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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Senator: Afghanistan drawdown coming

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham said Monday that President Donald Trump will announce an American troop drawdown from Afghanistan this week that will likely begin next year.

Speaking from the Afghan capital of Kabul, Graham, R-S.C., said the president could reduce troop numbers to 8,600, down from the current estimated 12,000.

“The Afghan security forces are getting more capable,” said Graham. “As they achieve capability, the number of U.S. forces necessary can go down.”

Despite his past reluctance to embrace a troop withdrawal, Graham said he supports Trump’s expected drawdown. That’s because Graham said

8,600 U.S. troops would be sufficient to guarantee “Afghanistan never becomes a launching pad for another attack against the United States’ homeland.”

Graham said America’s withdrawal from Afghanistan must be “condition-based” and that the Taliban must keep the promises they’ve made during talks.

“It’s our goal to withdraw our forces, but it is our ultimate goal to do it in a sustainable fashion so we don’t have to come back and we don’t undercut our prestige and our standing all over the world,” he said.

It wasn’t clear from Graham’s comments when or if the U.S. would withdraw all of its forces completely.

The Taliban have said any peace agreement must include getting all American troops out

of the country.

Recently resumed peace negotiations between the U.S. and the Taliban were “paused” again after an attack Wednesday outside Bagram Air Field, north of Kabul. The attack killed two Afghans and wounded 70 others. Five international coalition troops from the U.S. and the country of Georgia were lightly wounded, according to U.S. military spokesman Sonny Leggett. He did not specify how many of the injured were Americans.

Washington’s peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, has been trying to hammer out a peace agreement with the Taliban for more than a year. The U.S. wants any deal to include a promise from the insurgent group that Afghanistan would not be used as a base by terror-

ist groups.

Graham, however, said the Taliban could not be trusted to be a reliable counterterrorism force.

“It would be insane for America to allow the Taliban to ensure that al-Qaida and ISIS-K doesn’t come back in a way to represent a threat to our allies and to the American homeland,” said Graham, using an alternative abbreviation for Islamic State’s branch in Afghanistan. The Afghan affiliate refers to itself as the Khorasan Province.

Khalilzad tweeted earlier this month that ISIS in eastern Afghanistan has been weakened by operations carried out not just by the U.S. and Afghan forces, but by the Taliban as well.

US envoy rejects nuclear deadline set by N. Korea

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — A senior U.S. diplomat said Monday that Washington won’t accept a year-end deadline set by North Korea to make concessions in stalled nuclear talks and urged Pyongyang to return to negotiations immediately.

“On this point, let me be absolutely clear: The United States does not have a deadline,” Stephen Biegun, the U.S. special representative for North Korea, told reporters. “We are fully aware of the strong potential for North Korea to conduct a major provocation in the days ahead. To say the least, such an action will be most unhelpful in achieving lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula.”

Biegun, who was in Seoul for talks with South Korean officials, called on North Korea to sit down for talks.

“Let me speak directly to our counterparts in North Korea: It is time for us to do our jobs. Let’s get this done. We are here. And you know how to reach us,” he said.

Biegun later held separate meetings with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Unification Minister Kim Yeon-chul, Seoul’s point man on North Korea. Moon’s office said that during his visit to the presidential Blue House, Biegun said the Trump administration wouldn’t give up on seeking diplomatic progress with North Korea, but it did not elaborate.

It’s unclear if North Korea will reach out to the U.S. to resolve their widening differences on how to achieve North Korean denuclearization. Senior North Korean officials have recently said denuclear-

ization is already off the negotiating table and have threatened to lift a self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests. In past months, North Korea has also conducted a slew of short-range missile and other weapons tests.

Worries about a major North Korean provocation grew after the country said Saturday that it had successfully performed an unspecified “crucial test” that will strengthen its nuclear deterrent. Experts say the North could launch a satellite-carrying rocket or an intercontinental ballistic missile if the U.S. fails to meet the deadline.

Friday’s test was the second in a week at a rocket facility where North Korea has conducted missile engine tests and launched satellites in what the United Nations called cover for testing its long-range missile

technology.

North Korea’s military chief, Pak Jong Chon, asserted Saturday that the North has built up “tremendous power” and that the findings from the recent tests would be used to develop new weapons to allow the country to “definitely and reliably” counter U.S. nuclear threats.

The test flight of an ICBM would likely derail diplomatic efforts as President Donald Trump has viewed the North Korean weapons test moratorium as a major foreign policy achievement.

Biegun called the latest North Korean statements “so hostile and negative and so unnecessary.” He said they don’t reflect the spirit and content of the discussions the two nations have had since the North entered talks with the U.S. last year.

Airmen get medals for Afghanistan actions

BY J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

Two pararescuemen credited with saving dozens of lives during intense combat in Afghanistan have received Silver Star Medals, the Air Force said.

Tech. Sgt. Gavin Fisher and Staff Sgt. Daniel Swensen, who were lauded for their actions in separate clashes, received the third-highest military award for bravery in a ceremony Friday at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.

“Getting this medal is important because it lets people know the war is still going on, and valiant efforts by men and women are still going forth,” Fisher said in a statement. “People are

still out there dying and fighting for each other, and it needs to be recognized.”

