

Ways sought to get evacuees out of Kabul

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military is considering “creative ways” to get Americans and others into the Kabul airport for evacuation from Afghanistan amid “acute” security threats, Biden administration officials said, and the Pentagon on Sunday ordered six U.S. commercial airlines to help move evacuees from temporary sites outside of Afghanistan.

At the one-week mark since the Taliban completed their takeover of the country by sweeping into the capital, U.S. officials expressed growing concern about the threat to the evacuation from Islamic State. That worry comes in addition to obstacles to that mission from the Taliban, as well as U.S. government bureaucratic problems.

President Joe Biden planned to provide a public update on Afghanistan later Sunday. He also was meeting with his national security team. Afghanistan will be the chief topic of discussion when leaders of the Group of Seven industrialized nations, including Biden, meet virtually on Tuesday.

“The threat is real, it is acute, it is persistent and something we’re focused with every tool in our arsenal,” said President Joe Biden’s national security adviser, Jake Sullivan.

He said on CNN’s “State of the Union”

that 3,900 people had been airlifted out of Kabul on U.S. military flights over the past 24 hours. A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to provide details not yet made public, said those people were flown on a total of 23 flights — 14 by C-17 transports and nine aboard C-130 cargo planes. That represents an increase from 1,600 flown out aboard U.S. military planes in the previous 24 hours.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told ABC’s “This Week” that as Biden’s Aug. 31 deadline for ending the evacuation operation approaches, he will recommend whether to give it more time.

The interview aired Sunday but was taped Saturday as other U.S. officials cited increased concerns about security threats at the Kabul airport from militants affiliated with Islamic State. The U.S. Embassy issued a security warning Saturday telling citizens not to travel to the airport without individual instruction from a U.S. government representative. Officials declined to provide more specifics about the ISIS threat but described it as significant.

In a notice Sunday, the State Department urged people seeking to leave Afghanistan as part of an organized private evacuation effort to not come to the Kabul airport “until you have received specific instructions” to

do so from the U.S. Embassy’s flight organizer. The notice said that others, including American citizens, who have received specific instructions from the embassy to make their way to the airport should do so.

Austin said the airlift would continue for as long as possible.

“We’re gonna try our very best to get everybody, every American citizen who wants to get out, out,” Austin said in the interview. “And we’ve got — we continue to look at different ways to — in creative ways — to reach out and contact American citizens and help them get into the airfield.” He later said this included non-Americans who qualify for evacuation, including Afghans who have applied for Special Immigrant Visas.

A central problem in the evacuation operation is processing evacuees once they reach other countries in the region and in Europe. Those temporary waystations, including in Qatar, Bahrain and Germany, are sometimes reaching capacity.

In an attempt to alleviate that, and to free up military aircraft for missions from Kabul, the Pentagon on Sunday activated the Civil Reserve Air Fleet. The Defense Department said 18 aircraft from six commercial airlines will be directed to ferry evacuees from interim waystations. The airlines will not fly into Afghanistan.

7 dead at Kabul airport as Afghans attempt to flee

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — At least seven Afghans died in a panicked crush of people trying to enter Kabul’s international airport, the British military said Sunday, as thousands were still trying to flee the country in a chaotic exodus a week after the Taliban takeover.

The Taliban moved to confront the first stirrings of armed resistance since capturing nearly all of Afghanistan in a matter of days earlier this month. Anti-Taliban fighters claimed to have seized three mountainous districts, and a

prominent militia commander in the only province not yet under Taliban control pledged to fight back if attacked.

The British military on Sunday acknowledged at least seven deaths at the airport. Others may have been trampled, suffocated or suffered heart attacks as Taliban fighters fired into the air to try to drive back the crowds. Soldiers covered several corpses in white clothing. Other troops stood on concrete barriers, trying to calm the crowd.

Kabul’s airport, now one of the only routes out of the coun-

try, has seen days of chaos since the Taliban entered the capital on Aug. 15. Thousands poured onto the tarmac last week, and several Afghans plunged to their deaths after clinging to a U.S. military cargo plane as it took off, some of the seven killed on Aug. 16.

The Taliban have pledged amnesty to those who worked with the U.S., NATO and the toppled Afghan government, but many Afghans still fear revenge attacks. There have been reports in recent days of the Taliban hunting down their former enemies. It’s unclear if Taliban

leaders are saying one thing and doing another, or if fighters are taking matters into their own hands.

Outside the airport on Saturday, Western troops in full combat gear tried to control crowds big enough to be seen in satellite photos. They carried away some who were sweating and pale.

“The situation at Kabul airport remains extremely challenging and unpredictable,” a NATO official said on condition of anonymity in keeping with regulations. The official was not able to confirm a precise number of casualties.

Navy's Triton drones get summer debut in Japan

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

A Navy MQ-4C Triton unmanned surveillance plane has launched around 20 missions this summer from northeast Japan, where it shares airspace with U.S. and Japanese military and commercial aircraft, according to one of the drone pilots.

The Triton from Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19 at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Fla., deployed from Guam to Misawa Air Base, Japan, in May. Another Triton, still on Guam, is also scheduled to deploy to Misawa, according to the Navy.

