

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

Saturday, July 28, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Taliban, US official have 'useful' meeting

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — The Taliban held their first direct contact with a U.S. official in a preliminary discussion about future peace talks on Afghanistan, a senior official with the insurgent group said Saturday. It marked one of the most significant developments amid efforts to find a negotiated end to the country's protracted war.

The official described as "useful" a meeting with Alice Wells, the U.S.'s top diplomat for South Asia, earlier this week. He said the meeting was held in the small Middle Eastern country of Qatar, where the Taliban have maintained a political office since 2013.

"The environment was positive and the discussion was useful," the Taliban official told The Associated Press on con-

dition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

U.S. officials neither confirmed nor denied a meeting took place. However, Wells was in Doha, the Qatar capital, this week. In a statement following her return, the State Department said only that Wells had been in Doha, had met with the ruling family and "the United States is exploring all avenues to advance a peace process in close consultation with the Afghan government."

Any talks about a future political setup would be between the Taliban and the Afghan government, the statement said.

The Taliban have long demanded direct talks with Washington, saying they do not want to talk politics with the U.S. but instead meet face to face to

discuss Washington's concerns — particularly its security concerns — about the Taliban and Taliban involvement in Afghanistan's future. They also say they want a time frame for the withdrawal of the roughly 15,000 U.S. and NATO troops still in Afghanistan.

It wasn't clear when the next meeting would be held or with whom, but the Taliban official who spoke to The AP was certain one would be held.

A former Taliban minister and ex-head of their political committee, Aga Jan Mohtism, who has maintained close contacts with the insurgent group, also confirmed a meeting in Doha between U.S. officials and the Taliban took place earlier this week.

"The Taliban want to solve their problems with the Ameri-

cans to end the invasion," he said.

The Taliban have argued that the Afghan government cannot act independent of Washington. They also say that unless they can allay U.S. concerns about the group, an agreement with Kabul would be meaningless.

During the Taliban's five-year rule that ended with the 2001 U.S.-led invasion, leader Mullah Mohammed Omar said regardless of whatever concessions they agreed to, including allowing girls to attend school, it would not gain them international recognition as long as the U.S. refused to accept them.

The current leadership, most of whom are Mullah Omar's contemporaries, still believe their future in Afghanistan can be guaranteed only if the United States' concerns are addressed.

Return of remains good but easy move for N. Korea

Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea — North Korea made good on another promise to President Donald Trump by returning dozens of sets of remains of

ANALYSIS American GIs killed during the Korean War. But it expects something in return — a peace treaty, or something very much like it.

Until that's on the table, real progress toward denuclearization will likely have to wait.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un agreed in his summit in Singapore with Trump last month to resume returning remains.

But the North chose the most symbolic day to actually turn over the first batch. Friday was the 65th anniversary of the end of the 1950-53 Korean War,

which concluded not in a formal peace treaty but in an armistice agreement that was supposed to be temporary but has stayed in effect ever since.

That, to North Korea, says it all.

North Korea's demand all along has been that improved relations between the two countries must begin with the creation of a stable peace on the Korean Peninsula, not with the unilateral abandonment of the North's nuclear weapons that the Trump administration has been pushing for. North Korea's logic is that both sides need to take simultaneous action to gradually improve the security climate.

Denuclearization, if it will come at all, will only come once that hurdle has been cleared.

"The adoption of the declaration on the termination of war is

the first and foremost process in the light of ending the extreme hostility and establishing new relations between the DPRK and the U.S.," the North's Korean Central News Agency said in a statement on Tuesday, referring to North Korea by its official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"Peace can come only after the declaration of the termination of war," it said.

To keep the ball rolling in the meantime, North Korea has announced a moratorium on nuclear tests and long-range missile launches. It has demolished structures and the entrances to buildings on the site of its underground nuclear testing facility in Punggye-ri, and appears to have begun dismantling some of its missile testing facilities at Sohae. It has also returned three Americans

who were being held in jail and has significantly toned down its anti-U.S. propaganda.

All should be seen as significant, positive steps — certainly when compared to last year, when the U.S. and North Korea were trading insults and threats of nuclear war.

But none of the North's actions so far have much to do with actual denuclearization.

North Korea has yet to declare what its nuclear program consists of — how many bombs it has, where they are built — information that must be revealed to Washington before any credible denuclearization process can even begin. The moratoriums could easily be rescinded if Kim chooses to do so, and experts believe new underground testing tunnels and missile test sites could be rebuilt in a matter of months.

Airman to receive posthumous Medal of Honor

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — An Air Force combat controller killed in an infamous battle with al-Qaida militants in the early months of the war in Afghanistan will be awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously for his actions during that 2002 fight, the White House announced Friday.

President Donald Trump will present the nation's highest military honor to Tech. Sgt. John A. Chapman's spouse, Valerie Nessel, in a ceremony Aug. 22, according to the White House. The award is an upgrade of the Air Force Cross that Chapman initially received posthumously for his actions on Roberts Ridge in March 2002 as part of an elite special operations team charged with locating and targeting al-Qaida fighters entrenched on Takur Ghar mountain in eastern Afghanistan along the Pakistan border.

He will become the first airman to receive the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War, and just the 19th in the service's history.

The upgrade of Chapman's medal has been the subject of speculation for a long time among defense officials, who said the service's top leaders have recommended the upgrade since at least 2016.

