

Military prepares as Milton approaches

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force and Navy moved aircraft and ships out of the path of Hurricane Milton on Tuesday as the storm churned toward Florida's west coast.

State officials also activated Florida's entire National Guard force in preparation for Milton's expected landfall as early as late Wednesday in the Tampa area.

MacDill Air Force Base officials closed the major military hub near Tampa to all non-essential personnel on Tuesday after moving its aircraft out of the way of a major storm for the second time in less than two weeks. Navy and Space Force officials said they too were preparing to close bases across Florida and in southeast Georgia in the coming days ahead of Milton's arrival.

MacDill officials are poised for a direct hit from Milton after avoiding the worst of Hurricane Helene, which made landfall northwest of the Tampa area as a Category 4 storm near Florida's

Big Bend region on Sept. 26. The National Hurricane Center warned Tuesday that Milton could bring up to 12 inches of rainfall and produce a deadly storm surge of 10 to 15 feet in the Tampa area.

Milton, which reached Category 5 on Monday with windspeeds beyond 180 mph, weakened slightly on Tuesday. But hurricane center forecasters expected it to strike Florida as at least an "extremely dangerous" Category 3 storm, and warned Tuesday was the last day Floridians had to prepare for the storm and evacuate. Milton was expected to continue eastward after striking the Tampa area and could remain a Category 1 hurricane Thursday when it arrives in the Jacksonville, Fla., area, forecasters warned.

MacDill's 6,600 military and civilian personnel have been forced to evacuate several times in recent years, including ahead of Helene last month, Col. Edward Szczepanik, commander of

MacDill's 6th Air Refueling Wing, said Tuesday in a social media post. He instructed the installation's personnel to take the storm seriously once again, after recent storms — including Helene — left only minor damage on the base.

"Let's all remember MacDill Air Force Base is not the buildings on the installation," he said. "The 6th Refueling Wing is our people, our partners and our air power. No matter what happens the next few days, we promise you that we will preserve those three things."

In addition to the refueling wing, which moved its 12 KC-135 Stratotankers to McConnell Air Force Base in Kansas until the storm's passing, the 5,700-acre coastal base is home to the headquarters of U.S. Central Command and U.S. Special Operations Command.

The Navy also acted Monday in preparation of Milton's arrival, moving dozens of aircraft and at least three ships from its bases

near Jacksonville out of the hurricane's path, service officials said. Three guided-missile destroyers — the USS Donald Cook, the USS Thomas Hudner and the USS Lassen — were sent to sea to avoid Milton. Other ships based at Jacksonville's Naval Station Mayport — including the destroyer USS Delbert D. Black — were heavy-weather moored in recent days to help them "withstand strong winds and heavy seas" during the storm.

Rear Adm. John Hewitt, the commander of Navy Region Southeast, on Tuesday ordered all Florida Navy bases to prepare to shutdown to non-essential personnel by Tuesday evening. Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay just north of Florida's border with Georgia on the Atlantic Ocean was also preparing to close Tuesday for the storm, officials said.

"Our foremost concern is the safety of our personnel and their families," Hewitt said in a statement.

Fighter pilot takes command of US Forces Japan

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A fighter pilot with experience in Asia and the Middle East took command of U.S. Forces Japan on Tuesday as it moves toward a joint force headquarters in a tightening alliance with its host nation.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Stephen Jost took over for Lt. Gen. Ricky Rupp in a ceremony presided over by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command chief Adm. Samuel Paparo in a hangar on Yokota's flight line. Dignitaries, including U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm

Emanuel, and troops from both nations were also in attendance. The command change comes as USFJ, which oversees about 115,000 troops, civilians and family members in Japan, prepares to "reconstitute" as a joint force headquarters, Paparo told those gathered for the ceremony.

The change announced by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in July will modernize USFJ's structure to serve as a counterpart to Japan's Self-Defense Forces Joint Operations Command.

"The decision to reconstitute

USFJ, to expand its mission and operational responsibility will be the most significant change to USFJ since its creation and one of the strongest improvements to the alliance's military cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in 70 years," Paparo said at the ceremony.

The reorganization comes amid concern about China's rapid military buildup and aggression toward Taiwan and neighboring countries such as the Philippines over disputed territory in the South and East China seas.

USFJ is a liaison with Japan

for the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps and helps manage the nations' military alliance. It has authority over basing issues and the status of forces agreement, which governs the legal rights and responsibilities of U.S. military personnel in the country.

The USFJ commander also leads the 15,000 airmen under 5th Air Force at three bases: Yokota, Misawa and Kadena. Fifth Air Force provides a fighter deterrent to would-be adversaries as well as airlift, combat and other aviation capabilities for the U.S. and Japanese militaries.

DOD civilians in Japan to get health care aid

By ALEX WILSON
AND KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

The Department of Defense announced a one-year pilot program this week in a bid to help 11,000 civilian employees in Japan navigate and defray the cost of medical care in the country.

