

Russia says it foiled drone attack on Moscow

Associated Press

Russian air defenses on Tuesday foiled a Ukrainian drone attack on Moscow that prompted authorities to briefly close one of the city's international airports, officials said, as a Western analysis said that Russia has managed to slow Kyiv's recently launched counteroffensive.

The drone attack, which follows previous similar raids on the Russian capital, was the first known assault on the city since an abortive mutiny launched 11 days ago by mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin. His Wagner troops marched on Moscow in the biggest — though short-lived — challenge to Russian President Vladimir Putin in more than two decades of his rule.

Authorities in Ukraine, which generally avoids commenting on attacks on Russian soil, didn't say whether it launched the drone raid.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that four of the five drones were downed by air defenses on the outskirts of Moscow and the fifth was jammed by electronic warfare means and forced down.

There were no casualties or damage, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said.

As with previous drone attacks on Moscow, it was impossible to verify the Russian military's announcement that it downed all of them.

The drone attack prompted authorities to temporarily restrict flights at Moscow's Vnukovo airport and divert flights to two other Moscow main airports. Vnukovo is about nine miles southwest of Moscow.

In May, two daring drone attacks jolted the Russian capital, in what appeared to be Kyiv's deepest strikes into Russia.

Tuesday's raid came as Ukrainian forces have continued probing Russian defenses in the south and the east of their country in the initial stages of a counteroffensive.

Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's Security and Defense Council, said that the military was currently focusing on destroying Russian equipment and personnel, and that the past few days of fighting have been particularly "fruitful."

He provided no evidence and it wasn't possible to independently verify it.

The Ukrainians are up against minefields, anti-tank ditches and other obstacles, as well as layered defensive lines reportedly up to 12 miles deep in some places as they attempt to dislodge Russian occupiers.

The U.K. Defense Ministry said Tuesday the Kremlin's forces have "refined (their) tactics aimed at slowing Ukrainian armored counteroffensive operations in southern Ukraine."

Moscow has placed emphasis on using anti-tank mines to slow the onslaught, the

assessment said, leaving the attackers at the mercy of Russian drones, helicopters and artillery.

"Although Russia has achieved some success with this approach in the early stages of Ukraine's counteroffensive, its forces continue to suffer from key weaknesses, especially overstretched units and a shortage of artillery munitions," the assessment said.

Western analysts say the counteroffensive, even if it prospers, won't end the war, which started with Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Russia, meanwhile, has continued its missile and drone barrage deep behind the front line. Russian shelling of Pervomaiskyi, a city in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region, wounded 43 civilians, Kharkiv Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Tuesday. Among the wounded were 12 children, including two babies.

Oleksandr Lysenko, mayor of the city of Sumy in northeastern Ukraine, said that three people were killed and 21 others were wounded in a Russian drone strike on Monday that damaged two apartment buildings.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the attack also damaged the regional headquarters of the Security Service of Ukraine, the country's main intelligence agency. He argued that the country needs more air defense systems.

Ukrainians honor writer killed in missile attack

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Dozens of people with flowers, many unable to hold back tears, bid farewell Tuesday to an award-winning Ukrainian writer who was among those killed by a Russian missile attack on a popular restaurant in eastern Ukraine.

The memorial service for Victoria Amelina, 37, was held in the crowded main hall of Saint-Michael's Cathedral in Kyiv, where ceremonies are usually held for soldiers who were killed on the battlefield.

Amelina died in a hospital from injuries sustained in the June 27 strike on a popular restaurant frequently visited by journalists and aid workers in the city of Kramatorsk.

Twelve other people also lost their lives in the attack.

"Usually, we gather here to say goodbye to the most deserving," said Archimandrite Lavrentii, the Orthodox priest leading the service. "Considering the times we live in, leading a worthy and dignified life for each of us is the best tribute we can offer in memory of those who have passed away into eternity."

Around 100 people, including representatives from the Ukrainian literary community, relatives, and residents of Kyiv gathered at the church to honor Amelina, a prominent writer who had turned her attention from literature to documenting Rus-

sian war crimes after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Mourners approached the closed casket, gently touching the yellow and blue Ukrainian flag covering it. Many couldn't hold back tears.

To the left of the casket, people laid flowers, some of which were adorned with ribbons in the colors of the Ukrainian flag. At the end of the farewell, a mountain of flowers stood next to a portrait of Amelina, a red-haired woman with a pale face and a penetrating gaze pictured against a dark background.

A funeral will be held Wednesday in Amelina's hometown of Lviv.

USS Nimitz home after historic voyage

Stars and Stripes

The oldest U.S. aircraft carrier still in service is back home in Washington state after a 7-month deployment.

The USS Nimitz, flagship for Carrier Strike Group 11, returned to its homeport in Bremerton on Sunday. During its deployment to the 3rd and 7th Fleet areas of operations, Nimitz conducted multinational exercises, long-range maritime strike exercises, anti-submarine warfare and other exercises, sailing more than 65,000

nautical miles and completing more than 14,500 aircraft launches and recoveries, a Navy news release said.

