

Philippines: Vessels hit by Chinese ships

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — A Chinese coast guard ship and an accompanying vessel rammed a Philippine coast guard ship and a military-run supply boat Sunday off a contested shoal, Philippine officials said, in an encounter that heightened fears of an armed conflict in the disputed South China Sea.

A top Philippine security official told The Associated Press there were no injuries among the Filipino crew members and an assessment of the damage to both vessels was underway.

The official said that the two incidents near Second Thomas Shoal, where China has repeatedly tried to isolate a Philippine marine outpost, could have been worse if the vessels were not able to maneuver rapidly away from the Chinese ships. The official spoke on condition of anonymity due to a lack of authority to publicly discuss the matter.

China's sweeping territorial claims in the South China Sea, including over islands closer to Philippine shore, have raised tensions and brought in the United States, a longtime treaty ally of the Philippines, into the fray.

The U.S. ambassador to Manila, Mary-Kay Carlson, wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that "the United States condemns the PRC's latest disruption of a legal Philippine resup-

ply mission to Ayungin shoal, putting the lives of Filipino service members at risk."

She used the initials for China's formal name, the People's Republic of China, and the name the Philippines uses for Second Thomas Shoal.

She added that Washington was standing with its allies to help protect Philippine sovereignty and to support a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

The Chinese coast guard said the Philippine vessels "trespassed" into what it said were Chinese waters "without authorization" despite repeated radio warnings, prompting its ships to stop them. It blamed the Philippine vessels for causing the collisions.

"The Philippine side's behavior seriously violates the international rules on avoiding collisions at sea and threatens the navigation safety of our vessels," the Chinese coast guard said in a statement posted on its website.

The Chinese authorities said that they were stopping Philippine ships that carried "illegal construction" materials.

A Philippine government task force dealing with the South China Sea said the collisions occurred as two Philippine supply boats escorted by two Philippine coast guard ships were heading to deliver food and other supplies to the military outpost that has been under a Chinese blockade.

The actions of the Chinese ships were "in utter blatant disregard of the United Nations Charter, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea" and international regulations that aim to prevent sea collisions, it said.

Near-collisions have happened frequently as Philippine vessels deliver supplies to Filipino marines and sailors stationed on the disputed shoal.

But this was the first time Philippine officials have reported their vessels being hit by China's ships.

In the past, Chinese officials have played down claims that the Chinese vessels enforcing Beijing's territorial claims were in fact paramilitary ships disguised as fishing boats.

Despite the Chinese efforts, one of the two boats managed to maneuver and deliver supplies to the small contingent stationed on board a marooned warship, the BRP Sierra Madre, the task force said.

The South China Sea is one of the world's busiest trade routes. The disputes involve China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei, and are regarded as a flashpoint in a delicate fault line in U.S.-China rivalry in the region.

In early August, a Chinese coast guard ship used a water cannon against one of two Philippine supply boats to prevent it from approaching Second Thomas Shoal.

US orders more troops to prep for Mideast deployment

By J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military is telling more troops to prepare to deploy to the Middle East and is sending a second aircraft carrier and additional air defense assets to the region as Israel prepares for a ground invasion of Gaza.

The moves are due to "recent escalations by Iran and its proxy forces," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in an online statement Saturday.

"These steps will bolster regional deterrence efforts, increase force protection for U.S. forces in the region, and assist in the defense of Israel," Austin said in the statement.

The defense secretary said he ordered an unspecified number of troops to receive "prepare to deploy" orders to prepare them to be ready to leave quickly if needed. The Pentagon had said Tuesday that 2,000 U.S. troops from a variety of units have been giv-

ing a prepare to deploy order.

The U.S. will be sending air defense assets including a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery and additional Patriot battalions to bases in the region, Austin said Saturday.

Rocket and drone attacks have targeted U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria, as militant groups respond in the aftermath of Israel's military response to the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks.

The attacks led to the death of a U.S. defense contractor in Iraq on Wednesday due to a heart problem that happened while scrambling for cover during an alert warning, said Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon's top spokesman.

U.S. troops also received "minor injuries" in the attacks, which targeted bases with U.S. troops in Baghdad, northern and western Iraq, and eastern Syria.

NATO sends planes, ships to Baltic Sea

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Drones, reconnaissance planes and ships have been dispatched to the Baltic Sea, a move that comes in response to recently discovered damage to critical undersea infrastructure, NATO said last week.

“NATO will continue to adapt its maritime posture in the Baltic Sea and will take all necessary steps to keep allies safe,” NATO spokesman Dylan White said Thursday in a statement.

The vulnerability of undersea gas pipelines and communication cables to sabotage is a growing NATO concern. Alliance officials have warned that Russia could target such infrastructure to gain leverage against allied countries providing security assistance to Ukraine.

On Tuesday, those concerns were brought into focus when Sweden reported partial damage to an undersea telecommunications cable connected to Estonia. Authorities suspect the damage occurred at the same time an undersea gas pipeline

and telecommunications cable running from Finland to Estonia was found to be damaged 2 weeks ago.

The incidents remain under investigation and senior NATO officials have refrained from blaming Russia so far.

“If it is proven to be a deliberate attack on NATO-critical infrastructure, then this will be, of course, serious, but it will also be met by a united and determined response,” NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said last week during a meeting of allied defense ministers.

