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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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China accuses US of 'serious provocation'

The Washington Post

China has accused the United States of staging a "serious political and military provocation" after an American warship sailed near a disputed island in the South China Sea.

The USS Stethem, an American guided-missile destroyer, sailed within 12 nautical miles of Triton Island, a small landmass in the Paracel Islands chain, on Sunday, a U.S. defense official said, marking the second such operation since President Donald Trump took office.

China, which has enjoyed de facto control of the Paracels since expelling Vietnam in a military engagement in 1974, said the islands, which it calls the Xisha, are an "inherent part of Chinese territory."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the Stethem had "trespassed" there, entering the waters "without China's approval."

"Its behavior has violated the Chinese law and relevant international law, infringed upon China's sovereignty, disrupted peace, security and order of the relevant waters and put in jeopardy the facilities and personnel on the Chinese islands, and thus constitutes a serious political and military provocation," spokesman Lu Kang said in a statement.

"The Chinese side is dissatisfied with and opposed to the relevant behavior of the U.S. side."

The incident is the latest flare-up in relations in just a few days, and came only hours before Trump spoke by telephone to Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday night in Washington — Monday morning in Beijing.

China's state media said the two men discussed "brewing issues," but gave no further information — except to say that North Korea was expected to top their agenda, while also

noting the call came soon after an arms deal with Taiwan was announced.

Last week, China's Foreign Ministry expressed outrage over twin American announcements: of a major package of arms sales to Taiwan, and fresh sanctions on North Korea that target a Chinese bank. Lu said then that the "wrong moves go against the consensus achieved at Mar-a-Lago," when Trump and Xi met in Florida in April.

U.S. officials said the navy's action, known as a freedom-of-navigation operation, was planned in advance, and was not targeted at any one country or aimed at making a political statement.

But China accused the United States of deliberately stirring up trouble in the South China Sea and staging "provocative operations" that violate China's sovereignty and threaten its security.

Fox News, which first reported on Sunday's incident,

said a Chinese warship tailed the Stethem as it sailed past the island, although it is unclear how close the ship came to the American vessel.

Capt. Charlie Brown, a spokesman for the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet, did not confirm the Sunday operation but said in an emailed statement that the Navy routinely conducts such operations and they are not "about any one country, nor are they about making political statements."

"U.S. forces operate in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region on a daily basis, including in the South China Sea," Brown said. "All operations are conducted in accordance with international law and demonstrate that the United States will fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows. That is true in the South China Sea as in other places around the globe."

The Stethem, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, is based in Japan.

Fourth of July festivities resume at US bases in Japan

By LEON COOK

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Independence Day celebrations, including plenty of colorful fireworks, are making a triumphant return to U.S. bases in Japan, a year after such events were scaled back in the wake of a brutal slaying on Okinawa.

"You protect freedom every day," Col. Kenneth Moss, commander of Yokota's 374th Airlift Wing, told a crowd gathered for Celebrate America festivities on Friday. "It's important to enjoy that freedom for your-

selves every once in a while."

That freedom took the form of a full day of activities at the western Tokyo air base, from a morning 5K race to a whimsical Leaky Kon-Tiki competition at the natatorium using homemade cardboard boats.

Samurai re-enactors and traditional taiko drummers drew large crowds, and a petting zoo encouraged face-painted kids and adults alike to feed and pet sheep, ducks, rabbits and other cute creatures.

After nightfall, the rockets' red glare lit up the sky over Yokota's flight line. Many watched the lengthy pyrotechnics show

from the festival grounds, nearby parks, tower balconies or the roof of the Yokota Community Center.

The Independence Day Celebration at nearby Camp Zama featured a Friday concert by singer-songwriter Natalie Imbruglia, and a Saturday fireworks show that was open to Japanese residents. Festivities at Yokosuka Naval Base kicked off with Saturday's Firecracker Color Run and a concert by Imbruglia on Sunday. A festival, complete with carnival games, eating contests and fireworks, is scheduled for Tuesday.

Events on Okinawa included

Kadena Air Base's Rockin' the Block festival Saturday, featuring rock bands Hoobastank and Papa Roach. Many other Pacific bases have scheduled July Fourth events and fireworks for Tuesday evening.

Last year's decision to go low key for the most patriotic American holiday was an extension of a monthlong "period of unity and mourning" declared on Okinawa in sympathy over the killing of a 20-year-old Okinawa woman in which a U.S. civilian base worker was charged.

Fireworks and major live concerts were canceled.

5 N. Korean defectors sail to safety in South

By KIM GAMEL
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Five North Koreans defected by sailing across the maritime border into the South this past weekend, the coast guard said of the latest in a series of risky cross-border escapes.

Four men and one woman were found Saturday evening after South Korea's coast guard responded to a military request to check an unidentified boat off the peninsula's east coast, a coast guard official said.

The boat, which had crossed the border known as the Northern Limit Line and was northeast of Gangneung city, then was towed to the nearby port of Mukho, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to provide the details.

The North Koreans said they wished to defect and were turned over to the government for investigation, the official said. North Koreans are granted citizenship automatically once they arrive in South Korea, but must go through a transition period including debriefing and re-education.

The incident pushes the number of North

Koreans who have defected by crossing the heavily fortified border by sea or land to at least 10 since September. While South Korea has recorded an overall increase in the number of defectors, most escape via China or other countries.