The carrier made port calls in Guam; Singapore; Busan, South Korea; Laem Chabang, Thailand; Sasebo, Japan; and Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; and hosted two formal “big top” receptions in South Korea and Thailand, the release said.

Before returning home, Nimitz dropped off the embarked air wing of Carrier Air Wing 17 at Naval Air Station Coronado in

California on June 28.

“Every day of the deployment, our sailors were relentless in the safe execution of operations,” said Capt. Craig Sicola, commanding officer of Nimitz during the deployment. Sicola formally took over command of the carrier from Capt. Douglas Graber during a change of command ceremony in San Diego on June 29, the release said. “I especially want to thank all our Nimitz families who supported and encouraged our sailors throughout these

seven months.”

While deployed, Nimitz made history when it completed its 350,000th arrested aircraft landing April 22 while sailing in the South China Sea. An arrested landing — also known as a trap — is one where a landing plane contacts the aircraft carrier and its tailhook snags one of four cables that are laid across the deck.

By catching one of the cables, the tailhook immediately decelerates the fighter jet’s speed so that it can safely stop.

Pentagon reports rise in military suicides

BY DOUG G. WARE

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Suicides in the active-duty military increased in the first three months of 2023 compared to the same time last year, according to a newly released Pentagon report.

The Defense Suicide Prevention Office revealed in its quarterly report that the overall number of active-duty suicides — 94 — from January through March was up 25% compared to the number of troops — 75 — who took their own lives in the first three months of 2022.

The Army had the greatest increase in suicide deaths, from 37 to 49. The Marine Corps increased from eight to 14. The Air Force had one additional suicide compared to 2022 and there was no change for the Navy or Space Force, the Defense Department report states.

The 94 active-duty suicides are the most that the military has seen since 97 were reported in the second quarter of 2021. Among reserve troops and the

National Guard, the report said suicide figures did not change between the first quarter of 2022 and the same period this year.

Pentagon data have shown a rise in military suicides in the past decade, including a significant spike in 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic, and the Defense Department has spent millions of dollars on efforts to try to prevent them.

In May, the department enacted the long-awaited Brandon Act to let troops seek mental health services confidentially and any time that they need it. It’s named after Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Brandon Caserta, who committed suicide in 2018.

According to Defense Department data, there were almost 29 suicides per 100,000 troops in 2020 — up from 17.5 per 100,000 in 2010.

That figure fell to 24.3 per 100,000 in 2021, but it still represented a serious uptick in suicides compared to most of the 2000s and 2010s.

Two soldiers charged with smuggling migrants

BY ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — Two soldiers were arrested last month in a rural west Texas county that borders Mexico and charged with smuggling migrants into the United States, according to local law enforcement officials.

Spc. Desman Braxton, 22, and Sgt. Diamond Lampton, 27, were arrested June 18 in separate incidents in Kinney County while driving on a road commonly used to avoid U.S. Customs and Border Protection checkpoints that are further north of the Rio Grande, according to Matt Benacci, spokesman for the county and its sheriff’s office.

Braxton is an active-duty nutrition care specialist assigned to Brooke Army Medical Center at Joint Base San Antonio, which is located about 130 miles east of Kinney County, according to her service record. Lampton is a cannon crewmember with the Louisiana National Guard, according to her service record.

Neither was assigned to work on a mission at the border with the Defense Department or the state of Texas, according to the Louisiana National Guard and U.S. Northern Command, the combatant command tasked with overseeing the federal border mission.

Both arrests began on Ranch Road 674, which Benacci described as a hotspot for smuggling in the county. It is also rare that anyone from outside the county would be on the road, he said. Braxton told law enforcement officers during a routine traffic stop that she was transporting a friend. It was determined by police that the friend was an undocumented person from Ecuador, Benacci said.

Hours later along the same road, police attempted to stop a vehicle driven by Lampton. She slowed down enough to let two people believed to be migrants out of the vehicle and then sped off again, Benacci said.

Deputies pursued her and Lampton crashed. The people who exited the vehicle were not found, he said.

Not all in Maine town salute flagpole plan

Associated Press

COLUMBIA FALLS, Maine — Lobster boat engines rumble to life, lumberjacks trudge into the woods and farmers tend wild blueberries just like they have for generations here at the nation's northeastern tip, where the vast wilderness and ocean meet in one of the last places on the East Coast unspoiled by development.

It's a striking backdrop to a family's bold vision for the region: a flagpole jutting upward from the woodlands toward spacious skies — reaching higher than the Empire State Building and topped with an American flag bigger than a football field.

To promoters, the \$1 billion project would unite people of all political stripes in an era of polarization. "We want to bring Americans together, remind them of the centuries of sacrifice made to protect our freedom, and unite a divided America," said Morrill Worcester, whose family is behind the proposal.

So far, the proposed Flagpole of Freedom Park has done precisely the opposite. In Columbia Falls, population 485, the debate has laid bare community and cultural flashpoints. Does the quiet area want the visitors it would bring? Would the massive undertaking scar the landscape? How do you balance development and environmentalism? How do traditional industries fare?

