

US-Iran interim deal goes into effect

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump signed an interim deal to end the war with Iran and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, speeding up the timeline for the agreement to go into effect despite blowback from Republicans who said it amounted to a victory for Tehran.

Trump signed the memorandum of understanding at the Palace of Versailles near Paris on Wednesday evening, at the end of a Group of Seven summit. He was flanked by world and business leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron and Blackstone Chief Executive Officer Steve Schwarzman, who applauded as he did so.

“Oil is flowing,” Trump posted on Truth Social on Thursday, emphasizing why he has been so keen to end a war with Iran he started alongside Israel at the end of February. The conflict and Iran’s closure of the critical waterway caused energy prices to soar, heightening the risk of a

global economic crisis, and led to chaos across the Middle East.

Those concerns led Trump to accept an agreement many Iran hawks in the U.S., as well as Israel, say concedes far too much to the Islamic Republic in terms of sanctions relief and potentially unfreezing tens of billions of dollars of funds. Many say it looks no better than the Obama administration’s 2015 nuclear deal that the U.S. leader calls the “worst deal ever.”

“History teaches us giving billions of dollars to theocratic lunatics who want to murder us is not a good idea,” said Sen. Ted Cruz, a Texas Republican who is normally supportive of Trump’s policies.

Some Republican lawmakers were harshly critical, suggesting the war against Iran wasn’t worth it.

“Before the war, the strait was open, Iran was being crushed by sanctions, and 13 service members were still alive,” Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., wrote on social

media.

“Now, 13 Americans are dead, families have paid billions at the pump, sanctions will be lifted, and the bombing has stopped,” Cassidy said. “This is the worst foreign policy blunder in decades.”

Ships carrying stranded oil began making their way out of the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday, while Kuwait said it will start ramping up production, as the peace deal sparked a flurry of activity in the region. Vessels carrying nearly 10 million barrels of oil have either appeared outside the strait or are sailing through, including the first Saudi-owned tankers since the war began more than three months ago.

Iran said commercial vessel traffic at southern ports had returned to normal since Monday, according to the semi-official Iranian Students’ News Agency.

Many shipping and oil executives had previously said they need more clarity, including on

whether the strait is clear of mines and whether they need to seek any kind of permission from Iran before sailing through.

Iran will arrange passage of commercial ships through the strait with “no charge for 60 days only,” according to a copy of the memorandum of understanding published by Iran’s President Masoud Pezeshkian on X on Thursday.

The memorandum extends a U.S.-Iran ceasefire that began in April by 60 days. During that time, the sides will try to agree on restrictions on Tehran’s nuclear program and how to dilute or destroy its stocks of highly enriched uranium. Many nuclear experts say 60 days is too little to negotiate something so complex and technical, and the agreement says the time frame can be extended.

The 2015 nuclear deal, which Trump derided and abandoned during his first term, took about two years to finalize.

Commander says Iran war reinforces Baltic strategy

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

RIGA, Latvia — The recent war in the Middle East is proving core naval principles for the U.S. Navy in Europe and Africa, particularly when it comes to deterring aggression in critical maritime chokepoints such as the Baltic Sea, the commander of U.S. 6th Fleet said this week.

The past several months, which saw Iran attack commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz, have reinforced the importance of key strategies such as naval domination of a water-

way and limiting an adversary’s access to the sea, said Vice Adm. Jeffrey Anderson.

He spoke with Stars and Stripes following a media briefing Wednesday here related to the annual Baltic Operations exercise. Known as BALTOPS, it aims to strengthen NATO’s ability to defend the Baltic Sea and keep allied forces and supplies moving through the region during a crisis.

Anderson, also commander of Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO, said efforts to keep key sea routes open and

maintain chokehold control don’t necessarily require ships.

“We can leverage land-based capabilities and air capabilities to be able to provide some of that chokepoint control and protection of forces that are flowing into and out of these critical maritime regions,” he said.

The Iran war has underscored the importance of harbor protection, coastal defense and mine countermeasures in the Baltic, which carries 15% of the world’s cargo and sees transit of as many as 5,500 ships monthly, he said.

Recent events in the Strait of Hormuz illustrate the risks facing strategic waterways. Since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran in February, ship traffic in the strait came to a near-standstill under threat of Iranian sea mines and missile attacks.

The U.S. has helped coordinate some commercial vessels’ transit through the strait, which typically carries 20% of the world’s daily consumption of petroleum products, though many shipowners and their insurers have remained unconvinced of safe passage.

Hegseth puts European allies on notice

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Thursday announced a new review of the U.S. force posture in Europe while warning that allies who fall short on defense commitments will face consequences.

During a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels, Hegseth said future troop deployments and base locations in Europe could be altered depending on how allies align with Pentagon priorities, including the recent U.S. war against Iran.

"It's a review that some countries will fail and others will pass with flying colors," Hegseth said.

The announcement marks the latest potential shift in the U.S. military presence in Europe, which has undergone significant

change in recent months.

In May, the Defense Department announced that it was withdrawing 5,000 troops from Europe, a decision that resulted in the cancellation of an armored brigade's deployment to Poland.

