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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Trump: 'Hate has no place in America'

President denounces racism, white nationalism after mass shootings in Texas, Ohio

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — In a solemn address from the White House on Monday, President Donald Trump condemned the gunmen who carried out two deadly mass shootings during the weekend and the white nationalism that motivated one of them — but stopped short of calling for stricter gun laws to prevent future attacks.

“These barbaric slaughters are an assault upon our communities, an attack against our nation and a crime against all of humanity,” Trump said. “Hate has no place in America. In one voice, our nation must condemn racism, bigotry and white supremacy.”

The president vowed to act “with urgent resolve” to end the uniquely American epidemic of mass shootings, highlighting the internet, violent video games and mental health issues as contributing factors.

Trump pointedly did not endorse rising calls for stricter laws to keep guns out of the hands of likely killers. He instead blamed the violence on the individual shooters, describing one as “wicked” and the other as a “twisted monster.”

“Mental illness and hatred pull the trigger, not the gun,” Trump said.

Hours earlier, Trump had suggested on Twitter that he could support “strong background checks” if Congress should enact them, but he did not repeat that pledge in his comments.

“Republicans and Democrats must come together and get strong background checks, perhaps marrying this legislation with desperately needed immigration reform,” he tweeted. “We must have something good, if not GREAT, come out of these two tragic events!”

Trump similarly endorsed gun law reforms including expanded background checks following the 2018 school shooting in Parkland, Fla., but quickly reversed himself after meeting with the National Rifle Association.

Two Democratic bills that would expand background checks passed the House in February with scant Republican support, and neither has been taken up by the GOP-controlled Senate, which is now on a six-

week recess.

Trump, for his part, has threatened to veto the bills should they ever get to his desk, calling them a breach of Second Amendment rights.

The first bill would expand background checks on all gun sales and most gun transfers, including private transfers. The other would give the federal government additional time to complete a background check on someone trying to buy a gun from a licensed dealer before the sale can be finalized.

Trump, who offered several ideas aside from tightening the nation’s gun laws, said he would direct the Department of Justice to work more closely with local law enforcement to disrupt potential shooters.

He also called for more so-called red-flag laws, which enable police or family members to petition a state court to temporarily remove firearms from someone who may present a danger to others or themselves.

The president also suggested that those who commit hate crimes and mass murders should receive the death penalty and be executed quickly.

Democrats, including several 2020 candidates, have blamed Trump for inciting violence against immigrants with racist language, which was echoed by the shooter who killed 22 people in El Paso, Texas, on Saturday.

Trump accused the media of deepening divisions in the United States.

“The Media has a big responsibility to life and safety in our Country. Fake News has contributed greatly to the anger and rage that has built up over many years. News coverage has got to start being fair, balanced and unbiased, or these terrible problems will only get worse!” he tweeted.

Trump may travel this week to El Paso and Dayton, Ohio, although Rep. Veronica Escobar, the Democrat who represents El Paso, said Monday that, in her view, Trump is not welcome in her community.

“Words have consequences,” she said in a TV interview. “The president has made my community and my people the enemy. He has told the country that we are people to be feared, people to be hated.”

GI helps kids at Texas shooting

Stars and Stripes

A Fort Bliss, Texas, soldier who helped children to safety at an El Paso mall after a gunman opened fire at a nearby Walmart said he was just doing what he’d been trained to do.

Pfc. Glendon Oakley, of Killeen, Texas, has been hailed in the media as a hero, but in a tearful interview on Sunday he called for the focus to be on the families who lost loved ones in the shooting on Saturday near El Paso’s Cielo Vista Mall. Twenty-two people died and dozens were injured.

“I’m looked at as a hero for it, but that wasn’t the reason for me,” the 1st Armored Division soldier, 22, told reporters before he was overcome with emotion. “The spotlight should not be on me.”

A day earlier, in an interview with El Paso’s KTSM 9 News that aired on CNN and other national outlets, Oakley described how, as he was walking to Foot Locker in the mall, he heard gunfire. He drew his handgun, which he said he’s licensed to carry, and took cover inside the store where employees closed the security gate.

When a group of people in the Foot Locker lifted the gate and made a dash to the mall’s exit, he went with them, he said, and that’s when he saw a “whole bunch of kids” running around without their parents. He helped as many as he could carry, taking them outside the mall, where police were located.

“I did that because that’s what I was trained to do,” he told reporters on Sunday. “That is what the military has taught me to do, and that’s why I’m thankful to be in the military.”

UK will join US mission in Strait of Hormuz

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Britain said Monday that it would join a U.S.-led naval security mission in the Strait of Hormuz, where Iran's seizure of merchant vessels has raised tensions with the West. Earlier, Iran's foreign minister lambasted recent U.S. financial sanctions against him, calling the move a "failure" for diplomacy.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told reporters in Tehran that "imposing sanctions against a foreign minister means failure" for any efforts at negotiations, and means the side imposing the measures is "opposing talks."

The U.S. administration last week announced sanctions on Zarif, a month after President

Donald Trump had imposed similar sanctions on Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The moves are seen as part of Washington's escalating campaign in what Trump calls "maximum pressure" on the Islamic Republic.

