

## Navy: 'Repeated failures' fueled ship fire

Report says Bonhomme Richard blaze was preventable, unacceptable

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — A Navy report has concluded there were sweeping failures by commanders, crew members and others that fueled the July 2020 arson fire that destroyed the USS Bonhomme Richard, calling the massive five-day blaze in San Diego preventable and unacceptable.

While one sailor has been charged with setting the fire, the more than 400-page report, obtained by The Associated Press, lists three dozen officers and sailors whose failings either directly led to the ship's loss or contributed to it. The findings detailed widespread lapses in training, coordination, communication, fire preparedness, equipment maintenance and overall command and control.

"Although the fire was started by an act of arson, the ship was lost due to an inability to extinguish the fire," the report said, concluding that "repeated failures" by an "inadequately prepared crew" delivered "an ineffective fire response."

It slammed commanders of the amphibious assault ship for poor oversight, and said the main firefighting foam system wasn't used because it hadn't been maintained properly and the crew didn't know how to use it. The report was expected to be released Wednesday.

U.S. Navy officials on Tuesday said that while crews at sea consistently meet high firefighting standards, those skills drop off when ships move into maintenance periods. The Bonhomme Richard was undergoing maintenance at the time of the fire.

During maintenance there are more people and organizations involved with the ship, including

contractors. And the repairs often involve equipment and chemicals that present different hazards and challenges.

The report describes a ship in disarray, with combustible materials scattered and stored improperly. It said maintenance reports were falsified, and that 87% of the fire stations on board had equipment problems or had not been inspected.

It also found that crew members didn't ring the bells to alert sailors of a fire until 10 minutes after it was discovered. Those crucial minutes, the report said, caused delays in crews donning fire gear, assembling hose teams and responding to the fire.

Sailors also failed to push the button and activate the firefighting foam system, even though it was accessible and could have slowed the fire's progress.

"No member of the crew interviewed considered this action or had specific knowledge as to the location of the button or its function," the report said.

The report spreads blame across a wide range of ranks and responsibilities, from the now retired three-star admiral who headed Naval Surface Force Pacific Fleet — Vice Adm. Richard Brown — to senior commanders, lower ranking sailors and civilian program managers. Seventeen were cited for failures that "directly" led to the loss of the ship, while 17 others "contributed" to the loss of the ship. Two other sailors were faulted for not effectively helping the fire response. Of the 36, nine are civilians.

Adm. William Lescher, the vice chief of naval operations, has designated the commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet to handle any disciplinary actions for military

members. The Navy officials said the disciplinary process is just beginning. One official said the key challenge in making improvements will be addressing the "human factor," including leadership skills and ensuring that everyone down to the lowest ranking sailors understands their responsibilities, and can recognize problems and correct them.

Specifically, the report said failures of Vice Adm. Brown; Rear Adm. Scott Brown, the fleet maintenance officer for the Pacific Fleet; Rear Adm. William Greene, the fleet maintenance officer for U.S. Fleet Forces Command; Rear Adm. Eric Ver Hage, commander of the regional maintenance center; Rear Adm. Bette Bolivar, commander of Navy Region Southwest; Capt. Mark Nieswiadomy, commander of Naval Base San Diego; and Capt. Tony Rodriguez, commander of Amphibious Squadron 5, all "contributed to the loss of the ship."

The report also directly faults the ship's three top officers — Capt. Gregory Thoroman, the commanding officer; Capt. Michael Ray, the executive officer; and Command Master Chief Jose Hernandez — for not effectively ensuring the readiness and condition of the ship.

"The execution of his duties created an environment of poor training, maintenance and operational standards that directly led to the loss of the ship," the report said of Thoroman. And it said Ray, Hernandez and Capt. David Hart, commander of the Southwest Regional Maintenance Center, also failed in their responsibilities, which directly led to the loss of the ship.

The report only provides

names for senior naval officers. Others were described solely by their job or rank.

More broadly, the crew was slammed for "a pattern of failed drills, minimal crew participation, an absence of basic knowledge on firefighting" and an inability to coordinate with civilian firefighters.

"The loss of the USS Bonhomme Richard was a completely avoidable catastrophe," said U.S. Rep. John Garamendi, D-Calif., chairman of the House Armed Services readiness subcommittee.

The ship was undergoing a two-year, \$250 million upgrade pierside in San Diego when the fire broke out. About 115 sailors were on board, and nearly 60 were treated for heat exhaustion, smoke inhalation and minor injuries. The failure to extinguish or contain the fire led to temperatures exceeding 1,200 degrees Fahrenheit in some areas, melting sections of the ship into molten metal that flowed into other parts of the ship.

Due to the damage, the Navy decommissioned the ship in April. In August, Seaman Apprentice Ryan Mays was charged with aggravated arson and the willful hazarding of a vessel. He has denied setting the fire.

The report, written by Vice Adm. Scott Conn, included a number of recommended changes and improvements that have been endorsed by Lescher. The Navy set up a new fire safety assessment program that conducts random inspections, and has taken steps to increase training. Nearly 170 of those inspections have already been done, and officials said they are finding good results.

