

Iraq touts deal to withdraw most US troops

The Washington Post

BAGHDAD — The United States will withdraw most troops from Iraq over the next two years but leave a small residual force in the northern Kurdistan region under a plan negotiated by American and Iraqi officials, who disclosed some details of the deal this week.

Defense Minister Thabit al-Abbasi said the two nations had reached an agreement that would transition Operation Inherent Resolve, the U.S.-led military mission set up a decade ago to combat Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria, into a “sustainable security partnership” and would remove in two stages the roughly 2,500 U.S. troops now stationed in Iraq.

“The first phase will begin this year and continue until 2025, while the second phase will conclude in 2026,” Abbasi

told al-Arabiya television.

An Iraqi military official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe plans that had not been made public, said a smaller American force was expected to remain in semiautonomous Kurdistan to provide a security guarantee for Iraqi Kurds against the Iranian-backed militia groups that hold wide sway in the rest of the country.

The Pentagon and White House did not respond to requests for comment.

Maj. Gen. Patrick Ryder, a Defense Department spokesman, declined in a news briefing Thursday to confirm whether the plan described by Iraqi officials was accurate from a U.S. perspective.

If completed, the drawdown would mark the second time the United States has pulled most of its forces from Iraq in more

than two decades of American intervention, since U.S. forces invaded in 2003 to overthrow then-President Saddam Hussein.

Like the first American exit in 2011, a U.S. withdrawal would probably leave behind an Iraq saddled with significant security vulnerabilities, sectarian divisions and corruption, problems that helped give rise to Islamic State, which seized a vast swath of the country in 2014.

The government of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, like other recent Iraqi leaders, has maintained close ties with neighboring Iran, another Shiite Muslim power that has backed a set of powerful Iraqi militias pressuring Baghdad to finalize the U.S. departure.

U.S. officials have long acknowledged the ongoing negotiations that they have said aim

to outline an “orderly transition” from the multinational military mission. At its peak, the U.S.-led command included thousands of American and allied troops in Iraq and Syria supporting massive air and ground operations against Islamic State, also known as ISIS.

Following the culminating battles against the bulk of ISIS forces in 2016 and 2017, in Iraq’s city of Mosul and Syria’s city of Raqqa, the number of U.S. personnel decreased.

Today, a much smaller mission headquartered in Baghdad is headed by a two-star officer, Maj. Gen. Kevin Leahy.

Washington and Baghdad have already agreed in principle to end America’s anti-ISIS mission in Iraq as part of what President Joe Biden and Sudani described this spring as a “natural evolution” as that threat abates.

Biden, Starmer to discuss Ukraine weapons limits

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Ukraine’s push to ease restrictions on the use of weapons from the United States and Britain will be discussed Friday in White House talks between President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

Ukraine and many of its supporters in the U.S. and Europe want Biden to let Kyiv use the weapons to strike military targets deeper inside Russia, and there are signs Biden might shift U.S. policy.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has threatened that Ukraine’s use of long-range weapons would put NATO at war with Moscow.

Two U.S. officials familiar with discussions about the weapons said they believe Starmer will seek Biden’s approval to allow Ukraine to use British Storm Shadow missiles for expanded strikes in Russia. Biden’s approval is needed because Storm Shadow components are made in the U.S.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to share the status of private conversations, said they believed Biden would be amenable.

No announcement on a decision was expected Friday, several U.S. officials said.

During this week’s visit to Kyiv by Secretary of State Antony Blinken and British Foreign

Secretary David Lammy, Ukrainian officials renewed their pleas to use Western-provided long-range missiles against targets deeper inside Russia.

Blinken said he had “no doubt” that Biden and Starmer would discuss the matter, noting the U.S. has adapted and “will adjust as necessary” as Russia’s battlefield strategy has changed.

Blinken spoke similarly in May, shortly before the U.S. allowed Ukraine to use American-provided weapons just inside Russian territory.

The permitted distance has been largely limited to cross-border targets deemed a direct threat out of concern about fur-

ther escalating the conflict.

Biden also has hinted that a change could be afoot. In an exchange with reporters this week about whether he was ready to ease weapons restrictions on Ukraine, he responded, “We’re working that out now.”

Putin said Thursday that allowing long-range strikes “would mean that NATO countries, the United States and European countries, are at war with Russia.”

His remarks were in line with the narrative the Kremlin has promoted since early in the war, accusing NATO countries of de-facto participation in the conflict with Ukraine and threatening a response.

Boeing workers reject contract, OK strike

The Seattle Times

Boeing Machinists union members voted Thursday by an overwhelming majority to reject management's contract offer and go on strike.

Boeing's 33,000 blue-collar workers were instructed to walk out at 12:01 a.m. Friday and stay out indefinitely.

International Association of Machinists District 751 President Jon Holden, who on Sunday urged members to accept the deal, announced the result to raucous cheers and chants of "Strike! Strike! Strike!" to about 80 Machinists late Thursday at the union headquarters in the South Park neighborhood of Seattle.

