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IG: General used aide as servant in Iraq

By CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

A Marine general violated ethics rules on a recent deployment to Iraq when he asked or allowed his aide to loan him money and to run his personal errands, the Pentagon's inspector general said Thursday.

Marine Brig. Gen. Rick A. Uribe — who previously had served as the inspector general of the Marine Corps — often had his aide pick up his laundry, deliver his meals, write his unofficial correspondence and stand by gym equipment he wanted to use to make sure no one else could use it, the Pentagon IG said in a report.

Uribe also let his aide pay for his haircuts, borrowed cash and used Wi-Fi access she paid for without reimbursing her, the report found.

From May 2016 to June 2017, Uribe was the senior ranking

Marine in Iraq as part of the anti-Islamic State coalition. He was deputy commanding general for operations in Baghdad and director of the Combined Joint Operations Center. His responsibilities included ordering airstrikes to destroy enemy car bombs, mortars and other heavy weapons.

He told investigators he was often working 18-hour days to support the Iraqi security forces maneuvering to retake cities such as Fallujah and Mosul from ISIS.

Before deploying to Iraq, the general served as inspector general, a job in which he had responsibility for investigating ethical violations involving the misuse of subordinates.

One witness told investigators "he would have known better" than to request or allow his aide to perform duties for him on official time that had no connection to official duties.

Uribe also had attended ethics training in recent years that witnesses said included instruction on misuse of position, appropriate use of an aide-de-camp and guidance on not accepting gifts from subordinates.

But days after he returned to the U.S. from Iraq in June 2017, a Defense Department hotline complaint alleged that during the course of the one-year deployment, his aide's "entire existence as aide-de-camp centered on personal servitude."

In his own defense, Uribe said he was a "frocked" brigadier general, meaning he was a colonel who was selected for promotion and wore the rank of a general, and had never had an aide or any instruction or guidance beyond a few general slides about the use of aides. He said he trusted his aide to tell him if he was asking her to do something improper.

The aide, who is unnamed in the report, later told investigators she had told him, "I'm doing a lot more stuff like your personal type of items. Like, that's not my job as an aide."

To which she said Uribe replied only, "Understood."

Some of those personal services included stripping the sheets from the general's bed and turning them in to be cleaned, as well as spending hours arranging to have his prescription toothpaste shipped to Iraq. The aide also alleged that he hoarded about \$150 in chocolates and coffee sent to him by a lieutenant colonel.

The investigation found Uribe told the officer in an email he would share the goodies.

The report recommends that Uribe's supervisor "take appropriate action" and that Uribe reimburse the lieutenant colonel \$150 for the coffee and chocolates.

Study: Eating disorders a rising trend in servicemembers

By NANCY MONTGOMERY

Stars and Stripes

Eating-disorder diagnoses among military personnel are up 26 percent over a five-year period, according to a new military study that suggests the actual incidence of such illnesses is even higher.

The study, published in the Defense Health Agency's Medical Surveillance Monthly Report, found that incidence rates had risen steadily from 2013 to 2016 before decreasing slightly last year.

Diagnoses rose from 2.3 per 10,000 to 3 per 10,000 in 2016 before dropping to 2.9 per 10,000 last year.

"Results of the current study suggest that servicemembers likely experience eating disorders at rates that are comparable to rates in the general population, and that rates of these disorders are potentially rising among service members," the study said. "These findings underscore the need

for appropriate prevention and treatment efforts in this population."

Estimates of the prevalence of eating disorders in the general U.S. population vary widely, depending on study methods and populations. In a nationally representative U.S. sample, lifetime prevalence estimates of anorexia and bulimia were 0.9 percent and 1.5 percent, respectively, among women. Among men, the numbers were 0.3 percent and 0.5 percent.

Far more women than men were diagnosed with eating disorders in all services. More than two-thirds of cases involved female troops, and the overall incidence rate among women, at 11.9 cases per 10,000, was more than 11 times that of men.

"Of note, the overall incidence rate of all eating disorders among female Marine Corps members was nearly twice that among female Army members," the study said. Among men, rates were highest in the

Army and the Marines.

Less than one-eighth of the diagnoses were for anorexia, a well-known and potentially fatal disorder that is especially evident because of dramatic, excessive weight loss.

Bulimia — bingeing and purging through vomiting and laxative use — accounted for nearly 42 percent of diagnoses. More than 46 percent were classified as other or unidentified eating disorders. Included in the "other" category was binge eating, defined as recurrent episodes of eating large quantities of food, often very quickly and to the point of discomfort, a feeling of a loss of control during the binge, and experiencing shame afterward.

Military service could increase the risk of developing an eating disorder due to potential exposure to trauma and the need to meet physical fitness and weight requirements, the study said.

Navy boosts funds for Fitzgerald repairs

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Navy has increased the amount it's spending to repair one of two Japan-based warships that were damaged badly in collisions at sea last year.

The service announced Monday that it will pay Ingalls Shipbuilding \$27,469,298 for "additional collision repairs as well as maintenance and modernization of USS Fitzgerald," according to a Defense Depart-

ment statement.