Fisher, who also received a Purple Heart, fought in a fierce battle in the strategically important southeastern city of Ghazni in August of 2018.

An assault by more than 1,000 Taliban fighters occupied much of the city — home to 280,000 people — prompting American forces to send support and launch airstrikes against the insurgents.

Fisher served as the rear gunner in a convoy that was struck by rocket-propelled grenades and machine-gun fire during a Taliban ambush, an Air Force statement said.

Even after being wounded by

grenade shrapnel, Fisher continued firing back at his attackers and gave medical treatment to critically injured soldiers during two ambushes, the Air Force said.

The Air Force credits Fisher with saving the lives of 10 critically injured soldiers, evacuating 20 more and eliminating 118 Taliban fighters.

Swensen received his medal for fighting in western Farah province in September, the statement said.

He was part of an Army Special Forces helicopter assault to reclaim a police headquarters taken by the Taliban. Militants sprang an ambush on a ground assault team Swensen was leading through a compound,

separating them from their supporting fire team and pinning them down before a grenade blast wounded Swensen and five others. Despite his wounds, the pararescueman ran through enemy fire to treat an injured soldier before moving him to safety, the Air Force said.

Swensen carried one of the wounded as he and the others moved to an extraction point about half a mile away. As they waited for a medical evacuation helicopter to arrive, the Taliban launched a second attack.

Braving enemy fire, Swensen directed his comrades to cover, then continued treating the wounded until they could be evacuated.

Battle of the Bulge vets, war dead honored

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Defense Secretary Mark Esper and European leaders gathered Monday at the Luxembourg American Cemetery to honor those killed in the Battle of the Bulge and to thank veterans on hand to mark the 75th anniversary of the pivotal battle.

Before approaching the vets to shake hands, Esper addressed the crowd and the men.

“For a moment in history, the fate of the free world rested on their shoulders — rested on your shoulders,” Esper said.

The winter battle was the largest and costliest of the war for the United States, fought over six weeks in the forests and towns of Belgium and Luxembourg, where allies were outnumbered in a surprise offensive by German forces.

The American soldiers held the line, buying time for reinforcements. More than 19,000 U.S. troops died in the fighting, and more than 5,000 of the war dead are buried at the cemetery in Luxembourg. Lt. Gen. George S. Patton Jr., who commanded the 3rd Army during the Bulge campaign, is also buried there.

“Your stories are remarkable and we will forever be grateful for the sacrifices you made,” Esper said. The U.S. soldiers took a “gallant stand against tyranny” as they fought Germany’s last major offensive on the Western Front, he said.

Included in the U.S. delegation attending the ceremony in Luxembourg were House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Events in Luxembourg capped four days of international commemorations of the battle.

Turkish leader says he could close Incirlik over sanctions

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Turkey is prepared to kick the U.S. military out of Incirlik Air Base if Washington imposes sanctions on the country, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, raising the stakes after a similar warning was made last week by Turkey’s foreign minister.

“We will close down Incirlik if necessary,” Erdogan said

Sunday on Turkey’s A Haber news program.

The U.S. has about 50 nuclear bombs stored at Incirlik, which watchdog groups have raised security concerns about.

President Donald Trump said earlier this year he is confident the weapons are safe at the base.

Erdogan also said a U.S. Army site in the small Turkish village of Kurecik, which houses a radar for NATO mis-

sile defense efforts in Europe, could also be closed down. “If they are threatening us with these sanctions, of course we will be retaliating,” he said.

Erdogan’s warnings come a week after a U.S. Senate committee backed legislation calling for economic sanctions after Turkey acquired Russia’s S-400 missile defense system and over Ankara’s incursion into northern Syria.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu last week also blasted the action by U.S. lawmakers and warned Ankara would consider cutting off access to Incirlik and Kurecik if economic penalties were imposed.

Incirlik, a strategic base that dates to the early days of the Cold War, has played a role in U.S. operations against Islamic State.

House report: Trump betrayed nation

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House Judiciary Committee released a sweeping report Monday bolstering the case for impeaching President Donald Trump, laying out the rationale and charges that accuse him of betraying the nation for his own political gain.

Trump faces two articles of impeachment by House Democrats: abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. They point to Trump pressuring Ukraine to investigate 2020 political rival Joe Biden while withholding as leverage military aid the country relies on to counter Russia as well as his efforts to block the House investigation.

The House will vote Wednesday on the impeachment articles approved last week by the House Judiciary panel. The

vote is all but certain to result in Trump's impeachment, though he's expected to be acquitted in a Senate trial.

Detailing its case against the nation's 45th president, the Judiciary panel released a 650-page report just after midnight. The document, which formally lays the groundwork for the vote, said Trump "betrayed the nation by abusing his high office to enlist a foreign power in corrupting democratic elections."

The report was submitted to the House Rules Committee, which will meet Tuesday to set parameters for Wednesday's debate.

The panel summarized the evidence for impeachment compiled by the House intelligence committee and said Trump "has demonstrated he will remain a threat to national

security and the Constitution if allowed to remain in office."

Trump, by refusing to cooperate with the House impeachment inquiry, violated the Constitution's system of checks and balances, the report said.

In dissent, Republicans on the panel denounced the materials submitted by Democrats.

