

US bases in Mideast attacked 13 times

By **DOUG G. WARE**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Two dozen American troops were injured in 13 separate attacks at bases in Iraq and Syria during the past week, the Pentagon said, as Iranian-backed militants respond to U.S. support for Israel in its war with Hamas.

U.S. forces have seen attacks in recent days at the al-Tanf garrison in southeastern Syria and the al Asad and al-Harir air bases in Iraq. While the attacks have resulted in only minor injuries, the Defense Department said troops at the bases are repeatedly being targeted.

“Between Oct. 17 and [today] U.S. and coalition forces have been attacked at least 10 separate times in Iraq and three separate times in Syria via a mix of one-way attack drones and

rockets,” said Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon’s top spokesman. “Those are the initial numbers. We are continuing to work to ensure we get you the facts.”

U.S. Central Command, which is responsible for American military operations in the Middle East, said 24 military personnel sustained minor injuries Oct. 18 in drone attacks at al-Tanf and al Asad. CENTCOM officials said they all quickly returned to duty. That same day at the Syria garrison, an American contractor died of a heart attack and an attack destroyed an aircraft hangar and small airplane.

The Defense Department declined to specifically identify what groups are launching the attacks but said they are supported by Iran.

“We know that the groups

conducting these attacks are supported by [Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] and the Iranian regime. What we are seeing is the prospect for more significant escalation against U.S. forces and personnel across the region in the very near term,” Ryder said. “We know these groups are Iranian proxy groups.”

While all 13 attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria came within a couple of weeks of a surprise attack by Hamas militants against Israel on Oct. 7, the Pentagon has been hesitant to establish a clear connection. Military officials have said they are looking at the drone and rocket attacks as separate incidents, along with the firing of several rockets and drones by Houthi rebels in Yemen toward Israel that were shot down by

the USS Carney operating in the Red Sea. It’s still not confirmed the Houthis were shooting at Israel, though Ryder said the missiles could travel roughly 1,200 miles, which would have put them well within the range of Israel.

U.S. officials also said Tuesday that additional air power has arrived in the region — F-16s from the New Jersey Air National Guard’s 119th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, known as the “Jersey Devils.”

“The arrival of these airmen strengthens our ability to support our allied, coalition and regional partners as we work together to enhance regional stability and security,” said Air Force Lt. Gen. Alexis Grynkewich, commander of the 9th Air Force and Combined Forces Air Component Command.

UN: Gaza blockade could force cuts to relief effort

Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees warned Wednesday that without immediate deliveries of fuel it will soon have to sharply cut back relief operations across the Gaza Strip, which has been blockaded and hit by devastating Israeli airstrikes since Hamas militants launched an attack on Israel more than two weeks ago.

The warning came as hospitals in Gaza struggled to treat masses of wounded with dwindling resources, and health officials in the Hamas-ruled territory said the death toll was soaring as Israeli jets continued striking the territory overnight into Wednesday.

The airstrikes killed more than 750 people in Gaza between Tuesday and Wednesday, ac-

ording to the Health Ministry in Gaza, where Hamas controls the government. The figures did not give a breakdown of how many of those killed were militants. The Associated Press could not independently verify the death tolls cited by Hamas, which says it tallies figures from hospital directors.

The Israeli military said its strikes had killed militants and destroyed tunnels, command centers, weapons storehouses and other military targets, which it has accused Hamas of hiding among Gaza’s civilian population. Gaza-based militants have been launching unrelenting rocket barrages into Israel since the conflict started.

The death toll, following a reported 704 killed the day before, was unprecedented in the dec-

ades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even greater loss of life could come when Israel launches an expected ground offensive aimed at crushing Hamas militants.

The U.N. says about 1.4 million of Gaza’s 2.3 million residents are now internally displaced, with almost 600,000 crowded into U.N. shelters.

Gaza’s residents have been running out of food, water and medicine since Israel sealed off the territory following the attack on southern Israel by Hamas, which is sworn to Israel’s destruction.

In recent days, Israel allowed a small number of trucks filled with aid to come over the border with Egypt but barred deliveries of fuel — needed to power hospital generators — to keep it out of

Hamas’ hands.

The U.N. said it had managed to deliver some of the aid in recent days to hospitals treating the wounded. But the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, the largest provider of humanitarian services in Gaza, said it was running out of fuel.

Officials said they were forced to reduce their operations as they rationed what little fuel they had.

“Without fuel our trucks cannot go around to further places in the strip for distribution,” said Lily Esposito, a spokesperson for the agency.

Meanwhile, more than half of Gaza’s primary health care facilities, and roughly a third of its hospitals, have stopped functioning, the World Health Organization said.

Lawyers argue over evidence against general

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas — Lawyers argued during a hearing Tuesday whether the evidence used to charge Maj. Gen. Phillip Stewart with sexual assault points to a commander abusing his power over a junior officer or a woman regretting an alcohol-fueled night of infidelity with her boss.