The flagpole would be 1,461 feet tall — the tallest in the world — and the proposal also envisions a village with living history museums, a 4,000-seat auditorium, restaurants and a monument with

the name of every veteran who has died since the Revolution — about 24 million names in all.

Residents were stunned by the scale of a project that would require paving over woods for parking spaces and construction of housing for hundreds, maybe thousands of workers, potentially transforming this oasis into a sprawl of souvenir shops, fast-food restaurants and malls.

"This is the last wilderness on the East Coast," says Marie Emerson, whose husband, Dell, is a beloved native son, a longtime blueberry farmer and university research farm manager.

It's that rugged coast and pristine wilderness that makes this corner of the world special, and a large development could destroy woodlands and wild blueberry barrens that have been here 10,000 years, with Native Americans being the first stewards. "Do you want to kill the goose that laid the golden egg?" Emerson asks.

On a recent day, Charlie Robbins found himself deep in the woods alongside peaceful Peaked Mountain Pond. In the distance stood a hill where the flagpole would tower above the landscape, topped with an observation tower with blinking lights cutting through the dark stillness of night.

"It's like putting the Eiffel Tower in the Maine wilderness," says Robbins.

The story of how such a place became a proposed home to the world's tallest flagpole begins more than 700 miles away outside Washington, D.C., at Arlington National Cemetery and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where

sacrifices represented by headstones left an impression when Worcester was a boy. He built a successful wreath-making company but never forgot about the cemetery.

In 1992, Worcester Wreath Co. began donating thousands of balsam wreaths to adorn headstones.

He later founded a nonprofit spinoff, Wreaths Across America, run by his wife, that now provides more than 1 million wreaths to military cemeteries and gravesites around the world.

Worcester unveiled his proposal for a high-flying flag last year.

"Most people were, let's say, shocked to see that it was that large," says Jeff Greene, a contractor and one of the town Select Board's three members.

There was a bigger problem. The proposed site is not technically in Columbia Falls. The 10,000-acre plot is in a neighboring township overseen by a state agency. Worcester's solution was to push through the legislature a bill to let residents vote to annex the land.

Town residents began taking sides. Divisive political discourse began seeping into the discussion, which saddens Greene.

"What we're desperately in need of in this area in the country, or in the world as a whole, is the ability to listen to somebody you disagree with in an attempt to find something of value," he says, adding: "Even if you disagree with them."

For all the natural beauty, life is not perfect in Down East Maine. Tourists flock here to enjoy clean air and dark starry skies. But behind the beauty, many are struggling.

The region vies for the state's highest jobless and poverty rates. The county's residents are among the state's oldest. The county is dealing with rampant abuse of opioids.

In March, residents approved a six-month moratorium on large developments to give the town time to develop the needed rules and regulations. Until they figure it out, there will be no flagpole.

Morrill Worcester isn't saying much these days. The Worcester family declined repeated requests for interviews. In a statement, the family said the project will move forward — while leaving the door open to changes.

The family is buoyed by support and respects the wishes of town residents who want more time to study the proposal, Mike Worcester, one of Morrill Worcester's sons, said in a statement.

"As we refine our plans," the statement said, "we remain committed to our vision, and remain more confident than ever that our evolving plan will result in a place where all Americans can celebrate our country's history of service together."

Peter Doak, an Army veteran who supports the project, knows Morrill Worcester as humble but determined — and a visionary. He frames it like this: People thought Walt Disney World, built in a Florida swampland, was a crazy idea. They thought Mount Rushmore was outlandish. Both are now treasured.

"I'm gonna tell you right now, he's gonna build that flagpole," Doak says. "So why shouldn't it be Columbia Falls?"

China restricts exports of metals ahead of Yellen's visit

Associated Press

China has imposed export curbs on two metals used in computer chips and solar cells, expanding a squabble with Washington over high-tech trade ahead of Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's visit to Beijing this week.

The controls on gallium and germanium are intended to "safeguard national security," the Commerce Ministry said late Monday. It said exports will require official permission once the rules take effect Aug. 1 but did not say what restrictions might be ap-

plied. The United States gets about half its supply of both metals directly from China, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's government is frustrated by U.S. curbs on access to advanced processor chips and other technology

on security grounds. But Beijing has been slow to retaliate, possibly to avoid disrupting China's fledgling developers of chips, artificial intelligence and other technology.

Yellen is due to arrive Thursday in an effort to revive relations.

Wait for passports snarls summer plans across US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Seeking a valid U.S. passport for that 2023 trip? Buckle up, wishful traveler, for a very different journey before you step anywhere near an airport.

A much-feared backup of U.S. passport applications has smashed into a wall of government bureaucracy as worldwide travel rebounds toward record pre-pandemic levels — with too few humans to handle the load. The result, say aspiring travelers in the U.S. and around the world, is a maddening pre-travel purgatory defined, at best, by costly uncertainty.

With family dreams and big money on the line, passport seekers describe a slow-motion agony of waiting, worrying, holding the line, refreshing the screen, complaining to Congress, paying extra fees and following incorrect directions. Some applicants are buying additional plane tickets to snag in-process passports where they sit — in other cities — in time to make the flights they booked in the first place.

