

DOD: US troops in Syria targeted in attack

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — U.S. troops in Syria were targeted on Wednesday in a “deliberate and coordinated attack” that appears to have used both unmanned aircraft and indirect fire, U.S. military officials said.

The attack occurred on the Tanf base in the southeastern part of the country, where a group of about 200 Americans man a position on a highway that runs from Damascus to Baghdad.

The United States was not aware of any killed or injured Americans on Wednesday

night, and was working with partner forces to determine whether they suffered any casualties.

“We continue to maintain all appropriate force protection measures to ensure the safety and security of our forces,” the U.S. statement said. “We maintain the inherent right to self-defense and will respond at a time and place of our choosing.”

The United States did not blame anyone for the attack in its statement. For several years, it has attempted a balancing act with Iranian-backed militias along the Iraq-Syria border who

want to drive the United States out of both countries and launch periodic attacks on U.S. positions.

In May, a drone strike targeted a CIA hangar in Irbil, Iraq. No one was injured, but the drone’s ability to evade tracking as it closed in concerned U.S. officials, they later said.

In June, the United States launched airstrikes on both sides of the Iraq-Syria border in response to that incident and other drone attacks.

A Pentagon spokesman, John Kirby, said at the time that the strikes were defensive in nature,

and targeted locations used by the Kataeb Hezbollah and Kataeb Sayyid al-Shuhada groups, which are both linked to Iran.

In July, al Asad Air Base in western Iraq was attacked by rockets, U.S. military officials said. No injuries were reported.

The United States initially deployed a sizable contingent of troops to Tanf in 2016 to train Syrian fighters to counter Islamic State. The Syrian and Russian governments oppose the U.S. presence, but the U.S. military continues to partner there with a group called Maghawir al-Thawra.

Mom rejects Air Force’s offer on medical malpractice claim

BY ERICA EARL

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Eight years after a surgeon at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo left a laparotomy towel inside Angie Perry’s abdomen, the Air Force has offered to settle her medical malpractice claim for \$50,000.

Perry, a former Army spouse now living in Vancouver, Wash., discovered the towel and had it removed five years after her cesarean section at Yokota in 2013, according to Perry and records she provided. She is seeking \$1 million in compensation.

“There is no doubt in my mind if that towel wasn’t found, it would’ve killed me,” she told Stars and Stripes on Sept. 15. “I’d rather not take anything than settle.”

Mistakes of this type are not uncommon in Defense Department hospitals, although they have declined since 2016, when DOD began tracking them in its annual Tricare program report. That year, the Pentagon identified 18 cases of objects left in patients by

surgeons and 38 cases of surgeons operating on the wrong patient, performing the wrong procedure or operating on the wrong body part. In 2020, DOD hospitals reported 17 instances of a foreign object being left inside a patient after surgery, according to the annual DOD report on its Tricare health care program. The report identified another 21 cases of the wrong patient, the wrong procedure or the wrong body part.

Until recently, patients at the receiving end of a military surgeon’s mistake had little recourse to compensation.

A provision in the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, which sets policy and spending priorities for the Pentagon, ended the 70-year ban on suing the DOD for medical malpractice. In December 2019 then-President Donald Trump signed the Richard Stayskal Military Medical Accountability Act into law, allowing active-duty members to file medical malpractice claims against the DOD. The new law has a two-year statute of limitations, however, and does not allow

service members and their families to sue medical facilities at bases overseas, although they may file claims.

“Overseas patients may bring administrative claims for malpractice against the DoD under the Military Claims Act,” a Pentagon spokesperson, Maj. Charlie Dietz, told Stars and Stripes via email Oct. 5.

Perry remembered her surgery at Yokota as chaotic. The surgeon assigned to her was fresh out of training, according to the résumé of the physician, who no longer works at the base.

“At one point, the surgeon couldn’t stop the bleeding and things got a little frantic in the surgery room where the nurses were pleading with the surgeon to let them go ask another surgeon to come and assist,” Perry said. “I thought for certain I was going to die right there.”

Nonetheless, Perry went home with her new, healthy baby. But she said she suffered a series of chronic health problems until a CT scan in 2018 discovered the metal tag on the towel left in her

abdomen five years prior.

For three years, Perry said she experienced pain that interfered with her bonding with her child. And because her bladder no longer functioned properly, she wore diapers. Despite 27 doctors’ appointments while living in Japan, Perry said she never found the cause for her agony. Five years, six gastrointestinal specialists and several emergency room visits later, a doctor in Washington state did a scan of Perry’s abdomen and found the laparotomy towel. It was removed on Oct. 31, 2018, along with a part of her small intestine, Perry said.

In July, the Yokota legal office offered to settle Perry’s claim for \$50,000, according to a letter it sent her. Perry hired a medical malpractice attorney in Texas in April 2019 to file a claim against Yokota. She said she does not intend to accept the settlement offer from Yokota and is now seeking different representation.

A Yokota spokesperson said the 374th Medical Group and the base’s legal department cannot speak about Perry’s case.

US sub engineer, would-be spy caught

The Washington Post

For years, the aspiring spy had gone to remarkable lengths to protect his identity and evade detection.

With a cash-bought burner phone, he created an anonymous email account that could send encrypted messages, according to the FBI, then waited to use it.

