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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Long-term plans for Afghanistan discussed

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump presided over a rare meeting of his full national security team Wednesday in the White House. The subject was the future of the U.S. war effort in Afghanistan, and hovering over the discussion was a big question: How committed is the president to a long-term and costly American presence in the country?

Trump has said little about America's longest war since taking office in January, but the debate over how to stabilize the country and reverse the Taliban's momentum has divided top officials in the Pentagon, the State Department and the White House in recent weeks.

The meeting Wednesday was designed to tee up final decisions for the president in what has been a long and difficult policy review, said current and former U.S. officials.

Trump gave Defense Secre-

tary Jim Mattis the authority more than a month ago to send as many as 3,900 additional troops to Afghanistan on top of the roughly 8,400 currently there. But Mattis has yet to pull the trigger on sending the additional forces until the administration can agree on a final strategy for Afghanistan, said U.S. officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing internal planning.

"He's clearly being cautious about cashing that check," said a former U.S. official who has participated in the administration debate. "Mattis is either not persuaded that there's a strategic rationale for the troops or he's not persuaded that the decision will ultimately fly with the president — or both."

The meeting that Trump led in the White House did not focus on the size of the American force in Afghanistan but looked at America's broader

approach to the region and its strategy regarding Pakistan, which has provided a haven for the Taliban.

National security adviser H.R. McMaster and U.S. commanders in Afghanistan have pressed for a more punitive approach to Pakistan aimed at forcing it to cut ties to the Afghan Taliban.

But such an approach has been met with skepticism by senior officials in the Pentagon and the State Department, who said that Pakistan is unlikely to change its behavior and that efforts to pressure Islamabad would likely lead to greater instability in the region.

Top U.S. officials have also been divided over whether to seek peace negotiations with the Taliban now or wait until the new U.S. strategy has begun to shift the momentum on the battlefield. "The McMaster view is that you should not ne-

gotiate with the Taliban while they are still ascendant," said the former U.S. official.

But the current U.S.-Afghan war strategy is built around a four-year plan to push back the Taliban that is not likely to yield significant results until its later stages, U.S. officials said.

Earlier this week, Trump met over lunch with servicemembers who had fought in Afghanistan and suggested that his patience with the war might be running out.

One challenge for Trump is that there are not a lot of new options available to him that do not come with a big price tag. In recent months, Trump has loosened the rules governing American airstrikes, allowing U.S. forces to boost the air campaign against the Taliban to levels not seen since 2012, when the United States had 100,000 troops in the country.

John McCain diagnosed with brain cancer

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Battling brain cancer, Sen. John McCain on Thursday promised to return to work, making a good-natured dig at his Republican and Democratic colleagues who were jolted by news of the six-term lawmaker's diagnosis.

"I greatly appreciate the outpouring of support — unfortunately for my sparring partners in Congress, I'll be back soon, so stand-by!" McCain said in a tweet.

The 80-year-old McCain, the GOP's presidential nominee in 2008, was diagnosed with glioblastoma, an aggressive type of brain cancer, according to doctors at the Mayo Clinic in Phoenix who had removed a blood clot above his left eye last Friday.

"Subsequent tissue pathology revealed that a primary brain tumor known as a glioblastoma was associated with the blood

clot," his office said in a statement late Wednesday.

The senator and his family are considering further treatment, including chemotherapy and radiation, as he recuperates at his home in Arizona.

Prayers and words of encouragement multiplied on Thursday from presidents and Senate colleagues past and present.

"I called Senator John McCain this morning to wish him well and encourage him in his fight. Instead, he encouraged me," said former President George W. Bush, who prevailed over McCain for the GOP presidential nomination in 2000. "I was impressed by his spirit and determination."

McCain's closest friend in the Senate, Lindsey Graham, of South Carolina, said he spoke to the senator Wednesday night and that the diagnosis was a shock to McCain. He said McCain is fighting the ill-

ness, and "woe is me" is not in his DNA. "One thing John has never been afraid of is death," said Graham, who said he expects McCain to be back.

According to the American Brain Tumor Association, more than 12,000 people a year are diagnosed with glioblastoma, the same type of tumor that struck McCain's Democratic colleague, the late Ted Kennedy, of Massachusetts.

McCain has a lifetime of near-death experiences — surviving the July 1967 fire and explosion on the USS Forrester that killed 134 sailors; flying into power lines in Spain; the October 1967 shoot-down of his Navy aircraft and fall into Truc Bach Lake in Hanoi; and 5½ years in a North Vietnamese prison.

In the past, McCain had been treated for melanoma, but a primary tumor is unrelated.

EUCOM eyes Russia-China Baltic Sea drills

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. European Command is monitoring a series of coming exercises between Russia and China in the Baltic Sea, warning Moscow to observe safety protocols that American officials accuse Russia of flouting.

“Russia has a reputation of unsafe intercepts and naval activity,” EUCOM said in a statement Thursday. “Our concerns were raised through appropriate channels.”

Set to start in late July, Joint Sea 2017 will feature Chinese and Russian warships conducting drills as the two navies aim to forge closer ties.

This will be the first time

Chinese warships have entered the Baltic sea. The two navies have held joint drills every year since 2012 in the Pacific and the Mediterranean. Joint Sea will involve 10 warships and a like number of aircraft, Russian media said.

The Russian and the Chinese militaries both stand to gain if their collaboration proves lasting, some analysts say.

