

US destroyer sails close to Paracels

By JOSEPH DITZLER

Stars and Stripes

The USS Curtis Wilbur steamed past the Paracel Islands to assert free navigation, the Navy said Thursday, just days after the guided missile destroyer passed through the Taiwan Strait.

The Paracels, a cluster of islands in the South China Sea about 180 miles southeast of Hainan, China, are claimed by Vietnam, Taiwan and China. All three expect either permission or advance notice before a warship cruises through the area.

The Chinese military's Southern Theater Command said the Curtis Wilbur entered the waters near the Paracels without permission, and that Chinese ships and planes followed the U.S. ship, according to Reuters news service.

The United States periodically sends a warship, often a destroyer, on freedom-of-navigation operations past the Paracels and the Spratly Island chain about 250 miles west of the Philippines to demonstrate a right of "innocent passage." The

USS John S. McCain steamed through the Paracel archipelago on Feb. 5.

The South China Sea, particularly, is overlaid with claims and counterclaims. China uses the islands as baselines to extend its claim of territorial seas beyond 12 nautical miles of the mainland coast, according to a 1996 State Department report.

"Regardless of which claimant has sovereignty over the islands in the Paracel Islands, straight baselines cannot lawfully be drawn around the Paracel Islands in their entirety," according to a Navy statement on the Curtis Wilbur's operation Thursday.

China has also expanded the islands by dredging and building an airfield, helipads, harbors, surface-to-air missile sites and complementary structures, according to the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative.

On Tuesday, the Curtis Wilbur made a trip through the Taiwan Strait, the 110-mile-wide body of water that separates China from Taiwan, which Beijing regards as a renegade province.

Chinese President Xi Jinping in January said China expects Taiwan's peaceful return to the people's republic, but it reserves the right to use force to make that happen, the BBC reported.

In February, President Joe Biden said the U.S. under his administration would maintain its heightened pace of innocent-passage operations and trips through the Taiwan Strait.

China views U.S. passage through the strait as a bold provocation.

U.S. warships "have repeatedly flaunted their prowess in the Taiwan Strait, provoking and stirring up trouble," Zhao Lijian, spokesman for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said on Wednesday.

China is resolved to uphold its territorial integrity, he said.

"This is by no means commitment to freedom and openness, but rather deliberate disruption and sabotage of regional peace and stability," Zhao said. "The international community sees this crystal clear."

Base stores in Afghanistan begin phasing out pogs

By J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The paper coins, or pogs, that troops have used at stores and collected as souvenirs on overseas bases for the last 20 years are being phased out as the U.S. military leaves Afghanistan.

Some stores have already stopped using pogs, which were given as change instead of nickels, dimes and quarters since 2001 at Army and Air Force Exchange Service stores.

Signs at the seven AAFES stores that are still open on bases in Afghanistan encouraged people to turn in or use their pogs before they are no longer accepted, spokesman Chris Ward said.

"As closure of operations in Afghanistan continues, Exchange facilities in the country are transitioning to a cashless system," Ward said.

The exact day when pogs will no longer be used anywhere in the country was unknown,

he said.

The B&S Central Store at the coalition base at Kabul airport has already stopped accepting the paper coins, a sign at the shop's entrance said last week.

Many shelves were bare inside the store, which once sold items like energy drinks, protein powder and action figures. The few items available were discounted by 75% or more.

B&S stopped accepting pogs when it could no longer exchange them for dollars through AAFES and the U.S. finance office, Michiel Kampers, head of retail support for the Netherlands-based chain, said by email.

The airport store, which was the last B&S shop in Afghanistan, was set to close Thursday, he said.

Pogs started being phased out early this month as the U.S. military's finance office began its Afghanistan drawdown, Ward said.

The finance office at Resolute Support

Headquarters was no longer accepting pogs, Maj. Nicholas J. Long, commander of the 93rd Financial Management Support Unit, said in an email Monday.

The end of the pog in Afghanistan comes as U.S. and coalition troops continue to withdraw after nearly 20 years of war.

President Joe Biden said last month that the U.S. military would be out of Afghanistan no later than Sept. 11.

The drawdown from Afghanistan is "between 13-20%" completed, Central Command said Tuesday in a statement.

Troops and contractors still in Afghanistan have been discussing what to do with their paper coins, they said.

Pogs can continue to be used at locations outside of Afghanistan, but "I think the majority are just calling it a loss and throwing them out," said one soldier, who asked to remain anonymous because she was not authorized to speak to the press.

US, allies fine-tune firepower in Europe drill

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — The ground shook in northern Bavaria as Spanish artillerymen fired rockets under the orders of American soldiers, who are using a makeshift command post this week to test the Army's ability to coordinate attacks across large distances.

At the Army's sprawling ranges in Grafenwoehr and a separate site in Poland, U.S. Army Europe and Africa's Dynamic Front drill is bringing together dozens of howitzers and multiple launch rocket systems in a showcase of allied reach.

"This, right now, is about fine-tuning our ability to work together

and working out the bugs now, so that in a crisis or conflict, we've got that behind us," said U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Roger Cloutier, head of NATO Allied Land Command. "Fires is going to be a critical part of any crisis or conflict if it gets to that end."