The U.S. also has informed allies that it will provide fewer forces to NATO in the event of a crisis on the Continent. Such moves are designed to force Europe to take on more responsibility for its own defense.

The future force posture aims to follow through on the Pentagon's "NATO 3.0" concept, Hegseth said.

"It will be designed to ensure that NATO is moving fast and irreversibly toward Europe leading, stepping up to take primary responsibility for the defense of Europe," he said.

The Pentagon analysis also will make sure that base access and overflight rights are "clearly delineated and assured," Hegseth said, adding that "any other country would do the same."

The review could have significant implications for where U.S. forces operate in Europe, where about 80,000 U.S. troops are currently deployed.

How allies responded to Operation Epic Fury, as the Iran war was dubbed, is likely to factor into the force posture analysis.

When the U.S. sought to use bases in Europe for military flights and warship deployments directed against Iran, "too many of our allies said no," Hegseth said.

Others "tried to drown us in arcane legal debates or criticized us publicly for doing what they

aren't prepared or able to do themselves," Hegseth added. "It was shameful."

Those allies "put America's sons and daughters at risk" by denying them predictable base access and overflight rights, which "never should have been in question at all," he said.

Hegseth described the Pentagon's approach to NATO as a return to the alliance's Cold War construct, which featured European armies with larger arsenals built to counter the Soviet threat.

In the post-Cold War era, instead of "tanks and fighters and air defenses, the focus has been on gender equity and climate change and defense austerity," he said.

In recent years, however, NATO allies have significantly increased defense spending.

Finnish lawmakers vote to lift ban on nuclear deployments

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Finland this week took a step toward lifting its ban on the deployment of nuclear weapons on its territory, a move that puts the country in sync with NATO's deterrent mission.

The country's parliament voted Wednesday to lift the ban, advancing the measure to President Alexander Stubb for a decision on approval.

The decision paves the way for Finland to allow nuclear weapons to be positioned in the country should they be required for defense purposes.

"With this proposal, we strengthen Finland's defense and enable the full use of NATO's nuclear deterrent as protection for Finland," Defense Minister Antti Hakkanen said on X ahead of the vote.

Stubb has said that he supports lifting the restriction but that Fin-

land does not intend to host nuclear weapons on its soil in peacetime.

"This is about nuclear deterrence, a deterrent to ensure they would never have to be used," Stubb said in March.

The development marks a sharp turn from just a few years ago, when Finland was militarily unaligned and effectively neutral. But Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 prompted Helsinki to seek NATO membership, which was granted in 2023.

Three NATO allies — the United States, the United Kingdom and France — are nuclear-armed states. The alliance's nuclear deterrence posture relies on forward-deployed U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe.

Under NATO's nuclear-sharing program, allied fighter pilots would deliver tactical nuclear bombs if a conventional conflict turned into an atomic one.

Navy hospital reverses its policy about scheduling

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — U.S. Naval Hospital Naples has backtracked a decision that would have kept Defense Department civilians and retirees from scheduling appointments with their family medicine providers for months.

The addition of temporary staffing assistance from military hospitals in Europe and virtual visit support from the Defense Health Agency will enable the medical facility on Naval Support Activity Naples to forgo the appointment restrictions announced earlier this month, a Facebook post Monday said.

"Effective immediately, the appointment limits announced on June 2 are no longer in effect and you can continue to schedule your appointments exactly as you have in the past," the hospital said in the post.

The extra support will help allay staffing challenges brought on by the departure of employees during the annual permanent change of station season, the announcement said.

The turnabout came the same day hospital officials had said they would begin limiting civilians and retirees to same-day visits subject to appointment availability. That policy was intended to last through at least September.

The change was initially considered necessary to ensure that the hospital could care for active-duty service members and their families during the busy PCS season.

The abrupt restriction alarmed civilians and retirees who rely on the hospital for their medical needs. The limitations were announced June 2, less than two weeks before they were set to take effect.

Emails suggest DHS ignored law to end TPS

Miami Herald

The Department of Homeland Security did not follow the law when it ended temporary protected status for Haiti, according to internal government documents filed as part of a Supreme Court case that could determine the fate of hundreds of thousands of immigrants in the United States.

Under federal law, DHS must consult with “appropriate agencies” to evaluate on-the-ground conditions of a country due for a TPS designation renewal. The agency said last summer in a press release that then-agency Secretary Kristi Noem based the decision to terminate TPS for Haiti on a “U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services review of the conditions in Haiti and in consultation with the Department of State.” The notice about the termination also said DHS had consulted the “appropriate” agencies.

But that legally mandated consultation with the State Department didn’t happen, according to an email exchange between USCIS officials while they evaluated a separate TPS termination for Venezuela.

“Since the statute requires (Noem) to consult with other federal agencies (traditionally the Department of State) and we have not received a recommendation from them, can (Noem) choose anything other than an auto-extension?,” a USCIS official asked on June 13, 2025.

Another official from USCIS replied: “I can share that (Noem) recently elected to terminate Haiti without country conditions from the Department of State.”

Separate emails also shared in the trove of internal documents reveal how USCIS officials first urged for an automatic extension of Haiti’s TPS and

how agency leadership reversed that recommendation.