So grim is the outlook that U.S. officials aren't even denying the problem or predicting when it will ease. They're blaming the epic wait times on lingering pandemic-related staffing shortages and a pause of on-line processing this year. That's left the passport agency flooded with a record-bust-

ing 500,000 applications a week. The deluge is on track to top last year's 22 million passports issued, the State Department says.

Stories from applicants and interviews by The Associated Press depict a system of crisis management, in which the agencies are prioritizing urgent cases such as applicants traveling for reasons of "life or death" and those whose travel is only a few days off. For everyone else, the options are few and expensive.

So, 2023 traveler, if you still need a valid U.S. passport, prepare for an unplanned excursion into the nightmare zone.

By March, concerned travelers began asking for answers and then demanding help, including from their representatives in the House and Senate, who widely reported at hearings this year that they were receiving more complaints from constituents on passport delays than any other issue.

The U.S. secretary of state had an answer, of a sort.

"With COVID, the bottom basically dropped out of the system," Antony Blinken told a House subcommittee March 23. When demand for travel all but disappeared during the pandemic, he said, the government let contractors go and re-assigned staff that had been dedicated to handling passports.

Palestinian man hits 4 in Tel Aviv; Israel pushes on

Associated Press

JENIN, West Bank — A Palestinian man careened his car into pedestrians in Tel Aviv on Tuesday, wounding at least four people, in an attack praised by the Islamist militant group Hamas as a response to Israel's ongoing military operation in the occupied West Bank.

Israeli paramedics said at least four people were wounded when a car careened into pedestrians on a sidewalk in the seaside city. Police spokesman Eli Levi told Kan public radio that the incident was a deliberate attack, and that a civilian shot and killed the driver at the scene.

The Hamas militant group praised the attack as "heroic and revenge for the military operation in Jenin."

Israeli media identified the attacker as Hasin Halila, 23, a Palestinian man from a village near the West Bank city of Hebron.

The attack came as Israeli troops pressed ahead with their hunt for Palestinian militants and weapons in a West Bank refugee camp, after military bulldozers tore through alleys and thousands of residents fled to safety. The two-day Palestinian death toll rose to 10.

The large-scale raid of the Jenin camp, which began Monday, is one of the most intense military operations in the occupied West Bank in nearly two decades. It bore hallmarks of Israeli military tactics during the second Palestinian uprising in the early 2000s and came as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces growing pressure from his ultranationalist political allies for a tough response to recent attacks on Israeli settlers, including a shooting last month that killed four people.

Earlier in the day, rubble littered the streets of Jenin and there were reports of damage to shops. Columns of black smoke periodically punctuated the skyline over the camp in the northern West Bank city, long a Palestinian militant stronghold.

Jenin Mayor Nidal Al-Obeidi said that about 4,000 Palestinians had fled the Jenin refugee camp, finding accommodation in the homes of relatives and in shelters. Residents said there was no water or electricity in the camp.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said Tuesday that the two-day death toll rose to 10, with two more deaths reported overnight. The Israeli military has claimed all were militants, but did not provide details.

Vietnam bans 'Barbie' movie over territorial South China Sea map

Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam — Vietnam's state media have reported that the government banned distribution of the popular "Barbie" movie because it includes a view of a map showing disputed Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea.

The newspaper Vietnam Express and other media said posters advertising "Barbie" were removed from movie distributors' websites after Monday's decision. With Margot Robbie playing Barbie opposite Ryan Gosling's Ken in Greta Gerwig's comedic look at their "perfect" world, "Barbie" was supposed to open July 21 in Vietnamese theaters.

The reports cited Vi Kien Thanh, director general of the Vietnam Cinema Depart-

ment, as saying the National Film Evaluation Council made the decision. It said a map in the film shows China's "nine-dash line," which extends Beijing's territorial claims far into waters that fall within areas claimed by Vietnam and other countries.

China is exceedingly sensitive when it comes to how its national image and border claims are portrayed in entertainment and by businesses. For example, it has routinely retaliated against companies from hotels to airlines that it believes have suggested that self-governing Taiwan is anything other than a part of China.

Companies almost always acquiesce to Chinese complaints, fearing they risk being locked out of the huge, lucrative Chinese market.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Black bear attacks homeowner and his dog

CT LITCHFIELD — A Connecticut homeowner was bitten by a black bear after his dog chased it into the yard and it attacked the pet, officials said. Both were recovering, though the bear escaped into the woods.

The dog spotted the bear as it was inspecting a bird feeder on a porch in the western Connecticut town of Litchfield and chased it, state environmental officials said. The bear attacked the dog and bit the 65-year-old homeowner on the hand when he tried to intervene, officials said.

The man was treated at a hospital, and the dog was sent to a veterinary hospital. The state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection did not have an update on the dog's condition.

Ex-school food chief convicted in bribery case

NY NEW YORK — A man who oversaw food service for New York City schools was convicted in a bribery case that picked apart how chicken tenders riddled with bone and bits of metal were served for months in the nation's biggest public school system.