“The Russians have greater experience and still have the lead in most warfare areas, particularly in submarine and anti-submarine operations,” wrote James Goldrick, an analyst with the Sydney-based Lowy Institute for International Policy. “But the Chinese have the resources and are rapidly press-

ing ahead.”

During the past two years, the Baltics and the Black Sea have been a flashpoint between Russia and U.S. military planes and ships conducting operations in the area.

The U.S. frequently complains about unsafe maneuvers, such as when Russian fighters buzzed the USS Donald Cooke in 2016 in a high-profile encounter caught on video.

Last month, EUCOM released photos that showed a close encounter between a Russian fighter and a U.S. Air Force surveillance plane flying over the Baltic Sea in international airspace.

EUCOM said Russian and Chinese navies have a right to

conduct exercises in the region. For its part, EUCOM has numerous ongoing training activities stretching from the Baltics to the Black Sea and beyond.

“We are closely tracking Russian exercises with other participants, like China. While we support their rights to train in international commons, we expect all nations to adhere to international norms and laws,” EUCOM said.

EUCOM said it is concerned about the pace of Russia’s military buildup and its “unprecedented increased military activity focused on a nationwide approach to exercises, including modernized command and control and higher operational tempo.”

17-nation Sea Breeze exercise wrapping up

By SCOTT WYLAND
Stars and Stripes

U.S. and multinational forces are wrapping up a two-week exercise on the Black Sea, a region of heightened tensions since Russia’s takeover of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

The United States and Ukraine co-hosted the Sea Breeze exercise, which ends Friday. It has featured warships, aircraft, a submarine, divers and construction teams from among 17 nations. The U.S. contingent includes the destroyer USS Carney and the cruiser USS Hue City.

Russian aggression against Ukraine has changed the tenor of Sea Breeze, which was established 20 years ago when the West’s relations with Russia were friendlier.

“I have no doubt a signal is being sent, and that it’s aimed at Russia,” said Jim Holmes, professor of strategy at the Naval War College. The signal,

he said, is that “we can help our Ukrainian friends and thus defeat Russia’s aims.”

Capt. Tate Westbrook, who helped oversee Sea Breeze, said that Russia’s intervention in Ukraine and its encroachment on Georgia have had a destabilizing effect on the region. But a multinational exercise like Sea Breeze is intended to prepare allies for any conflict, he said.

“It’s not all about Russia,” Westbrook said.

However, the anti-submarine portion was expanded this year in response to the increased presence of Russia’s submarine fleets in the Black Sea, Westbrook said.

In all, 30 vessels, 17 aircraft and almost 3,000 personnel have taken part in Sea Breeze. Besides the United States and Ukraine, the exercise includes Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Moldova, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Pentagon delays Japan deployment for USS Milius

By TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The destroyer USS Milius’ forward deployment to Japan has been pushed back to 2018 despite a need for additional ships in the busy Asia-Pacific region.

The USS Milius, originally scheduled to arrive this summer, was rescheduled so the ship can undergo additional testing and certification, the Navy said Thursday in a statement. Naval Surface Forces delayed the ship’s arrival to complete its maintenance and modernization.

The announcement comes at a time when the 7th Fleet is already down a destroyer. The USS Fitzgerald has been undergoing extensive repairs since a June 17 collision with a cargo ship killed seven sailors and severely damaged the ship.

“I am concerned about the number of ships that we have out here,” Pacific Fleet Commander Adm. Scott Swift said in an interview with Stars and

Stripes on June 26.

“Milius was coming out to help get us down to the [operations] tempo that we can really sustain. We’ve got such an incredible amount of work out here that I need Milius plus another ship to backfill behind Fitzgerald.”

Swift is looking for a ship to take over for the Fitzgerald and is considering vessels outside the 7th Fleet, he said during the interview. He said he has two candidates in mind but declined to name them.

The San Diego-based Milius, commissioned in 1996, is undergoing a modernization process that will outfit it with the Aegis Baseline 9 combat system.

The destroyers USS Barry and USS Benfold, based at Yokosuka Naval Base in Japan, have the same system.

The Aegis upgrade boosts the ship’s air defense, missile defense, surface warfare and undersea warfare capabilities, the Navy said.

Aussies show mastery of amphibious skills

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE

Stars and Stripes

SHOALWATERBAYTRAINING AREA, Australia — Under the cover of darkness, U.S. and Australian troops aboard the USS Green Bay loaded into small rubber boats early Wednesday and crept toward the eastern Queensland shore.

The Marines from the Okinawa-based 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment were laying the ground work for a joint U.S.-Australian amphibious landing — part of the monthlong Talisman Saber exercise underway Down Under — slated to commence at dawn.

More than 33,000 Australian and U.S. troops are participating in the biennial exercise, which has an imaginary foe with capabilities that mirror those of major military powers such as China and Russia. The war games include simulated cyberoperations, Special Forces, naval and air movements, bombardment, acts of deception, and assaults from the sea and air.

The exercise has also marked a historical achievement for the Australians, who demonstrated new amphibious capabilities that have been years in development.

Before Wednesday's invasion could commence, the small reconnaissance force needed to clear the beach and set up a helicopter landing zone. The sounds

of gunfire from opposition forces — played by Army National Guard troops — quickly interrupted their mission.

