

Army brings combat robot to exercise

BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL

Stars and Stripes

HOHENFELS, Germany — The new robotic ground vehicle called Project Origin made its multinational debut at a training exercise last week with more than 5,000 troops from across Europe.

The unmanned vehicle is being used at the Army's Joint Multinational Readiness Center for Combined Resolve 17, a recurring exercise designed to test the ability of troops to operate effectively in a complex battlespace with ground, air and cyber assets, according to the Army.

"We came out so we could expose the vehicle to multinational partners and U.S. forces," said Todd Willert, a leader of the Origin program. "We do that so soldiers not only see the capability, but so they can fight and defend against it. Across the world, armies are developing robotic platforms with lethal payloads. We as a coalition need to know how to fight against that."

About the size of a small car and equipped with an electric engine and four axles, the Origin moves through the terrain without a driver on board and features sensors and attachment kits with an M240 machine gun,

.50-caliber mounted weapons and anti-air Javelin missiles.

During the exercise's open combat portion, soldiers coordinate, maneuver and execute freely within a more than 61 square mile training ground, or "the box." The Origin vehicle was used by soldiers of 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment to challenge conventional operating plans and train on how to react to autonomous military vehicles in combat, said Sgt. 1st Class Joshua De Palma, a scout platoon sergeant with the unit.

"We used the weapons-capable platform in various ways, from traditional reconnaissance to attack and harass enemy troops and to test their defenses," De Palma said Wednesday during a presentation on the exercise grounds. "It was interesting to see troops react to seeing it for the first time in simulated combat. They didn't know what they were dealing with."

Combined Resolve 17 is a major test of the combat capability of the Army's 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, which deployed to Germany in February as Russia launched its invasion into Ukraine.

The Fort Stewart, Ga., soldiers were joined in the training by troops from Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Lithuania, Moldova, North Macedonia and Poland.

During one of the simulated assaults, radio traffic between some troops accentuated how they were surprised by the Origin, Willert said.

"We heard one of the soldiers say 'It's not human!'" he said. "They are fighting something that doesn't eat, doesn't sleep and they need to figure out how to fight that with new tactics."

Much like unmanned drones operated by the Air Force, the Project Origin vehicles require a remote driver and a sensor or weapons operator. Origin is controlled remotely by a specialist with chest-mounted control units that look like rugged template computers paired with joystick controllers.

The vehicles are a prototype creation of the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command's Ground Vehicle Systems Center in Warren, Mich., the military's research and development facility for advanced technology in ground systems.

Navy pauses flights for safety review after crashes

Los Angeles Times

The U.S. Navy announced Saturday that it would pause all flight operations to conduct safety reviews and training after three recent crashes, including one last week in California that killed five U.S. Marines.

Vice Adm. Kenneth Whitesell, Naval Air Forces commander, has directed more than 300 naval aviation units that are not deployed in the United States or overseas to take a one-day pause June 13 to review their safety procedures and practices.

Deployed units will conduct the review "at the earliest possible

opportunity," the Navy announced.

"In order to maintain the readiness of our force, we must ensure the safety of our people remains one of our top priorities," Cmdr. Zachary Harrell said. "We understand the most valuable resource we have is our people, and we just want to be sure that we're making our best efforts to keep them safe as we train and operate."

The safety pause does not apply to the U.S. Marine Corps.

The order comes after three crashes occurred this month involving U.S. Navy and Marine Corps aircraft. The cause of the

accidents are under investigation.

On June 3, a Navy pilot, Lt. Richard Bullock, was killed when his F/A-18E Super Hornet jet crashed in the desert, in the general area of Trona in San Bernardino County, during a training mission.

On Wednesday, another crash killed all five U.S. Marines aboard a MV-22B Osprey during a training mission near Glamis in California, about 150 miles east of San Diego near the borders with Arizona and Mexico. The aircraft was based at Marine Corps Air Station Camp Pendleton with Marine Aircraft

Group 39 and crashed around 12:25 p.m. near Coachella Canal Road and Highway 78.

On Thursday, a Navy helicopter with four crew members went down near El Centro during a training flight. One person suffered non life-threatening injuries and was released from the hospital, Harrell said in an interview.

On Monday, two aviators were injured when an AH-64 Apache helicopter crashed near an Army base in southern Alabama, officials said. In March, a Marine MV-22B Osprey crashed in Norway and killed four.

Austin calls out China for its military activity near Taiwan

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

America's policy toward Taiwan remains unchanged, but China's relations toward that island have grown ever more aggressive and coercive, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Saturday in Singapore.

America's "One China" policy regarding Taiwan remains "unchanged and unwavering," Austin said during the opening speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue, a defense summit held each summer in the Asian city-state. "But unfortunately, that doesn't seem to be true for [China]," he said.

Under the "One China" policy, the U.S. acknowledges Beijing's view that it has sovereignty over Taiwan, which split from the mainland in 1949, but considers Taiwan's status as unsettled.

"We've witnessed a steady increase in provocative and destabilizing military activity near Taiwan," Austin said, referring to China's military, the People's Liberation Army. He said Chinese aircraft in recent months flew in record numbers near Taiwan, and nearly every day.

