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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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DOD: Strike kills militant leader

The Washington Post

The head of the Islamic State group's branch in Afghanistan, a former Pakistani Taliban member named Hafiz Saeed Khan was killed in a U.S. airstrike last month, the Pentagon announced Friday.

The July 26 strike took place in the Achin district of Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province, said Pentagon deputy press secretary Gordon Trowbridge in a statement.

"Nangarhar province has been a hotbed for (Islamic State) activity since the summer of 2015," Trowbridge said. "Khan's death affects (Islamic State) recruiting efforts and will disrupt (its) operations in Afghanistan and the region."

Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan Omar Zakhilwal told Reuters Friday that the strike that

killed Khan had also targeted other Islamic State leaders. It is unclear how many others were killed and if that number included civilians.

Khan was also reported to have been killed in a drone strike in January of last year.

According to a 2015 U.S. Treasury sanctions notification release, Khan was appointed head of the Islamic State group's branch in Afghanistan, known as the Islamic State in the Khorasan province, in October 2014 following his pledge of loyalty to the Islamic State group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Khan previously served as senior commander in the Pakistani Taliban. He helped establish training camps in western Afghanistan for the Islamic State group and also claimed that the group was responsible for a series of sui-

cide attacks that killed up to 30 people in the city of Jalalabad in April 2015, according to the Pentagon release.

American forces have been active recently in the region where the strikes took place. Late last month, the top U.S. general in Afghanistan, Army Gen. John Nicholson, told reporters that five U.S. Special Operations troops had been wounded alongside their Afghan counterparts while clearing parts of Nangarhar province.

Roughly a week later, the Islamic State group posted pictures of captured U.S. equipment and identification cards from a U.S. soldier who had been involved in the fighting there. Some of the captured gear included a disposable rocket launcher, grenades and an encrypted radio.

Removal of general in Bergdahl case sought

San Antonio Express-News

Lawyers for Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who was held prisoner by the Taliban for nearly five years after abandoning a remote Army outpost in Afghanistan and faces criminal charges for leaving his unit, on Friday accused his top commander of burning more than 100 letters regarding the case.

The defense, in a court motion, asked a judge to remove Gen. Robert Abrams from the case and to cancel a scheduled Feb. 6 trial because Abrams told Bergdahl's defense team last Monday that he burned the letters, which were sent to him by supporters and detractors of their client.

The motion also said Abrams, head of the Army's Forces Command, failed to review a list of defense objections and comments provided Oct. 9 before he ordered Bergdahl's trial, choosing not to read them because "he claimed it was written 'for the lawyers.'"

It said Abrams "suggested that if the defense wanted him to read the submission, it should be written in 'plain-speak,'" which one outside observer called a "legally fatal" blunder that could convince the judge to throw out the charges.

Two months after the defense submission, Abrams had ordered Bergdahl, 30, of Hailley, Idaho, to stand trial at Fort Bragg, N.C., on charges of desertion and misbehavior before the enemy by endangering the safety of a command, unit or place, the latter charge punishable by up to life in prison.

Marine Corps seeking more good women

Associated Press

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. — The U.S. Marine Corps is looking for a few more good women.

And this time, the campaign is a bit different. Marine recruiters are turning to girls' high school sports teams to find candidates who may be able to meet the Corps' rigorous physical standards, including for the front-line combat jobs now open to women.

Marine Commandant Gen. Robert Neller says he wants to increase the number of women in the Corps to 1 in 10.

"I've told them that 10 percent is where we want to go, and they're working on it," Neller told The Associated Press in an interview. "Go recruit more women. Find them. They're out there."

For years, only about 7 percent to 8 percent of the Corps, which numbers 184,200, has been women. It's the smallest percentage of women among all the military services. But on the heels of the Pentagon decision to allow women who qualify to serve in combat jobs, thousands of new infantry, armor and other front-line posts are now open.

Neller said he wants to see women in some of those posts. That order now rests with Maj. Gen. Paul Kennedy, head of the Marine Corps' recruiting command.

Kennedy is aggressively recruiting women for the service. He's sending targeted mailings, changing advertising to better represent female Marines and traveling the country to meet with coaches and female athletes who may be well-suited for

the rigors of Marine service.

