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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Trump urged to limit summit damage

From wire reports

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Tuesday he meant the opposite when he said in Helsinki that he doesn't see why Russia would have interfered in the 2016 U.S. elections.

Back at the White House on Tuesday, the president told reporters that he said he meant he doesn't see why Russia "wouldn't" be responsible.

The president also said he accepts the American intelligence community's conclusion that Russia interfered in the election, but he denied that his campaign had colluded in the effort.

Trump spoke a day after returning to the U.S. to nearly universal condemnation of his performance at Russian President Vladimir Putin's side in Helsinki. Putin said he wanted Trump to win the race against Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Pressure built throughout Tuesday as traditional Trump allies joined critics in the assault. A growing number of Republicans called on Trump to take swift action to embrace the U.S. intelligence community's findings about Russian interference in the 2016 election.

"He's got to speak out about it, and he's got to reverse course immediately," former White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci said during an appearance on CNN. "The optics of this situation are a disaster. ... If he doesn't reverse course on this, he will eventually lose people who want to support him."

Scaramucci, who said he still considers himself loyal to Trump, recommended that the president huddle with "his smartest, most loyal aides" and craft a statement making clear he understands there was Russian interference in the election.

Trump could do that while continuing to insist there was no

Obama gives president sharp rebuke in address

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG — Without ever mentioning President Donald Trump by name, former President Barack Obama on Tuesday took aim at "strongman politics" in his highest-profile speech since leaving office, urging people around the world to respect human rights and other values now under threat in an impassioned address marking the 100th anniversary of anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela's birth.

Obama's speech to a cheering crowd of thousands in South Africa countered many of Trump's policies, rallying people around the world to keep alive the ideas that Mandela worked for including democracy, diversity and tolerance.

Obama opened by calling today's times "strange and uncertain," adding that "each day's news cycle is bring-

ing more head-spinning and disturbing headlines." These days "we see much of the world threatening to return to a more dangerous, more brutal, way of doing business," he said.

He targeted politicians pushing "politics of fear, resentment, retrenchment," saying they are on the move "at a pace unimaginable just a few years ago."

He attacked "strongman politics," saying that "those in power seek to undermine every institution ... that gives democracy meaning."

He spoke up for equality in all forms, saying that "I would have thought we had figured that out by now," and he even invoked the World Cup-winning French team and its diversity. He warned that countries that engage in xenophobia "eventually ... find themselves consumed by civil war."

collusion between the Russians and his campaign, Scaramucci said.

Early in the morning, Trump seemed to remain defiant.

Around 9 a.m. Tuesday, Trump spoke out about the summit for the first time since returning to Washington, taking to Twitter to thank Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., one of the few prominent Republicans who have defended his performance at Monday's remarkable 46-minute joint news conference.

Earlier in the morning, Paul defended Trump on CBS, saying

he has been the focus of a "partisan investigation" over Russia and is "sensitive to that."

Later in the afternoon, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell took Trump to task, saying: "Make no mistake about it, I would say to our friends in Europe, we understand the Russian threat and I think that is the widespread view here in the United States Senate among members of both parties."

Standing next to Putin on Monday, Trump would not challenge the Russian leader's claim that his government played no

role in trying to sabotage the U.S. election, despite the Justice Department's indictments Friday of 12 Russian intelligence officers.

Trump's performance during the news conference prompted a wave of condemnation, including from many in his own party.

"It was a really bad day for the president," Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., said Tuesday morning on CNN. "I think President Trump was wrong yesterday in a major way, and I think it was a very embarrassing press conference."

Kinzinger said Trump needed to speak to the nation about what happened — in person and not on Twitter. "You need to come out today and very much clarify this," he said.

Kinzinger's pleading echoed former House speaker Newt Gingrich, a Republican who typically defends Trump.

"President Trump must clarify his statements in Helsinki on our intelligence system and Putin," Gingrich wrote on Twitter Monday. "It is the most serious mistake of his presidency and must be corrected — immediately."

Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who Trump recently endorsed for re-election, was asked during an appearance on Fox News's "Fox & Friends" on Tuesday whether he thinks Trump should clarify his comments at the news conference.

"I look for the president to maybe illuminate a little further the progress that was made in the closed-door session," Gaetz said, referring to a two-hour meeting earlier Monday between Trump and Putin at which only their translators were present.

The Associated Press and The Washington Post contributed to this report.

Some Truman strike group units to return to homeport

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

In a surprise revelation Tuesday, the Navy announced some units from the USS Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group will return to their homeport in Norfolk, Va., this week after just three months at sea.

The strike group in the past has typically deployed for periods more than twice as long. The Truman's most recent deployment in 2016 — scheduled for seven months — ultimately was extended for an additional month.

The Navy said in a statement Tuesday that the decision for the shorter deployment is a “direct reflection” of the 2018 National Defense Strategy’s dynamic force employment concept.

The strategy calls for the military to “be strategically predictable, but operationally unpredictable,” aiming to shake up what would be expected of its

movements to “challenge competitors by maneuvering them into unfavorable positions, frustrating their efforts, precluding their options while expanding our own, and forcing them to confront conflict under adverse conditions.”

