

Food insecurity in military highlighted

By MATTHEW ADAMS

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — When Rep. Chrissy Houlahan was a little girl growing up on naval bases, it was drilled into her how precious military pay was.

“My mother would walk around with envelopes of cash every month that this was for food, and this one was for clothes and this one was for medicine. She would open her envelopes for food at the commissary,” the Democrat from Pennsylvania said Tuesday. Houlahan’s father was a Navy aviator.

Rand Corp. published a study in 2023 showing more than 25% of active-duty service members lack consistent access to enough food for their households. The study, which Congress directed the Pentagon to sponsor as part of the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, also found 15.4% of troops would be classified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as not having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

Houlahan, along with six other lawmakers, placed 325 flags on the National Mall to represent and bring awareness to the 325,000 service members who are considered food insecure, according to With Honor Action, a nonprofit that promotes and advances veteran leadership in public service. The group hosted the event with lawmakers on Tuesday near the Capitol.

“I know that there’s a lot of pushback right now. Fixing things like housing might be a priority, which is great but you can’t eat housing. It’s really, really important that we emphasize just the vastness of this,” said Houlahan, who was an Air Force captain.

The fiscal 2025 NDAA, an annual bill that outlines defense priorities and spending, gives troops a 4.5% pay raise. The House version of the legislation includes an additional 15% pay raise for junior enlisted service members. The Senate Appropriations Committee in August unanimously advanced a version of the Pentagon spending

bill that includes funding to cover a 5.5% pay bump for E-1s through E-3s and a 4.5% raise for all other troops.

“I’ve said this in hearings before that we have junior enlisted who make at the poverty level or under the poverty level. So, I think it is important that we are here to bring attention to this matter and that for members of Congress to understand it is really important [that] lives are affected when we can’t bring our act together and pass our budgets on time,” said Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks, R-Iowa, after placing some flags on Tuesday.

The findings in the Rand study are at odds with the conventional wisdom that those most prone to food insecurity in the ranks are junior enlisted members with large families. Instead, the report found the majority of those affected, 67%, were early- to mid-career enlisted personnel between the pay grades of E-4 and E-6.

The call for attention to troops struggling to feed their families

comes as congressional lawmakers on Sunday agreed to a deal to avert a looming government shutdown Sept. 30, the end of the fiscal year.

The House is expected to vote Wednesday on a temporary funding extension, known as a continuing resolution. The Senate is expected to do the same shortly thereafter. It is expected to pass both chambers and be signed by President Joe Biden.

The Pentagon has long balked at the use of stopgap funding measures, which Congress has passed to begin new fiscal years in 15 of the last 16 years.

In 2024, Congress did not pass a full DOD budget until late March.

In a letter to Congress this month, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin wrote that a six-month continuing resolution would cost the Pentagon more than \$6 billion compared to his 2025 spending proposal, and it would stall some \$4.3 billion in research projects and delay some \$10 billion in expected military construction projects.

Damaged Navy tanker in Mideast being towed to port

The Washington Post

The Navy oil tanker damaged in the Middle East is being towed to a port for evaluation and repairs, two military officials said.

The USNS Big Horn experienced an unspecified emergency overnight Monday and the incident is under investigation, the Navy said in a statement.

One of the officials said the ship was damaged in the Arabian Sea, where an aircraft carrier, the USS Abraham Lincoln,

and several other warships have operated for months amid tensions stemming from Israel’s war in the Gaza Strip.

The other official said the ship encountered trouble while close to a shoreline, without elaborating. Both spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military movements.

The entire crew of 80 was safe, the Navy said, and it was not immediately clear whether there were any injuries. The As-

sociated Press reported on the incident, which began circulating on social media Monday night, earlier.

It’s too early to say what caused the Big Horn’s damage, the two military officials said, but it is not believed that the oiler collided with another vessel. At least one of the ship’s compartments began flooding, requiring embarked personnel to take action, the second military official said.

Other possibilities include

the ship having run aground in shallow water or a collision with some other object. Officials did not immediately rule out a mine strike, but the second military official said it was unlikely.

The situation could leave the Navy challenged, for the foreseeable future, to conduct sea-based refueling for ships involved in its Middle East deterrence mission. The military officials said a near-term solution could entail the transfer of fuel between vessels.

Reflections on Naval Academy admissions

The Baltimore Sun

BALTIMORE — Laith Shannon said he was used to being among the few non-white officers during his military career, thinking that “at the end of the day, we were all Marines and we all wore the same uniform.”

Still, it was a “phenomenal experience,” he said, to serve three years as a company commander at the Naval Academy.

“I got to see myself represented by the senior officers, because Annapolis has a diverse officer corps, and be an example to the midshipmen,” said Shannon, 33, who is biracial. “It was very encouraging to see the fabric of America represented in a service academy.”

How to maintain and grow that diversity is at issue in a trial that is entering its second week in U.S. District Court in Baltimore.

The Naval Academy has been sued by an anti-affirmative action group, Students for Fair Admissions, over its use of race and ethnicity as a factor in admissions. The same group successfully sued Harvard and the University of North Carolina,

leading to the Supreme Court striking down those schools’ race-conscious admissions policies.