"We were going up the road and took contact off and to the left, from the bushes up there, the trees," Marine Sgt. Douglas Shaffer said while pointing into the brush. "We reset, came back on the road, then took contact again from up on the left, in the trees; came back, and by that time, they were taking contact from the [helicopter landing zone] here."

Shaffer and his men moved west to set up a blocking position, but encountered stiff resistance. All along a road from the beach, Marines could be seen firing in prone positions from the undergrowth pushing out the opposition by the time amphibious-assault vehicles filled with Marines hit the beach about a half-hour later.

Launched from the well-decks of the USS Bonhomme Richard and its expeditionary strike group, the assault included more than 50 vehicles and 500 Marines coming ashore within just a couple of hours, said Marine Lt. Col. Jackson Doan, battalion commander for 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, the unit deployed to the 31st MEU from Camp Pendleton.

Tilt-rotor MV-22 Osprey made several trips ashore, as did landing craft air cushion hovercrafts from Naval Beach Unit 7 out of Sasebo, Japan.

While amphibious assaults are routine for Marines, they are relatively new for the Australians, who have been showcasing those skills this month at Talisman Saber. On July 13, the Aussies conducted their largest amphibious landing since World War II at Langham Beach, Stanage Bay.

The Australians — who worked for the past six years to build their amphibious capability — have gained a lot of ground very quickly, Shaffer said.

"I've been in the Marine Corps three years and we've done dozens of these operations," he said. "Working with the Australians, it's nice to have an equal force ... it's almost like having another one of our craft out there. They're right on our same level, so it's great."

Twenty Aussie soldiers participated in the assault. Australian Army Sgt. Michael Morton, of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, said the army is branching out to be part of the nation's "amphibious commitment."

"Obviously, we have that small-boat capability to provide the insertion method for the pre-landing force," said Morton, who added that they can also perform surface assault swimming and rocky landings in addition to their usual demolition, mine-clearing and engineering duties.

"The skillsets and the level of training we're provided with

now are second to none," he said.

Australian Army Cpl. Bradley Congerton agreed.

"It's been two years since we've worked with the U.S. Marines with amphibious insertion, so it's been a really good experience on Talisman Saber this year," he said. "We got the job done."

Congerton called Wednesday's assault a "culminating event" for the joint forces. All nations involved have learned from each other and should incorporate certain things, such as boat set-up, into their repertoires, he said.

Marine Cpl. Kevin Poole, who came ashore in the second wave, said Talisman Saber, while challenging at times, has been a positive experience. The 22-year-old from Clemson, S.C., said everything from the chopiness of the seas to the humidity and spiders made training in Australia a unique experience.

"I've only been here for an hour, and I've seen a lot of spiders," Poole said while trying to suppress a smile. "It's been good training. I don't want to say we're used to it, but we're just doing our job."

As Talisman Saber 2017 heads into its final days, the troops fighting at Shoalwater Bay appear to be moving closer to victory, which will require clearing a Military Operations on Urban Terrain town, or MOUT, facility.

Lawmakers urge expansion of Bay of Bengal security help

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

While the Trump administration has yet to define its strategic policy in the Pacific, key lawmakers are urging the Pentagon to expand Obama-era security assistance to countries in the Bay of Bengal to counter China's growing influence.

The proposed National Defense Authorization Act 2018 directs the Defense Department to expand the Maritime Security Initiative to add Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myan-

mar to the five Southeast Asian countries already included.

The inclusion underscores the emerging alliance among the United States, India and other Bay of Bengal states as a counterbalance to China's military and economic ventures in the region.

The waters are central to China's "One Belt, One Road" project, a massive global infrastructure plan intended to secure trade routes essential to China.

Earlier this year, China re-

leased a proposal to build a first-of-its-kind ocean corridor intended to link Southeast Asia with the Bay of Bengal, among other places.

The 2017 NDAA gave the defense secretary permanent, worldwide authority to provide foreign countries with support for training, equipment and sustainment to build capacity for, among other things, maritime and border security operations.

The first iteration of aid was last year's Southeast Asia

Maritime Security Initiative, which provided assistance to key nations bordering the disputed South China Sea — Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam — over which China has laid claim to a swathe. The initiative has funded equipment, training and military construction.

The initiative expansion, proposed by the Senate Armed Services Committee, would build upon a blossoming military relationship between America and Bangladesh.

Sessions staying despite rebuke from Trump

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Attorney General Jeff Sessions said Thursday he has no immediate plans to resign after President Donald Trump excoriated the nation's top prosecutor for recusing himself from the probe of suspected Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. political campaign.

"We love this job, we love this department, and I plan to continue to do so as long as that is appropriate," Sessions said.

A former senator from Alabama, Sessions was one of Trump's earliest supporters and became attorney general in February. A month later, he took himself out of a Justice Department-led inquiry into the election following revelations he

failed to disclose meetings with Russia's ambassador to the U.S.

Trump on Wednesday told The New York Times he never would have tapped Sessions had he known a recusal was coming.

"Jeff Sessions takes the job ... recuses himself, which, frankly, I think is very unfair to the president. ... If he would have recused himself before the job, I would have said, 'Thanks, Jeff, but I'm not going to take you,'" Trump said.

Trump's rebuke underscored his continuing fury with Sessions more than four months after the recusal and came during an interview in which he also lashed out at Robert Mueller, the special counsel now leading the federal probe; James Comey, the FBI director Trump

fired; Andrew McCabe, the acting FBI director who replaced Comey; and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who appointed the special counsel.

