

## Taliban add to gains, seize major city

*Associated Press*

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban captured Afghanistan's third-largest city and a strategic provincial capital near Kabul on Thursday, further squeezing the country's embattled government just weeks before the end of the American military mission there.

The seizure of Herat marks the biggest prize yet for the Taliban, who have taken 11 of Afghanistan's 34 provincial capitals as part of a weeklong blitz. Taliban fighters rushed past the Great Mosque in the historic city — which dates to 500 B.C. and was once a spoil of Alexander the Great — and seized government buildings. Witnesses described hearing sporadic gunfire at one government building while the rest of the city fell silent under the insurgents' control.

The capture of Ghazni, meanwhile, cuts off a crucial highway linking the Afghan capital with the country's southern provinces, which similarly find themselves under assault as part of an insurgent push some 20 years after U.S. and NATO troops invaded and ousted the Taliban government.

While Kabul itself isn't directly under threat yet, the losses and the battles elsewhere further tighten the grip of a resurgent Taliban, who are estimated to now hold over two-thirds of the nation and are continuing to pressure government forces in several other provincial capitals.

Thousands of people have fled their homes amid fears the Taliban will again impose a brutal, repressive government, all but eliminating women's rights and conducting public amputations, stonings and executions. Peace talks in Qatar remain stalled, though diplomats met.

The latest U.S. military intelligence assessment suggests Kabul could come under insurgent pressure within 30 days and that, if current trends hold, the Taliban could gain full control of the country within a few months. The Afghan government may eventually be forced to pull back to defend the capital and just a few other cities in the coming days if the Taliban keep up their momentum.

Herat had been under militant attack for two weeks, with one wave blunted by the arrival of warlord Ismail Khan and his forces.

But on Thursday afternoon, Taliban fighters broke through the city's defensive lines and later said they were in control.

Afghan lawmaker Semin Barekzai also acknowledged the city's fall, saying that some officials there had escaped.

Already, the Taliban's weeklong blitz has seen the militants seize nine other provincial capitals around the country. Many are in the country's northeast corner, pressuring Kabul from that direction as well.

With the Afghan air power limited and in disarray, the U.S. Air Force is believed to be carrying out strikes. Aviation tracking data suggested U.S. Air Force B-52 bombers, F-15 fighter jets, drones and other aircraft were involved in the fighting across the country, according to Australia-based security firm The Cavell Group.

U.S. Air Force Maj. Nicole Ferrara, a Central Command spokeswoman, acknowledged that American forces "have conducted several airstrikes in defense of our Afghan partners in recent days." However, she declined to offer any details on the attacks or to discuss the Afghan complaints of civilian casualties.

## Experts warn of increasing possibility of Taiwan war

**BY ALEX WILSON**

*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — A panel of security experts, including a former Japanese government official, expressed concern this week about the increasing potential for war between China and the United States, but made clear they believe conflict can be avoided.

During a news conference Wednesday at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, three experts discussed the rising tensions over Taiwan between the U.S., Japan and China, as well as what could be done to avoid outright combat.

Kyoji Yanagisawa, a former

assistant chief cabinet secretary for Japan who led the country's national security and crisis management between 2004 and 2009, expressed serious concerns about stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

"Personally, I believe that this situation is already reaching close to the danger zone of war," he said. "And there is a serious risk that China and the U.S. may go to war or enter into a conflict over Taiwan."

Mounting tensions follow increasing reunification rhetoric from Beijing, which considers Taiwan to be a breakaway province that should be reunited, possibly by force. The island

split from the mainland in 1949 and has its own democratic government.

As recently as two weeks ago, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Zhao Lijian, described Taiwan as "an inalienable part of China's territory" and said the issue itself is part of the political foundation of China's diplomatic relations with Japan and the U.S.

"China's national reunification and rejuvenation are an unstoppable trend. No one should underestimate the strong resolution, determination and capability of the Chinese people to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity," he

told reporters on July 29. "Any attempt to create 'two Chinas' or 'one China, one Taiwan' will be like trying to hold back the tide with a broom and is doomed to fail."

Adm. John Aquilino, head of Indo-Pacific Command, said in an Aug. 5 press conference that the U.S. is ready for "any contingency that may occur," including armed conflict, when it comes to the Indo-Pacific region and Taiwan.

"We are here to continue to operate to ensure peace and prosperity through the region, and we have to be in a position to ensure that status quo remains as it applies to Taiwan," he said.

# Marine Raider to receive Navy Cross award

By CHAD GARLAND  
*Stars and Stripes*

A Marine Raider will receive the Navy Cross later this month for his heroism during a deadly daytime operation last year to clear Islamic State positions in mountain caves in northern Iraq and in an ensuing five-hour firefight, the Marine Corps said.

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger is slated to present the medal to Staff Sgt. Nicholas J. Jones, a critical skills operator with 2nd Marine Raider Battalion at Camp Lejeune, N.C., during a ceremony Aug. 26, Marine Forces Special Operations Command said in a statement Wednesday. Citing Jones' "decisive actions, bold initiative and

unconquerable spirit," the command said he'll become the eighth service member in its 15-year history to earn the valor award, second only to the Medal of Honor.

