

US: Talks to continue despite skirmishes

Bloomberg News

Talks between the U.S. and Iran over a permanent peace deal are continuing, according to a American official, despite two days of clashes that threatened to shatter an already fragile ceasefire.

The U.S. is still committed to finding a diplomatic solution with Iran, the official said Thursday, declining to be named discussing sensitive matters. The official described the ongoing discussions as technical talks.

The comments are likely to ease fears of a return to all-out war after the U.S. launched strikes on Iranian military targets this week, retaliating against attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran hit back at U.S. bases in the region, including in Kuwait and Bahrain.

The skirmishes underlined the precariousness of an interim agreement signed between Tehran and Washington in mid-June. Threats of retaliation between the warring sides have also persisted.

"An attack on infrastructure will be met with a reciprocal response," Iran's Supreme National Security Council secretary, Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr, said Friday, extending the warning to Israel.

Mediators including Qatar have worked in recent days to ease the soaring tensions between the U.S. and Iran, according to a person familiar with the matter.

The two countries, which have been at war since the U.S. and Israel bombarded Iran in late February, are trying to agree a permanent peace by around mid-August, though that timeline may have to be extended.

Maritime traffic through the strait has fallen this week and oil has risen, with Brent up more than 6% to \$76.50 a barrel, taking its gain this year to 25%. Still, it remains far below a peak in late April of \$125, when traders were more concerned about all-out conflict resuming.

Since then, President Donald Trump has consistently sig-

naled he wants to end a war the majority of Americans disapprove of and which has hit his polling numbers ahead of mid-term elections in November.

Amid the new violence, Trump on Wednesday suggested the ceasefire was "over." But he also said he would not prevent negotiations from going ahead.

Talks slowed this week as the Iran held days of funeral rites for former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who was killed in an airstrike on the first day of the conflict. Khamenei was buried on Thursday in the northeastern city of Mashhad.

His son and successor, Mojtaba, has not been seen in public or appeared on video since taking on his new role, sparking questions over his health and involvement in negotiations with the U.S.

The flare-up and the U.S. Treasury's decision to revoke a waiver allowing the sale of Iranian oil globally marked the biggest challenge to last month's interim peace agree-

ment.

The preliminary deal was meant to reopen Hormuz, a narrow waterway where a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas transited before the war effectively brought maritime traffic to a standstill.

Both sides have traded accusations of violating the truce, with Washington saying Tehran is attacking vessels and Iran claiming the U.S. is interfering with its control of the waterway.

The same U.S. official cast Iran's attacks on vessels in the strait as acts of terrorism and Tehran's actions as failing to meet the interim deal's performance-based conditions.

The U.S. says Iran can only get funds held in various countries unfrozen if it meets the terms of the memorandum of understanding.

The U.S. military said Iran doesn't control Hormuz, citing that it's helped the transit of more than 800 commercial vessels and 380 million barrels of crude oil through the strait since early May.

Nimitz arrives at new homeport, Naval Station Norfolk

By GARY WARNER

Stars and Stripes

The USS Nimitz arrived Thursday at its new and final homeport, Naval Station Norfolk, Va., concluding what is likely to be its final major deployment.

Nimitz, commissioned in 1975, and its 3,000 sailors have been at sea since leaving previous homeport Naval Base Kitsap in Washington on March 7. After circumnavigating South America and hosting exercises or VIP visits involving 17 na-

tions along the way, the carrier made a final stop near the tip of Manhattan for celebrations marking the 250th anniversary of the United States and the Declaration of Independence.

"Nimitz and its crew performed outstandingly as they demonstrated unity, shared values and commitment to global maritime security alongside our nation's partners and allies," said Rear Adm. Forrest Young, commander of Carrier Strike Group 8. "I am proud to have them join the Carrier Strike

Group 8 team and to welcome them home."

Its most recent stop was New York Harbor as the centerpiece of the International Naval Review. More than 130 invited navies and coast guards from around the world took part in the review.

In Norfolk, the carrier will be involved in training sailors and aviators, Nimitz spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Peter Pagano told Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

"Nimitz is planning to support carrier qualifications while the

ship remains active and homeported in Norfolk," Pagano said.

Carrier qualifications are training and evaluation flights to certify Navy and Marine Corps aviators to safely take off from and land on an aircraft carrier.

Pilots must successfully take off from a carrier using the catapult system, then fly back to the carrier for an arrested landing. Qualifications include both daylight and night landings, along with emergency procedures for approach and recovery.

Possible replacements for Platner in Maine

Bloomberg News

Maine Democrat Graham Platner's withdrawal from the race for a U.S. Senate seat unleashed a scramble by a handful of candidates who have little time to build support ahead of a convention the party is planning before a July 27 deadline to confirm a name on the ballot.

Platner built support among progressive Democrats with a populist message centered on lowering health care costs, taxing the rich and bashing the political establishment. But Maine voters also rallied for Kamala Harris in the 2024 election, showing a candidate can be more moderate and win.

