

Threats rise for US troops in Mideast

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With tensions spiking in the Middle East, U.S. forces in the region are facing increasing threats as a Navy warship shot down missiles appearing to head toward Israel Thursday and American bases in Iraq and Syria were repeatedly targeted by drone attacks.

Later, a U.S. official said there had been a rocket attack early Friday morning on U.S. and coalition forces at a diplomatic support center near the Baghdad International Airport. Initial assessments indicated two rockets were fired, the official said, noting that one was intercepted by a counter-rocket system and the other struck an empty storage facility.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details not yet made public, said no casualties were reported.

Earlier, the USS *Carney*, a Navy destroyer in the northern Red Sea, intercepted three land attack cruise missiles and several drones that were launched by Houthi forces in Yemen. The action by the *Carney* potentially

represented the first shots by the U.S. military in the defense of Israel in this conflict.

Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, Pentagon press secretary, told reporters the missiles were “potentially” headed toward Israel but said the U.S. hasn’t finished its assessment of what they were targeting.

A U.S. official said they don’t believe the missiles — which were shot down over the water — were aimed at the U.S. warship. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations that had not yet been announced.

But an array of other drone attacks over the past three days did target U.S. bases, including one in southern Syria on Thursday that caused minor injuries.

The rash of violence comes in the wake of a deadly explosion at a Gaza hospital, triggering protests in a number of Muslim nations. The Israeli military has relentlessly attacked Gaza in retaliation for the devastating Hamas rampage in southern Israel almost two weeks ago, but Israel has denied responsibility for the al-Ahli hospital blast and the

U.S. has said its intelligence assessment found that Tel Aviv was not to blame.

In recent days, however, a number of militant groups across the region — from Hezbollah to the Houthis — have expressed support for the Palestinians and threatened Israel. Since Tuesday, militants have launched at least four drone attacks on U.S. military installations in Iraq and Syria where U.S. troops train local defense forces and support the mission to counter Islamic State.

The attacks fuel escalating worries in the U.S. and the West that the war in Israel could expand into a larger regional conflict.

“That’s exactly what we are trying to prevent,” Ryder said.

The most recent drone attack was Thursday at al-Asad Air Base in western Iraq. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq posted a statement claiming responsibility for the attack, saying they had fired a salvo of rockets at the base and “they hit their targets directly and precisely.” A U.S. official confirmed the latest attack but said it was too early to

assess any impact.

Also Thursday, the al-Tanf garrison in southeastern Syria was struck by drones. U.S. troops have maintained a presence at the base for a number of years to train Syrian allies and monitor Islamic State militant activity.

The Pentagon said one drone was shot down, but another hit the base and caused minor injuries.

The garrison is located on a vital road that often used by Iranian-backed militants to ferry weapons to Hezbollah in southern Lebanon — and Israel’s doorstep.

Syrian opposition activists also said there was a separate drone attack on an oil facility in eastern Syria that houses American troops. Omar Abu Layla, a Europe-based activist who heads the Deir Ezzor 24 media outlet, said three drones with explosives struck the Conoco gas field in the eastern province of Deir el-Zour that borders Iraq. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, also confirmed explosions at the site.

Israel says it doesn’t plan long-term control of Gaza

Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip — Israel said Friday it does not plan to take long-term control over the Gaza Strip after an expected ground offensive to root out Hamas militants that rule the territory.

The Israeli military punished Gaza with airstrikes, authorities inched closer to bringing aid to desperate families and hospitals, and Muslims around the world protested in solidar-

ity with Palestinians.

Israel bombed areas in southern Gaza where Palestinians had been told to seek safety while it tries to destroy Hamas in retaliation for its brutal rampage in Israel two weeks ago. Fighting between Israel and militants in neighboring Lebanon also raged, prompting evacuations of Lebanese and Israeli border towns as fears of a widening conflict grew.

Speaking to lawmakers about Israel’s long-term plans for Gaza, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant laid out a three-stage plan that seemed to suggest that Israel did not intend to reoccupy the territory it left in 2005.

First, Israeli airstrikes and “maneuvering” — a presumed reference to a ground attack — would aim to root out Hamas. Next will come a lower intensity fight to defeat remaining pockets of resistance. And, fi-

nally, “the removal of Israel’s responsibility for life in the Gaza Strip,” Gallant said.

Gallant did not say who Israel expected to run Gaza if Hamas is toppled.

Israel occupied Gaza from 1967 until 2005, when it pulled up settlements and withdrew soldiers. Two years later, Hamas took over. Some Israelis blame the withdrawal from Gaza for the sporadic violence that has persisted since then.

Biden: Israel, Ukraine aid vital for US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Declaring that U.S. leadership “holds the world together,” President Joe Biden told Americans on Thursday night the country must deepen its support of Ukraine and Israel in the middle of two vastly different, unpredictable and bloody wars.

Acknowledging that “these conflicts can seem far away,” Biden insisted in a rare Oval Office address that they remain “vital for America’s national security” as he prepared to ask Congress for billions of dollars in military assistance for both countries.