A native of Olathe, Kan., Jones was an element leader accompanying Iraqi security forces on the mission to clear the cave complex March 8, 2020, when several entrenched enemy fighters "unleashed a heavy volume of fire on an adjacent element," the statement said.

"Hell just opens up behind me," Jones said in a video last month for a Montana-based nonprofit he recently founded called Talons Reach Foundation. "Chaos. And then the next second there's an 'Eagle' (American spe-

cial operator) down."

The barrage immediately wounded a French special operator, then two Marine Raiders, the MARSOC statement said. Jones mounted a counterattack and under sustained enemy fire at close range maneuvered to the French casualty, it said.

Jones didn't wait to hear the names of the fallen Marines before running to help recover the casualties, he said on the podcast Signal Fire Radio in May. He dropped his ruck and lowered himself blindly into a ravine, he said, then crawled to the opening of a cave, where he came under enemy machine-gun fire.

Jones suppressed the enemy 20 meters away with rifle fire and

grenades, while helping move the French casualty to cover and to a medical evacuation, MARSOC said. He then turned his attention to the two fallen Marines, braving enemy fire from the caves to fire his rifle and toss grenades to drive them back.

Jones himself was injured nearly five hours into the firefight when he led a third and final attack on the enemy positions.

He planned to serve 20 years, but he was forced to medically retire due to complications from his injuries, he said in the podcast.

"I was crushed," he said. "It was such a good time with the boys. ... It makes you feel amazing to be around that community all the time."

## Marine honored for saving woman and child from flood

By JONATHAN SNYDER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Marine Corps has recognized a sergeant major who rescued a woman and her child when a flash flood struck a hiking trail to a waterfall on Okinawa last year.

Sgt. Maj. David Potter, 42, of Medina, Ohio, was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal on Aug. 4 at Camp Hansen by Brig. Gen. Brian Wolford, commander of 3rd Marine Logistics Group. Potter is assigned to the 9th Engineers Support Battalion, 3rd MLG on Okinawa.

The medal is the second-highest awarded by the Navy and Marines for noncombat heroism. It typically recognizes actions involving the risk of one's own life.

"I saw out the corner of my eye these two objects floating down the river; it was a woman and her young son," he told Stars and Stripes by phone on Wednesday. "I locked eyes with her for just a moment and I saw just fear and

panic. In that moment, I just jumped in because I knew something had to be done."

Potter's recognition came about two months after Master Gunnery Sgt. Ronald Thomas, 42, and Master Sgt. Sara Thomas, 44, were awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal at Camp Courtney for helping more than a dozen people to safety that day.

Potter credits the rescue to his Marine Corps training.

"I was an aviation crew chief," he said. "In order to be a crew chief you have to go through an extensive swim qualification, about a monthlong swim lessons."

"I'm very confident in my comfort level in the water and the additional training to be able to rescue myself from a sinking helicopter," Potter told Stars and Stripes. "That definitely helped my ability to navigate through the water to save that woman."

## Patriot Express delays don't dent contractors' reliability

By JONATHAN SNYDER  
*Stars and Stripes*

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — Three times in July, maintenance issues delayed Patriot Express flights bound for or already in Japan, setbacks that had little impact on the reliability record of the contractors who fly them.

Patriot Express is the government-contracted air service that flies service members and their families between the United States and its overseas bases in Europe and Asia. Omni Air International, based in Tulsa, Okla., and Atlas Air, of Purchase, N.Y., operate the Pacific routes. Omni primarily flies the Boeing 767 and 777; Atlas flies the 767 and 747 models.

Over the past 1 ½ years, the air service has a better than 90% on-time flight reliability, when issues only controlled by the contractor, such as mainte-

nance problems, are considered, according to a spokesman for U.S. Transportation Command.

Ninety percent of all contracted air carriers, including the Patriot Express flights, were on-time in 2020, and 92% so far in 2021, command spokesman Scott Ross told Stars and Stripes in an email July 30.

"Commercial passenger carriers are required to maintain a minimum of 80% on-time reliability," he said. "We do not track delays that are uncontrollable, or of no fault of the carrier, such as weather delays or delays caused by the government."

The Patriot Express mission for this fiscal year costs \$160 million, part of the International Airlift Contract, Ross wrote. "The contract covers passenger and cargo airlift for special assignment airlift missions, exercises and contingencies," he said.

# CDC urges vaccines for pregnant women

Associated Press

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urged all pregnant women Wednesday to get the COVID-19 vaccine as hospitals in hot spots around the United States see disturbing numbers of unvaccinated mothers-to-be seriously ill with the virus.

Expectant women run a higher risk of severe illness and pregnancy complications from the coronavirus, including perhaps miscarriages and stillbirths. But their vaccination rates are low, with only about 23% having received at least one dose, according to CDC data.

“The vaccines are safe and effective, and it has never been more urgent to increase vaccinations as we face the highly transmissible delta variant and see severe outcomes from COVID-19 among unvaccinated pregnant people,” CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said in a statement.

The updated guidance comes after a CDC analysis of new safety data on 2,500 women showed no increased risks of miscarriage for those who received at least one dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine before 20 weeks of pregnancy. The analysis found a miscarriage rate of around 13%, with-

in the normal range.