NATO said it will more closely monitor an area that already had been under surveillance since the 2022 sabotage of Nord Stream 1, a Baltic Sea pipeline that delivered natural gas from Russia to Germany.

Maritime patrol aircraft, NATO AWACS planes, drones and a fleet of four minehunter vessels are part of the enhanced surveillance effort.

“We continue to monitor the situation closely, and we remain in close contact with our allies Estonia and Finland, and our partner Sweden,” White said.

Air Force Reserve crew honored for Afghan exit aid

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

An Air Force Reserve crew who flew through gunfire and helped manage the chaos at the Kabul airport during the U.S. evacuation from Afghanistan in 2021 were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The six reservists from the 446th Airlift Wing at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., were some of the last of 96 active-duty and Reserve airmen authorized to receive the award for Operation Allies Refuge.

The 17-day mission flew 124,334 people out of Kabul as Taliban rebels closed in on the Afghanistan capital. It was the largest evacuation of noncombatants in U.S. history, according to the Defense Department.

The six reservists in the crew were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for their extraordinary aerial achievements during the evacuation. In addition, each was awarded a “C” applied to the medal, a “device” established in 2016 for “exceptionally meritorious service or achievement performed under combat conditions.”

Air Force Brig. Gen. Derin Durham, 4th Air Force commander, presented the medals

Monday at Lewis-McChord.

Medals were awarded to three pilots: Maj. Brandon Dubuisson, Maj. Amit Patel and Capt. Mitchell Williams. Medals also went to three loadmasters: 2nd Lt. Zachary Ward, Master Sgt. Jodi Signer and Tech. Sgt. Brian Sinden.

The Air Force said the awards were specifically for their mission on Aug. 26, 2021, when they flew a C-17 Globemaster III from Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait to Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul.

The crew was ordered into the air soon after receiving a briefing that a Taliban attack at an airport checkpoint had killed 170 civilians and 13 U.S. service members.

The crew flew into Kabul with 23,000 pounds of supplies for troops and the relief efforts, a 13-member aeromedical team, and caskets for U.S. service members killed at the checkpoint, whose remains would be flown home.

“The crew stood up when their nation called, as this wing always does,” said Dubuisson, aircraft commander on the mission. “I am so proud and honored to have flown with you guys and call you friends and family.”

Japanese V-22 Osprey makes its 1st landing on Okinawa

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND MARI HIGA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A Japanese V-22 Osprey landed on Okinawa for the first time Thursday to train with the U.S. military, despite a request from the prefectural government to exclude the tiltrotor aircraft.

The Ground Self-Defense Force Osprey touched down at New Ishigaki Airport on Ishigaki Island, 160 miles east of Tai-

wan, around 10:50 a.m., a Ground Staff Office spokesman wrote in an emailed statement Friday. It first made stops at Ground Self-Defense Force Vice Camps Takayubaru and Setouchi in Kumamoto and Kagoshima prefectures, respectively.

The tiltrotor took on simulated casualties before flying back to Takayubaru at 1:10 p.m., he said. The Ground Self-Defense Force plans to repeat the evac-

uation drill again on Tuesday.

The drill was part of Resolute Dragon, an annual multidomain exercise with the U.S. military that kicked off Oct. 15 and runs through Oct. 31.

After the Osprey landed at Ishigaki, Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki took to X, formerly known as Twitter, to express disappointment that his request had not been granted. The prefecture asked the Okinawa Defense Bureau, which represents

Japan’s Defense Ministry on the island, to refrain from flying V-22s to the prefecture on Sept. 13 and again on Tuesday.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno responded that Ospreys are “essential” for moving Self-Defense Force personnel to remote islands and that every effort was made to minimize impacts on the local population, according to a video on Prime Minister Fumio Kishida’s website.

Israel strikes Gaza, Syria and West Bank

Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli warplanes struck targets across Gaza overnight and into Sunday, as well as two airports in Syria and a mosque in the occupied West Bank allegedly used by militants, as the 2-week-old war with Hamas threatened to spiral into a broader conflict.

Israel has traded fire with Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group on a near-daily basis since the war began, and tensions are soaring in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where Israeli forces have battled militants in refugee camps and carried out two airstrikes in recent days.

For days, Israel has seemed to be on the verge of launching a ground offensive in Gaza as part of its response to Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 rampage. Tanks and tens of thousands of troops have massed at the border, and Israeli leaders have spoken of an undefined next stage in operations.

But the military acknowledges there are still hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians in

northern Gaza despite a sweeping evacuation order, which would complicate any ground attack. And the risk of triggering a broader war with Hamas' allies in Lebanon and Syria might also give them pause.

On Saturday, 20 trucks of aid were allowed to enter Gaza from Egypt through the Rafah crossing, the first time anything has gone into the territory since Israel imposed a complete siege two weeks ago.

Aid workers said it was far too little to address the spiraling humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where half the territory's 2.3 million people have fled their homes. Hospitals packed with patients and displaced people are running low on medical supplies and fuel for generators, forcing doctors to perform surgeries with sewing needles, using kitchen vinegar as disinfectant, and without anesthesia.

Palestinians sheltering in U.N.-run schools and tent camps are running low on food and drinking dirty water.