The U.S. has increasingly deployed military reinforcements to the region amid unspecified threats from Iran in the wake of Trump's withdrawal last year from the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers.

Britain's Ministry of Defense said it "will draw largely on assets already in the region." It said the Royal Navy will work alongside the U.S. Navy to escort vessels through the Strait of Hormuz, which sits at the

mouth of the Persian Gulf, a shipping channel for one-fifth of all global crude exports.

Two Royal Navy warships are currently in the region, the frigate HMS Montrose and the destroyer HMS Duncan. The Montrose is due to leave for planned repairs later this month.

Britain has been giving U.K.-flagged vessels in the region a naval escort since the Iran's Revolutionary Guards seized a British-flagged oil tanker last month. Some Iranian officials suggested the seizure of the Stena Impero was retaliation for the seizure of an Iranian oil tanker off the British overseas territory of Gibraltar.

European nations have been reluctant to take part in the U.S. naval mission, and Germany

has said it will not be involved.

Last month, then-U.K. Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt announced that the U.K. would join with European allies to form a "maritime protection mission" in the strait.

Hunt has since lost his job, and that effort appears to have foundered. Britain's Ministry of Defense said the U.S. and the U.K. hoped other countries will join the new mission.

Zarif's press conference came a day after Iran announced its forces had seized a foreign ship in the Persian Gulf suspected of carrying smuggled fuel, but provided no details on the vessel or the nationality of the crew. It was the Revolutionary Guard's third seizure of a vessel in recent weeks

US, South Korea begin low-key training drills

BY KIM GAMEL
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The U.S. and South Korea began joint military exercises on Monday but kept them low-key to avoid provoking North Korea, which has warned the drills could derail efforts to resume nuclear negotiations.

The allies declined to officially announce the two-week exercise had begun or to provide details, but several officials confirmed they were underway.

The quiet start was in sharp contrast to past years, underscoring the desire of Seoul and Washington to get talks with the communist state back on track.

North Korea, however, has continued to criticize the drills despite the changes and has conducted several short-range ballistic missile tests during

the past two weeks in what was seen widely as a protest.

The command post training — as military officials are calling it to avoid using the word "exercise" — will last until Aug. 20. It mainly will involve computer-simulated scenarios as opposed to past years when those were combined with combat field training, officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity to provide the details.

U.S. Forces Korea, the main command, said it would not discuss any planned training publicly "as a matter of standard operating procedures and in order to allow diplomacy to work."

"Readiness remains a priority for us," said USFK spokesman Col. Lee Peters. "We will continue to train in a combined manner at echelon while harmonizing our training program with diplomatic efforts by adjusting four dials: size, scope, volume and timing."

Australia says it won't host a US missile base

Associated Press

SYDNEY — Australian officials confirmed Monday that their country will not be used as a base for any planned U.S. midrange missiles following talks with American officials in Sydney.

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said at last week's meetings that he wanted to deploy intermediate-range conventional missiles at various Asia-Pacific sites within months.

The move follows the Trump administration's withdrawal from a Cold War-era arms control treaty with Russia. It also comes in the wake of Chinese military expansion in the Asia-Pacific and is likely to anger Beijing.

Australian Defense Minister Linda Reynolds said Monday that while the locations for the missile bases were not yet known, Australia would not be one of them. She said Esper

made no such request, and no such request was expected from the U.S.

"I asked him directly, 'Was there any expectation of a request,' and he said, 'No,'" Reynolds told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison later echoed Reynolds' comments that the missiles would not be based in Australia.

"It's not been asked of us, not being considered, not been put to us. I think I can rule a line under that," Morrison told reporters in Brisbane on Monday.

Prior to the talks, Esper said he intended to deploy intermediate-range missiles in locations throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Such missiles are capable of flying about 620 miles. The step comes after the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty — signed between the U.S. and Russia in 1987 — expired last Friday.

Army wants lasers on Strykers by 2022

Stars and Stripes

The Army is developing 50 kilowatt lasers for its Stryker wheeled armored vehicles, with plans calling for a prototype to be fielded in 2022, the service said.

“The time is now to get directed energy weapons to the battlefield,” said Lt. Gen. L. Neil Thurgood, director of hypersonics, directed energy, space and rapid acquisition.

“This is no longer a research effort or a demonstration effort. It is a strategic combat capability, and we are on the right path to get it in soldiers’ hands,” he said in a statement released Thursday.

Last week, the Army awarded competing contracts to Northrop Grumman and

Raytheon to build the directed energy weapons. The two companies will act as subcontractors to Kord Technologies, which in May signed a \$203 million contract with the service, and will each develop a prototype laser. The program will deliver 50 kW-class lasers mounted in 2022 on four Strykers, the statement said.

Last year, Congress allocated about \$155 million to the Army budget for testing high-energy lasers on the service’s Strykers and other wheeled vehicles.

The prototypes are part of the progression of the Army’s Multi-Mission High Energy Laser program. General Dynamics, which builds Strykers, will be responsible

for integrating the laser.

