

USAF denies its base in Kuwait was hit

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The U.S. Air Force said Saturday it was the subject of a “propaganda attack” by a previously unheard-of Iraqi militant group that falsely claimed it had launched a drone attack targeting American troops at an air base in Kuwait.

The statement by the Air Force’s 386th Air Expeditionary Wing came hours after the group calling itself Al-Waretheen, or “The Inheritors,” put out an online statement claiming that on Aug. 12, it targeted Kuwait’s Ali Al Salem Air Base. The statement included a video showing a drone being launched from a stand, but offered no evidence of an attack or any damage done at the base.

The statement claimed the alleged attack aimed to avenge the U.S. drone strike that killed prominent Iranian Revolu-

Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC analyzed by the AP since Aug. 12 show no apparent damage at the base.

tion Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad in January 2020.

The air base is located a few dozen miles from the Iraqi border.

“The misinformation falsely stated an Iranian militia group used (drones) to carry out an attack on base,” the Air Force statement to The Associated Press said. “No such attack occurred.”

The statement suggests the U.S. believes that Al-Waretheen is likely an Iranian group,

though it described itself as Iraqi.

The Air Force added that the online claim “only aims to deceive their audience in believing a lie” and that the Air Force and Kuwait “continue to project air power throughout the region without disruption.”

Kuwait, a small, oil-rich nation bordering Iraq and Saudi Arabia also near Iran, is considered a major non-NATO ally of the United States. Kuwait and the U.S. have had a close military partnership since America launched the 1991 Gulf War to expel Iraqi troops after Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein invaded the country.

Some 13,500 American troops are stationed in Kuwait, which also hosts U.S. Army Central’s forward headquarters. Those forces have supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and later operations against Islamic State.

Kuwait did not immediately

acknowledge the claimed attack. Its Information Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment Saturday night.

Kuwait’s Al-Qabas newspaper, quoting anonymous “responsible” sources, called the claims about an attack “completely untrue.”

Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC analyzed by the AP since Aug. 12 show no apparent damage at the base.

A series of militant groups that analysts believe have ties back to Iran have claimed attacks they say targeted U.S. troops in Iraq over recent years. However, those roadside bombings targeted Iraqi contractors supplying American forces in the country.

The claim also comes as what has been described as the final round of negotiations continues between Iran and the U.S. over Tehran’s tattered nuclear deal with world powers.

USS Ronald Reagan back in Japan after 3 months at sea

By ALEX WILSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan steamed into Tokyo Bay on Friday, three months after leaving its homeport on its annual summer deployment.

The carrier pulled into its berth at Yokosuka Naval Base around 9 a.m. without fanfare or ceremony, Task Force 70 spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Joseph Keiley told Stars and Stripes by email Friday. The Reagan’s complement of aircraft, Carrier Air Wing 5, arrived at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni on Thursday.

Keiley didn’t comment on whether the Reagan’s deployment is concluded or if its arrival in Yokosuka is just a stop. Its deployments typically last about six months.

“While in port, Ronald Reagan will conduct maintenance and remain ready to respond to any assigned tasking in their role as the U.S. Navy’s only forward-deployed aircraft carrier,” he said.

The Reagan was expected to arrive in Yokosuka earlier in August, but the Defense Department ordered it to remain near the South China and Philippine seas in response to extensive drills by the Chinese

navy and air force around Taiwan.

The weeklong drills, which concluded Aug. 11, were Beijing’s response to U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan on Aug. 3. China launched a fresh set of exercises on Monday in response to a second U.S. congressional delegation that arrived in Taipei the day before.

Beyond Taiwan, the Reagan was busy the last three months. Immediately following its departure in late May, the Reagan participated in an exercise with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, in which it integrated the destroyer JS Teru-

zuki into its strike group.

The carrier went on to take part in a carrier strike group exercise with South Korea in early June and later linked up with the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group to join the U.S.-only Valiant Shield 2022 exercise.

The Reagan finished June with its first port visit to Guam. In July, the carrier and its strike group entered the South China Sea for maritime security and flight operations. It later stopped at Changi Naval Base in Singapore, where it hosted Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro and U.S. Ambassador to Singapore Jonathan Kaplan.

N. Korea dismisses South's aid offer

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The sister of North Korea's authoritarian leader on Friday dismissed as "ridiculous" and the "height of absurdity" an offer of economic assistance from South Korea in exchange for the North abandoning its nuclear weapons.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol during a Liberation Day speech on Monday offered to help lift North Korea's standard of living and improve its infrastructure if its leaders laid aside their nuclear ambitions. Yoon called the offer an "audacious initiative."

But Kim Yo Jong, the sister of North Ko-

rean leader Kim Jong Un and a high-ranking government official herself, rejected Yoon's proposal as an "absurd dream" and said he should "shut his mouth, rather than talking nonsense."

Kim Yo Jong, in remarks published in the state-run Korean Central News Agency, said: "The most repulsive point was when he recited absurd words impertinently, proposing us a 'bold and broad-based plan' to radically improve the economy and public welfare if we would stop nuclear development and turn towards substantial denuclearization."

