

Europe helping Ukraine keep heat, lights on

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — European officials are scrambling to help Ukraine stay warm and keep functioning through the bitter winter months, pledging Friday to send more support that will mitigate the Russian military's efforts to turn off the heat and lights.

Nine months after Russia invaded its neighbor, the Kremlin's forces have zeroed in on Ukraine's power grid and other critical civilian infrastructure in a bid to tighten the screws on Kyiv. Officials estimate that around 50% of Ukraine's energy facilities have been damaged in the recent strikes.

France is sending 100 high-powered generators to Ukraine to help people get through the coming months, French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said Friday.

She said Russia is "weaponizing" winter and plunging Ukraine's civilian population into hardship.

British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, arriving Friday on a visit to Kyiv, said a promised air-defense package, which Britain valued at \$60 million, would help Ukraine defend itself against Russia's bombardments.

The package also includes 24 ambulances and 11 other emergency vehicles, some of them armored.

Russian officials have claimed they are hitting legitimate targets. But the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights on Friday expressed his shock at the depth of civilian suffering caused by the bombing, amid broader allegations of abuses.

"Millions are being plunged into extreme hardship and appalling conditions of life by these strikes," Volker Türk said in a statement Friday. "Taken as a whole, this raises serious problems under international humanitarian law, which requires a concrete and direct military advantage for

each object attacked."

The U.N. humanitarian office also chimed in with its concerns. "Ukraine is turning increasingly cold without power, without steady water supply and without heating," Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the office, said Friday.

He said the global body and its partners were sending hundreds of generators to Ukraine to help the government there in its efforts to keep people warm and maintain essential services, such as health care.

The World Health Organization said it is sending generators to hospitals.

Despite strong wind, rain, sub-zero temperatures at night, icing and broken power lines, more than 70% of Ukraine's electricity requirements were being met on Friday morning, the country's state power grid operator Ukrenenergo said in a statement.

Elsewhere, Ukrainian officials and energy workers continued their push to restore

supplies after a nationwide barrage Wednesday left tens of millions without power and water.

Kyiv's mayor Vitali Klitschko said Friday morning that heating was back on in a third of the capital's households, but that half of its population still lacked electricity.

Writing on Telegram, Klitschko added that authorities hoped to provide all consumers in Kyiv with electricity for a period of three hours on Friday, following a pre-set schedule.

As of Friday morning in Kharkiv, all residents of Ukraine's second-largest city had had their electricity supplies restored, but more than 100,000 in the outlying region continued to see interruptions, the regional governor said.

In the south, authorities in the city of Mykolayiv said that running water was set to start flowing again after supplies were cut off by Russian strikes on Thursday.

Inflation hovers over shoppers on Black Friday

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Shoppers hunted for the best deals at stores and online as retailers offered new Black Friday discounts to entice consumers eager to start buying holiday gifts but weighed down by inflation.

Due to elevated prices for food, rent, gasoline and other essentials, many people were reluctant to spend unless there was a big sale.

Shoppers were being more selective, selecting cheaper options, dipping more into savings and turning to "buy now, pay

later" services that allow payment in installments. Some were also running up their credit cards at a time when the Federal Reserve is hiking rates to cool the U.S. economy.

Sheila Diggs, 55, went to a Walmart in Mount Airy, Maryland early Friday looking for a deal on a coffee maker and to see what else was in the aisles. She said her family is being more cautious about their holiday spending this year. Usually, all the adults in the family would exchange gifts. But this year, everyone is drawing names and

selecting one person, because things cost so much more, she said.

"Everything's going up but your paycheck," said Diggs, who manages medical records at a local hospital.

This year's trends are a contrast from a year ago when consumers were buying early out of fear of not getting what they needed amid supply-network clogs. Stores didn't have to discount much because they were struggling to bring in items.

This year, shoppers are holding out for the best bargains,

said Rob Garf, vice president and general manager of retail at Salesforce, which tracks online sales. He said retailers finally responded this week, introducing more attractive deals online after offering mostly lackluster discounts earlier in the season.

Online discounts rates were 31% on Thanksgiving, up 7% from the previous year, according to Salesforce data. The steepest discounts were in home appliances, general apparel, makeup and luxury handbags. Online sales on the holiday rose 9% over last year.

NATO vows aid 'for as long as it takes'

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — NATO is determined to help Ukraine defend itself against Russia for “as long as it takes” and will help the war-racked country transform its armed forces into a modern army up to Western standards, the alliance’s Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg vowed on Friday.

Speaking to reporters ahead of a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Romania next week, Stoltenberg urged countries that want to, either individ-

ually or in groups, to keep providing air defense systems and other weapons to Ukraine. NATO as an organization does not supply weapons.

“NATO will continue to stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes. We will not back down,” the former Norwegian prime minister said. “Allies are providing unprecedented military support, and I expect foreign ministers will also agree to step up non-lethal support.”

