

Navy: Drone strike hit oil tanker in Oman

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — U.S. Navy explosive experts believe a “drone strike” targeted an oil tanker that came under attack off the coast of Oman in the Arabian Sea, killing two on board, the American military said Saturday.

The strike Thursday night on the oil tanker Mercer Street marks the first-known fatal attack after years of assaults on commercial shipping in the region linked to tensions with Iran over its tattered nuclear deal. While no one has claimed responsibility for the attack, Israeli officials alleged Tehran launched the drone strike.

While Iran did not directly acknowledge the attack, the strike comes as Tehran now appears poised to take an even tougher approach with the West as the country prepares to inaugurate a hard-line protégé of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as president.

The American nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan and the guided missile destroyer USS Mitscher were escorting the Mercer Street as it headed to a

safe port, the U.S. Navy’s Mideast-based 5th Fleet said in a statement early Saturday.

“U.S. Navy explosives experts are aboard to ensure there is no additional danger to the crew, and are prepared to support an investigation into the attack,” the 5th Fleet said. “Initial indications clearly point to a (drone)-style attack.”

The 5th Fleet statement did not explain how it determined a drone caused the damage, although it described its explosive experts finding “clear visual evidence that an attack had occurred” aboard the Mercer Street. The U.S. military’s Central Command did not immediately respond to a questions on the evidence.

The drone attack blasted a hole through the top of the oil tanker’s bridge, where the captain and crew command the vessel, a U.S. official said. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as an investigation into the attack still was ongoing.

The Mercer Street is managed by London-based Zodiac Maritime, part of Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer’s Zodiac Group. The

firm said the attack killed two crew members, one from the United Kingdom and the other from Romania. It did not name them, nor did it describe what happened in the assault. It said it believed no other crew members on board were harmed.

British maritime security firm Ambrey said the attack on Mercer Street had killed one of its team members on board the vessel.

The Mercer Street, empty of cargo, had been on its way from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to Fujairah, United Arab Emirates, at the time of the attack, Zodiac Maritime said. The attack targeted the tanker just northeast of the Omani island of Masirah, over 185 miles southeast of Oman’s capital, Muscat. Oman’s state-run news agency late Friday described the area as “beyond Omani regional waters” and said its forces responded to the tanker’s mayday call.

Israeli officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity as they weren’t authorized to talk to the media, blamed Tehran for the attack. They offered no evidence to support their claim.

Pentagon grappling with new coronavirus directives

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is vowing he “won’t let grass grow under our feet” as the department begins to implement the new vaccine and testing directives. But Pentagon officials were scrambling at week’s end to figure out how to enact and enforce the changes across the vast military population and determine which National Guard and Reserve troops would be affected by the orders.

The Pentagon now has two separate missions involving President Joe Biden’s announcement Thursday aimed at increasing COVID-19 vaccines in the federal workforce. The Defense Department must develop plans to make the vaccine mandatory for the military and set up new requirements for federal workers who will have to either attest to a COVID-19 vaccination or face frequent testing and travel restrictions.

Austin said Friday that the department

will move expeditiously, but added that he can’t predict how long it will take. He said he plans to consult with medical professionals as well as the military service leaders.

Any plan to make the vaccine mandatory will require a waiver signed by Biden because the Food and Drug Administration has not yet given the vaccine final, formal approval. According to federal law, the requirement to offer individuals a choice of accepting or rejecting use of an emergency use vaccine may only be waived by the president and “only if the president determines in writing that complying with such requirement is not in the interests of national security.”

Mandating the vaccine before FDA approval will likely trigger opposition from vaccine opponents and drag the military into political debates over what has become a highly divisive issue in America.

Military commanders, however, have also struggled to separate vaccinated recruits

from unvaccinated recruits during early portions of basic training across the services in order to prevent infections. So, for some, a mandate could make training and housing less complicated.

Military service members are already required to get as many as 17 different vaccines, depending on where they are based around the world. Some of the vaccines are specific to certain regions. Military officials have said the pace of vaccines has been growing across the force, with some units seeing nearly 100% of their members get shots.

According to the Pentagon, more than 1 million service members are fully vaccinated, and 233,000 have gotten at least one shot. There are roughly 2 million active-duty, Guard and Reserve troops.

A vaccine mandate will also raise questions about whether the military services will discharge troops who refuse the vaccine.

Ammo shelves bare as gun sales continue to rocket

Associated Press

SEATTLE — The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with record sales of firearms, has fueled a shortage of ammunition in the United States that's impacting law enforcement agencies, people seeking personal protection, recreational shooters and hunters — and could deny new gun owners the practice they need to handle their weapons safely.

Manufacturers say they're producing as much ammunition as they can, but many gun store shelves are empty and prices keep rising. Ammunition imports are way up, but at least one U.S. manufacturer is exporting ammo. All while the pandemic, social unrest and a rise in violent crime have prompted millions to buy guns for protection or to take up shooting for sport.

