

Israel, Hamas agree to ceasefire, exchange

Associated Press

CAIRO — Israel and Hamas have agreed to a pause in their devastating two-year war and the release of the remaining hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners — a breakthrough greeted with joy and relief Thursday but also caution.

Uncertainty remains about aspects of the broader peace plan advanced by the administration of President Donald Trump — such as whether and how Hamas will disarm and who will govern Gaza. But the sides appear closer than they have been in months to ending a war that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians, reduced much of Gaza to rubble, brought famine to parts of the territory and left dozens of hostages, living and dead, in Gaza.

The war, which began with Hamas' deadly attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, has also triggered other conflicts in the region, sparked worldwide pro-

tests and led to allegations of genocide that Israel denies.

Even with the agreement expected to be signed later in the day, Israeli strikes continued, with explosions seen Thursday in northern Gaza. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties.

An Israeli military official who spoke on the condition of anonymity in line with military guidelines said that Israel was continuing to hit targets that posed a threat to its troops as they reposition.

In the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, celebrations were relatively muted and often colored by grief.

"I am happy and unhappy. We have lost a lot of people and lost loved ones, friends and family. We lost our homes," said Mohammad Al-Farra. "Despite our happiness, we cannot help but think of what is to come. ... The areas we are going back to, or intending to return to, are un-

inhabitable."

In Tel Aviv, families of the remaining hostages popped champagne and cried tears of joy after Trump announced a deal late Wednesday.

Under the terms, Hamas intends to release all living hostages in a matter of days, while the Israeli military will begin a withdrawal from the majority of Gaza, people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss details of an agreement that has not fully been made public.

Some 20 of the 48 hostages still in captivity are believed to be alive.

In a short video posted by U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, Trump was seen speaking by phone to a group of elated hostage families.

"The hostages will come back," said Trump, who is expected in the region in the coming days. "They are all coming

back on Monday."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans to convene his Security Cabinet late Thursday to approve the ceasefire, and the entire parliament will then meet to approve the release of Palestinian prisoners.

Hamas, meanwhile, called on Trump and the mediators to ensure that Israel implements "without disavowal or delay" the troop withdrawal, the entry of aid into Gaza and the exchange of prisoners.

The deal being submitted to Israel's parliament and then expected to be signed in Egypt will include a list of prisoners to be released and maps for the first phase of an Israeli withdrawal to new positions in Gaza, according to two Egyptian officials briefed on the talks, a Hamas official and another official.

Israel will publish the list of the prisoners — and victims of their attacks have 24 hours to lodge objections.

Lawmakers: Trust lacking in government shutdown talks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A president looking to seize power beyond the executive branch. A Congress controlled by Republican lawmakers unwilling to directly defy him. And a minority party looking for any way to fight back.

The dynamic left Washington in a stalemate Thursday and lawmakers openly venting their frustration as they tried to gain traction without the trust that is typically the foundation of any bipartisan deal.

"To have good-faith conversations, you have to have trust. There's a real challenge of

trust," said Rep. Brad Schneider, chair of the New Democratic Coalition, a pragmatic group of House Democrats.

Groups of lawmakers — huddled over dinners, on phone calls and in private meetings — have tried to brainstorm ways out of the standoff that has shuttered government offices, kept hundreds of thousands of federal employees at home and threatened to leave them without a scheduled payday. But lawmakers have found themselves running up against the reality that the relationship between the two parties is badly broken.

"We're in an environment where we need more than a handshake," said Sen. Chris Coons, a Delaware Democrat who has engaged in talks with Republicans.

President Donald Trump and Republicans have so far held to the stance that they will only negotiate on Democratic demands around health care benefits after they vote to reopen the government. They also say Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer is beholden to the left wing of his party and only staging the shutdown fight to stave off a primary challenge.

"There are some things that I

think there is interest on both sides in trying to address when it comes to health care in this country," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune on Wednesday. "But you can't take the federal government hostage and expect to have a reasonable conversation on those issues."

Democrats have insisted they can't take Trump at his word and therefore need more than a verbal commitment.

"Donald Trump has no respect for law if he can push outside it, so I think we need some safeguards," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a Connecticut Democrat.

Navy workers sent letter for landlords

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Some civilian workers assigned to Navy bases overseas are getting the service's help explaining to their landlords why their rent may not be paid on time as the partial government shutdown enters its second week.

On Monday, human resource officials from Navy Region Europe, Africa, Central sent a letter to Navy commands to distribute to their civilian employees for use with landlords and other creditors, the civilian

human resources office at Naval Support Activity Naples said Thursday.

It was unclear whether Navy civilian employees in Japan, Guam and other overseas locations would receive similar letters.

There are more than 5,100 appropriated fund civilians working at Navy bases overseas, according to a Defense Department workforce report in June.

The letter explains the circumstances of the shutdown, including that civilian workers won't receive a paycheck until a

federal appropriations bill is passed.