But the landmark ruling left open whether the nation’s service academies have “potentially distinct interests” that should allow them to continue considering race and ethnicity in deciding whom to admit to the elite institutions, which often serve as pipelines to the highest leadership positions.

Shannon did not attend the academy, rising to the rank of captain via a different route before retiring from the Marines last year. Like others interviewed for this article, he is careful to note that he speaks as a private citizen, and not for his former service. But he is among many in the larger military community with an interest in the trial’s outcome, and how it will shape the nation’s armed forces in the future.

“We need the military to look like America,” said Clara Adams-ENDER, 85, who retired as a brigadier general and commanding officer of Fort Belvoir in 1993. “I hope the Navy keeps

doing what they’re doing.”

Adams-ENDER, who is Black, calls her more than three decades in the Army “grand and glorious” despite the lingering vestiges of segregation and discrimination that she faced. In need of nurses, the Army gave the daughter of North Carolina sharecroppers a college scholarship to get her degree, launching a career that would earn her multiple firsts and leadership positions at facilities including Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and Fort Meade, both in Maryland.

But it wasn’t easy, she said, and there are still hurdles for the current and retired service members she continues to mentor today.

“I was born Black. I was born a woman,” said Adams-ENDER. “I was not going to make that my problem. If that was a problem, it was going to be someone else’s problem.”

“Everybody deserves to be treated with dignity and respect at all ranks,” she said.

Adams-ENDER is among the longest-standing members of the National Association of

Black Military Women, among the groups that filed a brief in support of the Naval Academy in the trial. The groups, which include the ACLU and its Maryland branch and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, say the academies can’t be held to the same admissions policies as other universities because they’re training an officer corps that will wield much broader authority over those beneath them than in a civilian workplace.

“Today’s military is racially diverse within the enlisted ranks, but disproportionately white within the officer class, particularly at the highest ranks,” the brief noted.

Black people make up about 20% of the Navy’s enlisted ranks but just 8% of its officers, the brief said, citing Defense Department statistics.

The Naval Academy, with the backing of the Biden administration, has said that having a less diverse officer corps threatens unit cohesion and the military’s legitimacy both at home and abroad, posing consequences for readiness and national security.

Japan replaces skipper accused of sailing into Chinese waters

BY BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

The captain of a Japanese warship that reportedly sailed into Chinese waters this summer has been replaced, according to Japan’s defense minister.

Defense Minister Minoru Kihara, at a news conference Tuesday, said the skipper of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyer JS Suzutsuki was replaced in July but declined to identify the officer or say why the move was made.

Kihara also declined to confirm that the destroyer intruded into Chinese waters on July 4.

“Not only in the Maritime Self-Defense Force, but also in the Ground and Air Self-Defense Force, transfer of personnel happens on multiple occasions, but we do not release the reason for each transfer, and it is the same for this transfer too,” he said.

Tokyo told Beijing the ship inadvertently sailed into Chinese territorial waters within 12 nautical miles of the coast of Zhejiang province, Kyodo News reported Monday, citing unnamed diplomatic sources.

A Maritime Self-Defense Force base questioned the Suzutsuki after noticing it had en-

tered Chinese waters on July 4. The destroyer’s captain responded that he was “not aware” the ship had sailed into an “off-limits area,” Kyodo reported.

The officer was named captain of the Suzutsuki in May, a Ministry of Defense spokesman said. He declined to answer questions about whether the vessel entered Chinese waters on July 4.

Some Japanese government officials are required to speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

The ministry started an investigation of the ship’s captain in response to the incident, Kyodo

do reported July 11.

China’s Maritime Safety Administration on July 3 issued a warning that a live-fire exercise would run July 4-5 in Hangzhou Bay, bordered to the south by Zhejiang and north by Shanghai. The Suzutsuki was monitoring the drill when Chinese vessels urged it to leave the area, but instead it sped up and sailed into Chinese waters for about 20 minutes before leaving, Kyodo reported July 11.

Under China’s Maritime Traffic Safety Law, foreign vessels are required to give notice and provide information before entering Chinese waters.

Congress moving to avert shutdown before leaving DC

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress is expected Wednesday to give swift approval to a temporary spending bill that would keep federal agencies funded when the new fiscal year begins Tuesday, avoiding a potential shutdown showdown just weeks before the Nov. 5 election.

The stopgap measure generally funds agencies at current levels through Dec. 20, but an additional \$231 million was included to bolster the Secret Service after the two assassination attempts against Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump.

Money was also added to aid with the presidential transition, among other things.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., billed the measure as doing “only what’s absolutely necessary,” a statement directed at members of his own conference concerned about spending levels.

Still, it’s a no-go for some Republicans, forcing House GOP leadership to rely on Democratic votes to pass the bill through a process that requires at least two-thirds support from voting members.

Johnson said the only alternative to the continuing resolution at this stage would be a government shutdown.

“It would be political malpractice to shut the government down,” Johnson said. “I think everyone understands that.”

If the House passes the temporary funding measure as expected, it will move to the Senate for final approval. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said late Wednesday that he had reached agreement

ensuring passage will happen quickly.

