

US helps ships transit Strait of Hormuz

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military is helping oil tankers and other commercial ships safely transit the Strait of Hormuz through communications and coordination along a route established by Navy destroyers weeks ago, according to U.S. Central Command.

The goal is to give the vessels a way to continue moving through one of the world's most important shipping lanes despite threats to maritime traffic following months of conflict between the United States and Iran.

"A pathway is available that we have established for commercial ships seeking to freely and safely transit the Strait of Hormuz," CENTCOM spokesman Navy Capt. Tim Hawkins told Stars and Stripes.

The support does not include military escorts. Rather, it consists of communications and coordination with commercial vessels using a route established through transits by two Navy destroyers in April and two U.S.-

flagged commercial vessels in May, Hawkins said.

Their success demonstrated that the critical waterway was not, in fact, closed. Thousands of seafarers and hundreds of vessels have been stranded in the Persian Gulf since the war began with joint U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February.

Since then, Iran has asserted control over a portion of the strait and reportedly demanded that ships pay a toll and coordinate their movements with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, discouraging many vessels from attempting the transit.

Tehran has reinforced those claims by warning that it has mined parts of the waterway and by launching dozens of drone and missile attacks against commercial shipping.

As of May 17, there had been 29 serious, one minor and three attempted attacks on ships in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman, according to the most recent weekly report by the Joint Maritime Information

Center, a multinational information-sharing organization that monitors maritime security in the region.

The result has been a steep decline in ship traffic. About 61 ships transited the strait in the week ending May 17, according to JMIC data. Before the war, the waterway handled an average of 761 vessel transits per week, the data showed.

The latest U.S. effort has helped about 70 ships through the strait in recent weeks, the New York Times reported Sunday.

Many of the U.S.-coordinated transits were conducted with ships' transponders turned off to reduce the risk of detection and attack, according to the report.

That effort follows the short-lived Project Freedom, a U.S. initiative launched in early May to support commercial shipping through the strait. The operation was suspended after just one day.

The Navy likely has mapped out a safe route through the strait using surface and underwater drones to hunt for mines, said Ste-

ven Wills, an analyst with the Center for Maritime Strategy at the Navy League of the United States.

The U.S. also could be providing "a kind of distant protection" for commercial ships sailing through the Strait of Hormuz, likely on or near the Omani side, using destroyers and attack aircraft and helicopters, he said.

On Monday, Iranian state media reported that Tehran had suspended talks with the U.S. aimed at ending the three-month war in protest of Israeli military operations in Lebanon.

Iran also threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz.

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that U.S. forces have quietly helped coordinate some commercial transits through the waterway.

Responding to that report, CENTCOM disputed suggestions that the effort marked a revival of Project Freedom, saying the military routinely communicates and coordinates with ships in the waterway but is not providing dedicated escorts.

US tries to stop Israel attacks from dashing Iran deal

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump is still optimistic the U.S. can reach an interim peace deal with Iran soon, after the Islamic Republic threatened to suspend talks because of Israel's escalating attacks in Lebanon.

"I think you're talking about over the next week," Trump said to ABC News late on Monday, referring to a memorandum of understanding with Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Separately, he said discussions with Iran continue "at a rapid pace."

Officials in Tehran are dis-

cussing their "final text" to send to the U.S., Iran's Mehr news agency reported on Tuesday, citing a person close to the Iranian negotiating team but without giving a timeline.

The developments capped a frantic few hours in which oil prices and government bond yields jumped after Iran took umbrage at Israel's deepening invasion of Lebanon — where the Jewish state is fighting Tehran-backed Hezbollah militants — and its threats to bomb parts of Beirut. Iran said it might increase restrictions on maritime traffic through the Strait of

Hormuz, as well as close the Bab el-Mandeb strait at the southern end of the Red Sea and strike Israel.

Trump reacted by calling Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and, according to an Axios report, swearing at him as well as accusing him of ingratitude. The U.S. leader said he also spoke to representatives of Hezbollah, deemed a terrorist organization by Washington.

Trump said Israel and Hezbollah agreed to stop firing on one another and Israeli forces had backed off on raiding Bei-

rut, Lebanon's capital.

In a short statement, Netanyahu said Israel's position in Lebanon "remains unchanged" and his military will "continue to operate as planned in southern Lebanon." He said Israel will refrain from hitting "terrorist targets" in Beirut if Hezbollah stops firing on Israeli cities.

Fighting continued overnight in Lebanon. Israel struck the southern town of Tyre as well as a car in Nabatieh early on Tuesday, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported. Hezbollah said it fired rockets at an Israeli tank.

Tricare special-needs program may need boost

By **MATTHEW M. BURKE**
Stars and Stripes

A Tricare program that provides services to military dependents with special needs is overdue for a review of its coverage limit, which has stayed the same for more than 15 years.

That's the conclusion of a new Government Accountability Office report regarding the Extended Care Health Option in the military's medical insurance plan.