The state party hasn't laid out the details of how its convention will work, but here are the candidates expected to jockey to come out of that gathering as the Democratic nominee running to beat incumbent Republican Senator Susan Collins in December:

■ **Shenna Bellows:** The cur-

rent Maine secretary of state, Bellows fell short in her bid to be the state's next governor. The Middlebury College graduate was a two-term state senator who represented a district that President Donald Trump won and previously led the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine. She ran against Collins for a U.S. Senate seat in 2014.

■ **Troy Jackson:** The ex-president of the Maine Senate, Jackson won an endorsement from Platner in his failed bid for governor in last month's Democratic primary. A former logger from Allagash, the one-time Republican has already filed paperwork to explore a Senate campaign and updated his website to say he would fight for "Medicare for All" and "take on corporate power" if he's chosen to challenge Collins.

■ **Nirav Shah:** Many in Maine recognize Shah as the face of the state's efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when he was the director

of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. In an interview he said he considers himself an unabashed progressive, pointing to his support for "Medicare for All" and a belief that billionaires need to pay their "fair share" in taxes. Like Jackson, Shah fell short in his bid to be the Democratic nominee for governor last month.

■ **Dan Kleban:** The co-founder of the Maine Beer Company in Freeport, Kleban briefly entered the U.S. Senate primary last year but dropped out after Governor Janet Mills got into the race and quickly sewed up establishment support. A political novice, he's focused his messaging on affordability and the need for new leadership in Washington.

■ **Jordan Wood:** The former chief of staff to California Representative Katie Porter, Wood was in the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, when a mob of Trump supporters tried to stop the counting of electoral votes.

He previously served as vice president of End Citizens United, a group that argues for restrictions on campaign spending, and he previously ran for House and Senate seats.

■ **David Costello:** The Bangor-born Costello finished third in last month's Democratic primary won by Platner, garnering about 8% of the vote. He previously worked abroad for the U.S. Agency for International Development and as an aide to Baltimore's mayor in the early 2000s. As soon as the latest allegations against Platner emerged on July 6, Costello said he was ready to reenter the race.

■ **Paige Loud:** A social worker and former House candidate, Loud is championing what she calls an "unabashedly progressive platform" heading into this Senate race. Arguing that life in for average Mainers has never been harder, she also argues for "Medicare for All" and a "humane foreign policy."

Independent hopes to take on Democrat Melat Kiros

The Denver Post

DENVER — Melat Kiros, a democratic socialist who earned the Democratic nomination to run for the seat long occupied by U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette, may soon face a new opponent in November.

Shimon Blau, a pain management physician and Israel supporter, on Thursday turned in signatures required to get on the ballot as an unaffiliated candidate — and he did so just an hour before the deadline to collect signatures this week.

Blau must submit 1,500 valid voter signatures from the 1st Congressional District, which for the most part covers Denver,

to make the November ballot.

Kiros, who defeated the 15-term DeGette in the June 30 primary, also faces Republican Christy Peterson, who according to Federal Election Commission records had raised no money for the race through the end of March.

Blau, who is Jewish, launched his long-shot congressional bid on Sunday, writing on Facebook that he was "saddened and alarmed" by Kiros' victory.

Kiros has been criticized for comments about 9/11, Israel's legitimacy as a nation and the firebombing attack on Jews in Boulder last year — an act she refused to call antisemitic.

Trump says he's unsure of McConnell's condition

Lexington Herald-Leader

President Donald Trump said last night he doesn't know specifics on Sen. Mitch McConnell's condition after more than three weeks of hospitalization.

Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One on Wednesday that he hasn't spoken with McConnell since he was admitted to the hospital last month, according to a post on X from Kristen Holmes, a senior White House correspondent for CNN.

"I have no idea how he's doing," Trump said.

McConnell, 84, was hospitalized June 14, but his team did not give details about his condition at the time, only saying he

was receiving "excellent care." On July 2, his office confirmed that he was still recovering in the hospital after it was unclear if he had been released.

McConnell, who is not seeking reelection this year, is in his seventh term and has held his Senate seat since 1985. From 2007 to 2025, he served as the leader of the Senate GOP.

The public has received few details surrounding his health condition, and only a handful of people, including former McConnell adviser Scott Jennings, Majority Leader John Thune and Senate Whip John Barrasso, have said they've spoken with McConnell this week.

EPA wants to relax air pollution standards for buses and trucks

Bloomberg News

The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday proposed rolling back emission standards for new heavy-duty trucks, including buses, garbage trucks and semis.

Under the proposal, the EPA is looking to scale back future warranty mandates from 10 years to 5 and to delay requirements to extend the period in which the vehicles are subject to pollution limits. If finalized, this action could result in lower costs for truck manufacturers while potentially also boosting air pollution.

The 10-year warranty rules, which were created by the Biden administration, are “the single biggest cost of all to the trucking industry,” said EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin at a press event announcing the rule change on the National Mall. “We’re proposing to roll it back

while keeping the underlying emissions standards in place.”

