

Houthis launch 'drone boat' hit on ship

Associated Press

ABOARD THE USS LABOON IN THE RED SEA — Yemen's Houthi rebels launched a boat-borne bomb attack against a commercial ship in the Red Sea on Wednesday, authorities said, the latest escalation despite a U.S.-led campaign trying to protect the vital waterway.

The use of a boat loaded with explosives raised the specter of 2000's USS Cole attack, a suicide assault by al-Qaida on the warship when it was at port in Aden, Yemen, killing 17 on board. Associated Press journalists saw the Cole in the Red Sea on Wednesday, now taking part in the U.S. campaign while visiting one of her sister ships, the USS Laboon.

Yemen's military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for the attack, identifying the vessel targeted as the Liberian-flagged, Greek-owned bulk carrier Tutor. He described the attack as using a "drone boat," as well as drones and ballistic missiles.

In a warning to shippers, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center described the vessel as being hit in its stern by a small white craft southwest of the Houthi-controlled port city of Hodeida.

The captain "reports the vessel is taking on water, and not under command of the crew," the UKMTO said. He also "reports the vessel was hit for a second time by an unknown airborne projectile."

U.S. Central Command also acknowledged the attack, saying the Tutor "most recently docked in Russia."

"The impact of the (drone boat) caused severe flooding and damage to the engine room," it added.

The U.S. military separately destroyed three anti-ship cruise missile launchers in Houthi-held Yemen, as well as one rebel drone over the Red Sea. The Houthis launched two anti-ship ballistic missiles over the Red Sea, but they caused no damage,

CENTCOM said.

The Houthis, who seized Yemen's capital, Sanaa, nearly a decade ago and have been fighting a Saudi-led coalition since shortly after, have been targeting shipping throughout the Red Sea corridor over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

They say the attacks are aimed at stopping the war and supporting the Palestinians, though the attacks often target vessels that have nothing to do with the conflict.

The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, killed three sailors, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the U.S. Maritime Administration.

A U.S.-led airstrike campaign has targeted the Houthis since January, with a series of strikes May 30 killing at least 16 people and wounding 42 others, the rebels say.

Associated Press journalists on an embark with the U.S. Na-

vy were interviewing Cmdr. Eric Blomberg, the commanding officer of the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer Laboon, when the alert came in on the attack. Blomberg took multiple calls from sailors on board the vessel, giving updates on the apparent attack.

The Laboon is one of the destroyers accompanying the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier and both have shot down Houthi fire and escorted vessels through the region.

Though Blomberg and others stressed they were still investigating the attack, he said it appeared the vessel targeted had nothing to do with the Israel-Hamas war.

The Houthis "hit ships that are completely not associated or tied to the U.S. or Israel at all," Blomberg said.

"These are just innocent merchant sailors carrying goods through the Red Sea, trying to get it through the least-expensive route, and they're paying for it," he said.

DOD keeps eyes on Russian sub deployment off Fla.

Miami Herald

WASHINGTON — Russia's deployment of a naval flotilla to Cuba on Wednesday was generally consistent with routine military posturing by Moscow — with one exceptional detail, Jake Sullivan, the U.S. national security adviser, told reporters aboard Air Force One on Wednesday.

"There are elements of this one that are different, that are distinct," he said. "They have a submarine associated with this port visit that they have not had before."

The first deployment of a nuclear submarine to Cuba since the end of the Cold War has served not only as a message to the Biden administration of Moscow's displeasure with continued U.S. support for Ukraine, but also of its increasing ability to stalk U.S. coastlines with stealth submersibles — a growing concern for the U.S. military, multiple officials familiar with the matter told McClatchy and the Miami Herald.

Last month, the head of the U.S. Northern Command warned Congress that Moscow

may soon deploy 12 similarly advanced nuclear submarines split evenly between the Pacific and Atlantic, creating a "persistent conventional threat" to the U.S.

"The threat will only become more acute later in the decade," Air Force Gen. Gregory Guillot said, once the Yasen-class submarines are regularly armed with hypersonic missiles capable of traveling many times the speed of sound.

U.S. officials are now assessing whether the current Russian deployment, which will culminate in military exercises

in the Caribbean, could be the beginning of a pattern of Russian submarine activity that will require a more sustained change in U.S. force posture.

The Kazan, a Yasen-class sub, joined three other Russian combat vessels that U.S. officials characterized as routine visitors to Cuba's shores.

The deployment is "something we watch closely, carefully," Sullivan said.

U.S. officials said the Kazan is not known to be carrying hypersonic missiles on its current deployment.

DOD health care in Japan near 'lowest point'

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Japanese hospitals are denying health care for Defense Department civilians and military personnel once every two days, on average, according to a recent report by the Japan Civilian Medical Advocacy group.

More than 340 people were denied access to routine, specialized or emergency care between February 2022 and April 2024, and at least 13 died between 2021 and 2024 due to denials or failure to receive timely medical attention, states a research report released by the group on May 18.

