

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Emails show US didn't wait to hold aid

The Washington Post

An official from the White House budget office directed the Defense Department to “hold off” on sending military aid to Ukraine less than two hours after President Donald Trump’s controversial phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, according to internal emails.

Michael Duffey, a senior budget official, told Pentagon officials that Trump had become personally interested in the Ukraine aid and had ordered the hold, according to the heavily redacted emails, obtained by the Center for Public Integrity on Friday in response to a Freedom of Information Act request. He also asked the Pentagon not to discuss the hold widely.

“Given the sensitive nature of the request, I appreciate your keeping that information closely held to those who need to know to execute the direc-

tion,” Duffey wrote in a July 25 email to Pentagon Comptroller Elaine McCusker and others.

The new emails shed light on the opaque and unorthodox process by which the Trump administration withheld almost \$400 million in aid from Ukraine at the same time the president and some of his political allies were pushing Zelenskyy to investigate Democrats.

On Wednesday, the House of Representatives voted to impeach Trump for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, charging the president with leveraging U.S. military aid to solicit foreign interference in the 2020 election and blocking congressional attempts to conduct oversight.

In one email, Duffey indicated Trump began asking about the aid Congress had appropriated for Ukraine after seeing a June 19 article in the Washington Examiner with the headline “Pentagon to send \$250M in weapons to Ukraine.”

The haphazard process continued throughout the summer, the emails show, including on the same day that Trump spoke with Zelenskyy and requested a “favor” after the Ukrainian president said he was ready to purchase anti-tank missiles from the U.S. That phone call, which took place about 9 a.m. on July 25, was followed by Duffey’s email directing the hold at 11:04 a.m. Some administration officials testified that they had learned of the hold, which blocked money from being appropriated by the State Department and the Defense Department, in early July.

The emails also show that some Pentagon officials were concerned that withholding the aid from Ukraine, which relied on the money to defend itself against Russian aggression, was ill-advised policy and potentially unlawful. Mark Sandy, a career budget official who testified before the House Intelligence Committee dur-

ing last month’s impeachment hearings, told lawmakers he was concerned that withholding the aid Congress had approved could be a violation of a 1974 law that restricts how a president can suspend congressionally approved funds.

Sandy testified that two budget officials resigned in part due to frustration about the freeze, a sentiment that was shared within the Pentagon, according to the emails.

Sandy was removed from his position and replaced by Duffey, who proceeded to sign documents implementing the hold on aid during the summer.

The aid was released in September after a whistleblower came forward to allege that Trump had pressured Zelenskyy to interfere in the 2020 election by launching investigations into former Vice President Joe Biden and his son Hunter, as well as into a conspiracy theory about Ukrainian election interference in 2016.

GI killed in Afghanistan; Taliban claim responsibility

BY J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — An American service member was killed in action in Afghanistan on Monday, the military said, making 2019 the deadliest year for U.S. forces in Afghanistan since major combat operations officially ended five years ago.

The Taliban said the American soldier was killed by a roadside bomb planted by their fighters in Kunduz province in the north of the country. Monday’s death is the 20th combat fatality for U.S. forces in Afghanistan this year.

The service member’s name has not been released pending notification of next of kin, U.S.

Forces-Afghanistan said in a statement.

The statement did not say where in Afghanistan the soldier was killed and officials declined to provide more details.

In addition to the soldier who was killed, another American and an Afghan commando were seriously wounded in the roadside bombing, a statement released by the Taliban said. The insurgents are known to exaggerate their claims.

Several sources reached by phone in Kunduz province said Afghan commandos raided an ammunition depot there Sunday night. It was unclear whether American forces were involved, said Anamudin Rahmani, a spokesman for the pro-

vincial police.

Last month, two Fort Hood, Texas-based Army pilots were killed when their helicopter went down in Logar province. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Kirk T. Fuchigami Jr. and Chief Warrant Officer 2 David C. Knadle were providing security for ground troops, the Pentagon said.

More than 2,400 American troops have died in Afghanistan since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion launched in response to the 9/11 attacks.

The latest U.S. death came as the U.S. and Taliban resumed peace talks that were called off in September by President Donald Trump. Trump cited the death of an American soldier in

a roadside bombing in Kabul, which the Taliban claimed they carried out, as a main reason for canceling the talks.

The revived talks are at “an important stage,” the U.S. diplomat leading the negotiations, Zalmay Khalilzad, said on Twitter last week.

The Taliban want a peace deal to include the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. The U.S. is seeking a promise from the insurgent group that it will no longer provide safe haven to international terrorist groups and will include the internationally recognized government in Kabul in peace negotiations.

Zubair Babakarkhail contributed to this report.

Construction seen at N. Korean site linked to missiles

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — A new satellite image of a factory where North Korea makes military equipment used to launch long-range missiles shows the construction of a new structure.

The release of several images from Planet Labs comes amid concern that North Korea could launch a rocket or missile as it seeks concessions in stalled nuclear negotiations with the United States.

North Korea has warned that what “Christmas gift” it gives the U.S. depends on what action Washington takes.

One of the satellite images taken on Thursday shows the completion of a new structure at the March 16 Factory near Pyongyang, where North Korea is believed to be developing and manufacturing vehicles used as mobile launchers for long-range ballistic missiles.

Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia nonproliferation program at the Middlebury Institute, said in an email that the construction seemed to be an

expansion of the factory, which would be “big news.”