The Yokosuka-based destroyer collided with a Philippine-flagged container ship off the coast of Japan on June 17, 2017. Seven sailors died and more were injured in the crash.

Sailors at the naval base mourned the loss of their brethren in a ceremony marking the anniversary of the collision last month.

On Aug. 21, 2017, 10 sailors aboard another Yokosuka-based destroyer, the USS John S. McCain, were killed and others injured in a collision with a Li-

berian-registered oil tanker off the coast of Singapore.

About \$20.6 million of the newly awarded funds for the Fitzgerald repairs will be paid out of the Navy's fiscal year 2018 operations and maintenance budget and "other procurement funding" for fiscal year 2017, according to the Defense Department.

The extra spending involves a modification to an original approximately \$29 million contract awarded in September to Ingalls for the planning and execution of the work and res-

toration and modernization of the ship. Since then, a series of contract modifications have been issued at different phases of the repairs.

In December, the Navy awarded an additional \$63 million for the "initial rip-out phase" of the collision damage. From January to July there were more contract modifications for repairs, maintenance and modernizations worth more than \$212 million, according to Defense Department statements.

Osprey surprises Japanese residents in Tokorozawa City

BY JAMES BOLINGER
AND HANA KUSUMOTO

Stars and Stripes

The Air Force doesn't have to give notice before aircraft land at U.S. or Japanese facilities that they have permission to use, a U.S. military official said Thursday after residents complained about a CV-22 Osprey landing in Saitama Prefecture, Japan.

Local government officials there told Japan's Defense Ministry that they weren't informed before the tiltrotor aircraft landed briefly at the Tokorozawa Communications Site on Monday evening, sparking noise complaints from residents, according to the Tokyo Shimbun newspaper.

"There is no requirement for any type of pre-notification before we use U.S. facilities or Japanese facilities for which we have agreements on usage," Air Force spokesman Master Sgt. Michael Davis said in a statement Thursday. "The air operations in question are in line with relevant airspace agreements and regulations between the United States government and the Government of Japan."

Davis declined to say why the

aircraft landed at Tokorozawa, citing the need for operational security.

The 242-acre Tokorozawa site is operated by personnel from the nearby Yokota Air Base in Tokyo and includes an antenna and warehouses.

Five special operations Ospreys — capable of taking off like helicopters, then tilting their rotors to fly long distances as fixed-wing aircraft — began operating out of Yokota in April.

Rim Peace, a group of activists, told Tokyo Shimbun that the Tokorozawa facility might be turned into a training site for the Ospreys, which could lead to more low-level flights over residential areas nearby.

According to Davis, the communications site already was available for training by UH-1 Huey helicopters and there has been no change in its status. It's important for all aircraft operating out of Yokota to be familiar with the surrounding areas and facilities to ensure safety during training and operations, he said.

Criminal complaint filed over stray bullet

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND AYA ICHIHASHI

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Politicians in Japan's southernmost prefecture want a U.S. general and other troops charged with attempted murder over a June 21 incident in which a bullet allegedly strayed out of a Marine Corps firing range and struck a farm shed.

A criminal complaint was filed Monday with the Okinawa Prefectural Police in Naha by nine legislators — led by Kantoku Teruya, who represents District 2 of the Okinawa House of Representatives, Ginowan City, Chatan and Kadena Town.

It seeks to charge III Marine Expeditionary Force commander Lt. Gen. Lawrence Nicholson, Camp Smedley D. Butler's headquarters and support battalion commander Col. William DePue and a group of unidentified Marines who were training at the time of the incident with destruction of property and attempted murder.

"This incident happened in Japan, and on Japanese soil; we

should be able to apply Japanese law and bring justice," said Ichiro Miyagi, a member of the Social Democratic Party and one of the complaint's nine signatories.

Police have a few days to determine whether there is enough evidence to pursue the case. They declined to comment Thursday.

Marine officials could not be reached for comment Thursday.

The alleged shooting incident occurred sometime between 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. June 21 in Sukuta, Nago, according to Japanese police.

A mango farmer told authorities he had come home from shopping to discover two broken windows in his shed and a 2-inch-long bullet on the floor.

Officials from Japan's Okinawa Defense Bureau have said that the range was in use at the time of the alleged incident. In the aftermath, the Marine Corps vowed to cooperate in any investigation and temporarily shuttered the range.

Protester shuts down Statue of Liberty

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A protest against U.S. immigration policy forced the evacuation of the Statue of Liberty on the Fourth of July, with a group unfurling a banner from the pedestal and a woman holding police at bay for hours after she climbed the base and sat by the statue's robes.

The woman and at least a half-dozen demonstrators who displayed the banner were arrested, while the climb forced thousands of visitors to leave the iconic American symbol on the nation's birthday.

About 100 feet above ground, the woman engaged in a four-hour standoff with police before two officers climbed up to the base and went over to her. With the dramatic scene unfolding on live television, she and the officers edged carefully around the stat-

ue toward a ladder, and she climbed down about 25 feet to the monument's observation point and was taken into custody.

The woman, Therese Okoumou, told police she was protesting the separation of immigrant children from parents who cross the U.S.-Mexico border illegally, according to a federal official who was briefed on what happened but wasn't authorized to discuss it and spoke on the condition of anonymity. A message left at a possible phone number for Okoumou wasn't immediately returned.