The free program — the Pilot Health Insurance Enhancement for DOD Civilian Employees in Japan — begins Jan. 1 and runs through Sept. 29, the DOD said in a news release Monday. Civilian employee dependents will not be eligible during the trial period.

It offers access to a call center staffed 24/7 with bilingual representatives who will assist callers with “identifying their needs,” making appointments

and issuing payment guarantees upfront, according to the news release.

Eligible employees may sign up for the program during the Federal Benefits Open Season from Nov. 11 through Dec. 9. The employee must already be enrolled in a participating health plan through the Federal Employees Health Benefits program.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs will oversee the pilot, which awarded a \$4.2 million contract to International SOS Government Services Inc. — the primary contractor for the Tricare Overseas Program — to begin the program, according to the release.

The contract is funded

through the military departments, defense agencies and DOD field activities that have civilian employees in Japan, according to the release.

The pilot follows “a yearlong effort to identify and address concerns regarding access to medical care,” the Pentagon said in its release, apparently referencing complaints raised by angry DOD civilians who turned out in droves in early 2023 to public meetings at U.S. bases in Japan.

At those hearings, visiting Pentagon officials gauged discontent over the Defense Health Agency forcing employees to Japanese providers and limiting civilian access to base hospitals and clinics to a space-available basis only.

In response, civilian employees cited the practice in Japan of paying for health care upfront, a matter sometimes costing tens of thousands of dollars; of sometimes being refused care at Japanese medical facilities; the language and cultural barrier and differing health care practices in Japan.

They also cited deaths that resulted from a lack of or delay in services from military and Japanese providers.

Japanese hospitals are not required by law to accept patients and routinely deny patients at their discretion. Reasons can vary, but often pertain to a preference for Japan’s national insurance plan or the belief they lack adequate resources to treat someone.

New F-35 deal lets Lockheed win back withheld payments

Bloomberg News

The Pentagon has agreed with Lockheed Martin Corp. on milestones the company can reach by the end of the year to earn some of a potential \$500 million payment withheld for F-35 jets lacking necessary hardware and software upgrades, according to the U.S. program manager.

That agreement also includes a \$350 million investment by Lockheed into the Pentagon’s F-35 software development labs and testing facilities, the program manager, Lt. Gen. Michael Schmidt said.

Lockheed expects it will deliver by Dec. 31 between 75 and 110 of the upgraded F-35s, including both new aircraft and backlogged jets, the company has said. Lockheed delivered 46 jets as of Sept. 30, according to the Defense Contract Management Agency.

The Pentagon in August said it was withholding about \$5 million for each F-35 that didn’t yet have the advanced upgrade, known as TR3.

“We have set up various milestones for the release of that money and it is possible they can hit some of them” by year-end, Schmidt said. “It will be incremental,” and it’s unlikely his office will announce when Lockheed has met any interim goals, he added.

The \$350 million Lockheed investment to improve the Pentagon’s software development infrastructure “was a criteria I insisted on because we have not invested enough in that aspect,” Schmidt said. “We have an itemized, detailed plan” and Lockheed’s payment “helps us kick start” that effort.

Lockheed said the \$350 million will be invested over the next five years.

Oregon National Guard soldier reclaims burpee world record

By BRADLEY LATHAM
Stars and Stripes

An Army National Guard officer has reclaimed a Guinness World Records fitness title by completing over 1,000 burpees in one hour, service officials said.

Maj. Tommy Vu, a medical officer with the Oregon National Guard’s Medical Command, recorded 1,027 chest-to-ground burpees Saturday in Salem to set the world record for the second time since March 2023.

In his first record-breaking feat, Vu completed 1,003 repetitions of the dynamic exercise. Vu’s record held until Nov. 12, 2023, when Habtamu Franke of the Netherlands racked up seven more reps to bring the record to 1,010.

Vu’s latest attempt is pending validation from Guinness World Records. If Saturday’s demonstration is confirmed, he will officially hold five fitness records

with the organization.

A standard burpee involves placing hands on the ground in a squat position followed by a move into a pushup stance, a return to the squat position and a jump to stand. Chest-to-ground burpees are considered to be a more challenging version of the exercise.

Vu is also the male record holder for most chest-to-ground pushups in one hour (1,494), fastest time to complete 25 burpees (33.34 seconds), and most burpee pullups in one minute (26) and one hour (611), according to the Guinness World Records website.

“His dedication to both his military duties and personal goals showcases the work-life balance and drive for excellence we foster in our organization,” Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, the adjutant general of Oregon, said in a statement.

Biden sets deadline to replace lead pipes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A decade after the Flint, Mich., water crisis raised alarms about the continuing dangers of lead in tap water, President Joe Biden is setting a 10-year deadline for cities across the nation to replace their lead pipes, finalizing an aggressive approach aimed at ensuring that drinking water is safe for all Americans.

Biden was expected to announce the final Environmental Protection Agency rule Tuesday in the swing state of Wisconsin during the final month of a tight presidential campaign. The announcement highlights an issue — safe drinking water — that Kamala Harris has pri-

oritized as vice president and during her presidential campaign. The new rule supplants a looser standard set by former President Donald Trump's administration that did not include a universal requirement to replace lead pipes.