Because the program's coverage limit hasn't changed since 2009, it may not be on par with that of other programs such as Medicare, and may not be meeting the needs of enrollees, according to the report issued Monday.

Tricare covers uniformed

service members, retirees and their families.

Dependents of active-duty service members with special medical or educational needs must be enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program to receive specialized care.

The program provides services and supplies for dependents with conditions like autism, cerebral palsy or severe intellectual disabilities.

It has about 27,000 people enrolled, the GAO said.

Increasing numbers of plan members have been approaching the \$36,000 coverage limit, the report said, adding that some enrollees want to make requests that go over the limit but are instructed to prioritize the items they need now.

In addition, the program's home health care benefit offers in-home medical services to homebound military dependents with complex medical conditions.

The report puts the number of recipients of that benefit at about 1,000.

Three major focus areas were addressed by the GAO: habilitative services, nursing and respite care.

The GAO flagged several issues with respite care, the most requested service in the program.

Respite care provides temporary relief for caregivers by having another provider look after a dependent with special needs.

According to the report, families often struggle to find pro-

viders willing to accept ECHO respite-care assignments.

Of the 734 authorizations approved for respite care between 2022 and 2024, less than one-third were used, the report said.

According to case managers interviewed by the GAO, one reason is that providers often want more hours than ECHO currently offers.

Tricare's reimbursement rates may also be less competitive than some private insurance options, according to the GAO.

The Defense Department plans to review ECHO benefits and is standardizing eligibility requirements and the number of covered respite care hours offered across service branches, the report said.

Divided court blocks removal of transgender troops

By **MATTHEW ADAMS**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A divided federal appeals court on Monday concluded the Trump administration's policy banning transgender individuals from serving in the military is likely unconstitutional.

The majority opinion by a three-judge panel from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld a March 2025 ruling by U.S. District Judge Ana Reyes in Washington.

Reyes concluded that President Donald Trump's executive order to exclude transgender troops from military service likely violates their constitutional rights.

Judges Judith Rogers and Robert Wilkins agreed that the Trump administration's policy targeting transgender service members likely violated the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection.

The two judges agreed to leave in place a preliminary injunction that prevented the Defense Department from removing transgender troops from service.

That order is narrow, covering only the active-duty plaintiffs in the case.

"The government's stated reason for issuing the Hegseth Policy as based solely upon gender dysphoria was pretextual, and that instead, the Hegseth Policy was premised, at least in part, on a non-legitimate state interest to harm the politically unpopular group of transgender persons," Wilkins wrote in an opinion, adding that Trump "declared transgender people as categorically unfit for military service explicitly because of their gender identity."

Meanwhile, Wilkins and Judge Justin Walker allowed the administration to enforce restrictions on transgender plaintiffs seeking to join the mil-

itary but were prevented under the new policy from doing so.

The administration appealed after Reyes issued a preliminary injunction requested by attorneys for six transgender people who are active-duty service members and two others seeking to join the military.

The appeals court's majority decided that the injunction should be narrowed to the plaintiffs currently serving in the military but not those seeking to join.

In January 2025, Trump signed an executive order that claimed the gender identity of transgender service members "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an honorable, truthful and disciplined lifestyle, even in one's personal life" and is harmful to military readiness.

"We will get transgender ideology the hell out of our military. It's going to be gone," Trump said at the time during a

retreat of House Republicans at his Doral golf resort in Miami.

In response to the order, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth issued a policy that presumptively disqualifies people with gender dysphoria from military service unless they obtained a waiver.

Gender dysphoria is the distress that a person feels because their assigned gender and gender identity don't match.

The medical condition has been linked to depression and suicidal thoughts.

There are approximately 4,200 transgender service members in the U.S. military, according to figures released by the Defense Department in February 2025.

The current ruling is not a final decision.

Instead, it determines what parts of the policy can remain in effect while the lawsuit continues in the lower court.

Trump's \$1.8B compensation fund unravels amid setbacks

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is backing away from plans to create a \$1.8 billion fund to compensate people who claim the government was weaponized against them, a retreat that comes amid a cascade of legal setbacks and a revolt within members of the Republican Party.

But Senate Democrats say the concession is not enough, and are pushing legislation to ensure no president can ever attempt the creation of such a fund again.

“If Republicans are serious about ending this brazenly corrupt scheme, they should have no

problem voting for legislation banning any president from creating such a slush fund in the future,” Sen. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., wrote Monday in a post on X.

Schiff, along with Sens. Mark Kelly of Arizona and Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, introduced the “Drain the Slush Fund Act” on Monday. The bill, if approved, would bar any payout arising from a lawsuit filed by a president or vice president, language that is designed to permanently foreclose the fund, or anything like it, from being put in place by a future administration.

The White House did not com-

ment. But in a statement, the Department of Justice said the decision to scrap the fund was in response to a federal judge’s ruling last week that temporarily blocked payouts from the fund while legal challenges remain pending. The department said it “disagrees strongly” with the move, but stopped short of saying it would challenge the decision.

