

Florida reeling from Hurricane Ian

Associated Press

PUNTA GORDA, Fla. — Rescue crews waded through flooded streets and used boats Thursday in a scramble to save people trapped after Hurricane Ian destroyed a cross-section of Florida and brought torrential rains that inundated more communities.

The destruction began to come into focus a day after Ian made landfall in Florida as one of the strongest hurricanes ever to hit to the U.S. The storm flooded homes on both of the state's coasts, cut off the only bridge to a barrier island, destroyed a historic waterfront pier and knocked out electricity to 2.67 million Florida homes and businesses. At least one man was confirmed dead.

"We've never seen storm surge of this magnitude," Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said during a news conference. "The amount of water that's been rising, and will likely continue to rise today even as the storm is passing, is basically a 500-year flooding event."

Though downgraded to a tropical storm by Thursday morning, the National Hurricane Center said storm surge and flooding rains remained a threat as Ian crept across the Florida peninsula and emerged in the Atlantic Ocean north of Cape Canaveral.

Forecasters predicted a northward turn toward South Carolina, and a hurricane warning was issued for the state's coastline.

Sheriffs in southwest Florida said 911 centers were inundated by thousands of stranded callers, some with life-threatening emergencies. The U.S. Coast Guard began rescue efforts around daybreak on barrier islands near where Ian struck, DeSantis said. Fire departments fanned out in flooded areas as well.

In the Orlando area, Orange County firefighters used boats to reach people in a flooded neighborhood. A photo the department posted on Twitter showed one firefighter carrying someone in his arms through knee-deep water. At an area nursing home surrounded by water, patients were carried on stretchers across floodwaters to a waiting bus.

In Fort Myers, a few miles west of the barrier island where Ian came ashore, Valerie Bartley's family spent desperate hours Wednesday holding a dining room table against their patio door, fearing the storm raging outside "was tearing our house apart."

"I was terrified," Bartley said. "What we heard was the shingles and debris from eve-

rything in the neighborhood hitting our house."

She said her 4-year-old daughter grabbed her hand and said: "I'm scared too, but it's going to be OK." The girl was right. The storm ripped away patio screens and snapped a palm tree in the yard, Bartley said, but left the roof intact and her family unharmed.

Authorities confirmed at least one Florida death — a 72-year-old man in Deltona who fell into a canal while using a hose to drain his pool in the heavy rain, the Volusia County Sheriff's Office said. Two other storm deaths were reported in Cuba after Ian struck the island nation earlier.

Lee County Sheriff Carmine Marceno said his office was scrambling to respond to thousands of 911 calls, but many roads and bridges in Fort Myers and the surrounding area remain impassable.

"It crushed us," Marceno told ABC's "Good Morning America." "We still cannot access many of the people that are in need."

Emergency crews sawed through toppled trees to reach stranded people. Many in the hardest-hit areas were unable to call for help amid widespread electrical and cellular outages.

US will double HIMARS commitment for Ukrainians

The Washington Post

The United States will more than double its commitment of long-range rocket artillery systems for Ukraine, the Pentagon said Wednesday, part of a long-term strategy by the United States and its partners to ramp up weapons production in response to Russia's invasion.

The \$1.1 billion package will include 18 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launchers, the weapons that have wreaked havoc on command posts and logistical hubs behind Russian lines. The United States already has delivered 16 of the systems, capable of delivering precision munitions from up to 50 miles away, from existing stocks.

This new tranche will take a "few years" to build and deliver, a senior U.S. defense official told reporters, underscoring efforts to provide

for Ukraine's long-term defense infrastructure while allies and partners speed tailored packages of equipment and ammunition for the most urgent needs. The HIMARS represents a "core component of Ukraine's fighting force in the future," the official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the Pentagon.

Separately, the Pentagon said Wednesday that the United States intends to increase production of "ground-based long range fires, air defense systems, air-to-ground munitions, and other capabilities" needed to sustain Ukraine's military for the long haul.

In a statement, defense officials said that nearly 20 other nations also agreed to expand their industrial base and accelerate the production of arms that can replace Ukraine's Russian and Soviet-era equipment with mod-

ern systems used by NATO.

The most recent arms package includes weapons and equipment that will take between six months and two years to deliver and require defense contractors to restart or intensify manufacturing, the first defense official said.

Ukraine also will receive 150 additional armored Humvees, which will allow troops to transport foot soldiers and maneuver around the battlefield during offensive operations, and more than 200 vehicles that will help them haul heavy equipment, a logistical challenge that comes with supplying large amounts of heavy weapons.

The package also includes systems designed to mitigate weapons the Russians have used effectively, including radars that can detect incoming artillery and drones.

N. Korea fires missiles after Harris leaves South

Associated Press

PANMUNJOM, Korea — In a show of defiance, North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea on Thursday, hours after U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris flew home from a visit to South Korea during which she traveled to the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Koreas and emphasized the “ironclad” U.S. commitment to the security of its Asian allies.

