

STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, August 27, 2019

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Army toughens shooting skills tests

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The Army is revamping small arms training with tougher marksmanship tests designed to better prepare troops — whether cook or infantryman — to shoot straight while under duress.

The new standards, which take effect in October, will change how troops train with pistols and automatic rifles, the Army said. The standards must be met by October 2020.

“It’s exactly what we would do in a combat environment, and I think it’s just going to build a much better shooter,” Sgt. Maj. Robert K. Fortenberry, of the Army’s infantry school at Fort Benning, Ga., said in a statement.

The aim is to get all soldiers to a “baseline” set of marksmanship skills that go beyond achieving just a passing score during routine weapons qualification testing. Rather than pulling from stacked pre-staged

ammunition to hit targets, troops will now need to draw their gear as they would in conflict.

“Marksmanship training should also train soldiers on the other tasks they’d face in using their weapon in combat,” the Army statement said.

Soldiers will be tested on whether they can rapidly load and reload as they would in combat, as well as quickly switching firing positions and making snap decisions on what targets to hit. Other new requirements include demonstrating proficiency in night combat conditions and simulated chemical attacks.

“You’re employing your weapon system in a more tactical environment or scenario, versus the more traditional way of doing it,” said Fortenberry. “And by doing so, it creates additional rigor, using all of the elements of critical thinking, sound judgment, adapting to change, all of those nontangible attributes.”

The Army also is eliminating timeouts when weapons malfunction during testing.

“You have to fix the malfunction,” Fortenberry said. Timeouts would be authorized by leaders only on a case-by-case basis, he said.

The new standards also require units to use indoor and electronic firing ranges as more affordable aids to instruction rather than just relying on outdoor ranges.

“All units regardless of type will be held to the same new, tougher basic standards,” the Army said. “All will have to train the same skills, and ensure they schedule the same amount, type and frequency of marksmanship training mandated (by the new manual).”

In the past, the Army did not use a single approach to teaching marksmanship. The training overhaul pulls together all the individual weapons standards.

The Army said it spent about two years developing the program, drawing upon the expertise of nearly 200 marksmanship experts.

US: S. Korea’s exit from pact with Japan endangers troops

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The United States stepped up criticism of South Korea’s withdrawal from a military intelligence-sharing agreement with Japan, warning it will complicate defense and “increase risk to U.S. forces.”

The unusually blunt statement on Monday came amid concerns that Seoul’s decision to exit the General Security of Military Information Agreement, or GSOMIA, is the latest blow to U.S. influence in the region.

Underscoring the high stakes, North Korea has conducted seven missile and rocket tests since July 25, most recently on Saturday, expanding its arsenal amid stalled nuclear talks with

Washington.

Chinese and Russian fighter jets also recently flew in a show of force though disputed air space between South Korea and Japan.

The State Department said Monday it was “deeply disappointed and concerned” that South Korea has terminated the agreement.

“This will make defending [South Korea] more complicated and increase risk to U.S. forces,” spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus wrote in a tweet.

The Pentagon expressed similar concern after the decision was announced last week.

“We strongly believe that the integrity of our mutual defense and security ties must persist despite frictions in other areas of the [South Korea]-Japan relationship,” it said.

The United States maintains about 28,500 servicemembers in South Korea and 54,000 in Japan, as well as supersonic bombers and other strategic assets serving as a bulwark against North Korea and China.

The 2016 signing of the military information agreement was seen as a diplomatic victory for the U.S. by bringing its two closest Asian allies together despite their bitter historical enmity.

On a practical level, it enabled the traditional rivals to streamline intelligence sharing instead of relying on the U.S. as a mediator.

South Korea announced Thursday it was terminating the pact due to an escalating trade spat with Japan. The Foreign Ministry insisted the deci-

sion had been made in “close communication” with the United States.

But many observers said the move signals a growing rift in the alliance at a critical time as China and Russia are eager to fill the vacuum in regional leadership.

“Although few have said it out loud, Korea’s decision to pull out of its three-year-old military intelligence-sharing pact with Japan despite strong U.S. objections is nothing less than open rebellion,” columnist Oh Young-jin wrote Tuesday in *The Korea Times*.

“It marks a major departure from the role of junior partner that Korea plays in its alliance with the U.S., coming as U.S. regional stewardship is being challenged by a growing China,” he added.

Kurdish militia moving from Syria 'safe zone'

Associated Press

BEIRUT — The main U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish militia has begun withdrawing its fighters from two towns near Turkey's border, part of a deal for a so-called safe zone in northeastern Syria involving the U.S. and Turkey, the Kurdish-led regional administration in northern Syria said Tuesday.

Turkey has been pressing for a safe zone, running east of the Euphrates River toward the Iraqi border, to push U.S.-allied Syrian Kurdish militias away from its frontier. Turkey wants to control — in coordination with the U.S. — a 19- to 25-mile-deep zone within civil war-ravaged Syria.

Turkey wants the region along its border to be clear of Syrian Kurdish forces and has threatened on numerous occasions to launch a new operation in Syria against Syrian Kurdish forces if such a zone is not established.

