

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Sources: US, Russia reach deal on Syria

Associated Press

HAMBURG, Germany — The United States and Russia have reached agreement on a cease-fire in southwest Syria, three U.S. officials said Friday as President Donald Trump held his first meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The deal marks a new level of involvement for the U.S. in trying to resolve Syria's civil war. Although details about the agreement and how it will be implemented weren't immediately available, the cease-fire is set to take effect Sunday at noon Damascus time, said the officials, who weren't authorized to discuss the cease-fire publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Jordan and Israel also are part of the agreement, one of the officials said. The two U.S. allies both share a border with the southern part of Syria and have been concerned about violence from Syria's civil war spilling over the border.

The deal is separate from "de-escalation zones" that were to be created under a deal brokered by Russia, Turkey and Iran earlier this year. The U.S. was not a part of that deal. Follow-up talks this week in Astana, Kazakhstan, to finalize a cease-fire in those zones failed to reach agreement.

Previous cease-fires in Syria have collapsed or failed to reduce violence for long, and it was unclear whether this deal would be any better.

Earlier in the week, Syria's military had said it was halting combat operations in the south of Syria for four days, in advance of a new round of Russia-sponsored talks in Astana. That move covered southern provinces of Daraa, Quneitra and Sweida. Syria's government briefly extended that unilateral cease-fire, which is now set to expire Saturday — a day before the U.S. and Russian deal would take effect.

The new agreement to be announced Friday will be open-ended, one U.S. official said, describing it as part of broader U.S. discussions with Russia on trying to lower violence in the war-ravaged country. Officials said the U.S. and Russia were still working out the details as Trump and Putin concluded their more than two-hour meeting on Friday.

Implications for Syria aside, the deal marks the biggest diplomatic achievement for the U.S. and Russia since Trump took office. Trump's administration has approached the notoriously strained relationship by trying to identify a few limited issues on which the countries could

make progress, thereby building trust for a broader repair of ties.

For years, the U.S. and Russia have been backing opposing sides in Syria's war, with Moscow supporting Syrian President Bashar Assad and Washington supporting rebels who have been fighting Assad. Both the U.S. and Russia oppose the Islamic State group in Syria.

The U.S. has been resistant to letting Iran gain influence in Syria — a concern shared by Israel and Jordan, neither of which wants Iranian-aligned troops amassing near their territories. A U.S.-brokered deal could help the Trump administration retain more of a say over who fills the power vacuum left behind as the Islamic State is routed from additional territory in Syria.

During their meeting, Trump raised American concerns about Moscow's meddling in the 2016 presidential election, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said. He said Putin denied being involved.

Trump's decision to confront Putin directly over election interference fulfilled ardent demands by U.S. lawmakers of both parties that the president not shy away from the issue in his highly anticipated meeting with Putin.

ISIS pushes back Iraqi forces in Mosul

Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq — A major Islamic State counterattack Friday along the northern edge of Mosul's Old City has pushed Iraqi army forces back some 82 yards and is threatening recent gains in other Old City fronts, an Iraqi military officer said.

The officer said the attack was launched just after noon Friday and estimated it was carried out by 50 to 100 ISIS fighters. A doctor at a medic station said he received more than a dozen wounded Iraqi soldiers.

Both men spoke on condition of anonymity.

Iraqi security forces have re-

taken almost all of Mosul from ISIS militants who overran it in 2014.

In late June, ISIS counterattacks on the western edge of Mosul in neighborhoods retaken months earlier stalled the push by Iraqi forces to go deeper into the Old City as they forced a re-allocation of Iraqi ground forces, coalition surveillance and air support.

Unlike the Friday attack, the late June counterattack was launched from outside Mosul, most likely from Tal Afar, an ISIS-held town some 37 miles west of Mosul.

The counterattacks underscore the extremist group's

resilience in Iraq, despite significant territorial losses and months of heavy fighting with Iraqi forces backed by U.S. air power.

Also on Friday, the U.N.'s migration agency suspended operations in two camps — the Qayara air strip emergency site and the Haj Ali camp — near Mosul hosting nearly 80,000 displaced Iraqis due to sporadic violence and exchange of gunfire.

Agency spokesman Joel Millman said the security situation prevented six water-tanker trucks from entering the Haj Ali camp, where temperatures have soared in recent days.

Humanitarian groups have repeatedly suspended operations in and around Mosul due to security concerns since the fight to retake the city from ISIS began in October.

In April, the United Nations suspended operations in the same area due to security threats along the road south of Mosul's western half.

In February the U.N. suspended operations in eastern Mosul weeks after the area was declared fully liberated as ISIS attacks continued to inflict heavy civilian casualties.

In both instances the U.N. resumed operations within days.

US death highlights military's evolving role in Afghanistan

The Washington Post

The death of a 19-year-old U.S. soldier in southern Afghanistan on Monday highlights the U.S. military's evolving role in the war there under President Donald Trump's administration, after years of President Barack Obama restricting the use of conventional combat troops on the battlefield.

Army Pfc. Hansen B. Kirkpatrick, a mortarman with the 1st Armored Division's 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, was killed by indirect fire while outside his base on a partnered operation with Afghan troops, said Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman. The attack, presumably by Taliban fighters, occurred in Helmand province's Nawa district, and also caused injuries to two other U.S. soldiers who are expected to survive, Davis added.