The territory's sole power plant

shut down over a week ago, causing a territory-wide blackout and crippling water and sanitation systems. The U.N. humanitarian agency said cases of chicken pox, scabies and diarrhea are on the rise because of the lack of clean water.

Gaza's Hamas-run Interior Ministry reported heavy Israeli airstrikes across the territory overnight into Sunday, including southern areas where Israel had told Palestinians to seek refuge. The ministry said that among the sites hit were homes and a cafe in the south where dozens of residents had sought shelter.

Israel's military has said it is striking Hamas members and installations, but does not target civilians. Palestinian militants have continued daily rocket attacks, with Hamas saying it targeted Tel Aviv early Sunday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convened his Cabinet late Saturday to discuss the expected ground invasion, Israeli media reported. A military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel

Hagari, said Israel planned to step up airstrikes starting Saturday as preparation for the "next stages of the war."

Israel has vowed to crush Hamas but has given few details about what it envisions for Gaza if it succeeds. Yifat Shasha-Biton, a Cabinet minister, told Channel 13 TV there was broad consensus in the government that there will have to be a "buffer zone" in Gaza to keep Palestinians away from the border.

An Israeli ground assault would likely lead to a dramatic escalation in casualties on both sides. More than 1,400 people in Israel have been killed in the war — mostly civilians slain during the initial Hamas attack.

At least 210 people were captured and dragged back to Gaza, including men, women, children and older adults. Two Americans were released on Friday.

More than 4,600 people have been killed in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry. That includes the disputed toll from a hospital explosion.

Freed teenage hostage's father says she is 'doing very good'

Associated Press

EVANSTON, Ill. — The father of freed American teen hostage Natalie Raanan said Friday she's doing well following two weeks in captivity after she and her mother were abducted in Israel by Hamas and held in Gaza.

Uri Raanan of Illinois told The Associated Press that he spoke to his daughter Friday by telephone. "She's doing good. She's doing very good," said Uri Raanan, who lives in the Chicago suburbs. "I'm in tears, and I feel very, very good."

The 71-year-old said he saw on the news earlier Friday that an American mother and daughter would be released by Hamas, and he spent the day hoping that meant his daughter and her mother, Judith Raanan.

Knowing Natalie may be able to celebrate her 18th birthday

next week at home with family and friends feels "wonderful. The best news," her father said.

Ben Raanan, Natalie's brother, said before her abduction he and his sister had spoken of getting matching tattoos to mark her birthday. Instead, he got a tattoo this week in her honor, incorporating their names along with their brother's name.

The family's text message chain sharing updates on Friday moved from tentative hope to outright celebration, tempered by an awareness that other families still are living in fear for their loved ones, Ben Raanan told The Associated Press at his home in Denver.

"When I see her again, I think there aren't going to be words to express what's going on," he said. "It's just going to be like this intense hug that is bigger than

words and bigger than what we could actually communicate verbally."

Uri Raanan said he believes Natalie and Judith to be in transit to Tel Aviv to reunite with relatives, and that both will be back in the U.S. early next week.

An Israeli army spokesperson said the two Americans were out of the Gaza Strip and with the Israeli military. Hamas said Friday it released them for humanitarian reasons in an agreement with the Qatari government.

They were the first hostages to be released since Hamas militants, according to Israel, abducted roughly 200 people during their Oct. 7 rampage.

President Joe Biden was among the many celebrating the news that the Raanans had been freed.

"I am overjoyed that they will

soon be reunited with their family, who has been wracked with fear," Biden said in Washington. The president spoke Friday with Judith and Natalie and "relayed that they will have the full support of the U.S. government as they recover from this terrible ordeal," the White House said.

"I just wanted to say thank you for your services to Israel," Natalie told the president. Judith told him they were in good health.

Uri Raanan said late Friday in a short news conference that he spoke with his daughter for only a few emotional minutes and that they didn't talk about what she and her mother experienced in the past two weeks.

"They look good and sound good," he said, adding that when he sees his daughter he plans to hug her and kiss her. "It's going to be the best day of my life."

Hurricane Norma makes landfall near Los Cabos

Associated Press

CABO SAN LUCAS, Mexico — Hurricane Norma came ashore near the Pacific resort of Los Cabos at the southern tip of Mexico's Baja California Peninsula on Saturday afternoon. Hours later, Hurricane Tammy made landfall on the Caribbean island of Barbuda. The storms were each Category 1 hurricanes when they hit.

There was a threat of heavy rainfall and flash flooding as Norma moved into mainland Mexico early Sunday, the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami reported at 3 a.m. ET.

Norma was centered about 145 miles west of Culiacan, Mexico, and about 105 miles

south-southwest of Los Mochis, Mexico, moving north-northeast at 7 mph with maximum sustained winds of 60 mph. The Mexican government extended a tropical storm warning along the coast northward to Huatabampito, the center said.

Tammy came ashore Saturday night with 85 mph winds. In an update at 5 a.m. ET Sunday, the hurricane center said the storm was centered about 70 miles north-northwest of Barbuda and about 55 miles east-northeast of Anguilla. Tammy was moving north-northwest around 10 mph and hurricane warnings remained in effect for the islands of Barbuda, Anguilla, St. Martin and St. Barthel-

my, while a tropical storm warning was discontinued for Saba and St. Eustatius.