The development comes as the Supreme Court is weighing a case based on two emergency requests from the Trump administration, asking to end TPS protections for 348,000 Haitians and 6,000 Syrians. Should the justices accept the government’s argument that TPS decisions are not reviewable by judges, it would pave the way to deport hundreds of thousands of people.

The case is significant in Florida, where over a third of all Haitians with TPS — about 145,000 people — lived as of March 2025. It could also have consequences beyond these two nationalities and leave immigrants under other countries’ TPS designations without the ability to challenge TPS terminations through the courts.

On Wednesday, lawyers representing the TPS holders

asked the Supreme Court to dismiss the consolidated case, arguing that the documents reveal that the justices don’t yet have all the facts and that the Haiti termination was preordained and prejudice-fueled.

“It should matter that former DHS Secretary Noem lied,” said Emi MacLean, attorney with the ACLU of Northern California, representing the plaintiffs in a parallel lawsuit. “The Supreme Court should not be complicit. Checks and balances exist for a reason, and the government’s actions here demonstrate exactly why the government must not be granted unfettered discretion.”

Other emails also reveal how the termination of TPS occurred within the Homeland Security bureaucracy. A draft of the Haiti termination was already in the works in late April, prior to a country conditions review.

Fed officials edge closer to rate hikes

Bloomberg News

Federal Reserve Chairman Kevin Warsh vowed to restore price stability following his first policy meeting since taking the helm of the U.S. central bank, after officials left interest rates unchanged and signaled support for rate hikes this year.

“Persistently high prices are a burden for the American people, but the recent past need not be prologue,” Warsh said in his debut press conference as chairman. Officials “are unambiguous and unanimous. This committee will deliver price stability.”

At the same time Warsh played down somewhat the projections from his colleagues showing nine officials foresee at least one quarter-point hike this year, with six anticipating at

least two. Another nine expected no move or a cut.

The new Fed chief said he declined to submit a rate forecast.

The Federal Open Market Committee voted unanimously Wednesday to hold its federal funds rate in a range of 3.5% to 3.75% in its first gathering under Warsh’s leadership.

Treasuries sold off, the dollar rallied and stocks fell after the decision was announced. Traders were pricing in a rate hike by October.

In their post-meeting statement, officials said inflation remained elevated and vowed to deliver price stability.

They continued to characterize growth as “solid.” Officials also described productivity growth and capital investment as strong.

Supreme Court to hear incarcerated veteran’s disability benefits challenge

BY LINDA F. HERSEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court has agreed to hear the case of an incarcerated Army veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder whose disability benefits were significantly reduced because of his lengthy prison term.

The Department of Veterans Affairs decreased Floyd D. Johnson’s disability rating from 80% to 10% because of an existing federal law that imposes a benefits restriction on felons that are serving prison sentences lasting more than 60 days.

But the case before the high court, which is expected to be heard during its 2026-27 term, is not over whether Johnson can keep his full benefits while in

prison.

Johnson, who was honorably discharged in 1985 after three years in the military, is asking the Supreme Court to decide whether constitutional challenges to VA benefit laws can be heard in district court.

Johnson, who is serving 40 years in prison in Florida for a string of state felony convictions, claimed that his constitutional rights were violated under the Fifth Amendment’s due process clause, when the VA lowered his benefits.

Congress has placed limits on VA benefits for incarcerated felons because the government covers basic living and medical expenses during imprisonment, according to the Veterans Benefits Administration.

Georgia GOP won't pursue redistricting during session

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Georgia Republicans pulled back on plans to redraw the state's congressional map during a special legislative session that began Wednesday, the day after primary runoffs set up high-stakes fall races for Senate, governor and other statewide offices.

Republican Gov. Brian Kemp last month called a special session to address the state's congressional boundaries, with an eye on making changes ahead of the 2028 elections.

The move came as several states are reconsidering their House maps after a Supreme Court ruling that limited the use of race in drawing congressional districts.

But Republicans in the

Georgia legislature said that as litigation to the state's prior and current maps remains ongoing, they would not take up redistricting in this month's special session.

"Changes to Georgia's maps should take place only when members of the General Assembly and citizens have been given ample opportunity to gather the facts, provide input, and engage in meaningful discussion," Republican state House leaders wrote in a Wednesday letter to Kemp.

This fall's race to replace Kemp, who is term-limited, will feature wealthy health care executive Rick Jackson, who won the GOP nomination in a runoff Tuesday, and Democrat Keisha Lance Bottoms, the former Atlanta mayor.

Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff, meanwhile, is set to face GOP Rep. Mike Collins in a crucial Senate race.

Mid-decade redistricting has turbocharged this year's fight for control of the House.

Texas, North Carolina, Missouri and California all took steps last year to redraw their maps, while Ohio and Utah will also use new lines after legal challenges or for constitutional reasons.

Several states, including Florida, Tennessee and Louisiana, approved new maps after the Supreme Court issued its *Louisiana v. Callais* ruling in late April.

Additional states, including ones led by Democrats, are likely to reconsider their maps ahead of the 2028 elections.