"We remain focused on maintaining peace, stability and the status quo across the Taiwan Strait," he said.

China regards Taiwan, which lies just off its southeast coast, as a renegade province that, at some point, must be unified under Beijing's control.

The United States formally switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979. The U.S., however, has continued to supply arms to Taiwan under the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act. The U.S. has maintained "strategic ambiguity" about what military actions it would take in the event China moved to take the self-governing island by force.

President Joe Biden, in Tokyo on May 23 during his first presidential visit to Japan, signaled an apparent end to that policy by saying the U.S. would defend Taiwan against a Chinese invasion.

On Friday in Singapore, Austin met with Chinese Defense Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe for an hour, most of which they spent discussing Taiwan, the Pentagon said in a news release later that day.

China accuses US of trying to 'hijack' support in Pacific region to harm Beijing

Associated Press

SINGAPORE — China's defense minister accused the U.S. on Sunday of trying to "hijack" the support of countries in the Asia-Pacific region to turn them against Beijing, saying Washington is seeking to advance its own interests "under the guise of multilateralism."

Defense Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe lashed out at U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, rejecting his "smearing accusation" the day before at the Shangri-La Dialogue that China was causing instability with its claim to the self-governing island of Taiwan and its increased military activity in the area.

Austin had stressed the need for multilateral partnerships with nations in the Indo-Pacific, which Wei suggested was an attempt to back China into a corner.

"No country should impose its will on others or bully others under the guise of multilateralism," he said. "The strategy is an attempt to

build an exclusive small group in the name of a free and open Indo-Pacific to hijack countries in our region and target one specific country — it is a strategy to create conflict and confrontation to contain and encircle others."

China recently signed a security agreement with the Solomon Islands that many fear could lead to a Chinese naval base in the Pacific, and broke ground this past week on a naval port expansion project in Cambodia that could give Beijing a foothold in the Gulf of Thailand.

Last year U.S. officials accused China of testing a hypersonic missile, a weapon harder for missile defense systems to counter, but China insisted it had been a "routine test of a spacecraft." Answering a question Sunday, Wei came the closest so far to acknowledging it was, indeed, a hypersonic missile, saying, "As for hypersonic weapons, many countries are developing weapons and I think there's no surprise that China is doing so."

New base chief on Guam urges China readiness

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military must prepare to fight decisively if China challenges America, its allies or partners, the new commander of Andersen Air Force Base on Guam told troops moments after stepping into the job.

Brig. Gen. Paul Birch took command of Andersen's 36th Wing from Brig. Gen. Jeremy Sloane on Friday during a ceremony in a hangar at Andersen that was livestreamed on Facebook.

Birch, a former Pentagon strategic planning chief, pinned on his first star March 2. He told airmen he looks forward to working with them, as well as other branches and allied militaries, to increase Andersen's capabilities.

"We have to get it right now, right here because of the world's situation," he said.

U.S. allies in Europe have been focused on Russia's invasion of Ukraine since February. Meanwhile, North Korea has been conducting regular missile tests and Chinese planes have been buzzing Taiwan.

"The threat is relentless," Birch said. "We need to enhance our ... readiness and lethality in such a way that deters our adversary today and also postures us to fight decisively should that adversary — China — make a strategic miscalculation and elect to take on the United States, its allies or its partners."

Birch, who graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1996 and received a master's degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1998, takes command during Valiant Shield. The biennial exercise on and near Guam involves two aircraft carriers, 15 surface ships, more than 200 aircraft and an estimated 13,000 personnel.

The exercise and others like it aren't just building troops' skills, he said.

"They also signify our resolve to our global commitments," he said. "Our methods of command and control must be the golden braid that holds together the substance of operational warfighting capability even when it is stressed in the most demanding conditions of high-end conflict and a near-peer fight."

Sloane praised airmen for their efforts to continue the mission during the coronavirus pandemic and noted "the pacing threat just over the horizon." He is set to retire, the service said in a news release Friday.

N. Korea slams Seoul's part in massive US drill

BY DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — A state-run news outlet in North Korea has railed against South Korea's plan to participate in the world's largest maritime exercise, led by the U.S. military.

Uriminzokkiri, or With Our People, in an online editorial Wednesday described the South Korean navy as "war maniacs" for joining Rim of the Pacific, or RIMPAC, from June 29 to Aug. 4 in and offshore of Hawaii and California.

Twenty-six nations are expected to participate, with land forces from nine countries, 38 ships, four submarines, more than 170 aircraft and around 25,000 service members, according to the Navy. The massive biennial exercise, which began in 1971, also serves to sustain relationships between the United States and allied and friendly navies.

This year's invitees include Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, South Korea, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga and the United Kingdom.

North Korea frequently criticizes the joint military exercises between the U.S. and the South and claims they are a rehearsal for an invasion. Uriminzokkiri wrote Wednesday that South Korean forces are "plotting to engage actively in ... world domination."

"The rash military behavior of petty [South Korean] military authorities ... is a ridiculous lunatic attitude, as if one sets out to play with fire while carrying gunpowder on one's back," the editorial said.

