

STARS AND STRIPES®

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House will draft articles of impeachment

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House is pressing forward to draft articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump, Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced Thursday.

“Our democracy is what is at stake,” Pelosi, D-Calif., said somberly. “The president leaves us no choice but to act.”

Pelosi delivered the historic announcement in solemn tones, drawing on the Constitution and the Founding Fathers, as Democrats push toward a vote, possibly before Christmas.

“The president’s actions have seriously violated the Constitution,” she said from the speaker’s office at the Capitol. “He is trying to corrupt, once again,

the election for his own benefit. The president has engaged in abuse of power, undermining our national security and jeopardizing the integrity of our elections.”

“Sadly, but with confidence and humility, with allegiance to our founders and a heart full of love for America, today I am asking our chairmen to proceed with articles of impeachment,” Pelosi said.

At the core of the impeachment probe is a July call with the president of Ukraine, in which Trump pressed the leader to investigate Democrats and political rival Joe Biden as the White House was withholding military aid to the country bordering an aggressive Russia.

Pelosi emphasized the Russia angle at a news conference later, saying that it’s Russia and President Vladimir Putin who benefited most from Trump’s actions toward Ukraine.

“All roads lead to Putin. Understand that,” she declared. “That was the a-ha moment.”

Asked as she was leaving if she hates Trump, Pelosi stiffened, returned to the podium and responded sharply that the president’s views and politics are for the voters at elections to judge, but “this is about the Constitution.” She said that as a Catholic, she does not hate the president but rather is praying for him daily.

Trump tweeted that if Democrats “are going to impeach me, do it now, fast.” He said he

wanted to get on to a “fair trial” in the Senate. The president also said that Democrats have “gone crazy.”

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., criticized Democrats for focusing on impeachment over other issues, although many House-passed bills are waiting for action in his chamber. “It’s all impeachment, all the time,” he said.

Drafting articles of impeachment is a milestone moment, only the fourth time in U.S. history Congress has tried to remove a president, and it intensifies the deeply partisan undertaking that is consuming Washington and dividing the nation.

Sailor kills 2 civilians, himself at Pearl Harbor

BY CAILIN DOORNBOS
AND WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — A sailor killed two civilian workers and injured another Wednesday before killing himself at Pearl Harbor Shipyard, the military said.

The shootings happened at the shipyard’s dry dock 2, and the victims were Defense Department employees, said Rear Adm. Robert Chadwick II, Navy Region Hawaii commander.

Chadwick said the sailor was assigned to the submarine USS Columbia, which is undergoing repairs in dry dock.

The Associated Press reported Thursday the shooter was a 22-year-old enlisted sailor named G. Romero. AP quoted a military official who spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details that had not been

made public.

Victims’ names will be released after families are notified. The surviving victim was at a hospital in stable condition, Chadwick said.

Chadwick, who said the motive is unknown, declined to say whether the sailor was on duty at the time of the shootings. It is unclear whether the sailor knew the victims or if they were randomly targeted.

Personal firearms are not allowed on base, he said.

Chadwick said officials will look at “every aspect of it — what lessons we can learn, what additional security procedures would be needed.”

Base security and Navy investigative services are investigating and interviewing witnesses, he said.

The base went into a lockdown for nearly two hours after the 2:30 p.m. shooting. About 4:10 p.m., base officials tweeted

that “gates and base access are now open.”

By 5 p.m., traffic into the base was backed up for a mile and the entrance to Pearl Harbor-Hickam from the H-1 freeway remained blocked. Dozens of journalists gathered on the lawn across from the main gate for Chadwick’s press conference.

With a workforce of about 5,800 civilians and 540 Navy personnel, the shipyard is the largest industrial employer in Hawaii.

Chadwick said the shooting was “certainly a tragedy for everyone.”

“The ohana is everyone who works on Pearl Harbor,” he said. “Generations of locals have worked in that shipyard.” Ohana is the Hawaiian word for family.

Officials have opened the Emergency Family Assistance Center until further notice

in the Personnel Support Detachment building for those affected, according to a base statement. Chaplain and counseling services are being provided there, as well as in room 130 of building 2.

Pearl Harbor is home to the U.S. Pacific Fleet along with 10 destroyers and 15 submarines.

The 148-acre shipyard is across the harbor from the Pearl Harbor National Memorial, which on Saturday will mark the 78th anniversary of the attack by Japan that propelled the U.S. into World War II.

Chadwick said the service would evaluate whether security should be upgraded before the annual ceremony. About a dozen survivors of the 1941 bombing were expected to attend, along with dignitaries and service members.

DOD mulling more troops for Mideast

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A top Defense Department official told lawmakers Thursday that more military forces could be sent to the Middle East as a check on Iran, after he and other Pentagon officials denied a news report that the increase could total as many as 14,000 troops.

John Rood, the Pentagon's undersecretary for policy, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that Defense Secretary Mark Esper was evaluating "a threat situation" emanating from Iran, which could lead him to advise President Donald Trump to approve new deployments. Rood was under questioning from multiple senators following the Wednesday evening Wall Street Journal report that cited unnamed U.S. officials who said Trump could make a decision this month on sending those troops.

