

Seoul: N. Korean troops could join fight

Bloomberg News

South Korea warned that North Korean troops and generals dispatched to Russia to aid Moscow's war on Ukraine are possibly moving to the front line, in a sign the conflict is on the verge of spreading and dragging in new players.

The National Intelligence Service is "trying to confirm the possible movement" of North Korean troops to the front line, South Korean lawmaker Lee Seong-kweun said after the spy agency briefed parliamentarians in a closed-door session Tuesday. The assessment comes after South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said Monday that the troops could join the battlefield earlier than expected, without giving further details.

North Korea's possible direct involvement in the Russia-Ukraine conflict has added a new twist to the war, and the United States and its allies

have described it as a turning point in the 2½-year-old conflict. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte confirmed earlier that some North Korean military units have been sent to the Kursk region where Ukrainian forces made gains this year in what he described as a "significant escalation."

On Tuesday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the thousands of North Korean soldiers are expected to reinforce Russian troops on the front line in Ukraine, The Associated Press reported.

"There is only one conclusion — this war is internationalized and goes beyond the borders" of Ukraine and Russia, Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram.

As Ukraine and its allies mull a response to the troops dispatch, North Korea sent its Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui to Russia for her third trip in less than a year, according to the official Korean Central

News Agency on Tuesday. Choe is expected to discuss additional deployment with her Russian counterparts, Lee said.

It's still unclear how the North Korean troops will aid Russia's fight against Ukraine, as well as when or if they will engage in combat.

North Korea plans to dispatch about 10,000 troops to Russia, NIS estimates. While it is unlikely to tip the balance of power, the involvement of Moscow's ally risks dragging the divided Korean Peninsula into the conflict.

Seoul, which has raised the prospect of supplying arms to Ukraine in response, is sending high-ranking officials to Ukraine to share information and discuss possible areas of cooperation.

Russia is trying to teach North Korean soldiers about a hundred terms of its military vocabulary, but it's unclear if

they will manage to overcome the language barrier, Lee said, citing the spy agency.

The deepening ties between North Korea and Russia have alarmed South Korea and its allies, and they have been discussing options to counter the move.

In Pyongyang, North Korea has stepped up security for leader Kim Jong Un over possible assassination attempts, lawmaker Park Sun-won who was also briefed by the spy agency told reporters.

Choe's last public visit to Moscow was in January when she held talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in a meeting the U.S. and its partners saw as facilitating arms shipments from North Korea.

The visit was followed by Putin's Pyongyang trip in June where he agreed with Kim to provide immediate military assistance if one of them is attacked.

Philippine bases shared with US may be relief hubs

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

Philippine facilities made available to U.S. forces under a decade-old defense pact may serve as disaster-relief command centers, according to a Philippine military spokeswoman.

The 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement allows the United States to build facilities and position supplies and equipment at nine sites across the Philippines.

The sites were activated for relief and rescue operations ahead of Tropical Storm Trami last week, the state-run Philippine News Agency reported Oct. 23.

The death toll from the storm, which struck the islands Oct. 22, and an approaching typhoon, reached 111 with nearly 2 million households affected, the agency reported Tuesday.

EDCA sites have been used to prepare and send supplies to disaster areas, Philippine military spokeswoman Col. Francel Margareth Padilla said during a televised briefing Monday, reported that day by Philippine broadcaster ABS-CBN News.

"Over and above that, EDCA sites may also serve as a command-and-control point for multiple nations," she said.

The chief of the Philippine military, Army Gen. Romeo

Brawner, told reporters Oct. 23 at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon city that his American counterparts were ready to deploy planes to the sites ahead of the storm.

U.S. forces' capabilities were not required for the mission, however, Capt. Mark McDonough, a spokesman for Marine Rotational Force-Southeast Asia, told Stars and Stripes on Friday by text message from the Philippines.

Members of the rotational force and the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, embarked on the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer, helped deliver supplies to Filipinos struck by Su-

per Typhoon Krathon on Sept. 30.

The Marines used forklifts that were prepositioned in Manila during that operation, 15th MEU commander Col. Sean Dynan told Stars and Stripes on Oct. 22 on Palawan.

Around 200 15th MEU members were on Palawan training with Philippine marines last week but flew off the island ahead of the storm, Dynan said.

The Philippines is preparing for Typhoon Kong-rey, which packs sustained winds of over 80 mph and gusts up to almost 100 mph. The storm is expected to strike the country's north Thursday.

Navy reservist gets 20 years for Afghan visa program bribes

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

A Navy Reserve officer who took thousands of dollars in bribes to write fake recommendation letters for Afghans seeking a special U.S. visa was sentenced Monday to more than two years in prison.

Cmdr. Jeromy Pittmann received a sentence of two years and six months behind bars from a federal judge in New Hampshire, a statement from the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction said.

"This case shows how someone betrayed his sacred oath of office to commit crimes for personal gain, with no regard for how his actions could threaten U.S. homeland security and harm Afghans who risked their lives to help the United States," SIGAR Inspector General John Sopko said in the statement.

Pittmann was convicted in July on one count of bribery and false writing, separate single charges of bribery and false writing and conspiracy to commit money laundering to conceal the bribes. He had faced up to 45 years in prison for taking several thousand dollars in bribes, the Justice Department said at the time.

