

## Russia seeks to regain ground in Ukraine

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia's troops fought Thursday to regain lost ground in areas of Ukraine that Russian President Vladimir Putin has illegally annexed while Moscow tried to pound the invaded country into submission with more missile and drone attacks on critical infrastructure.

Russian forces attacked Ukrainian positions near Bilohorivka, a village in the Luhansk region of eastern Ukraine. In the neighboring Donetsk region, fighting raged near the city of Bakhmut. Kremlin-backed separatists have controlled parts of both regions for 8½ years.

Putin declared martial law in Luhansk, Donetsk and southern Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions on Wednesday in an attempt to assert Russian authority in the annexed areas following a string of battlefield setbacks and a troubled troop mobilization.

The unsettled status of the illegally absorbed territory was especially visible in the Kherson region's capital, where Russian military officials have replaced Kremlin-installed civilian leaders amid a mass evacuation and an ongoing Ukrainian counteroffen-

sive.

Kherson city, with a prewar population of about 284,000, was one of the first urban areas captured by Russia when it invaded Ukraine, and it remains a prime target for both sides because of its key industries and major river port. Officials said 15,000 of a planned 60,000 residents had left the city as of Thursday in anticipation of intensified assaults.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office said Thursday that Ukrainian forces continued to engage the enemy, mounting 15 attacks on Russian military strongholds in the Kherson region.

Meanwhile, Russia continued its stepped-up attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, dispatching drones and missiles to eight regions. At least three civilians died and 14 were wounded in overnight attacks across Ukraine, according to the Ukrainian president's office.

In Kryvyi Rih, Russian strikes damaged a power plant and another energy facility, cutting electricity to the central Ukraine city of about 600,000 residents. Apart from being Zelenskyy's hometown, Kryvyi Rih is home to several large metallurgical factories that are

key to Ukraine's economy. Regional governor Valentin Reznichenko said the city sustained serious damage.

Ukrainian authorities said missile and drone strikes ignited several fires in the southern city of Mykolaiv, with four drones hitting a school. Another school in Komyshevakha, a village in the Zaporizhzhia region, also took four drone strikes and sustained damage. Authorities reported no casualties.

Russia's sustained attacks on Ukraine's infrastructure prompted authorities to ask residents to reduce their energy consumption from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. starting Thursday and to dim city street lights. They warned of rolling blackouts.

The general staff of the Ukrainian army said there was a heightened chance that Russian forces could launch an attack from Belarus with the aim of cutting off supply routes for Western weapons and military equipment.

In another sign of Russia's wavering mobilization, Ukrainian authorities said more than 3,000 Russians have so far called a dedicated hotline for soldiers who don't want to take part in the war and want to surrender.

## US examines wreckage of kamikaze drones in Ukraine

*The Washington Post*

The U.S. government has examined the wreckage of Iranian-made drones shot down in Ukraine, deepening its insight into the unmanned craft that Russia has launched in a spate of kamikaze attacks on the country's critical infrastructure, according to two U.S. officials.

Information about the drones' structure and technology could prove crucial in helping the United States and its Ukrainian allies better identify and ultimately defeat them before they can reach their targets. Officials said the process has been used in the past to study weaponry deployed by Iran's proxies in conflicts in the Middle East. People interviewed for this report spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence collection.

The Shahed-136 unmanned aerial vehicles used in this week's attacks on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, have targeted power sta-

tions and other utilities, killing at least four, authorities there have said. Their use by Russian forces has underscored the growing ties between Moscow and Tehran, alarming Western leaders whose sanctions and other punitive economic measures have drastically undercut the Kremlin's ability to regenerate its military after eight months of war.

The Iranian-made drones are being launched from three Russian military bases in Crimea and another position in Belarus, a Ukrainian official said. Tehran has dispatched advisers to Russian-controlled areas, where they have provided operators with technical instruction.

It is unclear how the United States gained access to the drone wreckage, though the Pentagon coordinates closely with Ukraine's military and maintains a small administrative presence at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv. That team is led by a one-star Army general.

The Shahed is a large, lumbering aircraft that flies very low and appears to have few metallic parts, making it difficult to detect with radars and other sensors before reaching its target. Examination of the wreckage may help overcome those challenges.

The drones' points of origin pose another challenge, the Ukrainian official said: They are too far for U.S.-supplied rocket artillery to strike, blunting options for destroying the aircraft before they are airborne.

Ukraine, which says it has destroyed more than 220 Shahed-136 drones since Sept. 13, appears to be studying the platform, Estonian Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur told reporters this week. Pevkur said it was of regional urgency to learn about the aircraft.

"We all have to understand that we all have to put our efforts to that. To understand how it works, and to understand how to take it down," he said.

# Afghan couple claim Marine abducted baby

Associated Press

An Afghan couple who arrived in the U.S. as refugees are suing a U.S. Marine and his wife in federal court for allegedly abducting their baby girl.

The baby had been pulled from the rubble two years earlier after her parents and five siblings were killed during a joint U.S. Special Forces raid. After months of treatment in a U.S. military hospital in Afghanistan, she had gone to live with a newlywed Afghan couple, identified by the International Committee of the Red Cross and Afghan authorities as her relatives.