The award is at least partially the result of new drone footage that showed Chapman was not yet dead when the team of Navy SEALs that he was fighting alongside was extracted from the battle, according to officials. Those SEALs have long insisted Chapman was dead when they left him, including retired SEAL Britt Slabinski, who

received the Medal of Honor in May for his actions in the same battle. Slabinski, however, has endorsed Chapman's nomination for the Medal of Honor, telling officials that Chapman's actions in the battle ensured the survival of his comrades.

Analysis of the drone footage conducted more than a decade after Chapman's death indicated the airman was merely unconscious when the SEALs left the battlefield. When he regained consciousness, the video shows he resumed fighting al-Qaida militants approaching him.

"Despite his wounds, [Sgt.] Chapman regained his faculties and continued to fight relentlessly, sustaining a violent engagement with multiple enemy fighters before paying the ultimate sacrifice," his Medal of Honor citation will read, according to a statement Friday from the Air Force. "In performance of these remarkably heroic actions, he is credited with saving the lives of his teammates."

That language differs from that of the citation for his Air Force Cross, the second-highest valor award an airman can receive. The previous award citation credited Chapman with saving lives by coordinating AC-130 gunship attacks on the fighters attacking the American special operations team, coordinating the extraction helicopter's landing for his teammates and eventually risking his life to engage two enemy machine gun positions, sustaining fatal wounds during those actions.

"Chappy," as his teammates knew him, was one of two airmen awarded the Air Force Cross for actions during the Battle of Roberts Ridge. The other was

Senior Airman Jason Cunningham, a pararescueman.

Initially, the special operations team was only charged with reconnaissance to aid a conventional force preparing an attack on the al-Qaida group around Takur Ghar. But the MH-47 Chinook helicopter carrying Chapman, Slabinski and other members of SEAL Team 6 — officially Naval Special Warfare Development Group — was hit by enemy rocket fire as it flew over the mountaintops.

With the rocket's impact, another SEAL, Petty Officer 1st Class Neil C. Roberts, fell from the chopper before the pilots crash-landed it into a valley, leaving him stranded atop the 10,000-foot peak amid a mass of al-Qaida and Taliban fighters. Slabinski ordered a daring rescue mission up the mountain to recover his comrade. Chapman volunteered to participate, according to the Air Force. That's when the fight that would last some 17 hours broke out.

"Tech. Sgt. John Chapman fought tenaciously for his nation and his teammates on that hill in Afghanistan," Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein said in a statement. "His inspiring story is one of selfless service, courage, perseverance, and honor as he fought side by side with his fellow soldiers and sailors against a determined and dug-in enemy. Tech. Sgt. Chapman represents all that is good, all that is right, and all that is best in our American airmen."

The Air Force never gave up on seeking the recognition senior leaders believed Chapman deserved, said the service's senior enlisted leader, Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright.

Pentagon identifies Tuskegee Airman missing from WWII

The Washington Post

The Defense Department announced Friday that it has accounted for the first of more than two dozen black aviators known as Tuskegee Airman who went missing in action during World War II.

Capt. Lawrence Dickson, a fighter pilot who had trained at the Tuskegee Army Flying School, was 24 when he went down over Austria on Dec. 23, 1944, while on a mission.

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) had been investigating the possibility that human remains and other items found at a crash site in Austria this past summer were Dickson's.

On Friday morning, the DPAA informed his daughter, Marla Andrews, 76, of East

Orange, N.J., that the remains were those of her father.

"I feel great!" she said in a telephone interview. "I really do feel a relief ... I had a good crying jag."

Dickson is probably the first missing Tuskegee Airman found since the end of World War II, the DPAA has said.

There were 27 Tuskegee Airmen missing from the war. Now there are 26.

DPAA investigators said the crash site was a few miles from where his P-51 Mustang was reported to have gone down. Debris at the site was from a P-51. And German records report a lone P-51 crash there the same day Dickson disappeared.

Historically, the site was a match, Joshua Frank, a DPAA research analyst, said ear-

lier this year.

Last summer, the site was excavated by the DPAA and a team from the University of New Orleans, and human remains were recovered.

Dickson was among the more than 900 black pilots who were trained at the segregated Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama during the war.

They were African-American men from all over the country who fought racism and oppression at home and enemy pilots and anti-aircraft gunners overseas.

More than 400 served in combat, flying patrol and strafing missions, and escorting bombers from bases in North Africa and Italy. The tail sections of their fighter planes were painted a distinctive red.

Another US-Russia summit possible

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rarely has an RSVP been so complicated.

President Donald Trump is open to visiting Moscow — if he gets a formal invitation from Vladimir Putin, the White House said. Russian President Putin said he's game for a trip to Washington — but his answer came only after Trump retracted his invitation for a fall sit-down.

The awkward back and forth is the latest round of summit drama flowing from the two leaders' controversial first meeting in Helsinki this month. It underscores Trump's eagerness to forge a warmer relationship with Putin, though the Russian does not appear to share the urgency, and Trump's allies in Washington are watching with frustration.

Trump's tentative yes to a Moscow trip comes even as lawmakers are still pushing for details about what he and Putin

discussed in Helsinki. The president has been widely criticized for failing to publicly denounce Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. election and appearing to accept Putin's denials of such activity.

