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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Militants display US military equipment

The Washington Post

Almost two weeks after several U.S. special operations troops were wounded fighting Islamic State group militants in eastern Afghanistan, the militants' media arm has posted photos of American equipment, including weapons and a radio that they say were captured from U.S. soldiers fighting in the region.

The assortment of weapons, equipment and documents raise more questions than answers, and while the U.S.-led mission in Afghanistan has been reluctant to conflate the loss of material with the wounding of the U.S. soldiers in the country's restive Nangahar province, the type of gear and the timing of the pictures suggest that the two could be related.

Last month, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John Nicholson, told reporters that five U.S. special operations soldiers had been wounded alongside their Afghan counterparts during "clearing operations" against Islamic State militants in Nangahar. Over the

course of a week, the soldiers received wounds from gunfire and shrapnel, he said.

On Saturday, the Islamic State group's Amaq media agency posted pictures of the American equipment including the identification, or CAC card, of a U.S. soldier.

In an emailed statement, Brig. Gen. Charles Cleveland, the deputy chief of staff for the U.S.-led mission in Afghanistan, said the soldier had not been captured and is currently with his unit.

"We are still working to determine if all of the equipment in the pictures was lost during recent operations or at some other time in the past," Cleveland said.

The amount of equipment — including what appears to be a 66 mm, single-shot rocket launcher; 40 mm grenades; medium machine-gun ammunition; and multiple rucksacks, which include two smaller assault packs, a sandbag, a handheld radio, pin flares, knee pads, a body armor carrier, a kit bag, a spare machine-gun barrel, multiple rifle maga-

zines, notebooks, medical equipment and goggles — suggest that either a position could have been overrun or a vehicle might have been ambushed. However, Cleveland refuted both scenarios.

The U.S. military has been operating in eastern Afghanistan for years, and while some of the equipment could have been captured from a recent operation, it is also possible some of it might have been left behind or captured in the past and pulled into the picture for added propaganda value.

The type of equipment, along with an additional list of gear that is also pictured in the cache, indicates that at least some of the radio batteries, ammunition and kits likely belonged to a special operations unit.

The list, partially hand-written and featured in one of the photos, has what appears to be a breakdown of the serialized equipment carried by a U.S. soldier, although it is unclear if the equipment belongs to the soldier whose ID was also captured.

The list includes a pair of nonstandard night-vision goggles, an Mark 48 medium machine gun and a FN SCAR — or Special Operations Forces Combat Assault Rifle. The SCAR is a futuristic rifle that is billed as a highly modifiable weap-on and comes in a number of variants that can be used in both close-quarters combat and long-range engagements.

The SCAR, while in use by a number of Special Operations units, is a favorite of the 75th Ranger Regiment, a unit that has operated in Nangahar province for some time. Last year, two soldiers from the regiment's 1st battalion were awarded Silver Stars for their actions in the province in 2014.

Also in the picture — and on the list of equipment — is a PRC-148 MBITR radio. The small black device is a favorite of ground troops and is often used for interteam communication. Also, when equipped with the right antenna, it can be used to talk to overhead aircraft

N. Korea used airport to launch missile in June

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea used an airport on its east coast for a missile launch earlier this summer and will likely use it again for future tests, a U.S. think tank said.

Pyongyang said a missile launched June 22 flew as high as 870 miles before landing in the Sea of Japan, raising fears the communist country is making technical progress on its ballistic missile program after

several failures.

State-run media published photos of the launch, which was reportedly observed by leader Kim Jong Un, but did not give the launch location.

The 38 North website, which is run by Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies and monitors North Korean activities, said Friday that a comparison of ground photos and commercial satellite images from June 17 "clearly identifies the test as having taken place"

at a recently constructed firing position on the east side of the former Wonsan air base. The base is in the final stages of being converted into a modern civilian airport.

"It is likely that North Korea will continue to use both this new location and its companion facility on the Hodo Peninsula ... for live-fire artillery, rocket and missile tests, with the (airport) location being used primarily for highly publicized events and the Hodo facility for more routine testing and train-

ing," the report said.