Kirkpatrick's death is the fourth fatality this year of a conventional U.S. soldier in an operation outside a base. Obama relied nearly exclusively on special operations troops to advise Afghan troops outside bases in Afghanistan after tens of thousands of U.S. troops were withdrawn in 2014, but U.S. military officials have said that is unsustainable and that conventional forces are needed to carry out more missions.

Kirkpatrick, of Wasilla, Alaska, was described by his executive officer, Maj. James C. Bithorn, in a statement as a "caring, disciplined, and intelligent young soldier" who daily lived by his unit's motto: "Deeds Not Words." He had been in the unit about a year, Bithorn said.

"At a time when we remember the patriots who founded our nation in freedom, we are saddened by the loss of one of

our comrades who was here, protecting our freedom at home," said Army Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan. "We will keep his family in our thoughts and prayers as we reflect on the sacrifice he and others have made to secure our freedoms and help make Afghanistan a better place."

The death comes as Defense Secretary Jim Mattis prepares a strategy in Afghanistan that is expected to call for the U.S. military to return to a war footing with the Taliban and to lift Obama-era restrictions that limited the mobility of U.S. military advisers on the battlefield. The Pentagon could add 3,000 to 5,000 U.S. troops to the 8,400 currently deployed and could allow them to be closer to combat operations.

In Helmand province, considered the birthplace of the Taliban and the center of Afghanistan's opium trade, nearly all U.S. forces were withdrawn in fall 2014 after years of fierce fighting led by U.S. Marines. The rapid deterioration of security in Helmand prompted U.S. commanders in February 2015 to rush a small, "expeditionary advising package" including U.S. troops to stop the downward spiral, and it has expanded since to include hundreds of conventional U.S. soldiers and Marines.

The previous U.S. military fatalities in Afghanistan this year included three conventional U.S. soldiers — Sgt. Eric M. Houck, 25; Sgt. William M. Bays, 29; and Cpl. Dillon C. Baldrige, 22 — who were members of the 101st Airborne Division. They were ambushed June 10 by an Afghan soldier they were advising in eastern Afghanistan's Nangahar district.

Sen. Warren: Trump creating 'diplomatic vacuum' in war zone

The Washington Post

Back from her first overseas trip to visit U.S. military personnel, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., warned that the Trump administration is creating a "diplomatic vacuum" in Afghanistan by leaving key State Department posts unfilled at a time when a "whole-of-government strategy" is needed to end the 16-year-old conflict.

The Trump administration has been working for several months on a new plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan, but internal debates among the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department have delayed this even as militants continue to mount attacks in both countries. U.S. military leaders have asked to deploy 3,000 to 4,000 more troops to Afghanistan, a request that probably will be fulfilled by President Donald Trump.

Warren traveled this week to Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates as part of a bipartisan congressional delegation, making her overseas debut as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Back in her Cambridge, Mass., living room on Thursday just 16 hours after returning home, Warren made clear, "I'm not there on a troop increase."

"No one on the ground believes there is a military-only solution in Afghanistan. No one," she said. "From the heads of state to the young man who walked us from one building to another in the embassy compound. No one — people at the forward operating base to anyone we stopped."

"The Trump administration needs to define what winning in Afghanistan is and how we get to that," the senator added. "They owe it to the deployed forces to provide the American people with a comprehensive,

whole-of-government strategy that has not only a military angle, but also an economic and diplomatic plan."

Trump has yet to nominate a U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan or neighboring Pakistan, two countries destabilized for years by terrorist groups that freely move across a porous border. Senior State Department positions entrusted with overseeing U.S. policy for Afghanistan and Pakistan remain vacant, and the acting director of the Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan and her deputy stepped down last month as the administration is poised to close the stand-alone office, launched by veteran diplomat Richard Holbrooke.

Warren said she is perplexed by the administration's decisions. "They're not only talking about cutting up and down at the State Department, but also leaving major diplomatic posts unfilled. That's dangerous," she said.

One of several Democratic senators talked about as a potential 2020 presidential candidate, Warren has long been a target of Trump, who has been derided for nicknaming her "Pocahontas" — a reference to her claim of being part Native American, which was questioned during her 2012 Senate campaign.

The overseas trip marked the most visible demonstration of Warren's work on defense matters — an area she is less known for after years of focusing on the nation's economic recovery and financial regulatory reform.

Warren said she "committed to do my homework" when she joined the Senate Armed Services Committee, hiring policy experts for her staff and seeking out "extra reading and extra policy briefings from our government" and outside experts.

Anti-ISIS carrier ops unfold in hours or months

BY CHRIS CHURCH
AND CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

ABOARD USS GEORGE H.W. Bush — On the flight deck, a golden sunrise cast its rays across a small group of sailors in colored jerseys preparing for the day's operations. Those in brown inspected jets, red shirts loaded ordnance onto wings, and the ones in blue and yellow directed aircraft.

This peaceful scene somewhere in the Persian Gulf aboard a 100,000-ton war machine soon would become frenetic, with several steam catapults launching aircraft from a standstill to 150 mph in mere seconds.

Since shortly after the Norfolk, Va.-based carrier's latest deployment began in January, F/A-18C Hornet pilots have done a "good mixture" of both preplanned and "dynamic" airstrikes against Islamic State targets from both the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Butters, a fighter pilot who for security reasons gave only his call sign. The pilots take part in roughly 20 flight operations daily.

