

Pentagon rushes assets to Middle East

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has sent military advisers, including a Marine Corps general versed in urban warfare, to Israel to aid in its war planning and is speeding multiple sophisticated air defense systems to the Middle East days ahead of an anticipated ground assault into Gaza.

One of the officers leading the assistance is Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James Glynn, who previously helped lead special operations forces against Islamic State and served in Fallujah, Iraq, during some of the most heated urban combat there, according to a U.S. official who was not authorized to discuss Glynn's role and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Glynn will also be advising on how to mitigate civilian casual-

ties in urban warfare, the official said.

Israel is preparing a large-scale ground operation in an environment in which Hamas militants have had years to prepare tunnel networks and set traps throughout northern Gaza's dense urban blocks.

Glynn and the other military officers who are advising Israel "have experience that is appropriate to the sorts of operations that Israel is conducting," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Monday.

The advisers will not be engaged in the fighting, the unidentified U.S. official said.

The military team is one of many fast-moving pieces the Pentagon is getting in place to try and prevent the already intense conflict between Israel and Hamas from becoming a

wider war. It also is trying to protect U.S. personnel, who in the last few days have come under repeated attacks that the Pentagon has said were likely endorsed by Iran.

Kirby said Iran was "in some cases actively facilitating these attacks and spurring on others who may want to exploit the conflict for their own good, or for that of Iran. We know that Iran's goal is to maintain some level of deniability here. But we're not going to allow them to do that."

On Monday, the U.S. military garrison at an-Tanf, Syria, came under attack again, this time by two drones. The drones were shot down and no injuries were reported. It was the latest episode in the last week that U.S. military locations in the Middle East had come under rocket or drone attack since a deadly blast

at a Gaza hospital.

Last Thursday the destroyer USS Carney shot down four land-attack cruise missiles launched from Yemen that the Pentagon has said were potentially headed toward Israel.

In response, over the weekend the Pentagon announced it was sending multiple Patriot missile defense system battalions and a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system to the Middle East, as well as repositioning the USS Eisenhower strike group to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

The shift means that the Navy will have a carrier strike group off the shore of Israel—the Ford carrier strike group—and another, the Eisenhower, potentially maneuvered to defend U.S. forces and Israel from the Red Sea or the Gulf of Oman.

Israel launches a barrage of airstrikes across Gaza

Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — A barrage of Israeli airstrikes across the Gaza Strip on Tuesday crushed multiple residential buildings and buried families under rubble, as health officials in the besieged territory reported hundreds killed in the past day and the closure of medical facilities because of bomb damage and a lack of power.

The soaring death toll from Israel's escalating bombardment is unprecedented in the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It augurs an even greater loss of life in Gaza once Israeli forces backed by tanks and artillery launch an expected ground offensive aimed at crushing Hamas militants.

Gaza's 2.3 million people have been running out of food, water

and medicine since Israel sealed off the territory following the devastating Oct. 7 attack by Hamas on towns in southern Israel.

The Gaza Health Ministry run by Hamas said the attacks killed at least 704 people over the past day, including 305 children and 173 women; the ministry said it tallies daily figures collected from hospital directors. The AP cannot independently verify the death tolls cited by Hamas.

Israel said Tuesday it had launched 400 airstrikes over the past day, killing Hamas commanders, hitting militants as they were preparing to launch rockets into Israel and striking command centers and a Hamas tunnel shaft. The previous day, Israel reported 320 strikes. Witnesses and health officials said many of the airstrikes hit resi-

dential buildings, some of them in southern Gaza where Israel had told civilians to take shelter.

One overnight strike leveled a four-story residential building in the southern city of Khan Younis, killing at least 32 people and wounding dozens of others, according to survivors.

The dead included 13 members of the Saqallah family, said Ammar al-Butta, a relative who survived the airstrike. He said there were about 100 people sheltering in the building, including many who had evacuated from Gaza City following Israel's orders for civilians in northern Gaza to move south.

"They were sheltering at our home because we thought that our area would be safe. But apparently there is no safe place in Gaza," he said.

Another airstrike hit a bustling marketplace in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, killing several shoppers and wounding dozens as they shopped for meat and vegetables, witnesses said.

Men used sledgehammers to break up concrete and dug with their bare hands through the jagged wreckage to save anyone they could, or recover the dead. Rescuers put an oxygen mask on the face of one man buried up to his chest in rubble as they worked for 15 minutes to free him.

The Hamas-run health ministry says more than 5,700 Palestinians have been killed in the war, including some 2,300 minors. The figure includes the disputed toll from an explosion at a hospital last week.

NATO seeks Turkey's vote on Sweden bid

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

NATO's top official called on the Turkish parliament Tuesday to quickly finalize Sweden's entry into the U.S.-led alliance, which it is on the cusp of joining after months of delays.

"Sweden's membership will make NATO stronger," Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Tuesday during a visit to Stockholm, the Swedish capital. "Sweden is fully ready to join NATO. The time has come."

On Monday, Sweden's membership bid advanced when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan gave the green light to his country's parliament to hold a vote on the matter.