A spokesman for the Unification Ministry, which oversees defectors and inter-Korean relations, declined to comment on the most recent incident, pending the outcome of the investigation.

"It is true there were a few defection cases by using boats or the cease-fire line lately," the spokesman, Lee Duk-haeng, said Monday during a regular press briefing. "The investigation is still ongoing."

Many of the defectors have fled by boat, sometimes accidentally. The Unification Ministry says there has been an uptick in aging North Korean fishing vessels going astray, apparently because leader Kim Jong Un has ordered an increase in the production of fish.

Many of the rescued fishermen have requested to return home and were repatriated, including eight who were found drifting on June 23 after their boat suffered engine problems near Ulleung Island off the east

coast, according to Yonhap News Agency.

The coast guard has not increased patrols or taken special measures because of the defections, but is on the lookout for North Koreans in need of rescue. "We are not tightening guard specially. But we're looking in every nook and corner," the official said.

Earlier this month, a North Korean man defected by swimming south with the aid of plastic foam pieces on his shoulders, the military said. He was found near an observation post on the northern part of the Han River just west of Seoul.

A father and his son also defected after being found on a fishing boat on June 3, a Unification Ministry official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to disclose the details. The pair apparently intended to defect, but others have made the decision only after the opportunity arose, officials said.

On June 14, a North Korean soldier also escaped by taking the extremely dangerous land route of crossing the Demilitarized Zone, which is dotted with land mines. He was the second soldier to do so since September.

USAREUR chief: Rotational forces best to deter Russia

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — A rotational brigade in Eastern Europe deters Russian aggression better than a permanently based armored unit in Germany, the Army's top commander in Europe said following a study that questioned the cost of sending U.S.-based units on deployments to the continent.

A deployed brigade maneuvering through potential flash points in the Baltics and Poland operates at a higher state of combat readiness, U.S. Army Europe's Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges said in an interview Sunday.

"What it (a rotational brigade) does for us is so much more than if it was an armored brigade that was sitting in Germany," Hodges said.

For more than a decade, the military has debated how best to shape the Army in Europe, where the ranks have shrunk to about 30,000 permanently based soldiers. In 2012, the U.S.

sent its tankers back home in favor of a rotational model that then was considered a cheaper way of doing business.

Congress has taken renewed interest in this long-running debate over cost and benefits. Rep. Mac Thornberry, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, has commissioned a study comparing the expense of forward-stationing forces with the cost of rotating them.

"I don't know what the cost data will show. I'm not convinced that it is tremendously cheaper to rotate a bunch of units through rather than have that permanent presence," said Thornberry, who expressed concerns in late May about the "human toll on families."

Meanwhile, a new study by Army War College professor John R. Deni argues that sending a rotational armored brigade to Europe costs about \$135 million more annually to maintain a continuous presence than a full-time unit based

in Germany.

Hodges said he is unconvinced by this analysis and that more investigation is needed before it can be determined definitively which model is cheaper. The Army now has the issue under review, he said.

From an operational standpoint, Hodges argues there is no comparison in determining which force is more effective in the field.

"The main shortfall with a forward-stationed armored brigade is I still need to get it out to all those places — the Baltics, Poland especially," he said. "I can do that with a rotational force."

A brigade stationed in Germany, on accompanied tours in Europe, would spend less time in the field than its rotational counterpart and more time back in garrison, he said.

The Army in January began "heel-to-toe" brigade rotations, which involve back-to-back nine-month tours to ensure a

continuous presence of heavy units along NATO's eastern flank.

The mission is now being conducted by the 4th Infantry Division's 3rd Armored Brigade, whose operations include live-fire exercises and maneuvers designed to bolster allies' ability to fight together.

The brigade is in the field full time, and by the end of its rotation, the unit will be Army's most combat-ready because of the intensity of operations, Hodges said.

For now, the top priority is guaranteeing a continued rotational or permanently stationed combat aviation brigade in Europe to ensure freedom and speed of movement for soldiers, he said.

"Aviation is always going to be my number one need," Hodges said. "The Russians will absolutely not take us serious if we do not have aviation. It is such an essential part of how the Army fights."

Nicholson honors victims of Kabul blast

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The top U.S. commander in Afghanistan on Sunday thanked families of Afghan police officers killed or wounded in one of the deadliest terrorist bombings of the country's 15-year-old war.

"They are our heroes; you are our heroes," Army Gen. John Nicholson told a crowd of burqa-clad widows, small children and policemen with visible scars at NATO's Resolute Support headquarters in Kabul.

A truck packed with more than 3,300 pounds of explosives was detonated at an entrance to the capital's Green Zone on May 31. More than 150 people were killed and more than 400 injured by the blast, for which no group has yet claimed responsibility. Afghanistan's in-

telligence agency charged that the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network planned the attack.

NATO's headquarters, the U.S. Embassy and several other foreign missions are located in the heavily fortified Green Zone. The explosion killed seven police officers and wounded a dozen more.

"It is our duty to remember them, to honor them, and to complete the work for which they died and for which you were wounded," Nicholson said at the officers' memorial Sunday evening.

Officials say police prevented what could have been an even deadlier attack. Security footage showed officers stopping the truck from passing a checkpoint near the German Embassy. Moments later it exploded.

Hugo Llorens, special charge d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, also spoke at the event, suggesting the men may

have saved many American lives if the perpetrators' intended target had been the embassy or the adjacent NATO base.