"We have had a number of firearms instructors cancel their registration to our courses because their agency was short on ammo or they were unable to find ammo to purchase," said Jason Wuestenberg, executive director of the National Law Enforcement Firearms Instructors Association.

Doug Tangen, firearms instructor at the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, the police academy for the state, said the academy also has had trouble obtaining ammo.

"A few months ago, we were at a point where our shelves were nearly empty of 9mm ammunition," he said. In response, instructors took conservation steps like reducing the number of shots fired per drill, which got them through several months until fresh supplies arrived, Tangen said.

The National Shooting Sports Foundation, an industry trade group, says more than 50 million people participate in shooting sports in the U.S. and estimates that 20 million guns were sold last year, with 8 million of those sales made by first-time buyers.

"When you talk about all these people buying guns, it really has an impact on people buying ammunition," spokesman Mark Oliva said. "If you look at 8.4 million gun buyers and they all want to buy one box with 50 rounds, that's going to be 420 million rounds."

Trump urged Justice officials to declare 2020 election 'corrupt'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump urged senior Justice Department officials to declare the results of the 2020 election "corrupt" in a December phone call, according to handwritten notes from one of the participants in the conversation.

"Just say the election was corrupt and leave the rest to me and the R. Congressmen," Trump said at one point to then-Acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen, according to notes taken by Richard Donoghue, who was then Rosen's deputy and who was also on the call.

The notes of the Dec. 27 call, released Friday by the House Oversight Committee, underscore the lengths to which Trump went to try to overturn the results of the election and to elicit the support of

senior government officials in that effort. Emails released in June show Trump and his allies in the last weeks of his presidency pressured the Justice Department to investigate unsubstantiated claims of widespread election fraud, forwarding them conspiracy theories and even a draft legal brief they hoped would be filed with the Supreme Court.

The pressure is all the more notable because just weeks earlier, Trump's own attorney general William Barr, revealed that the Justice Department had found no evidence of widespread fraud that could have overturned the results. Unsubstantiated claims of fraud have been repeatedly rejected by judge after judge, including by Trump appointees, and by election officials across the country.

DOJ: Trump should give tax returns to committee

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Former president Donald Trump's tax returns should be turned over to House Democrats who tried unsuccessfully for years to get the documents, the Justice Department said Friday, in a legal analysis reversing a position taken two years ago.

The decision marks another significant legal setback for Trump, who has fought a multifaceted campaign to keep his tax records secret from prosecutors, lawmakers, and the public. Trump was the first president in decades to refuse to share his tax returns as a candidate or while in office.

Earlier this year, Trump's tax records were turned over to the Manhattan District Attorney, after a separate legal fight in which the Supreme Court declined to intervene. The prosecutor's office has been examining Trump's finances as part of a criminal probe of his businesses, and has indicted Trump's longtime financial officer, Allen Weisselberg, on tax charges. Weisselberg has denied the charges.

While he was president, Trump successfully beat back efforts by the House Ways & Means Committee to see his tax returns, including a battle in federal court. But the new opinion from the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel said the committee's request to see the records — as part of its oversight of the Internal Revenue Service's presidential audit program — is valid and should be fulfilled.

It wasn't immediately clear if the former president would fight the release through a previously filed lawsuit over the committee's demand for his tax returns. A spokesperson for Trump did not respond to a request for comment.

Rep. Kevin Brady of Texas, the top Republican on the Ways & Means Committee, said the Justice Department's new opinion was a politically motivated invasion of privacy that "sets a dangerous precedent that weaponizes that tax code by giving Congress the dangerous power to rummage through anyone's private tax returns for purely political reasons."

California wildfire flares — within perimeter

Associated Press

PARADISE, Calif. — California's largest wildfire so far this year was flaring up Friday but it was because the flames were chewing through unburned islands of vegetation within a perimeter that firefighters have built, authorities said.

The Dixie Fire covered 376 square miles in the mountains of Northern California where 42 homes and other buildings have been destroyed and more than 10,000 are still threatened.

The vegetation burning inside the fire on Thursday produced a huge "fire cloud," towering columns of smoke and ash that can pose a danger to firefighters. Residents were given assurances that it had been expected and would happen again but did not mean crews were losing control they have

on the fire.

"There's nothing close to our line right now. It's all interior fuels burning," Mike Wink, an incident commander, said in an online briefing.

The fire northeast of the town of Paradise, which was largely destroyed in 2018 by the nation's deadliest wildfire in a century, has been burning since July 13 and is more than 20% contained.

Meanwhile, concerns over the risk of rolling outages in the coming weeks prompted California Gov. Gavin Newsom to sign an emergency proclamation on Friday that offers cash incentives to big energy users such as factories or casinos to conserve when the power supply is tight.