Firing exercises and missile tests previously occurred from improvised positions on the beach, but a new firing position for mobile-launch vehicles has been built about 820 feet from an observation building at the facility, the analysis said.

North Korea has test-fired numerous missiles despite U.N. sanctions imposed after it conducted a nuclear test and launched a long-range rocket earlier this year.

Bonhomme Richard begins its fall patrol

Stars and Stripes

The USS Bonhomme Richard left its home port at Sasebo Naval Base in southern Japan on Saturday after four months of upgrades to its combat and engineering systems.

"We are very excited to get the ship back to sea after a successful maintenance period," Capt. Jeffrey Ward, the amphibious assault ship's commander, said in a Navy statement.

"The crew has put in a lot of hard work to make sure this ship is ready to return to sea and operate with our regional

partners," he said. "I am confident in our ability to carry out any mission required of us."

The Bonhomme Richard usually takes on Okinawa-based Marines from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and patrols 7th Fleet waters, which extend from the International Date Line to the India/Pakistan border and from the Kuril Islands in the north to the Antarctic in the south.

The ship is an integral part of the 7th Fleet's Task Force 76, the Navy's only forward-deployed amphibious force.

Japan decries moves by China near disputed islets

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND CHIYOMI SUMIDA

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japan launched a series of protests with China in recent days over what it considers provocations near disputed islets in the East China Sea.

The complaints were issued Friday, Saturday and Sunday after eight Chinese vessels entered Japanese territorial waters near the resource-rich Senkaku island chain. A record number of 14 Chinese government vessels have sailed through Japan's contiguous zone since last Wednesday. As of 10 a.m. Monday, 12 Chinese vessels were still in the area.

Japan also has taken issue with surface radar discovered on a Chinese gas-drilling platform.

"We lodged a strong protest with China over the intrusion, urging China not to raise tensions in the area," Yoshihide Suga, Japan's chief Cabinet secretary, told reporters Monday. "Japan will respond to the situation with a resolute and calm attitude."

Japan's coast guard is generally the first agency to respond to reports of incursions by foreign vessels. Its self-defense forces provide information from routine surveillance, said a Ministry of Defense spokesman. Special monitoring activities — such as P-3 Orion missions — are taking place, the ministry said.

China's moves come during a tense time for diplomacy in the region. The communist country has remained defiant after an international tribunal ruled against its expansion activities in the South China Sea, where about \$5 trillion in global trade transits annually. It has long denied Japan's claims to the Senkakus — called "Diaoyu" by the Chinese — and have vowed to traverse that area unimpeded.

The protests filed with the Chinese Embassy in Japan said the incursions were a violation of Japan's sovereignty and were unacceptable. They called for the vessels to vacate Japan's territorial waters and its contiguous zone immediately.

Chinese officials didn't respond to Japan's assertions.

Iraq gets new batch of F-16 jets from US

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq has received a new batch of F-16 Fighting Falcons from the United States, bolstering the country's fledgling air force amid more than two years of fighting with the Islamic State group, a spokesman said Monday as attacks in and near Baghdad killed six people.

Defense Ministry's spokesman Brig. Gen. Tahseen Ibrahim told The Associated Press that Iraq received four fighter jets. Ibrahim did not give more details.

Iraq has eight F-16s in service out of 36 fighter jets the U.S. agreed to sell to Baghdad.

Also on Monday, a bomb went off at an outdoor market in Youssifiyah, 12 miles south of Baghdad, killing four shoppers and wounding 11, a police officer said.

Two more civilians were killed in another explosion in a commercial area in Baghdad's western Eskan neighborhood.

That attack wounded eight people, another police officer said.

Medical officials confirmed the casualty figures. All officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to release information.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks, but they bore the hallmarks of the Islamic State group, which often targets commercial areas and large gatherings.

Iraq has been going through its worst crisis since summer 2014, when Islamic State militants captured much of the country's north and the west, including the second-largest city, Mosul. Despite major ground losses since last year, the Islamic State group still controls key areas.

Iraq heavily depended on aging Russian-made Sukhoi Su-25 jets. In 2014, the country received Sukhoi Su-25 jets from Russia and Iran to help combat the Islamic State group.