Preplanned airstrikes are the culmination of activities that vary in length and complexity, spanning hours, days or even months, and involving teams on the ship and hundreds of miles away. Here's a look at how an airstrike typically evolves from a single report of enemy activity to a sortie launched from the Bush.

Days before a strike

Most coalition strikes are "dynamic," developing rapidly in response to conditions on the ground, but many others are deliberately planned over long time periods at operation centers in Iraq and Qatar hundreds of miles away.

At one such strike cell in a dimly lit airport terminal in the Kurdish region's capital of Irbil in northern Iraq, coalition analysts and planners sat at rows of workstations.

The experts here, and at similar centers in Baghdad and al-Udeid in Qatar, vet potential targets against legal authorities, rules of engagement and other requirements. They identify targets and then select weapons and timing to minimize unintended damage.

"It takes more effort, work and analysis to get to a point where we can achieve positive identification (of targets)," said Col. Patrick Sutherland, chief of intelligence at the 609th Air Operations Center in al-Udeid.

Planned targets are often deeper in enemy territory than the targets of dynamic strikes, said Army Brig. Gen. John B. Richardson, a former deputy commander in Irbil.

Once developed, a strike package goes to a senior target engagement authority

for approval, which may involve further vetting and legal review. Dynamic strikes — generally close air support for ground troops engaged with the enemy — follow the same general process, officials said, but may be approved by subordinate commanders closer to the front lines.

In Iraq, all strikes must be approved by the government, said Brig. Gen. Rick Uribe, the coalition's deputy commanding general in Baghdad.

24 hours before launch

After receiving authorization, targets are prioritized on the Air Tasking Order — a detailed document notifying all components of all capabilities, missions and air sorties for a 24-hour period. The carrier's aircrews are notified of their missions the afternoon before the strike.

Within the air wing, the mission commander — normally a pilot or weapons system officer — determines how the mission will look, but everyone involved has a voice in the planning, Butters said.

Three hours before launch

Shortly before each mission, crewmembers gather for a preflight briefing "focused on all aspects of the flight, itself, breaking them into pieces we can tackle and execute during each portion of the flight," Butters said.

Aboard the ship, aircrew personnel gathered in one of several squadron ready rooms, a sort of lounge decked out with big, leather chairs. Crewmembers drank coffee, chatted and watched ongoing carrier launches and landings on wall-mounted monitors.

Near the front of the room, Butters and two other aircrew members sat down to begin their preflight brief for a defensive flight around the carrier. They discussed the launch, transit to their patrol area, aerial refueling, the mission, the return and a safe ship landing.

Launch

With flight operations in full swing, aircraft lined up on the Bush's deck waiting their turn to shoot off the carrier. Personnel crowded the flight deck as the jets moved into position, their engines giving off face-melting heat.

Depending on the mission, the warplanes can be airborne anywhere between one and seven hours. While loitering over the mission area, the aircrew typically remain in contact with airspace management elements on the ground, Butters said. Ground elements and strike cells pass details of dynamic strike requests — locations, types of ordnance and how to execute them. It helps that ISIS has very limited anti-aircraft capabilities that pose little threat to U.S. warplanes.

"If things are slow, we'll make comments about how something went previously in a flight or talk about light subjects, but typically it's pretty focused on what we are doing," Butters said.

Even though ISIS doesn't possess a significant anti-aircraft capability, it's not like there aren't any threats to look out for up there. Russia last month threatened to shoot down foreign aircraft in its area of operation in Syria after an F/A-18E Super Hornet from the Bush shot down a Syrian ground attack jet.

Post-strike

After a strike, a battle damage assessment is completed to ensure it achieved its desired physical effects against its target.

"There's also more (discussion of) how successful was a particular strike as it relates to the larger effect on the enemy," Sutherland said. As the coalition works to destroy ISIS in its final urban stronghold in Mosul, the civilian population in tightly packed neighborhoods have made it harder to limit unwanted damage and casualties. The coalition will face similar challenges in Raqqa, the terrorist group's capital.

"There are still ways we can do it," said Col. William Denham, combat plans division chief for the 609th Air Operations Center. "It's more about adjusting which weapons you use and ensuring ... we know exactly what we are hitting before we hit it."

As of May, the coalition estimated that in more than 46,500 engagements since August 2014, at least 603 civilians had been killed unintentionally. Airwars, an independent monitor tracking civilian deaths from coalition airstrikes in Iraq, Syria and Libya, estimates the civilian casualties through the end of June to be between 4,300 and 6,700.

Despite the challenges on the ground, "the support from the air is going to continue," Denham said.

End of mission

After a full day of flying, pilots still face the challenge of landing on the carrier, which involves significant risk.

"Especially the landing at night after a long mission," Butters said. "It's something we've trained very extensively for ... but it's not without challenges, for sure."

At the end of a long day, it was nearly pitch black on the flight deck. Only a few lights assisting navigation and launch-and-recovery operations were allowed.

As a fighter jet slammed to the deck and its tailhook connected to one of the arresting cables spread across it, the plane came to an abrupt stop, its afterburners blasting bright flames. Soon the roar of the jets turned to a low growl and the fire faded into the flattop's busy darkness.

23 killed in attack at Sinai checkpoint

Associated Press

EL-ARISH, Egypt — Islamic militants unleashed a suicide car bomb and heavy gunfire on an Egyptian military checkpoint in northeastern Sinai Peninsula on Friday, killing 23 troops and wounding 33, officials said.