North Korea used what appeared to be vehicles imported from China during its three flight tests of the Hwasong-14 and -15 intercontinental ballistic missiles in 2017, Lewis said.

An increased capacity to produce mobile launchers would potentially help expand North Korea’s ICBM force and improve its survivability during nuclear conflict.

“As far as I know, North Korea only imported eight of those vehicles,” Lewis said about the vehicles the North used during the 2017 tests.

“I would think North Korea would want 50-100 such systems. ... This would probably be some mix of ICBMs we have seen and the new system that North Korea claims is under development.”

Nuclear talks between the U.S. and North Korea have been stalled since a February summit between President Donald Trump and South Korean leader Kim Jong Un fell apart.

Navy contractor faces wire fraud charges

The Washington Post

The owner of a Virginia company that provides the U.S. Navy with ballistic vests, protective helmets and riot gear is facing a federal charge of wire fraud after the owner was accused of misleading authorities about where the products were made.

Prosecutors said Arthur Morgan, 67, the chief executive of Surveillance Equipment Group and its division SEG Armor, falsely claimed the equipment was made in Hong Kong and the United States when it was made in mainland China.

According to federal court records, Morgan’s company was an authorized seller of law enforcement and security supplies to federal agencies. Such sales must comply with the Trade Agreements Act, which requires products to be made or “substantially transformed” in a “designated country.”

The United States includes Hong Kong, a special administrative region of China, on its list of countries designated to make equipment under the act but excludes the mainland. If a contractor wants to supply products from nondesignated countries, it must specifically disclose that information in an initial offer.

When a General Services Administration contracting officer asked Morgan whether his items complied with the trade act, prosecutors said, Mor-

gan emailed saying his products were made in the “United States/Hong Kong.”

An Army special agent checked pictures Morgan’s firm had filed with the GSA and detected that a photo of a helmet for sale had been altered, court records said. When the agent did a reverse image search, he found the unaltered photo on Alibaba.com, a Chinese e-commerce site, indicating that the helmet was made by a Chinese firm.

Another reverse image search found the same was true for a ballistic vest.

Investigators also found serial numbers on equipment that traced back to the Chinese company and Mandarin handwriting on ballistic material, prosecutors said. Emails Morgan had sent, however, indicated that orders were made in the United States and were being shipped from a factory in southern Virginia.

Between 2015 and July 2019, prosecutors said, five federal agencies placed nine orders for ballistic vests, helmets or riot gear from Surveillance Equipment Group, totaling about \$640,000.

If convicted, prosecutors said, Morgan could face a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison. Actual sentences are typically less than that, they said.

China calls US Space Force threat to outer space peace

Associated Press

BEIJING — Rising space power China on Monday attacked the newly created U.S. Space Force as a “direct threat to outer space peace and security.”

Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters that China is “deeply concerned about it and resolutely opposed to it.”

“The relevant U.S. actions are a serious violation of the international consensus on the peaceful use of outer space, undermine global strategic balance and stability, and pose a direct threat to outer space peace and

security,” Geng said at a briefing.

China’s space program has advanced rapidly since its first crewed mission in 2003. In a report last February, the Pentagon asserted that China and Russia have embarked on major efforts to develop technologies that could allow them to disrupt or destroy American and allied satellites in a crisis or conflict.

China in 2007 conducted an unannounced missile strike against one of its own defunct satellites, creating an enormous amount of space debris.

Geng dismissed such concerns, calling

them “unfounded counter charges” that merely provided the U.S. with a justification for its own actions.

The establishment of the Space Force is seen by the U.S. military as a recognition of the need to more effectively organize for the defense of U.S. interests in space — especially satellites used for navigation and communication. The Space Force is not designed or intended to put combat troops in space.

Space has “evolved into a war-fighting domain of its own,” Defense Secretary Mark Esper told reporters Friday.

Boeing CEO resigns amid Max 737 crisis

Associated Press

Boeing CEO Dennis Muilenburg resigned Monday with no end in sight to the crisis that has engulfed the manufacturer and its Max 737 jetliner.

The company's board said a change in leadership was needed to restore confidence in Boeing as it works to repair relationships with regulators and others in the wake of two Max 737 crashes that killed 346 people in all.

The Max was grounded worldwide after the two disasters — one in October 2018 off the coast of Indonesia, the other in 2019 in Ethiopia. Boeing has come under fierce criticism on Capitol Hill and elsewhere over the design and rollout of the

aircraft and has been unable to get approval from regulators to put the plane back in the air.

Last week, in another blow to a company long seen as a stalwart of American industry, Boeing announced it is suspending production of the Max in January.

And in another stinging setback for the aerospace giant, Boeing's new Starliner space capsule went off course during a bungled unmanned test flight to the International Space Station.

Boeing said Muilenburg will depart immediately and the board's current chairman, David Calhoun, will take over as CEO on Jan. 13. The company declined to make Calhoun or other executives available

for comment.

Investigators say that in both crashes, a faulty sensor caused the plane's automated MCAS flight control system to push the nose of the plane down, and the pilots were unable to regain control.

Ababu Amha, who lost his wife, a flight attendant, in the second crash, involving an Ethiopian Airlines aircraft, welcomed Muilenburg's departure.

"This is something that we have been asking and struggling for quite some time," he said. "The CEO reluctantly and deliberately kept the aircraft in service after the Lion Air crash. The Ethiopian Airlines crash was a preventable accident."