This is the latest effort by the Trump administration to unwind pollution regulations finalized by former President Joe Biden. In May, the agency proposed delaying emission standards set to kick in for new light- and medium-duty cars and trucks starting with model year 2027.

Heavy-duty trucks are far more polluting than smaller cars and trucks, releasing higher levels of nitrogen oxides, or NOx, that can cause shortness of breath and other respiratory problems in the short term. They also contribute to ozone and smog conditions.

Under the current rules that took effect in 2023, Biden’s EPA reduced the federal NOx limit for these trucks by nearly 90%. It also extended the heaviest trucks’ useful life — meaning

the time frame when they are expected to meet the federal limits — from 435,000 miles or 10 years to 650,000 miles or 11 years. The time period during which this class of vehicles has to be under warranty, meaning manufacturers are legally required to repair or replace defective emissions-related components, went from 100,000 miles or 5 years to 450,000 miles or 10 years.

These changes were designed to cut truck-related pollution. Biden’s EPA estimated at the time that in 2045, the final rule would have prevented 6,700 hospital and emergency department visits, 18,000 cases of asthma onset in children and 78,000 lost work days.

Under the proposal, Trump’s EPA is keeping the stricter NOx thresholds but relaxing warranty requirements for new vehicles.

Homicides from guns decline, suicides rise

Stateline.org

Firearm homicides in the United States fell sharply in 2024, but gun suicides reached a record high, according to a new analysis of federal mortality data by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions.

The report, based on newly released data from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, found that 44,447 people died from firearm-related injuries in 2024, down about 5% from the previous year. The decline was driven largely by a nearly 16% drop in firearm homicides, which fell to 15,364 deaths.

At the same time, firearm suicides rose to a record 27,593 deaths, accounting for about 62% of all firearm deaths in 2024.

The report’s authors also found that firearms remained the leading cause of death for children and teens ages 1 to 17 for the fifth consecutive year, with 2,214 deaths in 2024.

About 86% of firearm deaths were among men, according to the report. But rates have risen over the past decade among some groups of women, particularly Black women. From 2015 to 2024, the firearm homicide rate among Black women increased 63%, compared with a 2% increase among white women. Over the same period, the firearm suicide rate among Black women rose 169%, compared with a 4% increase among white women.

The report also found increases among other groups of women. From 2015 to 2024, firearm homicide rates rose 39% among Asian or Pacific Islander women and 31% among Hispanic or Latina women, while firearm suicide rates increased 57% and 51%, respectively.

Trump fires Democrats on election commission, Republican resigns

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump fired two Democratic members of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, an agency charged with helping states facilitate accurate elections, and the Republican member resigned, a White House official said Thursday night.

The departures mark the latest move by the president to put his stamp on how U.S. elections are run, months before voters go to the polls in November for an election that will determine control of Congress.

Trump, who continues to falsely claim that he won the 2020 election against Joe Biden and portrays the U.S. electoral sys-

tem as being beset with fraud, has sought to restrict voting rights by clamping down on mail-in ballots and requiring proof of citizenship when people come to the polls.

Michael Waldman, president and chief executive officer of the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University Law School, called the terminations “deeply concerning in light of President Trump’s relentless efforts to try to interfere in elections.”

“These removals leave the agency without leadership and unable to carry out its major responsibilities,” Waldman said.

The Supreme Court expanded a president’s right to dismiss

government officials, including at independent agencies, in a ruling last month that allowed Trump to fire Democratic Federal Trade Commission member Rebecca Kelly Slaughter, despite a law that said commissioners could be removed only for specified reasons.

The White House official cited the Slaughter decision on Thursday when asked about the EAC firings.

Trump reserves the right to remove individuals who may not be totally aligned in securing U.S. elections, and the Supreme Court ruling gave him precedence to do so, said the official, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

Parasite that causes severe diarrhea spreads in Midwest

Bloomberg News

A dangerous parasite that causes explosive diarrhea is spreading throughout the Midwest, as federal health officials investigate the still-undetermined source of the outbreak.

Michigan — the state with the highest infection count — recorded 1,251 total cases of cyclosporiasis on Thursday, a 26% jump from the previous day. The infections are largely concentrated in the southeastern part of the state. Neighboring Ohio has reported more than 360 cases, according to a spokesperson for the health department.

Other states, including New York and Illinois, are also seeing rising rates. Since May 1, New York City has recorded 273 infections. The health department's investigation into the source of exposure is ongoing.

"When you hear over 1,000 cases, we are probably talking about a lot more people out there just not being diagnosed," said Daniel Griffin, an infectious disease physician and president of the nonprofit Parasites Without Borders.

The disease can cause frequent watery diarrhea for a few days or even months, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It stems from consuming a microscopic parasite, known as cyclospora, that can contaminate food or water. Outbreaks in the U.S. usually are linked to basil, cilantro, lettuce and raspberries, or stem from infections acquired outside the country.

"It could really be this explosive, significant diarrhea that doesn't get better," Griffin said, noting it can take hold even in healthy people.