Stoltenberg said that members of the 30-nation security

organization have been delivering fuel, generators, medical supplies, winter equipment and drone jamming devices, but that more will be needed as winter closes in, particularly as Russia attacks Ukraine’s energy infrastructure.

“At our meeting in Bucharest, I will call for more,” he said. “Over the longer term we will help Ukraine transition from Soviet era equipment to modern NATO standards, doctrine and training.”

Stoltenberg said Ukrainian

Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba would join the ministers to discuss his country’s most pressing needs but also what kind of long-term support that NATO can provide. NATO’s top civilian official said the support will help Ukraine move toward joining the alliance one day.

The Nov 29-30 meeting in Bucharest is being held almost 15 years after NATO promised that Ukraine and Georgia would one day become members of the organization, a pledge that deeply angered Russia.

Poland upsets some by rebuffing German offer of air defense system

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Poland’s government says an anti-missile system which Germany offered to send to Poland should instead go to Ukraine, a proposal that is a likely non-starter for Berlin because it would significantly ratchet up NATO involvement in Ukraine.

Poland’s surprising response to Berlin’s offer was welcomed by Ukraine, which is desperate to protect its airspace as barrage upon barrage of Russian missiles have knocked out power across the country.

But Germany’s Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht stressed that use of NATO defense systems outside its territory needs to be agreed by all member states.

“It is important to us that Poland can rely on allies to stand by each other, even in difficult times, and especially Poland in its exposed position,” Lambrecht told reporters in Berlin.

“That’s why we have offered to support air policing and Patriots, but these Patriots are part of an integrated air defense of NATO, that is, they are intended for NATO territory,” the minister said. “If they are used outside the NATO area, then it has to be agreed with NATO and with the allies beforehand.”

In Poland, critics of the populist ruling party accused it of sacrificing the country’s security with a war next door in Ukraine for the sake of a domestic political struggle which exploits anti-German sentiment for short-term gain.

The Rzeczpospolita daily called the new proposal by Poland’s leaders “shocking,” arguing that it would require sending German soldiers operating the system to Ukraine, and “that, in turn, would involve NATO in a direct clash with Russia, something the alliance has been trying to avoid from the beginning.”

Veteran sues over coverage denial for gender transition

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — A U.S. military veteran and his daughter filed a lawsuit on Monday challenging a federal rule they said prevents the daughter from accessing medical coverage because she is transgender.

The veteran and daughter filed their lawsuit against the government anonymously via GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, a Boston-based advocacy group. The group’s court filing said the daughter has been denied treatments recommended by doctors due to a federal statute that dates to 1976 that mandates exclusion of surgical treatments for gender transition in the military’s medical coverage for the dependents of service members.

The statute is an antiquated rule based on outdated views of transgender people, and striking it from the books would be significant for many people seeking to access care, said Ben Klein, an attorney with GLAD.

The defendants in the lawsuit include the U.S. Department of Defense and Defense Secretary

Lloyd Austin. The plaintiffs, who live in Maine, filed their lawsuit in U.S. District Court for the District of Maine. The lawsuit calls for the exclusion rule to be declared unconstitutional and also states that the plaintiffs want damages.

Representatives for the U.S. Department of Defense declined to comment on the lawsuit and deferred to the U.S. Department of Justice, which would represent the agency in the case. Justice Department representatives did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The lawsuit states that the veteran served for 23 years in the Marine Corps and Air Force. His daughter is a 21-year-old transgender woman who has been diagnosed with gender dysphoria and sought gender transition surgery to address the condition.

The suit states that the daughter, who is only referred to as Jane Doe, is entitled to receive health care benefits through the military’s TRICARE health plan.

Omicron still driving COVID surges, worries

Associated Press

A year after omicron began its assault on humanity, the ever-morphing coronavirus mutant drove COVID-19 case counts higher in many places just as Americans gathered for Thanksgiving. It was a prelude to a wave that experts expect to soon wash over the U.S.

Phoenix-area emergency physician Dr. Nicholas Vasquez said his hospital admitted a growing number of chronically ill people and nursing home residents with severe COVID-19 this month.

"It's been quite a while since we needed to have COVID wards," he said. "It's making a clear comeback."

Nationally, new COVID cases averaged around 39,300 a day as of Tuesday — far lower than last winter but a vast undercount because of reduced testing and reporting. About 28,000 people with COVID were hospitalized daily and about 340 died.

Cases and deaths were up from two weeks earlier. Yet a fifth of the U.S. population hasn't been vaccinated, most Americans haven't gotten the latest boosters and many have stopped wearing masks.

Meanwhile, the virus keeps finding ways to avoid defeat.

The omicron variant arrived in the U.S. just after Thanksgiving last year and caused the pandemic's biggest wave of cases. Since then, it has spawned a large extended family of sub-variants, such as those most common in the U.S. now: BQ.1, BQ.1.1 and BA.5. They edged out competitors by getting better at evading immunity from vaccines and previous illness — and sickening millions.