"Pending a prompt resolution of this unforeseeable circumstance, landlords, and all those who may indirectly be affected, should anticipate potential delays in the payment of the monthly rents as stipulated in the lease agreements signed with U.S. civilian personnel," the letter states.

As soon as funding is approved and paychecks are disbursed, employees will be responsible for promptly paying any rent owed as required by

their leases, the letter continues.

"We trust that the community affected will understand the unforeseen nature of these circumstances and the lack of accountability for each tenant for the temporary delay in the fulfillment of their contract obligations," the letter states.

It was sent to civilian workers at bases in Italy, Spain, Greece, Bahrain and other locations in the EURAFCENT area of responsibility and included a translation into the local language.

Troops turning to food pantries, interest-free loans

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — U.S. service members in Japan were looking for low-interest loans and visiting food banks this week as an end to the federal government shutdown appeared nowhere in sight.

Financial planning was a priority among approximately 50 people at a "resource fair" Thursday at Yokosuka Naval Base, the home of the Navy's 7th Fleet. Several stopped at a table manned by Heather Rogers, a customer service representative for Navy Federal Credit

Union, to ask about the interest-free loan program.

"So far, almost everyone that's come by here has said they're either going to or already have enrolled in it, which is wonderful," Rogers said at the two-hour fair.

U.S. service members are working without pay during the shutdown as an empty payday looms Oct. 15.

Nicole Pickle, a volunteer for the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, said sailors stopped by her table seeking information on bridging a pay gap. The so-

ciety also offers interest free loans and case-by-case assistance with basic living expenses. None of the sailors she spoke to were in dire straits yet, Pickle said.

"Everyone is current on their pay up until now," she at the fair. "Once the paycheck hits — if they don't receive their pay — that's when things are going to get more uncomfortable."

At the Neighborhood Pantry on Marine Corps' Camps Foster and Kinser on Okinawa, the number of people coming by for food has grown considerably in

the past week, according to Kim Durham, a Navy spouse who runs the operation.

The pantries had 52 visitors so far in October, compared to 148 throughout September, Durham said Thursday at the Foster location.

"Definitely next week if a paycheck does not come, I think our shelves will be wiped out," she said.

The pantries have about 2,000 pounds of food on hand, Durham said. She has been networking with nonprofits on the island to find more.

Hegseth hunts for critics of Charlie Kirk across DOD

The Washington Post

The Pentagon has investigated nearly 300 Defense Department employees, including service members, civilian workers and contractors, for comments appearing online after last month's shooting death of conservative activist Charlie Kirk, according to documents reviewed by the Post.

The sweeping, ongoing inqui-

ry follows an extraordinary directive by the department's political leadership to silence criticism of a prominent and polarizing figure who was a fervent support for President Donald Trump. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has argued forcefully that speech celebrating or mocking Kirk's death is itself an illicit partisan activity subject to disciplinary action.

As of Sept. 30, 128 service members have been investigated and most of those cases are still under review, according to documents reviewed by the Post. Of those, 26 have received administrative reprimands — an adverse mark that can hinder assignments or promotions. Three have received nonjudicial punishment, which can lead to a reduction in rank or other

disciplinary action, and three others are in the process of either being kicked out or leaving the military, the documents show.

A total of 158 non-uniformed personnel have been investigated as of Sept. 30, including 27 Defense Department civilians, according to the documents. Two have been "removed from employment."

Senate fails to limit Trump's war powers

The Washington Post

A bipartisan measure to block the Trump administration's lethal strikes against alleged Venezuelan drug smugglers fell short in the Senate on Wednesday night, in what Democratic lawmakers framed as a failure of Congress to assert its constitutional role to decide whether the country enters war.

In the past two months, the U.S. military has struck at least four boats in the Caribbean Sea, killing 21 people. The administration has claimed it is targeting "narco-terrorists" from notorious drug gangs in Venezuela, and President Donald Trump has notified Congress that the United States is now in "armed conflict" with these alleged traffickers.

Democratic lawmakers have pushed back, arguing that military officials in multiple classified briefings have not definitively identified the victims or ex-

plained why the military is using deadly force rather than the long-standing protocol of interdicting vessels at sea.

The Wednesday vote marked the most direct confrontation between lawmakers and the Trump administration over the strikes, which Democrats have called unconstitutional and some Republicans have privately worried may lack a legal basis.

"What we are doing is a very simple, straightforward resolution that just says, Congress, be Congress," Tim Kaine, D-Va., one of the senators leading the measure, said during a news conference before the vote. "These military actions should stop unless authorized."

The administration has escalated its campaign, sending U.S. Navy warships and military aircraft to the region, with Trump saying the attacks will continue and may broaden from " interna-

tional waters" into direct strikes on Venezuelan land.

"The United States has now reached a critical point where we must use force in self-defense and defense of others against the ongoing attacks by these designated terrorist organizations," the administration's notice to Congress states.

Democratic lawmakers have argued the Pentagon has not made a conclusive case for taking military action.

"I have no idea precisely the identities of who was on these ships, or even whether the administration knows their identities," said Adam Schiff, D-Calif., another senator leading the vote.

