

Austin: Stopgap will negatively affect DOD

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—Passage of a six-month temporary spending bill would have widespread and devastating effects on the Defense Department, Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin said in a letter to key members of Congress on Sunday.

Austin said that passing a continuing resolution that caps spending at 2024 levels, rather than taking action on the proposed 2025 budget will hurt thousands of defense programs, and damage military recruiting just as it is beginning to recover after the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Asking the department to compete with (China), let alone manage conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, while under a lengthy CR, ties our hands behind our back while expecting us to be agile and to accelerate progress,” said Austin in the letter to leaders of the House and Senate appropriations committees.

Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson has teed up a vote this week on a bill that would keep the federal government funded for six more months. The measure aims to garner support from his more conservative GOP members by also requiring states to obtain proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate or passport, when registering a person to vote.

Congress needs to approve a stop-gap spending bill before the end of the budget year on Sept. 30 to avoid a government shutdown just a few weeks before voters go to the polls and elect the next president.

Austin said the stop-gap measure would cut defense spending by more than \$6 billion compared to the 2025 spending proposal. And it would take money from key new priorities while overfunding programs that no longer need it.

Under a continuing resolution, new projects or programs

can’t be started. Austin said that passing the temporary bill would stall more than \$4.3 billion in research and development projects and delay 135 new military housing and construction projects totaling nearly \$10 billion.

It also would slow progress on a number of key nuclear, shipbuilding, high-tech drone and other weapons programs. Many of those projects are in an array of congressional districts, and could also have an impact on local residents and jobs.

Since the bill would not fund legally required pay raises for troops and civilians, the department would have to find other cuts to offset them.

Those cuts could halt enlistment bonuses, delay training for National Guard and Reserve forces, limit flying hours and other training for active-duty troops and impede the replacement of weapons and other equipment that has been pulled

from Pentagon stocks and sent to Ukraine.

Going forward with the continuing resolution, said Austin, will “subject service members and their families to unnecessary stress, empower our adversaries, misalign billions of dollars, damage our readiness, and impede our ability to react to emergent events.”

Noting that there have been 48 continuing resolutions during 14 of the last 15 fiscal years—for a total of nearly 1,800 days—Austin said Congress must break the pattern of inaction because the U.S. military can’t compete with China “with our hands tied behind our back every fiscal year.”

Johnson’s bill is not expected to get support in the Democratic-controlled Senate, if it even makes it that far.

But Congress will have to pass some type of temporary measure by Sept. 30 in order to avoid a shutdown.

Marines in mortar, rocket training go virtual to cut risks

BY LYDIA GORDON

Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps is introducing virtual training simulators for infantrymen whose work subjects them to repeated blasts, which growing research indicates is a risk factor for brain injury and suicide.

The indoor marksmanship trainers at bases in California, North Carolina and Okinawa were previously limited to service rifles, pistols and machine guns. But soon they will include the M252 60 mm mortar and the M3A1 shoulder-fired rocket system, known as the MAAWS.

The M224 81 mm mortar has

been used in virtual training since last year.

The service has gone to great lengths to make sure the training isn’t merely a video game. The equipment imitates the look, weight and feel of familiar systems, Marine Corps officials said.

“Marines bring their real MAAWS from the armory, and the drop-in kit is installed to simulate fires onto the (training system) screens,” said Morgan Blackstock, a spokesperson with the Marine Corps Systems Command. “The mortars are replicas that operate like real mortars and can use real tacti-

cal optics and bipods.”

The goal is to provide Marines with everything but the blast. The added practice supports better performance during live-fire exercises, Blackstock said.

Marines train to the same courses of fire they would perform in a real-life scenario, and the simulator accurately shows on a screen where their rounds would impact, service officials said.

The shift to more virtual training comes amid added scrutiny on Capitol Hill and within the Pentagon focused on the effects of blast overpres-

sure.

A Defense Department report to Congress in July on military suicide incidence broken down by job code found that troops exposed to blasts were among those most likely to take their own lives.

While some MAAWS have already been delivered, the remaining M224 60 mm mortars and MAAWS will be distributed from now through fiscal year 2025, which begins in October.

“Marines use the 81 mm mortars now and are happy with the benefits. The initial feedback for the MAAWS is the same,” Blackstock said.

Houthi rebels claim they shot down another US Reaper drone

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed early Sunday they shot down another American-made MQ-9 drone flying over the country, marking potentially the latest downing of the multimillion-dollar surveillance aircraft. The U.S. launched airstrikes over Houthi-controlled territory afterward, the rebels said.

The U.S. military told The Associated Press it was aware of the claim but has "received no reports" of American military drones being downed over Yemen.

The rebels offered no pictures or video to support the claim as they have in the past, though such material can appear in propaganda footage days later.

However, the Houthis have repeatedly downed General

Atomics MQ-9 Reaper drones in the years since they seized Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in 2014. Those attacks have exponentially increased since the start of the Israel-Hamas war and the Houthis launched their campaign targeting shipping in the Red Sea corridor.

Houthi military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree made the claim in a prerecorded video message. He said the Houthis shot down the drone over Yemen's Marib province, a long-contested area home to key oil and gas fields that's been held by allies of a Saudi-led coalition battling the rebels since 2015.

