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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Afghanistan airstrikes reach 2012 level

The Washington Post

The U.S. air war in Afghanistan has returned to a level of intensity not seen since American forces were still fanned out across the country and fighting Taliban militants in daily skirmishes in 2012, according to recently released military data.

As of June 30, U.S. and coalition aircraft had dropped or expended 1,634 munitions in Afghanistan so far this year, according to U.S. Air Force numbers. By comparison, in 2015 and 2016, that figure was 298 and 545, respectively.

The majority of this year's strikes have been used to go after the Taliban, said Navy Capt. Bill Salvin, a spokesman for the U.S.-led mission in Afghanistan.

The surge in U.S.-led air attacks comes as the Pentagon weighs whether to send thousands more troops into Afghanistan in a bid to reverse three

years of steady gains by the Taliban. While Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis pledged to deliver a strategy to Congress this month, some lawmakers see any increase in support to what has become America's longest running war as futile.

Salvin attributed the increase in airstrikes to gains made by Afghan Security Forces. "As they're more successful, more strikes are needed," he said.

On Monday, a U.S. Marine unit in Helmand province — often called the birthplace of the Taliban — said it had helped the Afghan Army retake a district center south of the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah and that the operation had been supported with "numerous" U.S. airstrikes. While Afghan forces control some population centers in the violent province, the Taliban are able to move around almost completely unrestricted.

An April report released by

the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction indicated that Afghan forces control 60 percent of the country, up from 57 percent in November of last year.

That same report indicated the Taliban had gained a percentage point of ground, still putting the militants' control of territory at its highest in the country since U.S. forces invaded the country in 2001. The rest, the report said, remains contested.

To help prevent further losses, then-President Barack Obama gave the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, Army Gen. John Nicholson, authority to go after the Taliban with airstrikes. Before the June 2016 decision, U.S. forces were allowed to target the Taliban with air support only when defending U.S. troops alongside their Afghan counterparts.

The new powers, known as

the "strategic effects authority," were supposed to be used sparingly, during times when the U.S.-provided air support could effectively change the strategic outcome of a battle.

The renewed intensity of the U.S.-led air campaign, along with the burgeoning capabilities of the Afghan air force, also have meant Afghan civilians are dying more frequently from aerial attacks. Salvin said Afghans had carried out 1,000 strikes this year, compared with 1,600 for all of 2016.

A report released Monday by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan documented 95 civilian deaths and 137 wounded from airstrikes during the first six months of this year. The report said the Afghan air force was responsible for 29 of the deaths. It is unclear if that air force, like its coalition counterparts, uses guided or "smart" munitions.

Sailor who went missing at sea is charged

BY TYLER HLAVAC

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The USS Shiloh sailor who was presumed lost at sea only to be later found in the ship's engine room admitted to intentionally hiding from his fellow sailors and has been charged with abandoning watch and dereliction of duty, a spokesman said Tuesday.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Peter Mims admitted during an admiral's mast that he had actively avoided searches conducted by the ship's crew during his week-long disappearance, 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Paul Newell told Stars and Stripes. Newell didn't provide a reason for the

evasion.

Newell said Task Force 70 held the proceeding, which is used to determine minor offenses, on Thursday "due to the seriousness of the incident and the impact it had on the [USS Ronald Regan strike group] and also our Japanese allies."

The 23-year-old sailor was charged with Uniform Code of Military Justice violations including absence without leave for abandoning watch under Article 86 and failure to obey an order or regulation for dereliction in the performance of duties under Article 92, the spokesman said.

Newell added that the Navy is looking into taking other administrative actions against

Mims but declined to discuss the punishment, citing privacy concerns.

According to the Manual for Courts-Martial, violations of Article 86 that last longer than three days but less than 30 have a maximum punishment of six months confinement and forfeiture of two-thirds pay per month for six months. Violations of Article 92 that involve willful dereliction of duty carry a maximum punishment of "bad-conduct discharge, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and confinement for 6 months."

Mims, who served as a gas turbine systems technician on the Yokosuka-based guided-missile cruiser, was reported missing the evening of June 8

and was believed to have fallen overboard from the Shiloh, which was conducting routine operations near Okinawa.

U.S. and Japanese ships spent more than 50 hours searching for him, assisted by helicopters and other aircraft from the Shiloh, the USS McCampbell, the USS Barry, USS John S. McCain and the USS Ronald Reagan.

The massive sea search was suspended on June 11, with the presumption that he was lost at sea.

Crewmembers continued to search the Shiloh while simultaneously planning a memorial service for Mims when he was found in the ship's engineering room on June 15, the Navy said.

Rear admiral selected to lead 3rd Fleet

BY TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon has announced its pick to lead the Navy's 3rd Fleet, as its role in the Western Pacific continues to expand amid regional tensions.

Rear Adm. John Alexander, who now serves as director of maritime operations for U.S. Fleet Forces Command, has been nominated to command the San Diego-based fleet, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis announced Friday.

Alexander was also nominated for appointment to the rank of vice admiral.

If confirmed, Alexander will take charge of the fleet and its four strike groups during a time of rising tensions with both North Korea and China.

Although the 7th Fleet is the Navy's forward-deployed force in the Western Pacific, 3rd Fleet ships participate in a number of prominent exercises and operations in the region.