Directed-energy weapons still face significant challenges, said a Congressional Research Service report last year. For lasers, that includes generating adequate power and cooling, blockage from weather, obscurants and limited range.

An earlier vehicle-mounted laser system developed by Northrop Grumman and Israeli contractors shot down more than 30 rockets, artillery and mortar shells during operational testing in the early 2000s. But the chemical-based laser system was deemed too large for vehicle use and the program was canceled, according to the CRS report.

Syrian troops to resume offensive on rebels in Idlib

Associated Press

ISTANBUL — The Syrian army said Monday it will resume its offensive against the northwestern Idlib province, the last opposition-held stronghold, accusing insurgents there of violating a recent truce. Opposition activists reported airstrikes had resumed in the southern parts of the enclave, which is located on the Turkish border.

Meanwhile, Turkish and American military officials began a two-day set of talks in the Turkish capital, Ankara, about establishing a safe zone in northeastern Syria to address Ankara’s concerns about U.S.-allied Syrian Kurdish-led forces in that region.

The Syrian military said in a statement carried by state media that insurgents in Idlib had continued to break the cease-

fire since it went into effect late Thursday. State media and opposition activists had reported repeated violations of the truce by both sides since then.

The military statement said the rebels also failed to abide by an agreement reached last year to withdraw from a demilitarized zone surrounding the enclave.

The cease-fire marked a brief pause in the stalled government offensive against al-Qaida-linked militants and other jihadi groups, which dominate Idlib and surrounding areas.

After the army announced it was restarting military operations, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said Syrian and Russian warplanes began airstrikes on the southern parts of Idlib, mainly the town of Khan Sheikhoun.

The Syrian military later reported that insurgents had fired rockets at the Russian air base of Hmeimeem in Latakia province on the Mediterranean coast, “inflicting large human and material” losses outside the base.

The Russian Defense Ministry later said three unguided rockets were fired at the base but hit a nearby village instead, injuring four civilians.

Turkey’s defense minister tweeted that a new round of talks had begun with the U.S. military about creating a Turkish-controlled safe zone inside Syria east of the Euphrates River, which would have no Syrian Kurdish forces within 19-25 miles of the border.

Turkey sees the Syrian Kurdish fighters as terrorists aligned with a Kurdish insurgency within Turkey.

Official: Afghan policeman opens fire on colleagues

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — An Afghan policeman in the southern province of Kandahar opened fire on his colleagues, killing seven other policemen before fleeing the scene, a provincial official said Monday. The Taliban claimed the attack, saying the policeman had joined their ranks.

The deadly shooting is the latest case of so-called “insider attacks” when an Afghan policeman or soldier — or a Tal-

iban insurgent wearing a police or military uniform — turns his weapon on Afghan forces or international troops.

Last week, two American soldiers were shot and killed by an Afghan soldier in the same Kandahar district. The attacker, who was wounded and taken into custody, was dubbed a “hero” by the Taliban, though the insurgents did not claim the assault.

The latest attack in Kandahar took place Sunday, and the attacker fled the scene, said

Jamal Naser Barezai, a provincial spokesman. He added that an investigation is underway.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yusuf Ahmadi claimed the attack and said the policeman had joined their ranks.

In last week’s attack, the U.S. Defense Department said Pfc. Brandon Jay Kreisler, 20, of Stryker, Ohio, and Spc. Michael Isaiah Nance, 24, of Chicago died “as a result of wounds sustained in a combat related incident” in southern Afghanistan.

Both soldiers were assigned

to the Army’s 82nd Airborne Division, based in Fort Bragg, N.C.

The Taliban also claimed an attack on a checkpoint Sunday that killed 11 security forces in northern Jawzjan province, said Faridon Aneeq, the provincial governor’s spokesman.

A motorcycle rigged with explosives killed at least four people and wounded 25 Monday near a market in the western city of Herat, said Farzad Fartan, the spokesman for Herat province’s police chief.

Gunman's ex-classmates describe hit list

Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — High school classmates of the gunman who killed nine people in Dayton say he was suspended years ago for compiling a “hit list” and a “rape list” and questioned how he could be allowed to buy the military-style weapon used in last weekend’s attack.

The accounts emerged after police said there was nothing in the background of Connor Betts, 24, that would have prevented him from purchasing an AR-15-style rifle with an extended ammunition magazine that he used to open fire outside a crowded bar early Sunday.

Police on patrol in the entertainment district fatally shot him less than a minute later.

The former classmates told The Associated Press that Betts was suspended during their junior year at suburban Bellbrook High School after a hit list was found scrawled in a school bathroom. That followed an earlier suspension after Betts came to school with a list of female students he wanted to sexually assault, according to two of the classmates, a man and a woman who are both now 24 and who spoke on condition of anonymity out of concern they might face harassment.

“There was a kill list and a

rape list, and my name was on the rape list,” said the female classmate.

A former cheerleader, the woman said she didn’t really know Betts and was surprised when a police officer called her cellphone during her freshman year to tell her that her name was included on a list of potential targets.

“The officer said he wouldn’t be at school for a while,” she said. “But after some time passed, he was back, walking the halls. They didn’t give us any warning that he was returning to school.”