"The paltry record on which the majority relies is an affront to the constitutional process of impeachment and will have grave consequences for future presidents," said Rep. Doug Collins, of Georgia, the panel's top Republican. "The quicker the majority report and the majority's actions are forgotten, the better."

Trump, only the fourth U.S. president to be charged in impeachment proceedings, has insisted he has done nothing wrong.

Attention is turning to the Senate trial, where the Republicans are expected to acquit Trump in January.

"There ought to be a fair trial where the whole truth comes out," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer told reporters Sunday in New York. "And I'm going to work to get that done."

The top Senate Democrat called for new evidence and testimony from former national security adviser John Bolton, acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and two others as part of a detailed proposal outlined in a letter Sunday to Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to spur negotiations with the GOP.

McConnell and Schumer are expected to meet to discuss how to conduct the trial.

Comey: Sloppiness in Russia probe but no misconduct

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former FBI Director James Comey acknowledged Sunday that a Justice Department inspector general report identified "real sloppiness" in the surveillance of a former Trump campaign aide and said he was wrong to have been "overconfident" about how the Russia investigation was handled.

But Comey also insisted he was right to feel some measure of vindication because the report did not find evidence for the most sensational of President Donald Trump's claims, including that he had been wiretapped and illegally spied on and that the FBI had committed treason in investigating ties between Russia and his 2016 campaign.

The inspector general, Comey said in an interview on "Fox News Sunday," "did not find misconduct by FBI personnel, did not find political bias, did not find illegal con-

duct." The significant mistakes the inspector general identified are "not something to sneeze at" but also not evidence of intentional misconduct, Comey said.

In a tweet Sunday, Trump called for an apology from Comey, now that he "got caught red handed."

The report by Inspector General Michael Horowitz concluded that the FBI opened the Russia investigation for a legitimate reason and was not motivated by partisan bias when it did so.

But Horowitz also found major errors and omissions in applications the FBI submitted to eavesdrop on former Trump campaign aide Carter Page. Those problems include the omission of key information about the reliability of a source whose information had been relied on for the warrant and the altering of an email by an FBI lawyer.

Navy building ship named for gay sailor who was forced out

The Washington Post

By the time Harvey Milk's supervisors in the U.S. Navy officially questioned him about his sexuality, he had graduated from officer school and served as a diving officer on a submarine rescue ship during the Korean War.

Then his superiors caught him in a park that was popular with gay men, his nephew said. The sighting raised questions about Milk's sexual orientation in an era when the military banned gay, lesbian and bisexual service members. Milk was forced to resign.

In a move that signaled an about-face on the issue of gay rights, the Navy on Friday began to construct the USNS Harvey Milk, a fleet oiler that will provide fuel to ships and aircraft.

The Navy announced in 2016 that Milk's name would appear on a ship, along with those of other civil rights leaders, including abolitionist Sojourner Truth and suffragist Lucy Stone.

Milk moved to San Francisco in 1972 and opened a camera shop in the Castro District, which was known for its gay community.

He quickly became a powerful local activist. He founded the Castro Village Association for LGBTQ-led businesses, sat on San Francisco's Board of Permit Appeals and in 1978 was sworn in as a city-county supervisor.

On Nov. 27, 1978, former Supervisor Dan White entered city hall through a basement window, killed Mayor George Moscone and shot Milk, then 48, several times.

White pleaded "diminished capacity" at trial because he had fallen into a depression and, among other things, eaten a lot of sugar-heavy food before the killings.

A jury found White guilty of voluntary manslaughter instead of murder. White served five years in prison and later killed himself.

UK's PM Johnson prepares to 'get Brexit done' on deadline

Associated Press

LONDON — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is ready to give a pep talk Monday to a new group of Conservative Party lawmakers as he begins his push to secure parliamentary approval for his Brexit deal.

Johnson will welcome 109 newly elected colleagues, many of them coming from parts of the country that were once strongholds of the opposition Labour Party.

Buoyed by the Conservatives' decisive win in last week's election, Johnson will move fast to deliver on his campaign mantra to "get Brexit done." That means ensuring a Brexit with-

drawal agreement bill is passed in time for the U.K. to complete its historic departure from the European Union by the current deadline of Jan. 31.

Johnson spokesman James Slack said the government will introduce the EU withdrawal bill on Friday. It will be up to the speaker of the House of Commons to determine if Parliament will hold its first major vote on the bill that same day or will wait until January after the Christmas recess.

The Brexit divorce bill is expected to receive strong support in Parliament, where Johnson's Conservatives hold a strong majority. The party won 365 of the 650 seats in the

House of Commons in Thursday's landslide election.

If the bill passes and Britain leaves the EU on time, the country will enter a transition period when EU rules and regulations would still apply in the country and people and goods would still be able to pass freely between the U.K. and the remaining EU members.

Negotiators for the British government and the EU would start trade talks with an eye toward reaching a comprehensive post-Brexit agreement.

Queen Elizabeth II will formally open Parliament on Thursday with a speech outlining the government's legislative program.

ISIS-linked rebels kill scores in Congo

Associated Press

BENI, Congo — Rebels with apparent links to Islamic State killed at least 43 people in eastern Congo over the weekend in a series of attacks carried out in response to a new military offensive in the area, a rights group said Monday.

