

N. Korea fires missile, artillery shells

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea fired a ballistic missile and hundreds of artillery shells toward the sea Friday and flew warplanes near the tense border with South Korea, further raising animosities triggered by the North's recent barrage of weapons tests.

The North Korean moves suggest it is reviving an old playbook of stoking fears of war with provocative weapons tests before it seeks to win greater concessions from its rivals.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement the short-range missile lifted off from the North's capital region at 1:49 a.m. Friday and flew toward its eastern waters.

It was North Korea's 15th missile launch since it resumed testing activities Sept. 25. North Korea said Monday its recent missile tests were simulations of nuclear strikes on South Korean and U.S. targets in response to their "dangerous" military

exercises involving a U.S. aircraft carrier.

Soon after the latest missile test, North Korea fired 130 rounds of shells off its west coast and 40 rounds off its east coast. The shells fell inside maritime buffer zones the two Koreas established under a 2018 inter-Korean agreement on reducing tensions, South Korea's military said.

On Friday afternoon, South Korea's military said North Korea fired 90 additional shells off its east coast. It said it also spotted about 300 other North Korean artillery launches from two separate western coastal areas. In both cases, the North Korean shells were believed to have landed in the buffer zones again, according to South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Observers said it was North Korea's third and most direct violation of the 2018 agreement, which created buffer zones and no-fly areas along their land and sea boundaries to prevent accidental clashes. South Korea's Defense Ministry said it earlier sent North Korea a message asking

it not to violate the agreement again.

North Korea separately flew warplanes, presumably 10 aircraft, near the rivals' border late Thursday and early Friday, prompting South Korea to scramble fighter jets. There were no reports of clashes between the two countries. It was reportedly the first time that North Korean military aircraft have flown that close to the border since 2017.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said North Korea's provocations are becoming "indiscriminate" but that his country has massive retaliation capabilities that can deter actual North Korean assaults to some extent.

"The decision to attack can't be made without a willingness to risk a brutal outcome," Yoon told reporters. "The massive punishment and retaliation strategy, which is the final step of our three-axis strategy, would be a considerable psychological and social deterrence (for the North)."

Russia and NATO are both holding nuclear drills

Bloomberg News

Moscow and NATO are both proceeding with nuclear exercises, even as tensions escalate over Russian President Vladimir Putin's threats to use "all means available" — including atomic weapons — to defend land he claims to be Russian.

The drills come as Russia steps up its missile attacks on Ukraine, nearly eight months into its invasion and as its troops struggle to make headway on the ground. Putin has recently moved to annex parts of Ukraine, and is mobilizing as many as 300,000 Russian reservists.

The difficulties facing Russia's military in Ukraine have raised concerns that Putin could yet resort to some sort of nuclear strike, although U.S. and European officials say they have detected no change in Moscow's nuclear posture or any unusual movement of its atomic stocks.

The Russian defense ministry said in a statement Thursday that it conducted exer-

cises involving an unspecified number of Yars mobile ground-based missile systems, with troops testing how to hide them from aerial reconnaissance systems and protect them from saboteurs on the ground.

More than 3,000 troops and about 300 vehicles took part, according to the statement. It was unclear if those drills would continue into Friday or beyond.

Moscow has not yet stated if it plans to conduct a Grom strategic nuclear exercise, which traditionally takes place in October and generally involves submarines, planes and missiles.

Russia did not hold the drills in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, although Grom exercises were held in February of this year, shortly before it invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko watched those strategic tests with Putin from a monitoring center at the Kremlin.

Asked about the potential for another Russian nuclear exercise soon, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg replied, "What I can say is that this exercise, the Russian exercise is an annual exercise, an exercise where they test their nuclear forces. We will monitor that as we always do."

Meanwhile, around 14 members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will take part in "Steadfast Noon" starting Monday and located in the western part of Europe, more than 621 miles from Russia's border, according to a NATO official.

The exercise, which runs for two weeks, will test a mix of more than 50 fighter, escort and surveillance jets as well as tankers needed for a nuclear mission, but will not use any live bombs.

The drills will involve flights in the northeast of Belgium to test procedures related to the dropping of nuclear bombs, Belgian broadcaster VRT NWS reported, citing a person it did not identify.

Putin: Reservist call-up will end in 2 weeks

Associated Press

KYIV, UKRAINE — Russian President Vladimir Putin said Friday he expects a mobilization of army reservists he ordered to bolster his country's troops in Ukraine to be completed in two weeks, a milestone that would allow him to end the unpopular call-up as the Kremlin tries to counter Ukrainian gains on the battlefield.

After attending a summit in Kazakhstan of regional leaders from Asia and eastern Europe, Putin told reporters he does not regret starting the conflict with Russia's neighbor and "did not set out to destroy Ukraine" when he sent troops into the country nearly eight months ago.

"What is happening today is unpleasant, to put it mildly," he said. "But we would have had all this a little later, only under worse conditions for us, that's all. So my actions are correct and timely."