Biden and Harris believe it's "a moral imperative" to ensure that everyone has access to clean drinking water, EPA Administrator Michael Regan told reporters Monday. "We know that over 9 million legacy lead pipes continue to deliver water to homes across our country. But the science has been clear for decades: There is no safe level of lead in our drinking water."

The rule is the strongest over-

haul of lead-in-water standards in roughly three decades. Lead, a heavy metal used in pipes, paints, ammunition and many other products, is a neurotoxin that can cause a range of disorders from behavioral problems to brain damage. Lead lowers IQ scores in children, stunts their development and increases blood pressure in adults.

The EPA estimates the stricter standard will prevent up to 900,000 infants from having low birthweight and avoid up to 1,500 premature deaths a year from heart disease.

The new regulation is stricter than one proposed last fall and requires water systems to ensure that lead concentrations do

not exceed an "action level" of 10 parts per billion, down from 15 parts per billion under the current standard. If high lead levels are found, water systems must inform the public about ways to protect their health, including the use of water filters, and take action to reduce lead exposure while concurrently working to replace all lead pipes.

Lead pipes often impact low-income urban areas the most. They are most commonly found in older, industrial parts of the country, including major cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Detroit and Milwaukee, where Biden was set to announce the standards Tuesday.

Report: Debt to increase under Trump or Harris

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — No one is likely to be happy with the projected higher deficits laid out in a new analysis of Kamala Harris' and Donald Trump's economic plans.

The analysis released Monday by the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget suggests a Harris presidency could increase the national debt over 10 years by \$3.5 trillion.

That's even though the vice president's campaign insists her proposed investments in the middle class and housing would be fully offset by higher taxes on corporations and the wealthy. Her campaign policy guide states that Harris is "committed to fiscal responsibility — making investments that will support our economy, while paying for them and reducing the deficit at the same time."

The same analysis says former President Trump's ideas could heap another \$7.5 trillion onto the debt and possibly as much as \$15.2 trillion.

That's even though he suggests growth would be so strong under his watch that no one would need to worry about deficits.

The 34-page report released by the fiscal watchdog group puts a spotlight on the issue of government borrowing that will confront the winner of November's election. Total federal debt held by the public now tops \$28 trillion and is expected to keep climbing as revenues can't keep up with the growing costs of Social Security, Medicare and other programs. The analysis noted that the expense of servicing that debt in dollar terms has "eclipsed the cost of defending our nation or providing health care to elderly Americans."

Drawing on the candidates' speeches, campaign documents and social media posts, the analysis warns bluntly: "Debt would continue to grow faster than the economy under either candidates' plans and in most scenarios would grow faster and higher than under current law."

Officials face antisemitism over hurricane response

The Washington Post

Top officials in North Carolina and at the Federal Emergency Management Agency responding to Helene are being subjected to a flurry of antisemitic attacks, causing some of them to fear for their safety as they prepare for another hurricane to strike Florida.

The attacks, which include wild claims that Jewish officials are conspiring to orchestrate the disasters, sabotage the recovery or even seize victims' property, are being fomented largely on Elon Musk's X. Antisemitic tropes have commingled on the site with false rumors and conspiracy theories amid the chaos of the recovery effort, according to a report released Tuesday by the nonprofit Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD).

The online vitriol is compounding the challenges facing emergency management officials dealing with the aftermath of Helene and readying a response to Milton, a Category 4 hurricane barreling toward

Florida.

The volume and virulence of the X posts have dismayed experts who warn that they risk undermining lifesaving response measures.

"We're seeing an alarming trend of antisemitism being included now in false narratives around pretty much any breaking news event," said Isabelle Frances-Wright, ISD's director of technology and society. "This portends a grim outlook for the information ecosystem, both on X itself but also on other platforms where these narratives trickle into and evolve."

The report focused on 33 recent viral X posts that spread misinformation about Helene, which made landfall in Florida as a major hurricane last month and caused at least 231 deaths and widespread devastation in six states.

The posts collectively attracted 159 million views, even though their claims were thoroughly debunked by local residents, FEMA, the White House and other government officials.

Hezbollah: More Israelis to be displaced as fire extended

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Hezbollah's acting leader said Tuesday that even more Israelis will be displaced as the militant group extends its rocket fire deeper into Israel, in a defiant televised statement marking the anniversary of fighting that escalated into war last month.

Sheikh Naim Kassem, the acting leader of Hezbollah, said its military capabilities are still intact and that it has replaced all of its senior commanders after weeks of heavy Israeli airstrikes across large parts of Lebanon, including targeted strikes that killed much of its top command in a matter of days.

He also said Israeli forces have not been able to advance after launching a ground incursion into Lebanon last week. The Israeli military said a fourth division is now taking part in the incursion, which has expanded

to the west, but operations still appear to be confined to a narrow strip along the border.