The climber was among about 40 demonstrators who earlier unfurled a banner calling for abolishing the federal government's chief immigration enforcement agency, said Jay W. Walker, an organizer with Rise and Resist, which arranged the

demonstration.

Walker said the other demonstrators had no idea the woman would make the ascent, which wasn't part of the planned protest.

"We don't know whether she had this planned before she ever got to Liberty Island or whether it was a spur-of-the-moment decision," Walker said.

Regardless, he said he felt the publicity would help the group's cause.

A spokesman for the National Park Service, which runs the monument, saw it differently.

"I feel really sorry for those visitors today" who had to leave or couldn't come, spokesman Jerry Willis said. "People have the right to speak out. I don't think they have the right to co-opt the Statue of Liberty to do it."

3 judges top list of potential court nominees

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is closing in on his next Supreme Court nominee, with three federal judges leading the competition to replace retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy.

Trump's top contenders for the vacancy at this time are federal appeals judges Amy Coney Barrett, Brett Kavanaugh and Raymond Kethledge, said a person familiar with Trump's thinking who was not authorized to speak publicly.

Working closely with a White House team and consulting with lawmakers and outside advisers, Trump has spent the week deliberating on the choice. He conducted interviews on Monday and Tuesday and

has spoken to seven possible candidates.

He has not yet publicly indicated that he has narrowed the list and could still consider others in the mix.

With customary fanfare, Trump plans to announce his selection Monday night, kicking off a contentious nomination process as Republicans seek to shift the court to the right and Democrats strive to block the effort.

Vice President Mike Pence also has also met with some of the contenders for the Supreme Court vacancy, The Associated Press has learned.

The meetings took place in recent days, according to a person familiar with the search process. The person did not specify which candidates Pence met with and

spoke on condition of anonymity Wednesday to describe the private search process.

Trump is choosing his nominee from a list of 25 candidates vetted by conservative groups. Other contenders who have received serious interest include federal appeals judges Amul Thapar, Thomas Hardiman and Joan Larsen.

The president spoke by phone with Republican Sen. Mike Lee of Utah on Monday. He's the only lawmaker on Trump's list.

Trump's choice to replace Kennedy — a swing vote on the nine-member court — has the potential to remake the court for a generation as part of precedent-shattering decisions on abortion, health care, gay marriage and other issues.

Bank restores funds stolen from oldest US war vet

The Dallas Morning News

Bank of America has restored funds stolen from 112-year-old veteran Richard Overton's account, his family said.

Overton, a World War II veteran who lives in Austin, learned his bank account had been drained last week, said Volma Overton, his third cousin.

Volma Overton said the family was shocked when the bank called and asked them to come in and sign for the restored funds.

"Man, I teared up," he said. "I couldn't believe it. They made it happen.

"The executive of the company said he'd

take care of this, and he took care of it."

A Bank of America spokeswoman confirmed Wednesday that the bank was investigating the issue and had credited Overton's account. Austin police were also investigating, along with federal authorities.

"Everyone wants to get to the bottom of this. I don't think it's going to be long before we know," Volma Overton said.

Money wasn't the only thing stolen from Richard Overton, his cousin said. His identity was taken, too.

His bank account wasn't tied to his GoFundMe account, which funds his in-home care. The campaign has raised more than

\$430,000 since it launched in December 2016, but a large portion has been spent. The funds go toward his medical care — Overton requires 24-hour care and four caretakers switch off between 12-hour shifts.

The fundraiser saw a huge spike in donations since the news broke about Richard Overton's account being drained, his cousin said.

"It's been a true blessing in disguise for us," he said.

Now, the oldest man in America can spend his days as he always does: sitting on his front porch, where he smokes 12 cigars a day and sips on whiskey and coke.

Thai cave rescuers are racing the rain

Associated Press

MAE SAI, Thailand — With more rain coming, Thai rescuers are racing to pump out water from a flooded cave before they can extract 12 boys and their soccer coach with minimum risk, officials said Thursday.

A firefighter who has been working on draining the water said parts of a passage leading to the chamber where the group was found Monday was still flooded to its ceiling, making diving the only way out.

“What we worry most is the weather,” Chiang Rai provincial Gov. Narongsak Osatana-korn told reporters. “We can’t risk having the flood back into the cave.”

The boys, ages 11 to 16, and their 25-year-old coach went exploring in the Tham Luang Nang Non cave in the northern province after a soccer game June 23. Monsoon flooding cut off their escape and prevented rescuers from finding them for 10 days. The boys, although skinny, have been described as in good health. Authorities have said the soccer players are being looked after by Thai navy

divers, including medics, staying with them inside the cave.

Narongsak said he asked the divers in charge of extraction plans to estimate what sort of a risk would be involved to take them out and “what kind of readiness we can have today and decide if we can take that chance.” He said the 13 may not be extracted at the same time, depending on their condition. They’ve practiced wearing diving masks and breathing in preparation for the possibility they may have to dive.