Carey Johnson's family got hit twice. She came down with COVID-19 in January during the first omicron wave, suffering flu-like symptoms and terrible pain that kept her down for a week. Her son Fabian Swain, 16, suffered much milder symptoms in September when the BA.5 variant was dominant.

Fabian recovered quickly, but Johnson had a headache for weeks. Other problems lingered longer.

"I was like, 'I cannot get it together.' I could not get my thoughts together. I couldn't get my energy together" said Johnson, 42, of Germantown, Maryland. "And it went on for months like that."

Some communities are being particularly hard hit right now. Tracking by the Mayo Clinic

shows cases trending up in states such as Florida, Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico.

In Arizona's Navajo County, the average daily case rate is more than double the state average. Dr. James McAuley said 25 to 50 people a day are testing positive for the coronavirus at the Indian Health Service facility where he works. Before, they saw just a few cases daily.

McAuley, clinical director of the Whiteriver Indian Hospital, which serves the White Mountain Apache Tribe, said they are "essentially back to where we were with our last big peak" in February.

COVID-19 is part of a triple threat that also includes flu and the virus known as RSV.

Dr. Vincent Hsu, who oversees infection control for AdventHealth, said the system's pediatric hospital in Orlando is nearly full with kids sickened by these viruses. Dr. Greg Martin, past president of the Society of Critical Care Medicine, sees a similar trend elsewhere.

Pediatric hospitals' emergency departments and urgent care clinics are busier than ever, said Martin, who practices mostly at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta. "This is a record compared to any month,

any week, any day in the past," he said.

Looking to the future, experts see the seeds of a widespread U.S. wave. They point to what's happening internationally — a BA.5 surge in Japan, a combination of variants pushing up cases in South Korea, the start of a new wave in Norway.

Some experts said a U.S. wave could begin during the holidays as people gather indoors. Trevor Bedford, a biologist and genetics expert at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, said it could peak at around 150,000 new cases a day, about what the nation saw in July.

A new wave would be rough, said Dr. Mark Griffiths, medical director of the emergency department of Children's Health Care of Atlanta-Spalding Hospital. "So many systems are on the brink of just being totally overburdened that if we get another COVID surge on top of this, it's going to make some systems crack."

One bright spot? Deaths are likely to be much lower than earlier in the pandemic. About 1 in 2,000 infections lead to death now, compared with about 1 in 200 in the first half of 2020, Bedford said.

Beijing on edge as city adds new quarantine centers

Associated Press

BEIJING — Residents of some parts of China's capital were emptying supermarket shelves and overwhelming delivery apps Friday as the city government ordered faster construction of COVID-19 quarantine centers and field hospitals.

Uncertainty and scattered, unconfirmed reports of lockdowns in at least some Beijing districts have fueled demand for food and other supplies, something not seen in the city for months.

Unusually large numbers of

shoppers in the city's northern suburbs left shelves bare in markets, but customers were relatively few in the center of the city of 21 million, where supplies remained abundant.

Daily cases of COVID-19 across the country are hitting records, with 32,695 reported Friday. Of those, 1,860 were in Beijing, the majority of them asymptomatic.

Improvised quarantine centers and field hospitals hastily thrown up in gymnasiums, exhibition centers and other large, open indoor spaces have be-

come notorious for overcrowding, poor sanitation, scarce food supplies and lights that stay on 24 hours.

Most residents have already been advised not to leave their compounds, some of which are being fenced in. At entrances, workers clad in white hazmat suits stop unauthorized people and make sure residents show a recent negative COVID-19 test result on their cellphone health apps to gain entry.

Several university campuses have been closed off and students in lower grades have been

shifted to online classes.

Meanwhile, some of Beijing's grocery delivery services have reached capacity.

An increase in demand combined with a worker shortage left some customers unable to book same-day delivery slots on Friday for food and supplies from popular online grocery services such as Alibaba's Freshippo and Meituan Maicai.

Online, some Chinese users said some delivery personnel were unable to work because their compounds were locked down.

Midterms free of feared chaos as voting experts look to 2024

Associated Press

Before Election Day, anxiety mounted over potential chaos at the polls.

Election officials warned about poll watchers who had been steeped in conspiracy theories falsely claiming that then-President Donald Trump did not actually lose the 2020 election. Democrats and voting rights groups worried about the effects of new election laws, in some Republican-controlled states, that President Joe Biden decried as “Jim Crow 2.0.” Law enforcement agencies were monitoring possible threats at the polls.

Yet Election Day, and the weeks of early voting before it, went fairly smoothly. There were some reports of unruly poll watchers disrupting voting, but they were scattered. Groups of armed vigilantes began watching over a handful of ballot drop boxes in Arizona until a judge ordered them to stay far away to ensure they would not intimidate voters. And while it might take months to figure out their full impact, GOP-backed voting laws enacted after the 2020 election did not appear to cause major disruptions the way they did during the March primary in Texas.