Trump's response to the criticism — an abruptly announced invitation for a second meeting in Washington in the fall — got an ice-cold reception from Republicans in Congress facing tough elections in November. Moscow was lukewarm and did not immediately accept.

Then, national security adviser John Bolton said Wednesday that plans for a fall visit would be delayed until 2019. He cited special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian election meddling as the reason, using Trump's favorite term for the probe: "witch hunt."

But the possibility of a Trump trip to Moscow emerged Friday after Putin said he was ready to invite Trump — or to visit

Washington if conditions are right.

"I understand very well what President Trump said: He has the wish to conduct further meetings," Putin said while traveling in Johannesburg. "I am ready for this. We are ready to invite President Trump to Moscow. By the way, he has such an invitation, I told him of this. I am prepared to go to Washington but, I repeat, if the appropriate conditions for work are created."

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders responded that Trump "looks forward to having President Putin to Washington after the first of the year, and he is open to visiting Moscow upon receiving a reciprocal formal invitation."

But it's just talk at this point.

It's part of "a power game between Putin and Trump," said Dr. Alina Polyakova, of the Brookings Institution. She said the Kremlin basically drove the process in Helsinki, and "we're seeing that again now."

Administration credited, faulted on reuniting families

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A federal judge commended the Trump administration for reunifying families in its custody with their children after being separated at the U.S.-Mexico border, while faulting it for leaving hundreds of families still apart and warning that a better system must be in place.

U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw said the government gets "great credit" after reunifying more than 1,800 children 5 and older with parents or sponsors by Thursday's court-imposed deadline.

He pointed out that many of the families were reunited while in custody, then turned his attention to 431 children whose parents have been deported.

"The government is at fault for losing

several hundred parents in the process and that's where we go next," the judge said.

Sabraw ordered the government and the American Civil Liberties Union, which represents the parents, to submit written updates every Thursday on still-separated families.

The order signaled slightly looser oversight than Sabraw imposed last month with frequent hearings to make sure his deadline was met.

In late June, the judge gave the government 14 days to reunify children younger than 5 and 30 days to reunite children 5 and older with their families.

Sabraw said the "problem" could not be repeated, describing how Homeland Security, Health and Human Services and Justice departments didn't have a system to keep

track of the families that were separated when the administration introduced a "zero tolerance" policy toward illegal entry.

Sabraw didn't rule immediately on a request by the ACLU to give parents a week to decide whether or not to seek asylum after the group is notified that the family is reunited. As a result, a temporary halt on deportations remained in place.

Earlier on Friday, Homeland Security officials said they had reunified all eligible parents with children — but noted many others were not eligible because they had been released from immigration custody, are in their home countries or chose not to be reunited.

More than 1,800 children 5 and older had been reunited with parents or sponsors as of Thursday.

Prelate McCarrick resigns from College of Cardinals

Associated Press

In a move described as unprecedented, Pope Francis has effectively stripped U.S. prelate Theodore McCarrick of his cardinal's title and rank following allegations of sexual abuse, including one involving an 11-year-old boy. The Vatican announced Saturday that Francis ordered McCarrick to conduct a "life of prayer and penance" even before a church trial is held.

Francis acted swiftly after receiving McCarrick's letter of resignation Friday

evening, after recent weeks have brought a spate of allegations that the prelate in the course of his distinguished clerical career had sexually abused both boys and adult seminarians. The revelations posed a test of the pontiff's recently declared resolve to battle what he called a "culture of cover-up" of similar abuse in the Catholic's church's hierarchy.

McCarrick 88, already had been removed from public ministry since June 20, pending a full investigation into allegations

he fondled a teenager more than 40 years ago in New York City. A man, who was 11 at the time of the first alleged instance of abuse, said a sexually abusive relationship continued for two more decades. McCarrick has denied the initial allegation.

The prelate rose steadily up the U.S. Church's ranks, from auxiliary bishop in New York City, to bishop in Metuchen, N.J., to archbishop of Newark, N.J., and then to Archbishop of Washington, the city where the papal ambassador to the U.S. is based.

Curiosity and awe over total lunar eclipse

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG — Curiosity and awe have greeted a complete lunar eclipse, the longest one of this century and visible in much of the world.

The so-called “blood moon,” when it turns a deep red, was visible at different times in Australia, Africa, Asia, Europe and South America when the sun, the Earth and the moon lined up perfectly, casting Earth’s shadow onto the moon.

The total eclipse lasted 1 hour and 43 minutes, with the entire event lasting closer to four hours.

Rio de Janeiro’s spectators cheered when the blood moon emerged from the fog. The local planetarium set up telescopes for astrology fans.

In a special treat, this week, Mars was also at its closest approach to Earth since 2003, making it appear bigger and brighter.

North America missed out on Friday’s lunar eclipse but can look forward to the next one on Jan. 21, 2019, according to NASA.

CBS probes misconduct claims amid report on CEO Moonves

Associated Press

NEW YORK — CBS said Friday it is investigating personal misconduct claims after the company’s chief executive, Les Moonves, was the subject of a New Yorker story detailing sexual misconduct allegations.

The media company said independent members of its board of directors are “investigating claims that violate the company’s clear policies” regarding personal misconduct.

