

US strikes 10th suspected drug vessel

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military has conducted its 10th strike on a suspected drug-running boat, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said on Friday, blaming the Tren de Aragua gang for operating the vessel and leaving six people dead in the Caribbean.

In a social media post, Hegseth said the strike occurred overnight, and it marks the second time the Trump administration has tied one of its operations to the gang, which originated in a Venezuelan prison.

The pace of the strikes has quickened in recent days from one every few weeks in September when they first began to three this week. Two of the strikes this week were carried out in the eastern Pacific Ocean, expanding the area in which the military was launching attacks and where much of the cocaine from the world's largest producers is smuggled.

In a 20-second black and white video of the strike posted to social media, a small boat can be seen apparently sitting motionless on the water when a long thin projectile descends on it, triggering an explosion. The video ends before the blast dies down enough for the remains of the boat to be seen again.

Hegseth said the strike happened in international waters and boasted that it was the first one conducted at night.

"If you are a narco-terrorist smuggling drugs in our hemisphere, we will treat you like we treat Al-Qaeda," Hegseth said in the post. "Day or NIGHT, we will map your networks, track your people, hunt you down, and kill you."

The strike also came hours after the U.S. military flew a pair of supersonic heavy bombers up to the coast of Venezuela on Thursday.

The flight was just the most recent move in what has been

an unusually large military buildup in the Caribbean Sea and the waters off Venezuela that has raised speculation that President Donald Trump could try to topple Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Maduro faces charges of narcoterrorism in the U.S.

Venezuelan Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino has told his military leaders that the U.S. government knows the drug-trafficking accusations used to support the recent actions in the Caribbean are false, with its true intent being to "force a regime change" in the South American country.

Hegseth's remarks around the strikes have recently begun to draw a direct comparison between the war on terrorism that the U.S. declared after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and the Trump administration's crackdown on drug traffickers.

When reporters asked Trump on Thursday whether he would

request Congress issue a declaration of war against the cartels, he said that wasn't the plan.

"I think we're just going to kill people that are bringing drugs into our country, OK? We're going to kill them, you know? They're going to be like, dead," Trump said during a roundtable at the White House with homeland security officials.

Lawmakers from both major political parties have expressed concerns about Trump ordering the military actions without receiving authorization from Congress or providing many details. Democrats have insisted the strikes violate international law.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a Democratic member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said this week that "expanding the geography simply expands the lawlessness and the recklessness in the use of the American military without seeming legal or practical justification."

Senate blocks bills to pay workers during shutdown

The Washington Post

The Senate blocked three bills Thursday to pay federal employees who have been required to keep working during the shutdown.

Most Democrats voted against advancing a bill from Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., to pay employees who are on the job despite the closure, which failed on a 54-45 vote along mostly partisan lines.

And Republicans blocked two bills to pay all federal workers, which Democrats tried to pass by unanimous consent.

The shutdown is in its fourth week. All workers are entitled by law to back pay once the government reopens, including those who are furloughed.

But the Trump administration has moved money around to pay some of the workers who are required to come in, mostly in the military and law enforcement.

About 750,000 federal workers have been furloughed without pay during the shutdown.

Workers whose jobs involve protecting life and government property have been expected to continue working without pay,

including air traffic controllers, Transportation Security Administration officers and employees of law enforcement agencies.

Johnson expressed frustration that Democrats and Republicans could not reach a compromise on their competing bills.

Democrats argued that Johnson's bill gave White House budget director Russell Vought too much leeway to determine which workers would get paid and which would not because the administration decides which employees are fur-

loughed or working.

The two Democratic measures were similar to each other. One from Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., would authorize immediate pay for all federal employees — including those who have been furloughed — and bar the Trump administration from trying to lay off workers during the shutdown.

The other, from Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., would pay all federal workers for their work from Oct. 1, when the shutdown began, to the date the bill becomes law.

Zelenskyy seeks more European assistance

Associated Press

LONDON — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was in London on Friday for talks with two dozen European leaders who have pledged military help to shield his country from future Russian aggression if a ceasefire stops the more than three-year war.

The meeting hosted by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is also due to assess ways of helping protect Ukraine's power grid from Russia's almost daily drone and missiles attacks as winter approaches, enhancing Ukrainian air defenses and supplying Kyiv with longer-range missiles that can strike deep inside Russia.

The talks aim to step up pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin, adding momentum to measures in recent days that have included a new round of sanctions from the United States and European countries that take aim at Russia's vital oil and gas export earnings.

Putin has so far resisted efforts to push him into negotiating a peace settlement with Zelenskyy and has argued that the motives for Russia's all-out in-

vasion of its smaller neighbor are legitimate. Russia has also been adept at finding loopholes in Western sanctions.

Starmer greeted Zelenskyy with a hug on the doorstep of 10 Downing St. The two leaders were to hold a lunchtime meeting before being joined by other leaders in the afternoon.

"We've got really important business to go through," Starmer said to Zelenskyy.