“The entire ecosystem in a lot of ways has become more resilient in the aftermath of 2020,” said Amber McReynolds, a former Denver elections director who advises a number of voting rights organizations. “There’s been a lot of effort on ensuring things went well.”

Even though some voting experts’ worst fears didn’t materialize, some voters still experienced the types of routine foul-ups that happen on a small scale in every election. Many of those fell disproportionately on Black and Hispanic voters.

Amir Badat of the NAACP Le-

gal Defense Fund said his organization recorded long lines at various polling places from South Carolina to Texas.

There were particular problems in Harris County, Texas, which includes Houston. Shortages of paper ballots and at least one polling location opening late led to long lines and triggered an investigation of the predominantly Democratic county by the state’s Republican authorities.

The investigation is partly a reflection of how certain voting snafus on Election Day are increasingly falling on Republican voters, who have been discouraged from using mailed ballots or using early in-person voting by Trump and his allies. But it’s a very different problem from what Texas had during its March primary.

Then, a controversial new voting law that increased the requirements on mail ballots led to about 13% of all such ballots being rejected, much higher compared with other elections. It was an ominous sign for a wave of new laws, passed after Trump’s loss to Biden and false claims about mail voting, but there have been no problems of that scale reported for the general election.

Texas changed the design of its mail ballots, which solved many of the problems voters had putting identifying information in the proper place. Other states that added regulations on voting didn’t appear to have widespread problems, though voting rights groups and analysts say it will take weeks of combing through data to find out the laws’ impacts.

The Brennan Center for Justice at the NYU School of Law is compiling data to determine whether new voting laws in states such as Georgia contributed to a drop in turnout among

Black and Hispanic voters.

Preliminary figures show turnout was lower this year than in the last midterm election four years ago in Florida, Georgia, Iowa and Texas — four states that passed significant voting restrictions since the 2020 election — although there could be a number of reasons why.

Poll watchers were a significant concern of voting rights groups and election officials heading into Election Day. The representatives of the two major political parties are a key part of any secure election process, credentialed observers who can object to perceived violations of rules.

But this year, groups aligned with conspiracy theorists who challenged Biden’s 2020 victory recruited poll watchers heavily, and some states reported that aggressive volunteers caused disruptions during the primary. But there were fewer issues in November.

In North Carolina, where several counties had reported problems with poll watchers in the May primary, the state elections board reported 21 incidents of misbehavior at the polls in the general election, most during the early, in-person voting period and by members of campaigns rather than poll watchers. The observers were responsible for eight of the incidents.

Voting experts were pleasantly surprised there weren’t more problems with poll watchers, marking the second general election in a row when a feared threat of aggressive Republican observers did not materialize.

“This seems to be an increase over 2020. Is it a small increase? Yes,” said Michael McDonald, a political scientist at the University of Florida. “It’s still a dry run for 2024, and we can’t quite let down our guard.”

Musk plans to relaunch Twitter premium

Associated Press

LONDON — Elon Musk said Friday that Twitter plans to relaunch its premium service that will offer different colored check marks to accounts next week, in a fresh move to revamp the service after a previous attempt backfired.

It’s the latest change to the social media platform that the billionaire Tesla CEO bought last month for \$44 billion, coming a day after Musk said he would grant “amnesty” for suspended accounts and causing yet more uncertainty for users.

Twitter previously suspended the premium service, which under Musk granted blue-check labels to anyone paying \$8 a month, because of a wave of imposter accounts. Originally, the blue check was given to government entities, corporations, celebrities and journalists verified by the platform to prevent impersonation.

In the latest version, companies will get a gold check, governments will get a gray check, and individuals who pay for the service, whether or not they’re celebrities, will get a blue check, Musk said Friday.

“All verified accounts will be manually authenticated before check activates,” he said, adding it was “Painful, but necessary” and promising a “longer explanation” next week. He said the service was “tentatively launching” Dec. 2.

Twitter had put the revamped premium service on hold days after its launch earlier this month after accounts impersonated companies including pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly & Co., Nintendo, Lockheed Martin, and even Musk’s own businesses Tesla and SpaceX, along with various professional sports and political figures.

Taliban treatment of women seen as crime

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — The Taliban treatment of women and girls in Afghanistan may amount to a crime against humanity and should be investigated and prosecuted under international law, a U.N. team of experts said Friday.

The Taliban promptly rejected the allegation.

The statement by the U.N.-appointed experts followed a

confirmation from the Taliban that three women were among 12 people lashed on Wednesday in front of hundreds of spectators at a provincial sports stadium. It signaled the Taliban's resumption of a brutal form of punishment that was a hallmark of their rule in the 1990s.

And on Nov. 11 in Taloqan in northeastern Takhar province, 10 men and nine women were lashed 39 times each in the pres-

ence of elders, scholars and residents at the city's main mosque after Friday prayers. They were accused of adultery, theft and running away from home.