Officials prefer to get the boys out as soon as possible because heavy rain expected by Saturday almost surely will raise water levels again in the cave, making passage in some areas even more difficult, if not impossible.

They are hoping that an upgraded draining effort can lower the water in an area where it is still at or near the ceiling. The idea is to get some headroom so the boys would not be reliant on scuba apparatus for a long stretch and could keep their heads above water.

Court ruling slows plans for Medicaid work requirement

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration’s drive to wean poor people from government benefits by making them work has been slowed by a federal judge framing a fundamental question: Are poverty programs meant to show tough love or to help the needy?

U.S. District Judge James E. Boasberg in Washington last week halted Kentucky’s first-in-the-nation experiment with Medicaid work requirements, ruling that the Trump administration glossed over potential coverage losses. He sent the state’s plan back to federal authorities for a harder look.

The debate goes well beyond Medicaid, the federal-state health program for low-income and disabled people.

This past spring, President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing Cabinet

agencies to add or strengthen work requirements for programs including subsidized housing, food stamps and cash welfare. The government’s biggest assistance program for low-income people — the Earned Income Tax Credit — is already designed to supplement earnings from work.

Boasberg found that “medical assistance” is by law a “central objective” of Medicaid. While work requirements might be allowable if that’s what a state wants, “there may be limits to how much (coverage) loss is too much,” he wrote.

Kentucky’s Republican Gov. Matt Bevin wanted to impose work requirements on some 428,000 state residents who got Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act’s expansion. The state estimated that work requirements would save money, reducing the Medicaid rolls by about 95,000 people over five years.

Trade war with China is here, and it won’t be pretty

The Washington Post

BEIJING — Some said the day would never come, that it was all a bluff. But as the Independence Day fireworks cool in Washington, the eve of the trade war has arrived in China’s capital, where government leaders keep reminding people:

ANALYSIS We did not start this, but we will fight back.

President Donald Trump’s first tariffs are scheduled to hit \$34 billion of Chinese imports on Friday, and Beijing plans to respond swiftly with levies on an equal amount of goods. Border officers here could receive the order as early as midnight to slap new taxes on hundreds of American products, including pork, poultry, soybeans and

corn.

And so would begin an unprecedented commerce battle between the world’s two largest economies — a conflict analysts fear could rattle markets, cripple trade and undermine ties between the U.S. and China at a time when the administration seeks Beijing’s cooperation on North Korea.

As the global business community watches the clock, China is moving to pin the fallout on Trump, framing the U.S. as a bully the Asian nation is forced to confront. A state media editorial this week called America’s “dictatorial bent” a global threat, while officials said China will “absolutely not” take the first swing.

“As long as the U.S. side rolls out its tariffs list, China will re-

spond with all necessary measures to firmly safeguard our legitimate rights and interests,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told reporters Wednesday.

Those measures appear to be aimed at America’s heartland, which helped lift Trump into the White House. Farmers in the overwhelmingly red Midwest fear they’ll lose access to China’s lucrative market and will be left with the bill for excess produce and livestock.

What happens next is anyone’s guess, analysts say, because both sides have pledged not to back down.

“It’s a dark day tomorrow for global trade,” predicted Joerg Wuttke, former president of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China.

Uncertainty hangs over com-

panies, supply chains and investment plans, he said. American firms in China are already reporting spikes in random inspections at ports.

One U.S. manufacturer said Chinese authorities, on average, used to inspect 2 percent of the vehicles it sent abroad. Since June, agents have taken a closer look at every product.

Supply chains also will suffer a blow, said Cliff Tan, East Asian head of Global Markets Research at Japan’s MUFG Bank in Hong Kong. The initial set of American tariffs could rock companies in the technology sector and could increase the prices of “Walmart-type” products.

The conflict over U.S.-China trade has been brewing for years, but has intensified rapidly in 2018.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man recovers fallen son's stolen US flag

WA WHITE SWAN — A Washington state man has recovered a stolen American flag that belonged to his son who was killed in Afghanistan.

Two months after pleading for help on social media, Shawn Marceau told the Yakima Herald-Republic that he went to his son's gravesite Tuesday and found the flag folded in front of the headstone.

Marceau said the flag is sentimental to him because his son, Marine Lance Cpl. Joe Jackson, had it over his bed before he went out on his last patrol.

Jackson was 22 when he was killed April 24, 2011, by an improvised bomb while conducting combat operations in Helmand province of Afghanistan.

Man stirs after receiving last rites

ME SKOWHEGAN — The mother of a Maine man who was shot in the head with a pellet gun said he began showing signs of life less than an hour after a priest performed last rites for him at a hospital.

Lauri Quimby told the Bangor Daily News a doctor said her son Charles Quimby, 19, wouldn't live Sunday. But instead, she said he started moving shortly after the priest arrived.

Lauri Quimby said the pellet is still lodged in her son's head as of Tuesday, but he is breathing on his own and able to speak to doctors.

Woman safe after video of fall from SUV

FL TAMPA — Detectives in Florida have found a woman safe after she was seen on a surveillance video falling

from a moving SUV, officials said Tuesday.

The 21-year-old woman had suffered road rash in the Monday fall but had not sought medical attention, a Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office news release said. She told investigators that she fell out after leaning against a previously damaged door.