Turkey sees the Syrian Kurdish fighters, who make up the majority of the Syrian Democratic Forces and are allied with the U.S., as terrorists aligned with a Kurdish insurgency within Turkey. American troops are stationed in northeast Syria, along with the Kurdish forces, and have fought Islamic State together.

The differing positions on the Kurdish fighters have become a major source of tension between NATO allies Turkey and the U.S.

The administration said "the first step" in these understandings began three days ago in the town of Ras al-Ayn, from where members of the militia known as YPG withdrew with their heavy weapons. The statement that was read by Zeidan al-Assi, head of the defense office at the administration, added that similar steps were taken Monday in the border town of Tal Abyad.

Pentagon taps Lockheed to supply spare parts for F-35s

By CHRISTOPHER DENNIS
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon awarded Lockheed Martin an additional \$2.4 billion to provide spare parts for the F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter after a government watchdog found earlier this year that a parts shortage kept them grounded and forced squadrons to "cannibalize" jets to keep others flying.

The procurement announced last week was made after commanders in the field requested more spare parts, said Michael Land, a spokesman for the Joint Strike Fighter program.

Officials modified a previously awarded contract to speed up the process and provide greater contracting flexibility, he said.

The modification includes parts for the Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and other participants, including foreign military customers, the Pentagon said Friday. All parts orders are expected to be placed no later than December 2020, a Pentagon statement said.

The added funding "is an important step" to increasing the availability of spares, enhancing the military's ability to employ the F-35 and reducing its costs, Lockheed Martin spokesman Michael Friedman said in a statement to Inside Defense.

For the Lockheed Martin-produced F-35s, which first deployed in combat this spring, working through maintenance issues overseas has been a chal-

lenge, particularly the timely resupply of spare parts.

A lack of parts and difficulties managing and moving them kept the aircraft grounded 30% of the time during an eight-month period last year, the Government Accountability Office said in a report in the spring, documenting a host of flaws in the Pentagon's efforts to establish an effective and accountable supply chain.

Considered the Pentagon's most expensive weapons program, the F-35 has long been dogged by delays and cost overruns. The GAO warned that without fixes to supply and maintenance issues, it could fall short of supporting critical national defense missions.

Ex-Army spouse awarded \$3.2M in revenge porn suit

The Fayetteville (N.C.) Observer

A Fayetteville bartender won a \$3.2 million verdict Monday evening against her ex-husband and his new significant other in what appears to be North Carolina's first revenge porn lawsuit to reach a jury verdict.

Elizabeth Ann Clark a year ago leveled accusations of alienation-of-affection, libel and revenge porn in the case against ex-husband Army Maj. Adam Matthew Clark and his partner, Army Lt. Col. Kimberly Rae Barrett, in Cumberland County Superior Court.

"Alienation-of-affection" is the legal term for instances in which someone outside a marital relationship breaks up the marriage.

Elizabeth Clark's case said that she and Adam Clark, who is stationed on Fort Bragg, had been married since April 2010. They had two children together. She alleged that he began an affair with Barrett in 2016, when Adam Clark was temporarily working at Fort Belvoir, Va.

Lawyer Michael Porter contended to the jury in closing arguments Monday that Barrett, recently divorced and over age 40, wanted to start a family. She began her relationship with Adam Clark to make that happen, Porter said, and stole

him away from Elizabeth Clark.

The evidence included sexting between Adam Clark and Barrett in which he sent a sexually explicit video of himself, Porter said.

Barrett, a physician, has since come to Fort Bragg and practices at Womack Army Medical Center. Adam Clark has fathered a child with Barrett via in vitro fertilization, Porter said.

Adam Clark has misdemeanor charges of stalking and cyberstalking pending against him in Cumberland County District Court in connection with the allegations. Another member of Elizabeth Clark's legal team, Jose Coker, said Barrett testified she is being investigated by the military for adultery, which is a crime in the military, using her position to influence child care and accessing the medical records of Elizabeth Clark and her children.

Barrett and Adam Clark's lawyers argued that there was little evidence that Elizabeth Clark had been harmed by the pictures and comments.

The jury ordered Barrett to pay Elizabeth Clark \$1.2 million and Adam Clark to pay her \$2 million. The judge, Mary Ann Talley, assessed an additional \$10,000 on Adam Clark for the revenge porn, Porter said.

Drugmaker must pay \$572M

Associated Press

NORMAN, Okla. — An Oklahoma judge Monday found Johnson & Johnson and its subsidiaries helped fuel the state's opioid crisis and ordered the consumer products giant to pay \$572 million, more than twice the amount another drug manufacturer agreed to pay in a settlement.

Cleveland County District Judge Thad Balkman's ruling followed the first state opioid case to make it to trial and could help shape negotiations over roughly 1,500 similar lawsuits filed by state, local and tribal governments consolidated before a federal judge in Ohio.

"The opioid crisis has ravaged the state of Oklahoma," Balkman said before announcing the judgment. "It must be abated immediately."

An attorney for the companies said they plan to appeal the ruling to the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

Before Oklahoma's trial began May 28, the state reached settlements with two

other defendant groups — a \$270 million deal with OxyContin-maker Purdue Pharma and an \$85 million settlement with Israeli-owned Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd.