Saree offered no details on how the rebels down the aircraft. However, Iran has armed the rebels with a surface-to-air missile known as the 358 for years. Iran denies arming the rebels, though Teh-

ran-manufactured weaponry has been found on the battlefield and in seaborne shipments heading to Yemen despite a United Nations arms embargo.

The Houthis "continue to perform their jihadist duties in victory for the oppressed Palestinian people and in defense of dear Yemen," Saree said.

Reapers, which cost around \$30 million apiece, can fly at altitudes up to 50,000 feet and have an endurance of up to 24 hours before needing to land. The aircraft have been flown by both the U.S. military and the CIA over Yemen for years.

After the claim, the Houthis' al-Masirah satellite news channel reported multiple U.S.-led airstrikes near the city of Ibb.

The Americans have been striking Houthi targets intensely since January.

Chinese ships sail near Japan

BY KEISHI KOJA

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japan lodged another protest with China last week, its third in less than two weeks, after it said Chinese coast guard vessels entered waters around Japanese islets in the East China Sea.

Four vessels crossed the 12-mile territorial limit claimed by Japan around the Senkaku Islands between 4 p.m. and 4:06 p.m. Friday, according to a Japan coast guard news release that day.

Japan's Foreign Affairs Ministry then lodged complaints with the Chinese Embassy in Japan and with the Chinese government in Beijing, a ministry spokesman said Monday. Some Japanese officials are required to speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

Two Chinese vessels approached Taisho Island from the northwest and entered the 12-mile limit at 4 p.m. and 4:06 p.m., according to the release.

Meanwhile, the remaining pair of Chinese vessels simultaneously entered the area around Uotsuri Island, also from the northwest.

The Chinese vessels appeared to be armed with deck-mounted machine guns and were met by a larger contingent of Japanese coast guard ships, a Japan coast guard spokesman said Monday.

They warned the Chinese vessels to leave the area using radio and electronic message boards, he said.

"We do not know why the Chinese vessels intruded Japanese waters," he said.

All four vessels left Japanese waters without incident by 6:01 p.m.

China announces naval and air exercises with Russia, spotlights military closeness

Associated Press

BEIJING — China's Defense Ministry on Monday announced joint naval and air drills with Russia starting this month, underscoring the closeness between their militaries as Russia presses its grinding invasion of Ukraine.

The ministry said the "Northern United-2024" exercises would take place in the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk farther north, but gave no details.

It said the naval and air drills aimed to improve strategic cooperation between the two

countries and "strengthen their ability to jointly deal with security threats."

The notice also said the two navies would cruise together in the Pacific, the fifth time they have done so, and together take part in Russia's "Great Ocean-24" exercise. No details were given.

China has refused to criticize Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, now in its third year, and blamed the U.S. and NATO for provoking President Vladimir Putin. While China has not directly provided Russia with arms, it has become a crucial

economic lifeline as a top customer for Russian oil and gas as well as a supplier of electronics and other items with both civilian and military uses.

Russia and China, along with other U.S. critics such as Iran, have aligned their foreign policies to challenge and potentially overturn the Western-led liberal democratic order.

With joint exercises, Russia has sought Chinese help in achieving its long-cherished aim of becoming a Pacific power, while Moscow has backed China's territorial claims in the South China Sea and elsewhere.

Harris, Trump prep for crucial debate

The Washington Post

When Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump meet Tuesday night in Philadelphia, they will have taken dramatically different approaches to preparing for the first — and likely only — presidential debate between the two candidates.

Harris spent most of the past four days ensconced in Pittsburgh's Omni William Penn Hotel for an intensive "debate camp." Her aides created a mock setup to mimic the layout of the debate studio; cast a veteran Donald Trump stand-in to unleash harsh attacks and offensive comments; and put the vice president through hours of rehearsed questions.

About 330 miles to the east, Trump spent much of the weekend at his golf club in Bedminster, N.J., opting for "policy sessions" with aides and allies instead of traditional practice runs. The former president has participated in about a half-dozen of the sessions in recent weeks, reviewing Harris' policy record from her 2020 presidential campaign and practicing how to respond to an expected barrage of attacks on his character.

And yet for all the attacks they have exchanged, Harris and Trump have never met. The event will likely draw the largest audience for either candidate before November, and both sides agree the faceoff, hosted by ABC News, carries unusually high

stakes, given the campaign's compressed timetable and the fact that polls show it is essentially tied. The previous presidential debate, in June, dramatically reshaped the campaign when President Joe Biden stumbled over his words, struggling at times to complete sentences and landing few attacks on Trump. The performance exacerbated long-standing concerns about Biden's age, eventually leading him to abandon his reelection campaign and endorse Harris.

This time, Trump will face an opponent who is expected to be far more formidable on the debate stage and is intent on creating a contrast not only with Biden but with Trump's often-rambling appearances. A former prosecu-

tor who burnished her national profile in Senate hearings by aggressively questioning Trump appointees, Harris planned to deploy the same tactics on Tuesday, firing back at any questionable remarks by Trump and trying to fact-check him in real time.