The resignation, however, is

not enough, Amha said: "They should further be held accountable for their actions because what they did was a crime."

Earlier this month, the head of the Federal Aviation Administration expressed concern that Boeing was pushing for an unrealistically quick return of the grounded Max.

The shutdown in production is likely to ripple through Boeing's vast network of 900 companies that make engines, bodies and other parts for the 737.

Muilenburg's departure was long overdue, said Robert Clifford, a Chicago lawyer representing several people who are suing Boeing after losing relatives in the Ethiopia crash.

Downpours flood US Southern coast, delaying flights

Associated Press

Several roads were closed for the Monday morning rush hour in downtown Charleston, S.C., as heavy rain soaked several southern states, forecasters said.

Charleston was flooding before dawn due to a combination of coastal flooding and the effects of the heavy rains, the National Weather Service said.

Creeks and streams were on the rise there and across the South. Flood watches and warnings covered parts of Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana and South Carolina.

In Florida, the heavy rain and flooding delayed dozens of flights at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. The airport had issued an advisory late Sunday that said more than 150 of its flights were experiencing delays and 11 had been canceled.

Areas around the airport were hit with about 6 inches of rain between midnight and early Monday morning, according to WPTV-TV. By 6:30 a.m. Monday, flight operations were resuming.

An "energetic and moisture-rich low

pressure system" brought the torrential rains to the South, the weather service said. High winds also accompanied the system, littering some Georgia roads with fallen tree branches.

In Atlanta, a wind gust of 39 mph was recorded Sunday at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. No major delays were reported Monday at Atlanta's airport. The strongest winds had diminished by sunrise Monday, but some strong gusts were still possible in the northeast Georgia mountains later in the day, forecasters said.

Christmas leave isn't canceled over lost Marine rifles

BY MARTIN EGNASH
AND IMMANUEL JOHNSON
Stars and Stripes

Scuttlebutt over lost rifles aside, Marines from Camp Lejeune will be allowed to take off for the holidays and the base has not been locked down, officials said.

Marines with the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment reportedly lost two M4 service rifles and a body armor set during a training exercise on base recently. A Naval Crimi-

nal Investigative Service probe began Wednesday, military officials said.

Since then, dozens of often contradictory rumors have been swirling on social media, posted apparently by junior Marines.

Many claimed that Christmas leave at the base was canceled as a form of collective punishment over the lost combat gear and that nobody was being allowed off base.

But Marine officials said that those who had leave approved

have been allowed to go and that the base was not under lockdown.

First Lt. Dan Linfante, a Camp Lejeune spokesman, confirmed that Marines are not being denied leave as a result of the incident.

"Leave is an important benefit afforded to all Marines, in particular during the holiday season," he said in a statement Sunday.

The Lance Corporal Underground — the unofficial term for junior Marines' rumor net-

work — seemed convinced it was an inside job, said a Marine with the battalion who spoke to Stars and Stripes on condition of anonymity.

Other Marines have taken to putting their conspiracy theories to the internet in the shape of memes. Hundreds circulated online over the weekend on various Marine Corps-oriented pages, including many implying that a lieutenant and a corporal had simply misplaced their rifles during the training.

Japan proposes release of toxic water

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's Economy and Industry Ministry proposed on Monday the gradual release or evaporation of massive amounts of treated but still radioactive water being stored at the tsunami-wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant.

The proposal to a group of experts is the first time the ministry has narrowed down the various options available to those choices. It is meant to solve a growing problem for the plant's operator as storage space for the water runs out, despite fears of a backlash from the public. The draft proposal will be discussed further.

Nearly nine years after the 2011 meltdowns of three reactor cores at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Plant, radioactive water continues to accumulate as water used to keep the cores cool leaks from the damaged reactors and is stored in tanks so it won't escape into the ocean or elsewhere.

For years, a government panel has been discussing ways to handle the crisis and to reassure fishermen and residents who fear possible health effects from releasing the radioactive water as well as harm to the region's image and fishing industry.

Fukushima fishermen and the National Federation of

Fisheries Co-operative Associations have strongly opposed past suggestions by government officials that the water be released to the sea, warning of an "immeasurable impact on the future of the Japanese fishing industry," with local fishermen still unable to resume full operations after the nuclear plant accident.

The water has been treated, and the plant operator, Tokyo Electric Power Co., says all 62 radioactive elements it contains can be removed to levels not harmful to humans except for tritium. There is no established method to fully separate tritium from water, but scientists say it is not a problem in small

amounts. Most of the water still contains other radioactive elements including cancer-causing cesium and strontium and needs further treatment.

In Monday's proposal, the ministry suggested a controlled release of the water into the Pacific, allowing the water to evaporate, or a combination of the two methods. The ministry said the controlled release to the sea is the best option because it would "stably dilute and disperse" the water and can be properly monitored.

A release is expected to take years and radiation levels will be kept well below the legal limit, the proposal said.

Saudi Arabia sentences 5 to death in Khashoggi killing

Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — Saudi Arabia sentenced five people to death on Monday for the killing of Washington Post columnist and royal family critic Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul last year by a team of Saudi agents.

The killing of Khashoggi stunned the international community and also many Saudi citizens, who were deeply shocked that a Saudi national could be killed by 15 government agents inside one of the kingdom's consulates.

Another three people were sentenced to prison for a combined 24 years, according to a statement read by the attorney general's office on Saudi state TV. No individual breakdown for the sentencing was given.