In particular, Neller believes female wrestlers are good candidates.

"We looked at that and said, 'Wow, that's kinda what we're looking for,'" he said. "They're disciplined, they're fit, they're focused on their mission."

According to Kennedy, the Marines, for the first time, are mailing recruiting literature to thousands of high school girls. Also, updated advertising will show active-duty female Marines doing their jobs on the battlefield.

"The biggest complaint that we've heard and we're reacting to is that we were showing women in some of our material — whether it's commercial or print or whatever — and they were always training," Kennedy said. "And that was a mistake."

Clintons release their 2015 tax returns

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Hillary and Bill Clinton earned \$10.6 million last year, according to a tax filing released by her campaign Friday that sought to pressure presidential rival Donald Trump to disclose his tax returns.

The filing shows that the Clintons paid a federal tax rate of 34.2 percent in 2015. The bulk of their income — more than \$6 million — came from speaking fees for appearances made largely before Hillary Clinton launched her campaign in April 2015. They gave more than \$1,042,000 to charity, with \$1 million going to the Clinton family foundation. That is the financial vehicle the family uses to give money to museums, schools, churches and other charitable causes. It is not the

same organization as the better-known Clinton Foundation.

The Clintons' income puts them well within the ranks of the top 0.1 percent of Americans, though they pay a higher tax rate than many of their elite peers, according to an analysis by the nonpartisan Tax Foundation, based on 2013 data.

The release is part of an effort to question Trump's record. He has refused to make his filings public, saying they're under audit by the Internal Revenue Service and he'll release them once that review is complete. All major U.S. presidential candidates in modern history have released their returns.

Trump steered clear of mentioning his personal taxes Friday. A spokesman pointed to Clinton's move to delete tens of thousands of personal emails from her private account as sec-

retary of state. "Hillary Clinton has turned over the only records nobody wants to see from her — the American public wants to see the 33,000 emails she deleted to obstruct an FBI investigation," said Trump spokesman Jason Miller.

The Clintons have disclosed tax returns for every year since 1977, in part due to laws requiring public officials release returns. She put out her most recent eight years of tax filings last summer and several years during her first presidential bid.

Hillary Clinton frequently mentions Trump's returns as a way of underscoring how his economic plans would benefit his personal interests and questioning whether he's as wealthy as he claims.

Democrats believe Trump's returns could be a trove of po-

litically damaging information. They want to see his tax rate, charitable giving, and business dealings with foreign governments.

"Here's a pretty incredible fact: There is a non-zero chance that Donald Trump isn't paying *any* taxes," Clinton tweeted, after releasing her own returns.

Clinton's strategy borrows from President Barack Obama's winning playbook against Mitt Romney in 2012. Obama repeatedly used Romney's business dealings against him and seized upon his reluctance to release certain tax records.

Clinton's campaign also released 10 years of returns from running mate Tim Kaine and his wife, Anne Holton. Over the last decade, the couple has donated 7.5 percent of their income to charity, the campaign said.

Health emergency declared in Puerto Rico

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — The U.S. government on Friday declared a public health emergency in Puerto Rico as a result of a Zika epidemic.

The declaration allows the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to award grants, access emergency funds and temporarily appoint personnel where needed, among other things.

"This administration is committed to meeting the Zika outbreak in Puerto Rico with the necessary urgency," HHS Secretary Sylvia Burwell said in a department statement. Burwell traveled to the U.S. territory in late April to evaluate its response to the outbreak.

A department spokesman did not immediately return a message seeking comment on what immediate steps the agency may take.

The announcement came hours after Puerto Rico reported 1,914 new cases in the past week, for a total of 10,690 since the first one was reported in December.

The mosquito-borne virus has infected 1,035 pregnant women, which is a concern to authorities because Zika has been tied to a severe birth defect known as microcephaly. More than 100 pregnant women infected with Zika in Puerto Rico who have given birth have had healthy babies, officials said.

Puerto Rico reported the first microcephaly case acquired on U.S. soil in May, involving a

dead fetus that a woman turned over to health authorities. Since then, no microcephaly cases have been reported, but federal officials say it is only a matter of time.

Gov. Alejandro Garcia Padilla said he had asked federal officials to declare a public health emergency and thanked them for their support.

