

## Hegseth, Caine pay visit to Puerto Rico

*Associated Press*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrived in Puerto Rico on Monday for an unexpected visit as the U.S. steps up its military operations against drug cartels in the Caribbean.

Their arrival in the U.S. territory comes more than a week after ships carrying hundreds of U.S. Marines deployed to Puerto Rico for what officials said was a training exercise, a move that some on the island have criticized.

But on Monday night, Hegseth said in a video posted on X that the deployed Marines were “on the front lines of defending the American homeland.”

“Make no mistake about it, what you’re doing right now is not training. This is the real-world exercise on behalf of the vital national interest of the United States of America to end the poisoning of the American people,” he said while aboard the USS Iwo

Jima.

Earlier in the day, Puerto Rico’s Gov. Jenniffer González said Hegseth and Caine visited on behalf of President Donald Trump’s administration to support those participating in the training.

“We thank President Trump and his administration for recognizing the strategic importance of Puerto Rico to U.S. national security and for their fight against drug cartels and the narco-dictator Nicolás Maduro,” González said.

Hegseth and Caine met with officials at the 156th Wing Muñoz Air National Guard Base in Carolina, a city just east of the capital of San Juan.

González said Hegseth spoke to nearly 300 soldiers at the base and thanked those he described as “American warriors” for their work. He later departed for the USS Iwo Jima.

“The American people are counting on you to ensure the American homeland is kept safe,” Hegseth told the Marines

aboard the USS Iwo Jima. “Narco terrorists and drug traffickers are on notice.”

The visit comes as the U.S. prepares to deploy 10 F-35 fighter jets to Puerto Rico for operations targeting drug cartels, a person familiar with the planning said Saturday. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because information about the deployments has not been made public.

On Sept. 2, Trump announced that the U.S. carried out a strike in the southern Caribbean against a vessel that had left Venezuela and was suspected of carrying drugs. Eleven people were killed in the rare U.S. military operation in the Caribbean, with the president saying the vessel was operated by the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua.

While the prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago praised the strike and said the U.S. should kill all drug traffickers “violently,” reaction from other Caribbean leaders has been more subdued.

Barbadian Foreign Minister Kerrie Symmonds recently told

The Associated Press that members of Caricom, a regional trade bloc, sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio asking for an open line of communication on developments. He said they want to avoid being surprised by any U.S. moves against Venezuela.

Meanwhile, Venezuela’s government on Monday insisted that the U.S. is falsely accusing it of playing a crucial role in the global drug trade. Vice President Delcy Rodríguez told reporters the U.S. government should redirect its recently deployed maritime force to the Pacific, where fast boats and container ships have long carried Colombian cocaine.

“Those ships that are trying to intimidate Venezuela today should be there in the Pacific if they truly wanted to fight and prevent cocaine from reaching the United States of America,” she said. “They have a GPS location problem. They’re where they shouldn’t be. They need to calibrate their GPS.”

## Paparo: Homeland defense extends across Pacific

**BY WYATT OLSON**

*Stars and Stripes*

WAIKIKI BEACH, Hawaii — The commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said Monday that he was unfazed by media reports that the Pentagon’s draft National Defense Strategy will prioritize defense of the American homeland over challenging Beijing and Moscow globally.

“The homeland is in the Pacific,” Adm. Samuel Paparo told reporters on the sidelines of INDOPACOM’s four-day International Military Law and Operations Conference on Waikiki

Beach.

The American territories of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are in the Western Pacific, while the state of Hawaii is in the Central Pacific, he said.

Meanwhile, the United States is joined in compacts of free association with Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Marshall Islands, which means the U.S. is responsible for their national defense, he said.

“Defense-in-depth means that the Pacific is a priority theater because four of the five pri-

ority threats to the United States of America — to the security, freedom and well-being of the United States — traverses the Indo-Pacific geography,” Paparo said.

The Pentagon has up to now regarded those primary threats as China, Russia, North Korea, Iran and terrorism.

Incoming administrations typically issue a defense strategy that reflects its priorities, but China’s emerging military has been a concern for more than a decade.

Donald Trump’s first administration in 2018 regarded China

a priority challenge in its defense strategy.

Elbridge Colby, the Pentagon’s policy chief who supports a more isolationist American policy, is heading the revamped strategy, Politico reported Friday.

The annual MILOPS conference, now in its 36th year, is INDOPACOM’S effort to bring together military and legal officials from partner nations to collaborate on and advance legal diplomacy in the security realm. It is particularly beneficial for small nations lacking deep legal benches.

# Israel strikes Hamas in Qatar

*Associated Press*

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Israel launched a strike targeting Hamas' leadership in Qatar on Tuesday as they considered a U.S. proposal for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

The strike on the territory of a U.S. ally marked a stunning escalation and risked upending talks aimed at winding down the war and freeing hostages.

Qatar, an energy-rich U.S. ally hosting thousands of American troops, had served as a key mediator between Israel and Hamas even before the war. It condemned it as a "flagrant violation of all international laws and norms" as smoke rose over

its capital, Doha.

