

## ‘Drone wall’ OK’d amid airspace violations

*Associated Press*

BRUSSELS — European defense ministers agreed on Friday to develop a “drone wall” along their borders with Russia and Ukraine to better detect, track and intercept drones violating Europe’s airspace.

The decision comes after a spate of incidents in which Europe’s borders and airports have been tested by rogue drones. Russia has been blamed for some of them but denies that anything was done on purpose or that it played a role.

“Russia is testing the EU and NATO, and our response must be firm, united and immediate,” EU Defense Commissioner Andrius Kubilius said after chairing a virtual meeting of 10 countries on Europe’s eastern flank.

Ukrainian and NATO officials also took part in the talks.

Kubilius said the drone shield could take a year to build, and that envoys from the countries would meet soon to develop “a detailed conceptual and technical road map” on the way ahead. The top priority is an “effective

detection system,” he said.

The drone wall is likely to be discussed by EU leaders at a summit in Copenhagen next week, and later again in October when they meet in Brussels. Kubilius said that Europe’s defense industry would also be brought onboard.

Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland have been working on a drone wall project, but in March, the European Commission, the EU’s executive branch, rejected a joint Estonia-Lithuania request for funds to set one up.

Things have changed this month, though.

NATO jets scrambled on Sept. 10 to shoot down a number of Russian drones that breached Polish airspace, in an expensive response to a relatively cheap threat. Airports in Denmark were temporarily closed this week after drones were flown nearby.

“The hybrid war is ongoing and all countries in the European Union will experience it,” Polish Defense Minister Wla-

dyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz told reporters in Warsaw after the drone wall talks. “The threat from the Russian Federation is serious. We must respond to it in a very radical manner.”

He urged all EU partners to get involved in the project, saying that the incidents at Danish airports in recent days made it clear that “the threat is not only to the eastern flank, that the launch of drones may occur from a ship or vessel that is nearby.”

On Thursday, in a social media post addressed to the nation, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said the drone incidents in her country were part of a new reality facing Europe, in which hybrid attacks were fiercer and more frequent.

She said that Danish authorities still have not determined who was behind the incidents, but that Russia was currently the primary threat to European security.

Neighboring Sweden has offered to loan Denmark a military antidrone system ahead of

the two summits involving dozens of EU leaders in Copenhagen next week, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson told broadcaster TV4.

He said the system has the capability to “shoot down drones.” It was not immediately clear whether Denmark accepted the offer.

The 27 EU leaders meet on Wednesday, with the drone security threat likely to be high on their agenda.

They will be joined by more than a dozen other leaders for a European Political Community summit on Thursday.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said earlier this month that Europe “must heed the call of our Baltic friends and build a drone wall.”

Von der Leyen said that \$7 billion would be earmarked to set up a drone alliance with Ukraine, whose armed forces are using the unmanned aerial vehicles to inflict around two-thirds of all military equipment losses sustained by Russian forces.

## Thune: Shutdown can be avoided if Dems ‘dial back’ demands

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader John Thune is rejecting Democratic demands on health care as unserious but says a government shutdown is still “avoidable” despite sharp divisions ahead of Wednesday’s funding deadline.

“I’m a big believer that there’s always a way out,” the South Dakota Republican said Thursday. “And I think there are off-ramps here, but I don’t think that the negotiating position, at least at the moment, that the Democrats are trying to ex-

ert here is going to get you there.”

Thune said Democrats are going to have to “dial back” their demands, which include immediately extending health insurance subsidies and reversing the health care policies in the massive tax bill that Republicans passed over the summer. Absent that, Thune said, “we’re probably plunging forward toward the shutdown.”

It’s just the latest standoff in Washington over government funding, stretching back through several administra-

tions. President Donald Trump was the driving force behind the longest shutdown ever during his first term, as he sought money for a U.S.-Mexico border wall. This time it is Democrats who are making demands as they face intense pressure from their core supporters to stand up to the Republican president and his policies.

Democrats have shown little signs of relenting, just before spending runs out Wednesday. Their position remained the same even after the White House Office of Management

and Budget on Wednesday released a memo that said agencies should consider a “reduction in force” for many federal programs if the government closes — meaning thousands of federal workers could be permanently laid off.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said the OMB memo was simply an “attempt at intimidation” and predicted the “unnecessary firings will either be overturned in court or the administration will end up hiring the workers back.”

# Netanyahu: Israel 'must finish the job' against Hamas in Gaza

*Associated Press*

UNITED NATIONS — Encircled by critics and protesters at the United Nations, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told fellow world leaders on Friday that his nation "must finish the job" against Hamas in Gaza, giving a defiant speech despite growing international isolation over his refusal to end the devastating war. "Western leaders may have buckled under the pressure," he said. "And I guarantee you one thing: Israel won't."

He spoke after dozens of delegates from multiple nations walked out of the U.N. General Assembly hall en masse Friday as he began.

Responding to countries' recent decisions to recognize Palestinian statehood, Netanyahu said: "Your disgraceful decision will encourage terrorism against Jews and against innocent people everywhere."

