

Rockets hit occupied Ukrainian town

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Pro-Kremlin officials on Sunday blamed Ukraine for a rocket attack that struck the mayor's office in a key Ukrainian city controlled by the separatists as Russia's war nears the eight-month mark.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian officials said Russian rockets struck a city across from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, wounding six people.

The attacks on both sides came as Russia has lost ground in the nearly seven weeks since Ukraine's armed forces opened their southern counteroffensive.

Last week, in retaliation, the Kremlin launched what is believed to be its largest coordinated air and missile raids on Ukraine's key infrastructure since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24.

The municipal mayor's building in separatist-controlled Donetsk was seriously

damaged by the rocket attack. Plumes of smoke swirled around the building, which had rows of blown-out windows and a partially collapsed ceiling. Cars nearby were burned out.

There were no immediate reports of casualties. Kyiv didn't immediately claim responsibility or comment on the attack.

Kremlin-backed separatist authorities have previously accused Ukraine of numerous strikes on infrastructure and residential targets in the occupied regions, often employing the U.S.-supplied long-range HIMARS rockets, without providing corroborating information.

Separately, Ukrainian authorities on Sunday reported that at least six people were wounded as a result of Russian rocket attacks across from Zaporizhzhia, Europe's largest nuclear power plant, where Russia has stationed its troops.

Kyrylo Tymoshenko, deputy head of the

Ukrainian president's office, said two residents of Nikopol had been hospitalized following the strikes, which also damaged five power lines, gas pipelines, and a raft of civilian businesses and residential buildings.

Russia and Ukraine have repeatedly accused each other of firing at and around the plant, which continues to be run by its pre-occupation Ukrainian staff under Russian oversight.

Ukrainian officials have also regularly reported attacks on civilian communities across the Dnieper river from the plant, including in Nikopol and nearby Marhanets.

The presidential office and regional authorities said Russian rockets destroyed two schools, a park and private houses in the southern region of Zaporizhzhia, which has seen sustained Russian shelling since Moscow illegally annexed it along with three other Ukrainian provinces last month.

Soldier wins contest with anti-drone training program

By J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

A deployed Army sergeant built a program that could help troops defend themselves against deadly aerial drones in the Middle East.

Sgt. Mickey Reeve built a prototype training simulator on an 8-year-old laptop in a tent in the middle of the Arabian desert, the infantryman told Stars and Stripes.

His idea made him the winner Friday of U.S. Central Command's first Innovation Oasis, a Shark Tank-style competition that asked troops to pitch solutions to problems they're facing.

About 160 troops submitted ideas that included the use of blockchain technology in the military's supply chain and using CENTCOM's badging system to make daily accountabil-

ity easier.

Iran's aerial drones, among the most advanced in the world, have allowed that country to launch attacks and gain "localized air superiority" in proxy wars in Yemen, Iraq and Syria, experts and U.S. military officials have said.

CENTCOM currently only has one laptop that allows troops to train on anti-drone defense, Reeve said in a pitch document.

That laptop only allows training on one anti-drone system, said Reeve, who is currently deployed to Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia as a member of that base's Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C-UAS) team.

This means that troops could be ill-prepared to work with the many disparate systems developed by different units and mil-

itary branches, many of which do not communicate well together.

"CENTCOM currently has severely limited training solutions for its operators and base C-UAS systems," Reeve said. He hopes operators can use his simulator to train teams on multiple systems.

Four other service members identified problems they're facing and pitched their potential solutions in the final round of Central Command's ideas competition.

Army Maj. Matt Goyette pitched a military supply system based on the blockchain, a digital ledger where transactions are recorded in a way that makes it difficult for hackers to disrupt. If implemented, troops would have to spend less time on inventory, Goyette said.

Air Force Capt. Kendra Kir-

kland proposed streamlining Central Command's accountability system, which attempts to keep track of where troops are each day. The current system is inflexible and requires a laborious process of physically marking troops present, said Kirkland, who manages human resources programs.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Stephen Larson, deployed to Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, proposed a fix to the difficulties he has seen when loading airplanes with cargo pallets. Larson designed a bracket to help guide the pallets.

Army Lt. Col. Ferdinand Bacom compiled lessons from his deployment, where he helped establish a new type of medical unit for use in "far forward missions."

VP discussed Alkonis case with Japanese PM

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Vice President Kamala Harris during her visit to Tokyo last month spoke with the Japanese prime minister about a U.S. naval officer serving a three-year prison term in Japan, a White House official told Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

Harris and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida “discussed the case” of Lt. Ridge Alkonis during a Sept. 26 meeting, the official said in a Thursday email. The official spoke with Stars and Stripes on the condition of anonymity to disclose information about a private, diplomatic meeting.

Alkonis, 34, of Claremont, Calif., is serving three years for negligent driving causing the deaths of two people and injuring a third in Shizuoka prefecture in May 2021. He was convicted by a three-judge panel in Shizuoka District Court in October 2021, a verdict upheld on appeal by the Tokyo High Court in July.

“The case is tragic for all involved and we are working to find a compassionate resolution,” the White House official said. He did not disclose what was said during Harris’ conversation with Kishida.