Last April, the 3rd Fleet's USS Carl Vinson strike group was deployed to the Korean Peninsula, where it participated in joint war games with South Korean ships.

The 3rd Fleet's USS Nimitz strike group recently participated in the annual Malabar exercise alongside ships from the Indian navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.

China has criticized the exercise, and Indian news outlets claimed a significant increase in Chinese naval activity in the Indian Ocean — including a

surge in the number of Chinese warships and submarines in the region — leading up to the exercise.

As 3rd Fleet commander, Alexander would have more autonomy in the Western Pacific than his predecessors.

The International Date Line has traditionally served as the boundary between the 3rd and 7th fleets, with the 7th Fleet assuming command of a ship as soon as it passed the dateline. Last year, under Pacific Fleet Commander Adm. Scott Swift, a 3rd Fleet Forward initiative officially began allowing the 3rd Fleet to retain command of some ships while in the Western Pacific.

The initiative enabled current 3rd Fleet Commander Vice

Adm. Nora Tyson to represent Swift at a number of conferences and events with regional partners such as Japan, New Zealand and Australia, Swift said in a June 2016 interview with the *Nikkei Asian Review*.

A career aviator, Alexander brings Pacific experience to the table, having previously served as commander of the Yokosuka, Japan-based Task Force 70, according to his official biography. He has also served as commander of Electronic Attack Squadron 135 and the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier.

Alexander, who became a pilot in 1983, served as an A-6E bombardier/navigator with Attack Squadron 165, VA-155 and VA-196.

AF grounds Dover C-5s after 2nd malfunction

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Air Force has grounded its fleet of enormous C-5 Galaxy cargo planes based at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware following a second malfunction of a plane's nose landing gear in the last two months, the service announced Tuesday.

The standdown of the C-5s was ordered Monday by Air Force Gen. Carlton D. Everhart II, the Air Mobility Command chief, who cited safety concerns. The order affects only the 18 C-5 aircraft — 12 primary and six backup planes — based at Dover. The Air Force has 56 C-5s across the service.

"Aircrew safety is always my top priority and is taken very seriously," Everhart said in a prepared statement. "We are taking the appropriate measures to properly diagnose the issue and implement a solution."

Neither incident resulted

in injuries to any personnel, said Air Force Maj. Korry Leverett, a spokesman for Air Mobility Command. Both malfunctions occurred during landing at Naval Station Rota in Spain. They occurred May 22 and July 15, Leverett said.

The service is conducting inspections to ensure all of the Dover-based C-5 nose landing gears were operating properly.

Air Mobility Command "will work to ensure worldwide mission requirements are minimally impacted," the statement read.

The Lockheed Martin-built C-5 Galaxy is the largest airplane in the Air Force's inventory and among the most massive jets in the world. The 65-foot-tall, 247-foot-long aircraft can carry up to 270,000 pounds, according to an Air Force fact sheet.

It can carry any of the Army's air-transportable equipment, including up to two M1 main battle tanks or up to six AH-64 Apache attack helicopters.

Judge reopens case tried in military court

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — In a rare legal move unveiled Monday, a federal judge in San Diego has reopened a case that was tried in military court because of concerns that a sailor might have been wrongly convicted of molesting a child.

In his decision dated July 11, U.S. District Judge Gonzalo Curiel ordered federal prosecutors to respond to a petition brought by attorneys representing Navy Petty Officer James R. Rich.

Rich contends that the military violated his constitutional rights by relying on the shaky, hearsay testimony of a toddler and then allowing a biased juror to disregard the sailor's exemplary military record as the jury decided his sentence in 2014.

David Sheldon, the Washington-based appellate attorney for Rich, praised Curiel's decision Monday. He said the military court system gave the sailor "short-shrift review and

failed to address his constitutional challenges to his conviction." Curiel's order, he added, is the "first step in righting this injustice."

Navy legal officials declined to discuss these issues. It's customary for them to withhold comment while a case is undergoing appeal.

"I have never seen a habeas corpus (petition) where a federal court intervened in a military case. I am sure it has happened before, but it is rare," said San Diego-based attorney Jeremiah Sullivan III, an expert in military law.

A panel of sailors convicted Rich, an aviation structural mechanic 2nd class, during a general court-martial in Norfolk, Va., for the aggravated sexual abuse of a child. It sentenced him to seven years' confinement; he's currently imprisoned in the Miramar brig, and the local proximity explains why his federal court case was heard in San Diego.

Yokota diner expands hours in hopes of boosting morale

BY LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A 1950s-style diner at the home of U.S. Forces Japan and 5th Air Force has expanded its hours in an effort to boost morale at the western Tokyo air base.

The move comes months after a “suicide prevention support team” visited Yokota and other Pacific bases in response to a spate of airman suicides last year.

The Pacific Air Forces team was “charged with conducting a thorough review of the programs, procedures and policies in place across several PACAF bases in order to ensure airmen have the tools to assist with maintaining their resiliency and comprehensive fitness,” an Air Force statement said.

One of the team’s findings was that airmen on swing and overnight shifts are among the most stressed and have a hard time unwinding because of a 1 a.m. curfew. They can’t go off base, and there isn’t much for them to do on base late at night.

Yokota, which formed its own team to look at ways to boost morale, identified Route 16 — an on-base eatery close to dormitories for unaccompanied airmen that serves burgers, chili-cheese dogs and other diner food — as the best option for 24-hour dining, said Maj. Melissa Danley, deputy commander of the 374th Force Support

Squadron.