The state could face a shortage of 3,500 megawatts on days when soaring heat

drives up demand. That's partly because an intensifying drought has reduced water levels in reservoirs and diminished output from the hydroelectric dams.

A historic drought and recent heat waves tied to climate change have made wildfires harder to fight in the American West. Scientists say climate change has made the region much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

In remote southern Oregon, the nation's largest wildfire was more than halfway contained after scorching over 646 square miles in the Fremont-Winema National Forest. Active fire behavior there also was mainly interior pockets of vegetation burning, a situation report said.

More than 100 spend night on highway after mudslides

Associated Press

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colo. — More than 100 people had to spend the night on a highway, including nearly 30 who took refuge in a tunnel, after rain over an area burned by a wildfire once again triggered mudslides in western Colorado, authorities said Friday.

The people were caught with their vehicles on Interstate 70 in Glenwood Canyon on Thursday night. Those in the tunnel were stuck for about nine hours until crews could carve out a path through the mud to reach them at about 6:30 a.m. Friday, Garfield County Sheriff's Office spokesman Walt Stowe said.

The tunnel serves as a 24-hour operations center for the Colorado Department of

Transportation, so it is relatively well-lit and has telephones, Stowe said. No injuries were reported.

The transportation department has accounted for 108 people, including 29 in the tunnel, who were stuck on the highway overnight. Between 65 and 70 people remained stranded at a rest stop Friday afternoon as crews worked to punch a safe passage through the debris.

Mike Goolsby, a regional director for the transportation department, said the area was affected by about 10 slides, some 12 feet deep and up to 150 feet wide.

"I'm very grateful that no one was hurt. ... We've tried our hardest not to have people in the canyon when these flash flood warnings hit, but it was the best case scenario for

all of us based on the outcome this morning," he said.

Glenwood Canyon has cliffs towering up to 2,000 feet above the Colorado River, making it prone to rockslides and mudslides. In recent weeks, rain over the area burned by a wildfire last summer has triggered frequent slides, resulting in closures of I-70, Colorado's main east-west highway. Those closures have mostly occurred before the storm moves in, to prevent people from being trapped.

On Thursday, the canyon had temporarily closed earlier in the day as one storm cell approached but had reopened by the time a second storm cell moved in, which led to the vehicles and their passengers getting trapped.

Tourists evacuated by boat from wildfires in Turkey

Associated Press

ISTANBUL — Panicked tourists in Turkey hurried to the seashore to wait for rescue boats Saturday after being told to evacuate some hotels in the Aegean resort of Bodrum due to the dangers posed by nearby wildfires, Turkish media reported.

Coast guard units were leading the operation and authorities asked private boats and yachts to assist in evacuation efforts from the sea as new wildfires erupted.

The death toll from wildfires raging in Turkey's Mediterranean towns rose to six Saturday after two forest workers were

killed, the country's health minister said. Fires across Turkey since Wednesday have burned down forests and some settlements, encroaching on villages and tourist destinations and forcing people to evacuate.

The minister of agriculture and forestry, Bekir Pakdemirli, said Saturday that 88 of the 98 fires that broke out amid strong winds and scorching heat have been brought under control. Neighborhoods affected by the fire in five provinces were declared disaster zones by Turkey's emergency and disaster authority.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited

the area Saturday, inspecting the damage from a helicopter.

Speaking from the town of Manavgat, Erdogan announced that the Turkish government would cover the rents for people affected by the fire and rebuild their homes. He said taxes, social security and credit payments would be postponed for those affected and small businesses would be offered credit with zero interest.

"We cannot do anything beyond wishing the mercy of God for the lives we have lost but we can replace everything that was burned," he said.

US warns of more Chinese missile silos

Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — The U.S. military is warning about what analysts have described as a major expansion of China's nuclear missile silo fields at a time of heightened tension between Beijing and Washington.

Researchers at the Federation of American Scientists estimate that China has approximately 250 underground missile silos under construction after they used satellite imagery to identify a new field being built in western China.

U.S. Strategic Command tweeted a link Wednesday to a story in The New York Times on the federation's findings, which were published last week.

"The public has discovered what we have been saying all along about the growing threat the world faces and the veil of secrecy that surrounds it," said Strategic Command, which oversees America's nuclear arsenal.

The field in the Xinjiang region is the second one reported this summer. In June, researchers at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in California identified another field under construction in neighboring Gansu province.

China has not commented on the reports. Asked about the latest one, the Foreign Ministry said Friday that it was not aware of the situation.

The reports come at a time when relations between the U.S. and China have plunged to

their worst level in decades. The two nations remain sharply at odds over a range of issues, including trade, technology, cybersecurity, human rights and China's increasingly assertive foreign policy under President Xi Jinping.

The expansion of China's nuclear force would likely factor into any U.S. calculations for potential military confrontations over flashpoints such as Taiwan or the South China Sea.