Rood initially called the Journal story an "erroneous item" during a hearing meant to analyze the Pentagon's 2018 National Defense Strategy, which aims to focus military

efforts on near-peer threats such as Russia and China over counterterrorism options that have dominated defense policy for nearly two decades. Rood echoed an earlier denial by Pentagon press secretary Alyssa Farah, who tweeted the "reporting is wrong."

"The U.S. is not considering sending 14,000 additional troops to the Middle East," she wrote.

The Pentagon has deployed about 14,000 troops to the Middle East since May aimed at deterring Iranian aggression, following a series of attacks attributed to Iran on commercial shipping vessels and Saudi oil facilities. Those troops have largely included an aircraft carrier strike group, air defense troops, and fighter and bomber aircraft operators.

But Rood, under pressure later in the hearing from Republican Sens. Marsha Blackburn, of Tennessee, and Josh Hawley, of Missouri, admitted top Pentagon officials have been discussing possible new deployments. Rood promised to discuss the situation in a classified setting.

Navy seizes likely Iranian missile parts set for Yemen

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Navy warship has seized a "significant cache" of suspected Iranian guided missile parts headed to rebels in Yemen, U.S. officials said Wednesday, marking the first time that such sophisticated components have been taken en route to the war there.

The seizure from a small boat by the U.S. Navy and a U.S. Coast Guard boarding team happened last Wednesday in the northern Arabian Sea, and the weapons have been linked to Iran.

Officials said the incident illustrates the continuing illegal smuggling of weapons to Houthi rebels and comes as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were meeting, with Iran as the main topic.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details about a sensitive military mission. In a statement, Cmdr. Sean Robertson, a Pentagon spokesman, said a U.S. warship inspection discovered a cache of weapons and advanced missile components. He said, "An initial investigation indicates that these advanced missile components are of Iranian origin."

The U.S. has consistently accused Iran of illegally smuggling arms to Houthi rebels battling Yemen's government and has seized smaller and less sophisticated weapons in transit. The missile parts found in this incident were described as more advanced than any previously seized.

Since the spring, the Pentagon has beefed up its military strength in the region, adding about 14,000 troops, ships, aircraft and other assets in response to what officials said is a growing threat from Iran. Officials have been considering another increase of several thousand forces, which could include air, naval and ground troops, and weapons systems, but no decisions have been made.

According to the U.S. officials, the USS Forrest Sherman was conducting routine maritime operations when sailors noticed a small wooden boat that was not displaying a country flag. The Navy and Coast Guard personnel stopped, boarded the boat for inspection and found the weapons.

Officials did not provide the exact number of missiles or parts but did describe it as a significant cache and said it was headed to Yemen.

Senators: Delays in ship care may affect Navy readiness

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — During the last five years, Navy vessels have spent an unplanned 33,700 days — or about 90 years — docked at shipyards for maintenance, according to a recent government report. This statistic raised concerns from senators Wednesday about the ability of the service to conduct its missions around the world.

"One effect of these delays is fewer ready ships, which places a greater stress on our fleet to meet all of its operational de-

mands," Sen. David Perdue, R-Ga., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee subpanel on seapower, said during a hearing about maintenance delays.

Shipyard delays have been an issue for years. A report published Wednesday by the Government Accountability Office found the Navy faces "persistent and substantial maintenance delays" that affect most of its maintenance efforts and hurt its efforts to rebuild its readiness.

The report found, from fiscal

years 2014 through 2019, the Navy could not complete scheduled maintenance on time in 75% of the cases.

"When maintenance is not completed on time, fewer ships are available for training or operations, which can hinder readiness," the report states.

Perdue highlighted one of the examples in the report.

"In fiscal year 2019, maintenance delays alone resulted in the Navy losing the equivalent of 19 service ships. Of our [290-ship] fleet, 19 were not available to commanders," Perdue

said.

One of the reasons for the delays is the aging and outdated infrastructure of naval shipyards throughout the country. The Navy has a 20-year shipyard infrastructure optimization and modernization plan to meet the future needs of ship maintenance and the service has said it will cost about \$21 billion. However, a report published Nov. 25 by the GAO states the estimated cost is too low and will probably increase by billions of dollars to account for inflation, environmental remediation, and utility upgrades.

Glitch could affect AAFES customers

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN

Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Army and Air Force Exchange Service overseas customers who ordered online in recent months from exchange fast food restaurants could see batches of late charges turning up on their credit cards.

The exchange notified 32,000 customers in November that they had one or more delayed credit or debit card transactions, said Julie Mitchell, an AAFES spokeswoman.

The orders were not processed at the time of purchase due to a technical glitch.

The total amount of transactions involved is \$6.7 million, Mitchell said in a

statement.

Customers caught up in the glitch were those who used the exchange's online food ordering system, iMenu360, and who then paid with a credit or debit card other than the Military Star card from June 25 through October. Five installations in Germany, one in the United Kingdom, one on Guam and 16 in the Asia-Pacific region were affected, Mitchell said.