Michigan typically identifies about 50 cases a year. The surge that's occurred since June 22 points to a common source, physicians said. The CDC is working with the Food and Drug Administration to find the origin and help contain the outbreak.

The parasite is typically passed between humans through fairly indirect transmission, Griffin said. For example, someone who was infected with cyclospora or who recently had diarrhea caused by it could contaminate food and transmit the pathogen when it is consumed.

With no source identified, "people don't know what it is that they should be avoiding," said Bobbi Pritt, a pathologist and clinical microbiologist at the Mayo Clinic. "This is the time of year when we are eating a lot of fresh produce."

University of California considers SAT return

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — The debate over whether the University of California should restore the SAT in admissions, expected to surface next week before regents, is emerging as one of its most closely watched and consequential issues as leaders assess how the nation's premier public university decides who gets a coveted seat.

There are early signs that views may have changed in the six years since the governing board unanimously voted to eliminate SAT and ACT requirements.

One of the most significant: Former UC President Janet Napolitano, who was at UC's helm at the time, says a hard reassessment is much needed after a faculty outcry that students are severely deficient in math skills.

A standardized test score "shouldn't be a sole factor" in determining access to UC, Napolitano said, but a renewed look at admissions could conclude it should be "a factor."

She and others spoke to the high stakes of the decision amid a supercharged political climate in which the Trump administration has opened multiple investigations into UC admission practices for alleged racial discrimination.

The debate comes as UC increasingly stands as a national outlier in its refusal to consider SAT and ACT scores.

A growing number of prestigious universities — including Stanford, Harvard and Yale — and public university systems in Tennessee, Georgia and Texas have reinstated testing made optional during the pandemic.

Others, including USC and the California State University system, remain test-optional or test-free.

Congress on sidelines in Smithsonian fight

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — As the White House accuses the Smithsonian Institution of "ideological capture," it's put members of Congress in a tough spot as they weigh what, if anything, they can do.

A White House report released last weekend singled out the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, saying it "no longer treats the American story as a shared national inheritance to be taught or celebrated, but as a political instrument to divide, dispirit, and discourage our citizens."

Nevada Democratic Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, one of the six members of Congress on the Smithsonian Board of Regents, called the report "disgraceful."

"I remain committed to ensuring the Smithsonian continues sharing our country's inspiring story without partisan interference from this President or any other," she said in a statement.

But many Democrats are wary of wading into a cultural fight as they try to stick to affordability messaging ahead of the midterms.

And Republicans are reluctant, too. In theory, the majority could use a range of tools to add fuel to the president's Smithsonian agenda, from holding oversight hearings to pushing bills through the House. But so far, they have done little to make it a priority.

While the House Administration Committee held a Smithsonian oversight hearing in 2023,

pressing Secretary Lonnie Bunch on topics like drag performances and what the panel described as anticonservative bias in some museum exhibits, Republicans have yet to schedule a similar hearing this Congress.

A handful of lawmakers have introduced bills aimed at codifying President Donald Trump's executive order last March that called for the removal of "divisive, race-centered ideology" across the Smithsonian's 21 museums and the National Zoo. But those bills — led by Rep. Keith Self of Texas, Rep. Tim Burchett of Tennessee and Sen. Jim Banks of Indiana — have gone nowhere. None has seen a committee markup or landed a single cosponsor.

Mbappé leads France past Morocco

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Kylian Mbappé spread his arms out wide and spun around after scoring his eighth goal of this year's World Cup. He later gave the jubilant France fans dotted around the stadium a wave when he left the game because of an injury scare.

Les Bleus, with a star striker who said he's fine despite a right ankle issue, are headed back to the semifinals for the third straight World Cup tournament.

Mbappé had a goal and an assist after missing a first-half penalty kick, Ousmane Dembélé also scored and two-time champion France defeated Morocco 2-0 Thursday in the quarterfinals.

"There's only one way to relax, and that's by winning. Until we've done that, we don't let up," Mbappé said.

"We're in the semifinals and we're very happy, but there's still a long way to go."

Mbappé's goal in the 60th minute was the 20th of his World Cup career and came in his 20th match at the tournament, moving him one behind Argentina captain Lionel Messi. Dembélé scored his fifth goal of

the tournament in the 66th.

Mbappé went down to the ground in the 76th minute, about 13 minutes after being hit hard by a Moroccan defender, and was taken off for a substitute a minute later. He was then shown sitting on the bench with an ice pack on his right ankle.

After the match and with both shoes on, Mbappé ran and jumped in celebration with his teammates.

"I took a knock to the ankle, but I'm fine," Mbappé said. "At that point, JP (Jean-Philippe Mateta) was in better shape than I was to play the final minutes."

France will face Spain or Belgium in the semifinals in Dallas on Tuesday.

France beat Morocco by the same score in the semifinals of the 2022 tournament in Qatar when the Atlas Lions became the first African team to make it that far. France now remains on track to become only the third nation to play in the final of three consecutive World Cups.

