

US threatens response to Iran attacks

By LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump on Wednesday threatened to renew strikes against Iran after it launched what U.S. officials said was a surprise ballistic missile attack against troops in Jordan.

Speaking to Fox News, the president said the U.S. would be hitting Iran hard in response, but did not clarify a timeline or targets.

"We are going to beat the f---ing sh-- out of them," he told the news outlet.

Air defenses "intercepted and destroyed" five missiles from Iran early Wednesday, Jordanian state media reported, citing an armed forces spokesperson.

U.S. Central Command said that Iran had launched ballistic

missiles in an "attempted surprise attack" on U.S. forces in the Middle East and that all the missiles were intercepted.

The attack came just after the U.S. ended a 13-day bombing campaign, creating an opening for diplomacy to end a war now in its sixth month. Instead, the conflict expanded Wednesday, with attacks and counterattacks involving Iran and its proxies in the region.

According to CENTCOM, Iran-backed militant groups in Iraq conducted more than 30 drone attacks against U.S. forces and energy infrastructure in Saudi Arabia this week. The attacks against U.S. forces were unsuccessful, the command said.

In response, Saudi Arabia and

the U.S. carried out joint precision strikes against "Iran-aligned terrorists," CENTCOM said. The Iran-backed Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq said 20 of its members were killed and 32 wounded.

Over the weekend, U.S. officials signaled they would hold off on further attacks to allow for diplomacy, though President Donald Trump told Fox News on Tuesday that those talks appeared to be stalling.

If an agreement isn't reached, the U.S. will launch a strike against Pickax Mountain, an Iranian nuclear enrichment site believed to contain nuclear material, Trump said.

"If we don't make a deal, we'll take it out very easily," he said.

Iran's latest strike on U.S.

forces could mark a change in strategy, following months in which Tehran mostly described its attacks as retaliatory, analysts said.

The timing could be linked to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to the White House on Tuesday, said Hamidreza Azizi, a visiting fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

Tehran may be signaling that it is prepared to launch preemptive strikes if it believes an attack is imminent, Azizi wrote on X.

"The attack therefore appears to have been a warning to the United States not to join or initiate a new military campaign against Iran," he said.

Navy eyes creative solutions for base housing crunch

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

The Navy is exploring an array of creative solutions to combat a housing shortage at training bases: sailors in extended-stay hotels, in converted retail buildings, in group housing, in recreational vehicles; even sailors in houseboats "where locally feasible."

The Navy's list of suggested possible housing ideas, which also will provide temporary beds at bases where barracks are being built, is contained in a "Request For Information" posted July 24 on the federal contracting website, SAM.gov.

"Our sailors are our most critical asset, and providing them with safe, clean, and comfortable living quarters is a fundamental responsibility," Vice Adm. Scott Gray, the commander of Navy Installations Com-

mand, said in a statement July 24 announcing the RFI.

An RFI is used to gauge interest and options and doesn't obligate the Navy to issue a follow-up solicitation or acquisition strategy.

The Navy said it hopes to "understand the range of solutions available to rapidly provide safe, habitable, code-compliant temporary accommodations."

Construction of Navy barracks was spurred by \$375 million in one-time funds in the 2025 omnibus bill. The 2027 budget proposal from the Pentagon asks for \$12.5 billion for military housing across all services.

In the RFI, the Navy forecasts it will be between 3,950 and 5,800 beds short of its housing needs for major training centers in Great Lakes, Ill.; Meridian, Miss.; and Pensacola and

Panama City, Fla.

The Navy reported recruiting more than 45,000 sailors in Fiscal Year 2026, exceeding its goal three months ahead of schedule.

The Navy says it also needs up to 6,100 temporary beds around Norfolk and Newport News, Va.; San Diego and central California; Hawaii; and the Pacific Northwest for sailors displaced by barracks renovations.

"Comprehensive upgrades require significant structural work," the Navy said. "To safely conduct the deep renovations needed to modernize aging facilities, entire barracks must be vacated."

While the new barracks are built, the Navy is seeking temporary homes for sailors for one to two years.

"Utilizing temporary hous-

ing, which are often referred to as swing space, is a critical step," the Navy said in a statement. "It allows the Navy to proceed with massive construction projects on schedule while ensuring Sailors are not displaced into subpar accommodations during the transition."

With availability of off-base housing already tight in many locations, the Navy's RFI says it is open to "innovative or conceptual models that leverage past proven experience, such as adaptive reuse, stackable modular concepts or integrated campus-style housing," according to the RFI. "Respondents may combine solution types across installations or offer a single approach for specific locations."

The Navy said it will accept information on the RFI through Aug. 24.

Trump-Zelenskyy relationship warms

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy emerged from a day of meetings in Washington indicating momentum on a possible deal that would enable his country to start building American-designed air defense systems.

Zelenskyy met Tuesday with President Donald Trump at the White House and also spoke with U.S. defense industry leaders about ways to bolster cooperation.

"The president and I discussed licenses for Patriot interceptor production and several other ideas that could help," Zelenskyy said. "We also spoke

about diplomacy. It's important that the diplomatic process be reinvigorated."

