shot by Seiya Suzuki.

Tyler O'Neill homered twice for Baltimore and Coby Mayo also went deep.

Nationals 8, Astros 2: CJ Abrams and Luis García Jr. both hit their 20th homers of the season, and host Washington pounded Houston.

Foster Griffin (10-2) allowed one run in seven innings for the Nationals, who took two of three from the Astros to move two games over .500. Griffin's 10 victories are the most for a Washington rookie since the club moved from Montreal before the 2005 season.

Mets 6, Royals 2: Jared Young was plunked with the bases loaded in the eighth inning, sparking a five-run rally that lifted host New York over Kansas City.

Young took a 90 mph slider off his right elbow by Alex Lange (0-4), who allowed five straight baserunners with two outs. Brett Baty chased Lange with a two-run single and Young scored on a wild pitch by Jose Cuas, who then allowed an RBI single to Francisco Alvarez.

Cardinals 5, Brewers 1: Alec Burleson and José Fermín homered, Michael McGreevy worked 6½ strong innings and host St. Louis snapped a seven-game losing streak against Milwaukee.

McGreevy (4-7) struck out six and allowed five hits and one run on his 26th birthday. The right-hander in his third big league

campaign made his career-high 18th start of the season.

Red Sox 5, White Sox 0: Jake Bennett (4-3) allowed four hits in seven innings, Tsung-Cheng had his first multi-RBI game and visiting Boston beat Chicago for its fifth straight victory.

Cheng had an RBI single in the third to give the Red Sox a 1-0 lead, and Cedanne Rafaela drove in Cheng two batters later.

Angels 13, Rangers 1: Mike Trout hit a two-run homer in his return from the injured list, Jo Adell had two home runs and drove in a career-high five runs and visiting Los Angeles beat Texas.

Vaughn Grissom went 4 for 5 with a double and four RBIs, and Zach Neto was 3 for 4 with two doubles and three runs. Denzer Guzman and Jose Siri each had two hits.

Twins 6, Guardians 5: Alan Roden hit a game-winning RBI single in the ninth inning as host Minnesota beat Cleveland for its fourth straight win over the Guardians.

Roden singled twice and drove in two runs. Kody Clemens went 3 for 4 with a double and an RBI, and Brooks Lee singled twice and drove in a pair of runs.

Dodgers 4, Rockies 3: Mo'nie Betts singled in the go-ahead run with two strikes in the eighth inning, lifting host Los Angeles over Colorado in the series finale.

The Dodgers took two of three to prevent the Rockies from winning their first series at Dodger Stadium since August 2021.

Padres 10, Diamondbacks 4: Luis Campusano homered, Miguel Andujar had a career-high three doubles along with two RBIs and host San Diego beat Arizona to get back to .500.

Michael King (6-7) pitched six innings of one-run ball for the Padres, who tied their season high in runs and won for just the third time in 12 games.