Rebels from the Allied Democratic Forces in some cases went door-to-door shooting their victims dead, according to a Congolese human rights group known by its French acronym, CEPADHO.

The rebels have been trying to pit the civilian population against the army so that people demand the military action be stopped, said Omar Kavotha, president of the rights organization. Insecurity in the area already prompted demonstrators to protest late last month by setting fire to the town hall.

The deadly weekend violence targeted an area in eastern Congo that is at the heart of the Ebola epidemic.

"These attacks will certainly paralyze the Ebola response teams," said Dr. Pierre Celestin Adikey, who coordinates the effort to control the disease in the Beni region. "The movement of the population becomes difficult to control."

Other armed groups in the area such as the Mai Mai militias also may take advantage of the insecurity to carry out attacks of their own, he said.

The medical effort to control the second-deadliest Ebola outbreak in history has been severely hampered since the start by the presence of so many armed groups in eastern Congo.

Health teams have at times been unable to safely get to areas to carry out vaccinations of those at highest risk of contracting the deadly virus. Without the ability to react quickly, Ebola has continued to spread.

Japan, South Korea hold export talks

Associated Press

TOKYO — Senior officials from Japan and South Korea were holding talks Monday on high-tech exports for the first time since Tokyo tightened controls on South Korean semiconductor parts earlier this year.

The director-general level meeting was taking place in Tokyo between Yoichi Iida, of Japan's Trade Control Department, and his South Korean counterpart, Lee Ho-hyeon. The two officials shook hands at the beginning of the talks, though they made no opening remarks to the media.

A meeting of this level has not been held in more than three years.

Japan in July tightened trade controls on South Korea materials used in smartphones, television screens and other high-tech products, citing national security concerns. Japan also downgraded South Korea a month later from a list of preferential trade partners.

South Korea has demanded Japan reverse the measures,

saying Tokyo has weaponized export controls in retaliation for South Korean court rulings demanding Japanese companies pay compensation to former Korean laborers over their treatment during Japan's 1910-45 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula.

Tokyo has pressed Seoul to stick with a 1965 agreement in resolving their dispute over wartime Korean laborers, criticizing the court decisions as a violation of international law.

Japan's trade curbs against South Korea have led to subsequent retaliatory measures that spilled into the area of national security, with Seoul threatening to abandon a key military intelligence-sharing pact with Tokyo.

The pact was saved just hours before its expiration in November, following Washington's repeated pressure and with Tokyo agreeing to resume export control talks requested by Seoul.

Monday's talks come a week ahead of a planned summit be-

tween the two countries and China.

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and South Korean Foreign Minister Kan Geun-wha, both attending the Asia-Europe Meeting in Madrid, talked briefly and welcomed their trade officials' meeting in Tokyo, Japanese officials said.

The two sides also agreed to cooperate closely on threats from North Korea and to achieve next week's summit.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said that Japan's export control measures are part of the country's international responsibility and that "they are not something that we decide by negotiating with a trade partner."

"Our policy has been consistent and there is no change to our position," Suga said, referring to Japan's position on the wartime compensation issue. "We urge South Korea to act wisely."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man convicted in \$3M romance fraud

MO KANSAS CITY — A Virginia man was convicted Friday in federal court in Missouri for his role in a scheme that defrauded lonely women across the country out of nearly \$3 million.

Henry N. Asomani, 34, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Ghana who lived in Dumfries, Va., was found guilty of six counts involving fraud and conspiracy.

Prosecutors said Asomani's co-conspirators contacted people who had posted ads on online dating sites such as ChristianMingle.com or through their Facebook pages and then used various phony stories to persuade victims to send them money.

Man found eaten by gator died of overdose

FL FORT MEADE — Florida officials said a man who was found partially eaten by an alligator in June died of a meth overdose.

According to an autopsy report from a central Florida medical examiner, Michael Glenn Ford II, 45, had methamphetamine in his system when he died, and that was the cause of his death.

Ford's body was found in a canal on private property in June in Polk County, halfway between Tampa and Orlando. His hand and foot were found inside the gator's stomach.

Stolen pit bull to make long trip home

WV CHARLESTON — A pit bull that was stolen from its owner in Montana and taken across the country to West Virginia is on its way back

home, thanks to a microchip and a group of volunteers who love animals.

Cassandra Rasmussen, of Butte, Mont., said a person she considered a friend stole her purse and took her 9-year-old dog Zeus on Oct. 30.

The suspected thief was arrested in the Charleston area in November and the dog was taken to a shelter. Workers at the Kanawha-Charleston Humane Association scanned him for a microchip and identified Rasmussen as the owner.

Volunteers are driving Zeus the nearly 2,000 miles back to Butte, according to a Facebook page.

Package thief taunts with thank-you note

MN ST. PAUL — A package thief who made off with a woman's delivery in St. Paul last week decided to leave something behind for the victim — a handwritten thank-you note taunting her for the package.

Homeowner Hilary Smith said she found the note on her porch after she got home from work, hours after she received a text saying that her package had been delivered.

The note said: "So just a quick little thank you for leaving me the opportunity of stealing your package. Very nice of you. Thank You." It was signed: "The new owner of your package."

Smith said she appreciates hand-crafted thank-you notes, but not in this case.