China's nuclear arsenal is estimated by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute at 350 warheads, while the United States or Russia each has about 6,000. The Pentagon says China will at least double the size of its arsenal in 10 years.

UN: Hunger likely to rise in 23 global hotspots

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Hunger is expected to rise in 23 global hotspots in the next three months with the highest alerts for "catastrophic" situations in Ethiopia's embattled Tigray region, southern Madagascar, Yemen, South Sudan and northern Nigeria, two U.N. agencies warned Friday.

The Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Program said in a new report on "Hunger Hotspots" between August and November that "acute food insecurity is likely to further deteriorate."

They put Ethiopia at the top of the list,

saying the number of people facing starvation and death is expected to rise to 401,000 — the highest number since the 2011 famine in Somalia — if humanitarian aid isn't provided quickly.

In southern Madagascar, which has been hit by the worst drought in the past 40 years, pests affecting staple crops, and rising food prices — 14,000 people are expected to be pushed into "catastrophic" acute food insecurity marked by starvation and death by September. And that number is expected to double by the end of the year with 28,000 people needing urgent help, the two agen-

cies said.

In a report in May, 16 organizations including FAO and WFP said at least 155 million people faced acute hunger in 2020, including 133,000 who needed urgent food to prevent widespread death from starvation, a 20 million increase from that of 2019.

"Acute hunger is increasing not only in scale but also severity," FAO and WFP said in Friday's report. "Overall, over 41 million people worldwide are now at risk of falling into famine or famine-like conditions, unless they receive immediate life and livelihood-saving assistance."

Bacon may disappear in Calif. when pig rules take effect

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Thanks to a reworked menu and long hours, Jeannie Kim managed to keep her San Francisco restaurant alive during the coronavirus pandemic.

That makes it all the more frustrating that she fears her breakfast-focused diner could be ruined within months by new rules that could make one of her top menu items — bacon — hard to get in California.

"Our number one seller is bacon, eggs and hash browns," said Kim, who for 15 years has run SAMS American Eatery on the city's busy Market Street. "It could be devastating for us."

At the beginning of next year, California will begin enforcing an animal welfare proposition approved overwhelmingly by

voters in 2018 that requires more space for breeding pigs, egg-laying chickens and veal calves. National veal and egg producers are optimistic they can meet the new standards, but only 4% of hog operations now comply with the new rules. Unless the courts intervene or the state temporarily allows non-compliant meat to be sold in the state, California will lose almost all of its pork supply, much of which comes from Iowa, and pork producers will face higher costs to regain a key market.

With little time left to build new facilities, inseminate sows and process the offspring by January, it's hard to see how the pork industry can adequately supply California, which consumes roughly 15% of all pork produced in the country.

"We are very concerned about the poten-

tial supply impacts and therefore cost increases," said Matt Sutton, the public policy director for the California Restaurant Association.

California's restaurants and groceries use about 255 million pounds of pork a month, but its farms produce only 45 million pounds, according to Rabobank, a global food and agriculture financial services company.

The National Pork Producers Council has asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture for federal aid to help pay for retrofitting hog facilities around the nation to fill the gap. Hog farmers said they haven't complied because of the cost and because California hasn't yet issued formal regulations on how the new standards will be administered and enforced.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man who threatened to attack CIA pleads guilty

PA WHITEHALL — A Pennsylvania man who threatened to blow up government buildings in Harrisburg and Washington, D.C., has pleaded guilty to gun and explosives charges.

Kurt Cofano, 32, was convicted of three of the five counts brought against him, the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review reported.

Cofano said online that he wanted to “blow up” the Treasury Department in Harrisburg and “go to the CIA headquarters in D.C. and take out as many (people) as I can before I get gunned down.”

Last year, local police pulled Cofano over and said they found guns in the car alongside supplies to make fireworks.

Investigators also found chemicals used for making homemade explosives, detonators and grenades, the newspaper said.

WWE star: Seats, beer for return of stolen item

FL TAMPA — WWE star Sheamus is offering ring-side seats and “many beers” to anyone who returns a prop cross necklace that was stolen from an arena on the campus of the University of South Florida.

Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay is also offering a \$5,000 reward for information about the theft in May of the necklace, three title belts signed by various WWE stars and a corner pad.

Sheamus tweeted that he would appreciate it if the inter-

net sleuths could help track down his stolen necklace.

Girl dies after rock goes through windshield

ID MALAD — Authorities in eastern Idaho say a girl died after a rock crashed through the windshield of the car she was riding in.

The Oneida County Sheriff's Office said Kambrie Horsley, 10, was in the passenger seat of the vehicle driven by her father Brad Horsley when a 4-inch rock struck her in the head, the Idaho State Journal reported. The rock was dislodged from the roadway by a semi truck driving along the same road.