"Zika poses a hidden threat to future generations of Puerto Ricans, and I feel the responsibility to do everything in my power to fight the spread of it," he said.

Garcia recently authorized the use of Bti, an organic larvicide, to fight the spread of Zika after rejecting aerial spraying with the insecticide naled as proposed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Puerto Rico Health Secretary Ana Rius Armentariz said 90 people have been hospitalized because of Zika. Officials also say 30 people have been diagnosed with a temporary paralysis condition known as Guillain-Barre that has been linked to Zika.

Health authorities say they believe the number of Zika cases is much higher because 8 of 10 people show no symptoms and many don't go to the doctor.

The emergency was declared one day after the U.S. surgeon general visited Puerto Rico and said he expected 25 percent of Puerto Rico's nearly 3.5 million people will be infected with Zika by year's end.

Manufacturing error blamed for soldier's death in 2015

Associated Press

TACOMA, Wash. — The Army said an "unprecedented" manufacturing defect led to the death of a soldier who died during a parachute training operation in September.

Capt. James Ahn, 29, of California, died on Sept. 11 during the Washington operation. The soldier was stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

The News Tribune reported that the defect in Ahn's pack's reserve parachute had gone unnoticed over four years of use, and Ahn likely misidentified which parachute had malfunctioned, losing what little time he had to land safely.

An investigation into his death found that the manufacturer had failed to stitch a 4-inch ring that guides parachute cords onto the pack, an error so obscure it took experts four days to identify it.

Rodriguez plays final game with Yankees

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Alex Rodriguez returned to the infield, hugged a reception line of teammates and was handed the final ball from his final game with the New York Yankees. He walked to the area behind third base, leaned down and grabbed a handful of dirt.

Baseball's most notorious star of the last two decades then headed back to the dugout after a Yankee Stadium finale Friday night that included a pre-game ceremony punctuated by thunder cracks and cut short by a downpour, a first-inning RBI double and a surprising ninth-inning return to third base.

A sellout crowd of 46,459 gave him standing ovations and chanted his name, admiration and perhaps even affection coming out after more than a decade of trouble and tension.

"I've given these fans a lot of headaches over the years and I've disappointed a lot of peo-

ple," he said after the 6-3 victory over Tampa Bay, his hoarse voice sounding over the public-address system in one of baseball's most unusual farewells. "But like I've always said, you don't have to be defined by your mistakes. How you come back matters, too, and that's what New York's all about."

He will be cut Saturday by a Yankees team pivoting to youth. The 41-year-old designated hitter isn't sure whether he will play again.

A-Rod drove a 96 mph fastball from Chris Archer into the right-center field gap in the first inning, ending an 0-for-11 slide. Rodriguez then grounded out, struck out and bounced out again on the first pitch in his last at-bat. The 1-for-4 night left him with a .200 average, nine homers and 31 RBIs in his 12th and final Yankees season.

With the sellout crowd of 46,459 chanting "We want A-Rod!" Yankees manager Joe Girardi sent him to third base

for the first time in 15 months at the start of the ninth inning as the organist played "Thanks for Memory."

Rodriguez had criticized Girardi for benching him for most of the past month.

"If this is the last time he plays," Girardi said softly, pausing for 10 seconds and sniffing as his voice cracked and his eyes teared, "I wanted it to be something he never forgot."

Girardi offered to leave him in the field for two outs, but Rodriguez opted to leave after Mikie Mahtook's leadoff strikeout. Fans applauded, many of whom never warmed to a player who in 2009 admitted using performance-enhancing drugs, then served a yearlong drug suspension in 2014.

Rodriguez raised his cap and an arm before walking into the dugout, sitting down and holding a white towel to his face as he tried to hold back tears.

"With all that I've been through, and for them to show

up on a night like tonight and show me that type love is something that I'll never forget. It was overwhelming," he said during a news conference, perfectly coifed in a gray suit and silver necktie.

Starlin Castro had four RBIs for the Yankees, hitting a tie-breaking, two-run homer in the sixth off Archer (6-16) that gave CC Sabathia (7-9) his second win since mid-June.