U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema, who was nominated to the bench by President Clinton, a Democrat, has scheduled a June 12 hearing for argument on whether to extend the order blocking the fund.

Alabama groups urge court to halt election map

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Challengers to Alabama’s latest redistricting push urged the Supreme Court on Monday not to let the state use a congressional map in this fall’s elections that a lower court found likely discriminated against Black voters.

The groups, including voters and Democratic officials in the state, argued the justices should keep the state’s congressional lines used in the 2024 elections. That map was implemented by a three-judge court after it found the state’s first two congressional maps likely discriminated against Black voters.

Last week, the same three-judge court blocked a legislature-approved map Alabama officials want to use in this fall’s elections, known as the 2023 plan, finding it still violated the Constitution. State officials asked the Supreme Court to allow them to use the 2023 plan.

Monday’s filings come amid fast-moving litigation following a Supreme Court decision tossing out a Louisiana congressional map that prompted Alabama and other Southern states to redraw their districts.

One filing from a group of voters in the state, led by Marcus Caster, argued that Alabama has for years attempted to draw congressional maps that discriminate against Black voters. The filing argued that didn’t change because of the Supreme Court’s decision in an unrelated case that tossed out a Louisiana congressional map with two minority opportunity districts.

The Supreme Court’s Louisiana decision “did not invite legislatures to immunize discriminatory maps by concocting pretextual and inviolable criteria that lock in an illegitimate scheme,” the filing said.

Trump in perilous polling territory, raising questions over base support

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — Mired in a persistent cost of living crisis and an unpopular war with Iran, President Donald Trump reached a perilous milestone last week, registering an approval rating of 34% in a top-tier poll — a record low less than halfway through his second term.

The results mark one of the sharpest polling collapses of any modern president. The data, from the Economist and YouGov, brings Trump back down to his political nadir, matching a number he hasn’t seen since the immediate aftermath of the Jan. 6 attack five years ago.

It follows on several other surveys published in recent days showing the president entering precarious political territory roughly six months ahead of the midterm elections, raising alarm bells in Republican campaign offices across the country over the party’s pro-

spects in the fall.

It has also led pollsters to question long-standing assumptions about the president’s floor of support, wondering whether it is at risk of giving way.

“It’s harder to get lower, but it’s possible depending on what he does,” said Christopher Wlezien, a political scientist at the University of Texas at Austin. “To get that number down, you are going to have to eat into his core.”

Trump’s base of support remains strong, reinforcing a long-standing theory among pollsters that partisanship now serves as a direct proxy for presidential approval. But softening Republican support on specific policy matters — including top voter priorities, such as the economy — have begun raising questions among experts whether further erosion is possible.

A New York Times poll found his approval at 38%, and a Poli-

tico poll recorded a similar erosion, driven by a majority of Americans — including 18% of Trump supporters — stating they are financially worse off than they were before he resumed office.

Roughly 2 out of 3 Americans oppose the war Trump started with Iran. And the coalition that swept him back into office — including a surge in support from Latino, independent and young voters — has effectively disappeared.

While the downward trend looks like a story of a presidency in perpetual trouble, political scientists see a more complicated picture.

“Polarization has raised the floor and lowered the ceiling for approval ratings,” said Brandon Rottinghaus, a professor of political science at the University of Houston. “Dramatic swings are less common because approval ratings are now fixed to partisanship.”

Pentagon: No final decision on status of Bahrain schools

BY LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

No final decision has been made on whether to reopen schools this fall at a U.S. Navy base in Bahrain, the head of the Department of Defense Education Activity said after earlier telling parents that their children would not return for the upcoming school year.

DODEA Director Paul Craft told families in an email Monday that Bahrain schools would remain closed in August, a decision that raised questions about the future footprint of one of the largest U.S. military bases in the Middle East.

In a Tuesday email, Craft said the department is still considering its options.

"This message laid out just one of several potential courses of action for our DoWEA schools in Bahrain," Craft wrote Tuesday, referring to DODEA's alternate name as the Depart-

ment of War Education Activity. "No decision has yet been made. Our priority was — and remains — the safety, wellbeing, and educational success of our military-connected children."

Craft said the department is currently considering three options, including opening the schools in August 2026, January 2027 or August 2027.

"This decision will be made over the course of the next few weeks based on a threat assessment, readiness, and operating conditions," he wrote in the Tuesday email.

A spokesperson for the Pentagon's school system did not comment on the email.

Bahrain, a small island nation in the Persian Gulf, is home to Naval Support Activity Bahrain and hosts the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and the 5th Fleet. Typically, the base supports about 8,300 service mem-

bers, civilians and their families, but the majority were forced to evacuate shortly after the start of Operation Epic Fury in February.

The Pentagon supports two schools for military-connected students on the island, from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade.

Since the evacuation, the status of the DODEA schools has been viewed as a possible indicator of the Pentagon's plans for returning military families to Bahrain and restoring the broader U.S. presence that existed before the war.

Thousands of U.S. military-linked evacuees remain in limbo months after fleeing Bahrain, with many still unsure when they may be able to return, retrieve their belongings or resume their previous lives.