Oklahoma argued the companies and their subsidiaries created a public nuisance by launching an aggressive and misleading marketing campaign that overstated how effective the drugs were for treating chronic pain and understated the risk of addiction.

Oklahoma Attorney General Mike Hunter says opioid overdoses killed 4,653 people in the state from 2007 to 2017.

Hunter called Johnson & Johnson a "kingpin" company that was motivated by greed. He specifically pointed to two former Johnson & Johnson subsidiaries, Noramco and Tasmanian Alkaloids, which produced much of the raw opium used by other manufacturers to produce the drugs.

On Monday, Hunter said the Oklahoma case could provide a "road map" for other states to follow in holding drugmak-

ers responsible for the opioid crisis.

"That's the message to other states: We did it in Oklahoma. You can do it elsewhere," Hunter said. "Johnson & Johnson will finally be held accountable for thousands of deaths and addictions caused by their activities."

Oklahoma pursued the case under the state's public nuisance statute and presented the judge with a plan to abate the crisis that would cost between \$12.6 billion for 20 years and \$17.5 billion over 30 years. Attorneys for Johnson & Johnson have said that estimate is wildly inflated. The judge's award would cover the costs of one year of the state's abatement plan, funding things such as opioid use prevention and addiction treatment.

Attorneys for the company have maintained they were part of a lawful and heavily regulated industry subject to strict federal oversight, including the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and the Food and Drug Administration.

Military dog is finalist for award

The (Raleigh, N.C.)
News & Observer

In 2012, Lance Cpl. Abraham Tarwoe and his dog, Sgt. Yeager, were patrolling the Marjah district of Iraq.

A Marine had been injured by an improvised explosive device, so the pair were looking for other bombs in the area.

Suddenly, Tarwoe stepped on a buried IED, and it exploded, killing him. Yeager suffered shrapnel wounds that took months to recover from and cost him part of his right ear.

Ninety-two military working dogs died in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2001 to 2013, according to a study in Military Medicine. Roughly one in four died from explosions, the second leading cause of death after gunshot wounds.

Yeager was awarded a Purple Heart for his injuries after serving three combat tours and more than 100 detection patrols.

Now, the 12-year-old Labrador retriever is going to Hollywood, where he will be honored as the nation's top military dog and will compete for the title of American Hero Dog.

Tarwoe was born in Liberia and fled the country's civil war at age 12 to the United States. He went to high school in New Jersey. His citizenship was being processed when he was killed.

He was buried in Liberia, where many of his family members still live. He was 26 years old.

Yeager began serving alongside Tarwoe, a mortarman, in 2011 for the Weapons Company of the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment.

According to American Humane, fellow Marines described the bond between the handler and his dog as "unbreakable."

Yeager is the 2019 Military Dog of the Year and one of seven dogs receiving 2019 American Humane Hero Dog awards. They are now finalists for the grand prize: American Hero Dog.

Iran backpedals on talks with US

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's president backpedaled Tuesday on possible talks with Donald Trump, saying the U.S. president must first lift sanctions imposed on Tehran; otherwise, a meeting between the two would be a mere photo op.

Hassan Rouhani's change of heart came a day after Trump said Monday that there's a "really good chance" the two could meet on their nuclear impasse after a surprise intervention by French President Emmanuel Macron during the G-7 summit to try to bring Washington and Tehran together after decades of conflict.

"Without the U.S.' withdrawal from sanctions, we will not witness any positive development," Rouhani said in a televised speech on Tuesday, adding that

Washington "holds the key" as to what happens next. "If someone intends to make it as just a photo op with Rouhani, that is not possible," he said.

Earlier Monday, Rouhani expressed readiness to negotiate a way out of the crisis following America's pullout from the nuclear deal.

"If I knew that going to a meeting and visiting a person would help my country's development and resolve the problems of the people, I would not miss it," he had said.

"Even if the odds of success are not 90% but are 20% or 10%, we must move ahead with it. We should not miss opportunities."

Rouhani also shielded his foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, against criticism from hard-liners over his surprise visit Sunday to France's

Biarritz, where leaders of the Group of 7 rich democracies were meeting.

Iran's English-language Press TV issued a vague, anonymous statement later Monday, rejecting Macron's initiative.

Macron said he hoped Trump and Rouhani could meet within weeks in hopes of saving the 2015 nuclear deal that Tehran struck with world powers but which the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from last year. Under the deal, Iran agreed to limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

On Tuesday, Macron acknowledged his efforts to bring Iran and the U.S. together are "fragile" but said he still sees a "possible path" to rapprochement between the two.

Trump's 'unity' at G-7 ignores disagreements

Associated Press

BIARRITZ, France — Never mind his differences with world leaders on China, trade, Russia, Iran and more. President Donald Trump's takeaway message from the Group of Seven summit in France was "unity." In fact, "flawless" unity.

During this year's gathering of leaders of the world's wealthiest democracies, Trump went to great lengths to portray it as something of a lovefest, papering over significant disagreements on major issues.