CBS Corp.’s stock fell 6 percent — its worst one-day loss in nearly seven years — as the reports of the misconduct allegations began to circulate about noon Friday, triggering investor concerns Moonves might be forced to step down. The CBS chief has been a towering figure in television for decades, credited with turning around a network that had been mired for years at the bottom ratings.

The New York-based company did not mention Moonves by name but said it issued a statement in response to the New Yorker article, which was published on the magazine’s website late Friday. The article was written by Ronan Farrow, who wrote a Pulitzer Prize-winning story last year for the same magazine uncovering many of the allegations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein.

The article says six women who had professional dealings with Moonves say he sexually harassed them between the 1980s and late 2000s. Four of the women described forcible touching

or kissing during business meetings, it says, while two said that Moonves physically intimidated them or threatened to derail their careers.

Among the women quoted in the article were the actress Illeana Douglas, writer Janet Jones and producer Christine Peters. Farrow told The Associated Press that all the women quoted in the article had to overcome “a lot of fear of retaliation to tell very serious stories of sexual misconduct about Les Moonves.”

Moonves acknowledged in a statement that there were times decades ago when he may have made some women uncomfortable by making advances. But he said, “Those were mistakes, and I regret them immensely.”

He said that he never misused his position to harm or hinder anyone’s career.

The New Yorker article also said a culture of misconduct extended from Moonves to other parts of the corporation, including CBS News. It said men in that division who were accused of sexual misconduct were promoted, even as the company paid settlements to women with complaints.

CBS said that once the investigation by its independent board members is completed, the full corporate board will review the findings and “take appropriate action.”

It took issue in a statement with the New Yorker article, however, for not accurately representing “a larger organization that does its best to treat its tens of thousands of employees with dignity and respect.”

Calif. fire destroys 500 structures, wrecks community

Associated Press

REDDING, Calif. — In the small Northern California community of Keswick, only a handful of homes remain.

The air is thick with the smell of smoke and chemicals. The rubble of people’s lives still smoldered a day after the so-called Carr Fire moved through Shasta County like a freight train.

The flames so thoroughly ate up homes that it’s difficult to tell how many once stood above the pile of ash and smoking rubble that remains.

Somewhere in there was the home of Shyla and Jason Campbell.

Jason Campbell, a firefight-

er, was six hours away, battling a wildfire burning near Yosemite Valley when the Carr Fire moved in on his home and family.

Shyla Campbell, 32, said it was nearly 2 a.m. Thursday when she got an official alert to evacuate.

“It’s huge flames, it’s coming up the hill, and everyone’s out and we’re watching it, then it goes down, and everyone’s like, ‘Oh it’s going out,’” she said. “And I’m like, ‘No, it’s going down the mountain and it’s going to come back up the next ridge.’”

She was right.

The family spent the night at a hotel. When Jason Campbell returned from the blaze he

was fighting Friday, he found his own home had gone up in flames, along with an RV and a boat.

The Campbells’ home of five years is among at least 500 structures that officials say were destroyed by the fire, which also swept through the historic Gold Rush town of Shasta and hit homes in Redding, a city of 92,000 about 100 miles south of the Oregon border.

“It’s tough,” Shyla Campbell said Friday from the city of Shasta Lake. “I just have to figure out where we’re going to stay. We’re just trying to stay away from the fire.”

So are about 37,000 people who remain under evacuation

orders Friday. Nearly 5,000 homes in the area were being threatened by the 75-square-mile blaze, which is just 5 percent contained.

Thousands of people scrambled to escape before the walls of flames descended from forested hills onto their neighborhoods Thursday.

Residents who gathered their belongings in haste described a chaotic, congested getaway as the embers blew up to a mile ahead of flames and the fire leaped across the wide Sacramento River and torched subdivisions in Redding.

Redding police chief Roger Moore was among those who lost their homes, the Los Angeles Times reported.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Trespasser gored by bison won't be charged

KY GOLDEN POND — Authorities said a Tennessee man will not be charged with trespassing or harassing wildlife after he was attacked while apparently trying to pet a wild bison.

The Clarksville Leaf Chronicle reported that Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area spokesman Chris Joyner announced the decision Wednesday. The 37-year-old man entered a restricted area at Land Between the Lakes on July 4 and approached a herd of bison.

Joyner has said a witness told authorities it appeared the man was going to pet a bison. Joyner said the man, whose identity hasn't been released, got within 10 feet of the animal before it charged at him. The bison gored the man, who suffered severe chest wounds. He was recovering and in stable condition.

Reward offered for info on stolen sculpture

MN ST. CLOUD — A 10-foot-long crocodile sculpture has gone missing in a central Minnesota city, and its creator is offering a reward for information on who stole it.

Minnesota artist Dale Lewis said the statue has been on display in St. Cloud for the past year. But he discovered it was missing when he went to bring it home. Now, Lewis said he'll pay \$2,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person who stole his project.

The St. Paul Pioneer Press reported that Lewis' creation is made of stainless steel and weighs about 160 pounds. Lewis said it has "lots of teeth" and is valued at \$6,500.

Fish located far from home amid record rain

NC SHILOH — Heavy rainfall in North Carolina has diversified the farm of one family, who found fish flopping in between their rows of soybeans.

The Charlotte Observer reported that a video posted on Facebook by Pasquotank County officials shows foot-long fish swimming through the rows of soybeans. The video was filmed by Carolyn Jennings on Tuesday afternoon and has been viewed about 65,000 times.