The exchange is still retroactively processing charges from July and August, Mitchell said. Customers were notified via email that these charges would be applied in December, she said.

The remaining retroactive charges have already been resolved.

"The Exchange began notifying affected customers via email in November," Mitchell said. "We advised customers we could offer assistance and payment terms if the delayed transactions caused hardship."

The system glitch was discovered during financial reconciliation, when it was determined that all the payments had not been received, Mitchell said.

The exchange's online food ordering service for pickup or delivery is available at installations the company's restaurants serve in Okinawa, South Korea, Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan and Guam.

Customers can search by restaurant brand or location at aafesprem.imenu360.com.

Suit claims DOD defrauded out of \$1.3B in MRAP deal

BY J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

A defense vehicle manufacturer has been accused by one of its former employees of bilking the Pentagon of \$1.3 billion by vastly overcharging the Marine Corps for components of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles used by troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Illinois-based Navistar Defense company allegedly ran "a pervasive and long-running scheme to charge the U.S. Government wildly inflated prices," said a court filing made public Tuesday by the U.S. District Court in Washington.

The whistleblower case was originally brought six years ago by Duquoin Burgess, who worked in Navistar Defense's contract management department for over three years until October 2012.

Burgess alleged that his former employer and its parent company, Navistar International Corp., forged invoices, catalog prices and other documents to win the contract to build MRAP vehicles for the Marines. The government joined part of the case against Navistar Defense in September.

Navistar was awarded a contract in 2007 to build several hundred MRAP vehicles for the Marines to replace the

Humvee, which was vulnerable to roadside explosive devices, the Department of Justice said Wednesday.

Over the next several years, the government paid Navistar Defense around \$9 billion, and the company produced around 4,000 vehicles. But nearly \$1.3 billion of the money paid out under the contract for parts including suspension systems, engines and chassis were based on fraudulent documents, the complaint said.

The fraudulent documents allegedly masked that the vehicle components Navistar Defense was selling to the Marine Corps either had no commercial sales history at all or, when they did, were worth about half the price the company was charging the government for them, the complaint said.

The company charged about \$250,000 for each chassis but sold an identical product for half the price to other customers, the lawsuit alleged. The Marine Corps paid Navistar Defense around \$30,000 over the usual price for suspension systems, racking up nearly \$120 million in overcharges for that component alone, the complaint says.

Navistar executives knew about the fraud and were actively involved in it, Burgess, the whistleblower, alleged.

Women in military seek better-fitting equipment

BY ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

Allison Churchill never felt comfortable wearing anything with the Army Combat Uniform pattern on it. Depending on the garment, it either felt too big or painfully too tight.

In her five years as a public affairs specialist, it wasn't just that her uniforms always felt like they were falling off and her bulletproof vest squeezed her chest. It also seemed dangerous during her deployment to Iraq.

"The protective vest's shoulders were wider than my actual shoulders, which made it difficult to hold my M-16 [rifle] properly, and it never felt like my helmet sat on my head correctly," said Churchill, who left the Army in 2009 as a sergeant.

Since then, the military has made strides to improve personal protective gear for female service members, but a Defense Department report issued in 2018 again recommended the defense secretary get all military branches to issue gender-appropriate protective equipment to women for training and operational use.

Looking to get that recommendation fulfilled, Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, announced

Wednesday a proposal to push the Defense Department to speed up the process of getting women into appropriate-fitting equipment. Ernst, the first female combat veteran elected to the Senate, put forward the Female Body Armor Modernization Act of 2019 alongside three fellow veterans, Sens. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., Martha McSally, R-Ariz., and Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.

When it comes to getting equipment readily available to women, the new bill encourages the military to expedite the contracting, procuring and fielding of a new generation of protective equipment that better fits and protects all service members, and reduces preventable injuries by encouraging collaboration with academia and industry, utilizing emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, human factors modeling and digital predictive human modeling to develop the next generation of combat equipment and protective equipment.

The bill requires the military to submit a report to Congress in fiscal year 2021 concerning any barriers that they have encountered when fielding their newest versions of protective equipment to service members.

GAO: Data on military housing unreliable

BY ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

Data collected on privatized military housing was deemed unreliable and potentially misleading by a Government Accountability Office report released Tuesday.

The Defense Department used the data on resident satisfaction and maintenance in reports to Congress and to determine whether the 14 private companies managing base housing were eligible for bonus payouts.

"I'm trying to determine if I've been accidentally misled or intentionally misled," Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., said Tuesday during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.

The GAO report's author, Elizabeth Field, director of de-

fense capabilities and management, testified on her findings alongside top military leaders. The report is part of ongoing research by the GAO. A final report, expected in early 2020, could offer recommendations on improving privatized military housing.

Stories of houses filled with mold, rodent infestations and lead paint have led Congress to take a hard look at the partnership between the military and the private companies that manage 99% of base housing in the United States. Top officials at five private companies managing military housing were to testify Thursday before the readiness subpanel of the House Armed Services Committee.

On Tuesday, Field used her opening statement at the Sen-

ate hearing to describe how the GAO uncovered the misleading on-base housing information given to Congress.