It was the third round of missile launches by North Korea this week, extending a record pace in weapons testing as it accelerates a push to expand its arsenal and pressure Washington to accept it as a nuclear power.

South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missiles were fired nine minutes apart from an area just north of the capital, Pyongyang, and flew toward waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

Japan’s military said it also detected the launches. North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles on Wednesday, while Harris was in Japan, and one before she left Washington on Sunday.

Harris earlier capped her four-day trip to Asia with a meeting with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and a stop at the DMZ, where she addressed the threat posed by the increasingly hostile North.

There are concerns that North Korea may soon conduct a nuclear test, which would move the country closer to being acknowl-

edged as a full-fledged nuclear power.

Visiting the DMZ has become a ritual for American leaders hoping to show their resolve to stand firm against aggression.

At the DMZ, Harris went to the top of a ridge, near guard towers and security cameras. She looked through bulky binoculars as a South Korean officer pointed out military installations on the southern side.

Harris then visited one of a row of blue buildings that straddle the demarcation line, where an American officer explained how the buildings are still used to conduct negotiations with North Korea. Sometimes they pass messages back and forth and sometimes they use a megaphone, he said.

Harris described this week’s missile launches as provocations meant to “destabilize the region” and said the United States and South Korea remain committed to the “complete denuclearization” of the North.

“I cannot state enough that commitment of the United States to the defense of the Republic of Korea is ironclad,” she said.

Earlier, Harris met with Yoon at his office in Seoul and reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to defend the South with a full range of its military capabilities in the event of war, Yoon’s office said.

They expressed concern over North Korea’s threats of nuclear conflict and pledged an unspecified stronger response to major North Korean provocations.

US, S. Korea, Japan to hold anti-sub drill

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Naval forces from the United States, Japan and South Korea are set to carry out anti-submarine warfare drills in the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan, for the first time in five years, the South’s Ministry of National Defense said Thursday.

The exercise scheduled for Friday is “defensive” in nature and is being conducted “to cope with the North Korean nuclear and missile threat,” the ministry said in a news release.

“The [South Korea]-U.S.-Japan anti-submarine warfare exercise this time is a part of [the ministry’s] measure to restore the levels of ... trilateral cooperation for responses to North Korea’s nuclear program and missiles to pre-2017 levels,” the release said.

“And, especially, the three countries pursue this exercise in a bid to improve their capabilities to search, identify and chase North Korea’s submarines possessing the ability to launch [submarine-launched ballistic missiles],” the ministry added.

The South’s military noted that the drills would take place in international waters after considering North Korea’s submarine-launched ballistic missile threat.

New warship USS Zumwalt visits Japan for first time

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — One of the Navy’s newest warships, the guided-missile destroyer USS Zumwalt, docked this week at the homeport of the U.S. 7th Fleet, marking the vessel’s first-ever visit to Asia.

The lead ship of the Zumwalt-class guided-missile destroyers steamed into Yokosuka on Monday for a “routine port call” after spending 13 days at Naval Base Guam, Task Force 71 spokeswoman Lt. Katherine Serrano told Stars and

Stripes.

The Zumwalt arrived in Guam on Sept. 6, another first for the ship, Task Force 71 spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Joseph Keiley told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday.

The ship’s time in Guam was considered a working visit, but sailors also had the chance to visit local attractions, according to a Sept. 19 news release from Task Force 71.

Zumwalt’s arrival in Japan also marks the farthest it has traveled from its homeport, Naval Base San Diego, a record previously set in Guam, the release said.

The Zumwalt’s crew is fully vaccinated, and the sailors are free to explore Japan provided they abide by COVID mitigation policies, Serrano wrote in an email Thursday.

She declined to comment on the destroyer’s length of stay or future destinations as a matter of policy.

“Zumwalt is currently conducting operations and engagements in the Indo-Pacific region,” she said. “DDG 1000 plays an integral role in maintaining our competitive edge and assuring our allies and partners in the region.”

GAO: Navy failed to vet Boeing on Orca

Bloomberg

Orca, the U.S. Navy's mine-laying drone, is running at least three years late and 64% over original cost estimates because the service failed to determine that aerospace giant Boeing had the skills needed to build the sea-going vessel, according to congressional auditors.

"These cost overruns and schedule delays are attributable, in part, to the Navy's decision to not require the contractor to demonstrate its readiness to fabricate the prototype, as called for by leading acquisition practices," the Government Ac-

countability Office said in a report released Wednesday.

What was planned as a \$379 million project to produce 70-ton drones the size of a subway car is now at least a \$621 million effort, with \$504 million already spent, the GAO said. Although a contract called for the first of five vessels to be delivered in December 2020 and the rest by this December, Boeing and the Navy now "expect the contractor to complete and deliver all five vehicles between February and June 2024."

The delay was reported by Bloomberg News in June.