The Army's 41st Field Artillery Brigade is at the center of the action as it coordinates strikes. The brigade was stood up three years ago after years of U.S. unit cuts in Germany, in a push to bring long-range artillery back to Europe.

More than 70 different allied artillery systems, 15 different countries and 1,800 troops — 800 of them American — are taking part in the exercise, which is part

of the Army's new "Fires Shock" series that involves events from the Arctic to North Africa.

The aim of Dynamic Front is to ensure that, in the event of conflict, Army artillerymen in Germany can coordinate fire missions with any number of allied land forces anywhere in Europe, said Brig. Gen. Christopher Norrie, who commands the 7th Army Training Command in Grafenwoehr.

The drills also involve "shoot and scoot" tactics, where once a rocket is launched, the artillerymen move to another location ahead of possible return fire. Unlike the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, any conflict with Russia in Europe would involve facing off

with an adversary capable of launching long-range precision strikes of its own.

Norrie said there is no substitute for such rehearsals, which require forces to work through the technical difficulties of getting different weapons systems to synchronize, all in austere conditions, as soldiers live out of tents in the field.

"Those challenges are getting smaller as we continue to act and train together," Norrie said, as he watched artillery fire from a lookout point. "We'll never know exactly what a future conflict might look like. But all our efforts are to ensure the distance between where we are and where we need to be is as short as possible."

C-130 crew honored for heroism in Afghanistan

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — A pilot who escaped enemy ground fire and flew a quick reaction force to Bagram Airfield has received one of the military's highest awards for heroism in flight, the Air Force said.

C-130J pilot Maj. Christopher Richardson received the Distinguished Flying Cross at a ceremony in Little Rock, Ark., on May 10. Fellow pilot 1st Lt. Christian Grochowski, and loadmasters Senior Airman Dimitrious Carden and Staff Sgt. Jade Mori received Air Medals, a statement said Wednesday.

The 61st Airlift Squadron crew was flying a team of service members to an unnamed forward base on Sept. 19, 2020, when enemy fire crippled the plane and injured a crew member, the statement said.

Richardson tried to approach the base, but was hindered by damaged controls. He decided instead to return to Bagram Air-

field.

"For me, it was a continual balancing of priorities," Richardson said in the statement. "First was to get the crew and the plane out of harm's way. Second was assessing if the mission was worth the risk."

Meanwhile, Carden and an onboard combat control team tended to the injured crew member's wounds, it said.

"Everything happened quickly, and adrenaline makes decision-making difficult, but having my previous training to lean on helped me incredibly," Carden said.

Upon landing at Bagram, another C-130J Super Hercules was prepared and the remaining crew finished the mission, the statement said.

"The teamwork aspect of the squadron was awesome," Richardson said.

"I told them we were on our way back with a problem and the whole squadron jumped into action."

Racism he endured drove 1st Vietnamese-born US Army general's efforts on diversity

By ERICA EARL
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — For the Army's first Vietnamese-born general officer, the trauma of escaping to America with his family during the Vietnam War was a call to foster a more inclusive military.

Maj. Gen. Viet Luong, commander of U.S. Army Japan, was 9 years old when he fled Vietnam with his family in 1975. He shared his story during a U.S. Army Japan Facebook Live event on Tuesday as part of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

Luong faced racism as a young immigrant growing up in Los Angeles, he told Stars and Stripes via email Wednesday. The coupling of his family's harrowing ordeal in Vietnam and the discrimination he faced drove his passion for diversity and inclusion, he said.

"Just to be honest, the scars from that event are indelible," he said during the Facebook Live in-

terview. "I don't like to retell that story all that much, but I think it's a story that needs to be told because it's part of who we are as Americans."

In 1993, Luong became one of only 27 battalion commanders of Asian descent in the history of the 82nd Airborne Division.

At the time, he said, he felt a need to outperform his white counterparts to earn equal recognition.

"Maybe I was too naïve, but I thought if we all just do our jobs and do well, everything will work out," Luong said Tuesday. "But it doesn't work like that. In order to be successful, you need a lot of support, you need mentorship and you need advocacy."

"I'm not bitter about it, but as I look back, I realize there were opportunities and doors open for my peers as far as advocacy that were available at nearly every turn that I didn't have. To correct that, it's going to take a little bit of time."

US jobless claims decline to 444K, new pandemic low

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans seeking unemployment aid fell last week to 444,000, a new pandemic low and a sign that the job market keeps strengthening as consumers spend freely again, viral infections drop and business restrictions ease.

Thursday's report from the Labor Department showed that applications declined 34,000 from a revised 478,000 a week earlier. The number of weekly jobless claims — a rough measure of the pace of layoffs — has declined steadily since the year began.

The data release coincides with rapid moves by nearly all the nation's Republican governors to cut off a \$300-a-week federal unemployment benefit that they and many business executives blame for discouraging the unemployed from seeking jobs. Those cutoffs of federal jobless aid will begin in June.

