

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Risks posed by Russia's S-400 in Turkey

The Washington Post

A Russian shipment carrying the first components of the S-400 surface-to-air defense system landed in Turkey on Friday in a move that has been opposed by the Pentagon and could damage Turkey's relationship with the United States and other NATO allies.

Washington has long warned that if Turkey were to acquire the Russian system, the United States may impose harsh economic sanctions and revoke Turkey's participation in American military programs.

Here are some key questions about how the S-400 ended up in Turkey and what may come next:

■ **What is the S-400 air and missile system?** It's a Russian-made, long-range, surface-to-air defense system. The S-400 is one of Russia's most sophisticated pieces of military equipment, with advanced surveillance radar and a suite of missiles that can closely track and target aircraft from the ground.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said he chose to go ahead with the \$2.5 billion purchase from Russia because the United States did not make an adequate offer on its own Patriot air defense system. NATO currently has that system stationed in Turkey for its own purposes in Syria, but Turkey never purchased it from Washington. NATO officials have raised concerns that the S-400 purchase will not be compatible with other systems already in use

in Turkey.

■ **Why is the United States opposed to Turkey owning the S-400 system?** Turkey had previously ordered about 100 F-35 stealth jet fighters from the United States, and almost 1,000 parts of the jet are even made by Turkish companies. U.S. officials fear that if Turkey has both the F-35 and Russia's most advanced air defense system in its hands, then Russians may gain access to F-35 technology and later target its weaknesses.

Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Mike Andrew recently said, "Turkey will not be permitted to have both systems."

The episode has put the United States in an uncomfortable bind. Washington is eager to prevent Russia from having access to its advanced military equipment, but the United States also relies heavily on Turkey as an important partner in the region because of its strategic location bordering Iraq, Iran and Syria.

■ **Does the S-400 pose a risk to the F-35?** Not at the moment. Past estimates suggested that the radar systems on the S-400 can identify an F-35 once it is within about 20 miles, but the F-35 carries air-to-ground missiles with a range of up to 40 miles that could destroy it.

U.S. officials have expressed concern that if the two systems are in proximity, the Russian system could learn more about the F-35's stealth capabilities.

■ **What has Washington threatened to**

do about it? U.S. officials have threatened to cancel shipments of F-35 jets to Ankara and impose economic sanctions on Turkey through the 2017 Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.

In April, the Pentagon announced it was suspending Turkey's participation in a program that trains pilots from U.S. allies to fly the F-35 until Turkey agreed to cancel purchase of the S-400 system.

■ **How has Turkey defended its decision to go forward with the purchase?** Erdogan has said acquiring the Russian system is in line with Turkey's sovereign right to defend itself.

Last month, Erdogan urged the United States to not let the purchase of the S-400 deteriorate strong ties between the two countries. "They should think deeply because losing a country like Turkey will not be easy," Erdogan said, referring to officials in Washington. "If we are friends, if we are strategic partners, then we should handle this issue between each other."

Turkey also said it would keep the U.S. and Russian equipment separate to avoid allowing Russian access to U.S. stealth technology. Erdogan has expressed confidence that his relationship with Trump will override U.S. sanctions concerns.

"I say this very openly and sincerely, our relations with Trump are at a place that I can call really good," Erdogan said in June.

4th cargo plane lands at base near capital

Associated Press

ISTANBUL — Turkey on Saturday continued receiving components of a Russian-made air defense system, despite Washington's warnings that it will impose sanctions on the NATO-member country.

Turkey's Ministry of National Defence tweeted the landing of a fourth Russian cargo plane in Murted Air Base, near the capital, Ankara. On Friday, the ministry announced the much-

awaited delivery of S-400 components had begun.

The United States has repeatedly warned it will impose economic sanctions and kick Turkey out of the F-35 stealth fighter jet program if Ankara does not drop its S-400 purchase.

The U.S. administration was publicly silent Friday on how it would respond to the delivery, with the Pentagon postponing a news conference.

Acting U.S. Secretary of De-

fense Mark Esper and Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar spoke by phone. While the Pentagon declined to discuss the call, the Turkish ministry released a statement late Friday saying Akar stressed that the purchase of S-400 defense systems "was not an option but rather a necessity" due to Turkey's security concerns.