North Korea has become more outspoken in its opposition to its neighbor's military exercises in recent weeks.

The South took part in a carrier strike group exercise with the USS Ronald Reagan in the Philippine Sea that ended on June 4.

South Korea is also scheduled to join Pitch Black, a three-week air force exercise in Australia in the fall. Other participating nations are Canada, France, Indonesia, India, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, the U.K., the United Arab Emirates and the United States.

South Korea, Japan and Germany will be fully participating in Pitch Black for the first time.

Free service aims to reduce stress from PCS moves

BY JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

An organization is providing a concierge service for military families during their moves to new duty stations at no cost to them.

Military No Stress PCS, founded in 2021 by Rob Schelle of Tampa, Fla., helps the newcomers find real estate agents, schools, utilities and other services and basic needs. It has expanded into a network of concierges at 87 stateside and 12 overseas bases.

"I worked in the hospitality industry for over 30 years and decided during COVID to take a more active role at home and assist my wife in the real estate world," Schelle, president of the organization based in Valrico, Fla., recently told Stars and Stripes by video chat.

"One of the things I've noticed early on, since we are so close to MacDill Air Force Base, was quite a few of her clients both coming and going were military families," he said.

Sixty-eight real estate agents who volunteer their time make up the nonprofit network.

The organization has so far assisted several hundred individuals by connecting them to resources and specialists they need.

Military families moving to a new duty station frequently start over in a place where they've never been. Some are in need of child care, a job for a spouse or are incurring moving expenses not eligible for a government reimbursement.

"What we are doing is taking that load off their shoulders so that they're not wasting their time on Google and doing those things themselves, because they have more important things to do during this overwhelming process," Schelle said.

Almost half of all military families are "financially stressed" — a significantly higher proportion than the general population, according to Blue Star Families' most recent Military Family Life-style survey.

About 600,000 families with a military connection will make a permanent change of station, or PCS, every year, according to the Blue Star Families website.

"We want to help reduce PCS stress by doing PCS research for active-duty families," Erin Lorenz, the Military No Stress PCS program coordinator, told Stars and Stripes by email on May 3.

Son of former Dodgers second baseman among 5 Marines killed in Osprey crash

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — One of the five Marines killed in a training flight crash Wednesday was the son of former Los Angeles Dodgers second baseman Steve Sax.

In a public statement, Sax said that becoming a pilot was a lifelong ambition for his son, Capt. John J. Sax.

"There was never any doubt from a young age that Johnny would be a pilot and his passion was to fly! I am so proud of the man he became and so proud to call him my son!" he said in a statement released by CBS News. "This loss will change my life forever and is a loss to not only the Marines but this world!"

John J. Sax, 33, of Placer, Calif., and four crew members died Wednesday when their MV-22 Osprey crashed near Glamis, in California's Imperial County. The others who died were Cpl. Nathan E. Carlson, 21, of Winneba-

go, Ill.; Capt. Nicholas P. Losapio, 31, of Rockingham, N.H.; Cpl. Seth D. Rasmuson, 21, of Johnson, Wyo.; and Lance Cpl. Evan A. Strickland, 19, of Valencia, N.M.

Steve Sax played for the Dodgers from 1981-88, including two World Series titles, before moving on to other Major League Baseball teams.

He is currently a sports podcaster and radio host.

"For those of you that knew Johnny, you saw his huge smile, bright light, his love for his family, the Marines, the joy of flying airplanes and defending our country!" his statement said.

"He was my hero and the best man I know, there was no better person to defend our country."

The cause of the crash remains under investigation, Marine officials said Friday.

Senate group offers outline of gun-curb plan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate bargainers announced a bipartisan framework Sunday responding to last month's mass shootings, a modest breakthrough offering measured gun curbs and bolstered efforts to improve school safety and mental health programs.

The proposal falls far short of tougher steps long sought by President Joe Biden and many Democrats. Even so, if the accord leads to the enactment of legislation, it would signal a turn from years of gun massacres that have yielded little but stalemate in Congress.

Leaders hope to push any agreement into law quickly — they hope this month — before the political momentum fades that has been stirred by the recent mass shootings in Buffalo, N.Y., and Uvalde, Texas.

In a significant development, 20 senators, including 10 Republicans, released a statement calling for passage. That is potentially crucial because the biggest obstacle to enacting the measure is probably in the 50-50 Senate, where at least 10 GOP votes will be needed to attain the usual 60-vote threshold for approval.

“Families are scared, and it is our duty to

come together and get something done that will help restore their sense of safety and security in their communities,” the lawmakers said.

The compromise would make the juvenile records of gun buyers under age 21 available when they undergo background checks.

The suspects who killed 10 people at a grocery store in Buffalo and 19 students and two teachers at an elementary school in Uvalde were both 18, and many of the attackers who have committed mass shootings in recent years have been young.

In Jan. 6 cases, 1 judge is the toughest punisher

Associated Press

An Ohio couple climbed through a broken window of the U.S. Capitol and livestreamed a video of themselves inside. A Texas mortgage broker posed for a selfie in front of rioters breaching the building. An Indiana hair salon owner celebrated on Facebook a day after she joined the pro-Donald Trump mob.