Putin's unbudging stance has exasperated Western leaders. "Time and again we offer Putin the chance to end his needless invasion, to stop the killing and recall his troops, but he repeatedly rejects those proposals and any chance of peace," Starmer said in written comments ahead of Friday's meeting.

Ukraine's Western allies need to resolve some big questions about the future part they will play as Europe's biggest conflict since World War II heads toward its fourth anniversary next February.

The uncertainties include how they can help fund war-devastated Ukraine, what post-war security guarantees they might be able to provide it and

nail down what Washington's commitments to future security arrangements might be.

Zelenskyy and Starmer are expected to be joined at the Foreign Office in London by NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof. About 20 other leaders are to join via video link in the meeting of the group dubbed the Coalition of the Willing.

Details of the potential future "reassurance force" are scant, and the London meeting seeks to further develop the idea — even though any peace agreement appears at the moment to be only a distant possibility.

The force is likely to consist of air and naval support rather than Western troops deployed in Ukraine, according to officials. U.K. Defense Secretary John Healey says it would be "a force to help secure the skies, secure the seas, a force to help train Ukrainian forces to defend their nation."

Its headquarters is expected to rotate between Paris and London for 12-month periods.

The war has shown no sign of

subsiding, as a front-line war of attrition kills thousands of soldiers on both sides while drone and missile barrages cause damage in rear areas.

The Russian Defense Ministry claimed Friday that over the past week its forces have captured 10 Ukrainian villages. The small conquests are part of Russia's slow but steady slog to envelop the remaining Ukrainian strongholds in the Donetsk region from both the north and the south and create footholds for pressing further west into the Dnipropetrovsk region.

The Defense Ministry also said its forces downed 111 Ukrainian drones over several regions overnight, with debris causing damage to homes and infrastructure.

One drone hit an apartment building in Krasnogorsk on Moscow's northwestern edge, injuring five people, including a child, according to Andrei Vorobyov, the governor of the Moscow region.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyakin reported that air defenses downed three drones heading to Moscow, which forced flights to be suspended at two airports.

Lithuania: Russian military planes violated airspace

Associated Press

VILNIUS, Lithuania — Russian military planes briefly violated Lithuania's airspace Thursday evening, the Lithuanian president said, condemning what he called a blatant breach of the territorial integrity of his European Union and NATO-member country.

Lithuania's foreign ministry planned to summon Russian Embassy representatives in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius to protest the violation, President Gitanas Nausėda said in a post on the social media platform X.

"This is a blatant breach of international law and territorial integrity of Lithuania," Nausėda wrote on X. "Once again, it confirms the importance of strengthening European air defense readiness."

Baltic nations already have been on heightened alert over neighboring Russia's aggression on Ukraine.

And in recent weeks, a series of mysterious drone incidents and airspace violations by Russian war planes have fueled concerns that Russian President Vladimir Putin might be

testing NATO's defensive reflexes.

Some leaders have accused Putin of waging a hybrid war in Europe. Moscow denies probing NATO's defenses.

The Lithuanian armed forces said in a statement that about 6 p.m. local time on Thursday, two Russian military aircraft flew into Lithuanian airspace for about 800 yards. The SU-30 aircraft and IL-78 refueling aircraft flew away after roughly 18 seconds.

The Lithuanian armed forces believe the military planes

might have been conducting refueling exercises in the neighboring Russian exclave of Kaliningrad.

Two Spanish fighter jets, which had been doing NATO air policing missions, were scrambled and flew out to the area.

Earlier on Thursday, Nausėda attended a summit at the European Council building in Brussels where EU leaders endorsed a plan to ensure that Europe can defend itself against an outside attack by the end of the decade. The plan is dubbed Readiness 2030.

Vance criticizes Israeli vote on West Bank

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Vice President JD Vance criticized Thursday Israel's parliament vote on West Bank annexation, saying it amounted to an "insult" and went against the Trump administration policies and efforts to ensure that the U.S.-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas holds in Gaza.

The Israeli parliament on Wednesday narrowly passed a symbolic preliminary vote in support of annexing the occupied West Bank — an apparent attempt to embarrass Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu while Vance was still in the country.

The bill was sponsored by hard-liners, with only one member of Netanyahu's Likud Party joining them. With Netanyahu opposed, the bill is unlikely to pass the multiple votes it requires to become law.

While many members of Netanyahu's coalition, including the Likud, support annexation,

they have backed off those calls since President Donald Trump said last month that he opposes such a move. The United Arab Emirates, a key U.S. and Israeli ally in the push to peace in Gaza, has said any annexation by Israel would be a "red line."

On the tarmac of Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport before departing Israel, Vance said that if the Knesset vote was a "political stunt, then it is a very stupid political stunt."

"I personally take some insult to it," Vance said. "The policy of the Trump administration is that the West Bank will not be annexed by Israel."

The Palestinians seek the West Bank, captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war, as part of a future independent state. Israeli annexation of the territory would all but bury hopes for a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians — the hoped-for outcome by most of the world.