Among those killed in the attack — the deadliest on the country's military this year — were five officers, including a high-ranking special forces colonel, Ahmed el-Mansi, according to security officials. The assault started when a suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle into a checkpoint at a military compound in the village of el-Barth, southwest of the border town of Rafah, followed by heavy gunfire from dozens of masked militants on foot, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

As the attack unfolded, ambulance sirens were heard from a

distance rushing to the site. The officials initially put the death toll at 10 but later said that more bodies were pulled from under the rubble of a nearby building, used as a rest house for troops, that was destroyed in the attack.

The militants arrived at the site of the checkpoint — located in a remote, desert area — in some 24 Land Cruiser SUVs and opened fire on the soldiers with machine guns for nearly half an hour, the officials said. The troop presence at the compound is estimated to have numbered about 60 soldiers.

After the attack, the militants looted the checkpoint, taking away weapons and ammunition before fleeing the scene, the officials added. It was unclear if they also took armored vehicles.

The next army compound is located an hour's drive away, leaving the targeted site with no support except for local, armed tribesmen from the Tarabeen

who have their own small checkpoints nearby.

The wider area of the attack is considered to be an Islamic State stronghold and was the site of fierce battles in the spring between the tribesmen and militants. The officials told The Associated Press that some senior officers have voiced opposition to the location of the checkpoint, arguing that it provides no real cover.

Earlier, Egyptian army spokesman Tamer el-Rifai confirmed the attack on his official Facebook page, saying that 26 army personnel were killed or wounded in Friday's attack. He said the army foiled attacks targeting a number of other checkpoints in the Rafah area and that 40 militants were killed. Witnesses said they saw Apache helicopters carrying out airstrikes across Rafah after the attack. On his page, al-Rifai posted photographs of allegedly slain militants dressed in military uniforms.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. However, Egypt has been battling a stepped-up insurgency in northern Sinai in recent years, mainly by militants from an ISIS affiliate.

Though the ISIS affiliate has not managed to seize territory in Sinai, it has a strong presence in the western and southern areas of Rafah in the peninsula, on the outskirts of the town of Sheikh Zuweid and inside the residential area of Sinai's largest city, el-Arish.

Over the past months, ISIS has focused its attacks on Egypt's Christian minority and carried out at least four deadly attacks that killed dozens, prompting army chief-turned-President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi to declare a state of emergency in the country. The restive northern Sinai has been under a state of emergency since October 2014 after Islamic militants killed more than 30 soldiers in a single attack.

McConnell says he will rework health care bill

Associated Press

GLASGOW, Ky. — Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell says he plans to produce a fresh bill scuttling and replacing much of President Barack Obama's health care law in about a week. But he's also acknowledging a Plan B if that effort continues to flounder.

"If my side is unable to agree on an adequate replacement, then some kind of action with regard to the private health insurance market must occur," McConnell, R-Ky., said Thursday. It was one of his most explicit concessions that a top priority for President Donald Trump and the entire GOP, erasing much of Obama's landmark 2010 statute, might fall short.

He provided no details during remarks he made at a Rotary Club lunch in a deep-red, conservative, rural area of

southern Kentucky.

Previously, other Republicans have said that if their broad drive to dismantle much of Obama's law struggled, a smaller bill with quick help for insurers and consumers might be needed. They've said it could include provisions continuing federal payments to insurers that help them contain costs for some low earners and inducements to keep healthy people buying policies — a step that helps curb premiums.

McConnell's comments suggested that to show progress on health care, Republicans controlling the White House and Congress might have to negotiate with Democrats. While the current, wide-ranging GOP health care bill has procedural protections against a Democratic Senate filibuster, a subsequent, narrower measure wouldn't and would take 60 votes to pass.

Judge leaves travel ban in place

Associated Press

HONOLULU — A federal judge in Hawaii on Thursday left Trump administration rules in place for a travel ban on citizens from six majority-Muslim countries.

U.S. District Court Judge Derrick Watson denied an emergency motion filed by Hawaii asking him to clarify what the U.S. Supreme Court meant by a "bona fide" relationship in its June ruling.

The Supreme Court ruled the administration could mostly enforce its travel ban but those "with a credible claim of a bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States" could enter.

Watson says the relationship question would be better posed to the Supreme Court, not him.

Hawaii Attorney General Doug Chin objected to the administration's omission of grandparents, aunts and uncles from its list of people meet-

ing the definition of a close relationship.

The Trump administration has said the exemption would apply to citizens of the six countries with a parent, spouse, child, adult son or daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law or sibling already in the U.S.

The U.S. Department of Justice said in an emailed statement that it was pleased with the decision.

The Hawaii Attorney General's Office noted after the ruling that the district court did not address the substance of either party's arguments and instead focused on the procedural question about which court is the appropriate forum to decide the issue.

In March, Watson blocked the ban on travelers from Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Libya, Iran and Yemen in response to a lawsuit by the state of Hawaii that argued the policy discriminates against Muslims.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Lost pot-filled bag leads to 3 arrests

LA KENNER — Authorities in Louisiana arrested three people after a woman tried to claim a suitcase filled with marijuana in an airport's lost-and-found section.

NOLA.com/The Times-Picayune reported deputies found about 10 pounds of marijuana in the suitcase at Louis Armstrong International Airport on June 29. The next day, Safiya Zina, 38, attempted to claim the suitcase.