In May 2019, the Office of the Secretary of Defense released information that stated 87% of privatized housing residents were satisfied based on annual survey results from 2017, according to the GAO report. Field said she began examining the statistic and she realized it was "not in any way reliable" because of how the survey question was worded.

The secretary's office directed the services to ask residents "Would you recommend privatized housing," with available responses of "yes," "no" or "don't know." Instead, residents were asked on a scale of zero to five whether they agreed with the following statement: "I

would recommend this community to others."

Each branch of service then used different methods to match the six response options that residents provided to the three answers directed by the secretary's office. Residents responding with a "3" to the Navy's survey were matched with "don't know," while Air Force residents with the same answer were matched with "yes."

Military officials also used its high occupancy rate of about 93% to determine satisfaction, Field said.

As part of her research, Field collected more than 8 million work orders from the 14 private housing companies from October 2016 to May 2019 to try to determine the quality of houses on military bases.

Spike seen in face injuries linked to cellphone use

Associated Press

Add facial cuts, bruises and fractures to the risks from cellphones and carelessly using them.

That's according to a study published Thursday that found a spike in U.S. emergency room treatment for these mostly minor injuries.

The research was led by a facial plastic surgeon whose patients include a woman who broke her nose when she dropped her phone on her face. Dr. Boris Paskhover of Rutgers New Jersey Medical School said his experience treating patients with cellphone injuries prompted him to look into the problem.

Paskhover and others analyzed 20 years of emergency room data and found an increase in cellphone injuries starting after 2006, around the time when the first smartphones were introduced.

Some injuries were caused by phones themselves, including people getting hit by a thrown phone. But Paskhover said many were caused by distract-

ed use including texting while walking, tripping and landing face-down on the sidewalk.

Most patients in the study weren't hospitalized, but the researchers said the problem should be taken seriously.

The study involved cases in a U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission database that collects emergency room visit information from about 100 hospitals. The researchers tallied 2,500 patients with cellphone-related head and neck injuries from 1998 through 2017.

The study was published in the journal *JAMA Otolaryngology*.

Nationwide, they estimated there were about 76,000 people injured during that time. Annual cases totaled fewer than 2,000 until 2006, but increased steeply after that. About 40% of those injured were ages 13 to 29, and many were hurt while walking, texting or driving.

Cellphone use also has been linked with repetitive strain injuries in the hands and neck.

Russian mercenaries found to be fighting in Libyan war

Associated Press

TRIPOLI, Libya — Officials in Libya's U.N.-supported government say they plan to confront Moscow over the alleged deployment of Russian mercenaries fighting alongside their opponents in the country's civil war.

Libyan and U.S. officials accuse Russia of deploying fighters through a private security contractor, the Wagner Group, to key battleground areas in Libya in the past months.

They say the Russian fighters are backing commander Khalifa Hifter, whose forces have been trying for months to capture the capital Tripoli. The U.N.-supported Government of National Accord is based in Tripoli.

The GNA has documented between 600 to 800 Russian fighters in Libya and is collecting their names in a list to present to the Russian government, according to Khaled al-Meshri, the head of the Tripoli-based government's Supreme Council of State.

"We are going to visit Russia after we collect all evidence and present to the authorities and see what they say," al-Meshri told The Associated Press last week. He did not say when that visit would take place.

Moscow has repeatedly denied playing any role in Libya's fighting.

Hifter's self-styled Libyan National Army — made up of army units, ultraconservative Salafists, and tribesmen — launched its offensive on Tripoli in April after seizing much of eastern Libya from Islamic militants and other rivals in recent years. Hifter is backed by the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, as well as France and Russia, while the Tripoli-based government receives aid from Turkey, Qatar and Italy.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs David Schenker told reporters last week that the State Department is working with European partners to impose sanctions on the Russian military contractor responsible for sending fighters to Tripoli.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Workers fired after throwing packages

AK ANCHORAGE — An Anchorage company fired and disciplined workers after a video showed them throwing Amazon.com delivery packages to each other in a warehouse.

The video of workers at the Legacy Logistics LLC warehouse near Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport was posted to social media last Thursday and shared more than 4,000 times.

The company said an employee posted the video, which resulted in dozens of outraged comments.

The video showed employees throwing packages and some of the parcels landing on the concrete floor.

Gun found inside gift bought at thrift store

FL CRESTVIEW — A woman who bought a baby shower gift at a Florida Goodwill store was shocked when the father-to-be opened the box and found a loaded semi-automatic rifle instead of a baby bouncer.

Veronica Alvarez-Rodriguez told the Northwest Florida Daily News that she and her husband stopped by the store in Valparaiso as they were heading to a friend's baby shower. She found a Baby Einstein's bouncer that was unopened and appeared to be new.

While some of the guests laughed, Alvarez-Rodriguez said she and her husband were shocked. They called the Crestview Police Department.

The incident remains under investigation. There were no details on how the gun got into the box.

Fired waiter accused of adding tips to bills

NC FUQUAY-VARINA — A former North Carolina restaurant worker has been accused of adding tips to customers' bills.