"The state of health care for military personnel and civilians in Japan has reached one of its lowest points in decades," Randi Wilson, a spokeswoman for the group, said on Tuesday.

The advocacy group, a grass-

roots organization that began as an online forum for DOD employees to share tips on accessing health care, cites 140 sources in its research. Those include surveys, testimonies and personal correspondence gathered by the group, media coverage and reports from the DOD and U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Japanese hospitals are not required by law to accept patients for care and routinely deny patients at their discretion. Reasons for denials can vary, but often pertain to a preference for Japan's national insurance plan or the belief they lack adequate resources to treat a patient.

"Currently, no one — whether active duty, retiree, civilian employee or contractor — is guaranteed medical care for themselves or their loved ones during emergencies," Wilson said.

Defense Department employees have struggled to receive care at U.S. military hospitals and clinics in Japan and at local hospitals since the Defense Health Agency began implementing changes in February 2022.

The changes were a bid to prioritize health care for active-duty patients on overseas military bases and reduce wait times.

That plan, which significantly reduced access to health care for DOD civilians, has "done nothing to alleviate this crisis" and has potentially made the situation worse, according to Wilson.

"Instead, these measures backfired, causing civilian health care providers to resign and military members to leave their contracts, further reducing access," she said.

Wait times at Yokota Air Base

in Tokyo, for example, have not "significantly changed" over the past three years, according to the report.

Services responsible for areas such as ship repair, education, health care, and others also reported a 20% to 80% drop in employment applications due to concerns over accessing medical care.

DHA rolled back some restrictions in 2023, and civilians can now seek care for acute or chronic conditions on a space available basis.

Accessing that care, however, can be difficult.

"A lack of codified policies and protections for DOD civilians allows leaders of [military treatment facilities] to independently set rules, often with no public transparency, causing available care to vary drastically between MTFs," the advocacy group's report reads.

Banking change leads to tax-free buying hassles

By REBECCA HOLLAND
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — Community Bank procedures are now making military families wait up to a week to make purchases off base without paying value-added taxes, an unpublicized change that is forcing their customers to choose between higher prices and going without goods and services.

U.S. service members, others living under the status of forces agreement and many tourists who aren't European Union residents are eligible for refunds on VAT, which generally adds 22% to prices in Italy.

Community Bank offered same-day tax refunds until April, when the on-base military bank's operations were transferred from Bank of America to Navy Federal Credit Union.

In early June, Hilary Parry, whose husband is stationed at Caserma Ederle in Vicenza, was packing for a family vacation

when she realized she needed swim gear for her kids.

She went to Decathlon, where she had her order rung up without taxes, then headed to Community Bank to get a check.

Previously, the bank would have given her the check and she would have taken it to the VAT office at Caserma Ederle to be approved, then she would return to the store to pick up her purchase.

The process typically takes a few hours and is more complicated than for U.S. service members in Germany, where a participating store signs a VAT form and then deducts the price at the register.

Nevertheless, shoppers in Italy have said the hassle is worth the tax savings.

But last week, Parry arrived at Community Bank and was told by the teller that the check would take at least five business days.

"This is a huge change," Parry said. "Why did the bank not notify us about a change like this? If they had, while it's an-

noying, we would at least know and plan accordingly."

She ended up paying the full amount of her purchase, including around \$60 in taxes.

"Sixty dollars is nothing to sneeze at," Parry said. "There are families where that is not possible [to pay for]. And when you multiply that by all of us here [in Vicenza] it's a lot of money."

The bank's new Italian partner, Intesa Sanpaolo, doesn't allow Community Bank to produce the rebate checks in house, so Community Bank has to order them from Intesa and wait for them to be sent back, said Mimma Barber, a financial assistant at the tax relief office at Caserma Ederle.

"We're now sending the majority of our customers to BNL, the Italian bank on base," Barber said.

BNL can still produce same-day checks, even for those who bank elsewhere.

The change affects all Community Bank locations across Italy.

Ruling preserves access to mifepristone

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Thursday unanimously preserved access to a medication that was used in nearly two-thirds of all abortions in the U.S. last year, in the court's first abortion decision since conservative justices overturned *Roe v. Wade* two years ago.

The justices ruled that abortion opponents lacked the legal right to sue over the federal Food and Drug Administration's approval of the medication, mifepristone, and the FDA's subsequent actions to ease access to it. The case had threatened to restrict access to mifepristone across the country, including in states where abortion remains legal.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote for the court that "federal courts are the wrong forum for addressing the plaintiffs' concerns about FDA's actions." Kavanaugh was part of the majority to overturn *Roe*.

The high court is separately considering

another abortion case, about whether a federal law on emergency treatment at hospitals overrides state abortion bans in rare emergency cases in which a pregnant patient's health is at serious risk.

More than 6 million people have used mifepristone since 2000. Mifepristone blocks the hormone progesterone and primes the uterus to respond to the contraction-causing effect of a second drug, misoprostol. The two-drug regimen has been used to end a pregnancy through 10 weeks gestation.