Normally, such votes are a formality for alliance parliaments. It's not yet clear when Turkish politicians intend to vote.

However, Stoltenberg said the decision should be made in short order, adding that the Nordic country "has fulfilled its commitments."

"Sweden has amended its

constitution, changed its laws, expanded counterterrorism cooperation and resumed arms exports to Turkey," he said.

Those words were an allusion to Turkey's complaints over Sweden's admission to the country of Kurdish groups that Ankara regards as terrorist organizations.

For NATO, the addition of Sweden brings a modern military bolstering alliance defenses in the High North.

Melting sea ice in the Arctic has raised the prospect of competition with Russia for natural resources.

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 prompted Sweden and neighboring Finland to seek NATO membership and end long-entrenched policies of neutrality. Finland's accession occurred in April.

Initially, the two countries planned to join the alliance together, but Turkey's roadblocks stalled the process for Sweden, much to the dismay of the U.S. and other NATO members.

B-52 bombers arrive on Guam for mission

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Long-range, nuclear-capable bombers have touched down on Guam, where they're slated to take on a series of missions meant to hone their crews' skills and project U.S. airpower across the Indo-Pacific.

An undisclosed number of B-52 Stratofortresses and airmen with the 2nd Bomb Wing will "actively train during operations and exercises while integrating alongside Allies and partners throughout the region," Pacific Air Forces announced in a news release Friday.

The wing is based at Barksdale Air Force Base, La. The B-52s' arrival marks at least the fourth bomber task force mission this year at Andersen Air Force Base.

The deployments "demonstrate the credibility of U.S. forces to address a global security environment that is more diverse and uncertain than at any other time in recent history," according to the release.

Andersen spokeswoman 1st Lt. Ariana Wilkinson referred

all questions to Pacific Air Forces in Hawaii. A spokesperson there did not immediately respond to an email requesting additional information Monday evening.

The task force mission kicked off two days before a B-52 from the 96th Bomb Squadron, 2nd Bomb Wing, participated in an unprecedented exercise with South Korea and Japan on Sunday.

That B-52 joined two F-16 Fighting Falcons out of Osan Air Base, South Korea; two South Korean F-15K Slam Eagles; and two Japanese F-2s for an aerial drill that "demonstrated their security cooperation and solidarity," the South Korean air force said in a news release that day.

Days earlier, the bomber became the first B-52 to touch down on the Korean Peninsula in at least 30 years. It landed Oct. 17 at Cheongju International Airport, about 60 miles south of Seoul, and took part in flyovers with South Korean F-35A Lightning IIs during Seoul's Aerospace and Defense Exhibition that week.

Coast Guard cutter visits Philippines amid tensions

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The Coast Guard has sent a fast-response cutter to the Philippines for the first time as the longtime U.S. ally continues to butt heads with Beijing over territory in the South China Sea.

The Frederick Hatch arrived in Tacloban on the island of Leyte on Thursday and departed Monday, the Coast Guard announced in a news release coinciding with the visit's end.

That day, the United States

renewed a warning that it would defend the Philippines in case of an armed attack after Chinese ships blocked and collided with a pair of Filipino vessels in the South China Sea.

Philippine diplomats summoned a Chinese Embassy official in Manila that day for a strongly worded protest following Sunday's collisions off Second Thomas Shoal.

No injuries were reported but the encounters damaged a Philippine coast guard vessel and a wood-hulled supply boat oper-

ated by the navy.

In Tacloban, the Frederick Hatch's crew met Philippine coast guard colleagues, school children and government officials, according to Monday's release.

"It is a privilege to bring a U.S. Coast Guard Fast Response Cutter to the Philippines for the first time and to visit the historic city of Tacloban," the Frederick Hatch's commander, Lt. Patrick Dreiss, said in the release. "My crew was excited to collaborate with the Philip-

pine Coast Guard to deepen our connections with our fellow seagoing Service and explore this unique city and island."

This visit coincided with the 79th anniversary of the Battle of Leyte Gulf, which involved hundreds of U.S. and Australian ships fighting the Imperial Japanese Navy off the island's coast in October 1944.

"We are deeply honored to be part of this observance and to strengthen the bond between the United States and the Philippines," Dreiss said.

Emmer is GOP's latest speaker pick

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republicans picked Rep. Tom Emmer as their nominee for House speaker on Tuesday, as they try for a third time to fill the top leadership position and get Congress back to work.

Emmer, the GOP Whip and senior-most candidate, jumped out front in private balloting among the hodge-podge list of mostly lesser-known congressmen for speaker, a powerful position second in line to the presidency.

But it's no sure path to the gavel. Emmer, of Minnesota, won a simple majority of his colleagues behind closed doors, but he will need the support of most all Republicans during a House floor vote.

It's three weeks since Republicans ousted Kevin McCarthy. The House speaker will need to accomplish the seemingly impossible job of uniting the GOP majority.

"We're going to have to figure out how to get our act together — I mean, big boys and big girls have got to quit making excuses and we just got to get it done," said Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-S.D., a conservative caucus leader.