The statement said there was no change in Turkey's "strategic orientation," adding that a deterioration in relations

would not serve the interests of Turkey, the U.S. or NATO. The minister also emphasized Turkey's commitment to the F-35 program and repeated a proposal for a joint working group to study how the S-400 system would interact with the fighter jets.

The U.S. is concerned the S-400 could be used to gather data on F-35 capabilities if Turkey has both.

Storm surge concerns rise ahead of Barry

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Carrying “off the chart” amounts of moisture, sprawling Barry strengthened into a hurricane Saturday as it crawled slowly toward shore, knocking out power on the Gulf Coast and dumping heavy rains that could last for days in a test of flood-prevention efforts implemented after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans 14 years ago.

As natives and tourists in the Big Easy, Baton Rouge and other heavily populated areas in the storm’s path hunkered down or wandered through quiet, emptied streets waiting for the worst, the Coast Guard rescued more than a dozen people from the flooded remote island of Isle de Jean Charles. Water on the island had risen so high that some residents were clinging to rooftops by the time help arrived.

Video showed water overtopping a levee in Plaquemines Parish, a finger of land extending deep into the Gulf of Mexico, downstream from New

Orleans. Officials were still confident that New Orleans’ levees would hold firm. Most of the levees range from about 20 to 25 feet in height.

Barry had strengthened into a Category 1 hurricane by Saturday morning, with maximum sustained winds of 75 mph, the National Hurricane Center said. Storms become hurricanes when their winds reach 74 mph or higher.

Officials predicted Barry would make landfall near Morgan City, west of New Orleans. The small town had an overnight curfew that expired Saturday morning after on-and-off rain and power outages. People used cellphones to see in the dark, and opened doors and windows to let the warm, sticky, tropical air circulate.

More than 70,000 customers were without power Saturday morning, including 66,830 in Louisiana and 3,140 in Mississippi, according to power-outage.us.

Though expected to be a weak hurricane, Barry threat-

ened disastrous flooding across a swath of the Gulf Coast. By Saturday morning, the storm system had gathered a “big slough of moisture,” meaning “a lot of rain is on the way,” said National Hurricane Center Director Ken Graham.

During a storm update through Facebook Live, Graham pointed to a computer screen showing a huge, swirling mess of airborne water. “That is just an amazing amount of moisture,” he said. “That is off the chart.”

The rains inundated the remote Isle de Jean Charles, about 45 miles south of New Orleans. Coast Guard rescuers used helicopters to pluck some residents from rooftops and loaded others into boats from flooded homes on Saturday morning, Petty Officer Lexie Preston said.

Barry was moving so slowly, it was likely that heavy rain would continue throughout the weekend across Louisiana, Graham said. There were predictions of 10 to 20 inches of rain

through Sunday across a swath of Louisiana that includes New Orleans and Baton Rouge, with some parts of the state possibly getting 25 inches.

Looking ahead, tracking forecasts showed the storm moving toward Chicago, swelling the Mississippi River basin with water that must eventually flow south again.

Water was flowing over a levee in Point Celeste, in Plaquemines Parish, Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser said. He said crews were working to contain the water.

Governors declared emergencies in Louisiana and Mississippi, and authorities took unprecedented precautions in closing floodgates and raising the barriers around New Orleans.

Gov. John Bel Edwards said it was the first time all floodgates were sealed in the New Orleans-area Hurricane Risk Reduction System since Katrina. Still, he said he didn’t expect the Mississippi River to spill over the levees.

Judge sides with Pentagon, Amazon in cloud bid case

Associated Press

A federal judge dismissed allegations that bidding for a \$10 billion cloud computing contract with the Pentagon was rigged to favor Amazon.

Friday’s ruling dismissing Oracle’s claims clears the Defense Department to award the contract to one of two finalists: Amazon or Microsoft.

It will be a boon for whichever company gets to run the 10-year computing project, which the U.S. military considers vital to maintaining its technological advantage over adversaries and accelerating its use of artificial intelligence in warfare.

Oracle and IBM were eliminated during an earlier round, but Oracle persisted with a legal challenge claiming con-

flicts of interest.

Court of Federal Claims Judge Eric Bruggink said Friday that Oracle can’t demonstrate favoritism because it didn’t meet the project’s bidding requirements to begin with. Bruggink also sided with a Pentagon contracting officer’s earlier finding that there were no “organizational conflicts of interest” and no individual conflicts that harmed the bidding.