For now, the restaurant’s 24-hour schedule is offered only on weekends as a trial, she said. However, if there’s a good response, the base would like to expand it to include weekdays.

“I think this is great,” said Airman 1st Class Robert Gamboa, an aircraft maintainer with the 374th Maintenance Group. He and a group of airmen were enjoying a meal with milkshakes around 3 a.m. on Sunday.

“I hope they keep these hours,” said Gamboa, who added the base could feel like a prison after curfew because there was nowhere to go.

Yokota’s morale team also tagged the Yujo Community Center, a facility near the Base Exchange that offers a computer room and recreation activities such as video games, as a good place to run 24-hour operations, Danley said. However, the Yujo is currently being renovated.

A tough job market for Air Force spouses at Yokota was another stress factor cited in the PACAF report.

“I’m grateful to have this job,” said Danielle Hutchinson, a military spouse and newly hired cook on Route 16’s night shift.

Hutchinson, who described herself as a night owl, said the hours don’t interfere with spending time with her husband and three kids.

“We needed the money and this job is perfect,” she said.

Changes to GI Bill face easy review in House

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The changes to education benefits for veterans in a new House bill are numerous, including the end of a 15-year deadline for veterans to use their GI Bill after leaving the service, reimbursements for veterans whose schools abruptly close and boosts in aid for Purple Heart recipients, dependents, technical education and members of the National Guard and Reserve.

Altogether, HR 3218 combines 18 different bills and about 30 provisions put forth by Democrats and Republicans.

Though the scope of the legislation is large, nothing in it prompted opposition or controversy Monday night during a hearing that will be the House’s closest examination of the bill. Sixteen people testified, and all but one of the 24 members on the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs waived their usual five minutes to ask questions.

Rep. Jack Bergman, R-Mich., asked Curtis Coy, a Department of Veterans Affairs undersecretary, the biggest challenges in implementing the legislation.

“I think across the board when you talk to the people who work at the VA, this bill is an exciting bill for lots of reasons,” Coy said. “Probably my biggest concern is [information technology]. Almost all of these sections require some degree of changes in our IT system, and that’s what concerns me the most.”

VA Secretary David Shulkin expressed his support for the GI Bill expansion earlier Monday on Twitter, saying it would “strengthen an important benefit used by many.”

The committee is set to vote Wednesday morning on the bill. House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said Monday that he wanted to schedule the bill for a vote on the House floor within the next week.

Pratt & Whitney faulted on F-35 engine costs

Bloomberg

United Technologies’ Pratt and Whitney unit has been slow to incorporate promised cost-savings techniques for the latest and biggest batch of engines to power F-35 jets, the Pentagon’s costliest weapons program, according to a new report.

Pratt & Whitney is producing 102 engines for the fighters built by Lockheed Martin under what’s now a \$2.1 billion contract, including management, engineering support and spare parts. When the contract was signed in July 2016, Lt. Gen. Christopher Bogdan, who headed the Defense Department’s F-35 office, said Pratt’s team “has kept their word in delivering on their price-reduction commitments.”

One year later, the F-35 office took a different view in its annual Selected Acquisition Report on the program’s progress. It reviewed the schedule and cost status from July 2016 to April of this year, disclosing estimates of \$43 million in cumulative cost overruns for materials, which Pratt & Whitney will have to absorb if they persist.

Engine hardware “is costing more than planned,” according to the report, primarily because the contractor’s targets aren’t “achievable today due to delays with incorporating enough engineering changes and affordability initiatives to lower the manufacturing costs,” according to the document obtained by Bloomberg News.

Pratt & Whitney’s supply chain team also has “been un-

able to negotiate lower pricing from the supply chain,” the F-35 office added.

Through April, the engine maker was behind on \$51 million in work due to late engine hardware deliveries, some quality lapses with engine nozzle parts and other supplier issues, according to the report.

Controlling costs is crucial as the Pentagon plans to increase its budget requests to 77 engines in fiscal 2019 from 74 this year. The number would jump to 99 by 2022. The Pentagon’s annual engine procurement requests are planned to increase to \$2 billion by 2022 from \$1.6 billion this year.

Pratt & Whitney spokesman Matthew Bates deferred comment on the cost report to the Pentagon.

House budget boosts military, cuts safety net

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans on Tuesday unveiled a budget that makes deep cuts in food stamps and other social safety net programs while boosting military spending by billions, a blueprint that pleases neither conservatives nor moderates.

The GOP plan, authored by Budget Chairwoman Rep. Diane Black, R-Tenn., is critical to GOP hopes to deliver on one of President Donald Trump's top priorities — a Republican-only effort to overhaul the tax code. Unclear, however, is whether GOP leaders can get the measure through the House. Conservatives want deeper spending cuts while moderates are concerned the reductions go too far.

Medicare is the second-largest mandatory program after Social Security, and the House GOP plan again proposes to turn Medicare into a voucherlike program in which future retirees would receive a fixed benefit to purchase health insurance on the open market.