“History has taught us when terrorists don’t pay a price for their terror, when dictators don’t pay a price for their aggression, they cause more chaos and death and more destruction,” Biden said. “They keep going. And the cost and the threat to America and the world keep rising.”

On Friday, the White House

released a sweeping set of proposals to bolster Israel and Ukraine.

The total cost of the supplemental funding request was pegged at just over \$105 billion. Biden hopes Congress will move urgently on the legislation, and he made the case for deepening U.S. support for its allies during a rare Oval Office address on Thursday night.

The Democratic president’s national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, told reporters on Friday that Russia’s ongoing invasion of Ukraine and Hamas’ attack on Israel represent a “global inflection point.”

“This budget request is critical to advancing America’s national security and ensuring the safety of the American people,” Sullivan said.

However, next steps are in doubt while the House of Representatives remains in chaos with the Republican majority unable to choose a new speaker. Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, a close

ally of former President Donald Trump, is still pushing to run the chamber, an effort that has led to frayed nerves and bruised relationships on Capitol Hill.

Even if Republicans are able to sort out their leadership drama, Biden will swiftly face resistance to his plans. He’s hopeful that combining several different issues, from border security to countering China’s influence, will foster a political coalition that can move the legislation forward.

But there’s equal potential for the entire package to get bogged down in various policy debates.

Shalanda Young, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, suggested it would be hypocritical for Republicans to oppose Biden’s proposal after complaining about lax border management.

“We will not be lectured by those who refuse to act,” she said. “As we’ve said repeatedly, Congress needs to take action to

provide sufficient resources for the border.”

Although there was a lull in migrant arrivals to the U.S. after the start of new asylum restrictions in May, illegal crossings topped a daily average of more than 8,000 last month.

The White House wants roughly \$14 billion to, among other things, boost the number of border agents, install new inspection machines to detect fentanyl and increase staffing to process asylum cases.

The biggest line item in the supplemental funding request is \$61.4 billion to support Ukraine. Some of that money will go to replenishing Pentagon stockpiles of weapons that have already been provided.

“The world is closely watching what Congress does next,” Sullivan said.

Israel would receive \$14.3 billion in assistance under the proposal. The majority of that money would help with air and missile defense systems.

Ukraine, Russia assess resources as winter looms

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he spoke by phone with U.S. President Joe Biden about Washington’s future support for Kyiv, and Russian President Vladimir Putin visited a military base near the Ukrainian border, as the warring countries laid plans for the winter and next year’s combat operations.

Almost 20 months of war have sapped both sides’ military resources. The fighting is likely to settle into positional and attritional warfare during the approaching wintry weather, analysts say, with little change

along the more than 600-mile front line.

Zelenskyy said late Thursday he spoke to Biden about “a significant support package” for Ukraine. Western help has been crucial for Ukraine’s war effort.

Putin visited late Thursday the headquarters of Russia’s Southern Military District, less than 60 miles from Ukraine’s southeastern border, where he was briefed by the chief of the General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, the Kremlin said.

With uncertainty over the scale of Kyiv’s future Western aid, and after Ukraine’s five-month counteroffensive sapped Russian reserves but apparent-

ly only dented Russian frontline defenses, the two sides are scrambling to replenish their stockpiles for 2024.

Ukraine has been expending ammunition at a rate of more than 200,000 rounds per month, according to Jack Watling, a senior research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute think tank in London.

“Sufficient ammunition to sustain this rate of fire is not going to be forthcoming as NATO stockpiles deplete, and production rates for ammunition remain too low to meet this level of demand,” Watling wrote in an assessment published late Thursday.

Meanwhile, Russian production “has turned a corner,” he said. Moscow’s domestic ammunition production is growing quickly, at more than 100 long-range missiles a month compared with 40 a month a year ago, for example, according to Watling.

Also, Russia is reported to be receiving supplies from Iran, North Korea and other countries.

Though Ukraine’s counteroffensive has not made dramatic progress against Russia’s formidable defenses, it has suppressed the Kremlin’s forces and Kyiv is looking to keep up the pressure.

House GOP rejects Jordan a third time

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rep. Jim Jordan failed badly Friday on a third ballot for the House speaker's gavel, rejected by even more Republicans who warned the hard-edged ally of Donald Trump that no threats or promises could win their support.

The Republicans have no realistic or workable plan to unite the fractured GOP majority, elect a new speaker and return to the work of Congress that has been languishing since hardliners ousted Kevin McCarthy at the start of the month.

In all, Jordan lost 25 Republican colleagues, leaving him far from the majority needed.

Ahead of the vote, Jordan showed no signs of stepping aside, insisting at a Capitol press conference: "The American people are hungry for change."

Drawing on his Ohio roots, Jordan, who is popular with the GOP's right-flank activist base of voters, positioned his long-shot campaign alongside the history of American innovators

including the Wright brothers, urging his colleagues to elect him to the speakership.

McCarthy himself rose in the chamber to nominate Jordan, portraying him as a skilled legislator who reaches for compromise. That drew scoffs of laughter from the Democratic side of the aisle.