The CDC’s advice echoes recent recommendations from top obstetrician groups. The agency had previously encouraged pregnant women to consider vaccination but had stopped short of a full recommendation. The new advice also applies to nursing mothers and women planning to get pregnant.

Although pregnant women were not included in studies that led to authorization of COVID-19 vaccines, experts say real-world experience in tens of thousands of women shows that the shots are safe for them, and that it may offer some protection to newborns

when given during pregnancy.

The new guidance comes amid a surge in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths in the U.S., driven by the highly contagious delta variant.

Some health authorities believe the variant may cause more severe disease — in pregnant women and others as well — than earlier versions of the virus, though that is still under investigation.

Around 105,000 pregnant U.S. women have been infected, and almost 18,000 have been hospitalized, according to the CDC. About one-fourth of those received intensive care and 124 died.

## US jobless claims again fall as economy grows

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits fell for a third straight time last week, the latest sign that employers are laying off fewer people as they struggle to fill a record number of open jobs and meet a surge in consumer demand.

Thursday’s report from the Labor Department showed that jobless claims fell for a third straight week to 375,000 from 387,000 the previous week. The number of applications has fallen steadily since topping 900,000 in early January as the economy has increasingly reopened in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic recession.

Filings for unemployment benefits have traditionally been seen as a real-time gauge of the job market’s health, but the measure’s reliability has deteriorated during the pandemic. In many states, the weekly figures have been inflated by fraud and by multiple filings from unemployed Americans as they navigate bureaucratic hurdles to try to obtain benefits.

Those complications help ex-

plain why the pace of applications remains comparatively high. Before the pandemic paralyzed the economy in March 2020, unemployment applications were running at about 220,000 a week.

So far at least, there has been little sign that the delta variant of the coronavirus has depressed hiring or prompted layoffs. In July, employers added a substantial 943,000 jobs, the government said last week, and the unemployment rate sank from 5.9% to 5.4%. Average hourly earnings jumped a sharp 4% in July from a year earlier, indicating that employers have felt compelled to raise pay. Still, that report was based on a survey that was conducted in mid-July, before a surge in COVID-19 delta cases took off.

On Monday, the government reported that employers posted more than 10 million available jobs in June, the most on records dating back to December 2000. That meant there were more open jobs than there were unemployed people that month. Yet those figures, too, predate the recent spike in COVID cases.

## Over 9K anti-Asian incidents seen in US in pandemic era

Associated Press

The frequency of anti-Asian incidents — from taunts to outright assaults — reported in the United States so far this year seems poised to surpass last year despite months of political and social activism, according to a new report released Thursday.

Stop AAPI Hate, a national coalition that became the authority on gathering data on racially motivated attacks related to the pandemic, received 9,081 incident reports between March 19, 2020, and this June. Of those, 4,548 occurred last year, and 4,533 this year. Since the coronavirus was first reported in China, people of Asian and Pacific Islander descent have been treated as scapegoats solely based on their race.

Lawmakers, activists and community groups have pushed back against the wave of attacks. There have been countless social media campaigns, bystander training sessions and public rallies. In May, President Joe Biden signed the bipartisan COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, expediting Justice Department reviews of anti-Asian hate crimes and making federal grants available.

Those supporters should not feel discouraged because the data hasn’t shifted much, Stop AAPI Hate leaders said.

“When you encourage hate, it’s not like a genie in a bottle where you can pull it out and push it back in whenever you want,” said Manjusha Kulkarni, co-founder of Stop AAPI Hate and executive director of the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council. “There’s too much perpetuating these belief systems to make them go away.”

The reports aggregated by Stop AAPI Hate are from the victims themselves or someone reporting on their behalf, like an adult child. Overall, the report found verbal harassment and shunning — interactions that don’t qualify legally as hate crimes — make up the two largest shares of total incidents. Physical assaults made up the third. But their percentage of the incidents this year increased from last year — 16.6% compared to 10.8%.

More than 63% of the incidents were submitted by women. Roughly 31% took place on public streets, and 30% at businesses.



# Wildfire nears Mont. towns as West burns

Associated Press

LAME DEER, Mont. — A wildfire bore down on rural southeastern Montana towns Thursday as continuing hot, dry weather throughout the West drove flames through more than a dozen states.

Several thousand people remained under evacuation orders as the Richard Spring Fire advanced across the sparsely-populated Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation.

Meanwhile, the Dixie Fire — which started July 13 and is the largest wildfire burning in the nation — threatened a dozen small communities in the northern Sierra Nevada even though its

southern end was mostly controlled by fire lines.

The blaze had burned over 780 square miles, destroyed some 550 homes and nearly obliterated the town of Greenville. It was 30% contained.

On Wednesday, the Montana fire displayed extreme behavior and had grown by tens of thousands of acres, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. The blaze, which was only 15% surrounded, began Sunday and powerful gusts caused it to explode across more than 230 square miles.

By nightfall, the fire had crept within about 2 miles of the evacuated town of Lame Deer, leaping

over a highway where officials had hoped to stop it.

Rancher Jimmy Peppers sat on his horse east of town, watching an orange glow grow near the site of his house.