Over the past three months, the Truman strike group has battled Islamic State in Syria and completed training and goodwill missions with allies, the Navy said.

Adm. Christopher Grady, commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command, said in a statement Tuesday that the early return is not related to any mechanical issues or problems.

“Let me be clear — all returning units are 100 percent mission-capable and will remain in the sustainment phase of the Optimized Fleet Response Plan, which means they will sustain warfighting readiness and be ready to surge forward

or redeploy when called upon,” he said.

The 2018 Defense Strategy said the dynamic force employment concept would “more flexibly use ready forces to shape proactively the strategic environment while maintaining readiness to respond to contingencies and ensure long-term warfighting readiness.” The idea is to boost readiness for response to major conflicts.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis in April talked about the idea of shorter deployments during testimony to Congress.

“They’ll be home at the end of a 90-day deployment,” he told lawmakers in April. “They will not have spent eight months at sea, and we are going to have a force more ready to surge and deal with the high-end warfare as a result without breaking the families, the maintenance cycles — we’ll actually enhance the training time.”

Missing sailor safe, back with Marine unit

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — A sailor who went missing two weeks ago returned voluntarily Sunday to the Hawaii Marine Corps base where he was assigned.

Navy Seaman Shaun Palmer, a hospital corpsman, had failed to report for duty at Marine Corps Base Hawaii on July 1 and was classified as an “unauthorized absence” on July 2, the Marine Corps said.

“He came back of his own accord, and he will be integrated back into the unit,” said Capt. Eric Abrams, a spokesman for III Marine Expeditionary Force at MCBH.

On Monday morning, Palmer, a native of Conrad, Iowa, posted a brief message on his Facebook page: “I’m fine I’m back on base waiting to figure out what’s going on.” Palmer is assigned to 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment.

Abrams said he had no details about where Palmer was during his two-week absence.

Had Palmer remained missing from his unit more than 30 days, he would have been classified with “deserter status,” Abrams said.

“In this sort of situation, the Marine Corps command takes it on a case-by-case basis,” Abrams said of potential discipline. “In general, these actions are usually administrative in nature, and so they’re an internal matter.”

Administrative actions in the military can range from counseling to reprimand or even involuntary separation.

“We just want to make sure we’re gathering all the facts before we make any decision,” Abrams said.

Army drops effort to expel immigrant soldier

The Washington Post

The Army has reversed its widely covered decision to discharge a citizenship-seeking immigrant soldier, in what his lawyer called an acknowledgment that the move was “improper.”

Lucas Calixto, 28, a reservist from Brazil, had faced an uncertain future in the United States before the reversal, which was reported by The Associated Press. An abrupt discharge was likely to knock him off his path to citizenship, which the military promises in exchange for the skills of immigrants who enlist.

The reversal, revealed in a federal court filing Monday, comes as the Army and the Pentagon have defended tightening regulations for a program that

has historically traded expedited citizenship for badly needed language and medical skills from foreign recruits.

“We are pleased that the Army recognized that Mr. Calixto’s discharge was improper and will be revoked within two days,” an attorney for Calixto, Douglas Baruch, told The Washington Post on Monday.

A Pentagon spokeswoman declined to comment on the Calixto decision.

Since 2009, more than 10,000 immigrants have enlisted in the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest program, or MAVNI. But discharges such as Calixto’s have been on the rise, according to legal experts.

A native of Brazil who was recruited for his fluency in Portuguese, Calixto enlisted in 2016 and served in an Army Reserve

unit in Massachusetts. He sued the Army in June after it moved to expel him for unspecified “personnel security” reasons. He was deemed to exhibit honorable service as recently as May and earned a recent promotion, says his lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia.

The suit claimed the Army violated its own policies by not explaining why he was separated or giving him a chance to respond. The Army’s discharge also violated constitutional protections of due process under the Fifth Amendment, the lawsuit claimed.

The Army said in the Monday filing that it would “comply with the applicable law and regulations governing administrative separation of soldiers.”

N. Korea may return 55 sets of US remains

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea—North Korea has agreed to hand over as many as 55 sets of remains believed to be from American troops killed in the 1950-53 war and to allow the United States to fly them out of the country next week, a U.S. official said Tuesday.

The preliminary details emerged after U.S. and North Korean officials held working-level talks Monday in the truce village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone.

The Americans planned to send transit cases via truck to the DMZ, where they would be given to the North Koreans to use for the remains. “They’re going to use our cases for the remains and give them back to us,” the official told *Stars and Stripes*.

A U.S. delegation was expected to retrieve the remains in North Korea and fly them out on July 27, either to Osan Air Base in South Korea or to Hawaii, the official said, adding that the date may change as the two sides planned to iron out final details during another meeting in the near future.

The date would be symbolic as it marks the 65th anniversary of the signing of the armistice that ended the war instead of a peace treaty.

The North Koreans informed the U.S. delegates that they’ll return 50 to 55 sets of remains of U.S. servicemembers, the official said. It would be the first repatriation of remains since 2007 as search efforts stalled amid rising tensions over the North’s nuclear weapons program.