"I offer the heartfelt condolences of the administration of President Donald Trump and the people of the United States in these difficult times," he said.

Despite reports that the German Embassy — which sits just inside the Green Zone and is visible from a busy public road — was the planned target of the attack, the country's ambassador to Afghanistan, Walter Hassmann, told reporters at the memorial that authorities were "not sure yet about this."

He said Germans were aware of a heightened threat and that staff had been moved to safer buildings on the embassy compound. But he said they had no specific knowledge or warning of the explosion that occurred.

"If we had known about this

attack, we would have both vacated and evacuated the embassy, and we would have warned the neighborhood," he said. "We knew that a threat was out there, but we did not know that this attack was going to happen that morning."

Nearly all personnel at the German Embassy were evacuated after the bombing because of the extensive damage it caused. Hassmann said Germany was committed to continuing its work in Afghanistan and that his embassy staff would return as soon as possible.

The May attack underlined the difficulties the Afghan government and its international partners face in stabilizing the country, more than 15 years after a U.S.-led invasion removed the Taliban from power. The security situation has steadily deteriorated since NATO ended combat operations in 2014.

ISIS striking back in Mosul with female suicide bombers

Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq — Islamic State is striking back as Iraqi forces are on the cusp of full victory in Mosul, sending female suicide bombers to target soldiers as the battle for the country's second-largest city nears its end. At least 15 people were killed in the latest assaults across Iraq, officials said Monday.

The attacks underscore the intense violence still plaguing the battered nation and the perils that will remain even after ISIS militants are pushed out of Mosul.

On Monday morning in Mosul's Old City — the scene of ISIS' last stand, where soldiers are fast closing in on the last remaining pocket of militants — two female suicide bombers, hiding among a group of fleeing civilians, targeted Iraqi troops, killing one soldier and wounding several others.

And at a camp for displaced people in Iraq's western Anbar province, a suicide bomber dressed in a woman's all-covering robe killed 14 on Sunday evening, a provincial official said.

After days of fierce battles, the militant-held territory in Mosul is rapidly shrinking, with ISIS now controlling about 0.40 square miles.

Using women as suicide bombers is apparently the latest tactic by the militants,

Sgt. Ali Abdullah Hussein told The Associated Press as he returned from the front line, his troops carrying the body of their slain comrade wrapped in a blanket.

"They appeared from the basement (of a building) and they blew themselves up," Hussein said of the two female bombers.

The attack happened in the area of the destroyed al-Nuri Mosque, which was the focus of the Iraqi forces' push last week.

Over the past three days, Hussein said, at least four such attacks have targeted Iraqi forces as hundreds of Mosul's civilians are fleeing the battles in the Old City's congested streets.

After the explosion on Monday, another group of civilians appeared on the main road, prompting the Iraqi soldiers to immediately draw their weapons. They then yelled to the group of mostly women and children to back away and take another route out.

ISIS overran Mosul in a matter of days more than three years ago. The U.S.-backed offensive to retake the city was launched in October and has lasted nearly nine months, although Iraqi political and military officials had vowed that victory would be declared by the end of 2016.

Iraqi forces launched the operation to retake the Old City in mid-June. After a dawn push Thursday, they retook the area around

the al-Nuri Mosque, which the militants had blown up just a few days earlier.

The 12th-century mosque is hugely symbolic — it was from a pulpit of this mosque that ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed the ISIS caliphate in July 2014.

After the Iraqi forces retook the landmark al-Nuri Mosque, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared an end to ISIS' so-called caliphate and pledged victory was "near."

The suicide bombing in Anbar took place at dusk Sunday, as authorities were accommodating families that had fled from the ISIS-held town of Qaim, in western Iraq, according to Councilman Taha Abdul-Ghani.

Abdul-Ghani said a police colonel was among the 14 dead, and at least 20 were wounded in the explosion.

The death toll could have been higher, Abdul Ghani said, but the colonel had become suspicious about the person in the long robe and walked up to the attacker, embracing him — presumably to reduce the number of casualties — as the bomber detonated his explosives.

Iraqi forces have pushed ISIS out of most of Anbar. Though there was no immediate claim of responsibility for the camp attack, it had all the hallmarks of ISIS, which has in the past months staged large-scale attacks elsewhere in Iraq to distract from its losses in Mosul.

Trump stirs criticism with mock video of beating CNN

Associated Press

BRIDGEWATER, N.J. — President Donald Trump crowned his weekend rage against the news media with a mock video that shows him pummeling a man in a business suit — his face obscured by the CNN logo — outside a wrestling ring.

It was not immediately clear who produced the brief video, which appears to be a doctored version of Trump's 2007 appearance on World Wrestling Entertainment Inc. The 28-second clip was posted on Trump's official Twitter account Sunday morning, with the message: "#FraudNewsCNN #FNN."

Trump, who has branded the media as the "opposition party" and CNN as "fake news," stayed on the attack later in the day, stating on Twitter that "the dis-

honest media will NEVER keep us from accomplishing our objectives on behalf of our GREAT AMERICAN PEOPLE!"

On Monday, he continued the attacks on Twitter: "At some point the Fake News will be forced to discuss our great jobs numbers, strong economy, success with ISIS, the border & so much else!"

Bruce Brown, executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, condemned the video as a "threat of physical violence against journalists." He said Trump's tweet was "beneath the office of the presidency."