Man commits crime to return to prison

MI ESCANABA — A Kalamazoo-area man who told his lawyer that he wanted to rob an Upper Peninsula business so he could return to prison could be locked up for

the rest of his life.

Mark Wilson, 59, of Portage was sentenced Dec. 9 to at least 25 years in prison because of past convictions. He won't be eligible for parole until he's in his 80s.

"Somewhere along the road, your honor, I just seemed to have lost the ability to function normally with society," Wilson told a Delta County judge.

The Daily Press reported that Wilson gave a note to a Hardee's employee in Escanaba indicating that he was robbing the restaurant, he then stayed in the restroom until officers arrived.

Bones found may be Revolutionary soldiers

CT RIDGEFIELD — Human skeletal remains possibly belonging to Revolutionary War soldiers have been discovered under an 18th-century house being renovated in Connecticut, according to a published report.

The Connecticut Office of State Archaeology was notified by the medical examiner's office of bones found under the basement of the Ridgefield home on Dec. 2, The News-Times of Danbury reported Wednesday.

Subsequent excavations by state archaeologist Nicholas Bellantoni yielded two more skeletons. The bone size indicates they were probably men, he said.

One of the other reasons Bellantoni and his team believe the bones belong to Revolutionary War soldiers is that they found five buttons.

Man charged with biting off part of nose

AK FAIRBANKS — An Alaska man suspected of biting off part of the nose of

a friend has been charged with felony assault.

Zachary Atchley, 27, of Fairbanks, was arrested Dec. 10, the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner reported.

The injured man told Alaska State Troopers that he went to see Atchley and another man about 3 a.m. Tuesday at Atchley's camper west of Fairbanks and began drinking hard liquor.

The man said Atchley approached and bit him, then prevented him from leaving for medical help for about an hour, a criminal complaint said. Atchley also punched him in the head and neck, the man said.

Part of the man's left nostril and the tip of his nose was missing.

Mom who crashed car into barber surrenders

CA ANTIOCH — A San Francisco Bay Area mother suspected of ramming her car into her son's barber following a haircut surrendered to authorities, police said.

Ruby Delgadillo, 28, brought an attorney with her when she turned herself in Wednesday and refused to give a statement to detectives, the Antioch Police Department said.

Police said Delgadillo rammed into Brian Martin, 63, with her car, smashing him into a glass storefront and breaking his leg, because she was upset with her son's haircut.

"She was trying to kill me," said Martin, owner of the Delta Barber Shop in Antioch, 45 miles east of San Francisco.

Martin told reporters Delgadillo had been his customer for over a year and was usually pleasant but she became upset over a small nick on her son's neck.

From wire reports

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and Military News

NFL roundup

Texans top Titans, take AFC South lead

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Houston Texans grabbed control of the AFC South by beating the Tennessee Titans 24-21 Sunday.

The defending division champs are looking for Houston's fourth AFC South title in six years under coach Bill O'Brien. The Titans haven't won this division since 2008, and Mike Vrabel is Tennessee's third coach since then.

Ka'imi Fairbairn kicked a 29-yard field goal with 3:26 left for the winning points.

The Texans (9-5) nearly blew a 14-0 halftime lead. Deshaun Watson threw for 243 yards and two touchdowns, but Tennessee also intercepted him twice inside the Titans 1.

The Titans (8-6) snapped a four-game win streak with only their second loss in seven games. Now they will need help in the final two games to earn their second playoff berth in three seasons.

When the Titans tied it at 14 early in the fourth quarter, the Texans scored 10 straight points. Carlos Hyde ran for a 10-yard TD, then Fairbairn's field goal finished Houston's scoring.

Ryan Tannehill hit Dion Lewis with an 11-yard TD pass with 2:04 left to pull Tennessee within 24-21. But the Titans used backup kicker Ryan Santoso on the onside kick, and the ball only went 7 yards before being smothered by Texans safety Justin Reid.

Bills 17, Steelers 10: Josh Allen threw a 14-yard touchdown pass to Tyler Kroft with 7:55 to play and Buffalo clinched a playoff spot, beating host Pittsburgh.

The Bills secured their second playoff berth in three seasons under coach Sean McDermott. Buffalo trailed 10-7, but scored on two possessions in the fourth quarter, as Allen rallied the Bills for a comeback win for the fifth time this season. Consecutive interceptions by Jordan Poyer and Levi Wallace on Pittsburgh's last two possessions sealed the victory.

The surging Steelers had an opportunity to leapfrog the Bills for the top AFC wild card spot, but Buffalo snapped Pittsburgh's three-game win streak.

Packers 21, Bears 13: At Green Bay, Wis., Aaron Jones ran for two scores, Davante Adams caught another in the 200th edition of the NFL's oldest rivalry.

With the win, the Packers (11-3) clinched a playoff spot and swept the regular-season series between the teams for the 15th time in the last 26 seasons and the seventh time in the last 11 seasons. Green Bay defeated Chicago 10-3 in the season opener.

Patriots 34, Bengals 13: Tom Brady threw a pair of touchdown passes to move within one of the NFL career record, Stephon Gilmore returned one of his two interceptions 64 yards for a score, and the Patriots visiting New England clinched a playoff berth.