"I didn't think it would cross the highway so I didn't even move my farm equipment," said Peppers, who spent the afternoon herding his cattle onto a neighbor's pasture closer to town. "I don't know if I'll have a house in the morning."

The town of about 2,000 people is home to the tribal headquarters and several subdivisions and is surrounded by rugged, forested terrain. By late Wednesday, a second fire was closing in on

Lame Deer from the west, while the Richard Spring Fire raged to the east.

Also ordered to leave were about 600 people in and around Ashland, a small town just outside the reservation. Local, state and federal firefighters were joined by ranchers using their own heavy equipment to carve out fire lines around houses.

The National Weather Service said a ridge of high pressure moving into the area would pump temperatures into the 90s over the weekend.

Drought conditions have left trees, grass and brush bone-dry throughout many Western states, leaving them ripe for ignition.

## Northwest sizzles as heat wave reaches other states

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Volunteers and county employees set up cots and stacked hundreds of bottles of water in an air-conditioned cooling center in a vacant building in Portland, Ore., one of many such places being set up as the Northwest sees another stretch of sizzling temperatures.

Scorching weather also hit other parts of the country this week. The weather service said heat advisories and warnings would be in effect from the Midwest to the Northeast and mid-Atlantic through at least Friday.

In Portland, temperatures neared 100 degrees Fahrenheit on Wednesday and the mercury could soar past the century mark Thursday and Friday. Authorities trying to provide relief to vulnerable people are mindful of a record-shattering heat wave

earlier this summer that killed hundreds in the Pacific Northwest.

The high temperatures in Portland, part of a usually temperate region, would break all-time records this week if the late June heat wave had not done so already. Seattle will be cooler than Portland, with temperatures in the mid-90s, but it still has a chance to break records, and many people there, like in Oregon, don't have air conditioning.

People began coming into a 24-hour cooling center in north Portland before it opened Wednesday.

The first few people in were experiencing homelessness, a population vulnerable to extreme heat. Among them was December Snedecor, who slept two nights in the same center in June when temperatures reached 116 F.

She said she planned to sleep there again this week because the heat in her tent was unbearable.

"I poured water over myself a lot. It was up in the teens, hundred-and-something heat. It made me dizzy. It was not good," Snedecor said of the June heat. "I've just got to stay cool. I don't want to die."

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has declared a state of emergency and activated an emergency operations center, citing the potential for disruptions to the power grid and transportation. Besides opening cooling centers, city and county governments are extending public library hours and waiving bus fare for those headed to cooling centers. A 24-hour statewide help line will direct callers to the nearest cooling shelter and offer safety tips.

## Flooding hits Mich. in another round of Midwest storms

Associated Press

DETROIT — Heavy rains brought flooding to parts of Michigan early Thursday, shutting down some freeways in the Detroit area, as waves of thunderstorms made their way across large swaths of the Midwest.

The storms come as dangerous heat persists in the Northwest, Northeast and the central por-

tions of the country. Heat warnings and heat advisories were in effect for another day Thursday.

Portions of interstates 94 and 696 were closed early Thursday in the Detroit area, along with a stretch of I-696 in Livingston County. The Detroit area has been hit by multiple rounds of flooding this summer.

Damaging winds and falling

trees knocked out power to hundreds of thousands of customers. Utilities that had been working to restore power following earlier outages reported more than 700,000 outages in Michigan as of Thursday morning.

Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana have also been hit by recent rounds of storms. Utility poles were broken and transformers

damaged in the Fort Wayne and South Bend areas of northwestern Indiana following Wednesday storms. In Wisconsin, residents took cover Wednesday from a sixth straight day of severe thunderstorms, and at least two tornadoes touched in the west-central and northeast parts of the state. No reports of damage were immediately available.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**3 oil well fires put out in 16 days; cause not known**

**ND** WATFORD CITY — Authorities say fires involving three oil wells in McKenzie County were brought under control over the weekend after they had burned for 16 days.

Crews put out the fire at the first well northeast of Watford City, then extinguished the final well Saturday, said Beth Babb, a spokesperson for Petro-Hunt, the company operating the well pad.

An early estimate Petro-Hunt provided the state indicated that 4,200 gallons of oil and 4,200 gallons of produced water spilled in the incident. Produced water is also known as brine or saltwater, and it comes up alongside oil and gas in wells. State officials believe that any fluids that spilled either burned up or were contained.

The cause of the fire is under investigation, but the blaze began at one of the wells and then spread to the other two, all of which are on the same well pad.

**Decision to replace boardwalk is appealed**

**MA** SANDWICH — The battle over demolishing and replacing a beloved boardwalk in a Cape Cod community is being appealed.

The Sandwich Historic District Committee voted July 14 to demolish the boardwalk, but three members of Friends of the Sandwich Boardwalk filed an appeal July 20 to reverse the decision, the Cape Cod Times reported. The appeal will be heard this month.

The Sandwich Historic District Committee voted 3-2 to demolish the boardwalk and replace it with a new one that meets accessibility codes and federal flood regulations. Officials also say the cur-

rent boardwalk is in a fragile state due to rot and decay.

The Friends of Sandwich Boardwalk aren't necessarily against replacing or repairing the boardwalk, they just have a problem with the proposed design.