The candidate list, though quickly slimming, was long and jumbled with no obvious

choice for the job. Emmer, a lawyer, is known as a gruff hockey coach who reached out to Donald Trump for backing and was gaining on the first four ballots.

Coming in a steady second was constitutional law expert Rep. Mike Johnson of Louisiana, who directly battled Emmer in the fifth-round private ballot.

Others, including Rep. Byron Donalds, a top Trump ally, were dropping out. McDonald's franchise owner Rep. Kevin Hern of Oklahoma, a conservative leader, plied his colleagues with hamburgers seeking their support but also dropped out Tuesday.

Also withdrawing from the race were Reps. Austin Scott of Georgia, Jack Bergman of Michigan, Pete Sessions of Texas, Gary Palmer of Alabama and Dan Meuser of Pennsylvania.

The House has been in turmoil, without a speaker since the start of the month after a contingent of hard-line Republicans ousted McCarthy, creating what's now a governing crisis that's preventing the normal operations of Congress.

The federal government risks a shutdown in a matter of weeks if Congress fails to pass funding legislation by a Nov. 17 deadline to keep services and offices running. More im-

mediately, President Joe Biden has asked Congress to provide \$105 billion in aid — to help Israel and Ukraine amid their wars and to shore up the U.S. border with Mexico. Federal aviation and farming programs face expiration without action.

Those running for speaker were mostly conservatives and election deniers, who either voted against certifying the 2020 presidential election results, when Biden defeated Trump, in the runup to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, or joined a subsequent lawsuit challenging the results.

Some Democrats have eyed Emmer, the third-ranking House GOP leader, who had voted to certify the 2020 election results, as a potential partner in governing the House.

But Trump allies and other hard-liners have been critical of Emmer over his support of a same-sex marriage initiative and perceived criticisms of the former president. Among the far-right groups pressuring lawmakers over the speaker's vote, some are now attacking Emmer.

Trump downplayed, even derided, Emmer, with whom he has had a rocky relationship, while presenting himself Monday as a kingmaker who talks to "a lot of congressmen" seeking his stamp of approval.

Cohen was told to boost Trump values 'arbitrarily'

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Donald Trump's fixer-turned-foe Michael Cohen faced off with him at the former president's civil fraud trial Tuesday, testifying that he worked to boost asset values to "whatever number Trump told us to."

Five years after turning on a boss that he once pledged to "take a bullet" for, Cohen is a key witness in New York Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit alleging that Trump and his company duped banks, insurers and others by giving them financial statements that inflated his wealth.

"I was tasked by Mr. Trump to increase the total assets, based upon a number that he arbitrarily elected," Cohen testified, saying that he and former

Trump Organization finance chief Allen Weisselberg labored "to reverse-engineer the various different asset classes, increase those assets, in order to achieve a number that Mr. Trump had tasked us."

Asked what that number was, Cohen replied: "Whatever number Trump told us to."

Trump, who denies James' allegations, dismissed Cohen's account outside court as the words of "a proven liar" who served prison time after pleading guilty to tax evasion, lying to Congress and campaign finance violations.

"I'm not worried at all about his testimony," Trump said. "You see what his record is. He's not a credible witness."

The former president and Republican 2024 front-runner vol-

untarily came to court for the highly anticipated testimony, attending the Manhattan trial for a sixth day this month. Cohen, whose appearance was delayed from last week by an unspecified health issue, has said it is his first time seeing Trump in five years.

"Heck of a reunion," Cohen said during the court break. Earlier, he had insisted outside court that "this is not about Donald Trump vs. Michael Cohen or Michael Cohen vs. Donald Trump."

"This is about accountability, plain and simple," he said.

After Cohen took the stand and began answering questions about his career and criminal convictions, Trump at times whispered to his lawyers. At other points, he hunched for-

ward in his seat, watching intently, or leaned back with crossed arms.

Judge Arthur Engoron already has ruled that Trump and his company committed fraud, but the trial involves remaining claims of conspiracy, insurance fraud and falsifying business records.

Trump says his assets were actually undervalued, and he maintains that disclaimers on his financial statements essentially told recipients to check the numbers out for themselves.

He has derided the case as a "sham," a "scam" and "a continuation of the single greatest witch hunt of all time." The ex-president argues that the case is part of an effort by James and other Democrats to drag down his campaign.

Off-duty pilot tried to halt engines midflight

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — An off-duty pilot riding in the extra seat in the cockpit of a Horizon Air passenger jet tried to shut down the engines in midflight and had to be subdued by the crew, a pilot flying the plane told air traffic controllers.

Authorities in Oregon identified the man as Joseph David Emerson, 44. He was being held Monday on 83 counts each of attempted murder and reckless endangerment and one count of endangering an aircraft, according to the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office.

The San Francisco-bound flight on Sunday diverted to Portland, Ore., where Emerson was taken into custody by officers from the Port of Portland. He is to be arraigned Tuesday.

Seattle-based Alaska Airlines, which owns Horizon, a regional carrier, did not name Emerson, but said Monday that the threat was posed by one of its pilots who was off duty but authorized to occupy the cockpit jump seat.

The airline said in a statement that the captain and co-pilot “quickly responded, engine power was not lost and the crew secured the aircraft without incident.” Alaska said no weapons were involved.