Federal prosecutors did not seek prison time for any of them after they pleaded guilty to petty offenses for their actions on Jan. 6, 2021.

The judge had other ideas.

U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan put them all behind bars, describing it as the appropriate punishment for their participation in the riot that halted the certification of President Joe Biden's victory, sent lawmak-

ers running for their lives and left dozens of police officers beaten and bloodied.

As the number of people sentenced for crimes in the insurrection nears 200, an Associated Press analysis of data shows that some judges are divided over how to punish the rioters, particularly for the low-level misdemeanors arising from the attack.

“We're asking judges to do what they think is right, and they don't agree on what's right,” said Greg Hunter, a lawyer defending several Jan. 6 defendants.

A House committee that held its first public hearing on Thursday cast a wide net in its investigation of the insurrection, examining how President Trump and his allies tried to undermine the election results.

So far, the Justice Department's criminal

investigation has focused primarily on the hundreds of Trump supporters who broke through police barricades, shattered windows, attacked officers and stormed into the Capitol.

Chutkan, a former assistant public defender who was nominated to the bench by President Barack Obama, has consistently taken the hardest line against Jan. 6 defendants of any judge serving on Washington's federal trial court, which is handling the more than 800 cases brought so far in the largest prosecution in Justice Department history.

Most judges — appointed by presidents of both political parties — have gone easier on defendants than prosecutors wanted in most or all of their cases so far.

Ukraine's leader says his troops defy predictions

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said no one knows how long the war in his country will last but that Ukrainian forces are defying expectations by preventing Russian troops from overrunning eastern Ukraine, where the fighting has been fiercest for weeks.

In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy said he was proud of the Ukrainian defenders managing to hold back the Russian advance in the Donbas region, which borders Russia and where Moscow-backed separatists have controlled much of the territory for eight years.

“Remember how in Russia, in the begin-

ning of May, they hoped to seize all of the Donbas?” the president said late Saturday. “It's already the 108th day of the war, already June. Donbas is holding on.”

After failing to capture Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, early in the war, Moscow focused on seizing the parts of the largely Russian-speaking Donbas still in Ukrainian hands, as well as the country's southern coast. But instead of securing a swift, decisive takeover, Russian forces were drawn into a long, laborious battle, thanks in part to the Ukrainian military's use of Western-supplied weapons. Both Ukrainian and Russian authorities said Sievierodonetsk, an eastern city with a prewar population of 100,000, re-

mained contested. The city and neighboring Lysychansk are the last major areas of the Donbas' Luhansk province not under the control of the pro-Russia rebels.

Leonid Pasechnik, the head of the separatist-declared Luhansk People's Republic, said Ukrainian fighters remained in an industrial area of the city, including a chemical plant where civilians had taken shelter during a weeklong Russian bombardment.

“Sievierodonetsk is not completely 100% liberated,” Pasechnik said Saturday, alleging that the Ukrainians were shelling the city from the Azot plant. “So it's impossible to call the situation calm in Sievierodonetsk, that it is completely ours.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

2 rescued after falling into chocolate tank at factory

PA ELIZABETHTOWN — Two people were rescued after they somehow fell into a partially filled chocolate tank while doing maintenance work at a candy factory in Pennsylvania.

The incident occurred at the Mars Wrigley plant in Elizabethtown.

The two people work for an outside contracting firm, officials said, and it's not clear how they fell into the tank. Emergency responders were able to free the pair by cutting a hole in the bottom of the tank, officials said.

Woman banned from park after giving false report

WY JACKSON — A woman accused of intentionally providing wrong information in the search for a missing Irish hiker in Grand Teton National Park has been banned from the park and ordered to pay restitution.

Heather Mycoskie, 40, must stay out of the park in northeastern Wyoming for five years and pay \$17,600 under a deferred-prosecution agreement, park officials said in a statement.

Such agreements allow defendants to avoid prosecution if they meet certain requirements.

Mycoskie allegedly reported last June that she had seen Cian McLaughlin, 27, of Jackson, the day he disappeared almost two weeks earlier and that he was headed toward Taggart Lake because he planned to jump off his favorite rock into the water.

The information proved false, and other people told investiga-

tors Mycoskie fabricated the sighting to ensure that search efforts continued, the statement from park officials said.

All other sightings put McLaughlin, who is still missing following his disappearance June 8, 2021, on trails heading toward a different area of the park, according to the statement.

It wasn't clear whether McLaughlin knew Mycoskie. McLaughlin's mother, Gráinne McLaughlin, told The Associated Press she was not aware of any connection between the two.

Woman accused of killing fiance, living with body

GA GAINESVILLE — A northeast Georgia woman is accused of killing her 82-year-old fiance and then living with the body for two months, authorities said.

Tabitha Zeldia Wood, 45, of Gainesville, was arrested and charged with felony murder, aggravated assault and concealing the death of Leroy Franklin Kramer Jr.

Deputies from the Hall County Sheriff's Office said Kramer's stepdaughter told them she was concerned for his safety because she hadn't heard from him in several months.

When they arrived at Kramer's home, deputies found his body. Wood told deputies that Kramer had died in the first week of April and she had been living with the body in the house since then.