“This is how things should be done,” Schumer said. “Without brinkmanship, without delay.”

Lawmakers in both chambers are anxious to return to their home states and districts to campaign, smoothing the path for passage of a temporary funding fix.

But more arduous fiscal negotiations await them at the end of the year.

That’s because the bill essentially punts for three months a final decision on full-year spending levels. Under terms of a previous deal to avoid a federal default and allow the government to continue paying its bills, spending for defense and non-defense programs would rise 1% next year.

The Senate has charted a course to go above that level, while House Republicans have been voting for steep cuts to many nondefense programs, and they have attached policy mandates to the spending bills that Democrats overwhelmingly oppose. So a final agreement will be difficult to reach.

In the meantime, the temporary bill will mostly fund the government at current levels, with a few exceptions like the funding infusion for the Secret Service. The \$231 million for the Secret Service does come with strings attached. It’s contingent upon the agency complying with congressional oversight. The bill also allows the Secret Service to spend its allocations faster if needed.

“Everybody understands that’s critically important right now,” Johnson said of the Secret Service money.

Helene, now a hurricane, strengthens on way to Fla.

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Helene became a hurricane Wednesday after the huge storm rapidly strengthened in the Caribbean Sea and moved north along Mexico’s coast on a path toward the U.S., leading residents to evacuate, schools to close, and officials to declare emergencies in Florida and Georgia.

The storm’s center was near Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula on Wednesday, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said, and it was expected to intensify and grow in size as it crosses the Gulf of Mexico. Heavy rainfall was forecast for the southeastern U.S. starting Wednesday, with a life-threatening storm surge along the entire west coast of Florida, according to the center.

The storm is so large that areas roughly 90 miles north of the Georgia-Florida line could expect hurricane conditions. States as far inland as Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana could see rainfall. On Wednesday

day morning, winds of tropical storm force, at least 39 mph, extended as far as 275 miles from Helene’s center.

“You are going to have a major hurricane plowing inland, and storms take a little time to decay once they’re inland,” said Brian McNoldy, an environmental researcher at the University of Miami.

Forecasters warned of possible tornadoes Wednesday night in western Florida and southern Alabama and said the tornado risk would increase Thursday, expanding across Florida and into Georgia and South Carolina.

Helene is expected to become a major hurricane — a Category 3 or higher, with winds above 110 mph — on Thursday, the day it’s set to reach Florida’s Gulf Coast, according to the hurricane center. The center issued hurricane warnings for part of Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula and Florida’s northwestern coastline, where large storm surges of up to 15 feet were expected.

Chemical leak spurs an evacuation near Cincinnati

Associated Press

WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP, Ohio — An evacuation order remained in effect Wednesday for residents in an Ohio community as crews continued to work at the scene of a dangerous chemical leak.

Styrene, a toxic and flammable chemical that is used to make plastic and rubber, began leaking Tuesday afternoon from a railcar in Whitewater Township, a community of about 6,000 people just west of Cincinnati. The Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency advised anyone within a half-mile of the area near U.S. Route 50 and the Great Miami

River to leave immediately.

Tom Ciuba, a spokesman for Central Railroad of Indiana, which operates the tracks, said Wednesday that the railcar was no longer venting.

He said crews worked overnight to put water on the car, but it hadn’t been removed from the tracks and wouldn’t be until officials determine it is safe to do so. He said air and water quality continue to be monitored, and that several roads near the area will remain closed indefinitely.

The area has a mix of businesses, homes and large swaths of undeveloped land. Several schools were closed after the leak was discovered.

Israeli troops prep for push into Lebanon

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — The Israeli army chief said Wednesday that the military is preparing for a possible ground operation in Lebanon as Hezbollah hurled dozens of projectiles into Israel, including a missile aimed at Tel Aviv that was the militant group's deepest strike yet.

Addressing troops on the northern border, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi said the latest Israeli airstrikes were designed to "prepare the ground for your possible entry and to continue degrading Hezbollah."

In an apparent reference to the missile aimed at Tel Aviv, he said: "Today, Hezbollah expanded its range of fire, and later today, they will receive a very strong response. Prepare yourselves."

To achieve the goal of returning

the displaced citizens of northern Israel to their homes, "we are preparing the process of a maneuver," he said.

In recent days, the Israeli military has said it had no immediate plans for a ground invasion. Halevi's statement was the strongest yet from an Israeli leader suggesting that troops could move in.

In other developments, the Lebanese health minister said continued Israeli strikes Wednesday killed more than 50 people. That raised the death toll from the past three days to 615, with more than 2,000 people wounded.

This week has been the deadliest in Lebanon since the bruising monthlong war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006. With tensions still escalating, the Israeli military said it would activate reserve troops.

Israeli military officials said they intercepted Hezbollah's surface-to-surface missile, which marked a further escalation after Israeli strikes on Lebanon killed hundreds of people.

The missile set off air-raid sirens in Tel Aviv and across central Israel. There were no reports of casualties or damage. The military said it struck the site in southern Lebanon where the missile was launched.