To avoid suspicion at his job developing America's most advanced submarines, he allegedly sneaked out sensitive documents for years, a few pages at time.

The Navy veteran's work for the U.S. government had taught him to spot the clues that betray insider threats, and, according to an FBI affidavit, he would later brag that "we made very sure not to display even a single one."

But now, after all that caution, the foreign officials Jonathan Toebbe believed he was negotiating with were pushing him to do the one thing he'd been avoiding: come out into the open.

At first, Toebbe — a nuclear engineer and father of two who lives in Annapolis, Md. — pushed back in encrypted email exchanges detailed in the affidavit. "Face to face meetings are very risky for me," he wrote, "as I am sure you understand."

A month later, he protested again: "I am sorry to be so stubborn and untrusting, but I cannot agree to go to a location of your choosing."

He'd already threatened to approach "other possible buyers" if the country wasn't interested, an FBI agent testified at a court hearing on Wednesday.

Eventually — after a series of trust-building exchanges that involved a secret signal at a Washington, D.C., building and a deposit of \$10,000 in cryptocurrency — Toebbe relented.

For almost a decade, Toebbe, who held a top-secret security

clearance, had been part of the multibillion-dollar effort to build submarines that could remain submerged and undetected for the longest time possible.

The documents he allegedly smuggled out contained schematic designs for one of the Navy's most advanced boats — the Virginia-class submarine — with a nuclear reactor that could run for 33 years without refueling.

In this world, stealth was everything. And yet, despite all that technological sophistication, every submarine becomes vulnerable the second it surfaces.

On June 26, Toebbe, 42, drove to West Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. Accompanying him was his wife, Diana Toebbe, 45, a private-school humanities teacher beloved by students and known among friends for her intelligence and liberal politics. They brought with them a tiny data storage card filled with secrets they allegedly hoped to sell, wrapped in plastic and hidden inside half a peanut butter sandwich.

After years of staying submerged, Toebbe and his wife were surfacing. And unbeknownst to them, the FBI was watching their every step.

When the U.S. government announced their arrest on espionage charges last week, it filed a 23-page affidavit in support of a criminal complaint. Packed with technical notes, it also contained details as riveting as any spy novel.

There are sly exchanges and red herrings. Traps are set, evaded, then baited again.

But left unanswered in all the plot twists: What drove a suburban engineer and his schoolteacher wife to apparently try to sell secrets to a still-unidentified country?

Jonathan Toebbe's spy story began on April 1, 2020, with a brown envelope with four U.S. postage stamps, according to the affidavit.

Toebbe allegedly sent the package anonymously, with a return address in Pittsburgh, to an unidentified foreign government. Inside were sensitive U.S. Navy documents and instructions on how the country — believed by many national security experts to be a U.S. ally — should reply using an encrypted email service.

For almost nine months, the receiving country held on to the package before it apparently handed it over to the FBI on Dec. 20, 2020.

Six days later, an FBI agent — posing as a foreign spy handler — reached out to Toebbe at the anonymous email address he provided.

Toebbe was cautious at first. In his reply, he avoided any details that might give away his identity, simply calling himself "Alice," a common placeholder name in cryptographic circles.

In the five months that followed, Toebbe and his handler engaged in delicate negotiations. His emails adopted a vulnerable tone that laid bare his dilemma: his need to remain hidden was pitted against worries of offending his new friends or losing their interest.

So Toebbe proposed that his handlers fly a "signal flag" atop a building their country controlled in Washington over Memorial Day weekend — to prove they were who they claimed.

Yes, that can be arranged, his handler replied.

On Monday, May 31 — after the FBI coordinated with the country to put the signal in place — Toebbe wrote back elated. He'd seen the signal and was finally willing to surface.

On June 26, at 10:41 a.m., Jonathan and Diana appeared at the appointed location in Jefferson County, W.Va. Earlier that month, according to the affidavit, Toebbe had been sent \$10,000 in Monero cryptocurrency.

On the card, the FBI said, were details on the nuclear reactor used on one of the Navy's most advanced U.S. submarines — a \$3 billion ghost in the water, capable of launching cruise missiles from behind enemy lines.

Over the next four months, the FBI agent posing as a spy handler arranged for three more dead drops — an SD card hidden inside a sealed Band-Aid wrapper in Pennsylvania, another concealed in a chewing gum wrapper in eastern Virginia.

He dangled the possibility of more than 11,000 pages of sensitive documents to follow. For a price of \$5 million in cryptocurrency, he said, he would deliver it all. But, he added, he was aware of the risks.

He'd also discussed with his wife, at some point, the possibility of fleeing the country, according to court testimony Wednesday. Using the phone app Signal, the couple sent encrypted messages:

"We have passports and savings," Jonathan wrote. "In a real pinch we can leave quickly."

On Saturday, Oct. 9, those plans fell apart.

While in West Virginia making their fourth and final drop, Jonathan and Diana finally came face to face with the handlers he had been working with all along: agents from the FBI, who promptly arrested them.

The Toebbes have been charged with conspiracy and communication of sensitive government records to a foreign nation. If convicted, they could face life in prison.