In total, 11 people were on trial in Saudi Arabia for the killing, but the government has not made their names public. All can appeal the preliminary verdicts.

While the case in Saudi Arabia has largely concluded, questions still linger in the international court of public opinion about Crown Prince

Mohammed bin Salman's culpability in the slaying.

Khashoggi had walked into his country's consulate in Istanbul for a scheduled appointment to pick up documents that would allow him to marry his Turkish fiance. He never walked out and his body has not been found.

Riyadh's criminal court also ordered that the Saudi consul-general in Istanbul at the time, Mohammed al-Otaibi, be released from prison after the verdicts were announced, according to state TV.

Al-Otaibi has also been sanctioned by the U.S. due to his "involvement in gross violations of human rights." The U.S. Department of State has also issued travel bans against the consul general's immediate family.

After holding nine sessions, the trial concluded that there was no previous intent by those found guilty, according to a statement read by Shaalan al-Shaalan, a spokesperson from the attorney general's office.

Al-Shaalan said the attorney general's office is looking into the verdicts to see whether it will appeal.

Dozens injured in 69-car pileup on Va. interstate

Associated Press

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. — A pileup involving more than 60 cars on a major interstate in Virginia on Sunday morning injured dozens of people, according to state police.

The crash happened just before 8 a.m. Sunday on westbound Interstate 64 in York County near Williamsburg, Va. State Police Sgt. Michelle Anaya said. No fatalities were reported, but it took crews several hours to clear the roadway and reopen all lanes of traffic.

Authorities do not yet know the cause of the crash, but fog and icy road conditions were contributing factors, Anaya said.

Photos from the scene showed a tangled mass of metal, with car hoods crumpled, windows smashed and a red truck plopped on top of another vehicle.

Ivan Levy said he and his wife were both headed to Williamsburg, where they work, in separate vehicles around the time of the crash.

Levy told The Associated Press he started slowing his truck down and turned his haz-

ard lights on when he saw thick fog.

"Next thing I know I see cars just start piling up on top of each other," he said.

Levy was able to stop in time but then got a call from his wife saying she had been in the wreck.

"It was just so scary," said Alena Levy, who was evaluated at a hospital but was not seriously injured.

Ivan Levy said he ran past cars to find his wife and help her out. They made their way back to his truck, and Ivan Levy said he then grabbed a medical kit and started checking on other victims because first responders hadn't arrived yet.

Sixty-nine vehicles were involved in the crash, and 51 people were treated or transported to hospitals, Anaya said Sunday afternoon, noting that those figures were constantly changing.

Among those hurt, two were listed in critical condition and 11 were in serious but not life-threatening condition, said York County Fire Chief Stephen Kopczynski.

An investigation into the cause of the crash was ongoing.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Driver charged after pickup slams house

RI EAST PROVIDENCE — A man was charged with DUI after his pickup crashed through two yards and slammed into a house in Rhode Island.

WPRI-TV reports the crash happened around 3:40 a.m. Saturday near an intersection in East Providence.

Police said the truck was traveling south on Veterans Memorial Parkway before veering off the road. The vehicle crashed through one home's front lawn, shattering a fence and damaging small portions of the home. It then crashed into another yard, striking the house and destroying a set of glass doors.

Brian Pimentel, 27, was charged with driving under the influence.

Forklift used to haul away illegal fishnet

HI HONOLULU — An illegal fishing net discovered in a Hawaii bay was so large that a forklift was needed to move it, state officials said.

The state Department of Land and Natural Resources said the net was found by two boaters in Oahu's Kaneohe Bay earlier this month, Hawaii Public Radio reported Thursday.

Two boaters discovered the net after their craft became entangled. The boaters said that after they pulled the net out of the bay, the apparent owners chased them to retrieve the equipment. The boaters returned to the harbor and their pursuers fled, they said.

The boaters said their measurement found 500 yards of netting. Gill nets left floating on top of the water to trap fish can be no longer than 125 feet.

Girl's donation helps fund pet adoptions

AL CULLMAN — Money raised by an 11-year-old girl to help a north Alabama animal shelter is being used to fund animal adoptions as an early Christmas treat.

The Cullman Times reported that sixth grader Denna Chivers has been helping the Cullman County Animal Shelter for three years by holding yard sales and giving the proceeds to the operation.

The girl's mother, BethAnn Chivers, said Denna raised \$3,000, which was used to purchase some equipment. The shelter decided to use the remainder of the money to offer free adoptions to people looking for a pet.

Firefighters assist in just-in-time delivery

NH PLAISTOW — Some New Hampshire firefighters are being credited for assisting with a just-in-time delivery.

Firefighters in Plaistow said they got to work when a woman arrived in the lobby and announced she was having a baby.

Firefighters told WMUR-TV the woman was put on a stretcher, and the fire station training room became a delivery room Friday evening. Seven minutes later, her baby boy was born.

Firefighter and EMT Derek Travers said the episode was his first "field birth" in 23 years.

Cop stops driverless SUV heading near kids

CT BRIDGEPORT — A Connecticut police officer grabbed onto a driverless SUV that had rolled into traffic and stopped it from potentially

hitting a group of kids, authorities said.

Surveillance video posted online by news outlets shows Bridgeport School Resource Officer Carlos Carmo Jr. running toward the moving vehicle and using his body to slow and stop the car. A group of Harding High School school students were walking on the sidewalk near the path of the SUV.