Former city Department of Education official Eric Goldstein and three men who founded a school food vendor — Blaine Iler, Michael Turley and Brian Twomey — were found guilty of bribery, conspiracy and other charges after a month-long trial.

"Our children depended on nutritious meals served in

schools and, instead, got substandard food products containing pieces of plastic, metal and bones," Brooklyn-based U.S. Attorney Breon Peace said in a statement. He called the case "a textbook example of choosing greed" over children's well-being.

Armed man arrested near Obama's home

DC WASHINGTON — A man armed with explosive materials and weapons, and wanted for crimes related to the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, was arrested in the Washington neighborhood where former President Barack Obama lives, law enforcement officials said.

Taylor Taranto, 37, was spotted by law enforcement a few blocks from the former president's home and fled, though he was chased by U.S. Secret Service agents. Taranto has an open warrant on charges related to the insurrection, two law enforcement officials said.

They said Taranto also had made social media threats against a public figure. He was found with weapons and had materials to create an explosive device though one had not been built, one of the officials said.

No one was injured. It was not clear whether the Obamas were at their home at the time of his arrest.

University leaders fear new free tuition plan

ND BISMARCK — North Dakota higher education officials are deeply worried about losing students and revenue in 2024 when neighboring Minnesota makes

public college and university tuition free for thousands of residents.

Officials estimate around 15,000 to 20,000 Minnesota students a year will use the free North Star Promise program, and North Dakota education officials are projecting an \$8.4 million loss in combined tuition and fees in the first year alone, under one scenario.

Roughly 1,400 Minnesota students attending North Dakota colleges and universities might be eligible for the new program.

Minnesota students make up close to half the student body at North Dakota State in Fargo, their No. 1 out-of-state pick in their first year. They accounted for nearly 40% of the first-year students at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks and North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton in fall 2021.

Assault laws inspired by Larry Nassar abuse signed

MI LANSING — People who are sexually assaulted under the guise of medical treatment in Michigan will be further protected when coming forward, and their abusers will receive stricter punishments under legislation signed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

The long-sought changes to Michigan's law were first introduced following the Larry Nassar case in 2018, when former athletes at Michigan State University and elsewhere testified that the campus sports doctor had sexually assaulted them.

Under the legislation signed by Whitmer, individuals who use their professional authority over another person to prevent

the reporting of crimes could be charged with a misdemeanor. It would also prohibit a public school from expelling or suspending a student for more than 10 days for an action the student took arising from a sexual assault.

A disciplinary subcommittee would permanently revoke the license of any health professional convicted of sexual contact or penetration under the pretext of medical treatment.

State will begin sales for recreational marijuana

MD ANNAPOLIS — Maryland is becoming the latest state to legally sell recreational marijuana, as businesses aim to tap into July Fourth festivities to kick off sales.

About 100 stores that already have been licensed to sell cannabis for medicinal purposes will be able to begin selling it recreationally, more than five years after the state started selling medical marijuana.

"This is cannabis' kind of Independence Day — over Independence Day weekend — and so it's nice to be able to pull something together that makes it more of a celebratory occasion," said Brandon Barksdale, co-CEO of Remedy Maryland, which is opening a cannabis superstore in Columbia.

The Maryland law creates a "personal use amount" for people 21 and older to possess up to 1.5 ounces of cannabis flower, 12 grams of concentrated cannabis or a total amount of cannabis products that does not exceed 750 mg THC.

— From wire reports

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Red-hot Braves keep pedal to metal

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — At the moment, there's no team in the same league as these Atlanta Braves.

They're in a class by themselves — from top to bottom.

"Dangerous team," said Guardians manager Terry Francona.

Michael Harris II, Atlanta's No. 9 hitter, homered twice and Bryce Elder, one of the club's eight All-Stars, pitched into the seventh inning as the Braves moved 30 games over .500 with their season-high ninth straight win, 4-2 over the Cleveland Guardians on Monday night.

Harris connected for solo shots in the third and fifth in-

nings off Guardians rookie Gavin Williams (0-1), who in his third career start had to face a lineup featuring six All-Stars and no detectable weaknesses.

Harris may be last in Atlanta's order, but he's batting .416 (37-for-89) with seven homers and 16 RBIs in his last 24 games. The Braves don't have any holes in their relentless lineup.

"I feel like it's pretty frustrating for the other pitchers," said Harris. "They get through who they think is going to do all the damage and they get down to the bottom of the lineup and we can still do a little damage. It's a pretty special lineup."

Marcell Ozuna also homered

for the Braves, who have won 17 of 18 and 24 of 27.

Atlanta, which has had three winning streaks of at least eight games, improved MLB's best record to 57-27.

Manager Brian Snitker has no explanation for how his team finds ways to win.

"I don't know," he said. "We just do."

Ronald Acuña Jr. continued his record-setting first half of the season.

Atlanta's four-time All-Star outfielder made history by becoming the first player to reach 20 home runs, 40 stolen bases and 50 RBIs before the All-Star break.

"Special player," Snitker said.

The 25-year-old Acuña is also just the third player to hit 20 homers and steal 40 bases in the first 84 games, joining Rickey Henderson (1990) and Eric Davis (1986).