In his comments on the army mobilization, Putin said the call-up he ordered last month had registered 222,000 of the 300,00 reservists the Russian Defense Ministry set

as an initial goal. A total of 33,000 of them are already in military units, and 16,000 are involved in combat, he said.

The call-up, announced by Putin as his forces lost ground to a Ukrainian counteroffensive that inflicted a stunning blow to Moscow's military prestige, aroused public discontent in Russia, where almost all men under the age of 65 are registered as reservists.

Reports have surfaced since then of recruits getting deployed to the front lines in Ukraine with little training and inadequate equipment. Several mobilized reservists were reported to have died in combat in Ukraine this week, just days after they were drafted.

The war's momentum has shifted toward Ukraine as its military pursues counteroffensives in the invaded country's east and south. The Kherson region's Moscow-installed leader asked the Kremlin on Thursday to organize an evacuation from four cities, citing incessant shelling by Ukrainian forces.

Russia promised free accommodation to Kherson residents who want to evacuate to Russia, a sign that Ukrainian military gains along the war's southern front were worrying the Kremlin.

Vladimir Saldo, the head of the Moscow-appointed regional administration, said a decision was made to evacuate Kherson residents to the Russian regions of Rostov, Krasnodar and Stavropol, as well as to the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

"We, residents of the Kherson region, of course know that Russia doesn't abandon their own, and Russia always offers a hand," Saldo said.

Russia has characterized the movement of Ukrainians to Russia or Russian-controlled territory as voluntary, but in many cases those are the only evacuation routes residents of occupied areas can or are allowed to take.

Reports have surfaced that some Ukrainians were forcibly deported to "filtration camps" with harsh conditions.

Russia strikes intended to show force, reveal weakness

The Washington Post

On Monday, Russia fired 84 missiles, many at Ukrainian civilian infrastructure targets, causing power outages in many cities. On Tuesday, Russia launched another 28 cruise missiles. And on Thursday, the Ukrainian Armed Forces General Staff said Russia had hit more than 40 settlements since the day before. In all, more than three dozen people were killed.

But no matter how many times Russia fires at Ukraine, pro-war Russian nationalists want more, even though targeting civilian infrastructure is potentially a war crime.

"It has to be done constantly, not just once but for two to five weeks to totally disable all their infrastructure, all thermal power stations, all heating and power stations, all power plants, all traction substations, all power lines, all railway hubs," said

Bogdan Bezpalko, a member of the Kremlin's Council on Interethnic Relations.

"Then, Ukraine will descend into cold and darkness," Bezpalko said on state television. "They won't be able to bring in ammunition and fuel and then the Ukrainian army will turn into a crowd of armed men with chunks of iron."

But the hawks, who are demanding publicly on TV broadcasts and on Telegram to know why Russia does not hit more high-value targets, won't like the answer: The Russian military appears to lack sufficient accurate missiles to sustain airstrikes at Monday's tempo, according to Western military analysts.

"They are low on precision guided missiles," said Konrad Muzyka, founder of Gdansk, Poland-based Rochan Consulting said, offering his assessment of

Russia's sporadic air attacks. "That is essentially the only explanation that I have."

Even as NATO allies on Thursday said they would rush additional air defenses to Ukraine, the experts said the reason Russia had yet to knock out electricity and water service across the country was simple: it can't.

Since May, Russia's use of precision guided missiles (PGMs) has declined sharply, with analysts suggesting then that Russian stocks of such missiles may be low.

Tuesday's attacks mainly used air-launched cruise missiles, which are slower than Iskander guided missiles and easier for Ukraine to shoot down, according to Muzyka.

"If Russia had a limitless supply of PGMs, I think that they would still strike civilian targets, because that's what the

Russian way of warfare is," Muzyka said.

He said analysts did not have confirmed information about Russian missile stocks or production levels, and judgments were based on the decline in usage of PGMs and Moscow's greater reliance on less accurate missiles.

But a clue lies in Russia's failure to destroy the kinds of targets that Ukraine is able to hit using U.S.-supplied HIMARS artillery.

"If we take a look at what HIMARS has done to Russian supply routes, and essentially their ability to sustain war, they've done massive damage to Russia's posture in this war," Muzyka said. "So technically, you know, if the Russians had access to a large stock of PGMS, they could probably inflict a similar damage to Ukrainian armed forces, but they haven't."

Panel subpoenas Trump, reveals unseen footage

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House Jan. 6 committee voted unanimously to subpoena former President Donald Trump, demanding his personal testimony as it unveiled startling new video and described his multi-part plan to overturn his 2020 election loss, which led to his supporters' fierce assault on the U.S. Capitol.

With alarming messages from the U.S. Secret Service warning of violence and vivid new video of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other congressional leaders pleading for help, the panel on Thursday showed the raw desperation at the Capitol. Using language frequently seen in criminal indictments, the panel said Trump had acted in a "premeditated" way before Jan. 6, 2021, despite countless aides and officials telling him he had lost.