Air, Space forces' power garner low marks

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Air Force and the newly established Space Force were graded as “weak” in an annual assessment of military power that found both services to be underequipped to carry out the full spectrum of their respective missions.

The assessments, contained in the conservative Heritage Foundation’s 2022 index on military strength, examined the capability, capacity and readiness of each service and whether they would be up to the task of fighting two major conflicts simultaneously.

“These three areas of assessment (capability, capacity and

readiness) are central to the overarching questions of whether the U.S. has a sufficient quantity of appropriately modern military power and whether military units are able to conduct military operations on demand and effectively,” the Washington-based think tank said in a statement Wednesday.

The Heritage index rates the services on a five-category scale that ranges from “very strong” to “very weak.” Heritage emphasized that the scores do not reflect the U.S. military’s strength relative to other militaries.

“Rather, they are assessments of the institutional, programmatic and material health or viability

of America’s hard military power,” Heritage said.

For the Air Force, the score of “weak” was a downgrade from its “marginal” rating in Heritage’s assessment last year.

While the Air Force possesses 86% of the combat aircraft recommended by the index, the mission readiness and physical location of the aircraft “would make it difficult for the Air Force to respond rapidly to a crisis,” Heritage said.

Also, the need to pull aircraft from all locations for a single major fight would prevent them from joining a simultaneous major battle elsewhere.

While Heritage said Air Force modernization programs are

“generally healthy,” old planes are being retired faster than they are getting replaced. A pilot shortage and reduced flying hours also factored into the Air Force’s lower score.

Meanwhile, the Space Force was assessed by Heritage for the first time and got poor marks.

The service “does not have enough assets to track and manage the explosive growth in commercial and competitor-country systems being placed into orbit,” Heritage said in its 608-page report.

Also, the force has outdated equipment and lacks defensive and offensive counter-space capabilities, the report said.

DOD announces plan for civilian vaccine refusers

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense Department officials have laid out how they will remove employees who refuse to comply with the federal government’s coronavirus vaccine requirement, according to a Pentagon memo released Monday.

Defense Department civilian employees who are not fully vaccinated against the coronavirus after Nov. 22 without a pending or approved exemption request will be fired. New employees must be fully vaccinated by their start date for work or Nov. 22, “whichever is later,” according to the memo.

The Pentagon does not consider a person fully vaccinated until two weeks after the last shot in the series, meaning the final day to meet the deadline to receive the last injection is Nov. 8. Two available vaccines — by Moderna and Pfizer — require two shots. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is administered in a single dose.

The order also applies to defense contractors and civilian

employees who work remotely.

Before a refusing employee is terminated, however, defense officials listed two “progressive enforcement actions” that employers should take to convince personnel to get vaccinated.

An employee should first receive a “five-day period of counseling and education,” according to the memo. If the person still declines the vaccine, they can be suspended without pay for 14 days or less before they are “removed from federal service for failing to follow a direct order.”

Those who have approved religious or medical exemptions will be required to regularly test for the coronavirus, according to the memo. Teleworking employees are exempt from that requirement, but must submit proof of a negative coronavirus test 72 hours before entering a Defense Department facility.

“Exemptions will be granted in limited circumstances and only where legally required,” according to the memo.

FDA OKs mixing vaccines and backs Moderna, J&J boosters

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. regulators on Wednesday signed off on extending COVID-19 boosters to Americans who got the Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccine, and said anyone eligible for an extra dose can get a brand different from what they received initially.

The Food and Drug Administration’s decisions mark a big step toward expanding the U.S. booster campaign, which began with extra doses of the Pfizer vaccine last month. But before more people roll up their sleeves, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will consult an expert panel Thursday before finalizing official recommendations for who should get boosters and when.

The latest moves would expand the number of Americans eligible for boosters by tens of millions and formally allow “mixing and matching” of shots — making it simpler to get another dose, especially for people who had a side effect from one brand but still want the proven protection of vaccination.

Specifically, the FDA authorized a third Moderna shot for se-

niors and others at high risk from COVID-19 because of their health problems, jobs or living conditions — six months after their last shot. One big change: Moderna’s booster will be half the dose that’s used for the first two shots, based on company data showing that was plenty to rev up immunity again.

For J&J’s single-shot vaccine, the FDA said all U.S. recipients, no matter their age, could get a second dose at least two months following their initial vaccination.

The FDA rulings differ because the vaccines are made differently, with different dosing schedules — and the J&J vaccine has consistently shown a lower level of effectiveness than either of the two-shot Moderna and Pfizer vaccines.

As for mixing and matching, the FDA said it’s OK to use any brand for the booster regardless of which vaccination people got first. The interchangeability of the shots is expected to speed the booster campaign, particularly in nursing homes and other institutional settings where residents have received different shots over time.

New ways to pay for Biden plan mulled

Associated Press

SCRANTON, Pa. — In an abrupt change, the White House is floating new plans to pay for parts of President Joe Biden's \$2 trillion social services and climate change package, shelving a proposed big increase in corporate tax rates though also adding a new billionaires' tax on the investment gains of the very richest Americans.

The reversal Wednesday came as Biden returned to his hometown of Scranton, Pa., to highlight the middle class values he says are at the heart of the package that Democrats are racing to finish. Biden faces resistance from key holdouts, including Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., who has not been on board with her party's plan to undo Trump-era tax breaks to help pay for it.