Before the game, Acuña was named NL Player of the Month for June, the second time he's won the award this season.

In the third inning, Acuña extended his hitting streak to 14 games before swiping his 40th base, the most he's had in a season. He stole 37 in 2019.

"You go out and get a drink or go to the bathroom you might miss something you've never seen before," Snitker said. "I'm just glad to have him on our team and be able to watch him every day."

Bader's home run powers Yankees past Orioles

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Harrison Bader hit a tiebreaking three-run homer in the eighth inning and the New York Yankees rallied for a 6-3 victory Monday night over the Baltimore Orioles in the opener of a four-game series between AL East playoff contenders.

Anthony Volpe scored the tying run in the seventh on a wild pitch by All-Star reliever Yenier Cano (1-1) before the Yankees completed the comeback ahead of a postgame fireworks show.

Giancarlo Stanton opened the eighth with a hard single off Cano, and Anthony Rizzo followed with a single against Danny Coulombe.

After showing bunt on the first pitch, Bader drove a 1-1 sweeper into the left-field seats for his seventh homer.

Reds 3, Nationals 2: Joey Votto hit a two-run home run to end an 0-for-21 slump, Ian Gi-baut pitched out of a jam in the sixth inning and visiting Cincinnati beat Washington for its fifth

win in six games.

Votto homered in the fourth off Jake Irvin, depositing the ball just inside the visiting bullpen in left-center field and driving in Elly De La Cruz. It's his fourth home run in 12 games this season since returning in June.

Marlins 5, Cardinals 4: Nick Fortes hit a go-ahead RBI single in the seventh inning and host Miami rallied to beat St. Louis.

Marlins pinch hitter Yuli Gurriel tied it in the seventh with a two-run double against reliever Andre Pallante (2-1) after two straight walks. The Marlins then inserted the speedy Jon Berti to pinch run for Gurriel, and Berti scored on Fortes' ground-ball single.

Brewers 8, Cubs 6: Newly signed Jahmai Jones hit a pinch-hit, three-run double in his first big league appearance since 2021, helping host Milwaukee rally past Chicago.

With the bases loaded and two outs in the seventh inning, Jones hit a line drive on the first pitch from reliever Anthony Kay that

one-hopped off the center field wall and scored Raimel Tapia, Christian Yelich and Owen Miller, tying the game at 6.

Astros 12, Rangers 11: José Abreu and Chas McCormick had back-to-back RBI doubles in the ninth inning and second-place Houston recovered to beat host Texas after giving up an eight-run lead.

Abreu and McCormick also homered earlier for Houston, which took three of four against its in-state rival to move within three games of the division lead.

Twins 8, Royals 4: Edouard Julien hit a pinch-hit, solo homer to start a five-run eighth inning and host Minnesota went on to beat Kansas City for the seventh time in eight games this season.

Carlos Correa had four hits from the leadoff spot and Byron Buxton drove in two runs with sacrifice flies for the Twins.

Mariners 6, Giants 5: Julio Rodríguez hit a two-run double in a four-run ninth inning against All-Star closer Camilo Doval, and visiting Seattle held

on to beat San Francisco.

J.P. Crawford broke a 2-all tie with a sacrifice fly against Doval. Rodríguez's double made it 5-2, and Teoscar Hernández added an RBI single with two outs.

Padres 10, Angels 3: Blake Snell helped keep All-Star slugers Shohei Ohtani and Mike Trout in the ballpark, and Xander Bogaerts hit a three-run homer that sent host San Diego to a big win.

Trout left with an apparent left hand or wrist injury after fouling off a pitch while leading off the eighth inning. He immediately shook his arm. Angels manager Phil Nevin and a trainer came out to check on the superstar and he left the field.

Dodgers 5, Pirates 2: Max Muncy hit his 18th homer of the season, and host Los Angeles got Dave Roberts his 700th win as manager.

Jason Heyward and Miguel Rojas had RBI doubles to help the Dodgers bounce back after dropping the last two games in a weekend series at Kansas City.

Alcaraz, Rybakina, Murray win openers

Associated Press

WIMBLEDON, England — In only his third Wimbledon, Carlos Alcaraz is already one of the main men to beat.

The top-seeded Spaniard hasn't been past the fourth round at the All England Club, but he has become the primary threat in Novak Djokovic's quest for a record-equaling eighth men's title at the grass-court Grand Slam.

On Tuesday, Alcaraz beat Jeremy Chardy 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 on No. 1 Court — a fitting location for the No. 1 player in the world.

The match was played under the roof because rain affected play on the outside courts for the second straight day.

"Obviously without the roof, with sun, is much better for me. I think for everyone as well," Alcaraz said on court. "With the roof or not, I have to show my best level."

His best led Alcaraz to his first major title at the U.S. Open last year. He reached the semifinals at this year's French

Open, but Djokovic ended up winning that match en route to his 23rd Grand Slam title.

At Wimbledon, Alcaraz reached the second round in 2021, playing as a wild card. He made the fourth round last year and entered this year's tournament after winning the grass-court title at Queen's Club.