As the Israeli leader spoke, unintelligible shouts echoed

around the hall. Applause rang out in other quarters as he spoke. The U.S. delegation, which has backed Netanyahu in his campaign against Hamas, stayed put. The few world powers in attendance, the United States and the United Kingdom, did not send their most senior officials or even their U.N. ambassador to their section. Instead, it was filled out with low-level diplomats.

"Antisemitism dies hard. In fact, it doesn't die at all," Netanyahu said. Netanyahu routinely accuses his critics of antisemitism.

Netanyahu faces international isolation, accusations of war crimes and growing pressure to end a conflict he has continued to escalate. Friday's speech was his chance to push back on the international community's biggest platform.

Netanyahu also frequently praised President Donald Trump, his chief ally in his political and military approach in

the region. Netanyahu said the changes across the Mideast have created new opportunities. He said Israel has begun negotiations with Syria aimed at reaching security arrangements with the country's new government.

In recent days, Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom and others announced their recognition of an independent Palestinian state.

The European Union is considering tariffs and sanctions on Israel. The assembly this month passed a nonbinding resolution urging Israel to commit to an independent Palestinian nation, which Netanyahu has said is a nonstarter.

The International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant accusing Netanyahu of crimes against humanity, which he denies. And the U.N.'s highest court is weighing South Africa's allegation that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza, which it vehemently refutes.

# Ukraine's front line gets longer

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — The front line on the battlefield in Ukraine has grown in length to nearly 800 miles, stretching Kyiv's defenses, while Russian forces employ a new tactic of sending swarms of small assault groups to infiltrate Ukrainian lines, Ukraine's top military commander says.

The line of contact has grown by roughly 120 miles over the past year, and Ukrainian forces are averaging between 160 and 190 combat engagements every day with Russia's bigger army, Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi said.

At the same time, Russian tactics have switched since the start of the summer from costly large-scale offensives to deploying small assault groups in a new approach that Syrskyi called the "thousand cuts" tactic.

Russian forces have been trying to engulf Ukraine with sheer weight of numbers and relentless barrages of drones, missiles, artillery and devastating glide bombs. Though they have slowly pushed Ukrainian defenders back in rural areas, the Russian army has failed to conquer cities that constitute defensive strongholds.

Syrskyi said Russia is launching large numbers of small assault groups of about four to six soldiers who use the cover of the terrain to penetrate the front line and then strike Ukrainian rear areas, disrupting supply lines and troop rotations. However, those small groups become cut off and are trapped by encircling Ukrainian forces, he said.

Syrskyi told reporters that Russian forces are firing roughly twice as many artillery shells as Ukrainian units.

# Trump: US won't let Israel annex West Bank

*The Washington Post*

President Donald Trump said Thursday that he told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu he will not allow Israel to annex the West Bank, imposing the clearest limit yet on his support as Israel nears two years of war in the Gaza Strip.

Until Thursday, Trump had been publicly silent about calls within the Israeli government to take Palestinian territory, potentially derailing decades of efforts to achieve a two-state solution that would enable Israelis and Palestinians to live side-by-side. But with Arab allies of the

United States increasingly vocal about their discontent, the president weighed in as he sought regional support for a new peace plan.

"I will not allow Israel to annex the West Bank. No, I will not allow it. It's not going to happen," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office, saying that he had spoken to Netanyahu about it. "There's been enough. It's time to stop now."

His public opposition helped create space for Arab nations to consider a 21-point U.S. vision for ending the war and rebuilding Gaza, said three diplomats

who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe sensitive closed-door discussions.

The plan was the subject of a closed-door meeting Trump held this week on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in New York, the diplomats said. The White House declined to detail the plan shared with Arab and European leaders, but people familiar with the details said it has a clear mention of a Palestinian state and envisions Palestinian and international experts leading a transitional administration in Gaza following an end to the fighting.

# Ex-FBI chief indicted after push by Trump

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — James Comey was charged Thursday with lying to Congress in a criminal case filed days after President Donald Trump appeared to urge his attorney general to prosecute the former FBI director and other perceived political enemies.

The indictment makes Comey the first former senior government official involved in one of Trump's chief grievances, the long-concluded investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election, to face prosecution. Trump has for years derided that investigation as a "hoax" and a "witch hunt" despite multiple government reviews showing Moscow interfered on behalf of the Republican's campaign, and has made clear his desire for retribution.

The criminal case is likely to deepen concerns that the Justice Department under Attorney General Pam Bondi is being

weaponized in pursuit of investigations and now prosecutions of public figures the president regards as his political enemies. It was filed as the White House has taken steps to exert influence in unprecedented ways on the department, blurring the line between law and politics at an agency where independence in prosecutorial decision-making is a foundational principle.

Trump hailed the indictment as "JUSTICE FOR AMERICA!" Bondi, a Trump loyalist, and FBI Director Kash Patel, a longtime vocal critic of the Russia investigation, issued similar statements. "No one is above the law," Bondi said.

Comey, in a video he posted after his indictment, said: "My heart is broken for the Department of Justice but I have great confidence in the federal judicial system, and I'm innocent. So let's have a trial."