It was not immediately clear if anyone was hurt in the strike. Hamas has survived numerous assassinations of top leaders and is still intact in Gaza, despite having suffered major blows since the outbreak of the war triggered by its Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

The future of the long-stalled ceasefire talks was more uncertain, as Israel gears up for a major offensive aimed at taking over Gaza City.

That escalation has been met with heavy international condemnation and opposition within Israel.

Israel alerted the U.S. ahead

of time, according to an Israeli official and another person familiar with the matter, who were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. There was no official comment from the White House or Pentagon.

The Israeli military said it used "precise munitions and additional intelligence" in the strike, without elaborating. It was not immediately clear what caused the explosions.

Qatar condemned what it referred to as a "cowardly Israeli attack" on Hamas' political headquarters in Doha. Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari said Qatar "will not tol-

erate this reckless Israeli behavior."

The U.S. Embassy in Qatar said it had instituted a shelter-in-place order for its facilities.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military urged a full evacuation of Gaza City on Tuesday morning ahead of its planned expanded offensive, where hundreds of thousands of people struggle under conditions of famine.

The announcement was the first warning for a full evacuation of the city in the current round of fighting. Previously, the military has warned specific sections of Gaza City to evacuate ahead of concentrated operations or strikes.

## Philippines urges others to resist Chinese push

**BY DAVID CHOI  
AND YOOJIN LEE**

*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — The Philippines' secretary of national defense has called on South Korea and other small nations to band together as they did during the Korean War to resist China's "creeping occupation" of the Indo-Pacific.

Gilberto Teodoro Jr. delivered opening remarks Tuesday at the annual Seoul Defense Dialogue, a gathering of about 400 diplomats, service members and defense experts.

The Philippines deployed 7,420 soldiers to South Korea to support the U.S.-led U.N. Command during the 1950-53 Korean War, according to the South's Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs.

More than 110 Filipino soldiers were killed and nearly 300 were wounded.

Teodoro urged "smaller nations" to "once again stand together as we did 75 years ago to defend peace, stability and prosperity in our region."

He added: "The choices we make, together or apart, will determine whether our future is defined by greater instability or a renewed sense of order and security."

Geopolitical competition in maritime areas continues to stir unease, particularly in the South China Sea, Taiwan Strait, East China Sea and Yellow Sea.

"What becomes of the rules-based order ... in these waters will directly affect us, for better or for worse," he said.

Teodoro alleged China is the primary perpetrator of these tensions, as evidenced by its territorial claims over vast swaths of water and "strategy of creeping occupation disguised as fishing activity."

## Russian attack in Ukraine kills people in pension line

*Associated Press*

SLOVIANSK, Ukraine — A Russian glide bomb struck a village in eastern Ukraine on Tuesday as people stood in line in the open air to collect their monthly pension. The blast killed at least 24 people and injured 19 others, the Ukraine Emergency Service said.

The bomb hit the Donetsk region village of Yarova at around 11 a.m., authorities said. The village lies about 5 miles from the front line. Donetsk regional head Vadym Filashkin said 23 of the dead were pensioners.

Yarova resident Hennadii Trush said his wife was killed in the blast as she waited to collect the pension of her bedridden mother-in-law. Afterward, Trush fled Yarova with his elderly mother, who was carried out on a stretcher.

In shock and with soot still on his face, Trush wept as he de-

scribed the scene of the attack. "It was beyond words," he said. "Before, strikes landed on the outskirts. This time it was right in the center of the village."

It was the latest Russian attack to kill civilians. More than 12,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed in the three-year war, the United Nations says.

"Frankly brutal," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a post on Telegram of Tuesday's attack, urging the international community to make Russia pay economically for its invasion through additional sanctions.

Russia has been scaling up its aerial attacks, despite U.S. President Donald Trump's attempts to persuade Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to agree to a ceasefire and enter peace talks with Zelenskyy — proposals that Ukraine has endorsed.

# Trump denies writing note to Epstein

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats on the House Oversight Committee released on Monday a sexually suggestive letter to Jeffrey Epstein purportedly signed by President Donald Trump, which he has denied.

The letter was included as part of a 50th birthday album compiled in 2003 for Epstein, a wealthy and well-connected financier who was once a friend of Trump's. The full House committee on Monday night released a copy of the entire album, which bore names of some other prominent figures such as former President Bill Clinton and attorney Alan Dershowitz in a "friends" section, and included other letters with sexually provocative language.

Trump has said he did not write the letter or create the drawing of a curvaceous woman that surrounds the letter, and he filed a \$10 billion lawsuit

against The Wall Street Journal for earlier reporting on his link to the letter.

"As I have said all along, it's very clear President Trump did not draw this picture, and he did not sign it," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement posted on X. "President Trump's legal team will continue to aggressively pursue litigation."

White House deputy chief of staff Taylor Budowich posted various pictures on X of Trump's signature over the years and wrote, "it's not his signature."

As House Republicans left the Capitol on Monday, many waved off questions about the letter, echoing a similar theme.