A White House aide insisted the tweet should not send a chill across the media landscape.

"I think that no one would perceive that as a threat," homeland security adviser Tom Bossert said. "I hope they don't.

But I do think that he's beaten up in a way on cable platforms that he has a right to respond to."

CNN accused Trump of engaging in "juvenile behavior far below the dignity of his office."

White House officials traveling with Trump during his weekend stay at his New Jersey golf club did not immediately respond to questions about the video. It appeared to be a doctored version of an appearance Trump made on a World Wrestling Entertainment Inc. show called "Battle of the Billionaires" in 2007, in which Trump appears to attack WWE CEO Vince McMahon.

McMahon's wife, Linda, who founded and built the company with her husband, now heads the Small Business Administration for Trump and was a donor to his campaign.

NJ governor faces backlash over his day at the beach

Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. — Gov. Chris Christie got blistered online Monday after he was photographed sunning himself on a New Jersey beach that he had closed to the public over the Fourth of July weekend because of a government shutdown.

Christie defended his use of the beach, saying he had previously announced his vacation plans and the media had simply "caught a politician keeping his word."

The Republican was photographed Sunday by NJ.com at Island Beach State Park lounging in a beach chair in sandals, shorts and a T-shirt. He and his family had the sun and sand to themselves.

The deeply unpopular governor was widely mocked online as selfish and arrogant, with memes using the image of Christie in his beach chair. Some commenters ridiculed the portly Christie over his weight.

"SON OF A BEACH," screamed London's Daily Mail.

Christie's lieutenant governor, who is running in November to succeed him, said Christie's beach time was "beyond words."

"If I were governor, I sure wouldn't be sitting on the beach if taxpayers didn't have access to state beaches," said Republican Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno. "We need to end the shutdown now. It's hurting small businesses and ordinary New Jerseyans."

Christie ordered the shutdown of nonessential state services over the holiday weekend, including parks, beaches and motor vehicle offices, in a stalemate over his demand that Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield be overhauled so that the state can tap into the nonprofit insurer's surplus to finance drug treatment.

Christie, who is heading into his final six months in office with approval ratings at an abysmal 15 percent, made supporting the \$34.7 billion state budget contingent on the overhaul.

Some mixed emotions on Fourth

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — As many in the United States celebrate the Fourth of July holiday, some minorities have mixed feelings about the revelry of fireworks and parades in an atmosphere of tension on several fronts.

How do you celebrate during what some people of color consider troubling times?

Blacks, Latinos and immigrant rights advocates say the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, recent nonconvictions of police officers charged in the shootings of black men and the stepped-up detentions of immigrants and refugees for deportation have them questioning equality and the promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the United States.

Police shootings

Black filmmaker Chris Phillips, 36, of Ferguson, Mo., said

he likely will attend a family barbecue just like every Fourth of July. But he said he can't help but feel perplexed about honoring the birth of the nation after three officers were recently cleared in police shootings.

Since the 2014 police shooting of unarmed teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, officer shootings — of black males, in particular — have drawn scrutiny, sparking protests nationwide. Few officers ever face charges, and convictions are rare. Despite video, suburban St. Paul, Minn., police Officer Jeronimo Yanez was acquitted last month in the shooting of Philando Castile, 32, a black man. The school cafeteria worker was killed during a traffic stop July 6, almost a year ago.

Immigration

Immigration was a key issue during the presidential campaign for both parties. Since then, President Donald Trump's

administration has stepped up enforcement and instituted a scaled-back partial travel ban that places new limits on entry to the U.S. for citizens of six Muslim-majority countries. The temporary ban requires people to prove a close family relationship in the U.S. or an existing relationship with an entity like a school or business.

"There's a lot not to be proud about when celebrating the Fourth of July," said Janelle Astorga Ramos, a University of New Mexico student and daughter of a Mexican immigrant. "Even though it's a time to celebrate as a country and (for) our unity, it's definitely going to be on the back of our minds."

Isabella Baker, 17, a Latina from Bosque Farms, N.M., said she'll celebrate the holiday based on her own views of patriotism.

"More people are standing up because of the political climate," Baker said. "That makes me proud."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Vandalism at church caught on video

NY NEW YORK — Officials at a historic Catholic church in Manhattan's SoHo neighborhood said it would cost thousands of dollars to repair statues recently damaged by a vandal.

WCBS-TV reported the early-morning vandalism June 26 occurred in a shrine outside St. Anthony of Padua Church and was caught on the church's street surveillance camera.

The video shows a man yanking three statues of children and hurling them at a larger statue of the Virgin Mary. The man then hops a fence onto the sidewalk and casually walks away.

Bill would name post office for Navy SEAL

IL CHILLICOTHE — An Illinois congressman said he plans to introduce legislation to name a post office after a U.S. Navy SEAL from Illinois who was killed in Yemen.

U.S. Rep. Darin LaHood said the post office in Chillicothe would be named for William Owens, who was known as "Ryan." Owens died Jan. 29 while on a mission at an al-Qaida compound.

LaHood told the Journal Star in Peoria that he has the support of Owens' widow and the Illinois congressional delegation. LaHood said Chillicothe residents consider Owens "as their own."

'Terrorism' misspelled on bench at memorial

IN COLUMBIA CITY — The designer of a Vietnam War memorial in northern Indiana said a misspelling on a bench seems to be getting too

much attention.