Harris was in Tokyo to attend a state fu-

neral for Shinzo Abe, the former Japanese prime minister assassinated July 8 at a campaign rally outside a train station in Nara.

Harris met last week with Alkonis’ wife, Brittany Alkonis, at the White House and sent a supportive message to the couple’s children in a video shared Friday by Alkonis supporter Andrew Eubanks on Twitter.

Alkonis was driving on May 29, 2021, when his car plowed into pedestrians and parked cars outside a soba restaurant in Fujinomiya, a city about two hours from Yokosuka, where Alkonis was stationed as a weapons officer aboard the destroyer USS Benfold.

Alkonis, his wife and their three children were returning that day from a hike at Mount Fuji’s fifth station.

A woman, 85, died the same day as the crash; her son-in-law, 54, died June 11, 2021. A second woman, 53, the daughter and wife of the other victims, was injured.

Throughout his trial, Alkonis and his defense attorneys maintained that acute mountain sickness, a form of altitude illness, caused him to lose consciousness while at the wheel.

The district and appellate courts rejected that defense.

Troops help out after fatal crash in Philippines

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Medical training kicked in for a group of American Marines and sailors who recently chanced upon a fatal traffic accident near a former U.S. naval base in the Philippines.

The troops were in the islands for the 12-day Kamandag drills involving 1,900 U.S. Marines, as well as Filipino, South Korean and Japanese forces, that wrapped up Friday.

The five Marines and sailors came across the accident while riding in a van back to their hotel in Zambales province on the Philippines’ main island of Luzon after a day of medical training with local and Japanese forces Oct. 7.

“What is all this training for if I’m not going to get out of the van and maybe help save a life?” Navy Lt. Katelyn Morton said of her thoughts at the crash site. “Whether it’s U.S. service members or local nationals I think it’s our job to help.”

Two other sailors, Petty Officer 3rd Class Brianna Gausden and Seaman Jason Toro, and two Marines, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Angelo Alvarez and Staff Sgt. Rochae Petgrave, helped aid the crash victims, according to a report released by the 3rd Marine Division on Wednesday.

The troops saw police but no local medical personnel tending to victims in the road near Subic Bay, she told Stars and Stripes by phone Friday.

The crash involved a moped and a jeepney, said Morton, 27, of Camden County, Ga. A jeepney is a type of bus modeled on jeeps left behind by U.S. forces at the end of World War II.

Three victims were at the site — a male teenager with the least severe injuries, an unresponsive man who was later pronounced dead and another man with a broken femur, Morton said.

Morton, a nurse with the 3rd Medical Battalion at Camp Foster, Okinawa, assigned other service members to tend to two victims and focused her efforts on the man with the broken femur, putting pressure on his wound to slow bleeding until an ambulance arrived.

The two surviving patients were taken to a hospital; one remains in critical condition, she said.

Marine Corps halts surf usage of amphibious vehicles after mishap

Associated Press

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — The Marine Corps has halted some operations of its new amphibious combat vehicles after one of the armored vehicles rolled over in surf during training off California’s Camp Pendleton.

The eight-wheeled vehicle flipped over at about 7:45 p.m. Thursday at the Marines Assault Amphibian School at the base north of San Diego, authorities said.

The three crew members weren’t injured, a Marine Corps statement said Friday.

The vehicle had a “mechanical malfunc-

tion,” according to the Marine Corps, which banned the vehicles from going into or out of surf zones, except for testing, while more analysis is performed.

The vehicles can still be used on land, in protected waters and in the open ocean.

It was the second time this year that restrictions have been placed on the use of amphibious combat vehicles. Open water operations were halted after one of the vehicles rolled onto its side and another was disabled in unusually high surf on July 19 during another training exercise. The pause was lifted last month.

NC teen could face adult murder charges

The Washington Post

Prosecutors in Raleigh, N.C., signaled that adult charges are expected against the 15-year-old boy suspected in Thursday's shooting that killed five people and injured two others.

Wake County District Attorney Lorrin Freeman on Friday stated her office's intent to move the case from district court, which covers juvenile matters, to superior court.

"In this situation, there's no question [because of] the mass loss of life, in my opinion, this case be transferred and tried in superior court," Freeman told the Ra-

leigh News and Observer. Freeman's office did not respond to a request for further details.

In North Carolina, cases involving juveniles originate in district court, though prosecutors can seek their transfer to an adult court. If a judge determines probable cause for first-degree murder, the case will automatically move to superior court.

Officials have not publicly identified the suspect. The Washington Post is not naming him because he is a juvenile and has not formally been charged as an adult.

The 15-year-old, who was taken

into police custody after a four-hour search Thursday, remained hospitalized in critical condition Friday, according to police. Police have not said how he received his injuries. The Raleigh Police Department did not immediately respond Saturday to questions about the status of the investigation, including whether police have determined a motive, or how the firearm was obtained.

Knightdale High School, where the youngest shooting victim was a junior, postponed its homecoming weekend to join the community in mourning. A vigil is planned for Saturday afternoon

to remember those who were killed: Nicole Conners, 52; Susan Karnatz, 49; Mary Marshall, 35; James Roger Thompson, 16; and Gabriel Torres, 29.