"This has been declared dead on arrival from the moment I introduced it, but I think

we're going to surprise them, because I think people are beginning to figure out what's at stake," Biden said in a speech at Scranton's Electric City Trolley Museum, his first visit home since becoming president.

Negotiations between the White House and Democratic leaders on Capitol Hill are underway on what's now a scaled-back package but would still be an unprecedented federal effort to expand social services for millions and confront the rising threat of climate change. It's coupled with a separate \$1 trillion bill to update roads and bridges.

The newly proposed tax provisions, though, are likely to sour progressives and even some moderate Democrats who have long campaigned on undoing the 2017 GOP tax cuts that many believe unduly reward the wealthy, costing the federal government

untold sums in lost revenue at a time of gaping income inequality.

Administration officials spoke with congressional leaders on the tax alternatives, according to a person familiar with the private talks and granted anonymity to discuss them. The changes may be needed to win over Sinema, who had objected to plans to raise the rates on corporations and wealthy individuals earning more than \$400,000 a year, said the person and several others.

As it stands, the corporate tax rate is 21%, and Democrats want to lift it to 26.5% for companies earning more than \$5 million a year. The top individual income tax rate would rise from 37% to 39.6% for those earning more than \$400,000, or \$450,000 for married couples.

Under the changes being floated, that 21% corporate rate would stay the same.

US unemployment claims fall to pandemic low 290K

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits fell last week to a new low point since the pandemic erupted, evidence that layoffs are declining as companies hold onto workers.

Unemployment claims dropped 6,000 to 290,000 last week, the third straight drop, the Labor Department said Thursday. That's the fewest people to apply for benefits since March 14, 2020, when the pandemic intensified. Applications for jobless aid, which generally track the pace of layoffs, have fallen steadily from about 900,000 in January.

Unemployment claims are increasingly returning to normal, but many other aspects

of the job market haven't yet done so. Hiring has slowed in the past two months, even as companies and other employers have posted a near-record number of open jobs. Officials such as Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell had hoped more people would find work in September as schools reopened, easing child care constraints, and enhanced unemployment aid ended nationwide.

Yet so far, that hasn't happened. Instead, some observers are starting to consider whether some of those who had jobs before the pandemic, and lost them, may have permanently stopped looking for work.

On Tuesday, Christopher Waller, a member of the Federal Reserve's Board of Gover-

nors, said that 2 million of the 22 million jobs lost to the pandemic may not return anytime soon because retirements have accelerated so quickly since COVID-19 hit.

The Labor Department's report Thursday also showed that the number of people receiving jobless aid continues to fall steadily. In the week of Oct. 2, the latest data available, 3.3 million people received unemployment benefits, down from 3.6 million in the previous week.

A year ago, nearly 24 million people were getting unemployment aid.

About 7 million people lost jobless benefits in September after two emergency programs, set up in March 2020, expired.

Trump announces launch of his own social media site

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Nine months after being expelled from social media for his role in inciting the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, former President Donald Trump said Wednesday he's launching a new media company with its own social media platform.

Trump says his goal in launching the Trump Media & Technology Group and its "Truth Social" app is to create a rival to the Big Tech companies that have shut him out and denied him the megaphone that was paramount to his national rise.

"We live in a world where the Taliban has a

huge presence on Twitter, yet your favorite American President has been silenced," he said in a statement. "This is unacceptable."

Conservative voices actually do well on traditional social media. On Wednesday, half of Facebook's 10 top performing link posts were from conservative media, commentators or politicians, according to a daily list compiled by a New York Times technology columnist and an internet studies professor using Facebook's own data.

Trump has spoken about launching his own social media site ever since he was barred from Twitter and Facebook. An earli-

er effort to launch a blog on his existing website was abandoned after the page drew dismal views.

TMTG has not set its sights low. In addition to the Truth Social app, which is expected to soft-launch next month with a nationwide rollout early next year, the company says it is planning a video-on-demand service dubbed TMTG+ that will feature entertainment programming, news and podcasts.

One slide in a TMTG presentation on its website includes a graphic of TMTG's potential competitors, which range from Facebook and Twitter to Netflix and Disney+ to CNN.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

7 people rescued after vehicle goes over cliff

WA ARLINGTON — Search and rescue and fire crews rescued seven people after the vehicle they were in went over a cliff on the road to the Boulder River Trailhead, southeast of Arlington, Snohomish County.

Crews retrieved all seven people from the vehicle, according to the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office.

One person was critically injured and airlifted to a hospital. The others were also taken to hospitals for treatment of injuries, The Seattle Times reported.

Info sought on alleged smuggling ring

FL MIAMI — The U.S. government is offering two \$1 million rewards for information leading to the arrest of a 40-year-old Pakistani man described as a "prolific human smuggler," and for information leading to the financial disruption of his smuggling network.

Abid Ali Khan is accused of leading an operation that has profited from the trafficking of migrants from the Middle East and southwest Asia into the U.S. without legal permission since 2015, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said in a news release.

Investigators said Khan conspired with others in the network to coordinate the international travel, including false paperwork for the migrants.