The plan, in theory at least, promises to balance the budget through unprecedented and unworkable cuts across the budget. It calls for turning this year's projected \$700 billion or so deficit into a tiny \$9 billion surplus by 2027. It would do so by slashing \$5.4 trillion over the coming decade, including almost \$500 billion from Medicare, \$1.5 trillion from Medicaid and the Obama health law, along with enormous cuts to benefits such as federal employee pensions, food stamps and tax credits for the working poor. But in the immediate future, the GOP measure is a budget buster. It would add almost \$30 billion to Trump's \$668 billion request for national defense, which already exceeds an existing "cap" on spending by \$54 billion.

Trump rips Congress as latest health effort fails

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump blasted congressional Democrats and "a few Republicans" Tuesday over the collapse of the GOP effort to rewrite the Obama health care law.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell proposed a vote on a backup plan repealing the statute, but that idea was on the brink of rejection, too.

Republican Sens. Susan Collins, of Maine, and Shelley Moore Capito, of West Virginia, said they opposed McConnell's Plan B. If a third GOP senator opposes it — and several are expected to — it would be defeated, and that might send a message to conservative Republicans that it is time to abandon efforts to tear down Obama's law.

All Senate Democrats are opposed.

Trump's early morning tweet led off a barrage of Republican criticism of Congress over the party's failure on its flagship legislative priority. For seven years, the GOP has pledged to repeal President Barack Obama's law.

"Most Republicans were loyal, terrific & worked really hard," Trump tweeted Tuesday morning. "We were let down by all of the Democrats and a few Republicans."

He added, "As I have always said, let ObamaCare fail and then come together and do a great healthcare plan. Stay tuned!"

Two GOP senators — Mike Lee, of Utah, and Jerry Moran, of Kansas — sealed the measure's doom late Monday when they announced they would vote "no" in an initial, critical vote that had been expected as soon as next week. That meant that at least four of the 52 GOP senators were ready to block the measure — two more than Ma-

majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., had to spare in the face of unanimous Democratic opposition.

On the Senate floor Tuesday, McConnell conceded that the legislation repealing the 2010 law and replacing it with GOP-preferred programs "will not be successful," essentially waving a white flag.

He said instead, the Senate would vote on legislation dismantling much of Obama's statute that would take effect in two years, which Republicans say would give Congress time to approve replacement legislation. But such legislation seems unlikely to be approved, with many Republicans concerned the two-year gap would roil insurance markets and produce a political backlash against the GOP.

Moderate Capito said she'd oppose scuttling Obama's statute "without a replacement plan that addresses my concerns and the needs of West Virginians." She criticized the GOP bill's cuts in Medicaid, the health insurance program for low-income people that her state relies on heavily.

Another moderate, Collins, also said she'd oppose McConnell's measure. She said repealing the law without an immediate replacement would produce "great anxiety for individuals" who benefit from Obama's statute and "cause the insurance markets to go into turmoil."

This is the second stinging setback on the issue in three weeks for McConnell, whose reputation as a legislative mastermind has been marred as he's failed to unite his chamber's Republicans behind a health overhaul package that highlighted jagged divides between conservatives and moderates. In late June, he abandoned an initial package after he lacked enough GOP support to pass.

US: Iran complying with nuclear deal, defying its 'spirit'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration told Congress for a second time Monday that Iran is complying with the nuclear deal and can keep enjoying sanctions relief, even as it insisted Tehran would face consequences for breaching "the spirit" of the deal.

President Donald Trump, who lambasted the 2015 pact as a candidate, gave himself more time to decide whether to scuttle it or let it stand. Instead, senior Trump administration officials sought to emphasize their

deep concerns about Iran's non-nuclear behavior and vowed that those transgressions won't go unpunished.

During the campaign, Trump told the American Israel Political Action Committee, "My number one priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran." He returned to that theme often during the presidential race, describing the deal as "catastrophic," among other things.

In a shift from Trump's previous threat to "rip up" the deal, officials said the administration was working with U.S. allies to try to fix the deal's flaws, including the ex-

piration of some nuclear restrictions after a decade or more. The officials also said the U.S. would slap Tehran with new sanctions penalizing it for developing ballistic missiles and other activity.

Trump, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and "the entire administration judge that Iran is unquestionably in default of the spirit" of the agreement, one official said. That assessment carries no legal force, while Trump's certification that Iran is technically complying clears the way for sanctions to remain lifted.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man sentenced to 416 years in prison

PA PHILADELPHIA — A Philadelphia man has been sentenced to a maximum of 416 years in prison after being convicted of shooting and injuring four people in a series of robberies.

Amin Ackridge was found guilty in April of four counts of attempted murder, six counts of robbery and other various offenses.

Prosecutors say the robberies occurred between June 6 and July 21, 2015, during which Frank Oliver III acted as the getaway driver. Several victims were shot, including one man who is paralyzed from the waist down. Oliver was sentenced to a maximum of six years in prison after pleading guilty.

Hot-air balloon out of fuel lands on road

PA GREEN LANE — Officials said a hot-air balloon had to make an emergency landing in the middle of a Pennsylvania road after running out of fuel.

Police were called to the scene about 8:30 p.m. Sunday after the balloon landed on state Route 29 in Green Lane, about 38 miles northwest of Philadelphia. The balloon was eventually deflated with the help of the PECO energy company after coming into contact with electrical wires.

Pair recovering after being run over by police

NY LONG BEACH — The two Long Island beachgoers who were struck by a police vehicle are recovering.