The state has seen record-breaking rain in July, particularly around coastal areas that measured nearly a foot of rain since July 20. More than 16 inches of rain have been recorded this month at Cape Hatteras by the National Weather Service, breaking a 1949 record.

2 police officers fired for coin-flip arrest

GA ROSWELL — Two Georgia police officers who used a simulated coin toss to decide whether to arrest a woman during a traffic stop have been fired.

Roswell city spokeswoman Julie Brechbill told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution that Courtney Brown and Kristee Wilson were fired Thursday, weeks after video of the April stop surfaced. The officers had been on administrative leave.

The footage showed them using a cellphone app mimicking a coin toss to decide whether to arrest Sarah Webb, who'd been pulled over for speeding. The decision to flip the virtual coin was made after Brown discovered her radar gun wasn't working. Although the result of the toss indicated Webb should be released, she was arrested anyway. Charges against Webb were later dropped.

Bear caught in storm drain for an hour freed

CO COLORADO SPRINGS — Authorities have freed a bear that got caught in a storm drain for about an hour.

Colorado Springs Utilities workers and Colorado Parks and Wildlife Southeast Region workers arrived to the residential neighborhood Thursday to work out a strategy to get the bear out. They didn't want to handle it because they would have to tag it and it would be euthanized if tagged again.

Wildlife officials harassed the bear by firing a nonlethal rubber slug while utility workers opened a manhole. The bear, estimated to be about 250 pounds, climbed out and was chased away.

Mom chokes young girl during game, is charged

WA SEATTLE — A suburban Seattle mother has been charged with felony assault following an attack last year on a sixth-grade girl at a basketball game between two Catholic schools.

Authorities said Monique Altheimer, 38, of Kent, got onto the basketball court during a December game in Seattle and choked the child who had fought with the suspect's daughter during an aggressive ballgame.

Investigators said Altheimer was cursing at the victim as she strangled her, and she elbowed another 11-year-old girl trying to help her teammate.

The victim was starting to black out when her own mother appeared to knock Altheimer down to stop the attack.

Charging documents note that Altheimer has been previously convicted of assault.

Teen fined \$1,000 for climbing memorial

SD PIERRE — A Michigan man arrested for climbing Mount Rushmore has been fined \$1,000.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in South Dakota said Wednesday Zachary Schossau, 19, of South Rockwood, was arrested July 22 by park rangers. Schossau appeared before a federal magistrate Monday where he was fined and also ordered to pay a \$30 court processing fee.

The U.S. Attorney's Office and the National Park Service caution that climbing the Mount Rushmore National Memorial is illegal and a violation that will be prosecuted.

Swimming ponies cheered by large crowd

VA CHINCOTEAGUE — Thousands of people cheered on dozens of ponies during the annual Chincoteague Pony Swim on Virginia's Eastern Shore.

Media outlets reported that the ponies swam across the Assateague Channel on Wednesday morning. Crowds of people greeted them from the other side of a fence on the shore. Others watched from kayaks and boats.

The ponies traveled from Assateague Island to Chincoteague Island during "slack tide," when there is little current.

Every year, the first foal to come ashore is named King or Queen Neptune. Some of the ponies will be auctioned off to buyers. Others will head back into the wild.

The pony swim is in its 93rd year.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

On a mission to provide credible reporting and daily news to America's military, wherever they serve.

Mobile apps available: www.stripes.com/apps.

Past's pull powerful at Baseball Hall of Fame

Associated Press

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — “The best part of baseball today is its yesterdays,” Lawrence Ritter, the author of one of the game’s finest and most celebrated books, “The Glory of Their Times,” liked to say.

We hear a lot these days, from the offices of Major League Baseball on down, about how baseball needs to change, to adapt, to evolve so the problems adversely impacting attendance and attention can be solved.

There are too many strikeouts, they say. Not enough hits. Too much shifting. Games that stretch into eternity and bore people, driving them to the high-intensity pop of the NBA and the NFL.

But baseball’s different, right? It’s the national pastime, a secular religion. It’s about tradition and a shared past and history. Change it and you change us. Right?

This weekend, brings the latest crop of inductees into the Baseball Hall of Fame — the ultimate repository of the game’s yesterdays — Vladimir Guerrero, Chipper Jones, Jack Morris, Alan Trammell, Jim Thome and Trevor Hoffman. Modern players who now belong to the ages.

Baseball is at a crossroads these days. Revenue is up, but attendance is down. People are worried. The game is struggling to clarify its identity — to balance tradition and marketability so that people will keep coming, drawn by what is increasingly being called “the on-field product.”

This is not just a business conundrum. It is also a very American one — the tension between what was (or what sorta kinda was) and what actually is.

Like the country around it, baseball often gets pulled toward a mythic past that, like all myths, has just enough fact embedded in its story to endure. Both game and nation have been upended by the Information Age and its distractions and diminishing attention spans. Both are buffeted by the complexities of an increasingly demanding and disenchanting

constituency.

But our yesterdays, real and imagined, are an alluring siren, as baseball fans who make the summer pilgrimage to Cooperstown know or quickly realize.