As they wait out the war in havens across the U.S. and in Europe, many have expressed a desire to return to Bahrain.

Pulte picked as acting intel chief

The Detroit News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Tuesday he has chosen federal housing regulator Bill Pulte, who has served as a political attack dog targeting Trump's perceived enemies, to serve as acting director of national intelligence.

Pulte, a businessman with ties to Michigan, lacks national security experience, which is required by federal statute for the role, prompting some critics to immediately question his qualifications and whether the president is trying to "politicize" intelligence.

"He appears to have been selected precisely because the White House believes he will provide the narrative it wants, not the intelligence we need," said Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the top Democrat on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

Trump said on social media that Pulte, 38, is to keep his roles as director of Federal Housing Finance Agency and the chair of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the government-sponsored housing giants that guarantee most mortgages in the U.S.

Pulte is in an acting capacity set to replace Tulsi Gabbard, the former Hawaii congresswoman who said she's stepping down June 30 following her husband's diagnosis with cancer. He'd require confirmation by the Senate if Trump were to nominate him to permanently serve in the role of DNI, which oversees 18 agencies that make up the intelligence community in the United States.

"William has deep experience managing the most sensitive matters in America, the safety and soundness of the Markets, and over 10 Trillion Dollars at Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac, a substantial increase from where it was just 12 months ago," Trump wrote.

State sues Open AI over safety concerns

Miami Herald

Florida on Monday launched an unprecedented legal assault on the artificial intelligence giant OpenAI, suing the company and CEO Sam Altman in a sweeping lawsuit that portrays ChatGPT as a product deliberately designed to foster emotional dependence, collect sensitive personal information and keep users engaged regardless of the consequences.

The 83-page complaint filed by Attorney General James Uthmeier argues that OpenAI built its flagship chatbot to act as a "friend, ally, collaborator, or even romantic partner" in order to maximize user engagement and subscription revenue.

State lawyers contend the chatbot encourages users to di-

vulge personal details about their health, finances, relationships and children while creating what the lawsuit describes as an unhealthy psychological reliance on AI.

"Sam Altman and ChatGPT have chosen the AI race over the safety and security of our kids. They have chosen profit over public safety, and we're not going to stand for it here in Florida," Uthmeier said during a press conference.

Florida's lawsuit grew in part out of last year's deadly shooting at Florida State University, where officials say accused gunman Phoenix Ikner consulted ChatGPT before killing two people and wounding six others.

Florida also alleges ChatGPT routinely presents itself as

trustworthy and reliable while OpenAI markets the product for everything from managing family businesses to healthcare decisions and financial matters. State lawyers argue consumers are encouraged to depend on the chatbot even though it can generate false information, fabricate facts and provide dangerously inaccurate advice.

A major focus of the complaint is children and teenagers. The state cites research suggesting young users can become emotionally attached to AI chatbots and argues OpenAI has failed to implement meaningful age-verification measures, parental notification systems or safeguards despite widespread evidence that minors use the service.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Lottery tickets in stolen purse lead to felony

WI WATERLOO — A chance to win thousands of dollars could mean a big loss for an alleged purse snatcher.

Police said Tyler William Bakkala Heyrman, 30, stole a purse from a shopper in the Crossroads Hy-Vee parking lot on Thursday.

The charge would usually be misdemeanor theft.

But the purse contained unscratched lottery tickets, which has allowed authorities to lodge a felony lottery ticket theft charge, which is punishable by up to five years in prison upon conviction.

Genetic testing firm sued over data breach

CA SACRAMENTO — The California attorney general filed a lawsuit Thursday against the company formerly known as 23andMe, accusing the genetic testing service of failing to protect customers' data during a 2023 breach.

The data breach affected nearly 7 million people across the country, including more than 850,000 Californians, according to a release from Attorney General Rob Bonta's office.

The exposed data contained sensitive material such as raw genetic information and health reports. Hackers listed the data for sale on the dark web in 2023, Bonta said.

The business 23andMe filed for bankruptcy last year and was acquired by TTAM Research Institute, a nonprofit led by the company's former Chief Executive Anne Wojcicki.

"23andMe collected genetic data about millions of people, failed to meet its obligation under California law to keep that information safe, and then lied to consumers about the severity of its 2023 data breach," Bonta said.

Ex-clerk in election case released from prison

CO DENVER — Tina Peters was released from a Pueblo prison Monday morning after a commutation from Gov. Jared Polis ended both her 20-month incarceration and a months-long pressure campaign by President Donald Trump.

A former Mesa County clerk, Peters was sentenced to a total of nine years in jail and prison in October 2024.

She was convicted of four felonies and three misdemeanors for overseeing a plot to grant an unauthorized third party access to secure voting systems.

A key ally of Donald Trump, Peters' conviction and incarceration became a rallying cry for the president and his election-conspiracist allies.

Peters' release, authorized by Polis' commutation last month, had long been expected: He had publicly mused that her sentence was too long, and his office had discussed her commutation with other officials, including the judge who sentenced her.