McCarthy said of Jordan, "He is straightforward, honest and reliable."

Democrats nominated Leader Hakeem Jeffries, with Rep. Katherine Clark calling Jordan, who refused to certify the 2020 election, "a threat to democracy."

"We need a speaker worthy of wielding the gavel," she said.

But after two failed votes, Jordan's third attempt at the gavel did not end any better — in large part because more centrist Republicans are revolting over the nominee and the hardball tactics being used to win their votes. They have been bombarded with harassing phone calls and even reported death threats.

In fact, the hard-charging Judiciary chairman lost rather than gained votes despite hours of closed-door talks, no improvement from the 20 and then 22 Republicans he lost in early rounds this week.

For more than two weeks the stalemate has shut down the U.S. House, leaving a seat of American democracy severely hobbled at a time of challenges at home and abroad. The House Republican majority appears to have no idea how to end the political turmoil and get back to work.

With Republicans in majority control of the House, 221-212, any candidate can lose only a few detractors. It appears there is no Republican at present who can win a clear majority, 217 votes, to become speaker.

"He doesn't have the votes to be speaker," Rep. Carlos Gimenez, R-Fla., said after a late Thursday meeting when Jordan sought to hear detractors out and shore up support.

The holdouts want "nothing" from Jordan, Gimenez said,

adding that some of the lawmakers simply called on Jordan to drop out of the race.

One extraordinary idea, to give the interim speaker pro tempore, Rep. Patrick McHenry, more powers for the next several months to at least bring the House back into session and conduct crucial business, was swiftly rejected by Jordan's own ultra-conservative allies.

A "betrayal," said Rep. Jim Banks, R-Ind.

Next steps were highly uncertain as angry, frustrated Republicans predict the House could essentially stay closed for the foreseeable future — perhaps until the mid-November deadline for Congress to approve funding or risk a federal government shutdown.

"We're trying to figure out if there's a way we can get back with a Republican-only solution," said veteran legislator Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla.

"That's what normal majorities do. What this majority has done is prove it's not a normal majority."

Guilty plea in efforts to overturn Trump's 2020 loss

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Lawyer Kenneth Chesebro pleaded guilty to a felony on Friday just as jury selection was getting underway in his trial on charges accusing him of participating in efforts to overturn Donald Trump's loss in the 2020 election in Georgia.

Chesebro, who was charged alongside Trump and 17 others with violating the state's anti-racketeering law, pleaded guilty to one felony charge of conspiracy to commit filing false documents in a last-minute deal. His plea came a day after fellow attorney Sidney Powell, who had been scheduled to go to trial alongside him, entered her own guilty plea to six misdemeanor counts.

In Chesebro's case, he was

sentenced to five years' probation and 100 hours of community service and was ordered pay \$5,000 in restitution, write an apology letter to Georgia's residents and testify truthfully at any related future trial.

The two guilty pleas are major victories for Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, who obtained the indictment in August. They allow her to avoid a lengthy trial of just two defendants — which would have given those remaining a peek at her trial strategy — and to whittle down an unwieldy pool of defendants.

Chesebro, who lives in Puerto Rico, was initially charged with felony racketeering and six other counts as part of a wide-ranging scheme to keep

the Republican president in power after he lost the 2020 election to Democrat Joe Biden. The indictment alleges Chesebro coordinated and executed a plan to have 16 Georgia Republicans sign a certificate declaring falsely that Trump won the state and declaring themselves the state's "duly elected and qualified" electors.

For prosecutors, the plea deal assures that Chesebro publicly accepts responsibility for his conduct in the case and removes the uncertainty of a trial by a jury of his peers.

It also compels him to testify about communications he had with Trump's campaign lawyers and close associates, including co-defendant Rudy Giuliani, the former New York

mayor and a Trump attorney.

Jury selection had been set to start Friday for the trial of Powell and Chesebro after each filed a demand for a speedy trial. Once Powell pleaded guilty, Chesebro had been set to continue to trial on his own.

As part of Powell's deal, she will serve six years of probation, will be fined \$6,000 and will have to write an apology letter to Georgia and its residents. She also recorded a statement for prosecutors and agreed to testify truthfully against her co-defendants at future trials.

A lower-profile defendant in the case, bail bondsman Scott Graham Hall, pleaded guilty last month to five misdemeanor charges.

Soldier who fled to N. Korea is charged with desertion

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An Army private who fled to North Korea before being returned home to the United States last month has been detained by the U.S. military, two officials said Thursday night, and is facing charges including desertion and possessing sexual images of a child.

The eight counts against Pvt. Travis King are detailed in a charging document seen by The Associated Press.

Desertion is a very serious charge and can result in imprisonment for as much as three years. King is also accused of kicking and punching other officers last year, unlawfully possessing alcohol, making a false statement and possessing a video of a child engaged in sexual activity. That allegation dates to July 10, the same day he was released from a South Korean prison where he had served nearly two months on assault charges.