She described Yoon's plan as "the height of absurdity as it is an impracticable one" and accused him of belittling Pyongyang by bartering with food and other aid.

Yoon's office responded Friday that it found "very regretful" the "rude remarks" by Kim about the president.

"North Korea's attitude, like this, is never helpful to its future and peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and it only hastens North Korea's international isolation," according to a statement from the presidential office.

It said Yoon is still pursuing ways to denuclearize North Korea and develop positive relations with the regime.

The U.S. supports the Yoon administration's goal of "serious and sustained diplomacy" with North Korea, State Department spokesman Ned Price said during a news briefing in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday.

Annual drill tests security at Yokosuka Naval Base

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Navy over five days took on armed assailants, suspicious packages, an emergency evacuation and six other simulated scenarios during the Citadel Pacific exercise at the home of the 7th Fleet.

The drills from Aug. 15 through Friday were part of security drills held at naval facilities across Japan. Other scenarios mimicked a small boat attack on the base harbor and an active shooter scenario.

"Our Navy's responsibility is to ensure the safety and security of our personnel, equipment and installations," Rear Adm. Carl Lahti, commander of Navy Region Japan, told Stars and Stripes by email Friday. "This annual exercise uses realistic scenarios to ensure our security forces all across Japan maintain a high level of readiness."

At Yokosuka Naval Base, the exercise included approximately 300 sailors and civilians from every department, base spokes-

man Randall Baucom told Stars and Stripes on Friday.

"The amount of professionalism and dedication it took from all these players — from the department heads down to the sailors in the thick of it — was outstanding," said base commander Capt. Les Sobol in a Friday email to Stars and Stripes. "They knocked it out of the park."

In most scenarios, the drills are highly scripted, but only the "red hats," or administrators, are aware of the script beforehand. The participants, or "blue players," go into the exercises relatively blind.

On Tuesday, 50 people, including sailors, took part in active-shooter exercise near the Benny Decker Theater, Chief Petty Officer Carlos Hernandez told Stars and Stripes

"The idea is that we run these drills so we can kind of tweak the tactics," said Hernandez, 43, of Brownsville, Texas. "So, when it happens for real, we have something to kind of fall back on."

Military families' housing benefits lag as rent rises

Associated Press

When Kristin Martin found out her husband was being transferred to Naval Base San Diego, securing housing for their family of five quickly took over her life.

On-base housing wasn't an option — the waitlist for a four-bedroom home in the neighborhoods they qualified for was 14 to 16 months.

Neither were the military-only hotels near the base where new arrivals can pay low rates as they get their bearings — those were full, too.

More than 30 rental applications later and hundreds of dollars in application fees down the drain, the Martins finally found a home.

But there were caveats. They'd have to start paying rent a month before they actually moved. And, at \$4,200 per month, their rent was nearly \$700 more than the monthly basic allowance for housing, known as the BAH, that her husband, a lieutenant, receives.

Housing has long been a major benefit for service members, a subsidy to salaries that trail the private sector. But, amid record-breaking spikes in rent, the Department of Defense has neglected its commitment to help military families find affordable places to live, service members and housing activists say.

That's forced many to settle for substandard homes, deal with extremely long commutes or pay thousands out of pocket they hadn't budgeted for.

Reports of the housing squeeze military families face have alarmed members of Congress, who are pushing legislation that would force the Department of Defense to rethink how it handles housing.

"We are woefully underhoused," said Stephanie Poynor, a Tampa property manager and wife of a retired serviceman. "The DoD needs to recognize how much our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coasties are really suffering in this market."

Landlords attempt to stop Florida rent control initiative

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Ballots haven't even been printed yet, but already a group of landlords, apartment managers and real estate agents in Florida want to stop voters from deciding on a measure that would implement rent control for a year in the theme park hub that has been one of the fastest-growing metro areas in the U.S.

The Florida Apartment Association and the Florida Association of Realtors last week sued Orange County, Fla., in an attempt to invalidate a ballot initiative aimed at limiting how much landlords can increase rents. If passed by voters in the fall, it would be the first such measure in decades in the Sunshine State.

The associations say that Florida law prohibits rent control ordinances except in an emergency, and the current situation in the county that is home to Orlando doesn't rise to that standard. They also say that the ordinance could have the unintended consequence of making the situation worse by discouraging the construction of new apartment buildings and other housing.

"It is adverse and antagonistic to the public interest and to the interests of the Plaintiffs and their members to allow the Rent-Control Ordinance to be placed on the ballot or enforced by Orange County where the Ordinance is unlawful and

invalid," the associations said in court papers.

Earlier this month, Orange County's Board of County Commissioners narrowly approved the rent control ordinance, which now goes to voters for approval in November. The ordinance limits rent increases in multiunit buildings to the annual increase in the Consumer Price Index. The ordinance doesn't apply to luxury units, single family homes or vacation rentals.

Violators of the ordinance could face fines of up to \$1,000 per day for a first violation, with fines not exceeding \$15,000 per offense. Landlords would be able to request an exception to the limits under certain conditions.