The aircraft, on their first mission in Japan, support the 7th Fleet at Yokosuka Naval Base throughout its area of operations, which covers the vast Indo-Pacific region.

A team of four drone pilots at Misawa works closely with the Japan Air Self-Defense Force and civilian air traffic controllers, according to one of them, Navy Lt. Fiona McCoy, of Aurora, Ill.

Misawa is home to the U.S. Air Force's 35th Fighter Wing with its "Wild Weasel" F-16 fighters as well as Japan's newest aircraft, the F-35A Lightning II stealth fighters. Navy P-8A Poseidon surveillance planes and

EA-18G Growler electronic attack aircraft operate there, and commercial passenger planes also share Misawa's runway.

"We coordinate every time we fly so everything is very structured," McCoy said in a telephone interview Thursday.

After launch, the pilots in Misawa hand off the drones to counterparts working in Jacksonville, who operate them during missions, she said.

The Tritons perform an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance mission over the sea, rather than land, said McCoy, who flew drones out of Guam last year.

"It's cool to fly a high-tech platform," said McCoy, a former Poseidon pilot.

About 80 maintainers are at Misawa supporting the mission, according to one of them, Petty Officer Jason Grob of Springfield, Mo.

The mechanics do the same work at Misawa that they perform on Guam, he said in the same telephone interview as McCoy.

"Misawa is a great location, but an airfield is an airfield," he said.

The Tritons' mission coincides with the deployment of RQ-4 Global Hawk drones to Yokota Air Base, home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo.

Navy begins work on \$111M loading dock at Yokosuka

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA, Japan — The Navy and Army Corps of Engineers have begun construction of a \$111 million loading dock to streamline the process of loading munitions aboard its warships at nearby Yokosuka Naval Base, thus drastically reduce the time needed to do so.

When complete, the new combat loading wharf at the Navy's Urago Storage Area will enable the Navy to load its destroyers and cruisers with munitions faster and despite inclement weather.

The project site, in an industrial area about a mile from base and directly adjacent to the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force naval base, is officially called the Urago Wharf. The facility served as a munitions storage area for nearly a century, including for the armed forces of Imperial Japan.

"This combat loading wharf represents a huge step forward in our capability, allowing us to complete all loading requirements pier-side instead of in the middle of Tokyo Bay," said Lt. Cmdr. Brian Snyder, commanding officer of Naval Munitions Command Pacific East Asia, Detachment Unit Yokosuka. "Right now, nearly 40% of the time we're not able to go out [and load ships] because of winds or because of the sea's state. This almost eliminates that factor."

Naval ships at Yokosuka are typically loaded via barge, and the speed of the process is largely determined by weather and sea conditions, Capt. Rich Jarrett, commander of Yokosuka Naval Base, said.

Even that day, Jarrett said, high winds meant a ship waiting in the harbor for munitions could not be loaded.

"This combat loading wharf will eliminate that uncertainty and it will give days back to sailors so they can spend time with their families or out at sea conducting their real-world missions rather than waiting for the weather or the wind or any other circumstance that nature brings upon us," Jarrett said.

The wharf will provide a safer environment for loading munitions, said Randall Baucom, spokesman for the naval base, on Friday.

Israel launches strikes on Gaza after violent protests at border

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel's military bombed Palestinian militant weapons sites in the Gaza Strip early Sunday in response to a violent demonstration on the perimeter fence that left an Israeli police officer critically injured, the army said.

Saturday's violence erupted after hundreds of Palestinians took part in a demonstration organized by Gaza's Hamas rulers to draw attention to the Israeli-Egyptian blockade of the territory. The demonstration grew violent after dozens of people approached the fortified border fence and threw rocks and explosives toward Israeli soldiers from behind a black

smoke screen billowing from burning tires.

At least 24 Palestinians, including a 13-year-old, were injured by Israeli gunfire, according to the Gaza health ministry. An Israeli Border Police officer was shot and critically injured.

The army said in a statement that in response to the violent demonstrations, fighter planes hit "four weapons and storage manufacturing sites" belonging to Gaza's Hamas rulers, and that the military deployed additional troops to the region near the border with the Palestinian enclave. There were no immediate reports of injuries in the airstrikes.

Tenn. floods kill at least 10, dozens still missing

Associated Press

McEWEN, Tenn. — Rescue crews on Sunday searched for dozens of people reported missing in Tennessee after flooding from extraordinarily heavy rains left at least 10 dead.

The flooding in rural areas took out roads, cellphone towers and telephone lines, leaving families uncertain about whether their loved ones survived the unprecedented deluge and emergency workers searching door to door, said Kristi Brown, a coordinator for health and safety supervisor with Humphreys County Schools.

Humphreys County Sheriff Chris Davis said many of the missing live in the neighborhoods where the water rose the fastest and he expects the death toll will rise.

The hardest-hit areas saw double the rain that area of Middle Tennessee had

in the previous worst-case scenario for flooding, meteorologists said. Lines of storms moved over the area for hours, wringing out a record amount of moisture — a scenario scientists have warned may be more common because of global warming.