Everything about the place — Victorian architecture, green spaces, ubiquitous bunting and constant reminders of its hand-spun farming heritage — seems designed to pull you back in time to a baseball past, and an American past, that kind of existed and kind of didn’t.

Even the choice of Cooperstown was an elaborate transaction between truth and myth aimed at helping an agricultural community transition to a tourist economy.

When I was a kid, the signs here all said “Birthplace of Baseball,” an ode to Cooperstown’s Abner Doubleday, who invented the game one day in 1839.

Except, of course, he didn’t. Like so many good things, baseball emerged not from one single event but from a murky soup of predecessors — things like “town ball,” “old cat” and perhaps even the English game of rounders.

The commission that venerated Doubleday in the early 20th century, and led to Cooperstown’s elevation, was motivated as much by a desire to prove that baseball was a purely American game as it was by historical accuracy. The title of the Hall’s official magazine sums it up nicely: “Memories and Dreams.”

The past’s pull is powerful as you walk through the Hall of Fame and its museum. It engulfs you, beckoning you. It speaks of men long gone, ways of life long overwritten, times that it would be easy to call simpler (though black and Latino athletes might take issue with that conclusion).

Yet as the Hall’s romance begins to airlift you away, if you cast a colder eye, something emerges from the mist, something common to so many of the relics on display: Behind the comforting veneer of a static, dusty past, a constantly rushing river of change and progress is revealed.

There is the baseball cap worn by Boston Red Sox catcher Bob

Montgomery on Sept. 9, 1979, the day he became the final big leaguer to bat without a helmet. I remember, as a child, having passionate debates with friends about whether players should be required to wear helmets.

There is the bat used by Ron Blomberg of the New York Yankees on April 6, 1973, the day he became the first designated hitter in baseball history. The DH debate rages to this day.

Nearby, there is the protective throat flap invented by Dodgers catcher Steve Yeager that spread throughout baseball to protect catchers’ necks from 100-mph fastballs and broken bats.

“Baseball has always been a game of innovation, experimentation and change,” an exhibit about the game’s early history tells us. “While the game keeps one foot in the past, ever mindful of its cherished history, it also steps into the future by altering rules, adopting new tactics, and testing novel equipment.”

And there is, of course, the significant chunk of the Hall devoted to people of color — the Jackie Robinsons, Larry Doby, Roberto Clementes and their counterparts across the major leagues whose arrivals were, at the time, considered by critics to be tectonic shifts that baseball might not endure. It did.

Sabermetrics, free agency, reviewed calls, the no-pitch intentional walk, even the dawn of gloves themselves 150 years ago: Each was a sea change that helped make the game what it is today. And just ask current players Gift Ngoepe of South Africa or Dovydas Neverauskas of Lithuania, the first MLB players from their countries, whether baseball is merely about tradition.

There are continuous arguments, even among the most ardent of fans, about the decisions that change the game. I passed a number of them while walking through the Hall this week.

In front of the Henry Aaron exhibit, two men waged a spirited discussion about whether the DH should be deployed in the National League. One floor down, in a room devoted to the

history of Latino players, a similar conversation unfolded about shifts. And near a display of 19th-century catcher’s mitts, a gaggle of boys talked of the virtues and detriments of plate-blocking rules.

Sorta like how the players and executives of baseball are talking about it all.

“We are not out there or up there in New York sitting around thinking, ‘You know, baseball, it’s been this way a long time. How are we going to change it?’” Commissioner Rob Manfred told the National Press Club last week. But, he said, change requires management because baseball is already changing “organically.”

That’s how it should be, isn’t it? Put aside the details — shift or no shift, mound visit limits or not — and you have a durable, alluring game that is evolving with the times. As the noted philosopher — and former Defense Secretary — Donald Rumsfeld once said, you go to war with the army you have. In short, deal with what is, not what’s wished.

Let’s end with a counterbalance to Lawrence Ritter. It’s from one of the game’s greatest pitchers, who was denied the right to play in the big leagues for much of his career because of the color of his skin. Not for him the allure of a romanticized past that reframed progress as tradition.

“Don’t look back,” Satchel Paige said. “Something might be gaining on you.”

He was being extreme, but he had a point. Truth is, there’s room in baseball for all three of its sometimes-competing narratives — the past, the imagined past and the very real present. The important question is: How do we — the players, the executives, the ticket-buying public — balance those things in a way that will keep something we love healthy and vibrant?

Somewhere between Lawrence Ritter and Satchel Paige lies the reality of baseball. The game will find it. It always has. And it probably always will.

Betts' game-ending homer lifts Red Sox

Associated Press

BOSTON — Mookie Betts ended a series of late rallies with a home run that cleared Fenway Park and set off another celebration in Boston.

Betts led off the bottom of the 10th with a shot well over the Green Monster to push the Boston Red Sox past the Minnesota Twins 4-3 on Friday night.

"Fortunately, I got enough of a good pitch to hit and got it up in the air," Betts said after his first game-ending home run.

Betts' homer capped a wild last few innings. The Twins rallied from a 2-1 deficit to take a one-run lead in the top of the ninth. Rafael Devers hit a lead-off homer in the bottom of the inning to force extras.

"That's the definition of a team — we've just got to pick each other up," Betts said. "We may not do everything well one

particular night, but we can find a way to win a game and I think that's what makes us good."

It was the 25th homer of the season for Betts, Boston's All-Star right fielder who is leading the majors with a .345 batting average.