"If there was any word for this particular meeting of seven very important countries, it was unity," Trump said at a news conference Monday closing out the two-day gathering in the French resort of Biarritz.

After Trump disrupted the last two G-7 summits with his erratic behavior, other world leaders seemed determined to play along this year in the interest of keeping any negative drama out of the headlines.

First came the decision by French President Emmanuel Macron, the summit host, to scrap the annual practice of issuing a lengthy joint statement, or communique, at the summit's conclusion. The document typically spells out the consensus that leaders have reached on issues on the summit agenda and provides a road map for how they plan to tackle them.

Trump roiled the 2017 meeting in Italy over the climate change passage in that summit's final statement. He withdrew his signature from the 2018 communique after

complaining he had been slighted by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the host that year.

"I think it's against that background that Macron decided it's not worth it" to issue a statement, said Thomas Bernes, a distinguished fellow at the Center for International Governance Innovation in Canada.

Instead, the leaders issued a final "declaration" that began, "The G7 leaders wish to emphasize their great unity and the positive spirit of their debates."

Macron also sought to play down awkward differences and said that what the G-7 leaders were "really keen on was to convey a positive and joint message following our discussions."

Families in US for medical care no longer protected

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Trump administration has eliminated a protection that lets immigrants remain in the country and avoid deportation while they or their relatives receive life-saving medical treatments or endure other hardships, immigration officials said in letters issued to families this month.

Critics denounced the decision as a cruel change that could force desperate migrants to accept lesser treatment in their poverty-stricken homelands.

Mariela Sanchez, a native of Honduras who recently applied for the special exemption, said a denial would amount to a death sentence for her son, Jonathan, 16,

who suffers from cystic fibrosis. They are among many families who settled in Boston to seek care at some of the nation's top hospitals.

Sanchez, who arrived in the U.S. with her family in 2016, said she lost a daughter to the same disease years ago after doctors in her home country failed to diagnose it.

The disease, which is hereditary, affects the lungs and digestive system and has no cure.

"He would be dead" if the family had remained in Honduras, she said of her son. "I have panic attacks over this every day."

In Boston alone, the decision could affect about 20 families with children fighting cancer, HIV, cerebral palsy, muscular

dystrophy, epilepsy and other serious conditions, said Anthony Marino, head of immigration legal services at the Irish International Immigrant Center, which represents the families.

Advocates say similar letters from Citizenship and Immigration Services have been issued to immigrants in California, North Carolina and elsewhere.

"Can anyone imagine the government ordering you to disconnect your child from life-saving care — to pull them from a hospital bed — knowing that it will cost them their lives?" Marino said.

"This is a new low," Democratic Sen. Ed Markey said. "Donald Trump is literally deporting kids with cancer."

Hurricane watch for Puerto Rico as Dorian strengthens

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Tropical Storm Dorian was dumping rain Tuesday on the Windward Islands of the eastern Caribbean, gathering power on a path to brush past Puerto Rico's southwest coast and hit the eastern Dominican Republic on Wednesday at near hurricane strength.

A still-uncertain long-term track showed the storm near Florida over the weekend.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center issued a hurricane watch for Puerto Rico and for the Dominican Republic from Isla Saona to Samana and tropical storm warnings for Martinique and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The center said the storm has maximum sustained winds near 50 miles per hour and is forecast to strengthen dur-

ing the next 48 hours before passing near or south of the U.S. territory.

The storm knocked out power overnight in Barbados, where crews began clearing downed trees and repairing the electrical grid early Tuesday.

Government officials said that by Tuesday morning, public transportation would resume and businesses would reopen. The storm was expected to dump between 3 and 6 inches of rain in the Windward Islands, with isolated amounts of 10 inches.

In St. Lucia, Prime Minister Allen Chastanet said "we are expecting the worst" and announced that everything on the island of nearly 179,000 people would shut down Monday evening ahead of the storm, but it remained below hurricane strength

early Tuesday.

In Puerto Rico, some grocery stores had run out of bottled water as people rushed to buy supplies including generators and filled their cars with gas. Many are worried about power outages and heavy rains on an island still struggling to recover from Hurricane Maria, a Category 4 storm that hit in September 2017.

On Monday, Puerto Rican Gov. Wanda Vazquez signed an executive order declaring a state of emergency and provided a list of the equipment that public agencies have bought since Maria. "I want everyone to feel calm," she said. "Agency directors have prepared for the last two years. The experience of Maria has been a great lesson for everyone."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Man stole 22 boxes of ice cream

NM LAS VEGAS — A northern New Mexico man is facing charges after he was accused of committing a cold crime on a hot day: an ice cream heist.

The Las Vegas Optic in New Mexico reported authorities said Paul Trujillo, 31, was arrested last week after he was one of two men who allegedly entered a walk-in freezer at a Dairy Queen store and stole 22 boxes of Dilly Bars.

Police said the July 29 footage shows Trujillo walking up to the freezer following a stake-out. The second man has not been identified.

Police report: Man forced to walk naked

SC MYRTLE BEACH — A South Carolina police report states a man found walking down a road naked was forced to do it by a gun-toting drug dealer to whom he owed money.