The downpours rapidly turned the creeks that run behind backyards and through downtown Waverly into raging rapids. Business owner Kansas Klein stood on a bridge Saturday in the town of 4,500 people and saw two girls who were holding on to a puppy and clinging to a wooden board sweep past, the current too fast for anyone to grab them.

He isn't sure what happened to them. Klein heard that a girl and a puppy had been rescued downstream, and that another girl was also saved, but he wasn't sure it was them.

Tropical Storm Henri reaches land in R.I.

Associated Press

WESTERLY, R.I. — Tropical Storm Henri hit the coast of Rhode Island on Sunday afternoon, packing high winds that knocked out power to tens of thousands of homes and bands of rain that led to flash flooding from New Jersey to Massachusetts.

The storm was downgraded from a hurricane to a tropical storm, but still had wind gusts of up to 70 mph, according to the National Hurricane Center. There were few early reports of major damage due to wind or surf, but officials warned of the danger of spot flooding in inland areas over the next few days.

Millions on New York's Long Island and in southern New England braced for the possibility of flooding, toppled trees and extended power outages.

National Grid reported 74,000 customers without power in Rhode Island, and EverSource reported nearly 20,000 customers out in Connecticut.

Several major bridges in Rhode Island, which stitch together much of the state, were briefly shuttered Sunday, and some coastal roads were nearly im-

passable.

While the wind was significant in certain areas, experts warned that the storm's biggest threat will likely come from storm surge and inland flooding, caused by what are expected to be heavy and sustained rains. Some of the highest rain totals were expected inland.

In one of his final appearances as governor before he is set to step down at the end of Monday over a sexual harassment scandal, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said that with the threat to Long Island diminishing, the state's primary concern were inland areas like the Hudson River Valley, north of New York City, which was projected to get inches of rain over the next few days.

Massachusetts' Steamship Authority canceled all Sunday ferry service between the mainland and the popular vacation islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket after the U.S. Coast Guard shut down ports on Cape Cod and New Bedford. Tourists waiting in their cars, hoping for a last-minute ferry off the islands, were stranded until the worst of Henri passes.

Winds fuel fury of N. Calif. wildfires

Associated Press

PLACERVILLE, Calif. — Crews were digging in and burning out fire lines amid another round of high winds that contributed to the fury of a Northern California wildfire.

"We have a firefight ahead of us and the wind today is going to make it very challenging," said Keith Wade, a spokesman with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, on Saturday.

The Caldor Fire in the northern Sierra Nevada already destroyed dozens of homes, and authorities on Friday closed down a 46-mile stretch of U.S. Route 50, the main route between the state capital of Sacramento and Lake Tahoe on the Nevada state line.

The highway was closed after debris from the blaze fell onto the roadway, and because of red flag warnings for 20- to 30-mph winds that by Saturday evening "combined with continued extremely dry fuels will result in critical fire weather conditions in the vicinity of the Caldor Fire," the National Weather Service said.

The road is a key checkpoint as crews struggle against the fire, which erupted last week and grew to 10 times its size in a few days, fueled by winds.

"We're going to invest everything we can into holding the fire south" of the road, said Eric Schwab, an operations section chief with Cal Fire.

Firefighters made progress on the fire's western side and burned vegetation to starve it of fuel and prevent the flames from heading into the evacuated community of Pollock Pines. On the northeast side, crews were protecting cabins in the dense forest area, fire officials said.

As of Saturday, the Caldor Fire had devoured about 130 square miles and more than 1,500 firefighters were battling it amid heavy timber and rugged terrain.

The blaze was one of about a dozen large California wildfires that have scorched Northern California, incinerating at least 700 homes alone in and around the Sierra Nevada communities of Greenville and Grizzly Flats.

The fires, mainly in the northern part of the state, have burned nearly 1.5 million acres, or roughly 2,300 square miles and have sent smoke as far as the East Coast. They were burning in grass, brush and forest that is exceptionally dry from two years of drought likely exacerbated by climate change.

Mask, vaccine fights getting even more ugly

Associated Press

PHOENIX — The Hawaii lieutenant governor watched in horror as protesters showed up outside his condo, yelled at him through bullhorns and beamed strobe lights into the building to harass him over vaccine requirements.

A parent in Northern California barged into his daughter's elementary school and punched a teacher in the face over mask rules. At a school in Texas, a parent ripped a mask off a teacher's face during a "Meet the Teacher" event.

A Missouri hospital leader was approached in a parking garage this week by a man from Alabama who handed him papers accusing him of "crimes against humanity," and it was not the only in-your-face encounter over vaccines and masks. School board members, county commissioners, doctors and local leaders are regularly confronted at meetings and in public with angry taunts that compare them to the Taliban, Nazis, Marxists and the leaders of Japanese internment camps.

"The heat definitely got turned

up this week," said Shannon Portillo, a county commissioner in Kansas who was berated at a meeting Wednesday in which the board mandated masks indoors for unvaccinated children. "It got much more hostile than anything I had seen."