According to Long Beach police, Officer David Walpole ran over the pair Monday evening as he was making a three-

point turn. Police said Walpole was responding to reports of after-hour swimming, which is prohibited.

Authorities said the 48-year-old man and 36-year-old woman involved in the accident were taken to South Nassau Communities Hospital. The man suffered broken ribs and bruised lungs. The woman was treated for a leg injury and a broken finger.

Police Commissioner Michael Tangney said Walpole didn't notice the pair lying on a blanket.

Parents criticize July 31 start date for school

GA KENNESAW — More than 11,000 people have signed an online petition protesting a Georgia county's school calendar.

WSB-TV reported that Cobb County School District's July 31 start date has drawn criticism from parents who say it cuts summer too short.

The petition's author said the date crosses a symbolic line, threatening the traditional summer vacation. The petition asks the school board to take away extra week breaks in September and February or consider adding days in May to balance out the summer.

Man, 68, sentenced for money laundering

DE NEWARK — A man was sentenced for taking part in a scheme that transferred more than \$6.1 million from a financial services company that his wife worked at to her bank account.

The News Journal reported that Matthew Czap, 68, was sentenced to one year and a day. Czap pleaded guilty on March 22 to structuring financial transactions to avoid currency reporting requirements.

Czap's wife, Roberta, 66, pleaded guilty last month and will be sentenced in September.

According to court documents, from 2011 to 2016, Roberta Czap directed more than \$6.1 million in electronic funds transfers from her operating account to her personal bank accounts. Prosecutors say Matthew Czap took some of that money and deposited it in amounts less than \$10,000. From 2013, he structured \$1.2 million in cash deposits.

Police: Babysitter caught sleeping on job

VA DUMFRIES — Authorities are searching for a babysitter who they say was caught sleeping in an apartment while two young children in her care were outside.

News outlets reported that Prince William County police spokesman Nathan Probus said officers responded to reports of an unattended child Saturday. Authorities say officers saw a 2-year-old boy playing in the parking lot area. Probus said the boy led police to his 11-month-old sister, who was crawling outside the apartment.

Police woke up Amanda Sue Allen and asked her questions. Authorities said she gave them a false name and sneaked out a window. Allen, 30, is wanted for violating parole. She is charged with two counts of felony child neglect and giving a false name to police.

'Little House' log cabin to soon get a makeover

KS WICHITA — The deteriorating log cabin at the "Little House on the Prairie" site in Kansas is expected to soon get a makeover.

The Wichita Eagle reported that the current cabin was re-created and built near Independence in 1977 at the television

series' peak of popularity.

The show is based on Laura Ingalls Wilder's books centered on her childhood in the country's Midwest region. Wilder spent a year with her family at the Kansas site in 1869.

Cabin owners Bill Kurtis and Jean Schodorf said they want to rebuild the house and add a barn.

Man charged in murder also accused of assault

SC ASHEVILLE — Police said a North Carolina man charged in another man's death is also suspected of biting a pregnant woman.

The Asheville Citizen Times reported that warrants accuse Sharod Terrell Woods, 20, of breaking the woman's phone, assaulting her and threatening to kill her. About a week later, he allegedly assaulted the same woman again.

Woods was arrested earlier this month and charged with first-degree murder in the shooting of Kelby Ismael Swinton-Moore, 20.

Woods is jailed without bond.

Wrigley suing vape firm for using its brands

IL CHICAGO — Chewing gum maker Wrigley is protecting its Juicy Fruit and Doublemint brand names by suing an e-cigarette manufacturer for allegedly appropriating the brands.

In the lawsuit, Wrigley alleges Chi-Town Vapers attempts to take advantage of the Wrigley brands by selling "Dbl Mint" and "Joosy Fruit" e-cigarette liquids. It says the liquids feature logos similar to the gum packaging.

Wrigley spokeswoman Michelle Green said use of popular gum brands was "grossly deceptive and irresponsible."

From wire reports

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Can Dodgers keep winning at this pace?

Associated Press

MIAMI — Clayton Kershaw's notion that the past five extraordinary weeks are the new norm for the Los Angeles Dodgers seems to be taking hold.

Going into the All-Star break, Kershaw suggested the Dodgers' surge might not be a surge at all, but a sustainable pace. Then his team began the second half of the season with a three-game sweep at Miami last weekend.

The NL West leaders started a two-game series at the White Sox on Tuesday with a nine-game winning streak and baseball's best record at 64-29 (.688). They have won 29 of their past 33 games (.879).

That's some surge. Or not.

"We've been pretty good all year," third baseman Justin Turner said. "To say it's a five-week thing I don't think is fair to the team."

If the Dodgers play .879 ball the rest of the year, they would finish with 125 wins. Don't tell

them they won't.

"Clayton's quote about, 'Are we on a hot streak, or is this just who we are?' — I never really thought about it that way, but I'm starting to think maybe this is just who we are," unbeaten left-hander Alex Wood said with a laugh. "We have a different guy doing it every night, whether it's pitching or one of the guys in the lineup. It has been incredible."

The Dodgers' record merits comparisons to their teams in 1977 and 1955, both World Series clubs. They're 35 games above .500 for the first time since '77, and their record at the 93-game mark is their best since '55.

Why all the winning? Among the many reasons are Kershaw, Wood, Kenley Jansen, Yasiel Puig and Cody Bellinger.