The incident was captured on video at an intersection near the University of South Florida in Tampa. She appeared to be unconscious after the fall, which prompted the search for her.

Detectives have categorized the case as an accidental injury. No charges are expected.

Stuck drawbridge shuts part of highway

MA BOSTON — Ramps on a Massachusetts highway were shut down as a drawbridge that runs across the highway was stuck.

Massachusetts State Police said the northbound and southbound ramps of Interstate 93 in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston were closed until further notice.

The drawbridge crossing the Neponset River is stuck open. No further information was available about why the bridge is stuck.

The 187-foot-long bridge, built in 1959, was closed for repairs in late April. A 2015 structural evaluation of the bridge found it to be in high priority of replacement.

Gun stolen 35 years ago is recovered

CT STAMFORD — Connecticut police said they have recovered a gun stolen 35 years ago during a bust.

The Stamford Advocate reported patrol officers checked out an Audi in Stamford on

Monday and arrested three men on charges related to carrying a pistol without a permit, and charges of possessing marijuana and stealing a firearm.

David Bates, 21; Philippe Renard, 25, and David Wilkin-son, 21, all of Stamford, were detained.

Police ran the gun's serial number through the National Crime Information Center database and discovered it was reported stolen on New Year's Eve 1983 in Quincy, Mass.

3 deer shatter barbershop windows

MS BROOKHAVEN — Deer broke through the door and plate-glass window of a barbershop in Mississippi.

Jackie Saujon told WLBT-TV that she was in downtown Brookhaven on Sunday evening when three deer shattered the storefront.

Saujon said what the animals didn't break on the way in, they broke on the way out. She captured video of them running away.

Brookhaven Barber Shop owner Jill Lewis Case says she doesn't have insurance, so she will pay for the damage on her own.

Photog finds duo after capturing moment

FL CLEARWATER BEACH — A photographer captured a beautiful picture of a couple on a Florida beach, silhouetted by the setting sun moments after their marriage proposal.

The Tampa Bay Times reported Lori Hayes realized that she had the couple's moment in her hands, but they left Clearwater Beach before she could share it.

Hayes took to social media, asking if anyone knew of an en-

agement there Friday. She also asked television station WFLA to share the image.

Word spread, and within days, a friend tagged Brooke Houseworth. She and her fiancé Bryan Parker found the photo on WFLA's website and got in touch.

Moose crashes couple's wedding

AK ANCHORAGE — An Anchorage couple was about to seal their wedding vows with a kiss when the ceremony was interrupted by a moose.

The Anchorage Daily News reported the wedding ceremony for Shandalyn and Alan Cuellar was wrapping up when the unexpected visitor emerged from the woods.

The moose eventually passed by, moving out of range. The ceremony continued, but the animal stayed in the background, ending up in several of couple's wedding photos.

Man arrested on 6th DWI charge

TX ODESSA — A West Texas man with five prior convictions for drunken driving has been arrested again on a charge of driving while intoxicated after a woman was seriously hurt when she fell out of his moving vehicle.

Luis Ortega Anzures, 47, was arrested early Monday and also charged by Odessa police with evading arrest.

Police began searching for Anzures after emergency personnel found the bloodied woman in the road. It's not clear what led her to fall out of Anzures' Jeep. She was in critical condition at a hospital.

His latest DWI charge was enhanced to a third-degree felony because of his prior convictions.

From wire reports

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FIFA rebukes Maradona over criticism of American referee

Associated Press

MOSCOW — FIFA's patience with Diego Maradona's World Cup antics finally ran out on Wednesday.

Soccer's world body said it "strongly rebukes" comments by the Argentina great criticizing American referee Mark Geiger's handling of England's win against Colombia in the World Cup round of 16.

It was yet another controversial moment involving Maradona — an official FIFA ambassador and figurehead of its "Legends" program celebrating former players — at a World Cup he has mostly attended as a VIP guest of FIFA.

FIFA hit back at Maradona for telling Venezuelan broadcaster Telesur the outcome of Tuesday's game in Moscow was a "monumental theft."

Maradona had been photographed before the game wearing a yellow Colombia jersey.

England advanced to the quarterfinals in a penalty shootout after a 1-1 draw in a feisty game slowed by stop-

pages and players arguing with Geiger, a former high school teacher from New Jersey.

FIFA said Maradona's "insinuations" were "entirely inappropriate and completely unfounded."

"FIFA is extremely sorry to read such declarations from a player who has written the history of our game," it said in a statement.

FIFA had tolerated previous incidents by Maradona at games in Russia, which the 1986 World Cup winning captain was left to explain on his Facebook page.

He apologized for making an offensive gesture toward a South Korean fan at Argentina's opening 1-1 draw with Iceland in Moscow. He then suggested media were trying to make headlines from an innocent incident and also broke World Cup stadium rules by smoking a cigar.

Maradona was filmed on FIFA's official television broadcast aggressively raising his middle fingers after Argentina scored

a late winning goal against Nigeria in St. Petersburg.

He was also seen on footage circulated on social media seeming to be unwell and assisted from his seat into a private dining area.