Those plans have hit a snag of sorts. Harris' aides wanted ABC to change the debate rules so both microphones would remain unmuted throughout the debate, hoping that would encourage Trump to go wildly off-script and let Harris issue sharp retorts. Trump signaled a willingness to unmute the mics, but his aides were determined to keep the rules in place, telling the former president that Harris' team was trying to set him up.

GOP report blames Biden for disastrous Kabul exit

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans on Sunday issued a scathing report on their investigation into the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, blaming the disastrous end of America's longest war on President Joe Biden's administration and minimizing the role of former President Donald Trump, who had signed the withdrawal deal with the Taliban.

The partisan review lays out the final months of military and civilian failures, following Trump's February 2020 withdrawal deal, that allowed America's fundamentalist Taliban enemy to sweep through and conquer all of the country even before the last U.S. officials flew out of Kabul on Aug. 30, 2021. The chaotic exit left behind many American citizens, Afghan battlefield allies, women activists and others at risk from the Taliban.

But the report breaks little new ground as the withdrawal has been exhaustively litigated

through several independent reviews. Previous investigations and analyses have pointed to a systemic failure spanning the last four presidential administrations and concluded that Biden and Trump share the heaviest blame.

Texas Republican Rep. Michael McCaul, who led the investigation as chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said the GOP review reveals that the Biden administration "had the information and opportunity to take necessary steps to plan for the inevitable collapse of the Afghan government, so we could safely evacuate U.S. personnel, American citizens, green card holders, and our brave Afghan allies."

"At each step of the way, however, the administration picked optics over security," he said in a statement.

A White House spokesperson, Sharon Yang, said the Republican report was based on "cherry-picked facts, inaccurate characterizations, and preexisting biases."

Black Caucus issues new DEI guidelines, urges help

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Corporate policies meant to advance diversity and inclusion in the workplace are legal and should be expanded to promote broad economic prosperity and reduce racial wealth inequities, according to a new report by the Congressional Black Caucus.

The report released Monday offers guidelines to corporations on the best practices to adopt to advance diversity, equity and inclusion policies in the workplace and calls on companies to recommit to advance racial justice in the workplace. The document also includes a roadmap for advancing wealth creation in Black communities.

"In the wake of the death of George Floyd, corporations pledged \$50 billion to racial equity and strengthening DEI policies," said Rep. Steven Horsford, D-Nev., chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, in an interview. "DEI is now under attack, but the response from corporate Ameri-

ca has been overwhelming."

The findings follow a December open letter the caucus issued that called on corporations to "reaffirm their commitments to DEI" and work with the CBC to fulfill pledges on racial and economic inequality. The study is the result of dialogue between the caucus and nearly half of Fortune 500 companies, as well as academics and analysts, to develop guidelines that promote DEI and Black economic mobility.

Horsford condemned "far right actors who are attempting to bully corporate America" to back away from DEI policies. He added that it was "erroneous" for corporations to rescind DEI policies because of the Supreme Court's June decision overturning affirmative action programs in college admissions, which did not directly address corporate DEI policies. Since the ruling, more than a dozen Republican attorneys general have sent letters to Fortune 500 corporations threatening legal action over DEI policies.

Western US wildfires lead to evacuations

Associated Press

HIGHLAND, Calif. — Out-of-control wildfires in the foothills of a national forest east of Los Angeles and in a recreational area south of Reno, Nev., threatened buildings and forced hundreds of residents to flee amid a days-long heat wave of triple-digit temperatures.

In California, the so-called Line Fire was burning along the edge of the San Bernardino National Forest, about 65 miles east of Los Angeles. As of Monday morning, the blaze had charred about 32 square miles of grass and chaparral and blanketed the area with a thick cloud of dark smoke.

It remained uncontained, threatening more than 36,000 structures, including single and multi-family homes and commercial buildings, the U.S. Forest Service said.

About 20 miles outside Reno, Nev., the Davis Fire, which started Sunday afternoon, has grown to about 10 square miles. It originated in the Davis Creek Regional Park in the Washoe Valley and was burning in heavy timber and brush, firefighters said. It, too, was not contained.

An emergency declaration issued for Washoe County by Gov. Joe Lombardo on Sunday said about 20,000 people were evacuated

from neighborhoods, businesses, parks and campgrounds. Some of south Reno remained under the evacuation notice on Monday, firefighters said, and some homes, businesses and traffic signals in the area were without power.

The California fire burned so hot Saturday that it created its own thunderstorm-like weather systems of pyrocumulonimbus clouds, which can create more challenging conditions such as gusty winds and lightning strikes, according to the National Weather Service. Firefighters worked in steep terrain in temperatures above 100 degrees Fahrenheit,

limiting their ability to control the blaze, officials said. State firefighters said three firefighters had been injured.

Evacuations were ordered Saturday evening for Running Springs, Arrowbear Lake, areas east of Highway 330 and other regions.

Meanwhile, a small vegetation fire burned at least 30 homes and commercial buildings and destroyed 40 to 50 vehicles Sunday afternoon in Clearlake City, 110 miles north of San Francisco, officials said. Roughly 4,000 people were forced to evacuate by the Boyles Fire, which was about 10% contained Monday morning.