In a 911 recording The Post obtained from the day of the shooting, a caller is heard describing the shooter as wearing "camo" and "looks like he's like 15." The unnamed person, who called from Osprey Cove Drive near the Neuse River Greenway, said the shooter had a "shotgun" and "killed my buddy," who he said was an officer. The officer was later identified as Torres, who was off duty and heading to work.

Stockton, Calif., police arrest suspect in serial killings

Associated Press

STOCKTON, Calif. — A man suspected of killing six men and wounding a woman in a series of shootings in Northern California was arrested before dawn Saturday as he drove through the streets of Stockton, armed with a handgun and possibly searching for another victim, police said.

Investigators began watching the suspect after receiving tips and stopped him in a car at about 2 a.m. in the Central Valley city, where five of the shootings took place, Police Chief Stanley McFadden said at a news conference. Wesley Brownlee, 43, of Stockton, was dressed in black, had a mask around his neck, had a gun and "was out hunting," McFadden alleged.

"We are sure we stopped another killing," he added.

It wasn't immediately clear whether Brownlee had an attorney to speak on his behalf. He was expected to be arraigned Tuesday on murder charges.

A police photo showed the black-and-gray weapon allegedly carried by the suspect. It appeared to be a semi-automatic handgun containing some non-metallic materials.

Police had been searching for a

man clad in black who was caught on video at several of the crime scenes in Stockton, where five men were ambushed and shot to death between July 8 and Sept. 27. Four were walking, and one was in a parked car.

Police believe the same person was responsible for killing a man 70 miles away in Oakland in April 2021 and wounding a homeless woman in Stockton a week later.

Investigators have said ballistics tests and video evidence linked the crimes.

At the news conference, a moment of silence was held for the victims.

Juan Vasquez Serrano, 39, was killed in Oakland on April 10, 2021, and Natasha LaTour, 46, was shot in Stockton on April 16 of that year but survived. The five men killed in Stockton this year were Paul Yaw, 35, who died July 8; Salvador Debudey Jr., 43, who died Aug. 11; Jonathan Hernandez Rodriguez, 21, who died Aug. 30; Juan Cruz, 52, who died Sept. 21; and Lawrence Lopez Sr., 54, who died Sept. 27.

Police said Brownlee has a criminal history and is believed to have also lived in several cities near Stockton, but they did not give further details.

Ohio robbery leads to muscle car theft arrests

Associated Press

DETROIT — Thieves are using cloned key fobs to steal Dodge muscle cars and other high-powered vehicles directly from dealerships and even automakers in Michigan, then selling them for tens of thousands of dollars less than their value, according to authorities and court records.

For one Ohio-based theft ring, it all came crashing down after a January holdup of a U.S. postal worker led authorities to connect several men to car thefts in the Detroit area, long home to the country's biggest automakers, including Dodge, which is now owned by international conglomerate Stellantis. Investigators then discovered that new Chargers, Challengers, Durangos and Ram pickups worth \$50,000 to \$100,000 were turning up in Ohio, Indianapolis and East Coast shipping ports after being sold on the street for \$3,500 to \$15,000, according to a criminal complaint.

Thieves in the Detroit area are primarily going after Dodge vehicles with Hellcat engines, including Chargers and Challengers — "the fast ones," Sgt. Jerry Hanna with the Macomb Auto Theft Squad said.

"If a patrol car gets them, they are not stopping and they're faster than patrol cars. They're 150 mph all day," he said.

Instead of stealing them off the street, they're driving them off dealership and assembly plant lots. Thieves have targeted Dodges by using handheld electronic "pro pads" — a locksmith's tool that can clone keys by plugging into interior ports in the vehicles, according to the federal complaint in the Ohio case.

Authorities weren't looking for stolen vehicles when they stopped Devin Rice on Jan. 31 after a postal worker in Shaker Heights, outside Cleveland, was robbed of a mailbox key. But court records show that a search of his car and then his home turned up not just stolen mail, bogus checks, and credit and debit cards, but also a Ram pickup, a Range Rover SUV and a Dodge with a Hellcat engine—all stolen.

Rice and others were indicted in federal court in Ohio in June.

Jeff Schneider, general manager at Szott Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram in Highland Township, said his victimized dealership came up with an "old school" solution: parking boots.

Russia grabs men to fight in Ukraine

The Washington Post

Police and military officers swooped down on a Moscow business center last week unannounced. They were looking for men to fight in Ukraine — and they seized nearly every one they saw. Some musicians, rehearsing. A courier there to deliver a parcel. A man from a Moscow service agency, very drunk, in his mid-50s, with a walking disability.

“I have no idea why they took him,” said Alexei, who, like dozens of others in the office complex, was rounded up and taken to the nearest military enlistment office, part of a harsh new phase in the Russian drive.

In cities and towns across Russia, men of fighting age are going into hiding to avoid the officials who are seizing them and sending them to fight in Ukraine.