Twenty-two states, from Texas and Georgia to Ohio and Iowa, have acted to block the federal government's \$300 weekly payment for the unemployed, according to an Associated Press analysis. Two more states, Florida and Kansas, are also considering doing so. Those 24 states all have Republican governors and state legislatures.

Unemployed Americans have been able to receive the federal benefit, which was included in President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion financial rescue package, on top of their state jobless aid.

Combined, the cutoff of federal jobless aid in the states that are targeting it would reduce unemployment benefits for 3.5 million people, according to Oxford Economics.

About 16 million people were receiving unemployment benefits during the week ending May 1, the latest period for which data is available, the government said Thursday. That is down from 16.9 million in the previous week, and it suggests that some Americans who had been receiving aid have found jobs.

As the economy quickly recovers from the pandemic recession, consumers are showing more confidence and spending at a healthy rate. Most economists think the economy could expand 7% this year, which would amount to the fastest annual growth in more than 35 years.

Biden praises Coast Guard global role at graduation

BY SARAH CAMMARATA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Coast Guard's importance in strengthening global economic, trade and environmental security, especially amid a tumultuous year of extreme weather events and the coronavirus pandemic, took center stage in President Joe Biden's commencement address Wednesday at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

"Being here together is a victory in and of itself, an important marker in the progress we've made to turn the tide of this pandemic. It's a testament of the skill and military discipline [and] sense of responsibility you already embody," Biden told the Class of 2021.

Flanked by Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz, Biden spoke to a crowd of 240 U.S. cadets, along with seven international cadets, at the academy's campus in New London, Conn.

Operating as part of the Department of Homeland Security, the Coast Guard force of roughly 42,000 members has a broad range of missions including conducting search and rescue, drug interdiction, law enforcement and maritime security.

Biden praised members of the Coast Guard for stepping in to aid 250,000 stranded cruise passengers at the start of the pandemic. Later, 500 reservists deployed to support nationwide vaccination efforts.

Disaster response — long a part of the Coast Guard's diverse set of missions — was vital last year, amid the most active hurricane season on record, Biden said.

"The Coast Guard has always recognized the broader definition of our national security," as stewards of the environment and those who work to intercept illicit drug shipments at sea, he said.

Biden also spoke about the Coast Guard's role in keeping sea lanes open and secure, amid increasing aggression from Russia and China in the Indo-Pacific region and the Arctic.

"You have an essential role in our efforts to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific," he said.

Biden also highlighted that slightly more than one-third of the Coast Guard's 2021 graduating class is women. He recently nominated Vice Adm. Linda Fagan, the first female four-star admiral, to serve as the service's next vice commandant.

"To see more women at the highest levels of command, we have to make sure that women have the chance to succeed and thrive throughout their careers," he said.

Biden also reaffirmed his commitment to combat the scourge of sexual assault and harassment in the military and cited the importance of diversity.

"Our national success depends on our capacity to harness the full range of ideas and experiences that exist in our country," he said.

Veteran to receive Medal of Honor for his actions during Korean War

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden will award the Medal of Honor on Friday to Ralph Puckett Jr., a 94-year-old retired Army colonel who led the capture and defense of a hill during the Korean War against an overwhelming Chinese attack.

The White House announced the award Wednesday, saying Puckett distinguished himself with "acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty." South Korean President Moon Jae-in will join the ceremony Friday.

Puckett will receive the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award for bravery, for actions he took more than 70 years ago. As a young first lieutenant in November of 1950, Puckett commanded the Eighth Army Ranger Company during a mission to seize "Hill 205" and defend it against a series of chaotic assaults.

Puckett led 51 Army Rangers and nine Korean soldiers to capture Hill 205. He intentionally ran across an exposed area multiple times to draw enemy fire away from his soldiers, allowing them to destroy enemy positions, the White House said.

Video shows deadly arrest of Black man

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Louisiana state troopers were captured on body camera video stunning, punching and dragging a Black man as he apologized for leading them on a high-speed chase — footage of the man's last moments alive that the Associated Press obtained after authorities refused to release it for two years.

"I'm your brother! I'm scared! I'm scared!" Ronald Greene can be heard telling the white troopers as the unarmed man is jolted repeatedly with a stun gun before he even gets out of his car along a dark, rural road.

The 2019 arrest outside Monroe, La., is the subject of a federal civil rights investigation. But unlike other in-custody deaths across the nation where body camera video was released almost immediately, Greene's case has been shrouded in

secrecy and accusations of a cover-up.

Louisiana officials have rebuffed repeated calls to release footage and details about what caused the 49-year-old's death. Troopers initially told Greene's family he died on impact after crashing into a tree during the chase. Later, State Police released a one-page statement acknowledging only that Greene struggled with troopers and died on his way to the hospital.

Only now in the footage obtained by the AP from one trooper's body camera can the public see for the first time some of what happened during the arrest.

The 46-minute clip shows one trooper wrestling Greene to the ground, putting him in a chokehold and punching him in the face while another can be heard calling him a "stupid motherf—."