Ukraine: Iranian missiles in Russia a legitimate target

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A senior Ukrainian official said Monday that Western partner countries must allow Ukraine to use weapons they have supplied to strike military warehouses inside Russia because of strong suspicions Iran has provided ballistic missiles for the Kremlin's war effort.

The United States has told allies it believes Iran has sent short-range ballistic missiles to Russia for its war in Ukraine, two people familiar with the matter said.

Western countries supporting

Ukraine in the war have hesitated to let its military strike targets on Russian soil, fearing they could be sucked into Europe's biggest conflict since World War II, but the head of the Ukrainian presidential office said "protection is not escalation."

"In response to the supply of ballistic missiles to Russia, Ukraine must be allowed to destroy warehouses storing these missiles with Western weapons in order to avoid terror," Andrii Yermak said on his Telegram channel.

He did not specify which country was supplying the mis-

siles.

Russia has already subjected Ukraine to repeated and devastating long-range missile and drone bombardments that have killed more than 10,000 civilians since the start of the war in February 2022, according to a United Nations tally.

The barrages have also crippled electricity production.

Ukraine has refused to cave in, however, and recently launched a bold incursion into Russia's Kursk region even while toiling to hold back a Russian push in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region.

Russia has been receiving Iranian-made Shahed drones since 2022. The possible shipment of Iranian ballistic missiles to Russia as well has alarmed Western governments as President Vladimir Putin reaches out to other countries to provide him with support.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Monday said of the Iranian missile reports that "this kind of information is not true every time."

In Iran, foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani denied Tehran armed Russia with missiles.

Israel orders evacuations after militants fire rockets

Associated Press

The Israeli military has ordered another evacuation of some residential areas in northwest Gaza where it says Palestinian militants fired rockets on the nearby Israeli town of Ashkelon.

The orders issued on Monday came after a rocket attack triggered air raid sirens in Ashkelon the day before. The military said it intercepted one projec-

tile and another fell in the sea.

Israel ordered the evacuation of all of northern Gaza, including the territory's largest city, in the opening weeks of the war triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack.

Most residents heeded the orders and headed south, but up to 300,000 remained in the north, where Israel's air and ground operations have caused widespread destruction.

The north has been surrounded by Israeli forces and largely isolated since October.

Around 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people have been displaced in the 11-month-old war, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands of people are crammed into tent camps along the coast with few if any public services.

Meanwhile in Syria, the number of people killed in overnight

Israeli strikes rose to 14, with more than 40 wounded, Syrian state media said Monday morning.

Syrian state news agency SANA reported that Israeli strikes hit several areas in central Syria late Sunday, damaging a highway in Hama province and sparking fires.

The initial death count reported by the Masyaf National Hospital was four.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Decomposing body found in nursing home closet

FL NORTH MIAMI — A family believes a body found in a Florida nursing home's closet is a 71-year-old man who went missing from the facility nearly two weeks earlier.

The family of Elin Etienne believes it was his decomposing body that was found in a closet at the North Dade Nursing & Rehabilitation Center, 11 days after he went missing. He had been a patient at the facility after suffering a brain aneurysm last month, the family said.

Ruth Keisha Etienne, his granddaughter, told WTVJ-TV that nursing home administrators never notified them a body had been found. She said an anonymous caller told them, so they contacted administrators.

"They said they found him in a closet and he was already decomposing, and they refused to let us see the body," Etienne told the station. "And we tried to speak to the nursing home people, but they refused to speak to us. They don't want to talk to us. I wonder why?"

13-foot python seized from home, sent to zoo

NY NEW HARTFORD — A 13-foot Burmese python was confiscated from an upstate New York man who was keeping the still-growing snake in a small tank, authorities said.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation said it got a complaint about an illegally owned snake in New Hartford.

Environment Conservation Police Officer Jeff Hull responded and found the snake in a 4-

to-5-foot tank.

The snake weighed 80 pounds and measured 13 feet 2 inches in length. It appeared to be in good health and was still growing, the Department of Environmental Conservation said in a news release.

The snake was relocated to the Fort Rickey Discovery Zoo in Rome, which has the state-required permits for such an animal, the agency said.

Abortion clinic to be built to aid neighboring states

NM SANTA FE — Construction is getting underway on a state-funded reproductive health and abortion clinic in southern New Mexico that will cater to local residents and people who travel from neighboring states such as Texas and Oklahoma with major restrictions on abortion, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced.

Construction of the clinic will draw upon \$10 million in state funding that was set aside by the governor under a 2022 executive order. New Mexico has one of the country's most liberal abortion-access laws.

The new clinic is scheduled for completion within 18 months to provide services ranging from medical and procedural abortions to contraception, cervical cancer screenings and education about adoptions.

Open casket in park prompts calls to police

MI WARREN — A suburban Detroit park with baseball fields, a playground and picnic tables had an unusual addition: an open casket containing the body of Madonna Stiller, a 97-year-old

woman who used to live in the area.

Police in Warren fielded calls from curious residents, especially after a photo was posted on social media. Some people wondered if it was a very early Halloween prank. Officials said plans for the viewing at Butcher Park weren't disclosed ahead of time.