"It is a confirmation of how we've played so far," said France coach Didier Deschamps, who added there is a reason for his team's success in

recent World Cups.

"Having great players. Excellent players. My credit goes to the players. But maybe I do my job well," he said. "The only truth is the one on the pitch."

Mbappé got his goal with a perfectly placed shot just inside the far post after Morocco failed to clear the ball. He received the ball just outside the area, took a couple steps forward and then sent his shot sailing into the net. He extended both arms and ran to the sideline to celebrate with his teammates.

France's second goal came after Mbappé took a pass and tapped it back for Dembélé. Mbappé kept running forward and took defenders with him, opening space for Dembélé's shot.

Dembélé said he wasn't surprised with how Mbappé stepped up after his penalty miss in the first half.

"He's our captain and he has an incredible mentality," Dembélé said.

"We're expecting even more goals from him."

France held a 21-4 advantage in shots on goal and 8-1 edge in shots on target for the game.

"We are very disappointed.

We wanted to go on," Morocco coach Mohamed Ouahbi said. "When we had ball possession, our transitions were not great and we had to run a little more. Their players were in their comfort zone."

Mbappé also had the first shot on goal of the game, just missing wide right in the fourth minute. Then, in the 25th, he was running up the left side when he was chopped down in the box by Morocco defender Noussair Mazraoui. Referee Facundo Tello quickly pointed to the penalty spot.

Mbappé lined up waiting for his attempt but was held up by a lengthy video review. He was finally cleared to shoot in the 28th minute, but after a hesitation, Mbappé's shot toward the right corner was corralled by goalkeeper Yassine Bounou, who guessed the direction of the shot correctly.

Mbappé made his only other penalty kick at this year's World Cup in France's 1-0 win over Paraguay in the round of 16.

Morocco's best opportunity came just before the halftime whistle when Achraf Hakimi sent a free kick from just outside the box past the right post.

England defender Quansah suspended for 2 matches

Associated Press

ATLANTA — England defender Jarell Quansah was handed a two-match suspension on Thursday for his red card offense against Mexico in the World Cup round of 16.

That means Quansah will miss England's quarterfinal

match against Norway in Miami Gardens on Saturday and also the semifinals if Thomas Tuchel's team advances.

Quansah was sent off in the second half of England's 3-2 victory against Mexico on Sunday for a dangerous foul on Jesus Gallardo.

FIFA confirmed the two-match suspension for serious foul play.

FIFA's handling of red card punishments has come under intense scrutiny after its disciplinary committee suspended the one-game penalty of star United States striker Folarin

Balogun after President Donald Trump intervened and contacted FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

Infantino defended the independence of FIFA's disciplinary committee and insisted the Balogun case was properly handled.

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Durbin's homer lifts surging Red Sox

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Caleb Durbin hit a two-run homer to help the surging Boston Red Sox top the Chicago White Sox 2-1 on Thursday for their sixth consecutive victory.

Boston finished with just four hits, but Patrick Sandoval and four relievers shut down Chicago while finishing a sweep of the three-game series. The Red Sox improved to 11-2 in their past 13 games, and they have outscored their opponents 35-10 during their win streak.

Sandoval allowed one run and five hits in 4⅓ innings in his first major league start in more than two years. The left-hander had elbow surgery in June 2024 and then signed an \$18.25 million, two-year contract with the Red Sox that December.

Tyron Guerrero (1-1) got five outs after Sandoval departed. Garrett Whitlock and Justin Slaten each pitched an inning before Aroldis Chapman handled the ninth for his 19th save in 21 chances.

Chicago lost for the sixth time in eight games. White Sox left-hander Anthony Kay (6-4) allowed four hits and walked two in 5⅓ innings.

Mets 7, Royals 3: Tyrone Taylor, who entered when Mark Vientos suffered a fractured right hand after being hit by a pitch, hit the game-tying homer to start a five-run fifth inning, powering New York to a victory over visiting Kansas City.

Sean Manaea had his longest start in 21 months for the Mets, who won a series for just the third time since June 1.

Manaea (2-4) allowed six hits, three runs, two earned, and struck out six while completing seven innings for the first time since Oct. 8, 2024, when he earned the win for the Mets in Game 3 of the NL Division Series against the Philadelphia Phillies.

Orioles 3, Cubs 2: Jeremiah Jackson hit a two-run double in the bottom of the eighth inning to lift Baltimore to a victory over visiting Chicago.

Tyler O'Neill homered for the Orioles in the second inning, then Baltimore didn't have another hit until the eighth when Jackson came up.

Guardians 5, Twins 2: Gavin Williams pitched seven dominant innings, Gabriel Arias, Chase DeLauter and Patrick Bailey hit home runs and Cleveland won at Minnesota to avoid a three-game sweep.

Williams (10-4) moved into a tie with Boston's Sonny Gray for the most victories in the AL with his first win since June 3. He gave up two runs on three hits with a walk,

and tied his season high with 11 strikeouts.