Department of Defense spokeswoman Elissa Smith praised the judge’s order, saying it reaffirms the Pentagon’s position that the bidding process “has been conducted as a fair, full and open competition, which the contracting officer and her team executed in compliance with the law.”

Smith said the military “has

an urgent need” to get the cloud services in place. The Pentagon plans to pick a vendor as soon as Aug. 23.

Formally called the Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure plan, or JEDI, the military’s computing project would store and process vast amounts of classified data, allowing the Pentagon to use artificial intelligence to speed up its war planning and fighting capabilities. The initial contract starts at \$1 million but calls for as much as \$10 billion in spending over the course of the partnership.

Amazon was considered an early favorite when the Pentagon began detailing its cloud needs in 2017, but rivals accused Amazon executives and the Pentagon of being overly cozy.

Oracle had its final chance to make its case against Amazon — and the integrity of the government’s bidding process — in oral arguments Wednesday. The judge ruled two days later.

Oracle spokeswoman Deborah Hellinger didn’t address the ruling in a statement Friday but said the company looks forward to working with the Defense Department and other agencies in the future.

Some members of Congress have expressed concerns about reports of potential favoritism toward Amazon. In an emailed statement earlier this week, Sen. Chuck Grassley, an Iowa Republican, said the Pentagon should start the bidding process over and rewrite its proposal.

Trump asks court to unfreeze wall money

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Friday asked the Supreme Court to lift a freeze on Pentagon money it wants to use to build sections of a border wall with Mexico.

Two lower courts have ruled against the administration in a lawsuit over the funding. A divided three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco recently kept in place a lower-court ruling preventing the government from tapping Defense Department counterdrug money to build high-priority sections of wall in Arizona, California and New Mexico.

At stake in the case is billions of dollars that would allow President Donald Trump

to make progress on a major 2016 campaign promise heading into his race for a second term. Trump ended a 35-day government shutdown in February after Congress gave him approximately \$1.4 billion in border wall funding, far less than the \$5.7 billion he was seeking.

Trump then declared a national emergency to take cash from other government accounts to use to construct sections of wall.

The money includes \$3.6 billion from military construction funds, \$2.5 billion from Defense Department counterdrug activities and \$600 million from the Treasury Department's asset-forfeiture fund. The Treasury Department funds have so far survived legal challenges, and the transfer of the military construction funds

has not yet been approved.

At issue in the case before the Supreme Court is just the \$2.5 billion in Defense Department funds, which the administration says will be used to construct more than 100 miles of fencing.

The lawsuit challenging the use of those funds was brought by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of the Sierra Club and Southern Border Communities Coalition. Late Friday, Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan gave the groups until the afternoon of July 19 to respond in writing to the Trump administration's filing.

The administration wants the Supreme Court to lift the freeze on the Department of Defense money while it continues its case at the appeals court and, if necessary, appeals to the Supreme Court.

President: Immigration sweep to begin Sunday

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement said efforts to deport families with orders to leave the country will continue after an upcoming national sweep that President Donald Trump said would start Sunday.

Matthew Albence, the agency's acting director, said targets were on an "accelerated docket" of immigration court cases for predominantly Central Americans who recently arrived at the U.S. border in unprecedented numbers. Similar operations occurred in 2016 under President Barack Obama and in 2017 under Trump.

"This family operation is nothing new," Albence told The Associated Press. "It's part of our day-to-day operations. We're

trying to surge some additional resources to deal with this glut of cases that came out of the accelerated docket, but after this operation is over, these cases are still going to be viable cases that we'll be out there investigating and pursuing."

The operation will target people with final deportation orders on 10 major court dockets, including Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Miami. Albence said that doesn't mean arrests will be limited to certain areas.

Authorities will go where their investigations lead, even if it's five states away from where the case is filed.

Trump said authorities were "focused on criminals as much as we can before we do anything else."

"It starts on Sunday and they're going to

take people out and they're going to bring them back to their countries or they're going to take criminals out, put them in prison, or put them in prison in the countries they came from."

The operation inflamed the political debate over immigration as Trump appeals to his base with a pledge to crack down on migrants and Democrats cast the president and his administration as inhumane for going after families.

The Obama-era family operation in 2016 resulted in about 10% of those targeted being arrested, and the 2017 effort had a lower arrest rate, Albence said. Other operations that have targeted people with criminal arrest records have yielded arrests rates of about 30%, aided by access to law enforcement databases.