However, prosecutors recommended a sentence on the low end of applicable guidelines, from six-and-a-half to eight years, according to court records.

A Navy Seabee whose military career spans more than 20 years, Pittmann was assigned to Naval Support Activity Naples in Italy when he was arrested in

March 2022.

That came after the State Department received a complaint that some Afghan companies had bribed a U.S. service member to write false recommendations for Special Immigrant Visa applicants.

Each year, a limited number of the visas are made available to Afghans who served as translators or otherwise helped the U.S. military during the Afghanistan war from 2001 to 2021.

But even before the war ended, the program was plagued by delays, lack of coordination and understaffing, the State Department inspector general found. Some candidates had been waiting for years when the Taliban regained power in August 2021.

Pittmann's "pay-for-play scheme" slowed down processing of applications and extorted "vulnerable Afghans for the documentation they need to qualify," the State Department wrote in an Oct. 18 victim impact statement to the court.

Court records show that Pittmann wrote at least 22 fake recommendation letters from May 2018 to January 2021 for Afghan nationals seeking a Special Immigrant Visa.

Pittmann didn't know any of the individuals he vouched for and had agreed to write the letters for \$500 each, court records show.

In the letters, Pittmann said the applicants had served as translators for the U.S. military and NATO. He also said they were in danger because of their service and were not a threat to national security, according to court records.

US Marines aboard during Japanese Osprey mishap

BY BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

Three Marines were aboard a Japanese Osprey tiltrotor aircraft when it hit the ground and was damaged during a joint U.S.-Japanese exercise over the weekend.

The Marines were training with Japan Ground Self-Defense Force troops during the ongoing Keen Sword exercise when the incident occurred, U.S. Forces Japan said Tuesday.

The V-22 was attempting to take off from Camp Yonaguni, a Japanese base on a remote island, when its left wing hit the ground during a disaster-response drill Sunday morning, according to a Japan Joint Staff news release that day.

None of the 16 military personnel aboard were injured, a

Joint Staff spokesman said Monday.

U.S. Ospreys in Japan "remain mission capable" and will continue to participate in Keen Sword, according to USFJ.

"We do not anticipate any significant impacts to training," the command said. "The U.S. remains committed to conducting realistic training exercises with our Allies and partners."

Japan has grounded its fleet of 17 Ospreys as it investigates the incident, the Joint Staff spokesman said. However, Ospreys will carry out "mission flights," Defense Minister Gen Nakatani said Tuesday.

"If a natural disaster occurs, we will decide whether to use the Ospreys or not, but basically, we won't fly them," he said.

The Self-Defense Force began its investigation Sunday, Nakatani said.

Veteran sentenced for pregnant soldier's death

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

An American veteran who was serving at a since-closed U.S. Army base in Germany when he killed a female fellow soldier two decades ago was sentenced to 30 years in prison, according to the Justice Department.

Shannon L. Wilkerson, 44, was convicted in May of second-degree murder in the death of Amanda Gonzales, 19.

His sentencing was Thursday in federal court in Florida, the DOJ said in a statement the same day.

Wilkerson beat and strangled Gonzales to death on Nov. 3, 2001, in her barracks room at Fliegerhorst Kaserne in Hanau. The case went unsolved for

years, but in February 2023, authorities charged Wilkerson with first-degree murder.

Evidence introduced at trial indicated that Wilkerson, who was married to another soldier at the time, feared that he was the father of Gonzales' unborn child and that his infidelity would damage his military career, the Justice Department said.

Wilkerson served in the Army from 1999 to 2004 and was a light-wheel vehicle mechanic who held the rank of sergeant before his discharge, the Miami Herald reported.

When Wilkerson was convicted, authorities did not say where he was living, but a local newspaper gave his hometown as Andalusia, Ala.

Harris reaches for big moment on Ellipse

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Vice President Kamala Harris planned to make the “closing argument” for her presidential campaign Tuesday from the same site where Donald Trump fomented the Capitol insurrection, hoping it offers a stark visualization of the alternate futures that voters face if she or Trump takes over the Oval Office.

One week out from Election Day, Harris was to use her address from the grassy Ellipse near the White House to pledge to Americans that she will work to improve their lives while arguing that her Republican opponent is only in it for himself.

She hoped to sharpen that contrast by delivering her capstone speech from the place where Trump on Jan. 6, 2021, spewed falsehoods about the 2020 presidential election that inspired a crowd to march to the Capitol and try unsuccessfully to halt the certification of Democrat Joe Biden’s victory.

With time running out and the race tight, Harris and Trump both have been looking for big moments to try to shift the momentum their way.

But after her speech in the nation’s capital, Harris will be back to furiously scouring for votes one rally and one event after another in the battleground states.

On Tuesday, aides said, Harris was aiming to look beyond the startling imagery of her location on the Ellipse to make a broader case for voters to reject Trump and consider what she offers.

“There’s a big difference between he and I,” Harris told reporters Monday in previewing her speech. “If he were elected, on day one he’s going to sit in the Oval Office working on his enemies list. On day one, if I am elected, which I fully expect to be, I will be working on behalf of the American people on my to-do list.”

Campaign aides stressed that she will not be delivering a

treatise on democracy — a staple of President Biden’s own attempts to draw a contrast with Trump.