"The funeral director temporarily situated the casket in the park so that the deceased's family members could say their final goodbyes prior to her burial at Mt. Olivet Cemetery," police said.

A photo on Facebook showed an open casket and a spray of flowers under large leafy trees.

"We just wanted to honor my mother," Stiller's son, Ken Stiller, told The Macomb Daily. "We didn't mean to cause any problems and didn't mean for it to be in the newspaper."

Man charged with assault in random freeway attacks

WA SEATTLE — A 44-year-old man accused of randomly shooting at vehicles on Interstate 5 south of Seattle, injuring six people including one critically, has been charged with five counts of assault, King County prosecutors said.

The Washington State Patrol said Eric Jerome Perkins shot at three cars driving north on I-5 at around 8:30 p.m. last Monday, and at three more vehicles heading south several hours later. People in all but one of the cars were injured.

"The defendant fired indiscriminately at multiple vehicles as he drove the busy freeways in the Seattle and Tacoma areas," Senior Deputy Prosecuting At-

torney Stephen Herschkowitz said in his request for a high bail. "He is responsible for causing several of the victims to sustain critical, life-threatening injuries."

Perkins claimed that people were "stealing his identity, making threats and following him," so he "took matters into his own hands" and shot at cars to get them to "back off," Washington State Patrol Detective Russell Haake said in a court filing.

Johnny Cash statue on its way to the US Capitol

AR LITTLE ROCK — A statue depicting Johnny Cash departed Arkansas for Washington, as state officials gave the bronze figure a send-off toward its new home at the U.S. Capitol.

A small crowd that included members of Cash's family gathered outside Arkansas' Capitol to watch as the statue — safely enclosed in a wooden crate in the back of a tractor trailer — began its journey. The eight-foot-tall statue is scheduled to be unveiled at the U.S. Capitol on Sept. 24.

"Today is the day we're going to send Johnny to D.C.," Shane Broadway, chairman of the Arkansas National Statuary Hall Steering Committee, said.

The Cash statue is the second new one Arkansas has sent to replace two existing ones representing the state at the U.S. Capitol. Another statue depicting civil rights leader Daisy Bates was unveiled at the Capitol earlier this year. Bates mentored the nine Black children who desegregated Little Rock Central High School in 1957.

— From wire reports

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Montgomery's TD lifts Lions over Rams

Associated Press

DETROIT — The Detroit Lions opened the season by outlasting the Los Angeles Rams with a balanced offense, grinding out yards on the ground and going to the air for some pivotal plays just as they did in their NFC wild-card game.

David Montgomery's 1-yard touchdown run in overtime lifted the Lions to a 26-20 win over the Matthew Stafford-led Rams on Sunday night.

"Early in the season, a lot of games come down to who makes the fewest mistakes," Detroit coach Dan Campbell said. "We made one less than they did."

The Lions lost a two-touchdown lead in the third quarter, but extended the game with Jake Bates' tying 32-yard field goal in the final minute of regulation.

Detroit won the coin flip and took advantage of having the ball, gaining at least 9 yards on its first four plays in overtime to set up Montgomery's winning score.

Los Angeles was in a position to spoil the Lions' season-opening party when Stafford threw a go-ahead, 9-yard touchdown pass to Cooper Kupp with 4:30 left in the fourth quarter.

They just couldn't make enough plays on both sides of the ball to hold on for the win.

The Rams put up quite a fight despite losing Pro Bowl receiver Puka Nacua and two linemen on its banged-up line.

Cowboys 33, Browns 17: Dak Prescott threw a touchdown pass hours after agreeing to a four-year, \$240 million contract with Dallas and the Cowboys' defense roughed up Deshaun Watson in his return, throttling host Cleveland.

Prescott's deal makes him the first player to average \$60 million per season and ends months of speculation about his future with the Cowboys, who have won 12 games in each of the past three years with him.

Earlier this week, Prescott, coming off his best season and entering his final year under contract, said he wants to be the quarterback to finally end the team's Super Bowl drought. He'll get the chance.

He completed 19 of 32 passes for 179 yards, and relaxed for much of the second half.

Dolphins 20, Jaguars 17: Jason Sanders nailed a 52-yard field goal as time expired, and host Miami rallied past Jacksonville to win its fourth straight season opener. Fresh off a big offseason payday, Tua Tagovailoa threw for 336 yards and a touchdown and led Miami on an 8-play, 31-yard drive over the final 2:09.

Tyreek Hill started the comeback with 80-yard touchdown catch that sparked Miami's sluggish offense in the third quarter and got the Dolphins within 17-14. After the score, Hill placed his hands behind his back as if to simulate being handcuffed, hours after he was placed facedown and handcuffed on a street by Miami-Dade Police officers after being stopped for a traffic violation near Hard Rock Stadium.

Hill finished with seven catches for 130 yards. Devon Achane seven catches for 75 yards and ran for 25 yards and a touchdown on 10 carries.

Chargers 22, Raiders 10: J.K. Dobbins rushed for 135 yards, including a 12-yard touchdown, and host Los Angeles had a successful debut under new coach Jim Harbaugh as it rallied in the second half for a victory over Las Vegas.