Khan was indicted in April on federal charges including

conspiracy, encouraging immigrants to enter the U.S. illegally, and bringing an immigrant into the country without legal permission, the news release said.

Police, ranchers help catch roaming bull

AZ TUCSON — Tucson police responded to reports of a bull roaming a neighborhood near an elementary school this week.

The animal somehow got loose in the city's Rita Ranch community, and police found it casually grazing on some scrub grass among the gravel along a home's front lawn.

Tucson police spokesman Frank Magos said officers blocked off the street with their SUVs until ranchers arrived two hours later to help corral the bull.

The bull was not harmed, and there was no damage to any property, Magos said.

Looted van Gogh art to be auctioned

NY NEW YORK — A watercolor by Vincent van Gogh that was seized by the Nazis during World War II will be sold next month at auction in New York, where it is expected to fetch \$20 million or more, the auction house Christie's announced.

Christie's is auctioning the 1888 work, "Wheatstacks," after facilitating negotiations between Texas oilman Edwin L. Cox's heirs, who own it now, and the heirs of two Jewish art collectors who owned it at different times before it was looted by the Nazis.

It will be auctioned Nov. 11

along with other artworks from Cox's collection. Cox died last year at age 99.

It was purchased in 1913 by industrialist Max Meirinsky, who fled Germany for Amsterdam in 1938 fearing Nazi persecution. He entrusted "Wheatstacks" to a Paris-based art dealer, who sold it to Alexandre de Rothschild, a member of the renowned Jewish banking family.

Rothschild fled to Switzerland at the onset of World War II and her art collection, including the van Gogh watercolor, was confiscated by the Nazis during the Occupation.

Park: Stop tossing rocks down cliffs

WV GLEN JEAN — A national park in West Virginia is telling visitors they need to stop throwing rocks down cliffs, saying it could kill climbers and hikers below.

A Facebook post by the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve said a rock climber recently reported to park rangers that multiple people were throwing big rocks from the cliffs at Diamond Point on the Endless Wall trail to climbing areas more than 100 feet below.

The park said signs instructing people not to throw rocks due to the climbers are posted at the Diamond Point overlook and the rock climbing access spur trails.

Grizzly bear confirmed in national forest

ID COEUR D'ALENE — Wildlife managers in northern Idaho are warning people to be on the watch for

grizzly bears after one was recently reported in the Coeur d'Alene National Forest.

Idaho Fish and Game regional wildlife biologist Barb McCall Moore said in a statement that the bear was confirmed northeast of Magee, the Coeur d'Alene Press reported.

Black bears are common throughout northern Idaho but grizzlies are rarer and most often observed in the Cabinet and Selkirk mountain ranges.

Grizzly bears are federally protected in North Idaho.

Police see robbers switch getaway cars

NC CHARLOTTE — Three men accused of robbing a bank in North Carolina had one flaw in their plans to elude police, authorities said.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg police said in a news release shortly after the men robbed a Bank of America branch, an officer saw them in a car turning into a nearby neighborhood and watched them trying to switch getaway cars, according to a news release.

According to police, officers tried to stop the car but the driver kept going and crashed on a dead end street.

The suspects were captured without incident after police said they considered trying to escape by running across Interstate 77.

Multiple charges, including robbery with a dangerous weapon, were filed against Kendell Charles Alexander, 57, and Derrius Fleming, 30, both of Baltimore, and Steven McCory, 36.

— From wire reports

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and Military News

Braves blast four homers for 3-1 lead

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Behind the red-hot bat of Eddie Rosario, the Atlanta Braves are one win away from their first World Series appearance since 1999.

All they need to do is put away the defending champion Los Angeles Dodgers.

Easier said than done.

After all, the Braves were in exactly the same position last year and failed to finish the job.

Rosario homered twice in his second four-hit game of the series and six Atlanta pitchers combined on a four-hitter, giving the Braves a 9-2 victory Wednesday for a commanding 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven playoff.

Game 5 is Thursday in Los Angeles. Last year, the Dodgers also trailed 0-2 and 1-3 against Atlanta in the NLCS before roaring back to win three straight games at a neutral site in Arlington, Texas.

“As we saw last year, winning a game is hard, especially a veteran team like this that we’re playing,” Braves manager Brian Snitker said. “But I feel good about our club just from what we experienced last year and where these guys are.”

Adam Duvall and Freddie Freeman also homered for Atlanta, which bounced right

back from blowing a late lead in an agonizing loss Tuesday to end their 10-game skid at Dodger Stadium.

“I feel like everyone has really hunkered down and dug their heels in and everyone is really focused,” Rosario said through a translator. “That’s something that I’m really proud to be a part of.”

Rosario became the first player to have two four-hit games in a League Championship Series. He drove in four runs and scored three while continuing his torrid postseason hitting, finishing a double short of the cycle. He homered in the second inning, tripled in the third, singled in the fifth and clocked a three-run homer in the ninth.

“As soon as I hit that first home run I just thought to myself, ‘Wow, I feel amazing right now,’ ” Rosario said, “so I kind of just carried that confidence into my other at-bats going forward.”

Rosario hit for the cycle last month against San Francisco, achieving the feat on just five total pitches.