# B-1 bombers deploy to island of Diego Garcia

By **WYATT OLSON**  
*Stars and Stripes*

B-1B bombers and about 200 airmen deployed recently to the island of Diego Garcia in the center of the Indian Ocean, the first time Lancers have operated there in over 15 years, the Air Force said Tuesday.

The bombers arrived late last week to support Pacific Air Forces' continuing Bomber Task Force mission, the service said in a news release Tuesday.

Lancers of the 28th Bomb Wing flew from Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., to Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia, the Air Force said.

Citing operational security, Pacific Air

Forces declined to specify the number of bombers sent to Diego Garcia, which is a territory of Great Britain, or how long the deployment would last.

Airfields in Diego Garcia and Andersen Air Force Base on Guam are key hubs in the Air Force's effort to maintain a bomber presence in the Indo-Pacific region.

The bomber missions demonstrate America's commitment to allies and partners through the employment of military force, the Air Force said.

Sorties flown during the deployment support differing objectives of geographic combatant command and training requirements.

The task force missions are an "opportunity to showcase the unmatched range, speed and lethality of the B-1," Lt. Col. Ross Hobbs, 37th Bomb Squadron director of operations, said in the news release.

"It's been over 15 years since B-1s have operated out of this location and the 37th Bomb Squadron is beyond proud to be back," he said. "We are extremely grateful for the opportunity and well prepared to meet our nation's call."

Great Britain forcibly expelled the native inhabitants from Diego Garcia beginning in the late 1960s to establish a military base on the island for British and American forces.

## North Korea says it has tested 'new type' of missile

By **DAVID CHOI**  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — North Korea confirmed Wednesday it has tested a "new type" of submarine-launched ballistic missile, its fifth weapons test in recent weeks, as U.S. intelligence leaders began meeting with their South Korean and Japanese counterparts.

The missile was successfully launched from an older submarine Tuesday and included "lots of advanced control guidance technologies," the state-run Korean Central News Agency said in a statement.

The missile "will greatly contribute to putting the defense technology of the country on a high level and to enhancing the underwater operational capability of our navy," the statement said.

South Korean military officials on Tuesday said they tracked a short-range ballistic

missile that flew 279 miles at a maximum altitude of 37 miles. The 10:17 a.m. launch from North Korea's eastern coast was also confirmed by the Japan Coast Guard. No injuries or damages were reported.

Initial estimates indicate the missile flew the same distance but at a lower altitude than North Korea's SLBM launch in 2019, when a Pukguksong-3 SLBM flew 279 miles at a maximum altitude of 565 miles.

The military officials also noted that the missile appeared to have been fired from Sinpo, where a North Korean shipyard is believed to be working on a new ballistic missile submarine.

North Korea launched its 2019 SLBM test from an underwater platform, rather than a newly developed, operational submarine.

North Korea claims its weapons program is purely a defense against international aggression. The communist regime cites an-

nual U.S.-South Korean military drills, which it views as a precursor to a full-scale invasion, and the numerous sanctions against its country to justify its program.

The U.N. Security Council sanctioned North Korea because of its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile tests.

Experts question North Korea's self-defense claims, as an SLBM is typically viewed as a retaliatory, second-strike weapon.

"The significance of this capability is that the North Koreans continue to invest in their sea-based missile program," Ankit Panda, a North Korea analyst and Stanton senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday. "They see that as necessary, even if North Korean submarines are going to be very vulnerable to the U.S. and allies in submarine warfare attacks."

## Couple accused in Navy sub espionage case indicted

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — A Maryland couple arrested earlier this month on charges of trying to sell information about nuclear-powered warships to a foreign country have been indicted, the Justice Department said Tuesday.

Federal prosecutors say Jonathan and Diana Toebe, are each charged with one count of conspiracy to communicate re-

stricted data and two counts of communication of restricted data.

They were arrested in West Virginia on Oct. 9 and charged in a criminal complaint with violations of the Atomic Energy Act.

The couple was due in federal court Wednesday for a detention hearing.

Jonathan Toebe, a Navy nuclear engineer, is accused of trying to pass information about the design of submarines to someone

he thought was a representative of a foreign government but who was actually an undercover FBI agent. Court documents do not reveal the identity of the foreign country he is accused of trying to sell the information to.

Prosecutors say Diana Toebe accompanied her husband on several instances to pre-arranged "dead-drop" locations at which he left behind memory cards containing the sensitive information.

# Senator wants DOD to halt vaccine mandate

*CQ Roll Call*

A senior Senate Republican's call for a suspension of mandatory coronavirus vaccines for U.S. troops and Pentagon civilians could fuel partisan divisions over the pandemic and add a defense element to the debate.

Sen. James M. Inhofe of Oklahoma, the top Republican on the Armed Services Committee, in a letter Monday to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin called the Pentagon's vaccine mandates "haphazardly implemented and politically motivated."

Inhofe said they "risk irrevocable damage to our national security," which he said would be greater "than any external threat." He requested answers

from Austin on the mandates' costs and impact on readiness.

Some Democrats on the Armed Services Committees, however, are outraged by Inhofe's letter.