But unbeknownst to the couple, court records say, a U.S. Marine Corps attorney on temporary assignment in Afghanistan learned of the baby while she was still in the hospital. With his wife back home in Virginia, he felt compelled to adopt the Afghan baby and praised it as an act of Christian faith.

This little girl, now 3½ years old, finds herself at the center of a high-stakes tangle of at least four court cases. The ordeal has drawn in the U.S. departments of Defense, Justice and State, which have previously argued that the attempt to spirit away a citizen of another country could significantly harm military and foreign relations. The U.S. Marines and federal officials did not comment on the record.

The Afghan family has asked the court to shield their identity out of concerns for their family back in Afghanistan, and they agreed to communicate with the AP on condition of anonymity.

While authorities were looking for her Afghan relatives, attorney Joshua Mast, represented by his brother Richard Mast, told a

Virginia state circuit court judge that the baby was a “stateless war orphan,” records show: They assured the judge that Afghan President Ashraf Ghani himself was planning to sign a waiver of jurisdiction within days. The state judge agreed, and granted Joshua and his wife Stephanie Mast custody, naming them as guardians on a birth certificate.

That waiver never arrived, and Ghani’s aide told AP earlier this month that there was no record of any discussion about this. Further, he said such a request would have to go through the courts, which did not happen. Finally, Islamic law prohibits non-Muslims from adopting Afghan babies.

Nonetheless, with documents naming them as her guardians, the Masts turned to a federal judge in Virginia to stop the U.S. government from handing over the baby, court records show. Justice Department attorneys stepped in and said the state adoption was “invalid.” The judge refused to intervene and the baby was given to her relatives.

The Afghan couple — who say they had no idea what had been happening in U.S. courts — wept with joy when they met the 7-month-old baby.

“We didn’t think she would come back to her family alive,” said the young Afghan man. “It was the best day of our lives.”

Though the baby remained in Afghanistan, Joshua and Stephanie Mast had given the growing toddler a Western name in a U.S. state court, according to court records. They finalized the adoption, enrolled her in the Defense Department’s health care system, and even scheduled an appointment with a pediatrician.

Mast — through an interlocutor — kept in

touch with the Afghan couple, offering to bring their child to the U.S. for medical care, court records say. But the couple say they told Mast that journey was too arduous.

Everything changed last summer when the U.S. began its chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan. Amid erupting violence and instability, Mast offered to get the couple, and their little girl, evacuated to the U.S., records show. They took him up on his offer.

When the exhausted Afghans arrived at the airport in Washington D.C., they allege in court filings that Mast pulled them out of the international arrivals line and led them to an inspecting officer. They were surprised when Mast presented an Afghan passport for the child, the couple said. But it was the last name printed on the document that stopped them cold: Mast.

They didn’t know it, but they would soon lose their baby. Just a few days later as the Afghan couple began their resettlement process at Fort Pickett Army National Guard base, they allege Mast confronted them, took the little girl — then 2½ years old — and drove off.

The Masts insist in court documents that they are her legal parents and “acted admirably” to protect her. They’ve asked a judge to dismiss the lawsuit, claiming the Afghan couple are “not her lawful parents.” Mast’s attorney cast doubt on whether the Afghans were even related to the baby.

The Afghan couple is not giving up.

“After they took her, our tears never stop,” the woman told The Associated Press. “Right now, we are just dead bodies. Our hearts are broken. We have no plans for a future without her. Food has no taste and sleep gives us no rest.”

## Green Berets, SEALs transfer to Baumholder may need waiver

By JOHN VANDIVER

*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. special operations units poised for a move to a rural part of western Germany could need a special Pentagon waiver that explains why those forces wouldn’t be more useful in countries nearer to Russia.

For years, U.S. Special Operations Command Europe has

wanted to send SEALs and Green Berets to an Army base in Baumholder, Germany.

And those plans are coming to fruition, with various construction projects in the works and hundreds of troops expected to relocate from their current base of operations in Stuttgart.

But House lawmakers want to block funding for construction projects to support the

move, saying that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin must first justify the effort.

Specifically, the House’s version of the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act calls for Austin to explain why U.S. special operators wouldn’t be better positioned in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Romania or Poland, all of which are on the front lines when it comes to de-

terrifying Russian aggression.

The waiver would need to detail how “hosting such forces in Germany would provide greater deterrence or greater operational utility” than the other nations, the NDAA states. It would also need to describe how taking up a position in Baumholder “is in the national security interests of the United States.”

# Truss resigns after brief stint leading UK

*Associated Press*

LONDON — British Prime Minister Liz Truss resigned Thursday — bowing to the inevitable after a tumultuous, short-lived term in which her policies triggered turmoil in financial markets and a rebellion in her party that obliterated her authority.

Making a hastily scheduled statement outside her 10 Downing Street office, Truss acknowledged that “I cannot deliver the mandate on which I was elected by the Conservative Party.”

Hers is the third resignation by a Conservative prime minister in as many years and leaves a divided party seeking a leader who can unify its warring fac-

tions. Truss, who said she will remain in office for a few more days while that process unfolds, has been prime minister for just over six weeks.