Comey was fired months into Trump's first administration

and since then has remained a top target for Trump supporters seeking retaliation related to the Russia investigation. He was singled out by name in a Saturday social media post in which Trump appeared to appeal directly to Bondi bring charges against Comey and complained that Justice Department investigations into his foes had not resulted in criminal cases.

"We can't delay any longer, it's killing our reputation and credibility," Trump wrote, referencing the fact that he himself had been indicted and impeached multiple times. "JUSTICE MUST BE SERVED, NOW!!!"

The office that filed the case against Comey, the Eastern District of Virginia, was thrown into turmoil last Friday following the resignation of chief prosecutor Erik Siebert, who had not charged Comey and had faced pressure to bring charges

against another Trump target, New York Attorney General Letitia James, in a mortgage fraud investigation.

The following evening, Trump lamented in a Truth Social post aimed at the attorney general that department investigations had not resulted in prosecutions. He nominated as the new U.S. Attorney Lindsey Halligan, a White House aide who had been one of Trump's personal lawyers but has not previously served as a federal prosecutor.

Halligan had rushed to present the case to a grand jury this week because prosecutors evaluating whether Comey lied to Congress during testimony on Sept. 30, 2020, had until Tuesday to bring a case before the five-year statute of limitations expired. The push to move forward came even as prosecutors in the office had detailed in a memo concerns about the pursuit of an indictment.

## Federal judge refuses to reinstate 8 former IGs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge refused on Wednesday to reinstate eight former inspectors general who filed a lawsuit after the Trump administration fired them with no warning and little explanation.

U.S. District Judge Ana Reyes said that while President Donald Trump likely violated the federal law governing the process for removing the non-partisan watchdogs from office, the firings didn't cause enough irreparable harm to justify reinstating the watchdogs before the lawsuit is resolved.

The eight plaintiffs were among 17 inspectors general who were fired by Trump on Jan. 24. Each received identical two-sentence emails from the White House that attributed

their removal to unspecified "changing priorities." The mass firings targeted all but two of the cabinet agencies' inspectors general.

Plaintiffs' attorneys said the firings were unlawful because the administration didn't give Congress the legally required 30-day notice or provide a "substantive, case-specific rationale" for removing them.

Government attorneys said the president can remove inspectors general "without any showing of cause" and doesn't have to wait 30 days after providing notice to Congress.

The judge noted that even if the inspectors general were reinstated, Trump could simply give notice to Congress and have them removed from their positions 30 days later.

## Trump to place taxes on drugs, furniture, trucks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Thursday that he will put import taxes of 100% on pharmaceutical drugs, 50% on kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities, 30% on upholstered furniture and 25% on heavy trucks starting on Oct. 1.

The posts on his social media site showed that Trump's devotion to tariffs did not end with the trade frameworks and import taxes that were launched in August, a reflection of the president's confidence that taxes will help to reduce the government's budget deficit while increasing domestic manufacturing.

While Trump did not provide a legal justification for the tariffs, he appeared to stretch the

bounds of his role as commander in chief by stating on Truth Social that the taxes on imported kitchen cabinets and sofas were needed "for National Security and other reasons."

Under the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, the administration launched a Section 232 investigation in April about the impacts on national security from pharmaceutical drug and truck imports.

The Commerce Department launched a 232 investigation into timber and lumber in March, though it's unclear whether the furniture tariffs stem from that.

These new taxes on imports could pass through to consumers in the form of higher prices and dampen hiring, a process that economic data suggests is already underway.



# Man who fired on ICE facility sought to kill federal agents

Associated Press

DALLAS — The gunman who opened fire on an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Dallas hated the U.S. government and wanted to incite terror by killing federal agents, officials said Thursday, offering the first hint of a motive in the attack.

Citing handwritten notes found at his suburban home, authorities said 29-year-old Joshua Jahn set out to ambush the agency and then fatally shot himself following the assault.

The shooting at daybreak Wednesday targeted the ICE office building, including a van in a gated entryway that held detainees. One detainee was killed, and two others were critically wounded. No ICE personnel were hurt.

Jahn “specifically intended to kill ICE agents,” firing at vehicles carrying ICE personnel, federal agents and detainees. “He also fired multiple shots in the windows of the office building where numerous ICE em-

ployees do their jobs every day,” said Joseph Rothrock, agent in charge of the FBI’s Dallas field office.

Jahn’s notes indicated “that he did not expect to survive this event,” Rothrock said. “He wanted to cause terror.”

The gunman, who authorities said fired indiscriminately from a nearby rooftop, was involved in a “high degree of pre-attack planning,” FBI Director Kash Patel said on the social platform X.

Patel quoted a note that said: “Hopefully this will give ICE agents real terror, to think, is there a sniper with AP rounds on that roof?” The note used an apparent abbreviation for armor-piercing bullets.

The attack happened as heightened immigration enforcement has generated a backlash against ICE agents and stirred fear in immigrant communities.

The assailant appeared to have acted alone. Nancy Larson, the acting U.S. attorney for

the Northern District of Texas, said investigators discovered the notes at Jahn’s residence. Another note said, “Yes, it was just me.” Other notes were sharply critical of ICE agents and indicated he hoped to avoid hurting any detainees.