Dalton Michael Chobanian, 26, turned himself in to authorities, Fuquay-Varina police said. He is accused of adding money to as many as 60 transactions at Abbey Road Tavern while he worked there as a waiter, news outlets reported.

Lt. Brett Walsh said a customer told police that an extra \$10 had been added to his bill at Abbey Road Tavern in September, WRAL-TV reported. That sparked a police review of the restaurant's receipts. Walsh says Chobanian would add \$5 or \$10 to patrons' final bill, taking a total of \$550 from customers.

Eel powers aquarium's Christmas lights

TN CHATTANOOGA — Visitors to the Tennessee Aquarium may be shocked to learn that an electric eel named Miguel Wattson is lighting up a Christmas tree.

A special system connected to Miguel's tank enables his shocks to power strands of lights on a nearby tree, according to a news release.

Miguel releases low-voltage blips of electricity when he is trying to find food, aquarist Kimberly Hurt said. That translates to a rapid, dim blinking of the Christmas lights. When he is eating or excited he emits higher voltage shocks which cause bigger flashes.

The aquarium hopes the Christmas tree will spark appreciation for the unusual freshwater fish.

Police: French bulldogs stolen from 2 homes

FL WEST PALM BEACH — Investigators are searching for two French bulldogs who they believe were stolen from Florida homes during burglaries.

According to the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, a tan bulldog named Arthur was inside a kennel in the home when a burglar broke in on Monday. The bulldog hasn't been seen since.

The Palm Beach Post reported that on the same day, another bulldog was reportedly stolen from another home. Nattalia has black fur and brown eyes.

Family asked to change how it gifts coats

VA NORFOLK — A Virginia woman and her family have gifted coats to homeless people by leaving the winter weather gear hung about the city for years but may soon have to change tactics.

Brenda Parker said she was told this year that the tradition is considered littering. The Virginian-Pilot reported Norfolk instead wants Parker to work with an outreach program. City spokeswoman Lori Crouch says that would ensure the coats are delivered in better condition than if left outside.

School cancels 'Tarzan' over racism fears

NY ELMSFORD — A suburban New York high school is canceling a production of Disney's "Tarzan" after two parents complained about the source material's implicit racism and imperialism.

The Journal-News reported that the drama club at Alex-

ander Hamilton High School in Elmsford will instead hold auditions for a musical adaptation of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night."

School district superintendent Marc Baiocco said the parents who came forward were concerned about students of color playing simian characters on stage.

Couple, married 68 years, dies 1 day apart

MN ST. PETER — Bob and Corrine Johnson got married as teens in southern Minnesota's farm country and lived together for 68 years.

They were laid to rest after dying 33 hours apart, KARE-TV reported.

They lived in their farm home near St. Peter until six months ago. After Bob was hospitalized with cancer, Corrine joined him there with congestive heart failure.

He was 88. She was 87.

Pothole protested with holiday decor

MS MCCOMB — Residents of a Mississippi city protested a large pothole in their neighborhood by decorating it with holiday cheer.

The Enterprise-Journal reported residents of McComb's Edgewood neighborhood topped the pothole and its yellow traffic cone with tinsel, spray-painted pinecones, white leaves and other decorations. The newspaper said residents plan to add lights and presents in the hopes of drawing the city's attention.

It's unclear how long the pothole has gone unattended by the city or what drove residents to start protesting it recently.

From wire reports

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QBs Burrow, Fromm a contrast in styles

Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga. — Joe Burrow and Jake Fromm bring contrasting strengths to Saturday's Southeastern Conference championship game.

Burrow has been a nightmare matchup for defenses with the ball in his hands for No. 1 LSU.

Fromm, often described as a game manager, wins by making the best decisions to put the ball in other players' hands for No. 4 Georgia.

Burrow bolstered his status as a Heisman Trophy favorite by passing for 352 yards and three touchdowns as LSU (12-0, No. 2 College Football Playoff) capped its perfect regular season with last week's 50-7 win over Texas A&M.

Burrow, the SEC's leader in passing yards and total offense, is dangerous as a runner and passer. He's also important as a leader.

"Joe has the 'it' factor," LSU coach Ed Orgeron said Monday. "He has it. He walks on the field, he has it. He wants the ball in his hands. He wants to make the play."

Fromm matched his career high with four TD passes last week as Georgia (11-1, No. 4 CFP) rolled to a 52-7 win over Georgia Tech. Even in the runaway win, it was the fourth straight game in which Fromm failed to complete half of his passes.

Orgeron said he couldn't explain Fromm's slump.

"I do know this. He's a winner," Orgeron said. "I think he's a fantastic young man. He's a leader. They believe in him at Georgia and he's won a lot of games. That tells you a lot about a quarterback."

Indeed, Fromm's most impressive statistic is his 34-6 record as a starter.

Fromm can't match Burrow's passing numbers, but the edge for the Georgia junior may be his big-game experience. Fromm will make his third straight start in the SEC championship game, following a win over Auburn in 2017 and a loss to Alabama last year.

LSU safety JaCoby Stevens said Fromm is "basically a pro type quarterback in the backfield. He's very mature in his decision-making. He can make throws that a lot of quarterbacks in college football can't make."