With 24 items of evidence to review, Col. Brian Thompson, a military judge serving as the hearing's presiding officer, will have until mid-November to recommend whether there is probable cause to court-martial Stewart. The charges against Stewart are dereliction of duty, sexual assault, behavior unbecoming of an officer and adultery.

Lt. Gen. Brian S. Robinson, the commander of the Air Education and Training Command, will use Thompson's report to determine whether Stewart will go to trial. Robinson in May fired Stewart from his post as commander of the

19th Air Force because of the allegations.

Witnesses were not questioned during the roughly one-hour hearing at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, where Stewart led the Air Force's major pilot training unit. Stewart's face showed little emotion as he sat among his two military and three civilian attorneys in Building 100, a historic multi-use office building at Randolph that is known commonly as "The Taj Mahal."

Most of Tuesday's hearing focused on the two-count sexual assault charge against Stewart, which alleges he had sex with an officer under his command twice without her consent April 14 at Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma.

On that night, Stewart, the victim and two additional military personnel were drinking alcoholic beverages together, according to evidence discussed during the hearing. Sometime after leaving the gathering, a technical sergeant sent a text message to the vic-

tim asking if everything was OK. The victim responded yes.

Once alone, the victim sat closely on a couch next to Stewart and began to show him non-sex-related photos. She told criminal investigators that he kissed her, and she kissed him back. Then the two moved into a bedroom, where he undressed her and then himself, according to evidence discussed at the hearing.

Later April 14, Stewart participated in a training flight and sent a photo of himself in the aircraft to the victim. The flight occurred within 12 hours of drinking alcoholic beverages, which is not permitted.

Keith Scherer, a civilian defense attorney for Stewart, argued the victim's interview with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations proves "it is guilt and shame" that led to the charges rather than non-consensual sex. He accused investigators of an "unwillingness" to consider anything other than sexual assault during the victim's interview with

them.

"I told him I've never been unfaithful to [my husband]," Scherer quoted from the woman's interview.

A video of the interview was included as evidence and discussed but not played during the hearing. She never explicitly told Stewart to stop or tried to get out of the situation, the lawyer said.

"Anybody who's watched that video, it's hard to believe they would want to go forward with a [sexual-assault charge], Scherer said.

Thompson told prosecutors he too was having trouble finding probable cause in the woman's interview and asked them to explain at what point it became clear to them the sex was not consensual.

"It's important for whoever makes this decision ... to seriously consider the responsibilities and duties of an Air Force major general behaving in this manner with [a subordinate]," said Lt. Col. Pete Havern, one of three prosecutors at the hearing.

Officer's conviction for inappropriate drawing upheld

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

A Coast Guardsman's court-martial conviction connected to him drawing a penis on the forehead of a colleague in a photo, which was shared in a professional group chat, was upheld by the military's highest court this week.

Chief Petty Officer Fernando Brown, a machinery technician, was convicted in 2019 of disrespecting senior enlisted personnel after he sent a batch of off-color digital messages involving three chief petty officers in a text group called "Chief's Mess."

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces' ruling, released Monday, brings new clarity to how a statute intended to

uphold order and discipline applies in the era of digital and social media.

"Sometimes a seemingly simple statute can be devilishly difficult to interpret," Chief Judge Kevin Ohlson wrote in the majority's decision.

The statutory language led the five judges to differ on several legal points, even when they arrived at the same conclusion.

Brown was assigned to the Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star at the time and was part of a text group that involved the ship's 11 chief petty officers.

The aim of the Chief's Mess group was to pass along work-related information, because the crew was geographically separated while the cutter was in dry dock. While the group primarily dealt with work,

it also encompassed "some levity" and banter, court documents said.

Military prosecutors said, however, that Brown repeatedly crossed the line. That led to his conviction under Article 91 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which prohibits disrespect toward a warrant, noncommissioned or petty officer.

The court's ruling resolves two key points. First, a 3-2 decision stated that a service member can be convicted of disrespect even if the conduct occurs outside the physical presence of the victim, such as on a digital device or on social media.

A majority also ruled that service members can be held criminally liable only if the disrespectful conduct happens at the same moment the victim is on the job.

Hawaii group calls for new water tests

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — A community group in Hawaii is asking the Navy to investigate an uptick in reports of water contamination in households near Pearl Harbor that were affected by a jet fuel spill in late 2021.

The Community Representative Initiative — a 10-member group established last month to liaison directly with the Navy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Defense Logistics Agency — also called on the Navy to begin testing “hot water tanks in housing on the water distribution line,” according to a Monday news release.

The group was established to oversee community concerns related to defueling and closing the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, as well as water safety issues arising from the site.

In 2021, jet fuel leakage from the World War II-era facility seeped into the Navy’s water distribution on and near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, contaminating tap water for thousands of residents in military communities.

Defense Secretary Lloyd

Austin in March 2022 ordered the facility permanently closed. Final defueling of 104 million gallons of fuel began earlier this month and is expected to be completed by early next year.

The Hawaii Department of Health said in a news release Monday that it learned last week that 12 users of Navy water had reported symptoms attributed to exposure to tap water.