"This is about respect, this is about addressing the past and this is about fighting for our future," Holden told the crowd.

"We strike at midnight."

He said 94.6% voted to reject the contract and 96% voted to strike, more than the two-thirds majority required by union rules to authorize a walkout.

Boeing did not immediately offer comment on the vote.

Even before Holden delivered the result, a team of union officials outside was busily cutting holes in large metal barrels, carving the initials "IAM" into the side of each and adding a cylindrical chimney on top. They'll be used as "burn barrels," with fires lit inside to keep pickets warm in the nights and days ahead.

Inside the hall, buckets were filled with premade "On Strike" signs.

Votes were tallied from polling places across the Puget Sound region, as well as in Mos-

es Lake, Wash.; Portland, Ore.; Victorville, Calif.; and Edwards Air Force Base in Southern California.

The result was anticipated. Machinists have demonstrated and marched inside the local factories for days, loudly protesting Sunday's contract offer.

The main reason workers interviewed gave for rejecting the contract was that the wage increase was far short of what they wanted.

They did not even accept that Boeing's stated wage increase was really 25% over four years as the company presented it, since the Machinists at the same time lost their annual bonus, which might have been worth around 4% each of those years.

Brandon Phelps, 35, a former U.S. Air Force mechanic who installed weapons systems on

Boeing F-15s in Afghanistan and is now a team lead in the Renton, Wash., 737 assembly plant, said the increase is just over 10% over four years once that takeaway is considered.

He said he loves working at Boeing, where he finds "the same camaraderie as in the military," but backs a strike because the lower-paid, entry-level workers on his team cannot live on their wage.

"At Panda Express, they're making as much as a grade-three mechanic," Phelps said.

The last Machinists strike, in 2008, was unfortunately timed. Lehman Brothers bank collapsed, initiating a meltdown in global financial markets, just days after the strike was called.

The Machinists returned to work with limited gains after 57 days on strike.

Nearly \$6 billion in Ukraine funding scheduled to expire

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Nearly \$6 billion in U.S. funding for aid to Ukraine will expire at the end of the month unless Congress acts to extend the Pentagon's authority to send weapons from its stockpile to Kyiv, according to U.S. officials.

U.S. officials said the Biden administration has asked Congress to include the funding authority in any continuing resolution lawmakers may manage to pass before the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30 in order to fund the federal government and prevent a shutdown. Officials said they hope to have the authority extended for another year.

They also said the Defense Department is looking into other options if that effort fails.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the funding talks, did not provide details on the options. But they said about \$5.8 billion in presidential drawdown authority (PDA) will expire. Another \$100 million in PDA does not expire at the end of the month, the officials said. The PDA allows the Pentagon to take weapons off the shelves and send them quickly to Ukraine.

They said there is a little more than \$4 billion available in longer-term funding through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative that will not expire at the end of the month. That money, which expires Sept. 30, 2025, is used to pay for weapons contracts that would not be delivered for a year or more.

Russia claims 6 British diplomats were spying

Associated Press

Russia on Friday accused six British diplomats of spying and said it decided to expel them. The U.K. said the "completely baseless" move came weeks ago and was linked to its action in May to revoke the credentials of an attaché at the Russian Embassy and limit Moscow's diplomatic activities in London.

The latest tensions unfolded as British Prime Minister Keir Starmer visits Washington for talks that will include Ukraine's request to use Western-supplied weapons to strike targets inside Russia. President Vladimir Putin has warned that Kyiv's use of long-range weapons would put NATO at war with Moscow.

Russia's Federal Security Service said in a statement that

the Foreign Ministry withdrew the British envoys' accreditations, and Russian TV quoted an FSB official as saying it decided to expel them.

The FSB said it received documents indicating the diplomats were sent to Russia by a division of the U.K.'s Foreign Office "whose main task is to inflict a strategic defeat on our country," and that they were involved in "intelligence-gathering and subversive activities." It did not identify the six diplomats.

Russian TV said the six diplomats had met with independent media and rights groups that have been declared "foreign agents" — a label Russian authorities have actively used against organizations and individuals critical of the Kremlin.

Different courses in targeting swing states

Harris touts Republican endorsements as Trump leans into incendiary rhetoric

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump launched campaign blitzes Thursday with dramatically different approaches to attracting swing-state voters who will decide the presidential contest.

In North Carolina, Democrat Harris used rallies in Charlotte and Greensboro to tout endorsements from Republicans who have crossed the aisle to back her. She also promised to protect access to health care and abortion, while delighting her partisan crowds with celebrations of her debate performance Tuesday, taking digs at Trump and cheerleading for her campaign and the country.

“We’re having a good time, aren’t we?” Harris declared, smiling as her boisterous crowd chanted: “USA! USA! USA!”

In the border state of Arizona, the Republican Trump pitched a tax exemption on all overtime wages, adding it to his previous proposals to not tax tips or Social Security income. But the former president squeezed those proposals, along with a nonspecific pledge to lower housing costs, into a stem-winding speech marked by his most incendiary rhetoric on immigration and immigrants themselves, name-calling of Harris and others, and a dark, exaggerated portrait of a nation Trump insisted is in a free fall only he can reverse.