A week that started with intrigue — a Patriots crew videotaping the Bengals' sideline in Cleveland — concluded with more New England history. The Patriots have made the playoffs 11 consecutive seasons, extending their NFL record.

Chiefs 23, Broncos 3: Patrick Mahomes threw for 340 yards and two touchdowns, and Tyreek Hill and Travis Kelce were on the receiving end of many of his biggest throws, as the AFC West champions romped to remain in the hunt for the No. 2 playoff seed and a potential first-round bye.

Hill caught five passes for 67 yards and both scores, and Kelce hauled in 11 catches for 142 yards to become the first tight end in NFL history with four consecutive 1,000-yard receiving seasons, helping the Chiefs (10-4) beat the Broncos for the ninth straight time. Denver (5-9) hasn't won in Kansas City since Sept. 17, 2015.

Cowboys 44, Rams 21: At Arlington, Texas, Dak Prescott threw two touchdown passes and Ezekiel Elliott ran for two scores as Dallas (7-7) ended its second three-game losing streak of the season to stay even with Philadelphia atop the division with a showdown looming next week.

The defending NFC champion Rams (8-6), who already needed help to get into the playoffs, didn't help themselves with another poor showing a week after their most impressive game of the season in a win over Seattle. Their loss clinched playoff berths for Seattle, San Francisco and Green Bay.

Falcons 29, 49ers 20: At Santa Clara, Calif., Matt Ryan teamed with Julio Jones on a 5-yard pass that was ruled a touchdown after a replay reversal with 2 seconds left. Jones was called short of the goal line with Atlanta (5-9) trailing 22-17. But a replay showed the ball breaking the plane with Jones in the air while being tackled by Jimmie Ward.

When things couldn't get crazier, they did: On the final kickoff, Atlanta scored another touchdown when Olamide Zaccheaus came up with the ball as the 49ers were tossing it around in desperation.

The 49ers (11-3) still clinched their first playoff berth since a 2013 run to the NFC championship game with the Rams' loss at Dallas.

Vikings 39, Chargers 10: Dan Bailey kicked four field goals and Ifeadi Odenigbo scored visiting Minnesota's second defensive touchdown in three games.

Mike Boone ran for two touchdowns in the fourth quarter and Kirk Cousins threw for 207 yards and a TD for the Vikings (10-4), who have won four of their last five to remain in possession of the NFC's last playoff spot.

Seahawks 30, Panthers 24: At Charlotte, N.C., Russell Wilson threw for 286 yards and two touchdowns, Chris Carson ran for 133 yards and two scores.

The Seahawks (11-3) wrapped up a post-season berth for the seventh time in the last eight seasons with a Rams loss at Dallas. They also tied San Francisco for the NFC West lead.

Eagles 37, Redskins 27: Carson Wentz recovered from a late fumble by leading a 75-yard, go-ahead scoring drive and throwing his third touchdown pass of the day to keep visiting Philadelphia's NFC East hopes on track.

Wentz's ability to bounce back from some accuracy issues and a turnover means the Eagles (7-7) are tied with Dallas in the division race with a game against the Cowboys coming next week.

Cardinals 38, Browns 24: Kenyan Drake ran for four touchdowns, Kyler Murray threw for 219 yards and a score and host Arizona snapped a six-game skid.

Murray got the best of a much-anticipated showdown with Cleveland quarterback Baker Mayfield. The two were teammates in college at Oklahoma and both won Heisman Trophies before being selected with the No. 1 overall picks by their respective teams in back-to-back years.

Jaguars 20, Raiders 16: Gardner Minshew threw two TD passes to Chris Conley in the final 5:15 of the game and the Jaguars spoiled the final scheduled game at the Oakland Coliseum.

The Raiders (6-8) broke out to a 16-3 lead and appeared comfortably ahead before falling apart in the closing minutes on a somber day in Oakland.

Giants 36, Dolphins 20: Two-time Super Bowl MVP Eli Manning threw two touchdowns in what might have been his final home start for the Giants and host New York snapped a franchise record-tying nine-game losing streak.

Buccaneers 38, Lions 17: At Detroit, Tampa Bay's Jameis Winston became the first player in NFL history to throw for 450 yards in consecutive games. Winston threw for a career-high 458 yards one week after throwing for 456 yards.

NBA roundup

Lakers beat Hawks for 7th straight win

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Not looking the least bit tired after a whirlwind weekend, LeBron James scored 32 points and the Los Angeles Lakers extended their winning streak to seven with a 101-96 victory over the pesky Atlanta Hawks on Sunday night.

The Lakers pulled even with Milwaukee for the NBA's best record at 24-3.

"Highlights: sometimes they happen, sometimes they don't," James said. "I try to play the game with a lot of joy."

The Hawks kept it close all the way. Rookie Cam Reddish got a look at a tying three-pointer from the corner, but the shot clanked off the rim. Danny Green went to the other end and knocked down a pair of free throws to send the Hawks to their fourth straight loss.

After scoring 28 points in a win at Miami on Friday night, James flew to Columbus, Ohio, to watch son Bronny play a high school game Saturday night. Then, James traveled on to Atlanta to face the Hawks.

James also had 13 rebounds and seven assists, the best a no-look, between-the-legs pass that caught Dwight Howard breaking down the lane for a massive dunk. Anthony Davis added 27 points and 13 rebounds.