Led by Burrow and running back Clyde Edwards-Helaire, LSU has found balance on offense.

"I think the difference between us this year and last year is we're kind of throwing the ball to open up the run, and Clyde and those O-linemen are taking advantage," Burrow said, adding he believes Edwards-Helaire "is the best back in the country."

Georgia's hopes of beating LSU and winning its second SEC title in the last three years under coach Kirby Smart may rest on Fromm's ability to shake out of the passing slump.

Unfortunately for the Bulldogs, Fromm's

season-long adjustment to changes at wide receiver continues. Freshman George Pickens will be suspended for the first half as punishment for his ejection for fighting in the second half against Georgia Tech. Pickens is tied for the team lead in receptions with Lawrence Cager, who won't play following ankle surgery last week.

Smart said the "biggest difference" for Fromm this season has been his receivers.

"There's not been a level of consistency with the perimeter skill that there probably was last year," Smart said.

Fromm has thrown a combined five touchdown passes with no interceptions in the last two SEC championship games.

One year ago, Fromm outplayed Alabama's Tua Tagovailoa in the SEC title game, throwing for 301 yards and three touchdowns. Jalen Hurts entered the game to lead Alabama to a 35-28 win over the Bulldogs.

Fromm threw for two touchdowns in Georgia's 28-7 win over Auburn for the 2017 SEC championship.

Georgia has averaged almost 33 points per game with first-year offensive coordinator James Coley. It's good production but well below LSU's league-leading average of 48.7.

"For us, I think it's just getting the whole unit to buy into what we're trying to do as an offense," Fromm said Monday, adding "... it's all about all 11 guys moving in the same direction."

Clemson, Virginia ride talented rosters to conference title game

Associated Press

CLEMSON, S.C. — Clemson coach Dabo Swinney hasn't stopped thinking about Virginia quarterback Bryce Perkins since the 22nd-ranked Cavaliers clinched their spot in the Atlantic Coast Conference championship game last week.

"He's a guy you've got to account for," Swinney said. "He'll go 50 (yards), he'll go 60."

And Perkins isn't the only Cavalier with big-play potential the third-ranked Tigers (12-0; No. 3 College Football Playoff) will need to contain when they take on Virginia (9-3) in Charlotte, N.C., on Saturday night.

Cavaliers receivers Joe Reed and Hasise Dubois have a combined for 1,476 yards and nine touchdowns.

Perkins leads the league in

total offense with 303 yards a game. He's had a hand in 27 of Virginia's 50 touchdowns this season (16 passing, 11 rushing) and is at his best, Clemson defensive coordinator Brent Venables said, when things break down.

"I just look at him as a great player on his own. He's the heart and soul" of the Cavaliers, Venables said. "He's just difficult to defend."

Perkins made second team all-ACC while Reed, the league leader in kick returns, was picked as a first-team all-purpose player.

The Tigers had 16 players named to All-ACC teams on Tuesday.

One of them at the top of the list is Perkins' counterpart, Clemson's Trevor Lawrence, who has thrown 30 touchdowns,

10 of them for 30 yards or more. Another is Tigers tailback Travis Etienne, who leads the ACC with 16 rushing touchdowns and set the league career mark for running TDs with 53.

On the outside, Clemson is power-packed, too, with receivers Tee Higgins and Justyn Ross combining for 1,548 yards and 17 touchdowns.

Lawrence, Etienne and Higgins are all part of the all-ACC first-team offense.

Cavaliers coach Bronco Mendenhall knows the challenge his team is up against.

He said the Tigers offense is a matchup nightmare because of all the ways they can advance the football. The bevy of standout players makes it nearly impossible to take away one aspect and expect to shut Clemson down.

"When you allocate resources, and at any point if you allocate an additional resource to any one of those spots, there's an instant trade-off that you're making somewhere else," Mendenhall said.

The Tigers offense has averaged 541 yards and 45 points this season, topping the ACC by far in both categories. While Clemson has the postseason experience edge on Virginia — the Tigers are seeking to become the first team to win five straight league title games — Lawrence said it's essential to keep level-headed.

"I think just not making the moment too big. That's something that's easy to do," he said.

Clemson's been able to easily navigate any bumps during games this year — it has won 27 straight games.

College basketball roundup

Unranked Purdue downs No. 5 Virginia

Associated Press

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Sasha Stefanovic scored a career-high 20 points, Jahaad Proctor had 16 and Purdue routed No. 5 Virginia 69-40 on Wednesday night in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge.

It's the first time the Boilermakers have beaten a top-five foe from another conference in Mackey Arena's 52-year history. The Boilermakers (5-3) have won four of five overall.

Jay Huff had 11 points and Mamadi Diakite finished with 10 for the defending national champions. But the Cavaliers (7-1) had their 13-game winning streak snapped in a rematch of last season's overtime classic in the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament. They lost for the first time in eight road games dating to last season and produced their lowest point

total since March 2017.

The game was billed as a showdown between two of the nation's stingiest defenses, but Purdue dominated from start to finish.