One of the pilots told air traffic controllers that the man who posed the threat had been removed from the cockpit and was in handcuffs in the back of the plane.

“We’ve got the guy that tried to shut the engines down out of the cockpit. And he — doesn’t sound like he’s causing any issue in the

back right now, and I think he’s subdued,” one of the pilots said on audio captured by LiveATC.net. “Other than that, we want law enforcement as soon as we get on the ground and parked.”

Bailey Beck, who was on the flight, described to SFGate the confusion and stress experienced by passengers.

“It was really bizarre because there was no overheard commotion to alert the passengers. The man walked from the cockpit to the back of the plane by himself, where he was then handcuffed to a railing and didn’t make any disturbance from the rear,” Beck told the news outlet.

Sunday’s incident occurred on a Horizon Air Embraer 175 carrying 80 passengers, including children 2 or younger, and four crewmembers.

The plane left Everett, Wash., at 5:23 p.m. local time and landed in Portland an hour later. Alaska said passengers continued on to San Francisco on a later flight.

The FBI office in Portland said it was investigating.

The Federal Aviation Administration, in an alert to airlines, said a jump seat passenger tried to disable the engines by deploying the engine fire-suppression system. The agency said it was helping law enforcement investigations, but declined further comment.

FAA records indicate Emerson has a valid license to fly airline planes. Property records show he owns a house in Pleasant Hill, Calif., about 30 miles east of San Francisco. The Associated Press tried but couldn’t reach family members.

Zelenskyy: Russian fleet near Crimea is not safe

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy claimed on Tuesday that recent Ukrainian attacks have denied the Russian fleet safe bases and secure maritime corridors in the western part of the Black Sea, as Kyiv’s troops look to squeeze the Kremlin’s occupying forces out of the Crimean Peninsula.

Crimea provides rear support for Moscow’s battlefield efforts further west and has been a frequent target for Ukrainian forces during the war since Russia’s invasion.

“The Russian fleet is no longer capable of operating in the western part of the Black Sea and is gradually retreating from Crimea,” Zelenskyy claimed, without providing evidence. “This is a historic achievement.”

Ukraine is keen to show that billions of dollars’ worth of weapons supplied by its Western allies have allowed it to make progress in the fighting, as the conflict en-

ters its 21st month amid a broad stalemate.

With the war poised to extend into another winter and likely deep into next year, Kyiv is pushing its allies to provide it with more military assets. Ukrainian officials, meanwhile, are competing for the world’s attention with the Israel-Hamas war.

Ukraine’s forces are not yet able to strike at any target in Crimea and its waters, but that capability is coming closer, Zelenskyy told a meeting of the Crimea Platform, a diplomatic forum, in Prague via video link. He did not elaborate.

The Russian Defense Ministry said its forces hit three Ukrainian sea drones in the Black Sea early Tuesday.

Russia annexed Crimea, in eastern Ukraine, in 2014. In February last year, it launched a full-scale invasion that also aims to annex the Ukrainian provinces of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia.

Auto workers extend strike to GM and Stellantis plants

Associated Press

DETROIT — The United Auto Workers union turned up the heat on General Motors as 5,000 workers walked off their jobs Tuesday at a highly profitable SUV factory in Arlington, Texas.

The move comes just a day after the union went on strike at a Stellantis pickup truck factory in Sterling Heights, Mich., north of Detroit.

The additional plants further escalate a labor dispute that’s in its sixth week and now has about 46,000 union workers off the job. And rhetoric from both sides shows they remain far apart on what they believe are fair wage and benefits offers, with the company and the union hold firmly to their positions.

The addition of the Arlington plant, which makes big truck-based SUVs such as the Chevrolet Tahoe, GMC Yukon and Cadillac Escalade, came just after GM announced strong third-quarter financial results. The SUVs are

among GM’s most profitable vehicles.

The company on Tuesday posted a net profit of just over \$3 billion for the quarter, down 7% from a year ago. But the company reported strong demand and prices for its vehicles.

UAW President Shawn Fain said in a statement that GM beat Wall Street expectations, yet its offer lags behind Ford, preserving a two-tier wage structure and offering the weakest 401(k) contribution of all three companies at 8%.

“It’s time GM workers, and the whole working class, get their fair share,” Fain said.

GM CEO Mary Barra said on Tuesday morning’s earnings conference call that the company has already made a record offer and won’t agree to a contract that jeopardizes the company’s future. The union said the move came just hours after GM announced quarterly earnings and four days after Fain said GM’s latest offer wasn’t large enough.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

'Time capsule' DeLorean with only 977 miles found

WI MILWAUKEE — As a 1981 DeLorean DMC-12, stashed away inside a barn in southern Wisconsin, had tires deflated, an army of mice scurried around and nested inside it, and the odometer held firm at 977 miles, it nevertheless became a time machine of a sort.

"It was literally sinking into the earthy of this gravel floor barn, untouched for years," said Michael McElhattan, owner of DeLorean Midwest, an auto shop in Crystal Lake, Ill., that works exclusively on DeLoreans.