The Health Department conducted on-site inspections Thursday in five of those households but “did not observe a sheen or odor in the drinking water” in samples taken.

“A Photoionization Detector did not detect volatile organic compounds, which are indicators of petroleum byproducts,” the release said. “With the homeowners’ permission, the Navy collected water samples for further testing with DOH oversight.”

At the direction of the Department of Health, the Navy tested the well shaft for fuel contamination Thursday, but the presence of petroleum was not detected using rapid-screening tests, according to the release.

GOP elects Mike Johnson as Speaker of the House

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republicans eagerly elected Rep. Mike Johnson as House speaker Wednesday, elevating a deeply conservative but lesser-known leader to the seat of U.S. power and ending the political chaos in their majority for now.

Johnson, of Louisiana, swept on the first ballot with support from all Republicans anxious to put the past weeks of tumult behind them and get on with the business of governing.

A lower-ranked member of the House GOP leadership team, Johnson emerged as the fourth Republican nominee in what has become an almost absurd cycle of political infighting since Kevin McCarthy’s ouster as GOP factions jockey for power. While not the party’s top choice for the gavel, the deeply religious and even-keeled Johnson has few foes and an important GOP backer: Donald Trump.

“I think he’s gonna be a fantastic speaker,” Trump said Wednesday at the New York courthouse where the former president is on trial over a lawsuit alleging business fraud.

Trump said he hadn’t heard “one negative comment about him. Everybody likes him.”

Three weeks on without a

House speaker, the Republicans have been wasting their majority status — a maddening embarrassment to some, democracy in action to others, but not at all how the House is expected to function.

Far-right members have refused to accept a more traditional speaker, and moderate conservatives don’t want a hardliner. While Johnson had no opponents during the private roll call late Tuesday, some two dozen Republicans did not vote, more than enough to sink his nomination.

But when GOP Conference Chair Rep. Elise Stefanik rose to introduce Johnson’s name Wednesday as their nominee, Republicans jumped to their feet for an extended standing ovation.

“House Republicans and Speaker Mike Johnson will never give up,” she said.

Democrats again nominated their leader Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, criticizing Johnson as an architect of Trump’s legal effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election he lost.

With Republicans controlling the House only 221-212 over Democrats, Johnson could afford just a few detractors to win the gavel.

Power lines near Ukraine nuke plant hit as winter nears

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia fired 11 Shahed drones against Ukrainian targets, reaching deep into Ukraine while falling debris damaged power lines near a nuclear power plant in the country’s west, officials said Wednesday. Ukraine’s air force said it intercepted all the overnight drones.

For the fourth day in a row, the Kremlin’s forces took aim at the Ukrainian region of Khmelnytskyi, injuring 16 peo-

ple, according to local authorities.

Ukraine’s Ministry of Energy Infrastructure said falling drone wreckage in Khmelnytskyi broke windows in the administrative building and the laboratory of the local nuclear plant and knocked out electricity to over 1,800 customers.

The plant is about 120 miles east of the border with Poland.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country’s air defenses are preparing

for another winter of Russian attacks on energy infrastructure as the war enters its 21st month.

But Kyiv also plans to take the fight to Russia through its ongoing counteroffensive, he said.

“This year we will not only defend ourselves, but also respond,” Zelenskyy said. “The enemy knows this well.”

Last winter, Moscow’s drones and missiles zeroed in on Ukraine’s power grid, hop-

ing to erode the country’s will to resist Russia’s invasion by denying civilians heating. Ukraine said it was an effort to weaponize winter.

Ukrainians are bracing for another onslaught.

The looming wintry weather could further hamper battlefield movements in a conflict that is largely deadlocked and compel the warring sides to focus more on long-range strikes, including drones that have played a key role in the war.

States sue Meta, claim harm to kids' health

Associated Press

Dozens of U.S. states, including California and New York, are suing Meta Platforms Inc. for harming young people and contributing to the youth mental health crisis by knowingly and deliberately designing features on Instagram and Facebook that addict children to its platforms.

A lawsuit filed by 33 states in federal court in California claims that Meta routinely collects data on children under 13 without their parents' consent, in violation of federal law. In addition, nine attorneys general are filing lawsuits in their respective states, bringing the total number of states taking action to 41 and Washington, D.C.

"Meta has harnessed powerful and unprecedented technologies to entice, engage, and ultimately ensnare youth and teens. Its motive is profit, and in seeking to maximize its financial gains, Meta has repeatedly misled the public about the substantial dangers of its social media plat-

forms," the complaint says. "It has concealed the ways in which these platforms exploit and manipulate its most vulnerable consumers: teenagers and children."

The suits seek financial damages and restitution and an end to Meta's practices that are in violation of the law.

"Kids and teenagers are suffering from record levels of poor mental health and social media companies like Meta are to blame," said New York Attorney General Letitia James in a statement. "Meta has profited from children's pain by intentionally designing its platforms with manipulative features that make children addicted to their platforms while lowering their self-esteem."