During a NATO summit earlier this month, Trump said he was willing to grant licenses to Kyiv so it could produce Patriot interceptors domestically.

Such a move would give a major boost to Ukraine, which has been effective at developing counter-drone technology but lacks sufficient defenses against Russia's ballistic missile threat.

Trump said it was a "great honor" to meet with the Ukrainian leader and that the discussions went "very well."

The meeting marks a significant turnaround for Zelenskyy,

whose relationship with the Trump White House has been rocky.

The tensions spilled into public view during a February 2025 Oval Office meeting, when both Trump and Vice President JD Vance publicly berated Zelenskyy and accused him of being ungrateful for U.S. support.

But in recent months, Ukraine has seen its position improve both in Washington and on the battlefield as it makes incremental gains while striking deep inside Russia with its vast arsenal of drones.

Still, Ukraine has not returned to the position it occupied during the early years of the war, when the U.S. provided

billions of dollars in assistance.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has dramatically bolstered its own defense industrial base and is moving to capitalize on its advances in drone warfare.

After meeting with Trump, Zelenskyy met Tuesday with Lockheed Martin executives to discuss joint manufacturing and technology exchanges.

Teams were already working on "specific solutions to move to co-production as quickly as possible," Zelenskyy's office said in a statement Tuesday.

The Russia-Ukraine war and its lessons have been a focal point for the U.S. military since the Kremlin's invasion in 2022.

Officer admits using travel card to support second wife

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

An Army National Guard officer is awaiting punishment for using his government travel card to pay thousands of dollars in expenses for a Mongolian woman he married and brought to the U.S. while still being married to another woman.

Maj. Collin L. Welch, 40, of Arlington, Va., pleaded guilty Tuesday in federal court in the District of Columbia to theft of government money and unlawfully inducing aliens to enter

and remain in the United States, the Justice Department said in a statement Tuesday.

He agreed to forfeit \$54,000 as part of the plea. U.S. District Judge Amir Ali scheduled his sentencing for Dec. 3.

Currently a member of the D.C. National Guard, Welch previously served with its Alaska counterpart and deployed to Afghanistan and Djibouti.

He began a relationship with the woman in 2019 while on assignment at the U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, prosecutors

said. He was still married to the mother of his children at the time, court records said.

His wife, who had moved with him and their family to Mongolia, returned to Alaska for medical reasons that year, according to court filings.

The romance with the Mongolian woman and Welch's pattern of deception continued for years, prosecutors said.

After Welch returned to Alaska in 2021, the Mongolian woman visited him, and he used a fabricated divorce decree to

convince her that he was no longer married. He traveled to Mongolia and married her the following year, according to the Justice Department.

Welch was serving with the D.C. National Guard's State Partnership Program, which coordinates engagements with foreign forces and often requires members to travel for official purposes.

Welch's plea agreement says he will likely face 10 to 16 months in prison and a fine of up to \$55,000.

Littoral combat ship slated to be decommissioned early

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — The littoral combat ship USS Fort Worth will be decommissioned more than a decade early on Wednesday in San Diego in an effort by the Navy to save money on a vessel that's been plagued by costly mechanical problems

and structural defects.

The ship was expected to be in service for 25 years when it was commissioned in 2012. It was designed to be an agile, high-speed vessel that could carry out security patrols and other missions in shallow, near-shore waters.

But Fort Worth developed serious propulsion problems. And a 2022 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that the ship and other littoral vessels were not well enough designed to withstand an enemy attack.

Government reviews also

have found that littoral ships are far more expensive to operate than anticipated.

The Navy built 35 littoral combat ships, seven of which have been decommissioned early. More than a dozen of these vessels are currently homeported in San Diego.

Senate confirms Jay Clayton as new intelligence chief

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The Senate confirmed Jay Clayton as the Trump administration's spy chief, replacing an interim candidate who sparked broad concerns about the powerful role being used to influence U.S. elections.

Clayton, who was the top federal prosecutor in Manhattan, was confirmed as director of national intelligence by a vote of 51 to 47.

He will replace housing regulator Bill Pulte, whose appointment as acting director drew criticism for his lack of national security experience and his role in opening mortgage fraud investigations of perceived opponents of President Donald Trump, such as Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook.

Under Pulte, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence has seen a number of staff reductions, with the interim director announcing a fifth wave of terminations Tuesday — the day his replacement was set to be confirmed. In a post on X, Pulte said the layoffs represent an “approximately 30% Staff Reduction from Weeks Ago” and that this round is “Near Final.”

Trump has long expressed suspicion and disdain for U.S. spy operations and the people who work in them. He has also said that he would like the agency to shrink. And while many lawmakers balked at Pulte's appointment, Clayton's nomination process hasn't exactly endeared him to the administration's critics.

At his confirmation hearing earlier this month, Clayton repeatedly declined to say if Joe Biden won the 2020 election. That raised concerns about

whether he would be willing to contradict the president in his new position, especially when Trump revived unsubstantiated claims about the 2020 vote in a prime-time address just a day after the hearing.