Earlier this week, Vance an-

nounced the opening of a civilian military coordination center in southern Israel where some 200 U.S. troops are working alongside the Israeli military and delegations from other countries planning the stabilization and reconstruction of Gaza.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Marco Rubio told journalists at Joint Base Andrews late Wednesday that he plans to visit the center and appoint a Foreign Service official to work alongside the top U.S. military commander in the Middle East, Vice Adm. Brad Cooper.

The U.S. is seeking support from other allies, especially Gulf Arab nations, to create an international stabilization force to be deployed to Gaza and train a Palestinian force.

"We'd like to see Palestinian police forces in Gaza that are not Hamas and that are going to do a good job, but those still have to be trained and equipped," he said.

Rubio, who was expected to

meet with Netanyahu later Thursday, has also criticized Israeli far-right lawmakers' efforts to push for annexation of the West Bank.

Israeli media referred to the nonstop parade of American officials visiting to ensure Israel holds up its side of the fragile ceasefire as "Bibi-sitting." The term, utilizing Netanyahu's nickname of Bibi, refers to an old campaign ad when Netanyahu positioned himself as the "Bibi-sitter" whom voters could trust with their kids.

In the first medical evacuation since the ceasefire began on Oct. 10, the head of the World Health Organization said Thursday the group has evacuated 41 critical patients and 145 companions out of the Gaza Strip.

In a statement posted to X, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called on nations to show solidarity and help some 15,000 patients who are still waiting for approval to receive medical care outside Gaza.

TV ads spur Trump to end trade talks with Canada

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump announced he's ending "all trade negotiations" with Canada because of a television ad opposing U.S. tariffs that he said misstated the facts and called "egregious behavior" aimed at influencing U.S. court decisions.

The post on Trump's social media site came Thursday night after Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said he aims to double his country's exports to countries outside the U.S. because of the threat posed by Trump's tariffs. Trump's call for an abrupt end to negotiations could further inflame trade tensions that already have been building between the two neighboring countries.

Trump posted, "The Ronald Reagan Foundation has just announced that Canada has fraudulently used an advertisement, which is FAKE, featuring Ronald Reagan speaking negatively about Tariffs."

Earlier Thursday, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute posted on X that an ad created by the government of Ontario "misrepresents the 'Presidential Radio Address to the Nation on Free and Fair Trade' dated April 25, 1987." It added that Ontario did not receive permission "to use and edit the remarks."

The foundation said it is "reviewing legal options in this matter" and invited the public to watch the unedited video of Reagan's address.

Speculation of Kim meeting flares ahead of Trump visit

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — When President Donald Trump visited South Korea in 2019, he made a surprise trip to the border with North Korea for an impromptu meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to revive faltering nuclear talks.

Now, as Trump is set to make his first trip to Asia since his return to office, speculation is rife that he may seek to meet Kim again during his stop in South Korea. If realized, it would mark the two's first summit since their last meeting at the Korean border village of Panmunjom in June 2019, and fourth overall.

Many experts say prospects for another impromptu meeting are dim this time but predict

Trump and Kim could eventually sit down for talks again in coming months. Others dispute that, saying a quick resumption of diplomacy isn't likely given how much has changed since 2019 — both the size of North Korea's nuclear program and its foreign policy leverage.

Trump has repeatedly expressed a desire to restore diplomacy with Kim as he boasted of his relationship with the North Korean leader and called him "a smart guy."

Ending his silence on Trump's outreach, Kim last month said he held "good personal memories" of Trump and suggested he could return to talks if the U.S. drops "its delusional obsession with denuclearization" of North Korea.

Trump backs off planned surge of agents into San Francisco

Associated Press

ALAMEDA, Calif. — President Donald Trump said Thursday that he's backing off a planned surge of federal agents into San Francisco to quell crime after speaking to the mayor and several prominent business leaders who said they're working hard to clean up the city.

Trump had been threatening to send the National Guard to San Francisco, a move Mayor Daniel Lurie and Gov. Gavin Newsom said was unnecessary because crime is on the decline. Separately, U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents began arriving at a Coast Guard base in the region earlier Thursday for a possible ramp up of immigration enforcement, a move that drew several hundred protesters.

It was not clear if the presi-

dent was canceling a National Guard deployment or calling off immigration enforcement by CBP agents. At his news conference, Lurie said he could not clarify and could only repeat what the president had told him. Lurie said Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem "reaffirmed" Trump's commitment on Thursday morning. DHS oversees CBP agents as well as U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"The Federal Government was preparing to 'surge' San Francisco, California, on Saturday, but friends of mine who live in the area called last night to ask me not to go forward with the surge," Trump posted on social media. "I spoke to Mayor Lurie last night and he asked, very nicely, that I give him a chance to see if he can turn it around."

Specifically, Trump said he heard from Salesforce CEO Mark Benioff and Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang. He said the federal government could handle crime better than city leaders, and he indicated he could still send agents in the future.

At an afternoon news conference, Lurie said he welcomes the city's "continued partnership" with the Drug Enforcement Agency and other federal authorities to get illegal narcotics off the streets and contribute to falling crime rates.