Brad Horsley, who is also the Oneida County coroner, drove his injured daughter to a nearby hospital, and from there the girl was airlifted to a children's hospital in Salt Lake City. She was pronounced dead later that day.

Court orders 6 chimps removed from caretaker

MO JEFFERSON COUNTY — Six chimpanzees have been removed from their caretaker under a court order after People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals claimed in 2016 that the chimps were being held in inadequate conditions.

The chimps were removed from a Festus-area facility. Jefferson County sheriff's deputies and the U.S. Marshals Service oversaw the removal of the chimps out of concern that their caretaker, Tonia Haddix, or others would try to block the effort.

U.S. District Judge Catherine Perry's order capped a year-long dispute over the fate of the chimps, after a 2016 lawsuit

claimed they were being held “confined in cramped, virtually barren enclosures” at the Missouri Primate Foundation facility.

Esports arena planned near amusement park

OH SANDUSKY — Amusement park operator Cedar Fair Entertainment plans to add esports to its lineup of roller coasters and water parks.

It wants to build a 1,500-seat esports arena in Ohio for gaming tournaments near Cedar Point, its flagship amusement park in Sandusky, the company announced.

Plans call for the arena to have 200 gaming stations and host tournaments year-round beginning in the first half of 2023. It also could be used for concerts and other events, the company said.

Doctor loses license in kickback scheme

KS LEAWOOD — A Leawood physician has surrendered his medical license after admitting that he told a drug company he would not sell one of their products unless he was hired for more speaking engagements.

Dr. Steven M. Simon gave up his medical license, after being sentenced to three years of probation for soliciting health care kickbacks, KCUR reported. Simon was also ordered to pay a \$100,000 fine.

Simon, a pain doctor, admitted that he told a representative for AstraZeneca that he would not continue to prescribe Movantik, which is used to treat constipation caused by opioid

medications, unless he was paid for more speaking engagements.

Man dies after bee attack; 3 hospitalized

AZ MARANA — A man has died and three other people have been hospitalized after a bee attack in the Tucson suburb of Marana, police said.

Authorities said the swarming bees came from 100-pound open beehive that was in a tree inside a home's backyard.

Marana police said three people passing through the area were stung hundreds of times and taken to a hospital for treatment while three Northwest Fire District firefighters dispatched to the scene also were stung. One of the firefighters was stung about 60 times and was treated and released from the hospital.

3 kids lead police to bleeding mother

TX SAN ANTONIO — Three young children wandering a dark San Antonio street told a police officer, “Mommy's dead,” before leading the officer to their home where their mother was bleeding from stab wounds in a bathtub, police said.

Officers took the two youngest children, 4 and 5, to a convenience store while other officers went with the eldest, 8, to the family apartment and found the bleeding woman. She was hospitalized in serious condition with stab wounds to the legs and abdomen.

-From The Associated Press

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Dressel, Ledecky add 2 more golds for US

Associated Press

TOKYO — Caeleb Dressel is pretty much invincible when he has a lane to himself.

But give him a deficit of more than 8 seconds?

Well, that's too much for even the world's greatest swimmer to overcome with two laps of the pool.

On a morning of mixed emotions and chaotic racing at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, Dressel set a world record in the 100-meter butterfly, but was basically doomed before he even dove into the pool on the new mixed relay Saturday.

So went his chances of joining a very exclusive club. His bid to win six gold medals fell apart with another U.S. relay debacle. The Americans were too far behind in the 4x100-meter mixed medley when their top swimmer took over, so the best Dressel could do was rally the U.S. to a fifth-place finish in an event

that features two men and two women on each team. Britain set a world record to win the gold.

"Fifth place is unacceptable for USA Swimming," Dressel said. "It stings."

It was a disappointing capper to a golden morning for the Americans, whose biggest swimming stars both ascended to the top of the medal podium.

After Dressel won his third gold of the games, Katie Ledecky closed out her grueling Olympic program with a third straight victory in the 800 freestyle.

Ledecky was pushed hard by Australian rival Ariarne Titmus, but the American held on in a race she hasn't lost since 2010.

Ledecky finished with two golds, two silver and a fifth-place finish at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre — not as successful as she was five years ago in Rio de Janeiro, but not bad at all.

Ledecky became the first female swimmer to capture six individual gold medals in her career with another Olympic title in the 800 free, winning with a time of 8 minutes, 12.57 seconds.

Titmus closed strong to claim the silver in 8:13.83, while the bronze went to Italy's Simona Quadarella in 8:18.35.

Dressel led right from the start in the fly and held off Hungary's Kristof Milak to touch in 49.45 seconds, breaking the mark of 49.50 that the American set at the 2019 world championships.

Milak, winner of the 200 fly, earned the silver with a blistering 49.68. The bronze went to Switzerland's Noe Ponti.

The Australian women added another gold.