“I'm not an election denier,” Clayton told the intelligence committee. But under questioning from Senator Jon Ossoff, he declined to say who won, adding “I'm not going to do this with you.”

Clayton is a golf buddy of Trump's and, as the former U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, handled high-profile cases for the administration as the de facto sheriff of Wall Street. That includes the case against former Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro — after his capture by U.S. special forces — and the founders of First Brands and Tricolor.

Set to replace Clayton as Manhattan's U.S. attorney is James McDonald, a Sullivan & Cromwell partner who was part of Trump's legal team in an appeal related to the president's criminal conviction involving payment to adult film star Stormy Daniels.

The oDNI job originally opened up after Tulsi Gabbard, a former Democrat and long-time critic of foreign U.S. military interventions, said she was stepping down to help her husband after a bone-cancer diagnosis.

Her tenure was marked by several controversies, such as showing up at an FBI search at an election office in Georgia, while several people familiar with the matter said she was often excluded from White House meetings — including ahead of the U.S. operation to capture Maduro.

Beshear urges McConnell for health info or resign

Lexington Herald-Leader

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear is urging Sen. Mitch McConnell to either release more details on his health condition or resign from office.

In a letter sent to McConnell's office Monday and obtained by the Herald-Leader, Beshear called for McConnell to “directly and verbally address the people of Kentucky and provide proof of your capacity to serve, or resign.”

“It has now been 43 days since news of your hospitalization,” Beshear wrote. “During that time, you have cast zero votes, engaged in no official activities and aside from two photos and corresponding statements, have made no effort to communicate with your Kentucky constituents or the nation. Even the attending physician's written statement does not discuss your actual condition, including whether you can speak,

reason or carry out your duties as senator.”

Beshear, a Democrat, has faced a chorus of online criticism demanding he “do something” about the Republican senator's ongoing absence, with some suggesting inaction could harm his 2028 prospects. But without an official vacancy, there is little Beshear can do.

Kentucky law dictates that Senate vacancies have to be filled by special election, which would need to be called by the governor.

“Per our research, a vacancy in the Senate occurs when a senator dies, resigns, or is expelled by a vote of the Senate itself,” Beshear wrote. “If you are unwilling to voluntarily show that you still have the capacity to serve, I will insist Leader Thune fully investigate your condition, report to the American people, and begin the process if warranted.”

Over 2K ‘noncitizen voters’ may actually be NJ citizens

The Philadelphia Inquirer

About 2,000 New Jersey voters identified last week as noncitizens could actually be citizens after all, Gov. Mikie Sherrill said Tuesday, a week after her disclosure of a voter registration glitch that put the state at the center of the national debate over election security.

The latest development follows Sherrill's announcement last week that approximately 6,600 noncitizens had been registered to vote ahead of the 2024 election due to a software glitch with the state's Motor Vehicle Commission's automatic voter registration program.

She said fewer than 400 of those people had voted and there is no evidence that they impacted the results of any election. The discovery came right

as President Donald Trump's administration has been making widespread claims of noncitizen voting and pushing for an overhaul of the country's election system.

The first-term governor said Tuesday the Department of State's Division of Elections has begun a process to remove more than 4,500 individuals who were registered because of the software error, but that the rest of the registrations will be referred to county election officials for further review “to ensure that any lawfully registered voters are not being disenfranchised.”

“We are taking this extra step because our initial review indicates that a number of these individuals may be citizens,” she said in a statement.

Fauci invokes 5th Amendment at hearing

The Center Square

The man who led the U.S. response to the global pandemic in 2020 told Congress on Wednesday he wouldn't answer questions about it.

Anthony Fauci, former director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, said he will invoke his Fifth Amendment right to protect against self-incrimination in a hearing about his role as a public health official during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fauci, 85, was subpoenaed by the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs. Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., chairman of the committee, issued the subpoena to compel his testimony.

Fauci criticized Paul's pursuit of his leadership during the coronavirus pandemic. He said Paul has an "obvious obsession" with him.

"Because of the respect I have for this legislative government and my decades-long record of cooperating with Congress, under the advice of my attorneys, I will invoke my right under the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution to refrain from answering your questions," Fauci said.

Paul pointed to documents released as part of the Senate's investigation into the pandemic where Fauci appeared to acknowledge COVID-19's origin from a leak at a lab in Wuhan, China. Paul also mentioned several virologists and top scientists in Fauci's circle who acknowledged the possibility of the virus leaking from a lab.

Then-President Joe Biden issued an unconditional pardon for Fauci dating back to Jan. 1, 2014. Paul asked whether Fauci's pardon would be in jeopardy if he was found lying to Con-

gress. Fauci invoked his Fifth Amendment right in response.

"The committee has issued a valid subpoena," Paul said. "They have requested your presence here. The questions are very pertinent to your decision-making as head of NIAID as well as as a chief advisor to the president."

In his opening statement, Fauci said he was concerned Paul would seek to arrest him based on his testimony, regardless of his pardon.

"The only conclusion I can reach is that the sole reason he is calling me before this committee is to get me to say something, anything, that could vindicate his repeated public pledges that I end up, in his words, 'behind bars,'" Fauci said.