There were two passengers in the car but no driver when it somehow slipped out of park and rolled away, officials said. It had been parked on the street on a downward slope.

Expensive jewelry is donated in charity pail

MD ANNAPOLIS — Salvation Army leaders in Maryland said a donor recently dropped thousands of dollars worth of jewelry in a red kettle.

Capt. Ryan Vincent, commander of the Salvation Army in Annapolis, told the Capital Gazette everyone was shocked to find out the ring and two bracelets were real.

One of the bracelets, a yellow-gold piece by Tiffany & Co., has been sold for \$1,500. A gemologist will soon examine the ring and second bracelet that features diamonds and rubies to determine their value.

Pearl Eldridge, the ringer who collected the donation, called the donor a "quiet spirit" and said the woman told her the pieces were sentimental but had been lying around.

Ice house burns; toxic ammonia released

OR CHARLESTON — An ice house near Coos Bay caught fire Friday and released ammonia that caused temporary evacuations.

KEZI-TV reported the ice

house which provided ice for anglers in Charleston began burning and releasing ammonia about 9 a.m. Friday. By Friday afternoon authorities said ammonia was no longer detected in the area and a recommended evacuation had been lifted.

The ice house was mostly destroyed.

Donated toys for needy stolen, replaced

FL MIAMI — Good Samaritans have stepped up to replace toys for needy children that were in a trailer stolen from outside a school near Miami.

Thieves took the trailer early Dec. 16, said Mayra Constantino, principal of St. Kevin Catholic School.

The school and nonprofit organization St. Vincent de Paul had been working together to collect toys as part of an annual holiday toy drive. Once people in the community found out about the theft, they donated even more toys than the drive had already raised, Constantino said.

Barn is moved with plans for restoration

IA DUNCOMBE — After more than a century, a barn near the tiny northern Iowa community of Duncombe is getting a new home and a new look.

Matt and Libby Mitchell acquired the barn built in 1915 and watched nervously Thursday as it was moved about a mile over fields to a new location. Matt Mitchell prepared a path over fields by driving a blade over the land, smoothing out ruts.

He plans to restore the barn.

From wire reports

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and Military News

NFL roundup

Ravens beat Browns, clinch AFC's top seed

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Lamar Jackson threw three touchdown passes — two to tight end Mark Andrews late in the first half — and rushed for 103 yards as the Ravens won their 11th straight game, 31-15 over the Cleveland Browns on Sunday to lock up the conference's top seed and home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

The Ravens (13-2) shook off a sluggish start and avenged their last loss, a 40-25 to the Browns on Sept. 29.

But Baltimore looks nothing like the team it was three months ago as the marvelous, multi-dimensional Jackson has taken the league by storm with his arm and legs. Jackson finished with 238 yards passing and went over 100 yards for the fifth time this season.

The Ravens did suffer an injury that could hurt the playoff hopes as running back Mark Ingram went down without being touched in the fourth quarter. Ingram immediately grabbed his lower left leg and collapsed when he tried to stand. Ingram, who went over 1,000 yards rushing in the second quarter and caught a 12-yard TD pass from Jackson in the third, was able to walk to the sideline to be evaluated.

The Browns (6-9) were officially eliminated from the postseason, and now first-year coach Freddie Kitchens may be down to his last game. Kitchens has appeared overwhelmed at times and the home finale was a microcosm of this disappointing season as the Browns will miss the playoffs for the 17th straight season.

Eagles 17, Cowboys 9: Philadelphia cornerback Sidney Jones broke up Dak Prescott's fourth-down pass to Michael Gallup in the end zone with 1:15 left and the host Eagles denied Dallas a division crown.

The Cowboys (7-8) would have clinched their second straight NFC East title with a win in Philadelphia. And they would have eliminated the Ea-

gles (8-7). The Eagles need to win their final game next week at the Giants to clinch the East. The Cowboys can still win the East with a win next week against Washington and an Eagles loss to the Giants.

The difference between a division title and missing the playoffs could determine the fate of Dallas coach Jason Garrett.

Playing with a sore right shoulder, Prescott attacked the Eagles cornerbacks on the final drive and had Dallas in position to possibly tie the game until Jones made the clutch stop.

Carson Wentz was 31 for 40 for 319 yards and a touchdown, and Miles Saunders ran for a score to keep the Eagles' playoff hopes alive.

Prescott finished 25 for 44 for 265 yards. Two-time rushing champion Ezekiel Elliott, who had averaged 114.8 yards rushing in five games against the Eagles, was held to 47 yards.

Cardinals 27, Seahawks 13: Kenyan Drake rushed for 166 yards and two touchdowns, Larry Fitzgerald added a 21-yard TD reception, visiting Arizona stymied Russell Wilson and injury-depleted Seattle.

The Seahawks (11-4) saw their hopes for the No. 1 seed in the NFC potentially vanish with another late-season loss to the Cardinals. Seattle can still claim the NFC West with a win next week over San Francisco, but will need major help to earn total home-field advantage after entering the week as the top seed in the NFC.

Saints 38, Titans 28: Drew Brees threw for 279 yards and three touchdowns and Alvin Kamara ran for two TDs as New Orleans kept its chase for the NFC's No. 1 seed alive by rallying from a 14-point deficit.

The visiting Saints (12-3) had to win after San Francisco beat the Rams 34-31 on Saturday night. They scored 24 straight points to keep alive their chance at one of the NFC's top two seeds and a first-round playoff bye going into their regular-season finale at Carolina.