McElhattan, 46, learned of that particular DeLorean when a man named Mark from New Mexico called the shop to tell him he had a DeLorean for sale.

McElhattan met Dick, Mark's uncle and the original owner, who directed them to the barn and the DeLorean inside it. The exterior was covered in dust, the interior in mouse poop. Aside from that, the car was in remarkably good condition for being more than 42 years old and was "extremely original," sporting the same parts it did when it came off the line.

Video of hurt deer sparks calls for cruelty charge

VT MONTPELIER — Cellphone video that a game warden said showed a hunter petting an illegally shot and injured deer, and saying "good boy" before killing the animal, has raised calls from wildlife advocates for animal cruelty charges.

But Vermont's animal cruelty

law does not apply to activities regulated by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, including hunting and trapping, officials said.

The hunter told the game warden that he shot the buck with a crossbow in Peacham after leaving his ex-girlfriend's home angry. He said he got a friend to help retrieve the deer, returning 45 minutes later to find the animal still alive. They then transported the deer to the hay barn. The hunter said he ran out of arrows and didn't have a knife, implying that he would have killed the animal before moving it if he had the equipment, according to the affidavit.

CEO convicted in COVID, allergy fraud sentenced

CA SAN JOSE — A Silicon Valley executive who lied to investors about inventing technology that tested for allergies and COVID-19 using only a few drops of blood was sentenced to eight years in prison and ordered to pay \$24 million in restitution, federal prosecutors said.

Mark Schena, 60, was convicted of paying bribes to doctors and defrauding the government after his company billed Medicare \$77 million for fraudulent COVID-19 and allergy tests, the U.S. Department of Justice said in a statement.

Schena claimed his Sunnyvale, Calif.-based company, Arrayit Corp., had the only laboratory in the world that offered "revolutionary microarray technology" that allowed it to test for allergies and COVID-19 with the same finger-stick test

kit, prosecutors said. In meetings with investors, Schena claimed he was on the shortlist for the Nobel Prize and falsely represented that Arrayit could be valued at \$4.5 billion, prosecutors said.

Visitors tour atomic site in likely record attendance

NM WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE — Visitors lined up to tour the southern New Mexico site where the world's first atomic bomb was detonated in what officials believe could be a record turnout amid ongoing fanfare surrounding Christopher Nolan's blockbuster film, "Oppenheimer."

Thousands of visitors are expected at the Trinity Site, a designated National Historic Landmark that's usually closed to the public because of its proximity to the impact zone for missiles fired at White Sands Missile Range.

But twice a year, in April and October, the site opens to spectators. No attendance numbers were immediately available.

A video posted on social media showed at least 70 vehicles lined up to enter the site.

University gains massive addition of jarred snakes

MI ANN ARBOR — Greg Schneider scans rows upon rows of liquid-filled glass jars containing coiled snake specimens, just a portion of the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology's reptile and amphibian collection believed to be the largest held by any research institution in the U.S. thanks to a recent donation.

The museum this fall acquired tens of thousands of reptile and amphibian specimens from Oregon State University, many of which are snakes. The development places the university in a unique position, according to Schneider, the research museum collections manager for the museum's division of reptiles and amphibians.

"I'm fairly confident we'll have the largest snake collection in the world," he said.

Boxes containing water snakes, garter snakes, woodland salamanders, dusky salamanders and other species arrived.

City council halts virtual comments amid racism

VA CHARLOTTESVILLE — The Charlottesville City Council has suspended virtual public comments during public meetings after anonymous callers Zoomed into a council meeting and made racist remarks.

The Daily Progress reported that the decision came after a council meeting was interrupted repeatedly by people who turned their cameras off, used fake names and flooded the public comment period with racist slurs and praise for Adolf Hitler.

"We struggled for a while in trying to figure out what we could constitutionally do and concluded there was not really a good answer," Mayor Lloyd Snook told the newspaper.

Under the new policy, the public will still be able to attend meetings virtually, but anyone who wishes to speak will have to do so in person.

— From wire reports

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Rangers beat Astros, claim AL pennant

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Adolis García and these road-happy Rangers are not only tops in Texas, they're best in the American League.

García homered twice and drove in five runs as the Texas Rangers reached their first World Series in 12 years with an 11-4 blowout of the Houston Astros in Game 7 of the AL Championship Series on Monday night.

Corey Seager got the Rangers started with a long homer in a three-run first inning. Nathaniel Lowe also went deep to give Texas — one of six major league teams without a World Series title — its first berth in the Fall Classic since consecutive trips in 2010 and 2011.

García homered for the fourth straight game and set a record for RBIs in a postseason series with 15. He had four hits, scored three times and was the obvious choice for ALCS MVP in a series that saw the road team win every game.

"He's a bad man, isn't he?" Seager said. "To be able to come into this atmosphere and get booed every at-bat and do what he did was really special. It was really fun to watch."

After winning their Lone Star State showdown with rival Houston, the resilient Rangers open an all-wild card World Series at home Friday night against Arizona or Philadelphia, who played the decisive Game 7 of their NLCS on Tuesday night.