According to the measure passed by commissioners, the asking-rent-per-unit in Orange County has grown from \$1,357 in 2020 to \$1,697 in 2021, the highest increase since 2006, and the county has a shortage of as many as 26,500 housing units.

"For years, renters have been asking this commission to do something about the upcoming emergency we are in right now," Stephanie Porta, a cofounder of the social justice group Florida Rising, said last month during a commission meeting. "Corporate landlords, real estate investors and developers are raising prices and making record profits while hardworking Orange County residents are priced out of their communities."

Hawaii seeks to balance astronomy with culture

Associated Press

HONOLULU — For more than 50 years, telescopes and the needs of astronomers have dominated the summit of Mauna Kea, a mountain sacred to Native Hawaiians that's also one of the finest places in the world to study the night sky.

That's now changing with a new state law saying Mauna Kea must be protected for future generations and that science must be balanced with culture and the environment.

The shift comes after thousands of protesters camped on the mountain three years ago to block the construction of a state-of-the-art observatory, jolting policymakers and astronomers into realizing the status quo had to change.

There's a lot at stake: Native Hawaiian advocates want to protect a site of great spiritual importance. Astronomers hope they'll be able to renew leases for state land underneath their observatories, due to expire in 11 years, and continue making revolutionary scientific discoveries for decades to come.

At issue is the summit of Mauna Kea, which sits 13,803 feet above sea level. In 1968, the state gave the University of Hawaii a 65-year lease for land that the school subleases to leading global research institutions in exchange for a share of observation time. Astronomers like Mauna Kea's summit because its clear skies, dry air and limited light pollution make it the best place to study space from the Northern Hemisphere. Its dozen huge telescopes have played key roles in advancing humanity's understanding of the universe, including making some of the first images of planets outside our solar system.

Few changes in Kansas abortion recall while one county is still not completed

Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. — Results from eight of nine Kansas counties that recounted ballots found fewer than 35 changed votes from the Aug. 2 election, when voters soundly rejected a proposed amendment that would have removed abortion rights from the state's constitution.

The counties faced a 5 p.m. Saturday deadline to complete the hand recounts of ballots cast on Aug. 2. Eight counties finished on time but Sedgwick County officials said they would not meet the deadline. Posted results for the eight counties found a total of 13 fewer votes for those favoring tighter abortion restrictions and 19 fewer votes for those wanting to keep existing abortion rights.

Election officials attributed the changes to human error, such as voters making unclear marks on ballots.

A Sedgwick County spokeswoman said Saturday that after the counting was complete, the elec-

tion commissioner found things she wanted to check again. It was unclear what the problems were or when the county would finish its recount.

The nine counties were required to hand recount the votes at the request of two anti-abortion activists who questioned election procedures but did not provide proof of any specific problems.

Initial statewide tallies showed the proposed amendment, which would have removed protections for abortion rights from the Kansas Constitution and allowed the Legislature to further restrict abortion or ban it, failed by 18 percentage points, or 165,000 votes.

Votes were recounted in Douglas County, home to the University of Kansas' main campus; Johnson County, in suburban Kansas City; Sedgwick County, home to Wichita; Shawnee County, home to Topeka; and Crawford, Harvey, Jefferson, Lyon and Thomas counties. Abortion opponents lost all of those counties except Thomas.

Russia's war adds to global economy woes

Associated Press

MECKENHEIM, Germany — Martin Kopf needs natural gas to run his family's company, Zinkpower GmbH, which rustproofs steel components in western Germany.

Zinkpower's facility outside Bonn uses gas to keep 600 tons of zinc worth \$2.5 million in a molten state every day. The metal will harden otherwise, wrecking the tank where steel parts are dipped before they end up in car suspensions, buildings, solar panels and wind turbines.

Six months after Russia invaded Ukraine, the consequences are posing a devastating threat to the global economy, including companies like Zinkpower, which employs 2,800 people. Gas is not only much more costly, it might not be available at all if Russia completely cuts off supplies to Europe to avenge Western sanctions, or if utilities can't store enough for winter. Germany may have to impose gas rationing that could cripple industries from steelmaking to pharmaceuticals to commercial laun-

dries. "If they say, we're cutting you off, all my equipment will be destroyed," said Kopf, who also chairs Germany's association of zinc galvanizing firms.

Governments, businesses and families worldwide are feeling the war's economic effects just two years after the coronavirus pandemic ravaged trade. Inflation is soaring, and rocketing energy costs have raised the prospect of a cold, dark winter. Europe stands at the brink of recession.

High food prices and shortages, worsened by the cutoff of fertilizer and grain shipments from Ukraine and Russia that are slowly resuming, could produce widespread hunger and unrest in the developing world.

Outside Uganda's capital of Kampala, Rachel Gamisha said Russia's war in faraway Ukraine has hurt her grocery business. She has felt it in surging prices for necessities like gasoline, selling for \$6.90 a gallon. Something that's about \$16.70 this week may cost \$25 next week.

"You have to limit yourself,"

she said. "You have to buy a few things that move fast."

Gamisha has noticed something else, too — a phenomenon called "shrinkflation." A price may not change, but a doughnut that used to weigh 45 grams may now be only 35 grams. Bread that weighed 1 kilogram is now 850 grams.