WBTW reported Myrtle Beach police encountered a man walking naked down a beachside road Saturday night. The man reportedly said he was forced to do it by a drug dealer he owed about \$350.

The police report stated the man said the suspected dealer had a gun and told him he had to walk the road without clothes, and followed behind him in a car.

2 rob Taco Bell with machete, crowbar

CT CROMWELL — Authorities are looking for two men they say robbed a Taco Bell armed with a machete and a crowbar by entering the building through an

unsecured door.

Police said the suspects entered the Cromwell restaurant around 2:30 a.m. Monday. Police said they had employees empty a safe, as well as their pockets, of any valuables.

The men then took the staff outside and had them wait there while they fled in a tan Honda.

Cromwell police responded and tried to stop the vehicle, which fled at a high rate of speed.

Security guard shoots man with didgeridoo

OK TULSA — Authorities in Tulsa said a security guard at a gas station shot and wounded a man who was swinging an Australian musical instrument at him.

Tulsa police said the shooting happened late Saturday at a Quik-Trip convenience store in Tulsa. They said the security guard said he opened fire after the man “swung a large wooden club at him” that was later determined to be a didgeridoo. Police said that, according to witnesses, the man may have also had a knife.

Police said the man was shot once in the groin area but is expected to recover.

The security guard told investigators the shooting was in self-defense. Police said surveillance video appears to back up that claim.

‘Margarita Madness 5K’ halted over booze

MI GRAND RAPIDS — Police arrested two people Saturday and shut down a race billed as the “Margarita Madness 5K.”

Grand Rapids Police Sgt. Dan Adams told WOOD-TV that officers called a halt to the event after learning alcohol was being illegally served.

Adams said state regulators denied event organizers’ request for a liquor license.

Margarita Madness 5K is advertised as a race in which participants receive a margarita at the finish line.

Police said one person associated with the organization was arrested on the liquor violation. Another was arrested for trying to interfere with the first arrest. Neither was identified.

Coach is winner of mechanical bull event

WA SPANGLE — Laura Moore, of Washington State University, has won what was billed as a mechanical bull world championship in Spangle over the weekend.

Moore, who coaches the Washington State University equestrian team, rode the mechanical bull for 57 seconds Saturday to win a \$4,000 prize and a belt buckle.

She lives in Moscow, Idaho, and grew up around horses at her parents’ farm outside Seattle.

Right on track, couple marries on fast train

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — They may have been traveling a speedy 79 mph, but a Florida couple remained steady as they said their vows while onboard a high-speed passenger train.

Paul Ward and Jules Bandiera became the first couple to get married on the Brightline train. They tied the knot Saturday between the Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach stations.

The gay couple held a quick photo session and celebration at the West Palm station before hopping the train home.

Ward told the Sun Sentinel he was standing outside work one

day pondering a yacht wedding when the train passed by and he “was stopped in my tracks.”

Professor walks for vet suicide awareness

NY POUGHKEEPSIE — A Marist College professor finished a cross-country walk to raise awareness about suicide and homelessness among veterans.

Tommy Zurhellen is an associate professor of English and is a Navy veteran. He finished his roughly 2,800-mile trek Friday afternoon on the college’s campus in Poughkeepsie.

Zurhellen started his trip in April in Portland, Ore. He walked 22 miles per day.

The project raised almost \$42,000 to support Hudson River Housing’s Liberty Station program for veterans as well as the Vet 2 Vet Peer Mentoring program.

Police: Woman robbed stores in a fake beard

NM ALBUQUERQUE — A New Mexico woman is facing charges after authorities said she robbed stores while wearing a fake beard.

Court documents show that Tamala Cole was arrested Thursday following heists at the Nothing Bundt Cake store and a Boba Tea cafe in Albuquerque.

In each case, police say Cole, 51, demanded money while holding a gun and wearing a “black beanie style hat” and a fake brown beard.

Investigators said Cole also is suspected of robbing a Subway and the religious goods store FaithWorks.

She is facing seven counts of robbery.

From wire reports

On a mission to provide objective reporting to America’s military, wherever they serve.
Read us online at www.stripes.com.

STARS AND STRIPES®

Army football preview

Knights hope to keep building on success

Associated Press

WEST POINT, N.Y. — Entering his sixth season at Army, coach Jeff Monken is in a very good place — 29 victories in three seasons and a team that's driven to keep the excellence going.

The Black Knights are coming off an academy-record, 11-win season and their first national ranking — No. 19 — since 1996, so the bar's set pretty high.

"Obviously, we've had a lot more expectation put on us this year than we have in the past," said fullback Connor Slomka, one of 32 seniors. "It's really exciting for this program. We as a team are very excited to have this opportunity. It's something we haven't had before. We're just really excited to show people that we belong there."

Last season, Monken had to replace quarterback Ahmad Bradshaw. His stellar play in 2017 led the Black Knights to their first 10-win season, capped by a second consecu-

tive win over archrival Navy and a bowl victory over San Diego State.

Exit Bradshaw, enter sophomore Kelvin Hopkins Jr.