Health care providers have said that if mifepristone is no longer available or is too hard to obtain, they would switch to using only misoprostol, which is somewhat less effective in ending pregnancies.

President Joe Biden's administration and drug manufacturers had warned that siding with abortion opponents in this case could undermine the FDA's drug approval process beyond the abortion context by inviting judges to second-guess the agency's scien-

tific judgments. The Democratic administration and New York-based Danco Laboratories, which makes mifepristone, argued that the drug is among the safest the FDA has ever approved.

The decision "safeguards access to a drug that has decades of safe and effective use," Danco spokeswoman Abigail Long said in a statement.

The abortion opponents argued in court papers that the FDA's decisions in 2016 and 2021 to relax restrictions on getting the drug were unreasonable and "jeopardize women's health across the nation."

Kavanaugh acknowledged what he described as the opponents' "sincere legal, moral, ideological, and policy objections to elective abortion and to FDA's relaxed regulation of mifepristone."

But he said they went to the wrong forum and should instead direct their energies to persuading lawmakers and regulators to make changes.

Flooded Fla. prepares for more rain

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — A tropical disturbance that brought a rare flash flood emergency to much of southern Florida delayed flights at two of the state's largest airports and left vehicles waterlogged and stalled in some of the region's lowest lying streets.

"Looked like the beginning of a zombie movie," said Ted Rico, a tow truck driver who spent much of Wednesday night and Thursday morning helping to clear the streets of stalled vehicles. "There's cars littered everywhere, on top of sidewalks, in the median, in the middle of the street, no lights on. Just craziness, you know. Abandoned cars everywhere."

Travelers across the area were trying to adjust their plans on Thursday morning. More than 20 inches of rain has fallen in some areas of South Florida since Tuesday, with more predicted over the next few days.

Ticket and security lines snaked around a domestic concourse at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport just before noon Thursday. The travel boards showed about half of that terminal's flights had been canceled or postponed.

Wednesday's downpours and flooding blocked roads, floated vehicles and even delayed the Florida Panthers on their way to Stanley Cup Final games in Canada against the Edmonton Oilers.

The disorganized storm system was pushing across Florida from the Gulf of Mexico at roughly the same time as the early June start of hurricane season, which this year is forecast to be among the most active in recent memory amid concerns that climate change is increasing storm intensity.

The disturbance has not reached cyclone status and was given only a slight chance to form into a tropical system once it moves into the Atlantic Ocean after crossing Florida, according to the National Hurricane Center.

The National Weather Service in Miami noted in a post on the social media platform X early Thursday that a band of heavy rainfall was expected to fall over the region for a third day in a row.

"Even a small duration of heavy rainfall could lead to more flash flooding!" the post said.

Mayors in Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood declared a state of emergency for their cities Wednesday afternoon. Later, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis declared a state of emergency for five counties — Broward and Miami-Dade on the state's Atlantic coast and Collier, Lee and Sarasota counties on its west coast.

More rain was forecast for the rest of the week, leading the weather service office in Miami to extend a flash flood watch through Thursday. Some places could see another 6 inches of rain.

Protesters take over building on Calif. campus

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A takeover of a building at California State University, Los Angeles, by demonstrators protesting Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza ended early Thursday, leaving the facility trashed and covered with graffiti, TV news reports showed.

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators barricaded the university's multistory Student Services Building on Wednesday.

Workers inside were told to shelter in place, but it was empty by Thursday morning, said university spokesperson Erik Frost Hollins.

"What I can tell you, at the moment, is that the building is clear of employees and protesters and the building is secure," said Frost Hollins, who did not immediately offer details on what occurred overnight.

The university posted a "protest action alert" on its website announcing that all main campus classes and operations would be remote until further notice and asking people to stay away.

The CSULA Gaza Solidarity Encampment, a group that has camped near the campus gym for about 40 days, sent an email indicating that members were staging a sit-in in the building, Hollins said.

House votes to hold Garland in contempt

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House voted Wednesday to hold Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt of Congress for refusing to turn over audio of President Joe Biden's interview in his classified documents case, Republicans' latest and strongest rebuke of the Justice Department as partisan conflict over the rule of law animates the 2024 presidential campaign.

The 216-207 vote fell along party lines, with Republicans coalescing behind the contempt effort despite reservations among some of the party's more centrist members. Only one Republican — Rep. David Joyce of Ohio — voted against it.

Garland said in a statement late Wednesday, "It is deeply dis-

appointing that this House of Representatives has turned a serious congressional authority into a partisan weapon. Today's vote disregards the constitutional separation of powers, the Justice Department's need to protect its investigations, and the substantial amount of information we have provided to the Committees."

He added, "I will always stand up for this Department, its employees, and its vital mission to defend our democracy."

Garland is now the third attorney general to be held in contempt of Congress. Yet it is unlikely that the Justice Department — which Garland oversees — will prosecute him. The White House's decision to exert executive privilege over the audio rec-

ording, shielding it from Congress, would make it exceedingly difficult to make a criminal case against Garland.