Just a day earlier she had vowed to stay in power, saying she was “a fighter and not a quitter.” But Truss couldn’t hold on any longer after a senior minister quit her government with a barrage of criticism and a vote in the House of Commons descended into chaos and acrimony just days after she was forced to abandon many of her economic policies.

A growing number of lawmakers had called for Truss to resign after weeks of turmoil sparked by her economic plan.

When it was unveiled by the government last month, the plan triggered financial turmoil and a political crisis that has seen the replacement of Truss’ Treasury chief, multiple policy U-turns and a breakdown of discipline in the governing Conservative Party.

Earlier, Conservative lawmaker Simon Hoare said the government was in disarray.

“Nobody has a route plan. It’s all sort of hand-to-hand fighting on a day-to-day basis,” he told the BBC on Thursday.

Truss quit after a meeting with Graham Brady, a senior Conservative lawmaker who oversees leadership challenges. Brady was tasked with assess-

ing whether the prime minister still has the support of Tory members of Parliament — and it seemed she did not.

“It’s time for the prime minister to go,” Conservative lawmaker Miriam Cates said earlier Thursday. Another, Steve Double, said of Truss: “She isn’t up to the job, sadly.” Legislator Ruth Edwards said, “it is not responsible for the party to allow her to remain in power.”

With opinion polls giving the Labour Party a large and growing lead, the Conservative Party decided its only hope of avoiding electoral oblivion was to replace Truss. But they remain divided over who exactly should do that.

## ‘Positive energy’ from Native American woman in space

*Associated Press*

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — The first Native American woman in space said Wednesday she is overwhelmed by the beauty and delicacy of Mother Earth, and is channeling “positive energy” as her five-month mission gets underway.

NASA astronaut Nicole Mann said from the International Space Station that she’s received lots of prayers and blessings from her family and tribal community. She is a member of the Wailacki of the Round Valley Indian Tribes in Northern California.

Mann showed off the dream catcher she took up with her, a childhood gift from her mother that she’s always held dear. The small traditional webbed hoop with feathers is used to offer protection, and she said it’s given her strength during challenging times. Years before joining NASA in 2013, she flew combat missions in Iraq for the Marines.

“It’s the strength to know that I have the support of my family and community back home and that when things are difficult or things are getting hard or I’m getting

burned-out or frustrated, that strength is something that I will draw on to continue toward a successful mission,” Mann told The Associated Press, which gathered questions from U.S. members and tribal news outlets.

Mann said she’s always heeded her mother’s advice on the importance of positive energy, especially on launch day.

“It’s difficult for some people maybe to understand because it’s not really tangible,” she said. “But that positive energy is so important, and you can control that energy, and it helps to control your attitude.”

Mann, 45, a Marine colonel and test pilot who was born in Petaluma, Calif., said it’s important to recognize there are all types of people aboard the space station. It’s currently home to three Americans, three Russians and one Japanese astronaut.

“What that does is it just highlights our diversity and how incredible it is when we come together as a human species, the wonderful things that we can do and that we can accomplish,” she said.

## CENTCOM chief visits ballistic missile sub in the Arabian Sea

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The top U.S. military commander for the Middle East boarded a U.S. ballistic missile submarine in the Arabian Sea on Wednesday, a rare move that highlighted U.S. nuclear undersea capabilities during tense times with Iran and Russia.

Gen. Erik Kurilla was shuttled out to the USS West Virginia and went aboard for about eight hours as the submarine rose to the surface in an undisclosed location in international waters in the sea.

The West Virginia is one of the Navy’s Ohio Class, long-range submarines, known as boomers. They are stealthy and, as one leg of America’s nuclear triad, can launch nuclear missile strikes and are considered a key strategic deterrent. The U.S. seldom advertises the location of its nuclear-powered submarines, and doesn’t often have them patrolling in the Middle East.

In a statement Wednesday, U.S. Central Command said Kurilla met with Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, the commander of the U.S. Navy’s 5th Fleet, on the submarine. It said Kurilla also got a

“hands-on demonstration of the capabilities of the vessel.”

“These submarines are the crown jewel of the nuclear triad, and the West Virginia demonstrates the flexibility, survivability, readiness, and capability” of the U.S. forces at sea, Kurilla said in the statement.

The unusual submarine visit by a CENTCOM leader comes as Russian President Vladimir Putin has threatened to use nuclear weapons with his forces losing ground in the war in Ukraine.

And Iran — which is in the CENTCOM region — has become more involved in the war, supplying waves of drones that Russia has been using to strike targets in Ukraine, including power plants, residential buildings and other key infrastructure.

CENTCOM leaders have often visited U.S. Navy ships in the waters around the Middle East, including massive aircraft carriers that were routinely sent to the region as a deterrent to Iran. Since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have ended, the Navy has not had a frequent carrier presence in the region.



# Arizona refuses US demand to remove containers along border

*Associated Press*

PHOENIX — Arizona has refused the federal government's demand to take down double-stacked shipping containers it placed to fill gaps in the wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, saying it won't do so until the U.S. moves to construct a permanent barrier instead.

The Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs dug in its heels in an Oct. 18 letter to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, saying "the containers will remain in place until specific details regarding construction are provided." It was signed by Allen Clark, the department's director.