Norma, once a Category 4 hurricane, moved ashore with winds of 80 mph near el Pozo de Cota, west-northwest of Cabo San Lucas. The system later weakened to a tropical storm with 70 mph winds as it crossed the Baja California Peninsula, the center said.

Businesses in Cabo San Lucas had nailed plywood over their windows, and government personnel hung banners warning people not to try to cross gullies and stream beds after Norma regained strength and again became a major storm Friday.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said via X, formerly Twitter, that there had been no reported loss of life from the storm by Saturday night.

Authorities urged people to stay at home Saturday night. There were still families in shelters in Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo, though officials did not say how many. Around 200 people were in shelters in La Paz.

Its languid pace raised the possibility of severe flooding. Norma was expected to dump six to 12 inches of rain, with a maximum of 18 inches in places across southern Baja California and much of Sinaloa state.

Iran sentences journalists for allegedly working with US

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A court in Iran sentenced two female journalists to up to seven years in prison for “collaborating” with the United States government among other charges, local reports said. Both have been imprisoned for over a year following their coverage of the death of Mahsa Amini while in police custody in September 2022.

This is a preliminary sentencing that can be appealed in 20 days. The two journalists, Niloufar Hamed, who broke the news of Amini's death for wearing her headscarf too loosely, and Elaheh Mohammadi, who wrote

about her funeral, were sentenced to seven and six years in jail, respectively, reported the judiciary news website Mizan on Sunday.

Tehran Revolutionary Court charged them with “collaborating with the hostile American government,” “colluding against national security” and “propaganda against the system,” according to Mizan.

Hamed worked for the reformist newspaper Shargh while Mohammadi for Ham-Mihan. They were detained in September 2022.

In May, the United Nations awarded them both its premier prize for press freedom “for their commitment to truth and accountability.”

Amini's death touched off months-long protests in dozens of cities across Iran. The demonstrations posed one of the most serious challenges to the Islamic Republic since the 2009 Green Movement protests drew millions to the streets.

While nearly 100 journalists were arrested amid the demonstrations, Hamed and Mohammadi's reporting was crucial in the days after Amini's death to spread the word about the anger that followed.

Their detentions have sparked international criticism over the bloody security force crackdown that lasted months after Amini's death.

Apple supplier Foxconn subject to tax inspections in China

Associated Press

BANGKOK — Foxconn, a Fortune 500 company known globally for making Apple iPhones, was recently subjected to searches by Chinese tax authorities, according to local reports Sunday.

Foxconn, a Taiwanese-headquartered company officially registered as Hon Hai Precision Industry Co. Ltd, had its offices in Guangdong and Jiangsu provinces searched by tax officials, according to a report in

the Chinese state-run Global Times newspaper.

The Ministry of Natural Resources also inspected Foxconn offices in Henan and Hubei provinces, where the company has major factories. Foxconn employs hundreds of thousands of workers across China.

The report did not provide more details about the searches, including when they occurred or what was found.

It also quoted an expert who said that “while Taiwan-funded

enterprises, including Foxconn, are sharing in dividends from development and making remarkable progress in the mainland, they should also assume corresponding social responsibilities and play a positive role in promoting the peaceful development of cross-strait relations.”

Foxconn does the vast majority of its manufacturing in China. The company said in a statement Sunday evening that it will “actively cooperate with the rel-

evant units on the related work and operations.”

The company's founder, Terry Gou, announced in August that he would be running as a candidate in Taiwan's presidential elections, which will be held early next year. He then resigned from his seat on the board of Foxconn.

Gou is seen as a China-friendly candidate whose politics mostly align with the Kuomintang, the island's current opposition party.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Employee kills fleeing Pokemon card shoplifter

FL PEMBROKE PINES — A GameStop clerk who police say fatally shot a fleeing shoplifter has been charged with manslaughter.

Derrick Guerrero, 33, was working at the video game retailer in a Fort Lauderdale strip mall last week when a man grabbed five boxes of Pokemon Scarlet & Violet “ultra-premium” trading cards and ran toward the door, Pembroke Pines police said in a report released Wednesday. The cards retail for \$120 a box.

Guerrero pulled a handgun from his waistband and fired one shot, hitting the man in the side, police said. The shoplifter dropped the cards and ran outside to a waiting pickup truck, where a woman called police. He died three hours later at a hospital.

Police said store security cameras show the shoplifter never threatened Guerrero nor displayed any weapons.

Cops: Woman raped after getting into wrong car

MA BOSTON — A man has been charged with raping a woman who thought he was the driver she requested after leaving a Boston nightclub.

The woman told police she left the nightclub early Saturday and got into the car, believing it to be an Uber she had requested. But after she got in, the driver drove behind some buildings, put a T-shirt over the rear window and then raped her, police said in a report.

Afterward, the driver drove the woman around before drop-

ping her off near her house, police said.

Investigators said they used video surveillance and descriptions provided by the woman to identify the car.

The driver, identified as Qabel Najeeb, 29, of Worcester, was arrested and charged with rape.

County eyes federal funds to erase medical debts

MI PONTIAC — A Detroit-area county said it will use \$2 million in federal aid to erase the medical debts of thousands of residents.

Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter believes as much as \$200 million of debt could be wiped away if health care providers agree to take less money to get some delinquent bills off the books.

The county will be working with RIP Medical Debt, a national nonprofit group, that uses donations to purchase medical debts belonging to people who can’t afford them.

The money comes from a program intended to stimulate the economy and improve public health after the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Residents cannot apply for the program but will be notified if all or some of their debt has been cleared, the Detroit Free Press reported.

Police: Consulate attacker carried knife, crossbow

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A man who crashed a car at the Chinese Consulate earlier this month had a crossbow and arrows and swung a knife at officers before a police sergeant killed him, San Francisco police said Thursday, offering the first official details of

the attack.

San Francisco police showed body camera footage from the officers who responded to the Oct. 9 attack on the consulate. The footage showed the car inside the consulate’s lobby and people rushing out of a damaged door.

San Francisco Police Acting Commander Mark Im, speaking at a virtual town hall, said Zhanyuan Yang got out of his car, where police found a crossbow and arrows, and stood against a wall. Yang was covering his face with his left arm after a security guard sprayed him with pepper spray and hiding a knife in his right hand, Im said.

Im said Yang then turned toward San Francisco police Sgt. Troy Carrasco, who was the first to arrive on the scene, and a consulate security guard and made “multiple, rapid, downward swinging motions with the knife” in their direction.

Suit over transgender student policy dropped

VA RICHMOND — An attorney confirmed his firm was dropping litigation it filed last month regarding Republican Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin’s new policies on transgender students because the school board his firm sued has since adopted guidelines consistent with the governor’s.

But the firm could potentially still bring litigation in districts that are bucking the administration’s guidance, said Charles Cooper of Cooper & Kirk, which is widely known for its work on conservative legal causes.

Attorneys from the firm represented two parents who sued the Virginia Beach School Board seeking the enforcement

of Youngkin’s policies, which roll back many accommodations for transgender students urged by the previous Democratic administration.

The lawsuit was filed after a proposed Virginia Beach school board resolution to adopt the policies was introduced and failed in August. But the school board has since reconsidered, adopting policies the district says are consistent with the governor’s.

Pay raises held up in fight over diversity funding

WI MADISON — Leaders of the Republican-controlled Wisconsin Legislature withheld pay raises for Universities of Wisconsin employees while approving raises for other state workers last week in an ongoing fight over the school system’s diversity, equity and inclusion spending.

Republican Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, who co-chairs the Legislature’s employment relations committee, has promised to block pay raises for UW employees until the school system cuts its so-called DEI spending by \$32 million.

While writing the budget in June, Republicans slashed UW’s funding by \$32 million because they estimated that’s what the system’s 13 campuses put toward DEI efforts over two years. Democratic Gov. Tony Evers used his veto power to save 188 DEI positions at the university, but the funding cut remained.

The budget passed by the Legislature and signed by Evers also included pay raises for state employees of 4% this year and 2% next year.

— From wire reports



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Franklin, Penn State continue to chase elite

Associated Press

Penn State is still chasing elite under coach James Franklin.

The seventh-ranked Nittany Lions lost a seventh consecutive game to Ohio State on Saturday, needing more than 59 minutes to get into the end zone against the third-ranked Buckeyes.

Defense mostly ruled the day in the first of three games matching the Big Ten's three top-10 teams. The difference? Ohio State has All-American Marvin Harrison Jr., who set a career high with 11 catches for 162 yards and a touchdown.

It was 2018 when Penn State, for the second straight season, let a second-half lead get away against the Buckeyes and lost a 27-26 heartbreaker. Two years removed from Franklin's only victory against Ohio State and Big Ten title, he made a comment that still hangs over his program.

"We've gone from an average football team, to a good football team, to a great football team," Franklin said then. "But we're not an elite team yet."

Five years later, that's still the case.

Penn State hoped things would be different this season with its new former five-star quarterback in Drew Allar and a defense loaded with NFL talent.

Allar, who left his native Ohio and his childhood team to play at Penn State, looked overwhelmed. He was sacked four times and finished 18 for 43 for 191 yards.

"Sucked," was Allar's self-assessment.

There were ominous signs coming in for Penn State's offense as it dinked and dunked its way to an 6-0 start behind mistake-free offense and swarming defense.

Against an Ohio State defense that is every bit as formidable as Penn State's — and maybe not getting as much credit as it deserves — the Nittany Lions' lack

of weapons was glaring.

"Drew needs some guys to make plays for him on a more consistent basis," Franklin told reporters.

Getting Allar out of Ohio was huge for Penn State, but Harrison from Philadelphia was the difference between the Nittany Lions and Buckeyes on Saturday.

Heck, Buckeyes receiver Julian Fleming, another five-star from Pennsylvania, would probably be the No. 1 target on Penn State.

For Franklin, unquestionably one of the most successful coaches in the country during 13 seasons at Vanderbilt and Penn State, the record in big games is an albatross.

Penn State has four 11-win seasons since 2016 under Franklin, but these numbers exasperate Nittany Lions fans: 1-9 against Ohio State; 3-16 vs. top-10 teams; 1-13 vs. Ohio State and Michigan teams ranked in the top 10.

Post-Sandusky, Franklin restored Penn State's pride and placed it again among the best programs in the country — but not among the very best. Penn State fans can clamor for more, but good luck finding a better coach.