Yankees 12, Rays 4: Ben Rice hit two homers and drove in five runs, Austin Wells also went deep and visiting New York beat Tampa Bay to split a four-game series between the AL's top two teams.

Junior Caminero connected for the Rays, who have a four-game lead over the Yankees in the East.

Braves 10, Pirates 5: Mike Yastrzemski hit a game-sealing grand slam in the ninth inning, Matt Olson hit a first-inning home run while tying the franchise record for consecutive games played and Atlanta won at Pittsburgh.

The Braves were leading 6-5 when Yastrzemski connected off Dennis Santana for his third career slam.

Olson's homer was a solo shot and his 25th of the season. The first baseman played in his 740th straight game, going back to the start of the 2022 season, and tied the mark set by Dale Murphy from 1982-86.

Phillies 1, Reds 0: Jesús Luzardo allowed two hits in seven innings and struck out 11, Justin Crawford's base hit in the eighth inning drove in the game's only run and visiting Philadelphia beat Cincinnati in a pitcher's duel.

Luzardo (8-4) — named to his first All-Star Game as an injury replacement Tuesday — continued his dominance on the road. The left-hander is 6-0 with a 1.38 ERA this season in 11 starts away from Philadelphia.

Cincinnati's Brady Singer (3-9) was equally as effective the first seven innings, allowing only three hits and striking out five before the right-hander ran into trouble in the eighth.

Tigers 4, Athletics 1: Eduardo Valencia became the 10th Detroit player to homer in his first career plate appearance, Framer Valdez pitched seven innings and the host Tigers beat the Athletics for a series sweep.

Valencia entered as a pinch-hitter in the seventh against Hogan Harris and sent a 425-foot shot to center to cap the scoring and help the Tigers seal their third straight series victory. The 26-year-old catcher was called up from Triple-A Toledo on Thursday with fellow catcher Dillon Dingler recovering from a right hand contusion.

Marlins 8, Mariners 4: Otto Lopez hit a two-run triple to back a strong five-inning outing by Janson Junk and host Miami beat Seattle to extend its winning streak to six.

Griffin Conine homered to help Miami complete a three-game sweep.

The Marlins are 52-42 and 10 games

above .500 for the first time since completing a three-game sweep of the Washington Nationals on June 18, 2023.

Lopez, whose .345 average leads the majors, went 1 for 3 and walked twice. He has a club-record 127 hits before the All-Star break.

Brewers 8, Cardinals 4: Jake Bauers hit a three-run home run, Brice Turang added his 13th homer of the season, and visiting Milwaukee used a six-run third inning to rally past St. Louis to claim four of five games in the series.

Milwaukee won four games in a series at St. Louis for the second time in franchise history and the first time since 2008. The NL Central-leading Brewers are 59-34 with one series to go before the All-Star break.

Turang opened the third with an RBI single before Bauers hit his 17th homer of the season, giving Milwaukee a 6-0 lead it never surrendered. Bauers is tied for the MLB lead with seven three-run homers.

Rangers 7, Angels 6: Wyatt Langford lined a shot off the wall in left field to bring home Alejandro Osuna in the ninth inning, lifting Texas to a victory over visiting Los Angeles after the Rangers blew a five-run.

Langford struck out three of his first four times up as the designated hitter after getting activated from the 10-day injured list the first day he was eligible after dealing with a left hamstring strain.

Osuna led off the ninth with a single and went to second on pinch-hitter Nicky Lopez's sacrifice bunt. Langford lined a 1-1 fastball from former Texas closer Kirby Yates (0-4) over Jose Siri's head for the winning single.

Diamondbacks 3, Padres 1: Nolan Arenado homered and moved closer to 2,000 hits, and Merrill Kelly combined with two relievers on a three-hitter for Arizona, who won at San Diego to split a four-game series.

The Diamondbacks and Padres are jockeying for second place in the NL West, well behind the two-time defending champion Los Angeles Dodgers. Arizona and San Diego are both 14½ games behind the Dodgers.

Giants 8, Rockies 2: Casey Schmitt, Bryce Eldridge and Willy Adames homered to back rookie Carson Whisenhunt and San Francisco beat visiting Colorado to start a four-game series.

Whisenhunt (2-0) allowed two runs on three hits in 5⅓ innings in his second start this season and the seventh of his career. He struck out four and walked four, throwing 57 of 87 pitches for strikes.

Judge's rib to be tested during break

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Aaron Judge will have his injured rib tested during the All-Star break, and the New York Yankees are hopeful the results show the three-time AL MVP is healing.

Judge has not played since May 31 and went on the injured list June 5 with a stress fracture of his right rib after a CT scan, an MRI and a meeting with a specialist.

"I don't think we want to put him at risk of coming back while still injured," Yankees general manager Brian Cashman told reporters on Thursday. "He should be asymptomatic before we turn him loose. If he's asymptomatic and not feeling anything and (medical images) are showing healing, then it's probably appropriate to get him going again. But we don't want to, because the schedule is what it is, put him in a position where we're putting him in jeopardy where it somehow gets worse."