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., also criticized the strikes as "extrajudicial killings," at times directly confronting administration officials.

"Is it too much to ask to know the names of those we kill before

we kill them, to know what evidence exists of their guilt?" Paul said Wednesday on the Senate floor, calling the administration's argument "madness." Paul and one other Republican senator, Lisa Murkowski, were the only two who broke with party lines to support the 48-to-51 motion at Wednesday's vote. One Democrat, John Fetterman, D-Pa., voted against.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro posted Wednesday on X that the latest vessel struck by the U.S. military was from his country and carried Colombian citizens, running counter to the White House's claims.

Lawmakers from both parties were visibly frustrated with the lack of information following briefings by Pentagon General Counsel Earl Matthews in recent weeks, according to senators and other people familiar with the matter.

Guard protects US property in Chicago, aids Memphis police

Associated Press

CHICAGO — A small number of National Guard troops has started protecting federal property in the Chicago area and assisting law enforcement in Memphis, Tenn., on Wednesday, according to officials.

An "element" of 200 Texas Guard troops were working in the Chicago area, according to a spokesperson for the U.S. Northern Command, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity in order to discuss operational details not been made public. The troops are in the city to protect U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement buildings and other federal facilities and law enforcement personnel, Northern Command said online.

The troops, along with about 300 from Illinois, had arrived Tuesday at a U.S. Army Reserve Center in Elwood, 55 miles southwest of Chicago. All 500

troops are under the Northern Command and have been activated for 60 days. The spokesperson wasn't able to immediately offer details about how the troops were armed.

A lawsuit and Democratic leaders have vigorously fought the deployment, and a hearing is set for Thursday.

In Memphis, a small group of troops were helping Wednesday with the Memphis Safe Task Force, said a state Military Department spokesperson who did not specify the exact role or number of the Guard members. The task force is a collection of about a dozen federal law enforcement agencies ordered by President Donald Trump to fight crime.

Tennessee Republican Gov. Bill Lee, who has welcomed the Guard, has said previously that he would not expect more than 150 Guard members to be sent to the city.

Court to weigh Guard deployment to Illinois

Associated Press

President Donald Trump's deployment of National Guard troops in Illinois faces legal scrutiny Thursday at a pivotal court hearing that will occur the day after a small number of Guard troops started protecting federal property in the Chicago area.

U.S. District Judge April Perry will hear arguments over a request to block the deployment of Illinois and Texas Guard members. Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker and local officials strongly oppose use of the Guard.

An "element" of the 200 Texas Guard troops sent to Illinois started working in the Chicago area on Wednesday, according to a spokesperson for the U.S. Northern Command, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity in order to discuss operational details not been made

public.

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The nearly 150-year-old Posse Comitatus Act limits the military's role in enforcing domestic laws. However, Trump has said he would be willing to invoke the Insurrection Act, which allows a president to dispatch active duty military in states that are unable to put down an insurrection or are defying federal law.

Russia warns about Tomahawks for Ukraine

The Washington Post

Atop Russian Foreign Ministry official cautioned President Donald Trump's administration Wednesday against giving Ukraine access to long-range Tomahawk missiles that could hit targets deep within Russia in the latest in a series of warnings suggesting a degree of unease in Moscow.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov also declared that the boost toward resolving the conflict in Ukraine provided by Trump's August meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska had been "largely exhausted." The last few weeks have seen Trump considering the sale of new weapons to Ukraine and criticizing Russia as a "paper tiger."

The latest warning was part of a concerted Russian effort to deter Trump against enabling Ukraine access to the missiles, repeating a tactic Moscow has used throughout its war on Ukraine, declaring that providing advanced military technology to Ukraine would provoke a direct conflict between Russia and NATO countries.

Since Trump's election, however, Moscow has directed most of its ire against European leaders whom it portrays as warmongers to blame for the continued war, while directing consistently positive comments toward the U.S. president.

The U.S. administration has not even said if it would sell the Tomahawks to Ukraine, although Trump said on Monday that he had "sort of" made a decision but

wanted to know how Kyiv would use the weapons.

Tomahawks have a range of up to 1,550 miles, depending on the variant, compared to around 190 miles for ATACM missiles, which were provided to Kyiv by the Biden administration.

"I think I want to find out what they're doing with them," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Monday. "Where are they sending them? I guess I'd have to ask that question."

The repeated warnings from Putin and other officials indicate Moscow's anxiety of the possibility Ukraine could get access to weapons, and appear to contradict Putin's assertion last week at a Russian foreign policy conference that the missiles "won't change the balance of power on

the battlefield."

Putin warned that the weapons would mark a "qualitatively new stage of escalation" because Ukraine could not fire them without the U.S. personnel. He suggested, however, that Trump would ultimately decide against their provision because he knew how to listen.

Ryabkov also pointed out Wednesday that U.S. personnel would be needed to operate the Tomahawk missiles.