High court: Drug users don't lose gun rights

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — A unanimous Supreme Court ruled Thursday for gun rights and against drug laws.

In a 9-0 ruling, the justices struck down part of the long-standing federal gun control law that makes it a crime for an "unlawful user" of illegal drugs to possess a gun.

The Trump administration had urged the court to uphold the conviction of a Texas man who was investigated for alleged terrorist ties and admitted to being a regular user of marijuana.

Rejecting that claim, Justice Neil M. Gorsuch, speaking for the court, said the law was far too broad and overly harsh.

"The law automatically bans an individual from possessing a gun from the moment he becomes an unlawful user of any controlled substance until he ceases being one," he wrote. "It doesn't matter what controlled substance an individual uses, in what amounts he does so, or whether his drug use has ever made him a danger to himself or others."

And it can lead to a 15-year prison term, he added. He noted, however, the court was not ruling on "addicts" or people who were under the influence of drugs when they were arrested.

The American Civil Liberties Union welcomed the ruling.

Since 1968, federal law has prohibited gun possession by felons, fugitives and other persons deemed to be dangerous. Included was anyone who is "an unlawful user of or addicted to any controlled substance."

But the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in a Texas case this restriction on guns violated the 2nd Amendment. It said "there is no historical justification for disarming a sober citizen not presently under an impairing influence."

Ukrainian drones disrupt Moscow

Bloomberg News

Russia's capital faced a record air bombardment overnight, with drones reaching the Moscow Oil Refinery, disrupting airport operations and forcing the closure of several major roads in and around the city.

At least 194 drones were downed over Moscow, Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said on Telegram. Some drones reached the refinery, a key supplier of road fuel to the capital and the surrounding areas, Sobyanin said, without elaborating.

Operations were suspended at all four of Moscow's passenger airports, Interfax reported, citing Russia's air transport agency. The largest hub, Sheremetyevo, had to evacuate passengers into shelters and delay multiple flights, according to its Telegram channel. All airports later resumed services.

Moscow's law-enforcement agencies closed traffic at several key highways for security reasons, state-run Tass news service reported.

The assault on the capital is the second so far this week, after a strike Tuesday previously set the refinery ablaze. Ukraine has stepped up drone attacks in an effort to bring the Kremlin to the negotiating table. Russian President Vladimir Putin has also intensified strikes on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities.

"This is a fully justified response to Russian attacks on our cities and communities," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday in a post on X that included footage of the refinery on fire. "It is time the war ended, and Russia must take the necessary steps in diplomacy."

Moscow regional Gov. Andrey Vorobiev said 16 people were in-

jured across the region overnight, based on current information.

The latest assault caused fires at the refinery's storage facility, a combined oil-processing unit and a secondary processing unit, Ukraine's General Staff said on Telegram.

Gazprom Neft PJSC, which owns the plant, didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Air defenses downed 555 Ukrainian drones overnight in 17 Russian regions, the Defense Ministry in Moscow said on Telegram. Russian-occupied Crimea was also attacked.

Ukraine was also attacked overnight. Its Air Defense said it shot down four of seven ballistic missiles fired by Russia and 212 of 239 drones, mostly targeting Kyiv and the cities of Poltava, Chernihiv and Sumy.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Rikers Island detainees earn their degrees

NY NEW YORK — Rikers Island for the most part makes headlines for violence and disorder, so much so that New York City has moved to close the notorious jail complex.

But on Tuesday, there was a palpable shift in the air as dozens of incarcerated students crossed the graduation stage to receive their diploma from the public high school on Rikers, East River Academy — with a surprise commencement address by Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

“If today is proof of anything, it is that you have the power to move your life forward, even when everything feels like it is pulling you backwards,” Mamdani told the graduates. “And no matter what is waiting for you on the other side of your degree, be it college or be it a career, there will always be a place for you in New York City.”

In total, 57 students ages 18 and older graduated from East River Academy, earning high school degrees or GEDs. About 40 of them were in attendance at the Robert N. Davoren Complex chapel.

Judge sets 2027 trial in Key Bridge collapse

MD BALTIMORE — A federal judge on Tuesday scheduled the criminal trial connected to the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse in Baltimore for October 2027. But as attorneys prepare for the 16-month road ahead, questions remain about who exactly will be at the highly anticipated seven-week jury trial.

At the start of a status conference on Tuesday, U.S. District Court Judge James Bredar acknowledged that defendant Radhakrishnan Karthik Nair, a 47-year-old Indian citizen who served as the cargo ship Dali’s technical superintendent, was not present.

The U.S. Department of Justice believes Nair is in India, and prosecutors have said they will use all available tools to bring Nair to the country to face justice.

Nair, Singapore-based Synergy Marine Group and India-based Synergy Maritime face charges including conspiracy, obstruction and false statements in connection with the March 2024 collapse, which killed six men. A criminal indictment unsealed last month alleges the Synergy companies operated the Dali with an unauthorized fuel system that bypassed critical safeguards meant to prevent a total loss of power.

Fourteen witnesses, including 11 Dali crewmembers and three crewmembers on other Synergy-operated ships, have largely stayed in the U.S. since the Dali struck the bridge on March 26, 2024.