The launch ratcheted up hostilities as the region appeared to be teetering toward another all-out war, even as Israel continues to battle Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Thousands have fled their homes in parts of Lebanon coming under fire.

Israel said Wednesday that its air force had struck some 280 Hezbollah targets across Leba-

non by early afternoon, including launchers used to fire rockets on the northern Israeli cities of Safed and Nahariya.

Fleeing families have flocked to Beirut and the coastal city of Sidon, sleeping in schools turned into shelters, as well as in cars, parks and along the beach. Some sought to leave the country, causing a traffic jam at the border with Syria.

Hezbollah said it fired a Qader 1 ballistic missile targeting the headquarters of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, which it blames for a recent string of targeted killings of its top commanders and for an attack last week in which explosives hidden in pagers and walkie-talkies killed dozens of people and wounded thousands, including many Hezbollah members.

Man accused of staking out Trump has charges upgraded

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A man who authorities said staked out Donald Trump for 12 hours on his golf course in Florida and wrote of his desire to kill him was indicted Tuesday on an attempted assassination charge.

Ryan Wesley Routh had initially been charged with two federal firearms offenses. The upgraded charges contained in a five-count indictment reflect the Justice Department's assessment that he methodically plotted to kill the Republican nominee, aiming a rifle through the shrubbery surrounding Trump's West Palm Beach golf course on an afternoon Trump was playing on it. Routh left behind a note in which he described his intention, prosecutors said.

Court records show the case has been assigned to Aileen Cannon, a Trump-appointed federal judge who generated intense scrutiny for her handling of a criminal case charging Trump with illegally hoarding classified

documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. She dismissed that case in July, a decision now being appealed by special counsel Jack Smith's team.

The attempted assassination indictment had been foreshadowed during a court hearing Monday in which prosecutors successfully argued for the 58-year-old Routh to remain behind bars as a flight risk and a threat to public safety.

They alleged that he had written of his plans to kill Trump in a handwritten note months before his Sept. 15 arrest in which he referred to his actions as a failed "assassination attempt on Donald Trump" and offered \$150,000 for anyone who could "finish the job." That note was in a box that Routh had apparently dropped off at the home of an unidentified witness months before his arrest. After the attempted assassination, the person opened the box, took a photograph of the front page of the letter and contacted law enforcement.

Trump calls for 100% tariff on all cars made in Mexico

Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. — Donald Trump on Tuesday pledged to stop U.S. businesses from shipping jobs overseas and to take other countries' jobs and factories by relying heavily on sweeping tariffs to boost auto manufacturing — despite warnings that domestic consumers would pay more and a lack of specifics about how his plans would work.

"I want German car companies to become American car companies. I want them to build their plants here," the Republican presidential nominee declared during a speech in Savannah, Ga.

Trump added that, if elected, he'd put a 100% tariff on every car imported from Mexico and that the only way to avoid those charges would be for an automaker to build the cars in the United States.

His ideas, if enacted, could cause a huge upheaval in the American auto industry. Many automakers now build smaller,

lower-priced vehicles in Mexico — facilitated by a trade agreement Trump negotiated while president — or in other countries because their profit margins are slim. The lower labor costs help the companies make money on those vehicles.

German and other foreign automakers already have extensive manufacturing operations in the U.S., and many now build more vehicles here than they send. BMW, for instance, has an 8 million-square-foot campus in South Carolina that employs 11,000 people building more than 1,500 SUVs per day for the U.S. and 120 export markets. Mercedes and Volkswagen also have large factories here.

If German automakers were to increase production here, they would likely have to take it from factories in Germany, which would then run below their capacity and be less efficient, said Sam Abuelsamid, principal research analyst for Guidehouse Insights.

"It makes no sense," he said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman charged after daughter seeks help

WV CHARLESTON — A West Virginia woman was arrested Monday after her handcuffed daughter sought help from a neighbor, police said.

Officers in Charleston located the girl on the neighbor's porch, Lt. Tony Hazelett said in a news release.

The woman was charged with child abuse and unlawful restraint. She was being held on \$10,000 bond in the Southcentral Regional Jail. Jail records didn't indicate whether the woman has an attorney who could comment on the charges on her behalf.

According to a criminal complaint filed in Kanawha County Magistrate Court, the woman told police that she handcuffed her child on Sunday night because the girl was making a mess, "stealing" and hiding food, and attempting to leave without permission. Officers who responded to the home described it as "extremely messy."

Report: NYPD lenient on officers' stop-and-frisks

NY NEW YORK — The New York City police department is lax in punishing officers who illegally stop and frisk people on the street, undermining efforts to curb wrongful uses of the tactic that a judge declared unconstitutional more than a decade ago, a court-ordered study has found.

James Yates, a retired New York state judge, wrote in a report made public Monday that most of the dozens of internal disciplinary cases for stop-and-

frisk violations that he reviewed resulted in reduced penalties or no discipline.

"Discipline for illegal stops and frisks" is not pursued "with the same vigor and resolve as for other misconduct," Yates wrote in the 503-page report.