The memorial was put in place June 27 outside the Whitley County courthouse in Columbia City. The word "terrorism" was misspelled on a nearby bench.

Memorial designer Ty Murphy put tape over an errant "i." He told TV station WANE it's a "pretty small thing to worry about" but phones have been ringing "off the hook."

The mistake will be fixed or the bench will be replaced.

Missing pooch found 200 miles from home

FL BRADENTON — A Pomeranian named Sassy is back with her family five months after she went missing from her Florida backyard — found nearly 200 miles away by a police officer.

The Bradenton Herald reported the 6-year-old dog was let out to relieve herself in Bradenton along with three other dogs owned by the Dawson family. Just 15 minutes later, she was gone despite the yard being fenced in.

Five months later, a Pembroke Pines police officer found Sassy alongside a road. A microchip helped reunite her with the Dawsons. Barbara Dawson said she cried when police called her and told her the dog was found.

Developer fined for cutting protected trees

WA RENTON — A developer clearing a popular plot of woods in Washington is back to work after the city of Renton forced them to stop and to pay fines for cutting two protected trees.

KING-TV reported Friday that more than 1,000 trees have been cut to clear the way for about 90 new homes, but in

the process, developer Henley Homes illegally cut two protected trees.

The protected trees were big leaf maples. The developer paid \$100 per tree. They also will have to plant 12 new trees on the project site.

Crayola seeks help naming new crayon

PA EASTON — Crayola has the blues — five, to be exact.

The iconic crayon maker left it to fans to come up with a name for a new blue crayon replacing the recently retired color dandelion.

After receiving nearly 90,000 submissions, Crayola narrowed it to five names for the crayon based on a pigment discovered in 2009.

The choices are Dreams Come Blue, Bluetiful, Blue Moon Bliss, Reach for the Stars, and Star Spangled Blue.

Crayola said that customers can vote for their choices on its website until Aug. 31. The crayon will make its debut later this year.

Woman told to get rid of 450 exotic birds

CA CASTRO VALLEY — A group of California homeowners has heard enough from the gaggle of exotic birds in their neighbor's backyard.

After repeated complaints, authorities recently told a woman in Castro Valley she has 30 days to reduce her flock of birds from 500 to 50.

The East Bay Times reported the birds were being bred and raised in the backyard and offered for sale on Craigslist. Neighbors have been complaining about the noise, smell and flies attracted to the poop.

Police said that despite the large number, the woman has

been providing the birds with sufficient care and food. Officials inspected the flock under the owner's permission.

Female fin whale found dead on Long Island

NY SOUTHAMPTON — A female fin whale was found dead on a beach on eastern Long Island.

The Atlantic Marine Conservation Society said the fin whale beached about 7:30 a.m. Saturday in Southampton.

There is evidence of shark bites, but no other signs of injury have been found.

The whale appeared to be between 40 and 50 feet in length. Fin whales are common in the waters off New York.

The whale had been seen floating 9 miles south of Shinnecock Inlet on June 27. It appears to be relatively decomposed.

\$7 million in pot plants found in national forest

CO DENVER — Officials in south-central Colorado seized 7,400 marijuana plants worth an estimated \$7 million from the San Isabel National Forest.

Investigators encountered two people at the grow site on Friday, but they fled. No arrests have been made.

The Pueblo County sheriff has said four other marijuana growing operations found on or near the forest since 2012 are believed to be connected to a Mexican cartel.

Detectives are still investigating whether this grow is connected to the others.

A hiker stumbled onto the grow operation northwest of the town of Rye.

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1908 Series a turning point for anthem

Associated Press

CHICAGO — On Tuesday afternoon, the crowd at Wrigley Field will be asked to stand and “gentlemen” reminded to remove their caps for the playing of “The Star Spangled Banner.” Fans who can recite the words as easily as the alphabet will sing or listen to the story of a flag that continued to wave throughout one of the most famous battles in American history.

What they may not know is that Francis Scott Key, apparently better at lyrics than melody, put his description of the battle of Fort McHenry to an old English tune that had a lot less to do with patriotism than it did with booze and women. Or that this year marks the 100th season since the song was played for the first time at a World Series game — an event that helped cement it in the national consciousness and become the national anthem that is now simply assumed to be part of game day in American sports, from Little League to the Super Bowl to medal ceremonies at the Olympics.

“Certainly the outpouring of sentiment, enthusiasm, and patriotism at the 1918 World Series went a long way to making the (song) the national anthem,” said John Thorn, Major League Baseball’s official historian.

On Sept. 5, 1918, newspapers were dominated by news of World War I, including the latest American dead. In Chicago, the

World Series was in town, with the Cubs hosting Babe Ruth and the Boston Red Sox. The Chicago games were played at Comiskey Park, the home of the White Sox, instead of their new home at Wrigley Field — called Weegham Park at the time — because it held more fans. But in a city weary from the war, Game 1 that day attracted fewer than 20,000 fans, the smallest World Series crowd in years.

When they got there, they didn’t make much noise, though that could have had something to do with the 1-0 masterpiece Ruth was pitching for the Red Sox.

“There was no cheering during the contest, nor was there anything like the usual umpire baiting,” reported one Boston newspaper.

Then, in the seventh inning, a band from the Navy training station north of Chicago began to play “The Star Spangled Banner.”