Boeing "did not demonstrate its readiness to fabricate" the extra-large drone "because it was not required to do so" as the Navy sought "to field the vehicles quickly," the GAO said. The Navy determined that Orca "was critical to fulfilling an emergent need," but the service "did not develop a sound business case, including cost and schedule estimates, to ensure that it could deliver the vehicles quickly to the fleet," GAO said.

Investors are growing more concerned about Boeing's struggles to fulfill military contracts, especially given the billions of

dollars in charges the company has recorded for cost overruns on programs such as the KC-46 aerial refueling tanker and new Air Force One.

"The commercial aircraft side of Boeing continues to garner the most attention, but we are actually more concerned about the financial risk from the swathe of fixed-price development contracts in Boeing Defense," Vertical Research Partners analyst Robert Stallard said in a client note before the GAO report was published. Boeing faces a "risk of significant additional charges," he said.

Gas, electricity prices to surge for families in Italy

By ALISON BATH

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — U.S. service members and their families in Italy are facing sharp increases in the cost of lighting and heating their homes that could leave them paying out of their pockets for utility bills.

The situation soon may get worse for sailors and civilians who pay for their utilities through the Navy exchange at Naval Support Activity Naples.

On Saturday, their electricity cost could rise by somewhere between 48% and 80%, or 40 to 50 cents per kilowatt hour, said Aldo Giovanni Moccia, services operations supervisor for the Navy Exchange at NSA Naples. For the past few months, they have been charged 27 cents.

"Such a big change we haven't seen in a while," said Moccia, who said electricity prices gradually have increased about every three months. Moccia cautioned that no official statement on an increase had been made as of Wednesday.

The budget punch might be cushioned by a 22% increase in the monthly allowance service members living off base in Italy

receive to pay for utilities and maintenance. Even so, some military families worry that the larger stipend won't be enough this fall and winter.

Costanza Hanford, whose husband is an active-duty sailor assigned to NSA Naples, said her family of three paid about 100 euros a month for gas over the summer. Their monthly electricity bill averages about 300 euros, she said. Hanford was waiting to see her most recent gas and electricity bills to determine whether the allowance increase would cover them.

"I'm assuming no, since the increase (in utility costs) is way more than the increase in the allowance," Hanford said.

Consumer costs for natural gas could rise as much as 120% this winter, the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* reported Thursday. But leaks discovered this week in Russia's Nord Stream pipelines could drive prices even higher, it said.

Natural gas bills for soldiers have surged as much as 300% in Vicenza, retired Army Lt. Gen. Ray Mason, the director of Army Emergency Relief, told Stars and Stripes this week.

Kremlin closer to annexing 4 eastern regions of Ukraine

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia on Friday will formally annex parts of Ukraine where separation "referendums" received approval, the Kremlin's spokesman said, confirming the expectations of Ukrainian and Western officials who have denounced the Moscow-managed votes as illegal, forced and rigged.

Four regions of Ukraine — Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia — will be folded into Russia during a Kremlin ceremony attended by President Vladimir Putin, spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Thursday.

Peskov said the pro-Moscow administrators of those regions would sign treaties to join Russia during the ceremony at the Kremlin's St. George's Hall. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called an emergency meeting of the National Security and Defense Council for Friday, apparently in response to the Russian move.

The official annexation was widely expected following the votes that wrapped up Tuesday in the areas under Russian occupation and the administration of

Moscow-installed officials. Ukraine's supporters in the West have described the stage-managed referendums on living under Russian rule as a bald-faced land grab based on lies.

"It's absolutely unacceptable," said Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky, whose country currently holds the European Union presidency. "We reject such one-sided annexation based on a fully falsified process with no legitimacy."

Lipavsky described the pro-Russia referendums as "theater play" and insisted the regions remain "Ukrainian territory."

Armed Russian troops went door-to-door with election officials to collect ballots in five days of voting that produced suspiciously high margins in favor of joining Russia.

Ukrainian officials said the military escorts also took down the names of residents who voted against annexation.

Moscow-installed administrations in the four regions of southern and eastern Ukraine claimed Tuesday night that 93% of the ballots cast in the Zaporizhzhia region supported annexation, as did 87% in Kherson, 98% in Luhansk and 99% in Donetsk.

US wants psych tests for migrant parents who sued

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is asking that parents of children separated at the U.S.-Mexico border undergo another round of psychological evaluations to measure how traumatized they were by the Trump-era policy, court documents show.

The request comes in a lawsuit filed by migrants seeking compensation from the government after thousands of children were taken from parents in a policy maligned as inhumane by political and religious leaders around the world. Settlement talks with attorneys and the government broke down late last year.

Justice Department attorneys are also reserving the right to have a psychologist examine the children who were separated, if necessary.

The evaluations are routine in emotional-damages claims, but these cases are unusual because the government's role in traumatizing parents and children by the separa-

tions has been well documented.

“President Biden called the Trump family separations criminal and a moral stain on the nation, but now his administration is hiring doctors to try and claim the families didn't suffer all that much,” said Lee Gelernt, deputy director of the ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project and a lawyer for plaintiffs in the effort to compensate migrants.