The NYPD's discipline matrix lists a three-day penalty for an illegal stop, frisk or search, but "imposition of that level of discipline is a rarity" and the department's patrol guide permits guidance rather than penalties in "isolated cases of erroneous but good-faith stops or frisks," Yates wrote.

Library reopens after DVD returned with bugs inside

MI OAK — A popular suburban Detroit library reopened Monday after someone had returned more than a movie over the weekend.

The library in Royal Oak said it was closed Sunday after staff members encountered creepy crawlies when a DVD case in the drop box was opened.

A pest control company investigated and found no more insects, the library said.

Library director Sandy Irwin offered a bit of humor from the stacks.

"I'm a librarian, not a pest control professional," Irwin told the Detroit Free Press, "but I will look up 1,000 types of bugs."

Senate candidate wrongly claimed tax credits

MD ANNAPOLIS — Maryland's Democratic Senate candidate improperly claimed property tax credits for two homes, something her campaign says she was unaware of and plans to repay.

Angela Alsobrooks, who is the county executive of Prince George's County, claimed homestead and senior property tax credits for a home in Washington, D.C., and homestead credits on another one in Prince George's County, according to a story first reported by CNN. Her campaign confirmed the credits on Monday.

Alsobrooks owns two homes in Prince George's. She received a homestead exemption for the first home in May 2008. A homestead tax break credit is for homes that are an owner's primary residence. When Alsobrooks moved into a new home and started renting the Upper Marlboro townhouse, she did not transfer the homestead tax credit to her new home.

"This resulted in no financial gain for Angela," said Connor Lounsbury, a senior adviser to her campaign. "In fact, she ended up paying more in taxes than she would have had the credit transferred over. Nevertheless, Angela is working to repay any credits received on the old property."

Jury clears most 'Trump Train' drivers in civil trial

TX AUSTIN — A federal jury in Texas on Monday rejected voter intimidation allegations against all but one of a group of former President Donald Trump supporters who surrounded a Biden-Harris campaign bus on an interstate days before the 2020 election.

Only one of the six Trump supporters who were sued in the civil trial was held responsible by the jury. A Texas man whose car brushed up against another as the caravan of vehicles dubbed the "Trump Train"

raced down Interstate 35, was ordered to pay the bus driver \$10,000 and another \$30,000 in punitive damages.

Both sides declared victory at the end of a two-week trial in an Austin courthouse. The five Trump supporters cleared in the lawsuit — which was brought by three people aboard the campaign bus, including former Texas Democratic lawmaker Wendy Davis — described the verdict as vindicating and a relief.

2 men plead guilty to providing deadly heroin

NY NEW YORK — Two men have pleaded guilty to providing the fentanyl-laced heroin that killed prominent New York City transgender activist Cecilia Gentili earlier this year, federal prosecutors said Monday.

Michael Kuilan, 44, pleaded guilty to a charge that he distributed and possessed with intent to distribute heroin and fentanyl in Brooklyn federal court on Monday, according to U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York Breon Peace's office. Antonio Venti, 52, entered a guilty plea to the same charge in July.

As part of their plea deals, prosecutors said the men admitted they caused Gentili's death. They said text messages, cell site data, and other evidence showed that Kuilan, a Brooklyn resident, had supplied Venti, a Long Island resident, with drugs that he then sold to Gentili. Law enforcement officials searching Kuilan's home also found hundreds of small bags of fentanyl, a handgun and ammunition.

— From wire reports

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Triple play helps put Padres in playoffs

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Manny Machado and the San Diego Padres wrote their own Hollywood ending on the home field of their biggest rivals Tuesday night.

San Diego stunned the Los Angeles Dodgers with a game-ending triple play to preserve a 4-2 victory over the NL West leaders that clinched a playoff spot for the Padres.

"We won it! We won it!" yelled Fernando Tatis Jr.

The party was on in the Padres' darkened clubhouse, with music pumping and lights flashing as players drenched each other in alcohol.

"Couldn't have scripted it any better, man," manager Mike Shildt said over the din. "What a play by Manny, a phenomenal play."

With the Padres leading by three runs in the ninth inning, Kiké Hernández hit an RBI single that cut it to 4-2 and put runners at first and second.

Miguel Rojas hit a sharp grounder to Machado at third base, and he stepped on the bag before going around the horn for the triple play. The Dodgers challenged the out call at second base, but the ruling was upheld after a video review.

Dodgers superstar Shohei Ohtani was left watching from the on-deck circle.

"I've been dying to do it for a couple years now," said a bare-chested Machado, wearing sunglasses as a fragrant mix of beer and champagne dripped from every pore. "He showed bunt the first play. Thinking he was going to bunt — he hit a ground ball right at me."

The only other teams to turn a triple play on the same day they clinched a postseason berth were the 2020 Milwaukee Brewers, and the Chicago Cubs in 1910 and 1907, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

San Diego's was the first of those to end the game. It was the Padres' first triple play since June 10, 2010, against the New York Mets.

Guardians secure bye; Tigers, Royals close in

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Lane Thomas hit a two-run homer and drove in three, Josh Naylor had a pair of RBIs and the AL Central champion Cleveland Guardians clinched a first-round bye in the postseason with a 6-1 win over the Cincinnati Reds on Tuesday night.