In a statement, Meta said it shares "the attorneys general's commitment to providing teens with safe, positive experiences online, and have already introduced over 30 tools to support teens and their families."

"We're disappointed that in-

stead of working productively with companies across the industry to create clear, age-appropriate standards for the many apps teens use, the attorneys general have chosen this path," the company added.

The broad-ranging suit is the result of an investigation led by a bipartisan coalition of attorneys general from California, Florida, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey, Tennessee and Vermont. It follows damning newspaper reports, first by The Wall Street Journal in 2021, based on Meta's own research that found that the company knew about the harms Instagram can cause teenagers — especially teen girls — when it comes to mental health and body image issues. One internal study cited 13.5% of teen girls saying Instagram makes thoughts of suicide worse and 17% of teen girls saying it makes eating disorders worse.

Following the first reports, a consortium of news organizations, including The Associated

Press, published their own findings based on leaked documents from whistleblower Frances Haugen, who has testified before Congress and a British parliamentary committee.

The use of social media among teens is nearly universal in the U.S. and many other parts of the world. Almost all teens ages 13 to 17 in the U.S. report using a social media platform, with about a third saying they use social media "almost constantly," according to the Pew Research Center.

To comply with federal regulation, social media companies ban kids under 13 from signing up to their platforms — but children have been shown to easily get around the bans, both with and without their parents' consent, and many younger kids have social media accounts. The states' complaint says Meta knowingly violated this law, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, by collecting data on children without informing and getting permission from their parents.

GM-owned robotaxi service suspended in San Francisco

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — California regulators have revoked the license of a robotaxi service owned by General Motors after determining its driverless cars that recently began transporting passengers throughout San Francisco are a dangerous menace.

The California Department of Motor Vehicles' indefinite suspension of the Cruise robotaxi service comes just two months after another state regulator, the Public Utilities Commission, approved an expansion that authorized around-the-clock rides throughout San Francisco — the second most dense city in the U.S.

Now Cruise is being forced to slam on the brakes on its operations after the DMV concluded its robotaxis posed "an unreason-

able risk to public safety," according to a statement issued by the agency.

The DMV didn't elaborate on the specific reasons for the suspension, but the move comes after a series of incidents that heightened concerns about the hazards and inconveniences caused by Cruise's robotaxis. The worries reached a new level earlier this month after a Cruise robotaxi ran over a pedestrian who had been hit by another vehicle driven by a human, and then pinned the pedestrian under one of its tires after coming to a stop.

In a statement, Cruise confirmed it has ceased its robotaxi operations in San Francisco. It said it is cooperating with state and federal regulators in their inquiry into the Oct. 2 accident.

1st big US storm of season drops up to foot of snow

Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. — The first major snowstorm of the season dropped up to a foot of snow in the Helena area by Wednesday morning, canceling some school bus routes on the western side of the city.

The storm, which began Tuesday in the northern Cascades and Rockies, prompted people to search out their winter coats, gloves, boots and snow shovels after a warm fall in many places.

The National Weather Service warned of hazardous travel on snowy mountain passes and ice on some highways when snow initially melts and then freezes as road temperatures drop.

The storm was forecast to come in waves, beginning with precipitation that fell Tuesday as rain at

lower elevations in Washington state and as snow in the mountains. The snow was then forecast to spread across northern Idaho, Montana, northwestern Wyoming and North Dakota into Friday.

Cold air moving down from northwestern Canada has combined with a moist Pacific weather system, leading to freezing temperatures and expected snowfall amounts up 14 inches in Washington's northern Cascade Mountains and 18 inches in the mountains of Montana, the National Weather Service forecasts. Some higher elevations in the northern Rockies could see snow totals of 2 feet or more.

The storm brings a sharp change in weather. Helena tied record temperatures in the lower 80s late last week, Ludwig said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Whitmer criticizes MSU for scandals, woes

MI EAST LANSING — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer ripped into Michigan State University on Monday, accusing the school of “no clear unified leadership” amid rancor on the governing board and other unflattering incidents.

Whitmer’s statement came after two trustees over the weekend said they would support the ouster of board chair Rema Vassar.

Separately, MSU apologized after an image of Adolf Hitler was displayed on the scoreboard before the Michigan-MSU football game Saturday night. Officials said it was part of a quiz by an outside contractor that provides pregame content.

MSU also is dealing with fallout from the firing of football coach Mel Tucker, who was accused of sexually harassing a woman over the phone. Some critics say the school should have acted months ago.

Man gets 18 months for racist phone calls

MT BILLINGS — A Montana man has been sentenced to 18 months in federal prison for making repeated threatening and racist phone calls to a Billings church for two years after he went there seeking help and received a gift card from a Black employee, prosecutors said.

Joshua Leon Hiestand, 41, was sentenced Friday, according to the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Montana. Hiestand pleaded guilty in June to making harass-

ing telephone calls. A stalking charge was dismissed as part of the plea agreement.