The male classmate, who was on the track team with Betts,

said Betts routinely threatened violence toward other students.

“Most people avoided him,” the man said. “He would say shocking things just to get a reaction. He enjoyed making people feel scared.”

Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools officials declined to comment on those accounts, only confirming that Betts attended schools in the district.

The discovery of the hit list early in 2012 sparked a police investigation and, according to a Dayton Daily News story at the time, roughly a third of 900 Bellbrook students skipped school one day out of fear of a planned attack.

Aide: Lawmaker McConnell breaks shoulder

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is recovering at home in Kentucky after suffering a shoulder fracture in a fall Sunday, a spokesman said.

McConnell tripped on his outdoor patio at his Louisville home Sunday morning, and has been treated and released after getting medical attention, said David Popp, a spokesman for the Kentucky Republican. Popp’s emailed statement said

McConnell, 77, is working from home in Louisville and “will continue to work from home” for now.

The statement didn’t elaborate on where he received help or what treatment he received or the expected time needed for recovery. A McConnell spokesman didn’t immediately return a telephone message Sunday evening.

The statement said McConnell has expressed his sympathies to the people of El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, fol-

lowing the recent mass shootings in those communities and that he had been in touch with two Senate colleagues for those states.

McConnell returned to Kentucky after the Senate began a five-week recess Thursday, hailing the chamber for a hard-won budget deal that staves off a possible government shutdown.

McConnell, who is up for reelection next year and has aligned himself closely with President Donald Trump, has

recently been criticized for blocking election security legislation aimed at protecting the nation’s political system against foreign attacks.

On Saturday the sixth-term senator attended Kentucky’s premier political event, where some Democrats wore “Moscow Mitch” shirts depicting the communist-era hammer and sickle and others heckled McConnell during the stump-style speaking at the Fancy Farm picnic.

Cairo crash sets off fire outside hospital, killing 20

Associated Press

CAIRO — A multiple-car crash on a Cairo street in front of Egypt’s main cancer hospital set off an explosion that triggered a fire outside the building, killing a total of 20 people, authorities said Monday.

The crash and the explosion also injured 47 others, the Health Ministry said. Some of the injured suffered burns and broken bones, it added, though it wasn’t immediately clear if any of the casualties were inside the hospital.

The Interior Ministry said a vehicle driving against traffic — for reasons that were not specified — had collided with up to three other cars late Sunday, causing the

explosion on the Nile-side street, the city’s famous Corniche. At least 78 patients were evacuated to other hospitals while the fire was later brought under control.

The blast damaged the cancer hospital’s main gate and several patient rooms and wards, according to a statement from Cairo University. Its Medical School uses the institute as an educational facility.

Television stations broadcast footage of shattered windows and doors on Monday morning. The Health Ministry did not say if any hospital patients or staff were among the casualties.

“Parts of the ceiling of the hospital were collapsing as I got out of my room,” said Mahmoud el-Sayed, one of the patients

at the National Cancer Institute. “People were running everywhere and shouting.”

There was no immediate explanation as to why the crash had caused such a large explosion, and officials could not be reached for questions about possible sabotage or whether there had been any explosive materials at the scene.

The county’s top prosecutor ordered an investigation into the crash, according to the state-run MENA news agency.

Health Minister Hala Zayed said in TV comments that unidentified body parts were being collected in a body bag from the site of the explosion. It was also possible that some bodies had ended up in the Nile, she added.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Dog to help zoo care for cheetah cub

OH CINCINNATI — An Ohio zoo has enlisted its beloved nursery dog to care for the lone survivor from a litter of three cheetah cubs.

The Cincinnati Enquirer reported that Blakely, a male Australian Shepherd, is serving as a surrogate parent for Kris, born to a first-time mother July 7 at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden's cheetah breeding facility.

Zoo officials said caretakers stepped in because a single cub doesn't provide enough stimulation for a cheetah mother to produce an adequate milk supply. They said baby animals need more than nutrition and medical care.

Police respond to 911 call, get lemonade

WA GIG HARBOR — Six deputies responding to a report of unsupervised children selling lemonade in western Washington said the lemonade was cold and tasted awesome.

The News Tribune reported that deputies with the Pierce County Sheriff's Office responded to the lemonade stand in Gig Harbor on Friday following a 911 call reporting unattended kids selling beverages.

The sheriff's office posted a photo on Facebook showing the six smiling deputies with drinks in hand and four children operating the lemonade stand.

9 emaciated puppies rescued in pot raids

CO COLORADO SPRINGS — El Paso County authorities said they've arrested two men after finding

300 illegal marijuana plants, firearms and nine emaciated puppies on three properties.

KOAA-TV reported sheriff's deputies and police executed search warrants for the properties near the Pueblo County line. Abdiel Delgado, 30, and Elieser Curbelo, 44, were booked into county jail for investigation of marijuana-related offenses.

The Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region was caring for the puppies.

Hotel evacuated over odor, irritant in air

PA ALLENTOWN — A hotel near Allentown was evacuated for more than eight hours overnight after guests reported an odor that caused coughing and throat irritation.

Police said they were dispatched about 8 p.m. Thursday to the SpringHill Suites hotel in Upper Saucon Township to investigate the odor.