Rodriguez has 696 home runs, fourth on the career list behind Barry Bonds (762), Hank Aaron (755) and Babe Ruth (714).

New York will owe him \$7,103,825 for the rest of this year and \$20 million for next, the final season of his \$275 million, 10-year contract.

A 14-time All-Star and three-time AL MVP, A-Rod has a .295 batting average, 3,115 hits and his 2,086 RBIs, second to Aaron's 2,297 since RBIs became an official statistic.

Cubs batter Wainwright, Cards as streak reaches 11

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The Chicago Cubs are on a roll, and even their depth players are going deep to keep them streaking.

Matt Szczur hit two home runs, and the Cubs won their 11th straight game, backing Jake Arrieta and battering Adam Wainwright to rout the St. Louis Cardinals 13-2 Friday.

Willson Contreras hit a three-run shot to cap a five-run second inning, and Javier Baez and Jorge Soler also connected to back Arrieta (14-5).

The Cubs' winning streak is their longest since a 12-game run in 2001.

Red Sox 9, Diamondbacks 4: Hanley Ramirez hit two

three-run homers, and David Ortiz also homered to help host Boston rout Arizona.

Astros 5, Blue Jays 3: Joe Musgrove (1-0) pitched seven innings for his first major league win, Teoscar Hernandez homered for his first big league hit and visiting Houston beat Toronto.

Phillies 10, Rockies 6: Ryan Howard hit a grand slam and drove in five runs to help Jake Thompson (1-1) earn his first major league win and lead host Philadelphia past Colorado.

Padres 8, Mets 6: Rookie Ryan Schimpf hit a grand slam and added a two-run shot in visiting San Diego's victory over New York.

Braves 8, Nationals 5: Jace

Peterson, Freddie Freeman and Anthony Recker homered and Atlanta beat Washington to snap a 14-game losing streak in the nation's capital.

Reds 7, Brewers 4: Homer Bailey (2-1) struck out 11 in six scoreless innings in his third game back from Tommy John surgery in visiting Cincinnati's victory over Milwaukee.

Royals 7, Twins 3: Yordano Ventura (8-9) won consecutive starts for the first time in two months, Kendrys Morales homered in his return from a one-game suspension and visiting Kansas City beat Minnesota.

Athletics 6, Mariners 3: Yonder Alonso hit a tiebreaking two-run single in the sixth inning off rookie Joe Wieland

(0-1) and host Oakland ended Seattle's winning streak at six games.

White Sox 4, Marlins 2: Carlos Rodon (3-8) pitched six innings for his first victory since May and visiting Chicago beat Miami.

Orioles 5, Giants 2: Mark Trumbo retook the major league lead with his 33rd home run and visiting Baltimore moved back into first place in the AL East.

Pirates 5, Dodgers 1: Andrew McCutchen and Jordy Mercer homered to lead newcomer Ivan Nova (2-0) and visiting Pittsburgh.

Rangers 8, Tigers 5: Jonathan Lucroy drove in five runs with two homers, and host Texas won after a rain delay.



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Ledecky sets world record in 800 free

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO — Katie Ledecky came into the Rio Olympics facing enormous expectations.

Some athletes might've buckled under the pressure.

She seemed to thrive on it.

The 19-year-old from suburban Washington capped off one of the greatest performances in Olympic history with her fourth gold medal and second world record, shattering her own mark in the 800-meter freestyle Friday night.

"I just wanted to lay it all out there," Ledecky said.

She certainly did that.

And more.

Ledecky and Debbie Meyer are now the only female swimmers to sweep the three longest freestyle races. Meyer took the 200, 400 and 800 at Mexico City in 1968.

In recent days, Meyer's been texting with Ledecky's mom, Mary Gen.

Before the 800, the former swimming great sent along a video message that was for-

warded to Katie.

"I try not to think about the history much," Ledecky said. "But joining Debbie in that history is incredible."

She also followed fellow swimmers Amy Van Dyken and Missy Franklin as the only American women to win as many as four golds in a single Olympics. Along with her individual golds, Ledecky also topped the podium with the 4x200 free relay. For good measure, she earned silver anchoring the 4x100 free relay, showing the sort of speed that has only recently become part of her repertoire but bodes well for her branching out even more in the future.