Afghan official: 5 gunmen kidnap US, Australian men

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Five gunmen wearing Afghan military uniforms have abducted an American and an Australian in Kabul, a security official said Monday. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the abduction.

The two foreigners were taken from their SUV while driving on Sunday night on a main road near the American University of Afghanistan, according to Sediq Sediqqi, spokesman for the Afghan Interior Ministry. They are believed to be employees of the university and were traveling between the university and

their residence in the Afghan capital, he said.

Sediqqi added that initial reports say up to five armed men stopped the foreigners' vehicle. The two abducted are both men, he said. He did not reveal any more details except to say that an investigation is underway.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul issued a brief statement confirming the kidnapping of an American citizen but gave no further details "due to privacy concerns."

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade also issued a statement confirming "the apparent kidnapping of an Australian in Kabul."

Suzuki collects 3,000th career hit

Associated Press

DENVER — Ichiro Suzuki defined his career with speed and sharp hits. It was only fitting he flashed both in his historic moment.

Suzuki lined a triple off the wall for his 3,000th career hit in the major leagues, becoming the 30th player to reach the milestone as the Miami Marlins beat the Colorado Rockies 10-7 Sunday.

The 42-year-old Suzuki got his big hit in the seventh inning. He became the first player born in Japan to reach 3,000, and joined Paul Molitor, his former hitting coach in Seattle, as the only ones to hit the mark with a triple.

“I wanted to see it go over the fence, but after I heard that Paul Molitor was the other person to do it I was glad it didn’t

go over,” Suzuki said after sharing Champagne with his teammates in the clubhouse after the win. “I have a special relationship with him and having something like this, that is the same thing he accomplished, makes it more special.”

Giancarlo Stanton hit his 24th homer and Christian Yelich and Mathis had three hits and three RBIs each for the Marlins.

Nolan Arenado homered twice and drove in five runs for Colorado. Arenado leads the NL in home runs (29) and RBIs (87).

Adam Conley (8-6) allowed six runs in five innings. Fernando Rodney worked the ninth for his first save since coming to Miami on June 30 and 18th overall.

Jon Gray (8-5) was roughed up for eight runs and 10 hits in 3 2/3 innings.

Suzuki was hitless in his first three at-

bats of the game before he tagged Chris Rusin.

Suzuki launched a long drive to right field that carried just beyond the reach of leaping Gerardo Parra, and breezed into third standing up.

“When I got that hit the burden was lifted off,” Suzuki said.

Third base coach Lorenzo Bundy hugged Suzuki as Miami players came out of the dugout to congratulate him. He waved his helmet to acknowledge the cheers at Coors Field.

“We gave him a big hug and told him he deserved it,” said Dee Gordon, who was the first player to reach Suzuki as he stood on third. “That’s what you’re supposed to do. Show him his respect, show him that we respect his milestone.”

Machado hits three HRs in three innings

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Manny Machado was 16 when he first met Alex Rodriguez and they quickly became close friends and offseason workout buddies. So Machado was watching intently Sunday morning as A-Rod announced he was ending his career.

“I’m sure Manny had some emotions,” Orioles manager Buck Showalter said, “and he certainly took them out on the field with him.”

Machado became the second player in major league history to homer in the first, second and third innings, driving in a career-high seven runs in a 10-2 rout of James Shields and the Chicago White Sox.

“He’s a mentor to me,” Machado said of Rodriguez. “I’ve known him for a long time. To see him go up there and talk and leave it there, it’s tough. It’s a tough situation. I know as a personal friend he sleeps, breathes, eats baseball.”

Machado hit a two-run homer

in the first and a three-run shot in the second off Shields, who allowed four homers while getting four outs.

Machado hit another two-run homer in the third off Matt Albers. According to STATS, the only other player to do that was Carl Reynolds of the White Sox on July 2, 1930, at the Yankees.

“It’s pretty awesome,” Machado said. “I’m not going to lie.”

Chris Davis followed Machado’s second homer with his own and J.J. Hardy added a two-run shot before Shields (5-14) left to boos. The Orioles have hit a major league-best 168 homers this season.

Yankees 3, Indians 2: Masahiro Tanaka rebounded from two rocky outings, Didi Gregorius homered and host New York held off Cleveland after announcing that Alex Rodriguez will play his final game in pinstripes this week.