FIFA has had a turbulent relationship with Maradona in his career as a player and coach.

He tested positive for a cocktail of banned substances at the 1994 World Cup in the United States and was sent home from the tournament.

As Argentina's coach in 2009, a FIFA suspension for a tirade aimed at reporters after a World Cup qualifying game barred Maradona from attending the 2010 finals draw in Cape Town, South Africa.

Maradona was an outspoken critic of previous FIFA president Sepp Blatter, but was brought back into the fold when Gianni Infantino was elected in 2016.

He came to the Kremlin in Moscow last December wearing a gold bow tie to take part in the 2018 draw.

Nishino will not return as Japan's coach

Associated Press

TOKYO — Despite leading his team to a thrilling and unexpected ride at the World Cup, Akira Nishino will not be back as Japan's coach.

The Japan Football Association confirmed on Thursday that Nishino will not continue as coach of the national team when his term concludes at the end of July.

"We (the JFA) will not persuade Nishino to stay on the job as his term comes to an end." JFA president Kozo Teshima told a media conference Thursday.

Japan's squad returned home on Thursday following its round-of-16 defeat to Belgium at the World Cup in Russia.

The 63-year-old Nishino took over just two months before the World Cup following the surprise dismissal of Vahid Halilhodzic.

Exceeding expectations, Nishino led Japan to its first appearance in the knockout stage since 2010 in South Africa.

In April, the JFA said Nishino would manage the team until the end of the tournament.

CONCACAF boss targets 2026 for progress

Associated Press

MOSCOW — The head of North American soccer says the region's teams need until 2026 at a home World Cup to reach their full potential.

Mexico's traditional round of 16 loss this week left the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Football (CONCACAF) without the quarterfinals place it got four years ago from Costa Rica.

"All in all, I think it's par for the course," CONCACAF President Victor Montagliani said Tuesday of the region's performance in Russia.

With just three teams at this World Cup compared to four in 2014, Costa Rica was last in

a tough group and newcomer Panama lost all three games.

"I think you will see an improvement in four years," Montagliani told The Associated Press in an interview, though suggesting "eight years is more realistic."

Elected to lead CONCACAF in 2016, the Canadian official acknowledged the soccer body had too often let down its 35 FIFA member nations.

"Quite frankly, over the last 40 years CONCACAF as a confederation has not really done much to help the federations try to compete at a world level," Montagliani said of an era tainted by corruption, and leaders indicted by the U.S. Justice Department.

Now moved from Manhattan to Miami, CONCACAF has reformed its business practices and revamped competitions for national and club teams.

A Nations League kicks off next year, designed to raise competitive standards by giving smaller national teams more fixtures and revenue in a two-year cycle.

Four places were added to the marquee Gold Cup, which the United States will host next year with 16 teams.

"Then we will see what we look like eight years from now when we host a World Cup in our backyard," Montagliani said.

Though Mexico beat Germany 1-0 in a stunning group-stage

opener in Moscow, CONCACAF had a bigger win in the Russian capital. Five days earlier, FIFA members picked the joint United States-Canada-Mexico bid over Morocco to host the 2026 tournament.

That 48-team edition will give CONCACAF six guaranteed places — likely with automatic entry for all three hosts — plus two more chances in an intercontinental playoff round in November 2025. Two of six teams will advance, with Africa, Asia, Oceania and South America all sending one entry.

"Our confederation will look differently by the time we get to '22 and definitely look different by the time we host in '26," the FIFA vice president insisted.

Pella ousts No. 3 Cilic at Wimbledon

Associated Press

LONDON — Guido Pella of Argentina came from two sets down to stun third-seeded Marin Cilic at Wimbledon on Thursday, beating last year's finalist 3-6, 1-6, 6-4, 7-6 (3), 7-5 in the second round.

Cilic looked headed for a routine victory before the match was suspended by rain in the third set on Wednesday but the former U.S. Open champion couldn't find the same rhythm on Thursday.

"Yesterday he was playing so, so good, and hitting the ball so hard that I couldn't do anything," the 82nd-ranked Pella said. "So the rain helped me a lot."

Cilic was runner-up to Roger Federer last year and showed great form by beating Novak Djokovic in the Queen's Club final last month.

His early exit opens up Federer's path to the final even more, with No. 8 Kevin Anderson the highest-seeded player left in the Swiss star's half of the draw after No. 6 Grigor Dimitrov lost in the first round.

Stan Wawrinka also exited,

losing to Italian qualifier Thomas Fabbiano 7-6 (7), 6-3, 7-6 (6). That match was also suspended on Wednesday with Wawrinka leading 6-5 in the third set, but Fabbiano wrapped up the victory quickly to equal his best Grand Slam result by reaching the third round.

Wawrinka, whose ranking has fallen to 224th following knee surgery, came from a set down to upset sixth-seeded Grigor Dimitrov in the first round for just his second Grand Slam victory since last year's Wimbledon.

Former champions Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal remained on course for a semifinal meeting.

Djokovic overcame an apparent thigh problem to beat Horacio Zeballos 6-1, 6-2, 6-3, while top-ranked Nadal defeated Mikhail Kukushkin of Kazakhstan 6-4, 6-3, 6-4.