A regional spokeswoman for the Bureau of Reclamation did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Arizona's refusal in the most recent flap between the Biden administration and Republican-led border states over immigration policies.

The federal agency told Arizona officials in a letter last week that the containers were unauthorized and violated U.S. law. The bureau also demanded that no new containers be placed, saying it wanted to prevent conflicts with two federal contracts already awarded and two more still pending to fill border wall gaps near the Morelos Dam in the Yuma, Ariz., area.

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey ordered installation

of more than 100 double-stacked containers that were placed over the summer, saying he couldn't wait for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection to award the contracts it had announced for the work. Migrants have continued to avoid the recently erected barriers by going around them, including through the Cocopah Indian Reservation. The Cocopah Indian Tribe has complained that Arizona acted against its wishes by placing 42 of the double stacks on its land.

The border wall promoted by former President Donald Trump continues to be a potent issue for Republican politicians hoping to show their support for border security.

President Joe Biden halted wall construction his first day in office, leaving billions of dollars of work unfinished but still under contract. The Biden administration has made a few exceptions for small projects at areas deemed unsafe for people to cross, including the gaps near Yuma.

The Center for Biological Diversity raised a different objection to the shipping containers on Wednesday, filing a notice of intent to sue Ducey's administration over what the environmental group said are plans to erect more shipping containers along the border. The group said the move will obstruct a critical jaguar and ocelot migration corridor.

# Heating worries mount across US

*Associated Press*

JAY, Maine — Across the U.S., families are looking to the winter with dread as energy costs soar and fuel supplies tighten.

The Department of Energy is projecting sharp price increases for home heating compared with last winter and some worry whether heating assistance programs will be able to make up the difference for struggling families. The situation is even bleaker in Europe, with Russia's continued curtailment of natural gas pushing prices upward and causing painful shortages.

In Maine, Aaron Raymo saw the writing on the wall and began stocking up on heating oil in 5-gallon increments over the summer as costs crept upward. He filled a container with heating oil as he could afford it, usually on paydays, and used a heating assistance program to top off his 275-gallon oil tank with the arrival of colder weather. His family is trying to avoid being forced into a difficult decision — choosing between food or heating their home.

"It's a hard one," he said. "What are you going to choose for food, or what amount of fuel oil are you going to choose to stay warm?"

A number of factors are converging to create a bleak situation: Global energy consumption has rebounded from the start of the pandemic, and supply was barely keeping pace before the war in Ukraine further reduced supplies.

The National Energy Assistance Directors Association says energy costs will be the highest in more than a decade this winter.

# Fewer Americans apply for jobless aid

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits fell last week and remains historically low even as the U.S. economy slows in the midst of decades-high inflation.

Jobless claims for the week ending Oct. 15 declined by 12,000 to 214,000 from 226,000 last week, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

The four-week moving average rose by 1,250 to 212,250.

Considered a proxy for layoffs, applications for jobless aid have remained historically low since the initial purge of more than 20 million jobs at the start of the coronavirus pandemic in the spring of 2020.

Some recent employment data suggests the job market may be cooling slightly, but overall, it remains the healthiest part of an economy that's been shaky all year due to high inflation and Russia's war in Ukraine.

The government reported last week that inflation in the United States accelerated in September, with the cost of housing and other necessities intensifying pressure on families and businesses.

Four-decade-high inflation has prompted the Federal Reserve to keep raising its key interest rate, which is currently in a range of 3% to 3.25%. A little more than six months ago, that rate was near zero. The sharp rate hikes have pushed mort-

gage rates up to 15-year highs, and made other borrowing costlier. The Fed hopes that higher interest rates will slow borrowing and spending and push inflation closer to its traditional 2% target.

Fed officials have warned that the unemployment rate will likely have to rise as part of their fight against rising prices, and the most recent government jobs report likely snuffed out any hope that the Fed would pause rate increases when it meets in early November.

American employers slowed their hiring in September but still added 263,000 jobs and the unemployment rate dropped from 3.7% to 3.5%, matching a half-century low.

**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**2 killed when small plane crashes at car dealership**

**OH** MARIETTA — A small plane crashed into a car dealership parking lot near the border of Ohio and West Virginia early Tuesday, killing two people on board and sparking a large fire.

The crash of the 1974 Beechcraft Air King E90 in Marietta, Ohio, was reported at about 7:15 a.m., according to the Ohio State Highway Patrol. The pilot and another person on board were killed. The crash damaged several vehicles at the dealership and sparked a fire that sent dark plumes of smoke spewing into the air, but no one on the ground was injured. It wasn't known if anyone was in the dealership at the time of the crash.

The plane had apparently departed about 30 minutes earlier from John Glenn International Airport in Ohio, but it was not immediately clear where it was headed.

**Wrestler saves teammate from grizzly bear mauling**

**MT** BILLINGS — A college wrestler from a small Wyoming school helped his teammate survive a grizzly mauling over the weekend by trying to wrestle the massive bear off his friend, eventually drawing a more brutal attack to himself.