The Israeli military said it has dismantled militant infrastructure along the border and killed hundreds of Hezbollah fighters. On Tuesday, it said a strike in Beirut had killed Suhail Hussein, who it described as a senior commander responsible overseeing logistics, budget and management of the militant group.

There was no immediate comment from Hezbollah, and no way to confirm battlefield claims made by either side.

In Gaza, meanwhile, heavy fighting was underway Tuesday between Israeli ground forces and Palestinian militants in the isolated north, where Israel has ordered another full-scale evacuation in recent days.

"We are firing hundreds of rockets and dozens of drones. A

large number of settlements and cities are under the fire of the resistance," Kassem said. "Our capabilities are fine and our fighters are deployed along the frontlines."

He said Hezbollah's top leadership was directing the war and that the commanders killed by Israel have been replaced. "We have no vacant posts," he added.

He said Hezbollah will name a new leader to succeed Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike in a bunker in Beirut last month, "but the circumstances are difficult because of the war."

The Israeli army said 85 projectiles were launched from Lebanon toward northern Israel on Tuesday.

Israel's aerial defense intercepted most of the rockets, the military said. A 70-year-old woman was moderately wounded by shrapnel.

Pioneers in AI awarded Nobel Prize in physics

Associated Press

STOCKHOLM — Two pioneers of artificial intelligence — John Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton — won the Nobel Prize in physics Tuesday for helping create the building blocks of machine learning that is revolutionizing the way we work and live but also creates new threats to humanity, one of the winners said.

Hinton, who is known as the Godfather of artificial intelligence, is a citizen of Canada and Britain who works at the University of Toronto and Hopfield is an American working at Princeton.

"This year's two Nobel Laureates in physics have used tools from physics to develop methods that are the foundation of today's powerful machine learning," the Nobel committee said in a press release.

Ellen Moons, a member of the Nobel committee at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, said the two laureates "used fundamental concepts from statistical physics to design artificial neural networks that function as associative memories and find patterns in large data sets."

She said that such networks have been used to advance research in physics and "have also become part of our daily lives, for instance in facial recognition and language translation."

Hinton predicted that AI will end up having a "huge influence" on civilization, bringing improvements in productivity and health care.

"It would be comparable with the Industrial Revolution," he said in the open call with reporters and the officials from the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

Gang attack survivors in Haiti left reeling

Associated Press

PONT-SONDÉ, Haiti — Under the cover of night, dozens of gang members crept toward the small town of Pont-Sondé in central Haiti armed with knives and assault rifles as families slept.

The gang had traveled from nearby Savien in vehicles they ditched halfway through the trip, climbing into canoes for the last stretch for a quiet approach. Gunfire and screams woke the town. Those not shot dead were stabbed. Fires consumed homes.

"They tried to murder everyone," said Jina Joseph, who survived.

The Gran Grif gang killed babies and young mothers, older people and entire families, an-

gry that a self-defense group had tried to limit gang activity in Pont-Sondé and prevent it from making money off a makeshift toll it had recently established on a nearby road.

The gang escaped by foot through nearby rice fields after Thursday's attack, leaving more than 70 bodies strewn through the town.

It was the biggest massacre that Haiti's once peaceful central region had seen in recent history. Thousands now face an uncertain future, stripped of their jobs, homes and families.

Jameson Fermilus, who had crouched in a corridor next to his house as smoke and gunfire filled the air, later joined more than 6,000 other survivors who walked for hours, seeking safety.

"We don't know what we are going to do," said another who joined them, 60-year-old Sonise Morino. "We have nowhere to go."

Thousands walked west to the coastal city of Saint-Marc. Days after the massacre, a crowd of men, women and children gathered around a Good Samaritan standing atop his car distributing food and drink.

The newly homeless crowded into a church, a school and a public plaza shaded by trees. Those lucky enough to receive food sat on a dusty curb and ate. At night, they curled up on concrete floors and tried to sleep.

"These deaths are unimaginable," Mayor Myriam Fièvre said as she met with survivors.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Hot air balloons take off at international fest

NM ALBUQUERQUE — A flotilla of hot air balloons ascended into a clear desert sky on Saturday to kick off a colorful mass ascension at the 52nd annual Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta.

The nine-day gathering draws hundreds of thousands of spectators and pilots to New Mexico each fall for the rare opportunity to be within arm's reach as the giant balloons are unpacked and inflated.

Balloons took flight to screams of delight after a brief weather delay and were spirited away by a gentle breeze. Propane burners roared and hundreds of balloons — from traditional globes to cartoonish figures — rose to speckle the sky with color.

This year's fiesta includes 106 balloons in special shapes, 16 of which will be making their fiesta debut.

Ex-owner of roaming buffalo pleads guilty

IA DES MOINES — The owner of a water buffalo that ran loose in a Des Moines, Iowa, suburb for days pleaded guilty for having an animal at large.

The owner was fined \$105 and court costs, the Des Moines Register reported.

The owner was taking the animal to slaughter when it escaped in August.

Police spent days searching for it as it roamed Pleasant Hill, a town of 11,000 residents. Fans named the animal PHill after the city.