“I’ve been using that bat that I hit for the cycle with and it has not disappointed. I had that double remaining and I’m like, ‘Man, this bat has not let me down yet,’ ” he said. “As soon as I hit that second one out, I go, ‘Oh well, there goes the double.’ ”

Los Angeles will need to jump-start its offense to have a shot at another NLCS comeback. Its first five hitters — Mookie Betts, Corey Seager, NL batting champion Trea Turner, Will Smith and Gavin Lux — were a combined 0-for-17 in Game 4.

The team, which had won 18 of 19 at home going back to the regular season, has won six consecutive postseason elimination games dating to last year.

“I feel good about it,” manager Dave Roberts said. “We have a very resilient team, a very tough team, and it’s not going to get much tougher than facing Max Fried in an elimination game, but we’ve done it before.”

Rosario was acquired from Cleveland on July 30 as the Braves remade their depleted outfield before the trade deadline.

What a find he’s been.

The left fielder has hit safely in every game this postseason, piling up 14 hits in 30 at-bats (.467) — including a walk-off single in Game 2 against the Dodgers.

Rosario is 10-for-17 (.588) with two homers and six RBIs in the NLCS.

“He’s been looking so good at the plate, hitting balls hard,” Freeman said.

Atlanta’s four homers tied a postseason franchise record.

Astros’ Valdez throws 8, tops Red Sox for 3-2 ALCS lead

Associated Press

BOSTON — Framber Valdez lost his perfect game in the fifth inning and then bounced the next pitch off the batter’s leg.

Astros manager Dusty Baker headed for the mound.

“It was surprising more than anything,” Valdez said, noting that a visit from the manager usually means his night is over. “The first thing I did was look back to the bullpen to see if anyone was out there. I saw nobody was there.

“He just came out and told me ... ‘You know what you’re doing out here, so just breathe,’ ” Valdez said. “He gave me the confidence to get out of the inning.”

And much more than that.

Perfect through four, the Houston left-hander took a two-hit shutout into the seventh and became the first pitcher this postseason to complete eight innings,

leading the Astros over Boston 9-1 on Wednesday for a 3-2 lead in the AL Championship Series.

Yordan Alvarez had three hits and three RBIs for Houston, which could clinch a second trip to the World Series in three years with a victory at home on Friday night.

The Red Sox need a win to force a deciding seventh game on Saturday.

“We came back to Boston exactly where we wanted to be: We were 1-1,” Red Sox starter Chris Sale said. “Not in a good spot going back to Houston. There’s no denying that, but this team has won two games in the playoffs back-to-back before, and we think we can do it again.”

One day after the Astros scored seven runs to break a ninth-inning tie, they hung another crooked number on the Fenway

Park scoreboard, chasing Sale while scoring five runs in the sixth. Alvarez, who homered in the second and singled in the fourth, had a two-run double to break things open.

That was plenty for Valdez, who extended the staff’s shutout streak to 14 straight innings before Rafael Devers homered with one out in the seventh — one of just three Boston hits.

Valdez departed after retiring the Red Sox in order in the eighth — completing three full turns through the Boston lineup, a dramatic break from the prevailing baseball wisdom.

“It makes me feel great” to show that starters can still have that kind of impact on a game, Baker said.

“Today, it was in the hands of Framber,” he said. “This was in this hands of Framber, and, real-

ly, in the hands of Alvarez.”

In all, Valdez gave up one run on three hits, one walk and a hit batter, striking out five. He was also the first opposing pitcher to last eight innings in a postseason start at Fenway since Cleveland’s Charles Nagy went eight in the 1998 Division Series.

Ryne Stanek pitched a perfect ninth while the rest of Houston’s relievers rested. Astros starters had not lasted three innings all series, pitching to a 18.90 ERA in the first four games.

Valdez retired the first 12 batters on Wednesday — eight on grounders, four on strikeouts. Devers singled to lead off the fifth, then Valdez bounced the next pitch off J.D. Martinez’s leg. Houston escaped when Hunter Renfroe grounded into a double play and Alex Verdugo bounced out to first.

Knicks withstand Brown's 46 points

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The New York Knicks never could contain Jaylen Brown and on the last play of regulation completely lost track of Marcus Smart.

More mistakes than they'd like, but not enough to ruin their season opener.

"At the end of the day, we found a way to win a game," Julius Randle said.

Randle scored 35 points, Evan Fournier made the go-ahead three-pointer in the second overtime and added 32 against his former team, and the Knicks outlasted Brown and the Boston Celtics 138-134 on Wednesday night.

Brown scored a career-high 46 points after overcoming COVID-19, playing 46 minutes after spending most of the last 10 days in quarantine.

"My breathing felt irregular but fine for the most part," Brown said. "Toward the end, I could feel my heart beating through my chest."

"It would have been better if we got a win," he added.

The Celtics almost did.

Jayson Tatum had the biggest basket of his awful opener with a three-point play that gave Boston a 134-133 lead with 1:05 remaining. Fournier then hit his fourth three-pointer of the overtimes with 56 seconds to go and Derrick Rose finished it off with a basket with 22 seconds to play as New York finally put away a game it seemed to have won much earlier.

"It was crazy," Fournier said.

The Celtics put together a push late in regulation of their first game under coach Ime Udoka and Smart tied it with a three-pointer at the buzzer.