The U.N. experts said the latest Taliban actions against women and girls have deepened existing rights violations — already the “most draconian globally” — and may constitute gender persecution, which is a crime against humanity.

The Taliban overran Afghanistan in August 2021 as American and NATO forces were in the final weeks of their pullout from the country after 20 years of war. Despite initially promising a more moderate rule and allow for women's and minority rights, they have restricted rights and freedoms and widely implemented their harsh interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia.

Indonesia earthquake toll still climbing

Associated Press

CIANJUR, Indonesia — The death toll from an earthquake that struck Indonesia's Java island early this week rose to 310 after rescuers found more bodies under landslides, an official said. At least 24 people remain missing.

In devastated towns in western Java, residents gathered near badly damaged mosques for Friday prayers. Others prayed along with rescuers between the tents at evacuation centers.

Bodies were recovered Friday in two areas of mountainous Cianjur district where landslides triggered by Monday's quake brought tons of mud, rocks and broken trees, said Henri Alfandi, chief of the National Search and Rescue Agency.

More than 1,400 rescuers have been searching through the rubble since the magnitude 5.6 quake, which injured more than 2,000 people.

The head of the National Dis-

aster Management Agency, Suharyanto, who uses one name, said rescuers will continue searching until rebuilding begins.

He said distribution of food and other aid is improving and is reaching more people in 110 evacuation locations.

The disaster agency said the earthquake damaged at least 56,000 houses and displaced at least 36,000 people. Hundreds of public facilities were destroyed, including 363 schools.

Pakistan arrests man in daughter's death in Italy

Associated Press

LAHORE, Pakistan — A Pakistani man suspected of killing his 18-year-old daughter in Italy after she refused an arranged marriage has been arrested in Islamabad, a senior police official said Friday.

Shabbir Abbas was arrested in his village in Punjab province after a tip-off by Italian authorities and local police, the official Anwar Saeed Kingra said. A senior Pakistani police investigator said the woman's father was being sought by Italian police on a charge of killing his daughter.

His daughter, Saman Abbas, was last seen in late April near her family's home in Novellara, near the city of Reggio Emilia. A few days later, a Milan airport video showed her parents, who had reportedly been pressuring her to marry a man she had never met, catching a flight to Pakistan.

Authorities in Italy last week discovered a body in a shallow grave in an abandoned building near the family home.

China supports Cuba's on 'core interests'

Associated Press

BEIJING — Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Cuban counterpart pledged mutual support over their fellow communist states' “core interests” Friday at a meeting further hailing a return to face-to-face diplomacy by Beijing.

In comments to Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez, Xi said China hoped to “strengthen coordination and cooperation in inter-

national and regional affairs” with Cuba. The two will “go hand in hand down the road of building socialism with each's own characteristics,” Xi was quoted as saying in a Chinese government news release.

China generally defines core interests as the defense of its economic and political development aims, along with control over territory it claims, especially self-governing Tai-

wan.

Diaz-Canel's visit is a further sign of how China is trying to jump-start its in-person diplomacy after a virtual shutdown of such exchanges during the pandemic.

Diaz-Canel arrived in China after a visit to Moscow, where he and Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed the “traditional friendship” between their sanctions-hit nations.

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Cousins, Vikings rebound to beat Pats

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The Minnesota Vikings have quickly become a confident and resilient team under rookie coach Kevin O'Connell and his staff, and they sure showed it in this short week.

Kirk Cousins threw for 299 yards and three touchdowns, the last a go-ahead score to Adam Thielen with 9:34 left to push Minnesota past the New England Patriots in a 33-26 victory Thursday night.

Justin Jefferson had 139 receiving yards and one of the touchdown passes from Cousins, who delivered the clutch performance against a formidable defense the Vikings (9-2) needed to bounce back from a blowout loss four days before.

They rebounded multiple times within the game, too. After an overthrow by Cousins was intercepted by Jonathan Jones and returned 55 yards to set up a field goal in the first quarter, the Vikings scored on five straight possessions excluding a kneel-down to end the first half.

"Kevin has empowered me so much. This team has empowered me so much," said Cousins, who went 30 for 37. "At times, it al-

most brings me to tears the way these guys support me."

Mac Jones passed for a career-high 382 yards and two scores to snap a lagging offense to life for the Patriots (6-5), but they ran out of steam down the stretch. Their fourth quarter included two three-and-out punts, a turnover on downs at the Minnesota 39 and a brief desperation last drive.

Jones found Hunter Henry for a wide-open 37-yard touchdown pass to start the second half for a 23-16 lead. Kene Nwangwu scored on a 97-yard kickoff return to strike right back for the Vikings.

Jones — who has completed more than 77% of his passes over the last two games — appeared to hit Henry for another score on the next possession with a twisting catch at the goal line that was ruled a touchdown on the field. The replay reversal to an incomplete pass forced the Patriots to settle for Nick Folk's fourth field goal of the game.