The 36-year-old Chardy, who was playing at Wimbledon for the 14th time and at his 56th major overall, planned to retire from the sport after this year's tournament.

Kate, the Princess of Wales, was at a rainy Wimbledon on Tuesday and sat in the Royal Box at Centre Court next to Roger Federer, an eight-time champion who has retired from the sport. Federer was feted before play began.

Matches began on most courts shortly after 11 a.m. at the All England Club, but the rain came down about an hour later. Play never resumed, and all matches on the outside courts were suspended for the day.

Only Centre Court and No. 1 Court have retractable roofs at Wimbledon.

Elena Rybakina opened play on Centre Court against American opponent Shelby Rogers — the traditional spot for the defending women's champion.

Rybakina, who withdrew from the Eastbourne International last week citing a virus illness, improved her serve after the first set and beat Rogers 4-6, 6-1, 6-2.

"I'm feeling much better," Rybakina said on court. "It was a bit unlucky for me. It was not easy to get again to the fitness and physical condition, but now I'm much better. Hopefully this win gives me more confidence for the next round."

Rybakina had also pulled out of the French Open because of an illness and said she was "pretty nervous" at the start of Tuesday's match.

Two-time champion Andy Murray was second on Centre Court, beating Ryan Peniston 6-3, 6-0, 6-1.

"It was amazing to have some royalty here but also some tennis royalty, as well," Murray said on court, referring to the princess and to Federer. "It's amazing to have Roger here supporting the event."

Sixth-seeded Ons Jabeur, who lost to Rybakina in last year's final, advanced with a win over Magdalena Frech.

The biggest surprise so far came late Monday at No. 1 Court just before darkness, when Coco Gauff — who burst onto the scene at age 15 by beating Venus Williams in the opening round at Wimbledon — was eliminated by Sofia Kenin 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 in a highlight-reel matchup between two Americans.

Gauff was seeded No. 7 and established herself as a consistent Week 2 presence at Slams. Wednesday is normally the day the second round starts at Wimbledon, but there are still outstanding first-round matches from Monday to add to the nearly full slate of uncompleted matches from Tuesday.

Churchill Downs bans Baffert for additional year

Associated Press

Churchill Downs is extending Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert's suspension through 2024, keeping the two-time Triple Crown winner from entering horses in the Kentucky Derby and other races for an additional year.

Churchill Downs Inc. announced Monday it was continuing Baffert's ban at least through the 2024 calendar year, citing "continued concerns regarding the threat to the safety and integrity of racing he poses to CDI-owned racetracks."

Baffert was initially suspended for two years after 2021 Kentucky Derby winner Medina Spirit failed a postrace drug test and was later disqualified.

In a statement, Churchill Downs said Baffert continues to

"peddle false narratives" about Medina Spirit's failed drug test for a steroid, betamethasone, that is legal in Kentucky but is banned on race day.

"A trainer who is unwilling to accept responsibility for multiple drug test failures in our highest-profile races cannot be trusted to avoid future misconduct," CDI said.

The company went on to say it will re-evaluate Baffert's status after 2024.

Baffert, in a statement posted on Twitter, said he was at a loss to understand the decision, defending using a topical ointment on Medina Spirit to treat a skin infection and arguing it did not involve a disregard of the rules.

"In the interests of the sport we all love, I have made no pub-

lic comments on this unfortunate episode for an extended period of time, so the suggestion that I 'continue to peddle false narratives' is patently false," Baffert said.

Medina Spirit collapsed and died in December 2021 after a workout in California.

Baffert's suspension comes with horse racing at a crossroads, following the deaths of 12 horses within a month at Churchill Downs that led the storied track to look into causes, while the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority launched a parallel investigation. Trainer Saffie Joseph Jr. was recently reinstated by Churchill Downs after two of his horses died in the lead-up to the Kentucky Derby this year.

Baffert returned to the Triple

Crown trail earlier this year at the Preakness after being suspended from that race and the Belmont in 2022 in connection with a different, 90-day ban in Kentucky that Maryland and New York honored. His National Treasure won the Preakness, giving him a record-breaking eighth victory in the race hours after another 3-year-old horse he trained broke his left front leg while racing and was euthanized on the track.

"You can't do it without the group of owners that I have that have stuck by me through all this negative, this bad stuff that's happened to me in the last few years," Baffert said after winning the Preakness in May. "And they're loyal, they stuck with me, and I give them all the credit."

T-wolves give Edwards max contract extension

Associated Press

The Minnesota Timberwolves have made it clear: They're going to build around Anthony Edwards.

The Timberwolves and Edwards agreed on a max extension on Monday — five years, \$207 million, with a chance of the deal reaching \$260 million, agent Bill Duffy confirmed to The Associated Press.

Edwards' new contract will begin in the 2024-25 season. He becomes the fourth player to get the maximum rookie-scale extension so far this summer, joining Indiana's Tyrese Haliburton, Charlotte's LaMelo Ball and Memphis' Desmond Bane.

His deal would reach the supermax level if he makes an All-NBA team.