All 10 of Dobbins' carries came in the second half.

Gardner Minshew was 25-for-33 for 257 yards with a touchdown and an interception in his first game for the Raiders.

Bills 34, Cardinals 28: Josh Allen had three of his four touchdowns in the second half and host Buffalo overcame a 14-point deficit to defeat Arizona. Greg Rousseau had a career-

best three sacks, including one that forced a fumble.

The defense preserved the Bills' win when Damar Hamlin and Ja'Marcus Ingram broke up Kyler Murray's pass attempt to Greg Dortch near the goal line on fourth-and-7 from Buffalo's 29 with 26 seconds remaining.

Saints 47, Panthers 10: Derek Carr passed for three touchdowns and host New Orleans scored on its first nine possessions in a victory over Carolina.

Alvin Kamara and Jamaal Williams each ran for touchdowns and Blake Grupe kicked four field goals — two from beyond 50 yards — in an extraordinary debut for new Saints offensive coordinator Klint Kubiak.

Buccaneers 37, Commanders 20: Baker Mayfield threw for 289 yards and four touchdowns to lead host Tampa Bay to a rout of new-look Washington, spoiling the NFL debut of No. 2 overall draft pick Jayden Daniels.

Daniels was more effective running the ball than passing, scoring a pair of rushing TDs for Washington, which is aiming for a fresh start with the 2023 Heisman Trophy winner at quarterback, Dan Quinn as the coach and Kliff Kingsbury and Joe Whitt Jr. running the offense and defense, respectively.

Texans 29, Colts 27: Stefon Diggs caught two touchdown passes and Joe Mixon rushed for 159 yards and another score Sunday to help visiting Houston close out a victory against Indianapolis.

The Colts extended the NFL's longest active opening day winless streak to 11 despite getting two TD passes of more than 50 yards from Anthony Richardson, who also ran for a late score.

Steelers 18, Falcons 10: With Russell Wilson's Pittsburgh debut put on hold by a calf injury, Justin Fields stepped in to lead visiting Pittsburgh over Atlanta — with a big

assist from Chris Boswell's strong right leg.

Boswell booted six field goals, three of them longer than 50 yards, and the Steelers made life miserable for Kirk Cousins in his first game as Atlanta's big-money quarterback.

Boswell connected from 57, 56, 51, 44, 40 and 25 yards to account for all the Steelers' scoring.

Bears 24, Titans 17: Caleb Williams had a rough debut for Chicago but got bailed out by his defense, with Tyrique Stevenson returning an interception 43 yards for the go-ahead touchdown to give his team a victory over Tennessee.

The Bears, who have their sights set on a playoff spot after going 10-24 over the previous two seasons, trailed 17-0 in the first half. They shut down the Titans from there and spoiled the debut of Tennessee coach Brian Callahan.

Vikings 28, Giants 6: Sam Darnold threw two touchdown passes in a highly efficient performance and Andrew Van Ginkel scored on a spectacular one-handed 10-yard interception return to lead visiting Minnesota to an easy victory over woeful New York.

Darnold, who played his home games at MetLife Stadium for three seasons after being taken No. 3 overall by the Jets in 2018, had touchdown passes of 3 yards to Justin Jefferson and 21 to Jalen Nailor in his Vikings debut.

Seahawks 26, Broncos 20: Kenneth Walker III rushed for 84 of his 103 yards and a touchdown in the second half, and host Seattle overcame a mistake-filled first half to beat Denver in the debut of new coach Mike Macdonald.

Walker sparked a second-half rally after an unsightly performance by Seattle's offense over the first 30 minutes littered with sloppy miscues. The Broncos led 13-9 at the half thanks in part to two safeties.

Sinner rolls past Fritz to win US Open

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jannik Sinner started slowly at the U.S. Open, dropping the first set he played after being exonerated in a doping case no one knew about until shortly before play began at Flushing Meadows.

If that episode initially hung over him during the tournament, Sinner was able to put it aside while on court. Was he ever. The No. 1-ranked Sinner beat Taylor Fritz 6-3, 6-4, 7-5 with his typical relentless baseline game to win the men's championship at Arthur Ashe Stadium on Sunday, less than three weeks after word emerged of the Italian's two positive tests for a trace amount of an anabolic steroid.

"It was, and it's still, a little bit in my mind," Sinner said. "It's not that it's gone, but when I'm on court, I try to focus (on) the game, I try to handle the situation the best possible way. ... It was not easy, that's for sure, but ... I tried to stay focused, which I guess I've done a great job, mentally staying there every

point I play."

This 2-hour, 15-minute victory gave him a second Grand Slam trophy — the other was at the Australian Open in January — and prevented No. 12 Fritz from ending the major title drought for American men that has lasted 21 years.

Andy Roddick's triumph at Flushing Meadows in 2003 was the last Slam title for a man from the United States.

"I know we've been waiting for a champion for a long time," Fritz said, "so I'm sorry I couldn't get it done this time."

Still, this tournament was a success in many ways for U.S. tennis, with two women and two men in the semifinals for the first time at a major since the 2003 U.S. Open. Jessica Pegula reached the women's final before losing to Aryna Sabalenka. Sinner improved to 55-5 with a tour-high six titles in 2024. That includes a 35-2 mark on hard courts, the surface used at both the Australian Open and U.S. Open.