“I was angry at the debate,”

Trump said, mocking commentators’ description of his performance Tuesday. “And, yes, I am angry,” he said, because “everything is terrible” since Harris and President Joe Biden are “destroying our country.” As he repeated the word “angry,” Trump’s crowd in Tucson answered with its own “USA! USA! USA!” chants.

The competing visions and narratives underscored the starkly different choices faced by voters in the battleground states that will decide the outcome. Harris is casting a wide net, depending on Democrats’ diverse coalition and hoping to add moderate and even conservative Republicans repelled by the former president. Trump, while seeking a broad working-class coalition with his tax ideas, is digging in on arguments about the country — and his political opponents — that are aimed most squarely at his most strident supporters.

That could become a consistent frame for the closing stretch of the campaign after Trump shut the door on another debate. That potentially could have been another seminal moment during a year that already has boomeranged around milestones like Trump’s criminal conviction by a New York jury, Trump surviving an assassination attempt, Biden ending his reelection bid amid questions about his age and Harris consolidating Democratic support to become the first woman of color to lead a major-party ticket.

“There will be no third debate,” Trump said Thursday, counting his June matchup against Biden in the total, and insisting he had won his lone encounter with Harris on Tuesday in Philadelphia.

The postdebate blitz reflected the narrow path to 270 Electoral College votes for both candidates, with the campaign already having become concentrated on seven swing states: Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Harris’ itinerary Thursday put her in a state Trump won twice, but his margin of 1.3 percentage points in 2020 was his closest statewide victory. Arizona, meanwhile, was one of Trump’s narrowest losses four years ago. He won the state in 2016.

In North Carolina, Harris took her own postdebate victory lap, and her campaign already has cut key moments of the debate into ads. But Harris warned against overconfidence, calling herself an underdog and making plain the stakes.

“This is not 2016 or 2020,” she said in Charlotte. “Just imagine Donald Trump with no guarantees.”

She touted endorsements from Republican former Vice President Dick Cheney and his daughter, former Rep. Liz Cheney, both of whom have deemed Trump a fundamental threat to American values and democracy.

Trump, meanwhile, appears to bet that his path back to the White House depends mostly on his core supporters, plus enough new support from working- and middle-class voters drawn to his promises of tax breaks.

A raucous crowd cheered his new promise to end taxes on overtime wages. The Harris campaign quickly labeled the proposal a “snake oil sales pitch,” noting the Trump administration abandoned Obama administration plans to vastly expand the number of workers eligible for overtime pay in favor of a less generous expansion. In a state where rising housing prices has been an acute issue since the COVID-19 pandemic, Trump also pledged to reduce housing construction costs by “30 to 50%” — a staggering drop that he did not detail beyond pledging to cut regulations and ban mortgages “for illegal aliens.”

“We are going to bring back the American dream bigger, better and stronger than ever before,” Trump said, beaming.

But he reserved most of 75 minutes at the podium for, in his words, anger. Mostly about an influx of migrants across the U.S. Southern border, but also about the ABC debate moderators he said were unfair in the debate he insisted he won. He singled out Linsey Davis, calling her “nasty” — the same word he would use to describe his 2016 Democratic rival Hillary Clinton.

Biden wants crackdown on cheap Chinese imports

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is cracking down on cheap products sold out of China by companies such as Temu and Shein by saying that companies are no longer

exempt from tariffs simply by shipping goods that they claim to be worth less than \$800.

President Joe Biden would no longer exclude these “de minimis” imports from tariffs under a proposed rule released

Friday to tax all imports if they’re covered under Sections 201 or 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, or Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962.

Importers mainly from China have used the de minimis ex-

emption for shipments of \$800 or less to flood the U.S. market. The number of these shipments has jumped from 140 million annually to over 1 billion a year, according to a White House statement.

Gulf residents still reeling from Ida clean up following Francine

Associated Press

DULAC, La. — Shortly after Hurricane Francine's storm surge flooded a cemetery in the Louisiana bayou town of Dulac, Lori-Ann Bergeron arrived to check on three generations of family graves. Their tombstones were fine, but neighboring caskets had emerged beside broken crosses and soggy flower bouquets.

"It's like this almost every time the water comes up, but this is the only place for them," said Bergeron, 51, who on Thursday recalled her sister's casket being unearthed when Hurricane Rita ravaged the area in 2005.

"That was rough, trying to bury somebody twice," she said.

From cemeteries to homes to businesses and parks, Gulf Coast residents, many still reeling from the devastation of Hurricane Ida three years ago, were cleaning up the mess left by Francine, which struck Louisiana as a Category 2 hurricane Wednesday.

The storm knocked out power

to hundreds of thousands of utility customers, sent a surge of water rushing into coastal communities and caused flash flooding.

