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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Japan PM vows to boost role in US alliance

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged on Sunday to bolster his country's role under its security pact with the U.S. in "outer space and cyberspace," as the allies marked the 60th anniversary of a treaty that has been the basis for their postwar defense alliance.

Abe's grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, who was prime minister at the time, signed the treaty in Washington on Jan. 19, 1960, with President Dwight Eisenhower. The treaty allows for the stationing of tens of thousands of U.S. troops and the deployment of American warships in Japan. In exchange, the U.S. is obligated to protect Japan in case of enemy attack.

"We have elevated the relationship to one in which each of

us, the U.S. and Japan, protects the other, thereby giving further force to the alliance," Abe said in his opening remarks. "Going forward, it is incumbent upon us to make it even more robust, to make it a pillar for safeguarding peace and security in both outer space and cyberspace."

The anniversary comes as Washington adds pressure on Japan to shoulder more of the financial cost and to play a greater defense role in the Asia-Pacific region to make up for a receding U.S. presence.

"As the security environment continues to evolve and new challenges arise, it is essential that our alliance further strengthen and deepen," President Donald Trump said in a statement marking the

anniversary. "I am confident that in the months and years ahead, Japan's contributions to our mutual security will continue to grow, and the Alliance will continue to thrive."

The bilateral security treaty, initially designed to facilitate a greater U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific region as a deterrence to Soviet threats, is a legacy of the Cold War era.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Washington and Tokyo have redefined the pact as a pillar for maintaining stability and prosperity in the region in the face of new threats from China and North Korea.

Abe has pushed for Japan's Self-Defense Force to expand its international role and capability by bolstering cooperation and weapons compatibility

with the U.S., as it increasingly works alongside American troops. Abe is also campaigning to achieve his and his grandfather's long-cherished dream of amending Japan's postwar, U.S.-drafted pacifist constitution.

In 2015, Abe reinterpreted Japan's constitution to allow the use of force in defending Japan and its allies. He has bolstered Japan's defense budget, citing missile threats from China and North Korea.

Since Trump took office three years ago, Japan has increasingly purchased costly American weapons, including F-35 stealth fighter jets, in an apparent attempt to reduce its trade surplus with the U.S.

Space Force mocked for camouflage uniforms

From wire reports

WASHINGTON — The newly created United States Space Force unveiled its planned uniform, which immediately raised eyebrows over its design: standard woodland camouflage.

The issue was quickly a trending subject on social media, and whoever manages the Twitter account of the Space Force had a busy day responding to the jibes, according to dpa.

"In space, no one can hear you be ridiculous," Craig Mazin, the creator of the HBO show "Chernobyl," posted on Twitter. Other users questioned whether the force planned to invade forests on other planets.

The force, reacting to the comments of ridicule on social media, posted on Twitter that it is "utilizing current Army/Air

Force uniforms, saving costs of designing/producing a new one."

It also stressed that Space Force will work "on the ground" and not actually outside Earth. The force even had to answer a riposte from George Takei, the Star Trek actor.

"Our assigned members monitor and maneuver our space assets (GPS, SBIRS, AEHF, etc), track space debris and perform other duties from installations on Earth. They work closely with joint warfighters in the @usairforce and @USArmy hence similar uniforms," Space Force stressed.

President Donald Trump championed the creation of the sixth branch of the military, and Congress appropriated funds for the force in its most recent budget.

The Washington Post reported that one Twitter user mocking the uniform wrote, "Smart call on the Space Force camouflage. Never know when you're gonna have to blend into a space jungle or hide behind a space bush."

"I'm dressed better for Space Force than this and I'm wearing \$10 leggings from Target," said one woman, who shared a photo of leggings with images of cats floating in space.

Another person posted a picture of a camouflage pattern next to a completely black box. "Study these carefully until you can see the difference," he wrote in response to the Space Force.

The Space Force, a part of the U.S. Department of the Air Force that is dedicated to space warfare, was established in De-

cember. The Air Force Space Command was redesignated to form the military's sixth branch.

The Space Command's roughly 16,000 military and civilian employees were assigned to the Space Force. Gen. John "Jay" Raymond became the nation's first chief of space operations on Dec. 20.

The Space Force's utility uniform mirrors those of other branches in more ways than just the camouflage pattern. The navy Space Force name tape, which identifies a service member's branch, is the same color that the Air Force uses. The Air Force's space operations badge, the Space Command patch and the American flag are also embroidered on the Space Force uniform.

Troops slated for Arctic drill diverted to other missions

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — About 3,000 U.S. troops slated to take part in an upcoming cold weather exercise in Norway have been diverted to other missions, U.S. Marine Forces Europe-Africa said Friday.

About 7,500 U.S. troops are still expected to take part in the Norwegian-led Cold Response exercise scheduled for early March, MARFOREUR spokesman Maj. Adrian Rankine-Galloway said.

“Some military forces previously scheduled to participate in Cold Response 20 have been re-tasked to fulfill other operational requirements,” he said. The Marines did not specify which units were rerouted or where they were shifted. But in recent weeks the Pentagon has moved more personnel to the Middle East due to heightened tensions with Iran after the killing of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

The conflict with Iran has already led the mili-

tary to adjust some of its exercises, such as African Sea Lion in Morocco, when thousands of Marines were sent to the Middle East.