Police at one point shot PHill while trying to capture the animal, but it escaped and continued to roam for several days before being tranquilized with help from zoo and animal rescue workers.

Pilot dies in crash of replica WWI-era plane

NY RED HOOK — A replica of a World War I-era fighter plane caught fire and crashed during an airshow in upstate New York, killing the pilot, according to police.

Brian Coughlin, 60, died after the Fokker D.VIII replica went down during an exhibition at the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome, about 80 miles north of Manhattan, according to a statement from the Red Hook Police Department.

Police said it appeared the engine caught fire due to unknown mechanical issues, causing the plane to crash.

Coughlin, from Cazenovia in central New York, was the only person in the plane and was pronounced dead at the scene.

Native American told by senator to 'go back'

ID KENDRICK — Tensions rose during a bipartisan forum after an audience question about discrimination reportedly led an Idaho state senator to angrily tell a Native American candidate to "go back where you came from."

Republican Sen. Dan Foreman left the event early after the outburst and later denied making any racist comments.

Trish Carter-Goodheart, a Democratic candidate for the House District 6 seat and mem-

ber of the Nez Perce Tribe, said the blowup left her shaken.

About an hour into the event, someone asked a question about a state bill addressing discrimination.

"I pointed out that just because someone hasn't personally experienced discrimination doesn't mean it's not happening," Carter-Goodheart said. "I was making my statement, and then he shot up out of his seat and said, 'I'm so sick of your liberal (expletive). Why don't you go back to where you came from?'"

Bear with 3 cubs breaks into home, attacks man

CO LAKE CITY — A black bear with three cubs attacked a man in his Colorado home after they crashed in through a sliding glass door and he was unable to get them to leave.

State wildlife managers killed all four bears after the attack in Lake City, a southwestern Colorado town of 400 people. The man's injuries were significant, but he didn't need to go to a hospital, Colorado Parks & Wildlife said in a statement.

The 74-year-old man tried to shoo the adult female bear out with a kitchen chair, but it knocked him into a wall and clawed at him, the wildlife agency said.

The bear injured the man's head, neck, arms, shoulder, abdomen and calf.

1 death, large areas burned in wildfires

ND BISMARCK — One person died and others were evacuated from their

homes as wildfires driven by ferocious winds and dry conditions raged through parts of western North Dakota over the weekend.

Six wildfires were reported, and large fires near Grassy Butte and Mandaree were still considered 0% contained, the state Department of Emergency Services said.

Four other fires were 90% to 100% contained as of Sunday.

Johannes Nicolaas Van Eeden, 26, of South Africa, died due to critical injuries from a large fire near Ray in northwest North Dakota, the Williams County Sheriff's Office said Sunday.

Voters will decide on having open primaries

AZ PHOENIX — The Arizona Supreme Court has cleared the way for voters to decide on establishing open primaries for future elections in which all candidates compete against each other regardless of their party affiliation.

The citizen-led initiative, labeled as Proposition 140, already had been printed on ballots that county officials recently started mailing to overseas and uniformed voters.

But it wasn't clear those votes would be counted until the court's decision that ended two months of legal wrangling.

If the proposition is approved by voters, it would significantly reform Arizona's elections by eliminating partisan primaries. The two candidates who receive the most votes in the primary election would advance to the general election.

-From The Associated Press

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Jets fire Saleh five games into season

Associated Press

Robert Saleh insisted no one was panicked about the New York Jets' slow start. A day later, he was out of a job.

Owner Woody Johnson made the stunning decision Tuesday to fire Saleh five games into his fourth season after the team's 2-3 start following a 23-17 loss to Minnesota in London on Sunday.

"This morning, I informed Robert Saleh that he will no longer serve as head coach of the Jets," Johnson said in a statement issued by the team. "I thanked him for his hard work these past 3½ years and wished him and his family well moving forward.

"This was not an easy decision, but we are not where we should be given our expectations. And I believe now is the best time for us to move in a different direction."

Saleh was 20-36 as coach of the Jets, who are trying to snap the NFL's longest active playoff drought at 13 seasons. The move marks the first time in Johnson's 25-year tenure that a head coach has been fired during the season.

Defensive coordinator Jeff Ulbrich will serve as interim coach for the rest of the season — with the Jets maintaining expectations to make the playoffs.

"He is a tough coach who has the respect of the coaches and players on this team," Johnson said. "I believe he along with the coaches on this staff can get the most out of our talented team and attain the goals we established this offseason."

The surprising move came a day after Saleh said he was confident Aaron Rodgers and the Jets would be able to turn things around after losing two straight, including falling to undefeated

Minnesota. Rodgers had his worst game with New York, throwing three interceptions.

"There's so much football to be played," Saleh said Monday. "There's so many things that we can get better at, and there's so many things that we can continue to build on, the things that we are doing well.

"So, I'm not panicked. Nobody in the building is panicked."

But apparently Johnson had seen enough from Saleh, who became the NFL's first coach fired this season.