Trump is almost certain to fight the subpoena and decline to testify. On his social media outlet he blasted members for not asking him earlier — though he didn't say he would have complied — and called the panel "a total BUST."

"We must seek the testimony under oath of January 6's central player," said Republican Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, the com-

mittee's vice chair, ahead of the vote.

In the committee's 10th public session, just weeks before the congressional midterm elections, the panel summed up Trump's "staggering betrayal" of his oath of office, as Chairman Bennie Thompson put it, describing the then-president's unprecedented attempt to stop Congress from certifying Joe Biden's victory.

In one of its most riveting exhibits, the panel showed previously unseen footage of congressional leaders phoning for help during the assault as Trump refused to call off the mob.

Pelosi can be seen on a call with the governor of neighboring Virginia, explaining as she shelters with Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer and others that the governor of Maryland has also been contacted. Later, the video shows Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell and other GOP leaders as the group asks the Defense Department for help.

The footage also portrays Vice President Mike Pence — not Trump — stepping in to help calm the violence, telling Pelosi and the others he has spoken with Capitol Police, as Congress plans to resume its session that night to certify Biden's election.

Biden expresses confidence over his son's charges

The Washington Post

President Joe Biden, in his first public comments about possible federal tax and gun charges against his son, said he had "great confidence" in Hunter Biden and he was "on a straight and narrow" after his struggles with substance abuse.

Biden made the comments during an interview on CNN that aired Tuesday night. He was reacting to reporting in The Washington Post this month that said federal agents believe they have sufficient evidence to charge the president's son with tax crimes and making a false statement about substance abuse when he applied to purchase a gun.

"I have great confidence in my son. I love him. He's on a straight and narrow, and he has been for a couple years now," Biden said in the interview with Jake Tapper.

The investigation, which began in 2018, has been a talking point for former President Donald Trump and his Republican allies during the 2020 presidential election.

Initially, the investigation centered on the younger Biden's finances related to overseas business ties and consulting work. Over time the investigation grew and included looking at whether he reported all of his income, and whether he lied on a gun purchase paperwork in 2018 about substance use.

"I'm proud of my son," the president. "He got hooked on, like many families have had happened, hooked on drugs. He's overcome that." The president said his son has put his troubles behind him.

"He's established a new life," the president said, before expressing confidence that Hunter Biden has been truthful and forthcoming about his behavior. "I'm confident that he is, what he says and does are consistent with what happens."

On whether his son lied about using drugs when he applied to purchase a gun, the president said Hunter was unaware of any wrongdoing. "He came along and said, by the way this thing about a gun; I didn't know anything about it," the president said. He added: "You get asked the question are you on drugs or use drugs. He said no. And he wrote about saying no in his book," referring to his son's memoir, published last year.

Supreme Court rejects Trump plea to step into case on Mar-a-Lago

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Thursday rejected former President Donald Trump's plea to step into the legal fight over the FBI search of his Florida estate.

The justices did not otherwise comment in turning away Trump's emergency appeal.

Trump had pressed the court on an issue relating to classified documents seized in the search authorized by a federal judge of Mar-a-Lago.

The Trump team was asking the justices to overturn a lower court ruling and permit an independent arbiter, or special master, to review the roughly 100 documents with classified markings that were taken in the Aug. 8 search of Mar-a-Lago.

The move Thursday appears to greatly reduce the potential impact of the special master process to the ongoing Justice Department criminal investigation into the classified documents.

A federal appeals court had already restored the department's access to the classified documents, which had been investigators' primary goal. And the Supreme Court's decision to stay out of the fray ensures that the special master will not have access to those same records as the FBI and Justice Department evaluate if criminal charges are merited.

A three-judge panel from the Atlanta-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit last month limited the special master's review to the much larger tranche of non-classified documents.

Retail sales flat in September

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The pace of sales at U.S. retailers was unchanged in September from August as rising prices for rent and food chipped away at money available for other things.

Retail sales were flat last month, down from a revised 0.4% growth in August, the Commerce Department reported Friday. Retail sales fell 0.4% in July.

Excluding sales of automobiles and at gas stations, retail sales rose 0.3%. Excluding gas sales, spending was up 0.1%

While the report showed the resilience of the American consumer, the figures are not

adjusted for inflation unlike many other government reports. In fact, sales at grocery stores rose 0.4%, helped by rising prices in food.

Evidence that the Fed's fight to cool the economy may be taking hold can also be seen, particularly with big-ticket items. Sales at auto dealers fell 0.4% last month, and shoppers continued to pull back on appliances, electronics and furniture, all categories that did well during the early part of the pandemic. Business at consumer electronics and appliance stores fell 0.8%.

Sales at clothing stores rose 0.5%, while business at department stores rose 1.3% That

indicates a solid back-to-school season but adjusted for inflation, spending was modest, analysts said. Business at restaurants rose 0.5%, while online sales ticked up at the same pace.