One week later, King, 23, ran

across the heavily fortified border from South Korea and became the first American detained in North Korea in nearly five years. He was set to be sent to Fort Bliss, Texas, where he could have faced potential additional disciplinary actions and discharge.

Officials said King was taken to the airport and escorted as far as customs. But instead of getting on the plane, he left and later joined a civilian tour of the Korean border village of Panmunjom. He ran across the border, which is lined with guards and often crowded with tourists, in the afternoon.

After about two months, Pyongyang abruptly announced that it would expel him. He was flown on Sept. 28 to an Air Force base in Texas.

His release from North Korea was aided by Swedish officials who took King to the Chinese border, where he was met by U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns, the Swedish am-

bassador to China and at least one U.S. Defense Department official. He was then flown to a U.S. military base in South Korea before heading to the U.S.

Once back in the U.S., King was taken to Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston outside San Antonio. He went through what the military describes as a “reintegration” process that included medical exams, psychological assessments and debriefings. And he was allowed to meet with family.

Because he had willingly run into enemy hands, he legally was kept in military custody throughout that process.

At the time, officials said they did not know exactly why North Korea decided to let King go, but suspected Pyongyang determined that as a low-ranking serviceman he had no real value in terms of either leverage or information. King joined the Army in January 2021, and served as a cavalry scout.

Families may have received fake ashes

AP/Report for America

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — A Colorado funeral home where 189 decaying bodies were discovered this month appears to have fabricated cremation records and may have given families fake ashes, according to information gathered by The Associated Press from customers and crematories.

The families that did business with Return to Nature Funeral Home fear their loved ones weren’t cremated at all and instead could be among the yet unidentified corpses authorities discovered after responding to a report of an “abhorrent smell.”

“My mom’s last wish was for her remains to be scattered in a place she loved, not rotting away in a building,” said Tanya Wilson, who believes the ashes she spread in Hawaii in August were fake. “Any peace that we had, thinking that we honored her wishes, you know, was just completely ripped away from us.”

Return to Nature gave Wilson’s family and some others death certificates stating their loved ones’ remains had been handled by one of two crematories.

But those businesses told the AP they were not performing cremations for Return to Nature on the dates included on the certificates.

Calls and texts sent to numbers listed for Return to Nature and owners Jon and Carie Hallford have gone unanswered since the discovery of the decaying bodies. No arrests have been made.

Law enforcement officials have said Return to Nature’s owners were cooperating as investigators sought to determine any criminal wrongdoing.

Pig heart transplant recipient hits milestone

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It’s been a month since a Maryland man became the second person to receive a transplanted heart from a pig — and hospital video released Friday shows he’s working hard to recover.

Lawrence Faucette was dying from heart failure and ineligible for a traditional heart transplant when doctors at the University of Maryland School of Medicine offered the highly experimental surgery.

In the first glimpse of Faucette provided since the Sept. 20 transplant, hospital video shows physical therapist Chris Wells urging him to push through a pedaling exercise to regain his

strength.

“That’s going to be tough but I’ll work it out,” Faucette, 58, replied, breathing heavily but giving a smile.

The Maryland team last year performed the world’s first transplant of a heart from a genetically altered pig into another dying man. David Bennett survived just two months before that heart failed, for reasons that aren’t completely clear although signs of a pig virus later were found inside the organ. Lessons from that first experiment led to changes before this second try, including better virus testing.

Attempts at animal-to-human organ transplants — called xe-

notransplants — have failed for decades, as people’s immune systems immediately destroyed the foreign tissue. Now scientists are trying again using pigs genetically modified to make their organs more humanlike.

In Friday’s hospital video, Faucette’s doctors said the pig heart has shown no sign of rejection.

“His heart is doing everything on its own,” said Dr. Muhammad Mohiuddin, the Maryland team’s cardiac xenotransplantation chief.

A hospital spokeswoman said Faucette has been able to stand and physical therapists are helping him gain strength needed to attempt walking.

Lawrence, Jaguars hold off the Saints

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Jacksonville quarterback Trevor Lawrence was playing with a sprained left knee, and the visiting Jaguars hurt their own cause with turnovers and penalties.

They were still good enough to overcome that and pull out a dramatic victory that extended their winning streak to four games.

Travis Etienne ran for two touchdowns, Foyesade Oluokun returned an interception for a score, and Christian Kirk's late 44-yard touchdown after a short catch over the middle lifted the Jaguars to a 31-24 victory over the New Orleans Saints on Thursday night.

"I don't think I've run that fast since college," said Kirk, a former Texas A&M star, whose late score made up for his lost fumble in the first half. "That was some vintage stuff. I'm glad I was able to do it in that moment."

Lawrence returned from the knee injury that forced him out of the final minutes of a victory

over Indianapolis on Sunday and wound up leading Jacksonville (5-2) with 59 yards rushing.

"It's crazy how you have something like that going on and don't plan on moving a lot, and you end up running the ball more than you usually do," Lawrence said. "It felt pretty good. It didn't bother me too much and definitely didn't set it back. That was the goal, to play, find a way to win the game and not set it back."