Nonetheless, Speaker Mike Johnson defended the decision to push ahead with what is now a mostly symbolic effort.

"Look, we did our job on the contempt, and I think it sends an important message," the Louisiana Republican said following the vote. "We'll see what happens next, but, I mean, the House has to do its work and I'm pleased with the outcome today."

The White House and congressional Democrats have slammed Republicans' motives for pursuing contempt and dismissed their efforts to obtain the audio as purely political. They also pointed out that Rep. Jim Jordan, the

GOP chair of the House Judiciary Committee, defied his own congressional subpoena last session.

"This contempt resolution will do very little, other than smear the reputation of Merrick Garland, who will remain a good and decent public servant no matter what Republicans say about him today," New York Rep. Jerry Nadler, the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, said during floor debate.

Garland has defended the Justice Department, saying officials have gone to extraordinary lengths to provide information to the committees about Special Counsel Robert Hur's classified documents investigation, including a transcript of Biden's interview with him.

Largest-ever disaster-relief drills to be held at RIMPAC

By Wyatt Olson

Stars and Stripes

This summer's Rim of the Pacific will include the maritime exercise's largest-ever humanitarian aid and disaster relief drills and the sinking of a decommissioned U.S. Navy amphibious assault ship.

The disaster-relief portion will involve eight countries, five ships, five landing craft, five aircraft and more than 2,500 participants, the Navy said in a news release Wednesday.

Those drills will include support from the Hawaii Healthcare Emergency Management Coalition, the Defense Department's Honolulu-based Center for Excellence in Disaster Management, the University of Hawaii's Pacific Disaster Center, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, and Singapore's Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Coordination Centre, the Navy said in a Wednesday news release.

This year's RIMPAC will include the sinking of a vessel that was formerly designated USS Tarawa, the EurAsian Times newspaper reported Tuesday.

A Defense Department official contacted Wednesday by Stars and Stripes declined to speak on the record about the Tarawa report but confirmed that the ship, which was towed into Pearl Harbor several weeks ago, would be used in a sinking exercise.

RIMPAC, touted by the U.S. Navy as the world's largest international maritime exercise, kicks off June 27 and runs through Aug. 1.

Forty ships from nearly 30 nations are slated to participate in the exercise on and around the Hawaiian Islands.

The biennial exercise, which has been held 29 times since it began in 1971, will also include three submarines, 14 land-based units, more than 150 aircraft and about 25,000 personnel.

Japan: US resumes some Osprey flights on Okinawa

By Keishi Kojima

AND Seth Robson

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The U.S. Navy has resumed some Osprey operations on Okinawa, three months after a ban on flying the U.S. military's tiltrotors was lifted, according to Japanese officials.

One of the Navy's helicopter-plane hybrids flew over Kadena Air Base on Monday afternoon, a spokesman for the Okinawa Defense Bureau said Wednesday.

"This was the first time that a CMV-22 stationed at Kadena Air Base was confirmed flying after they grounded it last year," the spokesman said. The bureau represents the Japan Defense Ministry on Okinawa.

The U.S. military grounded its fleet of about 400 Ospreys between Dec. 6 and March 8 as it investigated the Nov. 29 crash of an Air Force CV-22 Osprey that killed eight airmen off Japan's southern coast.

The Osprey fleet will not be permitted to fly its full range of missions until mid-2025, the leader of the aircraft program told House lawmakers on Wednesday.

"I will not certify the V-22 to return to unrestricted flight operations until I am satisfied that we have sufficiently addressed the issues that may affect the safety of the aircraft," Vice Adm. Carl Chebi, who leads Naval Air Systems Command, told a subpanel of the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

The Marine Corps on March 14 reported it had resumed MV-22 Osprey flights on Okinawa, but other services have been slower to return their aircraft to flight. The Japan Ground Self-Defense Force resumed flying its Osprey fleet a week later.

Air Force Special Operations Command, whose tiltrotor crashed in southern Japan, has yet to resume flying its aircraft stationed in the country.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Jet missing since 1971
found submerged in lake

VT JUNIPER ISLAND — Fifty-three years after a private plane carrying five men disappeared on a snowy Vermont night, experts believe they have found the wreckage of the long lost jet in Lake Champlain.

The corporate jet disappeared shortly after departing the Burlington airport for Providence, R.I., on Jan. 27, 1971. Those aboard included two crew members and three employees of Georgia development company Cousins Properties, who were working on a development project in Burlington.

Initial searches for the 10-seat Jet Commander turned up no wreckage and the lake froze over four days after the plane was lost. At least 17 other searches happened, until underwater searcher Garry Kozak and a team using a remotely operated vehicle last month found wreckage of a jet with the same custom paint scheme in the lake close to where the radio control tower had last tracked the plane. Sonar images were taken of the wreck found in 200 feet of water near Juniper Island.

"With all those pieces of evidence, we're 99% absolutely sure," Kozak said Monday.