Robots vandalized while checking infrastructure

CA HOLLISTER — The robots came in peace. The humans greeted them with violence.

That's the scenario that played out Thursday in Hollister, where several "robotic assessment units" are traversing the city and evaluating its pedestrian infrastructure. An unidentified person strolled up to one of the robots near West and 5th streets and "intentionally knocked it onto its side," according to the Hollister Police Department.

Another incident happened near 4th and Line streets. Police said a second unidentified person appeared to hit two of the robots and pour a beer over one of them. Both incidents were captured by the robots' onboard camera systems, police said.

Deployed and operated by Daxbot, the robots are evaluating sidewalks, pedestrian pathways and curb ramps, police said. The project, police added, is funded through the Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program and is intended to help the city identify areas where pedestrian infrastructure may not meet accessibility standards.

Lawsuit over Baltimore bridge collapse paused

MD BALTIMORE — The long-anticipated civil trial over liability in the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse was put on hold just before it was set to begin Monday morning.

Though the parties remaining in the case, including cargo ship Dali owner Grace Ocean Private Limited, Dali operator Synergy Marine Private Limited, Baltimore City and Baltimore County agreed in court on Monday that the case should be stayed, or postponed, their reasons starkly differed.

Attorneys for Grace Ocean and Synergy argued that, with all of the personal injury, wrongful death and property damage claims settled, the remaining 11 claims in the case should be dismissed.

Attorneys for the city, county and private economic loss claimants, on the other hand, argued that the case should be postponed until a criminal case related to the collision is complete.

The civil case, which was scheduled to last about five weeks, centers on whether the ship owner and operator can avoid billions in liability for the disaster, which killed six, under a centuries-old maritime law.

NYPD to hire more cops despite mayor's pledges

NY NEW YORK — Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said Monday that the city will hire over 550 new officers this year — despite Mayor Zohran Mamdani previously saying he'd hold the NYPD headcount flat.

The increase marks a turnaround for Mamdani, whose campaign promises are often at odds with the direction his police commissioner wants to take the department.

The mayor has moderated his position on several issues as he has sidestepped open conflict with Tisch.

Tisch said during a budget hearing that the additional hires would bring the NYPD to 35,555 uniformed officers by the end of the calendar year — larger than the police force than under ex-Mayor Adams, around 35,000 at its peak.

From Tribune News Service

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Rams land star DE Garrett for Verse, picks

Associated Press

Myles Garrett finally got his wish — to be a part of a consistent winning team instead of one in perpetual rebuilding.

The Cleveland Browns traded the two-time AP NFL Defensive Player of the Year to the Los Angeles Rams for pass rusher Jared Verse and three draft picks in a blockbuster deal on Monday.

Garrett was the unanimous choice for Defensive Player of the Year last season after he had 23 sacks and broke the NFL single-season record. He is expected to report to the Rams' facility on Tuesday and have a news conference to discuss the trade.

Garrett's addition marks the first time the reigning AP NFL MVP and Defensive Player of the Year will be teammates. Rams quarterback Matthew Stafford won his first MVP award last season.

General manager Andrew Berry was able to make a deal after the Browns and Garrett agreed to modify his contract and defer option payments over the 2026-28 seasons in March. The first payment of around \$10 million was due on March 28, but was moved to near the start of the regular season.

Garrett demanded a trade at the end of the 2024 season, but signed a four-year contract extension last March with a total value of \$204.8 million that made him the highest-paid non-quarterback in NFL history. The contract also included a no-trade clause.

Berry had long said that Garrett would play his entire career in Cleveland, but Garrett's lingering frustrations over the franchise's direction and the chance to start anew meant it was time to move on.

Cleveland is 8-26 the past two years after making the playoffs in 2023.

"As discussions intensified we were stuck at a legitimate crossroads: do we hold on to a truly generational player who has become the identity of our team, or do we make the difficult decision that we think is best for the organization over the long run?" Berry said after the trade was announced.

The Browns get Verse, a 2027 first-round selection, a second-round pick in 2028 and a 2029 third-round selection.

The 30-year old Garrett is the first player in NFL history with at least 12 sacks in six consecutive seasons (2020-25) and the only player with double-digit sacks each of the past eight years. His 125½ career sacks are tied for 20th on the league list.

Garrett, who was part of five double-digit losing seasons during his nine years in Cleveland, finally gets a chance to contend for a Super Bowl title.

"Nine years. It's hard to put into words what that really means when so much of your life has been shaped in one place, around one team, and with one community behind you ... Cleveland made me tougher. You challenged me. You taught me about perseverance, about

showing up even when things aren't easy, and what loyalty really looks like. Through the highs, lows, setbacks, injuries, expectations, inclement weather, and difficult seasons, you all kept showing up. I never took that for granted," Garrett said in a social media post Monday night.

Another huge trade by Rams

The trade is yet another blockbuster deal swung by Rams general manager Les Snead, whose eagerness to use his draft picks in trades for star veterans has kept the Rams among the NFL's top teams during coach Sean McVay's decade on the sideline.