No. 3 Maryland 72, Notre Dame 51: Jalen Smith had 15 points and a career-high 16 rebounds as the host Terrapins cruised past the Fighting Irish in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge.

Eric Ayala scored 14 points and Aaron Wiggins added 11 for Maryland (9-0), off to its best start since winning 10 in a row to open the 1998-99 season.

John Mooney had 17 points and 12 rebounds for Notre Dame (6-2), which had won six straight since beginning the season with a loss at North Carolina.

No. 6 Ohio State 74, No. 7 North Carolina 49: Duane Washington Jr. had 18 points

and the Buckeyes shot 54% in the second half to hand the host Tar Heels their most lopsided home loss under Hall of Fame coach Roy Williams.

E.J. Liddell added 12 points for Ohio State (8-0), which led 29-27 at halftime. The Buckeyes outscored UNC 35-13 over the final 15½ minutes to break open the ACC/Big Ten Challenge game.

No. 9 Gonzaga 101, Texas Southern 62: Corey Kispert scored 17 points, Joel Ayayi added 16 and the host Bulldogs rebounded from a loss to Michigan in the Battle 4 Atlantis title game.

No. 20 Colorado 76, Loyola Marymount 64: D'Shawn Schwartz had a season-high 16 points, including a tiebreaking three-pointer late, and the host Buffaloes withstood an upset scare from the Lions.

No. 21 Tennessee 72, Florida A&M 43: John Fulkerson scored 15 points to lead five players in double figures as the Volunteers trounced the winless Rattlers for their 31st consecutive home victory.

No. 22 Washington 90, Eastern Washington 80: Quade Green had 20 points and eight assists, and Jaden McDaniels added 17 points before fouling out as the host Huskies beat the Eagles.

No. 23 Villanova 80, Penn 69: Saddiq Bey scored a career-high 27 points to lead the host Wildcats.

No. 25 Utah State 71, San Jose State 59: Justin Bean had 18 points and 14 rebounds, and the Aggies bounced back from their first loss of the season by winning at San Jose State in the Mountain West Conference opener.

MLB briefs

Source: Wheeler, Phillies agree to \$118M, 5-year deal

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The Philadelphia Phillies filled their biggest need quickly.

Right-hander Zack Wheeler and the Phillies agreed to a \$118 million, five-year contract, two people familiar with the deal told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Both people spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the agreement, which is subject to a successful physical, had not been announced.

The 29-year-old Wheeler stays in the NLEast after spending his first seven seasons with the New York Mets. He was 11-8 with a 3.96 ERA last season after going 12-7 with a 3.31 ERA in 2018. Wheeler missed the 2015 and 2016 seasons following Tommy John surgery.

He will join a rotation led by Aaron Nola that also includes

Jake Arrieta. The Phillies may pursue another front-line starter — Stephen Strasburg, perhaps — to join a staff that has Zach Eflin, Vince Velasquez and Nick Pivetta.

“He knows all of us hitters very well,” Mets role player J.D. Davis said earlier in the day. “He’s a great pitcher, great stuff. I only wish the best for him.”

Angels acquire Bundy for four pitchers

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Los Angeles Angels acquired right-hander Dylan Bundy from the Baltimore Orioles on Wednesday in a trade for four minor league pitchers.

The 27-year-old Bundy has been a durable starter with a nasty slider for the past four seasons with the Orioles, who

chose him with the fourth overall pick in the 2011 amateur draft. The Angels got him for four prospects, none ranked among the top 20 by most estimates.

Baltimore general manager Mike Elias said his latest trade “represents a big step toward our stated goals to accumulate and develop as much young talent as possible.”

Bundy has won 38 games in the last four seasons, including 13 wins in 2017 during his first full season as a big-league starter. Bundy went 15-30 with a 5.13 ERA and 70 home runs allowed during the Orioles' past two miserable seasons, but he has started at least 28 games in three straight years while averaging 168 innings in Baltimore's rotation.

In its latest dump of veteran major league talent for inex-

pensive prospects, Baltimore acquired four right-handers from the Angels' system: Isaac Mattson, Zach Peek, Kyle Bradish and Kyle Brnovich.

Hamels, Braves agree on \$18M, 1-year deal

ATLANTA — Alex Anthopoulos believes Cole Hamels can help the Atlanta Braves win big next season — and help the team's young starters have more success for years to come.

Hamels, who turns 36 this month, agreed Wednesday to an \$18 million, one-year contract with the busy Braves, one of the more active teams this offseason.

Hamels was 7-7 with a 3.81 ERA in 27 starts last season. He has 163 wins and a 3.42 ERA in 14 seasons.

NBA roundup

Bucks top Pistons for 13th-straight win

Associated Press

DETROIT — Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 35 points to lift the Milwaukee Bucks to their 13th consecutive victory, 127-103 over the Detroit Pistons on Wednesday night.

The last time the Bucks had a longer winning streak than this was when they won 16 in a row spanning the end of the 1972-73 season and the beginning of 1973-74. They also had a 13-game run shortly after that 16-game streak ended.

Milwaukee had won its previous two games by 41 and 44 points, and the Pistons had won their previous two by 34 and 33. This one wasn't close, either. The Bucks have dominated Detroit of late.