The official said Monday’s meeting was focused on the return of remains, and the North

Koreans apparently did not raise other issues or request anything in return despite speculation in South Korean media that they would try to tie the repatriation to other demands.

It’s unclear how the North Koreans could be certain of the nationalities, although they have in the past included dog tags. The U.S. Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, or DPAA, which oversees the effort, has cautioned that the identification process is complicated and often takes years.

The Hawaii-based DPAA said it has family reference samples for more than 90 percent of the missing servicemembers. But past remains have been found to be mixed up with other unidentified individuals and, in at least one case, animal bones.

Thousands of Americans were believed to have been lost on the

northern side of the heavily fortified border, which has divided the peninsula as the adversaries remain technically at war.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un agreed to recover remains, “including the immediate repatriation of those already identified,” and made other commitments during his unprecedented summit with President Donald Trump on June 12 in Singapore.

The historic meeting was focused on efforts to persuade the North to give up its nuclear weapons, and the agreement to return remains was seen as a goodwill gesture.

But the process has been slow, with the North Koreans keeping the U.S.-led United Nations Command on standby for weeks after the military sent dozens of temporary coffins to the DMZ in preparation.

Marines field-test flash-bang mortar rounds at RIMPAC

BY MARCUS FICHTL

Stars and Stripes

POHAKULOA TRAINING AREA, Hawaii — The Marine Corps has field-tested flash-bang mortar rounds designed to suppress the enemy and save civilian lives during the Rim of the Pacific exercise in Hawaii.

The Marines fired 56 flash-bang mortar rounds at Pohakuloa Training Area on Hawaii’s Big Island on Monday. It was the first field test for the 81 mm munitions, developed by the Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Program at Quantico, Va.

A standard mortar round is designed to strike and destroy a target. The new, nonlethal round can be timed to airburst overhead and release 14 flash bangs that descend with the aid of a ribbon attached to their tail. Parachutes attached to the metal shell prevent harm when they land.

The round, which took six years to develop, fills a capability gap, said Nathan Rush, a munitions capabilities integra-

tion officer who was on hand for the field test.

“The munition has reached a point where we felt comfortable integrating it into an exercise to get the operational feedback that we need from the Marines,” he said.

Marines from 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, who “hung” the first rounds at a makeshift shack at a range of a few thousand yards, were initially skeptical.

“The first thing that went through my head was, ‘Why?’” said Sgt. Joshua Jackson, 60 mm mortar section lead with Company A. “We’re in the business of killing; we’re here to destroy things.”

Soon, he and Cpl. William Ferris, the unit’s fire direction center chief, were coming up with uses for the round.

Jackson said they could distract defenders of a strongpoint. “They’ll be disoriented ... and while their heads are hunkered down making sense of what happened, we can assault,” he said.

130K vets paid disability may be owed tax refunds

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department has identified more than 130,000 veterans released from military service following injuries who may be owed more than \$1,700 each in tax refunds after the Pentagon incorrectly withheld money from their disability pay, officials said Monday.

Letters were sent this month by the IRS notifying 130,062 veterans that the federal agency might have improperly collected taxes on their lump sum disability severance pay issued between 1991 and 2016, said Army Lt. Col. David Dulaney, executive director of the Armed Forces Tax Council. Veterans who were sent the letter, which should arrive in the coming weeks, will have one year from the letter’s date to file their amended tax refund claim.

The letters are being sent as the Pentagon’s response to the Combat Injured Veterans Tax

Fairness Act of 2016, which required DOD to identify and notify veterans about the error. The problem was first discovered by The National Veterans Legal Services Program, a nonprofit veterans service organization.

That organization has said a computer glitch in the DOD accounting system is to blame. It estimated some \$78 million was owed. Dulaney said Monday that he did not have an estimate of how much money was owed.

Under federal law, disability severance pay cannot be taxed if an individual’s injury or illness was determined to have resulted from armed conflict, during extra-hazardous service, during war simulations, because of a weapon or if the individual is receiving disability pay from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Veterans who receive notification can apply for a standard refund amount approved by the IRS or they can submit a claim to the IRS for the actual amount of money withheld, Dulaney said.

US arrests woman accused of acting as Russian agent

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A 29-year-old gun rights activist served as a covert Russian agent while living in Washington, gathering intelligence on American officials and political organizations and working to establish back-channel lines of communications for the Kremlin, federal prosecutors charged Monday.

The announcement of the arrest of Maria Butina came just hours after President Donald Trump met with Russian President Vladimir Putin and just days after special counsel Robert Mueller charged 12 Russian intelligence officials with directing a sprawling hacking effort aimed at swaying the 2016 election.

Mueller didn't file the charge against Butina, but court papers show her activities revolved around American politics during the 2016 campaign and included efforts to use contacts with the National Rifle Association to develop relationships with U.S. politicians and gather intelligence for Russia.

Court papers also reveal that an unnamed American who worked with Butina claimed to have been involved in setting up a "private line of communication" ahead of the 2016 election between the Kremlin and "key" officials in an American political party through the NRA. The court papers do not name the political party mentioned

in the October 2016 message, but they contain details that appear to refer to the Republican Party. The documents don't say whether the back channel was ever established.