However, an autopsy determined Kramer's death was a homicide, Hall County Sheriff's spokesperson B.J. Williams told local news outlets.

46 frat brothers accused of hazing new members

NH DURHAM — Police have issued arrest warrants charging 46 fraternity members at the University of New Hampshire with student hazing stemming from an event in April.

The allegations are directed at members of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity's New Hampshire Beta Chapter, Durham police said in a news release.

A UNH spokesperson said the school was made aware of the incident by the fraternity's national headquarters, and immediately notified the local police.

"We have cooperated with police throughout the investigation and the fraternity was interim suspended pending the outcome of the police investigation," Erika Mantz said in a statement.

Geico facing payout to woman who got HPV

MO KANSAS CITY — Geico could be required to pay a Missouri woman \$5.2 million because she said she contracted a sexually transmitted disease while having sex in the car of a man who is insured by the company.

A three-judge panel of the Missouri Court of Appeals upheld a Jackson County Court's decision affirming an arbitrator's finding that the woman was entitled to the award.

However, Maryland-based Geico has filed a federal lawsuit arguing the woman's claim is not covered by the man's insur-

ance policy. The company said in an email that lawsuit will determine whether "there is coverage in this matter."

According to court documents, the woman, identified as M.O., and a man, who were in a relationship, had sex in the man's car. She contends she contracted HPV, human papillomavirus, because the man did not tell her he had the disease. HPV can cause cervical cancer, certain other cancers and genital warts.

1 dead, 3 hurt when fireworks explode on farm

NC LA GRANGE — A brush fire on a North Carolina farm caused fireworks to explode inside a container where they were stored, killing one person and injuring three firefighters, authorities said.

Lenoir County Emergency Services Director Murry Stroud told broadcast outlet WITN of Greenville that one person was confirmed dead from the afternoon blast and three firefighters were hurt, one of them in critical condition.

Stroud said firefighters were dispatched to put out a reported brush fire at a farm in La Grange as flames were approaching a building. He said fields were being burned off when the fire spread and detonated the fireworks stored in a container.

The identities of the dead and injured were not immediately released.

Authorities told the station a representative for the property was the person who died at the scene.

— From wire reports



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Lightning reach 3rd straight Cup final

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — The Tampa Bay Lightning's bid for a three-peat is alive and well.

With captain Steven Stamkos leading the way, the two-time defending champions beat the New York Rangers 2-1 in Game 6 of the Eastern Conference final Saturday night, securing a berth in the Stanley Cup Final for the third straight year.

"It's going to be tough to get out of the moment and look back and realize what a special group we have here because there's still some games to be played," Stamkos said. "You're still not at the end of our goal, but in saying that this group is pretty amazing and pretty special."

Stamkos scored two goals and Andrei Vasilevskiy had 20 saves for the Lightning, who won the series 4-2 — winning four straight games after losing the first two on the road — and will face the Colorado Avalanche in the Cup final.

Game 1 is Wednesday night in Denver.

"It's probably not the greatest word to use, but I'm damn impressed by this group," coach Jon Cooper said.

"It's impressive what they've done. ... I'm just utterly impressed by what they do to win a hockey game," the coach added. "And the fact that they have every excuse in the world to not win because nobody would fault them by saying hey, you won one, you won two, and to come back and and go for a third. I'm impressed."

Stamkos put Tampa Bay ahead for good in the third period just 21 seconds after New York's Frank Vatrano scored on the power play with the Lightning captain in the penalty box for holding.

Nikita Kucherov and Ondrej Palat as-

sisted on the winner with 6½ minutes left, with the puck deflecting off Stamkos' knee into the net after Rangers goalie Igor Shesterkin stopped the initial shot.

Stamkos also scored on a wrist shot from the top of the right circle midway through the second period.

"I obviously was a little disappointed in myself for taking the penalty. ... It's easy to say now, but for some reason I wasn't as rattled as I usually am in those situations," Stamkos said. "I was just confident in our group that we would find a way, whether it was in regulation or was in overtime. We deserved to win the game. That was the feeling we had from puck drop."

Tampa Bay is the first team to make three consecutive appearances in the Cup final since Edmonton did it from 1983-85. They are trying to become the first to win three straight championships since the New York Islanders claimed four in a row from 1980-83.

The Rangers, down 3-2 in a series for the third straight round, were 5-0 in elimination games this postseason before Saturday night.

The only teams to win more elimination games in a single postseason were the 1975 Islanders (eight), 2014 Los Angeles Kings (seven) and 2003 Minnesota Wild (six).

"It's hard right now. But we played well, we battled hard, we had a chance to win all those games," New York coach Gerard Gallant said. "They found a way to get the big goal at the big time."

The Rangers dropped three of the first four games before winning three straight elimination games to beat the Pittsburgh Penguins in the opening round. They lost

the first two on the road at Carolina before rebounding to oust the Hurricanes in seven games to reach the East final.

It was a different story Saturday night, with the Lightning limiting New York's scoring opportunities while outshooting the Rangers 31-21.

Vasilevskiy went long stretches without being tested. He faced just seven shots in the opening period, six in the second and eight in the third.