The Upper Saucon Township Police Department said in a Facebook posting that tests by hazardous materials teams failed to identify a specific irritant.

Guests were allowed to return to their rooms about 5 a.m.

Road sign misspelling city name is replaced

GA COLQUITT — The Georgia Department of Transportation said it has replaced a road sign that misspelled the name of a rural city.

WALB-TV reported that the mistake came to light on social media when somebody posted a photo of the sign telling drivers they were 12 miles from "Coulquitt." The sign erroneously placed an extra U in Colquitt,

a city of about 1,900 people in southwest Georgia.

The state DOT acknowledged the mistake on its Facebook page.

Accused brake-puller arrested for 'surfing'

NY NEW YORK — A man who authorities said caused dozens of New York City subway delays by pulling emergency brakes has been arrested again for allegedly "surfing" on the outside of a train.

Police said Isaiah Thompson, 23, was arrested Friday night on charges of reckless endangerment and trespassing. He's accused of riding on the outside of a northbound 5 train in Manhattan on Wednesday. Thompson was arrested in May after police said he was the man seen on a video pulling a train's emergency brake and fleeing.

Police believe Thompson is responsible for dozens of similar brake-pulling stunts that caused extensive delays. He had been free on bond before his latest arrest.

Convicted man flees while jury deliberates

AR LITTLE ROCK — Authorities in northeastern Arkansas said a man convicted of attempted murder caught a ride home with a juror during a court recess and then fled before sentencing.

The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reported that Madriekus Blakes, 32, was convicted on July 30 of two counts of attempted first-degree murder and other charges in a Sept. 27, 2018, shooting at a convenience store in West Memphis.

Prosecutors say Blakes caught a ride home with a juror during a recess but that both Blakes and the juror returned to the courthouse the next day

for sentencing. Blakes fled while jurors deliberated.

The judge replaced the juror with an alternate.

Woman uses bat to fight off coyote

NJ MAHWAH — Authorities said a woman fought off a coyote with a baseball bat after it attacked and bit her several times in New Jersey.

Mahwah police said the woman was walking on Grenadier Drive about 6:15 p.m. Friday when she encountered the animal.

She was taken to a hospital for treatment of the bites and told NorthJersey.com that she was recovering there Saturday.

Mahwah police said Saturday they and an animal control agency hadn't been able to locate the coyote.

2006 message in bottle is found

CA SANTA ROSA — A newspaper said a message in a bottle from Hawaii was discovered floating in California waters after traveling for more than a decade across the Pacific.

The Press Democrat reported Friday that Eric McDermott, 30, found the message, dated 2006, in April with the names of three siblings, ages 4, 7 and 10, and an Oklahoma street address.

McDermott said he tracked down the family a few miles from where he discovered the note about 77 miles north of San Francisco. The family is from Santa Rosa and returned after living in Oklahoma for a few years.

McDermott said the family threw the bottle into the ocean during a Hawaii vacation.

From wire reports

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UCF's Milton gets new role

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Part of the pitch that lured McKenzie Milton from his home state of Hawaii to UCF was a pledge by then-Knights coach Scott Frost to put the quarterback on a path to a post-playing career in coaching.

A horrific leg injury last November turned Milton's long-term plans into his current reality. He is determined to play again, and confident he will — just not this season.

Milton and the upstart Knights have brashly roiled the college football establishment the past two seasons, going 25-1, proclaiming themselves national champions after an undefeated 2018 and being not at all satisfied with the playoff selection committee's consolation prizes.

Whether UCF can keep it up without Milton's magical playmaking is one of the most intriguing stories of the upcoming season. But make no mistake, the guy everyone around Central Florida football calls KZ will contribute to the Knights' next chapter.

"He's going to take this year as a coaching role. Absolutely," second-year UCF coach Josh Heupel said. "And so working fundamentals with our quarterbacks during the offseason. Kind of being in charge of that. Approaching it as a coach in his preparation. He'll be a part of game planning. I fully expect him to bring ideas to the table, too. He's not going to sit there and not do that. He did that at the end of last year in the conference championship and bowl games. He's going to be a critical part."

Milton has made huge strides since a low, but legal hit by USF defensive back Mazzi Wilkins the day after Thanksgiving sent him into emergency surgery to repair artery damage that could have cost him his leg. Milton got off crutches in April and now wears a thigh-to-calf black brace that supports his tibia while ligaments heal.

"Maybe at first it was uncomfortable, but I'm used to it now.

It's like a part of me," Milton said in June.

Doctors have told him they want him in the brace until January. It has not kept him out of the weight room with his teammates or from the players-only throwing sessions with quarterbacks and receivers this offseason. He is not yet able to run and walks with a stiff gait. He does 2 1/2 hours of physical therapy five days per week.

For now, being limited to coaching is OK.

"I've always kind of felt like an extension of a coach," said Milton, who accounted for 79 touchdowns the past two seasons.