Kaylee McKeown completed a sweep of the backstroke events with a victory in the 200. Her winning time was 2:04.68.

The silver went to Canada's Kylie Masse in 2:05.42, with another Australian, Emily Seebohm, claiming the bronze in 2:06.17.

For the second time at these Olympics, the U.S. failed to win a relay medal, joining a fourth-place finish in the men's 4x200 freestyle. Before Tokyo, the Americans had never failed to finish in top three of an Olympic relay they entered.

The Americans tried a different strategy than everyone else, going with Dressel on the freestyle while the other seven teams all closed with a woman.

The Americans faltered when 17-year-old Lydia Jacoby — already the only woman swimming the breaststroke leg — had her goggles knocked off on her dive into the water.

The 17-year-old struggled to finish in 1:05.09, her goggles dangling as the rest of the field pulled away.

Djokovic's temper flares as he leaves empty-handed

Associated Press

TOKYO — Novak Djokovic came to the Tokyo Olympics aiming for a Golden Slam. He'll leave without a medal and will need some time to recover from a draining performance in extreme conditions that didn't meet expectations.

The top-ranked Djokovic lost his cool and abused his racket several times during a 6-4, 6-7 (6), 6-3 loss to Pablo Carreño Busta of Spain in the bronze-medal match of the tennis tournament on Saturday.

It was Djokovic's third defeat in two days and it came less than 24 hours after he was beaten by Alexander Zverev of Germany in the singles semifinals. That ended his bid for a Golden Slam, which is winning all four Grand Slam titles and Olympic gold in the same year.

"I just didn't deliver yesterday and today. The level of tennis dropped. Also due to exhaustion — mentally and physically," Djokovic said. "I gave it all, whatever I had left in the tank, which was not so much."

Djokovic's frustration was evident in his on-court behavior as the match wore on.

Having saved a match point in the second-set tiebreaker, Djokovic threw his racket into the stands — up and over five rows of seats — after he couldn't get to a stop-volley winner from Carreño Busta to conclude a long rally in the opening game of the third.

A couple of games later, when Carreño Busta had broken his serve to take control of the decisive set, Djokovic again lost his cool and slammed his racket into the net post during a change of ends.

McLaughlin, Muhammad win heats in 400 hurdles

Associated Press

TOKYO — Early starts, false starts — none of it bothered the world's top two hurdlers in their debuts at the Tokyo Olympics.

World-record holder Sydney McLaughlin and reigning world champion Dalilah Muhammad breezed through their opening rounds of the 400-meter hurdles Saturday morning, keeping their much-anticipated showdown on track for a gold-medal race next week.

McLaughlin was about 10 paces down the track in her heat when a second gun went off, signaling a false start in her race. Mariya Mykolenko of Ukraine was shown a yellow card, and given a warning.

This might have felt like a recurring bad dream for McLaughlin. At the U.S. Olympic trials last month, her qualify-

ing race was called back to the starting line three times because of what appeared to be a faulty sensor in the starting blocks.

Not a problem. Just as she did at the trials in Eugene, Ore., she crouched into the blocks again and cruised around the oval for the win.

"It's always an adjustment, just mentally, having to refocus and regroup," McLaughlin said. "It's just one of those things. You can't always control what happens, but mentally you can control how you respond to it."

McLaughlin said she was up at 4 a.m. to get ready for a 9:15 race — an unusually early starting time for most runners, and one made more difficult by the fact that they've only been in Japan for a week. There's a 16-hour time difference from McLaughlin's home base in California.

Biles opts out of vault, uneven bars

Associated Press

TOKYO — Simone Biles is opting not to defend her Olympic vault title, pulling out of Sunday's event finals for both vault and uneven bars while she focuses on her mental health.

The 24-year-old six-time Olympic medalist removed herself from competition during the team finals on Tuesday and sat out Thursday's all-around final as well. Biles said on social media Friday that she is dealing with what is defined as "the twisties": the sudden inability to feel comfortable while twisting in midair.

Biles said she's battled the issue before, but typically only when it comes to vault and floor exercise. This time around, it's a problem on all four apparatuses. She is scheduled to compete in both the balance beam and floor exercise finals next week.

Biles had been working on performing the Yurchenko Double Pike vault in Tokyo. She unveiled the vault — one never done by a woman in competition — in May. If she had been able to successfully land the vault, which requires the gymnast to do a roundoff and back handspring onto the table

before two backward somersaults with her hands clasped behind her legs, the vault would then carry her name in the sport's Code of Points.

USA Gymnastics said Biles will continue to be evaluated daily to determine her potential readiness for future competitions.

MyKayla Skinner, who had the fourth-highest score in vault during qualifications, will compete in vault finals for the U.S. alongside Jade Carey, who finished with the second highest score. Skinner initially did not make the vault finals because International Gymnas-

tics Federation rules allow each country a maximum of two athletes per event in the finals.