While the number of troops is smaller than anticipated for Cold Response, it will still be the largest exercise coordinated by MARFOREUR.

“Forces from all of the U.S. military services — from units based in Europe as well as the continental United States — are expected to participate in this Norway-hosted exercise,” Rankine-Galloway said.

In Norway, troops will work on cold-weather combat skills in a rugged Arctic environment where they will practice defending NATO’s northern flank.

Cold Response is the first in a series of exercises in northern Europe that will test U.S. European Command’s ability to deploy large forces to the region. The drill comes ahead of Defender Europe-20, the largest U.S.-led exercise on the Continent in 25 years.

Lawmakers visit Navy shipbuilder

Associated Press

BATH, Maine — The Democratic chairman and ranking Republican on a House Armed Services subcommittee toured Navy shipbuilder Bath Iron Works on Friday and offered assurances to shipbuilders amid reports of possible cuts.

Democratic Rep. Joe Courtney, of Connecticut, and GOP Rep. Rob Wittman, of Virginia, both members of the seapower and projection forces subcommittee, visited the shipyard at the invitation of Democratic Reps. Chellie Pingree and Jared Golden, both of Maine.

The tour came several weeks after a memo was leaked that outlined an initial Navy proposal to cut shipbuilding.

One proposal would reduce the number of Arleigh Burke-class destroyers planned for construction from 12 to seven over the next five years. Those destroyers are produced at two shipyards, Maine’s Bath Iron Works, a General Dynamics subsidiary, and Ingalls Shipbuilding in Mississippi.

Courtney and Wittman made it clear that they are strongly opposed to such a cut of shipbuilding, Golden said afterward.

Congress will have the final say, and shipbuilders should be heartened that there is bipartisan support in Congress for increasing the size of the fleet, not reducing it, he said.

Reports that the Navy was considering shipbuilding cuts and accelerated retirements of ships came as a surprise to many last month.

The proposed cost-cutting comes as the Navy works to modernize its ballistic missile submarine fleet, replacing aging current Ohio-class subs with new Columbia-class nuclear subs. That program is putting pressure on the shipbuilding budget.

Officials discuss response to toxins near bases in Japan

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

Top U.S. and Japan defense officials spoke about toxic chemicals detected near U.S. bases in Japan during a meeting at the Pentagon on Tuesday, according to the Japanese Ministry of Defense.

Acting U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and Japanese Defense Minister Taro Kono discussed “how U.S. and Japan can cooperate in responding to issues such as [perfluorooctane sulfonate and perfluorooctanoic acid] and to comprehensively advance the discussions,” a defense ministry news release summarizing the meeting stated on Wednesday.

Tokyo officials detected the chemicals, commonly known as PFOS and PFOA, in two wells near Yokota Air Base during a

survey from December 2018 to January 2019, according to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government’s Bureau of Social Welfare and Public Health.

The chemicals — found in cleaning products and in the type of firefighting foam used at airfields — were found near Yokota at levels about 19 times above the safe level set by a U.S. drinking water health advisory, the Asahi newspaper reported Jan. 6.

An official with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government last week said no evidence was found to directly link the pollutants with a source on the U.S. air base.

The chemicals were also found at high levels in untreated spring water near Kadena Air Base on Okinawa in 2018.

Some Okinawa officials blamed the base for the con-

tamination, but U.S. Forces Japan spokesman Marine Capt. Michael Hopkins last year said the pollution could have come from multiple sources.

PFOS and PFOA have proved toxic in tests on animals, affecting their developmental and reproductive systems, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists classified PFOA as a “confirmed animal carcinogen with unknown relevance to humans,” according to the EPA.

During the meeting Tuesday, Esper and his Japanese counterpart agreed their respective governments should work together to create a task force for handling toxic chemicals, according to a Wednesday report by NHK World News.

Trump team, House Dems exchange views

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's legal team issued a fiery response ahead of opening arguments in his impeachment trial Saturday while House Democrats laid out their case in forceful fashion, saying the president had betrayed public trust with behavior that was the "worst nightmare" of the founding fathers.

The dueling statements previewed arguments both sides intend to make once Trump's impeachment trial begins in earnest on Tuesday. Their challenge will be to make a case that appeals to senators who will render the verdict and for an American public bracing

for a presidential election in 10 months.

The House's 111-page brief pulled together the private and public testimony of a dozen witnesses — ambassadors and national security officials at high levels of government — who raised concerns about the president's actions with Ukraine. Stripped of legalese and structured in plain English, the document underscored the extent to which the impeachment proceedings are a political rather than conventional legal process. The Trump team similarly offered a taste of the rhetoric expected to be deployed by the president's defenders in the Senate.

In their brief, the House managers overseeing the prosecution wrote that it is clear that the "evidence overwhelmingly establishes" that Trump is guilty of both charges for which he was impeached last month: abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

The Trump team, meanwhile, called the Senate's formal impeachment summons to the two articles of impeachment "a dangerous attack on the right of the American people to freely choose their president."