Djokovic called for a trainer and had his left leg massaged when leading 4-3 in the third set. But he easily held serve in the next game and broke Zeballos again to close out the match.

Nadal won only 64 percent

of points on his first serve and faced 13 break points — including three in the first game of the match — but he saved 11 of them and converted five of his own to wrap up the win in under 2½ hours on Centre Court.

The 11-time French Open champion is looking for his third title at the All England Club and first since 2010.

Anderson hit 34 aces to beat Andreas Seppi 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-4 and set up a third-round meeting with Philipp Kohlschreiber of Germany.

Frances Tiafoe, a 20-year-old American, reached the third round at a Grand Slam tournament for the first time, beating Julien Benneteau of France 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 with the help of 22 aces.

The 52nd-ranked Tiafoe produced 52 winners and only 14 unforced errors while eliminating the 36-year-old Benneteau.

Ninth-seeded John Isner hit 64 aces and saved two match points to beat Ruben Bemelmans 6-1, 6-4, 6-7 (6), 6-7 (3), 7-5 in a match that was also suspended overnight.

Isner's ace total was the third-highest ever at Wimble-

don — behind his own record in a three-day epic against Nicolas Mahut in 2010, the longest tennis match in history. Isner had 113 aces in that match and Mahut hit 103.

Isner faced two match points against Bemelmans at 5-4 in the fifth set but held and then broke in the next game.

He was given a code violation in the fourth-set tiebreaker on Wednesday after losing his cool following a video review that went against him.

On the women's side, top-ranked Simona Halep won the last 10 games to beat Saisai Zheng of China 7-5, 6-0 in the second round.

Saisai led 5-3 in the first set but Halep broke back for 5-5 and cruised the rest of the way against her 126th-ranked opponent.

Former finalist Angelique Kerber had to come from a set down to oust American qualifier Claire Liu in the second round.

The 11th-seeded Kerber broke decisively for a 4-3 lead in the third set before serving out a 3-6, 6-2, 6-4 victory against the 18-year-old Liu, the youngest player in the tournament.

Concussion woes force Holloway out of fight

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS—UFC featherweight champion Max Holloway's representatives say he is dropping out of his title defense against Brian Ortega at UFC 226 this weekend due to apparent concussion symptoms.

Holloway's management team announced the decision in a statement issued Wednesday night, three days before the bout.

The UFC didn't immediately confirm any changes to the penultimate bout on its biggest show of the summer.

"Max's team and UFC staff noticed Max was not normal since late last week," the statement from Holloway's camp said.

Holloway's camp indicated the champion stayed overnight in an emergency room Monday before he had even started his weight cut for the bout. Holloway was taken to an emergency room again Wednesday after awakening groggily from a nap following an open workout for fans at

the MGM Grand.

"Max fought with his team to continue with the fight," the statement said. "He showed some improvement (from Tuesday to Wednesday) but was still showing obvious symptoms. After open workouts he crashed and was very hard to wake up. When he did, he had flashing vision and slurred speech."

In an interview earlier Wednesday, Holloway (19-3) said he was particularly excited about fighting on the UFC's International Fight Week card, held annually in Las Vegas near the Fourth of July holiday. He was eager to fight in front of a large group of fans traveling to Vegas from his native Hawaii.

He was also excited to fight on a card with Daniel Cormier, his close friend and the UFC light heavyweight champion, who is moving up to challenge heavyweight champ Stipe Miocic in the main event.

The 26-year-old Holloway is one of the UFC's most dominant and most charismat-

ic champions, but he has been pulled from three prospective bouts this year due to three apparently different health problems.

Holloway initially was scheduled to defend his belt against former lightweight champion Frankie Edgar at UFC 222 on March 3, but he was pulled from the bout in early February due to a leg injury.

Holloway then volunteered to fight Khabib Nurmagomedov for the UFC lightweight belt on six days' notice in early April after Tony Ferguson dropped out of the much-anticipated title bout with an injury. But Holloway couldn't make the weight cut in time, with doctors pulling him from the show one day before the weigh-in.

Holloway last fought in December, when he stopped former champ Jose Aldo for the second consecutive time. He won the interim featherweight title by beating Anthony Pettis in December 2016, and he took the undisputed title with his first victory over Aldo last June.

Red Sox complete sweep of Nationals

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As Boston Red Sox players donned red-white-and-blue outfits to celebrate a 3-0 victory on the 4th of July that completed a sweep, the Washington Nationals held a players-only meeting to discuss a fifth consecutive loss and the precarious spot they're now in beyond the halfway point of the season.

Done in again by small mistakes that get magnified in a stretch such as this, the pre-season NL East favorites lost for the 17th time in 22 games Wednesday to fall below .500 for the first time this late in the year since being 60-61 on Aug. 21, 2015.

This time, it was a throwing error by Adam Eaton on a sacrifice fly in foul territory and a wild pitch by Ryan Madson (2-4) in a disastrous seventh inning that

dropped the Nationals to 42-43 and kept them from making up ground on the division-leading Atlanta Braves.