Zina told the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's deputies she was paid \$1,000 to take the bag from California to New Orleans and to exchange it for money. Investigators allowed the exchange to take place and arrested Michael Lewis, 27, along with Sarah Abd-Elaziz, 29. Zina was charged with possession of marijuana with the intent to distribute. Lewis and Abd-Elaziz were charged with conspiracy to possess or distribute drugs.

WWII-era bomb ends up being time capsule

NY NEW YORK — Workers at a Manhattan construction site dug up what appeared to be an unexploded World War II-era bomb, but turned out to be a time capsule from a nightclub that helped launch Madonna's career.

Police determined quickly that the device was not dangerous after crews found it Wednesday in the Flatiron section of Manhattan. It turns out the capsule was buried in 1985 by clubgoers and bartenders from Danceteria. Former owner John Argento told the New York Daily News he bought the capsule for \$200 at an Army Navy store on Canal Street. He said it was "an excuse to throw a party."

Madonna was a regular at the club in the early 1980s.

'Santa Claus' arrested after 50-mile chase

ME CLINTON — This Santa made the naughty list.

Maine State Police said they arrested the driver of a stolen vehicle who identified himself as Santa Claus following a nearly 50-mile chase Tuesday.

Police said the chase started in Clinton after they tried to pull the driver over for a traffic violation. The chase reached 112 mph before spike strips were deployed in Newburgh, about 30 miles away.

Christos Kassaras, 54, of Goffstown, N.H., drove on burst tires another 15 miles before troopers caught and arrested him.

Kassaras was jailed on stolen-vehicle and criminal-speed charges.

Bear breaks into home as owner sleeps

CO COLORADO SPRINGS — A bear that broke in to a Colorado home and tore through the place looking for food as the owner slept has been killed by wildlife officers.

The Colorado Springs Gazette reported the bear spent six hours trashing the kitchen. Surveillance video shows the bear opening the refrigerator door with ease.

An officer shot the animal after it left the property Tuesday and then charged back toward it.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife officials said they believe it's the same bear that ate ice cream and M&Ms from a home in June.

They also believe it's the bear that trapped a woman inside her vehicle a few days later while it prowled around her garage.

Cops let noise slide, then go on water slide

NC ASHEVILLE — Two North Carolina police officers who investigated a noise complaint decided to let it slide — and then they slid down the street along with neighbors who were enjoying a makeshift water slide.

The Asheville officers got national media attention after their trips down the slippery slide were captured on video and shared by the department.

Police spokeswoman Christina Hallingse said the officers were responding to a noise complaint Sunday morning when they arrived at the holiday block party. Hallingse said the noise of children playing turned out to be at an acceptable level, so the officers issued no citations. They also determined the slide laid out along the street allowed cars to pass, so they joined in.

Man who released bedbugs charged

ME AUGUSTA — Authorities said a man who threw a cup of bedbugs onto a counter at the municipal office building in Augusta, Maine, has been charged with two misdemeanors.

The city manager said the building had to be sprayed for bedbugs. About 100 of them scattered off on June 2 and the facility had to be closed for the day.

The Kennebec Journal reported Charles Manning, 74, was charged with assault and obstruction of government administration. Authorities said he had complained to the code enforcement office about bedbugs at his former apartment and left. He returned and let the bugs loose after he was told he didn't qualify for assistance for a new apartment.

Utility blames snake for causing outage

SC GREENVILLE — Utility officials said a snake caused a power outage that left more than 4,000 customers without electricity in South Carolina.

Duke Energy spokesman Ryan Mosier told local media outlets it was a snake that left Greenville County residents in the dark around 5 a.m. Wednesday.

It took about 90 minutes to completely restore service.

Mosier said the utility constantly works to improve barriers to prevent snakes, squirrels and birds from causing outages. But he said the small animals remain a big reason for power outages.

Police help shelter by fostering seized dogs

IN CROWN POINT — Police officers in northwest Indiana are helping take care of seized dogs because the county animal shelter is overwhelmed.

Lake County police told The (Northwest Indiana) Times that they discovered almost 70 maltreated dogs last month in a poorly ventilated garage.

Assistant Lake County police chief and department spokesman Dan Murchek said the sheriff is allowing officers to take dogs home to relieve overcrowding in the Lake County Sheriff's Animal Adoption and Control Center.

Murchek said the foster arrangement of the seized animals is being kept within the department and isn't open to the public.

The department is keeping custody of the dogs until the Lake Superior Court issues a ruling on the case.

From wire reports

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Manager Francona to miss All-Star game

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Indians manager Terry Francona underwent a procedure to correct an irregular heartbeat that sidelined him for a few games and will keep him away from the All-Star Game next week.

Francona, 58, who had been experiencing dizziness, fatigue and a rapid heart rate over the last month, had a cardiac ablation performed on Thursday at the Cleveland Clinic.

Francona has been hospitalized and undergoing tests since Tuesday, when he was admitted after doctors detected an arrhythmia when reading a monitor the manager has been wearing for several weeks.

The Indians said Friday that Francona is resting comfortably in the hospital and is expected to be discharged in a “day or two.”

His health will prevent him from managing the American League squad in Miami next week. Indians bench coach Brad Mills,

who has been filling in while Francona has been ill, will likely manage the AL team, which includes five Cleveland players.