The song had been played before at major league games, from at least 1862 and on opening day in 1897, in Philadelphia, Thorn said. But this time, reported The New York Times, something happened that was “far different from any incident that has ever occurred in the history of baseball.”

Players took off their caps as they faced a flag that fluttered atop a pole in right field as the 12-piece band began to play.

All of them except Red Sox infielder Fred Thomas, who was in the Navy during the series, but was granted furlough so he could

play. When the Wisconsin native heard the music, “he turned toward the flag, kept his hat on and gave a military salute,” said Jim Leeke, author of “From the Dugouts to the Trenches: Baseball During the Great War.”

A few fans began to sing. Then others joined in “and when the final notes came, a great volume of melody rolled across the field,” the Times reported. And when it ended, “onlookers exploded into thunderous applause and rent the air with a cheer that marked the highest point of the day’s enthusiasm.” The Red Sox went on to win the game and the series, part of a Cubs’ title drought that ended up lasting 108 years but was a mere decade old in 1918.

The leader of the Navy band at the time was conductor and composer John Philip Sousa. He was not at the game, but had recently arranged the standardized version of the song that is still played today.

“It was a very important thing for him to put the anthem on a national stage in its new form,” said Mike Bayes, senior chief musician for the Navy Band in Washington.

It wasn’t until 1931 that Congress and President Herbert Hoover officially designated the song as the national anthem. Still, it was clear the song was on its way after that day in Chicago.

“It was a turning point and from then on it was played at all opening days and World Series games,” Leeke said.

12 first-timers among All-Star starters

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Aaron Judge, Carlos Correa and Nolan Arenado led a new generation of All-Stars, among 12 first-time starters elected by fans for the July 11 game at Marlins Park.

“I’ve got to call my family and tell them to book a flight to Miami. They’re going to be excited,” Judge said after rosters were announced Sunday.

The dozen first-time starters are the most since voting was returned to fans in 1970.

Just one player was picked from the World Series champion Cubs: reliever Wade Davis, who wasn’t even with Chicago when it ended a 108-year title drought last fall. The Cubs had seven All-Stars last season, including their entire starting infield.

“Frankly, we haven’t had many guys who were all that

deserving,” Cubs pitcher Jake Arrieta.

Just past the halfway point, the Cubs are 41-41.

“Maybe this is actually a good thing. Right now, rest is not a bad word,” said Chicago’s Joe Maddon, who will manage the NL.

In a sign of the generational change, the All-Stars with the most selections are Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Clayton Kershaw with eight and St. Louis catcher Yadier Molina with seven. Detroit’s Miguel Cabrera, the senior All-Star last year with 11 selections, wasn’t picked for the first time since 2009.

Two of the first-time starters are from the Houston Astros, who have the best record in the major leagues: Correa, the shortstop drafted first overall in 2012, and outfielder George

Springer. Second baseman Jose Altuve was elected to his third start.

“It’s something that you dream about since you are a little kid, since you get drafted, since you sign a professional contract,” Correa said.

Houston pitchers Dallas Keuchel and Lance McCullers Jr. were picked, as well, giving the Astros five All-Stars, tied for the most with the New York Yankees, Cleveland and Washington. Keuchel is hurt and won’t pitch.

Nationals outfielder Bryce Harper, second baseman Daniel Murphy and first baseman Ryan Zimmerman were elected to start, and Max Scherzer and Stephen Strasburg were selected for the pitching staff. Harper led fan voting with 4.63 million ballots.

“Definitely humbled by fans, the way they treat me,” Harper said.

Judge, the 6-foot-7 rookie who leads the major leagues with 27 home runs, topped the AL with 4.49 million votes. He is joined in the outfield by Springer and Los Angeles Angels star Mike Trout, who hopes to return in time from a torn thumb ligament.

Marlins outfielder Giancarlo Stanton was picked as a reserve and plans to defend his Home Run Derby title on July 10. Judge also has been invited, and Los Angeles Dodgers rookie Cody Bellinger, who leads the NL with 24 homers, has said he will participate.

“It is going to be amazing,” Stanton said. “Either way, the week was going to be cool, but this makes it even cooler.”

Nats' stars shine in showdown with surging Cardinals

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The Washington Nationals' two biggest stars took center stage on national television Sunday night.

Bryce Harper homered twice against Carlos Martinez, Max Scherzer struck out 12 over seven scoreless innings and the Nationals beat the St. Louis Cardinals 7-2.

"Martinez is really good," Harper said. "He's an All-Star. He's been really good the past couple of years. Throws hard, does things out there that other guys can't do. I was just trying to go out there and put the bat on the ball and hopefully supply the power a little bit and get lucky and get a pitch you can drive, and we were able to do that pretty early on."

Harper also doubled and had four RBIs to pace Washington, which snapped a three-game skid and had lost five of seven.

"It was a night were I came out early and came out sharp and Harp came out with some huge home runs and really put us ahead," Scherzer said.

The Cardinals had won four straight and six of seven overall, including series victories against the Arizona Diamondbacks and Nationals.

Scherzer (10-5), who grew up in the St. Louis area and pitched at the University of Missouri, allowed two hits and two walks while lowering his major league-leading ERA to 1.94. Scherzer's double-digit strikeout performance was his 10th this season and 59th of his career.