The men are crediting their bonds as wrestling teammates at Northwest College in Cody, Wyo., with helping them survive the attack Saturday evening southeast of Yellowstone National Park.

Brady Lowry of Cedar City, Utah, suffered a broken arm and puncture wounds in the initial

attack after they surprised the bear while searching for antlers shed by elk and deer in the Shoshone National Forest.

"It shook me around and I didn't know what to do," Lowry told KSL-TV Monday from a hospital in Billings, Mont. "I curled up in a ball and it got me a few more times."

His teammate — Kendall Cummings of Evanston, Wyo. — tried to stop the attack on Lowry by yelling, kicking and hitting the bear and pulling on its fur.

The bear quickly turned its fury onto Cummings. After the bear attacked him twice and left, Cummings pulled himself up and began looking for his teammates. In the meantime, Lowry walked to an area with cell service and called 911.

**\$275M verdict for toxic exposures at school**

**WA** MONROE — A jury in King County has awarded \$275 million to 10 students and parents who say they suffered serious neurological injuries from chemical exposure at a school northeast of Seattle.

The lawsuit against Bayer Pharmaceuticals is the fourth to result in a multimillion-dollar verdict, The Seattle Times reported. The company owns chemical giant Monsanto, the manufacturer of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs.

The first three lawsuits resulted in jury verdicts of \$268 million distributed to 14 plaintiffs. One lawsuit is ongoing and 16 more await trial.

More than 200 students, parents and teachers from the Sky Valley Education Center, an alternative school in Snohomish County, have sued Monsanto

over environmental contamination. They say Monroe School District knew PCBs were found on the campus, but, despite cleanup efforts, toxins were still being found into 2019.

**Police say 9 hurt when commuter train hits semi**

**CT** WATERBURY — A commuter train hit a tractor-trailer Monday whose operator had driven to a rail crossing after leaving the scene of an earlier crash, transit authorities said. Nine train passengers suffered minor injuries.

The tractor-trailer was involved in a crash with another vehicle near Metro-North Railroad property in Waterbury, Conn., shortly before 11 a.m., officials with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority said.

The tractor-trailer then drove a short distance to a railroad crossing and stopped in the path of the 10:45 a.m. train from Waterbury to Bridgeport, MTA police said in a news release. The semi driver noticed crossing gates lowering and tried to move out of the way but was unable to clear the crossing before the train hit the truck, MTA police said.

About 30 passengers were aboard the train, and nine reported minor injuries that were evaluated at the scene, police said.

The driver of the tractor-trailer was ticketed for stopping on a railroad crossing, police said.

**Worker admits dumping waste into water system**

**MS** JACKSON — An employee of a Mississippi wastewater hauling company pleaded guilty in federal court Tuesday for his part in

illegally discharging industrial waste into the capital city's sewer system.

William Roberts, an employee of Partridge-Sibley Industrial Services, admitted to supervising the improper disposal of industrial waste at a commercial entity in Jackson. As a result of Roberts' negligence, the waste was trucked and hauled to a facility that was not a legal discharge point designated to receive the waste, federal prosecutors said.

"The defendant's negligent conduct contributed to the discharge of millions of gallons of untreated industrial waste into the Jackson water system," said Chuck Carfagno, a special agent for the Environmental Protection Agency's criminal investigations division.

**Police: 20 cars stolen from lot for use in crimes**

**NY** NEW YORK — Thieves stole 20 cars from a New York City dealership and will likely use the vehicles to commit other crimes, a top police official said.

The car thieves hit a Mistubishi dealership over the weekend, broke open a lock box that held keys and drove off with late-model cars, NYPD Chief of Detectives James Essig said Monday.

While some stolen cars are sold overseas, Essig said investigators believe the cars stolen from the Mitsubishi lot will be used to carry out other crimes.

"Our feeling is just based on the way crime is going, people taking these cars, they will use these 20 cars in multiple robberies and burglaries throughout the city," Essig told reporters.

— From wire reports



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# Astros, Verlander win ALCS opener over Yankees

*Associated Press*

HOUSTON — When Justin Verlander was laboring and needed 45 pitches to get through two innings, Astros manager Dusty Baker was worried he'd have to go to his bullpen early.

Instead, the veteran ace buckled down and found a groove, striking out 11 in six strong innings to lead Houston over the New York Yankees 4-2 in their AL Championship Series opener Wednesday night.

"This guy, he has mental toughness," Baker said. "When he's down and out and it looks like you got him in trouble, this guy, he can dial it up."

Yuli Gurriel launched a tie-breaking homer for Houston in the sixth. Chas McCormick and Jeremy Peña also went deep as the AL West champions improved to 4-0 in the playoffs after going 106-56 during the regular season.

The Astros are in their sixth consecutive ALCS, looking to reach the World Series for the fourth time in that span, against a New York team in the LCS for the

first time since being eliminated by Houston in 2019.

The game was tied 1-all when Gurriel connected off reliever Clarke Schmidt for a solo shot into the left-field seats to put Houston on top. Two batters later, McCormick sent a sinker from Schmidt into right field to make it 3-1.

"I didn't do my job today," Schmidt said.

Verlander set a major league record with his eighth double-digit strikeout game in the postseason. He passed Clayton Kershaw (213) to become the career leader in postseason strikeouts with 219.