The Indians said in a statement that Francona is expected to return to his managing duties following the break. The team begins the unofficial second half of the season on July 14 in Oakland to start a six-game trip.

Francona had been forced to leave two games last month when he became lightheaded during games. He underwent tests following both episodes and team president Chris Antonetti said earlier this week that doctors had ruled out any major health issues.

Francona also missed a game in Washington last August after he experienced chest pains.

During a series last weekend in Detroit, Francona wasn't feeling well again and doctors decided to admit him to the Cleveland Clinic on July 4 after seeing an abnormality on his heart readings.

In his fifth season with Cleveland, Francona is hugely popular with his players and Indians fans, who affectionately refer to him as “Tito,” his father's name.

His absence was noticeable in recent days as players worried about his health and wondered when he would be back.

“We think about him all the time,” pitcher Josh Tomlin said after Thursday night's win over San Diego. “I bet he's not too happy in the hospital on a daily basis. We need him at the helm here. There's no doubt about it. He's big part of our success. He knows the game. He knows the players really well. His presence alone has that sense of calm in the dugout.

“Obviously, we want his health to be fine first before he comes back but we're itching to get him back,” Tomlin said.

Francona joined the Indians in 2013 after spending one year as a TV commentator following a messy departure in Boston, where he took the Red Sox to two World Series titles in eight seasons.

Twins' 3B Sano has sights set on playoffs

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Given the green light to let his bat fly with a 3-0 count in the third inning of a game last month, Miguel Sano drove an inside fastball into the second deck above right-center field.

The announced estimate of 414 feet didn't quite do that home run justice. Going that deep with an opposite-field swing was a feat of physical prowess that few players other than Minnesota's massive third baseman could pull off.

“Nothing is difficult in life if you're positive,” Sano said. “In your mind, you can do whatever you want. When you stay positive, everything is good.”

Attitude is helpful. Fortitude, too.

“He's someone at the plate you're very mindful of every time he comes there, because you know something can happen,” said Chicago White Sox manager Rick Renteria, whose team was the witness to that homer the Twins were still talking about in the clubhouse the next morning.

Sano had a greater goal on his mind, though, with the Twins unexpectedly in the thick of the American League Central race.

“He whispers and he's like, ‘Playoffs. Playoffs,’” second baseman Brian Dozier said. “A couple of years ago, he probably wouldn't have said it. His body has changed and everything. He kind of gets it now.”

As with his weight, which has been around 270 pounds for much of his major league career, the 6-foot-4 Sano also must make sure to keep that stout swing under control to stay on a thriving path.

Major League Baseball's postmodern embrace of science and data has paved the way for the Statcast tracking system and with it another set of leaderboards measuring the strongest sluggers, fastest runners and the hardest throwers to rival the traditional races for most home runs, stolen bases and strikeouts.

Sano, entering the weekend, trailed only New York Yankees rookie sensation Aaron Judge (97.3 mph) with an average exit

velocity of 95.2 mph. The eye tests that have long concluded Sano consistently crushes the ball can now be proven with facts.

Analytics, though, aren't the reason he'll play in his first All-Star Game at age 24 on Tuesday in Miami with plenty of family members from his native Dominican Republic in attendance.

“The Statcast thing is the worst thing for him, the exit velocity and all that crap of how far you can hit it and stuff,” Dozier said. “If he just stays with what he's been doing, so short and just smooth and really quieting everything down, he's got the power to do the same stuff.”

Sano led the Twins at their 85-game mark with 20 home runs, 61 RBIs, 51 runs and a .910 on-base-plus-slugging percentage, a formidable start that makes it easy to forget the majors-most 116 strikeouts through Thursday for a pace just short of the record set by Mark Reynolds with 223 in 2009.

What the Twins haven't lost

sight of, though, is the commitment Sano made to improve his conditioning and defense entering his third year in the majors. The failed experiment in right field last year set an inauspicious tone for the whole season, a discouraging setback from a rookie year that saw him win the team's most valuable player award with a mere half-season of play.

This time, Sano was more determined to make a greater impact. He's not exactly a Gold Glove Award candidate, but he has a reliably strong arm and a surprisingly agile body for its size.

“Work from 6 in the morning until 4 p.m. and then take a little break,” he said, proudly reflecting on his offseason regimen.

Count the player responsible for catching his throws at the opposite corner of the diamond impressed.

“I can definitely see him a little more relaxed and even improving on the defensive side, too,” first baseman Joe Mauer said.

Braves top Nationals after 'dry delay'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Washington Nationals told their fans to expect water Thursday night, and after three hours of waiting under stormless skies, they finally delivered.

The Nationals delayed their series opener against the Atlanta Braves for 3 hours, 5 minutes despite negligible rain. As a reward for fans who stuck around, Washington gave away free soda, ice cream, and yes, water.

Atlanta beat Washington 5-2 after play resumed. The game ended at 1:20 a.m.

"For 15 minutes of rain, that's unbelievable," Nationals starter Gio Gonzalez said. "I'm talking to you at 1:30 in the morning right now for a 15-minute delay."

The Nationals' scheduled game Wednesday night against the New York Mets was postponed amid a downpour and after a delay of 1 hour, 55 minutes, but only a very brief

shower hit Nationals Park on Thursday before first pitch was thrown at 10:10 p.m.

"That's a first for me," Braves manager Brian Snitker said. "Kind of frustrating."