Off-duty guard charged
with killing teen at store

WA SEATTLE — An off-duty security guard in a Seattle suburb has been charged with second-degree murder by prosecutors who said he fatally shot a 17-year-old six times in the back as the teen and his friends tried to return a toy gun the guard believed was a

firearm to a sporting goods store.

King County prosecutors charged Aaron Brown Myers on Monday in the death of Hazrat Ali Rohani outside a Big 5 Sporting Goods Store in Renton, Wash. Myers, 51, also faces a second-degree assault charge.

Rohani and two other teens were headed into the store at about 7:30 p.m. on June 5 to return a malfunctioning airsoft gun, Rohani's friends told police. They walked in front of Myers, who was sitting in his vehicle waiting to pick up his son from a martial arts class.

Myers told police he noticed one teen carrying what he believed was a Glock handgun, and thought he saw another teen put a firearm into his waistband.

As Myers approached, one of the teens moved to the side and the other two stopped, raised their hands and one placed the airsoft gun on the sidewalk, telling Myers numerous times it was a "BB gun," not a firearm.

Myers then pushed one of the boys onto the sidewalk and straddled him, according to the probable cause document filed by Renton police. Rohani started to back away and Myers opened fire.

Wife accepts blame in
1990 'To Die For' murder

NH CONCORD — Pamela Smart, who is serving life in prison for plotting with her teenage student to have her husband killed in 1990, accepted full responsibility for his death for the first time in a videotaped statement released Tuesday as part of her latest sentence reduction request.

Smart, 56, was a 22-year-old high school media coordinator

when she began an affair with a 15-year-old boy who later fatally shot her husband, Gregory Smart, in Derry, N.H. The shooter was freed in 2015. Smart was convicted of being an accomplice to first-degree murder and other crimes and sentenced to life without parole.

Smart said in the statement that she began to "dig deeper into her own responsibility" through her experience in a writing group that "encouraged us to go beyond and to spaces that we didn't want to be in."

"For me that was really hard, because going into those places, in those spaces is where I found myself responsible for something I desperately didn't want to be responsible for, my husband's murder," she said, her voice quivering. "I had to acknowledge for the first time in my own mind and my own heart how responsible I was, because I had deflected blame all the time."

Joyce Maynard wrote "To Die For" in 1992, drawing from the Smart case. That inspired a 1995 film starring Nicole Kidman and Joaquin Phoenix.

Police: Man with burning
gas can charges, is killed

ME BELFAST — A man holding a burning gas can who charged at police was fatally shot by a sheriff's deputy, authorities in Maine said.

The 65-year-old man called the Waldo County Dispatch Center on Monday afternoon and said he was going to burn down his apartment building in Belfast if law enforcement did not respond, the county sheriff's office and the Belfast Police Department said in a joint news release.

The man continued to threaten

to burn down the building as sheriff's deputies and police arrived, the news release said. As they entered the building, the man "charged the officers with a gas can that was on fire," and a deputy shot and killed him, it said.

He was identified as Daniel Ryan.

Laws banning gun shows
at county fairs are upheld

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A federal appeals court on Tuesday upheld California's ban on gun shows at county fairs and other public properties, deciding the laws do not violate the rights of firearm sellers or buyers.

The 3-0 decision by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals overturns a federal judge's ruling in October that blocked the laws.

The two measures were written by Democratic state Sen. Dave Min. The first, which went into effect in January 2022, barred gun shows at the Orange County Fair, and the other, which took effect last year, extended the ban to county fairgrounds on state-owned land.

In his decision last fall, U.S. District Judge Mark Holcomb wrote that the state was violating the rights of sellers and would-be buyers by prohibiting transactions for firearms that can be bought at any gun shop. He said lawful gun sales involve commercial speech protected by the First Amendment.

But the appeals court decided the laws prohibit only sales agreements on public property — not discussions, advertisements or other speech about firearms.

— From wire reports

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Celtics hold off rally, move 1 win from title

Associated Press

DALLAS — Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown shared a long hug after helping Boston avoid the biggest collapse in an NBA Finals game since at least 1997.

The reward? The Celtics stars are on the brink of joining the litany of big-name predecessors to put a banner above the parquet floor back home.

Tatum scored 31 points, Brown had 30 and the Celtics held off a furious Dallas rally to move to the verge of a record 18th championship with a 106-99 victory over the Mavericks on Wednesday night for a 3-0 lead.

Brown finished with eight rebounds and eight assists as the Celtics extended their franchise record with a 10th consecutive playoff victory and moved to 7-0 on the road this postseason. They can win the series and break a tie with the Lakers for most NBA championships with a victory Friday in Dallas.

And Boston can forget about nearly blowing a 21-point lead with 11 minutes to go.

"Not really trying to look too much into it," Tatum said. "The

game of basketball is about runs. It's never going to go like you expected. If you want to be a champion, you have to be resilient in those situations, and we did that tonight."

Boston also improved to 10-1 in these playoffs without Kristaps Porzingis after the 7-foot-2 Latvian was ruled out before the game because of a rare tendon injury in his lower left leg sustained in Game 2.