Lawrence also completed 20 of 29 passes for 204 yards and one TD to help the Jags secure their best start since opening 5-2 in 2007.

After Kirk's touchdown broke a 24-all tie with 3:08 left, the Saints (3-4) were in position to answer when they drove inside the Jacksonville 10 in the final minute, but stalled out with four straight incomplete passes.

Derek Carr's third-down pass bounced off of tight end Foster Moreau's hands in the back of the end zone and a fourth-down timing throw to

Chris Olave along the left sideline fell incomplete.

"We're finding it hard to start fast, finding it hard to maintain, to execute sometimes and we're finding it hard to finish," said Saints running back Alvin Kamara, who gained 153 yards from scrimmage on a mix of runs and catches. "That's kind of the glaring and recurring theme."

As time ran out, Moreau, a New Orleans native in his first season back home, looked disconsolate on the bench with his head in his hands.

Teammates consoled him and later said there were too many other missed opportunities throughout the game to pin the loss on his drop.

"It doesn't come down to one play," Carr said. "There's so many things that we could have done."

Jacksonville gave the Saints numerous chances to stay in the game, losing two fumbles in the first half and committing untimely penalties throughout the game.

It almost came back to haunt

them.

The Saints rallied from 24-9 down to tie the game on touchdowns by Taysom Hill on a 1-yard, fourth-down run and Michael Thomas on a 17-yard reception — the latter followed by Carr's pass to Kamara for a 2-point conversion.

Carr finished 33 of 55 for 301 yards, and New Orleans again gained Jacksonville 407 yards to 330, but the Saints again struggled to finish promising drives in the end zone after losing in a similar fashion in Week 6 at Houston.

After practicing on a limited basis this week and being listed as questionable, Lawrence completed five of his first six passes for 60 yards and even scrambled for 9 yards during a game-opening touchdown drive that ended with Etienne's 2-yard run.

"We have to do a better job of not letting the freakin' quarterback scramble," Saints coach Dennis Allen said, calling Lawrence's improvised runs a "black eye on the whole thing."

Source: Raiders QB Garoppolo won't play at Chicago

Associated Press

HENDERSON, Nev. — Raiders quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo will not play Sunday because of a back injury when Las Vegas visits the Chicago Bears, a person with knowledge of the situation said Thursday.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the

Raiders have not announced Garoppolo's playing status.

Either 15-year veteran Brian Hoyer or rookie Aidan O'Connell will start for Las Vegas. Hoyer played the second half of Sunday's 21-17 victory over the New England Patriots when Garoppolo was injured. O'Connell, however, started and played the entire game when the Raiders lost at

the Los Angeles Chargers 24-17 on Oct. 1.

Coach Josh McDaniels told reporters on Wednesday that the week of practice would determine the starter should Garoppolo not play.

"There are a few balls in the air right now that we're going to have to sort through," McDaniels said.

Garoppolo didn't practice

Wednesday, a strong sign he wouldn't be ready to face the Bears. However, tests showed there was no internal damage, and McDaniels expressed optimism Monday that Garoppolo wouldn't be out long term.

Garoppolo has completed 68% of his passes for 1,079 yards with seven touchdowns and a league-high eight interceptions.

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Marte delivers as D-backs top Phillies

Associated Press

PHOENIX — More than 15 minutes after the game, Ketel Marte stood at his clubhouse locker, gulping water while trying to finally catch his breath after delivering the Arizona Diamondbacks' latest clutch post-season moment.

"After my hit, I sprinted so hard," Marte said, shaking his head.

Marte capped a three-hit afternoon with a walk-off single in the ninth, rookie Brandon Pfaadt pitched 5½ scoreless innings and the Diamondbacks closed to 2-1 in the NL Championship Series by rallying to beat the Philadelphia Phillies 2-1 on Thursday.

On the verge of falling behind 3-0 in the best-of-seven matchup, Arizona tied the score on Lourdes Gurriel Jr.'s RBI double in the seventh.

Gurriel opened the ninth with a leadoff walk against Craig Kimbrel, stole second and took third on Pavin Smith's infield single.

Gurriel was thrown out at the plate by shortstop Trea Turner on Emmanuel Rivera's hard-hit grounder as the Phillies played the infield in. Geraldo Perdomo walked after falling behind 1-2 in the count and Marte — one of the few Diamondbacks who has looked comfortable at the plate this series — hit a liner that fell in front of center fielder Johan Rojas, sending the D-backs onto the field in celebration.

"I felt like I could make some pitches to get us out of it," Kimbrel said. "Sometimes you get them. Some days you don't. Today just wasn't that day."

Marte said he wasn't nervous during his at-bat. The 30-year-old is hitting .382 with four doubles, two homers and five RBIs in eight postseason games this year and has a 12-game postseason hitting streak.

"I'm not a pressure guy," Marte said. "I know what kind of hitter I am."

It was the third postseason walk-off win for the Diamondbacks after series-winning hits

by Tony Womack in the 2001 Division Series and Luis Gonzalez in 2001 World Series.