Greene wails "I'm sorry!" as another

trooper delivers another stun gun shock to his backside and warns, "Look, you're going to get it again if you don't put your f— hands behind your back!" Another trooper can be seen briefly dragging the man facedown after his legs had been shackled and his hands cuffed behind him.

Instead of rendering aid, the troopers leave the heavysset man unattended, facedown and moaning for more than nine minutes, as they use sanitizer wipes to wash blood off their hands and faces.

"I hope this guy ain't got f— AIDS," one of the troopers can be heard saying.

After a several-minute stretch in which Greene is not seen on camera, he appears again, limp, unresponsive and bleeding from his head and face. He is then loaded onto an ambulance gurney, his arm cuffed to the bedrail.

House backs commission for Jan. 6 riot over GOP dissent

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House voted to create an independent commission on the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, sending the legislation to an uncertain future in the Senate as Republican leaders work to stop a bipartisan investigation that is opposed by former President Donald Trump.

Democrats say an independent investigation is crucial to reckoning what happened that day, when a violent mob of Trump's supporters smashed into the Capitol to try and overturn President Joe Biden's victory. Modeled after the investigation into the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the legislation would establish an independent, 10-member commission that would make recommendations by the end of the year for securing the Capitol and preventing another insurrection.

The bill passed the House on Wednesday 252-175, with 35 Republicans voting with Democrats in support of the commission, defying Trump and House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy. Trump issued a statement urging Republicans to vote against it, calling the legislation a "Democrat trap."

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell is trying to prevent defections among his own ranks, echoing McCarthy's opposition

in a Senate floor speech Wednesday morning. Both men claimed the bill was partisan, even though membership of the proposed commission would be evenly split between the parties.

While most Republicans voted against forming the commission, only a few spoke on the floor against it. And the handful of Republicans who backed the commission spoke forcefully.

"This is about facts—it's not partisan politics," said New York Rep. John Katko, the top Republican on the House Homeland Security Committee who negotiated the legislation with Democrats. He said "the American people and the Capitol Police deserve answers, and action as soon as possible to ensure that nothing like this ever happens again."

Like in the House, some Senate Republicans have suggested they will support the legislation.

Utah Sen. Mitt Romney said Tuesday that given the violent attack, "we should understand what mistakes were made and how we could prevent them from happening again." Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy said he doesn't agree with McConnell that the bill is slanted toward Democrats and "I'm inclined to support it."

Israel fires rockets as expectations for cease-fire increase

Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Israel unleashed another wave of airstrikes across the Gaza Strip early Thursday, killing at least one Palestinian and wounding several, and Hamas fired more rockets, even as expectations rose that a cease-fire could be coming.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pushed back against calls from the United States to wind down the Gaza offensive, appearing determined to inflict maximum damage on Hamas in a war that could help save his political career. Still, officials close to the negotiations say they expect a truce to be announced in the next 24 hours.

In another possible sign of progress, Netanyahu scheduled a meeting later Thursday with his Security Cabinet, where the issue of a cease-fire was likely to be debated.

Explosions shook Gaza City and orange flares lit up the pre-dawn sky, with bombing raids also reported in the central town of Deir al-Balah and the southern town of Khan Younis. As the sun rose, residents surveyed the rubble from at least five family homes destroyed in Khan Younis. There were also heavy airstrikes on a commercial thoroughfare in Gaza City.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Cocaine worth more than \$1M found on beach

AL GULF SHORES — Late-night beachgoers found nearly 70 pounds of cocaine packaged in bundles washed up on the Alabama shore in an area popular with tourists, and police said they probably would never determine where the drugs came from.

Authorities said packages wrapped in plastic began coming in with the surf Monday night, and 30 were eventually collected.

Drug traffickers sometimes use boats and airplanes to cross the Gulf of Mexico, and a police spokesman said officials typically get calls about once a year about smaller amounts of drugs being found along the shore.

Valued at more than \$1 million, the cocaine was turned over to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Sgt. Jason Woodruff told WALA-TV, and police increased patrols along the stretch of beach where the bundles were found in case additional packages wash up.

Father charged after 2-year-old fired handgun

ME WEST BATH — A Maine man was charged with endangering the welfare of a child after his 2-year-old son discovered a loaded handgun and fired a single shot, hitting his parents and injuring himself in the process.

Ian Carr, 25, of West Bath, was arrested Monday and released on bail, the Times Record reports.

Police said Carr's son fired one round from a 9 mm semiautomatic handgun that struck both parents while they were sleeping. The recoil of the weapon injured the child. All three went to the

hospital on May 12.

"The seriousness of this incident must be underscored," Sagadahoc County Sheriff Joel Merry wrote in a statement Monday. "This situation could easily have been fatal. The carelessness is astounding."

The loaded handgun was left on a nightstand where the boy found it, Merry said. The boy's mother was shot in the leg and bullet fragments hit Carr in the back of the head, the newspaper reported.

The boy and a 3-week-old sibling who was in the room are currently in the custody of family members.

Officers pull dog to safety from septic tank

NH BEDFORD — Two police officers successfully rescued a German shepherd that had fallen into a 500-gallon septic tank as it was being serviced, police in New Hampshire said.