Bruce Bochy, who came out of retirement this season to manage the Rangers, became the first skipper to win a League Championship Series with three different teams, after leading San Diego and San Francisco to NL pennants.

He and general manager Chris Young have spearheaded a swift turnaround with Texas, making its first playoff appearance since 2016 after losing 102 games in 2021 and going 68-94 last year.

"I didn't know if I'd get back

in it. And here I am. I know how blessed I am," Bochy said. "We've had our streaks. We've had our injuries. They keep getting up. To come in here and beat such a great team like Houston — and congrats on their year. But it's great to be wearing the horns in Texas."

Meanwhile, the defending World Series champion Astros were finally dethroned.

Fittingly, it came at home, where they went 40-47 this year and 0-4 in this series. They won all three games at Texas and returned to Minute Maid Park a win shy of their third straight pennant, but Houston's pitching staff got pounded for 20 runs in the final two games of the team's seventh consecutive ALCS.

"That finished our season — not being able to win at home," said outfielder Chas McCormick, who sat stone-faced in the dugout long after the last out. "That came and bit us."

No club has repeated as World Series champion since

the New York Yankees won three straight from 1998-2000.

"I don't like tipping my cap to anybody," Astros manager Dusty Baker said. "But when someone beats the hell out of you, what are you going to do?"

"We have been spoiled around here as far as winning and winning and winning. And heck, I've been here four years, and we've been to two World Series and two Championship Series. We have nothing to be ashamed of or nothing to hold our head down about. We're down, but we're not out. And every team in baseball would trade to have had the last four years that we've had."

Texas led the AL West for most of the year, only to squander the division crown to Houston with a loss at Seattle on the final day of the regular season that sent the streaky Rangers on the road to begin the playoffs.

Turns out, that was no problem.

They have gone 8-0 away from home in these playoffs.

Early HRs, strong pitching send D-Backs to Game 7

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Merrill Kelly retired Kyle Schwarber, Trea Turner and Bryce Harper in order in the fifth inning, striking out Schwarber and Harper — October's biggest home-run threats.

When the pitcher reached the dugout, manager Torey Lovullo offered a handshake to signal that his start was over after 90 pitches. Kelly appeared agitated and gestured with his glove as if to point out he struck out Schwarber and Harper and had much more in the tank.

"It kind of just, I think, took me by shock more than anything," Kelly said.

Here might be the real shock — especially in Philly. After losing the first two games of the NL Championship Series, the Ari-

zona Diamondbacks are one win from their first World Series since 2001.

Tommy Pham and Lourdes Gurriel Jr. hit back-to-back homers in the second inning and Kelly struck out eight before his early hook to help Arizona force Game 7 with a 5-1 win over the Philadelphia Phillies on Monday.

The winner of Tuesday night's game advances to the World Series against Texas, which beat Houston for the AL pennant.

Kelly and four relievers combined to shut down the Phillies and stifle their rousing run of success at Citizens Bank Park. Arizona's bullpen didn't allow a runner to reach second.

"I'm expecting some fun," Kelly said. "Game 7, obviously, they talk about, it's the best

words in sports. I think the fact that we're here, I don't think anybody thought we were going to take them to Game 6. I don't think anybody thought we were even going to make it to Game 1. I don't think anybody thought we were going to make it past Milwaukee, to be honest with you."

Arizona backed up the bold pregame words from Lovullo and tamed Phillies bats and the hostile home crowd of 45,473.

"Getting there is really important, so we have that all-in mentality," Lovullo said ahead of Game 6. "We didn't come cross-country to get our asses kicked. We came here to play our best baseball game, and our guys will be ready to go."

Kelly allowed one run and three hits and three walks.

"He was making statements

to me that told me that he was capable of going back out there," Lovullo said. "But I've got to be the parent in the room and make a tough decision and hand it over to the bullpen that's been very, very efficient."

Sure enough, Arizona's bullpen allowed three hits in four scoreless innings.

Schwarber, Turner and Harper, the top three hitters in Philadelphia's batting order, went 0-for-9 with four strikeouts. Nick Castellanos was 0-for-4, dropping to 1-for-20 in the series.

Philadelphia lost at home for the first time in seven home postseason games. It was the Phillies' first playoff loss at home since dropping Games 4 and 5 to Houston in the World Series last year.

Addison TDs, Bynum INTs lift Vikings

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Kirk Cousins let the ball fly for Jordan Addison earlier than he wanted to in the face of an all-out San Francisco blitz in the closing seconds of the second quarter for Minnesota, bracing for the worst after realizing the pass was underthrown.

Addison won the tug-of-war battle this time with 49ers cornerback Charvarius Ward and spun away for a 60-yard touchdown, and the Vikings finally pulled out a victory after three straight late lapses at home.

“I thought it was getting picked,” Cousins said. “I still don’t know how Jordan came away with it.”

Cousins connected with Addison for two first-half scores, Camryn Bynum intercepted Brock Purdy twice in the fourth quarter, and the Vikings held on to beat the 49ers 22-17 on Monday night.

“One play here, one play there. We’ve had some tough losses,” said Cousins, who went 35-for-45 for 378 yards and no sacks. “Last year we were fortunate enough to

pull them out. We found a way to-night.”