Edwards was an All-Star for the first time this past season, and he has gotten better in each of his first three years with the Timberwolves.

His scoring, rebound, assist, steal and shooting numbers have increased each season. Edwards averaged 24.6 points, 5.8 rebounds, 4.4 assists and 1.6 steals on 46% shooting this past season — while shooting 37% from three-point range.

Only nine players averaged as many points, rebounds and assists per game as Edwards. Of the nine, he was the youngest at 21. Add the steals per game to that list, and Edwards became the youngest player to have those averages in each of those categories since LeBron James in 2005-06.

The only question regarding Edwards and the extension was how quickly it would happen. By league rule, Minnesota had to wait until July 1 — the deals for Bane and Haliburton, for example, came shortly after midnight EDT in the wee hours of Saturday.

Another couple of days didn't seem to hurt the Wolves.

Edwards was the No. 1 pick in the 2020 draft and turns 22 next month — when he's scheduled to be part of the USA Basketball roster that'll play in the FIBA World Cup. He took a significant step this past season toward becoming Minnesota's true go-to player while two-time All-Star Karl-Anthony Towns missed 52 games with a calf strain.

The Wolves now have three

max players on their roster in Edwards, Towns and center Rudy Gobert. Last year, the Wolves and Towns agreed to a \$224 million contract extension as soon as the negotiation period opened. Gobert, whose first season with Minnesota after the whopper trade with Utah was filled with growing pains between him and his new team, has three years left on his deal. Towns has five.

The Wolves made the playoffs in each of the last two years, falling in the first round both times. They'll try for a third consecutive winning record this coming season, a streak the likes of which the franchise hasn't enjoyed since six straight years over .500 from 1999-00 through 2004-05.

Predators early winners in NHL free agency

Associated Press

Barry Trotz was tired after a busy week of putting his stamp on the Nashville Predators by remaking the roster through some important comings and goings.

It's a good kind of tired.

On what was technically his first day on the job as general manager, Trotz signed top two-way center and 2019 playoff MVP Ryan O'Reilly, rugged Stanley Cup-winning defenseman Luke Schenn and winger Gustav Nyquist who has something to prove. Those moves, even after trading Ryan Johansen and buying out Matt Duchene, made Nashville one of the big winners in NHL free agency.

"I want to change a little bit of the culture," said Trotz, who coached the Predators for 15 years from their inception in 1998-2014. "I was looking for serial winners. I wanted to allow for a path for our young guys to develop and be surrounded by those those type of people."

Trotz and his team were far from the only ones who did well.

Winners

Top goalies: Two-time All-Star Tristan Jarry got a five-year deal worth almost \$27 million to stay with the very active Pittsburgh Penguins. Joonas Korpisalo signed a \$20 million, five-year contract with Ottawa.

The deal doesn't go into effect until the 2024-25 season, but Ilya Sorokin received \$66 mil-

lion over the following eight years to continue backstopping the New York Islanders.

Others — like Carolina's Antti Raanta, two-time Cup-winner Jonathan Quick and veteran James Reimer — got one-year contracts at more bargain prices.

Ryan Graves: No player has made more total money in unrestricted free agency so far than Graves, a defensive defenseman who signed for \$27 million over six years with Pittsburgh. Graves will make an average of \$4.5 million a season through 2028-29.

"He brings a lot of size to the group he's in, but more importantly, he's been very effective playing against very, very tough competition in New Jersey and going back to Colorado," Penguins GM Kyle Dubas said.

Additional shoutout to Dmitry Orlov for getting the highest cap hit at \$7.75 million for the next two seasons with Carolina, although he traded away the stability of a lengthy contract he might have gotten elsewhere.

Losers

Long-term contracts: Just seven of the contracts handed out this weekend to unrestricted free agents were for five years or more. Even Orlov said it was a tough time to be a player interested in a long-term commitment.

One- and two-year deals — many with performance-based incentive bonuses — were far more popular, given the limited money

available around the league and the expectation the salary cap is going up significantly next summer.

Western Canada: Other than the Edmonton Oilers, who are in win-now mode, it's a rough time for the Calgary Flames, Winnipeg Jets and Vancouver Canucks.

The Flames didn't do much to add, the Jets still seem on track to trade goalie Connor Hellebuyck and perhaps center Mark Scheifele, and the Canucks are trying to retool on the fly after buying out Oliver Ekman-Larsson, who has since joined Florida.

Toronto Maple Leafs: After winning a playoff series for the first time since 2004, the Leafs face an incredibly uncertain future. They already lost O'Reilly, Schenn, forward Noel Acciari and defenseman Erik Gustafsson after acquiring them prior to the trade deadline, as well as forward Michael Bunting.

They got tougher by signing enforcer Ryan Reaves to a three-year deal worth just over \$4 million, added motivated defenseman John Klingberg for next season and nabbed winger Tyler Bertuzzi. Max Domi could also help Toronto. But now the real work begins to decide what to do with the "Core Four." Auston Matthews and William Nylander could become free agents next summer — and Mitch Marner and captain John Tavares in 2025 — so the answer of whether Toronto will be better is still to be determined.