"The hours I put in, it's very similar to the coaches. The amount of film I watch. The way I try to engage in practice. I mean, prior to the injury, just helping the helping the receivers be in the right spots. Talking to the o-line, just getting to understand what they do and being able to slide protections and all that. It'd be like a disservice to the guys if I didn't help them because I've played more ball than anybody in our QB room, so I know I can help them out. And I can help our receivers with recognizing coverages and just being the best ball players they can be."

UCF entered the spring with four quarterbacks competing to start, but the competition took a turn in July when Darriel Mack Jr., who stepped in for Milton after the injury, broke his ankle. Mack is expected to be healthy enough to play this season, but not at the beginning. That leaves Notre Dame transfer Brandon Wimbush as the presumptive leading contender ahead of redshirt freshman Quadry Jones and freshman Dillion Gabriel.

Ask Milton about the quarterbacks and he already sounds like a coach.

"I mean they can all throw the rock. They all can ad-lib with their feet. But I just think it'll be the guy who wins the team over in fall camp. Takes care of the ball and doesn't turn it over and whoever the coaches feel will give us the

best chance to win. But for me it's all about who separates in that aspect mentally and really who takes care of the ball," said Milton, who hopes for a seat in the coaches' box with offensive coordinator Jeff Leiby on game days this season. Heupel said how Milton is used during games is still to be determined.

Wimbush spent four years at Notre Dame and started 16 games before transferring to UCF in January. He and Milton knew each other from their time at the Manning Passing Academy in New Orleans last year. Wimbush rolled Milton in a game of pool there and has been letting his new teammate hear about it ever since.

Aside from making Wimbush feel welcome on a new team, Milton has been working with him on the footwork necessary to run UCF's scheme.

"It's been a significant difference for me coming from the offense I ran up in South Bend to this offense. That's where I had to make my biggest transition and he's helped me make tremendous strides in doing so," Wimbush said.

Receiver Gabriel Davis said Milton's knowledge of the entire offense is expert level.

"He's the smartest player I've ever been around. He will be big-time after football for sure when it comes to coaching," Davis said. "He will definitely be one of the top coaches in the country."

Milton said faith in God and the values instilled in him by his parents have lifted him through tough times since the injury. He doesn't ask: Why me? He says he still has a great life.

"I've always felt like there's light at the end of the tunnel. You know, day by day, the light gets a little bigger," Milton said. "I'm just working towards the goals that I have, whether it's coaching, playing. I'm going to work my tail off."

"UCF has given me so much more than I've given them. I know I'll be connected here for forever, when my time is done," he said, then added: "I don't think my time will be done here for a while."

Source: Pats give QB Brady extension

Associated Press

Tom Brady has never known what it's like to play out the final season of a contract in his 20-year NFL career, and the New England Patriots superstar quarterback isn't about to find out.

Brady, who turned 42 on Saturday, is signing a two-year, \$70 million extension that runs through 2021 and includes a hefty raise this season, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press.

The person, speaking to the AP on condition of anonymity Sunday because the Patriots hadn't announced the extension, confirmed the NFL Network report on Brady's contract.

Brady will get an \$8 million raise in 2019, when he'll make \$23 million. The extension also calls for him to make \$30 million in 2020 and \$32 million in 2021, when he would be 44.

Brady, who led the Patriots to a 13-3 win over the Los Angeles Rams in Super Bowl 53, is one of just four players to win six NFL titles. The others all played for Vince Lombardi's mighty Green Bay Packers teams in the 1960s: Hall of Famers Herb Adderley and Forrest Gregg and their teammate, Fuzzy Thurston.

Adderley, 80, told the AP earlier this year that he believes it will take another 100 years for someone else to join the exclusive club, although he figures Brady will make it a moot point with a seventh ring before he decides to retire.

"Oh yes, indeed. He has a shot at it as long as he plays," Adderley said.

Brady and the Patriots open defense of their latest Super Bowl title against Pittsburgh on Sept. 8. Usually, the champion kicks off the season but that honor goes to Green Bay and Chicago this year as the NFL celebrates its 100th season.

Verlander dominant again for Astros

BY KRISTIE RIEKEN

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Another day, another dominant pitching performance by the Houston Astros.

Justin Verlander struck out 10 and the Astros beat the Seattle Mariners 3-1 Sunday for a three-game sweep.

A day after Astros newcomer Aaron Sanchez and three relievers combined on a no-hitter, Verlander (15-4) took over the major league wins lead and left with an AL-best 2.68 ERA.

Houston's starters are 14-1 in the last 17 games, and Verlander has won his last five starts for the AL West leaders, striking out a combined 53 in that

span.

"Each guy, when you create a competitive atmosphere like we have here, not that you want to one-up the guy before you, but you want to go out there and compete against some of the best in the world, and we've got a lot of the best in the world right here in the starting rotation," Verlander said.

He didn't give up a hit until Kyle Seager singled with two outs in the fourth inning. The Astros ace took a two-hit shutout in the seventh and exited after Seager led off with a home run.

"Verlander was really good today," Seattle manager Scott Servais said. "Oftentimes you see him with one or the other,

the curveball or the slider going, and he had them both going today."

Verlander's 206 strikeouts rank second in the majors behind teammate Gerrit Cole (216). This is the fourth straight season the 36-year-old Verlander has fanned at least 200 batters and his ninth overall.