"The human spirit is defined by its resiliency, and resiliency is what defines Louisiana," Gov. Jeff Landry told a news conference. "Certainly there are times and situations that try us, but it is also when we in this state are at our very best."

There were no reports of deaths or injuries, he said.

The storm, which drew fuel from exceedingly warm Gulf of Mexico waters, drenched a large swath of the South, including parts of Arkansas and Florida. Forecasters expected Francine to weaken Friday as it crosses northern Arkansas, but the storm's slow progress will mean days of heavy rain in the Southeast, creating a flash flooding risk. Parts of Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia are at slight risk of excessive rainfall while northern and central Alabama face a moderate risk.

Heavy rain was forecast into

the weekend in parts of the South and Southeast that could cause more flooding. Another 3 to 6 inches, with about 8 inches in some locations, were expected in parts of central and northern Alabama through Sunday. In northeastern Mississippi, western Tennessee, western Georgia and the Florida Panhandle another 2 to 4 inches is expected.

Francine slammed into the Louisiana coast Wednesday evening with 100 mph winds in coastal Terrebonne Parish, battering a fragile coastal region that has not fully recovered from a series of devastating hurricanes in 2020 and 2021. The system then lashed New Orleans with torrential rain — leaving behind widespread power outages and debris-covered streets.

At the storm's peak, 450,000 people in Louisiana were without power, according to the Public Service Commission. Many of the outages were linked to falling debris, not structural damage.

Fires ease but threat still lingers

Los Angeles Times

After days of multiple wildfires across Southern California in extreme heat, a drop in temperatures has finally given crews a chance to gain the upper hand, though lingering risks remain, officials said.

On Thursday, fire officials cautioned that several communities in Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties are still under evacuation orders, with some of the blazes continuing to show "extreme fire behavior" on the ground. Since last week, the Bridge, Line and Airport fires have raced across more than 100,000 acres combined, or more than 156 square miles of Southern California. But the pace has slowed dramatically in the last day.

"The conditions are improving a little bit—at least weather-wise," said Bryan Lewis, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Oxnard, Calif.

The Bridge fire has consumed at least 20 homes in Wrightwood, Mount Baldy Village and other mountain towns — with more than 5,700 structures threatened, officials said Thursday.

The fire broke out Sunday in Angeles National Forest and exploded from 4,000 acres to more than 50,000 acres between Tuesday and Wednesday. It had blackened 51,167 acres by Thursday with no containment.

Firefighters were focusing their efforts to protect the communities of Wrightwood, Pinon Hills and Mount Baldy. After days of temperatures that reached into the triple digits, crews will carry on the fight with temperatures hovering in the mid- to low-70s into the weekend, with the possibility of drizzle on Sunday, Lewis said. The weekend weather will also bring a light breeze with 10 mph gusts steering the fire east, he said.

LA quakes unusually frequent this year

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES —The magnitude 4.7 earthquake just north of Malibu on Thursday morning adds to what scientists say is an unusually active year for moderate earthquakes in Southern California.

The Malibu earthquake was the 14th seismic sequence so far this year in Southern California with at least one magnitude 4 or higher earthquake, said seismologist Lucy Jones, a California Institute of Technology research associate.

The observation is not necessarily an indication that a large, damaging earthquake is around

the corner, scientists said. Some researchers have offered dueling theories — some say earthquake activity goes up in a region before a large earthquake; others say seismic activity goes down before a large earthquake. So the recent activity does not offer any hints of when the next large, destructive earthquake will occur, according to U.S. Geological Survey seismologist Susan Hough.

But it is a reminder that Southern California has been in a seismic drought, so to speak. The last major seismic event underneath a highly populated area — the magnitude 6.7

Northridge earthquake — is now 30 years old. And that seismic drought won't last forever.

Over the last 65 years in Southern California, Jones said, there were an average of eight to 10 independent sequences of earthquakes with at least one magnitude 4 earthquake or greater.

In some years, there's just one or two of those earthquake sequences; the highest tally was 13, in 1988. But this past year has broken a record for the last 65 years, with Thursday's quake being the 14th seismic sequence with an earthquake of magnitude 4 or greater so far this year.

Cartel leader Zambada pleads not guilty to charges in US

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada, a powerful longtime leader of Mexico’s Sinaloa drug cartel, pleaded not guilty Friday to U.S. narcotics trafficking and murder charges.

Participating in a court hearing through a Spanish-language interpreter, Zambada didn’t speak, except to give yes-or-no answers to a judge’s standard questions about whether he understood various documents and procedures and how he was feeling — “fine, fine,” he said. His lawyers entered the not-guilty plea on his behalf.

Sought by American law enforcement for more than two decades, Zambada has been in U.S. custody since July 25, when he landed in a private plane at an airport outside El Paso in the company of another fugitive cartel leader, Joaquín

Guzmán López, according to federal authorities.

Zambada later said in a letter that he was forcibly kidnapped in Mexico and brought to the U.S. by Guzmán López, a son of imprisoned Sinaloa co-founder Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán.