Russia's war led the International Monetary Fund last month to downgrade its outlook for the global economy for the fourth time in under a year. The lending agency expects 3.2% growth this year, down from the 4.9% it forecast in July 2021 and well below a vigorous 6.1% last year.

"The world may soon be teetering on the edge of a global recession, only two years after the last one," Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, the IMF's chief economist, said.

The U.N. Development Program said rising food and energy prices threw 71 million people worldwide into poverty in the first three months of the war.

In Bangkok, rising costs for pork, vegetables and oil have

forced Warunee Deejai, a street-food vendor, to raise prices, cut staff and work longer hours.

"I don't know how long I can keep my lunch price affordable," she said. "Coming out from COVID lockdowns and having to face this is tough. Worse is, I don't see the end of it."

Even before Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine, the global economy was under pressure. Inflation had skyrocketed as a stronger-than-expected recovery from the pandemic recession that overwhelmed factories, ports and freight yards, causing delays, shortages and higher prices. In response, central banks began raising interest rates to try to cool economic growth and tame prices.

"We've all got all these different things going on," said Robin Brooks, chief economist at the International Institute of Finance. "The volatility of inflation went up. The volatility of growth went up. And therefore, it's become infinitely harder for central banks to steer the ship."

Somali forces end gunmen's hourslong attack on hotel

Associated Press

MOGADISHU, Somalia — Somali authorities on Sunday ended a deadly attack in which at least 20 people were killed and many others wounded when gunmen stormed a hotel in the capital.

It took Somali forces more than 30 hours to contain the fighters who had stormed Mogadishu's Hayat Hotel on Friday evening in an assault that started with loud explosions.

The siege ended around midnight, police commissioner Abdi Hassan Hajar told reporters.

"During the attack, the security forces rescued many civilians trapped in the hotel, including women and children," he said.

Police are yet to give a detailed explanation of how the attack unfolded.

It remains unclear how many gunmen entered the hotel.

Ismail Abdi, the hotel's manager, told The Associated Press that security forces were still working to clear the area.

No more gunfire could be heard after 9 a.m. local time. Onlookers gathered outside the gates of the badly damaged hotel on Sunday morning, surveying the scene.

The Islamic extremist group al-Shabab, which has ties with al-Qaida, claimed responsibility for the attack, the latest of its frequent attempts to strike places visited by government officials.

European drought unearths sunken Nazi ships, ammo

Special to The Washington Post

One of the worst droughts on record in Europe has parched the Continent's major waterways, revealing relics such as a long-submerged village and World War II-era battleships.

Last week, low water levels on the Serbian section of the Danube river exposed a graveyard of sunken German warships filled with explosives and ammunition. The vessels, which emerged near the port town of Prahovo, were part of a Nazi Black Sea fleet that sank in 1944 while fleeing Soviet forces. More ships are expected to be found lodged in the river's sandbanks, loaded with unexploded ordnance. A junior Serbian transport minister told local

media there were about 10,000 explosive devices in the water.

Other ruins have also emerged as waters recede in the drought. In July, a Roman bridge built during the first century B.C. was uncovered in the Tiber River, and in August, a village that had been deliberately flooded in 1963 to build a dam appeared from the Belesar Reservoir in Spain.

The drought has threatened shipping routes, food supply and electricity in Europe this summer. European Union researchers said earlier this month that nearly half of the continent is under "warning" conditions, which connote a severe drought and a major soil moisture deficit. The Washington Post has reported.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Jobs' Apple-1 computer prototype auctioned off

MA BOSTON — An authenticated Apple-1 Computer prototype from the mid-1970s has sold at auction for nearly \$700,000.

The prototype was used by Apple co-founder Steve Jobs in 1976 to demonstrate the Apple-1 to Paul Terrell, owner of The Byte Shop in Mountain View, Calif., one of the first personal computer stores in the world, Boston-based RR Auction said in a statement.

A Bay Area collector who wishes to remain anonymous made the winning \$677,196 bid, the auctioneer said.

"There is no Apple-1 without this board — it's the holy grail of Steve Jobs and Apple memorabilia," said Bobby Livingston, RR's executive vice president.

The board has been matched to Polaroid photographs taken by Terrell in 1976, showing the prototype in use. It was also examined and authenticated by Apple-1 expert Corey Cohen.

The prototype resided on the Apple Garage property before being given by Jobs to the seller about 30 years ago.

Suspect in I-85 shootings had 2K rounds of ammo

AL AUBURN — Police who arrested a man with an arsenal of weapons in his car are trying to determine a motive for three seemingly random shootings along Interstate 85 in Alabama and Georgia, including one that critically wounded another motorist.

Jerel Raphael Brown, 39, of Montgomery, was arrested without incident near the courthouse in LaFayette with more

than 2,000 rounds of ammunition and an alarming number of firearms in his 1996 white Cadillac Fleetwood, police said.

Authorities responded first to a 45-year-old man who had left his car and collapsed on the pavement with a gunshot to his head, apparently fired through his rear window as the interstate passes through Auburn. The victim was taken by helicopter to a Montgomery hospital.