**Man admits role in theft of meds from VA hospital**

**NJ** NEWARK — A New Jersey man has admitted his role in a scheme to steal more than \$8.2 million worth of prescription HIV medication from a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital in northern New Jersey, according to federal prosecutors.

Wagner "Wanny" Checonolasco, 34, of Lyndhurst, pleaded guilty to conspiring to steal government property. He now faces up to five years in prison when he's sentenced Dec. 15.

Prosecutors say Checonolasco conspired with Lisa Hoffman, a former pharmacy technician at the hospital in East Orange, and others to steal the medication.

Prosecutors Hoffman said she used her position to order large quantities of HIV prescription medications, purportedly on behalf of the hospital. She then stole and sold the excess to Checonolasco for cash, prosecutors have said, and he then resold it to others for a profit.

Hoffman, 48, of Orange, has been indicted on charges of conspiracy, theft of government property and theft of medical products.

**Mold in court building leads to hearings on lawn**

**SC** GREENVILLE — Court hearings are being held outdoors after flooding revealed mold inside the municipal court building in Greenville.

The building that houses

Greenville Municipal Court remains closed after broken water and sewage lines revealed mold damage, The Greenville News reported. Tents have been set up for court hearings on the front lawn of the downtown building, and they're expected to be used throughout the week.

Repairs are still ongoing inside the court building, which was built in 1946, the newspaper reported.

**Plan to restore home of Satchel Paige unveiled**

**MO** KANSAS CITY — A \$3 million renovation plan for the fire-damaged former home of baseball great Leroy "Satchel" Paige in Kansas City, Mo., was unveiled Monday on the 50th anniversary of his entry to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Some of the possible features include a coffee shop, event and meeting space, and a bakery, the Kansas City Star reported.

The project will celebrate Paige's legacy as a ballplayer in the Negro Leagues. He became famous striking out white major leaguers before Black athletes were allowed into the Major Leagues. By the time he got into the majors, his career was winding down.

The city bought the house, which has been vacant for 30 years, after it was damaged in a 2018 arson fire.

**Late-arriving catch wins White Marlin Open title**

**MD** OCEAN CITY — A late-arriving catch upset the scales and appears to have upended the outcome of the premier competition on the final day of the White Marlin Open on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Butch Wright of Arnold, Md., brought in to Harbour Island Ma-

rina in Ocean City an 85.5-pound white marlin. That would give him the top prize at the 48th annual fishing tournament, The Daily Times of Salisbury reported.

Wright, with his boat called Sushi, edged out Mike Atkinson of Virginia Beach, Va., whose 82.5-pound white marlin weighed in on the competition's first day.

Wright's catch was valued at \$3.2 million, which would make it the largest payout in the tournament. Atkinson's catch would have been valued at \$5 million had he won. Instead, it was \$1.8 million for second place.

**Arrest made in crash that killed newlywed bride**

**UT** SALT LAKE CITY — The driver of a pickup truck who Utah police say caused a vehicle crash last weekend that killed a newlywed bride who was still in her purple wedding dress has been arrested, a TV station reported.

The bride, Angelica Jimenez Dhondup, 26, was on her way to a party hours after her wedding in car driven by a cousin when the pickup truck crashed into it head-on early Saturday morning, KSL-TV reported, citing the Utah Department of Public Safety.

The pickup driver, Manaure Gonzalez-Rea, 36, stole another vehicle at the crash scene but was stopped by a trooper a few miles away, according to Utah Highway Patrol.

He was arrested and is accused of automobile homicide, failure to remain at an accident involving death and driving under the influence.

Family members said Dhondup's 20-year-old cousin who was driving the car she was in was released from a hospital Saturday afternoon.

— From wire reports

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# Players jump at chance to change numbers

*Associated Press*

When Patrick Peterson found out about the NFL rule change expanding the ranges of jersey numbers that players are allowed to wear, he quickly contacted one of his new teammates on the Minnesota Vikings.

The eight-time Pro Bowl cornerback wanted his trusty No. 7 again after being forced to take No. 21 when he entered the league. Backup quarterback Nate Stanley had no problem giving it up and taking No. 14 instead.

"He said yes. All I had to do was get his dad's high school team some shoulder pads," Peterson said. "I said, 'Done!'"

While the boys in Stanley's hometown of Menomonie, Wis., ought to be a little bit better protected while they're blocking and tackling under the lights this fall, Peterson will feel a bit more comfortable himself in the single-digit identity he forged for himself at Blanche Ely High School in Pompano Beach, Fla., and then in college at LSU.

"I was known by that number, and I believe that if you're known by a number, nine times out of 10 you're a great player," Peterson said, pointing to the No. 2 worn by Hall of Fame cornerback Deion Sanders at Florida State and the No. 21 he wore as a pro. "When you see that number, you see that person. I'm just happy to finally not only be back in purple but also to wear No. 7."

The updated guidelines approved by the

league this spring opened up Nos. 1-19 for running backs and defensive backs, who were previously limited to Nos. 20-49. Running backs can choose from 80-89 now, too. Wide receivers were also granted the rights to single digits, after being slotted before from 10-19 and 80-89. Tight ends were assigned 40-49 and 80-89 before, but they can now take 1-39 as well. Linebackers were let in to the single-digit club, too, and allowed to take 20-39 in addition to their customary 40-59 and 90-99.