Newsom's office said on X: "Trump has finally, for once, listened to reason — and heard what we have been saying from the beginning. The Bay Area is a shining example of what makes California so special, and any attempt to erode our progress would damage the work we've done."

US inflation still elevated

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. inflation remained elevated last month as gas prices jumped while the cost of rents cooled, painting a mixed picture of the expenses consumers are facing in a murky economy where growth appears steady but hiring slow.

Consumer prices increased 3% in September from a year earlier, the Labor Department said Friday, the highest since January and up from 2.9% in August. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories core prices also rose 3%, down from 3.1% in the previous month.

On a monthly basis, price increases slowed: They rose 0.3% in September, down from 0.4% the previous month. Core inflation also cooled to 0.2%, from 0.3% in August.

The figures show that inflation continues to rise more slowly than many economists expected when President Donald Trump imposed sweeping tariffs in April. Some of those duties were later reduced as part of trade deals, while many companies have only passed on part of the tariff cost to consumers out of concern that doing so would reduce sales. Businesses may shift more costs to consumers in the coming months if the duties appear permanent.

The smaller increase will come as a bit of relief to Federal Reserve officials, who have signaled that they will cut their key interest rate at their meeting next week for the second time this year.

The inflation report was issued more than a week late because of the government shutdown, now in its fourth week. The Trump administration recalled some Labor Department employees to produce the figures because they are used to set the annual cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security recipients. Friday that increase was set at 2.8% for 2026.

Trump declares disasters in Alaska and other states but denies Ill., Vt., Md.

Associated Press

President Donald Trump approved major disaster declarations for Alaska, Nebraska, North Dakota and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe late Wednesday, while denying requests from Vermont, Illinois and Maryland and leaving other states still waiting for answers.

The decisions fell mostly along party lines, with Trump touting on social media Wednesday that he had "won BIG" in Alaska in the last three presidential elections and that it was his "honor" to deliver for the "incredible Patriots" of Missouri, a state he also won three times.

The disaster declarations authorize the Federal Emergency

Management Agency to support recipients with federal financial assistance to repair public infrastructure damaged by disasters and, in some cases, provide survivors money for repairs and temporary housing.

While Trump has approved more disaster declarations than he's denied this year, he has also repeatedly floated the idea of "phasing out" FEMA, saying he wants states to take more responsibility for disaster response and recovery. States already take the lead in disasters, but depend on federal assistance when the needs exceed what they can manage alone.

The states approved for disaster declarations include Alaska, which filed an expedited request after experiencing

back-to-back storms this month that wrecked coastal villages, displaced 2,000 residents and killed at least one person. Trump approved a 100% cost share of disaster-related expenses for 90 days.

North Dakota and Nebraska will also receive public assistance for August severe weather, and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe in Minnesota was approved for both public and individual assistance for a June storm that felled thousands of trees across its tribal lands.

Trump denied four requests, including Maryland's appeal for reconsideration after the state was denied a disaster declaration for May flooding that severely impacted the state's two westernmost counties.

Trail Blazers coach, Heat player charged

NBA figures arrested in sprawling sports betting, Mafia-backed poker schemes

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The head coach of the Portland Trail Blazers and a player for the Miami Heat were arrested Thursday along with more than 30 other people in a takedown of two sprawling gambling operations that authorities said leaked inside information about NBA athletes and rigged poker games backed by Mafia families.

Portland coach Chauncey Billups was charged with participating in a conspiracy to fix high-stakes card games tied to La Cosa Nostra organized crime families that cheated unsuspecting gamblers out of at least \$7 million. Heat guard Terry Rozier was accused in a separate scheme of exploiting private information about players to win bets on NBA games.

The two indictments unsealed in New York create a massive cloud for the NBA — which opened its season this week — and show how certain types of wagers are vulnerable to massive fraud in the growing, multibillion-dollar legal sports-betting industry. Joseph Nocella, the top federal prosecutor for the Eastern District of New York, called it “one of the most brazen sports corruption schemes since online sports betting became widely legalized in the United States.”

Both men face money laundering and wire fraud conspiracy charges. Also charged was former NBA assistant coach and player Damon Jones, who stands accused of participating in both schemes.

“The fraud is mind boggling,”

FBI Director Kash Patel told reporters. “We’re talking about tens of millions of dollars in fraud and theft and robbery across a multiyear investigation.”

The alleged fraud, however, paled in comparison to the riches the athletes earned on the court. Billups, who was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame last year, had about \$106 million in earnings over his 17-year career. Rozier made about \$160 million in his stops in Boston, Miami and Charlotte.

Billups and Rozier have been placed on leave from their teams, according to the NBA, which said it is cooperating with authorities.

Hours after his arrest, Rozier appeared in a federal court in Orlando, Fla., wearing a Charlotte Hornets sweatshirt, handcuffs and shackles. Billups appeared before a judge in Portland, Ore. Both men were ordered released from custody on certain conditions.