Police and military press-gangs in recent days have snatched men off the streets and outside Metro stations. They’ve lurked in apartment building lobbies to hand out military summonses. They’ve raided office blocks and hostels. They’ve invaded cafes and restaurants, blocking the exits.

At a predawn sweep on the MIPSTROYI construction company dormitories on Thursday, they took more than 200 men. On Sunday, they rounded up dozens at a Mos-

cow shelter for the homeless.

The press-gangs appear to descend at random. It is terrifying — and, at times, comically haphazard. Alexei, a 30-something pacifist, lives with his cat and, until he was hauled off, enjoyed hanging out with friends in bars, cafes and parks, going to concerts and planning his next holiday in Europe. (He and others in this report spoke on the condition that his last name be withheld out of concern for his safety. The Washington Post has confirmed the raid, but could not independently verify the details he provided.)

An official barged into Alexei’s office on Tuesday. Two police officers and several plainclothes military officials arrived and demanded his identification. They ordered him to go with them quietly “or we will use force,” he said.

“I was panicking,” he said. “I’d never been detained before. Everyone knows that if you are detained by the police in Russia, it’s very bad.”

Suffering massive military casualties and repeated defeats in Ukraine, Russia has begun cannibalizing its male population. The hard-eyed pundits on state television are demanding more Ukrainian blood and more sacrifice from Russian men who they say

have grown too used to soft living.

But the new phase of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s mobilization risks denting Russians’ tacit support for the war and even his manufactured popularity — and could stir social unrest. Particularly in Moscow and St. Petersburg, major cities that until now have been largely untouched by the war. More than 300,000 Russian men and their families have fled Russia since mobilization, reports from neighboring countries indicate. Authorities have set up mobilization points at border crossings to prevent departures. Many others want to leave after seeing the aggressive police raids and the first reports of the newly conscripted men dying in the war.

Activist Grigory Sverdlin, who left Russia and is based in Georgia, this month launched an organization, Go By The Forest, to advise men in Russia on avoiding the draft. He said group has consulted with 2,700 men in 11 days and told 60 drafted men how to surrender in Ukraine. At least eight have succeeded, he said.

“Obviously, people are very stressed because they are worried they will be pushed to shoot other people,” Sverdlin said. “So people are afraid not only for themselves, but about taking part in this unjust war.”

Xi urges Chinese military growth

Associated Press

BEIJING — Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Sunday called for faster military development and announced no change in policies that have strained relations with Washington and tightened the ruling Communist Party’s control over society and the economy.

China’s most influential figure in decades spoke as the party opened a congress that was closely watched by companies, governments and the public for signs of official direction. It comes amid a painful slump in the world’s second-largest economy and tension with Washington and Asian neighbors over trade, technology and security.

Party plans call for creating a prosperous society by mid-century and restoring China to its historic role as a political, economic and cultural leader.

Beijing has expanded its presence abroad including a multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative to build ports and other infrastructure across Asia and Africa, but

economists warn reversing market-style reform could end up hampering growth.

“The next five years will be crucial,” Xi said in a televised speech of one hour and 45 minutes to some 2,000 delegates in the cavernous Great Hall of the People.

He repeatedly invoked his slogan of the “rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” which includes reviving the party’s role as economic and social leader in a throwback to what Xi regards as a golden age after it took power in 1949.

The congress will install leaders for the next five years. Xi, 69, is expected to break with tradition and award himself a third five-year term as general secretary and promote allies who share his enthusiasm for party dominance.

The party’s military wing, the People’s Liberation Army, needs to “safeguard China’s dignity and core interests,” Xi said, referring to a list of territorial claims and other issues over which Beijing says it is ready to go to war.

US, Canada send vehicles to Haiti to help fight gang

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — The U.S. and Canada sent armored vehicles and other supplies to Haiti on Saturday to help police fight a powerful gang amid a pending request from the Haitian government for the immediate deployment of foreign troops.

A U.S. State Department statement said the equipment was bought by Haiti’s government, but it did not provide further details on the supplies flown on military aircraft to the capital of Port-au-Prince.

A spokesman for the U.S. military’s Southern Command said he could not provide further details on the supplies sent though he added it was a joint operation involving the U.S. Air Force and Royal Canadian Air Force.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman arrested after remains found in storage

IL GALESBURG — A western Illinois woman has been arrested on a warrant for concealment of death after human remains were found in a storage unit.

Marcy Oglesby was arrested after the remains were found in a storage unit in Maquon.

The identity of the body found in the storage unit has not yet been established. No identification was immediately possible due to the condition of the body. Knox County Sgt. Brad Davis said investigators are trying to match DNA from the remains with family members.

The remains were discovered after Knox County deputies responded to a complaint about an odor coming from the storage unit.

Gun-buyback loophole exploited with 3D printer

NY ALBANY — New York's attorney general has changed the rules of a state gun buyback program after a participant exploited the system by using a 3D printer to make firearm parts in bulk that he then turned in for \$21,000 in gift cards.

The seller, who identified himself by a pseudonym, said he traveled from West Virginia to a gun buyback in Utica, N.Y., to take advantage of a loophole in the program — and to demonstrate that buybacks are futile in an era of printable weapons.