Franklin's name comes up when big-time jobs open because there is an assumption that maybe, unable to break through the Ohio State-Michigan ceiling, he would try something else.

Franklin is in the second year of a 10-year contract worth \$85 million. Good luck finding a better gig.

The Nittany Lions will get another crack at a narrative-changing victory in three weeks at home against No. 2 Michigan, which seemed completely unfazed on the field against Franklin's Michigan State.

Hard to imagine that outcome in Happy Valley will be much different than Saturday's for Penn State.

Franklin and Penn State seem stuck together on a hamster wheel, running after a goal that remains out of reach.

Yes, Virginia

The first big upset of the season was pulled off by an especially unlikely team.

Virginia entered Saturday without a victory against an FBS team, but knocked off No. 10 North Carolina 31-27 in the most significant win for second-year coach Tony Elliott.

"What you saw is just a group that believed," Elliott said after Virginia's first-ever road victory against a top-10 team.

It was a cathartic victory for a team still recovering from last year's tragic shooting deaths of three teammates. Mike Hollins, a survivor of the shooting, ran for three touchdowns.

There had been only one game this season in which a top-10 team lost to an unranked team, but in retrospect, Duke beating Clemson in Week 1 really wasn't shocking.

No. 5 Washington, No. 6 Oklahoma and No. 9 Texas all played one-possession games against unranked teams Saturday and survived the scares.

North Carolina was not so fortunate. The Tar Heels looked primed to reach November unbeaten, but their defense couldn't get UVA off the field and Drake Maye was inaccurate (24 for 48) while throwing for 347 yards.

Three weeks ago the Atlantic Coast Conference had three unbeaten teams in No. 4 Florida State, North Carolina and Louisville, none of which were scheduled to play each other in the regular season.

Now, FSU is alone atop the conference after beating No. 16 Duke, which watched its upset hopes dry up when quarterback Riley Leonard aggravated an ankle injury.

About that rematch?

Maybe we penciled in that

Oklahoma-Texas rematch in the Big 12 title game a little too quickly.

The Sooners and Longhorns both escaped three-touchdown underdogs, and two more contenders in the conference seem to be emerging in Oklahoma State and Kansas State.

Oklahoma missed a chance to build a big lead early and then needed to stop a late two-point attempt to hold off UCF.

"We were fortunate to win the game," Oklahoma coach Brent Venables said.

Not to be outdone in the Big 12, No. 8 Texas slipped past Houston with the help of a third-down spot that went the Longhorns' way late in the game.

If anybody thought Big 12 officials were going to be out to get the SEC-bound Sooners and Longhorns, that third-down call that left Houston short of a pivotal first down disproved the conspiracy theory.

Meanwhile, Oklahoma State has come alive. Behind Ollie Gordon's 282 yards rushing, the Cowboys (5-2, 3-1) won at West Virginia for their third consecutive victory.

Oklahoma State's three-game run started with a victory over Kansas State. The Wildcats (5-2, 3-1) have turned their season around since inserting freshman quarterback Avery Johnson into the lineup to rotate with starter Will Howard.

Johnson ran for five scores last week against Texas Tech and he and Howard combined for four TD passes in blowout of TCU.

The Big 12 would love to avoid another Red River Showdown at the home of the Dallas Cowboys in December.

Whether it happens could come down to Nov. 4. Oklahoma State hosts Oklahoma in the last Bedlam game for the foreseeable future and Kansas State visits Texas.

OU does not play K-State in the regular season and Texas does not play Oklahoma State.

Phillies rebound to take 3-2 NLCS lead

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Kyle Schwarber got a hanging breaking ball at the top of the strike zone in the sixth inning and did what he does so well in the postseason, obliterate a baseball deep into the seats for another home run.

The formidable Philadelphia Phillies looked mortal for a couple days during a pair of frustrating one-run losses. Their response on Saturday night proved they're far from finished.

Zack Wheeler delivered another postseason gem with seven shutdown innings, Schwarber, Bryce Harper and J.T. Realmuto all homered and the Phillies beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 6-1 to take a 3-2 NL Championship Series lead.

"Everything was fantastic," Schwarber said. "It was a great response. Obviously, didn't work out the way we wanted last night, but it was great that we were able to turn the page and really put our focus and effort into this one."

Philadelphia moved one win from its second straight World Series appearance, regaining

control after wasting late leads in consecutive losses at Chase Field.

Bryson Stott hit an RBI single and Harper slid home in a collision with catcher Gabriel Moreno as part of a double steal that built a 2-0 lead in the first off Zac Gallen. It was part of a big game for the 30-year-old Harper, who had two hits, three runs, a diving defensive play and his long homer.

"He's as good as they get," Phillies manager Rob Thomson said. "He might be the best I've been around, just watching him on a daily basis."

Harper, who returned in May from Tommy John surgery, is batting .343 with five homers, eight RBIs and 12 walks in 11 postseason games.

"I just want to win. That's it. Whatever that takes, whatever that's going to be, whatever that's going to look like," he said. "That was a big game for us. Coming in here and getting one is huge. That's a good team over there. We took advantage of everything we could."