The 85-pound dog was about 6 feet down in the tank Monday, police in Bedford said. The officers and the homeowner used a catch pole to pull the dog to safety.

The dog was doing well, and was given a bath.

Endangered red wolves born at zoo, doing well

NC ASHEBORO — Three litters of American red wolves, which are critically endangered and number less than two dozen in the wild, have been born at the North Carolina Zoo, officials announced Monday.

The zoo said in a news release that the litters, which total 12 pups, were born over three days at the end of April. According to zoo officials, all the pups and

their mothers are healthy and doing well.

The newest pups bring the total number of red wolves currently in the zoo's breeding program to 36, making it the second-largest pack in the U.S. after Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium in Tacoma, Wash., according to the North Carolina Zoo.

Zoo officials said only 15 to 20 red wolves remain in the wild, all in eastern North Carolina. They're considered the most endangered canid in the world.

6 police officers, 4 others exposed to pepper spray

AZ PHOENIX — Ten people including six police officers were taken to a hospital as a precaution Monday after they were exposed to pepper spray and an unknown substance in the air.

Police said officers were called about an unknown trouble at an apartment complex. When they arrived, police said several people were running from an apartment. Two men and a woman told police that they were being held against their will by a man wielding a machete-like object and they used pepper spray to escape.

Police said nobody was displaying any symptoms, but six officers who entered the apartment and the four people who had been inside were taken to a hospital to get checked out.

Most wanted fugitive is returned to face charges

NE OMAHA — Douglas County's most wanted fugitive has been brought back to Omaha after being held by officials in Miami, the Douglas County Sheriff's Office said.

The sheriff's office said in a news release that Adam Hawhee,

29, was picked up by Douglas County deputies and returned to Omaha on Tuesday to face two counts of child enticement and 26 counts of child pornography.

Hawhee became a fugitive in December when he failed to appear in court on the charges, authorities said. He had twice posted bond to be released from jail earlier in the year, the first time after being arrested following a March incident in which he was accused of trying to entice girls at a park.

He was arrested again in July when police said he tried to lure a young boy into his car and exposed himself to the boy.

Following his failure to appear in court in December, local and federal authorities determined Hawhee had fled to Nicaragua, where he was taken into custody on immigration violations and extradited to Miami on May 7.

Improved water allows for expanded quahogging

RI WARWICK — Rhode Island regulators have opened up an area in the lower Providence River to quahogging for the first time in decades.

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management announced last week that improvements in water quality in Narragansett Bay will gradually allow for more shellfishing further up the bay, the Providence Journal reported. Department staff could not find any records of shellfishers being allowed in the waters that far north in at least 75 years.

The water improvements are the result of advances in storm-water management that prevent tainted runoff from overwhelming systems.

— From wire reports

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Reporting
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Kluber tosses no-hitter for Yankees

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Corey Kluber stopped for a moment before his first pitch of the ninth inning.

"I had to take a breath after the warmups and calm myself down a little bit," said the pitcher nicknamed Klubot for his robot-like demeanor.

Kluber then finished the sixth no-hitter in the majors this season and second in two nights, leading the New York Yankees over the Texas Rangers 2-0 on Wednesday.

"It was a lot of fun, I think it was a special night," Kluber said. "I've never been part of one, witnessed one, let alone thrown one."

There have been four no-hitters in a 15-day span. The six total is the most this early in a season.

Kluber came within a four-pitch walk to Charlie Culberson in the third inning of throwing a perfect game.

"I don't really do too much with what-ifs. Obviously I would've like to not walk a guy on four straight pitches," Kluber said. "That being said, at that point in the game,

it's still 0-0, so my thoughts after that walk was try to get out of the inning without allowing a run."

The 35-year-old right-hander pitched his gem a night after Detroit right-hander Spencer Turnbull threw one against Seattle, marking the first no-hitters on consecutive days since 1969, when Cincinnati's Jim Maloney threw one on April 30 and Houston's Don Wilson on May 1. There were two no-hitters on June 29, 1990, by the Los Angeles Dodgers' Fernando Valenzuela and Oakland's Dave Stewart.

Kluber (4-2) struck out nine. The two-time AL Cy Young Award winner threw 71 of 101 pitches for strikes in his ninth start for the Yankees, lowering his ERA to 2.86 and winning his fourth straight decision.

With his fastest pitch at 92.5 mph, he mixed 31 curveballs, 27 cutters, 23 sinkers, 18 changeups and two four-seam fastballs.

"I had butterflies in that ninth inning, I'm getting a little emotional now, even just getting to witness that was really, really special," manager Aaron Boone said. "And to see his teammates and the excitement of

everyone for Corey and just the excitement for themselves being a part of such a thing. What a performance."

Kluber was pitching on that same mound when he was hurt after one inning last season, tearing a muscle in his right shoulder on July 26 in his Texas debut. He insisted that he didn't even think about that until after that game when Robinson Chirinos, the former Rangers catcher now on the Yankees taxi squad, mentioned that it was better than his previous start in the \$1.2 billion stadium.