The NRA, which has previously been connected to Butina in public reporting and information released by members of Congress, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Butina, a Russian national who has been living in the U.S., was charged with conspiracy to act as an unregistered agent of the Russian government. A federal judge in Washington ordered her jailed until a hearing set for Wednesday, according to a statement from the Justice Department and Jessie Liu, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia.

In a statement, Butina's attorney, Robert Driscoll, called the allegations "overblown" and said prosecutors had criminalized mundane networking opportunities. Driscoll said Butina was not an agent of Russia but was instead in the U.S. on a student visa, graduating from American University with a master's degree in international relations.

"There is simply no indication of Ms. Butina seeking to influence or undermine any specific policy or law or the United States — only at most to promote a better relationship between the two nations," Driscoll said in a statement.

Deportation of reunified families temporarily halted

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A federal judge on Monday ordered a temporary halt to deportations of immigrant families reunited after being separated at the border, as the Trump administration races to meet a July 26 deadline for putting more than 2,500 children back in their parents' arms.

U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw imposed a delay of at least a week after a request from the American Civil Liberties Union, which cited "persistent and increasing rumors ... that mass deportations may be carried out imminently and immediately upon reunification."

Justice Department attorney Scott Stewart opposed the delay but did not address the rumors in court.

The ACLU requested that parents have at least one week to decide whether to pursue asylum in the U.S. after they are reunited with their children. The judge held off on deciding that issue until the government outlines its objections in writing by next Monday.

ACLU attorney Lee Gelernt

told reporters that he was "extremely pleased" by the halt and that parents need time to think over with their children and advisers whether to seek asylum.

The hearing in San Diego occurred as the government accelerated reunifications at eight unidentified U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement locations. The families are scattered around the country, the adults at immigration detention centers, the children at shelters overseen by the government.

Annunciation House, a shelter in El Paso, Texas, said the government has begun transporting children in a "tremendous amount of airline flights" to El Paso and elsewhere. Director Ruben Garcia said he is preparing to take in as many as 100 reunified families a day.

Last month, Sabraw ordered the government to reunite the thousands of children and parents who were forcibly separated at the border by the administration in the spring. He set a deadline of July 10 for children under 5 and gave the government until July 26 to reunite 2,551 youngsters ages 5 to 17.

Charlottesville again renames former Confederate parks

Associated Press

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Charlottesville's leaders have decided their city isn't ready for Emancipation and Justice.

Still struggling over how to handle Confederate symbols, the Charlottesville City Council voted 4-1 Monday night to change the names of two parks yet again. The former Lee Park, renamed Emancipation Park, is now Market Street Park. The former Jackson Park, whose name was changed to Justice Park, is now Court Square Park.

The initial name changes in June 2017 followed recommendations from a commis-

sion that studied the city's Confederate imagery. That and plans to remove the statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee led to rallies featuring torch-bearing white nationalists and deadly violence. The Lee statue still stands, as does that of Gen. Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson.

Councilor Kathy Galvin said some community members felt the idealistic names were ill-fitting for parks still dominated by Confederate monuments. A two-month survey then showed overwhelming support for the latest names.

Councilor Wes Bellamy, the lone dissenter, said the new names' neutrality obfus-

cates deeper issues still fomenting racial strife.

"When we choose neutral or easy names, it allows us to not deal with some of the issues we've had," Bellamy said.

"It doesn't make us have to think critically about what's going on," he added. "But if that's the will of the people, so be it."

Last week, Jason Kessler, who organized last year's "Unite the Right" rally, became the final defendant to sign a consent decree agreeing to "actively discourage" coordinated, armed activity in the city. Kessler is now preparing instead to hold an anniversary rally in front of the White House.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Raccoon freed after head gets stuck in jar

NY ITHACA — Firefighters in upstate New York helped out a presumably hungry raccoon that got its head stuck inside a mayonnaise jar.

The Ithaca Fire Department said the raccoon was spotted in a tree during its recent predicament.

The Ithaca Journal reported city firefighters and a state Department of Environmental Conservation officer got the animal down. They placed the raccoon into a large, plastic tub and freed its head.

Pranksters plant pot in city's flower pots

WY POWELL — Officials in Powell believe pranksters planted marijuana seeds in city-owned flower pots this past spring, leading unsuspecting city workers to water and care for them.

The Powell Tribune reported city Parks and Recreation staff noticed the unauthorized greenery late last month while watering the pots, including one not far from the police station.

Parks Superintendent Del Barton said workers pulled two plants June 29 and took them to police. Another was found a couple of days later.

Deputy urges slow tortoise along road

FL DUNNELLON — The tortoise walking down the middle of a Florida road was racking up numerous traffic infractions.

"Come on, grandpa" Marion County Sheriff's Deputy Bryan Bowman says on his video of the tortoise takedown Sunday. He explains that the tortoise is "literally going 1 mile per hour" in a 30 mph zone.

The list of infractions continues.