U.S. Magistrate Judge James Cho ordered Zambada detained until trial. His lawyers did not ask for bail, and U.S. prosecutors in Brooklyn asked the judge to detain him.

“He was one of the most, if not the most, powerful narcotics kingpins in the world,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Francisco Navarro said. “He co-founded the Sinaloa cartel and sat atop the narcotics trafficking world for decades.”

Zambada sat quietly as he listened to the interpreter. Leaving court after the brief hearing, he appeared to accept some help getting out of a chair, then

walked out slowly but unaided.

Sketch artists were in the small courtroom, but all other journalists could observe only through closed-circuit video because of a shortage of seats.

In court and in a letter earlier to the judge, prosecutors said Zambada presided over a vast and violent operation, with an arsenal of military-grade weapons, a private security force that was almost like an army, and a corps of “sicarios,” or hitmen, who carried out assassinations, kidnappings and torture.

His bloody tenure included ordering the murder, just months ago, of his own nephew, the prosecutors said.

“A United States jail cell is the only thing that will prevent the defendant from committing further crimes,” Navarro said.

Zambada also pleaded not guilty to the charges at an earlier court appearance in Texas.

Death toll from storm in Vietnam increases

Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam — The death toll in the aftermath of Typhoon Yagi in Vietnam climbed to 233 on Friday as rescue workers recovered more bodies from areas hit by landslides and flash floods, state media reported.

Flood waters from the swollen Red River in the capital of Hanoi were beginning to recede, but many neighborhoods remained inundated and, farther north, experts were predicting it could still be days before any relief is in sight.

Typhoon Yagi made landfall Saturday, setting off heavy rains that have triggered flash floods and landslides, particularly in Vietnam’s mountainous north. Across the country, 103 people are still missing and more than 800 have been injured.

Most fatalities have come in the province of Lao Cai, where a flash flood swept away the entire hamlet of Lang Nu on Tuesday. Eight villagers turned up safe on Friday morning, telling others that they had left before the deluge, state-run VNExpress newspaper said. However, 48 others from Lang Nu have been found dead, and another 39 remain missing.

Roads to Lang Nu have been badly damaged, making it impossible to bring in heavy equipment to aid in the rescue effort.

Some 500 personnel with sniffer dogs are on hand.

Austrian woman found guilty of fatally infecting her neighbor with COVID-19

Associated Press

VIENNA — A woman in Austria was found guilty of fatally infecting her neighbor with COVID-19 in 2021, her second pandemic-related conviction in a year, according to local media. A judge sentenced the 54-year-old Thursday to four months’ suspended imprisonment and an \$886.75 for grossly negligent homicide.

The victim, who was also a

cancer patient, died of pneumonia that was caused by the coronavirus, according to Austrian news agency APA. A virological report showed that the virus DNA matched both the deceased and the 54-year-old woman, proving that the defendant “almost 100 percent” transmitted it, an expert told the court.

“I feel sorry for you personally — I think that something like

this has probably happened hundreds of times,” the judge said. “But you are unlucky that an expert has determined with almost absolute certainty that it was an infection that came from you.”

While the judge issued the sentence, APA reported that the verdict isn’t yet final. The names of the victim and defendant were not released in line with Austrian privacy rules.

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Rockies beat Tigers on Stallings' RBI double

Associated Press

DETROIT — Jacob Stallings' RBI double in the ninth inning helped the Colorado Rockies beat the Detroit Tigers 4-2 on Thursday.

"This is the end of an 11-day road trip and all nine games were against teams in the playoffs or fighting for wild-card spots and we held our own," Stallings said. "Today we knew we were facing the guy who is going to win the AL Cy Young, but I felt good about it."

The Tigers began the day three games behind the Minnesota Twins for the third American League wild-card spot and ace Tarik Skubal on the mound.

With the score tied at 2, Brendan Rodgers led off the ninth with a single off Jason Foley (3-6) and took second on a passed ball.

Stallings hit a flare into right field that got past Matt Vierling, allowing Stallings to take second.

Pinch-runner Nolan Jones moved to third on a groundout and Jake Cave made it 4-2 with a long sacrifice fly.

Tyler Kinley pitched the ninth inning, retiring Zach McKinstry with runners at the corners for his 12th save.

"That's a really, really good win on the road against a team that has been rolling since August," Rockies manager Bud Black said. "Skubal is going to win the American League Cy Young Award, but we had some good at-bats against him."

Skubal pitched six innings, giving up one run on four hits. He struck out six without a walk, but the Tigers struggled offensively.

Cardinals 6, Reds 1: Masyn Winn and Brendan Donovan each homered to help St. Louis beat Cincinnati.

Cardinals starting pitcher Sonny Gray (13-9) was perfect through five innings before Jake Fraley singled to lead off the sixth. He finished the day allowing one run on two hits

and two walks while striking out nine batters in six innings.

Andrew Kittredge pitched 1 2/3 innings of scoreless relief before JoJo Romero got the final four outs for his first save of the season.