This was the first year since

2002 in which no member of the Big Three — Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal or the retired Roger Federer — won at least one major. Instead, Sinner, who is 23, and Carlos Alcaraz, 21, split the four Slam titles.

"Nice to see new champions," Sinner said. "Nice to see new rivalries."

The world found out on Aug. 20 that he tested positive twice in an eight-day span during March for a substance sold in an over-the-counter product in Italy, but he was cleared because his use was ruled unintentional — his defense was that the steroid entered his system via a massage from a team member he later fired.

While some players wondered whether Sinner was accorded special treatment, most believed he wasn't trying to dope. And the U.S. Open's fans never gave him a hard time.

Sinner, who dedicated this win to an aunt who is in poor health, said the months before his case was resolved were not easy.

"It was very difficult for me to enjoy in certain moments. Also how I behaved or how I walked on the court in certain tournaments before ... was not the same as I used to be," he said, "so whoever knows me better, they know that something was wrong. But during this tournament, slowly I re-started to feel a little bit more how I am as a person."

As expected, Fritz enjoyed a home-court advantage on a cool afternoon under a nearly cloudless sky. Some spectators occasionally engaged in chants of "U-S-A!" between games or rose whenever Fritz picked up what felt like a crucial point.

The loudest they got was at 3-all in the third set, when Fritz smacked an overhead winner, punched the air and screamed, "Let's go!" People all around rose, applauding and shouting. After Fritz deposited a volley winner to earn a break point, he celebrated in the same fashion, and thousands in the seats went wild. Sinner then double-faulted, putting Fritz in front 4-3.

Logano gets push from Blaney to win playoff opener

Associated Press

HAMPTON, Ga. — One of the first things Joey Logano said after winning NASCAR's playoff opener was that the postseason is his time of the year.

And, in 10 initial playoff appearances, he typically slid his way through the rounds, winning two Cup titles and never finishing lower than eighth in the standings.

Then came last year when Logano, as the reigning Cup champion, was eliminated from the 16-driver field in the very first round for the first time in his career. He dreaded going to the track for the remainder of the season even as Team Penske teammate Ryan Blaney went on to win the championship.

There will be no stumble this year, not after an overtime victory Sunday at Atlanta Motor Speedway gave Logano an automatic berth into the second round of the playoffs.

"That's how we start the playoffs, boys!" Logano shouted. "When it is playoff time, it is our time."

Logano won the 11th race of the season to end in overtime — a tie for the record set in the 2017 season. He's trying to become the only active three-time Cup champion in the series. Kyle Busch, who did not make the playoffs, is the only other driver with two Cup titles.

"We've been able to level up when we need to level up and be able to fire off the first race of

the playoffs and with a statement is key, right?" Logano said.

Blaney was initially listed in second for a 1-2 sweep for Team Penske. Blaney lined up behind Logano and gave him the push he needed to deny Daniel Suarez the victory.

But after a review, Suarez was moved to second and Blaney dropped to third.

Suarez, who won the closest three-wide finish in NASCAR history here in February, had his own help from Trackhouse Racing teammate Ross Chastain. The two-lap overtime sprint to the finish began with Logano and Suarez lined up side-by-side on the front row, each with their teammate behind them for the push to the

front.

Blaney got Logano out first, but Chastain remained locked onto the bumper of Suarez's Chevrolet and the two dueled it out until Blaney used a final push to get his Penske teammate the win.

Suarez, who gained two spots in the standings to ninth with his runner-up finish, was disappointed to come up short.

"No, definitely not satisfied. I am happy with it, but not satisfied," he said. "I felt like we were going to have a great shot at it. Ross was doing an amazing job of pushing, and I don't know if he got a flat tire or something, but once I lost him, I knew it was going to be tough. But, that is part of racing, right?"

Braves move into tie for last wild card

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Sean Murphy's infield ground ball with the bases loaded scored a sliding Eli White in the 11th inning, and the Atlanta Braves rallied for a gritty 4-3 win over the Toronto Blue Jays on Sunday.

The Braves now have 12 extra-inning wins, which leads the big leagues. They took two of three games from the Blue Jays and are tied with the New York Mets for the final wild card in a tight National League playoff race.

"That was probably one of the top two or three most draining games I've ever been a part of," Braves manager Brian Snitker said. "It's great to see how they just hung in there and kept forcing the issue."

Atlanta got another brilliant outing from left-hander Chris Sale, who pitched six shutout innings. White had two crucial hits after entering the game as a defensive replacement at second base, which was just his fourth game in the big leagues at the position.

The Braves' decisive rally started when White led off the 11th inning with a bunt single that advanced automatic runner Michael Harris II to third base. Adam Duvall then reached on an error by Blue Jays third baseman Addison Barger, whose throw sailed wide to first and scored Harris to tie the game.

Murphy followed with the bouncing ball up the middle off Zach Pop (1-4) and White was able to score, sliding in ahead of the throw from shortstop Ernie Clement.