These lawmakers, in statements to CQ Roll Call, noted that U.S. troops must be up to date on a variety of vaccinations, from chickenpox to measles, and may have to get additional jabs depending on where they are deployed.

"There are already 17 vaccines that are mandatory for all servicemembers," said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., the chair of the Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee. "This is a military readiness issue — the COVID vaccine will keep

our troops healthier, safer and ready to fight when called upon."

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., chair of the Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee, expressed a similar view.

"The COVID-19 outbreak aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt last year, which saw over 1,200 sailors infected and one killed, should serve as a grave reminder for anyone trying to make vaccine requirements a political football," Speier said.

Under new Defense Department and federal government directives, a coronavirus vaccination is mandatory for not only servicemembers but also Defense Department civilians and contractors, except for those

with religious or medical exemptions. Except for Army National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers, all the shots must occur by the end of this year.

The pending National Defense Authorization Act bills do not currently address whether to force the Pentagon to either drop or maintain its mandates. But as the vaccination deadlines near and political passions rise, lawmakers could still debate whether to include a directive in the final law.

The House has passed its NDAA, but the Senate has yet to debate its Armed Services Committee measure. As a result, House and Senate negotiators are still weeks away from writing a final version.

## Soldier with 'Hitler mustache' discharged

*The Washington Post*

An Army reservist charged in the Justice Department's sweeping investigation of the U.S. Capitol riot was quietly demoted and discharged earlier this year, becoming the first known service member to be forced out of the military after officials learned of an alleged involvement in the Jan. 6 insurrection, according to personnel records reviewed by The Washington Post and the former soldier's attorney.

Timothy Hale-Cusanelli, 31, was an Army sergeant working part-time as a human resources soldier until May, records show. In June, he was demoted to private and given an other-than-honorable discharge, terminating a 12-year military career, said his attorney Jonathan Crisp.

Crisp called the punitive discharge, which severely limits benefits and resources otherwise available to military veterans, "improper" because, he

said, it was delivered while Hale-Cusanelli was incarcerated and because any comments made in the former soldier's defense could violate his 5th Amendment rights in the federal case.

Hale-Cusanelli, whom federal authorities have accused of illegally entering the Capitol and harassing police officers, is one of at least six service members charged in connection with the riot.

Navy investigators interviewed 44 of his colleagues at Naval Weapons Station Earle in New Jersey, including Navy personnel and fellow security contractors, about his behavior at work. All but 10 described Hale-Cusanelli as "having extremist or radical views pertaining to the Jewish people, minorities and women," prosecutors said.

Several colleagues told investigators about his wearing of a "Hitler mustache" while at work, court papers show.

## NATO plans AI strategy, seeks to stay ahead in tech realm

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

NATO will adopt its first strategy on artificial intelligence and launch an innovation fund this week with the aim of investing \$1 billion to "future-proof" the 30-nation security pact, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday.

"We see authoritarian regimes racing to develop new technologies, from artificial intelligence to autonomous systems," Stoltenberg said at a news conference at the alliance's Brussels headquarters.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will join his NATO member counterparts Thursday in Brussels to formally approve the plans during two days of talks.

Stoltenberg said he expects the new NATO fund to invest in emerging and disruptive technologies.

New headquarters and test centers will be set up in both Europe and North America to support the effort, he said.

"We must keep our techno-

logical edge," Stoltenberg said. "Future conflicts will be fought not just with bullets and bombs but also with bytes and big data."

The alliance's artificial intelligence strategy will integrate areas such as data analysis, imagery and cyberdefense, he said.

During the past couple of years, NATO has expanded beyond its traditional focus of land, sea and air operations to adapt to a more complicated security environment.

Last year, it established a new center at Ramstein Air Base's Allied Air Command to coordinate efforts in space, which was declared a new domain of military operation for the alliance. And in 2017, allies also added cyber as a military domain.

In Brussels, ministers also will discuss military efforts to deter potential Russian aggression as well as the overall state of relations with Moscow, which Stoltenberg said are at their lowest point since the Cold War.

# US lays out plan to vaccinate 28M children

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Children age 5 to 11 will soon be able to get a COVID-19 shot at their pediatrician's office, local pharmacy and potentially even their school, the White House said Wednesday as it detailed plans for the expected authorization of the Pfizer shot for younger children in a matter of weeks.

Federal regulators will meet over the next two weeks to weigh the benefits of giving shots to kids, after lengthy studies meant to ensure the safety of the vaccines.

Within hours of formal approval, expected after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advisory meeting scheduled for Nov. 2-3, doses will begin shipping to providers across the

country, along with smaller needles necessary for injecting young kids, and within days will be ready to go into the arms of kids on a wide scale.

"We're completing the operational planning to ensure vaccinations for kids ages 5-11 are available, easy and convenient," said White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients on Wednesday.

The Biden administration noted that the nationwide campaign to extend the protection of vaccination to the school-going cohort will not look like the start of the country's vaccine rollout 10 months ago, when scarcity of doses and capacity issues meant a painstaking wait for many Americans.