"As the game's going along, you just gain more confidence as you start making better pitches," Verlander said. "Once I started being able to execute my pitches the way I wanted, I feel like my confidence just kind of built upon that."

New York whiffed 17 times in all to only two for the Astros — the largest difference ever in a postseason game.

"They're obviously really dynamic," Yankees manager Aa-

ron Boone said. "Outstanding starting pitching, but can shorten the game with the best of 'em. So we've got to find a way to break through against them."

Peña, whose 18th-inning home run completed a sweep of the Mariners in the ALDS, belted a homer off Frankie Montas to start the seventh and extend the lead to 4-1. Montas was pitching for the first time since Sept. 16 because of a shoulder injury that kept him off the Division Series roster.

Anthony Rizzo homered off Rafael Montero with two outs in the eighth to get the Yankees within two. Giancarlo Stanton singled before Josh Donaldson walked, spurring Baker to bring in closer Ryan Pressly.

He struck out Matt Carpenter to end the inning and pitched a 1-2-3 ninth to get the four-out save.

Carpenter, back recently from a broken foot, fanned all four times up.

"The way (Verlander) threw the ball tonight, I could have played for the last two months and it would have been a tough

day," he said.

After struggling in Game 1 of the ALDS against Seattle, Verlander looked shaky early in this one, giving up a second-inning homer to Harrison Bader that put the Yankees up 1-0. It was Bader's fourth home run in six playoff games — his first four long balls with New York.

But the Astros tied it in the bottom half on an RBI double by Martín Maldonado.

The Astros had a few days off after eliminating Seattle on Saturday. The Yankees dealt with a quick turnaround after winning a rain-postponed Game 5 over the Guardians at home Tuesday before heading to Houston.

They had runners at second and third with one out in the third after a double by Stanton, but Verlander struck out Donaldson and Carpenter to escape the jam.

"I thought early we had our chances. I don't think he was real sharp early, but then he kind of dialed it in," Boone said. "He started really executing, staying away from trouble. I thought he spun the ball really well."

# Drury, Padres rally to beat Phillies, even NLCS 1-1

*Associated Press*

SAN DIEGO — The scrappy San Diego Padres, largely rebuilt at the trade deadline, are finding their identity at just the right time.

In danger of heading to Philadelphia down 0-2 in the NL Championship Series, the Padres produced another huge rally in front of their rowdy fans to put some punch into the all-wild card matchup.

Brandon Drury hit a go-ahead, two-run single during a five-run outburst in the fifth inning and San Diego stunned Aaron Nola and the Phillies 8-5 on Wednesday to tie the NLCS at one game apiece.

"You go into their place, which is probably going to be as spirited as ours is, down 2-0 and that's an uphill battle," said veteran manager Bob Melvin, who has brought a calming presence in his first year as San Diego's skipper.

The Padres weren't rattled when they fell behind 4-0 in the second inning after

getting just one hit during a 2-0 loss in the series opener Tuesday.

"We go into Philly for three and it's a big game," Drury said. "We've got to fight and we did. It's huge."

The fifth-inning surge started with Padres catcher Austin Nola hitting an RBI single off his younger brother that brought the sellout, towel-twirling crowd of 44,607 to life. Three innings earlier, the Phillies took a 4-0 lead with a rally that included bloop hits, a sun-aided double on a gorgeous, 92-degree afternoon and some shoddy Padres defense.

On Saturday night, spurred by the bottom of the order, the Padres broke loose for five runs in the seventh inning of a 5-3 win that eliminated the 111-win Los Angeles Dodgers.

Wednesday's rally was similar.

"We need to continue to build that confidence," said Austin Nola, the No. 9 batter. "That's what we talked about all year.

That identity is never giving up, never giving in. Every inning we're putting pressure on the other team to score and it's paying off."

Drury and Josh Bell hit back-to-back homers for the Padres, and Manny Machado went deep late.

The series shifts to Philadelphia for three games beginning Friday night. The Phillies, trying to reach their first World Series since 2009, outscored Atlanta 17-4 in two home Division Series games last weekend to dispatch the defending World Series champion Braves.

Manager Rob Thomson said the Phillies need to approach this situation like they did the NLDS.

"We went into Atlanta, won the first one, lost the second one. Disappointing game. We had a day off and came back home in front of 46,000 raucous people and played really well. I expect to do the same thing," he said.



# Jets top Avalanche on Pionk's 2nd goal

Associated Press

DENVER — Neal Pionk scored his second goal of the game 31 seconds into overtime and the Winnipeg Jets regrouped after squandering a two-goal lead to beat the Colorado Avalanche 4-3 on Wednesday night.

Pionk's slap shot from the right side momentarily froze goaltender Alexandar Georgiev and nicked off the post to go in. It was Pionk's first career overtime goal.

"Shoot hard in case you hit the puck," the defenseman cracked. "I was going far side. I got a little lucky, but it was a good shot."

The winning goal was set up by Mason Appleton in the other end, when he kept Nathan

MacKinnon away from the puck along the boards. Appleton then fed the puck ahead to Pionk.