Government attorneys argued that the migrants “allege that their mental and emotional injuries are ongoing and permanent in nature” and that their injuries are directly related to the government's policy. They say it is necessary for the government to have its own opportunity to examine them.

The requests came in two cases filed by 11 families.

There are nearly two dozen similar cases pending in other courts, and some have already submitted to government-requested psychiatric evalua-

tions.

But the parents have already sat for hourslong depositions in which they recounted what happened in detail. Government investigators have said children separated from their parents showed more fear, feelings of abandonment and post-traumatic stress symptoms than children who were not separated.

Some children believed their parents had abandoned them or had been killed.

For some, the mental trauma caused physical symptoms, like chest or heart pain, according to a 2019 report from the inspector general's office in the Department of Health and Human Services.

Parents studied by Physicians for Human Rights, a nonprofit collective of doctors that works to document human rights violations, exhibited suicidal thoughts and suffered a raft of problems including nightmares, depression, anxiety, panic, worry and difficulty sleeping.

Report says fewer people seeking jobless aid

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans filing for jobless benefits dropped last week, a sign that few companies are cutting jobs despite high inflation and a weak economy.

Applications for unemployment benefits for the week ending Sept. 24 fell by 16,000 to 193,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That is the lowest level of unemployment claims since April. Last week's number was revised down by 4,000 to 209,000.

Jobless aid applications generally reflect layoffs.

The current figures are very low historically and suggest Americans are benefiting from an unusually high level of job security.

A year ago this week, 376,000 people applied for benefits. The economy shrank in the first half of the year, the government said in a separate report Thursday on gross domestic product, the broadest measure of the economy's output.

Yet employers, who have struggled to rehire after laying off 22 million workers at the height of the pandemic, are still looking to fill millions of open jobs. There are currently roughly two open positions for every unemployed worker, near a record high.

With companies desperate for workers, they are much more likely to hold onto their current staff.

Employers are also offering higher pay and benefits to attract and keep employees. Those higher salaries are contributing to inflation pressures.

The Federal Reserve is aiming to bring down inflation by rapidly raising its key interest rate, which is currently in a range of 3% to 3.25%.

Amazon unveils bedside device aimed at tracking sleeping patterns

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Soon enough, a bedside Amazon device might know whether you're sleeping — or not.

The e-commerce and tech giant said Wednesday it will start selling a device later this year that can track sleeping patterns without a wristband.

The device, called Halo Rise, will use no-contact sensors and artificial intelligence to measure a user's movement and breathing patterns, allowing the device to track sleep stages during the night, the Seattle-based company said. Amazon said the device “does not include cameras or microphones,” and will go for \$139.99.

The Halo Rise would be the latest device in

Amazon's Halo line, which includes a fitness tracker that can track physical activity and sleeping patterns. Amazon noted the device can connect with its virtual assistant, Alexa, and allow users to wake up to their favorite songs, and a light that “simulates the colors and gradual brightening of a sunrise.”

The new device highlights the company's ever-growing move to integrate its technology in consumers' lives, and broaden its reach into wellness. Its health care ambitions have grown over the years, seen most recently in its planned \$3.9 billion acquisition of the primary care organization One Medical. The deal is currently under review by the Federal Trade Commission.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Habitat closed after 3rd dolphin death in 5 months

NV LAS VEGAS — A dolphin habitat at a hotel on the Las Vegas Strip has been temporarily closed after the third mammal death at the attraction in five months.

Officials at the Mirage Secret Garden and Habitat said an 11-year-old bottlenose dolphin named K2 died Saturday. The cause of death remains unclear, but officials told the Las Vegas Review-Journal that the mammal had been receiving treatment for a respiratory illness.

They say Maverick, a 19-year-old bottlenose dolphin, died Sept. 2 following treatment for a lung infection while 13-year-old Bella died in April after undergoing treatment for gastroenteritis.

Man allegedly forged dead roommate's checks

CA CHICO — A Northern California man who lived with the body of his dead roommate for four years was charged with stealing his money by writing dozens of checks on his account, prosecutors said.

Darren Pirtle, 57, of Chico, was charged Monday with identity theft and forgery. He is accused of forging checks to himself from the credit union account of Kevin Olson, 64, who hadn't been seen since October 2018, according to the Butte County district attorney's office. Olson's body was found last week in a bedroom of his home, prosecutors said.

Authorities searched the home after starting a missing-person investigation in August, after a relative told police he

hadn't seen or heard from Olson for about four years, the DA's office said. A Chico police officer who contacted Pirtle was told that Olson was out of town, the DA's office said.

Olson was retired from the U.S. Navy and his monthly retirement checks were sent directly into his account, prosecutors said. His mortgage was still being paid, they said.

Beginning in July 2019, Pirtle allegedly forged about 50 checks on the account, authorities said.

Authorities believe Olson died in late 2018.

Ex-manager sentenced for urinating in drink mix

WA VANCOUVER — A former manager at an Arby's restaurant in Washington has been sentenced to more than five years in prison after admitting he possessed child pornography and urinated into a milkshake mix that might have been served to dozens of people.