Investigators have not found that the gunman was a member of any particular group or entity, Larson said. And while he broadly wrote about hatred of the federal government, he did not mention any federal agencies other than ICE, she said.

The gunman had also downloaded a document titled “Dallas County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management” containing a list of Homeland Security facilities, Patel said.

Hours before the shooting, the assailant conducted multiple internet searches for ballistics information and video of the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk on a Utah university campus this month, Patel said.

## Warning shots fired at ship from North Korea

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea’s military said it fired warning shots early Friday to drive away a North Korean merchant ship that briefly crossed the disputed western sea boundary between the rival neighbors.

The ship crossed the Northern Limit Line near the South Korean border island of Baengnyeong around 5 a.m. but retreated after South Korea’s military issued an audio warning and fired warning shots, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

There were no immediate reports that North Korean forces returned fire or responded with force.

The response was carried out in accordance with operational procedures and the military remains in a heightened state of readiness to firmly safeguard territorial waters, the South’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

South Korea’s military frequently has fired warning shots to repel North Korean patrol or commercial vessels breaching its waters.

The poorly marked western sea boundary between the Koreas has been the scene of past skirmishes and attacks, including the North’s 2010 shelling of a South Korean island and its alleged torpedoing of a South Korean navy ship, which together killed 50 South Koreans.

During a fiery speech in January 2024, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country does not recognize the Northern Limit Line in the Yellow Sea, which was drawn by the U.S.-led U.N. Command at the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. North Korea insists on a boundary encroaching deeply into South Korea-controlled waters.

## Fed’s favored inflation gauge up slightly

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve’s favored inflation gauge accelerated slightly in August from a year earlier.

The Commerce Department reported Friday that its personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index was up 2.7% in August from a year earlier, a tick higher from a 2.6% year-over-year increase in July and most since February.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core PCE inflation showed a 2.9% increase in prices from August 2024, same as in July.

The increases were what

forecasters had expected.

Prices rose 0.3% from July, compared to a 0.2% increase the month before. Core prices rose 0.2%, same as in July.

Separately, the report showed that inflation-adjusted consumer spending rose a healthy 0.4% from July, same as the month before, largely on a 0.7% increase in spending for goods; spending on services such as travel and dining out rose just 0.2%.

“The resilience of the US consumer was on show once again,” Michael Pearce of Oxford Economics wrote, though he cautioned that spending “is

being driven by households at the top of the income distribution.”

Incomes rose 0.4%, same as the month before inflation. Income for the self-employed and business owners rose 0.9% for the second straight month. Wages and salaries rose 0.3% from July, dipping from a 0.5% increase the month before.

Inflation has come down since rising prices prompted the Fed to raise its benchmark interest rate 11 times in 2022 and 2023.

But annual price gains remain stubbornly above the central bank’s 2% target.

# 52-yard FG on final play lifts Seahawks

Associated Press

GLENDAL, Ariz. — The Seattle Seahawks could have been shell-shocked, giving up a 14-point lead during the latter half of the fourth quarter and turning their comfortable advantage into a tie game with 33 seconds left.

It looked like they might need overtime to make amends.

Sam Darnold, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Jason Myers had other ideas.

Darnold hit Smith-Njigba for a 22-yard gain in a last-minute response, Myers made a 52-yard field goal as time expired, and the Seahawks withstood a

late rally by Kyler Murray and the Cardinals to beat Arizona 23-20 on Thursday night.

"I had no doubt we were going to go down there and score, honestly," Smith-Njigba said. "We just needed one play, a couple plays, and Jason's going to go down there and seal the deal."

Seattle has won eight straight over Arizona, its NFC West rival.

The Cardinals trailed 20-6 midway through the fourth. Murray threw a 16-yard touchdown pass to Marvin Harrison Jr. that cut the deficit to 20-13 with 5:50 left.

After Myers missed a 53-yard

field-goal attempt, Murray put together another drive and found Emari Demercado for a 7-yard touchdown with 33 seconds left.

But the Seahawks (3-1) weren't done. A penalty on the ensuing kickoff — Chad Ryland's kick landed short of the landing zone — gave Seattle good field position at the 40. Darnold then hit Smith-Njigba for the big gain that moved Seattle into field-goal range.

Two plays later, Myers calmly knocked the 52-yarder through, making up for his miss just a few minutes before.

"I've seen this guy play golf —

he's a stud," Seattle coach Mike Macdonald said. "He's got ice in his veins. We knew he was going to make that kick."

Said Myers: "I didn't try to change anything — just stay true to my routine. That's what I prepare for during the off-season and all week. Just trusting it and letting it rip."

Darnold had another efficient outing, completing 18 of 26 passes for 242 yards and a touchdown. Kenneth Walker III ran for 81 yards and Zach Charbonnet added his second rushing touchdown of the season. The Seahawks' defense sacked Kyler Murray six times.

## It's already a must-win week for several NFL teams

Associated Press

Four 2024 playoff teams are already facing a must-win in Week 4.

The two-time defending AFC South champion Houston Texans (0-3) are in the most desperate position. They can't afford another loss. Only the 1992 Chargers made the playoffs after an 0-4 start.