Prosecutors alleged Hiestand went to the Presbyterian church in November 2020 seeking help. Five days later, the church received a voicemail in which someone, using a racially derogatory term, said he would give more money to the church if the church did not employ an African American. After three similar calls, the woman called Billings police.

A detective called the number used to leave the messages and spoke to Hiestand, who admitted making the calls and apologized for his behavior, prosecutors said.

Judge releases man accused of plotting attacks

MD GREENBELT — A federal judge on Monday ordered the release of a Maryland man who has been imprisoned for more than four years on charges that he plotted Islamic State-inspired attacks at an airport and at a shopping and entertainment complex in the Washington, D.C., area.

Rondell Henry, 32, of Germantown, Md., pleaded guilty in August to attempting to perform an act of violence at Dulles International Airport in Virginia. U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis agreed to sentence Henry to the jail time that he already has served since his March 2019 arrest.

Accepting terms recommended by both prosecutors and defense attorneys, the judge also sentenced Henry to lifetime supervised release with mandatory participation in a mental health treatment program.

Henry, then 28, abandoned his plan to plow a stolen U-Haul van into pedestrians at the airport because he didn’t think the early-morning crowd was large enough, prosecutors said. Police arrested Henry after he parked the truck at National Harbor, a popular waterfront destination in Maryland just outside the nation’s capital.

Former NSA worker pleads guilty in secrets case

CO DENVER — A former National Security Agency employee from Colorado pleaded guilty Monday to trying to sell classified national security information to Russia.

Federal prosecutors agreed to not ask for more than about 22 years in prison for Jareh Sebastian Dalke when he is sentenced in April if he adheres to the terms of a plea deal, but the judge will ultimately decide his punishment.

Dalke, a 31-year-old Army veteran from Colorado Springs, technically faces up to a possible life sentence for giving the information to an undercover FBI agent who prosecutors say Dalke believed was a Russian agent. However, accepting responsibility for a crime usually leads to a lighter sentence.

Theft of 2M dimes leaves 4 facing federal charges

PA PHILADELPHIA — Federal authorities have released more details and unsealed charges in the theft of more than 2 million dimes earlier this year from a tractor-trailer that had picked up the coins from the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia.

The truck driver was bound for Miami when he pulled into a

parking lot to sleep on April 13. During the night, thieves made off with a portion of its cargo of \$750,000 in dimes, a shipment weighing about six tons, authorities said.

Thousands of coins were left scattered all over the lot in northeast Philadelphia.

The Philadelphia Inquirer reported that prosecutors contend the theft — which they now say totaled \$234,500 in stolen dimes — was part of a spree of robberies from tractor-trailers passing through the region that also netted the thieves frozen crab legs, shrimp, meat, beer and liquor.

Four Philadelphia men face conspiracy, robbery, theft of government money and other charges.

New bird flu cases reported in Iowa

IA DES MOINES — Two commercial turkey farms in Iowa have been hit by the re-emerging highly pathogenic bird flu, causing about 100,000 birds to be killed to prevent the disease from spreading.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture reported the infected commercial poultry flocks within weeks of a turkey farm in South Dakota and one in Utah reporting the first outbreaks in the U.S. since April, raising concerns that more would follow.

Bird flu last year cost U.S. poultry producers nearly 59 million birds across 47 states, including egg-laying chickens and turkeys and chickens raised for meat, making it the country’s deadliest outbreak ever, according to USDA figures.

— From wire reports



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D-backs stun Phils, advance to World Series

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Corbin Carroll ducked late into the Arizona Diamondbacks' clubhouse with his uniform pants stained with dirt — two stolen bases will get a player dirty — but was otherwise clean when he was spotted by the rest of his bubbly-bathed teammates.

“Have yourself a Game 7!” jubilant teammates shouted as they chased down the breakout postseason star. “Why are you dry?”

Carroll had little room to escape inside a cramped visitors' locker room — not that he wanted to — and was soon doused with beer before a victory cigar followed.

World Series trips don't come often for this franchise that plays in the desert. So when it was time to celebrate, the Diamondbacks

did it with the same vigor they used to knock off last year's NL champs.

Carroll went 3-for-4 with two RBIs and two runs scored, and Arizona advanced to the World Series for the first time in 22 years Tuesday night by stunning the Philadelphia Phillies 4-2 in Game 7 of the NL Championship Series.

“We did it! That's all I can say,” said Carroll, the front-runner for NL Rookie of the Year. “Just believe in each other, believe in our guys. We know what we have in that clubhouse, and it's special. We've known it all year.”

Arizona will play the Texas Rangers in an all-wild card World Series no one saw coming, with Game 1 set for Friday night at Globe Life Field.

In their only other trip to the Fall Classic, the Diamondbacks

won a seven-game thriller against the New York Yankees in 2001.

The young Diamondbacks, who at 84-78 squeezed into the playoffs as the final NL wild card, completed their comeback from an 0-2 hole in the NLCS. They won Games 6 and 7 in Philadelphia, where the defending National League champions had been 12-2 over the past two postseasons — including 11-0 in NL playoff games.