Trump's legal team, led by White House counsel Pat Cipollone and Trump personal lawyer Jay Sekulow, is challenging the impeachment on

both procedural and constitutional grounds, claiming Trump has been mistreated by House Democrats and that he did nothing wrong.

The lawyers said Trump "categorically and unequivocally" denies the allegations and encouraged lawmakers to reject "poisonous partisanship" and "vindicate the will of the American people" by rejecting both articles.

Trump's answer to the summons was the first salvo in what will be several rounds of arguments before the trial formally begins. Trump will file a more detailed legal brief on Monday, and the House will be able to respond to the Trump filing on Tuesday.

Docs suggest Nunes more involved in Ukraine plot

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — New documents released by House Democrats suggest that Rep. Devin Nunes, the top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, was more involved than was previously known in efforts by allies of President Donald Trump to dig up dirt in Ukraine on former Vice President Joe Biden.

Democrats on the Intelligence Committee released a trove of text messages, photos and other documents on Friday night as part of the impeach-

ment inquiry. The materials were provided to the House by Lev Parnas, a Florida businessman who worked with Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, to try to persuade the Ukrainian government to launch an investigation into Biden.

Nunes initially denied knowing Parnas, but has since been forced to admit that the two had spoken. The messages show about 100 texts traded over months between Parnas and the California Republican's staffer, Derek Harvey, a retired U.S. Army colonel. Harvey

previously served in the White House on Trump's National Security Council.

Friday's document dump included dozens of texts exchanged between Parnas and Harvey last spring over the encrypted messaging service WhatsApp. They show Parnas providing documents and helping set up meetings for Harvey with Ukrainians who have made unproven claims that as vice president, Biden orchestrated the firing of a prosecutor who was investigating corruption allegations involving

Burisma, an energy company where Hunter Biden served as a board member from 2014 to 2019.

Phone records released by House Democrats in December showed several calls between Parnas and Nunes, who helped lead the Republican's defense of Trump during the House impeachment hearings.

Nunes initially said he couldn't remember ever speaking with Parnas. But last week, after new documents were released showing additional contacts, Nunes said his memory had been jogged.

Women's March rallies drew thousands across country

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Thousands gathered in cities across the country Saturday as part of the nationwide Women's March rallies focused on issues such as climate change, pay equity, reproductive rights and immigration.

Hundreds showed up in New York City and thousands in Washington for the rallies, which aim to harness the politi-

cal power of women, although crowds were noticeably smaller than in previous years. Marches were scheduled Saturday in more than 180 cities.

The first marches in 2017 drew hundreds of thousands of people to rallies in cities across the country on the day after President Donald Trump was inaugurated. That year's D.C. march drew close to 1 million people.

In Manhattan on Saturday,

hundreds of people gathered as part of a "Rise and Roar" rally at separate events in Foley Square and Columbus Circle.

"Today, we will be the change that is needed in this world! Today, we rise into our power!" activist Donna Hylton told a cheering crowd in Foley Square.

Snow began falling by the afternoon in Manhattan, apparently putting a damper on plans for the two groups to converge

in large numbers near Times Square.

In downtown Los Angeles, thousands of men, women and children filled several blocks as they made their way from a plaza to a park adjacent to City Hall, where a rally featured speeches by Jennifer Siebel Newsom, the wife of California Gov. Gavin Newsom, Mayor Eric Garcetti, Rep. Maxine Waters and others.

Discovery of unused disaster supplies angers Puerto Rico

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — People in a southern Puerto Rico city discovered a warehouse filled with water, cots and other unused emergency supplies. They then set off a social media uproar on Saturday when they broke in to retrieve goods as the area struggles to recover from a strong earthquake.

With anger spreading in the U.S. territory after video of the event in Ponce appeared on Facebook, Gov. Wanda Vazquez quickly fired the director of the island's emergency management agency.

The governor said she had ordered an investigation after learning the emergency supplies had been piled in the warehouse since Hurricane Maria battered Puerto Rico in September 2017.

Vazquez said inaction by the fired official, Carlos Acevedo, was unacceptable.

"There are thousands of people who have made sacrifices to

help those in the south, and it is unforgivable that resources were kept in the warehouse," the governor said.

Puerto Rico's secretary of state, Elmer Roman, told reporters that Acevedo had not told him about the contents of the warehouse.

News of the warehouse spread after online blogger Lorenzo Delgado relayed live video on Facebook of people breaking into the building. The scene became chaotic at times, as people pushed their way in and began distributing water, baby food and other goods to those affected by the earthquake.

Delgado later told reporters that he had received a tip about the warehouse, but gave no specifics on when.

The mayor of Ponce, Maria Melendez, said she had not known about the warehouse and its contents.

"This is outrageous," she said. "Everyone knows what us mayors went through after

Hurricane Maria to try and get help to our cities and how we've worked these weeks to provide basic supplies to people affected by earthquakes. Those involved owe us an explanation."

Ines Rivera, spokeswoman for the city of Ponce, told The Associated Press that the warehouse is owned by Puerto Rico's Company of Commerce and Export. Officials with the company could not be reached for comment.