That was the second straight shortened season for Kluber, whose 2019 season ended May 1 when he was hit on the forearm by a comebacker. He left the Rangers as a free agent to sign an \$11 million, one-year deal with the Yankees.

"We expected some outings like that in our ballpark, unfortunately not against us," Texas manager Chris Woodward said. "I can't say enough good things about him. I'm not surprised by this guy's success. I've watched this guy go through his routine and the work he puts in."

Tatis goes 4-for-4 in return from COVID-19 list

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Fernando Tatis Jr.'s return from the COVID-19 injury list was nothing short of remarkable.

Cleared to play by Major League Baseball late Wednesday morning, the star shortstop got to the ballpark about an hour before first pitch, took a few swings in the batting cage and then played for the first time in 10 days.

"Go to that jungle, boy, survive," he said.

Tatis hit an impressive home run, went 4-for-4, finished a triple shy of hitting for the cycle and even did the splits after stealing second base, leading the Padres over the Colorado Rockies 3-0 for a three-game sweep.

Tatis, who had been out since May 11 and missed eight games, helped the Padres win their sixth straight game and for the ninth time in 10 games.

Indians 3, Angels 2: Josh Naylor drove in the tiebreaking run off Tony Watson (2-2) in the sixth, Aaron Civale (6-1) pitched seven strong innings and visiting Cleveland overcame Shohei Ohtani's latest do-everything performance for a victory over Los Angeles.

Cardinals 8, Pirates 5: Jack Flaherty (8-0) earned his major league-leading eighth win of the season and host St. Louis

scored five runs in the second inning to beat Pittsburgh.

White Sox 2, Twins 1: Lucas Giolito (3-4) struck out a season-high 11 and gave up two hits over eight innings, including Nelson Cruz's 10th homer and a single by Cruz, leading host Chicago past Minnesota.

Rays 9, Orioles 7: Randy Arozarena hit two home runs, stole another with his glove and knocked in four runs, Ji-Man Choi drove in the go-ahead run in the eighth inning, and visiting Tampa Bay rallied from a five-run deficit to beat Baltimore.

Marlins 3, Phillies 1: Brian Anderson homered on his 28th birthday to back Trevor Rogers (6-2), who pitched five-hit ball for 7 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings and led visiting Miami over Philadelphia.

Braves 5, Mets 4: Ronald Acuña Jr. homered on the first pitch in the bottom of the ninth inning and host Atlanta topped New York after blowing an early two-run lead.

Nationals 4, Cubs 3: Juan Soto homered off Wrigley Field's right-field scoreboard, helping Max Scherzer (4-2) win his third straight decision for visiting Washington.

Giants 4, Reds 0: Kevin Gausman (4-0) gave up one hit over six strong innings, Bus-

ter Posey drove in three runs with a late double and visiting San Francisco blanked Cincinnati.

Red Sox 7, Blue Jays 3: At Dunedin, Fla., Alex Verdugo and J.D. Martinez hit back-to-back homers during a five-run first inning, Garrett Richards won his fourth straight decision and Boston beat Toronto.

Royals 6, Brewers 4: Jorge Soler hit a slump-busting homer to tie the game, Nicky Lopez bunted home the go-ahead run, and host Kansas City used a late rally against Milwaukee's bullpen to win.

Astros 8, Athletics 1: José Altuve homered on the first pitch of the game, Yuli Gurriel drove in four runs to back Zack Greinke (4-1), and host Houston won for the seventh time in eight games by beating Oakland.

Dodgers 4, Diamondbacks 2: Will Smith's pinch-hit sacrifice fly with the bases loaded in the seventh inning scored the tying and go-ahead runs when Josh Rojas dropped the ball in right field, and host Los Angeles rallied to beat Arizona.

Tigers 6, Mariners 2: Tarik Skubal (1-6) struck out a career-high nine in his first win of the season and Harold Castro had three hits and three RBIs as visiting Detroit downed Seattle.

Boston overtakes Washington in 20T

Associated Press

BOSTON — Craig Smith has a mantra that he pulled out after scoring the winning goal against Washington on Wednesday night: “I love winning, but I hate waiting.”

The Bruins forward took care of the first part after he’d had plenty of the second, scoring 25:48 into overtime to give Boston a 3-2 victory over the Capitals and a 2-1 lead in their East Division first-round playoff series.

Smith outraced Washington defenseman Justin Schultz to a puck that Capitals goalie Ilya Samsonov left behind his net. The Bruins forward swept it around before Samsonov could get back in position to end the third straight overtime game in the series.

“I just tried to jump on it and see if I could create a little bit of a turnover there. They gave me just enough time,” said Smith, who also had an assist. “It just worked out. He was still out of his net trying to get back in, and I just snuck it in there.”

Brad Marchand and Taylor Hall also scored for Boston, and Tuukka Rask stopped 35 shots. The Bruins fell behind 1-0 and 2-1 before twice tying it, taking their only lead on Smith’s game-winner.

“We had a lot of good looks and then obviously got a break at the end,” Boston coach Bruce Cassidy said. “It’s a second-effort league and that’s how you score. That’s the way goals go in when goalies are on. You need to get two or three whacks at it.”