Paul also pointed to potential conflicts of interest Fauci had to support gain-of-function research in Wuhan. He said Fauci

financially supported critical labs in China.

Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., criticized the committee's decision to subpoena Fauci. He criticized Paul for his past statements calling for Fauci to be fired, arrested and accused of conspiratorial behavior. He accused Paul of excluding Democratic members from participating in Fauci's investigation.

"I fear the intent of this hearing is only meant to further a purely partisan agenda, and it will not make Americans safer," Peters said.

Paul announced late in the hearing that the committee would vote next week on whether to hold Fauci in contempt for declining to answer questions, The Associated Press reported. The senator did not say whether he would push for a criminal contempt referral to federal prosecutors or another charge.

Musk firm seeks to block AI 'nudification' tech ban

Star Tribune

Tech billionaire Elon Musk's artificial intelligence company xAI has challenged a Minnesota law banning apps that digitally alter photos of clothed people to make them appear nude before the law takes effect Aug. 1.

In a complaint filed Monday in Minnesota federal court, xAI argues that the provision is a "clumsy attempt to prohibit nudification" by imposing an "overbroad, content-based ban on free speech and the tools of visual expression."

The complaint said the law violates First Amendment protections and exposes people using free speech to civil liability and government sanctions.

Minnesota this year passed the country's first ban on nudification technology, which allows users to manipulate photographs of fully-clothed people

using AI to make them appear nude or create deepfake pornographic images and videos.

The law calls for a \$500,000 fine per violation and allows victims to sue the owners of tech apps for damages.

While nearly every state has laws banning deepfakes or other nonconsensual AI-generated sexual images, Minnesota's law is unique because it holds AI companies liable for the creation of nudification images on their platforms, according to Ashley Casovan, the managing director of the IAPP AI Governance Center.

xAI's complaint argues that the company already prohibits users from generating nude or sexualized images of people without their consent and has sued people individually who have skirted its technological guardrails.

Ghost gun was used in Seattle Center shooting

The Seattle Times

SEATTLE — Three firearms, one of which was a potentially homemade ghost gun and another which was modified to become fully automatic, were recovered from the Bite of Seattle shooting scene that left three dead and four injured, according to police.

Seattle Mayor Katie Wilson said at a news conference Tuesday that police believe the shooting was "targeted, gang-related violence," and that investigators are looking into other suspects.

Festival attendees Ashley Whitehead, 56, and Carlos Israel Sanchez Villalba, 44, died in the volleys of gunfire. Junior Cee Niko Semo, 19, also died at the scene. Seattle police later confirmed Semo was an "associate" of a boy, 15, whom police chased down, disarmed and arrested.

Investigators have not determined their exact relationship.

At least one more suspect remained at large Tuesday. Police Chief Shon Barnes said officers are still trying to determine a description. Barnes left open the possibility there is more than one suspect on the loose.

Barnes said there is a "potential eighth victim" of the shooting, a 27-year-old man who self-reported to UW Medical Center-Montlake the evening of the shooting.

The 15-year-old is being held for investigation of three counts of first-degree assault and one count of illegally possessing a firearm. The teen waived his presence in court Monday in Seattle, where Superior Court Judge Tanya Thorp ruled he will remain in secure detention pending an arraignment, expected Thursday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man surviving on squid, oatmeal white at sea

CA LOS ANGELES — Kai Sato, 39, embarked on an odyssey, but the trip he got was not the one he planned.

Two weeks into his first solo voyage from Catalina Island to Hawaii in June, the mast on his sailboat snapped, setting off an ordeal that lasted several weeks.

He said he tried to motor back on course but ran out of gas. His cellphone, which he was using for navigation, became waterlogged and inoperable, Sato said.

He improvised repairs using PVC pipes and kayak paddles to get his boat back on course.

When his fresh water ran out on July 11, he collected drinking water by filling buckets with seawater and capturing the condensation beneath plastic bags he stretched over the buckets. He survived on oatmeal along with fish and squid that landed on the boat.

According to Kato, it took him a month to make his way back into the shipping lane from California to Hawaii.

He endured the long weeks alone at sea by meditating and carrying on conversations with the ocean and wind. He said he sensed the presence of his uncle, who shared a California-to-Hawaii voyage with him when Sato was a youngster.

Campaign accepted unfit donations

CO DENVER — Colorado gubernatorial candidate Victor Marx received more than \$78,000 in donations from people who'd already con-

tributed the maximum amount to the Republican's campaign, state election officials allege.

The complaint from the secretary of state's office accuses Marx, who won the recent GOP primary, of accepting at least 197 donations from 111 people that went beyond the individual limit of \$1,450.

While Marx's campaign had told state officials that it refunded the improper donations, the complaint states that Marx has reported refunding only \$58,195.93, "far short" of the \$78,613.15 his campaign allegedly received in excess contributions. The complaint also accuses the campaign of accepting at least 10 cash donations above the legal limit of \$100.