Billups’ attorney, Chris Heywood, issued a statement Thursday evening denying the allegations, calling his client a “man of integrity.” “To believe that Chauncey Billups did what the federal government is accusing him of is to believe that he would risk his Hall of Fame legacy, his reputation and his freedom. He would not jeopardize those things for anything, let alone a card game,” Heywood said.

Rozier’s lawyer, Jim Trusty, said that his client is “not a gambler” and “looks forward to winning this fight.”

Roughly 20 other defendants appeared in federal court in

Brooklyn, where most of them pleaded not guilty. Many of those charged with violent crimes or with lengthy criminal records and ties to organized crime were detained.

Mafia profited

The poker scheme lured unwitting players into rigged games with the chance to compete against former professional basketball players like Billups and Jones. The games were fixed using sophisticated cheating technology, such as altered card-shuffling machines, hidden cameras in poker chip trays, special sunglasses and even X-ray equipment built into the table to read cards, authorities allege.

The scheme often made use of illegal poker games run by New York crime families that required them to share a portion of their proceeds with the Gambino, Genovese and Bonnano crime families, according to court papers. Members of those families, in turn, also helped commit violent acts, including assault, extortion and robbery, to ensure repayment of debts and the continued success of the operation, officials said in court documents.

Athletes accused

In the sports betting scheme, Rozier and other defendants are accused of accessing private information from NBA players or coaches that could affect a player’s performance and giving that information to others so they could place wagers. Players sometimes altered their performance or took them-

selves out of games early to rig prop bets — a type of wager that allows gamblers to bet on whether a player will exceed a certain statistic, such as a total number of points, rebounds or assists, according to the indictment.

In one instance, Rozier, while playing for the Charlotte Hornets in 2023, told people he was planning to leave the game early with a supposed injury, allowing gamblers to place wagers earning them tens of thousands of dollars, authorities said. That game against the New Orleans Pelicans raised eyebrows at the time. Rozier played the first 9 minutes and 36 seconds of the game before leaving, citing a foot issue. He did not play again that season.

Posts still online from March 23, 2023, show that some bettors were furious with sportsbooks that evening when it became evident that Rozier was not going to return to the game after the first quarter, with many turning to social media to say that something “shady” had happened regarding the prop bets involving his stats for that night.

The indictments contain the descriptions of several unnamed NBA players whose injury status and availability for certain games were the source of betting activity. Those players are not accused of any wrongdoing, and there is no indication that they would have even known what was being said about their status for those games. Those players include LeBron James, Anthony Davis and Damian Lillard.

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Herbert throws for 3 TDs in Chargers win

Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Four days after a humbling loss, the Los Angeles Chargers bounced back in a big way.

Justin Herbert threw for 227 yards and three touchdowns in a 37-10 win over the Minnesota Vikings on Thursday night, ending a skid of three losses in four games that knocked them from atop the AFC West.

"It was a big win for us, a big opportunity for us to go correct some more mistakes," said Herbert, who also rushed for 62 yards.

The Chargers (5-3) won for the first time since Week 6 at Miami, after coming off a resounding 38-24 defeat to the AFC South-leading Indianapolis Colts at SoFi Stadium.

"The team really responded," Chargers coach Jim Harbaugh said. "They went back to work after Sunday and they set their minds to it that they weren't going to be denied."

The Chargers scored 30 points or more for the first time and didn't punt.

"If we don't beat ourselves, I feel like we're a hard football team to beat," said Ladd McConkey, who caught a 27-yard TD pass from Herbert that made it 21-3 late in the first half.

Keenan Allen had four catches for 44 yards and joined Hall of Famer Antonio Gates as the only players in Chargers history with 11,000 receiving yards.

The Vikings (3-4) lost consecutive games for the first time this season, with both coming in a five-day span. They managed just 12 first downs to 29 for the Chargers, were 3 of 11 on third down and had the ball for just 21 minutes.

"This is not a bury-the-tape kind of time for our organization," Vikings coach Kevin O'Connell said. "This is a watch it, view it, own it — every coach and every player, and it starts with me. I did not have our team prepared to play."

Carson Wentz started on short rest in place of quarterback J.J. McCarthy, who missed his fifth straight game with an ankle injury.

Wentz was 15 of 27 for 144 yards with one touchdown and an interception while getting sacked five times. He played through a left shoulder injury that he aggravated multiple times.

"Hats off to their defense on a short week," Wentz said. "Scheme-wise, they have some good players. We were banged up up front. I thought guys com-

peted their tails off. I could always get the ball out quicker and make some plays and make decisions faster, but the defense made it tough."

The Chargers had chances to score on all four of their possessions in the first half, and they led 21-3 at the break. They missed only on Cameron Dicker's 49-yard field-goal attempt that went wide left after holder JK Scott had to go up and get a bad snap. Dicker had made 46 of 47 attempts at home.

Oronde Gadsden II caught an 8-yard TD pass and Kimani Vidal scored on a 3-yard run to go with McConkey's score. Vidal finished with 117 yards rushing.

Scott salvaged another bad snap on Dicker's 49-yard field goal early in the third that extended the lead to 24-3.