Two Trump advisers, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that the president's public comments largely reflected what they have heard him say about Sessions privately.

Sessions' decision to step away from the Russia probe was made without consulting with the president and essentially paved the way for the appointment of Mueller as special counsel. Mueller's investigation, along with separate congressional probes, has overshadowed much of Trump's agenda and ensnared several of his associates, including his son Donald Trump Jr. and the president's

son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner.

Few developments in the controversy have irked Trump more than Sessions' decision to recuse himself from the investigations. The advisers said the president viewed the move as an act of disloyalty and was angry Sessions did not consult with him ahead of time.

At one point, Sessions privately told Trump he was willing to resign, but the president did not accept the offer. One adviser said Trump's comments to the Times did not reflect any new desire to fire Sessions, though they acknowledged the attorney general's response to the public denigration was less certain.

Trump raised the prospect of firing Mueller in his interview with the Times.

Silicon Valley outreach helps in fight against ISIS

The Washington Post

The Pentagon's Silicon Valley office is developing several new computer programs for the U.S. military's air operations center running the bombing campaign against Islamic State, one of its largest efforts since launching two years ago.

The effort was started in the fall after several academics and Silicon Valley executives, including Alphabet chief executive Eric Schmidt, visited the Air Force's air operations center in Qatar as part of a tour of U.S. bases in the Middle East. The visitors, part of then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter's new Defense Innovation Board, were surprised to see that the Air Force used a white marker board to plan the elaborate daily effort to refuel aircraft involved in the war in Iraq and Syria, said Joshua Marcuse, the board's executive director.

"The board members were horrified and appalled at the way we were doing it," Marcuse said. "But they were also really impressed with the young men and women who had the inge-

nuity to try to work through this on their own. They just felt there had to be a better way."

Schmidt, chairman of the innovation board, suggested that the Pentagon's Silicon Valley office could address the problem quickly. The effort has included Air Force coders deploying to Qatar and a Silicon Valley company working daily with the military to improve the software.

The effort could stand as an example of how the Pentagon's Silicon Valley office — known as DIUx, short for Defense Innovation Unit Experimental — is gaining traction after initially struggling following its formation in 2015. The office was created with the goal of making it easier for tech firms to work with the Pentagon, which has traditionally contracted more with older defense companies.

Airmen involved in refueling planning said the job used to take a handful of airmen about eight hours each day to complete. Several airmen said that time period has since been reduced to about four hours, and it could be reduced further.

GOP senators in final effort to rescue health care bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican senators are hunkering down in a last-ditch attempt to prevent their own divisions from pushing their health care bill to oblivion.

Yet after a face-to-face lecture from President Donald Trump, around two dozen of them staged a meeting Wednesday to resolve disputes over repealing and replacing President Barack Obama's health care law.

"We still do have work to do to get to a vote of 50, but people are committed to continuing that work," said Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo.

Reviving the legislation will require party leaders to win support from at least 50 of the 52 GOP senators, a threshold they've been short of for weeks. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell says he'll force a vote on the bill early next week. Also attending Wednesday's private meeting were health Secretary Tom Price and Seema Verma, the Medicaid and Medicare administrator.

Earlier in the week, the latest Senate GOP health care plan

collapsed, leading Trump to call for simply letting Obama's law fail. McConnell indicated he was prepared to stick a fork in the bill and move on to other issues including overhauling the tax code. But plunging into the issue after a period of lackadaisical involvement, Trump pressured McConnell to delay the key vote until next week and invited Republican senators to the White House for lunch.

There, with the cameras rolling, Trump cajoled, scolded and issued veiled threats to his fellow Republicans, aimed at wringing a health care bill out of a divided caucus.

McConnell has failed repeatedly to come up with a bill that can satisfy both conservatives and moderates in his Republican conference. Two different versions of repeal-and-replace legislation fell short of votes before coming to the floor, pushing him to announce Monday night that he would retreat to a repeal-only bill that had passed Congress when Obama was in office. But that bill, too, died a premature death as three GOP senators announced their opposition on Tuesday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man nabs blue lobster, donates it to science

NH PORTSMOUTH — A New Hampshire lobsterman joined an elite club after catching a rare blue lobster.

The Portsmouth Herald reported Greg Ward initially thought he had snagged an albino lobster when he examined his catch Monday off the coast where New Hampshire borders Maine. The Rye lobsterman quickly realized his hard-shell lobster was a unique blue and cream color.

The oft-cited odds of catching a blue lobster are 1 in 2 million. But no one knows for sure.

Ward gave the rare crustacean to the Seacoast Science Center in Rye to study and put on display.

Center aquarist Rob Royer said Ward's blue lobster will go on display in the "exotic" lobster tank once it acclimates to the water.

Man to display head of huge hog shot in yard

AL SAMSON — Hogs aren't unusual in rural south Alabama, but Wade Seago said he'd never seen anything like the 820-pound animal he shot and killed in his front yard.

Seago told al.com that he and his daughter spotted the massive hog in their yard in Samson last week after the family's pet Schnauzer Cruiser started barking.

"Cruiser had this huge hog confused with all of the barking and movement," Wade said. "It was not a good situation."

The man got his .38-caliber handgun and took aim. It took three shots to drop the hog, Seago said, and he later weighed it on scales at a peanut company.

Seago told The Associated Press on Wednesday that he plans to display the hog's stuffed head and shoulders at his taxidermy shop.