"It's not his signature. I've seen Donald Trump sign a million things," said Rep. Byron Donalds of Florida.

Rep. Thomas Massie, who is leading a bipartisan push for a

House vote to force the Justice Department to release its Epstein files, downplayed the letter's relevance entirely.

"It doesn't prove anything. Having a birthday card from Trump doesn't help the survivors and the victims," Massie said.

The release of the drawing comes as the president has for months faced increasing pressure to force more disclosure in the case of Epstein and his former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell. Epstein was accused of paying underage girls hundreds of dollars in cash for massages and then molesting them, while Maxwell was convicted of luring teenage girls to be sexually abused by him.

It also once again puts a spotlight on Trump's former friendship with Epstein, which the president has said ended two decades ago after a falling-out. Trump said recently that he cut

ties with Epstein because he "stole" young women — including Virginia Giuffre, who was among Epstein's most well-known sex trafficking accusers — who worked for the spa at his Mar-a-Lago resort.

Trump has denied writing the letter and creating the drawing, calling The Wall Street Journal report on it "false, malicious, and defamatory."

"These are not my words, not the way I talk. Also, I don't draw pictures," Trump said.

The letter released by the committee looks exactly as described by The Wall Street Journal in its report.

The letter bearing Trump's name and what appears to be his signature includes text framed by a hand-drawn outline of a curvaceous woman.

"A pal is a wonderful thing. Happy Birthday — and may every day be another wonderful secret," the letter says.

## Trump, allies target Dem city in NC after Ukrainian killed

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Officials in Charlotte are facing sharp criticism over the fatal stabbing of a young Ukrainian refugee on a commuter train last month, a killing that quickly drew the attention of President Donald Trump and MAGA allies who blame Democrats for what they say is out-of-control crime in blue cities.

Critics say the death of Iryna Zarutska, 23, could have been prevented, and they're blaming officials for failing to keep a man with a history of mental illness, arrests and erratic behavior off the streets before he killed her. Trump wrote on his social media platform on Monday that "Criminals like this need to be LOCKED UP."

The suspect, Decarlos Brown Jr., 34, had served time in pris-

on, been briefly committed for schizophrenia and was arrested earlier this year after repeatedly calling 911 from a hospital.

The Aug. 22 attack, captured in a newly released video, is the latest flashpoint in the debate over whether cities like Charlotte are adequately addressing violent crime, mental illness and transit safety.

It added to an ongoing political debate as Trump has deployed the National Guard in Washington and threatened to do so in other Democratic-led cities.

MAGA allies say the attack shows how large cities and governors are failing to protect their residents and justifies the president's federal takeover of Washington and his plans to replicate that effort in other places.

## US and Europe discuss new sanctions on Russia

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. and European officials met at the U.S. Treasury Department on Monday evening to discuss various forms of economic pressure to exert on Russia, including new sanctions and tariffs on Russian oil purchases, a person familiar with the meeting told The Associated Press.

The person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the meeting, said U.S. officials emphasized to their European counterparts that President Donald Trump is willing to exert significant actions to end the war but expects full cooperation from European partners in whatever actions are taken.

The meeting, which lasted less than two hours, highlighted tariff actions, the need for col-

lective action on whatever is determined on sanctions, and how to manage Russian sovereign assets that are still immobilized largely in Europe, among other issues.

Officials with the Treasury Department, including Secretary Scott Bessent, as well as the White House, State Department and U.S. Trade Representative participated in Monday's meetings. The European team includes staff focused on energy, sanctions, financial services and trade.

The officials were set to meet again Tuesday.

The meeting comes as Trump has tried to get Russian President Vladimir Putin to agree to sit down with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for talks aimed at ending the war.



# ICE launches sweep through Chicago

*The Washington Post*

CHICAGO — The Department of Homeland Security said Monday that it has launched an immigration enforcement operation in Chicago as part of the Trump administration's effort to target "sanctuary cities," and immigrant advocates said several people in heavily Hispanic communities have been detained.

The agency did not provide details of the scale or duration of the undertaking in Chicago, which will be led by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The announcement came after President Donald Trump vowed for weeks that his administration would send federal law enforcement officers — including, potentially, National Guard troops — to the city as part of an effort to crack down on crime.

Local officials and immigrant advocates said federal immigration officers began making arrests in Chicago on Sunday and had taken at least five people into custody, including a well-known flower vendor and people waiting

at a bus stop and on the sidewalk. The advocates said there had been "an escalation" in enforcement actions and reported several sightings of ICE vehicles.

The number of reported arrests is relatively few, but immigrant rights advocates said the operation appears to mark a shift in ICE tactics. Before this operation, local activists said, agents had been targeted in their tactics, presenting warrants at specific homes or detaining people at immigration court. Stopping people on the street in what appeared to be a fairly random fashion is new, they said.

"We believe this operation signals the beginning of ICE's full escalation in Chicago and Illinois," said Rey Wences, the senior director of deportation defense for the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.