"I hit all my goals right on the nose this week," Ledecky said.

Four years ago, she seemingly came out nowhere to capture gold as a 15-year-old at the London Games. Then, after her coach moved to the West Coast, Ledecky hooked up with Bruce Gemmill and never missed a beat.

She called it "a testament

to the vision that Bruce and I had three years ago when we set these goals, and we weren't going to stop until we met them."

As was the case in the 400 free, where she crushed her own world record, Ledecky was merely racing the clock as she powered away from the field to touch in 8 minutes, 4.79 seconds, eclipsing the mark of 8:06.68 that she set at a grand prix meet in Texas back in January.

"The goal was 8:05 or better," she said.

Naturally, she was better.

Then, Ledecky played the waiting game, hanging on the rope for a while to let the rest of the field finish.

Jazz Carlin of Britain finally touched in 8:16.17 to claim silver, just ahead of Hungary's Boglarka Kapas grabbing bronze in 8:16.37.

"It's tough when you've got such an incredible athlete in your event and someone who breaks world records every time she swims," Carlin said.

Some 23 seconds after Ledecky touched the wall, the last of the eight finalists chugged to the end of the grueling race.

Ledecky was barely breathing hard.

"What she's doing in the sport is ridiculous, it's insane," said Michael Phelps, the 22-time gold medalist who plans to retire again after his final race on Saturday. "She's obviously someone I'm very excited to look forward to watching race."

Ledecky rarely shows her emotions, maintaining the sort of even keel that works so well in the pool.

On the medal stand, though, she finally broke down in tears.

She was surely thinking about all the work she put in to make it there, not to mention all the changes to come as she gets ready to head off to college.

"I think it's the first time in my life I've ever seen true emotion come out," Phelps said.

US men's basketball teams survives scare from Serbia

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO — Written in Portuguese on one wall above center court at Carioca Arena is the phrase "Um mundo novo." Translation: A new world.

It didn't seem that way in men's Olympic basketball — until now.

Threatened by Australia in its previous game, the U.S. men's team survived a heart-racing final seconds to defeat disciplined and experienced Serbia 94-91 on Friday night and extend its winning streak in international tournaments to 49 games.

No. 50 is no given, and suddenly, a gold medal that seemed a formality just a few days ago is anything but certain.

The Americans, boasting a roster stuffed with NBA All-

Stars, elite outside shooters but only two former Olympians, look very vulnerable and somewhat lost on the world's hardwood stage.

"We do have more talent," said U.S. coach Mike Krzyzewski, who has been warning about overconfidence since his team's arrival in Brazil. "We have to get our talent playing even much better as a team."

Despite a ferocious start, the Americans couldn't put away the underdog Serbs, who ran their cut-and-cut-again offense with precision and had a chance to tie it in the final seconds. But guard Bogdan Bogdanovic's three-pointer from the left wing was a little long and Kevin Durant secured the rebound and the relieved Americans walked off the floor with their streak intact but their standing shaken.

Kyrie Irving scored 15 points and Durant and Carmelo Anthony added 12 apiece for the U.S. team, which arrived in South America lauded as the latest version of an American super squad. However, after their 10-point win over the Aussies earlier this week and now a nail-biter against the Serbs, the rest of the field might be starting to believe the U.S. can be taken.

"We got in our own heads," Durant said. "We had a great start, great start. We were up almost 20 points. We should have held the lead and we just got sidetracked by stupid stuff, from the calls to the physicality, the extra plays. We got to stay with it. That's the way it's going to be out here."

Nikola Jokic, who plays for the Denver Nuggets, scored 25 and Milos Teodosic and Miro-

slav Raduljica 18 each for the Serbs, who fell to 1-3 but left the building feeling confident after making the Americans sweat.

Paul George said Serbia's systematic offense was unlike anything he and his teammates have faced.

"It's like they don't get tired."

It was the first Olympic game between the nations, and a rematch of the 2014 Basketball World Cup championship won by the U.S. 129-92. However, this never resembled that track meet as the Serbs slowed the tempo and forced the Americans into turnovers and rushed possessions. The world's best team certainly didn't look or play like it for long stretches.

The U.S., which will wrap up preliminary-round play against France on Sunday.