Jackie Bradley Jr. hit a two-run homer in the fifth for Boston and Chris Sale struck out 10 over six scoreless innings. Sale was on track to win his sixth straight start before the late hits took both starters out of the decision.

"Just unbelievable. We know what this lineup can do," Sale said. "Our guys are just picking us up."

Tyler Thornburg (1-0) got the win by holding the Twins scoreless in the 10th after Craig Kimbrel blew a shot at his 33rd save in the ninth. Eddie Rosario hit a two-run double with two outs in the ninth to give Minnesota its

first lead.

Kimbrel came in for the last out of the eighth but couldn't survive his own control issues in the ninth. Robbie Grossman drew a walk with one out and advanced on a wild pitch, Jorge Polanco walked with two outs and Rosario drove in both with a double to center.

"We hung around, we made Sale work," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "We didn't score but we got him up there."

Sale was done after throwing 100 pitches in six innings. The Twins rallied against Boston's bullpen, but couldn't hold the lead themselves.

Devers homered off Fernando Rodney with a line drive to right, just out of Max Kepler's reach as he crashed hard into the short wall. Kepler stayed down on the warning track for a minute or two but remained in

the game.

It was the sixth blown save of the season for Rodney. Matt Belisle (1-1) took over in the 10th and faced only Betts, who ended it with his 25th homer of the season.

"We're a good offensive team, we're just kind of struggling right now," Boston manager Alex Cora said.

Lance Lynn also pitched six innings, holding Boston to just two runs on Bradley's homer in the fifth. He struck out three and walked two.

More Mookie: Betts' teammates cooled him off by dousing him with a cooler full of ice water when he answered the curtain call from the Red Sox fans who stuck around in the heat for the ending.

"I had a feeling it was coming. It was just a little colder than I wanted it to be," Betts said.

MLB roundup

Freese drives in five runs to help Pirates edge Mets

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — David Freese drove in five runs, including an RBI single in the ninth inning that lifted Pittsburgh to a 5-4 win over New York.

Freese homered as part of a 3-for-3 effort with two walks, helping the Pirates win for the 12th time in 14 games.

The Mets had won three in a row. They beat the Pirates 12-6 on Thursday night behind Asdrubal Cabrera's homer and two doubles — and Cabrera was traded to Philadelphia on Friday.

Josh Harrison led off the Pittsburgh ninth with an infield single against rookie reliever Tim Peterson (2-2). A single by Gregory Polanco put runners on the corners and Elias Diaz was intentionally walked to load the bases. Freese hit a drive over center fielder Brandon Nimmo for the win.

Pirates closer Felipe Vazquez

(4-2) got the win after striking out two in a scoreless ninth.

Rangers 11, Astros 2: Robinson Chirinos hit a two-run homer, Isiah Kiner-Falefa and Jurickson Profar added solo shots and visiting Texas routed Houston.

Texas snapped an eight-game losing streak to the Astros and ended a four-game skid overall.

Cardinals 5, Cubs 2: Paul DeJong had three hits and three RBIs, Yadier Molina also had three hits and drove in a run, and St. Louis beat Chicago before a season-high crowd of 47,169 at Busch Stadium.

Nationals 9, Marlins 1: Max Scherzer allowed one unearned run and struck out 11 in eight innings on his 34th birthday, and visiting Washington beat Miami.

Blue Jays 10, White Sox 5: Lourdes Gurriel Jr. hit two of Toronto's five home runs, Curtis Granderson led off the game

with a homer and Toronto beat host Chicago.

Reds 6, Phillies 4: Mason Williams hit a three-run homer to snap a 2-2 tie in the fourth inning, and Cincinnati's bullpen made it stand up against visiting Philadelphia.

Indians 8, Tigers 3: Francisco Lindor hit two of his team's four home runs, and Cleveland broke through in the final two innings to beat host Detroit.

Orioles 15, Rays 5: Adam Jones hit a three-run homer, Jonathan Schoop connected in a fifth consecutive game and Baltimore beat Chris Archer and visiting Tampa Bay.

Rockies 3, Athletics 1: Kyle Freeland threw six shutout innings, Nolan Arenado homered and Colorado cooled off visiting Oakland.

Angels 4, Mariners 3 (10): At Anaheim, Calif., Kole Calhoun homered on the first pitch of the bottom of the 10th inning, giving Los Angeles a

victory over Seattle.

Brewers 3, Giants 1: Ryan Braun hit an RBI single and drove in two runs to back Chase Anderson's first victory in nearly a month, leading Milwaukee to another late rally and a win over host San Francisco.

Diamondbacks 6, Padres 2: Zack Greinke won his seventh straight decision by holding San Diego to three hits in seven innings, and Steven Souza Jr. had the big hit in the six-run third that carried visiting Arizona.

Dodgers 4, Braves 1: Clayton Kershaw pitched 7 2/3 strong innings, added a two-run single and reached four times, helping visiting Los Angeles beat Atlanta.

Kershaw (4-5) allowed one run and six hits and striking out eight. The three-time Cy Young Award winner and 2014 NL MVP is 4-0 with a 1.43 ERA in 10 career starts against the Braves.