Defending NL champion Philadelphia had opened the post-season 7-1 and outscored the Diamondbacks 15-3 over two games at Citizens Bank Park, hitting six homers.

Bryce Harper put the Phillies ahead in the seventh when he scored on Ryan Thompson's wild pitch.

"We are here at their place," Harper said. "They played a really good game today. I thought both sides had good defense, good pitching. Just got to move on as soon as possible."

After throwing 4½ scoreless innings against the Los Angeles Dodgers in the NLDS clincher, Pfaadt struck out nine and allowed two hits against the Phillies with a mid-90s fastball and a nifty sweeper that had hitters chasing. The 25-year-old right-hander became the first pitcher in postseason history to have two straight outings giving up no runs and no walks.

"It was fun — I had a lot of things working," Pfaadt said. "I was able to hone in on a few things, execute the way I wanted and get some big outs."

Pfaadt combined with Andrew Saalfrank, Thompson, Kevin Ginkel and Paul Sewald on a three-hitter. Sewald, who got the win, stranded Harper on second in the ninth when Alec Bohm took a called third strike.

Philadelphia's Ranger Suárez gave up three hits and struck out seven in 5½ innings, leaving after Marte's leadoff double in the sixth. Suarez's 0.94 ERA is the lowest in a pitcher's first eight career postseason appearances.

After nearly taking a 3-0 series lead, the Phillies planned to regroup.

"It could have gone either way, you know," manager Rob Thomson said. "What are you going to do? I'm not going to think about it that way. I'm going to think about coming in here tomorrow and getting ready and getting ready to compete."

Astros pull even in ALCS with 10-3 win over Rangers

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Houston manager Dusty Baker and third baseman Alex Bregman really have no explanation for why the Astros have been so good in that other retractable-roof stadium in Texas.

"I have no clue, to be honest with you," Bregman said. "But I think the focus has been really good in that clubhouse."

They do know the 250-mile trip north and another big-scoring road game against the Rangers has pulled Houston even in the AL Championship Series.

José Abreu hit a three-run homer right after Yordan Alvarez's go-ahead sacrifice fly, and the Astros rolled to a 10-3 victory in Game 4 on Thursday night. They led 3-0 only four batters

into the game, and responded immediately after Texas tied it on Corey Seager's opposite-field homer in the third inning.

Adolis García also homered for the wild-card Rangers, who have dropped two games in a row at home after starting this postseason with seven consecutive wins — six on the road. That included sweeps of the AL's two winningest teams, Baltimore and Tampa Bay.

"Nobody thought it was going to be easy," Texas manager Bruce Bochy said. "(The Astros) have played very well in this ballpark. We need to change that."

Game 5 is Friday afternoon at Globe Life Field, where the defending World Series champion Astros are 8-1 this season. The

home team has yet to lead in the series, which returns to Houston for Game 6 on Sunday night.

"They keep asking me that same question," Baker said about his team's success in Arlington. "I've got the same answer: I don't know."

Jose Altuve had three hits in his 100th career postseason game and scored three runs for a record sixth time. Alvarez drove in three, giving him 13 RBIs already this postseason, and Chas McCormick added a two-run homer.

"It makes it even more special because we won," said Altuve, the seventh big leaguer to play in 100 postseason games. "Nothing's done yet, but to be able to get the opportunity to come back and tie the series ...

it's really important for us."

The Astros have outscored Texas 74-32 in winning their last seven games at Globe Life. They won 8-5 in Game 3 of the first postseason series between the in-state AL West rivals.

"They crush the ball here, man. I don't have an answer other than that," Rangers first baseman Nathaniel Lowe said. "Maybe it's too nice in the visiting clubhouse and we need to maybe switch up the spread, leave something uncooked a little bit."

AL West champion Houston has won 18 of its past 21 road games, including a three-game sweep during the first week of September when the Astros homered 16 times and outscored the Rangers 39-10.

Golden Knights get 5th straight victory

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Jack Eichel broke a tie on a power play with 4:36 left and the Stanley Cup champion Vegas Golden Knights beat the Winnipeg Jets 5-3 on Thursday night for their fifth straight victory to open the season.

After Eichel gave Vegas a 4-3 lead, Nicolas Roy capped the scoring with an empty-netter with 1:03 remaining.

Jonathan Marchessault, Brett Howden and Alec Martinez also scored for the Golden Knights. Logan Thompson stopped 36 shots.

Alex Iafallo scored twice for Winnipeg and Cole Perfetti added a goal. Laurent Brossoit made 22 saves.

Panthers 3, Maple Leafs 1: Kevin Stenlund and Oliver Ekman-Larsson scored their first Florida goals, Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 29 shots and the Panthers won their home opener, beating Toronto in a playoff rematch.

Stenlund scored with 2:52 left in the first, Ekman-Larsson made it 2-0 with seven seconds left in the opening period and that was enough for Bobrovsky. Sam Reinhart added a short-handed empty-net goal as time expired.