"We're a good team and we're going to go out there and compete with anybody," said Bryce Harper, who went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts. "We just have to keep grinding and keep doing our thing and good things will happen."

Powered by struggling outfielder Jackie Bradley Jr.'s two RBIs on the sac fly and a ninth-inning double and a strong start by Eduardo Rodriguez (10-3), the Red Sox moved 30 games over .500 under rookie manager Alex Cora.

Bradley, who came into the game hitting .201, worked full counts on each of his at-bats that produced a run. He was hoping the ball Eaton caught deep in foul territory down the third-base line would go out of

play so he could see another pitch but will gladly take the RBIs — the second time this season he has had two in a game without a home run.

"Just had to continue to battle and finally get a pitch I could handle," Bradley said. "Any time you can help the team win, it's a positive."

Rodriguez struck out six in six scoreless innings, mixing his change-up and slider in more often to keep Nationals hitters off-balance.

The Nationals have lost four series in a row. This freefall led to the postgame meeting Wednesday afternoon.

"It's 'Let's get this thing going,'" Nationals infielder Trea Turner said. "We all know we're capable of playing better baseball. It's time we do it. It's do or die now."

MLB roundup

D-backs clinging to NL West lead after latest loss

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Yadier Molina and Yairo Munoz homered, Miles Mikolas threw six strong innings and St. Louis broke loose late to beat Arizona 8-4 and take two of three from the first-place Diamondbacks.

Molina's three-run shot on the first pitch from reliever Fernando Salas highlighted a five-run seventh inning after Arizona had nursed a 2-1 lead through six. Tommy Pham drove in three Cardinals runs with a double and two singles.

The Diamondbacks dropped to 1-5 on their homestand and lead the surging Dodgers by just a half-game in the NL West.

Mikolas (9-3) gave up two runs, seven hits and four walks.

Arizona reliever Yoshihisa Hirano (2-1) had his franchise-record streak of 26 games without allowing a run end when Munoz homered on the first pitch of the seventh. Hirano gave up four runs, one earned, on three hits in two-thirds of an inning for his first loss since coming to the major leagues from Japan this season.

Yankees 6, Braves 2: Giancarlo Stanton hit a three-

run homer and CC Sabathia pitched six effective innings, leading host New York to the victory.

Yankees rookie second baseman Gleyber Torres left in the fifth inning because of tightness in his right hip and was placed on the 10-day disabled list with a right hip strain.

Aaron Judge and Kyle Higashioka also homered for New York. Higashioka became the ninth player since 1920 whose first three hits were home runs.

Astros 5, Rangers 4 (10): Evan Gattis drove in Jose Altuve with a sacrifice fly in the 10th inning, sending AL West-leading Houston to the road win.

Altuve stopped an 0-for-13 slide with a one-out single in the 10th. Chris Martin (1-2) then hit Yuli Gurriel with a pitch before an errant pickoff throw allowed both runners to move up. Gattis followed with a fly ball to right-center.

Dodgers 6, Pirates 4: Rich Hill earned his first win in three months, Yasmani Grandal and Chris Taylor drove in three runs apiece, and host Los Angeles swept Pittsburgh for the second straight year.

The Dodgers outscored the Pirates 31-8 in the three-game series while winning their fourth in a row overall.

Cubs 5, Tigers 2: At Chicago, Javier Baez stole home, Willson Contreras hit a tiebreaking homer and the Cubs earned their sixth straight victory.

Athletics 4, Padres 2: Stephen Piscotty doubled three times and drove in three runs, powering host Oakland to the win.

Khris Davis added an RBI single for the A's, who have won 14 of 17 to move a season-high nine games over .500.

Phillies 4, Orioles 1: Aaron Nola stuck out nine in seven innings, Nick Williams hit a two-run homer and Philadelphia beat visiting Baltimore to sweep a two-game interleague series.

Philadelphia pulled within 1½ games of NL East-leading Atlanta and improved 10 games over .500 for the first time since finishing the 2011 season with a franchise-record 102 wins.

Mets 6, Blue Jays 2: Todd Frazier hit a two-run homer for New York, and Brandon Nimmo reached base three times in the Mets' victory over host Toronto.

Brewers 3, Twins 2: Nate Orf hit a solo homer in host Milwaukee's two-run seventh after going hitless in his first seven major league at-bats.

Angels 7, Mariners 4: Kole Calhoun hit a two-run homer, helping visiting Los Angeles snap Seattle's eight-game winning streak.

Rockies 1, Giants 0: Chris Iannetta homered in the seventh, Tyler Anderson pitched eight stellar innings and host Colorado beat San Francisco for the three-game series sweep.

It was the first 1-0 game at Coors Field since June 12, 2010.

Indians 3, Royals 2: Trevor Bauer pitched effectively into the eighth inning, and visiting Cleveland finished a three-game sweep.

Reds 7, White Sox 4: Starting pitcher Sal Romano dropped down a suicide squeeze during host Cincinnati's six-run fourth inning.

Marlins 3, Rays 0: At Miami, Jose Urena and three relievers combined on a four-hitter, and the Marlins shook off the hangover from a 16-inning loss.

The teams took the field barely 12 hours after Tampa Bay won a 5½-hour marathon.