The ranges for quarterbacks and specialists (1-19), offensive linemen (50-79) and defensive linemen (50-79 and 90-99) did not change, although centers, guards and tackles are now comingled. The former used to be limited to 50-59, the latter 60-79.

Temporary deviations from the position-by-position guidelines are allowed during spring and summer practices when rosters are larger, but unless the commissioner grants special permission, the rules must be adhered to during the regular season.

Vikings defensive tackle Sheldon Richardson, who signed with the club this summer and was uninspired by the No. 67 he was offered, picked No. 9 for training camp. He's going to have to pick something else in September, mildly irked that linebackers can flash single-digits but linemen can't.

"I really don't mind numbers, but I wasn't

wearing 67," Richardson said. "We'll see what happens."

For this year only, players seeking to change numbers within the allowable ranges for their position were required to first buy out all the remaining inventory of jerseys in their likeness through the NFL's official distributors.

Los Angeles Rams cornerback Jalen Ramsey previously balked at the asking price of a change while he was with the Jacksonville Jaguars. Now that single digits are in play, however, he took No. 5 in favor of his old No. 20. Ramsey's first choice was No. 2, but he yielded to wide receiver Robert Woods, who discarded No. 17.

"The reason for me wanting No. 2 was really to remember I'm second, like in life. I wanted to put others before myself," said Ramsey, who playfully traded pictures earlier this year with Woods of them each wearing No. 2 in Pop Warner youth games.

Woods, a native of Los Angeles, wanted to wear his original number as an inspiration for kids playing the game he once did in the same city.

Arizona Cardinals running back James Conner left his No. 30 behind with the Pittsburgh Steelers and picked No. 6 with his new team — a first for his career.

"It's just a change-up. I think it looks good on uniforms, too. But I've got to play good in it. That's first," Conner said.

## Years after famous play, Butler returns to desert

*Associated Press*

GLENDAL, Ariz. — The biggest moment in Malcolm Butler's career happened right at State Farm Stadium, when the rookie cornerback stepped in front of a Seattle Seahawks receiver at the goal line, intercepted a Russell Wilson pass and secured a stunning Super Bowl 49 victory for the New England Patriots.

That play was about 6½ years ago.

Butler, entering his first season with the Arizona Cardinals, is finding out that's an eternity in NFL time.

"I'm getting a little older in the NFL now, so I'm talking to guys who were born in 2000," Butler said, grinning. "One of my teammates told me he was at the (school) bus stop, talking about the score. I'm getting up there."

Butler and the Cardinals hope there's more magic left for the cornerback in the desert. The 31-year-old veteran, who signed a one-year deal with Arizona, is one

of several 30-somethings the team is relying on this season, including receiver A.J. Green (33), defensive end J.J. Watt (32), linebacker Chandler Jones (31) and center Rodney Hudson (32).

"I've still got a chip on my shoulder, I'm still healthy," Butler said. "I've only had one injury in my career. I still want more, I'm still hungry, I still want to learn, I still want to make plays, I still want to play football."

The Cardinals hope Butler's presence can help offset the loss of three-time All-Pro cornerback Patrick Peterson, who was a mainstay in Arizona for a decade before signing with the Minnesota Vikings in the offseason.

Butler will wear Peterson's No. 21 this season, which is the number he's had throughout his career. He thought about taking No. 7, but third-year cornerback Byron Murphy wanted it.

"I got permission from the head man of

the team, and he said it was OK," Butler said. "That's no disrespect to Patrick Peterson. I'm not trying to replace him. I'm Malcolm Butler."

Butler's been a solid NFL player since his career-defining play for the Patriots, making the Pro Bowl in 2015. He spent the past three seasons with the Tennessee Titans, where he had four interceptions and made 100 tackles in 2020.

The cornerback position is notoriously tough on players who have reached 30 years old. Any loss of athleticism, especially against the league's elite receivers, is exploited in a hurry. But third-year coach Kliff Kingsbury said he's confident Butler has good years remaining.

"Watching him play last year, just the physical nature of his game, it's something we wanted to get and add to our team," Kingsbury said. "I thought he played at a high level last year, and he's continued to do so in camp."



# DODEA Europe fall sports return, with limits

By KENT HARRIS  
*Stars and Stripes*

DODEA Europe will make “a cautious return to a regular schedule” for high school sports this fall, though competition will be severely curtailed for some schools, athletics coordinator Kathy Clemmons said Thursday.

Armed with measures to limit exposure to the coronavirus pandemic that eliminated most after-school competition last year, Clemmons said practices can start as early as Monday across Europe, though the first competitions won’t take place until Sept. 11.

With the potential exception of schools in Belgium and the Netherlands competing against Germany-based schools, teams won’t cross country borders to

compete, Clemmons said.

That means European champions won’t be crowned in football, volleyball, tennis and cross country. It also means that schools in the United Kingdom, Spain, Bahrain and Turkey are scrambling to find games against international or local club teams.

Clemmons said she hopes to issue schedules this week but cautioned that they “won’t be written in stone. We might have changes and modifications all season depending on host nation and community restrictions.”

Still, the return of fall sports staples such as football and volleyball is a step forward for players and fans.