Harris said police began investigating the Auburn shooting and later learned that a shooting had occurred an hour earlier in Montgomery, and then an hour later in Troup County, Ga.

No one was injured in the Georgia shooting. No details on the Montgomery shooting were immediately released.

School ceiling collapse leads to review

TN MEMPHIS — Tennessee's largest school district is reviewing all buildings older than 70 years with drop ceilings after one collapsed, officials said.

Memphis-Shelby County Schools said inspectors and engineers have been reviewing the damage after a drop ceiling collapsed in the library of Cummings K-8 Optional School.

Three employees were treated for injuries after the ceiling collapse, which forced the evacuation of students, teachers and staff, officials said.

Cummings students have been attending LaRose Elementary, and they will continue to do so from Aug. 22 through Aug. 26, district officials said in a statement. A reopening date for Cummings school has not been set.

Officials said the Cummings library building dates to 1930 when it was used as an auditorium, and the drop ceiling was installed in 1982.

Man suspected of anti-LGBTQ vandalism

GA ATLANTA — Atlanta police said they have arrested a man they suspect spray-painted swastikas on a rainbow crosswalk meant to honor the city's LGBTQ community, as well as at other sites.

Police told local news outlets that they went to an apartment in Atlanta's Midtown neighborhood around noon Friday seeking the man. A SWAT team was called after the man refused to come out. Around 5 p.m., the man, who has not been named, emerged and was arrested.

The first swastika was found Wednesday on the crosswalk. A second swastika, as well as an obscenity and an anti-gay slur, were found on the crosswalk in Midtown on Friday.

A swastika and other graffiti were also painted before dawn Friday on the nearby Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. Police said security cameras at both locations captured images of a man.

85 people arrested in drug flight scheme

FL BARTOW — Eighty-five people have been arrested and millions of dollars in illicit drugs seized in a smuggling operation that used checked bags on commercial flights from California to Florida, investigators said.

Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd said at a news conference that the drugs were hidden in

luggage on flights from Los Angeles to Orlando, Fla., over a two-year period. One seizure involved six pieces of luggage containing nothing but drugs, he said.

"They didn't even put so much as a pair of underwear in there to hide it," Judd told reporters.

The 85 arrests involved 355 combined felonies and 93 misdemeanors in a case centered on drug trafficking in the area around Winter Haven, Fla., authorities said.

Street value of about \$12.8 million was estimated for the seizures of drugs including methamphetamine, cocaine, marijuana, fentanyl, oxycodone and Xanax. Forty-nine guns and \$235,000 in cash were also confiscated.

Construction to begin on 1st Coast Guard Museum

CT NEW LONDON — Construction is set to begin on a long-awaited national museum that will honor the U.S. Coast Guard.

A special keel-laying ceremony, a term that's usually used to celebrate construction of a cutter, was held at the museum's riverfront site in New London, Conn., about 40 miles south of Providence, R.I.

It comes after \$50 million was included in the 2022 federal budget for the project, money that Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., said has "turbo-charged construction" of the 80,000 square foot structure.

The Coast Guard and Space Force are the only two branches of the U.S. military without their own museums.

The museum is expected to open sometime in 2024.

— From wire reports

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Cantlay leads BMW Championship by 1

Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. — Patrick Cantlay and Xander Schauffele went from being teammates to close friends and now seem to be inseparable on the PGA Tour, so the final round of the BMW Championship might have the feel of one of their countless practice rounds.

Except for the stakes.

Cantlay holed out from 106 yards in the fairway on the par-5 14th and had a 6-under 65 despite twice missing 3-foot par putts. That gave him a one-shot lead over Schauffele and Scott Stallings going into Sunday in the second FedEx Cup playoff event.

Schauffele had an eagle early in the round with an approach to 5 feet on the par-5 third hole and he played bogey-free for a 67.

Sunday will be the sixth time in eight FedEx Cup playoff events they have played together, and it will be the second time this year they have played in the final group. Schauffele led by one at the Travelers Championship and shot 68 to win. Cantlay had a 76.

They also won the Zurich Classic as partners.

The typical practice round is match play of some variety, winner-take-all. This one could determine who goes to the Tour Champion-

ship as the No. 1 seed and starts the chase for the FedEx Cup with a two-shot advantage.

That depends on Masters champion Scottie Scheffler, who joined Adam Scott two shots behind.

Cantlay, who was 12-under 201, is trying to become the first back-to-back winner of the BMW Championship since it became part of the FedEx Cup playoffs in 2007.

He knows from experience the value of being a top seed at the Tour Championship. After his playoff win in the BMW Championship last year at Caves Valley, he had a two-shot lead at the start of the FedEx Cup finale and wound up winning by one shot to claim the \$18 million prize.

"My head is not even there right now," Cantlay said. "I think the best way to handle this playoff system is to just focus on doing your best in the tournament that you're in and not worry too much about the points. So that's what I'm going to do."

And there's another reason. This is far from a two-man show on the South course at Wilmington Country Club that is sun-baked and becoming faster by the day.