He's reveling in the work of Houston's rotation as the Astros roll toward the postseason.

"It's pretty incredible," he said. "You just kind of stay in your own lane and try to keep doing what's making you great, and at the same time you appreciate everything that's going on around you."

Next up for the Astros: Newly acquired All-Star Zack Greinke

makes his Houston debut.

Roberto Osuna struck out one in the ninth for his 25th save. The victory improved Houston to 12-1 against Seattle this season and 38-12 against the AL West.

The Mariners couldn't get much going on offense throughout this series, getting four hits on Sunday and managing just seven hits and three runs in the three games.

"It's tough," Seattle right fielder Dylan Moore said. "They're obviously a good ballclub, but we can do better than that. Everybody in here is going to tell you that we didn't play offensively to our potential or our standards that we hold ourselves to."

MLB roundup

Bieber completes Indians' sweep of Angels

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Shane Bieber knows he will never be as famous as the singer with his surname. He doesn't even mind that his latest Topps baseball card refers to him as Justin.

Bieber was content becoming the first pitcher this season to throw three complete games, leading the Cleveland Indians over the Los Angeles Angels 6-2 on Sunday with a five-hitter that finished a three-game sweep.

"I don't want to get too far ahead of myself because there is obviously a lot of work to be done, but I've strung a couple of good outings together," the 24-year-old right-hander said. "It's a lot of fun to be out there playing and giving these guys a chance to win. I know we're going to put up runs and we're going to have some fun doing it."

Bieber (11-4) struck out eight and walked none, reaching 300 career strikeouts in his 44th big league appearance. The All-Star Game MVP is 9-2 with 128 strikeouts in his last 15 starts.

Cleveland is 37-15 since June 4 — the best record in the ma-

jors in that span — and Bieber has taken over as ace from the injured Corey Kluber and the since-traded Trevor Bauer.

Jason Kipnis homered and drove in three runs, Francisco Lindor had two RBIs and a homer, and rookie Oscar Mercado added a third solo shot for Cleveland, which is three games behind AL Central-leading Minnesota.

Yankees 7, Red Sox 4: At New York, Aaron Judge homered early and a makeshift Yankees lineup pounded David Price in a victory that sent the defending World Series champion Boston Red Sox to their eighth straight loss.

The banged-up Yankees completed the first four-game sweep of their longtime rivals since August 2009.

Boston has dropped eight in a row for the first time since an eight-game skid in July 2015.

Mets 13, Pirates 2: Mets star Robinson Cano is headed back to the injured list after straining his left hamstring, an injury that overshadowed Noah Syndergaard's sparkling outing.

Syndergaard (8-5) allowed three hits, singled twice and

pitched shutout ball into the seventh to help New York win for the ninth time in 10 games.

Athletics 4, Cardinals 2: Tanner Roark pitched five innings to get the win in his Oakland debut.

Cubs 7, Brewers 2: Jason Heyward drove in three runs, Yu Darvish pitched five effective innings and host Chicago finished a three-game sweep.

Heyward and Kyle Schwarber homered as the NL Central leaders won for the 11th time in 13 games at Wrigley Field.

Dodgers 11, Padres 10: Max Muncy's fourth hit was a game-ending, two-run double, and host Los Angeles rallied from a late three-run deficit for a wild victory.

Rays 7, Marlins 2: Yonny Chirinos allowed one run in five innings before leaving with a hand injury, and host Tampa Bay matched its longest winning streak this season at six games.

Twins 3, Royals 0: Devin Smeltzer pitched two-hit ball into the seventh inning for his first major league win, and host Minnesota finished off a three-game sweep.

Rockies 6, Giants 2: Kyle Freeland earned his first win in nearly four months and Nolan Arenado homered twice for host Colorado.

Diamondbacks 7, Nationals 5: Ketel Marte hit an inside-the-park home run off former Arizona ace Patrick Corbin, and Adam Jones drove in four runs for the host Diamondbacks.

White Sox 10, Phillies 5: Leury Garcia hit a grand slam and Eloy Jimenez added a three-run shot, powering visiting Chicago to the victory.

Reds 6, Braves 4 (10): Cincinnati's Tucker Barnhart hit a tiebreaking three-run homer in the top of the 10th inning off new Atlanta closer Shane Greene.

Rangers 9, Tigers 4: Willie Calhoun hit a tiebreaking three-run triple in the seventh inning, helping host Texas finish a three-game sweep.

Texas' four-game win streak is its longest since a six-game streak in late June.

Orioles 6, Blue Jays 5: Trey Mancini drove in two runs and host Baltimore won a mistake-prone game with wild pitches, misplayed balls, costly walks and baserunning errors.

Elliott defends title at Watkins Glen

Associated Press

WATKINS GLEN, N.Y. — Chase Elliott put an emphatic end to his summerlong struggle, making a statement with a dominating win on the road course at Watkins Glen International.

A year after racing to his first career NASCAR Cup victory at The Glen, Elliott won a second time in the No. 9 Chevrolet for Hendrick Motorsports on Sunday, besting Martin Truex Jr. just as he did a year ago. Elliott, who started from the pole, led 80 of 90 laps around the speedy 2.45-mile layout to become the first repeat winner in nearly a decade, since Marcos Ambrose in 2011-12.