Thomas Saggese singled to center to drive in Lars Nootbaar for his first career RBI in the eighth inning after getting his first major league hit in the sixth.

Astros 6, Athletics 3: Jason Heyward hit a two-run homer early and Jon Singleton had three hits, capped by a tie-breaking RBI single in Houston's four-run eighth inning, and the Astros got a win over Oakland.

Brent Rooker homered off Ryan Pressly (2-3) with one out in the eighth to tie it at 2-all.

Yainer Diaz and Kyle Tucker hit consecutive singles with one out in the eighth to chase T.J. McFarland (2-3) and bring on Grant Holman.

There were two outs in the inning when Singleton's single to center field scored Diaz to put the Astros on top.

Jake Meyers followed with a run-scoring double before the Athletics intentionally walked Heyward to load the bases. Mauricio Dubón singled on a ground ball to left field to score two more, pushing the lead to 6-2.

Tyler Nevin hit a solo homer off Josh Hader with one out in the ninth before the closer retired the next two batters to end it.

Marlins 6, Nationals 3: Jake Burger had three hits, Jonah Bride and Connor Norby had two RBIs apiece and Miami scored three unearned runs off three errors in a victory over Washington in the opener of a three-game series.

Bride had a game-tying single in the eighth inning and Otto Lopez put the Marlins ahead when his fielder's choice grounder was mishandled two batters later as Miami snapped a three-

game losing streak and improved to 2-9 against the Nationals this season.

Washington, which has dropped three of its past four, lost its 81st game, assuring its fifth straight season without a winning record since its 2019 World Series title.

Rays 5, Guardians 2: Brandon Lowe homered, Tampa Bay's bullpen held Cleveland to one hit over seven innings and the Rays snapped a three-game losing streak on a rugged trip with a win over the AL Central-leading Guardians.

Lowe connected for his 18th homer in the first inning off Gavin Williams (3-9).

The Rays were swept earlier this week in a three-game series at NL East-leading Philadelphia.

They improved to 3-4 on the 10-game trip, which started in AL East-leading Baltimore and finishes Sunday in Cleveland.

Tampa Bay will be the first MLB team to face three division leaders on the same trip in September or later.

Cole Sulser (1-0) took over for Rays starter Ryan Pepiot in the third and pitched three hitless innings. Richard Lovelady worked the ninth for his second save.

Yankees 2, Red Sox 1: Juan Soto hit a game-ending single leading off the 10th inning to lift New York over Boston as Aaron Judge's homerless streak stretched to a career-high 16 games.

With pinch-runner Jon Berti on second as the automatic runner, Soto grounded a single against Josh Winckowski (4-2) just past the glove of diving shortstop Trevor Story, and Berti slid home ahead of center fielder Ceddanne Rafaela's throw to give the Yankees back-to-back walk-off wins for the first time in three years.

Judge, who leads the major leagues with 51 homers and 126 RBIs, went 1 for 4 with a single and is batting .207 (12 for 58)

with 21 strikeouts since Aug. 26.

Brewers 3, Giants 0: Jackson Chourio hit a two-run home run, Frankie Montas pitched six scoreless innings, and Milwaukee beat San Francisco to take another step toward clinching the NL Central.

The Brewers, who hold a nine-game lead over Chicago in the division, took two of three from the Giants and reduced their magic number to seven.

The game was scoreless until Milwaukee's Willy Adames reached base with a walk in the seventh and rounded the bases on three Camilo Doval (0-1) wild pitches.

Milwaukee added to the lead when Chourio hit a two-run shot off Spencer Bivens in the eighth, scoring Brice Turang after he reached on an infield single.

The 20-year-old Chourio became the youngest player with a 20-homer, 20-stolen base season in MLB history.

Rangers 5, Mariners 4: Nathaniel Lowe drove in the go-ahead run for Texas with an infield single during a three-run eighth inning, hit a solo homer in the seventh, and the Rangers erased a three-run deficit for a win over Seattle in top prospect Kumar Rocker's major league debut.

After Lowe made it a 4-2 game with his seventh-inning homer, Marcus Semien brought Texas within one with a solo homer off Collin Snider (3-3) in the eighth.

Josh Smith reached on an error, Wyatt Langford doubled, and Adolis García drove in Smith on a groundout to shortstop to tie the game at 4-4.

Lowe then hit an infield single to second base to score Langford from third.

Rocker struck out seven while allowing one run on three hits over four innings in his first big league start.

The only run he allowed came on a solo homer from Justin Turner in the fourth.

Cook scores 3 TDs as Bills rout Dolphins

Associated Press

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — Buffalo fans cheered so loudly in Hard Rock Stadium that Bills coach Sean McDermott was asked if it was a home game.

It wasn't. But Buffalo certainly gave fans who made the trip to South Florida plenty to celebrate Thursday night.

James Cook caught a touchdown pass and ran for two scores and the Bills routed Miami 31-10, with Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa leaving early because of a concussion.

Tagovailoa left in the third quarter after colliding with defensive back Damar Hamlin and hitting the back of his head against the turf. Tagovailoa was quickly ruled out with the concussion, casting doubt on his season after a history of dealing with head injuries.