It was a seamless transition. Hopkins became the first player in program history to throw and rush for more than 1,000 yards (1,026 and 1,017) in a season and finished the year with 17 rushing touchdowns, tying the team record shared by tailback Carlton Jones and quarterback Trent Steelman.

"A year ago we didn't know if he was going to be the starter," Monken said. "He earned the job, had a great season, so at this point the confidence that we have and his teammates have in him as a leader and as a performer makes it different."

Hopkins finished his breakout season with five rushing touchdowns in a stunning 70-14 victory over Houston in the Armed Forces Bowl. He's not expecting a drop-off.

"I think this team can be very special just based on the group of seniors we have," Hopkins

said. "This is the largest group of seniors we've had in my time here. It's a lot of guys that want to leave a good legacy."

Junior Christian Anderson and sophomore Jabari Laws are vying to be the backup.

Other things to know about Army, which opens the season at home against Rice on Friday:

Fullback fleet

Army relies heavily on its fullbacks to lead its ball-control option attack. The Black Knights ranked second nationally last season with an average of 312.4 yards rushing a game, but lost their top two fullbacks, bruising Darnell Woolfolk and slithery Andy Davidson, to graduation. Together, they had 1,286 yards rushing and 16 TDs, with Woolfolk tallying 14 of those scores. The 240-pound Slomka, a gifted short-yardage runner who had 216 rushing yards and scored five TDs last season, and junior Sandon McCoy are the top two heading

into the season. The 215-pound McCoy had 123 yards rushing on 28 carries and is getting a large share of the reps in pre-season to get him acclimated.

Offensive coordinator Brent Davis expects his retooled offensive line, minus stalwart Bryce Holland, to get the job done.

"This year the sum of the parts has a chance to be just fine," Davis said. "We've got 45 starts returning, guys that have started in 45 games. We really feel this is the most depth across the board that we've had."

Defensive drive

Army finished last season ranked eighth nationally in total defense, allowing 295.5 yards per game. Although LB James Nachtigal, the leading tackler, LB Kenneth Brinson, and DB Mike Reynolds are gone, LB Cole Christiansen, a returning captain, leads a unit that has veterans Elijah Riley and Jaylon McClinton to anchor the secondary.

Air Force football preview

Falcons eager to prove past two season were flukes

Associated Press

AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo. — Obviously, a second consecutive 5-7 season didn't sit well with the Air Force Falcons.

Quick for them to point out, though, was this little tidbit: Of the seven losses, five were by eight points or fewer.

"We were right there in a lot of games," said senior defensive back Jeremy Fejedelem, who led the team with 104 tackles. "That's really a one-play difference. One play. You get to that last play and realize the game of football is truly a game of inches."

It marked the first time since coach Troy Calhoun took over

before the 2007 season that the Falcons have missed a bowl in back-to-back years.

Again, that doesn't sit well.

"Last year, we were a lot better team than we showed," senior linebacker Kyle Johnson said. "We're confident. We're confident every year. Hopefully, we show how good we truly are."

The Falcons return seven players on defense and seven on offense. They certainly have experience back at quarterback after Donald Hammond III and Isaiah Sanders split time last season. Hammond rushed for a team-best nine touchdowns while Sanders, who went to high school in Colorado Springs, fin-

ished third on the team in rushing with 466 yards. He also passed for 844 yards and four scores.

"We'll be a late-blooming team," said Calhoun, who's gone to nine bowl games since becoming the coach at the Academy. "We just have to see when that is. If we can stay healthy, we'll be better in the back half of the season than we will today."

Things to know before the Falcons start the season on Saturday by hosting Colgate:

Spur of the moment

The Falcons have a position on defense they call "Spur," which is a hybrid linebacker/

safety. The player has to be versatile enough to cover tight ends and occasionally rush. The leading candidates to fill the spot are Garrett Kauppila and Grant Theil. Kauppila was limited to eight games due to an injury. He had 35 tackles.

Size on the line

At 330 pounds, nose guard Mosese Fifita (pronounced mo-SESS-a FUH-fee-tuh) is one of the bigger defensive linemen Air Force has had. The senior from Snohomish, Wash., had one sack last season. Joining him up front will be Jordan Jackson, who's listed at 270 pounds. Jackson had 12½ tackles for loss in '18.

Navy football preview

Mids looking for bounce-back season

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — In the wake of his worst season as Navy's football coach, Ken Niumatalolo made widespread changes to his standard formula for success.

The Midshipmen went 3-10 in 2018, losing to Army and Air Force. It was their fewest wins since 2002 and only their second sub-.500 season since Niumatalolo took over in December 2007.

As a result, Niumatalolo altered Navy's attack on both sides of the ball.

He hired Brian Newberry as the defensive coordinator, replacing Dale Pehrson, who retired after 23 years with the program. Newberry plans to play more aggressively and keep the opposition off balance with multiple coverages.

"He is very creative and does some exotic stuff," Niumatalolo said. "Coach Newberry just has that 'it' factor. He has great leadership qualities, a presence that people gravitate toward."