Just a couple of months ago, Snead acquired star cornerback Trent McDuffie from Kansas City in a deal for four draft picks, including a first-rounder, to rebuild the secondary that was the weak link of last season's team.

The Rams are among the preseason Super Bowl favorites after winning 12 games and reaching the NFC championship game last season. Stafford, the reigning league MVP, is returning at the head of the NFL's most potent offense last season along with a retooled defense featuring McDuffie and fellow ex-Kansas City star Jaylen Watson as its new cornerbacks. The Rams' roster in 2026 now includes last season's NFL leaders in yards passing, TD passes, total receptions (Puka Nacua), receiving touchdowns (Davante Adams) and sacks (Garrett).

Eagles finally send disgruntled star WR Brown to Patriots

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — A.J. Brown is leaving a frustrating experience in Philadelphia for a reunion in New England with his first NFL coach.

The Eagles traded the star receiver to the Patriots on Monday, putting a cap on the long-rumored deal.

The Eagles said they will receive a first-round pick in 2028 and a fifth-round pick in 2027 for the three-time Pro Bowler.

The trade comes after a frustrating 2025 season for Brown in Philadelphia, in which he had grown dispirited with an Eagles offense that played uninspired football at times while the team failed to defend its Super Bowl title.

Still, he posted a message on Instagram shortly after the trade became official Monday of him in an Eagles jersey with his hands making the "heart" symbol. He also posted a few other photos of himself as a kid wearing a Tom Brady Patriots jersey.

Brown played under Vrabel for three seasons after being drafted by the Tennessee Titans in 2019.

Brown, 28, quickly rose to the top receiving option in Philadelphia after being traded by Tennessee to the Eagles in 2022.

He had back-to-back Pro Bowl seasons his first two seasons with the Eagles, catching 88 passes for 1,496 yards and 11 touchdowns in 2022 and 106 passes for 1,456 yards and seven TDs in 2023.

He earned a Super Bowl ring during the 2024 season, but began to grow unhappy last season as the Eagles offense stagnated.

The Patriots have been viewed as a possible landing spot for Brown since they released receiver Stefon Diggs in March. Diggs led New England with 85 receptions and 1,013 yards receiving with four touchdowns in his only season in New England in 2025, helping the Patriots reach the Super Bowl, where they lost to the Seattle Seahawks.

Diggs' exit made finding a No. 1 receiving option for quarterback Drake Maye a priority. The Patriots did add former Green Bay Packers receiver Romeo Doubs in free agency. But he doesn't instantly change an offense the way

Brown's addition could.

Brown leaves Philadelphia as one of the top receivers in franchise history.

He topped 1,000 yards receiving all four seasons with the Eagles. He totaled 339 total receptions and 32 touchdowns and was a crucial member of the two Eagles teams that played in the Super Bowl during his tenure.

Vrabel was entering his second season as coach of the Titans when the team selected Brown in the second round of the 2019 draft. He stated multiple times during that offseason that Brown would be on the roster as long as he was the coach, but the realities of the situation changed things.

Four years later, he'll get to coach him again.

Wemby vs. Knicks a marquee matchup

Associated Press

The marquee outside of Madison Square Garden in December 1949 once promoted the following event, which was happening a couple of days later: “Geo Mikan vs. Knicks.”

Not “Minneapolis Lakers vs. Knicks.” Just George Mikan. The NBA’s first one-of-a-kind big man.

It feels like history repeating itself now. The NBA Finals start Wednesday, with the Spurs facing the Knicks for the title. And the marquee for this series — in San Antonio, in New York, in Paris and countless other points around the globe — may as well say “Wemby vs. Knicks.”

Victor Wembanyama keeps stepping onto bigger and bigger stages. The latest version of the NBA’s one-of-a-kind big man — a title once held by the likes of Mikan, Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Shaquille O’Neal — will have all eyes on him in this series, and probably for every game he

plays for the rest of his life. He’s not “on the way” to superstardom. He’s there. And this series is giving him his first chance at putting champion on his résumé.

“This is the best basketball on the planet that’s being played right now,” Wembanyama said after the Spurs won Game 7 at Oklahoma City to capture the Western Conference title. “And the crazy thing is ... I want to do that 15, 20 more times. Let’s hope it doesn’t become an addiction. Maybe it is already.”

San Antonio is clearly addicted to him.

There’s no Major League Baseball in the city, no NHL team, no NFL team. As far as big-time pro sports go, it’s the Spurs and nothing else. And those who drive five minutes in any direction in this city will see the prof.

School’s out in San Antonio. It’s summer. The city’s public library was buzzing Monday, and a few kids just happened to be noticing a new display not far from the front desk. “Read Like

Wemby,” it said, and it featured five books the Spurs star has been known to read in the past. An Instagram account — wembybooks — starting posting images of him with books, local media caught on and the library came up with an idea.