Tanner Bibee (12-8) allowed one run on four hits in seven innings to win for the first time at home since July 19. The right-hander struck out seven in what could be his final outing until Game 1 of the ALDS.

Thomas and Kyle Manzardo both went deep against Carson Spiers (5-7) in a three-run first inning as the Guardians improved their AL-best home record to 49-28.

Cleveland will get five days off between the end of the regular season and the start of the division series on Oct. 5 at Progressive Field.

Royals 1, Nationals 0 (10): Kyle Isbel snapped his team's 27-inning scoreless streak by sprinting home on a throwing error in the 10th inning, Cole Ragans gave up three hits in six innings, and visiting Kansas City held on to the second American League wild card with a victory over Washington.

Isbel, the Royals' automatic runner to begin the 10th,

reached third on Bobby Witt Jr.'s infield single to short and crossed the plate on Nasim Núñez's low throw to first to end Kansas City's seven-game slide.

Kansas City and Detroit are both 83-74 but the Royals own the head-to-head tiebreaker. Both teams are 2 games up on Minnesota.

Tigers 2, Rays 1: Tarik Skubal allowed two hits in seven scoreless innings and host Detroit took another step toward an improbable postseason appearance with a victory over Tampa Bay.

Skubal (18-4), a leading candidate to win the AL Cy Young award, struck out seven while walking only one. He will get a chance for a 19th win on Sunday if the Tigers need him to beat the Chicago White Sox on the final day of the regular season to make the postseason.

The Tigers (83-74) remain tied with Kansas City for the second and third wild-card spots. Sellers at MLB's trade deadline, Detroit is an MLB-best 28-11 since Aug. 11.

Marlins 4, Twins 1: Cratering Minnesota took another step backward in the American League wild-card race, as Jonah Bride homered to spark a four-run second inning off Bailey Ober for the loss to visiting Miami.

The Twins (81-76), who have lost 23 of their last 34 games and 14 of 20, dropped to two games below the postseason cut behind both Detroit and Kansas City. The Twins hold the tiebreakers after winning the season series against both of them, but there are only five games to go.

Giants 11, Diamondbacks 0: Michael Conforto and Brett Wisely each hit three-run homers in visiting San Francisco's six-run third inning, and the Giants won their fifth straight against playoff contenders by crushing Arizona.

The Diamondbacks lost their third straight and had their lead over Atlanta, a 5-1 winner over the New York Mets, drop to a half-game for the final NL playoff spot with four games remaining.

White Sox 3, Angels 2: Chicago rallied for three runs in the eighth inning and beat visiting Los Angeles to remain tied with the 1962 New York Mets for the modern major league record of 120 losses in a season.

Red Sox 6, Blue Jays 5 (10): Trevor Story hit a tiebreaking double in a three-run 10th inning, and visiting Boston rallied past Toronto.

Brewers 7, Pirates 2: Willy Adames secured his first 30-20 season in visiting Milwaukee's win over Pittsburgh.

Cubs 10, Phillies 4: Cody Bellinger tripled, singled twice and drove in four runs, and visiting Chicago routed Philadelphia.

Kyle Schwarber hit his 38th homer of the season and Bryce Harper hit his 30th for the Phillies, who clinched their first NL East title in 13 years on Monday night.

Cardinals 7, Rockies 3: Masyn Winn homered, doubled and drove in four runs, Lars Nootbar scored twice, and visiting St. Louis beat Colorado.

Athletics 5, Rangers 4: Jacob Wilson's single with one out in the ninth inning gave Oakland a victory over Texas in the opener of their final series at the Coliseum.

Braves 5, Mets 1: Michael Harris II had three more hits, including a solo home run and an RBI double, and rookie Spencer Schwellenbach shut down visiting New York again as Atlanta cruised to a win in the opener of a pivotal three-game series.

Atlanta trails the Mets by one game in the National League playoff race with five remaining. New York began the night a half-game ahead of Arizona for the second of three wild cards, while the Braves were 1½ games behind the Diamondbacks.

Astros lock up another AL West title

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Trailing the Seattle Mariners by 10 games in mid-June, the Houston Astros were undoubtedly down.

But first-year manager Joe Espada worked every day to remind his team it was far from out.

“We got this,” he recalled telling the players. “We are a good team. We’ve just got to go on a hot streak and we’ll turn this around.”

Then a champagne-soaked Espada paused for a beat before continuing.

“And we did,” he said.

The Astros clinched their fourth straight AL West title with a 4-3 win over the Mariners on Tuesday night, overcoming a terrible start to reach the playoffs for an eighth consecutive year.

“We started off super slow and we had to grind for it all year

long,” third baseman Alex Bregman said. “And the guys just put their heads down, never stopped believing and kept faith and kept going.”

The Astros are the first team to win the AL West in four straight seasons since Oakland won five times in a row from 1971-75. It’s the first time they’ve won four consecutive division titles, after winning three in a row on two previous occasions (1997-99 and 2017-19).