Consumer spending accounts for nearly 70% of U.S. economic activity and Americans have remained mostly resilient even with inflation near four-decade highs. Yet surging prices for everything from mortgages to rent have upped the anxiety level.

Overall spending has slowed and shifted increasingly toward necessities like food, while spending on electronics, furniture, new clothes and other non-necessities has faded.

Teenage shooter kills 5 people in NC

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — A 15-year-old boy fatally shot two people in the streets of a neighborhood in North Carolina's capital city, then fled toward a walking trail, where he opened fire, killing three more people and wounding two others, police said Friday.

Raleigh Police Chief Estella Patterson said the suspect was hospitalized in critical condition following the shootings late Thursday afternoon.

The victims were a racially diverse group

and ranged in age from 16 to their late 50s, Patterson said during a news conference. Among the dead was an off-duty Raleigh police officer, Gabriel Torres, 29, who was on his way to work when the shooting began. Police identified the other victims as: Nicole Conners, 52; Mary Marshall, 34; Susan Karnatz, 49; and James Roger Thompson, 16.

Marcille Lynn Gardner, 59, was wounded and remained hospitalized in critical condition Friday. A second police officer, Casey Joseph Clark, 33, was wounded and released

from the hospital.

The suspect, who was not immediately identified by police, eluded officers for hours before he was cornered in a home and arrested, police said. Officials have not said how the suspect was injured.

The shootings set off a massive police response and manhunt, with police scouring an area of more than 2 miles to find and capture the suspect, Patterson said. She said authorities have not yet determined any motive.

Changes to chicken, turkey processing proposed

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — The U.S. Department of Agriculture on Friday proposed sweeping changes in the way chicken and turkey meat is processed that are intended to reduce illnesses from food contamination but could require meat companies to make extensive changes to their operations.

Despite decades of efforts to try and reduce illnesses caused by salmonella in food, more than 1 million people are sickened every year and nearly a fourth of those cases come from turkey and chicken meat.

As it stands, consumers bear much of the responsibility for avoiding illness from raw poultry by handling it carefully in the kitchen — following the usual advice to not wash raw chicken or turkey (it spreads the bacte-

ria), using separate utensils when preparing meat and cooking to 165 degrees. The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service wants to do something about it by starting with the farmers that raise the birds and following through the processing plant where the meat is made.

Their food poisoning target: Of the more than 2,500 salmonella serotypes, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has identified three that cause a third of all human illnesses from chicken and turkey products. The agency proposes limiting the presence of these on poultry products.

In an effort to curtail salmonella outbreaks in poultry, the agency is proposing a regulatory framework that would include testing incoming flocks of chickens and turkeys for the bacterial disease. Officials hope testing chickens and turkeys before

they enter the slaughterhouse will encourage farmers to adopt practices that reduce the bacterial infection on the bird before they reach the point of meat processing.

A second measure would require enhanced monitoring for salmonella during processing by adopting sampling for the bacteria at multiple stages inside the processing facility. The third major change would be to establish a maximum level of bacterial contamination allowed and possibly limiting the three specific types of salmonella that can make people sick. Meat that would exceed the limits or that would contain the types of salmonella prohibited could be withheld from the market.

The FSIS will begin a lengthy process of proposing new rules by holding a public hearing on Nov. 3 to get input from the poultry industry and others.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Anglers caught cheating at tournament charged

OH CLEVELAND — Two anglers accused of stuffing fish with lead weights and fillets in an attempt to win thousands of dollars in an Ohio fishing tournament were indicted Wednesday on charges of attempted grand theft and other counts.

Jacob Runyan, 42, of Broadview Heights, Ohio, and Chase Cominski, 35, of Hermitage, Pa., were indicted in Cleveland on felony charges of cheating, attempted grand theft, possessing criminal tools and misdemeanor charges of unlawfully owning wild animals. They're due to be arraigned Oct. 26.

The cheating allegations surfaced Sept. 30 when Lake Erie Walleye Trail tournament director Jason Fischer became suspicious because Runyan and Cominski's fish were significantly heavier than typical walleye of that length.

A crowd of people at Gordon Park in Cleveland watched Fischer cut the walleye open and announce that there were weights and walleye fillets stuffed inside.

An officer from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources confiscated the fish as evidence.

Teacher, students hurt in chemistry class fire

VA DINWIDDIE — Three students and a teacher were taken to hospitals Wednesday after a fire broke out during a demonstration in a Virginia high school chemistry classroom, officials said.

When the fire broke out in the classroom at Dinwiddie High

School, the fire alarm was pulled and all students were evacuated from the building, Dinwiddie County Public Schools officials said in a statement.

A teacher was taken to a local hospital and three students were taken to VCU Medical Center, officials said. Officials didn't release details of their conditions. One student was treated at the scene and released.