Police: Woman drove drunk with daughter, 10

MA ATTLEBORO — Police said a Massachusetts woman had a blood-alcohol content more than four times the legal limit to drive when she was pulled over with her 10-year-old daughter in the car.

The Sun Chronicle reported that Jennifer White, 41, of North Attleborough, was arrested last weekend when police say she was spotted driving erratically at 20 mph.

She was released on her own recognizance after pleading not guilty to driving under the influence and child endangerment.

Brothers, 5 and 2, crash mom's car

WV RED HOUSE — Authorities in West Virginia said a 5-year-old and a 2-year-old who wanted to visit their grandfather took their mother's car for a 3-mile ride on a curvy, winding road before crashing it and escaping unharmed.

Putnam County Sheriff Steve Dewese said officials think the brothers worked together to steer the vehicle, but aren't sure because they haven't confessed details about their Monday ride. The car crashed into a ditch, and a neighbor found them and called authorities.

The boys made some good progress toward their grandfather's farm before crashing, navigating two or three turns and even a complete right turn, Dewese said.

"They were heading in the right direction," he said, but

crashed about 5 miles short of their destination.

Parents hope teen's last text will raise awareness

NM LOVINGTON — The parents of a Texas teen who died after she was accidentally electrocuted in a bathtub are sharing one of the last photos their daughter sent before her death.

The photo taken on July 9 shows an extension cord that Madison Coe, 14, brought inside the bathroom so she could charge her phone while she was in the tub.

Investigators believe Coe may have been electrocuted after touching a frayed portion of the extension cord.

A news release by the Lovington Police Department says the parents hope the image will raise awareness of the dangers that the combination of electricity, water and portable electronic devices can pose to people.

Volunteers step up to clean parks' outhouses

AK FAIRBANKS — A group of 18 Alaska residents has volunteered to clean the overrun outhouses at five Delta Junction state parks.

The Daily News-Miner reported the parks no longer have the money to pay the state for outhouse cleaning, water and trash pickup services. So the 18 residents decided to temporarily solve the smelly problem. They jokingly call their volunteering "potty training."

The services stopped July 1. Within a few days, the lack of clean outhouses turned into complaints that human waste was lying around campgrounds.

State parks officials hope to sign a contract with a private

company by mid-August.

Man uses his prosthetic leg to remain afloat

OH DOYLESTOWN — An Ohio man said his prosthetic leg helped save his life after he went overboard during a fishing trip.

Adam Shannon, of Doylestown, said he was fishing on Dohner Lake near his home Monday evening when a seat on his boat broke, sending him into the water.

Shannon's prosthetic leg came off as he went into the lake. The 45-year-old was able to use his prosthesis as a flotation device when it got trapped in his pants and filled with air.

Shannon called 911 for help, and his yelling attracted the attention of a family who lives nearby. Jeffrey and Matthew Krause grabbed their boat, paddled out to Shannon and tugged the man to shore.

Herd of buffalo roam in town before recapture

NH GILFORD — These buffalo have been roaming through a New Hampshire town.

Police in the town of Gilford spent Tuesday afternoon corralling a herd of buffalo that got loose from a local farm. They said on Facebook the buffalo are "scared and running," and asked drivers not to approach them or blow their car horns.

The Bolduc Farm told WMUR-TV nine of the buffalo had made it back; police were still looking for a mother and two yearlings.

Robert Bolduc said the buffalo may have been startled by some construction work and found a weak spot in a fence.

From wire reports

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Yanks call for reinforcements

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The New York Yankees have ignited their playoff drive with a bold trade.

This midseason tailspin didn't deter general manager Brian Cashman from making an aggressive move. The recent slump couldn't dampen any excitement of the acquired trio of power-hitting infielder Todd Frazier and power-armed relievers Tommy Kahnle and David Robertson, either.

"We're now in a sprint, and we want to be able to run the fastest, swiftest, most successful race we can," Cashman said, "and hopefully these three new additions can, again, put ourselves in position to do that."

The deal that sent reliever Tyler Clippard and three prospects, including 2016 first-round draft pick Blake Rutherford, to the Chicago White Sox was completed on Tuesday night. Frazier, Kahnle and Robertson arrived at the ballpark around game time on Wednesday afternoon and soon joined their new teammates in the dugout.

Frazier pinch hit in the seventh inning, striking out in his debut against Twins starter Jose Berrios. He remained in the game at third base, where he'll stay as a regular with Chase Headley moving to first base, and was hit by a pitch on the right hand in the ninth.

"Ah, I was a little foggy, man. I'll be honest with you. Just getting off the plane, I didn't really sleep last night. Getting up there, I've faced Berrios a couple times already, but it felt like my first at-bat, basically, getting called up again,"

Frazier said.

Kahnle struck out two in a perfect eighth inning of the 6-1 loss at Minnesota. Robertson didn't pitch.

"It was a rush," Kahnle said.

The Yankees sent left-handed reliever Chasen Shreve to Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and designated first baseman Ji-Man Choi and utility man Rob Refsnyder for assignment to make room for the new players. They fell to 10-22 in their past 32 games and 0-8-2 in their past 10 series, but they control the second AL wild-card spot.

"I think all the tools are in that clubhouse. I do. We just have to play better," manager Joe Girardi said.

The 20-year-old Rutherford was hitting .281 with 30 RBIs and 25 stolen bases at Class A Charleston to make the South Atlantic League All-Star team, and the 18th overall pick last year was the key piece for the White Sox to agree to the deal.