The pandemic rage has coincided with a surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, a growing movement to require vaccines and a new round of mask requirements, most notably in schools where exhausted families had hoped the worst days of the virus were over. Now, the country is averaging nearly 1,000 coronavirus deaths a day.

Anger from parents over masks has been simmering in rural Amador County in Northern California, and it reached a peak earlier this month when for the first time a teacher was attacked. A father became irate when he saw his daughter come out of school wearing a mask but teachers in a lounge were unmasked. Vaccinated staff are allowed to take off their masks if students aren't present, said Amador County Unified School District

Superintendent Torie Gibson. The father was told this and left, but returned later to speak with the principal.

A concerned male teacher went to the principal's office. An argument ensued and the father struck the teacher.

"The teacher had some lacerations and bruising on his face and a knot on the back of his head," Gibson said.

He was treated at a hospital and returned to work the following day. Still, the incident has shaken teachers and the community.

"The teachers have definitely been on edge. They are fearful because the last thing they want is to have an issue with a parent," Gibson said.

Meanwhile, the father is prohibited from entering the school and could face prosecution.

Since Hawaii announced a mandate earlier this month that state and county workers would have to show proof of vaccination or face weekly tests, 50 to 100 unmasked vaccine opponents have gathered almost nightly outside the downtown Honolulu condominium building where Lt. Gov.

Josh Green lives with his wife and two children, ages 14 and 10.

Some yell into bullhorns and shine strobe lights into apartment units, Green said. Flyers with his photo and the words "Jew" and "fraud" have been plastered around the neighborhood. Green, who is Jewish, has been tearing them down and turning them over to the state attorney general's office.

He recognizes the right to protest, but not why demonstrators subject bystanders to such rage.

"They should protest me at my place of work, where I'm the lieutenant governor," Green said. "But it's different than flashing a strobe light into a 90-year-old woman's apartment or a strobe light into a family's apartment, where they have two kids under age 4."

Ironically, Green wasn't home during a recent intense weekend of protests. He was on the Big Island working on his other job as an emergency room doctor and treating mostly COVID-19 patients during a record surge in coronavirus hospitalizations in the state.

Young, healthy, unvaccinated father of 3 dies of COVID-19

Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Healthy and in their 30s, Christina and Josh Tidmore figured they were low-risk for COVID-19. With conflicting viewpoints about whether to get vaccinated against the virus filling their social media feeds and social circles, they decided to wait.

On July 20, Josh came home from work with a slight cough initially thought to be sinus trouble. On Aug. 11, he died of COVID-19 at a north Alabama hospital as Christina Tidmore witnessed a doctor and her team frantically try to resuscitate her husband.

"She would say, 'I need a pulse.' I would hear, 'no pulse,'" Christina Tidmore said through tears. "They were trying so hard.

"Nobody should go through this. He was only 36 and I'm 35 and we have three kids."

She is now imploring young adults not to dismiss the risk and to consider getting vaccinated.

"Josh was completely healthy, active, not a smoker." He would have turned 37 on Saturday.

Doctors say they are seeing a spike in cases among young adults and children as the highly contagious delta variant sweeps through unvaccinated populations. Medical officials say there is conflicting information on whether it makes people more severely ill or whether young people are more vulnerable to it, but it's clear the contagiousness means more young people and children are getting sick.

"There is no question that the average age of people who are being hospitalized is going down," State Health Officer Scott Harris said Friday.

"I don't know if it's clear that delta is worse in that age group or worse than any of the strains we've seen before. ... But what you have though is one that is just much, much more transmissible. Because seniors are the

ones that are predominately the vaccinated population in our state, the most vulnerable are these younger people. So you see them getting infected at much higher rates than we had before."

In the past four weeks, people ages 25 to 49 years made up 14% of all COVID deaths in the state. And people 50 to 64 years made up about 29%.

The Alabama Hospital Association said that 85% of hospitalized COVID-19 patients are unvaccinated.

Christina Tidmore also had COVID-19 but recovered. She said she and her husband were not against vaccines — their children are current on their childhood immunizations.

"If you can try to save your life, then you probably should," she said of vaccinations.

"I have lots of feelings and lots of regret and lots of what ifs," she said. "You don't want to do that. You don't."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Motorcyclist knocked out in hit-and-run, robbed

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A Twin Cities motorcyclist suffered a broken leg when he crashed into a driver who fled from the scene, then was robbed after he was knocked unconscious.

Evan Wise captured the crash on his helmet camera which shows a car pull out in front of him in an apparent attempt to make a U-turn.

Wise hit the driver-side door and flipped over the car. His helmet camera flew off but landed facing both Wise and the car.

The camera was still rolling as a number of people gathered around him on the street.

Unfortunately, Wise later learned one of the people that surrounded him stole money from his wallet.

Officials seek lost tool with radioactive material

MD BALTIMORE — Maryland environment officials are looking for a lead paint test tool containing small amounts of radioactive material that was lost in Baltimore.

The lead paint test tool was last seen at a job site by Pennsylvania Avenue and Laurens Street, where the user placed the tool on the sidewalk next to his vehicle, then noticed it was missing, according to the Department of the Environment.