The trial for Synergy and Nair is scheduled to begin Oct. 4, 2027, and last through Nov. 19, 2027.

Former state lawmaker’s wife gets plea deal

MI LANSING — Stephanie Chatfield, the wife of former Michigan House Speaker Lee Chatfield who is accused of embezzling political funds, finalized a plea agreement Tuesday with the attorney general’s office.

The deal makes Stephanie Chatfield the third close ally of the ex-political leader to publicly admit to a financial crime and means she’ll avoid a trial that was expected to take place this fall. Meanwhile, 13 felony charges remain pending against her husband, once viewed as a rising star in Republican politics.

Under the new agreement, Stephanie Chatfield pleaded guilty to a single felony count of embezzling less than \$1,000 from a nonprofit organization, according to Attorney General Dana Nessel’s office.

Stephanie Chatfield will serve a term of probation, which will be later determined by the court, and, upon successful completion of probation, the remaining counts against her will be dismissed, according to Nessel’s office.

Prosecutors have alleged that Lee and Stephanie Chatfield repeatedly moved money from the Peninsula Fund, a nonprofit fundraising account the ex-speaker used to raise money from disclosed donors, to make \$152,270 in direct payments on their personal credit card.

Some were legitimate nonprofit expenses, while others weren’t, prosecutors have said.

5 women hurt in acid attack by moped riders

NJ JERSEY CITY — Five women were wounded in New Jersey when two people riding a moped tossed “an acid substance” into the victims’ car on Monday night.

The women were treated in a Jersey City hospital with skin burns that were not believed to be life-threatening, according to city officials.

Investigators believe the attack was a targeted incident tied to an earlier altercation involving a group of people. No further information was provided about the nature of that conflict.

Preliminary information indicates sulfuric acid was thrown on the victims. They were all said to be in stable condition Tuesday afternoon.

Person in custody after cross is burned at park

IL CHICAGO — Chicago police said Tuesday an individual is in custody in connection to a cross found burning in Grant Park last week.

Police officers responded to the downtown park around 2:30 p.m. on June 9, where the wooden cross was burning, according to the Chicago Police Department. Officers extinguished the fire and an investigation has been underway, police say.

Police released an image on June 10 of a man wearing black pants who was observed fleeing the scene. No charges had been filed against the individual as of Tuesday morning, according to police.

On Monday night, NBC 5 reported it had interviewed a man who claimed to be the person captured in the police images and who burned the cross.

The sight of the cross burning sparked criticism and rage from the Chicagoland community and beyond on social media. Both Mayor Brandon Johnson and Gov. JB Pritzker remarked on the act on social media, and the Rev. Michael Pfleger of St. Sabina Church in Auburn Gresham offered a \$10,000 reward to help find the perpetrator.

— From wire reports

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Kane scores twice as England tops Croatia

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Harry Kane has already made the most of another opportunity in this World Cup. Given a second penalty kick, he didn't miss.

The hope now for England and its captain is this is just the start of a long run and another chance to seek a championship after bitter losses ended their last two appearances.

That successful retry on a penalty kick was the first of Kane's first two goals as England won its World Cup opener 4-2 Wednesday over Croatia, the team that knocked the Three Lions out in the 2018 semifinals.

After scoring his goals in the first half, the second a powerful header, Kane was the first person to jump on the back of Jude Bellingham after his tiebreaking goal early in the second half put England ahead for good. Then in the 94th minute, there was Kane in front of his own net on a set play, blocking a close-

range shot by Croatia.

"See the commitment of our captain, our No. 9," coach Thomas Tuchel said. "Complete performance, absolute leader and he's all in. He's all in physically, he's all in mentally. ... He's the full package. He wants it, and he leads by example."

Kane's goals pushed his World Cup total to 10 and matched the English record that Gary Lineker set playing in the 1986 and 1990 tournaments. Kane, who won the Golden Boot in 2018 in Russia by scoring six times, is the first player from England to score multiple goals in three Cup appearances. He has 81 international goals.

"Obviously it's a great milestone to reach, to get 10 goals in a World Cup. ... To reach double figures in this amazing tournament is very special," Kane said. "And it's the first game, I'm feeling good. I said before the game, physically, mentally, the goals I've scored this year (are) at the highest level I've ev-

er had in my career. ... I enjoy being on the pitch when I'm feeling in this form."

Kane didn't score in England's 2-1 semifinal loss to Croatia eight years ago in the only previous World Cup meeting between the teams. When England lost 2-1 to France in the 2022 quarterfinals, Kane missed a penalty late, sending the ball over the crossbar.

This time, the 32-year-old Kane came close to another hat trick — he had one against Panama in 2018.

He had seven shots, three of them on goal. Those included a pair of rapid-fire tries in close shortly after England had retaken in the lead in the second half, and he was almost immediately trying to get to another ball when he collided with a defender and ended up on the ground in front of the net.

Kane's first goal in his 12th World Cup game came after Dominik Livakovic's save on his first penalty try was nullified by

a video review. Both of the Croatian goalkeeper's feet were off the goal line as Kane struck the ball after an initial stutter-step.