Calif. Navy base may get big check for quake repairs

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House unanimously approved a measure to authorize \$100 million for repairs to the Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, which was near the epicenter of the recent California desert earthquakes.

The sprawling 1.1 million-acre station, which tests and develops military technology, sustained significant damage in the 6.4 and 7.1 magnitude quakes which struck the Southern California desert on July 4 and 5. While flight operations resumed Wednesday, the base remains closed to

nonessential personnel but may reopen as early as July 15.

"There has been significant progress made on inspecting and executing appropriate repairs to family housing," the base said in a message to residents Thursday.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., and Rep. Paul Cook, R-Calif., introduced the funding proposal as an amendment to annual defense authorization legislation, which passed the House Friday.

In addition to authorizing \$100 million for repairs at the naval station, it requires the Department of Defense to develop a

plan by Oct. 1 to assess, repair and modernize the facilities at China Lake and other installations in the region damaged by the earthquake. That includes Fort Irwin in San Bernardino County and Edwards Air Force Base in Kern County.

Neither Fort Irwin nor Edwards Air Force Base sustained significant damage in the quakes, although an off-base air control tower that supports operations at Edwards was damaged, according to the Air Force.

Personnel from Edwards also provided emergency response support to China Lake after the July 5 earthquake.

Dems grapple with rift over issue of race

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The highly public, racially charged rift between House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and a clutch of freshmen congresswomen led by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., has spilled into the 2020 Democratic presidential contest. The intramural conflict is threatening to overshadow President Donald Trump's history of race-baiting and xenophobia.

Seizing an opportunity to rile his opponents, Trump on Friday offered a finger-wagging rebuke to Ocasio-Cortez and a defense of Pelosi. "She is not a racist," he said of the speaker, who rarely hides her contempt for the president and certainly was not seeking his support.

While many Democrats had

hoped to use the president's history on race against him, the party's 2020 hopefuls are finding they first need to reconcile the matter internally.

Former Vice President Joe Biden cited Trump's tacit support for white supremacists as the primary motivation for his White House bid. Yet Biden has struggled in recent weeks to explain his own record on race, including his work with segregationist lawmakers in the early 1970s, support for a crime bill that disproportionately hurt minorities and racially insensitive comments about school desegregation decades ago.

In the first Democratic presidential debate last month, California Sen. Kamala Harris skewered Biden's record on race, and his support in public polls has declined since.

Now that debate is also playing out on Capitol Hill in the feud between two prominent congresswomen: Pelosi, the most powerful Democrat in Washington, and Ocasio-Cortez, 29, a self-described democratic socialist who is one of four members of a high-profile "squad" of newly elected women of color.

Pelosi sought to minimize Ocasio-Cortez's influence in recent days, while Ocasio-Cortez called the speaker "disrespectful" and accused her of marginalizing women of color.

The friction has forced the party's presidential candidates to weigh in. And so far, no one wants to pick sides.

Harris described Ocasio-Cortez as "bold and smart as anything" but declined to criticize Pelosi in a Friday inter-

view with The Breakfast Club, a New York-based radio show.

South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg, who has struggled to attract minority support early in his underdog presidential bid, was even more cautious when asked to address the rift as he campaigned Friday in New Hampshire.

"I'm not going to pick sides in a House caucus tussle," he said. "What I will say is that the diversity of opinions in the party right now is pretty healthy."

Among the 2020 candidates, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren have been the most prominent Ocasio-Cortez allies in recent months.

Neither has spoken out on the Pelosi-Ocasio-Cortez dispute in recent days, however.

Pence calls for Space Force during visit to Calif. base

Santa Maria (Calif.) Times

Vice President Mike Pence on Wednesday evening reiterated President Donald Trump's desire to welcome a "new millennium" of space investment and exploration during a speech at Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Attended by more than 400 base personnel and invited guests, Pence said Vandenberg plays a key role in the nation's space operations. He praised the base personnel for their work supporting other government agencies and the commercial space industry.

To booming cheers and thundering applause from the entire audience, he reiterated President Donald Trump's call to establish a "Space Force" as the sixth branch of the U.S. Armed Forces.

"Our nation's armed forces have always been a vanguard of advancing American leadership beyond the bounds of Earth," he said, "and the Space Force ... is the next and the natural evolution of American military supremacy. So, get

ready for it."