Niumatalolo also brought in Billy Ray Stutzmann from Hawaii to help offensive coor-

dinator Ivin Jasper add more passing elements to the Midshipmen's traditional triple-option attack.

Niumatalolo is confident the Midshipmen are poised for a bounce-back year.

"After doing this for 35 years, I know when a good team is coming together," he said. "I really believe this can be one of the great football teams at the Naval Academy."

Navy opens at home Saturday against Holy Cross.

Perry must throw

Niumatalolo has been pleased with the progress of senior quarterback Malcolm Perry. The Midshipmen spent the off-season implementing elements of the run and shoot, which features spread formations and relies on receivers to adjust their routes based on coverage. Much of the team's success could hinge on how well Perry is able to execute this offense. He completed nine of 25 pass attempts for 222 yards with two touchdowns and an interception in 13 games last season.

Navy averaged 72.8 passing yards per game, which ranked last among FBS programs. Niumatalolo knows those numbers need to improve to keep up in the American Athletic Conference.

"We're an option team and I believe we have the best option staff in the country," Niumatalolo said. "But we have to get better in the passing game. We want to do some run-and-shoot stuff because it's very similar to option schemes in that you have to adjust to coverages."

New motto

The Midshipmen initially adopted the motto "Load the Clip" for the upcoming season. However, Naval Academy Superintendent Vice Adm. Sean S. Buck called an audible, saying it was "insensitive" to those affected by a couple of mass shootings in the region last year. So Navy's captains implemented a new slogan: "Win the Day."

Meal plan

Niumatalolo put an added

focus on his player's nutrition this offseason, which has become an increasingly critical part of major college football programs. Navy hired Scott Maher in June as an assistant athletic director for dietetics and sports performance. The staff is monitoring the players' weight and their hydration following practices and games. The players also have access to a fueling station on the practice field that is stocked with protein bars, fruit, applesauce, fruit cups and other items high on carbohydrates and protein.

Tough schedule

Navy resumes its annual game against Notre Dame, which reached the College Football Playoff last year. The Midshipmen also are looking to snap a two-game losing streak against Army, which won the Commander-in-Chief's Trophy last year. The Midshipmen, who went 2-6 in the AAC last year, face three conference teams that advanced to a bowl game last season: Memphis, Tulane and Houston.

Serena crushes Sharapova in first round of US Open

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Serena Williams was not about to let Maria Sharapova make a match of this.

So facing a break point early in the second set, Williams conjured up a backhand passing shot so good, so powerful, so precise, that Sharapova had no chance to reach it. Williams watched the ball land, and then raised a clenched left fist toward the night sky.

In her first match at the U.S. Open since last year's loss in a chaotic, controversial final, Williams stretched her winning streak against Sharapova to 19 matches with a nearly flawless performance that produced a

6-1, 6-1 victory Monday.

Asked whether she could even imagine losing that many matches in a row across 15 years against one opponent, Williams paused for a moment, then replied: "Gosh, I never thought about it like that."

She now leads their head-to-head series 20-2.

"Every time I come up against her," Williams said, "I just bring out some of my best tennis."

Sure did this time; the whole thing lasted all of 59 minutes.

Williams won twice as many points, 56-28. She saved all five break points she faced and lashed serves at up to 115 mph. She broke five times.

"I always said her ball somehow lands in my strike zone," Williams said. "I don't know. It's just perfect for me."

Few players would have stood a chance against Williams the way she was hitting balls deep and true — and certainly not a diminished Sharapova, who is ranked 87th after missing much of this season with a bad right shoulder that needed surgery. This was a showdown fit for a final, at least in theory: These two met in a title match at each of the other three Grand Slam tournaments but never had faced each other in New York.

In other matches around the grounds Monday, Roger Federer dropped his first set of the tournament against a qualifier

ranked 190th before coming back to eliminate Sumit Nagal of India 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-4, No. 1 Novak Djokovic opened defense of his title with a 6-4, 6-1, 6-4 victory over Roberto Carballes Baena, and 21-year-old American Reilly Opelka provided the biggest upset of the afternoon in his U.S. Open debut by eliminating No. 11 Fabio Fognini of Italy 6-3, 6-4, 6-7 (6), 6-3.

And 2016 champion Angelique Kerber continued her rough Grand Slam year with a first-round exit against Kristina Mladenovic by a 7-5, 0-6, 6-4 score, while 2016 runner-up Karolina Pliskova and reigning French Open title winner Ash Barty both struggled through rough starts before emerging.

Rockies halt Braves' streak at 8 games

Associated Press

DENVER — Ryan McMahon ran hard to first because he wasn't sure his line drive would get over the fence. When it bounced just over the scoreboard he settled into a home run trot and into a mob of teammates at the plate.

McMahon's hit — a two-run homer in the ninth — lifted Colorado to a 3-1 win over Atlanta on Monday and ended the Braves' eight-game winning streak.

McMahon saw two fastballs from Jerry Blevins before hitting the third one just over the scoreboard in right for the second game-ending homer of his career.

"He's kind of a funky lefty, has a little crossfire and he went two fastballs to me early, which

I thought was kind of weird," said McMahon, who has 18 homers this season. "I felt like it was a little too predictable for it to be a curveball next pitch. I was looking for something over the plate and put a good swing at it."