Shesterkin, meanwhile, stopped 29 of 31 shots and made big save after big save to give New York a chance.

"I thought Igor was outstanding. He gave us a chance to win every night. We got outchanced in a lot of the games but he was outstanding. He was our best player all year long and again in this series," Gallant said.

"Shesterkin was unbelievable. He made some unbelievable saves to keep them in it, but I think I just felt kind of a calming presence because of the group," Stamkos said. "It was just one of those nights where whether it was the next shift after, whether I scored or someone else scored, it was just a feeling that we were going to get it done."

Notes: The Lightning played again without forward Brayden Point, who's missed 10 games since suffering a lower body injury during Tampa Bay's Game 7 victory over Toronto in the first round. He was the NHL's leading goal scorer the previous two postseasons. ... Lightning defenseman Victor Hedman exited in the second period after appearing to be elbowed in the head by New York's Alexis Lafreniere. He returned at the start of the third period.

Tatum Time: Celtics' star vows he will bounce back

Associated Press

BOSTON — Jayson Tatum knows he has taken his game to a new level in his fifth NBA season, pushing his way into the league's top echelon of play-makers as the Boston Celtics' go-to scorer.

The three-time All-Star also knows at times he hasn't been good enough against the Golden State Warriors during the NBA Finals and must find a way to elevate his play if he hopes to

help Boston capture the franchise's 18th championship.

He doesn't mind the spotlight, or the burden that comes with it.

"I just got to be better," Tatum said after Golden State's 107-97 win in Game 4 Friday night to tie the series. "I know I can be better, so it's not like I, myself or my team is asking me to do something I'm not capable of. They know the level and I know the level that I can play

at."

His team had an opportunity to take a commanding 3-1 NBA Finals lead and drop the Warriors into a hole only one team in 36 tries has ever dug out of — the 2016 Cleveland Cavaliers, who rallied from 3-1 to beat Golden State in seven games.

Instead, Boston went collectively cold late in the fourth quarter as the Warriors' Stephen Curry put the final touches on what may be his signa-

ture playoff moment in front of a stunned TD Garden crowd.

Tatum tried, but this time couldn't match Curry's dominance.

He finished with 23 points, 11 rebounds and six assists. But Tatum had his second-worst shooting performance of the series — just 8-for-23 from the field — and didn't take care of the ball; he had six of the Celtics' 16 turnovers that led to 19 Golden State points.

Mo Donegal surges to Belmont win

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Triple Crown veteran Todd Pletcher had simple advice Saturday for jockey Irad Ortiz Jr. before the Belmont Stakes.

“Be patient,” Pletcher said. “I think you have the best last quarter of any horse in the race.”

Sometimes, less is Mo.

Mo Donegal pulled away down the home stretch and held off filly Nest to win the Belmont Stakes, giving Pletcher a 1-2 finish and his sixth Triple Crown victory, including four at this track on the outskirts of New York City.

“To be honest with you, we were a little confident going into the race today,” Donegal Racing CEO and co-owner Jerry Crawford said. “When he turned for home, I was like, forget about it. I know Todd thought he could get a strong last quarter mile, and he surely did.”

Rich Strike, a stunning Kentucky Derby winner at 80-to-1 odds, was sixth.

Mo Donegal rounded the 1½-mile distance in 2 minutes, 28.28 seconds, three lengths

ahead of Nest — ridden by Ortiz’s brother, José. Pletcher, who lives on Long Island, adds another Belmont title following wins with Rags to Riches in 2007, Palace Malice in 2013 and Tapwrit in 2017.

Mo Donegal beat an eight-horse field without a clear favorite. We the People, a monster in the mud, opened at 2 to 1 amid a rainy forecast but reached 7 to 2 by race time as show-ers held off.

Mo Donegal entered the gate the betting favorite at 5 to 2. We the People led for much of the race, but Mo Donegal and Ortiz took charge coming out of the final turn. The 3-year-old colt paid \$7.20, \$3.80 and \$3. Nest — who nearly became Pletcher’s second filly to win Belmont after Rags to Riches — paid \$5.30 and \$4.10. Skippy Longstocking was third and returned \$5.60 to show. We the People finished fourth.

Rich Striker owner Rick Dawson and trainer Eric Reed held the Kentucky Derby winner out of the Preakness with an eye on Belmont, the first healthy horse to skip Pimlico after winning the Triple Crown’s first

event since 1985.

Reed said the team encouraged jockey Sonny Leon to try pushing Rich Strike from the outside, but the horse kept trying to get back inside — where he made a late charge past 19 horses to win at Churchill Downs. Rich Strike spent much of the race in last place and couldn’t recover.

“I think we just made a tactical error,” Reed said.

Just like Rich Strike, Mo Donegal was at the back of the pack at the Derby, but the colt didn’t have enough kick at Churchill Downs. He found it Saturday, winning the 154th running of the \$1.5 million race. He made a winner out of co-owner Mike Repole, a local entrepreneur known around the track as “Mike from Queens.” Repole also co-owns Nest.

“This is New York’s biggest race and to win it here, with my family and friends and 70 people here, this will be a big winner’s circle,” he said.