The status of Porzingis for the rest of the series appears in doubt, but it might not matter. None of the previous 156 teams to face a 3-0 deficit has rallied to win an NBA playoff series.

The Mavs almost pulled off a crazy comeback to avoid the big hole — 13 years after Dallas had the biggest fourth-quarter rally in the play-by-play era of the NBA Finals (since 1997) when a 15-point comeback in Game 2 started its run to the franchise's only title against Miami.

Boston led 91-70 at the end of a 20-5 run early in the fourth quarter before Dallas answered with a 22-2 spurt to get within a point with 3½ minutes remaining.

Problem was, Luka Doncic picked up his sixth foul with 4:12 remaining when a challenge was unsuccessful before Kyrie Irving, who scored 35 points, hit a jumper to get Dallas within one.

Tatum and Brown saved the Celtics from there, with some help from Derrick White, who scored 16. Those three combined for the remaining 13 Boston points to get the Celtics within a victory of their first title since 2008, and just the second since 1986.

The Celtics have led 3-0 in the NBA Finals only once, finishing off the Lakers in a sweep in 1959.

The first step for Dallas is trying to avoid getting swept in a seven-game series for just the second time in franchise history.

"We just got to make history," rookie Mavs center Dereck Lively II said. "We got to go out there and we just got to play like our lives are on the line."

In a game that seemed over early in the fourth, the score was stuck on 93-90 for more than three minutes. That included

when Doncic was called for a blocking foul on a driving Brown.

The Mavs had nothing to lose with the challenge, since it meant trying to save their superstar from disqualification.

Without Doncic, P.J. Washington Jr., Irving and Tim Hardaway Jr. each missed a 3-point shot in the final minute as Irving's personal losing streak against his former team reached 13 games.

"We had a good chance," Doncic said. "We were close. Just didn't get it. I wish I was out there."

After it was over, pockets of Celtics fans screamed with delight in a mostly empty arena, seemingly starting the celebration of the inevitable.

To everyone but the Celtics.

"You've got to understand we are just as vulnerable if not more vulnerable than they are," coach Joe Mazzulla said. "When you understand that you're vulnerable and your back's against the wall, you've got to fight. And so that's the mindset that we have to have."

2 conferences evenly split 8 spots for College World Series

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — The College World Series begins this week and only two conferences will be represented on the game's biggest stage for the first time since the event expanded to eight teams in 1950.

The Southeastern Conference and Atlantic Coast Conference are each sending four teams, the SEC for the fourth time since 2015 and seventh overall and the ACC for the first time since 2006.

Their exclusivity this year hints at an even greater concentration of power in the sport as college athletics moves into an era where players, already able to transfer around freely, can make more money than ever, scholarship limits are likely to be removed and the richest schools pour more resources into facilities.

The CWS opens Friday with an all-ACC matchup between North Carolina (47-14) and Virginia (46-15) and Tennessee (55-12) of the

SEC playing Florida State (47-15) of the ACC. Games the next day match Kentucky (45-14) of the SEC against the ACC's North Carolina State (38-21) and Texas A&M (49-13) against Florida (34-28) in an all-SEC meeting.

College baseball has never been better, coaches and administrators have said. The shortening of the amateur draft since the pandemic has kept talented older players in school, regular-season television coverage has expanded and attendance has increased.

"I honestly believe we're probably in a golden age of college baseball right now," American Baseball Coaches Association executive director Craig Keilitz said.

Beneath the surface, there is concern the transformation of college athletics will further reduce the number of programs capable of competing at the highest level.

Baseball is already top heavy. The SEC has claimed four straight national championships and nine of the last 14, and has had at

least one team in 14 of the past 15 finals. Since 2014, 50 of the 80 CWS teams have been from the SEC (31) or ACC (19).

Part of the sport's charm has been the ability of smaller programs to occasionally rise up and challenge the big-name brands, scenes familiar to fans of the March Madness basketball tournaments.

Evansville, which had one of the oldest rosters in the country this year, came within one win of going to Omaha by extending its super regional against No. 1 national seed Tennessee to three games. Oral Roberts made it to the CWS last year and won a game. Stony Brook was here along with Kent State in 2012. Coastal Carolina, then in the Big South, won the national title in 2016.

"Those are the teams you root for," Cal State Fullerton coach Jason Dietrich said. "Not to say you don't root for the other schools, but you love the underdog, the teams that don't have the bells and whistles."

Pulisic goal earns US draw vs. Brazil

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Four days after one of their worst matches, Christian Pulisic and the U.S. soccer team stopped an 11-game losing streak to Brazil with a spirited 1-1 draw that left them with a positive mindset heading into the Copa America.

Pulisic scored in the 26th minute to offset Rodrygo's 17th-minute goal and Matt Turner had 11 saves, the most for an American goalkeeper since Tim Howard's 15 in a loss to Belgium at the 2014 World Cup.

"It's obviously a huge bounce-back performance for us," Turner said. "We really stared in the face of adversity and we were able to bounce

back a few days later. And in tournament play that's so, so important because not every result, not every call is going to go your way and you have to be able to put things behind you."