Vancouver police said they uncovered footage of Stephen S. Sharp, 29, peeing into a bag of milkshake mix as they searched his phone as part of the child pornography investigation, The Columbian newspaper reported.

Sharp pleaded guilty Aug. 16 to three counts of first-degree possession of child pornography and one count of second-degree attempted assault. Judge Derek Vanderwood sentenced him Monday to five years and seven months in prison.

As part of his plea agreement, Sharp must register as a sex offender and is prohibited from going to any Arby's restaurants.

Sharp was working alone at an

Arby's in Vancouver in October 2021 when he urinated at least twice into the milkshake mix bag. According to an affidavit filed in Clark County Superior Court, he told investigators he did it for sexual gratification and was "almost sure" he threw the bag out afterward. If he didn't throw the bag away, he said, it would have been added to other mix by the next shift and served to customers.

20 arrested, 300 dogs found in dogfighting raids

SC COLUMBIA — More than 20 people were arrested and more than 300 dogs were rescued as authorities raided dogfighting kennels in South Carolina, federal prosecutors said Monday.

The sting started when state and federal agents interrupted a dogfight in Richland County on Saturday, U.S. Attorney Adair Borroughs said in a statement. That led agents to serve 23 warrants on Sunday, investigators said. Twenty people face state charges of animal cruelty and dogfighting, authorities said.

Officials said 305 dogs were rescued, with about 275 of them believed to be part of the dogfighting ring. The Humane Society of the United States and Bark Nation is helping take care of the dogs.

Prosecutor seeks 3rd trial for woman in killings

KS TOPEKA — A Kansas prosecutor has indicated that he intends to try a woman for the third time in the killings of her ex-husband and his girlfriend two decades ago.

Dana Chandler is accused of killing Mike Sisco, 47, and his

fiancee, Karen Harkness, 53, in 2002 in Topeka. Chandler's second trial on two counts of first-degree murder ended in a hung jury last month.

Chandler, who maintains she was in Colorado when the murders occurred, was convicted in 2012, but the Kansas Supreme Court overturned that conviction because of prosecutorial misconduct.

In a court filing last week responding to a defense motion seeking an acquittal, Shawnee County Deputy District Attorney Charles Kitt indicated prosecutors will try Chandler again, The Topeka Capital Journal reported.

100-year-old woman given honorary diploma

NH MANCHESTER — A 100-year-old woman who left high school to care for her brother during the Great Depression has been awarded an honorary diploma in New Hampshire.

Josephine Sad left Central High School in Manchester to take care of her younger brother while both of their parents worked. She later joined the Women's Army Corps and served during World War II.

Sad's friend, Terry Seavey, shared her story with Mayor Joyce Craig and a surprise award ceremony was held Tuesday.

"When the mayor reached out, we were immediately on board," said Jennifer Gillis, Manchester School District superintendent. "Mrs. Sad's service to her family, community and country in times of need is inspiring."

— From wire reports

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Judge ties Maris' mark with 61st HR

Associated Press

TORONTO — When Tim Lincecum made a mistake pitch, Aaron Judge made sure the Blue Jays left-hander wound up on the wrong end of history.

Judge tied Roger Maris' American League record of 61 home runs in a season with a tiebreaking, two-run drive in the seventh inning that lifted the New York Yankees over the Toronto Blue Jays 8-3 on Wednesday night.

Mayza said he was trying to attack Judge with sinkers in the hopes of inducing a ground ball, but missed his spot.

"Just one too many good pitches over the plate to a really good hitter," Mayza said.

The 30-year-old slugger drove a 94.5 mph belt-high sinker with a full-count from Mayza (8-1) over the left-field fence at Rogers Centre. The 117.4 mph drive took just 3.8 seconds to land 394 feet from the plate, and it put the Yankees ahead 5-3.

"When I hit it, I thought I got enough, but it's been a couple of games since I did that," Judge said.

Judge watched the ball clank off the front of the stands, just below two fans who reached over a railing and tried for a catch. He pumped an arm just before reaching

first and exchanged a slap with coach Travis Chapman.

The ball dropped into Toronto's bullpen and was picked up by Blue Jays bullpen coach Matt Buschmann, who turned it over to New York.

Judge's mother and Roger Maris Jr. rose and hugged from front-row seats. He appeared to point toward them after rounding second base, then was congratulated by the entire Yankees team, who gave him hugs after he crossed the plate.

"As soon as he hit it I was like 'OK, that's gone,'" Maris Jr. said. "Then it was just a matter of enjoying him run the bases and giving his mom a big old hug and just enjoying the moment."

Judge moved past the 60 home runs Babe Ruth hit in 1927, which had stood as the major league mark until Maris broke it in 1961. All three stars reached those huge numbers playing for the New York Yankees.

Barry Bonds holds the big league record of 73 for the San Francisco Giants in 2001.