The Jets face the Buffalo Bills (3-2) on Monday night, when they have a chance to share the AFC East lead with a victory. But instead of Saleh, it will be the 47-year-old Ulbrich on the sideline.

Ulbrich, who played linebacker for 10 seasons with San Francisco, joined the Jets as

part of Saleh's initial staff in 2021.

Saleh replaced the fired Adam Gase in January 2021 after the Jets went 9-23 in his tenure.

Saleh's tenure began with a major decision. They moved on from quarterback Sam Darnold — the No. 3 overall pick in 2018 — to draft Zach Wilson with the second overall pick in 2021.

While Saleh and Ulbrich's defense was a strength for the Jets, Wilson and the offense struggled mightily. Quarterback instability was a theme that was consistent throughout Saleh's tenure.

The Jets traded for Rodgers in April 2023, adding the four-time NFL MVP to a franchise looking for a winner. But last season was short-circuited when Rodgers tore his left Achilles tendon four snaps into his debut.

Ex-Chiefs return, give KC a boost in win over Saints

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Patrick Mahomes threw for a bunch of yards. Travis Kelce caught a whole lot of his passes. And Kareem Hunt plowed into the end zone once again, sending a torrent of red fireworks flying over Arrowhead Stadium on Monday night.

It might as well have been six years ago, the last time that trio of Chiefs played in a home game together.

But with injuries having ravaged their offense, the Chiefs were forced to lean on two of their stalwarts and the return of their erstwhile star running back to beat the Saints, 26-13. Mahomes finished with 331 yards through the air, Kelce had a game-high nine catches for 70 yards, and Hunt ran 27 times for 102 yards and a touchdown.

"It was a great feeling to get back in the end zone. I missed it

very much," said Hunt, who only returned to the Chiefs a couple of weeks ago, after an injury to starter Isiah Pacheco. "That's why I threw up a heart. To show my love for Kansas City."

There was a lot of love flowing inside Arrowhead Stadium.

Just as the Chiefs were moving to 5-0 behind another defensive gem, the Royals were beating the Yankees in Game 2 of their AL Division Series in New York. There were frequent chants of "Let's go Royals!" throughout the game.

"There was kind of a lull there toward the end of the game, and I was like, 'They're not showing the score. The Yankees came back,'" said Mahomes, who owns a part of the Royals. "But they picked it up and got the win, and it was extremely exciting."

The Chiefs held Saints quarterback Derek Carr to 185 yards

passing with two touchdowns and an interception before leaving with an oblique injury. It occurred with about 9½ minutes left, when Carr was hit by blitzing defensive back Chamarri Conner on a fourth-down incompleteness as he tried to rally New Orleans from a 23-13 deficit.

"I couldn't do what I needed to do in the simplest form," said Carr, who planned to get an MRI exam on Tuesday.

The Saints' Alvin Kamara managed 26 yards rushing on 11 carries, becoming the latest high-profile running back to struggle against the Chiefs. They held the Ravens' Derrick Henry to 46 yards, Zack Moss of the Bengals to 34, Falcons star Bijan Robinson to 31 and J.K. Dobbins to 32 last week against the Chargers.

"We got outplayed," Saints coach Dennis Allen said. "We

really couldn't get a whole lot going on either side of the ball."

The first half Monday night featured a bit of everything: Hunt's first TD since returning to Kansas City, where his once-promising career was derailed by an off-the-field incident; a 43-yard touchdown pass from Carr to Rashid Shaheed, the shortest of the three Shaheed has caught this season; and yet another lateral by Kelce, which came on the most bizarre of drives.

The Chiefs were leading 10-7 when a fumbled pitch and a holding penalty left them facing second-and-34. They got some of it back on a pass to JuJu Smith-Schuster, and then Mahomes hit Kelce over the middle. Kelce lateraled to Samaje Perine, who got within a yard of a first down, and Kansas City converted the fourth-and-short to set up a field goal.

Carpenter's HR lifts Tigers over Guardians

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Kerry Carpenter hit a three-run homer off Cleveland's All-Star closer Emmanuel Clase in the ninth inning, and the Detroit Tigers stunned the Guardians 3-0 in Game 2 on Monday to even their AL Division Series at one game apiece.

Carpenter connected for a 423-foot shot with two outs off Clase, who had not given up a run since Aug. 30 and led the American League with 47 saves.

"To do it off him is special," said Carpenter. "He's one of the best."

Detroit ace Tarik Skubal pitched seven shutout innings, increasing his postseason total to 13, before the Tigers put together a rare big inning against the almost unhittable Clase.

The intimidating right-hander has dominated hitters all season — he hasn't blown a save since May — and was making

just his second multi-inning appearance of 2024.

Jake Rogers and Trey Sweeney hit consecutive two-out singles. Carpenter, who entered an inning earlier as a pinch-hitter, turned on Clase's third straight slider, sending the ball into the right-field seats and shocking Cleveland's rowdy home crowd.

"How about those three two-out hits?" Tigers manager A.J. Hinch said.