The information upset many in Puerto Rico already angry over the government's botched response to Hurricane Maria, with similar incidents of supplies going unused being uncovered months later.

Ponce is one of several cities in the island's southern region hit by the recent 6.4-magnitude earthquake that killed one person and caused more than an estimated \$200 million in damage. More than 7,000 people remain in shelters since the quake.

SpaceX's capsule test completed

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — SpaceX completed the last big test of its crew capsule before launching astronauts in the next few months, mimicking an emergency escape shortly after liftoff Sunday.

No one was aboard for the wild ride in the skies above Cape Canaveral, just two mannequins.

A Falcon 9 rocket blasted off as normal, but just over a minute into its supersonic flight, the Dragon crew capsule catapulted off the top 12 miles above the Atlantic. Powerful thrusters on the capsule propelled it up and out of harm's way, as the rocket engines deliberately shut down and the booster tumbled out of control and exploded in a giant fireball.

The capsule reached an altitude of about 27 miles before parachuting into the ocean just offshore to bring the nine-minute test flight to a close and pave the way for two NASA astronauts to climb aboard next time.

Everything appeared to go well despite the choppy seas and overcast skies. Within minutes, a recovery ship was alongside the capsule and preparing to pull it from the water.

"I'm super fired up," Elon Musk, the company's founder and chief executive, said at a news conference. "It's just going to be wonderful to get astronauts back into orbit from American soil after almost a decade of not being able to do so. That's just super exciting."

NASA astronauts have not launched from the U.S. since 2011 when the space shuttle program ended.

Recycled from three previous launches, the SpaceX rocket was destroyed as it burst apart in flight and slammed in pieces into the sea. SpaceX normally tries to recover its boosters to drive down launch costs, landing them upright on a floating platform or back at the launch site.

Fires alter Australia's landscape forever

Associated Press

Australia's forests are burning at a rate unmatched in modern times and scientists say the landscape is being permanently altered as a warming climate brings profound changes to the island continent.

Heat waves and drought have fueled bigger and more frequent fires in parts of Australia, so far this season torching some 40,000 square miles, an area about as big as Ohio.

Before the recent wildfires, ecologists divided up Australia's native vegetation into two categories: fire-adapted landscapes that burn periodically, and those that don't burn. In the recent fires, that distinction lost meaning — even rainforests and peat swamps caught fire, likely changing them forever.

Flames have blazed through jungles dried out by drought, such as Eungella National Park, where shrouds of mist have been replaced by smoke.

High temperatures, drought and more fre-

quent wildfires — all linked to climate change — may make it impossible for even fire-adapted forests to be fully restored, scientists say.

"The normal processes of recovery are going to be less effective, going to take longer," said Roger Kitching, an ecologist at Griffith University in Queensland. "Instead of an ecosystem taking a decade, it may take a century or more to recover, all assuming we don't get another fire season of this magnitude soon."

The changing landscape has major implications for Australia's diverse wildlife. The fires in Eungella National Park, for example, threaten "frogs and reptiles that don't live anywhere else," said University of Queensland ecologist Diana Fisher.

Fires typically burn through the forest in a patchwork pattern, leaving unburned refuges from which plant and animal species can spread. However, the megafires raging in parts of Australia are consuming everything in their path and leaving little room for that kind of recovery, said Kitching.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Grandpa forgot \$43,170 hidden in his footstool

MI OWOSSO — The footstool didn't feel right. That's what happens when someone stashes \$43,170 inside and apparently forgets about it.

Indeed, the money was discovered inside a footstool that was donated to a Michigan resale shop in Owosso Township.

Howard Kirby bought the piece and other furniture for \$70 after Christmas. He was stunned Sunday when his daughter-in-law unzipped the cushion and shouted. After the shock wore off, he began the extraordinary step of returning the money to the former owners.

The footstool was part of a living room set donated to a Habitat For Humanity store by Kim Fauth-Newberry and her husband. The furniture had belonged to her grandfather, Philip Fauth, who died in July.

Company takes pizza delivery to new heights

AK ANCHORAGE — An Alaska company has taken pizza to new heights by providing airplane deliveries around the state.

Papa Murphy's in Anchorage flies hundreds of miles to deliver about 150 pizzas each week, Alaska Public Media reported.

Owner Tyler Williams said the shop offers assembled pizzas for its Anchorage customers to take home to bake. The rest of the uncooked pies are flash-frozen for air delivery to customers throughout Alaska.

"They get flown out frozen," Williams said. "Once the customer gets them it takes two to three days, depending on weather. They defrost them, it takes just a couple hours on the counter."

Lawmakers question 'deport' license plate

UT SALT LAKE CITY — Utah lawmakers want to know how a license plate with the phrase "DEPORTM" got approved despite state rules against expressing contempt for any race, religion or political opinion on vanity plates.

While people have the right to freedom of speech, the messages that appear on license plates are different because they must be approved by the state, said Republican Sen. Daniel Thatcher.

"If someone put a bumper sticker on a car, I would shake my head and keep walking," he said. "The state has approved this, so it's a state-approved message and that's wildly inappropriate."