DHS named the enforcement action "Operation Midway Blitz" and said it was in honor of an Illinois woman allegedly killed by an undocumented immigrant driving drunk when he crashed into

her vehicle. In announcing the operation, the agency republished an interview with the parents of 20-year-old Katherine Abraham, who died in January after being rear-ended by a vehicle authorities said was driven by Julio Cucul-Bol of Guatemala.

"President Trump and [Homeland Security Secretary Kristi L.] Noem have a clear message: No city is a safe haven for criminal illegal aliens," DHS spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin said. "If you come to our country illegally and break our laws, we will hunt you down, arrest you, deport you, and you will never return."

Immigrant advocates and Democrats in Chicago and Illinois rebuked the administration, accusing it of using the pretext of cracking down on violent crime to target undocumented migrants as part of the president's mass deportation campaign. Studies have found that migrants who enter the United States either legally or without authorization do not commit other crimes at a higher rate than U.S. citizens.

The ICE operation in Chicago comes after the Trump administration ramped up enforcement actions in Los Angeles, Washington and Boston. Like those jurisdictions, Chicago and Illinois are led by Democratic officials, setting up a clash over immigration at a time when public polls show waning support for some of Trump's hard-line enforcement tactics. Democrats, however, have struggled to project an alternative vision for how the nation should move forward on the issue.

Trump and his top aides have long railed against "sanctuary city" policies that limit cooperation with federal immigration enforcement and have been embraced by many Democratic-led jurisdictions. Chicago and Illinois adopted statutes that prohibit city and state law enforcement from inquiring about a person's immigration status during an arrest or transferring custody of people who are arrested to federal immigration agents unless instructed by a court order.

## Detained Koreans had special skills for Hyundai jobs

*Associated Press*

SAVANNAH, Ga. — A lawyer for several workers detained at a Hyundai factory in Georgia says many of the South Koreans rounded up in the immigration raid are engineers and equipment installers brought in for the highly specialized work of getting an electric battery plant online.

Atlanta immigration attorney Charles Kuck, who represents four of the detained South Korean nationals, said Monday that many were doing work that is authorized under the B-1 business visitor visa program. They had planned to be in the U.S. for just a couple of weeks and "never longer than 75 days," he said.

"The vast majority of the individuals that were detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs En-

forcement that were South Korean were either there as engineers or were involved in after-sales service and installation," Kuck said.

The raid Thursday at the battery factory under construction at Hyundai's sprawling auto plant west of Savannah resulted in the detainment of 475 workers, more than 300 of them South Koreans. Some were shown being shackled with chains around their hands, ankles and waists in video released by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

South Korea's foreign minister was flying to the U.S. on Monday to secure his citizens' return on a charter flight to South Korea, where many people have expressed confusion, shock and a sense of betrayal.

President Donald Trump said the workers "were here illegally," and that instead, the U.S. needs to arrange with other countries to have their experts train U.S. citizens to do specialized work such as battery and computer manufacturing. But immigration lawyer Kuck said no company in the U.S. makes the machines that are used in the Georgia battery plant, so they had to come from abroad to install or repair equipment on-site.

While neither government has revealed details about all the workers' visas, it's not unusual for foreign companies to save time and money by sending workers from abroad to set up U.S. factories, and then train U.S. workers, said Rosemary Coates, executive director of the Reshoring Insti-

tute, a nonprofit that encourages U.S. manufacturing.

"We saw the same thing happening in the '80s with Japanese carmakers setting up U.S. factories, and in the '90s with German carmakers," Kuck said.

Advocates called for the detained workers to be released during a news conference Monday at a church in Savannah, about 25 miles east of the site where Hyundai began producing electric vehicles a year ago.

They included Sarah Park, president of the Korean American Coalition of Atlanta. Daniela Rodriguez, executive director of Migrant Equity Southeast, said immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador and Venezuela also were detained.

# High schoolers' math, reading scores dropped after pandemic

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A decade-long slide in high schoolers' reading and math performance persisted during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 12th graders' scores dropping to their lowest level in more than 20 years, according to results released Tuesday from an exam known as the nation's report card.

Eighth-grade students also lost significant ground in science skills, according to the results from the National Assessment of Education Progress.

The assessments were the first since the pandemic for eighth graders in science and 12th graders in reading and math. They reflect a downward drift across grade levels and subject areas in previous releases from NAEP, which is considered one of the best gauges of the academic progress of U.S. schools.

"Scores for our lowest-performing students are at historic lows," said Matthew Soldner, the acting commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics. "These results should

galvanize all of us to take concerted and focused action to accelerate student learning."

While the pandemic had an outsized impact on student achievement, experts said falling scores are part of a longer arc in education that cannot be attributed solely to COVID-19, school closures and related issues such as heightened absenteeism. Educators said potential underlying factors include children's increased screen time, shortened attention spans and a decline in reading longer-form writing both in and out of school.

The dip in reading scores appeared alongside a shift in how English and language arts are taught in schools, with an emphasis on short texts and book excerpts, said Carol Jago, associate director of the California Reading and Literature Project at UCLA. As a high school English teacher 20 years ago, Jago said it was common for her high school students to read 20 books over the course of a year. Now, some English classes are assigning just three books a year.