Skinner, 24, was an alternate on the 2016 Olympic team that won gold in Rio de Janeiro. She made the 2020 team as a "plus-one," competing in all four events during qualifying last Sunday. She actually finished 11th in the all-around during qualifying but did not make the 24-woman final because both Biles and eventual all-around champion Sunisa Lee posted better scores among American competitors.

On to the quarters: US men rally past Czech Republic

Associated Press

SAITAMA, Japan — The U.S. lost its first two exhibition games of the summer in Las Vegas, dropped its opening game at these Olympics and had a difficult time shaking free of the Czech Republic in their group-play finale.

None of that matters now.

The Americans are headed to the quarterfinals at the Tokyo Games — with a shot of being good as gold once again. Jayson Tatum scored 27 points, Kevin Durant added 23 and set a pair of USA Basketball men's Olympic records, and the U.S. defeated the Czechs 119-84 on Saturday to clinch a berth in the knockout stage.

"I think our guys really focused well and did a good job in gaining ground, day by day, practice by practice," U.S. coach Gregg Popovich said. "Hopefully we'll continue that moving forward. We have to if we want to be successful."

Zach LaVine scored 13 points, Jrue Holiday had 11 and JaVale McGee finished with 10 points for the U.S. The Americans shot 7-for-20 in the first quarter — then made 33 of 44 shots over the next 26 minutes, including a staggering 21-for-25 start to the second half.

"It's fun to watch," Holiday said, "and fun to be part of."

The U.S. (2-1) finished second behind France in Group A, but will join the French, Australia and the winner of Sunday's game between Slovenia and Spain as a top-four seed

for Tuesday's quarterfinals based on FIBA's tiebreaker system that includes point differential.

Those quarterfinal matchups will be decided in a draw on Sunday night, but the U.S. has now assured itself of not having to face any of the three group winners until at least the semifinals.

Blake Schilb scored 17 for the Czech Republic (1-2), which led by 10 early and was still within 60-54 midway through the third quarter.

In a flash, the Czechs' hope of a stunner ended there.

"I think the first half, we played amazing. ... Second half, we ran out of gas," Czech Republic coach Ronen Ginzburg said.

Durant — who passed Carmelo Anthony as both the U.S. Olympic men's all-time points and all-time field goals leader during the game — hit a three-pointer to end the third quarter, capping a 22-6 run that put the Americans up by 22 going into the final quarter.

The outcome was not in doubt again, and Durant said the scoring record was "special" to him on a night where the Americans engineered a 48-point turnaround from being down 10 to leading by as many as 38.

"You just think about all the players that played in this program," Durant said. "Pretty cool to be amongst names like that. Carmelo is a guy that I played on two Olympic teams with, I've seen his approach to these games and I've tried to steal some of his techniques."

SEC makes it official, accepts Texas, Oklahoma

Associated Press

Oklahoma and Texas accepted invitations to join the Southeastern Conference in July 2025 on Friday, worried that their storied athletic programs were in danger of losing ground if they stayed in the Big 12.

A whirlwind week of official moves — after who knows exactly how long the schools worked behind the scenes — came to a conclusion when regents at both Texas and Oklahoma unanimously jumped at the chance to join the SEC.

"After thorough consideration and study it became obvious that standing pat would be falling behind," Oklahoma athletic director Joe Castiglione said.

The SEC, already the strongest football conference in the country, welcomed its newest members, who arrive with 11 national championships between them as determined by The Associated Press.

"The SEC has already established itself as the premier conference in collegiate athletics, and the addition of these two tradition-rich programs will make for an even more competitive league in all sports," Alabama athletic director Greg Byrne said in a statement.

News broke of discussions between Texas and Oklahoma and the SEC last week. The schools and conference remained silent on the matter until this week.

"This is a move for stability and preservation and propagation," Oklahoma President Joe Harroz said.

Votto homers for 7th straight game

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Joey Votto homered for the seventh straight game, one shy of a major league record, and the Cincinnati Reds beat the New York Mets 6-2 on Friday night.

Jonathan India went deep twice for the Reds, including a leadoff shot that came on Carlos Carrasco's first pitch with the Mets. Acquired from Cleveland in January, the veteran righthander finally made his New York debut after recovering from a hamstring injury.

Yankees 3, Marlins 1: Anthony Rizzo homered, singled and walked in his debut with New York to help it win at Miami.

Blue Jays 6, Royals 4: Bo Bichette hit a two-run home run, Teoscar Hernandez added a solo shot and Toronto made a triumphant return to its home sta-

dium, beating Kansas City.

Rockies 9, Padres 4: Star shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. left in the first inning with a partially dislocated left shoulder and San Diego lost to visiting Colorado, which was led by Ryan McMahon's grand slam and Jon Gray's solid outing.