The Texans host the winless Tennessee Titans on Sunday. If they don't figure things out against a rebuilding team, Houston has a problem.

The Kansas City Chiefs (1-2), Baltimore Ravens (1-2) and Denver Broncos (1-2) also are in danger of falling further back with another loss.

The Chiefs host the Ravens so one of them will drop to 1-3 unless they tie. Both teams entered the season with Super Bowl-or-bust aspirations. For the loser, it'll be a tough task to achieve. Only the 2001 Patriots started

1-3 and won the Super Bowl.

The Broncos are home against the Cincinnati Bengals (2-1) on Monday night. They're already two games behind the Chargers and lost to Los Angeles last week so they would dig a deeper hole in the AFC West with another loss.

Who needs to win more between the Ravens and Chiefs?

Kansas City plays in a tougher division and already lost to the Chargers (3-0) in Brazil in Week 1. Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs also have a tough schedule upcoming. They face the Jaguars (2-1), Lions (2-1), Commanders (2-1) and Bills (3-0) in four of their next five games with the Raiders in between.

The Ravens only trail the Steelers (2-1) and Bengals by one game and have a softer schedule ahead so they have a better chance to rebound from a 1-3 start. They play the Texans,

Rams (2-1), Bears (1-2) and Dolphins (0-3) in their next four games.

"We have to tighten up. Even though we're 1-2, and we were there last year, but that's not pretty to be sitting at," Lamar Jackson said. "It's a long season ahead of us, but we have to just lock in."

The Texans already trail Indianapolis (3-0) by three games. They overcame an 0-3 start in 2018 and ended up winning the division at 11-5 under Bill O'Brien.

"I just want us to get back to the basics of what is going to take to win the game, not get into all the noise that goes on the outside," coach DeMeco Ryans said after a tumultuous week that included releasing veteran safety C.J. Gardner-Johnson.

The Broncos are a few plays away from being 3-0. They lost to the Colts in Week 2 after a penalty gave Indianapolis a sec-

ond chance to kick the game-winning field goal. They blew a fourth-quarter lead last week and lost to the Chargers on a game-ending field goal.

Other teams that entered this season with high aspirations who also need wins this week include Chicago and Atlanta.

The Bears (1-2) were a popular pick for a breakout season under new coach Ben Johnson. They lost their first two games before routing Dallas last week behind Caleb Williams' best game in the NFL. Chicago visits Las Vegas (1-2) on Sunday.

The Falcons (1-2) were supposed to compete with Tampa Bay in the NFC South. They lost to the Buccaneers in Week 1 and were embarrassed by Carolina last week, 30-0. Atlanta hosts Washington (2-1) this week.

It's only September, but teams can ruin their chances of playing in February if they don't win now.

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# Washington home win streak at stake as No. 1 Ohio State visits

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Washington's program-best 22-game winning streak at Husky Stadium is up against its toughest challenge yet: the No. 1-ranked team in the country.

The Ohio State Buckeyes will make their first visit to Washington in nearly two decades on Saturday.

Washington coach Jedd Fisch, who has yet to lose at home in his brief tenure, is eager for the challenge.

"We're really excited about the game," Fisch said this week. "We know we have a fantastic opponent coming in. No. 1 team in the country."

Unlike Washington (3-0), which has yet to play a Power Four team this season, Ohio State (3-0) already has a defining win from a Week 1 victory over then-No. 1 Texas.

Washington running back Jonah Coleman leads the nation with nine rushing TDs, and

quarterback Demond Williams Jr. has been an efficient dual-threat option. Ohio State cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. recognizes that Coleman, Williams and others could pose challenges — but it won't be anything unfamiliar.

"I always say this is why you come here, to play these types of games, go against some of the best players in the country," Mathews said. "But I tell y'all, I play against the best players in the country every day, so I'm not worried."

Washington's leading receiver, Denzel Boston, hardly sees his squad as one to scoff at.

"We've built a lot over the off-season," Boston said. "There's a lot to look forward to. We still have a lot to build on. We know we have a tough defense coming in, and being able to put together an offense and go against them will be fun."

For Washington, a win would bring sizable attention to a team

that labored to a 6-7 record during its first year in the Big Ten last season. For Ohio State, meanwhile, a victory would be but another step in the journey toward defending its national title.

"The country's watching," Fisch said.

**Run stoppers:** Ohio State has not allowed a rushing TD this season. Coleman and Williams hope to change that.

**Tough in the trenches:** The Huskies' run defense has been among the best in 2025, yielding the ninth-fewest yards per game (62.7). They have the tall task of trying to stop three different Ohio State running backs — Bo Jackson, CJ Donaldson Jr. and James Peoples — who have each rushed for at least 125 yards this season.

**Road rules:** Ohio State is 23-3 in true road games and 20-4 with more than one week to prepare for an opponent since Ryan Day became head coach in 2019.

# Lakers give JJ Redic extension

Associated Press

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. — The Los Angeles Lakers know head coach JJ Redick will be a part of their future going forward, and plan to give superstar forward LeBron James every chance to do the same.