Police find half-ton of homemade explosives

ND WILLISTON — More than 1,000 pounds of homemade explosive materials have been recovered in a residence in northwestern North Dakota, authorities said Wednesday.

Police said multiple chemicals and powders were also found in the apartment in Williston, located in the North Dakota oil patch near the Montana border. No arrests have been made, although police say they have identified a person of interest.

Tree trimmer killed in fall into wood chipper

CA MENLO PARK — A tree trimmer was killed Tuesday in the San Francisco Bay Area after he fell into a wood chipper, authorities said.

The man, whose name has not been released, was working in the city of Menlo Park shortly before 1 p.m. when he fell, police said.

Officers arrived to find the man dead from injuries sustained after his fall. The state's

Division of Occupational Safety and Health is investigating the man's death.

Paper offers reward for vote-buying evidence

KY SALYERSVILLE — A weekly eastern Kentucky newspaper is trying to do its part to keep the upcoming general election legal and fair.

The Salyersville Independent newspaper included an ad recently that offers up a \$3,000 cash reward for credible and concrete evidence of vote buying in the Nov. 8 election, WKYT-TV reported.

Owner Ritt Mortimer says new technology makes it easy to record video or audio that prosecutors could use to file charges.

Mortimer says the reward is his way of trying to protect democracy in the community.

Man freed after murder convictions overturned

MI PONTIAC — A man who spent nearly 25 years in prison walked out as a free man Wednesday after a judge overturned his murder convictions.

Anthony Kyles, 54, left the Carson City Correctional Facility after an order from Oakland County Circuit Judge Daniel O'Brien threw out the convictions earlier in the day.

Prosecutors and defense attorneys agreed the convictions should be overturned.

Kyles, 54, has always maintained his innocence.

"This is an overwhelming day," Kyles told the Detroit Free Press. "I'm happy and I'm

excited about finally being out."

In 1997, a jury convicted Kyles of four counts of second-degree murder. The prosecution's theory was Kyles set a house on fire by throwing a Molotov cocktail at it, killing three children and their father. The witness has since recanted, saying he lied to the jury.

The Conviction Integrity Unit at the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office reviewed Kyles' case and determined he was wrongfully convicted.

Man admits arson that he blamed on politics

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A Minnesota man pleaded guilty to filing fraudulent insurance claims for a staged arson he attempted to portray as a politically-motivated attack.

Federal officials said Denis Molla, 30, of Brooklyn Center, falsely reported to law enforcement in September 2020 that someone had lit his camper on fire and that three unknown males were near his home when he heard an explosion.

Molla told officials his garage door was vandalized with a spray painted antifa symbol and words stating "Biden 2020" and "BLM." He claimed his camper was targeted because it had a Trump 2020 flag displayed on it.

Police discovered that Molla started his own property on fire and spray painted the graffiti on his own garage.

He then submitted multiple insurance claims seeking coverage for the damage to his garage, camper, vehicles and residence caused by the fire, court documents show.

— From Associated Press

STARS AND STRIPES®

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

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Commanders top Bears, end 4-game skid

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Brian Robinson scored plenty of touchdowns during his stellar career at Alabama. The rookie's first as a pro came at a big moment.

Christian Holmes recovered a muffed punt by Velus Jones deep in Chicago territory to set up a 1-yard touchdown by Robinson midway through the fourth quarter, and the Washington Commanders stopped a four-game losing streak, hanging on to beat the Bears 12-7 on Thursday night.

"It was huge," quarterback Carson Wentz said. "We've been on a skid lately, we've been in some tough games, had some tough go's with it. This one was huge."

This one might not have been quite as ugly as the Colts-Broncos yawner a week earlier that had famed play-by-play announcer Al Michaels launching zingers and creating a buzz on social media. There were plenty of bad reads, tipped balls, over-

thrown passes and sloppy play in general. But there was also no shortage of drama down the stretch.

The Commanders (2-4) were aided by two turnovers after taking the ball away just once in the first five games and won for the first time since beating Jacksonville in the opener. Jonathan Allen intercepted Justin Fields' pass deep in Washington territory in the first half.

Robinson — playing his second game in five days, less than seven weeks since being shot twice in the right leg in an attempted robbery — scored his first career touchdown. Benjamin St-Juste stopped Darnell Mooney just shy of the end zone in the closing minute of the game, sending the Bears (2-4) to their third loss in a row.

"God is good, man," Allen said. "The NFL is not for the faint of heart. Tough game, man. I'm glad we're able to pull it out at the end."

Washington caught a huge

break when it punted on fourth down at its 37. Jones had trouble tracking the ball, then let it hit off his arms.

Holmes recovered it in a big pile at the 6, and Robinson scored two plays later, making it 12-7 with 7:21 remaining.

Wentz overthrew Curtis Samuel in the back of the end zone on the two-point conversion attempt, and Joey Slye missed a 48-yard field goal wide left with 1:48 remaining.

Fields then broke off a 39-yard run to the 5. But after blowing two big scoring chances in the first half, the Bears let another slip away.