"Very sad. It's the worst part of the game," Bills quarterback Josh Allen said. "Nothing but love and prayers to him and his family, and hopefully everyone is sending those because he's going to need them."

Coach Mike McDaniels did not specify if the Dolphins will place Tagovailoa on injured reserve, saying the team would evaluate him more Friday.

"I'm just worried about my teammate like the rest of the guys are," McDaniels said.

"We'll get more information tomorrow and then take it day by day from there."

Allen, playing with a glove on his left non-throwing hand after hurting it in Buffalo's opener, completed 13 of 19 passes for 139 yards. He's 12-2 against the Dolphins, and the Bills are 14-2 against Miami since McDermott's first year as head coach in 2017.

McDermott praised the outing from his defense, which had three turnovers and held Miami's high-flying offense to a touchdown and field goal despite missing several starters.

"Next man up. The guys did a great job," McDermott said. "These guys work hard. Good things happen when you work hard, and sometimes the ball finds you like that."

Cook caught a 17-yard touchdown pass from Allen and scored on runs of 1 and 49 yards in the first half, flipping into the end zone when he gave the Bills a 24-7 lead. The three first-half touchdowns tied a team record.

"As long as they trust me, I'm going to get in the end zone," Cook said.

Allen didn't appear limited by the left hand that he hurt after hurdling safety Budda Baker in Buffalo's opener against the Cardinals. He had his hand heavily wrapped before returning to finish that game and

practiced all week with a glove to protect it.

After the game and before leaving the field, Allen held up his hand and flexed it in front of fans as if to display that it's not broken.

"Feels great," Allen said later.

Backup Mitchell Trubisky replaced Allen late in the fourth Thursday with Buffalo up by 21.

Miami's star receiver Tyreek Hill was held to three catches for 24 yards during a week in which he dominated national headlines. Hill was pulled from his sports car by Miami-Dade County police officers, pushed face-first onto a street and handcuffed during a traffic stop outside the Dolphins' home stadium hours before their season opener.

Officer Danny Torres was placed on administrative duty as the department's director launched an internal affairs investigation. Hill said he wants the officer fired, but the 30-year-old also acknowledged he could have handled the interaction better in the moment.

Buffalo scored 10 points off two first-half turnovers by Tagovailoa. Ja'Marcus Ingram intercepted Tagovailoa's pass on a tipped ball intended for receiver Grant DuBose on Miami's opening drive. Then Christian Benford picked off a pass

on what appeared to be miscommunication between the quarterback and receiver Robbie Chosen. Both DuBose and Chosen arrived to the team after the preseason.

Tagovailoa threw another interception to Ingram trying to toss the ball out of bounds on Miami's opening drive of the third. Ingram returned the ball 31 yards for a score that put Buffalo up 31-10. It was Tagovailoa's third career game with three interceptions.

Tagovailoa ran for a first down with 4:36 in the third and collided head-first into Hamlin and hit his head on the ground.

Bills players, as well as Tagovailoa's teammates, immediately waved for trainers to come to the field. The fifth-year quarterback was helped to his feet after a few minutes and walked under his own power to the locker room with trainers after throwing for 145 yards and a 5-yard touchdown to DeVon Achane.

Tagovailoa was diagnosed with two concussions in 2022. Skylar Thompson replaced him Thursday.

"I'm not worried about anything that's out of my hands," McDaniels said. "I'm just worried about the human being. He'll drive the ship when we get the appropriate information."

NFL: Van Noy got appropriate care after hurting eye

Associated Press

The NFL says Baltimore Ravens linebacker Kyle Van Noy received "appropriate" care from Kansas City's medical staff after sustaining an eye injury during the teams' season opener last week.

"It's disappointing the NFLPA would publicize unsupported conclusions without attempting to understand the facts. We have reviewed the case with the Chiefs' and Ravens'

medical staffs and are comfortable he received appropriate care," the league said Thursday night in a statement released by spokesman Brian McCarthy.

Van Noy injured his right eye in the third quarter of the first NFL game last week and said he was "disappointed" about how long it took for Chiefs doctors to see him in the locker room after leaving the field.

"When you get hurt, espe-

cially something that can be serious like mine was, you're supposed to rely on the team's training staff or their doctors, and I was supposed to see an ophthalmologist," Van Noy said Tuesday on his podcast. "They took an entire quarter to get down to talk to me in the locker room, which to me is unacceptable because then you start thinking, 'What if I was trying to go back in the game? What if I was really, really

hurt? I know mine happened to be moderate, but it still was serious because it's an eye and your expectation of someone to be down there, as the training staff asked them to be down there, would have had a little bit more urgency."

The Chiefs had no comment on Van Noy's remarks, which also referenced the organization getting a failing grade for its training staff on NFLPA report cards.

Pac-12 to add 4 schools from Mountain West

Associated Press

After being poached almost into oblivion, the Pac-12 is fighting off extinction by plucking schools from the Mountain West.