"That's why he's an All-Star," Harper said. "That's why he's Max Scherzer. He's one of the best in the league, if not the best. If there's a guy you want on the mound every fifth day, it's him. He's got his plan, he's got his mentality and

he does things for this club that he needs to do put us up to that next level. That's why he is who he is and he's fun to watch."

Martinez (6-7) entered the game ranked fourth in the NL in ERA but allowed five runs in five innings. The right-hander had allowed five earned runs over his previous four starts combined.

"It was two innings really," Cardinals manager Mike Matheny said. "It was a slider that didn't get in on Harper and then a changeup that he stayed back on."

The Nationals, who scored two runs over the first two games of the series, scored twice in the first inning, with Brian Goodwin leading off with a ground-rule double and scoring on Harper's 19th home run of the season.

Harper made it 4-0 in the third, driving an 0-2 changeup below the strike zone into the Cardinals' bullpen. Daniel Murphy followed with a walk, and Anthony Rendon smacked an RBI double to the left-center wall to make it 5-0.

Wilmer Difo and Goodwin added sacrifice flies in the eighth to push Washington's lead to 7-0.

Tommy Pham's two-run homer in the eighth, his 10th of the season, off reliever Enny Romero got the Cardinals on the scoreboard.

Streak over: Cardinals catcher Yadier Molina's 16-game hit streak, which tied his career long, came to an end with an 0-for-4 performance.

Transactions: The Cardinals announced two trades Sunday, sending international cap space to the Red Sox for minor league infielders Stanley Espinal and Imeldo Diaz and to the Blue Jays for minor league outfielder Lane Thomas.

Roundup

Arrieta, Happ help lead Cubs past Reds

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Jake Arrieta pitched one-hit ball for seven innings without allowing a stolen base, and Ian Happ homered twice in the ballpark where he played as a college star, leading Chicago past Cincinnati 6-2 on Sunday.

Arrieta (8-6) was coming off a subpar performance that created friction and a surprise move. The Nationals stole seven bases off Arrieta during their 6-1 win on Tuesday, and catcher Miguel Montero complained afterward about the pitcher's move to the plate with runners on base. Montero was cut loose the following day.

Back in the ballpark where he threw a no-hitter last season, Arrieta was back in form, allowing only Joey Votto's first-inning single and a pair of walks — the Reds were never in position to try to steal.

Happ hit a two-run homer and a solo shot off Tim Adleman (5-5), and added an RBI single.

Anthony Rizzo also had a solo homer, and Javier Baez doubled home a run.

Astros 8, Yankees 1: Yuli Gurriel finished a triple shy of the cycle, Carlos Correa tied a career-high with four hits and had three RBIs, and host Houston handed New York its 14th loss in 19 games.

Marwin Gonzalez hit a two-run homer in a three-run second off Luis Severino (5-4) as the Astros improved the best record in the major leagues to 56-27.

Indians 11, Tigers 8: Jose Ramirez homered twice, and visiting Cleveland snapped Justin Verlander's decade-long streak of games with at least one strikeout, chasing the Detroit star in the fourth inning.

Verlander (5-5) allowed seven runs and nine hits with three walks in 3¹/₃ innings.

Diamondbacks 4, Rockies 3: At Phoenix, Ketel Marte lined a run-scoring single in the ninth inning and Arizona overcame the first earned run allowed by

Fernando Rodney in 21 games.

Padres 5, Dodgers 3: Jhoulys Chacin pitched five scoreless innings, Manuel Margot homered and drove in two runs, and host San Diego got a rare victory over Los Angeles.

Braves 4, Athletics 3 (12): Kurt Suzuki led off the 12th inning with his second home run of the game, helping visiting Atlanta complete a three-game sweep.

Phillies 7, Mets 1: Nick Pivetta allowed one hit in seven impressive innings for his second major league win, and Philadelphia stopped host New York's four-game winning streak.

Orioles 7, Rays 1: Manny Machado hit a three-run homer, Kevin Gausman pitched seven innings of two-hit ball and Baltimore avoided a three-game sweep in their final home game until July 14.

Red Sox 15, Blue Jays 1: Mookie Betts hit two home runs and matched a career-high with eight RBIs to help visiting Boston rout Toronto.

Giants 5, Pirates 3: At Pittsburgh, Brandon Belt started San Francisco's comeback with an RBI single in a three-run seventh inning, then added a two-run homer in the eighth as the Giants got their season-high sixth straight win.

Royals 6, Twins 2: Alcides Escobar had two hits and two RBIs and Scott Alexander picked up his first major league victory for host Kansas City.

Marlins 10, Brewers 3: Marcell Ozuna hit two home runs — the second moments after having his bat thrown out for having too much pine tar on it — and visiting Miami beat Milwaukee.

White Sox 6, Rangers 5: Yolmer Sanchez hit a two-run home run with two outs in the eighth to rally host Chicago past Texas.

Mariners 5, Angels 3: Robinson Cano hit a three-run homer in the eighth inning and James Paxton retired the first 16 hitters he faced in visiting Seattle's win over Los Angeles.

V. Williams among Wimbledon winners

BY CHRIS LEHOURITES
Associated Press

LONDON — Venus Williams won her first tennis match since being sued by the estate of a Florida man who died after a car crash police say she caused.

The 10th-seeded Williams beat Elise Mertens 7-6 (7), 6-4 Monday in the first round at Wimbledon, a tournament the American has won five times.