"He's a keeper that likes to move early and jump kind of forward early. So I knew there was a high chance that if I did stutter that he might come off the line," Kane said. "I wasn't 100% sure that he was. I was maybe 80% sure he did. But obviously not ideal, I still want to score the penalty."

On the second attempt, Kane went the same way toward the right post while Livakovic lunged in the opposite direction.

Kane matched Lineker's mark when the Bayern Munich striker easily beat Livakovic with header off a corner kick from Declan Rice. Kane was basically alone before moving into position to make the play.

"It was a set piece that we used," he said. "Just kind of block the guys in front a little bit and just give me a bit of space."

Portugal star Ronaldo finishes scoreless in draw vs. Congo

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Cristiano Ronaldo delivered a pretty forgettable performance in the first match of his sixth World Cup.

After Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappé and Erling Haaland all scored in their opening matches, the 41-year-old Ronaldo couldn't find the net Wednesday in Portugal's 1-1 draw with Congo.

With players like Vinícius Júnior, Christian Pulisic, Viktor Gyökeres and Harry Kane also all scoring early in this year's World Cup, Ronaldo being held scoreless stands out even more.

The Portugal great did, however, join Messi as the only players to appear in six World Cups. But a day after the Argentina captain had a hat trick, Ronaldo missed a few chances to become the first player to score in a sixth tournament.

His shots in the 68th and 73rd minutes went wide right, and he didn't look happy after either of them.

Ronaldo didn't speak to reporters after the game but posted about the match on X.

"It wasn't the start we wanted, but this is far from over," he wrote. "Head up and focus on the next game."

Portugal coach Roberto Martínez was asked if he considered taking out Ronaldo on Wednesday.

"It makes no sense to get the best world scorer to be out when you need goals," Martínez said. "The experience of Cristiano in the box is important. The way that he attracts defenders is important."

Congo midfielder Ngal'ayel Mukau, who is 20 years younger than Ronaldo, addressed the challenge of facing one of the greatest to ever play the game.

"We know that Ronaldo isn't the same as before," Mukau said. "So we know that he runs less, less efforts. So yeah, it was up to our defense to stop him, and they did a great job."

Wednesday's game was the 229th of Ronaldo's international career, the most for a man in history. He won the European Championship with Portugal in 2016, but his best finish at the World Cup came in

his first tournament in 2006 when his team reached the semifinals.

Martínez was asked if Ronaldo will start Portugal's upcoming matches against Uzbekistan and Colombia considering his age.

"We treat every player in the same way. We take it step by step," Martínez said. "We'll assess every player. It's not a special issue. We don't treat Cristiano with age ... we treat him how he feels."

Ronaldo did, however, become the oldest outfield player to start a World Cup match, taking the record set four years ago by Canada midfielder Atiba Hutchinson. Cameroon great Roger Milla is the oldest outfield player to appear in a World Cup match, coming on as a substitute at 42 years old during the 1994 World Cup.

This is likely to be the final World Cup for Ronaldo, who won the Champions League five times with Manchester United and Real Madrid and currently plays for Saudi club Al-Nassr.

Tar Heels, Sooners pound way to finals

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Owen Hull had a triple and two doubles among his four hits, Gavin Galaher had four hits and four RBIs and North Carolina rolled past West Virginia 12-7 on Wednesday to advance to the College World Series finals for the first time since 2007.

The Tar Heels (53-12-1) went 3-0 in bracket play and will play for their first national championship in baseball starting Saturday in the best-of-three finals against Oklahoma.

The Mountaineers (47-17) were 2-2 in their first CWS appearance with both losses to North Carolina.

A Tar Heels offense that batted .217 with just four extra-base hits in their first two CWS games went into overdrive against West Virginia. UNC was 8 for 10 with runners in scoring position, had five extra-base hits and amassed its most runs and hits (16) in nine NCAA Tournament games.

“We were joking before the game today, like, ‘Man, we need to have one of those games where

we get 15 hits and score some runs,’” Tar Heels coach Scott Forbes said. “So thankfully that happened.”

Hull was a home run shy of becoming the second player in three days to hit for the cycle. Texas’ Adrian Rodriguez did it Monday against Alabama. Hull had an RBI double in the first inning, a single in the third, RBI double in the fourth and a triple in the sixth.

North Carolina scored twice in the first inning off Chansen Cole (10-2) and Cooper Nicholson’s two-run triple put it up 5-1 in the third. The Tar Heels were ahead 12-1 before West Virginia began whittling into the lead.

UNC starter Folger Boaz labored through a 28-pitch first inning, giving up two singles and a walk, and he didn’t come out for the second. Jackson Rose (5-0) pitched 4½ innings of shutout relief and gave the ball to Matthew Matthijs with a nine-run lead.

The Mountaineers scored five runs on five hits and two walks in the seventh, all with two outs, and pulled within 12-6 when catcher Colin Hynek had a pitch by new

reliever Caden Glauber get past him. Gavin Kelly homered in the eighth, his second of the CWS and 19th of the season, to make it a five-run game.