Guardians manager Stephen Vogt didn't regret using Clase for more than one inning.

"Emmanuel has been locked down all year," Vogt said. "He's been nearly perfect. He's human, too. These things are going to happen, and it's unfortunate the timing of when it did, but at the same time he's going to have the ball in the ninth again."

"This is the best closer in the game for a reason, and they just happened to get him tonight."

The homer drove in the first

runs of the series for the Tigers, who have been finding ways to win for months. Detroit went 31-13 after Aug. 11 to qualify for the postseason and then stunned the AL West champion Houston Astros in the Wild Card Series.

They're at it again and head home to Comerica Park for Games 3 and 4 on Wednesday and Thursday with a chance to advance.

"You come to this environment, on the road, and it's a five-game series," Tigers manager A.J. Hinch said. "When you get that emotional win and go back home 1-1, you feel like you got one on their home turf."

"We now have two games at our place. We know it's going to be electric. We know Detroit has waited a really long time for a playoff game. We're going to have a couple of them and a chance to take control of this series."

When Carpenter stepped into the box, the Tigers felt some-

thing good would happen.

"Kerry coming up there being Kerry Bonds, that's what you want right there," Rogers said. "He got one low and in the middle of the zone. I had the best view of it and I was screaming from the bottom of my lungs."

After Skubal pitched seven innings and winner Will Vest got through the eighth, Beau Brieske pitched a perfect ninth for the save.

Skubal was getting a postgame workout when Carpenter homered.

"What a swing," he said. "I was on the ground, and I think that's the fastest I've ever stood up in my life. What a swing off a really good pitcher, too, the best closer in the game. That was incredible to watch."

Skubal, who won the AL pitching triple crown by leading the league in wins (18), ERA (2.39) and strikeouts (288), allowed just three hits.

Royals score four in 4th, beat Yanks to even ALDS

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Salvador Perez homered leading off the fourth inning to spark a four-run rally against Carlos Rodón, and the Kansas City Royals beat the New York Yankees 4-2 on Monday night to even their AL Division Series at one game apiece.

Four relievers held New York in check after an inconsistent Cole Ragans lasted four innings. Tommy Pham, Garrett Hampson and Maikel Garcia singled in runs for the Royals.

Garcia, who moved up from ninth to first in Kansas City's batting order, had four hits.

Game 3 in the best-of-five playoff is Wednesday night at Kansas City, the Royals' first postseason home game since the 2015 World Series.

"It's basically like a brand-new series when we get to the

K," Ragans said, referring to Kauffman Stadium.

Yankees slugger Aaron Judge went 1-for-3 with an infield single and is 1-for-7 with four strikeouts in the series. Kansas City star Bobby Witt Jr., expected to finish second to Judge in AL MVP voting, was 0-for-5 with three strikeouts, dropping to 0-for-10 in the series.

All four Division Series opened 1-1 for the first time since the round started in 1995.

Giancarlo Stanton put the Yankees ahead with an RBI single in the third, but New York went 1-for-6 with runners in scoring position and is 3-for-19 in the two games.

"They were making their pitches when they needed to," Judge said. "We've got to come through in those situations to kind of break it open."

Ragans allowed just the one run and three hits, striking out five and walking four. Winning pitcher Angel Zerpa and John Schreiber each followed with a hitless inning before Kris Bubic threw two scoreless innings. Lucas Erceg worked the ninth for his third save this postseason.

Erceg gave up a leadoff homer to Jazz Chisholm Jr. and a two-out single to Jon Berti but retired Gleyber Torres on a grounder to end it with slugger Juan Soto on deck. Chisholm's homer was the first off Erceg since June 12, when he was still pitching for Oakland.

Perez, at 34 the only remaining Royals player from their 2015 championship team, tied the score when he drove a 2-0 slider into the left-field seats. The nine-time All-Star entered

12-for-26 (.462) with three homers off Rodón, an old AL Central rival when he pitched for the Chicago White Sox.

"He falls behind him, and from there started making some mistakes with his secondary (pitches) just in the heart of the plate," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said.

Rodón, lined up to pitch a potential Game 5, gave up four runs and seven hits in 3⅓ innings with seven strikeouts and no walks. Twenty-four of the 32 home runs he has allowed this season have been solo shots.

"Obviously, I want to be better than that — especially how the first three innings went," Rodón said. "I wouldn't say I tired out. Just got to be better with those pitches, just more fine with them and get to better spots."

Next generation of NHL stars set to make mark

Associated Press

Juraj Slafkovsky was an NHL Draft pick, just like Alex Ovechkin, Sidney Crosby, Auston Matthews, Nathan MacKinnon, Connor McDavid and Connor Bedard. The spotlight, however, has not been quite as bright or the hype train as strong for him in Montreal. "I like it that way," Slafkovsky said.

Regardless of the attention or lack thereof, Slafkovsky is on the vanguard of hockey's next generation of stars, along with the likes of San Jose's Macklin Celebrini and Will Smith, Buffalo's JJ Peterka and New Jersey's Luke Hughes.