But her campaign is hoping the setting will help catch the attention of battleground state voters who remain on the fence about whom to vote for — or whether to vote at all.

It comes days after Harris traveled to Texas, a reliably Republican state, to appear with megastar Beyoncé and emphasize the consequences for women after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. That, too, was a speech meant to register with voters far away in the battleground states.

The vice president’s latest address has been in the works for weeks. But aides hoped her message would land with more impact after Trump’s rally Sunday at Madison Square Garden in New York, where speakers hurled cruel and racist insults. Harris said the event “highlighted the point that I’ve

been making throughout this campaign.”

“He is focused and actually fixated on his grievances, on himself and on dividing our country,” she said.

Harris was expected to use her speech to lay out a pragmatic and forward-looking plan for the country, including reminding voters about her economic proposals and pledging to staunchly work for access to reproductive care, including abortion.

Also central to her message: positioning herself as a “new generation” of leader after Trump and even her current boss, Biden.

As for Trump, she said Monday, “People are literally ready to turn the page. They’re tired of it.”

Harris’ aides, many of whom also advised Biden’s campaign before he dropped out, still believe that centering the race on who Trump is and how she’s different will be their strongest message for voters.

GOP works to turn out pro-Trump Jewish voters

Associated Press

WEST BLOOMFIELD, Mich. — Rachel Weinberg calls herself a religious Jew first, then a proud American. She said she has only one choice for president: Donald Trump.

“I don’t like everything he says,” the 72-year-old retired preschool teacher from Michigan said after volunteer canvassers for the Republican Jewish Coalition knocked on her door Sunday. “But I vote for Israel. It is our life. I support Israel. Trump supports Israel with his mouth and his actions.”

Weinberg’s home in West Bloomfield, in vote-rich Oakland County, was among more than 20 that the Republican Jewish Coalition was visiting that morning. She has voted for Trump in previous elections as

well.

The door-to-door outreach to Jewish voters with a history of backing Republicans is part of a new effort the group is undertaking this year in five presidential battleground states in hopes of boosting Trump over Democrat Kamala Harris in the Nov. 5 election. Although surveys show that Jews vote decidedly Democratic, the Republican Jewish Coalition is hoping that the door-knocking will peel off enough votes to make a difference in an election year when the war between Israel and Hamas has stoked debate and provoked division.

About 7 in 10 Jewish voters nationally backed Democrat Joe Biden in 2020, while about 3 in 10 backed Trump that year, according to AP VoteCast, a

sweeping survey of the electorate. A Pew Research Center poll released last month found that about two-thirds of Jewish voters back Harris.

Biden carried Michigan in 2020 by fewer than 155,000 votes out of roughly 5.5 million cast. Although Jewish voters account for only 2% of the state’s voters, the 15,000 new Jewish Republican voters the coalition has identified since the 2020 election — out of roughly 120,000 Jewish voters in the state — could make an impact in what is shaping up to be a very close race, said Sam Markstein, an RJC spokesperson.

The Republican Jewish Coalition’s targeting is very specific in Michigan, as it is in Arizona, Georgia, Nevada and Pennsylvania. Here, its work is centered

in Oakland County, the state’s second most-populous county, with 1.3 million people just northwest of Detroit.

It’s particularly focusing on the upper middle-class suburbs of Farmington Hills, Oak Park, Southfield and West Bloomfield — the township with the state’s largest Jewish population, where Israeli flags hang in some front windows.

Biden defeated Trump in 2020, 66% to 33%, in the West Bloomfield Township precinct where 82-year-old David Cuttner and 22-year-old Noam Nedivi were canvassing for the coalition on Sunday. The margin was not far off the national trend.

The coalition’s robust effort is aimed at chipping away at Democrats’ advantages among this voting bloc.

Founding member new Hezbollah leader

Associated Press

DEIRAL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — An Israeli strike on a five-story building where displaced Palestinians were sheltering in the northern Gaza Strip killed at least 60 people early Tuesday, more than half of them women and children, Gaza's Health Ministry said.

In a separate development, Lebanon's militant group Hezbollah said it has chosen Sheikh Naim Kassem to succeed longtime leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike last month. Hezbollah vowed to continue with Nasrallah's policies "until victory is achieved."

Israel also faced backlash after passing legislation that could severely restrict the ability of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees to operate in the Palestinian territories. The agency, known as UNRWA, is the largest

aid provider in Gaza. Israel has long accused it of militant ties, allegations it denies.

A spokesperson for the U.N. children's agency said the decision "means that a new way has been found to kill children."

Hezbollah said in a statement that its decision-making Shura Council elected Kassem, who had been Nasrallah's deputy leader for over three decades, as the new secretary-general.

Kassem, 71, a founding member of the militant group established following Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, had been serving as acting leader. He has given several televised speeches vowing that Hezbollah will fight on despite a string of setbacks.

Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel, drawing retaliation, after Hamas' surprise attack out of Gaza on Oct. 7, 2023, triggered the war there. Iran,

which backs both groups, has also directly traded fire with Israel, in April and then again this month.

The tensions with Hezbollah boiled over in September, as Israel unleashed a wave of heavy airstrikes and killed Nasrallah and most of his senior commanders. Israel launched a ground invasion into Lebanon at the start of October.

Hezbollah fired dozens of rockets into northern Israel on Tuesday, killing at least one person in the northern city of Maalot-Tarshiha, authorities said.