"It doesn't go unnoticed," Pionk said about Appleton's play. "He used his big body, made a nice little play to me, and I put it in the net."

Sam Gagner and Cole Perfetti also had goals for the Jets, who finished a difficult back-to-back with a game at Vegas on Thursday night. Connor Hellebuyck made 30 saves.

Leading 3-1 in the second period, Winnipeg saw Mikko Rantanen and Valeri Nichushkin score 2:01 apart to tie it. Rantanen led the comeback for Colorado with two goals and an assist in the second.

"They're the defending Stan-

ley Cup champions, so they're going to push back, right?" Pionk said. "They scored a couple goals, we broke down a few times, but overall in the third I thought we responded well."

**Blues 4, Kraken 3 (OT):** Justin Faulk scored his second goal of the game at 2:50 of overtime and visiting St. Louis beat Seattle.

Vladimir Tarasenko took advantage of a defensive miscue behind the net and found Faulk in front of the net for his third assist of the game. Faulk put the shot past Martin Johnson from the crease.

Brayden Schenn had a goal and an assist to help St. Louis improve to 2-0, Jordan Kyrro also scored and Jordan Binnington made 32 saves.

Will Borgen, Ryan Donato and Alex Larsson scored for Seattle in its third straight loss at home to start the season.

**Panthers 4, Flyers 3:** Carter Verhaeghe scored twice and Rudolfs Balcers and Josh Mahura had third-period goals to help host Florida beat Philadelphia.

Balcers' goal, his first with Florida after signing in the off-season, put the Panthers on top for good. Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 31 shots for the Panthers, who have won three of four to open the season.

Travis Konency, James van Riemsdyk and Nick Seeler scored for Philadelphia. Kevin Hayes had two assists for the Flyers, and Felix Sandstrom made 31 saves.

# Avs captain Landeskog out after knee surgery

Associated Press

DENVER — Colorado Avalanche captain Gabriel Landeskog will be sidelined about 12 weeks after undergoing arthroscopic knee surgery.

Avalanche coach Jared Bednar said after morning skate Wednesday that Landeskog had the procedure performed in Minneapolis the day before. Landeskog missed the opening three games of this season with what the

team described as a lower-body injury.

"Started bugging him when he started training and getting back on the ice," said Bednar, whose team hosted Winnipeg on Wednesday night. "So they had it looked at, images taken. Decided on surgery."

Landeskog sat out the final 23 regular-season games last season after undergoing knee surgery. He returned in time for the playoffs, where he had 11 goals and 11 assists to help the

Avalanche win the franchise's third Stanley Cup title.

The 29-year-old Landeskog is in his 12th NHL season and his 11th as captain of the Avalanche. He was the youngest captain in NHL history at the time he earned the role (19 years, 286 days) on Sept. 4, 2012. He held that distinction until Connor McDavid was named captain by the Edmonton Oilers on Oct. 5, 2016, at 19 years, 266 days.

# Source: Panthers would be open to trading McCaffrey

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The Carolina Panthers are considering trading 2019 All-Pro running back Christian McCaffrey if they get something significant in return, according to a person familiar with the situation.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Wednesday because no trade is imminent.

It's unclear how many other NFL teams have inquired about McCaffrey, who has been productive this season after missing 23 games over the previous

two seasons with various injuries.

The Panthers are 1-5 this season and have struggled to find stability at the quarterback position.

The Panthers traded Robbie Anderson to the Arizona Cardinals this week for two late-round draft picks after he was involved in a sideline argument with an assistant coach and sent to the locker room.

The Panthers are not expected to have a fire sale, despite having lost 12 of their past 13 games.

McCaffrey is one of the few bright spots on the league's 32nd-ranked offense.

He has 670 yards from scrimmage, which ranks fourth in the NFL behind only Saquon Barkley, Tyreek Hill and Nick Chubb. McCaffrey and Chubb are the only players in the league with five games with at least 100 yards from scrimmage.

McCaffrey said Wednesday that he's trying to stay focused on Sunday's game even as trade rumors swirl around the 2017 first-round draft pick.

"That's out of my control,"

McCaffrey said. "I'm trying to control everything I can control. Right now I'm a Carolina Panther and giving it all to this place."

When asked if he would like to be kept in the loop regarding trade talks, McCaffrey responded, "if they keep me in the loop, great. If not, it doesn't matter. To me, I am focused on playing against the Bucs this weekend and doing everything I can to prepare for them."

McCaffrey did not practice Wednesday as that is his normal rest day.

# Williamson back, Pelicans top Nets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Zion Williamson resumed his assault on backboards and basketball players, leaving both at the mercy of his skills and strength.

"It's like he didn't miss a beat," New Orleans coach Willie Green said. "You just throw the ball to him and watch what he does."

Williamson returned from a one-year absence with 25 points and nine rebounds, powering the Pelicans to a season-opening 130-108 rout of the Brooklyn Nets on Wednesday night.

The No. 1 pick in the 2019 draft looked fully recovered and explosive after being sidelined with a broken right foot, and his addition to a roster that made the playoffs without him could make the Pelicans a rising team in the Western Conference.