At the buyback, he turned in 60 printed auto sears, small devices that can convert firearms into fully automatic weapons.

Under the rules of the buyback, hosted by Attorney General Letitia James' office and city police, that entitled him to \$350 for each of the printed parts, including a \$100 premium, since they were deemed "ghost guns" lacking serial numbers.

The seller, who declined to provide his real name, said in an email to The Associated Press that the prospect of making money was enticing, but that the big reason he took part in the buyback was to send a message.

James' office said it responded to the exploited loophole by giving buyback personnel more discretion to determine the value of weapons being handed in and setting a standard that all 3D-printed guns accepted by the program must be capable of being fired more than once.

Teacher with 'kill list' charged with intimidation

IN EAST CHICAGO — A fifth-grade teacher at a school in northwestern Indiana was charged with felony intimidation after allegedly telling a student she had a "kill list" of students and staff, authorities said.

Angelica Carrasquillo, 25, of Griffith, communicated "a threat to commit murder," Lake County court documents said.

Officials at her school, St. Stanislaus in East Chicago, immediately confronted her and escorted her from the building once they learned of the threat, the Diocese of Gary said in a message to parents.

When Carrasquillo was asked why she wanted to kill herself and others, she report-

edly told school officials, "I'm having trouble with my mental health, and sometimes the kids do not listen in the classroom. I also have trauma caused when I went to high school."

The threats came to light when a counselor overheard a fifth-grader say while being escorted to her classroom for recess detention, "I heard Ms. Carrasquillo wants to kill herself and has a list."

Carrasquillo allegedly told school officials "she was only joking about it all."

Earthquake hits during Mauna Loa volcano unrest

HI HONOLULU — A magnitude 5.0 earthquake was the strongest of a series of temblors that struck on Hawaii's Mauna Loa, the largest active volcano on the planet that scientists said is in a "state of heightened unrest."

Smaller aftershocks followed, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

The series started with a 4.6 magnitude quake seconds before the larger one, which the USGS previously reported as having a magnitude of 5.1.

Mauna Loa is not erupting and there are no signs of an imminent eruption at this time.

Scientists at the observatory were monitoring Mauna Loa closely for changes.

Armored guard killed, allegedly by ex-colleague

CA SAN LEANDRO — A fired armored truck employee was arrested and charged with killing his former colleague during a robbery in San Leandro, court records showed.

Akbar Bey, 27, was charged with murdering John Mendez, 60, with enhancements alleging the crime involved "planning, sophistication, or professionalism," court records showed. He was also charged with robbing Mendez's GardaWorld truck, the East Bay Times reported.

The shooting and robbery happened on the grounds of a Kaiser Permanente hospital in San Leandro. Mendez died at a hospital later that day.

Police allege that Bey had insider knowledge of Mendez's route because they were once partners who worked the same route for GardaWorld. Bey and another man were fired for allegedly stealing from the company, police said.

3 workers fall into grain bin, 1 of them dies

MS ITTA BENA — One man died and two were injured after they all fell into a grain storage bin at a farm in the Mississippi Delta.

Multiple law enforcement and rescue personnel responded to the scene at TT&W Farm Products in Itta Bena, the Greenwood Commonwealth reported. They cut into the base of the large metal structure to reach the workers.

One man was extracted from the bin after about five hours, and he had died. The two other men were taken by helicopter to the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson.

The newspaper reported the men were working on top of the bin, and investigators did not immediately know why they fell in.

— From wire reports



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and Military News**

Padres stun Dodgers, reach 1st NLCS since '98

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Baseball fans in San Diego have been waiting a long time to party like this, and the Padres were more than happy to finally oblige.

What made it so much sweeter was that they toppled the mighty Los Angeles Dodgers, the best team in the majors this year and one that had beaten up on the Padres regularly for the better part of two seasons.

Jake Cronenworth hit a tie-breaking, two-run single with two outs in the seventh inning and San Diego rallied past the Dodgers 5-3 Saturday night to advance to the NL Championship Series for the first time since 1998.

Petco Park shook and the sellout crowd of 45,139 roared when Josh Hader struck out Mookie Betts, Trea Turner and Freddie Freeman in succession to end the Padres' third straight win against the Dodgers.

Hader and third baseman

Manny Machado jumped into each other's arms and the rest of the team joined them in a wild celebration on the infield grass as fireworks went off above the downtown ballpark. Machado and Juan Soto exhorted the fans for more as they all reveled in the middle of a rare San Diego rainstorm.

"Our fans have been waiting for so long and I used to be that fan that was waiting," said Joe Musgrove, the hometown kid who started the clincher. "It feels good to be on this side of the ball, I'll tell you that, but these fans deserve to celebrate tonight.

"I know the job's not done, we've got a lot of baseball ahead of us still, but this is something that needs to be celebrated," Musgrove said. "Those guys handed it to us all year long and when it came down to it and we needed to win ballgames we found ways to do it."

Before a sign-carrying crowd chanting "Beat LA! Beat

LA!," the Padres stunned the 111-win Dodgers with a five-run seventh to win their NL Division Series 3-1.