Robbers smash into truck stop, take ATM

LA HAUGHTON — Louisiana authorities are searching for at least three people who reportedly rammed a vehicle into a truck stop and took the store's ATM.

The Haughton Police Department is investigating after getting a call around 5 a.m. to the Pilot Truck Stop. Upon arrival, Assistant Chief Ricky Bridges told KSLA TV officers found the front of the store smashed, possibly by a pickup truck.

Sewage spill closes shoreline

CA LONG BEACH — A sewage spill of about 11,000 gallons forced the closure of the shoreline in Long Beach.

Best practices dictate that the city needs at least two clean water samples before they're reopened.

Samples were taken last Monday, the Press-Telegram reported.

The spill last Sunday was caused by a grease blockage up the San Gabriel River in Hawaiian Gardens, the newspaper said.

Teen charged over making false report

VA ALEXANDRIA — The U.S. Justice Department has charged a former Virginia college student with calling in fake emergencies to prompt law enforcement response, in coordination with a group the FBI labeled as sympathetic to neo-Nazi ideology.

John William Kirby Kelley, 19, was charged with conspiracy to make threats.

He's accused of being part of a network that "shared racist views" and had a "particular disdain for African Americans and Jewish people," targeting such individuals in so-called swatting attacks, according to an FBI affidavit unsealed Friday.

Swatting is a practice in which fake emergencies are called in to authorities to draw a large law enforcement response.

Twister tosses cars outside high school

SC LORIS — A small tornado tossed around cars and damaged athletics fields outside a South Carolina high school on Monday, the National Weather Service said.

News outlets reported that no one was hurt when a small twister with winds estimated as strong as 90 miles per hour spun past Loris High School during class hours.

Photos and video showed cars tossed atop each other outside the school, which did not appear damaged.

K-9 moved after biting handler's girlfriend

MD ANNAPOLIS — A K-9 who bit his handler's girlfriend on two separate occasions will be reassigned at a sheriff's office in Maryland.

Cpl. Young Hur said he no longer wants to work with the K-9 detail in Anne Arundel County, Sheriff Jim Fredericks told The Capital newspaper.

An internal incident report obtained by the newspaper through the Maryland Public Information Act states that both bites happened while Hur and the K-9, Bodi, were off duty and Hur's girlfriend was playing with the dog in his apartment.

Hur's girlfriend was taken to a hospital after being bitten, the newspaper reported. The severity of her injuries from the second biting incident weren't given.

Police: Man may have been mauled by pit bull

KY ROCKCASTLE — Kentucky State Police on Friday charged a woman with murder in what authorities think was a fatal mauling of a man by a pit bull.

Police said they charged Melissa D. Wolke, 38, of Mount Vernon in the death of Donald W. Abner, 55, of Richmond.

Police said they encountered a very aggressive dog near the victim.

Trooper Scottie Pennington said the victim had dog bites on his face and head. The dog was fatally shot by a trooper. The dog belonged to a woman who was visiting the home.

An autopsy is being performed on to confirm Abner's cause of death. An autopsy will also be done on the dog to determine if it was infected with rabies.

From wire reports

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McGregor KOs Cerrone in 40 seconds

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Conor McGregor's opening punch bloodied Donald Cerrone's nose. He then floored Cerrone only 20 seconds into the bout with a perfectly placed kick to the head, and he mercilessly finished on the ground.

When he paraded around the ring with an Irish flag on his shoulders to celebrate, the mixed martial arts world knew McGregor is back with a big bang.

The Irish former two-division champion came out of a three-year stretch of relative inactivity and outside-the-cage troubles with a welterweight performance in UFC 246 on Saturday night that echoed his greatest fights during his unparalleled rise.

"I feel really good, and I came out of here unscathed," McGregor said. "I'm in shape. We've got work to do to get back to where I was."

After hurting Cerrone (36-14) with his first punch, McGregor (22-4) dropped him with a sublime kick to the jaw. McGregor pounced and forced referee Herb Dean to save Cerrone, delighting a sellout crowd of 19,040 at T-Mobile Arena.

McGregor's hand hadn't been raised in victory since November 2016, when he stopped lightweight Eddie Alvarez to become the first fighter in UFC history to hold two championship belts simultaneously. With his fame and fortune multiplying, McGregor fought only his boxing match

with Floyd Mayweather in 2017, and he lost a one-sided UFC bout to lightweight champion Khabib Nurmagomedov in late 2018.

"I wasn't committed," McGregor said afterward. "I just felt like I disrespected the people that believed in me and supported me. That's what led me to re-center myself and get back to where I was at."

After a year spent out of competition and in repeated trouble with the law, McGregor got back into training and vowed to return to elite form. This dramatic victory over Cerrone indicated he's well on his way, and McGregor has vowed to fight multiple times in 2020.

Welterweight champion Kamaru Usman and veteran brawler Jorge Masvidal watched UFC 246 from cageside. Either man could be McGregor's next opponent, but UFC President Dana White is pushing for a rematch with Nurmagomedov, who first fights Tony Ferguson in April.

"Any one of these mouthy fools can get it," McGregor yelled into the microphone. "Every single one of them can get it. It does not matter. I'm back and I'm ready."