"To be a good reader, you

have to have the stamina to stay on the page, even when the going gets tough," Jago said. "You have to build those muscles, and we're not building those muscles in kids."

Education Secretary Linda McMahon said the scores show why the Trump administration wants to give states more control of education spending.

"Despite spending billions annually on numerous K-12 programs, the achievement gap is widening, and more high school seniors are performing below the basic benchmark in math and reading than ever before," McMahon said.

The test scores show more students are not reaching what would be considered "basic" achievement across subject areas, said Lesley Muldoon, executive director of the National Assessment Governing Board. While NAEP's definition of "proficient" is a high bar, Muldoon said, it is not an unreasonable one, and it is based on what researchers believe students should be able to achieve by the end of high school.

## New data shows weak job market for last year

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. job market was much weaker in 2024 and early this year than originally reported, adding to concerns about the health of the nation's economy.

Employers added 911,000 fewer jobs than originally reported in the year that ended in March 2025, the Labor Department reported Tuesday.

The department issues the so-called benchmark revisions every year. They are intended to better account for new businesses and ones that had gone out of business.

The numbers issued Tuesday are preliminary. Final revisions will come out in February 2026.

The revision showed that leisure and hospitality firms — including hotels and restaurants — added 176,000 fewer jobs than originally reported, professional and business services companies 158,000 fewer and retailers 126,000 fewer.

The report comes after the department reported Friday that the economy generated just 22,000 jobs in August, adding to fears that President Donald Trump's erratic economic policies, including massive and unpredictable taxes on imports, have created so much uncertainty that businesses are reluctant to hire.

The latest revisions will likely increase pressure on the Federal Reserve to cut its benchmark interest rate at its meeting next week to give the economy a boost.

## Commercial shipping likely cut Red Sea cables

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A ship likely cut cables in the Red Sea that disrupted internet access in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, experts said Tuesday, showing the lines' vulnerability.

Initial reporting suggested the cut happened off the coast of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, some-

thing authorities in the kingdom have not acknowledged, nor have the companies managing the cables.

"Early independent analysis indicates that the probable cause of damage is commercial shipping activity in the region," John Wrottesley, the committee's operations manager, told the AP. "Damage to

submarine cables from dragged anchors account for approximately 30% of incidents each year representing around 60 faults."

Madory also told the AP that the working assumption was a commercial vessel dropped its anchor and dragged it across the four cables, severing the connections.

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# McCarthy rallies Vikings over Bears

Associated Press

CHICAGO — J.J. McCarthy's long-awaited debut for the Minnesota Vikings was looking more like a nightmare.

Even so, coach Kevin O'Connell could sense things were going to change. And he told his quarterback at halftime.

"You are going to bring us back to win this game," O'Connell said he told McCarthy.

McCarthy did just that in the fourth quarter, throwing for two touchdowns and running for another, and Minnesota rallied for a season-opening 27-24 win over the Chicago Bears on Monday night.

Chicago's Caleb Williams had his first career rushing touchdown and threw for a score in Ben Johnson's debut as Bears coach.

McCarthy delivered down the stretch after struggling through the first three quarters in his first meaningful game since Michigan beat Washington for the national championship at the end of the 2023 season. He sat out last year due to a knee injury after the Vik-

ings drafted him with the No. 10 overall pick.

Now, Minnesota is counting on McCarthy.

"I felt poise from the very beginning," O'Connell said.

"The look in his eye was fantastic," O'Connell said. "The best thing was just the belief I felt from the team, from the unit, and ultimately, that doesn't get done without him in the second half."

McCarthy felt empowered by his coach's halftime prediction.

"That guy is one of the best — if not the best — coaches, in my opinion, in the National Football League," he said. "Any kind of compliments or belief like that, it means the world. That just gave me the confidence to go out there and just execute the ball plays and have a fast arm and make quick, decisive decisions. And it worked out."

Things weren't looking good for McCarthy after Nahshon Wright returned an interception 74 yards for a touchdown to give Chicago a 17-6 lead in the third quarter. But he turned it around in the fourth.

McCarthy connected with Justin Jefferson for a 13-yard touchdown. His 2-point conversion pass failed.

The Vikings then needed just three plays to grab the lead, with McCarthy throwing a 27-yard TD pass to Aaron Jones. The conversion pass to Adam Thielen put Minnesota on top 20-17 with 9:46 remaining. McCarthy made it a 10-point game with about three minutes left when he faked a handoff and turned up the right side for a 14-yard touchdown run. The Bears then went 65 yards for a score, with Williams throwing a 1-yard TD pass to Rome Odunze with just over two minutes remaining, but the Vikings hung on to beat Chicago for the eighth time in the past nine games.

"We don't win this game unless J.J. plays the way he did in the second half," O'Connell said. "Most importantly, he kept the belief of this football team behind him, and now, we know it's possible. You hope to not be in these circumstances very often. But this team's made of the right

stuff."