■ The Dodgers are 55-18 (.753) since Bellinger was promoted from the minors. He has 26 homers and on Saturday became the first rookie in the 128-year history of the franchise to hit for the cycle.

■ They're 31-6 (.838) when Puig bats eighth, and he hits that low because the rest of the lineup's so potent. Puig is having his best year and ranks second on the team with 19 homers.

■ They're 23-0 when Jansen has a save opportunity. Even more impressive than his 0.90 ERA are his 61 strikeouts and two walks.

■ They're 11-0 when Wood gets a decision. He's the first Dodgers pitcher since at least 1913 to win his first 11 decisions in a season.

■ And they've won Kershaw's past 13 starts. He's 14-2, leads the majors in victories and will take the ball again Tuesday in Chicago. The three-time Cy Young Award winner has helped Los Angeles lead the majors with an ERA of 3.12.

And the offense?

"I feel like every time I go out and pitch, we score five, six, seven runs," Wood said. "It definitely takes the pressure off early. But you've got to focus on smelling blood in the water and

throw up zeroes so we can finish the game.

"We're just clicking on all cylinders, man."

Even so, there might be room for improvement. The Dodgers are widely expected to swing a deal before the trade deadline to reinforce their pitching. And five-time All-Star first baseman Adrian Gonzalez, sidelined more than a month because of a herniated disk, is expected back before Sept. 1.

As it is, Los Angeles began the week leading second-place Arizona by 10½ games and Colorado by 11½ in the NL West, even though both teams are more than 10 games above .500.

"Those guys are good ballclubs," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "But we have really hit our stride. We knew going into the season we would be the best team. It was up to us to go out there and prove it."

Kershaw and company are confident they'll continue to do so.

Should Milwaukee buy at trade deadline or stand pat?

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — The Milwaukee Brewers' biggest fan calls team owner Mark Attanasio regularly and wonders occasionally what moves one of baseball's most surprising teams might make at the trade deadline.

Former team owner and baseball commissioner Bud Selig is getting inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame on July 30, a day before baseball's non-waiver trade deadline. For the first time in a couple of seasons, the Brewers are in contention.

Should they be buyers and potentially veer from a long-term rebuilding plan? Or stand pat but hold on to the best prospects in one of the league's top farm systems?

"With (Selig) it's more, he wants to be on the inside know-

ing what we're doing, what are we thinking," Attanasio said. "So he wouldn't know the prospects. 'Is that guy the Cubs traded (away) really that good?'"

It's up to Milwaukee's current regime to figure out.

The surprising Brewers are trying to hold off the defending World Series champion Cubs, the Cardinals and the Pirates in the National League Central after holding a 5½-game lead at the All-Star break.

A wild-card berth is also in play with Arizona and Colorado struggling out West in recent weeks, meaning Milwaukee still has a potential path to the playoffs even if the Cubs awaken from their season-long slumber.

If anything, the Brewers probably won't be selling at the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline, and that in itself is a big

surprise for a team in just the second full season of a rebuild.

"You don't know what it is, because it's dynamic. It's not a static process," Attanasio said. "And by the way, there (are) games to be played, so between now and the trade deadline, teams that ... think they're not sellers could become sellers."

Milwaukee was a seller at the deadline the previous two seasons, moving pieces including catcher Jonathan Lucroy and outfielder Carlos Gomez.

There are painful memories from the last time the Brewers were in contention in 2014. Back then, Milwaukee led by 6½ games on July 1 before collapsing down the stretch.

Much has changed since, from the clubhouse to the front office. Left fielder Ryan Braun is the only everyday player remaining from the 2014 team.

Craig Counsell took over as

manager after Ron Roenicke was fired in May 2015; David Stearns took over as general manager after Doug Melvin retired at the end of the 2015 season.

Attanasio, Stearns and Counsell spoke Friday to catch up for the second half.

"So we know this is going to be a focused two weeks," Attanasio said in recounting the conversation. "Craig was saying ... 'It can't be we're just hanging on. We have to stay loose.' Then he looked at me and said 'This means you, too!'"

But this bunch of Brewers for the most part has been immune to the stretches of uninspiring baseball that can dog teams over a long season. Counsell has created an energetic environment in a clubhouse made up largely of young, hungry players.

Polanco leads surging Bucs past Brewers

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — By his own admission, it used to take Pittsburgh Pirates outfielder Gregory Polanco a day — sometimes more — to get over a mental mistake like his goof last week against St. Louis, when Cardinals catcher Yadier Molina picked a lackadaisical Polanco off third base to thwart a rally.

Not anymore. These days, Polanco moves on quickly, trying to keep one mental lapse from bleeding into another.

The proof is in the batter's box — and in the field — for Polanco and the surging Pirates. The right fielder doubled twice, drove in two runs and threw out a potential go-ahead run at the plate to lead Pittsburgh to a 4-2 victory over the Milwaukee Brewers on Monday night.

"We're fighting man, we're

fighting," Polanco said. "The second half is really good for us."

Polanco finished 4-for-4 and is hitting .446 this month. Francisco Cervelli added two hits for the Pirates, who pulled within six games of the first-place Brewers.

Pittsburgh pointed to a post All-Star break homestand against St. Louis and Milwaukee as a chance to finally make inroads in a crowded but unexceptional Central Division race. Outfielder Starling Marte returns from an 80-game performance-enhancing drugs suspension on Tuesday, and he'll join a team that's playing its best baseball of the season thanks in large part to the resurgent Polanco.