Though All-Star setup man Dellin Betances has struggled lately, adding Robertson and Kahnle to the mix with right-hander Adam Warren as bridges to closer Aroldis Chapman ought to be a big boost down the stretch for a team with a thin rotation. Kahnle, a New York native who grew up outside of Albany, was drafted by the Yankees in 2010. Though Frazier and Robertson are more experienced and accomplished, Kahnle could be the ultimate prize in this trade. The 27-year-old, who is still four seasons away from free agency, has 60 strikeouts in 36 innings with a 2.50 ERA and only seven walks.

Dodgers win 11th straight

Associated Press

CHICAGO — While the Chicago White Sox are looking to the future as their top prospect made his debut with the club, the Los Angeles Dodgers are just fine in the present.

The MLB-best Dodgers slugged their way to a 9-1 victory Wednesday night in a rain-shortened game, winning their 11th straight and spoiling the White Sox debut of Yoan Moncada.

Kike Hernandez homered in his first two at-bats, breaking out of a 1-for-23 slump and helping the Dodgers to their 31st victory in 35 games. The game was called in the top of the eighth inning after a 37-minute delay.

"The confidence that we have in our group that we're going to win a game on a particular night is real," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said.

Roundup

Arenado hits three homers as Rockies rout San Diego

Associated Press

DENVER — Nolan Arenado lined three homers as part of his five-hit afternoon and tied a career-high with seven RBIs, helping the Colorado Rockies complete a three-game sweep of the San Diego Padres with an 18-4 victory Wednesday.

Trevor Story and Charlie Blackmon also homered on a scorching day when the Rockies had a season-high 21 hits. Gerardo Parra ran his streak of reaching base to 10 straight plate appearances over three games before flying out in the fifth.

Angels 7, Nationals 0: Alex Meyer allowed only one hit in seven innings, and Mike Trout and C.J. Cron hit two-run hom-

ers to lead host Los Angeles to a victory that snapped Washington's six-game winning streak.

Giants 5, Indians 4: Buster Posey pinch hit a two-out, two-run double in the bottom of the eighth inning and San Francisco defeated visiting Cleveland.

Pirates 3, Brewers 2 (10): Max Moroff got his first career game-ending hit with a single in the 10th inning, lifting Pittsburgh over visiting Milwaukee.

Red Sox 5, Blue Jays 1: Dustin Pedroia drove in three, Drew Pomeranz pitched three-hit ball into the seventh inning and host Boston beat Toronto.

Twins 6, Yankees 1: Miguel Sano hit a three-run home run, Jose Berrios went strong into the seventh inning and Minne-

sota beat New York.

Phillies 10, Marlins 3: Daniel Nava tied a career high with four hits and Philadelphia had a season-best 20 hits to beat Miami and win a road series for only the third time this season.

Reds 4, Diamondbacks 3 (11): J.D. Martinez bruised his left hand, forcing him out of his debut with visiting Arizona, and Cincinnati ended its five-game losing streak with a victory by Adam Duvall's bases-loaded single in the 11th inning.

Mariners 4, Astros 1: James Paxton had another strong start against host Houston and rookie Ben Gamel powered the offense with a two-run homer to give Seattle a win over the Astros.

Orioles 10, Rangers 2: Kevin

Gausman pitched six innings of four-hit ball, Adam Jones homered and scored three runs as Baltimore beat visiting Texas.

Athletics 7, Rays 2: Sonny Gray struck out six pitching into the seventh, and the Athletics rallied in the fifth inning to beat Tampa Bay.

Royals 4, Tigers 3: Brandon Moss doubled off the wall in the ninth to score the tying run, and Alex Gordon drove him home with a sacrifice fly to give host Kansas City a victory over Detroit.

Mets 7, Cardinals 3: Jacob deGrom pitched into the seventh inning and won his career-best seventh straight start and New York beat visiting St. Louis.

Surging Cubs remain unbeaten since break

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Cubs are on the roll that had been long expected from the defending World Series champions.

Manager Joe Maddon said he likes the momentum created by a season-best six straight wins and feels even better about the positive energy in his clubhouse.

Mike Montgomery hit his first career home run and allowed two hits and one run in six innings to lead streaking Chicago to an 8-2 win over the Atlanta Braves on Wednesday.

Javier Baez hit a three-run homer in the eighth for Chicago, which hasn't lost since the All-Star break. The Cubs completed a three-game sweep of the Braves.

"It's even beyond that," Maddon said when asked about the winning streak. "It's just how we're starting to feel about ourselves. Yeah, the momentum is part of it but we've had this energy since the beginning of the second half in Baltimore."

The mood might have been spoiled if not for an encouraging report on Kris Bryant, the Cubs' 2016 NL MVP who left the game with a sprained left little finger in the first inning.

"I don't have any final conclusions but I think we really kind of dodged the bullet right there," Maddon said.

The team said X-rays were negative and Bryant is day to day.

Tommy La Stella, who replaced Bryant, also homered and Addison Russell drove in two runs with four hits, including two doubles.

The Cubs came to Atlanta only one-half game ahead of the Braves in the NL wild-card standings. Now they're bearing down on NL Central-leading Milwaukee.

"That's not a team that's going to stay dormant," Braves manager Brian Snitker said. "They're too good for that."