Schwarber's homer was his fifth in the NLCS and 20th of his

postseason career as the Philadelphia lineup roughed up Gallen for a second time this series. Schwarber's sixth-inning drive traveled 461 feet over the swimming pool beyond the right-center fence, quieting a crowd of 47,897. Two batters later, Harper hit a 444-foot homer into the right-field seats.

Realmuto added a two-run homer in the eighth against Luis Frias for 6-1 lead.

The series resumes Monday in Philadelphia, where the Phillies are 6-0 this postseason with 17 homers.

Wheeler, the 33-year-old right-hander, gave up one run and five hits with a walk while striking out eight. He is 3-0 with a 2.08 ERA in four postseason starts this year, striking out 34 and walking two in 26 innings.

"He gave us exactly what we needed," Thomson said.

Philadelphia's starting pitchers have a 1.48 ERA in this postseason with 67 strikeouts and just seven walks in 61 innings.

Gallen gave up four runs and six hits six innings, dropping to 2-2 with a 5.24 in four playoff outings. He allowed five runs

over five innings in taking the Game 1 loss to Wheeler.

Alek Thomas homered in the seventh for the Diamondbacks, a day after his tying home run in the eighth sparked Arizona to a series-evening win. Thomas has a team record four homers this postseason.

Schwarber, batting .412 with five solo homers in the series, reached on an infield single starting the game and scored on Stott's two-out single. Stott's dash for second on a steal drew a throw from Moreno to second baseman Ketel Marte, who stepped in front of the base and made an errant return throw that bounced past Moreno.

Harper collided with Moreno at home plate, dazing the catcher, but who remained in the game. Umpires ruled Harper couldn't have avoided the collision because Marte's throw drew Moreno down the third-base line.

"We made some mistakes today," D-backs manager Torey Lovullo said. "We didn't capitalize in some key situations and that was the difference in the game."

Larrier throws record TD as Falcons shuts down Mids

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Air Force coach Troy Calhoun said early in the week that quarterback Zac Larrier would be out "a while" — then his status apparently changed rather dramatically.

"I went to practice on Wednesday and saw (No.) 9 bouncing around. I went over and asked if this was possible and was told yes," Calhoun said. "On Thursday, we really put him through some work to see if there was swelling or soreness on Friday, and he seemed to be good. I truly thought last week on Saturday night that he was finished for the season."

Larrier overcame his knee injury and threw a 94-yard touchdown to Dane Kinamon — the longest pass in Air Force history — and the 22nd-ranked Falcons shut down Navy 17-6 on Saturday.

Air Force (7-0) gained almost as many

yards on that one play as Navy (3-4) did in the entire game. The Falcons seemed to back off defensively late, allowing the Midshipmen to drive 78 yards for their only touchdown. They finished with 124 yards and were 3-for-17 on third down.

Larrier completed only four passes, but they went for a total of 151 yards. Navy coach Brian Newberry said he wasn't surprised Larrier played.

"Being out for 'a while' might mean to him that he's out until Wednesday of game week," Newberry said. "We expected him to play."

Larrier threw a 34-yard pass to Jared Roznos in the first quarter that Navy was fortunate wasn't a longer gain. That drive ended in a missed field goal.

On the first play of the second quarter, with the Falcons facing second-and-10 from their own 6, Larrier found Kinamon

up the right sideline.

"Coach knew a look he wanted to get there and he put us in one," Larrier said. "You drop back there and expect guys to be open, and I tried to make sure I could give him the best ball I could."

Air Force's previous longest pass was a 92-yard TD from Haaziq Daniels to Brandon Lewis at Colorado State two years ago.

Navy freshman quarterback Braxton Woodson relieved injured Tai Lavatai last weekend, and Woodson started this game. But after the Midshipmen managed only 11 yards and one first down through three quarters, Lavatai took over in the fourth.

Navy finally started moving the ball with Lavatai, but he was intercepted twice during that final period. The second of those turnovers was returned 18 yards for a touchdown by Alec Mock.

Golden Knights remain undefeated

Associated Press

CHICAGO — So much for a Stanley Cup hangover for Vegas.

The Golden Knights are perfect so far.

Nicolas Roy, Mark Stone and Paul Cotter scored in the third period, and the undefeated Golden Knights beat Connor Bedard and the Chicago Blackhawks 5-3 on Saturday night.

Bedard scored on his first shot in Chicago's home opener, but Vegas' superior depth proved to be too much for the rebuilding Blackhawks. The Golden Knights became the first Stanley Cup champions to begin their title defense with six consecutive victories.

"We're playing good hockey," defenseman Brayden McNabb said. "We have some stretches where we don't like our games, but we're finding ways to win."

William Karlsson and Jonathan Marchessault also scored for Vegas, which extended its franchise-record start. Adin Hill made 21 saves.

"We knew after two periods that we were going to have to be better if we expected to win, and I thought we responded well," Vegas coach Bruce Cassidy said.

Reese Johnson and Corey Perry also scored for Chicago, which returned home after beginning the season with a 2-3-0 road trip. Arvid Soderblom made 19 stops.

Vegas went in front for good when Roy knocked home a perfect centering pass from Keegan Kolesar just 13 seconds into the third.

"I think that was a bit of a killer for them," Karlsson said.