General manager Rob Pelinka said Redick received a contract extension this summer after the 41-year-old completed his first season leading the Lakers, who went 50-32 to finish third in the Western Conference and lost to the Minnesota Timberwolves in five games in a first-round playoff series.

Pelinka snuck the announcement into his opening statement of a joint press conference with Redick on Thursday before training camp opens next week.

"It's not lost on me, the sort of rarity of a first-time head coach getting an extension," Redick said. "Like, I recognize how fortunate I am to be with an organization that supports me that way."

Getting Redick to sign a new deal after superstar point guard Luka Doncic agreed to a three-year, \$165 million maximum contract extension through 2028 in August leaves James as the last piece of the Lakers' headlining trio without certainty after this season.

James, 40, is going into his unprecedented 23rd professional season after picking up his \$52.6 million player option in June. What happens after the upcoming season is uncertain, but Pelinka said that if James wants to continue playing, the Lakers want him to do it for them.

Redick met twice with James during the summer, once in the Hamptons in New York and again in Los Angeles, and came away convinced the seemingly ageless legend is ready to go after averaging 24.4 points, 8.2 assists and 7.8 rebounds last season with the Lakers.

# Michael Hawkins Jr. slated to step in for injured Oklahoma QB John Mateer

Associated Press

NORMAN, Okla. — Oklahoma quarterback John Mateer had what some might consider an early Heisman Trophy moment when he scored the go-ahead touchdown against Auburn on a dramatic 9-yard run late in a 24-17 win.

Unknown at the time, the hand he carried the ball with on that play — the right hand he uses to throw — was injured badly enough in the first quarter to require surgery.

Mateer tweeted Thursday that the procedure was successful, and the team expects him to return this season. Though the situation is not ideal for the sev-

enth-ranked Sooners, they remain confident as backup quarterback Michael Hawkins Jr. steps in.

Hawkins, a sophomore, started four games last season, including a win at Auburn and a solid performance in the Armed Forces Bowl. The Sooners have a bye this week before Hawkins starts against Kent State on Oct. 4. Oklahoma coach Brent Venables said Hawkins will be ready.

"He just has put together a really good body of work over the last several months, and he's always had a great work ethic and he's always been really coachable," Venables said. "He's hungry, he's humble and

ultra talented."

Hawkins passed for 783 yards and three touchdowns and ran for 204 yards last season. One of his best highlights was a 48-yard touchdown run in a win at Auburn.

Receiver Deion Burks said Hawkins has matured since then and doesn't depend quite as much on his exceptional speed as in the past.

"He looks comfortable in the pocket," Burks said. "He trusts the O-line, so he's not quick to run. He's going to deliver the passes. If he scrambles, he's looking downfield to throw it. But he also can use his feet as well."



# Dodgers snag 12th NL West title in 13 years

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Shohei Ohtani matched his career high with his 54th home run, Freddie Freeman went deep twice and the Los Angeles Dodgers clinched their 12th NL West title in 13 years by beating the Arizona Diamondbacks 8-0 Thursday.

Ohtani's homer splashed into Chase Field's swimming pool behind the right-center wall for a 6-0 lead in the fourth inning. The two-run shot gave him 101 RBIs for the season and matched his career-best home run total with the World Series champion Dodgers last year. He has scored a big league-high 144 runs.

Los Angeles, which clinched a postseason berth last week, won its fourth straight division title.

Arizona (80-79) fell 1½ games behind the New York Mets (81-77) for the final NL wild card spot and also is one game back of Cincinnati (81-78). The Diamondbacks close with three games at San Diego.

Yoshinobu Yamamoto (12-8) allowed four hits in six innings and struck out seven to finish with 201. His 2.49 ERA ranked second in the NL behind the 1.97 ERA of Pittsburgh's Paul Skenes.

Three relievers finished a five-hitter in the Dodgers' 10th shutout.

**Orioles 6, Rays 5:** Dylan Beavers homered on the first pitch of the bottom of the ninth inning, giving Baltimore a victory over Tampa in its home finale.

The Orioles — who would have been assured of a last-place finish in the AL East with a loss — rallied from a 5-2, eighth-inning deficit and guaranteed the Rays consecutive losing seasons for the first time since four straight from 2014-17. Coby Mayo tied it with a two-run homer in the eighth.

Keegan Akin (5-4) worked the ninth. Kevin Kelly (2-5) al-

lowed the homers to Mayo and Beavers, each on the first pitch of the at-bat.

Jesse Scholtens struck out nine in 5½ innings of relief for the Rays. His final pitch was a swinging third strike by Colton Cowser in the eighth, but the ball got away for a wild pitch that allowed a run to score. Mayo then greeted Kelly with a two-run shot.

Tampa Bay's Christopher Morel opened the scoring with a bases-loaded double in the third that made it 2-0. Richie Palacios followed with a sacrifice fly.

Ryan Mountcastle hit a solo homer in the third and an RBI single in the fifth to pull the Orioles within one. The Rays answered with two runs in the sixth on back-to-back RBI doubles by Tristan Gray and Bob Seymour.

**Reds 2, Pirates 1:** Noelvi Martí robbed Bryan Reynolds of a tying home run in the ninth inning, and Cincinnati beat Pittsburgh to remain one game behind the New York Mets for the final NL wild card.