The outfielder has raised his average from .237 on July 1 to .269 as the Pirates have clawed

their way to 45-48, the closest they've been to .500 since early May. Daniel Hudson (2-4) earned the win thanks to Polanco's fifth outfield assist of the year. Felipe Rivero got four outs for his seventh save.

"I feel pretty comfortable," Polanco said. "I feel pretty good because I'm healthy now. I feel strong. I feel my hands are quick so I can see the ball."

He can throw it, too. Polanco nailed Milwaukee's Manny Pina at the plate to end the sixth, and then in the bottom of the inning put the Pirates ahead with a hustle double to second base that scored Josh Bell. Polanco's sprint was in stark contrast to what happened last Friday against St. Louis, when a triple turned into a double when he jogged out of the box thinking he'd hit a home run. He later compounded the problem when

Molina caught Polanco daydreaming off third base.

A year or two ago, the 25-year-old Polanco might have beat himself up thinking about it. Those days are over.

"When it happened, it happened," he said. "After that, you can't do anything. Just move forward and pay attention."

Travis Shaw, Eric Thames and Orlando Arcia had two hits each for the Brewers, who have lost consecutive games for the first time this month. Milwaukee left 11 men on base.

"Both sides pitched out of some jams, both sides threw a guy out at the plate," Brewers manager Craig Counsell said. "So, it was a good ballgame. We got some rallies going and bases loaded a couple times. That last hit wasn't there."

Back-to-back homers lift Mariners over Astros in 10th

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Seattle Mariners tied a season high by hitting four homers, including back-to-back shots by Kyle Seager and Danny Valencia in the 10th inning to get a 9-7 win over the Houston Astros on Monday night.

However, after the game it wasn't the powerful offense but Jean Segura's defense that everyone was talking about.

Josh Reddick was on second with no outs in the ninth inning when Segura snagged a grounder by Marwin Gonzalez backhanded and threw him out at first. Later in the inning he threw Reddick out at home on a fielder's choice on a ball hit by Nori Aoki. But Segura wasn't done yet. After an intentional walk loaded the bases, Segura had another backhanded grab on a grounder hit by Alex Bregman and tossed it to second for the force out to send it to the 10th.

"The defense (from) Jean throughout there was just unbelievable," manager Scott Servais said. "The backhand

stop that was the key out in the inning getting the first out with Marwin Gonzalez. Then the play at home, the backhand with the force play. There was a lot going on that inning."

Segura was asked about the last play of that inning.

"I knew the only chance I had was the force at second," he said. "It was just 'go get it.' It was the last out and if I don't get it or make an error, they win the game. I tried to make the play as quick as I (could)."

And it wasn't just the Mariners who raved about Segura's work.

"Both plays were exceptional plays," A.J. Hinch said. "Obviously, we would love to create more situations for ourselves, but it's hard to argue that he didn't have the most important plays of the game."

Twins 4, Yankees 2: Eddie Rosario had two RBI doubles and Eduardo Escobar added the go-ahead, pinch-hit single in the eighth inning to help host Minnesota beat New York.

Cubs 4, Braves 3: Jon Lester (6-6) bounced back from the

shortest start of his career by allowing only one run in seven innings and visiting Chicago stopped Atlanta's ninth-inning comeback.

Indians 5, Giants 3: Josh Tomlin (6-9) struck out five and pitched into the eighth inning to win back-to-back starts for the first time this year, and visiting Cleveland capitalized on two costly errors to rally and beat San Francisco.

Blue Jays 4, Red Sox 3: Steve Pearce hit a solo homer, then added the go-ahead single in the eighth inning in visiting Toronto's victory over Boston.

Nationals 6, Reds 1: Ryan Zimmerman set the Nationals' career home run record with a solo shot, and Bryce Harper connected again as visiting Washington powered its way to a victory for a four-game sweep of Cincinnati.

Rays 3, Athletics 2: Jake Odorizzi (6-4) and two relievers combined on a two-hitter, and visiting Tampa Bay beat Oakland.

Rockies 9, Padres 6: Charlie Blackmon's fourth leadoff

homer of the season hit the facing of the third deck, hard-throwing rookie German Marquez (7-4) tied a career high with nine strikeouts and scuffling Colorado beat visiting San Diego.

Tigers 10, Royals 2: Nicholas Castellanos and Mikie Mahtook went deep, Jordan Zimmermann (6-7) smothered the Royals with strikes and visiting Detroit proceeded to trounce Kansas City in the opener of a four-game series.

Cardinals 6, Mets 3: Paul DeJong homered against host New York for the fourth straight game and Adam Wainwright (11-5) hit an RBI double while winning his fourth consecutive start.

Orioles 3, Rangers 1: Seth Smith hit a tiebreaking homer in the seventh inning and host Baltimore used a strong performance by its struggling pitching staff to beat Texas.

Marlins 6, Phillies 5 (10): Giancarlo Stanton homered twice and Dee Gordon hit an RBI single with two outs in the 10th inning that sent host Miami over Philadelphia.

QB Cousins, Redskins don't reach deal

Associated Press

Kirk Cousins will be the first quarterback in NFL history to play consecutive seasons on the franchise tag.