“It’s a win,” she said. “It won’t be in capital letters like people want. But it’s certainly better

than last year.”

A month’s worth of practices will give athletes not only a chance to reacclimate to their sports, but also give schools an opportunity to see if they can viably field teams. That’s especially true for a sport such as football in Italy. Only Naples, Vicenza and Aviano have fielded teams in recent years. Sigonella might do so this year and Rota in Spain could join them later in the fall if conditions permit. Marymount International and American Overseas School of Rome don’t field football teams but should join the DODEA schools in other sports.

SHAPE in Belgium will compete in a local league in football.

Other teams at isolated schools in other countries may try that as well, though Clem-

mons said it could be difficult to manage this late in the year.

Though DODEA canceled sports last year that involved close contact, Clemmons said athletes and coaches aren’t currently going to be required to be vaccinated in order to participate.

As for those who want to watch the games, Clemmons said social distancing and masks will be required and seating will be limited in volleyball, the season’s only indoor sport. Fan access could vary by military community.

“We want families to be able to see their kids play, but we want to be very, very careful about this,” Clemmons said. “We don’t want to do anything to put our athletes or coaches in danger.”

## Big names in golf scrambling to make playoffs

*Associated Press*

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Rickie Fowler gets a final chance to keep his season going at the Wyndham Championship this week, and he’s not the only big name on the PGA Tour hoping to end up on the right side of golf’s playoff standings.

The top 125 players in the FedEx Cup make the tour’s postseason. That’s why all but one of those ranked between 104th and 151st will tee it up starting Thursday at Sedgfield Country Club.

Major champions Adam Scott (No. 121), Justin Rose (No. 138) and Francesco Molinari (No. 140) are also playing to stay or, like Fowler at No. 130, get into the chase for the FedEx Cup the next few weeks.

“Yeah, it’s pretty simple,” Fowler said Wednesday. “Back up against the wall, go make some more birdies than I do bogeys and get a tee time next week, and if not, you don’t. Yeah, it’s kind of just all on me.”

Fowler, one of the golf’s most popular players who’s seen in TV commercials galore, wishes he knew why his game has struggled the past couple of seasons. The last of Fowler’s five wins came in 2019 and his only top-10 finish this season was a tie for eighth at the PGA Championship at Kiawah Island in May.

Fowler compared it to kickstarting a dirt

bike that revs for a little while and then shuts off.

“There’s been a lot of good stuff within the past four, five, six months, more and more, a little more frequently,” he said. “It’s been a bummer that I’ve been kicking this long, but we’re still here kicking.”

Fowler needs to finish 21st or better this week or miss the playoffs for the first time since he became a full-time pro in 2010. He’s not sure what he would do with the time off.

“Hopefully, it’s better than what it’s been over the last year or two and we won’t have to worry about it,” he said.

Here are some other things to watch at the Wyndham Championship:

### Favorites

Past Wyndham winner and North Carolina native Webb Simpson is a 12-1 favorite to add another tournament title and his first this season. Masters champion Hideki Matsuyama is 14-1 while Louis Oosthuizen is 18-1, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

### Staying put

While Fowler must work to move up, Scott and Matt Kuchar (No. 124) are trying to hold onto their spots in the 125-man playoffs.

“It would be good to have my best week of

the year, I would have to say,” Scott said.

### Medalists playing

Olympic silver medalist Rory Sabbatini and bronze medal winner C.T. Pan are in the field. Sabbatini, 141st in the playoff standings, needs a top-six finish to play the Northern Trust next week. Representing Slovakia, Sabbatini shot a 10-under 61 in the final round of the Olympic tournament to finish runner-up to American Xander Schauffele.

“It was incredible. Every which way, every part of it was amazing,” Sabbatini said.

### Chance at No. 1

Oosthuizen has no worries about his playoff spot, sitting eighth in the FedEx Cup. Should he win or finish second at Wyndham, the South African would overtake Collin Morikawa for the top spot and win a \$2 million bonus.

### Where there’s a Will

Will Zalatoris also needs a win to keep his season going. Zalatoris is playing on a sponsor’s exemption as a special temporary member of the PGA Tour. Although he would’ve had enough FedEx points to qualify 26th, he’s ineligible for the playoffs unless the 24-year-old Masters runner-up takes home this championship.

# Tigers' Cabrera hits 499th HR in win

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Miguel Cabrera is a homer away from 500 — and before he returns to Detroit for the team's next home-stand, there's another game to play in Baltimore.

"He's playing," manager A.J. Hinch said, before he was even asked. "I've talked to him, and we're not going to test baseball fate. We really want him to hit it whenever he's supposed to hit it. Maybe it's (Thursday), maybe it's not."

Cabrera hit his 499th career home run Wednesday night, part of a three-hit night for the Tigers slugger that helped the Tigers beat the Baltimore Orioles 5-2. It was the seventh straight loss for the Orioles, who hosted Detroit again Thursday.

It would have been understandable if Cabrera sat out that game, which started at 4:05

p.m. on what was expected to be a steamy day in the Baltimore area. The Tigers are back home for six straight games after that.

"Everyone was hoping he can do it in Detroit, but we'll see what happens," teammate Jonathan Schoop said, before being told what Hinch said about the plan for Thursday.