"It's really cool to be a part of it, and I hope I will be a part of it," Slafkovsky said two years after the Canadiens took him at No. 1 in 2022. "Hopefully we can do some things as the younger generation."

Slafkovsky, Peterka, Hughes and Quinton Byfield of the Los Angeles Kings have been around a bit, and now is the time to show they can be among the league's best. Newcomers like Celebrini, Smith, Philadelphia's Matvei Michkov and even teammate Lane Hutson are front-runners in the race for the Calder Trophy as rookie of the year.

Macklin Celebrini

The most recent No. 1 pick does not have the so-called "generational talent" label like Crosby, McDavid or Bedard, but he still won the Hobey Baker Award last season at Boston University as the top college player in the country with 64 points in 38 games.

Sharks forward William Eklund was not too familiar with Celebrini's game until the draft, so he made it a point to check out his highlights.

"I looked him up a little bit, and obviously he's a great skill guy," Eklund said. "He's a high-caliber player, and it's going to be fun to see."

Will Smith

Rivals at Boston-area schools, Smith and Celebrini are now front and center as the faces of San Jose's rebuild.

"It's going to be a fun relationship," said Smith, the fourth pick in 2023 who decided to turn pro after starring last season at Boston College. "Really cool. We were talking about it earlier just how crazy it is that we're on the same team now."

Smith, a year older than Celebrini, is coming off a 71-point season, helped the United States win world junior gold and played at the world championships.

Juraj Slafkovsky

The MVP of the 2022 Beijing Olympics without NHL players struggled in his rookie year. Last season, he quintupled his production with 20 goals, 30 assists and 50 points and said, "I'm ready to start where I finished."

Slafkovsky in the spring signed an eight-year contract extension worth over \$60 million. Now it's up to the big Slovak forward to earn it.

JJ Peterka

A 2020 second-round pick of

the Sabres, Peterka is older at 22 but could get a look on the first line this season after establishing himself as a full-time NHL player and scoring 28 goals. The German forward is in a contract year looking to get the kind of guaranteed deal Slafkovsky and others have.

Peterka thinks the key is not putting too much pressure on himself, especially while trying to help Buffalo end the league's longest playoff drought.

Quinton Byfield

The 6-foot-5, 220-pound power forward is expected to play center after getting a five-year, \$31.25 million contract. He spent the summer working on his shot to be more of a threat from further away from the net and prefers center offensively and defensively.

"I like playing good defense and shutting down their top lines, so when I can be in my own end kind of playing those guys down low, that's where I want to be," Byfield said. "Also, I don't want to just be on the wall standing there going up the ice. I want to be able to use my speed and kind of demand the middle of the ice."

Luke Hughes

A left shoulder injury from summer training could cause the Devils defenseman to miss the start of the season. That absence should not keep Hughes from building on a 47-point rookie year that left him third in Calder Trophy voting.

"He'll take another step," older brother and New Jersey teammate Jack Hughes said. "Luke

will be even more mature this year. He'll know the league a little bit more and know the players and he'll know things he can get away with and where he can capitalize on certain things. I think he'll have a better year offensively, obviously, and just keep getting better."

Matvei Michkov

The 19-year-old Russian winger is the new face of the Flyers with the weight of the franchise's nearly five-decade Stanley Cup drought on his shoulders. Michkov was the seventh pick in 2023, with some teams concerned he might not be able to leave the KHL or was under-scouted given the war in Ukraine.

"Everyone's really excited to have him, and when you see him on the ice it's pretty special and gives our team a positive boost," forward Owen Tippett said. "Super-skilled. We're all really excited to have him on our side, and we're excited to see what he can do."

Lane Hutson

A saucer pass from Hutson during an early training camp scrimmage that landed right on the stick blade of teammate Emil Heineman went viral in hockey circles. It's just a taste of what the 20-year-old defenseman might be able to do when he gets used to life in the NHL, but he already has big expectations in Montreal.

"I haven't proved anything yet," Hutson said. "There's a lot to prove before I'm even close to a face of the team."

NCAA's \$2.78B athlete payment settlement approved

Associated Press

A judge granted preliminary approval Monday to the \$2.78 billion legal settlement that would transform college sports by allowing schools to pay players.

U.S. District Judge Claudia Wilken released an order setting a timeline for a deal that would put millions of dollars into the pockets of college athletes, who can begin applying for payment Oct. 18.

A final hearing is set for April 7, 2025, the day that one of college sports' biggest moneymakers, March Madness, comes to a close with college basketball's national title game. If finalized, the deal would allow the biggest schools to establish a pool of about \$21.5 million in the first year to distribute money to athletes through a revenue-sharing plan. Athletes would still be able to cut name, image and likeness deals with outside groups.

Former college athletes from as far back as 2016 would be able to apply for their share of \$2.576 billion set aside to help them recoup money they could've made from NIL deals, which weren't allowed until 2021.

"We are pleased that we are one step closer to a revolutionary change in college athletics that will allow billions in revenue sharing," said plaintiff attorney Steve Ber- man.