Scott, trying to work his way into the top 30 who reach the Tour Championship, held his own with a 69 and was only two shots behind.

He started the postseason at No. 77 and is coming off a tie for fifth last week just to make it to the BMW.

Also two back was Scheffler, the world No. 1 who answered consecutive bogeys late in his round with a 4-foot birdie for a 68.

Collin Morikawa (65) and Aaron Wise (67) made it seven players separated by three shots.

Rory McIlroy started slowly and could only manage a 70, leaving him five shots back. Jordan Spieth, who began the weekend just one shot behind, missed par putts of 3 feet and 2 feet and didn't have much else go right in his round of 74 that took him out of contention.

Cantlay and Schauffele became fast friends at the Presidents Cup in 2019 at Royal Melbourne and now take holidays together, along with countless practice rounds. It's different with a scorecard in hand, though the comfort level is obvious.

"I know how he hits the ball, he knows how I hit the ball. If I flush one or he flushes one, it sort of is extra information that we can use. I like to use that as an advantage, and we're good friends, so it's a very sort of easygoing pairing even though we're trying to beat each other," Schauffele said.

Newgarden drives into title contention with 5th win

Associated Press

MADISON, Ill. — Josef Newgarden considers teammate Scott McLaughlin one of his closest friends, his "Bus Bro" at the racetrack, and the driver he knows who will race him clean with a win on the line.

That made it a lot easier for Newgarden to chase down McLaughlin on a restart following a rain delay to reclaim the lead at World Wide Technology Raceway, take his IndyCar-best fifth win of the season, and tighten the championship race.

"With Scott, it's a little bitter-sweet because we just have a great friendship," Newgarden said. "He's a tremendous competitor. I rank Scott one of the elite drivers in the world, not just here, but in the world. He's top class, very difficult to beat. We get along really great, he's a tre-

mendous teammate, a hard worker and it's not the easiest friendship to have because at the end of the day, we are competing.

"He wanted to win the race and I wanted to win the race. But ultimately we have a tremendous working relationship and nights like this are good. If we're battling together, things are going well and we want to see that pretty often."

Mired in the middle of the championship picture despite having more than twice the wins of any rival, Newgarden is now in the heart of the title hunt.

He started the race on the short oval outside St. Louis ranked fourth in the standings, 22 points behind leader Will Power, his Penske teammate. Newgarden is now second in the standings and just three points behind Power with two races remaining.

Newgarden won for the third consecutive year at WWTR and fourth time in his career.

The rain delay saved the race for Newgarden.

McLaughlin had taken the lead from him on pit strategy shortly before the race was stopped for rain and lightning with 43 laps remaining. After a delay of just over 2 hours, the race resumed with 36 laps to go and Newgarden needed only one to get past his buddy for the race-winning pass.

"Great effort, great team," Newgarden radioed his team. "Great, great effort. Perfect car."

David Malukas, the rookie for Dale Coyne Racing, put on a stunning display of picking his way through traffic after the final restart. He passed McLaughlin on the final lap to disrupt the potential Penske 1-2 finish, and had

the race gone one more lap, Malukas might have had a shot at catching Newgarden for the win.

Newgarden in a Chevrolet beat Malukas in a Honda by 0.4708 seconds.

"They said 'Do you see them up front?' and I just see two Penskes and think 'Oh my God, they're Penskes,'" the 20-year-old said. "They were tough. They were tough to even get any kind of suck to get close to them."

With two laps to go, Malukas at last ventured into the top line of the track and found it racy enough to catch McLaughlin. He instantly lamented not trying the lane earlier.

McLaughlin finished third for Penske and was followed by Pato O'Ward of Arrow McLaren SP in fourth. The race began with seven drivers separated by 59 points in the standings.

Usyk retains heavyweight title belts

Associated Press

KING ABDULLAH SPORTS CITY, Saudi Arabia — Oleksandr Usyk kissed the blue-and-yellow flag of Ukraine and looked to the Saudi Arabian sky as he waited to discover if he had honored his war-torn country by retaining his world heavyweight titles.

When he heard the winning words “and still,” an emotional Usyk raised his left arm and pulled the flag over his face.

Six months ago, he was patrolling the streets of Kyiv with an automatic rifle and defending Ukraine from the invading Russians.

Here, inside the ring at King Abdullah Sport City arena, the still-undefeated Usyk had lived up to his billing as the sporting pride of Ukraine by beating Anthony Joshua in a closely fought rematch on Saturday to keep his WBA, WBO and IBF belts.

“I devote this victory to my country, to my family, to my

team, to all the military defending this country,” the 35-year-old Usyk said through a translator. “Thank you very, very much.”

After a grueling five-month training camp, Usyk entered the arena in a blue-and-yellow top carrying the words “Colors of Freedom” and supported by words of encouragement from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his nightly video address to the nation.

“We stick together,” the president said. “We help each other. We restore what was destroyed. We fight for all our people. And we cheer for those who represent Ukraine, today — definitely for Usyk, our guy!”

And Usyk started as the favorite after outclassing Joshua in the first fight in London in September last year.