Cubs 3, Athletics 1: Kyle Hendricks pitched into the eighth inning for his fifth win since June and visiting Chicago beat Oakland to complete a

three-game sweep.

Nationals 1, Giants 0: Tanner Roark and the Washington bullpen outdueled Madison Bumgarner, and Wilson Ramos homered to lift the Nationals over visiting San Francisco.

Dodgers 8, Red Sox 5: Rob Segedin set a Dodgers record with four RBIs in his major league debut, Adrian Gonzalez hit his 300th career home run for host Los Angeles.

Mets 3, Tigers 1: Neil Walker hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the top of the ninth, and New York beat host Detroit to avoid a series sweep.

Rangers 5, Astros 3 (11): Ian Desmond hit a tiebreaking single in the 11th inning and visiting Texas beat Houston for the 11th time this season.

Twins 6, Rays 3: Miguel Sano homered twice and drove in four runs and Minnesota beat host Tampa Bay to take two of three in the series between the teams with the AL’s worst records.

Phillies 6, Padres 5: Pinch-hitter Tommy Joseph had a

tiebreaking RBI single in the seventh inning, and Philadelphia turned the first triple play in Petco Park.

Braves 6, Cardinals 3: Mike Foltynewicz worked six strong innings, and Nick Markakis and Erick Aybar had two RBIs apiece to help visiting Atlanta.

Reds 7, Pirates 3: Major league steals leader Billy Hamilton swiped four bases, had three hits and scored three runs, leading Cincinnati past host Pittsburgh.

Mariners 3, Angels 1: James Paxton took a four-hitter into ninth inning before he was forced from the game after being hit on the left arm by a line drive, and host Seattle beat Los Angeles.

Royals 7, Blue Jays 1: Yorlano Ventura pitched effectively into the seventh inning, Kendrys Morales hit a grand slam, and Kansas City beat visiting Toronto.

Diamondbacks 9, Brewers 3: Jake Lamb and Phil Gosselin each hit two-run homers during a five-run fifth inning.



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Phelps and Ledecky grab gold

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO — Michael Phelps has to clear out more space in his medal case.

Time to make room for gold No. 19.

With yet another dazzling performance, the most decorated athlete in Olympic history added to his staggering haul Sunday night in the 4x100-meter freestyle relay, giving the United States a lead it never relinquished.

Defending Olympic champion France was out front when Phelps dove into the water on the second leg, taking over for leadoff swimmer Caeleb Dressel. Even though the 100 free isn't one of Phelps' specialties — he's never swam it individually at the Olympics, only in the relays — he blazed down and back in a stunning 47.12 seconds, a time that was faster than all but the three anchors on the medal-winning teams.

Ryan Held kept the Americans in front before giving way to Nathan Adrian, the nation's best sprinter.

France took the silver in 3:10.53, while Australia claimed the bronze in 3:11.37, holding off a Russian team that was booed during the introductions — a reminder of the drug scandal that has rocked the nation.

Racing nothing but the clock, Katie Ledecky gave the U.S. its first victory by crushing her own world record in the 400 freestyle.

When Ledecky saw the time — 3:56.46 — she let out an uncharacteristic scream and shook her right fist. She crushed the mark of 3:58.37 that she set nearly two years ago on the Gold Coast of Australia, and had been chasing ever since.

Britain's Adam Peaty set his second mark in as many nights in the 100 breaststroke, while Sarah Sjöström of Sweden eclipsed her own mark in the 100 butterfly.

In all, six world records have fallen on the first two days of swimming.

Gymnastics: The U.S. wom-

en's gymnastics team dominated at qualifiers Sunday.

Their score of 185.238 was nearly 10 points better than second-place China through four of the five subdivisions, a preposterous gap in a sport where the difference between first and second is measured in fractions.

Three-time world champion Simone Biles led the way. Her score of 62.366 was well clear of teammate Aly Raisman.

Raisman, a three-time Olympic medalist four years ago, grabbed the second spot in the individual all-around for the Americans by edging reigning Olympic champion Gabby Douglas.