Bowman followed for 20 minutes until the tortoise went into the woods. "Everyone wants to drive slow with a cop car behind them," he says. "You can't get nowhere on time."

Couple accused of sex in courthouse

LA ALEXANDRIA — A couple caught having sex in the stairwell of a Louisiana courthouse are facing obscenity charges.

The Rapides Parish Sheriff's Office said Miguel Glorioso, 20, of Alexandria, and Jamie Lee Coutee, 19, of Pineville, were arrested after a courthouse employee investigating a report of a commotion in the stairwell found the couple having sex.

The couple fled but an employee identified the man as an inmate trusty assigned to a cleaning detail at the courthouse. Glorioso's trusty status was stripped and he's been removed from the detail. He's serving time for drug charges.

The woman was found in Alexandria and was arrested. She's free on \$1,500 bond. She also faces a misdemeanor marijuana possession charge.

Police: Teens harmed kitten in online video

VA BRISTOL — A teenage girl in Virginia is accused of pepper-spraying a kitten while a teenage boy filmed it and shared the video online.

The Bristol Herald Courier reported Friday that the video was shared on Snapchat and other social media platforms, drawing ire from across the region. Bristol Virginia Police Department Sgt. Steve Crawford said authorities originally sought to charge the girl, 17, with animal cruelty.

Crawford said a juvenile in-

take worker declined to charge her and placed the girl on probation. He said charges are pending against the boy, also 17.

The kitten, named Peppy, has since been adopted and doesn't appear to have suffered any eye damage.

Caregiver charged in disabled man's death

MN HASTINGS — The caregiver of a 19-year-old man with muscular dystrophy has been charged in Dakota County with neglect after taking him to a party where he consumed alcohol and died.

Taylor Wellman, 24, of Inver Grove Heights, is charged with neglect of a vulnerable adult. Investigators said others at the party in Vermillion Township last August told police Wellman was drunk when she arrived with the man, who was confined to a wheelchair. Witnesses told police she ignored the man except to bring him beer and shots of alcohol.

The St. Paul Pioneer Press reported the complaint says the disabled man eventually lost consciousness and could not be revived.

Man jailed for not unlocking cellphones

FL TAMPA — A Florida man is behind bars for failing to unlock his phones following a traffic stop.

Fox 13 News reported that William Montanez was pulled over in June for improper yielding in Tampa. He wouldn't allow police to search his car, so a drug-sniffing dog was brought in. Police said a small amount of marijuana was found, and they asked to search his cellphones.

Again, Montanez said no, so detectives got a warrant.

Judge Gregory Holder ruled Thursday that police could go

through the cellphones, but Montanez said the phones are new and he couldn't remember the passwords. The judge jailed him for civil contempt.

Ex-deputy indicted over assault in jail

KY STANTON — A former deputy in eastern Kentucky has been indicted for conspiring with inmates at the jail to assault another inmate and lying to the FBI.

A federal grand jury in Lexington indicted Jamie Derickson on four counts, alleging he conspired with inmates at the Powell County Detention Center in 2016. He struck an agreement with inmates that they would assault another inmate after Derickson placed him in a jail cell, the indictment alleges.

The Lexington Herald-Leader reported the indictment also alleges that Derickson later lied to FBI agents when he claimed that he did not know the inmates were planning the assault.

Dumping of dead dog brings littering charge

AL CARBON HILL — An Alabama woman who police say illegally dumped a dead dog was charged with littering.

Citing a Walker County Sheriff's Office news release, news outlets reported an investigator followed up on a photo posted to Facebook that showed Addie Ann Brooks, 33, conducting the illegal dump.

The investigator learned Brooks had kept a dog who had been run over in her truck for two days. When she saw a buzzard in her truck with the animal, she went to a bridge and used a piece of lumber to push the carcass out of the truck and onto the ground.

From wire reports

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Nats' Harper wins Home Run Derby

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The ball cleared the center-field wall, and the sellout crowd roared. Bryce Harper threw his bat in the air, thrust both index fingers skyward and yelled with delight as a shower of streamers rained upon the crowd of 43,698.

It could have been a scene from a playoff game. That it was merely the All-Star Home Run Derby mattered not to Harper or the Washington Nationals fans, who were thrilled to see their hometown hero deliver the night's final longball Monday.

In the midst of it all — and in the middle of a trying season — Harper grabbed the microphone and said: "This crowd. Wow! Washington Nationals, baby!"

With an exceptional display of power and clutch hitting, Harper rallied in the final round, connecting on pitches from his father to beat Kyle Schwarber of the Chicago Cubs

19-18.

Harper hit the contest-winning blast in extra time, the reward for hitting two homers at least 440 feet during the 4 minutes of regulation. After he connected with the game winner, the Nationals star immediately went into celebration mode.

"We have some of the best fans in all of baseball, and to be able to that with my family out there, that's an incredible moment, not only for me but for the organization and the Nationals fans," Harper said.

Harper's teammate, Max Scherzer, the NL starter on Tuesday night, also appreciated the moment.

"It's awesome. Hometown," Scherzer said. "The crowd is behind him. He found some rhythm, kept it simple and just continued to hit home run after home run."