It’s the fourth straight year the Triple Crown contests were won by three different horses, a first for the sport since 1926-29.

Aggies win, lock up 1st spot in College World Series

Associated Press

Texas A&M swept its NCAA super regional and advanced to the College World Series, and Tennessee, Virginia Tech and Texas won Saturday to even their best-of-three series.

Connecticut, Mississippi, Arkansas and Auburn won their super regional openers to move within a win of making the CWS, which begins Friday in Omaha, Neb.

No. 5 national seed Texas A&M beat Louisville 4-3 for a second straight one-run win and returns to the CWS for the first time since 2017, the next step in a turnaround season under first-year coach Jim Schlossnagle.

A year after failing to even qualify for the Southeastern Conference Tournament, Texas A&M posted the second-best record in the conference and now has won five straight in the NCAA Tournament.

The super regional sweep in College Station, Texas, came one

year and two days after the Aggies hired Schlossnagle from TCU, where he had led the Horned Frogs to five CWS in 18 years.

“At this time a year ago I was waking up consistently at 3:30 in the morning in a full body sweat,” he said. “I had just left a place that was so comfortable. To be sitting here going to the College World Series, every single ounce of credit goes to the players.”

Relievers Will Johnston, Brad Rudis and Jacob Palisch combined to limit Louisville to five singles in 4½ shutout innings, and the Aggies scored the go-ahead run on a sacrifice fly in the seventh.

“I’m glad we won, but I’m really glad to see us win a game that’s not 15-7,” Schlossnagle said. “I’ve been saying all year long, you’re going to run into great pitchers. It’s good to see us match that up and play good defense.”

Luc Lipcius became the third Tennessee player to hit two homers in an inning when he connected twice in an eight-run fifth in the No. 1 Volunteers’ 12-4 victory over Notre Dame in Knoxville, Tenn.

Evan Russell also homered in the fifth, and he and Lipcius now share the Vols’ career record with 39, one more than Todd Helton’s 38 from 1993-95.

“It’s really cool after the fact that it happened,” Lipcius said, “and Todd Helton is one of the greats of Tennessee and of all time and it’s really cool two old guys are hanging out at the top.”

Nick Biddison hit two of No. 4 Virginia Tech’s single-game record five homers and six Hokies pitchers combined to strike out 14 in a 14-8 victory over Oklahoma.

“I felt like it was an exercise in toughness for our guys,” said Virginia Tech coach John Szefc, whose team bounced back from a 5-4 loss in Game 1.

Texas came back from a five-run deficit to beat No. 8 East Carolina 9-8 on Dylan Campbell’s bases-loaded single in the ninth.

Campbell also hit a tiebreaking homer in the bottom of the eighth for the Longhorns, who entered the inning trailing 7-4.

“There’s a lot of fight in this team,” Texas coach David Pierce said. “This team has proven it from the day we started it until right now. We’re not going to give in, not going to go away.”

UConn scored eight runs in the second inning and then survived No. 2 Stanford’s home run barrage to hold off the Cardinal 13-12, matching the most runs scored against Stanford this season.

The Huskies, trying to get to Omaha for the first time since 1979, withstood the Cardinal’s four homers in the ninth after entering the inning up 13-6. Stanford finished with eight homers, with Brock Jones connecting three times.

'Fire Tony!' chant heard in ChiSox loss

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Loud chants of "Fire Tony!" broke out at Guaranteed Rate Field as manager Tony La Russa and the Chicago White Sox blew a five-run lead and lost to the Texas Rangers 11-9 in 10 innings on Saturday.

La Russa has been under increased scrutiny in recent days since ordering an unconventional intentional walk in a loss to the Los Angeles Dodgers. The White Sox won the AL Central last season, but now are just 27-30 under their 77-year-old Hall of Fame manager.

"I hear it with one ear and I see it with one eye," La Russa said. "I just know I appreciate (that) they want us to win. And, when we don't win, they're unhappy."

Chicago has lost three of four.

Jake Burger hit a three-run homer off AL ERA leader Martín Pérez, helping the White Sox take a 5-0 lead into the fifth.

The Rangers clawed back. Adolis García hit a three-run homer in the fifth and Texas tied it at 7 on Jonah Heim's sacrifice fly in the seventh, prompting the crowd of 30,221 to begin chanting at La Russa.

Fans took up the chants a couple more times as the crowd rapidly thinned out in the 10th.

Nathaniel Lowe's second double of the game started a four-run 10th for Texas. A passed ball by Reese McGuire scored another run and Marcus Semien hit a two-run single.

Phillies 4, Diamondbacks 0: Zack Wheeler struck out eight in six innings, Bryson Stott hit a two-run homer and host Philadelphia won its ninth straight game, matching its longest streak in 11 years.

Phillies interim manager Rob Thomson improved to 8-0 since taking over for the fired Joe Girardi.

Wheeler (5-3) won his first start since a stop on the paternity list, tossing two-hit ball against Arizona and walking none.

Braves 10, Pirates 4: Dansby Swanson blooped a three-run single and Ozzie Albies added a grand slam in an eight-run seventh inning as host Atlanta extended its winning streak to 10 games.