"My hand was under it even when it hit the ground," Henry said.

Another vital call went the Vikings way a few minutes later when Pierre Strong Jr. was called for running into punter Ryan

Wright. With a fresh set of downs, Cousins and the Vikings cruised up the field for the go-ahead touchdown.

"We definitely had to come in and show people that last week, it just wasn't our week," Jefferson said.

O'Connell also got the bonus of a win over Bill Belichick, who drafted him with the Patriots in 2008.

"This one means a whole heck of a lot, just because I have so much respect for that organization and coach Belichick," O'Connell said.

The Patriots allowed just three points in each of their last two games and brought the NFL sack leader Matt Judon to the stadium where the Vikings were decimated by Dallas on Sunday while Cousins took a career-high seven sacks.

With standout left tackle Christian Darriusaw sidelined by a concussion, the Vikings gave backup Blake Brandel plenty of extra help and put Cousins in far more favorable situations with shorter drops and quicker throws. The Vikings had 231 yards in the first half, more than the Patriots allowed in the previous two games combined.

Lamb sets holiday table as Cowboys beat Giants

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — CeeDee Lamb could only smile when officials upheld an out-of-bounds call on what the Dallas receiver hoped would be a touchdown on his second one-handed catch of the game.

He had to settle for setting up three TDs instead.

Lamb put the Cowboys in position for one of Dak Prescott's two scoring passes to Dalton Schultz and Ezekiel Elliott's TD run in a 28-20 victory over the New York Giants on Thanksgiving Day.

The toe-tapping TD Lamb thought he set up for himself instead became rookie Peyton Hendershot running for the 2-yard score, then directing all three of his fellow tight ends into a giant Salvation Army red kettle for a Whac-A-Mole celebration with Dallas an extra point away from a 28-13 lead.

"I definitely thought the CeeDee catch was a touchdown," Prescott said after his 10th consecutive victory over the Giants (7-4). "I went to the sideline, dropped my helmet and everything.

"The Whac-A-Mole was great. The guys

told me about it early in the week. They were worried about getting fined or getting a penalty. We said, 'Make sure you're up two touchdowns. We got a couple of guys that can help with the fine. So, go for it.'"

The victory ended a three-game Thanksgiving losing streak for the Cowboys (8-3), who moved a game ahead of the Giants in the NFC East while sweeping the season series. Philadelphia (9-1) leads the division.

Saquon Barkley was held to 39 yards rushing with a 1-yard TD behind a makeshift offensive line missing three starters because of injury in New York's third loss in the past four games.

Dallas, the NFL leader in sacks coming in, dropped Daniel Jones three times while limiting him to 14 yards rushing after he ran for first downs seven times in the first meeting, a 23-16 Dallas win.

Jones' TD pass to Richie James in the final seconds was too late for the Giants to take advantage of a 2-0 takeaway edge in the second Thanksgiving meeting out of 122 overall in the storied rivalry.

"It's a divisional game and we didn't play

our best. That's always disappointing," Jones said. "We've got a really good opportunity with big games down the stretch. We've put ourselves in a good position. We're still confident."

The Giants thought they had the game's first touchdown on Jones' pass Isaiah Hodgins, but Tyre Phillips, playing out of position at right tackle, was flagged as an ineligible receiver downfield.

New York coach Brian Daboll screamed in disagreement to one of the officials, and the Giants ended up settling for a field goal.

"You'll have to ask the officials," Daboll said when asked about the negated TD.

Prescott's TD tosses to Schultz came about five minutes apart in the third quarter, turning a 13-7 deficit into a 21-13 lead. The first was a 15-yarder on third-and-goal.

The Dallas quarterback's winning streak against the Giants started after he lost to them twice when the Cowboys went 13-3 his rookie year in 2016.

Lamb, who finished with six catches for 106 yards, had a 25-yard grab over the middle before Elliott's 6-yard scoring run on the first play of the second quarter.

Bills beat Lions for 2nd win in 5 days

Associated Press

DETROIT — The Buffalo Bills crashed Detroit's Thanksgiving party, making themselves at home for their second victory in five days at Ford Field.

Tyler Bass made a tiebreaking 45-yard field goal with 2 seconds left after missing an extra point late in the fourth quarter, lifting Buffalo to a 28-25 win over Detroit on Thursday.

"It was very *deja vu-ish*," said Josh Allen, who set up the game-winning kick by starting the drive with a 36-yard pass to Stefon Diggs and running twice for 12 yards. Allen led the Bills with 78 rushing yards.

The Bills were back in the Motor City after the NFL moved their previous home game

against Cleveland because a winter storm dumped several feet of snow in western New York.

Buffalo became the third NFL team to play two games in five or fewer days on the road in the same stadium, and the first to win both.

And the Bills equaled the number of wins Detroit has this season at its indoor stadium.

Buffalo (8-3) has won two straight — after losing two in a row — to move a half-game ahead of Miami in the AFC East.