"As you understand, without software and launchers, the missiles themselves are just blanks. Accordingly, as has also been stated at a high level by the Russian side, the hypothetical use of such systems is only possible with the direct involvement of American personnel," Ryabkov said.

Last of 10 New Orleans prison escapees captured

Associated Press

ATLANTA — A monthslong search for the only Louisiana inmate still on the run after an audacious May jailbreak ended Wednesday when authorities say they found him hiding in a crawl space beneath an Atlanta home, bringing the last of the 10 escapees into custody.

Derrick Groves, 28, was convicted of murder and facing a possible life sentence before the inmates escaped through a hole behind a toilet in a New Orleans jail. He had the most violent criminal record of the group and authorities offered a \$50,000 reward for tips leading to his capture.

A SWAT team spent hours searching the house for Groves after obtaining a warrant, Deputy U.S. Marshal Brian Fair said.

"They couldn't find him, they had to deploy gas multiple times into the house and basement," Fair said. "Based on how long it took a seasoned, well-trained SWAT team to get him out, he had planned to hide for a while."

A police dog eventually located him, Atlanta police Deputy Chief Kelley Collier said. In video provided by the department, Groves — shirtless, shoeless and shackled at his wrists and ankles — blew a kiss and grinned at the camera as he was led into a police car.

Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry applauded law enforcement for putting all 10 escapees "back where they belong: BEHIND BARS," in a post on X.

The tip that led to his capture came through New Orleans Crimestoppers, Fair said.

Several people appeared to be helping Groves and could face charges for aiding and abetting, Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill said at a press conference Wednesday, adding that Groves was scheduled to be in court in Georgia on Thursday for a hearing on extradition.

Groves' attorney, Peter Freiberg, said he had not yet spoken with his client and declined to comment.

US diplomat is fired over relationship with woman

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The State Department said Wednesday that it has fired a U.S. diplomat over a romantic relationship he admitted having with a Chinese woman alleged to have ties to the Chinese Communist Party.

The dismissal is believed to be the first of its kind for violating a ban on such relationships that was introduced late last year under the Biden administration.

The Associated Press reported earlier this year that in the waning days of Democrat Joe Biden's presidency, the State Department imposed a ban on all American government personnel in China, as well as family members and contractors with security clearances, from any romantic or sexual relationships with Chinese citizens.

Tommy Pigott, a State Department spokesman, said in a statement that the diplomat in question was dismissed from the foreign service after Presi-

dent Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio reviewed the case and determined that he had "admitted concealing a romantic relationship with a Chinese national with known ties to the Chinese Communist Party."

"Under Secretary Rubio's leadership, we will maintain a zero-tolerance policy for any employee who is caught undermining our country's national security," Pigott said.

The statement did not identify the diplomat, but he and his girlfriend had been featured in a surreptitiously filmed video posted online by conservative firebrand James O'Keefe.

In Beijing, a Chinese government spokesperson declined to comment on what he said is a domestic U.S. issue. "But I would like to stress that we oppose drawing lines based on ideological difference and maliciously smearing China," the Foreign Ministry's Guo Jiakun said at a daily briefing.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man who sent equipment to Russia gets 1 year

WI MADISON — A Wisconsin man accused of smuggling lab equipment to Russian companies in violation of trade sanctions will spend the next year in federal prison.

U.S. District Judge William Conley sentenced 68-year-old Andrew Pogosyan on Tuesday to a year and a day and fined him \$10,000.

Federal prosecutors charged Pogosyan, a Russian-born U.S. citizen who lives in Madison, in June with one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States and three counts of smuggling.

According to prosecutors, Pogosyan started using his company, Omega Diagnostics LLC, in September 2022 to ship lab equipment to Russian companies, including one that performed chemical research for the Russian military.

The U.S. Department of Commerce imposed sanctions in February 2022 on exports to Russia in response to the Ukrainian invasion.

Pogosyan didn't obtain a license and tried to hide the exports' destination by sending the equipment to third-party countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Latvia and Lithuania, prosecutors said. The products were then forwarded on to the Russian companies.

Additional pot tax created to 'fix the damn roads'

MI LANSING — Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer on Tuesday signed into law a new 24% tax on marijuana sales between producers and

dispensaries, creating revenue to partially fund her long-promised effort to improve the state's roads.

Whitmer made road repairs her priority this year. The Legislature's fiscal agencies estimate the wholesale tax will generate \$420 million in new revenue to go toward the annual \$1.8 billion road funding plan. But analysts predict the additional tax will inevitably lead to a drop in sales.

"When I took office, I made a promise to fix the damn roads so Michiganders could get where they're going faster and safer," she said in a video.

The wholesale tax will be levied on the sale of marijuana from growers and processors to retailers.

Geothermal project sues, claims no threat to toads

NV RENO — Three years after the federal government listed a tiny Nevada toad on the endangered species list, a geothermal company seeking to develop a project near the toad's only known habitat in Northern Nevada is suing the government over the listing.

Ormat Technologies, headquartered in Reno, is suing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Department of the Interior, saying that the Dixie Valley toad was placed on the endangered species list "without any evidence" that its population is declining.