Rays 7, Red Sox 3: Yandy Díaz, Mike Zunino and Randy Arozarena homered and host Tampa Bay beat Boston to move within a half-game of the AL East lead.

Nationals 4, Cubs 3: Josh Bell and Luis García homered and host Washington beat Chicago, hours after both franchises completed trade-deadline teardowns.

Pirates 7, Phillies 0: Wil Crowe and two relievers combined on a one-hitter and host Pittsburgh beat Philadelphia to

snap a four-game losing streak.

Brewers 9, Braves 5: Avisail García, Willy Adames and Eduardo Escobar homered and Milwaukee won at Atlanta.

Orioles 4, Tigers 3: Matt Harvey extended his shutout streak to 18½ innings, Pedro Severino homered twice and Baltimore won at Detroit.

White Sox 6, Indians 4: Tim Anderson had a tiebreaking single, José Abreu was hit in the head by a pitch with the bases loaded and host Chicago rallied for two runs in the eighth inning to beat Cleveland after acquiring All-Star closer Craig Kimbrel from the Cubs.

Mariners 9, Rangers 5: Logan Gilbert worked into the sixth inning to win his fifth decision in a row, fellow rookie Jarrod Kelenic hit a three-run homer and Seattle won at Texas.

Cardinals 5, Twins 1: Tommy Edman drove in three runs with a bases-loaded double, Wade LeBlanc pitched 5 2/3 strong innings and host St. Louis beat Minnesota.

Athletics 2, Angels 0: Chris Bassitt became the first American League pitcher to reach 11 wins, Matt Chapman hit his 14th homer and visiting Oakland shut out Los Angeles for the second straight night.

Astros 9, Giants 6: José Altuve hit a grand slam in the sixth, one inning after putting his team ahead on a solo homer, and AL-leading Houston won at San Francisco.

Diamondbacks 6, Dodgers 5 (10): Asdrúbal Cabrera hit a soft, looping double into left field that scored Daulton Varsho in the 10th inning and host Arizona beat Los Angeles.

All-Star swaps: Scherzer, Turner, Bryant and Báez lead trade news

Associated Press

Max Scherzer and Trea Turner wearing Dodger blue, Kris Bryant heading to the Golden Gate. Javier Báez joining the Mets, Craig Kimbrel crossing town to the White Sox, José Berríos moving north of the border.

Now this truly was an All-Star trade deadline day.

After a run-up that saw the likes of Nelson Cruz, Anthony Rizzo, Joey Gallo and Adam Frazier swapped, even more big names changed teams during a whirlwind Friday.

From contenders boosting their roster to the also-ran Chicago Cubs and Washington Nationals gutting theirs, this was a monster day for moves.

"They all feel busy, but today was non-stop," said Cleveland president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti, who made three trades.

"We executed a number of trades but there were probably at least another dozen other ones that we contemplated seriously at different points in time and exchanged different ideas," he said.

Several playoff chasers pursued arms,

with Toronto landing Berríos, Philadelphia getting Kyle Gibson and Ian Kennedy, Boston adding relievers Hansel Robles and Austin Davis, and St. Louis acquiring starters Jon Lester and J.A. Happ.

"I felt like this was one of the most active trade deadlines that I can recall," said Atlanta GM Alex Anthopoulos, who swung a slew of deals.

A total of 27 teams made deals Friday, and in the past week, 10 players picked for the All-Star Game last month were traded.

All 30 clubs have made a swap since Wednesday.

The Los Angeles Dodgers made the biggest noise, getting Scherzer and Turner for a talented quartet of young prospects. The ace and star shortstop could help them close a three-game gap behind the NL West-leading San Francisco Giants, who did just fine in landing Bryant for their lineup.

While much of the day hinged on which teams added players — Atlanta got Adam Duvall, Jorge Soler and Eddie Rosario and reliever Richard Rodriguez, among them — it also was about which clubs broke apart.

Martínez pitches US past S. Korea

Associated Press

YOKOHAMA, Japan — Nick Martínez stepped onto the mound, and it felt like an old familiar place.

Because it was.

"Felt comfortable the whole game," he said after striking out nine over five innings and pitching the United States over South Korea 4-2 for a 2-0 record at the Olympics.

A right-hander who turns 31 on Thursday, Martínez (1-0) allowed one run and four hits.

He was 17-30 for Texas from 2014-17 and signed with the Pacific League's Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters after the Rangers demoted him to Triple-A 13 times. He switched to the Fukuoka SoftBank Hawks this season and is 7-2 with a 2.03 ERA.

While Major League Baseball refused to allow 40-man roster players at the Olympics and many teams blocked top prospects from participating, Nippon Professional Baseball stopped its season, as did the Korean league (KPO).

"I'm familiar with Asian-style baseball," Martínez said. "I've been fortunate to watch a little bit of the KBO during quarantine."