"It's about to be a party out here tonight," said Musgrove, who grew up a Padres fan in the San Diego suburbs.

"I mean, since I was a little kid we've been getting beat up by the Dodgers. But when it comes down to it and the games matter, this team stepped up, from top to bottom."

The Padres had lost nine straight series to the Dodgers before winning the one that mattered the most.

San Diego will host the Philadelphia Phillies in Games 1 and 2 of an all-wild card NLCS on Tuesday and Wednesday. The Phillies beat the defending champion Atlanta Braves 8-3 earlier in the day to win their NLDS in four games.

"This is what the city's been waiting for for a long time," said Machado, the Padres' \$300 million third baseman

and unquestioned leader.

The Padres last reached the NLCS 24 years ago when they beat Atlanta in six games and were then swept by the New York Yankees in the World Series. A handful of players from that team watched from a luxury suite, including Hall of Fame closer Trevor Hoffman and center fielder Steve Finley.

It was a soul-crushing ending for the Dodgers after the best regular-season record in club history and manager Dave Roberts' prediction during spring training that they'd win the World Series.

"Shock factor, very high. Disappointment, very high. It's crushing," Roberts said. "Each guy gave everything they had all year long, and a tremendous season. The great thing about baseball is the unpredictability, and the tough thing about it is the same thing.

"Nothing I can say is going to make it feel any better. Obviously we didn't expect to be in this position," he added.

Phillies crush Braves in Game 4, advance to NLCS

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Bryce Harper stood as still in the clubhouse as he does when he admires a home run and accepted the beer bath from bottles his Phillies teammates took delight in pouring on him.

Harper's goggles provided no defense for the waterfall of booze streaming down his cheeks.

"It's so cold! But it's so good!" slugger Rhys Hoskins barked in Harper's face.

Then it was time for the Phillies to sing: "I'm going going, back back, to Cali Cali!" they shouted in unison to the Notorious B.I.G. classic. That's right, the next stop for the Fightins is a trip West to the NLCS, as a team that looked completely lost in May suddenly looks every bit like a World Series contender in October.

Brandon Marsh hit a three-run homer and J.T. Realmuto lined an inside-the-park home run that sent Philadelphia bolting headfirst into the NL Championship Series for the first time since 2010 with an

8-3 win over the Atlanta Braves in Game 4 on Saturday.

Realmuto became the first catcher to hit an inside-the-parker in postseason history and Harper punctuated the romp with a clinching home run that helped the Phillies take the NL Division Series 3-1 against the World Series champion Braves.

The Phillies will face the Padres in an all-wild card NLCS beginning Tuesday in San Diego. The Padres stunned the Dodgers later that same day, also taking their NLDS matchup in four games.

Atlanta had been looking to become Major League Baseball's first repeat champions since 1998-2000, when the New York Yankees won three straight World Series.

"Like I told them, the goal when we leave spring training is to win the division. Until you win the division, you don't have a chance to do anything special because you never know what's going to happen, you don't know what team's going to get hot, what things have to go right for you to

go deep into the postseason," Braves manager Brian Snitker said.

"And we got in. It didn't happen for us this year," he said.

Philadelphia finished third in the NL East at 87-75, a full 14 games behind the 101-win Braves this season, but is playing like a contender under manager Rob Thomson. Thomson, who had been a career coach for the Yankees and Phillies, transformed a team well out of contention at 23-29 when they fired Joe Girardi on June 3.

"We just got off to a little bit of a slow start and kind of spiraled. And May was a really tough month. It was a really tough schedule," Thomson said.

"Then once we hit June, the schedule kind of lightened up a little bit and we started winning, and guys started getting confidence and believing that they could win and believing that, OK, now this is the team that we thought we were. And it just kept going," he said.

Astros win in 18 innings, sweeping Mariners

Associated Press

SEATTLE—Jeremy Peña and the Houston Astros just kept going. Scoreless inning after scoreless inning, as day turned into night in front of a frenzied crowd in Seattle.

They eventually found a way. That's how the Astros reached the AL Championship Series for the sixth straight year.

It's just what they do.

Peña homered in the 18th inning, and the Astros beat the Mariners 1-0 on Saturday for a three-game sweep of their AL Division Series.

"These guys, they know not to panic," Houston manager Dusty Baker said. "They don't get too excited. They don't get too down. It means a lot."

Peña drove a slider from Penn Murfee deep to left-center for the rookie's first playoff homer, providing the only run in an afternoon full of dominant pitching and empty trips to the plate.

The 18 innings matched the longest game in playoff history

and the 6 hours, 22 minutes was the third-longest in time.

Exhausting for everyone? Absolutely. But exhilarating for the Astros.

"Man, that was a long game. But you still got to lock in, try to put together good at-bats," Peña said. "I was just trying to stay inside the baseball, drove it in the gap."

Spoiling Seattle's first home playoff appearance since 2001, Houston continued its ALCS streak that began with its 2017 World Series title. Next up is the Cleveland Guardians or New York Yankees in Game 1 of the ALCS on Wednesday.