"Just making sure I put the ball in play, and hopefully something good happens," Murphy said. "Hit it to a good enough spot."

George Springer put the Blue Jays up 3-2 in the 11th with a bouncing single up the middle that scored Barger, who had advanced to third on a sacrifice bunt from Brian Serven.

Springer had three hits.

Giants 7, Padres 6: Matt Chapman, Jerar Encarnacion and Luis Matos homered off Joe Musgrove in the six-run fourth inning and visiting San Francisco held on to beat San Diego to take two of three games.

Curt Casili also connected for the Giants, who had a winning record (4-3) in San Diego for the first time since 2021. The Padres, who have lost three of four, lead the race for the top NL wild card.

Dodgers 4, Guardians 0: Shohei Ohtani hit his 46th home run of the season to tie his career high, Jack Flaherty (12-6) pitched 7⅓ shutout innings and host Los Angeles beat Cleveland in record-tying heat.

With the first-pitch temperature of 103 degrees matching the hottest in Dodger Stadium history, Ohtani hit a 450-foot solo shot down the right-field line off Tanner Bibee in the fifth inning that was reviewed to see if it was fair.

Tigers 9, Athletics 1: Trey Sweeney had four hits, including a home run, Ty Madden struck out seven and visiting Detroit beat Oakland.

The Tigers, looking to make a late rally in the AL Wild Card race, took two out of three in Oakland and are two games above .500.

Mariners 10, Cardinals 4: Randy Arozarena and Jorge Polanco hit two-run home runs and visiting Seattle scored five times in the first inning on its way to a victory over St. Louis.

Julio Rodríguez led off the game with a double to left field and scored on Cal Raleigh's single. Luke Raley followed Arozarena's single with a two-run double. He and Justin Turner scored on Mitch Garner's two-out single.

White Sox 7, Red Sox 2: Dominic Fletcher's RBI double sparked a five-run ninth inning and visiting Chicago avoided a three-game sweep with a victory over Boston.

Chicago starter Chris Flexen's winless streak extended to 21 straight starts — the longest in team history — after he was pulled with the game tied in the seventh inning. The 30-year-old right-hander gave up two runs on six hits, striking out six and walking one.

Cubs 2, Yankees 1: Jameson Taillon allowed only one run in six innings and host Chicago beat New York to avoid a series sweep.

Taillon (10-8) struck out six against his former team. He gave up Anthony Volpe's second-inning, RBI sacrifice fly and allowed six hits.

Rangers 7, Angels 4: Andrew Heaney snapped an eight-start winless streak as host Texas took an early five-run lead and beat Los Angeles.

Heaney (5-13), one short of the major league lead in losses, allowed four runs, three earned, on three hits in six-plus innings to win for the first time since July 21. He was backed by home runs from Marcus Semien, Nathaniel Lowe and Ezequiel Duran.

Rays 2, Orioles 0: Zack Littell and four relievers combined on a five-hit shutout, Jonny DeLuca hit a two-run homer and visiting Tampa Bay beat Baltimore.

The Rays took two of three from the Orioles, who are chasing the first-place New York Yankees in the AL East.

Pirates 7, Nationals 3: Jared Jones cruised through seven innings, striking out nine, as host Pittsburgh beat Washington for a split of the four-game series.

Jones (6-7) allowed two runs and four hits, all coming in the first two innings. The 23-year-old rookie right-hander retired 16 straight to end his outing, striking out five of the final six.

Marlins 10, Phillies 1: Edward Cabrera (4-6) pitched seven scoreless innings, Connor Norby homered twice and host Miami beat Philadelphia.

The 26-year-old Cabrera, who struck out six and walked one, didn't allow a hit until Brandon Marsh singled with no outs in the sixth. He finished with three hits allowed.

Royals 2, Twins 0: Michael Wacha pitched seven innings of four-hit ball, Garrett Hampson and Salvador Perez drove in runs and host Kansas City beat Minnesota to complete a series sweep of their closest pursuers in the AL wild-card race.

Wacha (12-7) struck out seven and walked one in his 100th career win. The Royals moved 2½ games ahead of the Twins for the second wild-card spot.

Reds 3, Mets 1: Santiago Espinal hit a tie-breaking two-run double in the ninth inning to lift visiting Cincinnati to a victory and snap New York's nine-game winning streak.

Phil Maton (2-3) opened the ninth by plunking Spencer Steer before Ty France legged out an infield single. Both runners advanced a base on Jake Fraley's groundout before Espinal's hit down the left-field line.

Rockies 4, Brewers 1: Kyle Freeland pitched one-run ball for six innings and Sam Hillard hit a three-run homer as visiting Colorado beat NL Central-leading Milwaukee.

Freeland (5-7) allowed an unearned run on three hits and struck out four for his ninth quality start of the season.

Diamondbacks 12, Astros 6: Pavin Smith homered in his first three at-bats for his first multi-home run game and drove in a career-high eight runs, helping visiting Arizona rout Houston to end a three-game losing streak.

Arizona — which scored at least 10 runs for a majors-best 18th time — pulled within a half-game of San Diego for the National League's first wild card and increased its lead over New York and Atlanta to 1½ games. Houston leads Seattle by 4½ games in the AL West.