"We always get told that we're almost there, we're almost there," Fields said. "Me personally, I'm tired of being almost there. I'm tired of being just this close. I feel like I've been hearing it for so long now."

Dante Pettis was unable to hang onto a third-down pass in the end zone with Darrick Forrest all over him. A leaping Dar-

nell Mooney got knocked out of bounds by St-Juste inches shy of the goal line as he hauled in a pass.

Fields, whose left shoulder was bothering him, completed 14 of 27 passes for 190 yards and a touchdown after setting career highs in completion rate (71.4%) and passer rating (118.8) against Minnesota on Sunday. He threw a 40-yard touchdown to Pettis in the third. But was intercepted by Allen with the ball on the Washington 5 late in the first quarter when he threw a laser that hit defensive tackle Efe Obada's helmet and popped into the air. Allen came away with the interception.

Fields also ran for 88 yards.

"I think he took a step forward, I really do," coach Matt Eberflus said. "The toughness. For me, the ability to take the ball and drive it down at the very end, to give us a chance to win it — that's to me what was the improvement."

Sources: No vote planned on Snyder's owner status

Associated Press

There is no plan to vote on Washington Commanders owner Dan Snyder's status next week at the NFL owners' meetings in New York, according to three people with knowledge of the agenda.

The people spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Thursday because the discussions are private.

Snyder's ownership of the team has been widely debated for years amid several scandals and investigations into workplace conduct in Washington. It became a hotter topic Thursday following an ESPN report detailing Snyder's efforts to influence other owners and the league office to maintain control of the team.

ESPN reported, citing anonymous sources, that Snyder has hired private investigators and told people he has enough information to expose fellow owners and Commissioner Roger Goodell.

The Commanders are denying the contents of the report. In a statement sent to the AP, a team spokesperson called it "categor-

ically untrue" and "clearly part of a well-funded, two-year campaign to coerce the sale of the team, which will continue to be unsuccessful."

Holland & Knight, one of the law firms representing Snyder, did not immediately respond to a message seeking a response to the report.

Following Washington's 12-7 victory at Chicago on Thursday night that stopped a four-game slide, coach Ron Rivera said he is focused on his team and that his players should be recognized for their resilience. He also angrily insisted he wanted the team to trade for quarterback Carson Wentz, refuting the ESPN report that Snyder was behind the move.

"The young man doesn't deserve to have that all the time. I'm sorry. I'm done," Rivera said before departing the media room.

Snyder has owned the team since 1999. He and the organization are currently the subject of ongoing investigations by the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform and former U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White,

who is conducting a new review on behalf of the NFL.

Last month, league executive Jeff Miller said there was no timeline for the completion of White's investigation. Lisa Banks, who represents more than 40 former team employees, among whom some have spoken to White, voiced disappointment about the owners' plan not to vote on Snyder but expects new findings to change that trajectory.

"I think they're waiting, and they've indicated in the past that they're going to wait, to see what Mary Jo White's report says before making any decisions," Banks said in a phone interview Thursday. "But I expect that after they have that report, they will have plenty to base a removal on, if they choose to do that. I only hope they have the courage to do that."

Banks said clients of hers and colleague Debra Katz have been cooperating with the active league and congressional investigations but have not heard back from the NFL office about offers to speak to Goodell or a representative about their experiences.

Alvarez homers, lifts Astros to 2-0 lead

Associated Press

HOUSTON — With every big swing, Yordan Alvarez is owning this October.

A ferocious comeback for the powerful slugger who struggled in Houston's loss to the Atlanta Braves in last year's World Series.

Alvarez and his mighty bat did it yet again, launching a go-ahead, two-run homer in the sixth inning off Seattle ace Luis Castillo that lifted the Astros over the Mariners 4-2 on Thursday for a 2-0 lead in the AL Division Series.

"I call him Grande," manager Dusty Baker said. "He comes up big. We love having him at the plate. He likes to be in the

big moment. His concentration and discipline is way ahead of his years."

This performance comes after he batted just .100 (2-for-20) with no homers and six strikeouts as Houston lost the World Series in six games.

With all of baseball talking about his hitting, the 25-year-old was asked how he'd describe himself at the plate.

"I would say intelligent," he said in Spanish through a translator. "Whenever I go up to the plate I try to visualize what the different kind of results that I could get up there when I'm hitting. If everything goes according to plan we'll get a positive result."

He's already had plenty of those this postseason.

Alvarez was the Game 1 star with his gut-punch, three-run shot off reigning AL Cy Young winner Robbie Ray with two outs in the ninth inning that gave the Astros an 8-7 win in a game where they'd trailed by four.

Castillo, acquired from the Reds near the trade deadline and coming off 7⅔ innings of shutout ball against Toronto in the wild-card round, gave up an early home run to Kyle Tucker but little else as he took a 2-1 lead into the sixth.