Wearing a headband that resembled the District of Columbia flag and displaying a right sleeve with stars and stripes, Harper trailed 18-9

with 1:20 left before rallying. He homered on nine of his last 10 swings before entering extra time.

The six-time All-Star arranged to have his dad, Ron, pitch to him in the annual contest on the eve of the All-Star Game. That made the victory even sweeter.

"I'm only as good as my BP guy," Harper said with a grin.

Hours before the session, Harper spoke excitedly about having his dad pitch to him in the contest. The 25-year-old said his father "worked his tail off every single day to provide for me and my family" and "now being able to have him throw to me in a big league ballpark is the cherry on top."

Afterward, Ron Harper said of his son: "He did great. So I'm really proud of him. He's a great kid. You couldn't ask for anything better."

It's been a tough year for Harper, who's hitting only .214 for the disappointing Nationals. He won a contest that many

sluggers avoid, fearful it might wear them out and throw them off.

He can only hope this helps him get back into the swing.

The 2015 NL MVP beat Freddie Freeman of the Atlanta Braves and Max Muncy of the Dodgers before trumping the fifth-seeded Schwarber, who put the pressure on with a solid outing before Harper stepped to the plate.

"As soon as I got done with that round I told myself that (Harper) had it," Schwarber said. "I knew that he had the home crowd behind him."

Harper, who has 23 home runs this season, advanced to the final with an astonishing spree of longball hitting. He trailed Max Muncy of the Dodgers 12-4 with 2:20 left, then peeled off six homers in 47 seconds before calling a timeout.

Harper returned to hit three more home runs in 22 seconds, the last of them inside the right-field foul pole.

As trade rumors swirl, Machado focused on having fun

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — On the night of the All-Star Game, Manny Machado proudly represented the Baltimore Orioles, the only team he's played for in the big leagues.

It just might have been his final appearance in an Orioles uniform. With the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline looming, it won't be long before the four-time AL All-Star is dealt from last-place Baltimore to a contender.

Machado was drafted by the Orioles with the third overall pick in 2010 and has been a starter in Baltimore since 2012. His contract expires after this season, and the Orioles don't have enough money to keep the 26-year-old shortstop and build a decent team around him.

If there was ever any doubt about their intention, the point

was hammered home when manager Buck Showalter removed Machado in the fifth inning of Sunday's game against Texas because the field was messy following a rain delay.

"A month ago he wouldn't have come out of the game," Showalter said. "We know that. You know it."

Machado does, too. What he doesn't know, however, is how it might feel to play for another team.

"The only thing I've ever known has been the Orioles organization," he said Monday. "They drafted me, I came up with them, played with them. So I don't know anything different."

Machado wasn't the only All-Star facing the prospect of switching teams in the next two weeks. Rangers outfielder Shin-Soo Choo and pitchers Jacob deGrom (Mets), J.A. Happ

(Blue Jays), Blake Snell (Rays) and Brad Hand (Padres) could be headed to contenders.

"Starting pitching is always big during the trade deadline, whether it's me or somebody else who's having a good year," said deGrom, 30, a member of the Mets for his entire career.

The Blue Jays are going nowhere this season in the AL East, but Happ knows he might be going somewhere else.

"I know it's certainly a possibility," Happ said. "But I was talking to one of the guys earlier, he was in a position last year where everybody was telling him he was going to be traded, and it never happened. I can't imagine going through a month of that kind of anxiety and then have nothing happen."

The rumors, the massive media crowd around him Monday and the prospect of his imminent departure from Bal-

timore did nothing to diminish Machado's joy at being an All-Star again.

"To see the guys around the clubhouse, it's pretty awesome," Machado said. "It's always a blessing to be here. No one will ever take away how much fun I'm going to have these two days."

He insists he's not thinking about whether Tuesday night was his last in Orioles attire.

"No, no. I'm putting it on and I'm going to represent the organization in the right way," Machado said. "If it is, it is. If not, I'll be there on Friday (in Toronto), back with my teammates."

Machado would be a solid addition to any contender. He converted from third base to shortstop this season, and has played the position well enough to easily win the fan vote at the position.

Spieth returns jug ahead of British Open

Associated Press

CARNOUSTIE, Scotland — Jordan Spieth figured someone from the R&A would be waiting for him when he pulled into the parking lot at Carnoustie to take back the silver claret jug. Instead, he was part of a ceremony with enough pomp to drive home the point.

His reign as British Open champion was over.

“The traditions of the Open are very special,” Spieth said, “even if you’re on the wrong end of that one.”

This “tradition” is only a few years old, though typical of the august manner of this major, nothing was left to chance. Spieth was to arrive in a car provided by one of the R&A’s sponsors, and as it drove slowly down a dirt path behind the grandstands on the first hole, cameras moved into position. The door opened and a woman slowly emerged from the back seat. That’s where Spieth would be sitting. This was just a rehearsal to make sure the cameras had the right angle.

Moments later, an R&A employee asked people sitting in the right portion of the grandstands to move to the other side so it would appear fuller.