Although many observers have scoffed, the 31-year-old McGregor believes he can reclaim the fearsome form he showed during his meteoric rise to unprecedented MMA success. He won 15 consecutive fights during a five-year run from low-profile shows in Dublin to the world's biggest MMA events, stopping five straight elite UFC opponents with punches on the way up.

After his latest victory ended, McGregor peeled away briefly to celebrate, but quickly returned to comfort the disoriented Cerrone. When Cerrone's grandmother, Jerry, entered the cage after the fight to hug her grandson, McGregor also hugged Jerry and got a kiss on the cheek.

"This guy is such a huge superstar," White said. "I put him up there with (Mike) Tyson, (Sugar Ray) Leonard, all of them. He's got the biggest pay-per-view in history, and how many of the top 10 does he have?"

Former bantamweight champion Holly Holm beat Raquel Pennington by unanimous decision in the penultimate bout of UFC 246. The 38-year-old Holm (13-5) had lost five of her seven fights since she memorably knocked out Ronda Rousey in November 2015.

On the undercard, 37-year-old flyweight Roxanne Modafferi pulled off one of the biggest upsets in recent UFC history with a one-sided decision victory over previously unbeaten 21-year-old Maycee Barber, the UFC's top 125-pound prospect.

Barber (8-1) injured her left knee during the bout, but Modafferi (24-16) was already dominating with the superior jiu-jitsu she has been practicing for Barber's entire life. Modafferi was the biggest betting underdog on the UFC 246 card, facing 10-to-1 odds at some sports books.

Aleksei Oleinik, a 42-year-old heavyweight who made his pro debut in 1996, also beat Maurice Greene by submission in the second round.

Navy QB Perry scores in Shrine Bowl

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Mission accomplished for Florida International's James Morgan, Charlotte's Benny LeMay and Navy's Malcolm Perry in the East-West Shrine Bowl.

The trio shined for the East in a 31-27 victory, with Morgan leading two first-quarter touchdown drives and LeMay rushing for a pair of TDs, including the game-winner. Perry took a direct snap from center and sprinted 52 yards for a TD on his only carry.

"It was really a nice week," said Morgan. "I just wanted to come in, work as hard I could, learn as much as possible and go out and compete. It was quite

an experience."

LeMay and Perry, a quarterback in college who's eyeing a pro career as a receiver, felt good about what they accomplished before scouts in town to evaluate prospects playing in the nation's longest running college football all-star game.

LeMay's 9-yard TD run with just under two minutes remaining sealed offensive MVP honors for the 5-foot-8, 216-pound running back, who finished with 80 yards on 16 carries.

"The offensive line did a great job," LeMay said. "It's really nice to come out here and have a good game."

Morgan started at quarterback for the East and shared playing time with Princeton's

Kevin Davidson and Mississippi State's Tommy Stevens, who led his team downfield for the winning TD after the West took a 27-24 lead on James Robinson's 63-yard scoring run.

Robinson, who rushed for 1,899 yards and 18 touchdowns for Illinois State this season, finished with 80 yards rushing on seven attempts. He gained an additional 56 yards on two receptions, one a 46-yarder that led to a field goal.

Utah's Tyler Huntley threw a 7-yard TD pass to San Diego State tight end Parker Houston and North Texas' Mason Fine tossed a 36-yard scoring pass to Ohio State's Binjimon Victor to help the West wipe out a two-touchdown deficit and make it

17-all heading into the fourth quarter.

Morgan, meanwhile, continued to state his case as a potential pick in the NFL draft by going 9 of 14 for 116 yards, including a 9-yard TD throw to Louisiana's Ja'Marcus Bradley to finish the East's game-opening drive.

Versatile UCF running back Adrian Killins Jr. had only one rushing attempt but led the East with seven catches for 91 yards, including a 37-yard reception on the winning drive.

Stevens also had an 18-yard completion to Rhode Island's Aaron Parker to set up LeMay's second touchdown.

Illinois State's Kirk Luther was voted defensive MVP.

NBA roundup

Suns, Booker overcome Smart's bombs

Associated Press

BOSTON — Devin Booker sure loves playing in TD Garden.

His near triple-double effort was just barely enough for the Phoenix Suns to overcome Boston guard Marcus Smart's performance.

Booker had 39 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists and the Suns withstood a franchise-record 11 three-pointers by Smart and beat the Celtics 123-119 on Saturday.

Lakers 125, Rockets 115: LeBron James had 31 points and 12 assists and Los Angeles rode a big third quarter to a win in Houston.

The Lakers bounced back after a loss to Orlando on Wednesday night that snapped their nine-game winning streak. The loss was the third straight for the Rockets, tying a season high, and they have dropped four of five.

Bucks 117, Nets 97: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 29 points and 12 rebounds, Khris Middleton scored 20 points, and Milwaukee beat Brooklyn for its sixth straight win.

Clippers 133, Pelicans 130: Kawhi Leonard scored 39 points and Los Angeles rallied to win at New Orleans.

Lou Williams scored 14 of his 32 points during a dominant fourth quarter for the Clippers, who outscored the Pelicans 31-20 in the final 12 minutes.