The Blackhawks had two power-play chances in the third, but the Golden Knights killed off both. Michael Amadio's rush to the net set up Stone's first goal of the season at 13:47, and Cotter helped close it out when he made it 5-2 with a power-play goal at 16:09.

"We clawed and fought with a really good team for 40 minutes," Chicago coach Luke Richardson said. "It was just disappointing to start the third period like that."

Avalanche 6, Hurricanes 4: Logan O'Connor scored short-handed for the third straight game, one of five Colorado goals in the second period, Arturri Lehkonen had a goal and two assists, and the host Avalanche started the season 5-0 for the first time in four years.

Nathan MacKinnon, Mikko Rantanen, Ryan Johansen and Fredrik Olofsson also scored and Alexander Georgiev made 23 saves for Colorado.

Brent Burns, Michael Bunting, Jesper Kotkaniemi and Jacob Slavin scored for Carolina, and Pyotr Kochetkov had 22 saves for the Hurricanes, who are 2-3 on their six-game road trip.

Bruins 4, Kings 2: Brad Marchand scored twice, David Pastrnak added three points and became the first Boston player in 21 years with a goal in each of the first four games, and the visiting Bruins remained unbeaten.

Pastrnak, who was second in the league with 61 goals last season, had a goal and two assists. He is the first Bruin since Dimitri Kuartalnov in 1992-93 to open the season with a goal in four straight games.

Morgan Geekie scored the go-ahead goal in the second period for the Bruins, who are off to their first 4-0 start since 1990-91.

Rangers 4, Kraken 1: Artemi Panarin scored twice, Filip Chytil had three assists and visiting New York beat Seattle.

Kaapo Kakko and Alexis Lafreniere also scored for the Rangers while Jonathan Quick, signed in the offseason as New York's backup goalie, had 18 saves in his first start for the team.

Justin Schultz scored for the

Kraken, who have scored one goal or fewer in four of their five games this season. Philipp Grubauer had 23 saves.

Jets 3, Oilers 2 (OT): Mark Scheifele scored at 3:53 of overtime and visiting Winnipeg beat Edmonton.

Josh Morrissey and Vladislav Namestnikov also scored for the Jets, who rallied after falling behind by two goals in the first 6½ minutes. Connor Hellebuyck finished with 38 saves.

Darnell Nurse and Evan Bouchard had goals for the Oilers, who have lost two straight. Stuart Skinner had 24 saves.

Red Wings 5, Senators 2: Joe Veleno scored his first two goals of the season and Dylan Larkin added a goal and two assists as visiting Detroit posted its fourth straight win.

Larkin, Shayne Gostisbehere and David Perron added power-play goals for Detroit, which also got a 35-save performance from goaltender Ville Husso.

The game marked the return of Alex DeBrincat, who was dealt to Detroit earlier this summer, and the fans at the Canadian Tire Center jeered him.

Stars 5, Flyers 4 (OT): Joe Pavelski scored 2:12 into overtime and host Dallas beat Philadelphia, overcoming three short-handed goals for their seventh consecutive victory over the Flyers.

Wyatt Johnson had a goal and an assist, and Jamie Benn, Tyler Seguin and Roope Hintz also scored for Dallas. Scott Wedgewood stopped 36 shots for the win in the first start of the season for goalie Jake Oettinger's backup.

Coyotes 2, Ducks 1: Clayton Keller and Jason Zucker scored goals, Karel Vejmelka made 32 saves and host Arizona beat Anaheim in their home opener.

The Coyotes have won three of their first five games for the first time since the 2015-16 season, and they won their home opener for the first time since

2016-17.

Sabres 3, Islanders 1: Jeff Skinner, Mattias Samuelsson and Dylan Cozens each scored a goal to lead host Buffalo over New York.

Casey Mittelstadt had two assists and Eric Comrie made 24 saves in his first start of the season for Buffalo.

Maple Leafs 4, Lightning 3 (OT): John Tavares scored with 55 seconds left in overtime as visiting Toronto rallied from a two-goal, third-period deficit to beat Tampa Bay.

Matthew Knies had two goals in a span of 2:22 in the third period as Toronto tied it at 3. The second, at 14:33, came while he was down on one knee. William Nylander also scored for the Maple Leafs.

Canucks 5, Panthers 3: Andrei Kuzmenko scored the go-ahead goal with 4:57 left to help visiting Vancouver beat Florida.

Quinn Hughes, Carson Soucy, Elias Pettersson and Brock Boeser also scored for Vancouver, which snapped a two-game losing streak. Casey DeSmith made 34 saves.

Blue Jackets 5, Wild 4 (OT): Jack Roslovic scored 3:07 into overtime and visiting Columbus held off Minnesota.

Justin Danforth, Kent Johnson, Boone Jenner and Adam Fantilli also scored for the Blue Jackets. Elvis Merzlikins made 24 saves.

Blues 4, Penguins 2: Brandon Saad scored twice and Jordan Binnington stopped 31 shots as host St. Louis beat Pittsburgh.

Predators 5, Sharks 1: Tommy Novak scored twice, Juuse Saros made 31 saves and host Nashville defeated San Jose.

Canadiens 3, Capitals 2 (OT): Cole Caufield scored 47 seconds into overtime as host Montreal edged Washington.

Dylan Strome scored a pair for Washington, which has only won once this season.