“I think it’s huge,” Elliott said after his fifth career win. “We’ve had fast cars at times, but one thing or another ended up for a bad weekend.

“The way we did it was the biggest thing. That’s the kind of effort you have to put on often to compete with the guys in the field.”

Elliott had already qualified for the post-season with his win at Talladega in May, but after four straight top-fives he hadn’t had a top-10 finish since June at Pocono, a span of seven races.

He also led 400 laps in the opening 13 races but had led only nine laps since until Sunday.

It was a two-car race for more than half the 220.5-mile distance and the entire final 40 laps.

Truex began to exert some pressure

after sitting behind Elliott for more than 10 laps in the final segment. Elliott held his ground until Truex’s No. 19 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota closed with six laps to go, waiting to pounce on a mistake that never came.

“I tried to do all I could. Chase did an excellent job just not making mistakes,” Truex said. “He hit his marks. His car was really fast in the key areas that you need to be. I just couldn’t get a run on him.

“Really, it was all about restarts and track position,” Truex said. “If I could have just got by him on that last one we could have set sail.”

With two laps left, Truex still couldn’t get close enough to make a move as Elliott drove flawlessly, winning by 0.454 seconds.

Denny Hamlin was third, Erik Jones fourth for Gibbs and Ryan Blaney fifth in his No. 22 Penske Racing Ford after starting from the rear of the field. Penske Racing’s Joey Logano was never a factor and finished 23rd, dropping to second in points, 13 behind Kyle Busch.

Seven-time champion Jimmy Johnson finished 19th but still made up ground in the race for the final playoff spot with new crew chief Cliff Daniels calling the shots.

Truex was chasing a sweep of the two traditional road races on the schedule. He won at Sonoma in June for the second straight time and has five straight top-two finishes on road courses.

Elliott won the first two stages, dominating the first, and Truex moved into conten-

tion about a third of the way through the race.

Truex stayed back but like last year began to close the gap with 20 laps left. Elliott, who overcame some mistakes in the closing laps a year ago that nearly opened the door for Truex, maintained a steady lead of just a few car-lengths for almost the entire stage, the two 5 seconds ahead of Hamlin in third.

The race was stopped when Johnson, desperate for a good finish, spun out coming out of the carousel turn and seconds later Bubba Wallace spun Kyle Busch, who was running 10th on Lap 62.

Busch and Wallace had banged each other while racing down the front straightaway before Wallace had the last tap, sending Busch’s No. 18 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota around entering the first turn. Busch, who started third, finished 11th, right behind brother Kurt.

Elliott and Truex were back in front for the restart on Lap 66 and Truex challenged right off the green flag, the two exchanging bumps speeding up through the esses as Elliott never relinquished the lead despite damage to his Chevy.

“I think the left rear damage was the biggest concern,” Elliott’s crew chief Alan Gustafson said.

“It was pretty significant. There’s nothing you can do. There’s no reason to panic. We’d done the best job we could.

“I knew it was up to Chase. Chase was going to have to run a perfect race and he did.”

Colangelo: No angst as US men open camp

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — USA Basketball managing director Jerry Colangelo said Sunday that he is not worried about the Americans’ chances as they begin preparations for the FIBA World Cup, even after a wildly unpredictable process was needed just to fill a training-camp roster for the tournament that starts in China at the end of the month.

“Honestly, I don’t have any angst,” Colangelo said.

After what the two-time defending World Cup champion Americans have been through just to get to camp, that’s a very good sign.

It took more than 50 invi-

tations — and probably that many revisions of plans — to get to Sunday, the day where 15 members of the current national team arrived in Las Vegas for meetings and final preparations before the first training camp practice under new USA Basketball coach Gregg Popovich starts Monday.

Also in Las Vegas: 14 more NBA players on an enhanced practice squad known as the select team, and it’s a very real possibility that some of those players — Sacramento’s De’Aaron Fox and Brooklyn’s Joe Harris, probably foremost among them — will get a good look at moving up to the national team and potentially going to

China for the World Cup.

“We’re going to have some fun,” Colangelo said.

It’ll likely be a young group going to China, no matter who is on the plane. USA Basketball said at least six of the 12 players on the last three World Cup rosters were 24 or younger at the time, and that looks like it could be the case again. Of the 15 players on the national team now, six are 24 or younger.

Miami Heat center Bam Adebayo said after arriving in Las Vegas on Sunday that he didn’t hesitate when he got the call inquiring about whether he’d want to play.

“I was like, ‘Who would say no to this chance?’” the 22-

year-old Adebayo said.

Popovich has said finalizing a 12-man roster for China won’t be easy. Then again, he likely wasn’t counting on this much attrition.

The process of building a team for China started last year with 35 players being added to the selection pool for the World Cup and next year’s Tokyo Olympics. Of those 35, 30 have already withdrawn from World Cup consideration for a variety of reasons.

More than a dozen other names were officially added to the national team list along the way, with two of those players dropping out already as well.