“It’s the coolest trophy that our sport has to offer,” Spieth said. “So having to return that was certainly difficult. Kind of hit me a little bit there on the tee box.”

It’s far more enjoyable to pose with golf’s oldest trophy — it first was awarded in 1873 — at the 18th hole on Sunday, not the first hole on Monday. That’s the task that awaits Spieth, and it figures to be a monumental one.

Only four players in the last 50 years have repeated as British Open champions, the most recent being Padraig Harrington in 2008.

More than history, it’s the nature of Carnoustie that figures to be the stiffest challenge — or at least on Monday, the most mysterious one. A dry summer has turned the links into a combination of brown (fairways), yellow (wispy rough) and green on the tee boxes and putting

surfaces.

That translates into the fastest conditions at an Open since Tiger Woods won at Hoylake in 2006. That was the year Woods hit only one driver — yes, he missed the fairway — and relied mainly on long irons off the tee because the golf ball was running forever.

Early samples indicate this might be just the opposite.

Because the rough isn’t up, and because it’s difficult to judge how far shots will roll out on the fairways, the answer might be to just smash driver over the trouble. Jon Rahm said he planned to hit driver every day on the 396-yard opening hole.

Tommy Fleetwood, who shot 63 at a much different Carnoustie last year during the Dunhill Links Championship, was most perplexed when he reached the 350-yard third hole. It usually is a mid-iron off the tee and a wedge to the green. Now it’s more like a 6-iron off the tee. Or maybe a 7-iron. And even that’s not safe, because the undulations in the fairway could

send the ball rolling until a pot bunker gets in the way.

“You feel like on such a short hole, you should have a chance at birdie,” he said. “When actually, you can hit a 6-iron or 7-iron and it ends up in a fairway bunker.”

Spieth couldn’t speak to that because he had yet to see Carnoustie except on television in 2007, and he doesn’t remember much of that, anyway. He was in France over the weekend to see the Ryder Cup courses, and he went to St. Andrews on Sunday as part of the Junior Open.

He recalls Muirfield being fast on Sunday in 2013, his first Open, though that wasn’t nearly as fiery as this course. And even a light rain overnight didn’t change that.

“It doesn’t matter what club you hit. There’s so many holes where you’re going to be taking fairway bunkers on,” Fleetwood said. “You can’t just ... 260 [yards] is just a completely irrelevant number because any amount of clubs can go that far just with it playing that firm.”

FIFA conveniently forgot next World Cup is in France

Associated Press

MOSCOW — The “next” World Cup got plenty of hype in Russia. A massive cube was alight with video images of “Qatar 2022” in Gorky Park, while the ground floor of the high-end shopping mall at Red Square was devoted to displays touting the event.

But apart from a social media campaign, there was little attention on the (actual) next senior World Cup: the women’s tournament next year in France.

That was surprising.

In the past several years since scandal enveloped soccer’s governing body, FIFA has made a point of proclaiming that it aims to raise both the role of women in the organization and the profile of the women’s game. President Gianni Infantino appointed Fatma

Samoura as the first female secretary general of soccer’s international governing body in 2016, while also announcing the creation of a women’s soccer division.

The men’s World Cup in Russia could have provided an opportunity to address equity in the sport while also pointing to the women’s tournament next year. But France 2019 wasn’t promoted much at all: No signs, events or displays in tourist areas.

Venezuelan forward Deyna Castellanos was deemed the women’s soccer ambassador in Russia and she starred in a social media campaign anchored by the hashtag #DareToShine. But while the 19-year-old is considered a rising star in the women’s game, Venezuela failed to qualify for France so the selection seemed odd.

Infantino acknowledged more could be done for the women’s game at his wrap-up news conference in Moscow. There’s no doubt that the men’s World Cup every four years is FIFA’s financial juggernaut. But the women are the governing body’s second-biggest commercial asset.

“We have to invest in women’s football. We are thinking of a new women’s world league, because 50 percent of the world population, the ladies, need to be treated in the right way as well in a sport which is said to be macho like football,” Infantino said. “We have to invest in women’s football, we have programs and we have ideas.”

Following their victory over Japan for the trophy, the U.S. women went on to bargain for, and receive, a better contract with U.S. Soccer that brought

them closer to the compensation level of their male counterparts. The Americans were not alone, national teams from other countries won more equitable contracts with their federations, including Australia and Ireland.

France could provide FIFA an opportunity to showcase concrete change at the highest level, and the possible messaging couldn’t get more perfect: France won a World Cup, and now will host it.

Two issues stand out. It remains to be seen how much prize money will be increased in 2019. The U.S. women took home \$2 million in 2015. In contrast, France’s men earned \$38 million for their victory on Sunday.

And there’s no word yet whether video replay will be used just as it was for the men for the first time in Russia.

NBA free agency now bargain hunting

Associated Press

Even after roughly \$1.5 billion in new contracts were hammered out during the first two weeks of free agency, there is still plenty of shopping for NBA teams to do over the coming weeks.

Most of it will be for bargains.