Blevins said it was poor location that gave McMahon something to hit.

"I wanted to go down and away and I left it up and in the middle," he said. "That was on me."

Nolan Arenado started the inning with a walk off Anthony Swarzak (1-2) and Blevins fanned Daniel Murphy before McMahon's homer.

"I dropped my bat and started running," McMahon said. "I didn't know right away so I wanted to make it to second base."

Jairo Diaz (5-3) blew the save in the ninth but got the win, which ended the Rockies' four-game losing streak.

Monday was a makeup from the April 10th game postponed due to inclement weather and forced Atlanta to crisscross the country.

The Braves traveled to Denver on Sunday night after playing in New York, and right after the game boarded a plane for Toronto to take on the Blue Jays.

"You don't belabor or dwell on because it's what we signed up to do," Atlanta manager Brian Snitker said. "It's not going to be all the time. We have an off day in two days. It isn't like we came out here and now have to play 25 in a row."

Colorado starter Tim Melville pitched five scoreless in-

nings and now has allowed just one run over 12 innings since being recalled from Triple-A Albuquerque last week. The 29-year-old journeyman was pitching in the Atlantic League this spring before signing a minor league deal with Colorado.

He escaped a run in the fourth when Freddie Freeman was thrown out at home trying to score from second, and in the fifth he walked Ronald Acuna and Ozzie Albies to load the bases but got Freeman to ground out to end another threat.

"I had Albies and Acuna 0-2 and lost them," Melville said. "That's something you don't want to have happen so you step off the mound and take a deep breath. That's what did it right there. We executed and got out of that inning."

MLB roundup

Rodriguez's 11th-inning homer lifts Phillies over Bucs

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Sean Rodriguez lined a home run leading off the bottom of the 11th inning to give the Philadelphia Phillies a 6-5 victory over the Pittsburgh Pirates on Monday night.

Josh Bell hit a solo homer off Philadelphia closer Hector Neris to tie it at 5 in the ninth after Corey Dickerson hit a two-run shot against his former team in the eighth to give the Phillies a one-run lead.

But after stranding five runners in the ninth and 10th, the Phillies won it when Rodriguez went deep against Michael Feliz (2-4) for his fourth career walk-off homer. Rodriguez was in a 1-for-21 slump before he connected.

Philadelphia moved within a game of the idle Cubs for the second NL wild card.

Bryce Harper homered with two outs in the eighth in his first game back from paternity leave to cut it to 4-3. After J.T.

Realmuto's infield single, Dickerson ripped one out to put the Phillies ahead 5-4.

Dickerson, acquired from the Pirates before the July 31 trade deadline, has 21 RBIs in 19 games for the Phillies.

Cardinals 12, Brewers 2: Marcell Ozuna's bases-loaded double keyed a six-run second inning and surging St. Louis pounded out a victory over host Milwaukee.

The Cardinals, who have won five straight, jumped on starter Gio Gonzalez (2-2) for eight runs in the first two innings en route to their 14th victory in 17 games.

Athletics 19, Royals 4: Marcus Semien homered, tripled and drove in a career-high seven runs as visiting Oakland set season highs for runs and hits in a rout of Kansas City.

Jurickson Profar, Matt Chapman and Khris Davis also went deep for the Athletics, who are locked in a tight race with Cleveland and Tampa Bay for the two American League wild

cards. Josh Phegley drove in three runs and scored three times. Four players had three hits and every starter got at least one as Oakland finished with 22. Seth Brown singled in the first two at-bats of his big league career, scored twice and drove in a run.

Yankees 5, Mariners 4: Gleyber Torres hit his 13th home run this month, Mike Ford went deep twice and visiting New York beat Seattle.

Torres launched his 33rd homer of the season on the first pitch of the second inning from Tommy Milone, who took over after Matt Wisler was used as an opener. It was the start of a four-run rally for the AL East leaders. Austin Romine had an RBI single and Ford added the big blow with a two-run shot down the right-field line.

Padres 4, Dodgers 3: Greg Garcia scored the tying run on a throwing error by center fielder A.J. Pollock, and Manny Machado drove in the go-ahead run on a groundout during a

three-run rally in the sixth inning that carried host San Diego past Los Angeles.

Dodgers rookie Dustin May (1-3) took a 3-1 lead into the sixth before the Padres rallied to hand the NL West leaders their third loss in four games.

Diamondbacks 6, Giants 4: Outfielder Jarrod Dyson made a pair of stellar defensive plays in the sixth inning after Eduardo Escobar scored the go-ahead run on a wild pitch, and visiting Arizona held on to beat San Francisco.

Adam Jones delivered his third pinch-hit homer this season. Wilmer Flores added three hits and an RBI to help the Diamondbacks to their sixth win in eight games against the Giants.

Reds 6, Marlins 3: Sonny Gray pitched into the seventh inning, Freddy Galvis drove in four runs and visiting Cincinnati stopped a three-game slide.

Gray (10-6) walked five, but limited Miami to two runs and two hits.