The Braves loaded the bases with three singles off Koji Uehara in the eighth. After Pedro Strop replaced Uehara, Matt Kemp grounded into a double

play to end the inning.

Montgomery (2-6) earned his first win since June 20. The only run he allowed came on a sixth-inning leadoff homer by Ender Inciarte. It was Montgomery's best start since throwing six scoreless innings in a 4-0 win over San Diego on June 20.

Tyler Flowers led off the seventh with a homer off Justin Grimm.

Montgomery reached the second level of the right-field seats with his homer off R.A. Dickey (6-6) in the fifth inning. After the game, he found the home run ball had been left in his locker.

"The first homer obviously is pretty exciting," Montgomery said. "I had a bunch of family here so to do it in front of them was a lot of fun."

Bryant's injury scare threatened to spoil the Cubs' win.

After hitting a double to center field off Dickey, Bryant tried to advance to third on a pitch in the dirt. He slid head-first and was thrown out by Flowers. Bryant immediately looked at his left hand while still on the ground and when he rose to his feet.

Ambushed: Montgomery surprised Dickey by taking a big swing on a 2-0 fastball that he hit for the home run.

"That's the first time in my career that a pitcher swung on a 2-0 pitch against me in a situation like that," said the 42-year-old Dickey. "He ambushed me and you have to give him credit. He had a good swing."

Montgomery said Dickey placed the fastball "pretty much the only place I could do that."

Soaring in second half: The Cubs have won their first six games since the All-Star break for the first time since 1935. Their only better second-half start was 7-0 in 1933.

Trainer's room: Braves RHP Arodys Vizcaino (strained right index finger) was activated from the DL. He pitched the ninth inning and gave up a run in his return after missing 11 games.

US overcomes dirty play, wins quarterfinal

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Skirmishing for position at the goal line ahead of a corner kick, Jozy Altidore could not believe what occurred: El Salvador defender Henry Romero bit the back of his left shoulder, then twisted his nipple.

Altidore maintained his composure — just — and then made light of the incident.

"My girl's mad at me," the American forward said. "She's mad at me. She's mad at Romero, 'cause she's like: 'Only I can bite you, only I can grab your nipples.'"

Amid the biting, twisting and talking, the U.S. advanced to a CONCACAF Gold Cup semifinal against Costa Rica with a 2-0 win on goals by Omar Gonzalez in the 41st minute and Eric Lichaj in first-half stoppage time.

But the ugly match, interrupted by 45 fouls, will be remembered for the mark on Altidore's shoulder left by the teeth of the 25-year-old defender. Gonzalez said after the game he was bitten on the back of his left shoulder by Darwin Cerin in the 81st minute.

"I was a bit shocked," Gonzalez said.

U.S. coach Bruce Arena said he wasn't surprised.

"There's a history of that in our sport," he said. Uruguay's Luis Suarez was given a four-month suspension for biting Italy's Giorgio Chiellini during the 2014 World Cup.

A furious Altidore shoved Romero, then grimaced and fell to the ground but remained in the game.

"It's never happened before, but in CONCACAF, it never ceases to amaze me," Altidore said. "You got to keep your cool. ... I shouldn't be saying these things happen, but they do."

Canadian referee Drew Fischer, a Major League Soccer regular, did not penalize the incident, which occurred in the 57th minute.

"I can't fault the referee," Arena said. "Those things are not easy to see on the field."

CONCACAF's disciplinary committee has leeway to impose punishment.

"These things always happen in football," El Salvador coach Eduardo Lara said through a translator, although it was unclear he knew bites had occurred.

The Americans, who started five veterans added for the tournament's knockout phase, overcame a shaky defense and poor passing. They face Costa Rica on Saturday in Arlington, Texas.

"Our timing wasn't good. We didn't deal well with the physicality. The game had no rhythm with all the fouls and players falling on the ground, but we weren't good on top of it." Arena said. "So it took us, really it took us 30 minutes to play a little bit, and then we got a little bit more assertive in different positions on the field and capitalized on a couple of their mistakes."

Arena changed all 11 starters for the second straight game and at 7-0-5 set a record for longest unbeaten streak at the start of a U.S. coaching tenure, topping Bob Bradley's 10-0-1 in 2007.

The U.S. improved to 6-0 against El Salvador in the Gold Cup, also winning quarterfinals 4-0 in 2002 and 5-1 in 2013. The Americans are 17-1-5 overall against the Salvadorans, the only loss an exhibition at San Salvador in 1992.

Altidore, forward Clint Dempsey, midfielders Michael Bradley and Darlington Nagbe, and goalkeeper Tim Howard were all added to the lineup. A crowd of 31,615 at half-filled Lincoln Financial Field was evenly split with supporters of both teams.

Howard was called on to save the U.S. in the third minute when Rodolfo Zelaya ran onto a terrible, lightly struck backpass by Lichaj. The goalkeeper sprinted out, slid and batted away the ball with his left hand.

"I told Tim thank you after the game," Lichaj said. "He got me out of the dirt there."

Kuchar, Spieth, Koepka lead British Open

Associated Press

SOUTHPORT, England — Matt Kuchar matched the best front-nine score ever at Royal Birkdale. And even following that with nothing but pars on the back nine, the American still shot his best score in a major.

Kuchar saved par from behind the 18th green and shot 5-under 65 to share the lead with Jordan Spieth and U.S. Open champion Brooks Koepka in the opening round of the British Open.