The biggest deals of NBA summer — like Chris Paul, Paul George and LeBron James getting contracts that will pay them a combined \$450 million over the next four years — are almost certainly all done. A blockbuster trade involving San Antonio's Kawhi Leonard can obviously still happen, and at some point Carmelo Anthony's exit from Oklahoma City to a new home, most likely Houston, will get finalized.

But most teams have exhausted their salary cap space for next season, so the annual shift into fill-out-the-roster mode has essentially arrived for the majority of clubs.

Here's a look at some of the bargains that have already been found this summer, and a look at others who are bargains waiting to happen:

Bargains found

Isaiah Thomas — \$2 million, one year, Denver. It seems so long ago that Thomas was averaging 30 points and answering questions about the max contract he would be signing. Except it wasn't a long time ago — it was at the 2017 All-Star Game. So much has happened in the last 17 months, and Thomas playing through a hip injury has clearly cost him tens of millions, at least temporarily. Now he's starting anew in Denver, with a coach in Michael Malone who believes fully in him, and that chip Thomas had as a No. 60 overall draft pick is squarely back on his diminutive shoulder. His massive deal may be waiting, but consider this: No fewer than 33 players will make more this coming season than Thomas has made in his entire career. "It's all good, though.... I'll just stay on that slow grind," Thomas said on social media after agreeing with the Nuggets.

DeMarcus Cousins — \$5.3 million, one year, Golden State. This could go down as the bargain of the summer, if Cousins

returns to previous form and fits his enormous game — and enormous personality — into the Golden State system. When he comes back from his Achilles tendon injury, the Warriors could have five players from the 2018 All-Star Game in their starting lineup. Had he not gotten hurt in January, somebody would be paying at least \$20 million and probably a lot more to Cousins this season. If this experiment works, and if the Warriors are healthy at playoff time, a fourth championship in five seasons will be the way Golden State closes out its time at Oracle Arena.

Jusuf Nurkic — \$48 million, four years, Portland. Not all bargains are for small dollars. Nurkic is durable, and he's one of 13 players who averaged 14.3 points and 9 rebounds last season. But there's at least 24 centers alone who will be paid more next season than Nurkic.

Wayne Ellington — \$6.3 million, one year, Miami. All Ellington did last season was make more three-pointers than any Heat player had in any season, ever. And he didn't even get a raise. It's not that Miami

doesn't value Ellington but he appeared to get caught in a numbers crunch. The Heat have tax concerns that kept them from being able to offer him more, and other teams probably knew that they would have to offer significantly more to get Ellington out of Miami. He's also a key voice in the Heat locker room, and if Miami is going to get out of the first round Ellington will likely have to play a key role.

Rajon Rondo — \$9 million, one year, Los Angeles Lakers. Rondo and LeBron James have had battles aplenty over the years. Don't think for one second that James wasn't down with the Lakers making this move. On the day before Game 4 of the NBA Finals, the day before James' last game as a member of the Cleveland Cavaliers, he told a story about facing Boston many years earlier and being impressed with the way "Rondo was calling out sets every time" down the floor. James values smarts in teammates and Rondo has plenty of smarts, so if this works the \$9 million will be a pittance to the Lakers.

Sports briefs

Steelers, Bell fail to reach agreement on new contract

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Le'Veon Bell's next season with the Pittsburgh Steelers will almost certainly be his last.

The Pro Bowl running back and the defending AFC North champions failed to reach an agreement on a new contract by Monday's deadline, meaning he will play under the franchise tag for a second straight year and hit the open market next spring.

Bell tweeted that he "both sides worked extremely hard" to try and find common ground but ultimately could not.

"The NFL is a hard business at times ... to the fans that

had hope, I'm sorry we let you down but trust me, 2018 will be my best season to date," Bell posted.

The 26-year-old Bell is one of the league's most versatile players and he has long maintained he wants to be paid accordingly. In addition to serving as a workhorse in the backfield — his 321 rushing attempts last season led the NFL — he also caught 85 passes, good enough for 10th in the league.

Steelers general manager Kevin Colbert said the team will make another attempt to re-sign Bell in the 2019 offseason, but another Pro Bowl-type season by Bell would likely

make him too expensive.

Bell will make \$14.5 million whenever he signs his franchise tender, which likely won't be until the end of training camp. It's the path Bell followed last summer after the Steelers placed the franchise tag on him for the first time.

Alaphilippe wins Stage 10 of Tour de France

LE GRAND-BORNAND, France — Julian Alaphilippe claimed the first mountain leg of this Tour de France on Tuesday, while Greg Van Avermaet kept the overall lead for a seventh consecutive day.

Alaphilippe, a French rider for Quick-Step, won the 158.5-kilometer (98.5-mile) ride from Lake Annecy that included climbs over four major Alpine passes before a descent to Le Grand-Bornand in around 4 1/2 hours.

Olympic champion Van Avermaet got into an early breakaway and held on to increase his lead over Geraint Thomas, a Sky teammate of defending champion Chris Froome, to 2 minutes, 22 seconds.

Alejandro Valverde of Movistar moved into third overall at 3:10 off the pace. Jakob Fuglsang of Astana was next at 3:12.