The country now has ample

supplies of the Pfizer shot to vaccinate the roughly 28 million kids who will soon be eligible, White House officials said, and has been working for months to ensure widespread availability of shots once approved.

More than 25,000 pediatricians and primary care providers have already signed on to administer COVID-19 vaccine shots to kids, the White House said, in addition to the tens of thousands of retail pharmacies that are already administering shots to adults.

Hundreds of school- and community-based clinics will also be funded and supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help speed putting shots into arms.

The White House is also pre-

paring to mobilize a stepped-up campaign to educate parents and kids about the safety of the shots and the ease of getting them.

As has been the case for adult vaccinations, the administration believes trusted messengers — educators, doctors and community leaders — will be vital to encouraging vaccinations.

While children are at lower risk than older people of having serious side effects from COVID-19, those serious consequences do occur — and officials have noted that vaccination both dramatically reduces those chances and will reduce the spread of the more transmissible delta variant in communities, contributing to the nation's broader recovery from the pandemic.

## Biden focuses on climate, families in trimmed \$2T plan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Scaling down his "build back better" plans, President Joe Biden has described a more limited vision to Democratic lawmakers of a \$2 trillion government-overhaul package with at least \$500 billion to tackle climate change and money for middle-class priorities — child tax credits, paid family leave, health care and free pre-kindergarten.

He expects negotiations to wrap up as soon as this week.

The president met privately into the evening Tuesday with nearly 20 centrist and pro-

gressive lawmakers in separate groups as Democrats appeared ready to abandon what had been a loftier \$3.5 trillion package for a smaller, more workable proposal that can unite the party and win passage in the closely divided Congress.

Likely to be eliminated or seriously shaved back: plans for tuition-free community colleges, a path to legal status for immigrants who are in the United States without documentation and a specific clean energy plan that was the centerpiece of Biden's strategy for fighting climate change.

The details were shared by those familiar

with the conversation and granted anonymity to discuss the private meetings.

Biden felt "more confident" after the day of meetings, said press secretary Jen Psaki.

"There was broad agreement that there is urgency in moving forward over the next several days and that the window for finalizing a package is closing," she said.

After months of fits and starts, Democrats are growing anxious they have little to show voters despite their campaign promises. Biden's ideas are all to be funded by tax hikes on corporations and the wealthiest individuals — those earning more than \$400,000 a year.

## Jan. 6 panel unanimously votes to hold Bannon in contempt

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A House committee investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection voted unanimously to hold former White House aide Steve Bannon in contempt of Congress after the longtime ally of former President Donald Trump defied a subpoena for documents and testimony.

Still defending his supporters who broke into the Capitol that day, Trump has aggressively

tried to block the committee's work by directing Bannon and others not to answer questions in the probe. Trump has also filed a lawsuit to try to prevent Congress from obtaining former White House documents.

But lawmakers have made clear they will not back down as they gather facts and testimony about the attack involving Trump's supporters that left dozens of police officers injured, sent lawmakers running for

their lives and interrupted the certification of Joe Biden's presidential election victory.

The committee's chairman, Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., said Tuesday that Bannon "stands alone in his complete defiance of our subpoena" and the panel will not take no for an answer.

He said that while Bannon may be "willing to be a martyr to the disgraceful cause of whitewashing what happened on Ja-

nuary 6th — of demonstrating his complete loyalty to the former president," the contempt vote is a warning to other witnesses.

The Tuesday evening vote sends the contempt resolution to the full House, which is expected to vote on the measure Thursday. House approval would send the matter to the Justice Department, which would then decide whether to pursue criminal charges against Bannon.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Pier condemned; former bridge section unstable

**LA** DOYLINE — Louisiana authorities have condemned and will remove a section of a Louisiana bridge used for nearly two decades as a fishing pier, officials said Monday.

Work at the Lake Bistineau spillway fishing pier will begin Oct. 25 and is expected to take 90 days, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries said in a news release.

When the current Louisiana Highway 154 bridge over Lake Bistineau was built in 2001, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development left a section of the old one for use as a fishing pier owned and managed by Wildlife and Fisheries. The pier has become so unstable that it's a safety hazard both for people who might use it and for the spillway itself, the news release said.

### 2 men arrested after blast set off in dispute

**GA** WINDER — Two men have been arrested after police concluded they set off an explosion in a subdivision in northeast Georgia in early October, damaging a number of houses.

Winder police said Friday that they have arrested Michael Bonzo Huff, 31, of Nicholson, and Royce Van Court, 38, of Winder. The men are being held on charges including possessing explosives, terroristic threats and acts, reckless conduct and criminal property damage.

Some sort of bomb went off before dawn on Oct. 2 in a Winder subdivision, heavily damaging a car and blowing out windows in

multiple houses. No one was injured. Winder police said the blast appeared to be related to a "domestic conflict."

### None injured in Walmart parking lot 7-car pileup

**ME** AUBURN — An SUV accelerated through a Walmart parking lot in Maine, hitting multiple vehicles and a shopping cart corral before coming to a stop with another SUV balanced on top of it.