The Titans (8-7) still have a

shot at the AFC's final playoff berth after Houston won the AFC South title beating Tampa Bay on Saturday. The Jets beating Pittsburgh 16-10 means the Titans must beat the Texans in Houston in the finale to earn their second playoff berth in three seasons.

Jets 16, Steelers 10: At East Rutherford, N.J., Le'Veon Bell helped deal his former team's playoff hopes a big blow.

The Steelers (8-7) entered the game controlling their postseason chances and would have clinched a berth with wins in their final two games, but now need some help. Pittsburgh now needs to win next week at Baltimore to stay in the mix.

Bell ran for 72 yards, including 7 on a big third-down play in the fourth quarter, on 25 carries while facing the team with which he spent his first six NFL seasons. After sitting out all last season in a contract dispute, Bell signed with the Jets (6-9) in the offseason.

Chiefs 26, Bears 3: Patrick Mahomes threw for two touchdowns and ran for another score, and visiting Kansas City stayed in contention for a first-round playoff bye.

Kansas City (11-4) earned its fifth straight win and remained a game behind New England for the AFC's second seed. The Patriots clinched their 11th consecutive AFC East championship by beating Buffalo on Saturday. The Chiefs hold the head-to-head tiebreaker over New England thanks to a victory two weeks ago.

Mahomes, playing his 30th game, became the fastest player to reach the 9,000-yard passing mark. The 2018 MVP was 23 of 33 for 251 yards, giving him 9,238 in three seasons since the Chiefs drafted him with the No. 10 overall pick in 2017.

Dolphins 38, Bengals 35 (OT): A laugher became a thriller for host Miami, and it needed overtime to beat Cincinnati.

After the gallant comeback, the Bengals (1-14) settled for clinching next year's No. 1 draft pick. They're assured of

at least tying for the worst record in club history; they went 2-14 in 2002.

Raiders 24, Chargers 17: At Carson Calif., Derek Carr threw for 291 yards and a touchdown as the Raiders kept their playoff hopes. The Raiders (7-8) had slim postseason chances coming into the day, but losses by Pittsburgh and Tennessee have given them renewed hope. They need a win over Denver next week and some help for only their second postseason trip since 2003.

Broncos 27, Lions 17: Drew Lock and Phillip Lindsay stood out even more than those hard-to-miss, all-orange uniforms worn by host Denver.

Trading the snow for much balmer conditions, Lock efficiently led the offense. He finished 25 of 33 for 192 yards in improving to 3-1 as the Broncos starter. His only loss was last week in snowy Kansas City.

Falcons 24, Jaguars 12: Devonta Freeman scored two touchdowns for Atlanta before visiting Jacksonville took a snap, and that was enough to beat the woeful Jaguars.

Matt Ryan threw for 384 yards and Julio Jones had his biggest game of the year, hauling in 10 catches for 166 yards.

Colts 38, Panthers 6: Nyheim Hines pulled off a rare feat for host Indianapolis. He scored on two punt returns, set up another touchdown with a 40-yard return four plays into the game and provided the jolt of energy the Colts needed to pull away from Carolina.

The Colts (7-8) snapped a four-game losing streak in their home finale and can avoid their second losing season in three years with a win next week.

Giants 41, Redskins 35 (OT): At Landover, Md., Daniel Jones put together the best performance of his rookie season fresh off an ankle injury, throwing for 352 yards and five touchdown passes.

With the loss, the Redskins moved into the driver's seat to draft Ohio State pass rusher Chase Young.

NHL roundup

Flames rock Stars behind power play

Associated Press

DALLAS — The Calgary Flames overpowered the Dallas Stars.

Matthew Tkachuk, Sean Monahan and Mikael Backlund scored power-play goals and Calgary beat the Stars 5-1.

Elias Lindholm assisted on the Flames' first three goals.

"They're getting some nice chemistry," Flames interim coach Geoff Ward said of Tkachuk and Lindholm. "The power play looked like it did for long stretches of last year. The key thing for us tonight was that the puck movement was quick and on the tape."

Tkachuk's 14th goal of the season broke a 1-1 tie in the second period. Monahan also scored in the second. Backlund's goal in the third period preceded a short-handed, empty-net goal by Derek Ryan.

Lindholm noticed the chemistry with Tkachuk, who had two assists.

"The last five or six games, I think we've played well," Lindholm said. "It's a good feeling and he's a godd player. Just get open, keep building chemistry, and we'll be fine."

Tkachuk agreed, "(Lindholm's) an easy guy to play with," he said. "He can make some great plays, too."

The three power-play goals were also the most allowed by the Stars' penalty killers this season.

"Our penalty kill has won us a lot of games. It cost us a game tonight," Dallas interim coach Rick Bowness said, "but it wasn't the only reason we lost."

The Stars were without key penalty killers for four of Calgary's five power plays. Mattias Janmark didn't play after the first period because of a lower-body injury and other penalty killers were in the box for two goals.

"We're just out of synch," Bowness said. "(Janmark's) gone, (Radek Faksa's) in the

box, (Andrew Cogliano's) in the box. That's our penalty killers."

Flames goalie David Rittich made 26 saves and picked up his first career assist on Backlund's goal.

Stars goalie Ben Bishop had 25 saves.

The Flames had been 0-2-1 in their previous three games. They are now 7-2-1 under Ward.