Mitch Marner scored his first goal of the season, coming on the power play, midway through the second period for Toronto. Ilya Samsonov made 21 saves.

Stars 3, Ducks 2: Leo Carlsson scored a goal in the third period while making an impressive NHL debut in Anaheim's loss to visiting Dallas.

Joe Pavelski had a goal and an assist for the Stars, and Mika Heiskanen got credit for the tiebreaking goal with 13:13 to play when Ducks defenseman Cam Fowler kicked a centering pass under goalie John Gibson.

Carlsson, the 18-year-old

Swede picked second overall by Anaheim in June, hit the ice to cheers from a Honda Center crowd eager for the start of a new era after five straight non-playoff seasons.

The cheers became a standing ovation when he confidently fired home his first goal on the rush off Troy Terry's pass.

Terry had a goal and an assist, and Gibson stopped 21 shots. Roope Hintz scored a power-play goal and Jake Oettinger made 27 saves for Dallas.

Predators 4, Rangers 1: Cole Smith scored twice in the first period to help visiting Nashville beat New York.

Ryan O'Reilly and Filip Forsberg also scored for Nashville, and Juuse Saros, starting for fifth time in five games this season, made 23 saves.

Adam Fox scored for the Rangers. Igor Shesterkin, starting for the fourth time in four games, was pulled in the second period after giving up four goals on 18 shots.

Jonathan Quick, signed to be the backup in the offseason, stopped all nine shots he faced in his season debut.

Bruins 3, Sharks 1: Brad Marchand and James Van Riemsdyk scored 21 seconds apart late in the first period and visiting Boston won its third straight game to open the season, beating San Jose.

David Pastrnak scored for the fourth time this season and Linus Ullmark made 26 saves to get the Bruins off to a good start on their four-game trip.

The Sharks wrapped up a season-opening, four-game homestand with another loss.

San Jose earned only one point in the four games against reigning division champions, losing in a shootout to Colorado on Saturday night.

Coyotes 6, Blues 2: St. Louis product Clayton Keller and Nick Schmaltz each had a goal and an assist, sparking visiting Arizona past the Blues.

Nick Bjugstad, Jason Zucker and Sean Durzi scored on the power play for Arizona, Michael Carcone added a goal and Connor Ingram stopped 24 shots.

The Coyotes finished a season-opening trip 2-2.

Jakub Vrana and Sammy Blais scored for St. Louis.

Lightning 4, Canucks 3: Nikita Kucherov scored twice and host Tampa Bay beat Vancouver to end a three-game winless streak.

Nicholas Paul and Michael Eyssimont also scored, and Jonas Johansson made 26 saves for the Lightning.

Steven Stamkos had an assist after missing the previous two games because of an undisclosed lower-body injury.

Thatcher Demko stopped 31 shots for Vancouver, and Brock Boeser, Tyler Myers and J.T. Miller scored.

Kraken 7, Hurricanes 4: Vince Dunn and Oliver Bjorkstrand each had a goal and two assists and host Seattle won for the first time this season, beating Carolina.

Yanni Gourde, Jaden Schwartz and Pierre-Edouard Bellemare scored in a three-goal first period for the Kraken. Seattle was winless in its first four games, earning only one point in the standings.

Jared McCann and Tye Karlye scored 21 seconds apart midway through the third after Carolina pulled to 4-3. Bjorkstrand added an empty-netter with 3:09 left.

Joey Daccord made 33 saves for Seattle. Seth Jarvis scored twice, and Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Jesper Fast also connected for Carolina.

Avalanche 4, Blackhawks 0: Logan O'Connor scored a

short-handed goal for the second straight game, Alexandar Georgiev stopped 18 shots and Colorado beat Chicago in its home opener.

Ryan Johansen, Devon Toews and Nathan MacKinnon also scored to help the Avalanche improve to 4-0.

Georgiev was sharp in posting his 14th shutout.

Colorado kept top pick Connor Bedard in check.

Flyers 4, Oilers 1: Cam Atkinson scored twice and Sean Walker added his first goal with Philadelphia, helping the Flyers beat visiting Edmonton.

Atkinson missed all of last season because of a neck injury. Walker had his first goal since February, ending a 25-game drought.

Joel Farabee opened the scoring in the first period for Philadelphia.

Carter Hart made 22 saves. Zach Hyman scored for Edmonton.

Kings 7, Wild 3: Pierre-Luc Dubois scored twice in a 12-second span in the first period and Cam Talbot stopped 29 shots in visiting Los Angeles' victory over Minnesota.

Carl Grundstrom, Vladislav Gavrikov and Trevor Moore also scored and Adrian Kempe and Blake Lizotte had empty-net goals.

Connor Dewar, Kirill Kaprizov and Joel Eriksson Ek scored for Minnesota.

Flames 4, Sabres 3: Adam Ruzicka scored the go-ahead goal on a bad-angle shot 4:35 into the third period and Calgary beat Buffalo.

Jonathan Huberdeau, Blake Coleman and Walker Duehr also scored, and Calgary improved to 1-1-1 three games into a five-game Eastern trip. Dan Vladar stopped 24 shots in his season debut.