The driver was an 83-year-old woman who Auburn Deputy Police Chief Timothy A. Cogle said seemed to have been trying to hit the brake and instead hit the gas pedal, the Lewiston Sun-Journal reported Monday. No one, including the driver, was injured.

"We are still sorting all the details out, but there is a total of seven vehicles involved — two significantly damaged or totaled," Cogle told the newspaper.

### Holocaust survivor given French Legion of Honor

**TX** HOUSTON — An 88-year-old Holocaust survivor from Houston who has spent decades educating people on the genocide of Jews during World War II has been honored by France.

The Houston Chronicle reported that Ruth Steinfeld was awarded the Legion of Honor, France's highest prize, in a ceremony Sunday at Holocaust Museum Houston. As children during the war, Steinfeld and her sister were saved by a French humanitarian organization.

French Consul General Valérie Baraban praised Steinfeld as an "invaluable witness" to the horrors of genocide, saying Steinfeld is "committed to speaking for the 1.5 million children

who never had a chance to survive."

### Man gets probation for rolling boulders off cliff

**ND** MANDAN — A North Dakota man has been sentenced to probation for rolling a boulder off a cliff at a state historic site.

The Bismarck Tribune reported that Charles Gipp, 36, of Mandan, pleaded guilty Friday to misdemeanor reckless endangerment and criminal mischief. Prosecutors dismissed a refusal-to-halt charge and reduced the reckless endangerment count from a felony to a misdemeanor in exchange for the plea.

According to court documents, Gipp was arrested in June 2020. He told authorities he rolled a 700-pound boulder off a cliff at Double Ditch Indian Village Historic Site for spiritual reasons. People were below but no one was hurt.

### Dog leads game warden to find suspect at lake

**KS** WELLINGTON — Ruby, the K-9 officer for Kansas game wardens, may be pushing 10 years old, but her sniffer works just fine. That was evident earlier this month when she played a key role in tracking down a man wanted by police in the south-central Kansas town of Wellington.

A Facebook posting by Kansas Wildlife & Parks-Game Wardens said Ruby and her handler, Chris Stout, joined in the search for the suspect on Oct. 8 at Wellington City Lake.

The Facebook post says Ruby "immediately picked up the track" and led Stout through thick vegetation, eventually finding the suspect "face down in

mud under dense brush." She stood on top of the man and licked him until Stout caught up.

### Surfboards burn in fire next to historic hotel

**HI** HONOLULU — For the second time in less than two years, a fire destroyed surfboards stored next to a historic Waikiki hotel.

Firefighters called to the scene found several storage racks of surfboards at a beach alleyway in flames and evacuated the adjacent buildings: the Moana Surfrider Hotel and the Honolulu Police Department's Waikiki substation.

The blaze scorched the exterior of the hotel, which first opened in 1901, and spread to the substation's walls, roof and eaves, the Honolulu Fire Department said.

An investigation is underway. Police arrested a 43-year-old man on suspicion of arson.

### Law enforcement gets cash from firearms sale

**WV** PINEVILLE — Several police and sheriff's departments in West Virginia are among those benefiting from the state treasurer's recent unclaimed property firearms auction.

Last week, state Treasurer Riley Moore presented a check for \$19,098 to the Wyoming County Sheriff's Department for proceeds from the auction, his office said in a news release.

State and local law enforcement agencies are allowed to turn over unclaimed, seized or outdated firearms to the treasurer's office for auction. The proceeds can be given back to the agency for its use.

— From wire reports

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# Dodgers, Bellinger get back in NLCS

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Cody Bellinger keeps erasing a forgettable regular season, with his latest big swing putting the Los Angeles Dodgers right back in the NL Championship Series.

Bellinger hit a tying, three-run homer and Mookie Betts then lined an RBI double in the Dodgers' eighth-inning rally, storming back to beat Atlanta 6-5 Tuesday and cutting the Braves' lead in the series to 2-1.

"It's hard to remember a bigger hit, with what was at stake," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "I'm kind of exhausted now."

Some of the 51,307 fans had already left when the Dodgers were down to their final five outs and facing the daunting prospect of a 3-0 deficit in the series. Bellinger swung and missed two pitches down the middle for strikes, going to his knees in the dirt.

"Ball's coming in hard, some shadows you're dealing with, so I saw it well and I just tried to barrel it up," Bellinger said. "Just continue to barrel up the ball and pass the baton."

Bellinger drove a shoulder-high, 95.6-mph fastball from Luke Jackson into the right-field pavilion, igniting the blue towel-waving crowd and reviving the hopes of the defending World Series champions.

"Sad thing is I would do the same thing

again," Jackson said. "I was trying to throw a fastball up and away. I actually threw it better than I thought I threw it. Out of my hand, I was like, 'Oh, that's a ball. It's too high.' And no, it wasn't too high. Good player, put a good swing on it and pretty remarkable."

Chris Taylor singled, stole second and moved to third on pinch-hitter Matt Beaty's groundout. Betts followed with the double off Jesse Chavez to right-center.

"One of our strong suits is not worrying about what happened yesterday, focusing on right now," Betts said.

Game 4 is Wednesday at Dodger Stadium.