The tool contains small amounts of cobalt-57, a radioactive metal used to make lead measurements. Tampering with the radioactive source inside the tool could cause potentially dangerous exposure.

Firefighter among 3 arrested for kidnapping

OR PORTLAND — A Portland firefighter was among three men arrested and accused of kidnapping a person at gunpoint in downtown Portland.

Douglas Bourland, 46, Hong Dieu Lee, 42, and Edward Simmons, 24, were all lodged in the Multnomah County Jail on three counts of first-degree kidnapping, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

Bourland is a firefighter with Portland Fire & Rescue.

Officers responded after someone reported seeing someone who appeared to be forced into a car at gunpoint by three people, and driven away.

Roller coaster shut after object flies off, hits girl

OH TOLEDO — The world's second-tallest roller coaster won't open again this year after a person standing in line was hit in the head by a metal object that flew off the ride at Cedar Point amusement park.

The 420-foot tall Top Thrill Dragster roller coaster will remain closed as officials from the park in Sandusky, ride experts and state authorities investigate, Cedar Point said in a statement.

Park and state officials said a female guest waiting to ride the coaster was struck by a "small metal object" that came off the coaster as it was nearing the end of its run.

Officials: Worker brought drugs into prison

NC ELIZABETH CITY — A former correc-

tional unit housing manager at a North Carolina prison is facing several drug-related charges after she was caught bringing marijuana into the prison, according to law enforcement officials.

Vanessa Uniqua Spence, 29, of Elizabeth City was arrested and charged with possession of a controlled substance while in a prison facility and possession of drug paraphernalia, The Daily Advance reported.

During a routine search of prison staff at Pasquotank Correctional Institution for contraband, Spence was arrested when they found drugs on her, Pasquotank Sheriff Tommy Wooten said.

Man sentenced for attack on McDonald's manager

MO CLAYTON — A St. Louis man who attacked the manager of a Chesterfield's McDonald's after his daughter was fired was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Kendell R. Cooks, 38, was convicted of first-degree assault, armed criminal action and property damage after the confrontation.

The manager, Jeffrey Jackson, lost sight in one eye in the attack that occurred a couple hours after Cooks' daughter was fired, The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

Investigators said Cooks and several others blocked in Jackson's car while he was sitting in it for a work break.

Cooks then smashed the driver's side window with a 5-foot wooden and metal rake and struck Jackson several times in the head and arms.

Prosecutor arrested for boat hit-and-run, 3 hurt

LA NEW ROADS — A local prosecutor was arrested in a hit-and-run boating accident that injured three boys who were being pulled in an inner tube on a Louisiana oxbow lake.

Agents arrested Chris Richard, 64, of Carencro, on charges of felony hit and run, careless operation of a vessel and negligent injury, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries said in a news release.

Richard is an assistant district attorney in Lafayette Parish, news agencies reported.

Those involved and witnesses told investigators that Richard jumped into the water to check on the juveniles, then returned to his 20-foot pontoon boat and left, the news release said.

State adds patrols to end turtle harassment

HI HONOLULU — Hawaii state officials said a surge in tourists is leading to increased harassment of sea turtles on a popular North Shore Oahu beach.

Hordes of people are crowding turtles at Laniakea Beach Park, known as Turtle Beach, The Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported.

The state Department of Land and Natural Resources said increased patrols are being dispatched to enforce laws against approaching the turtles.

Harassment of turtles and endangered Hawaiian monk seals led Gov. David Ige to warn that violators will be prosecuted if caught.

— From wire reports

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Decisions loom for Pacquiao after Ugás retains WBA title

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Although Manny Pacquiao hasn't decided what his future holds, the eight-division world champion realizes his 26-year professional boxing career might have ended Saturday night with a disheartening loss.

Yordenis Ugás is only seven years younger than Pacquiao, yet he's just getting started after seizing this improbable opportunity to knock off one of the greats.

Ugás beat Pacquiao by unanimous decision in Las Vegas, putting on an impressive technical performance on 11 days' notice and retaining his WBA welterweight title.

"He's a great competitor, but I came in here to show I am the champion of the WBA," Ugás said. "A lot of respect for him, but I won this fight."

Ugás (27-4) capitalized on this chance as the late injury replacement for Errol Spence Jr. The Cuban veteran was slightly better than Pacquiao (67-8-2) throughout one of the most frustrating fights in the 42-year-old Filipino senator's career.

"I did my best tonight, but my best wasn't good enough," Pacquiao said. "No excuses. I wanted to fight for the title in the ring, and tonight the champion is named Ugás."

A visibly disappointed Pacquiao said he hasn't decided whether he will fight again after an unimpressive performance in his return from the longest layoff of his quarter-century in the sport. He also wouldn't confirm whether he will enter the Philippines' presidential race, as is widely expected. He intends to make an announcement next month.

"In the future, you may not see Manny Pacquiao again to fight in the ring," Pacquiao said. "I don't know, but I'm so happy for what I've accomplished."

The 35-year-old Ugás threw roughly half as many punches as Pacquiao, but his blows were more precise and more effective. Pacquiao was the solid favorite before the bout, but he struggled to get inside on Ugás' effective jab while Ugás landed his right hand to increasing effect in the later rounds.