Even as attention has shifted to Lebanon and Iran in recent weeks, Israel has continued to wage a large operation in northern Gaza and to carry out airstrikes across the territory.

Dr. Marwan al-Hams, director of the field hospitals' department at the Gaza Health Ministry, announced the toll from

Tuesday's strike in the northern town of Beit Lahiya at a news conference. He said another 17 people are missing.

The ministry's emergency service said at least 12 women and 20 children were among the dead, including babies. The dead included a mother and her five children, some of them adults, and a second mother with her six children, according to an initial casualty list provided by the emergency service.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which has been waging the operation in northern Gaza for more than three weeks, targeting what it says are pockets of Hamas militants who have regrouped there.

The military said it detained scores of Hamas militants in the raid on Kamal Adwan, the latest in a series of raids on hospitals since the start of the war.

Fires set in drop boxes ruin ballots in Wash. and Oregon

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Incendiary devices were set off Monday at two ballot drop boxes — one in Portland and another in nearby Vancouver, Wash. — destroying hundreds of ballots in what one official called a "direct attack on democracy" about a week before a heated Election Day.

The early morning fire at the drop box in Portland was extinguished quickly thanks to a suppression system inside the box as well as a nearby security guard, police said, and just three ballots were damaged there.

But within a few hours, another fire was discovered at a transit center drop box across the Columbia River in Vancouver. Vancouver is the biggest city in Washington's 3rd Congressional District, the site of what is expected to be one of the closest U.S. House races in the country, between first-term Democratic

Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez and Republican challenger Joe Kent.

The ballot box in Vancouver also had a fire suppression system inside, but that failed to prevent hundreds of ballots from burning, said Greg Kimsey, the longtime elected auditor in Clark County, Wash., which includes Vancouver. He urged voters who dropped their ballots in the transit center box after 11 a.m. Saturday to contact his office for a replacement ballot.

"Heartbreaking," Kimsey said. "It's a direct attack on democracy."

The office will be increasing how frequently it collects ballots and changing collection times to the evening, Kimsey said, to keep the ballot boxes from remaining full of ballots overnight when similar crimes are considered more likely to occur.

Diddy accused of sexually assaulting 2 boys in 2000s

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Sean "Diddy" Combs is accused in one of two lawsuits filed Monday of drug-ging and sexually assaulting a 10-year-old boy in a New York City hotel room in 2005.

The second lawsuit accuses the jailed hip-hop mogul of similarly assaulting a 17-year-old would-be contestant on the reality television series "Making the Band" in 2008. The lawsuits filed in state Supreme Court in New York are the latest in a wave of lawsuits in which accusers allege they were sexually assaulted by Combs at parties and meetings over the last two decades.

Combs' lawyers denied the two new claims Monday and accused the plaintiffs' lawyer, Anthony Buzbee, who also represents accusers in earlier lawsuits, of seeking publicity.

Combs, 54, is incarcerated in a

New York City jail after pleading not guilty to federal sex trafficking charges contained in an indictment unsealed the day after his Sept. 16 arrest. Charges include allegations he coerced and abused women and silenced them through blackmail and violence.

The 10-year-old boy who was not identified in the lawsuit was an aspiring actor and rapper who had traveled with his parents from California for meetings with music industry representatives. During what was supposed to be an audition for Combs, he was given a drug-laced soda by a Combs associate and sexually assaulted by the Bad Boy Records founder, according to the lawsuit.

In a second lawsuit, a 17-year-old unidentified male said Combs forced him into sexual acts with Combs and a bodyguard during an audition for "Making the Band," which Combs produced.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Python stuns with size of mouth after eating deer

FL NAPLES — When python researchers Ian Bartoszek and Ian Easterling tracked a male “scout snake” with a radio transmitter, they expected him to lead them to a big female Burmese python. What they found was much more chilling.

As they pushed their way through the brush of a private property near Naples, they saw something shocking — a massive 14.8-foot, 115-pound python in the act of consuming a 77-pound, white-tailed deer.

“In the 12 years of doing this tracking effort, this is the most intense thing I’ve ever seen in the field, by far,” Bartoszek said. “Watching an invasive apex predator swallow a full-sized deer in front of you is something that you will never forget.”

Bartoszek and Easterling run a python research and removal program for the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, a nonprofit environmental group. They arrived when the snake had already half-ingested the deer, and it took another 30 minutes to fully swallow the meal.

Dungeness crab season delayed to protect whales

CA SAN FRANCISCO — The start of the commercial Dungeness crab season in California has been delayed for the seventh year in a row to protect humpback whales from becoming entangled in trap and buoy lines.

The state Department of Fish and Wildlife said Friday that commercial crabbing will be delayed until at least Dec. 1. The

situation will be reassessed on or around Nov. 15.

It’s the latest delay for the start of the commercial season, which traditionally begins in mid-November for waters between the Mendocino County line and the Mexico border.

Meanwhile the recreational take of Dungeness crab using traps will be temporarily restricted in some areas when the recreational season opens Nov. 2, officials said.

Fire pit, campfire banned due to dry conditions

NJ TRENTON — With fire danger at an “extreme,” New Jersey officials have enacted a statewide mandatory ban on wood and charcoal fires, whether on public or private property.