"We can do it, we're confident," Braves manager Brian Snitker said. "There is going to be no residual effects after this game."

The Dodgers had lost all 83 previous postseason games — in both Los Angeles and Brooklyn — in which they trailed by three or more runs in the eighth inning or later.

But that's history now. And so are Bellinger's recent struggles.

The 2019 NL MVP, Bellinger batted a miserable .165 this year with a paltry .240 on-base percentage and 94 strikeouts in 315 at-bats. He helped redeem himself last week with a tiebreaking single in the ninth inning of the decisive Game 5 of the NL Division

Series against the rival Giants at San Francisco.

"Fresh start," Bellinger said of the postseason. "At least for me this year it's a fresh start. You know, a tough regular season but you know, I felt good towards the end of the season, and just try to continue that feel all the way through."

"Just you know, staying simple," he said. "Crazy things are happening."

Bellinger's done this before, too. After the Dodgers overcame a 3-1 deficit against Atlanta in the NLCS last year, his tiebreaking home run in the seventh inning won Game 7.

With the cheering, chanting crowd on its feet in the ninth, Kenley Jansen struck out the side to earn the save, the ninth pitcher used by the Dodgers. They ran through a combined 15 in the first two games.

Staggered with back-to-back walk-off losses in Atlanta, the Dodgers returned home, where they've dominated the Braves in recent years and were an MLB-best 58-23 during the regular season.

The Braves haven't won at Dodger Stadium since June 8, 2018. Going back to the 2013 NLDS, the Braves have dropped 20 of their last 23 in LA — they've lost 10 straight in Los Angeles overall.

It sure looked like they'd end that skid after leading 5-2 in the fifth.

## Astros' offense awakens to even series with Red Sox

Associated Press

BOSTON — Six outs from falling behind 3-1 in the AL Championship Series and facing elimination in Game 5 in Boston — where the Red Sox had yet to lose this postseason — the Houston Astros offense awakened.

After tying it in the eighth inning on Jose Altuve's solo homer, the Astros bullied the Red Sox bullpen for seven runs in the ninth to win 9-2 on Tuesday night and even the best-of-seven playoff at two games apiece.

"This is one of the great things about baseball," said Houston's 72-year-old manager, Dusty Baker. "When you're dead in the water and things aren't going good, and then all of a sudden, boom, boom, boom, and you got

seven runs.

"That's what they've been doing to us this whole series," he said. "And we're capable of doing that as well."

Jason Castro looked off a potential third strike from Nathan Eovaldi before driving in watch-tapping Carlos Correa with the go-ahead run in the ninth, then the AL West champions kept on scoring to guarantee themselves at least one more game back home.

Game 5 is Wednesday in Boston, with Games 6 and 7 back in Houston on Friday and, if necessary, Saturday.

The Red Sox are 5-0 after playoff losses under manager Alex Cora.

"We're feeling pretty confident," said Eovaldi, the Game 2

winner who made his first relief appearance since 2019. "That's been one of our strengths is being able to turn the page and come in tomorrow."

In a series that had been dominated by offense — especially Boston's, which has hit 10 homers in the series, including a record-setting three grand slams to turn Games 2 and 3 into routs — the teams traded first-inning home runs.

Alex Bregman hit a solo shot into the Green Monster seats, then Xander Bogaerts topped it with a towering, two-run drive onto Lansdowne Street in the bottom half to give the Red Sox a 2-1 lead.

Then, the pitchers took over.

It was still 2-1 when Altuve homered against Garrett Whit-

lock to tie it in the eighth. It was his 21st career postseason home run, breaking a tie with Derek Jeter for third-most in baseball history and trailing only Manny Ramirez (29) and Bernie Williams (22).

Eovaldi, making his first relief appearance since he was coming back from an injury two years ago, came on for the ninth and gave up Correa's leadoff double.

Boston thought it was out of the inning when Eovaldi's 1-2 breaking ball appeared to catch the plate for strike three on Castro. Still alive, Castro singled in Correa to give the Astros the lead.

"Yeah, a lot of people thought it was a strike," Cora said. "It was a good game until the end, right?"

# Bucks celebrate with rings, roll past Nets

*Associated Press*

MILWAUKEE — Giannis Antetokounmpo and the Milwaukee Bucks didn't let the celebration of the franchise's first NBA championship in half a century distract them as they opened their title defense.

In his first game since scoring 50 points in a title-clinching Game 6 NBA Finals victory over the Phoenix Suns, Antetokounmpo had 32 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists to lead the Bucks to a 127-104 victory over the Brooklyn Nets on Tuesday night.

"We're part of history," Antetokounmpo said. "I'm excited. But now it's over with. We've got to focus on building good habits, keep moving forward and keep playing good basketball and hopefully we can repeat this again this year, next year and all the years that we're going to be here down the road."

Khris Middleton and Pat Connaughton each added 20 points to help the Bucks withstand the loss of Jrue Holiday, who sat out the second half with a bruised right heel after scoring 12 points. Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said MRI results on Holiday were encouraging.

Kevin Durant led the Nets with 32 points and 11 rebounds. Patty Mills scored 21 points and shot 7-for-7 from three-point range. James Harden added 20 points.