After Bass made the game-winning kick, Allen and Diggs embraced on the sideline.

"Let's get back to having fun again," Diggs recalled telling Allen after making eight catch-

es for 77 yards and a score. "We got away from that a little bit."

Allen threw a go-ahead, 5-yard touchdown pass to Diggs with 2:40 left, but Bass missed the extra point to make it 25-22 after the kicker matched his and the franchise record with six field goals in an eight-point win over the Browns on Sunday.

Allen had a passing and rushing touchdown in the first half, finishing 24 of 42 for 253 yards to more than make up for throwing his 11th interception of the season.

He has accounted for 162 touchdowns, trailing only Hall of Famer Dan Marino's total of 171 for the most by an NFL player in his first five seasons.

The Lions converted fourth-and-1 from midfield with

Amon-Ra St. Brown's 7-yard end-around to set up Michael Badgley's game-tying, 51-yard field goal with 23 seconds to go.

Badgley missed a 29-yard field goal late in the third and Jared Goff took a sack for a safety in the same quarter and those mistakes proved to be costly.

Detroit (4-7) missed an opportunity to win four straight games for the first time since 2016 and lost a franchise-record sixth straight game on Thanksgiving.

"I told them this one should sting," coach Dan Campbell said. "We had a chance to win and we didn't make it, but I don't think this was a step backward. I'm frustrated, but we're getting better."

Edey's double-double powers No. 24 Purdue past W.Va.

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Zach Edey had 24 points and 12 rebounds to lead No. 24 Purdue to an 80-68 victory over West Virginia on Thursday night in the opening round of the Phil Knight Legacy tournament.

Mason Gillis added 14 points for the Boilermakers (4-0), and Brandon Newman came off the bench to score eight points.

Erik Stevenson scored 17 points as the Mountaineers (3-1) lost for the first time this season. Joe Toussaint added 16 points off the bench.

The Boilermakers took a 43-32 lead into halftime. Edey led the way with 12 first-half points.

"I thought he had an average game," Purdue head coach Matt Painter said of Edey. "He's a really good player. One of the best players in the country. When you get 24 and 12 and you had an 'average' game, that's pretty cool."

The Mountaineers cut into

the Boilermakers' lead with a 9-0 run late into the second half, closing within four points before Braden Smith knocked down a 3-pointer with five minutes left to give Purdue a seven-point edge. That was the closest West Virginia got.

Stevenson scored six straight points to help West Virginia keep pace early in the second half, but exited the game at the 13-minute mark with an apparent leg injury. He checked back in with four minutes remaining.

"We were 4-0 because we were better," West Virginia head coach Bob Huggins said. "We still didn't execute. We turned the ball over at a very alarming rate and we refused to rebound it."

Purdue outrebounded West Virginia 34-32 and shot 47.1% from 3-point range (8 for 17).

West Virginia played solid defense, forcing 18 turnovers, but couldn't get its shots to fall, going 5 for-22 (22.7%) from beyond the arc.

No. 3 Kansas survives OT scare from Wisconsin 69-68

Associated Press

PARADISE ISLAND, Bahamas — Kansas' Bobby Pettiford Jr. stood all the way out near midcourt, almost on the Battle 4 Atlantis logo, when he saw his teammate launch a shot for the lead with only a few seconds left in overtime.

"I mean, I normally don't crash but that's the one time I get to crash," Pettiford said.

He sprinted all the way under the basket just in time to see a loose rebound pop to him. Pettiford then made a twisting reverse layup with 0.2 seconds left to give No. 3 Kansas a 69-68 win against Wisconsin on Thursday in a tournament semifinal game.

Pettiford's layup marked his only points of the game, capping a thriller that saw Wisconsin rally from 15 down early in the second half behind a strong performance from Tyler Wahl.

Trailing 68-67, Kansas' final play appeared stuck when Jalen

Wilson had to kick out a pass to Zach Clemence beyond the 3-point arc with about 5 seconds left. Clemence launched the long 3 that banged off the basket, but Wilson kept the play alive by tipping the ball enough to keep Wahl from snagging the rebound.

The ball went right to Pettiford.

"I had kind of a good angle but I mean, kind of a little bit of luck and skill at the same time," he said. "So I just kind of hoped it went in."

Pettiford landed on the floor as he watched the ball go through the net, then extended his fists in front of him and yelled as he started to sit up. Wisconsin's Max Klesmit crouched down into a squat, in disbelief.

By the time Pettiford had gotten on his feet, he had a big smile while his teammates began to hug him near the baseline corner to celebrate.

Ronaldo makes history as Portugal beats Ghana

Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — Cristiano Ronaldo closed his eyes, took in a deep breath and then made World Cup history.

The Portugal striker became the first male player to score at five World Cups with his 65th-minute penalty in a 3-2 win over Ghana on Thursday.

Days after his contract was terminated at Manchester United following a tell-all interview, he let his soccer do the talking at the start of likely his final World Cup.