Ronald Acuña Jr. and Austin Riley also homered for the Braves, who are on their longest winning streak since 14 in a row from July 26 to Aug. 9, 2013.

Pittsburgh has struck out at least 10 times in five straight games and lost their season-worst fifth straight.

Yankees 8, Cubs 0: Aaron Judge hit two of New York's six solo homers off rookie Matt Swarmer, and the hosts routed Chicago for their 10th win in 11 games.

Giancarlo Stanton, Gleyber Torres, Jose Trevino and former Cub Anthony Rizzo also went deep against the 28-year-old right-hander as the Yankees hit their most homers since Sept. 17, 2020, against Toronto.

New York is a major league-best 43-16. The four other times they won at least 43 of their first 59 games, they won the World Series — in 1928, 1939, 1953 and 1998.

Athletics 10, Guardians 5: Seth Brown's grand slam capped a five-run seventh inning, and visiting Oakland stopped a 10-game skid — its longest in 11 years — by beating Cleveland.

Steven Vogt, Christian Bethancourt and Sean Murphy also homered for the Athletics; Vogt had three hits and was hit by a pitch.

Giants 3, Dodgers 2: Clayton Kershaw returned from the injured list and gave up a go-ahead home run to Thairo Estrada in a two-run second inning as host San Francisco beat Los Angeles.

The Dodgers outhit the Giants 13-5 but stranded 14 runners and went 2-for-10 with runners in scoring position. The Dodgers have lost eight of 12.

Kershaw (4-1) had been sidelined by an inflamed joint in his back since a May 7 win at the Chicago Cubs. He allowed three hits and two walks in four innings with four strikeouts.

Angels 11, Mets 6: Jared Walsh had the ninth cycle in franchise history, Mike Trout returned to the lineup and had his 23rd career multi-home run game and host Los Angeles rolled past New York.

Walsh went 4-for-5 and drove in three runs. He completed the Halos' first cycle since Shohei Ohtani in 2019 with a two-run triple in the eighth inning. He had a single in the third inning, a double in the fifth and a solo shot in the seventh.

Trout (three hits, three RBIs), who missed three games due to right groin tightness, helped power a five-homer onslaught for Los Angeles. Ohtani and Andrew Velazquez also homered.

Cardinals 5, Reds 4: Tommy Edman hit a two-run homer with two outs in the ninth inning for the first walkoff RBI of his major league career as host St. Louis rallied past Cincinnati.

The Reds led 4-1 in the eighth but blew a save for the seventh time in 17 chances despite outhitting the Cards 12-7.

Tigers 3, Blue Jays 1: Rookie Beau Brieske pitched into the sixth inning and earned his first major league victory, Víctor Reyes came off the injured list and had three hits and host Detroit beat Toronto.

Making his ninth start, the 24-year-old Brieske (1-5) scattered seven hits and didn't issue a walk in 5 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings.

Twins 6, Rays 5: The majors' batting leader, Luis Arraez, hit his first career grand slam and host Minnesota spoiled Shane Baz's season debut, beating Tampa Bay.

Arraez got at least three hits for the seventh time this season, raising his average to .367. He has three home runs this year, including two in the last three games.

Nationals 8, Brewers 6: Juan Soto, Nelson Cruz and Josh Bell hit consecutive homers and host Washington sent Milwaukee to its eighth consecutive loss.

The Nationals broke it open in the fifth against starter Eric Lauer (5-2). Soto's two-run shot put Washington up 6-1, and Cruz followed two pitches later with a blast. Bell sent a 3-1 pitch for homer down the left field line as the Nationals won for the fifth time in eight games.

Orioles 6, Royals 4: Tyler Nevin hit a three-run home run and Cedric Mullins and Austin Hays each added an RBI, leading visiting Baltimore over Kansas City.

Padres 2, Rockies 1 (10); Rockies 6, Padres 2: Left-hander Kyle Freeland pitched six strong innings and visiting Colorado knocked out heralded rookie lefty MacKenzie Gore in the third inning to beat San Diego and split a doubleheader.

The Padres won the first game when automatic runner Manny Machado hustled home in the 10th inning on a two-out wild pitch and a throwing error by catcher Elias Díaz.

About 40 minutes before the second game, San Diego announced that manager Bob Melvin and bench coach Ryan Christenson entered COVID-19 protocols. Quality control coach Ryan Flaherty managed the team.

Marlins 5, Astros 1: Rookie Braxton Garrett pitched six strong innings against Houston, Jon Berti drove in two runs and visiting Miami extended its winning streak to five games.

Mariners 7, Red Sox 6: Dylan Moore hit a walk-off single to center field off Boston reliever Hansel Robles in the bottom of the ninth inning to give host Seattle the win.

The Mariners entered the bottom of the ninth inning trailing 6-5 after Seattle native Bobby Dalbec broke a 5-all tie with a solo homer to left field for Boston in the top half of the inning.

Abraham Toro tied it for the Mariners with an RBI single that scored J.P. Crawford, and Moore hit a ball past a diving Jackie Bradley Jr. in center field to score pinch-runner Sam Haggerty for the victory.