Thomas poised for Tour title after 20th stage

Associated Press

ESPELETTE, France — Geraint Thomas effectively sealed his first Tour de France title on Saturday by protecting the yellow jersey in the penultimate stage time trial.

Thomas, a Welsh rider with Team Sky, takes a lead of 1 minute, 51 seconds over Tom Dumoulin into the mostly ceremonial finish on the Champs-Élysées in Paris on Sunday.

Dumoulin won the stage by one second ahead of four-time champion Chris Froome, who leapfrogged Primož Roglič into third place overall.

“After a difficult day yesterday I did not think it was possible,” Froome said. “I’m very, very happy. Being on the podium with Geraint is a dream.”

Thomas finished third in the 20th stage, 14 seconds behind,

but that was more than enough to protect the lead of more than two minutes he had at the start of the day.

Wearing an all-yellow skin suit while riding a bike in the red, white and blue colors of the British flag, the 32-year-old Thomas was the last rider to start.

With a few drops of rain falling, Thomas was quick to regain control when his wheel appeared to lock up coming around a tricky, tight corner early in the route.

At the finish, Thomas let out a loud scream and held his arms out wide in celebration. He then embraced his wife, Sara Elen, as soon as he got off his bike.

Thomas is poised to become the third British rider — and first Welshman — to win the Tour after Bradley Wiggins

and Froome. Also, he can make it Sky’s sixth victory in the past seven years.

Thomas claimed the yellow jersey by winning Stage 11 in the Alps, followed that up with another victory atop Alpe d’Huez a day later and then defended his advantage through the Pyrenees.

Thomas was a support rider during Froome’s title rides but he became Sky’s undisputed leader when Froome cracked in the grueling 17th stage through the Pyrenees.

An all-around rider who began his career on the track, Thomas helped Britain to gold medals in team pursuit at both the 2008 and 2012 Olympics before turning his full attention to road racing.

Dumoulin clocked 40 minutes, 52 seconds over the hilly and technical 19.3-mile route.

It marked the first time in 12 years that the Tour passed through the Basque Country and fans waving the region’s red, green and white flags lined the entire route in front of the area’s traditional half-timbered houses.

It was Dumoulin’s second career stage win in the Tour, having also won a time trial in 2016. The Dutchman has now won six TT’s overall at the three Grand Tours — the Tour, the Giro d’Italia and the Spanish Vuelta — and he is also the time trial world champion.

“It’s amazing to finish second in the Tour de France,” Dumoulin said. “I’m 27 years old and hopefully I’ll get stronger, especially in the mountains, and hopefully one day I will be able to win.”

Sports briefs

Brewers add power to lineup by acquiring Moustakas

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The Milwaukee Brewers found the left-handed power hitter they sought, acquiring third baseman Mike Moustakas on Friday from the Kansas City Royals to complete a second significant trade in two days as the club makes a push for its first playoff appearance since 2011.

“We were looking for another big bat to add to the lineup and we got it,” manager Craig Counsell said. “We feel like we can put together a really tough lineup on a daily basis now.”

The Brewers sent outfielder Brett Phillips and pitcher Jorge Lopez to the Royals, who are in last place in the AL Central.

Milwaukee announced the trade after beating the San Francisco Giants 3-1. Reliever Joakim Soria, who was acquired Thursday from the Chicago White Sox, made his Brewers debut by pitching a scoreless seventh inning.

The 29-year-old Moustakas was hitting .249 with 20 homers and 62 RBIs for the Royals. At least initially, the Brewers will shift current third baseman Travis Shaw to second base.

In other baseball news:

■ Asdrubal Cabrera moved around a lot for the New York Mets, switching spots all over the infield. He was on the go Friday, too — to the Philadelphia Phillies.

The NL East-leading Phillies swung a deal four days before the trade deadline, getting Cabrera from the Mets for Double-A right-hander Franklyn Kilome.

Cabrera was hitting .277 with 18 home runs and 58 RBIs as the Mets’ second baseman. The 32-year-old Cabrera was a two-time All-Star shortstop for Cleveland earlier in his career.

■ The Houston Astros added bullpen help Friday night when they traded for Minnesota right-hander Ryan Pressly.

Houston sent two prospects — right-hander Jorge Alcala and outfielder Gilberto Celestino — to the Twins.

The 29-year-old Pressley is 1-1 with a 3.40 ERA and 69 strikeouts in 51 appearances this season. He adds depth in the bullpen to a team that sent closer Ken Giles to the minors earlier this month after he struggled most of the season.

Falcons owner defends players

FLOWERY BRANCH, Ga. — Atlanta Falcons owner Arthur Blank believes players should have the right to speak out on important issues even though he isn’t expecting his players to protest during the national anthem this season.

Blank says just like last season, Falcons players have been asked to stand for the national anthem.

He said the Falcons are

“very committed to the military.” He also says he believes players have “very significant rights” and appeared to say he wouldn’t fine players for exercising those rights.

Blank said players should be allowed to make their own decisions on what he described as the “complex issue” of standing or kneeling for the national anthem.

Capitals re-sign Wilson to 6-year deal

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Washington Capitals re-signed right winger Tom Wilson to a \$31.02 million, six-year deal Friday.

The contract carries a \$5.17 million salary-cap hit through the 2023-24 season.

Signing Wilson was the final need on the Stanley Cup champions’ offseason checklist. The 24-year-old was their final restricted free agent.