It was the 11th straight one-goal playoff game between the teams since 1998.

Game 4 is Friday night in Boston.

“I would imagine that the next game is probably going to be the same type of game,” Washington coach Peter Laviolette said. “You hope at the end of the night your number on the scoreboard is bigger than the opponent’s.”

Alex Ovechkin scored his 800th combined regular-season and postseason goal, and Nic Dowd returned from a slap shot off the knee to add a goal for the Capitals. Samsonov returned from the COVID-19 list to make his playoff debut, stopping 40 shots for Washington, which lost the home-ice advantage after splitting the first two games at home.

Hurricanes 3, Predators 0: Sebastian Aho scored twice and Alex Nedeljkovic was sharp in net to lead a perfect showing for Carolina’s penalty kill, helping the host Hurricanes a 2-0 series lead.

Nedeljkovic finished with 32 saves for the shutout in his second playoff start. And he was under plenty of pressure considering Carolina was called for nine penalties.

Warren Foegele also scored for the Hurricanes.

Game 3 is is Friday night in Nashville.

Jets 4, Oilers 1: Connor Hellebuyck made 32 saves on his 28th birthday, Dominic Toninato broke a tie midway through the third period and Winnipeg won at Edmonton in Game 1.

Playing just his third game for the Jets, Toninato tipped in Logan Stanley’s blast from the blue line, but the puck flew out so quickly it wasn’t immediately signaled a

goal. The 27-year-old Toninato made his debut in the second-to-last game of the regular season.

Tucker Poolman tied it midway through the second, and Kyle Connor and Blake Wheeler added empty-netters for Winnipeg in its first playoff meeting with the Oilers since 1990. Edmonton’s Jesse Puljujarvi scored in his postseason debut.

Game 2 is Friday night in Edmonton.

Avalanche 6, Blues 3: Nathan MacKinnon finished his first career playoff hat trick with an empty-net goal to help host Colorado pull away late after St. Louis avoided a pre-game virus scare that nearly sidelined several players.

Joonas Donskoi scored twice and Brandon Saad added an empty-netter as the Avalanche took a 2-0 lead in the first-round playoff series. Since moving to Denver, Colorado is 13-1 all-time in best-of-seven postseason series when capturing the first two games. Philipp Grubauer finished with 32 saves.

MacKinnon, who also had an assist, had the first hat trick by an Avalanche player in 24 years.

Flames 6, Canucks 2: Matthew Tkachuk scored twice and host Calgary beat Vancouver in the NHL’s regular-season finale.

The game was the third in a row between the teams to close the season after the Canucks’ schedule was pushed back by a COVID-19 outbreak.

Dillon Dube, Andrew Mangiapane, Brett Ritchie and Connor Mackey, with his first career NHL goal, also scored for the Flames.

Reunited: Tebow inks 1-year deal with Jaguars

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Tim Tebow and Urban Meyer are together again, this time in the NFL and with Tebow playing a new position.

The former Florida star and 2007 Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback signed a one-year contract with the Jacksonville Jaguars on Thursday and will attempt to revive his pro career as a tight end. The move also reunites two of college football’s most polarizing figures over the past 15 years.

The 33-year-old Tebow is returning to the NFL after five years (2016-20) in the New York Mets’ organization and he’ll be playing for Meyer for the first time since his senior year in 2009.

“I know it will be a challenge, but it is a chal-

lenge I embrace,” Tebow said in a statement released by the team. “I am dedicated to taking the direction of our coaching staff and learning from my teammates. I appreciate everyone’s support as I embark on this new journey.”

He was on the field with his new team Thursday for a voluntary, closed workout. Tebow is not expected to have any media availability until training camp, at the earliest, in hopes of minimizing the media circus that follows the devout Christian who has received rock star treatment at every NFL stop.

His comeback is an unprecedented one because of his age, his new position and the fact that he last played in a regular-season game in 2012, with the New York Jets.

Several teams suggested Tebow make the position change years ago, but he declined.

He finally switched after retiring from baseball in February. He worked out for the Jaguars the following week, the first of two exploratory sessions that came to light hours before the start of the NFL Draft on April 29.

Meyer raved about Tebow’s workouts, saying assistants were surprised to see the 235-pounder in such great shape. Ultimately, Tebow’s ability to pick up a new position — a number of college QBs have made the transition look seamless — will determine whether he makes the team.

Just getting a chance after such a lengthy layoff has stirred debate about preferential treatment. Others insist it’s merely the result of a decades-long relationship that now includes Meyer and Tebow being neighbors in Jacksonville.

LeBron's late 3 lifts Lakers over Warriors

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — LeBron James persevered through an injured ankle, a big first-half deficit and being poked in the eye late in the fourth quarter to add another highlight to his impressive résumé.

James made a long, go-ahead three-pointer with 58.2 seconds remaining, rallying the Los Angeles Lakers to a 103-100 victory over the Golden State Warriors in a Western Conference play-in tournament game Wednesday night.