Two judges scored it 116-112 for Ugás, and a third had it 115-113. The Associated Press also scored it 116-112 for Ugás.

Pacquiao also said his legs were cramping from the second round onward. He attributed the problem to a combination of overtraining and age.

"I think it was too much hard work," Pacquiao said. "But I'm not young anymore. So I don't know."

The victory was the culmination of a lengthy

journey for Ugás, who defected from Cuba two years after winning a bronze medal in the Beijing Olympics. Ugás quit boxing for two years midway through the last decade, but revitalized his career and then capitalized on this golden chance by earning his 12th victory in his last 13 fights.

Ugás was in the spotlight only because Spence was forced to drop out last week after discovering he had a torn retina during a pre-fight physical. Ugás had been booked for a bout on the undercard, but he jumped at the type of showcase and payday that had been just out of reach ever since he left Cuba on a small boat bound for Mexico 11 years ago.

"I'm very excited, but most of all, I want to thank Manny Pacquiao for giving me this moment in this ring today," Ugás said through a translator. "We only had two weeks of training, but I listened to my corner and it all worked out."

T-Mobile Arena appeared to be essentially sold out despite the late opponent change, and the crowd of 17,438 was vocally behind its Filipino hero. Even after a lengthy layoff in the last stages of his career, Pacquiao remains a surefire draw and a bankable star in a sport lacking both at its highest levels.

Ugás had a clear game plan on short notice, working hard in the early rounds with an effective jab and body shots. Pacquiao was more aggressive and occasionally got the crowd to its feet with combinations, but Ugás' rangy jab stymied him.

Ugás' confidence grew in the middle rounds, and he responded to action at the seventh-round bell with a defiant shimmy-shake of his shoulders in Pacquiao's direction. Pacquiao constantly threw more punches than Ugás, but they landed about the same number as Ugás showed off his defense and accuracy against Pacquiao's activity.

Pacquiao caught Ugás with a combination in the 10th round and knocked him back as the crowd rose in excitement, but Ugás recovered and rallied with big shots. Ugás also looked sharp in the 12th round, peppering Pacquiao all the way to the final bell.

Pacquiao had won three consecutive bouts since July 2017, but he hadn't fought since beating Keith Thurman in 2019 to win the WBA welterweight title.

That belt belonged to Ugás by the time Pacman returned: While Pacquiao's political career and the pandemic kept him out of the ring in 2020, the WBA took away the belt and awarded it to Ugás, who had won a different version of the belt in the WBA's byzantine championship system.

Rahm, Smith share lead as Henri delays final round

Associated Press

JERSEY CITY, N.J. — Jon Rahm and Cameron Smith were tied for the lead Saturday in The Northern Trust, and neither could have imagined how they got there.

Smith had never shot better than 62 — twice this year on the PGA Tour, once at his home club in Brisbane, Australia — when he stood over a 12-foot putt on the 18th hole at Liberty National for a chance at the 13th sub-60 round on the PGA Tour.

He missed and had to settle for the course record at 11-under 60, and figured that would at least keep him in range of the world's No. 1 player.

"Jon is playing some pretty good at the minute, so we've got to try to catch up," Smith said.

Thanks to Rahm, he did.

The U.S. Open champion ran off four birdies in a six-hole stretch around the turn to regain the lead and had good scoring chances ahead of him. But he twice hit into the water on the second- and third-easiest holes, dropped a combined three shots and had to rally for a 67.

They were at 16-under 197 and now get a day off because of Hurricane Henri. The PGA Tour looked at the path, and there was enough rain and dangerous wind on the edges of the storm that they decided to close Liberty National on Sunday. The final round will be Monday.

Ravens win 19th straight in preseason

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Many of the Baltimore Ravens players weren't aware they'd made NFL history until coach John Harbaugh walked into the locker room after Saturday night's 20-3 win over the Carolina Panthers and told them.

Tyler Huntley threw for 187 yards, and the Ravens tied an NFL record with their 19th straight preseason win.

Nate McCrary and Ty'Son Williams rushed for touchdowns for Baltimore, which equaled the mark set by Vince Lombardi's Green Bay Packers, who had a 19-game winning streak in exhibitions from 1959 to 1962.

"It's a good feeling to have because you can see the type of culture we have as an organiza-

tion," said Huntley, who played almost the entire game. "We strive to win every time we step on the field. It shows you how much depth you have."

Harbaugh said while some critics may discard the accomplishment because it's the preseason, he doesn't.

"I believe everything in life has meaning," Harbaugh said. "... It's something only one other team has done, the Vince Lombardi Packers and I think that is notable."

Lamar Jackson did not play for the Ravens.

McCrary ran for 64 yards and Williams 47 yards, including a grinding 20-yard score, as Baltimore outgained the Panthers 167-33 on the ground.

Huntley started slow, missing on his first four passes, includ-

ing the pick. But he started to heat up against Carolina's second-team defense, completing 15 of his next 16 pass attempts.

"I just had to get into a rhythm and get us on track," Huntley said.