Milwaukee won all eight matchups with the Pistons last season — four in the regular season and four in the first round of the playoffs. The Bucks also beat Detroit last month in their first meeting of 2019-20.

Andre Drummond had 23 points and 14 rebounds for the Pistons.

Lakers 121, Jazz 96: Anthony Davis scored 26 points, LeBron James had 20 points and 12 assists and Los Angeles won easily at Utah.

Rajon Rondo added 14 points and a season-high 12 assists and season-high nine rebounds. The Lakers cruised to an easy victory, outscoring the Jazz 32-5 in fast-break points and totaling 21 points off 19 Jazz turnovers.

Donovan Mitchell scored 29 points and Bojan Bogdanovic added 23 to lead Utah. The Jazz lost for the fifth time in six games.

Mavericks 121, Timberwolves 114: Dwight Powell had 24 points on 9-for-9 shooting from the field, Jalen Brunson ignited a fourth-quarter rally with 14 of his 16 points in the period and host Dallas beat Minnesota.

Powell and Brunson both had season highs as the Mavericks overcame a subpar outing by Luka Doncic to win for the ninth time in 10 games. Doncic finished with 22 points, seven rebounds and six assists after picking up a technical foul in the third quarter and seeing his team rally with most of its starters on the bench.

Karl-Anthony Towns and Andrew Wiggins had 26 points apiece for the Timberwolves.

Celtics 112, Heat 93: Jaylen Brown scored a season-high 31 points, Kemba Walker had 28 and Boston beat Miami to improve to 8-0 at home.

Brown connected on a season-high five three-pointers, and Walker had seven assists and four rebounds. Jayson Tatum added 19 points.

Jimmy Butler led Miami with a season-high 37 points and had six rebounds and four assists. Heat coach Erik Spoelstra left the team in the morning, flying home to be with wife Nikki for the birth of their second son. Assistant coach Dan Craig ran the team.

Hornets 106, Warriors 91: Devonte Graham made 10 three-pointers and scored 33 points and host Charlotte beat Golden State to spoil D'Angelo Russell's return to the court.

Graham was 10-for-16 from beyond the arc and also had nine assists and had seven

rebounds. Backcourt mate Terry Rozier added 25 points, seven assists and seven rebounds.

Russell finished with 18 points on 7 of 13 shooting in 25 minutes after missing the last nine games with a right thumb sprain.

Nets 130, Hawks 118: Garrett Temple scored a season-high 27 points, Spencer Dinwiddie had 18 of his 24 in the second half and Brooklyn won at Atlanta.

Taurean Prince finished with 23 points against his former team and Jarrett Allen had 20 for the Nets.

Trail Blazers 127, Kings 116: CJ McCollum scored 33 points and host Portland pulled away in the final quarter to beat Sacramento.

Hassan Whiteside added 22 points and 16 rebounds, as well as a career-high seven assists. Damian Lillard had 24 points and 10 assists in the Trail Blazers' third straight home victory. Carmelo Anthony finished with 20 points, his fourth game with 20 or more in seven games with Portland.

Magic 128, Suns 114: Aaron Gordon scored a season-high 32 points, Terrence Ross had 22 and host Orlando beat Phoenix.

Pacers 107, Thunder 100: T.J. Warren scored 24 points to help Indiana win at Oklahoma City.

Domantas Sabonis added 17 points and 13 rebounds for the Pacers. They have won seven of eight.

Bulls 106, Grizzlies 99: Zach LaVine scored 25 points, Wendell Carter Jr. had 16 points and 13 rebounds and Chicago held off Memphis. Lauri Markkanen added 15 points for the Bulls.

NHL roundup

Nichushkin, Avalanche top Maple Leafs

Associated Press

TORONTO—Valeri Nichushkin scored a short-handed goal in the third period, lifting the Colorado Avalanche to a 3-1 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs on Wednesday night.

Nathan MacKinnon had a goal and an assist, Joonas Donskoi also scored and Philipp Grubauer stopped 38 shots for the Avalanche.

Zach Hyman scored for Toronto and Frederik Andersen, starting on consecutive nights for the first time since January 2017, had 27 saves.

Penguins 3, Blues 0: Stefan Noesen celebrated his return to the NHL with his first goal of the season and banged-up Pittsburgh handed St. Louis its first regulation loss on the road since before Halloween.

Noesen, a five-year veteran

who signed a minor-league deal with the Penguins in the offseason, pounded home a rebound off Jared McCann's shot with 39 seconds left in the second period for his first goal since last March when he played for New Jersey.

Senators 5, Oilers 2: Tyler Ennis had a goal and two assists to help visiting Ottawa snap a five-game skid.

Artem Anisimov, Connor

Brown, Anthony Duclair and Vladislav Namestnikov also scored for the Senators.

Capitals 3, Kings 1: John Carlson scored twice, Ilya Samsonov stopped 22 shots and visiting Washington beat Los Angeles.

Tom Wilson also had a goal as the Capitals have won five in a row for the second time this season. They won six straight Oct. 25-Nov. 9.