Christian McCaffrey scored twice for the 49ers (5-2), who have a two-game losing streak for just the second time in two years.

“We came in with the right mindset,” said Purdy, who went 21-for-30 for 272 yards. “We’ve just got to execute better.”

Addison, stepping up in a big way with superstar wide receiver Justin Jefferson sidelined by a hamstring injury, had seven catches for 123 yards in his breakout performance on a prime-time stage.

The play of the game came on third-and-6 with 16 seconds left before halftime when the 49ers sent three extra rushers. The fight for the ball with Ward was eerily similar to the opening drive of the game, when Cousins threw to Addison over the middle where it was wrestled away by Ward to hang the Vikings with their fourth opening-drive turnover in seven games.

“I needed that one,” Addison said. “I couldn’t let him get it twice.”

The first-round draft pick

from USC, who left the game briefly with leg cramps, also had a 14-yard reception on third-and-4 on a drive that could have sealed the game for Minnesota (3-4).

But Greg Joseph, who also missed an earlier extra point, pulled a 50-yard field goal wide right.

With no timeouts and 1:11 left, the 49ers took possession at their 40. Purdy, who was picked off with 5:30 remaining at the Minnesota 30 after an off-target pass intended for Jajuan Jennings, completed two short throws to reach the Minnesota 40. But Bynum zeroed in on a pass over the middle for Ray-Ray McCloud III and leaped in front of him for the interception.

“Obviously, our season isn’t going as well as we would like it to, but nothing’s better than bouncing back from adversity and stacking wins up,” Bynum said.

The 49ers, who were still the favorites to win the Super Bowl after a 19-17 defeat last week at Cleveland, played without wide receiver Deebo Samuel and left

tackle Trent Williams, both of whom were hurt in that ugly game. Purdy bounced back from the worst game of his young NFL career and his first regular-season loss as a starter, but those late interceptions will sting.

Minnesota’s defense also avenged that mistake. McCaffrey lost the ball at the Minnesota 11 on the ensuing possession when Bynum and Harrison Smith converged on the NFL’s leading rusher. Smith was credited for the forced fumble, his third of the season to tie a career high, and Dean Lowry recovered.

“I made a bad mistake today that I believe cost us the game,” McCaffrey said.

That was the first time in seven games this season the 49ers failed to score on their first drive. Addison’s first touchdown, a perfectly placed 20-yard pass into the hole in the zone coverage after Cousins audibled, was the first allowed by the 49ers in the first quarter this season.

“Against that team, that’s big-time quarterback play in my mind,” coach Kevin O’Connell said.

Eagles land 2-time All-Pro safety Byard from Titans

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The defending NFL champion Philadelphia Eagles traded for two-time All-Pro safety Kevin Byard to help a banged-up secondary hours after beating the NFL’s best offense.

The Eagles are sending safety Terrell Edmunds and fifth- and sixth-round draft picks in 2024 to the Tennessee Titans, pending both players passing physicals. The Eagles and Titans confirmed the trade of Tennessee’s five-time defensive captain to Philadelphia on Monday night.

Titans controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk thanked Byard and his wife, Clarke, for their work on and off the field as a

model of leadership.

“His phenomenal play and tireless charitable efforts have earned him a special and lasting place in our hearts,” Strunk said in a statement. “Kevin will always be a Titan, and we wish him well this year and in the years to come.”

Philadelphia improved to 6-1 and tied Super Bowl champion Kansas City for the NFL’s best record after beating Miami 31-17 on Sunday night. The Eagles limited Miami’s offense to season lows in points scored, total yards (244), passing yards (199), rushing yards (45) and time of possession (23:17).

Reports of the trade emerged Monday while Eagles coach

Nick Sirianni talked to reporters and he said he couldn’t talk about those.

“I obviously want to get with everybody and talk before I say anything here,” Sirianni said.

Byard has 27 interceptions since becoming a starter in 2017, the most among safeties through 2022.

Edmunds, a first-round pick in 2018, has five interceptions. Edmunds has started two of seven games for Philadelphia after spending his first five seasons with Pittsburgh.

This deal fills a big need for the Eagles, who lost safety C.J. Gardner-Johnson to Detroit in free agency and are dealing with injuries in their secondary.

Philadelphia cornerback Darius Slay liked the trade, writing on social media: “Just got better let’s work @KevinByard yes sir!!!”

Byard was the first pick in the third round of 2016 and had been Tennessee’s longest-tenured defensive player. Born in Philadelphia, Byard has started 111 of his 120 regular-season games and has not missed a game because of injury. He also has started seven playoff games.

This marks a big step toward rebuilding for the Titans (2-4), who have lost 11 of their past 13 games.

The trade leaves the Titans with a dead cap hit of \$8.82 million for this season.

NBA has plenty of challengers for Denver's title

Associated Press

Damian Lillard went to Milwaukee, Bradley Beal went to Phoenix, Jrue Holiday ended up in Boston and Chris Paul ended up with Golden State. Victor Wembanyama arrived in San Antonio, Nick Nurse took over in Philadelphia and LeBron James is now the oldest player in the league.