Its endangered status has prevented construction of the company's planned geothermal power plant in Churchill County. Ormat first applied for federal approval for the project a decade ago and received a green

light, starting construction in 2022 before the toad was listed as endangered.

In a lawsuit filed last week in the District of Columbia's U.S. District Court, Ormat argued the wildlife service violated the law by listing the toad because it was not in danger of extinction at the time of listing.

Lawsuit: Roblox fails to protect kids on platform

KY FRANKFORT — Kentucky's attorney general claimed Tuesday that the online gaming platform Roblox has become a "playground for predators" as he announced a lawsuit accusing the company of lax child safety measures.

The Kentucky suit, filed by his office Monday in a state court, is the latest action alleging that the wildly popular site isn't doing enough to protect children on its gaming services.

To bolster safeguards for children and teenagers flocking to the site, the company needs to install effective age verifications and content filters, Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman said. Added parental notifications also are needed, he said.

Diwali designated official statewide holiday

CA LOS ANGELES — California has become the third U.S. state to designate Diwali — the Hindu "Festival of Lights" — as an official statewide holiday.

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill into law Tuesday to go into effect on Jan. 1. It would authorize public schools and community colleges to close on Diwali. State employees could elect to take the day off and pub-

lic school students will get an excused absence to celebrate the holiday. The new law recognizes that Diwali is also celebrated by Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists.

Pennsylvania was the first U.S. state to make Diwali a statewide holiday in 2024, followed by Connecticut earlier this year.

Diwali, which falls on Oct. 20 this year, is derived from the word "Deepavali," which means "a row of lights." Celebrants light rows of lamps to symbolize the victory of light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. The holiday is celebrated with festive gatherings, fireworks displays, feasts and prayer.

Rainbow crosswalk removed after appeal lost

FL MIAMI — A rainbow-colored crosswalk meant to celebrate the history and contributions of the LGBTQ+ community in Miami Beach has been removed from the city's iconic Ocean Drive entertainment district about two months after Florida officials ordered the removal of all street art throughout the state.

Workers with the Florida Department of Transportation began tearing up the colorful pavers Sunday, just two days after Miami Beach officials learned they had lost their appeal against the state order. By Monday, the intersection was paved over in asphalt.

Not all of the street murals tapped for removal pay tribute to historically marginalized groups. A "Back the Blue" mural outside Tampa police headquarters was painted over.

— From wire reports

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Blue Jays top Yankees, advance to ALCS

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Forget the preseason prognostications. Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and the worst-to-first Toronto Blue Jays believe they're as good as anybody.

Hard to argue after the way they dispatched Aaron Judge and the powerful New York Yankees in their AL Division Series.

And now, manager John Schneider's pesky Blue Jays bunch is set up pretty nicely for the next playoff round against the Detroit Tigers or Seattle Mariners.

"This is a really special group and we've had the confidence to be here since day one. I like our chances and I like the fact that these guys will be recognized for it," Schneider said. "I think we more than showed what we can do in this series between all that pitching, defense, everything. The guys in here know what we're capable of and we don't really care what anyone else thinks."

Guerrero and George Springer each drove in a run,

and eight Toronto pitchers shut down the Yankees in a 5-2 victory Wednesday night that sent the surprising Blue Jays to the American League Championship Series for the first time in nine years.

"Maybe some people don't believe in the team through the year, but I always remind everyone that we have an entire country behind us that believe in us, and hopefully we can get the World Series back to Canada," Guerrero said through a translator.

AL East champion Toronto, wearing its lucky caps with the white panels, took the best-of-five Division Series 3-1 and will host Game 1 in the best-of-seven ALCS on Sunday against the wild-card Tigers or AL West champion Mariners.

Those teams are set to decide their series Friday in Game 5 at Seattle.

"We knew we were kind of the best team all year," part-time outfielder and second baseman Davis Schneider said. "Obviously, a lot of people doubted us. Everyone was

kind of picking the Yankees to win the series or even the World Series. We're a great team for a reason. Over the 162 (regular-season games) and into the playoffs, we showed what we can do really well."

The Blue Jays went 4-3 against Detroit this season and 4-2 versus Seattle.

And while the Tigers and Mariners will use some of their best arms Friday, veteran right-hander Kevin Gausman and rookie Trey Yesavage — Toronto's top two starters in the ALDS — will be fully rested for the first two games of the ALCS.

"I think with this team, it's so special that everybody has each other's back and plays for each other," reliever Louis Varland said.

No matter who pitches against the Blue Jays, they'll need to contend with Guerrero and a feisty lineup that consistently fights off tough pitches and puts the ball in play.

Guerrero batted .529 with three homers and nine RBIs in the ALDS, tormenting New

York in October in the mold of David Ortiz, Ken Griffey Jr. and George Brett decades ago.

"They hit the crap out of the ball. They didn't miss," Yankees catcher Austin Wells said.