After the Vikings were forced to punt, Herbert was intercepted at the Chargers 26. That led to the Vikings' lone touchdown, helped by two Chargers penalties.

Will Reichard's 32-yard field goal was nullified when the Chargers were penalized for having too many men on the field. The Vikings went for it on fourth-and-9 and Wentz nearly got sacked, but Chargers cornerback Benjamin St-Juste was

penalized for illegal contact. That kept the drive alive and Wentz hit Jordan Addison for a 4-yard score to make it 24-10.

The Chargers answered early in the fourth on Herbert's 6-yard pass over the middle to Tre' Harris.

The Vikings were penalized for too many players on the field and the Chargers overcame a false-start penalty by Foster Sarell.

Rookie RJ Mickens had his first career interception, picking off Wentz to end Minnesota's first possession in the fourth.

The Chargers caught a couple of breaks on their way to taking a 7-0 lead.

Isaiah Rodgers' apparent pick-6 of Herbert was reversed and ruled an incomplete pass.

Herbert scrambled up the middle, dodging two defenders in the backfield and two at the line of scrimmage, to get the Chargers to third-and-goal. On the next play, Gadsden scored before the rookie was penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Vikings running back Aaron Jones returned from a hamstring injury that kept him out the last four games. He rushed for 15 yards on five carries and had two catches for 15 yards.

As Dodgers eye series, Roberts hopes he's not villain

Associated Press

TORONTO — Asked whether he felt like a villain, Dave Roberts tilted his head and widened his eyes, startled that he was being categorized as some baseball equivalent of Darth Vader or Lex Luthor.

His Los Angeles Dodgers have been criticized for spending \$509 million on its big league roster, more than seven times the \$69 million of the big league-low Miami Marlins. The affable manager had yelled to LA fans after last week's National League pennant clincher:

"They said the Dodgers are ruining baseball. Let's get four more wins and really ruin baseball!"

"I was just having a little fun with people that said that about the Dodgers," he explained Thursday, a day ahead of the World Series opener against the Toronto Blue Jays, "but I hope I'm not the villain."

Los Angeles is the first defending champion to reach the World Series since the 2009 Philadelphia Phillies, who lost to the New York Yankees. No team has won consecutive titles since

three in a row by the 1998-2000 Yankees, and no NL team has achieved the feat since Cincinnati's Big Red Machine in 1975-76.

"The one thing we cannot do is look over there and say that is Goliath," Blue Jays manager John Schneider said. "That is a beatable baseball team that has its flaws, and that has its really, really good strengths. How we expose each of them will determine who wins the series."

Led at the plate by Shohei Ohtani, Freddie Freeman and Mookie Betts, and on the mound

by Ohtani, Blake Snell, Tyler Glasnow and Yoshinobu Yamamoto, the Dodgers are 9-1 in the postseason despite starting every series on the road. They are 14-1 over the past month.

"Just to win once is hard and now to be this close to being able to do it two times in a row, I don't know if I've really grasped the weight of it," Freeman said. "Last week you're starting to get the word dynasty thrown out and things of that nature. And if that's being thrown out, that means the organization's doing a really, really good job."

Gilgeous-Alexander scores 55 in Thunder win

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored a career-high 55 points as the Oklahoma City Thunder won their second straight double-overtime game to begin the season, beating the Indiana Pacers 141-135 on Thursday night in a rematch of last season's NBA Finals teams.

The reigning MVP reached 50 for the fifth time, tying Russell Westbrook for most by a Thunder player. Ajay Mitchell added a career-best 26 points for Oklahoma City, which outlasted Houston on Tuesday in its season opener.

Gilgeous-Alexander fueled the decisive flurry to open the

second overtime. The officials also granted a late timeout to Oklahoma City when it appeared Obi Toppin had stolen the inbound pass underneath the Thunder basket.

Gilgeous-Alexander was 15 of 31 from the floor and 23 of 26 from the free throw line while adding eight rebounds and eight assists. Aaron Wiggins finished with 23 points and nine rebounds. Isaiah Hartenstein grabbed 14 rebounds.

Bennedict Mathurin had 36 points and 11 rebounds for the Pacers before fouling out in the first overtime. Pascal Siakam had 32 points and 15 rebounds for Indiana, which is without two-time All-Star guard Tyrese

Haliburton and backup point guard T.J. McConnell, then lost guard Andrew Nembhard with a sore shoulder in the first half.

Warriors 137, Nuggets 131, OT: Stephen Curry scored 42 points, including a game-tying 3-pointer late in regulation, to help Golden State overcome Aaron Gordon's career-high 50 points and beat Denver.

The Warriors went on a 12-2 run in overtime that started with a corner 3-pointer from Al Horford and featured a back-breaking one from Jimmy Butler that made it 133-127 with 41 seconds to play as Golden State got off to a 2-0 start this season.

Gordon broke Alex English's franchise record for a season

opener of 47 points set in 1985 against Golden State. Gordon's 103-pointers tied Terry Rozier's record set in 2020 for the most made in a season opener.