“We want to make sure people have access to those and people can read them,” said Scott Williams, the marketing manager for the San Antonio Public Library. “And so, we thought, ‘Let’s do a display and let’s do a book list and make sure that people can easily find what Wemby’s reading so that they can read it too.’”

Wembanyama also gets people to visit restaurants — even when they’re closed.

Rudy’s Seafood isn’t open Mondays. In a 15-minute span Monday afternoon, four cars showed up. They weren’t there for lunch. They were there to see the Spurs murals — current players and coaches are featured, alongside a freshly re-

painted Gregg Popovich, a newly added George Gervin and Manu Ginobili, among others.

Mark and Christina Lerma have family in San Antonio, but they live in Nebraska. They headed to Rudy’s to pay homage to their favorite team. They’ve loved the Spurs forever. And Wembanyama, as one might guess, has quickly acquired a special place in their fandom.

“He’s dominant,” Mark Lerma said. “He changes the game.”

Roland Ramirez, who owns the restaurant, has met Wembanyama in the past and was blown away by how he carries himself.

“The first vibe I got off of him was he was just very humble,” Ramirez said. “That’s what people are really feeding off. He’s humble, but he’s hungry for a championship. And when he gets on the floor, he’s a whole different monster.”

He’s different. Just like Mikan was 77 years ago. Wemby vs. the Knicks. A marquee matchup awaits.

Kostyuk, Andreeva set up Ukraine-Russia semis clash

Associated Press

PARIS — Marta Kostyuk, the best player on clay this season and a vocal supporter of Ukraine amid the war with Russia, will play her first major semifinal at the French Open against a Russian.

Kostyuk won an intense all-Ukraine quarterfinal against Elina Svitolina 6-3, 2-6, 6-2 on Tuesday. That set up Kostyuk against Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva, who thumped Romanian veteran Sorana Cirstea 6-0, 6-3.

In men’s play, up-and-coming Rafael Jodar of Spain was powerless against second-seeded Alexander Zverev, losing 7-6 (3), 6-1, 6-3. The 2024 runner-up from Germany will face Jakub Mensik of the Czech Republic or Joao Fonseca of Brazil for a place in Sunday’s final.

Kostyuk leads Andreeva 2-0 on

the tour; the second win in the Madrid final a month ago. Kostyuk didn’t shake hands at the net, following protocol for Ukrainians with opponents from Russia and its ally Belarus since the war started four years ago.

“We had a very difficult night again in Ukraine, especially in Kyiv, so many people dead,” Kostyuk said. “I want to give this match to Ukrainian people and to their resilience. Slava Ukraini! (Glory to Ukraine!)”

Russia launched hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles against Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities overnight, killing at least 18 civilians and wounding more than 100 others, authorities said Tuesday.

“I texted my family if they were OK. This is pretty much all I can do,” Kostyuk said. “The biggest

thing I can do is sit here and talk about it so more people can find out about it so they don’t get used to this terrible life.”

Svitolina said friends in Ukraine told her about the attacks just hours before the match.

The No. 7-seeded tennis player got off to a slow start but worked her way back, matching No. 15 Kostyuk’s power from the baseline. Kostyuk was better on the important points in the decider and improved her impressive 2026 record on clay to 17-0.

She’s the first Ukrainian woman to reach the semifinals at Roland Garros in the Open era since 1968. Svitolina has reached the semis at the other three Grand Slams, but failed for the sixth time to win a French Open quarterfinal.

Andreeva will appear in her

second French Open semifinal, two years after the first. She was asked about the challenges of playing a Ukrainian in wartime.

“Well, for me it doesn’t matter who I play,” Andreeva said. “I really try to play against the ball that is coming at me. Usually it doesn’t matter to me who I’m playing against, so I’m trying to really focus on the game and on the game plan.”

Asked whether she found it frustrating to hear Russian opponents avoiding the issue, Kostyuk said she wished “there was some more clear stance on what’s going on.”

“Especially when your country is killing other people,” she added. “I don’t know how you can sleep at night peacefully when you know that this is going on, and you have nothing to say about it.”

DeGrom gets 100th win, Rangers top Cards

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Jacob deGrom tossed five scoreless innings to earn his 100th career win and Ezequiel Duran had three hits as the Texas Rangers beat the St. Louis Cardinals 2-1 on Monday night.

A two-time NL Cy Young Award winner, the 37-year-old deGrom (4-4) allowed four hits and struck out eight in his fourth attempt at the milestone victory. The right-hander went 1-3 with a 5.72 ERA in five May starts and has not won this season when allowing multiple runs.

"It's really cool," deGrom said. "As a kid, your goal is to just play major league baseball and for it to become a reality and win 100 games in the major leagues, it's kind of crazy to think about."

Marlins 7, Nationals 3: Sandy Alcantara (4-4) pitched seven steady innings of three-run ball and visiting Miami hit three home runs, snapping its five-game losing streak with a win over Washington.

The Marlins trailed 3-1 before scoring three runs in the sixth.