With three straight birdies and a 29, he tied the record that Ian Baker-Finch set in 1991 when he won the claret jug. Kuchar missed good birdie opportunities on the par-5 15th and 17th holes. Even so, it beats by one shot his previous best — a 66 in the second round at Oak Hill in the 2013 PGA Championship.

Two great bunker shots by Spieth and Koepka — one for par, one for eagle — moved them into the tie atop the early leaderboard.

Koepka, with no competition and very little golf since winning the U.S. Open last month, was in a pot bunker short of the green on the par-5 17th when he blasted out and watched it roll into the cup for an eagle that allowed him to share the lead with Spieth among the early starters Thursday at Royal Birkdale.

Spieth had a bogey-free round, and it required great bunker shots even by his standards to keep it that way.

His shot out of the rough barely rolled into a pot bunker to the right of the 16th green, leaving the ball on a slight slope near the back edge.

“This is dangerous,” he said to his caddie.

He aimed to the right of the hole to avoid it going off the green on the other side and into another bunker, and it came off perfectly about 10 feet away.

“That was awesome,” were his next words to his caddie.

He made the par putt — Spieth made a lot of putts on Thursday — picked up a two-putt birdie on the 17th and nar-

rowly missed a 7-foot birdie putt on the last. It was Spieth’s best start in a major since he opened with a 66 at the Masters a year ago.

“I couldn’t have done much better today,” he said.

Royal Birkdale was much more kind than it was nine years ago in raging wind and rain. The 146th Open began in cool temperatures, a light rain and a strong wind. Mark O’Meara, a winner at Royal Birkdale in 1998 who is playing in his last British Open, hit the opening tee shot.

And then he hit another one.

O’Meara’s first shot was lost in the gorse, he made a quadruple-bogey 8 and was on his way to an 81. But it wasn’t long before the wind off the Irish Sea pushed along the rain clouds and led to sunshine in the afternoon.

The wind remained strong. The scores were largely good.

Paul Casey was one stroke back at 66. A handful of others, including Justin Thomas, Ian Poulter and Richard Bland, were tied at 67.

It was a businesslike day in more ways than one for Thomas, who wore a tie loosely draped around his neck and a cardigan sweater. He wasn’t all about making a fashion statement. Thomas, who shot a 63 in the third round of the U.S. Open, made eagle on the 17th hole.

Hideki Matsuyama was among those at 68.

Koepka didn’t seem to miss a beat from his four-shot victory at Erin Hills, even if he barely touched a club. He stuck to a planned trip to Las Vegas after winning his first major, and he spent two weeks out West. When he finally got back to Florida, he played golf only one time, with manager Blake Smith at Hambric Sports, and lost to him (though he gave him 13 shots).

Kuchar was the U.S. Amateur champion when he played Royal Birkdale in 1998, still not even sure he was going to turn pro. Now he’s on the short list of best players to have never won a major.

Barguil wins Tour’s 18th stage; Froome still leads

Associated Press

COL D’IZOARD, France — French rider Warren Barguil triumphed on the barren slopes of the fearsome Col d’Izoard climb in the Alps, winning his second stage of the 104th Tour de France while Chris Froome successfully defended his overall race lead on Thursday, putting him within touching distance of a fourth Tour crown.

On the last day of climbing in the Alps, Froome lost a handful of seconds to French rider Romain Bardet, who moved up to second in the overall standings, relegating Rigoberto Uran of Colombia to third.

But Froome still leads Bardet by 23 seconds, a margin that the French rider looks unlikely to close before the finish Sunday in Paris. The last opportunity is in a time trial

Saturday, but Froome excels at that discipline.

“I gave it all, I thought I was going to suffocate as I crossed the line,” Bardet said. “I have no regrets. I did everything I could.”

Froome was relieved to put the Alps behind him. The mountains can crack even the best riders, and with them over with, there remain no real obstacles to stop Froome from clinching a third straight title. His first was in 2013.

While not huge, his lead is sufficient to mean that he doesn’t have to take unnecessary risks on the twisting and technical time-trial course in Marseille. Friday’s stage out of the Alps through Provence isn’t tough enough to provoke a big shake-up in the standings, and Sunday’s ride into Paris is largely processional.

“I’m happy that I went through the Alps without any major problem,” Froome said. “I normally find the Alps more difficult.”

Barguil set off in search of the Stage 18 victory when there were still four miles left to climb to the top of the Izoard pass, a moonscape of scree and rockslides in thinning air at an altitude of 7,743 feet.

He sped away from Froome’s group and gradually reeled in riders ahead of him on the hairpin bends and steep road — the last being John Darwin Atapuma of Colombia, with about 1 mile left to ascend.

From there, Barguil labored on alone to win the first stage to finish at the summit of Izoard in the 114-year history of the Tour. Barguil also won in the Pyrenees on Bastille Day.

Only the hardest pines sur-

vive at such high altitudes. And only the hardest riders, too.

The climb showed again what was already becoming apparent on the first day of big Alpine mountains on Wednesday: that Froome is super-strong and only Uran and Bardet are capable of staying with him.

They are now the only riders within a minute of Froome overall, after Italian Fabio Aru faded again and continued his slide down the overall rankings.

Going into the Alps, Aru was second overall, breathing down Froome’s neck. He is now fifth overall, nearly two minutes behind Froome.

Bardet outsprinted Froome in the final ramp of the climb, and got four bonus seconds for finishing the stage in third place — behind Barguil and Atapuma.