"So we hope he'll do it (Thursday) then," Schoop replied.

Cabrera's solo shot off Matt Harvey (6-11) in the fifth inning opened the scoring. He also had two singles earlier in the game, plus a sacrifice fly in the sixth.

Tarik Skubal (8-10) allowed five hits and walk in six innings in his second straight scoreless outing. He struck out six. Gregory Soto earned his 14th save in 15 chances with a scoreless ninth.

Anthony Santander hit a two-run homer

for the Orioles in the eighth.

Baltimore did manage to avoid setting an unpleasant major league record. The Orioles had allowed at least nine runs in each of their previous six games. Only the New York Giants (in 1901) and Seattle Mariners (2000) have done that for seven games in a row.

"Unfortunately we have a tough stretch right now," Harvey said. "I feel like we've gotten a lot of hits, but our pitching has given up a couple runs here and there. It happens. You go into slumps hitting, you go into slumps pitching."

The Tigers left the bases loaded in the first and third innings. Then Cabrera went deep with one out in the fifth. The homer drew some cheers from the crowd at Camden Yards, and the 38-year-old slugger gave a little pump of his right fist when the ball cleared the wall in left-center field.

## Brewers' Burnes fans 10 straight in win over Cubs

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Milwaukee right-hander Corbin Burnes struck out 10 straight batters, tying the major league record and leading the Brewers to a 10-0 defeat of the Chicago Cubs on Wednesday.

A first-time All-Star this year, Burnes finished with a career-high 15 strikeouts in eight innings on a steamy night at Wrigley Field. All 10 of Burnes' strikeouts during his streak came on a swinging strike three.

The 26-year-old Burnes tied the mark set by Hall of Famer Tom Seaver of the New York Mets when he fanned 10 straight against San Diego in 1970. Philadelphia ace Aaron Nola matched the record by striking out 10 Mets in a row last June 25.

Burnes struck out the side in the second, third and fourth innings to set a Brewers team record at nine straight. Burnes then fanned Frank Schwindel to open the fifth before the next hitter, Matt Duffy, singled sharply on the first pitch for Chicago's second hit.

**Mets 8, Nationals 7:** Pinch-hitter Brandon Drury had a tie-

breaking single in the eighth inning and host New York overcame two three-run deficits to beat Washington in the completion of a game suspended by rain the night before.

The regularly scheduled game was then rained out, setting up a single-admission doubleheader Thursday at Citi Field.

**Red Sox 20, Rays 8:** Bobby Dalbec drove in a career-high five runs, Xander Bogaerts and Hunter Renfroe each had four RBIs and host Boston routed Tampa Bay.

The Red Sox moved within four games of the AL East-leading Rays with their highest-scoring game since 2015.

**Athletics 6, Indians 3:** Jed Lowrie hit a three-run homer and Elvis Andrus had a solo shot in the eighth inning in Oakland's comeback victory at Cleveland.

The Athletics scored twice in the seventh and four times in the eighth, erasing 2-0 and 3-2 deficits to extend their winning streak to six. The A's lead the AL wild-card race by a game over Boston.

**Yankees 5, Royals 2:** Luke Voit had a two-run single in New

York's three-run first inning and the Yankees won at Kansas City for their 12th straight series victory over the Royals.

Chad Green (6-5) got the victory in relief. Zach Britton earned his first save of the season. The game-time temperature was 93 degrees with a heat index of 102, the third straight game with a heat index above 100.

**Dodgers 8, Phillies 2:** Cody Bellinger hit a two-run homer on the 13th pitch of an at-bat, connected later for another two-run drive and Los Angeles won at Philadelphia on a second straight rainy night.

The Phillies, who had an eight-game winning streak snapped Tuesday, fell into a tie for first place in the NL East with Atlanta's win over Cincinnati.

**Blue Jays 10, Angels 2:** Shohei Ohtani hit his major league-leading 38th home run, but Toronto hit it out of the park four times, including two from George Springer and a grand slam by Teoscar Hernandez, to win at Los Angeles.

**Astros 5, Rockies 1:** Aledmys Díaz had three hits and drove in three runs to help host Houston

beat Colorado,

Cardinals 4, Pirates 0: Adam Wainwright extended his dominance of Pittsburgh with a two-hit shutout for visiting St. Louis.

**Braves 8, Reds 6 (11):** Ozzie Albies hit a three-run homer off Lucas Sims in the 11th inning, lifting host Atlanta past Cincinnati.

**Twins 1, White Sox 0:** Rookie Bailey Ober shut out Chicago into the sixth inning, Jorge Polanco homered and last-place Minnesota won at home to take another series from a playoff contender.

**Marlins 7, Padres 0:** Lewis Brinson hit two of Miami's three home runs off rookie lefty Ryan Weathers, Sandy Alcantara shut down San Diego for seven innings and the Marlins avoided a winless trip.

**Giants 7, Diamondbacks 2:** Kevin Gausman singled twice and pitched five uneven innings in his first start following the birth of his daughter, and host San Francisco beat Arizona for its fourth straight win.

**Mariners 2, Rangers 1:** Luis Torrens hit a ninth-inning single to score the winning run, and host Seattle beat Texas.