Dallas has lost three of four and is 3-3-1 under Bowness.

Coyotes 5, Red Wings 2: Clayton Keller had two goals and an assist to lead visiting Arizona past Detroit.

Carl Soderberg, Taylor Hall and Christian Dvorak also scored for Arizona. Coyotes defenseman Oliver Ekman-Larsson had three assists and Nick Schmaltz added two.

Antti Raanta made 28 saves in Arizona's first game since No. 1 goalie Darcy Kuemper sustained a lower-body injury Friday during an 8-5 loss to Minnesota.

Filip Zadina and Tyler Bertuzzi scored for Detroit. Jimmy Howard stopped 40 shots in his return after missing 10 games with a lower-body injury.

Rangers 5, Ducks 1: Chris Kreider scored twice and host New York beat Anaheim to end a three-game losing streak.

Mika Zibanejad had a goal and an assist, while Filip Chytil and Brett Howden also scored for the Rangers. Henrik Lundqvist made 19 saves.

Sam Steel scored for the Ducks and Ryan Miller made 36 saves.

Golden Knights 3, Sharks 1: Shea Theodore scored the tiebreaking goal with 11:55 remaining in the third period and visiting Vegas beat struggling San Jose for its ninth win in 13 games.

Paul Stastny and Jonathan Marchessault also scored, and Malcolm Subban made 37 saves to keep the Golden Knights tied for first place in the Pacific Division with Arizona.

NBA roundup

Nuggets keep rolling

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Buoyed by a perfect five-game homestand, the Denver Nuggets hit the road and kept on winning.

Paul Millsap scored 21 points and the Nuggets dominated the second half in defeating the Los Angeles Lakers, who were without LeBron James, 128-104 on Sunday night for their sixth win in a row.

"Our last homestand gave us confidence to come on the road and win," Millsap said. "We have so many weapons."

The Nuggets had six players in double figures. Gary Harris added 19 points, Nikola Jokic had 18 points, Malik Beasley had 16 points and Will Barton III had 14 points and a career-high-tying 13 rebounds for the Nuggets, who pulled away to a 23-point lead early in the fourth.

"It feels good to get a win in L.A. even if LeBron wasn't playing," Jokic said.

James missed his first game of the season because of a thoracic muscle strain. That left the Lakers without his 25.8 point average and 10.6 assists.

"It's kind of hard to next-man-up LeBron," said Kyle Kuzma, the only other Laker in double figures with 16 points. "He does so much. Shots come easier when he's on the floor because everyone just looks at him."

With James looking on in street clothes, Anthony Davis did his best to make up for it with 32 points and 11 rebounds. He scored 11 points playing all 12 minutes of the first quarter.

"It's tough when he's out but we still got to find ways to win," Davis said. "We lost our energy defensively. We got to continue to defend and once we get that edge back we'll be fine."

Davis slipped and tweaked his right leg in the third quarter, but felt good enough to play 7½ minutes in the fourth.

The Lakers can't afford to have Davis go down at the same time as James with a Christmas game against the Clippers looming.

Raptors 110, Mavericks 107: Kyle Lowry had 32 points and 10 assists, Chris Boucher scored a career-high 21 points and host Toronto overturned a 30-point deficit to beat Dallas, the biggest comeback in franchise history and the NBA's largest in a decade.

Lowry had one fewer point in the fourth quarter (20) than the Mavericks managed as a team (21).

It was the first 30-point comeback in the NBA since Sacramento beat Chicago on Dec. 21, 2009, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Thunder 118, Clippers 112: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander matched his career high with 32 points and host Oklahoma City rallied to beat Los Angeles.

The Thunder came back from 18 points down in the second quarter. It's the third time in seven days they overcame a deficit that big to win.

Paul George scored 18 points in his first game back in Oklahoma City since being traded from the Thunder to the Clippers.

Los Angeles scoring leader Kawhi Leonard sat out because of left knee soreness.

Bucks 117, Pacers 89: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 18 points, 19 rebounds and nine assists, and the Bucks spoiled Malcolm Brogdon's return to Milwaukee.

Brogdon was drafted by Milwaukee and spent his first three seasons with the Bucks before he was acquired by Indiana in a sign-and-trade deal over the summer. He finished with 10 points on 5 of 19 shooting and 10 assists.

Celtics 119, Hornets 93: Jayson Tatum had a career-high 39 points and 12 rebounds, Kemba Walker scored 23 points against his former team, and host Boston beat Charlotte.

Tatum eclipsed his previous high of 34 points against Brooklyn on Jan. 14. Jaylen Brown added 16 points and nine rebounds, and rookie Grant Williams added 12 points off the bench for the Celtics.

Gonzaga latest No. 1 this season

Associated Press

Gonzaga is the latest No. 1 in The Associated Press Top 25 men's college basketball poll that has had no stability on the top line.

The Bulldogs moved up a spot to take over for Kansas, which lasted only a week at No. 1 before losing at now-No. 10 Villanova. At the time, that had marked the first time the AP poll has had five different No. 1s before New Year's Day.

And now it's six, with the Zags (13-1) earning 54 of 65 first-place votes to outdistance Ohio State in a year with no dominant team.

Gonzaga's only loss was to No. 11 Michigan in the championship game of the Battle 4 Atlantis in the Bahamas on Nov. 29. The Zags have won five straight since, including victories at No. 21 Washington and No. 24 Arizona as well as a home win against North Carolina.