While Jordan Alvarez got the big hits in the first two games in Houston, it was Peña that set the table for Alvarez's opportunities. As Game 3 made its way into its sixth hour, Peña delivered the final painful blow to the Mariners that ended their short return to the postseason.

"We all know that we belong here now, and we all know what it

takes to get here and get beyond this point," Seattle shortstop J.P. Crawford said.

After 21 years, Seattle fans welcomed playoff baseball back inside T-Mobile Park. They got their money's worth, and then some.

Three previous playoff games reached the 18th inning, one involving Houston. The Astros beat the Atlanta Braves 7-6 in 18 innings in Game 4 of the 2005 NLDS on Chris Burke's game-ending homer. Game 2 of the 2014 NLDS between San Francisco and Washington and Game 3 of the 2018 World Series between Los Angeles and Boston also went 18 innings.

But those games had runs. This one failed to produce anything until Peña's swing on a 3-2 pitch.

"I feel like in the playoffs you can't try and do too much, especially the later the game goes," Peña said.

Seattle's best scoring chance was Julio Rodríguez's line drive that thudded off the wall in the

eighth. The Mariners had runners in scoring position in the 13th and 17th, but couldn't get a key two-out hit against Houston's superb bullpen.

Unlike baseball's regular season, there is no automatic runner when playoff games go to extra innings.

"They pitched great. They played a great series. They beat us," Seattle manager Scott Servais said. "In my mind, and I think our players' mind, is if a break here or there goes our way in this series, it could have been a lot different. But end of the day, they got the big hits in each of the games and they ended up winning them."

Luis Garcia worked five innings for the win. The Astros bullpen allowed five hits and struck out 15 following six innings from starter Lance McCullers Jr.

"Watching the whole thing, the guys are doing a really good job and I'm really proud of them. ... I was just trying to help," Garcia said.

Guardians come back to walk off Yankees for ALDS lead

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The affable rookie who loves SpongeBob SquarePants has backed the New York Yankees into a postseason corner.

Oscar Gonzalez hit a two-run single with two outs in the ninth inning, rallying the Cleveland Guardians to a 6-5 win over New York on Saturday night for a 2-1 lead in their AL Division Series.

Gonzalez, a postseason hero just a week ago, lined a 1-2 pitch from Clarke Schmidt through the middle to score rookie Steven Kwan and Amed Rosario as the young Guardians, who have shown no fear during this storybook season, rallied once again and pushed the Yankees to the brink of elimination.

"We've seen it in two series so far from this guy," Guardians starter Triston McKenzie said. "He comes up in the 15th inning and hits a home run, has a game-winning hit in another game, has the hit tonight.

"There's a maturity level at the plate you don't see all the time."

Aaron Judge hit a two-run homer for New York, which carried a 5-3 lead into the ninth before its bullpen flopped and the Guardians staged yet another comeback win.

As Rosario crossed the plate, Gonzalez flung his helmet in the air as his teammates rushed onto the field to mob him. The 24-year-old outfielder hit a walk-off homer in the 15th inning last week to sweep the Tampa Bay Rays in the wild-card round.

Game 4 is Sunday night, when the Yankees turn to ace Gerrit Cole to prevent an early postseason exit.

"Love that Gerrit's on the mound," manager Aaron Boone said. "Let's go get it. Tonight obviously was a gut-wrenching ending, but we've got to get over it. Now we're obviously up against it, but I still love our chances."

Before Cleveland's comeback, the Yankees were 167-0 in the postseason when entering the ninth inning with a multiple-run lead.

The win followed a familiar formula for the Guardians, who led the majors with 29

wins in their final at-bat and have now done it twice in a week — both times with Gonzalez delivering the game-winning hit.

Gonzalez walks to the plate to the theme for "SpongeBob SquarePants," a fitting anthem for baseball's youngest team.

"I go there singing the song because I have a big body," Gonzalez said through a translator. "But deep inside I feel like a kid."

Following the game, Gonzalez rode a scooter down one of the hallways inside Progressive Field.

Gonzalez joined Hall of Famer and fellow Dominican Republic native David Ortiz (2004) as the only players to get three or more hits in the ninth inning or later in a single postseason.

"It's incredible," Gonzalez said. "I didn't know about that stat, and I just thank God for that and what makes it more special is it's from another fellow countryman."

The winner of this series will advance to the ALCS to take on the Houston Astros, who swept Seattle.

Statement wins for Vols, Wolverines

Associated Press

October reveals the truth about a college football season.

A Saturday that featured six games matching ranked teams, including three battles of unbeaten, promised to set the tone for the second half and sort contenders from pretenders.

No. 5 Michigan stepped forward emphatically in the Big Ten. No. 13 TCU made an improbable rally to become the Big 12 favorite. In the Pac-12, No. 20 Utah showed its not ready to give up its crown.

And No. 6 Tennessee put the Southeastern Conference on tilt.

Hendon Hooker and the Volunteers played the game of the day, and maybe the season, beating No. 3 Alabama for the first time since 2006 with a walk-off field goal.

"This is college football at its absolute best," Vols coach Josh Heupel said.

No doubt about it.