But with two outs, Jeremy Peña singled on a blooper that fell in between second baseman

Adam Frazier and center fielder Julio Rodríguez. Castillo bent down and slapped his legs in disappointment as he watched the ball drop in shallow center.

"We just have to communicate a little better," Frazier said.

That brought up Alvarez, who hit a 98 mph pitch tailing away to the opposite field, into the short porch in left to put the Astros on top 3-2.

"He threw a ball 3 or 4 inches off the plate and he hits a home run to the opposite field," Seattle manager Scott Servais said. "He's that kind of talent."

Added Rodríguez: "He's one of the greatest hitters we have right now."

Crosby, Penguins pound Coyotes in season opener

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Sidney Crosby had a goal and two assists and the Pittsburgh Penguins beat the Arizona Coyotes 6-2 on Thursday night in the season opener for both teams.

Jake Guentzel, Jason Zucker and Bryan Rust each had a goal and an assist, and Evgeni Malkin and Kasper Kapanen also scored for Pittsburgh. Kris Letang and Danton Heinen each added two assists, and Tristan Jarry stopped 26 shots.

Nick Ritchie scored twice for the rebuilding Coyotes. Karel Vejmelka struggled early but improved as the game wore on to finish with 47 saves.

Golden Knights 1, Blackhawks 0: Paul Cotter scored and Logan Thompson stopped 27 shots as host Vegas beat Chicago.

The victory marked the fourth time in the Golden Knights' first six seasons in the NHL they opened 2-0-0, while the Blackhawks (0-2-0) have now lost their first two games in four straight seasons.

Maple Leafs 3, Capitals 2: Auston Matthews broke a third-period tie, Ilya Samsonov made 24 saves against his former team and host Toronto beat Washington.

John Tavares and Calle Jarnkrok also scored and Morgan Rielly added two assists to help the Maple Leafs rebound from an opening 4-3 loss at Montreal on Wednesday night.

Panthers 3, Islanders 1: Patric Hornqvist scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period, Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 31 shots and visiting Florida beat New York to give Paul Maurice a win in his first game as the new head coach.

Eetu Luostarinen scored in the second period and Matthew Tkachuk added an empty-netter late in the third for Florida. The Panthers won their season opener a year after winning their first eight games and starting 10-0-1.

Flames 5, Avalanche 3: Dillon Dube scored short-handed and host Calgary won its season opener for the first time since 2009.

Dube and Rasmus Andersson scored in the second period, Elias Lindholm and Tyler Toffoli had power-play goals in the third and Brett Ritchie also scored. Jacob Markstrom made 22 saves to help the Flames end an 0-10-2 funk in openers.

Stars 4, Predators 1: Mason Marchment scored twice, Jake Oettinger made 30 saves and visiting Dallas beat Nashville.

Joe Pavelski and Wyatt Johnston also scored and Tyler Seguin added three assists for the Stars, who won their opener for the fourth time in the last five seasons.

Kraken 4, Kings 1: Brandon Tanev scored the go-ahead goal early in the second period and visiting Seattle rebounded from an opening loss.

Jaden Schwartz, Alex Wennberg and Adam Larsson also scored for the Kraken and Martin Jones made 28 saves. Seattle bounced back from a 5-4 overtime loss to Anaheim on Wednesday night when the Kraken squandered a two-goal lead in the third period.

Rangers 7, Wild 3: Artemi Panarin had a goal and three assists and Chris Kreider scored twice as visiting New York spoiled Minnesota's season opener.

Kreider and Adam Fox had the first two goals as the Rangers took a 3-0 lead into the first intermission, and Filip Chytil scored in the second period to push the lead back to three. Vincent Trocheck and Kaapo Kakko tacked on goals in the third period to neutralize two for the Wild by Matt Boldy in a whiplash stretch of 2:02 in which both teams scored twice.

Sabres 4, Senators 1: Rasmus Dahlin and rookie JJ Peterka scored 2:54 apart in the second period, and host Buffalo rallied to beat Ottawa.

Craig Anderson stopped 35 shots and Victor Olofsson sealed the victory by scoring two empty-net goals in the final 42 seconds.

Flyers 5, Devils 2: Travis Konecny and Morgan Frost each scored twice and host Philadelphia won coach John Tortorella's debut with his new team.

Wade Allison also scored and Carter Hart stopped 34 shots for the Flyers.

Week 7: CFP implications in Power 5

Associated Press

Halfway through the season, it might be time for some College Football Playoff elimination games.

Ranked showdowns between undefeated teams in the Big Ten, Big 12 and Southeastern conferences all have huge CFP implications this weekend.

No. 5 Michigan hosts No. 10 Penn State with the winner hoping to keep pace with third-ranked Ohio State in the Big Ten.

No. 8 Oklahoma State visits No. 13 TCU with the winner remaining among the top Big 12 teams in line for the league's title game.

The biggest game of all might be in the Southeastern Conference, where No. 3 Alabama travels to No. 6 Tennessee. Neither wants to stumble with plenty of ranked opponents left on the schedule.