“We are currently experiencing some of the driest conditions ever, making our forests, in particular the sprawling Pinelands region of southern New Jersey, especially vulnerable to wildfires that could spread very quickly and threaten property,” New Jersey Department of Environmental Commissioner Shawn LaTourette said in a statement this week.

The ban, enacted Monday, prohibits fires unless they are in an elevated stove that uses propane, natural gas, or electricity. Wood and charcoal fires are prohibited, as are kerosene and gas torches. The ban is in place for all 564 municipalities.

Bat beauty contest hosted amid Bat Week

OR PORTLAND — Move over, Fat Bear Week. A bat beauty contest is now stepping up to the plate.

The Bureau of Land Manage-

ment has hosted the online competition since 2019 to raise awareness about the animal’s ecological importance. The federal agency posts photos of bats on its Facebook and Instagram accounts, and then asks people to vote for the cutest one.

The first round of voting began Thursday and pitted a Townsend’s big-eared bat named “Sir Flaps-A-Lot” from Utah against a hoary bat fittingly named “Hoary Potter” from Oregon. The contest coincides with the start of Bat Week, during which bat experts across the country and the world hold educational events celebrating the only flying mammal.

The defining feature of a Townsend’s big-eared bat is, unsurprisingly, its ears, which can reach a length of 1.5 inches. They funnel sound into the ear canal, provide lift during flight and help with temperature regulation, the Bureau of Land Management said in a Facebook post.

Hoary bats are known for swift flight and wrapping themselves in their own tails to mimic leaves and hide from predators, the agency said. Due to this attribute, it estimated Hoary Potter would be “the perfect candidate for seeker on this year’s Quidditch team,” referring to the game in Harry Potter that is played on flying brooms.

Havasupai Tribe to get aid for flood damage

AZ SUPAI — The Havasupai Tribe is set to receive federal emergency aid to help repair damage caused by severe and deadly flooding this summer.

President Joe Biden approved a disaster declaration

for the Havasupai, whose reservation at the southwestern edge of Grand Canyon National Park is one of the most remote in the continental U.S., accessible only by foot, mule or helicopter. Flash flooding in August swept an Arizona woman into Havasu Creek above the Colorado River confluence, killing her.

The federal aid will help with emergency repairs and may also be used for temporary housing. The Federal Emergency Management Agency said that it will coordinate the recovery operations in the affected areas.

Rare dime fetches \$500,000 at auction

OH TOLEDO — An extraordinarily rare dime whose whereabouts had remained a mystery since the late 1970s has sold for just over \$500,000.

The coin, which was struck by the U.S. Mint in San Francisco in 1975, depicts President Franklin D. Roosevelt and is one of just two known to exist without its distinctive “S” mint mark.

Three sisters from Ohio inherited the dime after the death of their brother, who had kept it in a bank vault for more than 40 years. The coin sold for \$506,250 in an online auction that concluded Sunday, according to Ian Russell, president of GreatCollections, an auction house based in Irvine, Calif.

The mint in San Francisco made more than 2.8 million special uncirculated “proof” sets in 1975 that featured six coins and were sold for \$7. Collectors a few years later discovered that two dimes from the set were missing the mint mark.

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Dodgers on verge of sweeping Yankees

Associated Press

NEW YORK — After all that buildup, it's been all Dodgers so far.

Freddie Freeman homered for the third straight game and Walker Buehler pitched another World Series gem as Los Angeles beat the slumping New York Yankees 4-2 on Monday night for a 3-0 lead in the Fall Classic.

With superstar Shohei Ohtani playing despite a partially dislocated left shoulder, the Dodgers moved within one victory of a surprising sweep in this much-hyped matchup between traditional powers.

"One more win. That's all I care about right now," Freeman said.

Teoscar Hernández threw out a runner at home plate with a pinpoint peg from left field. Mookie Betts and Kiké Hernández each delivered an RBI single, and Los Angeles chased Yankees starter Clarke Schmidt in the third inning.

Buehler and six relievers combined on a five-hitter for the Dodgers, on the cusp of their second championship in five years and the eighth in franchise history.

"Walker Buehler, he's been

doing this his whole career in big games, big moments," Freeman said. "Steps up when you need him."

Freeman's two-run shot three batters in gave him a home run in five consecutive World Series games dating to 2021 with Atlanta, matching a major league record set by George Springer with Houston.

Looking much healthier after a sprained right ankle slowed him earlier this postseason, Freeman connected for the first game-ending grand slam in World Series history to win a dramatic opener in Los Angeles.

Since then, it's been a one-sided fight.

Game 4 was Tuesday night at Yankee Stadium. Down to three healthy starters, the Dodgers planned their fourth bullpen game of this postseason. Rookie right-hander Luis Gil started for New York.

The only team in big league history to overcome a 3-0 deficit in a best-of-seven postseason series was the Boston Red Sox against the Yankees in the 2004 American League Championship Series.

"Hopefully we can go be this amazing story and shock the

world," New York manager Aaron Boone said. "But right now it's about trying to get a lead, trying to grab a game, and force another one, and then on from there. But we've got to grab one first."

Los Angeles manager Dave Roberts helped spark that stunning Red Sox comeback with a pivotal stolen base.