The Pac-12 announced Thursday that in 2026 it will add Boise State, Colorado State, Fresno State and San Diego State alongside Oregon State and Washington State in a rebuilt Conference of Champions.

The additions rob the Mountain West of four of its more prominent schools and successful football programs, most notably Boise State. It still leaves the Pac-12 two schools short of the eight it needs to have in place in two years to be recognized as a conference by the NCAA, so more moves are expected.

The Pac-12 and the departing schools will likely be on the hook for about \$110 million in exit fees and penalties to the Mountain West.

It is a remarkable bounce-back move by a conference left for dead a year ago when 10 members scattered to competitors across the country after being unable to secure a lucrative media rights deal that former Pac-12 schools such as Southern California, Oregon, Washington, Utah and Stanford believed would keep them competitive with other leagues.

"For over a century, the Pac-12 Conference has been recognized as a leading brand in intercollegiate athletics," Commissioner Teresa Gould said in a statement. "We will continue to pursue bold cutting-

edge opportunities for growth and progress, to best serve our member institutions and student-athletes. An exciting new era for the Pac-12 Conference begins today."

The Pac-12 said it evaluated potential new members using five criteria: academics and athletics performance; media and brand evaluation; commitment to athletics success; geography and logistics; culture and student-athlete welfare.

Pac-2

The Pac-12 is currently operating as a two-school conference, with Oregon State and Washington State the only remaining members, taking advantage of NCAA rules that allow for a two-year grace period. Oregon State President Jayathi Murthy and Washington State President Kirk Schulz welcomed their new conference mates in a joint statement.

"We eagerly anticipate their uniquely insightful contributions during this transformative era for the conference and collegiate athletics," they said.

Oregon State and Washington State have a football scheduling agreement in place this season with the Mountain West, giving them six opponents each from the league. A Sept. 1 first deadline to renew the deal came and went.

Part of that deal included millions of dollars in additional fees for the Pac-12 if it poached Mountain West schools.

Oregon State and Washington State should be able to afford the fees that remain. While

the schools have publicly downplayed having a war chest, they do have about \$250 million at their disposal from the two remaining years of the current College Football Playoff agreement; a contract with the Rose Bowl that expires after 2025; revenue accrued by Pac-12 teams in recent years from NCAA men's basketball tournament units; and Pac-12 Network assets.

Oregon State and Washington State also have an affiliate membership in place for this school year and next with the West Coast Conference for men's and women's basketball and other Olympic sports.

Best of the rest

Leaders at Oregon State and Washington State have insisted since the Pac-12 collapsed that unless an invitation came from a power conference, their priority was to keep the Pac-12 alive.

Whether the Pac-12 will be considered a power conference again, on par with the Big Ten, Southeastern Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference and Big 12, seems unlikely, but the league is trying to position itself as the best of the rest — especially in football.

Boise State is the most notable addition as the strongest and most consistent football program outside of the power conferences for more than two decades. The Broncos have 16 double-digit victory seasons since 2002, when they were members of the Western Athletic Conference.

"What a great day to be a

Bronco!" Boise State athletic director Jeramiah Dickey said.

Boise State is finally moving up, but the Pac-12 it enters hardly resembles the Conference of Champions it was for more than 100 years.

The collapse of the Pac-12 was the culmination of three tumultuous years of conference realignment in college sports, all of which went into effect this year and ushered in the super-conference era.

The Big Ten now has 18 schools, spanning from coast to coast. The ACC has 17 football-playing members, including former Pac-12 schools Stanford and California. The SEC and Big 12 each have 16 schools.

The Pac-12 appears to be taking a different approach, trying to build a slimmed-down conference instead of just merging with the full, 12-member Mountain West.

Left behind

The Mountain West will be left with Air Force, UNLV, Nevada, Utah State, New Mexico, Wyoming, San Jose State and Hawaii — with Hawaii, a football-only member.

Commissioner Gloria Nevez said late Wednesday that the MWC board of directors was meeting to discuss the next steps.

"All members will be held to conference bylaws and policies should they elect to depart," she said. "The requirements of the scheduling agreement will apply to the Pac-12 should they admit Mountain West members."

Leavitt rallies Arizona State past Texas State, 31-28

Associated Press

SAN MARCOS, Texas — Sam Leavitt passed for a touchdown and ran for another, as Arizona State rallied twice to earn a tough 31-28 win over Texas State on Thursday night.

Cam Skattebo ran for two short touchdowns, and the Sun Devils defense forced two fourth-quarter turnovers. The first, a fumble recovery, set up Ian Hershey's short field goal with 6:29 left that proved to be

the game winner for Arizona State.

Arizona State is 3-0 heading into the program's first Big 12 game next week at Texas Tech. The Sun Devils went 3-9 last season.

Leavitt's 52-yard touchdown throw to Jordyn Tyson and his 7-yard touchdown run on the next possession pulled the Sun Devils out of a 21-7 deficit in the second quarter. Leavitt passed for 246 yards.