Judge had gone seven games without a home run — his longest drought this season was nine in mid-August. This was the Yankees' 155th game of the season, leaving them seven more in the regular season.

The home run came in the fourth plate appearance of the night for Judge, ending a streak of 34 plate appearances without a home run.

Judge is hitting .313 with 130 RBIs, also the top totals in the AL. He has a chance to become the first AL Triple Crown winner since Detroit's Miguel Cabrera in 2012.

New York (96-59), which clinched its 20th AL East title a night earlier, won for the ninth time in 10 games.

Toronto (87-69) held on to the top spot in the wild-card race despite its second straight loss. The Blue Jays are 1½ games ahead of Tampa Bay and two games in front of Seattle.

Gerit Cole (13-7) allowed three runs and three hits in 6½ innings. Cole was perfect through five before Danny Jansen homered leading off the sixth. Cole struck out four, matching the Yankees season record of 248 set by Ron Guidry in 1978.

"I think it's more special because of what Aaron did tonight," Cole said.

New York scored three in the first off Mitch White, but Toronto tied it in a three-run sixth that included Bo Bichette's RBI single and Vladimir Guerrero's sacrifice fly.

Escobar, Mets down Marlins, take lead in NL East

Associated Press

NEW YORK — With the Mets needing a comeback while dealing with the pressure of a tight pennant race, Eduardo Escobar was a one-man show.

Escobar homered and drove in five late runs — including the game-winning single in the 10th inning — to rally New York past the Miami Marlins 5-4 on Wednesday night and back into sole possession of first place in the NL East.

Nationals 3, Braves 2 (10): CJ Abrams drove in the winning run in the 10th inning for his third hit to lift host Washington past Atlanta.

The Braves dropped a game behind the New York Mets in the NL East, with the teams set to open a three-game series Friday in Atlanta.

Brewers 5, Cardinals 1: Bran-

don Woodruff struck out 10 over six scoreless innings and Devin Williams delivered four big outs late to boost host Milwaukee's playoff hopes with a victory over NL Central champion St. Louis.

The victory, the Brewers' first since Saturday at Cincinnati, combined with the Phillies' loss to the Chicago Cubs, moved Milwaukee within a game of Philadelphia for the third and final NL wild-card spot with seven to play.

Red Sox 3, Orioles 1: Anthony Santander and his team were shut down by Rich Hill and three relievers in a loss to Boston, hurting visiting Baltimore's chances of rallying in the AL wild-card race.

Tigers 2, Royals 1: Miguel Cabrera hit his 507th home run and host Detroit got nine innings from its bullpen to beat Kansas City for its fifth straight victory.

Dodgers 1, Padres 0 (10):

Freddie Freeman singled in Mookie Betts with one out in the 10th inning and visiting Los Angeles beat San Diego to set the franchise season record with its 107th win.

Diamondbacks 5, Astros 2 (10): Host Houston squandered an opportunity to wrap up the top seed in the AL when Christian Walker capped Arizona's three-run 10th inning with a two-run single.

Guardians 2, Rays 1 (10): Pinch-hitter Amed Rosario had a bases-loaded single in the 10th inning to lift AL Central champion Cleveland past visiting Tampa Bay.

Mariners 3, Rangers 1: George Kirby allowed one run over six innings, Eugenio Suarez had three hits and an RBI and host Seattle beat Texas.

Angels 4, Athletics 1: Mike

Trout hit his 38th home run, Michael Lorenzen went five strong innings and host Los Angeles beat Oakland.

Giants 6, Rockies 3: Joc Pederson had a two-run triple and host San Francisco beat Colorado to keep its slim playoff hopes alive.

Pirates 4, Reds 3 (10): Kevin Newman had a two-out single in the 10th inning and host Pittsburgh beat Cincinnati after blowing a three-run lead in the ninth.

Twins 7, White Sox 4: Rookie Matt Wallner drove in a career-high three runs, Gio Urshela and Jake Cave each had three hits and host Minnesota sent Chicago to its eighth straight loss.

Cubs 3, Phillies 1: Aaron Nola surrendered Christopher Morel's three-run homer in the fifth inning in visiting Philadelphia's loss to Chicago.

No. 2 Tide faces tough 3-game stretch

Associated Press

Alabama has mostly breezed through the first month of the season, with one big scare and three games that were frightful but predictably easy.

How good is 'Bama, really? Check back in a few weeks.

The second-ranked Crimson Tide (4-0, 1-0 Southeastern Conference) start a three-game stretch against ranked teams with Saturday's visit to No. 20 Arkansas (3-1, 1-1). Then comes No. 17 Texas A&M and a visit to red-hot eighth-ranked Tennessee.

"It's the SEC, that's why you come to Alabama to play in the SEC and in games like this," Crimson Tide linebacker Will Anderson Jr. said. "It's not going to be our first time going on a stretch like this. We play good teams all the time out here in the (SEC) West."

But there's seldom such a stacked lineup of games in the division. Assuming the rankings hold up, it will be the first time since 2016 that Alabama has played three straight Top 25 opponents in the regular season.