Rebounding from a 5-1 loss to Colombia, the Americans are 1-18 with the draw against Brazil, getting their only win in a 1998 CONCACAF Gold Cup semifinal. The Seleção had 61% of possession, outshot the U.S. 24-12 and had a 9-0 advantage in corner kicks.

"We feel like we made a little step. It's not a huge step, but it's a little step to be able to play against an amazingly talented Brazil team and bend but not break and I think give them

problems, as well," U.S. coach Gregg Berhalter said.

Among six invited guests to the Copa America, the U.S. opens against Bolivia on June 23 and then plays Panama and Uruguay. Brazil has first-round matches against Costa Rica, Paraguay and Colombia.

"It just puts us in a good place," American defender Tim Ream said. "Obviously, it's a good result going into tournament play and I think that's what we needed."

The game drew a mostly pro-Brazilian crowd of 60,016, the largest attendance for a U.S. national team game in Florida.

Yunus Musah nearly put the U.S. ahead in the fifth minute

with a 25-yard shot that hit the crossbar and ricocheted off the back of goalkeeper Alisson and away from the net.

Brazil went ahead on Rodrygo's sixth international goal, an 8-yard shot past Turner's left arm.

Pulisic was pulled down by João Gomes at the edge of the penalty area and slotted a free kick through the defensive wall and past Alisson's right hand for his 29th goal in 68 international appearances.

Turner made excellent stops on Endrick in the 70th, Rodrygo in the 74th and Vinicius Júnior in the 87th. Alisson denied Pulisic in the 68th and Brenden Aaronson in the 80th.

At least for now, Oilers representing Canada in Cup

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Connor McDavid on the ice is an electrifying, must-watch sensation fit for the big screen. Off the ice, he does not think there is much "Hollywood" to him.

"Just a Canadian kid," McDavid said.

A Canadian kid who has led the Edmonton Oilers to the Stanley Cup Final, four wins away from bringing hockey's hallowed trophy back to the birthplace of the sport for the first time since 1993 — four years before he was born. While fans in Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver might not be rooting for a hated rival to win it all, the Oilers have as good a case as anyone in recent NHL history to get this close to ending the drought and truly call themselves Canada's team.

The Edmonton roster has the highest makeup of Canadians of any Cup Finalist over the past two decades. The lineup that takes the ice Thursday night for Game 3 in front of a raucous crowd starved for a championship could include as many as 16

of the 20 natives on the team.

"It gives you extra motivation, extra passion to do it for your country," said defenseman Brett Kulak, who along with goaltender Stuart Skinner is from Edmonton itself. "Very few guys on the team who aren't Canadian. We all kind of can get behind that."

Longtime NHL forward Ray Ferraro, a native of Trail, British Columbia, who now lives in Vancouver, argued before the series that Canada as a country is not getting behind the Oilers. He likened it to the New York Yankees reaching the World Series and not counting on much support from American League fans elsewhere.

"There's nobody in Vancouver cheering for the Oilers just because we all live in Canada," said Ferraro, who's broadcasting the Final for ESPN. "Edmonton is Edmonton's team. And it is a source of pride. We'd like to get, I'm sure, in this country a Stanley Cup champion again, but it is city by city."

Kulak, who also played for Calgary and Montreal, nonetheless

hopes the rest of Canada is pulling for the Oilers. Jason Demers, who played briefly for Edmonton last year before retiring, is a bit biased based but would like to see the run of 29 consecutive U.S.-based Cup winners come to an end.

"We haven't had a Cup in 30 years," said Demers, who is working the series for NHL Network. "Why wouldn't we be cheering for them as a country? Because the U.S. has all but dominated it. Obviously, there's Canadian players (who have won), but having a team, an organization and everything, I think it's really good for us."

The 1993 Montreal Canadiens remain the last team from Canada to hoist the Cup.

One of the seven Canadian teams made the Final 2004-07, but it's been rare since. Vancouver lost to Boston in seven games in 2011, Montreal in five to Tampa Bay in 2021 — and that's it.

Hall of Famer Mark Messier captained the final title team of the Oilers dynasty after Wayne Gretzky was traded to Los An-

geles, a move that set the stage for U.S. Sun Belt expansion and made it possible for teams like the Florida Panthers to thrive in so-called nontraditional markets. The native of St. Albert, just outside Edmonton, marvels at how far hockey has reached beyond Canada but is still glad there are so many homegrown players in this Final.

"The stories are rich with great Canadian players who've played the game," said Messier, who is providing analysis for ESPN during the Final. "Being a Canadian on a Canadian team in the finals (looking for the first championship) since 1993, it's incredibly exciting. We as Canadians have always had a lot of pride at the international level."

"Obviously being a Canadian kid myself, you know how much hockey means in Canada, and I think a lot of the guys who grew up in Canada know that, as well," Alberta native winger Dylan Holloway said. "That's pretty cool to think about and, yeah, to bring a Cup back to Canada would mean a lot to a lot of people."