After pinch-hitter Heriberto Hernández tied it with a two-run homer, Miami went ahead on Connor Norby's RBI double off Richard Lovelady (2-3). Liam Hicks and Kyle Stowers added home runs for the Marlins in the ninth.

Tigers 10, Rays 9: Dillon Dingler hit two of Detroit's season-high five homers, Riley Greene was a triple shy of the cycle and the visiting Tigers stopped a four-game skid by holding off Tampa Bay.

Dingler had four hits and drove in four runs. Kerry Carpenter also went deep and finished with three hits and two RBIs. Greene was 3 for 4 with a walk and three RBIs.

Royals 9, Reds 2: Lane Thomas hit a grand slam in the first inning and Luinder Avila pitched a career-high five innings as visiting Kansas City snapped a six-game skid with a win over Cincinnati.

Avila (1-2) made his second career start and allowed one run on two hits with four walks and a career-high five strikeouts on 86 pitches, also a career high. Avila

is replacing left-hander Kris Bubic, who is sidelined with arm issues.

Twins 9, White Sox 6: Tristan Gray hit a grand slam in the fourth inning and host Minnesota added four more runs in the fifth on the way to a win over Chicago.

The Twins snapped a five-game losing streak. The White Sox had their five-game winning streak halted.

Brewers 16, Giants 2: Brice Turang ended an 0-for-21 slump by going 2 for 2 with a double and triple in host Milwaukee's blowout of San Francisco.

Christian Yelich and David Hamilton each went 3-for-5 with three runs for the Brewers. Luis Rengifo also scored three runs, and Yelich had two RBIs. Jackson Chourio was 2 for 4 with three RBIs.

Diamondbacks 4, Dodgers 1: Ketel Marte launched a two-run homer, Nolan Arenado and rookie Tommy Troy hit solo shots and host Arizona rallied for a win over Los Angeles.

Eduardo Rodríguez continued his stellar season for the

Diamondbacks with six innings of one-run ball. The lefty gave up five hits and a walk, striking out three, and has a 2.24 ERA through 12 starts.

Mariners 3, Mets 2 (10): Cole Young hit a game-winning single in the 10th inning and host Seattle beat New York for its season-high seventh straight victory.

The Mets had their four-game win streak snapped. The walk-off victory was the Mariners' third in four games as they improved to a season-best three games over .500.

Rockies 9, Angels 8: TJ Ruffalo hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly in the ninth inning and visiting Colorado used a five-run eighth to rally past Los Angeles.

Hunter Goodman put the Rockies ahead 8-6 with a three-run homer in the eighth. Jake McCarthy homered earlier for Colorado, which has won more games this season (23) than it did before the All-Star break last year. Jorge Soler's two-run triple for the Angels tied it 8-all in the bottom of the eighth.

Texas Tech's Canady throws shutout in WCWS win

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — NiJaree Canady (29-6) pitched a complete-game two-hitter and Texas Tech advanced to its second straight championship series of the Women's College World Series after defeating top-seeded Alabama 2-0 on Monday night in their second semifinal matchup of the day.

The Red Raiders (61-8) will play No. 2 Texas (51-12) on Wednesday at Devon Park in a double-elimination format. The Longhorns won the 2025 national championship after beating Texas Tech in three games. It will be the first championship series rematch in WCWS history — with the previous rematches coming in one-game finals.

Canady's 99th pitch of the game — and 156th pitch of the day — led to an out in right field to become the first pitcher with multiple shutouts at multiple schools (Stanford) in WCWS history.

Jasmyyn Burns sent the first pitch of the

fourth inning over the center-field wall for her 19th home run of the season. It was her second hit of the tournament — both home runs.

Texas Tech took advantage of an error in the seventh to add a run. Lauren Allred singled up the middle and center fielder Kristen White's throw got past the third baseman and Mihyia Davis came home to score. It was White's third error of the season.

Texas 4, Tennessee 0: Teagan Kavan pitched a complete-game two-hitter and the defending champion Longhorns advanced to the championship series, defeating the Volunteers in their second matchup of the day.

Second-seeded Texas (51-12), needing two wins against seventh-seeded Tennessee (49-12), accomplished the feat with a 5-2 win in the first game, then followed with Kavan's dominating win. It was the second straight year the Longhorns eliminated the Lady Vols in the Final Four. Texas will be making its

third consecutive appearance in the final series where it will play Texas Tech.

Longhorns ace Kavan (28-6) struck out 10 batters without a walk. Tennessee had only two baserunners as Texas played errorless ball after committing four errors in the first game.

The Longhorns broke through with three runs in the third inning, taking advantage of two infield singles and a steal of home. Viviana Martinez, who had three hits in the first game, drove in the first run with a chopper down the third base line that barely reached the outfield grass. With Reese Atwood at the plate, Martinez stole second and Kayden Henry stole home when Volunteers second baseman Emma Clarke fell and lost the ball while trying to make the out on Martinez. Atwood then doubled to left center, driving in Martinez.

Katie Stewart hit her second solo home run of the day, making it 4-0 in the fifth inning.