Sam Darnold had his first action at quarterback for the Panthers, but left after one seven-play series.

Darnold started the drive at the Ravens' 33 after Derrick Brown tipped Huntley's pass at the line of scrimmage and edge rusher Haason Reddick, who had dropped back in coverage, grabbed the easy interception.

But after a 16-yard completion from Darnold to former New York Jets teammate Robby Anderson and a 9-yard run by Chuba Hubbard, the Panthers drive quickly stalled. With a

first-and-goal at the Baltimore 6, Darnold threw one pass away while under pressure and the Ravens stuffed three Hubbard running plays to take over on downs. DeShon Elliott came up with the big stop on fourth-and-goal at the 1 after Hubbard appeared to make a bad cutback.

"We just were going to run our base stuff," Carolina coach Matt Rhule said. "We didn't have our goal-line packages out there and all of those little things."

Darnold said that didn't matter.

"We should be able to score with our base plays," Darnold said. "We should have punched it in."

The Panthers didn't play running back Christian McCaffrey, who has 29 touchdowns rushing in 51 games.

Bridgewater stands out in Broncos' rout of Seahawks

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Teddy Bridgewater is trying not to get caught up or focus on being in the middle of the Denver Broncos' quarterback competition.

Bridgewater has made a pretty strong case with his play through two weeks of the preseason that he should be the one under center come Week 1.

"I just want to get in the end zone because at the end of the day if we're getting in the end zone that means we're finishing drives and we're getting points, and everything else will take care of itself," Bridgewater said. "I can't get caught up in, 'Man, you know, this decision has to be made.' This is football to me."

Bridgewater made another statement in his case to be Denver's starting quarterback, leading a pair of touchdown drives in the Broncos' 30-3 preseason win over the Seattle Seahawks on Saturday night.

Given first billing in the competition with Drew Lock and playing with most of Denver's starting offense, Bridgewater showed poise and command on a night the Broncos

dominated against mostly a crew of Seattle backups.

And a decision about who will be the starter for the season opener at the New York Giants could be coming soon.

"Both of them, Drew and Teddy, have done well, as you guys have seen, and they've made it a hard decision," Denver coach Vic Fangio said. "So we'll give it thorough thought. We've been discussing it with the coaches, with (GM) George (Paton) all along and we'll continue to do that."

Bridgewater was 9-for-11 for 105 yards and a touchdown in his two drives leading the Broncos' offense. He found Jerry Jeudy for 35 yards on fourth down on Denver's first possession, stepping away from a blitz and allowing the second-year receiver to separate from Ahkello Witherspoon in coverage. Bridgewater capped the drive with a 2-yard TD pass to KJ Hamler.

Denver's second possession was highlighted by Bridgewater's 21-yard pass to Eric Saubert to the Seattle 1 that was placed just over the top of Seahawks starting line-backer Jordyn Brooks in defense.

Roethlisberger shines in his preseason debut

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger enjoyed a perfect preseason debut.

Roethlisberger turned in a perfect passer rating of 158.3 and led the Steelers' first-team offense to a pair of touchdowns and Pittsburgh defeated the Detroit Lions 26-20 on Saturday night.

"I'm just trying to win a football game," Roethlisberger said. "It's the preseason and I wanted to stay healthy. It was good to be out there and playing."

Roethlisberger had his initial opportunity to work with first-year offensive coordinator Matt Canada during an in-game setting.

The 39-year-old Roethlisberger ran Canada's up-tempo approach to near perfection in three series. He finished 8-for-10 for 137 yards and two touchdowns, both to rookie tight end Pat Freiermuth.

Mason Rudolph followed and led the Steelers to three field goal drives, going 13-for-18 for 138 yards. Dwayne Haskins led the offense to another field goal, as Pittsburgh scored on six of its first seven possessions.

"I thought the effort was excellent," Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said.

Yelich's 6 RBIs power Brewers past Nats

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Christian Yelich had a grand slam in the eighth inning, a solo shot in the first and finished with six RBIs as the Milwaukee Brewers held on for a 9-6 victory over the Washington Nationals on Saturday night.

Yelich's slam gave the Brewers a 9-4 lead. The Nationals scored two in the ninth, but left the bases loaded.

"Really just trying to add on to the lead there, we were already up by one," said Yelich, who homered on the ninth pitch of the at-bat. "Just trying to really get something into the outfield so we can tag and tack on an extra run."

Luis Urias reached on catcher's interference to open the eighth against Javy Guerra (0-1). Jace Peterson singled and Jackie Bradley Jr. was hit by a pitch. After Willy Adames popped out, Kolten Wong was hit by a pitch to force in the go-ahead run at 5-4.

Yelich, who also had an RBI single, then

drove a 3-2 pitch 454 feet to right-center for his eighth homer of the season.

"He got 3-2 on a really good hitter in Yelich and had to throw a strike with the bases loaded, and Yelich didn't miss that pitch," Washington manager Dave Martinez said. "He threw it pretty much right down the middle, maybe little in, and he crushed it."