Hochul vows enrollment for Howard castoffs

NY NEW YORK — New York students who were abruptly unenrolled from Howard University just weeks before the first day of school will be guaranteed admission to the State University of New York or the City University of New York this fall, Gov. Kathy Hochul announced.

Each student will also receive an \$800 credit to help offset their nonrefundable deposits at Howard, according to the governor's office.

"Hundreds of students, including New Yorkers, are scrambling and scared since they've been disenrolled from their intended college just a few weeks before classes are set to begin," Hochul said.

Howard, a historically Black university in Washington, D.C., confirmed last week that it removed more than 500 incoming freshmen from its rosters after

"multiple detailed communications" to students and their families who missed key enrollment and financial deadlines.

Secret Service agent charged in frat hazing

FL MIAMI — A Miami U.S. Secret Service agent was placed on house arrest Monday after he was charged in connection with alleged fraternity hazing so extreme that it left a University of Miami student with severe kidney injuries.

Marquez Christopher Pinder, 29, faced a slew of felony charges, including attempted manslaughter with a deadly weapon, aggravated battery with a deadly weapon or causing great bodily harm, and hazing with a deadly weapon.

Also handcuffed were two other men involved with Kappa Alpha Psi who, authorities say, helped carry out the vicious beatings: Jared Lamar James, 26, and Elijah Delano Dyou, 29.

Pinder's arrest warrant states that two victims were questioned during different events about the historically Black fraternity's history and struck with a paddle or a cane if they got the answers wrong.

The warrant described the injuries on one of the victims as so severe that they required skin grafts to cover dead tissue.

The second victim, according to the warrant, had to be intubated and "received critical care to prevent further physical deterioration and death."

Officials scramble to track measles cases

PA PHILADELPHIA — Pennsylvania tallied

more than two dozen new cases of measles in the last week, including several in the Philadelphia region.

In Chester County, health officials confirmed 13 cases since April, with seven identified since Monday.

The rising counts come as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Friday that measles cases nationwide had surpassed all cases reported in 2025, the highest case count in 35 years.

In a growing Pennsylvania outbreak centered in Lancaster County, state health officials confirmed 14 new cases in the last week. The county has been at the center of two outbreaks this year and has reported 75 cases since April, when the current outbreak began.

So far this year, Pennsylvania has reported 139 cases of measles, more than eight times the number reported in 2025 and the highest case count in three decades. Twenty-five people have been hospitalized.

State agrees with Kalshi to quit writing contracts

NV LAS VEGAS — Nevada gaming regulators said they have reached an agreement with a leading prediction market that prevents it from writing contracts involving sports results, elections or entertainment-related propositions.

The Nevada Gaming Control Board announced that it had reached an agreement with New York-based Kalshi to stop writing those contracts by Aug. 12, or the state can impose a penalty of \$120,000 a day until it is in compliance.

—Tribune News Service

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and Military News

Starting QB auditions grow more common

Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — The quarterback position took even more heat — and hits — than usual last season around the NFL.

Ill-timed injuries to Daniel Jones, Patrick Mahomes and Bo Nix left their teams in the lurch. Joe Burrow, Jayden Daniels and Lamar Jackson had trouble staying healthy. Others once targeted and trained as franchise players were either sidetracked or discarded, as J.J. McCarthy, Kyler Murray, Michael Penix Jr. and Tua Tagovailoa found themselves on insecure ground.

Training camps always present a fresh start. Jones, Mahomes and Nix have been cleared for full activity, stabilizing or energizing the huddle in Indianapolis, Kansas City and Denver. Cincinnati, Washington and Baltimore are plenty happy to turn anew to Burrow, Daniels and Jackson. Murray (Minnesota) and Tagovailoa (Atlanta) flew to new places for welcomed scenery changes.

More tryouts for Browns

Since Cleveland got its NFL team back in 1999, the Browns have made the playoffs just three times — and won only one postseason game. There's no arguing the connection to the perpetually shuffling depth chart at quarterback, with 42 different starters over those first 27 years.

The latest was Shedeur Sanders, who fell to Cleveland in the fifth round of the 2025 draft after they'd selected Dillon Gabriel in the third round. Sanders is now competing for the job

with Deshaun Watson, the fallen star whose health problems and off-the-field trouble have limited him to just 19 games over the last five seasons. Watson last played Oct. 20, 2024, before an Achilles tendon rupture and reinjury kept him sidelined in 2025.

Falcons bring in Tua

Atlanta had a hot seat on the offseason quarterback carousel, cutting Kirk Cousins to clear salary cap space after two unfulfilling seasons and signing Tua Tagovailoa after Miami dumped him and ate a record \$99 million in dead money against the cap. Cousins' status immediately got complicated when the Falcons drafted Penix eighth overall in 2024, and the situation grew murkier yet last year when Penix tore the ACL in his left knee.

Penix had not yet been cleared for full-team work when the Falcons were last on the field at minicamp, so health and experience make Tagovailoa the front-runner for the job, though new head coach Kevin Stefanski has publicly declared this an open competition. Further complicating matters was Tagovailoa sustaining a minor injury Stefanski described as a "flare-up" Wednesday, though he anticipated Tagovailoa would be back "sooner rather than later."