McCarthy completed 13 of 20 passes for 143 yards. He grew up in the Chicago area and the first game he attended at Soldier Field was against Minnesota 18 years ago.

Jefferson and Jones each had 44 yards receiving.

Will Reichard kicked two field goals, including a 59-yarder near the end of the first half that matched a Soldier Field record.

Williams, coming off a shaky rookie season after being drafted with the No. 1 overall pick, completed 21 of 35 passes for 210 yards and a score. The former Heisman Trophy winner also ran for a 9-yard TD in the first quarter. He said the way Johnson called the game was not the issue for the Bears.

"It's not a play-call thing, it's not anything like that," Williams said. "It's just being able to go out there and execute the plays that are called and be able to execute them at a high level. That's something that we take pride in and today that didn't happen."

## Chiefs main WRs may be out for Super Bowl rematch

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Chiefs could be without Xavier Worthy and rookie Jalen Royals because of injuries in a depleted wide receiver group when they face the Philadelphia Eagles in a Super Bowl rematch on Sunday at Arrowhead Stadium.

Worthy hurt his shoulder in the opening minutes of the Chiefs' season-opening loss to the Chargers in Brazil, when he collided with tight end Travis Kelce on a crossing route. Kansas City coach Andy Reid did not provide much of an update Monday, when he spoke briefly with local reporters, saying only that the team was taking it "day by day."

"He's rehabbing and working his shoulder," Reid said, "and

we'll just see where it goes. See where we end up."

Royals, a fourth-round pick, did not practice last week and missed Friday night's game while dealing with a knee injury.

"Jalen is doing a good job with his rehab. We'll just see how that ends up this week," Reid said. "We've got a couple of days here that we've had. Guys are making good progress. But we'll see where it rolls. If neither (Worthy nor Royals) play, we've got guys that we played with the other night that are good football players."

Still, the loss of Royals and Worthy would leave the Chiefs without three of their primary wide receivers against the Eagles. Rashee Rice was already serving the second game in his

six-game suspension for violating the NFL's personal conduct policy. It is part of his punishment following a March 2024 car crash on a Dallas highway that injured several people.

Kansas City was hoping that the speedy Worthy would help it deal with Rice's absence early in the season, especially after a breakout rookie season in which he led their wide receivers with 59 catches for 638 yards and six touchdowns.

Instead, Worthy was the victim in a friendly fire incident reminiscent of last season, when Rice tore ligaments in his knee when Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes collided with him while trying to make a tackle following an interception.

"It was just one of those deals.

Sometimes that happens," Reid said. "You hope it doesn't very often, for sure."

Marquise Brown, who missed most of last season with a shoulder injury, led Kansas City against Los Angeles with 10 grabs for 99 yards. JuJu Smith-Schuster had five catches for 55 yards and Tyquan Thornton had two for 41 yards.

"Tyquan and Hollywood and JuJu did a great job of filling some of those roles," Mahomes said after the 27-21 defeat. "That's someone (in Worthy) that was a huge part of our game plan, and someone that we're counting on to go out there and make plays against some of the man coverage that they played. I thought guys did a good job kind of stepping up in those roles."



# Kittle out, Purdy questionable for 49ers

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — San Francisco 49ers star tight end George Kittle will miss at least a few weeks with a hamstring injury and quarterback Brock Purdy's status for this week is in question after he hurt his left shoulder and toe in the season opener.

Coach Kyle Shanahan said the team hasn't decided yet whether to place Kittle on injured reserve which would sideline him for four weeks or keep him on the active roster in case he can return earlier.

Shanahan said the team is also still waiting to get more tests on receiver Jauan Jennings' shoulder injury to determine if he needs to miss any time. An MRI came back clean but Jennings still needed to undergo a

CT scan.

Purdy's status remains in question for this week with Shanahan saying that the toe injury is more of a concern than his non-throwing shoulder.

"We're not sure," Shanahan said of Purdy's status for this week.

"We have to see how it heals and how the week goes on it."

Purdy led a game-winning drive on Sunday when he threw a 4-yard TD pass to Jake Tonges with 1:34 to play in a 17-13 win. He went 26 for 35 for 277 yards with two TDs and two interceptions.

Purdy missed two games last season with injuries, sitting out one game with a right shoulder injury and another with a right elbow injury.

If Purdy is unable to play this week at New Orleans, the Niners would turn to Mac Jones. The former first-round pick by New England in 2021 signed with San Francisco as a free agent in March.

Shanahan has been pleased with what he has seen from Jones, who is back healthy after missing time late in training camp with a knee injury.

"I think he's gotten really used to what we do," Shanahan said. "He had a little setback there the last couple weeks at camp with the injury that he got. But he had a good week of practice last week, picking up really right where he left off. If he has to go this week, he'll lead the guys, the guys will believe in him and I know he'll do his job at a high level."

Kittle got hurt in the second quarter on Sunday. He had four catches for 25 yards and a TD before the injury. Tonges replaced him and had his first three career catches, including the game-winning TD.