Forbes said he went into the game prepared to pull out all of the stops to win Wednesday even if it meant sending ace starter Jason DeCaro to the mound in relief.

Oklahoma 11, Georgia 4: Jason Walk and Dasan Harris each hit two home runs and Trey Gambill also went deep to lead the Sooners over the Bulldogs and to the College World Series finals.

Oklahoma (41-22) will meet North Carolina in the best-of-three championship round beginning Saturday night. The Sooners are in the finals for the first time since 2022 and will be playing for a third national title in baseball.

The Sooners’ five homers were a season high and a continuation of the heater they have been on since the second week of May. They have hit 43 of their 91 home runs in the last 16 games, including 26 in 10 NCAA Tournament games. They had 48 in their first 47 games.

Walk and Harris were improbable power sources. Each entered the game with four homers.

Walk sent a wind-aided fly ball 417 feet over the wall in straightaway center field leading off the third inning. In the fourth, Gambill and Harris went deep to make it 4-0 and chase Georgia starter Paul Farley (8-2). Harris and Walk connected again in the eighth to give Oklahoma a six-run lead.

Harris’ five RBIs were his most in 107 career games, and three of his six homers have come in the last four games.

Sooners freshman starter Nick Wesloski (2-1) held Georgia (53-14) to one run in the first five innings but ran into trouble in the sixth and was pulled with two outs and two men on base. An error loaded the bases, and reliever LJ Mercurius walked in two runs. Mercurius earned his fourth save after allowing one run on two hits in 3½ innings.

Georgia had one of the nation’s most potent offenses all season, but struggled at the cavernous Charles Schwab Field.

Golden Knights promote Craig from AHL as coach

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — After having previously hired established head coaches, the Vegas Golden Knights this time stayed within the organization and promoted Ryan Craig on Wednesday from its American Hockey League affiliate in suburban Henderson.

Craig, 44, replaces John Tortorella, who was hired with eight games left in the regular season and led the Golden Knights to the Stanley Cup Final before they lost in six games to Carolina. The club announced Tuesday that Tortorella wouldn’t be returning, creating immediate speculation that Craig would be promoted.

He was the Silver Knights’ coach the past three seasons. Henderson went 39-21-12 this

season and advanced to the second round of the Calder Cup playoffs.

Craig, who will address reporters on Thursday, has been in the Golden Knights organization all nine seasons, including the first six years with the top club. He was behind the bench when Vegas won the Stanley Cup in 2023 under Bruce Cassidy.

“He’s ready to be an NHL head coach,” Golden Knights general manager Kelly McCrimmon said. “That carried the day.”

Craig takes over a team with high expectations, especially coming off a deep playoff run, and in an organization not known for its patience.

He is the fifth coach in the organization’s short history and third

this calendar year. Considering Craig remained in the organization through so much turnover speaks to management’s belief in his abilities.

They could have handed Craig the job when Cassidy was fired, but instead chose the veteran Tortorella.

“Torts, very experienced, very comfortable in his own skin, very much was going to come in and hit the ground running,” McCrimmon said. “I don’t feel it would have been fair to Ryan Craig to start his career as a (NHL) head coach in that way. The other part, Henderson was having a really good year. He was doing a great job as a coach of that team. We felt that the finish of the Henderson season is also really important for

Ryan’s development to coach in the American League playoffs.”

Tortorella guided Vegas from third to first in the Pacific Division and three postseason series victories that included a sweep over Colorado, which had won the Presidents’ Trophy.

The Golden Knights took a 2-1 lead in the final before the Hurricanes closed it out by winning three games in a row.

“He saved our season,” McCrimmon said. “He turned our team around. Our players loved playing for him and it was a tremendous 30 games that he coached for our organization. John wanted to coach our team again this year. He wants to coach. We really wanted to give this opportunity to Ryan Craig.”

McLean dominates Reds as Mets avoid sweep

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Bo Bichette continued his hot streak with three hits, rookie Nolan McLean struck out nine in seven innings and the New York Mets averted being swept with a 9-1 victory over the Cincinnati Reds on Wednesday.

Francisco Alvarez and Juan Soto also had three hits apiece. New York had 15 hits, which is tied for its second-highest output of the season.

Bichette has multiple hits in six straight games and went 8 for 14 in the three-game series. The third baseman is also batting .539 (14 for 26) over his last six games with two homers and eight RBIs.

McLean (4-4) allowed one unearned run and three hits as he went seven innings for the third time in 15 starts.

It was Carlos Mendoza's 205th victory as the Mets' manager. The third-year skipper passed Jerry Manuel and moved into ninth place on the franchise's wins list.

Giants 7-7, Braves 2-5: San Francisco hit three homers in the second inning, including a two-run shot by Luis Arraez, Carson Whisenhunt won a matchup of rookie starting pitchers and the visiting Giants held off Atlanta to sweep a split doubleheader.

Whisenhunt (1-0) allowed two runs on six hits in five-plus innings in his season debut. Braves right-hander JR Ritchie (1-2) gave up five runs in five innings on five hits, including three homers.

San Francisco won the opening game of the doubleheader as left-hander Robbie Ray threw 6⅓ scoreless innings. It was the completion of Tuesday night's game, which was suspended due to rain.