"Don't talk about that. Wrong guy. Way too early," he said. "I don't want to divulge any secrets, but from the other side, I just think that we have got to stay focused, stay urgent."

In the 11 previous World Series meetings between these old October rivals, the lone sweep was by the Dodgers in 1963 behind Hall of Fame pitchers Sandy Koufax and Don Drysdale.

That was the only other time Los Angeles had a 3-0 lead in a World Series.

New York hasn't been swept in a Fall Classic since 1976 by the Cincinnati Reds. But on all five occasions they fell behind 3-0 in a best-of-seven postseason series, the Yankees lost Game 4.

The Dodgers have won seven World Series games in a row against New York dating to their

1981 crown.

This one marked the first Series game at Yankee Stadium since the Yankees clinched their 27th title in 2009 against Philadelphia. But a return home didn't help skidding Aaron Judge and the punchless Bronx Bombers, held to four runs and nine hits in the past two games.

New York didn't score until Alex Verdugo's two-run homer off Michael Kopech with two outs in the ninth inning. Kopech then retired Gleyber Torres on a grounder to end it.

Buehler allowed two hits in five innings. His only previous win this year during an injury-interrupted season was May 18.

The two-time All-Star improved to 4-4 in 18 career postseason starts, including a 2-0 record with a 0.50 ERA in three World Series outings.

"It's weird. For me, I think the playoffs, big games, that's always been the only thing I really cared about," Buehler said. "I was kind of awful all year. I think once you get to the playoffs, the adrenaline, I think whatever fear I had about my elbow or trying to throw a certain pitch or whatever goes away, because it's all now, it's all go. It's helped me I think."

Austin's 2 TDs spark Steelers in victory over Giants

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Pittsburgh Steelers coach Mike Tomlin pulled Calvin Austin III aside before the undersized wide receiver took the field for a punt return in the third quarter of a somewhat lifeless game against the New York Giants.

The Steelers were scuffling. The offense was moving the ball, just not into the end zone. Tomlin knew the 5-foot-9, 162-pound Austin had come close to breaking a big return several times this season. And the NFL's longest-tenured head

coach had a feeling.

"I thought it was his time," Tomlin said. "And he thought it was his time. And he delivered."

Not once, but twice.

Austin — who texted his friends over the weekend that he was due to break a big one — sprinted across the field and raced 73 yards for a touchdown after Tomlin's little pep talk. He later added a 29-yard, over-the-shoulder scoring grab to give the Steelers the boost they needed to beat the Giants 26-18 on Monday night.

Pittsburgh (6-2) won its 22nd

straight home game under the Monday night lights behind Austin's playmaking and a pair of late turnovers. T.J. Watt strip-sacked Daniel Jones with less than three minutes to go to end one New York drive, and rookie cornerback Beanie Bishop picked Jones off with 42 seconds to play.

"It wasn't as fluid as we'd like but that's football," Tomlin said. "We've got to guard against (caring about) style points."

Good thing, because style points were in short supply on a night when three apparent

touchdowns — two by Pittsburgh, one by New York — were nullified, the teams combined for 16 penalties, and drives regularly bogged down near the end zone.

The Steelers won their third straight and head into their bye week leading the AFC North by one game over Baltimore. After relying heavily on their defense over the opening month, the Steelers' offense has found another gear since Russell Wilson returned from a calf injury that forced him to miss the first six games.

Tavares, Maple Leafs hand Jets first loss

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — John Tavares scored three goals and the Toronto Maple Leafs beat Winnipeg 6-4 on Monday night, handing the Jets their first loss of the season.

William Nylander had a goal and two assists, and Matthew Knies and Morgan Rielly also scored for Toronto, which had lost three straight (0-2-1). Max Pacioretty, moved up from the fourth line to the second line, had three assists and Anthony Stolarz had 19 saves.

Kyle Connor had three goals and an assist for Winnipeg to extend his point streak to nine games (nine goals, five assists). That set a franchise-record for longest point streak to start a season, which had previously been held by former captain Blake Wheeler since 2015-16.

The Jets, the NHL's last remaining unbeaten team, had opened the season with a franchise-record eight consecutive victories.

Blue Jackets 6, Oilers 1: Mikael Pyyhtia scored his first NHL goal, and Columbus beat Edmonton for its second straight home win.

Sean Monahan had two goals, Cole Sillinger added a goal and

two assists, Adam Fantilli and Mathieu Olivier also scored, and Kirill Marchenko had two assists for the Blue Jackets. Elvis Merzlikins carried a shutout through 19:33 of the third period before giving up a late goal, but he stopped 31 shots as Columbus continued its trend of winning every other game on the season.

Panthers 5, Sabres 2: Captain Aleksander Barkov had a goal and an assist in his return after missing eight games with a lower-body injury, and Atlantic Division-leading Florida defeated host Buffalo.

Carter Verhaeghe scored the go-ahead goal with 3:16 left in the second period, and added an assist to extend his point streak to seven games.

Rasmus Dahlin and Jason Zucker scored in a span of 1:52 to tie the game at 2 midway through the second period.

Lightning 3, Predators 2 (OT): Nick Paul scored 3:22 into overtime and host Tampa Bay beat Nashville, spoiling the return of longtime captain Steven Stamkos.

Brayden Point had a goal and an assist, and Mitchell Chaffee also scored to give the Lightning a 2-0 lead in the first period. An-

drei Vasilevskiy made 35 saves.