Nick Lodolo tied his career high with 12 strikeouts before leaving with a right groin injury in the seventh.

Martí and Gavin Lux drove in runs, and the Reds (81-78) stayed just behind the Mets (82-77) and one game ahead of Arizona (80-79).

Martí used his 6-foot-2 height when he jumped at the 8-foot right-field wall and reached back above the first-row of seats to catch Reynolds' 348-foot drive for the second out of the ninth. Martí had all three putouts as Emilio Pagan got three straight outs for his career-high 30th save in 36 chances.

Lodolo (9-8) got 27 swings and misses, including 15 on curveballs. He allowed two hits and walked one, leaving due to the injury after 6½ innings and 81 pitches. Lodolo also struck out 12 at Philadelphia on April 8, 2023.

Braxton Ashcraft (4-4) gave

up two runs and a career-high eight hits in 4½ innings. Nick Yorke had an RBI grounder in the eighth.

**Astros 11, Athletics 5:** Christian Walker homered and drove in three runs to back a strong start from Framber Valdez and Houston beat the Athletics to snap a five-game losing streak.

Houston avoided a sweep and ended a seven-game losing streak to the Athletics and remained one game behind Detroit for the final AL wild card with the Tigers owning the tiebreaker. Detroit beat Cleveland 4-2 later Thursday.

Nick Kurtz homered twice and drove in the three runs for the Athletics. He hit a shot off Valdez in the sixth and a two-run shot against Enyel De Los Santos in the eighth. Kurtz's 35 home runs are the second-most by an A's rookie — trailing only Mark McGwire's 49 in 1987. He hit nine homers in 11 games against Houston, tied for fourth-most against the Astros in a single season.

Valdez (13-11) gave up a run and seven hits in seven innings, striking out 10 and walking two in his 31st start. He was 1-7 with a 6.80 ERA in his previous nine outings.

**Twins 4, Rangers 0:** Byron Buxton hit two home runs including a second-straight lead-off homer, Bailey Ober threw six innings with five strikeouts and two hits, and Minnesota beat Texas.

The Twins (69-90) outlit the Rangers (80-79) 10-3, with Buxton, Trevor Larnach, Royce Lewis, Edouard Julien and Christian Vázquez each recording two hits.

Ober (6-9) tied a season-low in hits allowed and did not allow a run for the first time this year. His last scoreless outing was Sept. 7, 2024, against Kansas City.

Holding onto a one-run lead in the fifth inning with one on and no outs, the Twins converted on a strikeout double play as

Kyle Higashioka went down swinging and Alejandro Osuna was caught stealing second.

Kody Funderburk threw a hitless seventh with two strikeouts, and Cole Sands struck out one in the ninth.

Tyler Mahle (6-4) threw five innings with five hits, one run and four strikeouts.

**Tigers 4, Guardians 2:** Jahmai Jones led off the game with a home run and Detroit snapped an eight-game losing streak, beating Cleveland to move back into a tie with the Guardians for the AL Central lead.

Detroit and Cleveland are 86-73 with three games left to play. The Guardians hold the tiebreaker after going 8-5 in the season series.

The Tigers head to Boston, where the Red Sox have a one-game lead for the AL's second wild card. The Guardians will host Texas, which has lost nine of 10.

Wenceel Pérez and Riley Greene also homered off Cleveland starter Parker Messick (3-1).

Brant Hurter (4-3) got the win, and Will Vest picked up his 22nd save in 29 opportunities.

Troy Melton allowed one run in 3½ innings in what was a bullpen game for the Tigers.

**Phillies 1, Marlins 0:** Walker Buehler pitched five scoreless innings and Philadelphia beat Miami, eliminating the Marlins from the wild-card race.

After hitting a team-record eight homers Wednesday night in an 11-1 victory that wrapped up a first-round bye, the Phillies scored the lone run on Alec Bohm's first-inning groundout.

Buehler (10-7) allowed three hits and three walks and hit a batter. Taijuan Walker followed with two innings of relief, Matt Strahm pitched the eighth and, after an hourlong rain delay, 40-year-old David Robertson finished for his second save.

Janson Junk (6-4) took the loss.

**SEE MLB ON PAGE 8**

# Raleigh's 60 homers might not be enough

Associated Press

The 60-homer mark remains a magical threshold in baseball.

Babe Ruth was the first hitter to reach it in a season, and nobody else did until Roger Maris 34 years later. Then it was another 37 years until Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa surpassed 60 home runs in 1998, part of a power surge in which there were six 60-homer seasons between '98 and 2001.

It was two more decades before Yankees slugger Aaron Judge hit 62 in 2022. Now Seattle catcher Cal Raleigh has 60

this year. Fittingly, the American League MVP race is coming down to him and Judge.

As of Thursday night, Raleigh (-220) was a slight favorite for the award over Judge (+165) according to BetMGM Sportsbook. But 60 homers is no guarantee of anything. In 1999, both McGwire and Sosa surpassed 60, but Chipper Jones was the National League MVP. McGwire hit a then-record 70 home runs in 1998 but lost out to Sosa, who hit 66.