"I don't think they should be doing polls this year until March," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said after Saturday's win against Eastern Washington. "I'm serious, I mean, it's just an effort in futility at this point."

This is the eighth season to have as many as six different teams reach No. 1, though it has happened now three times in the past five years. The record for an entire season is seven, set in 1982-83 when names like Michael Jordan and Ralph Sampson were still in the college ranks.

Michigan State, Kentucky, Duke and Louisville were the first four teams to hit No. 1. Throw in Kansas, and none has won more than twice before suffering a loss.

The Zags won't stumble this week, at least; they don't play again until hosting Detroit Mercy next Monday evening after

another poll is released.

Buckeyes climb: The second-ranked Buckeyes (11-1) have put together a non-conference resume likely to help their NCAA Tournament seeding come Selection Sunday.

The Buckeyes had lopsided wins against Villanova and at then-ranked UNC, then beat Kentucky over the weekend in a matchup of top-6 teams. That helped them earn nine first-place votes to jump three spots Monday.

The top tier: Louisville remained at No. 3 ahead of its state rivalry game against Kentucky this weekend, followed by Duke and Kansas, which fell four spots to No. 5.

Oregon, Baylor, still-unbeaten Auburn, Memphis and Villanova rounded out the top 10.

Rising: Villanova made the week's biggest jump, climbing eight spots after taking down the Jayhawks. No. 12 Butler and No. 15 San Diego State also had big moves, each climbing five spots.

In all, 16 teams moved up from last week.

Sliding: Six teams fell in the poll, all taking significant slides.

The biggest was Kentucky, which fell 13 spots to No. 19 after losses to Utah and Ohio State in Las Vegas. Arizona fell eight spots to No. 24 after following the Gonzaga loss with a loss to St. John's. And Virginia fell seven spots to No. 16 after a home loss to South Carolina.

No. 13 Maryland (down six spots), No. 18 Dayton (five) and Kansas (four) had the other slides.

Status quo: Louisville and Duke were the only teams to remain in their position from last week.

Ryu agrees to \$80M deal with Toronto

Associated Press

Hyun-Jin Ryu is headed north of the border to a Toronto Blue Jays team in dire need of starting pitching.

One that was willing to pay for it, too.

Ryu and the Blue Jays agreed to an \$80 million, four-year contract, according to a person familiar with the negotiations. The person spoke late Sunday night on condition of anonymity because the deal was pending a physical after Christmas and had not been announced.

Ryu was 14-5 with a major league-best 2.32 ERA for the Los Angeles Dodgers last season. He started for the National League in his first All-Star Game and finished second in Cy Young Award voting to New York Mets ace Jacob deGrom.

The 32-year-old left-hander from South Korea receives a \$20 million salary each of the next four years, with no signing bonus. His deal raised agent Scott Boras' total to more than \$1 billion in guaranteed contracts — \$1,016,500,000 to be exact — for seven players eligible for free agency since the start of November, agreements extending as many as nine seasons.

Toronto is building around a promising young core of hitters, including three sons of former big league stars who broke into the majors last season: Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Bo Bichette and Cavan Biggio. Looking to surround them with some proven pitching, the Blue Jays are set to add Ryu to the top of a revamped rotation that should also include newcomers Tanner Roark and Chase Anderson.

Roark signed a \$24 million, two-year deal last week with Toronto, which finished fourth in the AL East at 67-95 last season. Anderson, also a right-hander, was acquired from Milwaukee last month.

Pitching was certainly a problem. No starter won more than six games for the Blue Jays this year, and the rotation ranked 22nd out of 30 teams with a 5.25 ERA.

Ryu, who turns 33 in March, spent his first seven years in the majors with the Dodgers after coming over from South Korea and signing a \$36 million, six-year contract before the 2013 season. He was effective the first two years but sat out the 2015 season and made only one appearance in 2016 due to left shoulder surgery and elbow tendinitis. He also missed time in 2017 with injuries to his left hip and foot.

Ryu reemerged with a 1.97 ERA in 15 starts in 2018 and accepted a \$17.9 million qualifying offer from Los Angeles for 2019. He threw 182²/₃ innings in 29 starts this year for the NL West champions.

Top 25 roundup

South Carolina upsets No. 9 UVA

Associated Press

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Jair Bolden scored 15 of his 22 points in the first half and A.J. Lawson had 10 of his 14 in the second to help South Carolina beat No. 9 Virginia 70-59 on Sunday.

The Gamecocks (8-4) led 23-11, saw Virginia pull even at 45 with just over 11 minutes to play and promptly scored 12 of the next 17 points. The Cavs never got closer than five the rest of the way.

Coach Frank Martin called a timeout in the middle of a 13-3 run by Virginia that pulled them even, but watched as the Cavaliers closed the gap, letting his team figure it out.

"I'm sitting on the bench saying, 'Wow! That's pretty neat,'" he said of seeing them respond.

Mamadi Diakite scored a career-high 21 points to lead Virginia (9-2). The Cavaliers had a season-high 19 turnovers, leading to 23 Gamecocks points.

No. 22 Washington 85, Ball State 64: At Honolulu, Jaden McDaniels scored 22 points, Quade Green had 21 and Washington pulled away from Ball State in a Diamond Head Classic quarterfinal.

Isaiah Stewart added 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Huskies (9-2). They who shot 56% percent from the field and won for the seventh time in eight games.