“I've said it a million times, and I'll say it again: A connected team is a very dangerous team,” Arizona manager Torey Lovullo said. “No matter what happened in those times of crisis, these guys stuck together.”

Diamondbacks second baseman Ketel Marte hit .387 with 12 hits, four doubles, a triple and a stolen base in the series to earn

NLCS MVP honors. His 19 hits in a single postseason are a club record.

“There was times this year where it was, like, how do you even pitch this guy? He is kind of back in that mode right now. It's special to watch,” Carroll said.

Marte has hit safely in all 16 career postseason games, the longest streak in NL history and second in major league annals to Derek Jeter's 17-game postseason hitting streak for the Yankees.

Rookie starter Brandon Pfaadt struck out seven, and five relievers combined on five scoreless innings of one-hit ball for the surprising NL pennant winners.

“They played great baseball,” Phillies slugger Kyle Schwarber said. “There's no way around it. Everyone's got a sick feeling in their stomach. It's not the way we pictured this thing ending.”

Nuggets get championship rings, beat Lakers

Associated Press

DENVER — The bling and the banner were nice. What the Denver Nuggets really relished, though, was their opening defense of the franchise's first NBA title with a 119-107 win over the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday night.

“We can't think about last year too much,” Jamal Murray said after the Nuggets followed the raising of their championship banner by dropping the hammer on the Lakers in the NBA's season opener, which featured Nikola Jokic's triple-double and LeBron James taking a few more breathers than normal.

Jokic said the Nuggets fed off the emotion from the pregame ceremony to jump out to an early 18-point lead, which held up even after the Lakers got within three points in the fourth quarter.

“I think we controlled the game the whole time,” said Jokic, who had 29 points, 13 rebounds and 11 assists.

Murray added 21 points, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 20, Aaron Gordon had 15 and Michael Porter Jr. had 12.

All of LA's starters also scored in double figures, led by James' 21 points in 29 minutes — his playing time is being monitored at the start of his 21st season.

“It helps,” Murray said with a smile.

James ended up playing about five fewer

minutes than he's used to.

“I mean, I always want to be on the floor,” James said, “especially when you got an opportunity to win a game or feel like you can make an impact. But I guess there's a system in place and I'll follow it.”

James, the league's oldest player at age 38, stressed, “I'm not surprised or upset” about the Lakers monitoring his minutes as the season gets going.

Taurean Prince scored 18 points his his debut for the Lakers, his fifth team in nine seasons. Anthony Davis had 17 points, Austin Reaves 14 and D'Angelo Russell 11.

Suns 108, Warriors 104: Kevin Durant greeted many of the people he knew so well during three sensational seasons with the Warriors, then hardly showed off his best shooting performance on a night the Golden State fans finally got to cheer him all these years later.

He still spoiled the home team's opening night as the Phoenix Suns won the first matchup between the Pacific Division powerhouses.

“It's always good to be recognized for the work you put in, so it was exciting to see people I hadn't seen in a while, some familiar faces,” Durant said. “I feel like the fan base here got nothing but love and respect for me as an individual player and as a person. That's all I can

ask for.”

Devin Booker scored a go-ahead layup with 4:51 remaining followed by a 3-pointer on the way to 32 points in a Phoenix victory on Tuesday night in a back-and-forth finish.

Stephen Curry scored 27 points to former shooting partner Durant's 18 on a night the Warriors welcomed KD back for his first game in front of Bay Area fans since he left after the 2019 NBA Finals.

Curry scored seven straight points early in the third to pull the Warriors within 64-61 at the 8:21 mark and Phoenix called a timeout. Golden State opened the third on a 27-5 burst while the Suns went 2-for-14.

Durant was greeted with warm applause from the fans in their first time seeing him since he led the Warriors to a pair of championships with two NBA Finals MVP awards and three straight Finals berths from 2017-19.

The Warriors played video highlights on the big screen during pregame introductions. Durant patted his heart and raised his arm in the air to acknowledge the love, then shot 7-for-22 with 10 rebounds.

“A lot of good moments in the video. We was able to relive some of those memories real quick,” Durant said. “But it was good to come in here and get the season started off right with a W.”

Avs down Islanders, win sixth straight

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Mikko Rantanen scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period and had three assists as the Colorado Avalanche beat the New York Islanders 7-4 on Tuesday night for their NHL-record 15th straight road win.

Ryan Johansen scored twice, Cale Makar had a goal and an assist, and Bowen Byram, Nathan MacKinnon and Ross Colton also scored for Colorado, which won its sixth straight to open the season. Valeri Nichushkin had two assists, and Alexandar Georgiev stopped 27 shots to also improve to 6-0-0 this season.

Maple Leafs 4, Capitals 1: Auston Matthews scored his seventh goal of the season, Joseph Woll made 36 saves and visiting Toronto handed Washington its fourth loss in five games.

Stars 4, Penguins 1: Thomas Harley and Wyatt Johnston scored in the third period and visiting Dallas beat Pittsburgh.