Ben Simmons also returned to action after a missed season but had the misfortune of having to cover Williamson for much of the brief time he was in the game. He fouled out early in the fourth quarter with four points, five rebounds and five assists, taking three shots.

**Suns 107, Mavericks 105:** Devin Booker scored 28 points, Damion Lee made a go-ahead baseline jumper with 9.7 seconds left and host Phoenix overcame a 22-point deficit to beat Dallas in the season opener for both teams.

Lee — who signed with the Suns in the offseason after four seasons with Golden State — hit the contested 10-foot jumper, capping a big fourth quarter that included a pair of three-pointers.

**Bulls 116, Heat 108:** DeMar DeRozan

scored 28 of his 37 points in the second half, Ayo Dosunmu added 17 and short-handed Chicago beat host Miami.

Nikola Vucevic had 15 points and 17 rebounds for the Bulls, and Goran Dragic added 12 off the Chicago bench.

**Hawks 117, Rockets 107:** Dejounte Murray had 20 points and five steals to lead host Atlanta past Houston.

Murray, acquired from San Antonio in the Hawks' biggest move of the offseason, also dished out 11 assists. Trae Young had 23 points and 13 assists, teaming with Murray to give a glimpse of how a pair of star point guards can co-exist.

**Grizzlies 115, Knicks 112 (OT):** Ja Morant had 34 points and nine assists, and host Memphis beat New York in overtime.

Santi Aldama had 18 points and 11 rebounds for Memphis, and Desmond Bane finished with 16 points.

**Timberwolves 115, Thunder 108:** Rudy Gobert had 23 points and 16 rebounds in his debut with host Minnesota in a victory over Oklahoma City.

D'Angelo Russell had 20 points and Jaden McDaniels added 19 points for the Timberwolves, who turned a 16-point lead into a six-point deficit during the third quarter.

**Raptors 108, Cavaliers 105:** Pascal Siakam had 23 points and 11 rebounds before fouling out, O.G. Anunoby scored 10 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter and host Toronto beat Cleveland.

Gary Trent Jr. scored 19 points, and Scottie Barnes and Fred Van Vleet each had 15 as Toronto outscored Cleveland 32-21 in the final period.

**Pistons 113, Magic 109:** Bojan Bogdan-

ovic scored 24 points in his debut with host Detroit in a victory over Orlando.

Orlando's Paolo Banchero, the No. 1 overall pick last summer, had 27 points, nine rebounds and five assists in his NBA debut.

**Jazz 123, Nuggets 102:** Colin Sexton scored 20 points, Lauri Markkanen added 17 and new-look Utah beat visiting Denver.

New Jazz coach Will Hardy won his first game with a team that is rebuilding after trading cornerstones Donovan Mitchell and Rudy Gobert.

**Hornets 129, Spurs 102:** Terry Rozier had 24 points and six teammates scored in double figures in visiting Charlotte's win over San Antonio.

The Spurs opened their 50th season in San Antonio inauspiciously, losing a season opener for only the third time under Gregg Popovich.

**Trail Blazers 113, Kings 108:** Jerami Grant converted a three-point play with 50.4 seconds to play to give his team the lead as visiting Portland spoiled Mike Brown's coaching debut in Sacramento.

Grant scored 23 points to lead Portland and Anfernee Simons added 22. Damian Lillard scored 20 in his first game back from an abdominal injury that had sidelined him since January.

**Wizards 114, Pacers 107:** Bradley Beal scored 23 points and Kyle Kuzma added 20 as visiting Washington led wire to wire and beat rebuilding Indiana.

Kristaps Porzingis had 15 points and 10 rebounds as the Wizards won their second straight season opener for the first time since 2004-05.

## Pro Football Hall of Famer, Heisman runner-up Trippi dies

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Charley Trippi, a runner-up for the Heisman Trophy at Georgia who went on to lead the Cardinals to their most recent NFL championship in 1947, died Wednesday. He was 100.

The University of Georgia announced that Trippi died peacefully at his Athens, Ga., home.

Trippi was one of football's most versatile players, lining up at multiple positions on offense, defense and special teams. He

is the only member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame to have 1,000 yards rushing, receiving and passing in his career.

The son of a Pennsylvania coal miner, Trippi had a simple explanation for his dazzling array of skills.

"In those days, the more things a player did, the more pay he could demand," Trippi said, according to his bio at the Pro Football Hall of Fame. "I could run, kick, pass and catch, and that made me a valuable property."

Trippi played his college football at Georgia in the 1940s, his career interrupted by a stint in the military during World War II.

Trippi led the Bulldogs to a Rose Bowl victory, finished second to Glenn Davis for the 1946 Heisman Trophy, and was a No. 1 overall draft pick by the Cardinals, who then called Chicago home.

He went on to star in the "Dream Backfield" for the Cardinals, leading the franchise to the 1947 NFL championship.

The team, which moved to St. Louis in 1960 and then to its current home in Arizona in 1988, has yet to win another title.

"Charley Trippi was one of the greatest Bulldogs of all time!" Georgia athletic director Josh Brooks wrote on Twitter. "It was an honor to get to know him! God Bless the Trippi family."

Charles Louis Trippi was born in Pittston, Pa., just as America was embarking on a golden era of sports in the 1920s.