Rules limit each country to two gymnasts per event in the all-around and event finals.

Romania failed to qualify for the Olympics as a team for the first time in more than 40 years but will have an event finalist after Catalina Ponor finished in the top eight on beam. Uzbekistan's Oksana Chusovitina, competing in her record seventh Olympics, reached the vault final after finishing fifth in qualifying.

Tennis: Novak Djokovic shook his head and placed his palm over welling eyes on his way to the locker room after a first-round Olympic exit, devastated he might never realize his goal of adding a gold in singles to a substantial collection of Grand Slam titles.

The Serb was hardly alone in his disappointment on Day 2 of the Rio de Janeiro Games: He was one of three No. 1 seeds to exit the tennis competition in a wild span of 12 hours.

Djokovic lost to the ferocious forehand of Juan Martin del Potro of Argentina, 7-6 (4), 7-6 (2) Sunday night. That surprising result followed losses by the top-seeded duos of Serena and Venus Williams of the United States — who entered their match with a 15-0 Olympic record and three gold medals as a pair — in women's doubles, and Nicolas Mahut and Pierre-Hugues Herbert of France in men's doubles.

Cycling: After a series of

spills in the men's Olympic road race left cyclists with broken bones and bloody road rash, it seemed as if the women's race Sunday was going to escape serious injury.

That all changed in a fraction of a second.

Dutch rider Annemiek van Vleuten, barreling down the final descent of Vista Chinesa in the lead, hit the deck in a spectacular fall. Her bike catapulted into the air, and van Vleuten lay motionless on the side of the road while the rest of the field cautiously swept past her.

She was transported to a Rio de Janeiro hospital and diagnosed with a concussion and three small fractures of her spine, and was to remain in intensive care for at least 24 hours.

Anna van der Breggen of the Netherlands took gold.

American Meg Abbott coasted across in fourth in another shattering disappointment for the United States, one of the strongest teams in the race.

Fencing: Fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad made history Monday by becoming the first American to compete in the Olympics wearing a hijab.

Muhammad, sporting a plain black Muslim head scarf under a red, white and blue mask, was a winner in her opening bout in the women's sabre tournament, beating Olena Kravatska of Ukraine 15-13.

Muhammad, ranked eighth in the world in her weapon, will next face ninth-ranked Cecilia Berder of France.

Field hockey: The United States claimed its second straight win against a top-three team in women's field hockey, beating No. 3 Australia 2-1 on Monday.

Michelle Vittese and Caitlin van Sickle scored for the Americans, who defeated No. 2 Argentina 2-1 in their Olympic opener on Saturday.

The fifth-ranked Americans, who lead Pool B with six points, moved closer to qualifying for the quarterfinals. The top four teams in each six-team pool advance.

US women move to 2-0 with rout of Spain

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO — Another game, another rout for the U.S. women's basketball team. This time though, it wasn't record setting.

Diana Taurasi scored 13 points and Elena Delle Donne added 12 to help the Americans beat Spain 103-63 on Monday in women's group play.

The victory was the 43rd consecutive for the U.S. (2-0) in the Olympics. The contest was a rematch of the 2014 world championship gold medal game that the Americans won by 13. While this win didn't come in the same record fashion the U.S. opened the Olympics with when it beat Senegal by 65 points, the Americans coasted after the first few minutes.

Spain (1-1) led 8-6 before the U.S. closed the quarter on a 23-6 burst. Once again first-time Olympian Delle Donne was in the middle of it. She had seven points, including a three-pointer from the wing that made it 27-11 during the game-changing spurt. The Spaniards couldn't get within single digits the rest of the way.

Spain fought to just to stay within 20 in the second quarter, thanks in part to the play of guard Leticia Romero, who stars at Florida State. The Olympic newcomer got her first playing time of the tournament and scored five straight points as Spain trailed 54-37 at the half. She finished with nine points.

Sue Bird wouldn't let Spain get any closer. Playing in her fourth Olympics, Bird started the second half with a steal and then raced down the court for the layup.

Alba Torrens, who the Connecticut Sun have the rights to in the WNBA, led Spain with 20 points.

The U.S. next plays Serbia on Wednesday while Spain faces China.