However, the British challenger, a former two-time champion, came into the re-

match with a new game plan from his new trainer Robert Garcia: Attack Usyk’s body and keep the pressure on.

And it nearly worked, with Usyk taken to the limit in the ninth round as he was chased around the ring by Joshua, who landed combinations and targeted Usyk’s ribs.

Usyk took a deep breath at the bell, then came out hard in the 10th round, hurting Joshua with an early right hook and forcing him onto the ropes for the first time in the fight.

The battering of Joshua was sustained in the 11th while the 12th was evenly fought, the fight ending with both fighters — clearly exhausted — falling to their knees in front of each other on the canvas.

They embraced and Joshua appeared to offer his help to the plight of Ukraine.

Then, in an expletive-laden speech inside the ring after grabbing the microphone,

Joshua — who moments earlier was seen picking up two of Usyk’s belts and throwing them to the canvas — hit back at his critics before praising Usyk for fighting so well in the circumstances.

Usyk was complimentary about Joshua, too.

“This is already history,” he said. “Many generations are going to watch this fight, especially the round when someone tried to beat me hard. But I stood up to it and turned it in a different way.”

Usyk also claimed the Ring Magazine belt with the win. There’s only one heavyweight title that Usyk doesn’t own — the WBC one that is about to be vacated by Tyson Fury, who says he is retired.

When asked about Fury, Usyk said: “I am sure Tyson Fury is not retired yet. I am sure Tyson Fury wants to fight me. If I’m not fighting Tyson Fury, I’m not fighting at all.”

Edwards stops Usman for UFC welterweight title

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Leon Edwards dropped Kamaru Usman with a kick to the head and neck in the final minute of the fifth round to win the welterweight championship at UFC 278 on Saturday night.

Usman appeared to be seconds away from a 16th consecutive victory, which would have tied an all-time UFC record, before Edwards came up with the stunning finish just in time. He delivered the knockout blow with 56 seconds left in the bout.

“That crosshead kick landed perfectly,” Edwards said.

Edwards (20-3) is undefeated dating back to his previous bout with Usman in 2015. The British fighter rose to No. 2 in the welterweight division while accumulating nine wins in that stretch ahead of the title bout.

Usman (20-2) lived up to his reputation as the No. 1 pound-for-pound fighter in the world for much of the bout. The Nigerian weathered a late first-round takedown and turned the tables with a late second-round takedown. Usman controlled position throughout the third round, earning two more takedowns, and led 39-37 on the judges’ scorecards after four rounds. He appeared on his way to a win by unanimous decision before Edwards rallied in the final round.

“The octagon belongs to nobody,” Edwards said. “No man is meant to hold the belt for that long. I said all week I felt like this was my moment. This is how it was meant to play out.”

Edwards said he believes he has plenty left to prove even though he is now the champion.

“That wasn’t my best performance, and I did not feel myself in this,” Edwards said. “I feel like I have much more to offer.”

UFC’s first pay-per-view event in Utah drew 18,321 fans and \$4.2 million in live gate revenue, a Vivint Arena record. It marked the 23rd consecutive sellout for the UFC.

Dana White praised the arena atmosphere and said the UFC could return to Utah as early as 2023.

Paulo Costa prevailed over former middleweight champion Luke Rockhold in a unanimous decision in the middleweight bout. Costa (14-2) had lost two straight bouts coming into Salt Lake City.

Rockhold (16-5) returned to the octagon for the first time in three years and his rust showed as the bout progressed. Costa

more than doubled Rockhold in total strikes through the first two rounds and eventually left him with a bloodied mouth in the third round. Rockhold wiped his own blood over Costa’s face in the round’s final seconds while both fighters were locked in a stalemate on the ground.

Merab Dvalishvili prevailed over former UFC featherweight champion Jose Aldo in a unanimous decision in the men’s bantamweight bout, earning his eighth straight win. Aldo (31-8) had vocal support from the crowd but wore down under relentless pressure from Dvalishvili (15-4) over three rounds.

Lucie Pudilova beat Wu Yanan in the main card women’s bantamweight bout for her third straight win. Yanan suffered her fourth straight loss.

Pujols homers twice in Cardinals' win

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Cardinals slugger Albert Pujols blasted two more homers, pushing his career total to 692 and helping St. Louis beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 16-7 on Saturday night.

It was a vintage night for the 42-year-old Pujols. The 11-time All-Star hit solo homers in the second and fourth off D-backs lefty Madison Bumgarner. He nearly hit a third homer, scorching a single off the base of the left-field wall in the fifth. He capped his 4-for-4 night with a ground ball single through the left side of the infield in the seventh.

With the first homer, Pujols passed Stan Musial for No. 2 in total bases in major league history and now has 6,143. Hank Aaron is No. 1 with 6,856.

Pujols needs four more homers to tie Alex Rodriguez for No. 4 all-time.

Dodgers 7, Marlins 0: Dustin May dominated for five innings in his return from Tommy John surgery, Will Smith and Justin Turner hit three-run homers and

host Los Angeles routed Miami.

In his first big league start since May 2021, May gave up just one hit, struck out nine and walked two. He retired his last 13 batters.