As always, the NBA is opening a new season with new looks.

The Denver Nuggets are hoping this season doesn't end with another new champion.

The NBA's 78th season started Tuesday, with a ring ceremony in Denver — the traditional celebration of the reigning champions — highlighting the opening-night celebration. The Nuggets beat Miami last June to become the league's fifth different champion in the last five years, a run of parity the likes of which the league hasn't seen in more than 40 years.

"We've gone from being a team that's hunting the teams in front of us to now we're going to be the hunted," Denver coach Michael Malone said. "And hopefully our guys understand the responsibility that comes with being a defending champion. There can be no off nights, because we're getting everybody's best 82 times this year."

The last five winners: Toron-

to, the Los Angeles Lakers, Milwaukee, Golden State and Denver. The last time there was a five-season stretch with no duplicate champion was 1977 through 1981, and it was a very different NBA back then.

For context on what the league was like in those five years: Seattle had a team, Washington was the Bullets, the three-point line didn't exist when that run started, the league had 22 or 23 teams instead of its current 30, the Nets played in New Jersey, the Jazz were wrapping up their New Orleans run, the Kings played in Kansas City, the Clippers played in San Diego and four players were the top earners at exactly \$1 million a year each.

During this regular season, the NBA has at least 56 players who'll make \$1 million a week.

"There's still the elite teams: Denver, Milwaukee, Boston," Charlotte coach Steve Clifford said. "But there's a lot of really, really good teams that if they evolve the right way, they can get there, too."

The offseason included several major transactions. Lillard's quest to get traded to Miami wound up with him getting traded to Milwaukee and instantly forming a championship-caliber duo with Giannis Antetokounmpo. Beal got traded to the Suns, forming the newest Big 3 alongside Kevin Du-

rant and Devin Booker. The Lillard and Beal moves led to others — Holiday eventually joining Boston, Paul eventually joining Golden State.

Everybody is chasing the ring. Which means, for now, everybody is chasing the Nuggets.

"I just know when you have a team that can be one of those teams that's going to compete for a title," Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said. "And we have one of those teams."

For the first time, there are two titles for teams to go after this season.

The In-Season Tournament — something Commissioner Adam Silver wanted for years — is now a reality. It starts on Nov. 3 with group play, and ends with a Final Four in Las Vegas on Dec. 7 and 9. The winner gets the NBA Cup and around \$18 million in prize money will be awarded, with \$500,000 going to each player on the winning team.

"Anything that's going to create higher-quality basketball, better competition, more intensity and more fan engagement is a great growth opportunity for us," said Evan Wasch, the NBA's executive vice president of basketball strategy.

CJ McCollum, the president of the National Basketball Players Association, knows there are skeptics. He pointed out that there also were skep-

tics when the NBA added the play-in tournament — which has turned out to be a massive success and ratings bonanza.

"It makes November and December not so gloomy," McCollum said of the in-season event. "And it gives people a chance to go to Vegas and compete at a high level on television for a chance to make more money. So, you have all these incentives in place, along with the fact that the season is so long, you have to figure out ways to continue to make it entertaining. This is a way to accomplish that."

Boston and Milwaukee enter the season as co-favorites for the NBA title, according to Fanduel Sportsbook, which lists Denver's Nikola Jokic — who won MVP in 2021 and 2022 — as the favorite for that award this year. Reigning MVP Joel Embiid has a new coach in Nurse with the 76ers, and an unhappy teammate in James Harden, whose future in Philadelphia is most unclear. And James, who turns 39 in December, is convinced the Lakers can make another title run.

There are many questions heading into the season and endless possibilities with so many talented teams.

But Nuggets guard Jamal Murray is clear about this: "If we can get another championship, I think we'll be on the right track."

Allen stops 36 shots as Canadiens beat Sabres

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Jake Allen made 36 saves to lead the Montreal Canadiens to a 3-1 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Monday night.

Allen made several big stops in net for the Canadiens, guiding Montreal to its second win in a row. Brendan Gallagher, Justin Barron and Tanner Pearson scored for Montreal.

"He definitely did his job tonight," Pearson said of Allen. "He was a big reason why we won."

Jeff Skinner scored for the Sabres, who

dominated the flow of play and outshot Montreal 37-27, but Buffalo was unable to capitalize on the scoreboard. Eric Comrie made 24 saves.

"This team and this group will score," Sabres coach Don Granato said. "Yeah, it's frustrating tonight. You had numerous chances that they didn't convert on. ... We know we have goal scorers in here and guys that will make plays. I just think that'll come."

Allen's most important save came on the penalty kill with 8:32 remaining. After Canadiens defenseman David Savard blocked

back-to-back shots — while losing one of his skate blades in the process — Allen stopped a Skinner shot from the right circle with his glove.

"I feel like (Savard) does it every night," Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis said. "He doesn't lose his blade like that every night. Savvy's a hockey player. There's a big difference between someone who plays hockey and a hockey player and Savvy's showing that game in and game out that he's a hockey player. You can't have too many of those guys. That's what he does."