"We weren't very good," Brooklyn coach Steve Nash said. "If you're not playing at a high level against the champs, you're not going to win."

The Nets were missing star guard Kyrie Irving, who isn't with the team due to his refusal to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

A New York mandate requires professional athletes on local teams to be vaccinated to practice or play in public venues. Rather than using Irving exclusively in road games, the Nets decided he wouldn't play or practice with them at all until he could be a full participant.

After receiving their rings, raising a banner and watching a highlight video of their first NBA championship since 1971, the Bucks defeated the team that nearly eliminated them in the second round of the playoffs. Antetokounmpo acknowledged that he teared up a little bit during the pregame ceremony.

## Keenan will start ahead of injured Mayfield

*Associated Press*

CLEVELAND — Baker Mayfield had to surrender to the pain.

Cleveland's starting quarterback, who has played the past four weeks with a torn labrum in his left shoulder, will sit out Thursday's game against the Denver Broncos and backup Case Keenum will start.

The Browns (3-3) announced the switch on Wednesday, ending speculation about whether Mayfield would try to push through an injury to his non-throwing shoulder that he suffered last month and has worsened in recent weeks.

"Case Keenum will be our starter tomorrow night and we have full confidence in him to lead us and do the things necessary to put us in position to win," Browns coach Kevin Stefanski said. "Baker fought really hard to play, he's a competitor and obviously wants to be out there but just couldn't make it on a short week."

"We know he will continue to do everything in his power to return as quickly as possible."

Mayfield was limited in practice on Tuesday, when he said he still expected to play. However, it was decided it would be best for him to rest, ending Mayfield's streak of 53 consecutive starts for Cleveland.

The loss of Mayfield means the Browns' entire starting backfield has been wiped out by injuries.

Not only will they be missing Mayfield against the Broncos (3-3) in an important game for both teams, but running backs Nick Chubb and Kareem Hunt, the NFL's top running back tandem, also will sit out with calf injuries.

Cleveland could be missing star receiver Odell Beckham Jr. as well due to a shoulder injury, and starting offensive tackles Jack Conklin (knee) and Jedrick Wills Jr. (ankle) haven't practiced this week and could be game-time decisions.

On Tuesday, Mayfield was still planning to play despite a shoulder tear that was affecting his play and sleep. The 26-year-old underwent an MRI on Monday and the results were examined by a shoulder specialist.

Mayfield is dealing with swelling that needs to go down before he can strengthen the injured area.

The 2017 Heisman Trophy winner hasn't missed a game due to injury since 2013 when he was a walk-on at Texas Tech.

## Curry, Warriors rally to stun LA

*Associated Press*

LOS ANGELES — Opening night in Hollywood went well for three quarters for Los Angeles Lakers superstars LeBron James and Anthony Davis against Stephen Curry and the Golden State Warriors.

But it was a flop for their new supporting cast, including L.A. native and former league MVP Russell Westbrook.

Curry, a two-time MVP, had 21 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for the Warriors, who rallied from 10 points down to stun the Lakers 121-114 in a season opener Tuesday night.

The Lakers went cold in the fourth quarter, and surrendered the lead halfway through the period.

James had 34 points and 11 rebounds, while Davis had 33 points and 11 rebounds. No other Lakers scored in double figures.

"Those two guys were spectacular," coach Frank Vogel said. "We're going to be pretty good if we get those type of perform-

ances. We just have to be better defensively. This is a team that is all new to each other, so everybody's finding their way a little bit."

Westbrook shot just 4-for-13 for eight points in his Lakers debut.

"Him more than anybody, it's going to be an adjustment period," Vogel said. "He's coming into our culture, our system, he's the new guy, he's got to find his way. It's difficult, when you're used to being the guy that has the ball most nights, to be able to play off others like LeBron and A.D. It's just a little bit different for him. He's going to be great for us but it's going to be an adjustment period."

James and Davis said they helped console Westbrook afterward.

"I told Russ to go home and watch a comedy," James said. "Put a smile on his face. Don't be so hard on himself."

The Lakers had an 84-74 lead late in the third quarter after a jumper by Kent Bazemore, but the Warriors slowly closed the gap.

# Kuznetsov scores twice, Caps beat Avs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Evgeny Kuznetsov skated to the bench after a turnover cost the Washington Capitals a goal against and wanted to sink into the ground.

None of his coaches or teammates said a thing, but it took until he scored his second goal of the game on the way to the Capitals beating the Colorado Avalanche 6-3 Tuesday night that Kuznetsov finally felt better. He was the most noticeable player on the ice, finishing with three points after an assist on Alex Ovechkin's empty-netter for career goal No. 734 and looking like the player Washington needs him to be.

"The confidence always goes from the coaches and teammates," said Kuznetsov, who is tied with Ovechkin for the team lead in scoring with six points through three games. "I feel like I have a great relationship with the coaches and teammates, and that always gives you a lot of confidence when you can be creative."

Kuznetsov dazzled from his first shift on,

skating around defenders with ease and showing off the talent that made him the Capitals' leading scorer on their 2018 Stanley Cup run. It was only fitting he brought back his flapping wings bird celebration on a night that he showed the best he could offer.