Braves' GM addresses recent struggles

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Atlanta general manager Alex Anthopoulos held a media session before a game — which sort of says it all about how the Braves have been playing.

"I don't normally do scrums during the season, because we've done well," he told reporters Wednesday. "If I'm doing them, that means we're not playing well."

This is, of course, all relative. The Braves have the fourth-best record in the National League going into Thursday. But they lost their fifth straight game Wednesday night, 4-2 at Baltimore, and they trail NL East-leading Philadelphia by double digits. So Anthopoulos was available to discuss the disappointing reality.

He acknowledged that by their standards, the Braves aren't looking good, but

there's obviously a lot of season left. Right now three teams in the National League — Philadelphia, Milwaukee and the Los Angeles Dodgers — have significant division leads. Atlanta (35-30) is the best of the rest. In fact, only five teams in the league are above .500.

Three seasons ago, the Braves went 88-73, but that was enough to take the division. They went on to win the World Series.

"The Phillies are obviously playing exceptionally well — best team arguably in the game right now — but it's about making sure you get to the playoffs one way or the other," Anthopoulos said. "Right now, the NL, I bet you if you took a lot of these teams and these front offices, they'd tell you the same thing. No one's playing the way they thought they would — barring Brewers, Dodgers, Phillies."

Still, Atlanta hadn't dropped five straight since 2017, the last time the Braves didn't win the NL East. Two years ago, the Braves came from behind to win the division after the New York Mets had a big lead.

A similar comeback this year will be tough, since reigning NL MVP Ronald Acuña Jr. is out for the season because of a knee injury. He joined ace Spencer Strider, who only made two starts before undergoing UCL surgery that also cost him the year. Anthopoulos said he's been more active than usual in terms of pursuing trades, but nothing is imminent.

"The offensive issues seem like they're spread across the league," Anthopoulos said. "A lot of GMs are saying the same thing. People feel like they're not hitting the way they can."

Thomas' challenge of World Aquatics dismissed by CAS

Associated Press

Transgender swimmer Lia Thomas failed in her challenge against rules that stop her from competing in elite women's races because judges ruled she did not have standing to bring the case.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport panel of three judges dismissed Thomas' request for arbitration with the World Aquatics governing body, in a ruling released Wednesday.

World Aquatics banned transgender women who have been through male puberty from competing in women's races. It also created an "open" category for which transgender athletes would be eligible.

Thomas had asked the sports court in Switzerland to overturn the rules approved in 2022 that she said were invalid, unlawful and discriminatory.

Thomas called the CAS' decision "deeply disappointing" in a statement provided by her legal team. "Blanket bans preventing trans women from competing are discriminatory and deprive us of valuable athletic opportunities that are central to our identities," Thomas said the de-

cision should be viewed as a call to action for trans women to "fight for our dignity and human rights."

Athlete Ally founder and executive director Hudson Taylor called it a "sad day for sports and for anyone who believes that trans athletes should have the opportunity for their experiences of discrimination to be heard and adjudicated like everyone else."

Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) president/CEO Sarah Kate Ellis said in a statement that Thomas deserves a chance to participate in her sport like all human beings who work hard and follow their dream.

"World Aquatics continues to spread disinformation about transgender people as a distorted way to 'protect women,'" Ellis added. "Transgender women are women and all athletes who want to play and follow the rules should have a chance to do so."

Thomas swam for the University of Pennsylvania and won an NCAA title in meets that are outside the World Aquatics competitive system, in which she was not registered.

The world swim body argued to CAS that Thomas was not a member of its member federation USA Swimming when the legal case was started. She also had not competed in female events "for the purpose of qualification or selection" for World Aquatics competitions, such as the Olympics or world championships.

"The panel concludes that she lacks standing to challenge the policy and the operational requirements in the framework of the present proceeding," the court said in its ruling.

In January, the ruling said, USA Swimming granted her request for "self-identity verification" as part of its policy on athlete inclusion.

The judges said USA Swimming had no authority "to modify such scope of application" of the world governing body's rules.

World Aquatics said it welcomed the CAS decision in a case "we believe is a major step forward in our efforts to protect women's sport."

"World Aquatics is dedicated to fostering an environment that promotes fairness, respect, and

equal opportunities for athletes of all genders and we reaffirm this pledge," the governing body based in Lausanne said in a statement.

Swimming's policy on transgender athletes was followed by other top-tier Olympic sports, track and field, then cycling, in excluding from women's events those who have potentially gained lasting physical advantages from male puberty.

The International Cycling Union noted last year "it is also impossible to rule out the possibility that biomechanical factors such as the shape and arrangement of the bones in their limbs may constitute a lasting advantage for female transgender athletes."

The CAS judges declined World Aquatics' request for Thomas to pay its legal costs and other expenses incurred in the case.

The CAS panel, which held a hearing in March, was chaired by a Paris-based Spanish arbitrator Carmen Núñez-Lagos.

The ruling was dated Monday, five days before the U.S. trials meet for the Paris Olympics starts in Indianapolis.