Lightning 3, Hurricanes 0: Jonas Johansson made 32 saves, Brayden Point had a goal and an assist, and host Tampa Bay sent Carolina to its third straight loss.

Devils 5, Canadiens 2: Tyler Toffoli had a hat trick against his former team, leading visiting New Jersey past Montreal.

Sabres 6, Senators 4: Jeff Skinner and Tage Thompson each scored twice and visiting Buffalo won on a night Ottawa honored former star goaltender Craig Anderson, who serves as a hockey liaison for its opponent.

Panthers 3, Sharks 1: Sam Reinhart extended his goal streak to five games, helping host Florida keep San Jose winless.

Kraken 5, Red Wings 4 (OT):

Jordan Eberle scored with 5 seconds remaining in overtime and visiting Seattle ended Detroit's five-game winning streak.

Bruins 3, Blackhawks 0: Matthew Poitras and Trent Frederic scored 56 seconds apart in the third period as visiting Boston beat Chicago to match the best start in franchise history.

Ducks 3, Blue Jackets 2 (OT): Frank Vatrano scored on a breakaway 2:40 into overtime and Lukas Dostal stopped 34 shots as Anaheim snapped a three-game skid with its first road win of the season, rallying to beat Columbus.

Jets 4, Blues 2: Connor Hellebuyck stopped 18 of 20 shots to lead host Winnipeg past St. Louis.

Wild 7, Oilers 4: Ryan Hartman scored three goals as part of a career-high-tying five-point game, and host Minnesota

scored five times in the final period to beat Edmonton.

Canucks 3, Predators 2: Phillip Di Giuseppe and Nils Hoglander scored early in the second period to lead visiting Vancouver past Nashville.

Rangers 3, Flames 1: Defenseman Erik Gustafsson had a goal and an assist and visiting New York scored three times in the second period to beat Calgary.

Kings 6, Coyotes 3: Kevin Fiala had a goal and an assist, Anze Kopitar scored on the power play and had an assist, and host Los Angeles defeated Arizona.

Golden Knights 3, Flyers 2: Shea Theodore blasted a shot from above the left circle with 32.5 seconds left to beat visiting Philadelphia and extend Vegas' winning streak to seven games to open the season.

Sources: AAC votes to add Army for football only

Associated Press

The American Athletic Conference voted unanimously to add Army as a football-only member starting in 2024, two people with direct knowledge of the decision told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

The people spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity because a formal announcement was still in the works. AAC Commissioner Mike Aresco was planning to attend a news conference at West Point, N.Y., with school officials later Wednesday.

Army will replace SMU, which is moving to the Atlantic Coast Conference, to keep the American a 14-team football league. The move puts Army and Navy football in the same conference, but their traditional, end-of-the-season, standalone matchup will remain a non-conference game so it can be played after conference cham-

pionships.

Army mostly competes in the Patriot League, but it has been an independent in football for most of the program's existence. The Black Knights competed in Conference USA from 1998-2004 and never won more than three football games in a season.

Michigan sign-stealing investigation intensifies

Tickets for the last two Southeastern Conference championship games were purchased in the name of a suspended Michigan football staffer who is the focus of an NCAA investigation into an alleged sign-stealing scheme, a person with direct knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The person, speaking on condition of anonymity because no one was authorized to speak

publicly about an open NCAA investigation, said electronic records revealed Connor Stallions bought tickets to the games at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta.

ESPN was first to report that in addition to tickets being purchased in Stallions' name to multiple games involving most of Michigan's Big Ten rivals over the past three years, he also bought tickets to the games of several potential College Football Playoff opponents for the Wolverines.

Melvin leaving Padres for Giants, sources say

SAN FRANCISCO — The San Francisco Giants have hired manager Bob Melvin away from the division rival San Diego Padres, three people with direct knowledge of the agreement said Tuesday.

The people spoke to The As-

sociated Press on condition of anonymity because neither team had made a formal announcement about the move. The Athletic first reported Melvin was the Giants' choice.

The 61-year-old Melvin will be returning to the Bay Area where he grew up cheering the Giants. He later played for them and then managed the Oakland Athletics from 2011-21. An introductory news conference was planned for Wednesday.

Melvin had one year left on his contract with San Diego but leaves amid reports of friction with general manager A.J. Preller. Melvin managed the Padres for two seasons, reaching the 2022 NL Championship Series but then missing the playoffs this season with a \$258 million payroll, the third-highest in the majors. It's unclear if the Padres will receive compensation.

QB Allen takes blame for Bills' woes

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — With so many chiming in on why the Buffalo Bills offense has been so sluggish of late, and blame being placed on everything and everyone from jet lag to coordinator Ken Dorsey, quarterback Josh Allen came up with a reason of his own on Tuesday.

It just might be him.

Revealing he made the conscious decision last month to keep his emotions in check — “low positive,” the quarterback called it — following a season-opening dud and Week 2 domination, Allen wondered whether he’s reined himself in too much.