Warriors 109, Magic 95: D'Angelo Russell scored 26 points and dished out a season-high 12 assists, and short-handed Golden State snapped its longest losing streak in nearly 18 years at 10 games by beating Orlando.

Pistons 136, Hawks 103: Derrick Rose had 27 points and nine assists, Svi Mykhailiuk added 25 points in a reserve role, and Detroit won at Atlanta.

76ers 90, Knicks 87: Tobias Harris hit a go-ahead three-pointer late in the fourth quarter, Ben Simmons had 21 points and Philadelphia won its third straight game.

Raptors 122, Timberwolves 112: Fred VanVleet returned from a hamstring injury to score 29 points and lead Toronto to a win at Minnesota.

Bulls 118, Cavaliers 116: Zach LaVine scored 21 of his 42 points in the fourth quarter and host Chicago rallied from 15 points down.

Jazz 123, Kings 101: Rudy Gobert had a season-high 28 points and 15 rebounds and host Utah raced to a 16-point lead in the first quarter and routed Sacramento for its 16th win in 18 games.

Thunder 119, Trail Blazers 106: Chris Paul matched a season high with 30 points, and Oklahoma City beat short-handed Portland.

College basketball roundup

No. 11 Louisville grinds out win over No. 3 Duke

Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — Freshman David Johnson had a season-high 19 points and No. 11 Louisville hung on down the stretch to beat No. 3 Duke 79-73 on Saturday night in a key matchup in the Atlantic Coast Conference's regular-season title chase.

No. 1 Gonzaga 92, BYU 69: Killian Tillie had 22 points and 10 rebounds, and the host Zags earned their 12th consecutive win.

No. 2 Baylor 75, Oklahoma State 68: Freddie Gillespie and Jared Butler each scored 17 points, and the visiting Bears earned their 14th straight victory.

Florida 69, No. 4 Auburn 47: The Gators' Omar Payne had the best game of his college career, finishing with 19 points and 11 rebounds.

DePaul 79, No. 5 Butler 66: Paul Reed scored 23 points on 8-of-9 shooting, leading the host Blue Demons to the victory.

No. 6 Kansas 66, Texas 57: Devon Dotson returned from a hip injury to score 21 points, including the game's final seven.

No. 7 San Diego State 68, Nevada 55: Yanni Wetzell had 17 points and a career-high 16 rebounds for the host Aztecs.

No. 8 Oregon 64, Washington 61 (OT): Payton Pritchard hit his sixth three-pointer of the game with 3.4 seconds left in overtime.

No. 9 Florida State 83, Miami 79 (OT): The visiting Seminoles forced 24 turnovers, including three in a row in overtime, and rallied from a nine-point deficit.

No. 10 Kentucky 73, Arkansas 66: The Wildcats kept their composure after coach John Calipari was ejected, holding off the Razorbacks for the road win.

Kansas State 84, No. 12 West Virginia 68: Cartier Diarra scored 25 points and Xavier Sneed had 16, leading the host Wildcats.

No. 14 Villanova 61, Connecticut 55: Jermaine Samuels scored 19 points, powering the host Wildcats to the victory.

Houston 65, No. 16 Wichita State 54: Fabian White scored 14 points, part of a balanced attack for the Cougars.

No. 17 Maryland 57, Purdue 50: Jalen Smith had 18 points and 10 rebounds, and the Terrapins remained unbeaten at home.

No. 18 Seton Hall 82, St. John's 79: Myles Powell scored 23 of his 29 points in the second half, and the visiting Pirates extended their winning streak to eight games.

Arizona 75, No. 20 Colorado 54: Dylan Smith and Josh Green each scored 13 points, and the host Wildcats cruised.

Penn State 90, No. 21 Ohio State 76: Lamar Stevens scored 14 of his 24 points in the second half, helping the host Nittany Lions stop a three-game slide.

No. 23 Texas Tech 72, Iowa

State 52: Kyler Edwards had 22 points coming off the highest-scoring game of his career, and the host Red Raiders pulled away for the victory.

No. 24 Illinois 75, Northwestern 71: Trent Frazier made four three-pointers on his way to 16 points.

No. 25 Creighton 78, Providence 74: Marcus Zegarowski hit a tiebreaking three-pointer with 2.7 seconds left, sending the host Bluejays to the victory.

Army 81, Loyola (Md.) 80: Reserve Tucker Blackwell hit two three-pointers in the final 1:19 and then picked up an assist on Josh Caldwell's three-pointer with a second left.

Navy 68, Lafayette 66: Cam Davis scored 23 points including a three-pointer with nine seconds left that lifted the host Midshipmen over the Leopards.

Colorado St. 78, Air Force 65: Kris Martin had 19 points off the bench to lead the Rams past the host Falcons.

NHL roundup

Ovechkin passes Lemieux with hat trick

Associated Press

UNIONDALE, N.Y. — Alex Ovechkin has made a career out of scoring big goals in big moments. His latest milestone was no different.

Ovechkin had a hat trick for the second consecutive game to tie Steve Yzerman for ninth on the career goals list Saturday, and the Washington Capitals rallied with five goals in the third period for a 6-4 victory over the New York Islanders.