Last week, Williams was sued by the estate of a Florida man who died 13 days after a car crash. The lawsuit came one day after Palm Beach Gardens police released a report saying Williams caused the June 9 crash.

“There are really no words to describe, like, how devastating and ... yeah. I’m completely speechless,” Williams said before tearing up.

On No. 1 Court, Williams

had to wait through a 33-minute rain delay to win her opening match. She had two match points before the rain came. Play was stopped with Williams leading 5-3, 40-40 in the second set.

When play resumed, Mertens held serve to make it 5-4, but Williams served out the match.

Defending champion Andy Murray also won his opening match, beating Alexander Bublik 6-1, 6-4, 6-2.

Murray entered the tournament after pulling out of a pair of exhibition matches because of a sore hip.

“I was a bit nervous this morning,” Murray said. “I hadn’t been able to do as much as I would have liked in the buildup.”

Petra Kvitova, a two-time Wimbledon champion who was injured in a knife attack at her home in December, then beat

Johanna Larsson of Sweden 6-3, 6-4 on Centre Court while Rafael Nadal defeated John Millman of Australia 6-1, 6-3, 6-2.

Second-seeded Simona Halep and No. 17 Madison Keys also won. Halep, who lost in the French Open final, beat Marina Erakovic of New Zealand 6-4, 6-1. Keys defeated Nao Hibino of Japan 6-4, 6-2.

Keys, who is right-handed, was playing for the first time since having a second surgery on her left wrist.

“It’s obviously not perfect,” Keys said. “I haven’t been able to do the repetitions that ideally I would have wanted to do, but it feels fine. Doesn’t hurt anymore. That’s really all I care about.”

In the men’s draw, Nick Kyrgios retired from his first-round match after losing the first two sets.

The 20th-seeded Australian was trailing Pierre-Hugues Herbert of France 6-3, 6-4 when he called for a trainer to work on his left hip. He then decided to stop the match.

Kyrgios also retired with an injury from his first-round match at Queen’s, a Wimbledon warm-up tournament.

“I kind of knew I was in trouble. I have been feeling my hip ever since I fell over at Queen’s. Never got it right,” Kyrgios said. “I was doing everything I could to help it, but just not enough time.”

Two-time semifinalist Jo-Wilfried Tsonga also reached the second round. The 12th-seeded Frenchman beat Cameron Norrie of Britain 6-3, 6-2, 6-2.

Fifth-seeded Maric Cilic, ninth-seeded Kei Nishikori and 24th-seeded Sam Querrey also advanced.

Nuggets get Millsap; Lowry staying put

Associated Press

The Denver Nuggets have been chasing starry veterans the last two years, determined to add experience and firepower to a promising young core.

They finally landed a big one Sunday, agreeing to terms with four-time All-Star Paul Millsap on a three-year deal worth \$90 million, a person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the contract cannot be signed until Thursday.

The former Atlanta forward was one of the strongest free agents remaining on the board two days into the new business year, not counting Warriors superstar Kevin Durant, who is expected to re-sign with Golden State. The Nuggets engaged with Millsap early in the process, outlasting several other teams, including the Phoenix Suns and Atlanta Hawks, whose new GM Travis Schlenk acknowledged could get outbid

for the 32-year-old’s services before free agency started.

Millsap gives the young Nuggets a proven veteran who should fit perfectly with coach Michael Malone and budding star Nikola Jokic. Millsap averaged a career-high 18.1 points last season to go with 7.7 rebounds and 3.1 assists. He is versatile offensively and is one of the NBA’s most underrated defenders.

Millsap will slide in at power forward next to Jokic, the 6-foot-10 Serb who averaged 16.7 points, 9.8 rebounds and 4.9 assists last season. The Nuggets also have dynamic young wings Jamal Murray and Gary Harris.

Millsap was a second-round draft pick of the Utah Jazz in 2006. He spent his first seven seasons with the Jazz, developing into a rugged, two-way player, then signed with the Hawks in 2013. He has career averages of 14.2 points and 7.5 rebounds and made \$20 million last season.

Lowry announces he’s staying with Toronto

Kyle Lowry is staying home, saying he wants to finish what he started in Toronto.

Lowry announced on The Players’ Tribune site Sunday that he will re-sign with the Raptors, adding that it was an easy decision. Lowry will sign a three-year deal worth \$100 million, according to a person with knowledge of the negotiations who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because terms were not revealed publicly.

The three-time All-Star averaged 22.4 points and 7.0 assists last season for the Raptors, who also struck a deal to retain forward Serge Ibaka earlier Sunday.

“If you’re looking for people to believe in — choose the people who believed in you first,” Lowry wrote. “And if you start something? Man, you finish it.”

So Toronto’s star-powered backcourt is now set for at

least the next three years, after shooting guard DeMar DeRozan got a five-year deal worth \$139 million last summer.

Cavs re-sign Korver for 3 years, \$22M

After finally getting a taste of the NBA Finals with Cleveland, Kyle Korver had no interest in going anywhere else.

Korver reached agreement with the Cavaliers on Sunday on a three-year deal worth \$22 million, a person with knowledge of the agreement told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because a contract cannot be signed until the moratorium ends on Thursday.

Korver joined the Cavs midway through last season in a trade from Atlanta. The 36-year-old is one of the league’s best outside shooters and made it clear he wanted to stay with Cleveland after his first trip to the finals in his 14th season in the league.