Murray in good spot

J.J. McCarthy struggled with consistency and injuries that further hindered his opportunities to learn and improve in his debut with the Vikings last sea-

son, so the club reopened the search this year and found Murray available for the veteran minimum salary.

Minnesota has not given up on McCarthy, the 10th overall pick in the 2024 draft, and they'll split turns with the first team offense at least for the early stage of training camp. But if Murray is healthy, after spraining his foot last season and missing time between 2022-23 to recover from knee surgery, he's the clear favorite.

Willis gets big money

The Dolphins didn't give \$45 million guaranteed to Malik Willis for him to take turns. Their new leadership from Green Bay — general manager Jon-Eric Sullivan and head coach Jeff Hafley — became enamored with the 27-year-old over his two seasons as backup for the Packers.

With only three starts over the last three years, plus three more as a rookie with Tennessee in 2022, however, Willis is unquestionably unproven. Quinn Ewers took over for a struggling Tagovailoa and made three starts late last season, and the 2025 seventh-round draft pick performed well during spring practice sessions to present a potential alternative should Miami need to consider one.

Brissett gets bumps

After moving on from Murray, Arizona landed on this short list of quarterback uncertainty — until satisfying veteran front-runner Jacoby Brissett with a new contract and formalizing

his place atop the depth chart Sunday. Fellow journeyman Gardner Minshew and third-round draft pick Carson Beck are waiting in case a significant injury or costly interceptions were to give new head coach Mike LaFleur pause at some point this season.

Brissett, who's in his 11th year in the NFL, started 12 games last season after Murray's injury. He passed for a career-high 3,366 yards, but the Cardinals finished 3-14. After switching teams five times in five years, Brissett has stayed put for the first time since a four-season stint with Indianapolis. Minshew, who's on his sixth team in eight years in the league, was the primary starter for Indy in 2023 after replacing then-rookie Anthony Richardson.

Launching Mendoza era

The best long-term outlook of the group clearly belongs to Las Vegas after taking Heisman Trophy and national championship winner Fernando Mendoza with the first pick in the draft. The Raiders under new head coach Klint Kubiak also brought in a sturdy bridge to that bright future by signing Cousins to help ease the rookie in.

Cousins is on top of the depth chart to start camp and the favorite to lead the Las Vegas offense in the opener, which would stop a streak of six straight quarterbacks drafted No. 1 overall starting their season opener. Baker Mayfield in 2018 with the Browns was the last quarterback who didn't start his first game as the first overall pick.

Warriors bring Green back on 1-year, \$27.7M deal

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Draymond Green has agreed to a one-year, \$27.7 million deal to return to the Golden State Warriors, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

Green will sign the contract that essential-

ly matches the deal he opted out of last month before Golden State made an unsuccessful bid to sign LeBron James, the person said.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the deal hadn't been announced. ESPN first reported the deal.

Green is now set to play his 15th season

with the Warriors, and will join Stephen Curry as the only players in franchise history to appear in at least 1,000 contests if he plays in 51 games.

Golden State missed the playoffs this past season when it lost to Phoenix in the play-in tournament.

Tigers score in every inning to rout Orioles

Associated Press

DETROIT — Eduardo Valencia homered twice and drove in four runs, Gleyber Torres had a home run and five RBIs, and the Detroit Tigers scored in every inning they went to the plate in a 14-0 win over the Baltimore Orioles on Tuesday night.

Detroit became the 22nd team in major league history to score in every inning it came to bat during a game and the second this month. The Kansas City Royals did it in a 15-1 win over the Philadelphia Phillies on July 6.

The Tigers also did it in an 11-5 home win against the Colorado Rockies on Aug. 2, 2014.

Troy Melton (6-1) allowed three hits and two walks in seven innings. He struck out five. Melton is 3-1 with a 1.09 ERA in his last seven starts.

Baltimore catcher Chadwick Tromp almost prevented history, getting two outs with no one on in the eighth, but Zack McKinstry doubled and Valencia hit a 36 mph pitch over the left-field fence for his second homer.

Kevin McGonigle reached base five times and scored three runs as Detroit snapped a three-game losing streak.

Guardians 6-0, Reds 5-2: JJ Bleday hit a solo home run in the first inning and five Cincinnati pitchers combined for the shutout as the host Reds defeated Cleveland and split a day-night doubleheader.

Cincinnati sealed the win when, with a runner aboard in the ninth, Dane Myers made a leaping grab against the center field wall on Petey Halpin's drive for the final out, securing Emilio Pagán his 11th save.

In the opener, Kyle Manzardo hit a grand slam, Chase DeLauter scored the go-ahead run on a sacrifice bunt in the eighth inning and the Guardians snapped a five-game losing streak with a win.

With Sal Stewart on first base and two outs in the ninth, Cleve-

land right fielder Angel Martínez made a diving catch on a looping fly ball hit by JJ Bleday for the final out and give Cade Smith his major league-leading 30th save.

Nationals 8, Blue Jays 6: Washington drew six walks against former Cy Young Award winner Shane Bieber in a four-run first inning, and the host Nationals beat Toronto.