RJ Barrett scored all of his 19 points after halftime and Obi Toppin added a career-best 14 for the Knicks. Kemba Walker had 10 points and eight rebounds against his previous team.

Tatum had 20 points and 11 rebounds, but was 7-for-30 from the field, including 2-for-15 from three-point range.

"He carried us tonight," Tatum said. "Plays he was making, shots he was hitting,

he was unbelievable and I wish I could have did my part."

New York showed off more offensive punch than last season's team that finished 41-31 in its first season under Coach of the Year Tom Thibodeau, making the playoffs for the first time since 2013.

The team put six players in double figures, but it was the defense that let it down on the final possession of regulation, allowing the Celtics to race up the floor after Randle's two free throws with 4.8 seconds remaining. The Knicks seemed confused when Tatum slipped while dribbling and were slow to react, leaving Smart wide open near the sideline to tie it.

Fournier made three threes in the first 1:20 of OT but Boston kept answering, with Tatum's three knotting it at 128 with 2:58 to play. Perhaps out of gas, neither team scored again until the second OT.

Brown tested positive on Oct. 8 and played in only one preseason game.

Ball game: LaMelo has 31, Hornets edge Pacers

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — LaMelo Ball scored 31 points, hitting seven three-pointers, and the Charlotte Hornets used a 24-0 third-period run to battle back and beat the Indiana Pacers 123-122 on Wednesday.

The Pacers led 122-121 on Torrey Craig's foul shots with 12.7 left. P.J. Washington made two free throws with 4.6 seconds left before Domantas Sabonis missed from 11 feet to seal the Hornets' victory.

Ball scored 12 points in the third-period run and finished with nine rebounds and seven assists. Gordon Hayward scored 27 points for Charlotte, which got 14 each from newcomers Kelly Oubre Jr. and Ish Smith.

Sabonis scored 33 points, Malcolm Brogdon had 28, and Chris Duarte chipped in with 27 for Indiana. The Pacers had a 21-point lead early in the second half.

76ers 117, Pelicans 97: Joel Embiid had 22 points and 12 rebounds, Furkan Korkmaz hit four

three-pointers in the fourth quarter to also score 22 points, and Philadelphia pulled away to win at New Orleans.

A subplot of the season opener for both teams involved who wasn't playing. The Pelicans were without star power forward Zion Williamson, who is recovering from surgery to repair his broken foot. The Sixers were missing disgruntled forward Ben Simmons, who was suspended one game for conduct detrimental to the team.

Brandon Ingram had 25 points for New Orleans, Nickeil Alexander-Walker, a season-opening starter at guard in his third season, scored 23 points.

Nuggets 110, Suns 98: Reigning NBA MVP Nikola Jokic had 27 points and 13 rebounds, leading Denver to a win at Phoenix.

The 26-year-old Jokic earned his first MVP award last season after averaging 26.4 points, 10.8 rebounds and 8.3 assists per game. The Serbian was up to his old tricks Wednesday, scoring on

a crafty variety of hook shots, three-pointers and flat-footed jumpers. He was 13 of 22 from the field.

Bulls 94, Pistons 88: Zach LaVine scored 15 of his 34 points in the third quarter, leading the Chicago to a win at Detroit.

The Pistons' Jerami Grant was off on an 11-foot baseline jumper with 50 seconds left, missing a chance to tie it. The Bulls sealed the victory by making free throws.

Grizzlies 122, Cavaliers 121: Ja Morant had 37 points and six assists, De'Anthony Melton added 20 points and host Memphis pulled away in the fourth quarter to beat Cleveland.

Morant and Melton combined for 14 points down the stretch as the Cavaliers pulled within a point on a couple of occasions but could never overtake the Grizzlies. Desmond Bane added 22 points for Memphis.

Wizards 98, Raptors 83: Bradley Beal scored 23 points, Montrezl Harrell had 22 in his Wiz-

ards debut and Washington spoiled Toronto's homecoming.

Kyle Kuzma had 11 points and 15 rebounds for the Wizards.

Timberwolves 124, Rockets 106: Anthony Edwards energized the first full-size home crowd of his nascent career with 29 points in 31 minutes in Minnesota's victory over Houston.

Karl-Anthony Towns led Minnesota with 30 points and 10 rebounds, and D'Angelo Russell added 22 points and seven assists.

Kings 124, Trail Blazers 121: Harrison Barnes scored 36 points, De'Aaron Fox added 27 and visiting Sacramento spoiled Portland's opener under new coach Chauncey Billups.

Jazz 107, Thunder 86: Rudy Gobert had 16 points and 21 rebounds to lead host Utah past Oklahoma City.

Spurs 123, Magic 97: Devin Vassell scored 19 points, Lonnie Walker added 17 and San Antonio continued its success on opening night by dominating Orlando.

Appalachian State stuns No. 14 Coastal Carolina

Associated Press

BOONE, N.C.— Chase Brice is determined to make the most of what is left of his roller-coaster college career. He took a big step forward Wednesday night.

Brice threw for 347 yards and two touchdowns, Chandler Staton kicked a 24-yard field goal as time expired and Appalachian State upset 14th-ranked Coastal Carolina 30-27 in front of a capacity crowd of 31,061 at Kidd Brewer Stadium.