It was a dramatic end to regulation with Gordon hitting a tiebreaking 3-pointer with 25.7 seconds to play only to watch Curry tie it 4.3 seconds later with a long 3 of his own. Nikola Jokic then missed a shot in the lane just before the buzzer, sending the game to overtime, where the Warriors took control.

Jokic finished with 21 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists to join Oscar Robertson as the only players with four triple-doubles in season openers.

Jordan laughs at NASCAR's claims as antitrust feud barrels toward trial

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — NASCAR and two of its teams returned to court Thursday after two failed days of mediation and resumed their bitter antitrust fight with a hearing that included team owner Michael Jordan laughing in disbelief at some of the testimony as the two sides hurtle toward a trial.

"Today's hearing confirmed the facts of NASCAR's monopolistic practices and showed NASCAR for who they are — retaliatory bullies who would rather focus on personal attacks and distract from the facts," Jeffrey Kessler, who represents the two teams, said afterward. "My clients have never been more united and committed to ensuring a fair and competitive sport for all teams, partners, drivers and fans. We're going to trial to hold NASCAR accountable."

The lawsuit was filed a year ago by 23XI Racing, co-owned by Jordan and three-time Daytona 500 winner Denny Hamlin, and Bob Jenkins-owned Front

Row Racing. They are the only two organizations out of 15 to refuse to sign new charter agreements following more than two years of negotiations. Charters are at the heart of NASCAR's business model, guaranteeing revenue and access to weekly races, and without them, both teams say they will almost surely go out of business.

Other teams have called for a settlement to clear the air and move the stock car series forward, but three mediation sessions have apparently gone nowhere and the hearing laid bare how far apart they are. The trial is scheduled for Dec. 1.

U.S. District Judge Kenneth Bell and Jeffrey Mishkin, a former executive vice president and chief legal officer of the NBA, both participated in mediation Monday and Tuesday and Bell opened the session by thanking both sides for working in good faith during the sessions. NASCAR wants Bell to throw the lawsuit out and the hearing focused on the series' bid to narrow the scope of dam-

ages the two teams say they are owed.

NASCAR has accused 23XI and FRM of manipulating other teams and conducting themselves with "classic cartel behavior, ultimately because they received less than they would have" under charter extensions signed late last year. It struggled to make those arguments Thursday.

NASCAR repeatedly insisted that teams are free to compete in both IndyCar and F1, failing to disclose that entry into F1 is nearly impossible and the financials of IndyCar are simply not even close to the value of competing in the stock car series. Kessler likened a NASCAR move to IndyCar to a Major League Baseball team moving to the minors.

"Experts found that the (IndyCar) prize money and TV ratings were too low to make them a minor league team," Kessler argued. "Michael Jordan, if you put a gun to his head and said you have to join IndyCar, it better be a pretty big gun."

Oklahoma installs pads after injury

Associated Press

Oklahoma is installing padding around Owen Field after receiver Keontez Lewis ran headfirst into a brick wall three weeks ago.

A school spokesman confirmed padding will be added to both end-zone walls and the sideline walls outside the team bench areas in time for Saturday's game between No. 13 Oklahoma and No. 8 Ole Miss.

Lewis was injured in the first quarter of Oklahoma's 44-0 win over Kent State on Oct. 4. A pass by Michael Hawkins Jr. was a bit overthrown, and Lewis' momentum took him into an unpadded section of the wall behind the end zone. He was carted off, prompting concerns from fans.

Lewis played the next week against Texas, but missed Saturday's 26-7 victory over South Carolina.

He is listed on the SEC injury report as doubtful for this Saturday's game.

Streaking Islanders overwhelm Red Wings

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Emil Heinemann scored twice, while Tony DeAngelo, Mathew Barzal and Simon Holmstrom each had a goal and an assist as the New York Islanders topped the Detroit Red Wings 7-2 on Thursday night.

Jean-Gabriel Pageau and Kyle Palmieri also scored for the Islanders, who have won four in a row after losing their first three to open the season. Anders Lee added three assists and David Rittich made 29 saves.

Dylan Larkin and Jonatan Berggren scored for Detroit, and Cam Talbot finished with 23 saves as the Red Wings dropped their second straight.

Blackhawks 3, Lightning 2: Ryan Donato scored two more goals to help Chicago beat slumping Tampa Bay.

Frank Nazar had a goal and an assist as Chicago won for the fourth time in five games. Teuvo Teravainen had two assists, and Spencer Knight made 29 saves.

Donato has five goals during a four-game scoring streak. The veteran forward scored a career-high 31 goals last season.

Sharks 6, Rangers 5, OT: Macklin Celebrini had his second career hat trick and set up Will Smith's goal in overtime as part of a five-point game, and San Jose picked up its first win of the season by beating New York.

Celebrini scored in the first period, then twice in the second to become the 15th player in NHL history with multiple hat tricks before turning 20. In the third, he had the secondary assist on Will Smith's goal that came a second after a lengthy 5-on-3 power play expired.

Smith scored 1:38 into 3-on-3 OT off a pass from Celebrini, who was stopped by Igor Shesterkin on a chance just before.