Trae Young led the Hawks with 30 points.

Magic 130, Pelicans 119: Jonathan Isaac had 21 points and 10 rebounds and visiting Orlando handed New Orleans its franchise-record 12th straight loss.

Magic center Nikola Vucevic returned from a sprained ankle to score 20 points. He played 29 minutes in his first game since Nov. 20. Orlando snapped a three-game losing streak while making a season-high 17 threes, shooting 50% from long range.

Jrue Holiday led the Pelicans with 29 points and eight assists.

Nets 109, 76ers 89: Spencer Dinwiddie scored 24 points, Joe Harris had 16 points and host Brooklyn beat Philadelphia.

DeAndre Jordan had 13 points and 11 rebounds and Garrett Temple finished with 13 points for the Nets.

With Joel Embiid out with an upper respiratory illness, Ben Simmons scored 20 points and Tobias Harris chipped in 17 for the 76ers. They had won five in a row.

Nuggets 111, Knicks 105: Nikola Jokic made a late go-ahead three-pointer and finished with 25 points to help Denver hold off New York.

Will Barton had 16 points, Gary Harris added 15 and Jamal Murray had 14, including a key three-pointer in the late going. The Nuggets beat the Knicks for the 12th straight time in Denver.

Marcus Morris led New York with 22 points. The Knicks were coming off back-to-back road wins under interim coach Mike Miller. They played Denver 11 days ago in New York and lost by 37 points, a setback that preceded the firing of David Fizdale as coach.

Kings 100, Warriors 79: At San Francisco, Bogdan Bogdanovich scored 25 points, Buddy Hield added 19 and Sacramento routed Golden State.

The Kings won for the fourth time in five games and shook off a disappointing home loss Friday to the lowly New York Knicks. They shot a season-best 60% from the field and beat the Warriors for just the fourth time in the past 25 games between the teams dating to the 2013-14 season.

Willie Cauley-Stein, facing his former team, led the Warriors with 14 points on 7-for-9 shooting. Golden State has lost eight of nine to fall to 5-23.

Pacers 107, Hornets 85: Reserve guard Aaron Holiday scored 12 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter in Indiana's victory over visiting Charlotte.

Holiday was a point shy of his career high set a month ago at Brooklyn. Cody Zeller, an Indiana native who typically plays well in front of family and friends, had 19 points and 12 rebounds for Charlotte.

Top 25 basketball roundup

No. 3 Buckeyes, No. 17 Tar Heels tumble in upsets

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — With an eight-day break between games, Ohio State coach Chris Holtmann was wary of this trip to Minnesota despite the roll his team had been on.

The third-ranked Buckeyes had the kind of flat performance Holtmann was worried about, and — Poof! — their perfect record was gone, thanks to an all-around effort by the Gophers.

Marcus Carr scored a career-high 35 points and Daniel Oturu had 14 points and 13 rebounds, and Minnesota toppled undefeated and third-ranked Ohio State 84-71 on Sunday for

coach Richard Pitino's first win against a top-five team.

"I thought we had some inconsistencies to our practice week," Holtmann said. "You're not always sure if that's due to finals or whatever. Obviously, it was a significant layoff, but I don't look at that as the reason that we lost. They were the better team tonight."

Oturu outworked Kaleb Wesson in the paint to win the battle of two of the Big Ten's best big men with his sixth double-double of the season for the Gophers (5-5, 1-1). Prior to this game, the highest-ranked opponent they'd beaten in seven years under Pitino was No. 6

Maryland on Feb. 18, 2016. Minnesota beat the Buckeyes' average scoring allowance by 30 points. That was fifth in the nation entering the game.

"I don't know if there was a weakness in what we did," Pitino said. "I just thought start to finish that was about as complete a game as we've played here."

Carr stole the show with 28 points in the second half, but it took a collective increase in aggression by him and fellow guards Gabe Kalscheur and Payton Willis after a 20-point loss at Iowa when the three of them combined for 10 points on 3-for-29 shooting.

Wofford 68, No. 17 North Carolina 64: Wofford traveled to Chapel Hill and shocked a ranked North Carolina team again, getting 19 points from Trevor Stumpe and riding a 16-0 run in the second half to beat the Tar Heels.

Storm Murphy added 15 points and Messiah Jones had 13 points for the Terriers (7-4), who went on the road to beat North Carolina for the second time in three years.

"We know what comes with the intensity of this type of game," Murphy said. "We 100 percent believed we could do it and we were going to win. It was a blast. It was absolutely a thrill."

NHL roundup

Kane's 1st hat trick of season lifts Blackhawks

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Patrick Kane scored three goals for his first hat trick of the season, and the Chicago Blackhawks stopped a four-game slide by topping the Minnesota Wild 5-3 on Sunday.

Brandon Saad and David Kampf also scored for Chicago, which was coming off a heartbreaking loss at St. Louis. The last-place Blackhawks had dropped seven of nine overall. Robin Lehner stopped 23 shots.

Kevin Fiala scored twice for Minnesota in the opener of a three-game trip. Eric Staal also scored, and Ryan Suter had three assists. Kaapo Kahkonen finished with 22 saves.

Kings 4, Red Wings 2: Anze Kopitar scored two goals and Los Angeles beat host Detroit for its third win in four games.