"After the finger to the eye, I was seeing three rims and shot at the middle one. By grace, I was able to knock it down," said James, who finished with 22 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his sixth triple-double of the season. "I've been poked in the eye before.

"It is going to be sore tonight and tomorrow, but we got a big-time win."

James was poked by Draymond Green while driving to the basket with 2:07 remaining. But he made the biggest shot when the defending NBA champions needed it the most. His 34-foot, three-pointer over Stephen Curry as the shot clock was winding down is his longest make of the season. According to ESPN Stats and Information, it is also the longest go-ahead shot in the final three minutes of any game in his career.

"He proved why he is the best player in the world. Just add it to the list of great plays and accomplishments," Los Angeles coach Frank Vogel said.

Anthony Davis scored 13 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter, as the Lakers won their sixth straight and overcame 37 points from league scoring champ Curry.

Golden State had a chance to send it into overtime, but Kent Bazemore had a bad inbounds

pass and sealed the victory for Los Angeles — which earned the seventh seed for the play-offs and a first-round matchup with second-seeded Phoenix. The series opener is slated for Sunday afternoon.

"It's a great shot," Curry said of James' three. "Broken play ... thinking he was kind of out of the play, they found him, he got his balance just in time and knocked it down. That was a tough one because you don't really expect it to go in. You expect us to get the rebound and have a possession to take the lead. But everything changed when it goes in. All-time great players make great shots, that's what happens."

The Warriors host Memphis, which defeated San Antonio in Wednesday's other play-in game, for the eighth seed on Friday. The winner of that game will face top-seeded Utah.

James and Davis were 3-for-19 from the field in the first half before getting back on track. They combined to go 14-for-22 in the second half.

"We were very lackadaisical in the first half. We were playing hesitant because of the situation. There is a next game, but there is no next game," Davis said. "We had to remind ourselves to get going and play our style of basketball. We had to find our swagger knowing we were the defending champions."

The Lakers trailed by 13 at halftime and were down by 12 midway through the third quarter before rallying. They didn't get their first lead until Kyle Kuzma's layup 56 seconds into the fourth quarter put them up 81-79.

"This is a bitter pill to swallow. This was our game and we couldn't get it done," Golden State coach Steve Kerr said.

Grizzlies end Spurs' season, advance to another play-in

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — The young Memphis Grizzlies finally have a play-in victory to their credit, yet they're nowhere near satisfied.

Dillon Brooks scored eight of his 24 points in the fourth quarter to put Memphis ahead to stay and the Grizzlies eliminated the San Antonio Spurs 100-96 on Wednesday night in the first Western Conference play-in game.

"It feels good, but I mean we're not in the playoffs yet," Memphis guard Ja Morant said. "Just have to turn the page."

The Grizzlies will play at Golden State on Friday night for the No. 8 seed and a first-round series starting Sunday against top-seeded Utah. The Los Angeles Lakers beat the Warriors 103-100 on Wednesday night to take the No. 7 seed and a first-round spot against Phoenix.

Memphis is trying to snap a skid of three straight seasons without a postseason berth with last season ending with a loss to Portland in the NBA's first play-in game.

"We still have one more in front of us," Grizzlies center Jonas Valanciunas said. "Really important. The same importance as tonight. It's going to be do or die. That's how we build our confidence. That's how we build our experience."

Valanciunas had a season-high 23 rebounds and 23 points for Memphis. Morant added 20 points and six assists. Jaren Jackson Jr. had 10 points.

DeMar DeRozan and Rudy Gay each scored 20 points as the Spurs lost their fifth straight. Dejounte Murray had his fifth triple-double with 10 points, 13 rebounds and 11 assists. Keldon Johnson added 11 and Jacob Poeltl 10.

San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich said he told his team he didn't know if he's ever been more proud of a team that just doesn't quit.

"No matter what the mistakes, no matter what the circumstances are, they really fight," Popovich said. "That's a good base. So, I'm really proud of the way they conducted themselves and played to win."

The Spurs last led 83-81 on Johnson's three with 6:55 left. Brooks started his scoring spurt with the Grizzlies trailing 80-79, and his driving 5-footer with 5:57 to go put Memphis ahead to stay at 85-83.

"We put ourselves in a hole early, but we fought all the way back, and had the game," DeRozan said. "Let a couple of possessions slip away from us, and that kind of hurt us."

Memphis pulled out all the stops possible in a pandemic in

the biggest home game since the Grizzlies' last playoff appearance in 2017 against these very Spurs.

Inside the FedExForum, capacity was doubled to 40% with a sellout of 7,019 fans, and a yellow towel proclaiming "NXT UP MEMPHIS" was on each seat. Rapper Al Kapone performed outside during halftime and was shown on the video board with fans joining in waving towels when he sang "Whoop That Trick."

In five playoff series between these teams, the Spurs swept three of the four San Antonio won. Memphis' only series victory came in 2011 as the then-No. 8 seed, the start of seven straight playoff seasons for the Grizzlies.

Those players are long gone. On this night, the Grizzlies' next generation took over with a roster that was the second-youngest at the start of this season.