The Yankees were 14-19 without Judge entering their series finale against the AL-East leading Tampa Bay Rays.

Cashman said the injury has restricted Judge's ability to work out his upper body because he can't put stress on his rib cage. The new images will give a better understanding of where he stands in his rehab process.

Cashman said slugger Giancarlo Stanton, who hasn't played since April 24 because of a right calf injury, injured the calf again, setting back his return. Cashman said the injury was a new strain to the calf. Stanton has resumed running.

Infielder George Lombard Jr., the Yankees' top prospect, is hitting and throwing again after spraining two fingers on his left hand last month. He's expected to resume playing in the minors around the All-Star break.

Phils' Harper, Cards' Walker are added to Home Run Derby

Associated Press

Phillies first baseman Bryce Harper and St. Louis Cardinals outfielder Jordan Walker will participate in the Home Run Derby in Philadelphia on Monday night.

Harper and Walker join Boston's Willson Contreras, Kansas City's Jac Caglianone, Tampa Bay's Junior Caminero and the New York Yankees' Ben Rice in the contest at Citizens Bank Park. The other two participants haven't been announced.

Harper, hitting .261 with 20

homers and 57 RBIs, was selected for his ninth All-Star Game as a Legend Pick for baseball's midsummer showcase. The 33-year-old slugger will try to become the fifth player to win multiple derbys. Harper will try to do it in front of home fans — again. He last won it in 2018 in Washington while a member of the Nationals.

Walker, 24, is a first-time All-Star who is having a breakout season. He hit his 22nd homer on Thursday night. The 2020 first-round draft pick is batting

.294 with an .893 OPS and an MLB-leading 73 RBIs.

He'll be the eighth Cardinals player to compete in the competition, joining Jack Clark (1985), Ray Lankford (1997), Mark McGwire (1998-99), Jim Edmonds (2003), Albert Pujols (2003, 2007, 2009, 2022), Matt Holliday (2010-11) and Carlos Beltran (2012).

A Cardinals player has never won the derby. The Phillies have had two winners: Bobby Abreu in 2005 and Ryan Howard the next year.

Ducks match Flyers' \$90 million offer, make Carlsson highest-paid NHL player

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Anaheim Ducks have matched the Philadelphia Flyers' offer sheet for center Leo Carlsson, keeping their rising young star at an extraordinary cost.

The Ducks announced their decision Thursday on the 21-year-old Carlsson, who is now the NHL's highest-paid player under the five-year, \$90 million deal extended by the Flyers one week ago.

Carlsson signed the Flyers' offer sheet as a restricted free agent after a year of fruitless negotiations with Anaheim general manager Pat Verbeek, whose typical hardline approach in contract talks with his restricted free agents backfired tremendously this time.

Carlsson's new contract is worth much more than the league expected the Swedish youngster would get as a restricted free agent, and the \$18 million average annual value is significantly more than he had already indicated he would accept.

The deal surpasses the salary

of Minnesota's Kirill Kaprizov, who would have been the NHL's highest-paid player at \$17 million.

McIlroy in 5-way tie for lead in Scottish Open

NORTH BERWICK, Scotland — Rory McIlroy played the three par 5s in 4-under par and shot 65 in the Scottish Open on Thursday.

That puts him in a five-way tie for the lead with Patrick Cantlay, Tom Kim, Bernd Wiesberger and Rasmus Hojgaard after one round at the Renaissance Club.

The tournament is the final tuneup before next week's British Open at Royal Birkdale.

Judge grants injunction in NCAA eligibility case

CINCINNATI — An Ohio judge has granted a preliminary injunction for 24 men's and women's college basketball players suing the NCAA to be eligible, claiming the new age-based model unfairly shuts them out of further competition.

Judge Christopher Wagner

said Thursday the NCAA eligibility rules have been applied in an arbitrary and capricious manner.

Wagner's ruling allows the athletes in the lawsuit an opportunity to enter the transfer portal. He scheduled a conference for Aug. 4 to prepare for a trial. Attorney Ryan Downton has filed similar lawsuits against the NCAA on behalf of nearly 30 men's and women's basketball players.

White Sox infielder Murakami set for return

CHICAGO — Munetaka Murakami is expected to return to the slumping Chicago White Sox on Friday night after being sidelined by a strained right hamstring.

Murakami made two rehab appearances with Triple-A Charlotte, going 2 for 7 with a double.

Murakami, 26, signed a \$34 million, two-year contract with Chicago in December. The White Sox went 17-18 while the Japanese rookie was on the injured list.

Sinner, Zverev reach Wimbledon final

Associated Press

LONDON — If there were any lingering questions over Jannik Sinner's physical status after his meltdown at the French Open, they should be answered now.

Sinner blasted his way past seven-time champion Novak Djokovic 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 on Friday to reach the Wimbledon final — showing off the kind of dominance he displayed before that second-round defeat in Paris.

It was a bit of revenge for Sinner after Djokovic won their last meeting in five sets in this year's Australian Open semifinals.