After allowing two walks and an infield single to load the bases, Bieber (2-2) issued back-to-back run-scoring walks to Keibert Ruiz and Daylen Lile. After Nasim Núñez's sacrifice fly, Jorbit Vivas drew the inning's fifth pass. Jacob Young then walked to make it 4-0 and end Bieber's night.

Luis García Jr. and Dylan Crews hit back-to-back home runs in the fourth for Washington, which is a game behind Arizona in the race for the National League's third wild-card spot.

Diamondbacks 8, Pirates 7 (12): James McCann singled in the winning run in the 12th inning with his fourth hit of the game and visiting Arizona held on for a win over Pittsburgh despite blowing a six-run lead.

Brandon Lowe and Bryan Reynolds hit back-to-back home runs for the Pirates to spark a three-run rally against closer Paul Sewald in the ninth to tie the game at 6-all and force extra innings. Lowe's two-run shot was his 22nd.

Geraldo Carillo (1-0) got his first major league win as the Diamondbacks won for the 11th time in 17 games.

Rangers 4, Rays 1: Austin Wynn homered, Cal Quantrill (4-3) struck out seven and visiting Texas beat Tampa Bay.

Evan Carter led the way offensively for Texas with a pair of base hits, an RBI and run scored.

Marlins 1, Phillies 0: Sandy Alcántara (11-6) pitched four-hit ball over seven innings, Kyle Stowers homered and host Miami beat Philadelphia.

Xavier Edwards singled and

had two walks, and Liam Hicks had two hits for the Marlins, who won their second straight after ending a franchise-record 12-game losing streak Monday.

Twins 3, Royals 2: Royce Lewis hit a two-run triple with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning to give host Minnesota a victory over Kansas City.

Taj Bradley threw six strong innings for the Twins (54-54), who have won three in a row and five of six. They are third in the AL Central, just two games behind the first-place Chicago White Sox.

Yankees 3, White Sox 2: Gerrit Cole pitched six shutout innings of four-hit ball and visiting New York beat Chicago for its fifth victory in six games.

Anthony Volpe hit an RBI double in the second and scored on Max Schuemann's two-run double as the Yankees (61-46) moved within 1½ games of AL East-leading Tampa Bay. Jason Domínguez had two hits and reached base three times.

Cubs 10, Cardinals 2: Seiya Suzuki, Ian Happ and Nico Hoerner drove in two runs apiece and visiting Chicago jumped out to a seven-run lead after two innings on the way to a victory over St. Louis.

Happ punctuated an 11-pitch at-bat with a two-run double to get the Cubs' scoring started. Pete Crow-Armstrong's sacrifice fly scored Michael Conforto and Suzuki added a double. Michael Busch and Hoerner added RBI singles to make it 7-0, chasing Cardinals starter Michael McGreevy (4-9).

Astros 3, Angels 2: Yordan Alvarez homered and hit a go-ahead RBI single with two outs in the ninth inning to lift visiting Houston over Los Angeles.

Christian Walker added a solo homer while Astros relievers Enyel De Los Santos, Bryan Abreu, Steven Okert and Josh Hader combined for four hitless innings. Okert (4-1) threw a scoreless eighth to earn the win and Hader threw a four-pitch

ninth for his 14th save.

Athletics 4, Red Sox 3: Brian Serven hit his first major league home run in almost four years and Gage Jump (4-6) pitched six scoreless innings as the host Athletics cooled off Boston with a victory.

Tommy White went 4 for 4 and scored twice for the A's, who had lost three straight and five of six. Henry Bolte had an early RBI single, and pinch-hitter Lawrence Butler provided a critical insurance run with an RBI double in the eighth.

Padres 8, Rockies 7: Fernando Tatis Jr. went 5-for-5 with two RBIs in the first five-hit game of his career, and Xander Bogaerts' sacrifice fly in the bottom of the ninth inning gave host San Diego a victory over Colorado.

Manny Machado had three hits for the Padres, including an eighth-inning single that was misplayed by right fielder Jake McCarthy for an error — allowing Jake Cronenworth to score the tying run.

Brewers 8, Giants 2: Brice Turang had three hits and two RBIs as visiting Milwaukee beat San Francisco behind Logan Henderson.

Brewers rookie Luis Lara knocked in three runs and Jackson Chourio added two hits and two RBIs to help the NL Central leaders end a four-game road skid. Henderson (5-1) had seven strikeouts and allowed two hits in 5⅓ scoreless innings to win his first career start against the Giants.

Mariners 7, Dodgers 6: Dominic Canzone hit a tiebreaking, two-run homer — his second longball of the game and fifth for Seattle — in the eighth inning to rally the visiting Mariners past Los Angeles in their series opener.

The NL West-leading Dodgers blew three one-run leads and grounded into three double plays. Every LA player except Teoscar Hernández had at least one hit.

Big Ten keeps pushing for 24-team playoff

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The Big Ten Conference would do away with its championship game if college football adopts a 24-team playoff.

Commissioner Tony Petitti says that's a worthwhile sacrifice to get his preferred postseason format.