Tage Thompson, JJ Peterka and Erik Johnson scored for the Sabres.

LeBron is redefining longevity in NBA

Associated Press

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. — LeBron James is already the defining figure of this basketball era with his strength, skills, smarts and relentless will to win.

The Los Angeles Lakers superstar now seems determined to redefine how long an elite player can stay on top.

James begins his 21st NBA season next week with his 39th birthday looming in December, yet the top scorer in league history shows shockingly few signs of decline from his peerless standard of performance. From a statistical standpoint, James' prolific production hasn't waned in any significant way for two full decades.

James admits he can feel the years. For everybody else, they're almost impossible to see.

"I feel different. I'm not a 21-year-old, that's for sure," James said with a laugh. "Feels a little bit different getting out of bed every day. But as far as my energy level, I feel pretty good."

From Tom Brady to Kelly Slater, modern athletes across all sports have rewritten the traditional guidelines around age

and decline in the 21st century. Few have ever done it like James, whose ascent to the throne of the NBA's oldest player caught his Lakers teammates by surprise.

"He sure doesn't play like it," Austin Reaves said. "He's still out here making us look bad in practice."

James makes this unprecedented NBA longevity look relatively easy, yet he also smiles and deflects when asked about his endgame. He says he doesn't know how long he wants to play, and he admits he thought hard about walking away after last season before he decided to return to the Lakers while even keeping an eye on the Paris Olympics next summer.

"I don't know what the end is going to look like," he said. "I have no idea."

James is the sixth player in league history to make it into a 21st season, but nobody has ever played this many years at James' current level of performance — with the caveat that James got a jump on his career by entering the league directly out of high school, of course.

That difference gives him

more NBA seasons at a younger age, but also more wear and tear on his body from competition against other grown men. It's still increasingly clear that nobody has ever stayed as good as LeBron for as long as LeBron, who averaged 28.9 points, 8.3 rebounds and 6.8 assists per game last season.

The other five NBA players to reach 21 seasons — Robert Parish, Kevin Willis, Dirk Nowitzki, Vince Carter and Kevin Garnett — were all markedly diminished from their peaks. Only Carter played a 22nd season, but James currently seems capable of obliterating that barrier if he wishes.

While nearly all NBA players who lasted even to their mid-30s took precipitous declines in effectiveness before hanging up their sneakers, the former teenage phenomenon from Akron is still an elite, All-Star-caliber performer on a strong team. The Lakers reached the Western Conference finals under James' leadership last season, and they look capable of contending for his fifth title.

While James' merciless work ethic is the stuff of NBA legend,

he also cites more holistic reasons for his ability to keep up in a sport that demands youthlike athleticism now more than ever.

"It's just staying focused and being passionate about the purity of the game," James said. "Understanding the ones that came before me, respecting the history of the game, and also understanding that if you want to be great at something, you've got to put in the work. There's no substitution for work. I put in the work on the court, off the court."

Only injuries significantly slowed James during the end of his second decade in professional basketball. James has missed 80 games over the past three seasons, sitting out roughly one-third of the Lakers' regular-season contests.

He was slowed last spring by an injured tendon in his right foot, but he still extended his streak to a jaw-dropping 282 playoff games without an absence.

James and the Lakers are working harder than ever to keep him healthy this season — and for who knows how many more years to come.

NCAA probes allegations of sign-stealing by Michigan

Associated Press

Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh denied any knowledge or involvement in plotting to steal opponents' play-calling signals by sending representatives to their games and said he would fully cooperate with an NCAA investigation into the allegations against his program.

"I do not have any knowledge or information regarding the University of Michigan football program illegally stealing signals, nor have I directed any staff member or others to participate in an off-campus scouting assignment," Harbaugh said Thursday in a statement. "I

have no awareness of anyone on our staff having done that or having directed that action."

The Big Ten also announced it had been informed of the investigation. But the conference provided no further details, only to say that it had notified Michigan's upcoming opponents.

The second-ranked Wolverines (7-0), who started their season with Harbaugh serving a university-imposed three-game suspension for a still unresolved NCAA infractions case, play at Michigan State on Saturday.

"I want to personally assure

you that U-M Athletics will offer its complete cooperation to the NCAA in this matter," Michigan athletic director Warde Manuel said Thursday. "At the University of Michigan, all of us are committed to the highest standards of ethics and integrity for all members of our community. This is the same expectation I have of all coaches, staff, and student-athletes."

Michigan is coming off two straight playoff appearances under Harbaugh and is currently tied with No. 1 Georgia as the odds-on favorite to win the national title, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

The NCAA does not have rules specifically against stealing signs, but it does prohibit in-person advanced scouting of opponents and using electronic equipment to record an opponents' signals. There are also bylaws prohibiting unsportsmanlike or unethical activities.

The NCAA had no comment, and the conference offered little more.

"The Big Ten Conference considers the integrity of competition to be of utmost importance and will continue to monitor the investigation," the league said in a statement.