Especially without top center Nicklas Backstrom for at least their first 10 games, Washington will take every bit of the good and bad of Kuznetsov if he produces like this. And it could have been even more because teammates kept trying to set Kuznetsov up for the hat trick in the third period, but that's the last thing he wanted.

"I'm not a shooter," he said. "I always say one goal for four games and I'm all set: get 20 in a year, so now I'm all set for 10 games probably."

Fourth-liner Nic Dowd shook his head and told Kuznetsov the Capitals don't want him settling.

"We need more," Dowd said. "A goal every game would be perfect."

Nick Jensen, Anthony Mantha and Dowd also scored for Washington before Ovechkin sent the puck into an empty net from 143 feet to continue his quest for the career goals record. Mantha's goal was the 100th of his career and ended a 17-game drought counting the playoffs and the end of last season.

"It's been a long time," Mantha said after his first goal since April 18. "From 99 to 100, it was hard."

The Capitals spoiled Avalanche star Nathan MacKinnon's first game of the season after he missed the past week in NHL COVID protocol. MacKinnon, fellow top-line forward Mikko Rantanen and Norris Trophy finalist Cale Makar were each on the ice for four goals against.

Colorado coach Jared Bednar called it a "bad night" for some of his top players.

"I thought we got outcompeted in a lot of areas, so we gave up way too much," Bednar said. "I just thought they were the faster, bigger, stronger and hungrier team tonight, start to finish."

## Unbeaten Sabres top Canucks with 3rd-period rally

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Jeff Skinner and Tage Thompson scored 23 seconds apart in the third period and the Buffalo Sabres rallied to beat the Vancouver Canucks 5-2 on Tuesday night.

Buffalo's alternate captains, Kyle Okposo and Zemgus Girgensoons, each added a goal and an assist, and Craig Anderson made 32 saves. After finishing in last place for the fourth time in eight seasons, the Sabres are 3-0 for the first time since 2008 and the fifth time in franchise history.

"You go through ups and downs and you got to keep this momentum when you have it," said Okposo, who scored his 200th NHL goal and has recorded a point in eight straight games against the Canucks. "So we're just hoping to continue to keep that confidence for the season. We know it's going to dip at some points."

"We have a young group. But if we continue to practice well and have games like that, it's going to be fun."

Bo Horvat and Justin Dowling scored for Vancouver in the team's second straight loss.

**Stars 2, Penguins 1 (SO):** Joe Pavelski and Alexander Radulov scored in a shootout, lifting visiting Dallas past Pittsburgh in the start of the Stars' season-opening four-game trip.

Michael Raffl scored his second goal of the season for Dallas. Goaltender Braden Holtby turned aside 27 shots in regulation and overtime, and stopped Jake Guentzel and Kris Letang in the shootout as the Stars ended a five-game losing streak in Pittsburgh.

**Devils 4, Kraken 2:** Rookie Dawson Mercer and Damon Severson scored first-period goals and Jonathan Bernier made 27 saves, leading host New Jersey to a win over Seattle.

The Kraken slipped to 1-3-1 on their five-game road trip ahead of the much-anticipated home opener against Vancouver on Saturday.

Jimmy Vesey added a goal and Pavel Zacha scored into an empty

net with 20 seconds left.

**Sharks 5, Canadiens 0:** Rookie Jonathan Dahlen scored his first two goals in his second career game, and visiting San Jose blanked Montreal.

Erik Karlsson and Timo Meier each had a goal and two assists for the Sharks.

The Canadiens lost their fourth straight to start a season for the first time since 1995.

**Panthers 4, Lightning 1:** Alexander Barkov scored the go-ahead goal 3:40 into the third period and visiting Florida won its third straight game.

Barkov slammed a loose puck in the crease past Andrei Vasilevski for his second of the season. It came 1:04 after Tampa Bay tied it 1-1 on Brayden Point's goal.

The Panthers also got goals from defenseman Brandon Montour, Anton Lundell and Anthony Duclair.

**Red Wings 4, Blue Jackets 1:** Lucas Raymond made his first NHL goal a big one for host Detroit, breaking a scoreless tie at

6:38 of the third period on the way to a victory over Columbus.

**Predators 2, Kings 1:** Matt Duchene and Tanner Jeannot scored in the third period in host Nashville's win over Los Angeles.

Predators goalie Juuse Saros made 25 saves.

**Islanders 4, Blackhawks 1:** Ilya Sorokin made 39 saves and Oliver Wahlstrom scored twice in the third period, helping visiting New York beat Chicago for its first victory of the season.

The Blackhawks have been outscored 17-8 this season. They haven't led in any of their four games.

**Oilers 6, Ducks 5:** Leon Draisaitl had two goals and two assists, and host Edmonton extended its season-opening winning streak to three games with a win over Anaheim.

**Wild 6, Jets 5 (OT):** Joel Eriksson Ek had a hat trick, tying the game with 59 seconds remaining in regulation and winning it on a power play in overtime as host Minnesota stunned Winnipeg.