While Raleigh tries to add to his home run total, Judge has 51

of his own — and he's closing in on the AL batting title. So the only thing that's clear about the MVP race is that everyone else is fighting for third.

Entering Thursday's games, Judge led the American League in Baseball Reference's version of wins above replacement (bWAR) — and by a pretty healthy margin of 9.3 to 7.2. The FanGraphs version (fWAR) is closer, with Judge up 9.6 to 9.1, but the New York outfielder also has significant leads in batting average (.330-.247), on-base percentage (.457-.360) and slug-

ging percentage (.683-.594).

Judge and Raleigh both play for teams headed for the playoffs. Raleigh's role on a Seattle club that has won its division, but was also in danger of missing the postseason until recently, could weigh in his favor. But Baseball Reference has a stat for that, too: Championship win probability added (cWPA) measures how much a player's contributions have increased his team's chances of winning the World Series. Judge has the edge there too, with a cWPA of 3.8% to Raleigh's 3.0%.

## MLB: Grand slam helps Toronto maintain tie with Yankees in AL East

### FROM PAGE 7

**Blue Jays 6, Red Sox 1:** Daulton Varsho hit his fifth career grand slam, George Springer added a two-run homer and Toronto beat Boston to maintain a tie for the AL East lead with the New York Yankees.

Toronto (91-68), which had lost six of seven, closes with three games at home against Tampa Bay.

Boston (87-72) was prevented from clinching a postseason berth. The Red Sox are in position for the second AL wild card, one game ahead of Detroit (86-73) and two games in front of Houston (85-74) with three games left. The Red Sox finish at home against the Tigers.

Three Blue Jays combined for six perfect innings before Jarren Duran doubled off Braydon Fisher starting the seventh and scored on Trevor Story's single.

Toronto opener Louis Varland struck out three of six batters, and Eric Lauer retired 10 straight.

**Yankees 5, White Sox 3:** Giancarlo Stanton grounded a go-ahead, three-run double and New York beat Chicago to remain tied with Toronto atop the AL East with three regular-sea-

son games to be played.

Carlos Rodón (18-9) pitched six steady innings and Austin Wells added an RBI double off the right-center fence in the seventh as the playoff-bound Yankees finished a three-game sweep to move a season-high 23 games above .500.

New York, which has won five straight and eight of nine, is assured home-field advantage in the Wild Card Series if it can't edge the Blue Jays for the division title. The teams share the best record in the American League at 91-68.

Toronto holds the head-to-head tiebreaker over the Yankees after winning the season series 8-5.

**Mets 8, Cubs 5:** Francisco Lindor homered to reach the 30-30 milestone for the second time, Brett Baty went deep and New York beat Chicago to remain in position for the final National League wild card.

The Mets built a six-run lead and withstood a shaky outing by rookie Nolan McLean (5-1). They remained a game ahead of Cincinnati in the playoff race, with the Reds beating Pittsburgh.

Chicago's Shota Imanaga (9-8) got tagged for a season-high eight runs in 5½ innings.

Seiya Suzuki homered twice and Dansby Swanson also connected for the Cubs, who have lost six of seven.

Chicago leads San Diego by two games with three to play for the top wild card and home-field advantage in the opening round of the playoffs. Those two teams will meet in Game 1 on Tuesday.

The Mets led 2-0 in the third when Lindor connected against Imanaga, sending a solo drive beyond the left-field bleachers to Waveland Avenue. That gave him 30 homers to go with 31 steals.

The five-time All-Star had 31 homers and 31 steals for New York in 2023.

Though he struck out a personal-best 11, McLean gave up a season-high five runs and five hits in 5½ innings. Edwin Díaz worked the ninth for his 28th save in 31 chances.

**Royals 9, Angels 4:** Vinnie Pasquantino homered and drove in three runs, Bobby Witt Jr. had four hits and Kansas City beat Los Angeles.

Michael Lorenzen (7-11) gave up two earned runs and five hits with a season-high nine strikeouts and no walks in 5½ innings for the Royals.

Jo Adell, Nolan Schanuel and Mike Trout each homered for

the Angels. Trout's two-run shot — his 23rd of the season and 401st of his career — cut Kansas City's lead to 5-4 in eighth.

However, the Royals scored four in the top of the ninth, a rally highlighted by Salvador Perez's two-out, three-run double off Angels reliever Sam Bachman, to pull away.

Mitch Farris (1-3) gave up four earned runs and five hits in five innings, striking out five and walking two, for the Angels, who have lost 11 of 13 games.

**Mariners 6, Rockies 2:** Eugenio Suárez matched his career high with his 49th homer, leading the AL West champion Seattle over Colorado for their 17th win in 18 games.

A day after clinching their first division title since 2001, the Mariners were assured a first-round bye and home-field advantage in the AL Division Series when Cleveland lost to Detroit earlier Thursday.

Suárez connected on a hanging slider from Bradley Blalock (2-6) for a two-run homer in the second and Seattle never trailed as it won its seventh straight. Suárez, who also hit 49 homers for Cincinnati in 2019, added a run-scoring single in the fifth that raised his career-best RBIs total to 117.