And it’s the seventh AL West crown in eight seasons for the Astros. The only time they were beaten out during that stretch was by Oakland during a 2020 season shortened to 60 games because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Houston limped out to a 7-19 record and trailed Seattle by a season-high 10 games on June 18. But the Astros won their next seven to start a 13-2 stretch as

they improved to 46-42 by July 5.

They moved past the Mariners into first place in mid-August and cruised home to their latest division crown by going 79-53 after that awful 26-game stretch.

The Astros overcame numerous injuries to return to the postseason in their first year under Espada, who was hired as a first-time manager after Dusty Baker’s retirement.

“I never lost hope,” Espada said. “But when it comes to winning, you know how to win and you’ve got the right ingredients to win, you don’t mess that up. You’ve got to protect it and that’s what we’ve done.”

Houston’s rotation was decimated by injuries early, with José Urquidy and Cristian Javier both undergoing Tommy John surgery in June, and Framber Valdez missing most of April

with elbow inflammation.

The injuries forced the Astros to insert Ronel Blanco and rookie Spencer Arrighetti into the rotation. Blanco threw a no-hitter in his season debut and is second on the team with 12 wins and a 2.88 ERA. Arrighetti has made 28 starts and was selected AL rookie of the month for August after going 3-2 with a 1.95 ERA.

Hunter Brown, in his second MLB season, went 11-9 with a 3.49 ERA to help steady the rotation during a year when three-time Cy Young Award winner Justin Verlander made just 16 starts due to injuries.

“The young starters that stepped up, Hunter, Spencer, Ronel — those three guys right there — we for sure wouldn’t be here without them,” Verlander said. “You have a role to fill and lo and behold, somebody steps up and does a great job and that’s why we’re here.”

Orioles earn postseason spot for second straight year

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Still 2½ months shy of his 21st birthday and the legal drinking age, Jackson Holliday was given his own brand of bubbly in the jubilant Baltimore Orioles clubhouse: a bottle labeled “Baby Bird Bath Water” left in a bucket with his No. 7 jersey and a sign: “BABY’S FIRST CLINCHMAS 2024.”

“It’s a little bit more enjoyable for me,” the rookie said, clutching the non-alcoholic postprandial in Tuesday night’s celebration at Yankee Stadium while teammates chugged from the tubes of the Orioles Hydration Station. “I was hoping that I could get in on the fun.”

Baltimore is headed to the playoffs in consecutive years for the first time since the 1990s, clinching no worse than a wild-card berth.

After left fielder Colton Cowser gloved Alex Verdugo’s flyout to seal a 5-3 win over the New York Yankees that brought Baltimore to the verge of the postseason, the Orioles filed into a visiting clubhouse draped with protective plastic curtains. Nine minutes later, while manager Brandon

Hyde was answering postgame questions from the media, Carlos Correa took a called third strike that finished Minnesota’s 4-1 loss to Miami, assuring the Orioles another trip to the postseason.

“Last year winning the American League East was just such an achievement for us and the expectations were much lower,” general manager Mike Elias said. “We came into this year with higher expectations. We made a lot of moves that kind of pushed some chips in for this year and then we just didn’t have the fortune that we would have hoped for. I think today is a sense of relief.”

Coming off their first division title since 2014, the Orioles started 23-11 and were 55-31 before play on July 3 but have gone 32-39 since, slowed by a series of injuries. The Orioles had topped the division alone for 62 days and opened as much as a three-game lead.

Baltimore’s pitching staff lost Kyle Bradish, John Means and Tyler Wells to elbow injuries that led to operations. Grayson Rodriguez hasn’t pitched since July 31 because of a lat problem.

“Not a lot has gone right in the last few months,” Hyde said. “We’re right in every game and things just haven’t worked out in our favor. A ton of bad luck, too.”

Dean Kremer, who allowed one run and three hits over five innings for the win, started last year’s game against Tampa Bay that assured the Orioles their first playoff berth since 2016. Eleven days later, he got the victory in the AL East clincher, which gave the Orioles 100 wins for the first time since 1980. He then lost the final game of the Division Series as Texas completed a three-game sweep en route to the Rangers’ first World Series title.

“This is going to be kind of like a fresh start. We don’t have to grind now,” Kremer said.

As this year’s postseason approaches, the Orioles are getting healthier. All-Star infielder Jordan Westburg came back from a broken hand on Sunday, the same day third baseman Ramón Urías returned from a sprained right ankle. First baseman Ryan Mountcastle was activated Tuesday after missing a month because of a sprained left wrist.

Backup QBs get pressed into starting early

Associated Press

It sure is a good time to be a backup quarterback in the NFL, or even the backup's backup.

The leaves are still green and already five teams have turned to their QB2 either because of injury (Vikings, Packers, Steelers and Dolphins) or inefficacy (Panthers).

So much is made about developing an elite starting quarterback who shoulders the franchise's fortunes, but it's the other guys in the room that it often comes down to.

Last year, 66 quarterbacks started a game in the NFL. The year before that, 68.

Miami is already on its third quarterback after QB1 Tua Tagovailoa (another concussion) and QB2 Skylar Thompson (rib) got hurt.