The grounds crew didn't put the tarp on the infield until 74 minutes after scheduled first pitch. Light rain eventually fell, but only for a couple of minutes.

After the delay reached 2½ hours, the Nationals posted a statement on the video scoreboard saying, "It is our sincere hope that we will be able to play tonight's game. The weather system that we have been monitoring is beginning to reach the ballpark & should pass through shortly. ... Thank you for your patience."

Despite the warning, the grounds crew removed the dry tarp 10 minutes later, and players began warming up in the outfield.

During the delay, a tweet from Braves outfielder Ender

Inciarte read, "This No-Rain delay is something I've never seen before!!" When someone suggested he and his teammates take advantage of the break with some slip-and-slide fun on the tarp, Inciarte responded, "Can't. The tarp is dry."

Once the game finally started, though, the Braves knew exactly what they were doing.

Freddie Freeman drove in two runs and Mike Foltyniewicz quieted Washington's bats.

Kurt Suzuki's solo homer in the sixth inning off Gonzalez (7-4) broke a 2-all tie. Freeman's second RBI double of the game and 1,000th career hit extended the lead during a two-run seventh.

After taking a no-hit bid into the ninth inning against Oakland in his previous outing and throwing a career-high 119 pitches, Foltyniewicz (7-5) got an extra day of rest. He allowed two runs and eight hits, including Brian Goodwin's

homer, over six innings with five strikeouts to win his third consecutive start.

"It was a weird night, but we got through it with a win and that's all we can do," Foltyniewicz said.

The 25-year-old right-hander has won four straight decisions, and seven of eight since opening the season 0-4.

Jim Johnson worked the ninth for his 19th save, getting the final out at 1:20 a.m. Friday.

Gonzalez lost his third straight start. He permitted three runs and seven hits in six innings before an announced crowd of 22,274 — only hundreds remained when he threw the first pitch of the night.

Johan Camargo and Nick Markakis had RBI hits for the Braves, who had dropped two in a row. Atlanta improved to 5-4 against Washington this season after going 4-15 vs. the Nationals in 2016.

MLB roundup

Taylor's walk-off hit caps Dodgers' rally over D-backs

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Trailing 4-1 in the ninth, the Los Angeles Dodgers found a way to win again. They didn't even need extra innings, either.

Chris Taylor singled in the winning run in a four-run ninth, helping the NL West leaders rally for a 5-4 victory over the second-place Arizona Diamondbacks on Thursday night to complete a three-game sweep.

It was the Dodgers' 22nd comeback win of the season.

"It's kind of been our bread and butter this year; it feels like we're never out of the game," Taylor said. "We've had I don't even know how many comebacks in the ninth where it seems like we're out of it. We just put one good at-bat together and get some guys on and

things start happening."

Taylor's bases-loaded single off T.J. McFarland eluded the desperate stab of left fielder Ray Fuentes and scored Logan Forsythe. It was one of Taylor's career-high four hits, including two doubles.

Rays 4, Red Sox 1: Wilson Ramos homered and drove in three runs against Chris Sale (11-4) despite the All-Star's record-setting performance, and rookie Jake Faria remained unbeaten as host Tampa Bay beat Boston.

Athletics 7, Mariners 4: Khris Davis hit a three-run homer, Paul Blackburn pitched one-run ball into the eighth inning for his first major league win, and visiting Oakland beat slumping Seattle.

Seattle has lost four straight and nine of 11 since reaching a

season-best two games above .500 on June 23.

Blue Jays 7, Astros 4: Russell Martin homered and matched a season high with three hits, Josh Donaldson broke out of his slump with a go-ahead single and host Toronto beat Houston.

Brewers 11, Cubs 2: Ryan Braun homered to ignite a seven-run third inning and visiting Milwaukee beat Chicago for its fourth straight victory.

Tigers 6, Giants 2: Anibal Sanchez pitched six strong innings, and Dixon Machado hit his first career home run to lift host Detroit over San Francisco.

Indians 11, Padres 2: Edwin Encarnacion homered and matched a career high with four hits, All-Star Jose Ramirez hit a home run and had three

RBIs, and Cleveland, playing its third straight game without manager Terry Francona, defeated visiting San Diego.

Pirates 6, Phillies 3: Gregory Polanco had four hits with a home run and two RBIs, and Josh Bell homered, doubled and drove in three runs to lead Pittsburgh over host Philadelphia.

Reds 6, Rockies 3: At Denver, Sal Romano tossed five innings to earn his first major league win, and Cincinnati beat Colorado.

Cardinals 4, Marlins 3: Luke Voit homered and drove in three runs and host St. Louis beat Miami.

Twins 6, Orioles 4: Eduardo Escobar's two-run triple highlighted a six-run third inning as Minnesota beat visiting Baltimore.

Nadal advances, eyes No. 1 ranking

Associated Press

LONDON — Rafael Nadal is on his way to the fourth round at Wimbledon, and he's three matches away from taking over as the No. 1 player in the world.

Nadal beat Karen Khachanov of Russia 6-1, 6-4, 7-6 (3) Friday on Centre Court. If he reaches the final at the All England Club, the two-time Wimbledon champion will take over from Andy Murray as the top-ranked player in the world.

"First set-and-a-half, I think, was very, very well. Very happy (with) the way that I played," Nadal said in a television interview after walking off court. "Then it was a little bit tougher. I think I stopped a little bit with the legs and he started to hit stronger, but he's still a tough opponent and it's impossible to win easy."