That team brushed by No. 16 Arkansas (49-30), No. 9 Tennessee (49-10) and No. 6 Texas A&M (33-14) without breaking much of a sweat, and survived a stiffer test from No. 13 LSU (10-0).

Last season, the Tide went 6-1 in Top 25 games, including a national championship game loss to Georgia. Alabama did, however, lose to an unranked Texas A&M team.

The collective record of the Tide's seven remaining SEC opponents: 23-5, including unbeaten and 14th-ranked Mississippi on the road. But three of the toughest teams come in the next

three weeks.

By far Alabama's hardest game to date this season was the 20-19 win over Texas on a late field goal by Will Reichard. The Longhorns just lost again, in overtime to Texas Tech.

The Tide's wins over Utah State, Louisiana-Monroe and Vanderbilt came by a combined score of 173-10.

Bryce Young and Alabama unleashed their best downfield passing performance of the season in a 55-3 win over the Commodores in the SEC opener. Tide coach Nick Saban said afterward his team has shown steady progress in the opening month.

"The challenges get greater as we go, so we have to continue to focus on moving forward, improving," Saban said. "I think the team played really well. I think the team sort of bought in

to everybody trying to play to a standard, and I think this is probably the closest we've come to it this year."

Alabama will likely have to continue that trend to navigate the next three games unscathed. The Tide are favored by 16.5 points over quarterback KJ Jefferson and the Razorbacks, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. Arkansas is coming off a 23-21 loss to Texas A&M.

Tennessee is fresh from a 38-33 win over Florida.

"It's a big stretch," Young said of the next few games. "We understand that whenever we get into SEC play, anything can happen. So this is why we're all here, SEC ball. This was a good start and we have to carry that momentum. ... We know it's going to be a big challenge (this) week. We know it's going to take everything."

Jags getting elite play from 1st-rounders Walker, Lloyd

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The Jacksonville Jaguars have their own Defensive Rookie of the Year race ongoing.

It'd be tough to pick a front-runner through three games.

No. 1 overall draft pick Travon Walker, an outside linebacker from national champion Georgia, has been disruptive while playing nearly 85% percent of the team's defensive snaps. He has eight tackles, including a sack, and got his first interception in his NFL debut.

Inside linebacker Devin Lloyd, the 27th overall selection from Utah, leads the team with 24 tackles and six pass breakups. He has interceptions in back-to-back games.

"I believe some of it can be the fact that they've played a lot of football on a big stage in college," Jaguars coach Doug Pederson said Wednesday. "So it's not unfamiliar territory to them.

But these guys are both just tremendous workers and they prepare so well during the week, practice hard.

"They want to be great players in this league, and that's what you're seeing with both of them and it's paying off in the games."

Walker and Lloyd have been instrumental in helping Jacksonville (2-1) transform one of the NFL's worst defenses in 2021 into a formidable force, a unit that could get tested Sunday at Philadelphia (3-0).

Last season, the Jags failed to get consistent pressure on opposing quarterbacks, struggled to stop the run and really came up short in the takeaway department.

Now, they have 21 quarterback hits and seven sacks. They lead the league in rushing defense, giving up 55 yards a game, and haven't allowed a rushing touchdown. They al-

ready are one shy of last year's total of nine takeaways, with six interceptions and two fumble recoveries.

There are plenty of reasons for Jacksonville's turnaround, from the addition of defensive tackle Foley Fatukasi, linebacker Foye Oluokun and coordinator Mike Caldwell to the development of cornerback and second-year pro Tyson Campbell and the play of veterans Josh Allen and Roy Robertson-Harris up front.

But there's little doubt Walker and Lloyd have been the main catalyst in the team's improvement.

"Once opportunities come, you can't miss them, and they haven't missed a lot of them," Allen said.

Walker was all over the field in last week's 38-10 drubbing of the Los Angeles Chargers. He pressured Justin Herbert, chased down running back Aus-

tin Ekeler and even looked as smooth as any NFL cornerback while dropping into coverage.

"For a guy that size, man, to be able to move and to drop into coverage is a huge asset for us," Allen said. "That puts a little different taste in a lot of offenses scheming things up because you got to account for that."

Lloyd's success has been more eye-opening because he injured a hamstring during his conditioning test on the first day of training camp and missed the better part of the next month. He returned in time to play in the preseason finale, but there were questions about how quickly he would get back into playing shape and whether he would be in catch-up mode early in the season.

It was much ado about nothing. He finished with 11 tackles in the opener and has been even more effective the past two weeks.

NBA teams woo fans, sponsors in Japan

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese basketball fans will get to see NBA stars up close when the reigning league-champion Golden State Warriors take on the Washington Wizards in two preseason games.

Not surprisingly, Stephen Curry and Japanese-born Rui Hachimura will be the star attractions for each team.

And as clearly as the logo of Japanese online retailer Rakuten is splashed on Curry's jersey, big money is riding on the NBA's most recent foray into Japan.