Ernie Clement also had an outstanding series at the plate as Toronto advanced to its eighth ALCS. The Blue Jays' only pennants came in 1992 and '93, when the club won consecutive World Series crowns.

A season ago, Toronto finished last in the AL East at 74-88, which was 20 games behind first-place New York, which reached the World Series.

This year, the Blue Jays went 11-6 against the Yankees — including 8-1 in Toronto. The teams tied for the AL East title at 94-68, but the Blue Jays won the division on a head-to-head tiebreaker.

"It just shows you a lot can happen in a year," Springer said. "For us to respond the way we did this year, I couldn't be more proud of this team."

Tigers' All-Stars come through vs. Mariners to force Game 5

Associated Press

DETROIT — The Detroit Tigers' All-Stars stepped up when they were needed the most.

Facing elimination and trailing the Seattle Mariners 3-0 in Game 4 of the American League Division Series on Wednesday, Detroit's slumbering bats finally regained their thump and forced a winner-take-all Game 5 on Friday in Seattle.

The Tigers scored all their runs after the fourth inning in the 9-3 victory over the Mariners. Detroit's nine runs were its most in a postseason game since scoring 13 in Game 6 of the 1968 World Series.

Contributions to the victory came from up and down the lineup. But it was All-Stars Riley Greene, Javier Báez, Gleyber Torres and Zach McKinstry who fueled the outburst.

Greene, who had gone hitless in his previous 11 at-bats, launched a rocket of re-

lief over the right-center field fence to give the Tigers a 4-3 lead in the sixth.

Greene grounded out his first two times up and heard some boos after those at-bats before his blast off a hanging Gabe Speier slider. The 454-foot homer was the second-longest home run of Greene's career, regular season and postseason and longest at Comerica Park since a 453-foot shot by Gleyber Torres on Aug. 29, 2023.

"I haven't hit a ball like that in a while," Greene said of his first career postseason homer. "It feels pretty good, and I want to do it more often."

Greene led Detroit with 36 home runs but slumped down the stretch as the Tigers squandered a huge lead in the AL Central and finished a game behind the Cleveland Guardians.

"He is a tough kid. He's had to endure a lot," manager A.J. Hinch said. "I play him every day. He's in the middle of the order. He gets managed against, and he comes

up big right when you need it. So that was a big swing."

Báez, who wasn't on Detroit's postseason roster last season due to injury, drove in four runs. His two-run shot capped the four-run sixth inning that gave the Tigers a 7-3 lead. Báez had just one RBI and one extra-base hit in this postseason before Wednesday.

"I think when everything clicks together, the pitching and the hitting and everything we do as a team, you know, we can be really dangerous," Báez said.

Torres, who had scored just one run in the postseason despite batting first or second in the order, contributed a solo homer and reached base three times.

McKinstry had gone 1 for 19 in the postseason before his three-hit outing Wednesday, including an RBI single.

"It wasn't just the big swings," Hinch said. "I love the big swings. But there's also some singles in there."

Phillies avoid NLDS sweep by routing Dodgers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Kyle Schwarber homered twice, his first towering shot clearing the right-field pavilion in a three-run fourth inning, and the Philadelphia Phillies avoided a sweep with an 8-2 victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers in Game 3 of their NL Division Series on Wednesday night.

It was the first Schwarbomb of the postseason for the NL's leading home run hitter and the first allowed by the Dodgers in these playoffs. Schwarber snapped an 0-for-8 skid in the NLDS, slugging a 96-mph fastball from Yoshinobu Yamamoto 455 feet.

"It's ridiculous how far that ball went," Phillies shortstop Trea Turner said. "Sometimes it's hard to create your own momentum, and you've got to build off things like that. No better way than the ball leaving the stadium."

Schwarber became just the second player to homer over the pavilion, joining Pittsburgh's Willie Stargell, who did it in 1969 and 1973. Fans standing near the back railing pointed as the ball went out.

"I didn't even see where it landed," Schwarber said. "I was looking in the dugout, trying to get the guys going."

Schwarber's 23 career postseason homers rank third all-time and are the most among left-handers.

Game 4 of the best-of-five series was Thursday at Dodger Stadium, with Los Angeles clinging to a 2-1 lead.

"It's pretty close to being flushed already," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "I feel good with where we're at."

After Philadelphia's Aaron Nola pitched the first two innings, Ranger Suárez came in and allowed one run and five hits

in five innings to earn the win. He struck out four and walked one.

"Ranger did a fantastic job," Schwarber said. "Kept everyone right there for us to eventually crack through and have a beginning."

The Phillies tacked on five more runs in the eighth — including a solo shot by J.T. Realmuto and a two-run drive by Schwarber — off three-time Cy Young Award winner Clayton Kershaw in his first postseason relief appearance since 2019.

Six of Philadelphia's 12 hits came off Kershaw in his 18th and final season with LA before retiring at the end of the season.

"I was battling command," Kershaw said. "It's hard when you're trying to throw strikes in the postseason to get people out."