For those who spend their Saturdays in front of multiple screens, there was about a 30-minute period when Alabama and Tennessee were trading haymakers and TCU was erasing a 14-point deficit against No. 8 Oklahoma State.

As great as Max Duggan, Quinten John-

ston and the Horned Frogs were in taking one away that the Cowboys seemed to have in control, the Vols were the headliners.

The storyline of this season — or so we thought — was three elite teams, Alabama, Georgia and Ohio State, with the rest of the country playing catchup.

Alabama hasn't lived up to the billing.

Heisman Trophy winner Bryce Young and the Tide started No. 1, then barely escaped Texas in Week 2. OK, it happens.

Then Young injured his shoulder against Arkansas and had to sit out last week's game against Texas A&M. The Tide were a mess of turnovers and missed field goals and again barely escaped.

Surely, things would be different with Young.

Well, he was typically magical against Tennessee, but Alabama couldn't cover Jalin Hyatt (five touchdowns), couldn't stop committing penalties and botched the last minute of the game.

"We did too many things to help them," Tide coach Nick Saban said.

Saban and the Tide have plenty to lament, but having a first down at the Tennessee 32 with 34 seconds left and ending up with a 50-yard field goal sailing wide with 15 sec-

onds left for the Vols turned out to be a disaster.

Tennessee still has to play at No. 1 Georgia on Nov. 5. Alabama has plenty of work left to do to win another SEC West title, including a trip to unbeaten No. 9 Mississippi.

But the Vols blew away the idea of the two SEC titans marching unimpeded toward another championship showdown in Atlanta.

Now they're CFP contenders and Hooker is the Heisman front-runner.

Earlier in the day, Michigan officially put No. 2 Ohio State on notice.

The Wolverines beat the Buckeyes last year to end their long drought in the rivalry on the way to a Big Ten title and playoff berth. The Wolverines have lived in the top-five for weeks this season, but with some skepticism after starting against the weakest nonconference schedule in the country and no ranked Big Ten teams.

Against No. 10 Penn State, Michigan looked like a real threat to the Buckeyes again.

And to cap off a wild day, Utah knocked No. 6 Southern California from the ranks of the unbeaten.

A generous defense finally caught up to the Trojans.

Tkachuk, Panthers top Sabres to remain undefeated

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Matthew Tkachuk scored a goal and set up defenseman Brandon Montour's eventual winner in the Florida Panthers' 4-3 victory over the Buffalo Sabres on Saturday.

Aaron Ekblad and Colin White also scored for the defending President's Trophy-winning Panthers, who are off to a 2-0 start a year after winning their first eight. Spencer Knight stopped 24 shots in his season debut and improved to 4-0 against Buffalo after allowing a combined four goals in three starts against the Sabres last year.

Rasmus Dahlin and Alex Tuch had a goal and assist each for Buffalo.

Flyers 3, Canucks 2: Travis Konecny scored with just over six minutes to play in the third period as host Philadelphia rallied from a two-goal deficit over Vancouver.

Bruins 6, Coyotes 3: Derek Forbort scored the tiebreaking goal with 9:29 left in the third period, and host Boston beat Arizona for the 19th straight time.

A.J. Greer had two goals, and Pavel Za-

cha, Charlie Coyle and Nick Foligno also scored for the Bruins. Jeremy Swayman finished with 21 saves.

Penguins 6, Lightning 2: Sidney Crosby had a goal and two assists, Jake Guentzel had a goal and an assist, and host Pittsburgh scored four times in the third period.

Capitals 3, Canadiens 1: T.J. Oshie had a goal and assist, and host Washington avoided its first 0-3-0 start since the 2012-13 lock-out season.

Red Wings 5, Devils 2: Alex Nedeljkovic had 37 saves and Dylan Larkin had a goal and two assists to lead visiting Detroit over New Jersey.

Maple Leafs 3, Senators 2: Justin Holl scored with 1:55 left and Ilya Samsonov stepped in to stop 25 shots to lead host Toronto past Ottawa.

Islanders 7, Ducks 1: Defensemen Scott Mayfield and Robin Salo both scored twice, Anders Lee had three assists and Ilya Sorokin made 22 saves to lead host New York to its first win of the season.

Blues 5, Blue Jackets 2: Ivan Barbashev

and Jake Neighbours scored 20 seconds apart in the third period and Jordan Binnington made 23 saves to help host St. Louis beat Columbus.

Stars 5, Predators 1: Roope Hintz scored twice, Jason Robertson had a goal and two assists and host Dallas finished a home-and-home sweep of Nashville.

Kings 7, Wild 6: Adrian Kempe's second goal of the night broke a tie in the third period, and visiting Los Angeles recovered after giving up a two-goal lead for its first win of the season.

Blackhawks 5, Sharks 2: Sam Lafferty scored short-handed goals on back-to-back penalties in the second period to give coach Luke Richardson his first career win as visiting Chicago beat San Jose.

Flames 4, Oilers 3: Michael Stone had a goal and two assists, and Nazem Kadri added a goal and an assist in visiting Calgary's four-goal first period.

Golden Knights 5, Kraken 2: Jonathan Marchessault scored twice as visiting Vegas beat Seattle.