Stamkos, who played his first 16 NHL seasons with the Lightning before signing with Nashville on July 1, received a standing ovation after being honored with a video tribute in the first period. His assist on Ryan O'Reilly's power-play goal midway through the second period was his first with the Predators, and he got his second by setting up Gustav Nyquist's game-tying goal at 18:40.

Blackhawks 5, Avalanche 2: Ryan Donato scored twice, including an empty-netter with 57.8 seconds remaining, and visiting Chicago snapped a four-game skid with a victory over Colorado.

Philipp Kurashev, Lukas Reichel and Donato had goals as the Blackhawks led 3-2 after the first period. Donato and Ilya Mikheyev added empty-net goals in the final minute.

Casey Mittelstadt and Nathan MacKinnon scored for an Avalanche team that saw their five-game winning streak halted.

Sharks 5, Utah 4 (OT): Alexander Wennberg scored a power-play goal at 1:26 of overtime and visiting San Jose beat Utah for its first win of the season.

Fabian Zetterlund had two goals, and Mikael Granlund and Tyler Toffoli also scored for San Jose. Mackenzie Blackwood finished with 19 saves.

The Sharks rallied from a three-goal deficit late in the third period, tying it on Toffoli's snap shot with 2:42 left in regulation.

Golden Knights 5, Flames 0: Keegan Kolesar had two goals and an assist, and host Vegas beat Calgary.

The Knights closed out a 4-0 homestand, outscoring their opponents 24-8 during the impressive stretch. Kolesar posted his first career multigoal game.

Dan Vladar made 31 saves for the Flames.

Hurricanes 4, Canucks 3 (OT): Sebastian Aho scored 47 seconds into overtime and visiting Carolina beat Vancouver.

Martin Necas had a goal and an assist, and William Carrier and Jack Roslovic also scored in regulation for the Hurricanes, who won their fourth straight. Pyotr Kochetkov finished with 25 saves.

Brock Boeser and Quinn Hughes each had a goal and an assist for the Canucks, and Pius Suter got the tying goal late in the third period.

Penn State QB Allar may have to miss Ohio State game

Associated Press

Penn State coach James Franklin isn't sure if starting quarterback Drew Allar will be ready to play when the third-ranked Nittany Lions host No. 4 Ohio State on Saturday.

Allar suffered an apparent left knee injury late in the first half of Penn State's 28-13 win over Wisconsin last weekend. He returned for the second half wearing a knee brace, but after a short, ineffective warm-up, yielded the offense to Beau Pribula.

The strong-armed trigger-man of Andy Kotelnicki's dynamic offense, Allar has completed 117 of 164 passes for 1,640 yards with 12 touchdowns and four interceptions this year. He hasn't missed a game yet since taking over the starting job at the start of the 2023 season.

"It's too early to tell at this point, but he's played enough football that I think the decision will go all the way up to game time," Franklin said.

Franklin said after the victory over the Badgers that Allar told him he "couldn't move well enough" to finish the game.

"Even at the end of the half there, you saw even throwing was challenging," Franklin said.

Afterward, the 6-foot-5, 235-pound Allar walked over and gave the 6-foot-2, 206-pound Pribula a hug and wished him good luck.

The sophomore dual-threat kept the Nittany Lions moving. Pribula led a pair of touchdown drives, completing 11 of 13 passes for 98 yards and a touchdown with four rushes for 8 yards.

If Pribula is called on to make his first start on Satur-

day, it will be against the nation's second-ranked defense in a game that should have massive conference championship and playoff implications.

Franklin said the Nittany Lions will also look to get third-string quarterback Ethan Grunkemeyer more work alongside Pribula this week. Fellow freshman Jaxon Smolik is still working his way back from a preseason injury.

"The reality is, we're going to have to have both guys ready and you could make the argument, all three guys ready," Franklin said.

Banchero scores career-high 50 in Magic's win

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Paolo Banchero scored a career-high 50 points, and the Orlando Magic beat the Indiana Pacers 119-115 on Monday night.

Banchero also had 13 rebounds and nine assists in a terrific performance.

Jalen Suggs had 25 points and seven assists for Orlando, and reserve Mo Wagner finished with 14 points.

Pascal Siakam had 26 points and nine rebounds for the Pacers, who wiped out a 13-point Magic lead in the third quarter but went cold in the final minutes. Tyrese Haliburton had 19 points, nine rebounds and 10 assists.

Banchero tied a franchise record with 37 points in the first half, matching Tracy McGrady on March 9, 2003.

The game was slipping away from the Magic after Indiana's 22-3 run in the third quarter. But Banchero came up with a backcourt steal and fed Wagner for a dunk, cutting the Pacers' lead to one and bringing the crowd back into the game.

Heat 106, Pistons 98: Jimmy Butler had 23 points and seven assists, Terry Rozier added 20 points and host Miami beat Detroit.

Tyler Herro scored 19, Bam Adebayo added 12 points and 10 rebounds, and Jaime Jaquez Jr. also scored 12 for the Heat.

Cade Cunningham scored 24 points for Detroit, which is 0-4 for the third time in the last five seasons. Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 20, Jaden Ivey scored 18 and backup Isaiah Stewart had 15 rebounds for Detroit.