Senators 2, Flyers 1: Linus Ullmark made 22 saves after allowing a goal on Philadelphia's first shot and Ottawa rallied for

the win.

Tyson Foerster beat Ullmark 29 seconds for Philadelphia only goal. Late in the game, Ullmark stopped Travis Konecny's slap shot.

Michael Amadio tied it midway through the first, and Ottawa took the lead early in the second on Olle Lycksell's first goal with the Senators.

Ducks 7, Bruins 5: Troy Terry snapped a tie in the third period, and Anaheim held off Boston for a victory.

Mikael Granlund had two goals and three assists for Anaheim in its second straight win. Terry and Jacob Trouba each had a goal and an assist, and Nikita Nesterenko had four assists.

Boston dropped its sixth straight game after opening Marco Sturm's coaching tenure with three wins in a row.

Morgan Geekie scored twice for the Bruins, and David Pastrnak had a goal and an assist. Charlie McAvoy had two assists.

Penguins 5, Panthers 3: Sidney Crosby had two goals and an assist for his fourth multipoint game of the season, Erik Karlsson and Evgeni Malkin each added two assists and Pittsburgh topped Florida for its fourth consecutive win.

Crosby now has five goals in a four-game goal-scoring streak, his longest since a four-game stretch late in the 2021-22 season. Ben Kindel, Rickard Rakell and Connor Dewar also had goals for the Penguins, who improved to 6-2-0 and are off to their best start since 2019-20.

Brad Marchand had two goals and Sam Reinhart also scored for Florida, which got two-assist nights from Seth Jones and Mackie Samoskevich.

It was the first time that Crosby and Marchand both had two or more goals in the same game. Crosby is now two points away from joining Detroit's Gordie Howe and Steve Yzerman,

along with fellow Penguins legend Mario Lemieux, as the only players with at least 1,700 career points for one franchise.

Predators 2, Canucks 1: Cole Smith scored at 5:09 of the third period to lead Nashville to a victory over Vancouver.

Ryan O'Reilly also scored and Juuse Saros made 21 saves for the Predators, who snapped a four-game losing streak.

Max Sasson scored and Thatcher Demko made 33 saves for Vancouver, losers of two straight.

Standing in front of the Vancouver net, Smith tipped Justin Barron's shot from the left point through Demko and just across the goal line for his second of the season.

Saros made his best save of the game with three seconds remaining in the game on a one-timer from Brock Boeser from the low slot and Demko pulled for an extra attacker. He also denied former Predator Kiefer Sherwood on a short-handed breakaway at 2:57 of the second.

Mammoth 7, Blues 4: Logan Cooley had a natural hat trick and added an assist — in the first period — in Utah's victory over St. Louis.

Cooley had his first career four-point game and second NHL hat trick to help Utah run its winning streak to five.

Clayton Keller scored twice, including an empty-netter, and had an assist. Nick Schmaltz had a goal and an assist and Ian Cole also scored for the Mammoth. Karel Vejmelka made 16 saves and Dylan Guenther and JJ Peterka each had three assists.

Pius Suter, Pavel Buchnevich, Nathan Walker and Philip Broberg scored for the Blues.

Kraken 3, Jets 0: Joey Daccord made 32 saves and Seattle beat Winnipeg for its only regulation victory on a six-game trip.

The Kraken ended the Jets' winning streak at five. Seattle had an overtime victory at To-

ronto along with two regulation losses and two extra-time losses on the trip.

Jaden Schwartz scored twice — the second into an empty net — and joined Daccord in assisting on Jordan Eberle's empty-netter.

Schwartz opened the scoring at 2:28 of the second period off a rebound.

Connor Hellebuyck made 25 saves for Winnipeg.

Oilers 6, Canadiens 5: Vasily Podkolzin beat goalie Sam Montembeault with a backhand with 1:09 left and Edmonton overcame a late two-goal deficit to edge Montreal.

Podkolzin scored for the first time this season. Leon Draisaitl and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins had power-play goals in a 58-second span midway through the third period to tie it.

David Tomasek, Adam Henrique and Andrew Mangiapane also scored for Edmonton. Calvin Pickard made 22 saves.

Kings 3, Stars 2, OT: Adrian Kempe scored 37 seconds into overtime and Los Angeles beat Dallas, handing the slumping Stars their fourth consecutive loss.

Darcy Kuemper made 29 saves, and former Stars Corey Perry and Cody Ceci also scored as the Kings won in regulation for the first time this season.

Wyatt Johnston and Jason Robertson scored power-play goals for the Stars, and Johnston also had an assist. Jake Oettinger stopped 22 shots.

Hurricanes 5, Avalanche 4: Seth Jarvis had a short-handed goal and led off the shootout with the only goal in the tie-breaker, helping Carolina beat Colorado.

Eric Robinson, Sebastian Aho and Logan Stankoven also scored as the Hurricanes built a 4-1 lead.

Valeri Nichushkin scored twice for Colorado, tying it at 4 on a power play with 5:11 left regulation. Parker Kelly and Martin Necas also scored.