“To be honest with you, it’s something special. It’s history. Great names,” said Ovechkin, who is now two goals short of Mark Messier for eighth all-time.

Jakub Vrana scored the go-ahead goal with 2:30 left after the Islanders turned over the puck in their own zone. The league-best Capitals extended their winning streak to four games while the Islanders lost for the fourth time in their last five.

Ovechkin also passed Mario Lemieux for 10th place on the career list. His 692nd goal came late in the third period.

Senators 5, Flames 2: Marcus Hogberg made 40 saves and host Ottawa snapped a nine-game losing streak.

The Senators were outshot 42-21, but Hogberg’s performance kept the Flames at bay. It was the 25-year-old goalie’s second NHL win in 13 career starts.

Brady Tkachuk had a goal and assist and was on the winning side for the first time in four games against older brother Matthew. Chris Tierney, Connor Brown, Colin White and Vladislav Namestnikov had Ottawa’s other goals.

Wild 7, Stars 0: Alex Stalock posted his second shutout of the season, and Jason Zucker had a goal and two assists in host Minnesota’s rout of Dallas.

Stalock, playing his second straight game in place of Devan Dubnyk, made 27 saves for the Wild, who have won back-to-back games to start a season-high, seven-game homestand. Mats Zuccarello and Ryan Hartman each had a goal and assist. Jared Spurgeon, Carson Soucy, Ryan Donato and Zach Parise also scored for the Wild.

Avalanche 5, Blues 3: Cale Makar and Andre Burakovsky scored 22 seconds apart in the second period to chase All-Star goaltender Jordan Binnington from the game and host Colorado held on to beat St. Louis.

The Avalanche used a three-goal middle period to turn a 2-1 deficit into a 4-2 advantage. Tyson Jost also scored in the period. Nathan MacKinnon added a goal in the first and Gabriel Landeskog clinched it with an empty-netter. Makar’s goal was his 11th, breaking the franchise record for most by a rookie defenseman.

Oilers 7, Coyotes 3: Riley Sheahan had a goal and three assists and Connor McDavid scored twice as host Edmonton rode a strong start to a victory over Arizona.

Josh Archibald, Sam Gagner, Kailer Yamamoto and Joakim Nygard also scored for the Oilers, who are 6-1-1 in their last eight games.

Blue Jackets 5, Devils 0: Elvis Merzlikins made a career-high 41 saves in his third shutout in his last four starts, and host Columbus cruised to its fourth straight

win.

Cam Atkinson had two goals and an assist, helping the Blue Jackets improve to 14-2-4 in their last 20 games. Alexander Wennberg, Jakob Lilja and Nick Foligno also scored.

Flyers 4, Kings 1: Travis Konecny scored a pair of goals and James van Riemsdyk added a goal and two assists to lead host Philadelphia past the Los Angeles Kings.

Joel Farabee also scored and Brian Elliott made 34 saves for the Flyers, who improved to 16-4-4 at home.

Blackhawks 6, Maple Leafs 2: Jonathan Toews had two goals and two assists, and Chicago at Toronto for its fourth straight.

Dominik Kubalik added two goals and an assist for the Blackhawks (23-20-6), who improved to 11-5 in their last 16 games. Drake Caggiula had a goal and an assist, and Brandon Saad also scored.

Panthers 4, Red Wings 1: Evgenii Dadonov and Mark Pysyk scored late in the first period and Florida went on to win at Detroit for its fourth in a row.

Canadiens 5, Golden Knights 4 (SO): Tomas Tatar scored in the fourth round of a shootout to lift host Montreal over Vegas.

Predators 2, Sabres 1: Craig Smith’s power-play goal with 6:29 remaining in the third period propelled host Nashville past Buffalo.

Canucks 4, Sharks 1: Tanner Pearson scored on the power play and had an assist as host Vancouver defeated San Jose.

Golf roundup

Westwood’s Abu Dhabi win is 25th on European tour

Associated Press

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates — Lee Westwood secured his 25th European Tour win with victory at the Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship on Sunday.

Westwood, who had a one-shot overnight lead, has now won in four different decades starting in the 1990s. The Englishman’s 5-under par final-round 67 gave him a two-shot margin over a chasing pack of

France’s Victor Perez (63) and England’s Tommy Fleetwood (63) and Matthew Fitzpatrick (67) who all finished on 271.

Landry, Scheffler share Amex lead

LA QUINTA, Calif. — Andrew Landry and Scottie Scheffler broke away Saturday at The American Express.

Landry shot a 7-under 65 at PGA West’s Jack Nicklaus

Tournament Course to join Scheffler atop the leaderboard at 21-under 195, four strokes ahead of Rickie Fowler.

Jimenez beats Els

KA’UPULEHI-KONA, Hawaii — Miguel Angel Jimenez made a 12-foot birdie putt on the second hole of a playoff Saturday with senior newcomer Ernie Els to win the PGA Tour Champions’ season-

opening Mitsubishi Electric Championship.

Inbee Park leads by 2

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Inbee Park finally made a bogey, but she still finished with a 4-under 67 Saturday and a two-shot lead over Sei Young Kim heading into the final round of the season-opening Diamond Resorts Tournament of Champions.