For the 39-year-old Djokovic, it marked another chance missed at adding to his record total of 24 Grand Slam titles.

Aiming to defend his title at the grass-court Grand Slam, the top-ranked Sinner will face second-seeded Alexander Zverev in Sunday's final.

Zverev ended the "Ferytale" run of British wild card Arthur Fery with an overpowering 7-6 (0), 6-2, 6-4 victory earlier on Centre Court.

Zverev will be playing for another major trophy a month after winning his first Grand Slam title at Roland Garros.

"This Grand Slam has always been the one that I struggled with the most, and all of a sudden I'm in the final of Wimbledon," the

29-year-old German said. "We got one more match to go on Sunday, and that's what the focus is on."

Zverev, whose breakthrough at Roland Garros came in his fourth Grand Slam final, is attempting to become the first man in the Open era (since 1968) to win his second title at the next event immediately after his first major trophy.

"It's not going to be easy no matter who it is against," Zverev said before the Sinner-Djokovic match. "But I have to trust myself and I have to believe that I can win, and that's what I'm going to do."

The 114th-ranked Fery, who grew up five minutes from the All England Club and played at Stanford University, was attempting to become the first wild card to reach the final since Goran Ivanisevic won Wimbledon in 2001.

"I think this was just the beginning of his career, and I really think that he's going to do amazing things in this sport," Zverev said of Fery.

It was another warm day in southwest London, with the temperature rising to about 85 degrees Fahrenheit. It was also breezy and a bit cloudier than in recent days.

Zverev did well not to let the pro-Fery crowd get behind the local player too much,

and a double fault from Fery early in the first-set tiebreaker put Zverev in control.

The 6-foot-6 Zverev was also able to dominate with his serve, which he cranked up to 139 mph. The 5-foot-9 Fery, by comparison, was serving closer to 120 mph.

The British spectators did their best to encourage Fery early on, chanting his name between points as they sipped their Pimm's under their wide-brimmed hats.

At one point early on, chair umpire Marijana Veljovic had to tell the crowd to pipe down.

When it was over, Fery walked off to a standing ovation and applauded the crowd in return.

"I know that 99.99% of the stadium was wanting Arthur to win. But it was still such an incredible atmosphere. It was such a fair crowd as well," Zverev said. "A lot of crowds in the world can take an example of this crowd. It's one of the best crowds to play tennis in front of."

Zverev had previously never been past the fourth round at Wimbledon. Now he's the first German man to reach the final of the grass-court Grand Slam since Boris Becker lost to Pete Sampras in 1995.

The last German man to win Wimbledon was Michael Stich, who beat Becker in the 1991 final.

Raptors, Clippers put trade for Leonard on hold

Associated Press

Kawhi Leonard's trade to the Toronto Raptors is on hold pending the outcome of the NBA's investigation into whether the Los Angeles Clippers circumvented salary cap rules, the teams announced Thursday.

It does not necessarily mean that the trade is off. The Raptors said they still want Leonard, and the Clippers, in a statement sent to multiple outlets including The Associated Press, insisted that they are not guilty of any wrongdoing related to an endorsement contract between Leonard and a now-bankrupt California-based digital bank that touted itself as environmentally friendly.

But the probe, as detailed by the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, could lead to penalties that include a substantial fine, the loss of draft capital — and, potentially, even the voiding of a player contract — if the league finds there was a deliberate circumvention of cap rules.

There is no timetable for the conclusion of

the NBA's probe, which is being performed by outside counsel — Wachtell Lipton, a New York-based firm. Commissioner Adam Silver said in recent weeks that he'd like to see a conclusion.

The Raptors and Clippers agreed on June 30 on a trade that would send Leonard back to the city that helped win the 2019 NBA championship.

The Raptors agreed to send Brandon Ingram, Grady Dick, two first-round draft picks, two second-round picks and pick swaps to the Clippers for Leonard — who spent one season in Toronto, and that was the year the Raptors won their lone title.

He turned 35 this month but is coming off the highest-scoring season of his career, averaging 27.9 points for the Clippers in 65 games.

Leonard is a seven-time All-Star, seven-time All-NBA selection, a two-time NBA champion (also winning in 2014 with San Antonio) and is generally considered one of

the game's top defensive players. He has said there was no wrongdoing.

Mitchell signs 4-year, \$273M contract extension with Cavaliers

The Cleveland Cavaliers have achieved one of their primary aims of the offseason while they wait to see if LeBron James will return for a third stint with the franchise.

The team announced Thursday that Donovan Mitchell signed a four-year, \$273 million contract extension.

Mitchell's extension has been the Cavaliers' biggest move of the offseason while everyone in the NBA waits to see where James decides to sign.

The 41-year-old from Akron, Ohio, was the top overall pick by Cleveland in 2003 and has spent 11 of his 23 seasons wearing wine red and gold.

James left for Miami in 2010 but returned four years later to lead the Cavaliers to their first NBA championship in 2016.