Rafael Devers and Jung Hoo Lee hit back-to-back homers on consecutive pitches from left-hander Dylan Dodd in the fifth. Willy Adames added a homer in the eighth off right-hander

Anthony Molina.

Yankees 10, White Sox 5: Cody Bellinger hit an early homer and finished a triple shy of the cycle, Paul Goldschmidt homered for the third time in four games and surging New York used another big inning to beat visiting Chicago.

After Jalen Brunson and Josh Hart threw out ceremonial first pitches to continue the celebration for the NBA champion Knicks, the Yankees won their fourth straight and for the ninth time in 13 games. New York also equaled its largest lead atop the AL East by moving 3½ games ahead of Tampa Bay.

Bellinger hit a two-run homer in the first off Anthony Kay (6-2), doubled in the third against the left-hander and started a five-run fifth with a single. Bellinger finished with three hits for the fifth time this season.

Marlins 12, Phillies 4: Kyle Stowers homered twice and drove in five runs and visiting Miami avoided a series sweep with a win over Philadelphia.

Owen Cassie led off the second inning with his seventh homer of the season after the Phillies had tied the game at 2. It keyed a four-run second inning that included RBI singles from Liam Hicks and Xavier Edwards.

Sandy Alcantara (7-4) pitched six innings, allowing four runs (two earned). He scattered eight hits, walked one and struck out six, settling in after allowing two runs in each of the first two innings.

Pirates 12, Athletics 4: Ryan O'Hearn homered, doubled and singled to finish with a career-high six RBIs as visiting Pittsburgh romped to a victory over the Athletics.

Marcell Ozuna also went deep for the Pirates, who racked up 16 hits. They scored at least 10 runs for the seventh time this season, matching their 2025 total.

Braxton Ashcraft (6-3) struck out seven in six innings. He allowed two runs, one earned, and four hits.

Royals 6, Nationals 2: Luinder Avila took a shutout into the sixth, and visiting Kansas City hit four solo homers in the first three innings of a victory over Washington.

Carter Jensen led off the game with a home run, and John Rave, Lane Thomas and Michael Massey also went deep as the Royals avoided a three-game sweep. Avila (2-3) allowed a run and three hits with a walk and five strikeouts.

Astros 4, Tigers 2: Jeremy Peña homered and had an RBI single, Peter Lambert (6-4) allowed just one run on two hits in seven innings and host Houston beat Detroit.

Yordan Alvarez extended his on-base streak to 24 games and scored Christian Vazquez on a double for his 55th RBI of the season.

Padres 6, Cardinals 1: Fernando Tatis Jr. and Jackson Merrill each drove in two runs and finished with three hits as visiting San Diego avoided a sweep with a win over St. Louis.

Griffin Canning (1-5) worked 4⅓ innings, allowing four hits and a run in relief. It was his sixth career relief appearance after making eight starts this season. Bradgley Rodriguez started the second bullpen game of the series for the Padres.

Dodgers 5, Rays 4: Freddie Freeman hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the sixth inning after Tampa Bay scored four runs off a banged-up Shohei Ohtani in host Los Angeles' win.

Freeman's 407-foot shot to center off reliever Kevin Kelly (4-3) rescued Ohtani, who trailed 4-2 after giving up five hits and four runs in the fifth.

Diamondbacks 8, Angels 1: Corbin Carroll hit a grand slam, Eduardo Rodriguez earned his 100th career win

and host Arizona beat Los Angeles.

Rodriguez (6-2) scattered six hits and three walks, giving up just one run over his seven innings. The veteran left-hander struck out five, lowered his ERA to 2.45 for the season and became just the ninth Venezuelan-born pitcher to reach 100 wins in the big leagues.

Blue Jays 3, Red Sox 0: Andrés Giménez had two hits, an RBI and three steals, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. drove in two runs and visiting Toronto beat Boston.

Braydon Fisher got the first four outs as Simeon Woods Richardson (1-7), acquired in a cash deal June 3 after a 0-7 start with the Twins, followed with three shutout innings for the victory. Louis Varland struck out the side in the ninth for his 14th save.

Brewers 9, Guardians 4: Christian Yelich and Jackson Chourio homered and host Milwaukee scored seven runs in the first four innings in a victory over Cleveland.

One night after making his major league debut, Milwaukee's Cooper Pratt got his first hit and scored his first run in the second inning. Pratt also singled home a run in the eighth for his first RBI.

Cubs 8, Rockies 6: Dansby Swanson and Pete Crow-Armstrong homered as host Chicago beat Colorado.

Rockies rookie Sterlin Thompson hit his first two major league home runs. Hunter Goodman and Kyle Karros also went deep for Colorado.

Orioles 5, Mariners 3: Kyle Bradish struck out a career-high 12 while pitching one-run ball into the eighth inning as visiting Baltimore beat Seattle.

Gunnar Henderson and Jackson Holliday homered to help the Orioles stop a three-game skid. Bradish (4-7) allowed five hits and two walks in 7⅓ innings, throwing 65 of his 100 pitches for strikes.