"This was a beautiful moment," Ronaldo said. "The world record, the only player to score in five World Cups, makes me very proud."

Wheeling away after the ball

struck the back of the net to give Portugal a 1-0 lead, a smiling Ronaldo performed his usual leap and swivel in the air — the crowd roared his trademark "SI-UUU" as he did the pirouette — before getting mobbed by teammates.

He has now scored in every World Cup since his first in 2006, when a penalty against Iran started his run of goals in the tournament that's now up to eight in 18 matches. He has a men's record 118 international goals.

"I think Cristiano is a phenomenon, a legend," Portugal coach Fernando Santos said. "In 50 years, we will continue to talk about him."

His latest scoring record

adds to the luster of a resume that should ensure Ronaldo receives plenty of offers from new clubs after splitting with United on Tuesday. That came after he gave an unauthorized interview to Piers Morgan criticizing the manager, owners and his teammates at the English club.

His fraught buildup to the tournament didn't appear to affect Ronaldo against Ghana, even though he wasted two clear-cut chances in the first half.

"It was a week that finished this chapter (with United)," Ronaldo said. "It is closed and now I want to start with the good foot forward. We started, we won, I want to help my team and all

the rest does not matter."

Ronaldo ended the match with his head in his hands in pure relief after Ghana almost snatched a draw in the ninth minute of stoppage time thanks to a piece of ingenuity.

In the last action of the game, Ghana striker Inaki Williams hid behind Diogo Costa as the Portugal goalkeeper rolled the ball on the ground and prepared to clear it. Williams dispossessed Costa and, despite slipping, managed to poke the ball toward goal.

Portugal defender Danilo raced back and cleared the ball away from near the line as Ronaldo, who was sitting in the dugout after being substituted, watched in disbelief.

With Neymar hurt, Richarlison scores for Brazil

Associated Press

LUSAIL, Qatar — With Neymar limping off the field with an ankle injury, Richarlison came through for the "Seleção."

A spectacular acrobatic kick followed an easy tap-in from close range as Richarlison scored both goals in Brazil's 2-0 victory over Serbia on Thursday at the World Cup.

After the match, the Tottenham striker learned of the extent of Neymar's injury.

"The most important thing for us it to have him at 100% for the next match," said Richarlison, whose first goal came after a buildup started by Neymar. "When I get to the hotel I'm going to go and see how he is doing."

Brazil team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar said Neymar sprained his right ankle. He declined to speculate on whether he would be available to play in the team's next match against Switzerland on Monday.

"We put ice on it while he was on the bench and then in physiotherapy," Lasmar said.

"There is no test scheduled for now but we will schedule it if needed. He will be under observation. We will know more tomorrow."

Neymar was also injured at the 2014 World Cup. Playing at home in Brazil, his tournament ended with a back injury in the quarterfinals against Colombia when he had to be taken off the field on a stretcher. Brazil ended up losing to Germany 7-1 in the semifinals.

Neymar was fouled nine times in the match against Serbia, four more than any other player so far at this year's World Cup. But while taking care of Neymar, the opposing defense couldn't stop Richarlison.

He had his back to the goal when he used one touch to get the ball up in the air near the penalty spot, then spun around and leapt off the ground before knocking the ball into the net with his right foot in the 73rd minute.

"My childhood dream has come true," said Richarlison, who is playing in his first World

Cup. "We knew it was going to be difficult to get past them. I'm used to playing against defensive teams like this in England. I wanted to take advantage of the opportunities that I had and I did."

Brazil had struggled to get past the Serbian defense until Richarlison scored from close range in the 62nd. Vinícius Júnior assisted on both goals.

Neymar, seeking his first major title with Brazil, stayed at 75 goals for the national team, two shy of Pelé's scoring record.

He was tackled hard a few times and sprained his right ankle in the second half. He was crying on the bench after being substituted in the 79th and was limping as he left the stadium.

Brazil coach Tite started with an attack-minded squad that included four forwards — Neymar, Vinícius Júnior, Raphinha and Richarlison. Attacking midfielder Lucas Paquetá played alongside Casemiro, the lone defensive midfielder.

But Serbia had several

players back and was able to keep Brazil from creating many significant opportunities. Neymar tried to control the pace but struggled to get free. He, Vinícius Júnior and Raphinha all squandered chances early on.

Brazil's best chance before Richarlison's opening goal had been a low long-range shot by Alex Sandro that hit the post in the 60th. Neymar had his best opportunities with a free kick in the 50th and a shot from near the penalty spot in the 55th.

Serbia had its own injury issues for the match.

"We have three key players who are injured — it's too much for us," Serbia coach Dragan Stojkovic said. "We are not Brazil with 200 million people. We are a very small country."

The 30-year-old Neymar arrived to his third World Cup as Brazil's main attraction. He helped the "Seleção" win the 2013 Confederations Cup and its first Olympic gold medal at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, but has yet to win a major title with the national team.