Yamamoto retired nine of his first 10 batters before the Phillies jumped on him in the fourth. Bryce Harper and Alec Bohm

followed with singles and Harper scored on center fielder Andy Pages' throwing error. It skipped away from third baseman Max Muncy and into the Dodgers dugout, moving Bohm to third. He scored on Brandon Marsh's sacrifice fly to left for a 3-1 lead.

Philly chased Yamamoto with back-to-back singles by Bryson Stott and Turner in the fifth.

Reliever Anthony Banda came in and worked out of a bases-loaded jam. He struck out Schwarber after Stott and Turner's double steal. Harper flied out and Bohm was intentionally walked before Banda got Marsh on a swinging strikeout to end the threat.

LHP Cristopher Sánchez, who started Game 1 of the series, went for the Phillies on Thursday against Dodgers RHP Tyler Glasnow, who pitched 1⅓ scoreless innings of relief in Game 1.

Cubs use big 1st inning to beat Brewers, force Game 4

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Pete Crow-Armstrong hit a tiebreaking two-run single and the Chicago Cubs avoided a sweep by holding off the Milwaukee Brewers for a 4-3 victory in Game 3 of their NL Division Series on Wednesday.

Crow-Armstrong's two-out swing was part of a four-run first inning for Chicago, continuing a wild trend. Michael Busch kicked off the rally by becoming the first player in major league history with multiple leadoff homers in a single postseason series.

The matchup of NL Central rivals is the first postseason series in which both teams scored in the first in each of the first three games. Game 4 was Thursday night.

"Yeah, I'm going to tell our guys it's the first inning every inning tomorrow," Cubs manager Craig Counsell said. "I think that's our best formula right now offensively."

Jake Bauers rallied Milwaukee with an RBI single in the fourth and a leadoff drive in the seventh. He started at first base in place of Andrew Vaughn, who hit a three-run homer in the Brewers' 7-3 victory in Game 2 on Monday night.

Milwaukee loaded the bases in the eighth, but Brad Keller escaped the jam when he

struck out Bauers on a foul tip on a 97.1 mph fastball. Keller then retired the side in order in the ninth for the save.

"He's got a great fastball. He got it by me," Bauers said.

Looking to sweep their way to the franchise's first trip to the NL Championship Series since 2018, the Brewers jumped in front in the first.

With runners on first and second with one out, William Contreras hit a high pop-up that Busch lost in the sun before it landed in the infield for a single. Sal Frelick followed with a sacrifice fly off Jameson Taillon.

Chicago got the run right back when Busch drove a full-count cutter from Quinn Priester deep to right-center, delighting the crowd of 40,737 at Wrigley Field. It was the first baseman's team-high third homer of the postseason.

Busch said he had to move on right away after the miscue with the popup in the top of the first.

"Just tried to reset," he said. "It's a long game and there's a lot of outs, and just tried to remind myself just to have a good at-bat."

A single by Nico Hoerner and walks for Kyle Tucker and Ian Happ loaded the bases

for Crow-Armstrong, who chased Priester with a liner to right. Happ made it 4-1 when he scampered home on a wild pitch from Nick Mears.

Going into Thursday, the 23-year-old Crow-Armstrong was batting just .227 (5 for 22) with 11 strikeouts in six games in his first postseason. But the All-Star center fielder also hit a key RBI single off Yu Darvish in a clinching 3-1 victory over the San Diego Padres in the wild-card round.

"I'm pretty fortunate in a couple of these elimination games to just have pretty nice opportunities in front of me with guys on base, and I think that makes this job just a little bit easier sometimes," Crow-Armstrong said.

It was a rough homecoming for Priester after a breakout performance this season. The 25-year-old right-hander, who grew up in the Chicago area, threw 39 pitches, 21 for strikes.

"Very frustrating. Very frustrated with that first inning, the only inning," Priester said. "Command wasn't good. My stuff wasn't coming out the way I wanted it to and ultimately it falls on to me to make an adjustment."

Late jumper gives Aces 3-0 lead in Finals

Associated Press

PHOENIX — The Las Vegas Aces didn't play their best late in Game 3 in the WNBA Finals, coughing up a 17-point lead in the final quarter that meant the game came down to one offensive possession with five seconds remaining.

Even so, there wasn't any panic. The security of having a four-time MVP in the paint is nice.

A'ja Wilson made a turnaround jumper with 0.3 seconds left, capping a stellar 34-point, 14-rebound night and lifting the Aces over the Phoenix Mercury 90-88 on Wednesday night for a 3-0 lead in the WNBA Finals.

Las Vegas coach Becky Hammon said there wasn't any discussion about who would take the final shot. There was no need to overthink anything.

"You give the ball to A'ja and get out of the way," Hammon said. "That's all it really was."

The Aces are one victory away from winning their third title in four seasons. Game 4 is Friday in Phoenix.

Las Vegas had what looked like a comfortable 76-59 lead entering the fourth quarter, but the Mercury closed the gap to 84-83 with 3:06 left on Kahleah Copper's 3-pointer. DeWanna Bonner tied the game at 86-all on a 3-pointer with 1:33 left and made two free throws with 1:01 left to tie it at 88. That set up Wilson's heroics in the final seconds. She took an entry pass from Chelsea Gray and made her turnaround jumper over Alyssa Thomas and Bonner as the Phoenix crowd groaned.