Rays 5, Royals 2: Drew Rasmussen (8-4) took a no-hit try into the sixth inning in his first start since making a serious perfect game bid, and host Tampa Bay beat Kansas City.

Rasmussen, who lost his perfect game last Sunday when Baltimore's Jorge Mateo opened the ninth with a double, walked MJ Melendez leading off the Royals first.

Yankees 5, Blue Jays 2: Host New York lost for the 15th time in 19 games and saw its lead in the AL East slip to seven games over second-place Toronto.

Braves 5, Astros 4 (11): Matt Olson's check-swing double to left with the infield shifted the other way brought home the tying run in the 11th, and pinch-hitter Travis d'Arnaud won it with a single through the drawn-in defense as host Atlanta rallied twice in extra innings to beat Houston.

Phillies 2-4, Mets 8-1: Bailey Falter (1-3) threw six innings of two-hit ball, Kyle Schwarber tripled and doubled, and host Philadelphia earned a split of a day-night doubleheader against New York.

In the opener, Starling Marte had three hits to lead the Mets.

Red Sox 4, Orioles 3: Kike Hernández hit a two-run homer, Christian Arroyo added a key RBI double in the ninth inning and Michael Wacha (8-1) pitched scoreless ball into the sixth, leading Boston to a win over Baltimore.

Tigers 4, Angels 3: Tyler Alexander (3-7) pitched six strong innings and Detroit's bullpen finished off a win over visiting Los Angeles.

Rockies 4, Giants 3 (10): Brendan Rodgers drove in Winton Bernard with his fourth hit of the game, and host Colorado beat San Francisco in 10 innings.

White Sox 2, Guardians 0: Johnny Cueto (6-5) scattered five hits over 8⅓ innings and José Abreu had an RBI double to send Chicago to a win at Cleveland.

Cubs 6, Brewers 5 (11): Will-

son Contreras hit an RBI single to cap a two-run rally in the 11th inning, and host Chicago scored once in the ninth to tie, once in the 10th to keep it even and finally won in the 11th to extend its winning streak to five games.

Reds 10, Pirates 1: Jake Fraley's two-run home run highlighted a four-run outburst in the fourth inning and Justin Dunn (1-1) earned his first win in 16 months as Cincinnati won at Pittsburgh.

Athletics 4, Mariners 3 (10): Tony Kemp scored the winning run after pitcher Diego Castillo mishandled a high chopper by Sheldon Neuse with no one out in the 10th inning, and host Oakland ended Seattle's four-game winning streak.

Rangers 4, Twins 3 (10): Corey Seager hit a go-ahead single in the 10th inning and Mark Mathias added an RBI in the frame, leading Texas to a win at Minnesota.

Padres 2, Nationals 1: Juan Soto and Josh Bell homered against their former team, leading host San Diego to a much-needed win over Washington.

Chicago forces Game 3 with rout of Liberty

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Kahleah Copper scored 20 points and Courtney Vandersloot added 16 to help the Chicago Sky to a record 100-62 rout of the New York Liberty, tying the first-round WNBA playoffs series on Saturday and forcing a decisive Game 3.

They will play on Tuesday in New York with a trip to the WNBA semifinals at stake.

Candace Parker added 12 points, 12 rebounds and four assists for the Sky, who broke their own WNBA record for largest margin of victory in the playoffs. Chicago won by 36 at home in Game 3 of the Finals against the Phoenix Mercury last year.

The defending champion Sky took it right at the Liberty after losing Game 1 at home 98-91 on Wednesday when New York went on a 13-0 run to end the game.

"We knew we had to do something different than we've been doing all regular sea-

son," said Vandersloot, who shot 7-for-10 from the field and grabbed nine rebounds on Saturday. "That was our fault, we came out and played a regular-season game. You credit New York, they came out and beat us on our home floor. We knew that wasn't going to happen again."

Han Xu and Michaela Onyenwere each scored 10 points to lead the Liberty. Sabrina Ionescu shot 3-for-5 for seven points and added three assists. Natasha Howard finished 3-for-9 for eight points. In Wednesday's win, Ionescu and Howard both scored 22 points.

Aces 117, Mercury 80: Chelsea Gray had 27 points and eight assists and hit a career-high seven of her team's WNBA playoff-record 23 three-pointers and host Las Vegas beat Phoenix to sweep the best-of-three series.

The Aces never trailed and set WNBA

playoff marks for consecutive field goals made to open a game (10) and most three-pointers in a half (11, in the first). Top-seeded Las Vegas beat the Mercury 79-63 on Wednesday.

The Aces will play the fourth-seeded Seattle Storm or the fifth-seeded Washington Mystics in the best-of-five semifinals. Seattle leads the best-of-three series with the Mystics 1-0.

Kelsey Plum added 22 points for Las Vegas.

Kaela Davis led short-handed Phoenix with 23 points, and Diamond DeShields had 21.

The Mercury were without Diana Taurasi, Skylar Diggins-Smith and Brittney Griner. Taurasi was out with a quadriceps strain, Diggins-Smith stepped away last week for personal reasons and Griner is being detained in Russia on drug charges.