Kittle has dealt with several minor injuries in his career but has played at least 14 games in seven of his eight seasons. He has had four seasons with at least 1,000 yards receiving and led San Francisco with 78 catches for 1,106 yards and eight TDs last season.

San Francisco did reach an agreement Monday to bring back receiver Kendrick Bourne on a one-year worth up to \$5 million and he could have a significant role this week with Kittle out and Jennings' status in question.

## Spitting remains a complex issue despite opposition

Associated Press

Inter Miami's Luis Suárez further damaged his reputation. Jalen Carter of the Philadelphia Eagles cost himself the chance to play in a season-opening game. Florida's Brendan Bett gave South Florida a 15-yard gift on its drive that decided its win over the Gators.

Their transgression: spitting.

In the span of seven days from last Sunday through this past Saturday, there were three high-profile spitting incidents in sports. They were immediately condemned, including by those close to the offending parties such as the Florida coach who called such behavior "unacceptable." The reviled responses show there are limits to allowable aggressions, even in the most heated competitions.

"There are a lot of written and unwritten rules about how you interact with others," said Dr. Peter Valentin, the chair of the forensic science department at the University of New Haven in Connecticut. "And in the sports world,

you can have two opponents vie for supremacy and they go at each other very, very aggressively. But it's done with a measure of respect. ... The idea of spitting on your opponent communicates disrespect. And I would be shocked if that wasn't the intent of that act, to just demonstrate disdain for your opponent."

Suárez, who has been previously sanctioned at times in his career for biting opponents, spit on a member of the Seattle Sounders' staff after Inter Miami's 3-0 loss there in the Leagues Cup final. Carter spit — or spit back, depending on perspective — at Dallas quarterback Dak Prescott before the first play from scrimmage in the first NFL game of the regular season Thursday night. Bett spit at a South Florida player, and those 15 penalty yards helped the Bulls get a chip-shot field goal to win 18-16 on the final play of the game.

"We'll take a good look at it, but it's unacceptable," Florida coach Billy Napier said. "And I think we have a lot of players in that room

as well that have the same belief that it's unacceptable. When a guy does something like that, he's compromising the team."

Around the NFL this week, the reactions to spitting were clear.

"That's just not professional," Arizona offensive lineman Paris Johnson said.

"You can't do that," Green Bay defensive lineman Rashan Gary said.

"You don't want to see anyone getting spit on," Tennessee offensive lineman Lloyd Cushenberry III said.

Suárez got a six-game suspension from future Leagues Cup matches and may still face further penalties from Major League Soccer. Carter got kicked out of the Eagles-Cowboys game and Bett was ejected for what became the final seven plays of the Florida-South Florida game.

"It was a mistake that happened on my side," Carter said. "Just won't happen again."

Replays later revealed that Prescott spit first, but only in the general direction of the Philadel-

phia defense and not onto an opposing player. Carter, in response, spit on Prescott.

"I guess I needed to spit," Prescott said. "I wasn't going to spit on my linemen. I just spit ahead. ... I don't wish for anybody to get out of the game. I'm sure he probably regrets that to some extent. I'm pretty sure he knows I didn't try to spit on him or wasn't even aiming to spit on him."

Players around the league could easily see how that sort of back-and-forth was going to escalate quickly.

"You've got to fight me at that point, spitting on another player," Titans tight end Chig Okonkwo said. "If you spit at his feet, I guess it's just like talking. But spitting on another player like that is unacceptable."

In the way spitting occurred in and after those three games this past week, it was simply considered degrading. And there are few things that seem to trigger stronger reactions in sports than when someone intentionally spits on another person.

# Dodgers win after losing another no-no

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Tyler Glasnow and Blake Treinen combined to pitch eight innings of no-hit ball before Tanner Scott gave up the Colorado Rockies' first hit in the ninth and the Los Angeles Dodgers rallied for a 3-1 victory Monday night.

Glasnow struck out 11 and walked two on 105 pitches — one off his season high — 65 for strikes over seven innings in his first career start against Colorado.

"It would've been nice," Glasnow said of the potential no-hitter, "but it doesn't matter."

"He was fantastic all night," manager Dave Roberts said.

Blake Treinen followed with a 1-2-3 eighth. Scott came on in the ninth and promptly gave up a double to Ryan Ritter before retiring the next three batters to end the game.

Los Angeles remained a game ahead of second-place San Diego in the NL West race.

Dodgers right-hander Yoshinobu Yamamoto had a no-hitter broken up with two outs in the ninth inning at Baltimore on Saturday night, and the Orioles rallied for a 4-3 win.

LA took a 3-1 lead in the seventh on Mookie Betts' two-out, two-run single to center that scored Andy Pages, who was hit by a pitch, and Shohei Ohtani, who doubled with two outs.

**Phillies 1, Mets 0:** Aaron Nola returned to form with three-hit ball over six innings and Joao Duran stranded two runners when he struck out the final two batters to help host Philadelphia beat New York.

The Phillies stretched their lead in the NL East to eight games over the Mets, pulling away in a race that seemed to tighten when New York completed a three-game sweep of Philadelphia late last month.