Jeff Carter and Tyler Toffoli also scored for the Kings. Alex Iafallo had two assists and Jack Campbell, who is from Port Huron, Mich., stopped 22 shots.

Defenseman Madison Bowey had a goal and an assist, and Filip Zadina also scored for Detroit.

Golden Knights 6, Canucks 3: Max Pacioretty had two goals and two assists to help Vegas beat visiting Vancouver.

Nick Holden, Valentin Zykov, Jonathan Marchessault and Mark Stone also scored for the Golden Knights. It was the fifth time this season Vegas had five different goal scorers in a game. Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 26 shots to improve to 12-2-1 in his career against the Canucks.

Jets 7, Flyers 3: Blake Wheeler and Mark Scheifele each had a power-play goal and added two assists in host Winnipeg's win over Philadelphia.

Nikolaj Ehlers, Luca Sbisa, Logan Shaw, Patrik Laine and Kyle Connor also scored and Connor Hellebuyck made 29 saves to help the Jets improve to 20-11-2.

Diamondbacks land Bumgarner

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Long-time Giants ace Madison Bumgarner has reached agreement with the Arizona Diamondbacks on an \$85 million, five-year contract that ends his run of success in San Francisco, a person with direct knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press on Sunday.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because Bumgarner still needed to pass a physical to complete the deal.

Bumgarner pitched 11 seasons for the Giants but knew his time likely had ended. He bid farewell along with retiring manager Bruce Bochy on the final day of the season.

The 2014 World Series MVP will see a lot of his former team next season, too. Arizona plays the Giants in seven of its first 13 games, including a series that begins in San Francisco on April 6.

"I'm very excited to be playing with Madison again! He is the ultimate competitor and I know he will help us immense-

ly," said new Arizona catcher Stephen Vogt, a 2019 teammate with Bumgarner in San Francisco. "This team is already in a good position and adding someone like Bum will only add to that!"

The Giants said during the winter meetings this past week in San Diego they had remained in contact with representatives for the 30-year-old Bumgarner, who helped them win World Series titles in 2010, '12 and '14.

The seven-time defending NL West champion Dodgers also were among the clubs interested in signing the free agent.

Bumgarner went 9-9 with a career-high 3.90 ERA last season. The lefty has been especially valuable in postseason play — he is 4-0 with a memorable Game 7 save and an 0.25 ERA in World Series play, and has pitched two shutouts in NL wild-card games.

This marks the second time in four years the typically frugal Diamondbacks have signed a top-tier free-agent pitcher. In 2015, Arizona added right-

hander Zack Greinke on a \$206.5 million, six-year deal.

Arizona went 85-77 last season and traded Greinke to Houston in late July. The Diamondbacks haven't had a lot of success in October lately, not winning a game in the NL Championship Series round since taking their only World Series title in 2001.

Bumgarner will join a rotation that includes left-handers Robbie Ray and Alex Young and right-handers Merrill Kelly and Mike Leake.

Bumgarner matched his career high with the 34 starts this year, moving past two frustrating, injury-shortened seasons.

The four-time All-Star missed nearly three months in 2017 after an April dirt bike accident during an off day in Colorado. Then Bumgarner broke the pinkie on his pitching hand when he was hit by a line drive from Kansas City's Whit Merrifield in his final 2018 spring training start, undergoing surgery to insert pins into the finger.

Indians trade Kluber to Rangers

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Corey Kluber led by example and excellence in Cleveland. The Texas Rangers are hoping he can do the same for them.

The Indians traded the two-time Cy Young Award winner — and their unquestioned ace — over the past six seasons to the Rangers on Sunday, a blockbuster deal that could dramatically change both teams.

In exchange for the 33-year-old Kluber, Cleveland received outfielder Delino DeShields and pitching prospect Emmanuel Clase, a hard-throwing 21-year-old reliever with "electric stuff."

Indians president Chris Antonetti said he received calls from numerous teams, but the offer from Texas made the most sense for Cleveland because it included players who can have

an immediate impact and "help us be a better team in 2020."

But dealing the stoic and steady Kluber wasn't easy.

Since the Indians acquired him in a 2010 trade with San Diego, he has blossomed into one of baseball's most dominant pitchers. Kluber won his first Cy Young in 2014, when he went 18-9 and added No. 2 in 2017 after going 18-4 and leading the AL with a 2.25 ERA.

But his future with the money-conscious Indians grew more uncertain last season when the club managed to stay in the playoff chase until late September despite not having him after May 1.

Kluber broke his right forearm when he was struck by a line drive during a start at Miami and never made it back. He came close to returning to the Indians' rotation but suf-

fered an oblique injury during a minor league rehab appearance that ended his comeback.

Rangers general manager Jon Daniels said the injuries that Kluber dealt with last season "don't necessarily give us pause," and believes the time off could be a positive after all his innings pitched in previous seasons.

"The start of last season wasn't going the way he's accustomed of pitching, and I think the time off may give him a little time to reset and get his body fresh," Daniels said. "He feels like he's in a really good spot."

Daniels described Kluber, who is on vacation on the West Coast, as "genuinely excited" about the deal. A three-time All-Star, Kluber went 98-58 with a 3.16 ERA over his nine seasons with the Indians.