Cousins and the Washington Redskins didn't sign a long-term deal by the deadline Monday. He will make \$23.94 million on the franchise tag in 2017 after earning \$19.95 million last year.

Team president Bruce Allen said in a prepared statement that the Redskins' goal was to sign Cousins to a long-term contract and offered him \$53 million guaranteed or \$72 million in the event of injury. That would have been the second-most fully guaranteed money given to a QB behind Aaron Rodgers' \$54 million.

"Despite our repeated attempts, we have not received any offer from Kirk's agent this year," Allen said. "Kirk has made it clear that he prefers to play on a year-to-year basis. While we would have liked to work out a long-term contract before this season, we accept his decision."

Cousins' agent, Mike McCartney, declined an interview request made before Allen issued his statement. Allen said the team's offer was made May 2 and that he met with Cousins face to face over the

weekend.

The 28-year-old Cousins is going into his third full season as Washington's starter. He set franchise records with 4,166 and 4,917 yards the past two seasons, but has yet to win a playoff game.

Oakland's Derek Carr signed a deal last month that guarantees him \$40 million. Carr has also not won a playoff game, but has played only three pro seasons. Cousins will head into his sixth NFL campaign and was a backup to Robert Griffin III to start his career.

In 46 games, including 41 starts, Cousins has completed 65.6 percent of his passes for 12,113 yards, 72 touchdowns and 42 interceptions.

Cousins and executives described negotiations as positive, and they may go through this again next spring. If Washington uses the franchise tag again for 2018, Cousins would get a 44 percent raise to \$34.47 million, or they could use the transition tag on him at a cost of \$28.78 million.

The transition tag would allow the Redskins to match any offer but would not give them any compensation if he left. Cousins has no shortage of admirers around the league, most notably former Washington

offensive coordinators Kyle Shanahan, now head coach of the San Francisco 49ers, and Sean McVay, now coach of the Los Angeles Rams.

Chief negotiator Eric Schaffer said the Redskins weren't trying to "win a championship" with their contract and said there was a positive dialogue with Cousins' camp.

"Kirk is a really good player and he's a Redskin and we only want him to be here," Schaffer said. "I would express that."

Asked by former QB Joe Theismann if he wanted to be a member of the Redskins, Cousins said yes and called it "an easy answer."

"There's just so many positives to discuss — love my teammates, I love playing with these guys — so I don't need to look elsewhere," Cousins said in a video posted on the team's website.

For at least this season, Cousins remains with the Redskins. Allen said recently he believes Cousins has a lot of good football in front of him.

"We both share high hopes for this season," Allen said. "And we remain hopeful that a long-term contract will be signed in the future."

Top of NBA draft shines in summer league

Associated Press

The depth and quality of the 2017 NBA Draft had teams tanking at the end of the regular season in hopes of vaulting into the top three picks.

With the huge caveat being that it was only summer league action, those at the top of the draft made quite a first impression.

Summer league play ended on Monday night after the Los Angeles Lakers beat Portland in the Las Vegas league championship game. In leagues played in Orlando, Salt Lake City and Vegas, many of the top 10 picks gave their teams plenty to feel good about before heading into the league's quiet period for the next two months.

No. 2 pick Lonzo Ball owned Vegas with a pair of triple-doubles and was named Vegas MVP. Top pick Markelle Fultz showed off his wide array of scoring tricks in Utah before

sitting out much of Vegas with an ankle injury and No. 3 pick Jayson Tatum of Boston was drawing comparisons to Paul Pierce while dominating both in Utah and Nevada.

The competition these rookies will face will increase exponentially when training camps open in October. And there is a long list of summer league standouts — Nikoloz Tskitishvili, anyone? — who never amounted to anything in the NBA. But for struggling franchises like the Lakers, Sixers, Suns and Kings, seeing some real promise from their youngsters the first time they step on the court is encouraging.

"Lonzo definitely gave the team a lot of confidence as this thing went along," Lakers coach Luke Walton said. "The way he plays, he's always got his poise about him, just an incredible basketball player and with the unselfish nature he plays the

game, it just becomes contagious and I think other guys started picking up and playing off of that."

Winning a summer league title certainly doesn't mean the suffering of the last four years is over for the Lakers. Far from it. The real test comes in a couple of months.

But for several franchises that are in the business of selling hope right now, business is good.

Here are some other takeaways from summer league action:

Vegas title game. Kyle Kuzma had 30 points and 10 rebounds to lead the Lakers to a 110-98 victory over the Trail Blazers.

Kuzma hit 6 of 10 three-pointers and Matt Thomas scored 23 points on 8-for-9 shooting and 5-for-5 on threes to help the Lakers overcome the loss of Ball, who sat out with a calf

injury.

Caleb Swanigan had 25 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists and Jake Layman had 21 points and seven boards for Portland.

Packed house. Buoyed by Ball and the Lakers, nearly 128,000 fans attended the Vegas Summer League this year.

What started as a gathering of a few teams 13 years ago has turned into a full-fledged event under the guidance of coaching agent Warren LeGarie and Albert Hall. Sponsors are lining up to get in on the action, fans crowd the concourses looking for autographs of the next big things and established stars like LeBron James, Isaiah Thomas and John Wall sit courtside to watch the games.

ESPN and NBATV televise the games and more than 500 media credentials were given out for the Las Vegas site alone.