The Pac 12 has undefeated No. 6 Southern Cal at No. 20 Utah, the conference's best bet for a CFP berth when the season began.

In all, there are six ranked-vs.-ranked matchups in Week 7, including No. 15 N.C. State at No. 18 Syracuse and No. 16 Mississippi State at No. 22 Kentucky.

The What to Watch rundown for Week 7:

Best game

No. 3 Alabama at No. 6 Tennessee: Nick Saban's defense vs. Josh Heupel's offense. QBs Bryce Young and Hendon Hooker in a showcase. This one seems to have it all

Alabama and No. 1 Georgia have swapped spots at the top of the SEC the past few years. But Heupel and the Vols are making a run at both. They could take a huge step by

beating Saban and the Crimson Tide, who've won 15 straight in the series.

The game should feature two leading Heisman Trophy hopeful quarterbacks in Alabama's Young and Tennessee's Hooker. Saban is optimistic that Young, last season's Heisman Trophy winner, will be back this week. Hooker is completing 70% of his throws to lead the SEC's top scoring offense.

On defense, Will Anderson Jr. is tearing up Alabama's opponents while Byron Young is doing the same for Tennessee. Anderson has five sacks this season and Young is close behind with 3.5.

Heisman watch

Caleb Williams, QB, Southern Cal: The sophomore's decision to follow coach Lincoln Riley out West is looking better and better each week.

Williams has thrown for 1,590 yards and 14 touchdowns against only one interception. The Trojans' closest call was a 17-14 victory at Oregon State two weeks ago, where Williams' late TD pass to Jordan Addison was the difference.

If Williams can get by Utah, he could close the gap on Ohio State's C.J. Stroud, widely considered the leading Heisman contender.

Numbers to know

8.0: Points per game No. 24 Illinois has allowed this season, best in the nation. The Ilii defense has given up just three touchdowns in six games, which also leads the country.

12: Consecutive victories by No. 4 Clemson, the longest winning streak in Division I.

The Tigers head to Florida State on Saturday night.

14: Years since No. 19 Kansas has been bowl eligible, something it can accomplish for the first time since 2008 as early as this weekend with a trip to Oklahoma.

44: Seasons since a team in its first year transitioning from FCS to FBS was ranked in the AP Top 25. No. 25 James Madison of the Sun Belt Conference is 5-0.

.958: The percentage of trips inside the 20-yard line that No. 18 Syracuse has scored on this season. The Orange have gotten points 23 of 24 times in the red zone this season. The lone time they didn't was when they kneeled three times there to close out a 59-0 win over Wagner.

Under the radar

Arkansas (3-3) at BYU (4-2): What a difference a month makes. After three weeks of the season, the Razorbacks were ranked 10th and the Cougars 19th. Three weeks later, both teams are out of the poll with Arkansas having lost three straight and BYU dropping two of its last four.

It looks like Arkansas will have quarterback KJ Jefferson back after he missed last week's loss at Mississippi State.

Hot seat

Bryan Harsin, Auburn: It seems like Harsin has held the next ticket at the deli counter for the past few weeks.

The Tigers are 3-3 after a 42-10 blowout loss to No. 1 Georgia. They face another juggernaut in No. 9 Ole Miss this week as they try to avoid a third consecutive SEC loss.

Browns quarterback Watson faces new civil lawsuit

From wire reports

Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson is facing a new civil lawsuit from a woman in Texas claiming he pressured her into a sexual act during a massage therapy session two years ago.

The woman, referred to in court documents as Jane Doe, filed the lawsuit on Thursday in Harris County District Court in Houston. She claims Watson asked to have sex with her after getting a massage in a hotel room in 2020. When she refused, he "was able to pressure her into oral sex."

She's seeking "minimal compensatory damages" but has "suffered mental anguish

because of Watson's behavior," according to the lawsuit.

Watson is serving an 11-game NFL suspension for alleged sexual misconduct. The three-time Pro Bowler returned to the Browns' training facility this week and is allowed to interact with his teammates and coaches after being banned since Aug. 30.

Hall of Famer Sutter dies at 69

Bruce Sutter, a Hall of Fame reliever and the 1979 Cy Young winner, has died.

Sutter, 69, was recently diagnosed with cancer and died Thursday night in hospice, surrounded by his family, one of Sutter's

three sons, Chad, told The Associated Press. The Baseball Hall of Fame said Bruce Sutter died in Cartersville, Ga.

Sutter is considered one of the first pitchers to throw a split-finger fastball. The right-hander played 12 seasons in the major leagues, was a six-time All-Star and ended up with 300 saves over his career.

Sutter debuted with the Chicago Cubs in 1976. He won the Cy Young in 1979 in a season where he had 37 saves, a 2.22 ERA and 110 strikeouts. He joined the St. Louis Cardinals and played with them from 1981-84. There, he won a World Series in 1982. He was inducted into Hall of Fame in 2006.