Nola (4-8) shook off a season derailed by injuries and career-worst stretches to look like the right-hander who anchored the

rotation for most of the last decade. He walked only two and struck out seven.

Duran was the last of three Phillies relievers and worked a scoreless ninth for his 28th save to keep the Mets as the only big league team this season that hasn't won when trailing after eight innings.

**Guardians 10, Royals 2:** Slade Cecconi took a bid to end host Cleveland's long no-hitter drought into the eighth inning, and the Guardians rolled to a win over Kansas City and leapfrogged the Royals in the AL wild-card race.

Cecconi (6-6) was six outs from the first no-hitter in the majors this season — and Cleveland's first since Len Barker's perfect game in 1981 — when Kansas City's Michael Massey singled leading off the eighth.

On Cecconi's 95th pitch, Massey lined a 2-1 fastball into left-center. The right-hander received a nice ovation from the crowd in Progressive Field before getting Carter Jensen to hit into a double play.

The Guardians (73-70) won their fourth straight game and moved past the Royals (73-71) into second place in the AL Central. Cleveland entered the four-game series 2½ games behind Seattle for the third and final wild-card spot.

**Braves 4, Cubs 1:** Ozzie Albies and Matt Olson homered and Bryce Elder had his fourth straight strong outing as host Atlanta beat Chicago.

The Cubs, who lead the NL wild-card race, lost for the fourth time in five games.

Elder (7-9) pitched one-run ball for 6⅓ innings. The 26-year-old right-hander struck out six, walked one and allowed five hits. He has allowed four earned runs in his last four starts over 26⅓ innings.

**Rangers 5, Brewers 0:** Michael Helman drove in all the Texas runs with a grand slam and a double, lefty Jacob Latz (2-0) pitched 5⅓ scoreless in-

nings and the playoff-chasing Rangers beat MLB-best Milwaukee.

Host Texas (75-70) moved within 3½ games of idle Houston, the closest it has been to the AL West lead since also trailing by 3½ on May 30. The Rangers, with 17 games remaining, just won two of three against the Astros.

The Brewers (89-56), who in this three-game series could become the first team to officially clinch a playoff spot, were held scoreless for the 11th time this season. Cole Winn, Jacob Webb and Chris Martin finished off Texas' 14th shutout win.

**Mariners 4, Cardinals 2:** Josh Naylor hit a go-ahead, two-run double in the sixth inning to help host Seattle beat St. Louis.

Naylor, who homered in his last two games, turned on a hanging curveball from Cardinals reliever Gordon Graceffo (3-1) for a two-run shot after Julio Rodríguez got the Mariners on the board with an RBI single. After his double, Naylor made a heads-up play and stole third base, allowing him to score with ease on a sacrifice fly from Jorge Polanco.

Seattle moved to two games back of Houston for first place in the AL West and maintained a 1½-game lead over Texas for the final AL wild card.

**Giants 11, Diamondbacks 5:** Logan Webb pitched six solid innings and five San Francisco players homered to help the host Giants beat Arizona.

Jung Hoo Lee, Dominic Smith, Heliot Ramos, Matt Chapman and Patrick Bailey each went deep to support Webb (14-9), who allowed four runs — one earned — on five hits with two walks and seven strikeouts.

San Francisco has won 12 of 15. The Giants (73-71) are three games behind the New York Mets for the final wild card spot in the National League, 1½ games in front of the Diamondbacks.

**Red Sox 7, Athletics 0:** Garrett Crochet struck out 10 in seven innings, Trevor Story and Carlos Narváez homered and visiting Boston defeated the Athletics.

The Red Sox moved to three games behind the idle Blue Jays for the AL East lead, and one game back of the idle Yankees in the race for the first AL wild-card spot.

Crochet (15-5), coming off a shaky start against Cleveland on Sept. 2, allowed less than four hits for the first time since Aug. 17. He did not walk a batter for the third straight game.

**Padres 4, Reds 3 (10):** Fernando Tatis Jr. hit a sacrifice fly in the 10th inning to bring in Jake Cronenworth, and host San Diego beat Cincinnati.

Former Padres right-hander Nick Martinez (10-12) started the 10th for the Reds and committed a throwing error on Freddy Fermín's bunt that moved Cronenworth, the automatic runner, to third before Tatis stepped up.

San Diego remained one game behind the Los Angeles Dodgers in the NL West. The Padres continue to hold the second of three NL wild-card spots, three games ahead of the New York Mets.

**Twins 12, Angels 3:** Royce Lewis homered twice and drove in four runs as visiting Minnesota beat sloppy Los Angeles.

James Outman also went deep as the Twins moved to 4-0 against the Angels this season, outscoring them 33-7.

LA committed four errors, including two by third baseman Yoan Moncada.

**Nationals 15, Marlins 7:** Josh Bell became the second Washington player to homer from both sides of the plate in the same game, finishing with four hits and six RBIs to lead the visiting Nationals over Miami.

Dylan Crews and Luis García Jr also homered as Washington matched its season high for runs and hits (19).