Junya Ogura, senior manager at Japanese automaker Nissan's brand and media strategy department, thinks it's all worth it, given the NBA's strong appeal to the younger generation, a trend that's backed up by marketing studies.

Nissan Motor Co., which sponsors Japanese professional baseball and soccer, had a high-profile deal with tennis superstar Naomi Osaka which recently ended. This is the first time it's sponsoring NBA games.

The tickets cost up to 420,000 yen (\$2,900) each for courtside "VIP" seats. Both Friday and Sunday games are sold out at the Saitama Super Arena.

"These are the Japanese people who grew up on Michael Jordan," said Ogura. "We are banking on a return that will come in the future."

The NBA has drawn 15 marketing partners to support the preseason games in Japan, including American Express, Hennessy, NEC and Nike, and now has 19 marketing and promotional partners in Japan.

Rakuten, which also sponsors Japanese baseball and soccer and holds the Japan Open tennis championships, livestreams NBA games.

"Obviously it's about the money," said Bob Dorfman, a San Francisco-based sports analyst at Pinnacle Advertising.

"Building the fan base in Asia, and everywhere else in the world, results in more sponsorship dollars, increased media rights and greater merchandise sales."

The NBA may have more

global appeal than other U.S. sports, being easier to understand than football, for instance, according to Dorfman, who has worked in Japan.

"Every team has foreign-born players on their rosters, and the league's top stars are cultural icons, trendsetters, and social media giants. The game is cool," he said.

That translates not only into sponsorship money but also youngsters spending on sneakers and other fashion items and merchandising.

Between 1990 and 2003, the NBA staged 12 regular-season games in Japan. The last time the NBA played in Japan was in 2019, when Houston and Toronto played a preseason game. The coronavirus pandemic had postponed the league's return to Japan until now.

And so the NBA is again courting Japan.

A giant 3D display at a Tokyo street crossing depicts Curry and other NBA stars as "manga," or Japanese comic characters. The NBA's Japanese-language social media accounts

have amassed more than 1.6 million followers.

While the players are in town, they will be taking part in various fan events. Besides Hachimura, the NBA now has another Japanese player, Yuta Watanabe, who is with the Brooklyn Nets.

The NBA is also excited about the potential for women's basketball. Japanese women were the silver medalists in the last Olympics. Rui Machida, an Olympian, signed earlier this year with the WNBA's Washington Mystics.

"Our fan base is growing," said NBA Asia managing director Ramez Sheikh.

Wizards officials acknowledged they were surprised by the big reaction signing Hachimura drew from Japan. They suddenly saw more Japanese in the stands, tour buses started coming, and Japanese media showed up in big numbers.

"It was all about Rui (Hachimura)," said Hunter Lochman, chief marketing officer at Monumental Sports & Entertainment, which owns the Wizards.

Thomas helps US top Serbia, advance to World Cup semis

Associated Press

SYDNEY — Alyssa Thomas and her United States teammates were tested for the first time in the World Cup by a physical Serbia team.

After a slow start, the Americans used a dominant run spanning the half to take control of the game and reach the semifinals again.

Thomas had 13 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists to help the U.S. beat Serbia 88-55 in the quarterfinals of the women's World Cup on Thursday.

"I think you expect every team's best punch in the first quarter," Thomas said. "We just had to settle into the game and once we settled in, then we were really able to break

away."

Kelsey Plum scored 17 points and A'ja Wilson added 15 to lead the Americans (6-0), who will face Canada in the semifinals on Friday.

"They played super physical, more physical than we've seen the entire tournament," Plum said. "Credit to them. I felt that early on, their pressure bothered us a little bit, but we were able to kind of get under control."

The Americans had run through pool play, winning by 46.2 points per game and hadn't faced any kind of challenge. Serbia (3-2) wasn't afraid, though, going right at the U.S. The Serbians scored the first basket of the game — marking

the first time the Americans trailed in the tournament.

It was back-and-forth for the first 17 minutes, with the U.S. failing to go on any major run. Then, with 2:59 left in the half and the U.S. up by five, Kahleah Copper drove to the basket and was fouled. She landed hard on her hip and had to be helped off the court by the U.S. training staff. Copper, who has been a sparkplug for the U.S. in her first tournament, didn't return.

"It's too early to tell," Reeve said of the extent of Copper's injury. "We're getting her some imaging and we'll have information later."

Plum replaced Copper and hit the two free throws, starting

a 12-0 run to close the half as the Americans led 50-33 at the break. Thomas had 13 points, six rebounds, four assists and two steals in the opening 20 minutes.

The U.S. extended its run to 20 straight points in the third quarter before Serbia finally ended a nearly 8½-minute drought with a three-pointer by Yvonne Anderson. That cut the deficit to 22 points. Serbia didn't get much closer after that.

Anderson led Serbia with 14 points.

Betnijah Laney went down hard early in the fourth quarter on a put-back. She left the game and sat on the bench for the rest of the game.