The Nationals loaded the bases in the ninth against Miguel Sanchez on two walks and a hit. Josh Hader then allowed an RBI single and walked in a run before finishing off his 25th save in 26 chances. Devin Williams (7-1) struck out two of three hitters he faced in the eighth for the victory.

Yelich's homer in the first inning was his first since July 18. Yelich, who was on the COVID-19 injured list from July 27-Aug. 6, had 36 homers in 2018 as MVP and 44 in 2019 before a season-ending fractured kneecap. He dropped to 12 homers in 58 games last season.

"Obviously, it hasn't been the greatest

year performance-wise for myself," Yelich said. "The story is not written yet. We have a long way to go. There's a lot of baseball left to play, not only in the regular season, but hopefully the postseason for us. I think this thing's far from over."

The Nationals tied it 4-4 when Yadiel Hernandez opened the sixth inning with his sixth homer of the season off reliever Brent Suter.

Wong's heads-up base running keyed a three-run fifth as the Brewers went ahead 4-3. Lorenzo Cain drew a walk with one out and moved to third on Wong's single. Gabe Klobosits relieved and Yelich delivered an RBI single, cutting the lead to 3-2. After Yelich stole second, Omar Narvaez fouled out to first baseman Ryan Zimmerman.

Catcher Tres Barrera converged on the pop foul, leaving home plate uncovered. Wong broke from third and slid home ahead of Zimmerman's diving tag attempt. The call was upheld on review. Eduardo Escobar followed with an RBI single.

Max effort: Scherzer helps Dodgers win 9th straight

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Trea Turner, Albert Pujols and Chris Taylor homered, and the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the slumping New York Mets 4-3 on Saturday.

The surging Dodgers have won nine consecutive games, matching a season-best win streak. Six of those wins have come against the Mets, who have dropped eight of nine overall.

Kenley Jansen pitched a scoreless ninth for his 27th save. He hit Kevin Pillar to lead off the inning, then got Brandon Nimmo to ground out and struck out Jeff McNeil and Pete Alonso.

Los Angeles right-hander Max Scherzer (11-4) struck out eight while pitching five innings of one-run ball.

Giants 6, Athletics 5: Pinch-hitter LaMonte Wade Jr. connected for a two-run homer in the ninth inning, helping San Francisco rally for the win at Oakland.

Brandon Belt drew a one-out walk against Lou Trivino (5-5)

and was replaced by Mike Yastrzemski. Wade followed with his 16th homer, a towering drive to right on a 1-1 pitch.

Braves 5, Orioles 4: Austin Riley put Atlanta ahead for good with a homer in the fifth inning in a win at Baltimore, as the Braves stretched their winning streak to eight games.

Atlanta overcame four solo home runs by the Orioles, including two by Anthony Santander. Baltimore's 17-game skid is its second-longest since the team came to the city in 1954, behind the 0-21 start to the 1988 season.

Rangers 10, Red Sox 1: Former Boston utilityman Brock Holt hit two RBI singles, and Texas used a surprisingly strong start by Jordan Lyles to beat the host Red Sox.

The victory snapped a four-game losing streak for the Rangers, who entered with the majors' fewest wins since the All-Star break at 7-25. Andy Ibáñez and Adolis Garcia each had two of Texas' season-high seven doubles.

Rays 8, White Sox 4: Brandon Lowe, Manuel Margot and Joey Wendle each had two hits and two RBIs for host Tampa Bay.

Wander Franco also had two hits and scored twice as the Rays won for the fifth time in six games. Luis Patiño (3-3) pitched six innings of two-run ball, and Collin McHugh got five outs for his first career save.

Yankees 7, Twins 1: Gerrit Cole pitched six scoreless innings, leading host New York to its season-high ninth straight win.

Royals 4, Cubs 2: Kris Bubic carried a no-hitter into the seventh inning, leading Kansas City to the victory at Chicago.

Reds 7, Marlins 4: Nick Castellanos hit a two-run homer and drove in four runs, and host Cincinnati won for the fifth time in seven games.

Astros 15, Mariners: Rookie Taylor Jones had a career-high four RBIs and Yordan Alvarez hit a three-run homer, powering Houston to the runaway victory over visiting Seattle.

Indians 5, Angels 1: Triston McKenzie struck out Shohei Ohtani three times while pitching two-hit ball into the eighth inning, sending host Cleveland to the win.

Blue Jays 3, Tigers 0: Hyun Jin Ryu cruised through seven innings for host Toronto, and Randal Grichuk and Marcus Semien homered.

Pirates 5, Cardinals 4: Yoshi Tsutsugo and Kevin Newman homered for Pittsburgh, and Ke'Bryan Hayes added a two-run single in a win at St. Louis.

Rockies 5, Diamondbacks 2: Elías Díaz hit a three-run homer in the bottom of the ninth inning after Garrett Hampson hit a game-tying two-run pinch-hit homer in the bottom of the eighth, lifting host Colorado past Arizona.

Padres 4, Phillies 3 (10): Adam Frazier scored the winning run on a wild pitch by Connor Brogdon in the 10th inning and San Diego overcame a strong outing by Aaron Nola and beat visiting Philadelphia to end a four-game skid.