Miami was again without Kevin Love, who has missed all three Heat games this season for personal reasons. The Heat — on the 21st anniversary of his debut game — had a halftime ceremony honoring Dwyane Wade, whose statue outside the arena was unveiled Sunday.

Celtics 119, Bucks 108: Jaylen Brown scored 30 points,

Payton Pritchard came off the bench and hit eight 3-pointers en route to 28 points, and host Boston beat Milwaukee.

Reigning Eastern Conference Player of the Week Jayson Tatum added 15 points and eight rebounds for the Celtics (4-0). Derrick White had 13 points and eight assists.

Damian Lillard led the Bucks with 33 points, seven rebounds and seven assists, and Giannis Antetokounmpo had 30 points, 10 boards and six assists. Milwaukee has lost three straight after winning its opener.

It was close until late in the third quarter, when Pritchard hit a 3-pointer with 0.4 seconds left, putting Boston ahead 90-82. The Celtics scored the next seven points for a 15-point lead. Pritchard hit another 3-pointer during the spree.

Wizards 121, Hawks 119: Kyle Kuzma had 25 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists, and visiting Washington beat Atlanta for its first win this season.

Jordan Poole scored 26 points for the Wizards, and reserve Corey Kispert had 21 points. Washington improved to 1-2 after two one-sided defeats.

Jalen Johnson led the Hawks with 29 points. Trae Young, who missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer, was limited to 2-for-15 shooting. He finished with 14 points, 13 assists and six turnovers.

The Wizards made a season-high 21 3-pointers and overcame 13 first-half turnovers with a much cleaner second half.

Cavaliers 110, Knicks 104: Darius Garland scored a season-high 34 points, 15 in the fourth quarter, and visiting Cleveland improved to 4-0 by beating New York.

Donovan Mitchell added 25 points, Evan Mobley had 17 and Jarrett Allen finished with 15 points and 15 rebounds for the Cavaliers, off to their best start since beginning the defense of their 2016 NBA title by starting 6-0.

Jalen Brunson had 21 points and seven assists for the Knicks, who led by 13 in the second half. Mikal Bridges scored 19 points, Josh Hart had 16 points and 13 rebounds, and OG Anunoby scored 15 points. Karl-Anthony Towns fouled out with 13 points and 10 boards.

Bulls 126, Grizzlies 123: Zach LaVine scored 30 points, including 11 in the fourth quarter to key a Chicago comeback as they defeated host Memphis.

Nikola Vucevic finished with 22 points for the Bulls. Coby White scored 20 and Josh Giddey finished with 12 points, eight assists and 13 rebounds, including a key offensive rebound in the final seconds.

Desmond Bane led Memphis with 30 points, making 11 of 19 shots, including 6 of 10 from 3-point range. Jaren Jackson Jr. had 19 points, while Jake LaRavia finished with 17 points, and Scotty Pippen Jr. had 14 points and 10 assists.

Nuggets 127, Raptors 125 (OT): Nikola Jokic scored seven of his 40 points in overtime, and visiting Denver overcame a 15-point deficit to beat Toronto.

Canadian star Jamal Murray sent the game to overtime by making a reverse layup for the Nuggets with less than a second remaining in regulation.

Murray and Christian Braun each scored 17 as the Nuggets won for the first time in three games this season and extended their winning streak over the Raptors to four.

Rockets 106, Spurs 101: Jalen Green scored 34 points and visiting Houston never trailed in a victory over San Antonio.

Jabari Smith added 17 points and Alperen Sengun had 12 points and 12 rebounds for Houston.

Jeremy Sochan had 22 points and nine rebounds, and Victor Wembanyama had 12 points and 18 rebounds for the Spurs.

Mavericks 110, Jazz 102: Kyrie Irving scored 23 points and Klay Thompson added 18 to

lift host Dallas over Utah.

Jazz forward Taylor Hendricks was wheeled off on a stretcher with a broken leg midway through the third quarter after he fell to the floor without any contact near the baseline beneath Utah's basket. The team said he had a fractured right fibula and dislocated ankle.

Irving was scoreless until hitting two 3-pointers in the final 40 seconds of the first quarter for the defending Western Conference champions, who have won two of their first three games.

Suns 109, Lakers 105: Devin Booker scored 33 points, Kevin Durant added 30 and host Phoenix rallied to beat Los Angeles.

The Lakers took an 83-76 advantage into the fourth, but couldn't hold on, suffering their first loss of the season after winning three in a row. Durant made back-to-back jumpers to give the Suns a 105-101 lead with 2:17 left.

LeBron James responded with a 3-pointer with 1:58 left to cut the margin to 105-104, but the Lakers never regained the lead. James finished with 11 points, narrowly extending his NBA-record streak of at least 10 points in a game to 1,226.

Kings 111, Trail Blazers 98: De'Aaron Fox scored 24 points and surpassed 10,000 for his career, DeMar DeRozan added 23 points and host Sacramento beat Portland for its first win of the season.

Fox became the fifth player in franchise history to reach the 10,000 mark when he made a 3-pointer in the third quarter. The Kings never trailed, expanding a 60-58 lead midway through the third quarter to 26 points in the fourth.

DeAndre Ayton had 20 points and 11 rebounds for the Blazers, joining Bill Walton as the only players in franchise history to start a season with four straight double-doubles.