Nadal was playing in front of several sports stars seated

in the Royal Box. One of them was Sergio Garcia, the Spanish golfer who was wearing his green Masters jacket.

"He's having an amazing season, especially with that victory, amazing victory in the Masters," Nadal said. "So, just great to see him and thanks for coming."

Nadal is having a pretty good season, too. He reached the Australian Open final, losing to Roger Federer, and won the French Open. The title at Roland Garros was his 10th at the clay-court major.

On Monday, Nadal will face Gilles Muller in the fourth round. Muller beat Nadal at the All England Club in 2005, but the Spaniard got one back in 2011. That was the last time Nadal got past the fourth round at Wimbledon, reaching the final but losing to Novak Djokovic.

"He's a specialist on grass," Nadal said of Muller. "Prob-

ably his best surface, without a doubt."

Murray was next on Centre Court against Fabio Fognini.

Earlier Friday, Victoria Azarenka extended her Grand Slam comeback into the second week.

The former No. 1 from Belarus, who gave birth to her first child in December, advanced to the fourth round by beating Heather Watson 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 on Centre Court.

Azarenka also lost the first set in her opening match, but that was only her third match since her return. Friday's match was her fifth.

"This is the matches that you're looking for," Azarenka said, "try to find a way when not everything goes great."

The two-time Grand Slam champion will next face Simona Halep on Monday in the fourth round. The second-seeded Romanian beat Peng Shuai 6-4, 7-6 (7).

Venus Williams, a five-time Wimbledon champion, beat Naomi Osaka 7-6 (3), 6-4 and will next face 27th-seeded Ana Konjuh.

Fourth-seeded Elina Svitolina, sixth-seeded Johanna Konta, 21st-seeded Caroline Garcia and French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko also reached the fourth round.

For the men, ninth-seeded Kei Nishikori was eliminated. The 2014 U.S. Open finalist lost to Roberto Bautista Agut 6-4, 7-6 (3), 3-6, 6-3.

"I couldn't maintain my level high enough," Nishikori said. "He served well every set. Was really tough time (on) my return game."

Marin Cilic, the man who beat Nishikori in that U.S. Open final, advanced to the third round by beating Steve Johnson 6-4, 7-6 (3), 6-4. The seventh-seeded Croat will next face Bautista Agut on Monday.

Clippers acquire forward Gallinari in three-team trade

Associated Press

DENVER—The Los Angeles Clippers acquired sharp-shooting forward Danilo Gallinari from Denver as part of a three-team trade that also involved Atlanta on Thursday.

In the swap, Los Angeles sent Jamal Crawford, Diamond Stone, cash considerations and a protected 2018 first-round pick to the Hawks. The Nuggets receive a 2019 second-round pick from Atlanta.

Gallinari joins a Clippers team that recently traded Chris Paul to Houston, but agreed to a five-year deal with Blake Griffin. Los Angeles also has DeAndre Jordan in the frontcourt.

The 28-year-old Gallinari was selected by New York with the sixth overall pick in 2008. He wound up in Denver as part of the blockbuster deal in February 2011 that sent Carmelo Anthony to the Knicks.

A fan favorite, Gallinari averaged 16.2 points and made 535

three-pointers for the Nuggets. He missed the 2013-14 season because of a torn left ACL.

Also Thursday, the Clippers acquired the draft rights to Oklahoma State guard Jawun Evans from the Philadelphia 76ers in exchange for cash considerations. Selected 39th overall, Evans led the Big 12 in scoring at 19.2 points per game last season.

Olynyk, Heat agree to 4-year contract

MIAMI — Kelly Olynyk has agreed to sign with the Miami Heat.

Agent Greg Lawrence confirmed the decision to The Associated Press on Thursday night. ESPN reported it would be a four-year deal worth in excess of \$50 million.

The deal has not been signed, though could be as early as Friday.

A 7-foot center with three-

point range, Olynyk spent his first four NBA seasons with the Boston Celtics and played mostly as a reserve. He averaged 9.5 points in 278 regular-season games shot a career-best 51 percent last season.

Spurs sign veteran forward Gay

SAN ANTONIO — The San Antonio Spurs have signed veteran forward Rudy Gay.

Gay averaged 18.7 points last season in Sacramento but was limited to 30 games before rupturing his left Achilles tendon in January and having surgery a few days later.

Terms of the deal announced Thursday were not disclosed.

The 6-foot-8 Gay has averaged 18.4 points in 753 career games. The No. 8 pick in the 2006 draft out of Connecticut joins LeBron James and Russell Westbrook as the only players with at least 13,000 points,

4,000 rebounds and 1,000 steals since 2006. He also has won a pair of world championships with the U.S.

Mavs, Nowitzki reach 2-year, \$10M deal

DALLAS — Dirk Nowitzki has a deal with the Dallas Mavericks that sets him up to join Kobe Bryant as the only players to spend 20 seasons with one NBA franchise.

Nowitzki signed a two-year, \$10 million contract Thursday that carries a team option in the second season. A person with knowledge of the deal contract provided specifics on condition of anonymity because the team didn't release the terms.

The agreement is similar to the one the Mavs and Nowitzki reached last year, although for significantly less money. Last year's contract was for two years and \$50 million, and the club declined its option before free agency opened this year.