"When we make this decision as a league — are we going to support 24 — that's where you start the conversation," Petitti said Tuesday as the Big Ten opened its football media days. "Are you willing to give up your championship game to have the expanded playoff?"

Petitti mentioned this possibility back in May as he stepped up his push to double the 12-team playoff.

He conceded a 24-team College Football Playoff would mean no Big Ten championship game, which has been held annually in Indianapolis since 2011.

"Yeah, I think it's pretty much we won't be playing a championship game if we go to 24," he said.

The bid to expand the playoff to 24 teams also has the support of the Atlantic Coast Conference, Big 12 and Notre Dame. The Southeastern Conference remains a holdout.

During the SEC's media days event last week, commissioner Greg Sankey cited the risk to conference championship games as one potential drawback of a 24-team format. The SEC was the first major conference to adopt a league championship game and held its first one in 1992.

Petitti noted the potential drawbacks a team would face when it enters the playoff after competing in a championship game.

"There's a lot of conflicting incentives," Petitti said. "It's still very powerful to win a Big Ten championship, and teams play hard. They want to win that game. But you're talking about a pretty tough journey to go all the way through and where you are playing next, and what happens if a team loses that game, they don't

get a bye, and they have to go play relatively quickly."

Petitti also outlined his reasons for wanting a 24-team playoff rather than merely expanding to 16. He said it would assure that more late-season games carried postseason implications.

"The format creates all kinds of incentives," Petitti said.

"If you think about a 24-team playoff, right, a bunch of teams are going to be ranked between 16 and 24 that are just trying to make sure they're in. You're going to have teams playing until the very end to see if they're in. You're going to have teams playing to see if they can get a home game. So every game is going to matter because your seeding is always going to be determined by somebody else."

While some SEC coaches such as Georgia's Kirby Smart and Tennessee's Josh Heupel have countered Sankey's position by saying they're intrigued by a 24-team playoff, Big Ten coaches seem universally behind Petitti.

"When you get a room of 50 coaches or whatever we have in this conference together, it's hard to get everybody to be unanimous on something," Southern California's Lincoln Riley said. "This is something that our room has been unanimous on."

Riley said the lack of a conference championship game would make this more like the NFL model, where people simply pay more attention to the national championship than anything else.

"I know obviously those (conference championship games) are huge revenue drivers for these conferences, which matters in this day and age maybe a little bit more than it used to," Riley said.

"But to think that that could not be made up when you start adding in some of those playoff games.... I have a hard time believing that couldn't be recouped, that these conferences can't just decide the regular-season champion, have your tiebreaker structure or whatever and let's get into the playoffs."

Maiava, USC have high expectations in Riley's 5th season

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The expectations are not new for Lincoln Riley or Southern California. He faced them as a first-time head coach at Oklahoma before arriving at USC, and the Trojans have faced them nearly every year for generations.

Still, in Riley's five years at USC, those expectations have perhaps never been higher than they are this fall. With more than a dozen contributors returning, including star quarterback Jayden Maiava, the country's top-ranked freshman class and a handful of impact transfers, a lot of the pieces that were missing during the first few years of Riley's tenure have now fallen into place, on paper at least.

"It's what it's supposed to feel like here," Riley said Tuesday at Big Ten football media days. "I've

said this multiple times: I mean, the only two places that I've been a head coach at were blue-blood schools that have the highest of expectations. Honestly, I've really not known anything different. We're a product of our own experiences. That's been mine."

Riley cited institutional alignment including name, image and likeness financial support and a new \$200 million practice facility, the addition of new defensive coordinator and longtime TCU head coach Gary Patterson and the overall depth of talent on the roster among his reasons for optimism that he can get USC back to where it is used to being.

So far, that's been tough going. Riley enters his fifth year at USC with a 35-18 overall record and 24-12 record in the Pac-12 and Big Ten. Since going 11-3 in his debut, the Trojans have ended the sea-

son in the Top 25 only once, when they finished 20th last season after an Alamo Bowl loss to TCU to finish 9-4, tied for fourth in the Big Ten.

With all three losses on the road to ranked teams, Maiava said the Trojans are ready to build on their success last season.

"Just the work and the preparation," Maiava said. "That's where it comes from, what gives us the confidence to be willing to go out there and compete against everybody and anybody. I think we're just ready. We're all keeping the main thing the main thing and we're all driven to push each other and make each other better."

It starts with the 6-foot-4 Maiava, a native of Hawaii who threw for 3,711 yards and 24 touchdowns last season while rushing for six more scores in his second

season at USC after transferring from UNLV.

Then there's what Riley called the best depth of his tenure on both the offensive and defensive lines, along with the 32-player freshman class. That group includes three five-star linemen and a local four-star tight end, Santa Ana's Mark Bowman, all of whom will be expected to contribute immediately.

"I do think this is a special unit, and if it wasn't, I would say it wasn't," said defensive lineman Alex VanSumeren, a transfer from Michigan State who played against USC last season. "Now, what does that mean? It doesn't guarantee us any games to win. It just means that we have a very talented group of guys on the team. It's about what we do with it now, and I'm confident we're going to do something good."