After spending three years at Clemson mostly backing up Trevor Lawrence and then going 2-9 last season as a starter at Duke, Brice transferred to Appalachian State looking for a new start and a chance to win big football games.

“Right now I’m getting an opportunity to kind of flip the script on certain things about me that get talked about and written about,” Brice said. “So that’s kind of my goal.”

Malik Williams had a monster game catching some well-placed bombs from Brice, finishing with 10 catches for 206 yards and a touchdown. Camerun Peoples ran for two touchdowns and Corey Sutton had 113 yards receiving and a score for the Mountaineers (5-2, 2-1 Sun Belt). They have never lost at home to the Chanticleers.

Appalachian State moved into the driver’s seat in the conference’s East division

and the loss could prevent Coastal Carolina (6-1, 2-1) from reaching the championship game.

“We’re in control of our own destiny right now,” said Mountaineers coach Shawn Clark, whose team bounced back from a 41-13 loss last week at Louisiana-Lafayette. “I’m so proud of this team and everyone involved in our organization.”

The Chanticleers came in averaging 48.8 points, but Coastal Carolina was outgained 575 to 376 and the offense struggled to protect QB Grayson McCall in the second half.

“Look how it’s flipped,” Chanticleers coach Jamey Chadwell said. “One loss and now we’re acting like everything in the world is ending. That’s sort of where we put ourselves. Now that we have lost and now we don’t think we’re invincible, hopefully those little things that get us, we’ll get them corrected and move forward.”

Coastal had outscored its opponents by more than 33 points coming in with only one close game — a 28-25 victory at Buffalo on Sept. 18

“This is no disrespect to Coastal Carolina, but they have not played four quarters all season long,” Clark said. “And we have. We have been battled tested. I do believe we have played a tough schedule, a very tough schedule.”

Lawyer says Rolovich firing was ‘unlawful’

Associated Press

Former Washington State football coach Nick Rolovich’s termination for refusing to get a COVID-19 vaccination was unlawful and an attack on his Catholic faith, his attorney said Wednesday.

Attorney Brian Fahling also said in a statement that Rolovich intends to take legal action and that the litigation will detail what the attorney called athletic director Pat Chun’s “animus towards Coach Rolovich’s sincerely held religious beliefs” and his dishonesty at the expense of the former coach.

Rolovich and four of his assistants were fired Monday for not complying with the governor’s mandate that all state employees be vaccinated against the coronavirus. The attorney said Rolovich was escorted by campus police to his car and not allowed to speak to the team or visit his office after his dismissal.

Rolovich had requested a religious exemption but it was denied Monday, the state’s vaccination deadline.

“The institution also indicated that even if the exemption had been granted, no accommodation would have been made,” Fahling said in the statement.

University officials declined to comment on the attorney’s statement.

The statement didn’t specify Rolovich’s religious grounds for seeking an exemption and the coach himself had declined to discuss details in recent weeks.

Pope Francis and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops have stated that all COVID-19 vaccines are morally acceptable and that Catholics have a duty, responsibility or obligation to be vaccinated. Some Catholics still oppose vaccination, however.

Statewide, about 1,800 workers have been fired, resigned or retired because of the governor’s mandate, state officials said. Rolovich was the highest-paid state employee in Washington at \$3.2 million per year. He was fired for cause and will not be paid the balance of his contract.

Rolovich was hired from Hawaii two years ago, after Mike Leach left for Mississippi State. He finished with a 5-6 record in Pullman.

He was replaced for the remainder of the season by Jake Dickert, the Cougars’ defensive coordinator who was elevated to acting head coach.

Washington State (4-3) hosts BYU (5-2) on Saturday.

Atkinson lifts Flyers past Bruins

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Cam Atkinson scored two goals, including the go-ahead score that sent him tumbling into the boards, in the Philadelphia Flyers’ 6-3 victory over the Boston Bruins on Wednesday night.

The Flyers have won two straight since dropping the season opener, and a revamped roster has paid early dividends. Atkinson, acquired in a deal with Columbus, had the crowd going wild on his hustle-and-tumble goal only 58 seconds into the third for a 4-3 lead. Joel Farabee picked off a pass from Mike Reilly and fed to his right to a streaking Atkinson. Atkinson got tripped up and slid back first into the boards.

Travis Konecny beat Jeremy Swayman from the slot to make it 5-3 and had the crowd chanting “Let’s Go Flyers!” Sean Couturier

knocked in an empty-netter, making it the second straight game that Philadelphia scored six goals. Farabee and Scott Laughton also scored for the Flyers.

Karson Kuhlman, Taylor Hall and Brad Marchand scored for Boston.

Blues 3, Golden Knights 1: Vladimir Tarasenko broke a tie midway through the third period in St. Louis’ victory over host Vegas.

Jordan Binnington made 42 saves, and Brandon Saad and Ivan Barbashev added goals for the Blues. St. Louis won all three games on its season-opening trip.

On the tiebreaking goal, Alex Pietrangelo turned the puck over in the neutral zone with a blind pass, giving the Blues a 3-on-0 rush. Taking a pass from Brayden Schenn, Jordan Kyrou fed Tarasenko for a one-timer past Robin Lehner with 10:11 to play.