"That's playoff basketball. Those are the moments that you root for," Wilson said.

The Mercury had one final try to get a bucket, but Bonner's quick jumper was no good.

The 6-foot-4 Wilson continued her dominant postseason run, making 11 of 20 shots from

the field and adding four assists. She is averaging more than 26 points in 11 postseason games.

Wilson's 291 total points over 11 games is a WNBA postseason record. The Aces took a 2-0 lead by winning the first two games in Las Vegas, but Phoenix hoped for a boost from its boisterous home crowd in Game 3. Instead, the Aces thrived in the hostile atmosphere, showing the poise of a veteran team that's been in high-pressure situations many times.

Bonner led the Mercury with 25 points while Satou Sabally had 24. Copper scored 11 of her 17 points in the fourth quarter. Sabally left the game with 4:26 left in the fourth quarter when she got tangled with Young and then fell into Kierstan Bell, hitting her head on the side of her leg. Sabally stayed on the ground for several minutes before being helped off the court.

Las Vegas used a 17-0 run midway through the first quarter to take an early 21-8 lead and never trailed again. Jewell Loyd came off the bench and made four 3-pointers in less than two minutes to lead the offensive onslaught.

Phoenix responded with its own 13-0 run to tie the game, but could never regain the advantage. The Mercury trailed 26-23 heading into the second quarter.

The Aces pulled away late in the second quarter to take a 55-43 lead into halftime. Las Vegas shot 9 of 16 (56.3%) from 3-point range, including a combined six from bench players Loyd and Dana Evans.

Phoenix coach Nate Tibbetts said his team's defense needed to improve after it gave up 89 points in Game 1 and 91 in Game 2, but things weren't much better Wednesday. Tibbetts said he was proud of his team "for not giving in."

Pastrnak, Swayman lead Bruins over Capitals in opener

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — David Pastrnak had a goal and two assists and Jeremy Swayman made 35 saves in the Boston Bruins' 3-1 victory over Alex Ovechkin and the Washington Capitals on Wednesday night.

Pastrnak scored in the second period and Elias Lindholm added a goal at 7:41 of the third, just 38 seconds after Tom Wilson had tied it at 1 for Washington.

Boston made Marco Sturm a winner in his first game as coach, killing off all five of the Capitals' power plays. That included a two-man advantage that lasted nearly a minute in the second.

The 40-year-old Ovechkin is in the final year of his contract, and if this was his last season opener, at least one goal-scoring record will elude him. He has 13 goals in openers, but Michel Goulet and Dino Ciccarelli both had 14.

After breaking Wayne Gretzky's NHL record late last season, Ovechkin entered 2025-26 with 897 career goals. He had three shots on goal Wednesday but couldn't beat Swayman. After dealing with a preseason injury last month, Ovechkin occasionally came off the ice during power plays instead of staying on with both units.

Swayman stopped Nic Dowd on a semi-breakaway in the second after a poor line change by the Bruins. Then Washington goalie Logan Thompson returned the favor with a save on Viktor Arvidsson's breakaway. Pastrnak opened the scoring when his wrist shot from just inside the blue line made it through traffic and past Thompson.

Flames 4, Oilers 3 SO: Nazem Kadri scored in the eighth round of a shootout to give host Calgary a victory over Edmonton, spoiling

Oilers star Leon Draisaitl's 400th NHL goal.

After Draisaitl and Morgan Frost each scored in the second round of the tiebreaker, the next 11 shooters failed before Kadri slipped a backhand past Stuart Skinner to end the season opener.

Playing his 791st regular-season game, Draisaitl gave Edmonton a 3-0 lead at 8:32 of the second period. He tapped in David Tomasek's cross-crease feed, with Ryan Nugent-Hopkins also assisting.

Draisaitl also had an assist to push his points total to 958. The 29-year-old German star is the 111th player in NHL history to score 400 goals.

Kings 6, Golden Knights 5 SO: Adrian Kempe and Trevor Moore scored during the shootout and visiting Los Angeles spoiled Pavel Dorofeyev's hat trick and Mitch Marner's debut

in a Vegas uniform with a win over the Golden Knights.

After squandering a pair of two-goal leads in the second period, and falling behind by two goals in the third, the Kings bounced back from Tuesday's season-opening loss to Colorado.

Dorofeyev cut the lead in half just 2:10 into the second period when he fired a wrist shot past Forsberg and off the post.

Maple Leafs 5, Canadiens 2: Morgan Rielly broke a tie at 9:02 of the third period and host Toronto beat Montreal in the regular-season opener for both teams.

Matthew Knies chipped the puck to Rielly in the slot and he fired a wrist shot past goalie Sam Montembeault into the top right corner. Auston Matthews and William Nylander added empty-netters, with Nylander finishing with three points.