“I’ve been trying to find a zone where I get myself into throughout the game to try to stay as low as possible, because I feel like I perform better that way,” Allen said.

“If I could limit myself and my energy and my heart rate, I felt like I could maybe think a little bit more,” he added. “But, who

knows? Maybe I need to think a little bit less and play football.”

While Allen has no intention of returning to his reckless, defender-hurdling, squeezing passes into double coverage old ways, the quarterback thinks a reset might be in order.

“Maybe I’ve got to be more upbeat and be a voice a little bit more loud — let my emotions show a little more,” he said as Buffalo (4-3) faces a short week in preparing to host the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (3-3) on Thursday night.

Buffalo is in a desperate need of a spark, particularly involving a slow-starting offense that’s combined to score 10 points in the first half in its past three outings, capped by a 29-25 loss at New England.

The Bills are 1-2 over that span — rounded out by a 25-20 loss to Jacksonville at London’s Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and a 14-9 win against the New York Giants — and facing mid-season questions as to whether the window of opportunity is

closing on the three-time defending AFC East champions.

What’s befuddling is how the offensive slump immediately followed a three-game winning streak in which the Bills outscored their opponents by a combined margin of a 123-33 and capped by a 48-20 rout of division rival Miami.

Coach Sean McDermott placed the blame on everyone, including himself, by saying the team as a whole needs to return to dictating rather than reacting to what happens during a game.

Dorsey, facing intensifying scrutiny, dismissed a question as to whether his offense was facing a crisis. And he declined offering insight on what’s gone wrong and what steps he might take to improve its production, whether it’s switching tempos to keep defenses off balance or having Allen attack the middle of the field more often.

In the first half of Buffalo’s past two games, Allen has attempted just six passes over the middle, four of them comple-

tions, including a touchdown negated by a penalty, with one incompletion and an interception.

Receiver Stefon Diggs said one way to build momentum is enjoying some success on opening drives.

“Us in a rhythm is scary, you know what I’m saying? Once we get going, we get going,” Diggs said. “We just got to get going.”

The Bills’ starts have been going nowhere. Over its past three games, Buffalo’s first drives have combined for 11 yards on seven plays, and ended with two punts and a first-snap interception last weekend.

Buffalo’s been much better in rallying to score a combined 42 points in its past three fourth quarters. But it’s only resulted in one win, which came down to Buffalo’s defense stopping the Giants at the 1 on an untimed down.

“It’s frustrating when you can’t score. So the fun’s not there when you’re not doing what you work all week to do,” receiver Gabe Davis said.

JMU looks to avoid another quick exit from Top 25

Associated Press

James Madison is back in the Top 25 with a 7-0 record, and coach Curt Cignetti is confident the Dukes are better prepared for continued success this time.

A year ago, after starting 5-0 and being ranked No. 25 for the first time as a Bowl Subdivision program, they promptly lost three straight.

“I think last season we were ranked and then went down to Georgia Southern, there was a lot of hoopla around here,” Cignetti said Monday, the day after the Dukes appeared in both the AP Top 25 and the coach’s poll for the first time.

“We crossed that bridge a little bit when we played them last time because we were 5-0 again, the same matchup, and I thought we handled it much bet-

ter.”

On Oct. 14, this time at JMU’s Bridgforth Stadium, the Dukes rolled, 41-13.

“This team has learned the lessons from the past,” Cignetti said. “It’s very mature. One thing I’ll say about this team is they have been extremely focused day in, day out and played with great effort and energy every Saturday.”

After that skid last season, the Dukes won their last three, including a 47-7 blowout of then-No. 23 Coastal Carolina in what would have been a battle for the Sun Belt Conference’s East Division title if the Dukes had been eligible during their FCS transition.

After that game, Queen’s “We Are The Champions” blared over the PA system and Cignetti

admitted he was “disappointed we didn’t score 65.”

This year, when they were picked to win the division but are again ineligible to play for the conference championship, he’s not sure that bitterness is still evident.

“I don’t know. I can’t say that for sure,” he said. “I think this team’s really focused on taking care of business and doing something special.”

The Dukes are 4-0 in conference play and coming off a 20-9 victory at Marshall, their first-ever win against the Thundering Herd. Marshall finished with minus-4 rushing yards, the second Dukes opponent to finish with a negative rushing total. That was thanks in great measure to eight sacks for minus-60 yards, including five by Jalen

Green. Earlier, they held Troy to minus-12 yards.

The Marshall victory also made James Madison 4-0 on the road, including consecutive wins at Virginia, 36-35, on a touchdown pass with 55 seconds to play, at Troy, 16-14, and at Utah State, 45-38 after squandering a 24-point lead.

The Dukes play three of their next four games at home, beginning Saturday night against Old Dominion (4-3, 3-1), a team they beat for the first time just last year.

The ranking also marks the sixth consecutive season that a team from the Sun Belt has been ranked in the Top 25 during the season, and Appalachian State, Coastal Carolina, Troy and Louisiana have each finished ranked at least once.