Two-time flameout Sam Darnold is reviving his career in Minnesota, which is off to a 3-0 start just like the Steelers, where Bears bust Justin Fields has been so solid in place of an injured Russell Wilson that a switchback seems unlikelier by the week.

The Packers (2-1) have won both games started by Malik Willis, whom they acquired from Tennessee less than a month ago. He was pressed into duty almost immediately when Jordan Love,

fresh off signing a four-year, \$220 million contract, injured his left knee in the season opener.

In Week 3, former starter Andy Dalton replaced last year's top overall draft pick, Bryce Young, and led the Panthers to a stunning win in Las Vegas.

Things are unraveling in Miami, where Tagovailoa will miss at least three more games as he works through the NFL's concussion protocol. And if Thompson misses time, the Dolphins will turn to Tim Boyle (five career starts) or Tyler Huntley (nine career starts) unless they decide to pursue a veteran such as Russell Wilson or Denver's Zach Wilson.

Vanquishing Vikings

Darnold may have been slated as Minnesota's starter until rookie J.J. McCarthy was deemed ready, but the Vikings became Darnold's team in August when McCarthy was sidelined with a torn meniscus in his right knee, requiring season-ending surgery.

Darnold, who signed a one-year, \$10 million deal with Minnesota, has the Vikings off to an impressive 3-0 start, an unexpected balm for Kirk Cousins' departure to Atlanta in the offseason. Though Darnold suffered a bruised knee in Minnesota's 34-7

win over Houston, head coach Kevin O'Connell said he shouldn't miss any time and will be ready for the divisional game against the Packers on Sunday.

Pugnacious Packers

Green Bay's Super Bowl dreams seemingly took a huge hit when Love sprained his left knee in the Packers' loss to the Eagles in Sao Paulo to kick off the NFL season, but he is proving a fast healer and Willis has led them to two wins, including one Sunday over his former team, the Tennessee Titans.

As NFL senior researcher Tony Holzman-Escareno noted, Willis beating the Titans just 27 days after they traded him was the quickest a quarterback had ever done that to his former team.

Penance postponed

Russell Wilson signed with Pittsburgh for the veteran's minimum of \$1.21 million, leaving the Broncos on the hook for the remaining \$37.79 million of his 2024 salary. That's in addition to the record \$85 million in dead cap charges the Broncos incurred by releasing the former Seahawks star who flamed out in Denver.

Wilson's nagging calf injury kept him out of the Steelers' 13-6 win in the Mile High City in Week

2, although he did receive a "petty game ball," which Fields explained went to the Steelers' three former Broncos following their happy homecoming: Wilson, punter Corliss Waitman and receiver Brandon Johnson.

Dolphins derailed

The Seattle Seahawks clobbered Miami's offensive line and sacked Thompson five times in their 24-3 win over the Dolphins. They shut down the Dolphins' playmakers. And now Miami could be turning to its third starting QB in four weeks.

Panthers' problems

Young was 2-16 as an NFL starter before being benched last week by coach Dave Canales in a move that surprised some around the league and caused many to question Carolina's commitment to the No. 1 pick in the 2023 draft, even though Canales said the Panthers have no plans to trade him.

In just his second start since 2023 but 168th of his career, Dalton, 36, showed Young how it's done. Dalton fearlessly threw into tight windows, hanging in the pocket to make plays and provided a confidence in the huddle the team sorely lacked with Young under center.

Day returns to Presidents Cup with different attitude

Associated Press

MONTREAL — Jason Day is back in the Presidents Cup for the first time in seven years and it all feels so new to him. The International team has a new logo for its black-and-gold colors. More than the uniform, he noticed a big change in the attitude.

And he openly confessed that he was part of the problem of going through the motions.

"When I first started out, I was pretty gung-ho about it, and I felt like there were some guys that just didn't quite have the drive as much as some of the other guys," Day said Tuesday. "When you're not all working toward a goal, then it hurts."

He said he lost that drive himself in the last two of his four appearances, and the record bears that out. Day went 0-4-1 in 2015 in South

Korea, followed by a 1-3-1 mark at Liberty National in 2017, when the Americans won so easily they nearly clinched the cup before Sunday singles.

"You fast-forward to some of the other ones, and I didn't have as much drive as some of the other guys," he said. "And that kind of hurts the whole team environment. You've got to have all the guys pushing toward that goal of trying to win the cup."

That was the biggest difference he noticed long before he played Royal Montreal for a team practice session two weeks ago, and when the International team arrived this week in a bid to end 19 years of losing.

International captain Mike Weir has been arranging dinners, and players have been competing against each other in practice

rounds. They come from all over the world, except for Europe, and vast difference in culture and language no longer seems to be the barrier it once was.

Day is playing in his fifth Presidents Cup. In some respects, it feels like his first.

"The guys have gotten a lot closer — not necessarily the same guys over and over again, but I'm just saying that the actual team element, the team environment has shifted a lot since when I first started," Day said.

"I've missed the last couple, so it's nice to be able to get into a room and have guys very passionate about trying to win the cup," he said. "Back in my day, maybe not a lot of the guys bought into the Presidents Cup as what I'm seeing now, myself included. I felt like I probably could have done a little bit more."