Pence spoke after touching down in Air Force Two at Vandenberg just after 5 p.m. Wednesday for the second stop on a two-day trip to California. He and second lady Karen Pence were greeted by cheers and applause from a crowd waving American flags before being whisked away in a motorcade for a briefing and tour of the base Combined Space Operations Center.

Wednesday's trip marked Pence's first visit to Vandenberg since taking office. Earlier in the day, he delivered remarks at a Coalinga fundraiser for Trump's reelection campaign and spoke about trade between the United States, Mexico and Canada at a Lemoore farm in California.

Situated on nearly 100,000 acres of land mere miles from Lompoc, Vandenberg — the third-largest Air Force base in the U.S. — has played a key role in the nation's space and missile test operations since its 1957 inception.

Robert Mueller's testimony is postponed until July 24

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Special counsel Robert Mueller's testimony to Congress has been delayed until July 24 under an agreement that gives lawmakers more time to question him.

Mueller had been scheduled to testify July 17 before two house committees about the findings of his Russia investigation. But lawmakers in both parties complained that the short length of the hearings would not allow enough time for all members to ask questions.

Under the new arrangement, Mueller will testify for an extended period of time — three hours instead of two — before the House Judiciary Committee. He will then testify before the House intelligence committee in a separate hearing. The two committees said in a statement that all members of both committees will be able to question him.

The agreement will also give Mueller more time to prepare for the rigorous questioning. The statement said the post-

ponement was "at his request."

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., and House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., announced the terms after days of negotiations and questions over whether the testimony would be delayed. In the joint statement, the panels said the longer hearings "will allow the American public to gain further insight into the special counsel's investigation and the evidence uncovered regarding Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and President (Donald) Trump's possible obstruction of justice and abuse of power."

Mueller has expressed his reluctance to testify and said he won't go beyond what's in his 448-page report. But Democrats have been determined to highlight its contents for Americans who they believe have not read it. They want to extract information from the former special counsel and spotlight what they say are his most damaging findings against Trump.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

9-week-old kitten OK after rescue from car

KY FRANKFORT — A 9-week-old kitten survived a 30-mile trip trapped in the frame of a car.

Scott Bourne owns the auto repair shop Midas of Frankfort. He said the driver heard a noise coming from under his car when he left Lexington but didn't know what it was. Later that day, he stopped at a Hard-ee's in Frankfort and found the kitten. He named her Marigold, a variation of the name given to King Midas' daughter in a book by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Daughter blamed for beating up grandma

PA YOUNGWOOD — A woman asked a judge to dismiss charges that she beat her mother and shaved her head because she thought the older woman was listening to the Pittsburgh Steelers' game too loudly on the radio.

Lawyers for Delores Amorino filed legal documents that claimed her now-19-year-old daughter is responsible for assaulting the 78-year-old woman.

13 sheep killed in attack by wolf pack

WI TOWN OF HANSEN — A central Wisconsin farm lost the majority of its livestock in an attack by a pack of wolves.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture said 13 sheep were killed on a farm in the Wood County town of Hansen. An investigator determined they were killed by wolves. Only one sheep survived. USDA wildlife biologist Dan Hirschert said the owner of the livestock will receive compensation.

Police: Man drove child to hospital drunk

SD SIOUX FALLS — Police said a Sioux Falls man faces multiple charges after he was accused of driving drunk while rushing a 1-year-old child to the hospital.

Authorities said the driver reached speeds of up to 70 mph in Sioux Falls, drove on the wrong side of a downtown street and sped through a stop sign before arriving at Avera McKennan Hospital.

Officers learned the child had accidentally ingested lighter fluid before the 26-year-old man drove him to the hospital.

A preliminary breath test indicated the man had a blood alcohol content of 0.16, twice the legal limit to drive.

Police: Scantly clad man took bulldozer

OH AKRON — Police in northeast Ohio were trying to locate a man who reportedly drove a bulldozer on a wild, destructive ride from a construction site down a residential street.

Akron police received a 911 call about a man driving the bulldozer erratically. The caller said he didn't believe the man was a construction worker because he was shirtless and possibly wearing only underpants and was jerking the machine back and forth.

Police said the bulldozer slammed into the front of a home, heavily damaging an enclosed porch. A mother and children inside retreated to the home's back and weren't injured. Police said the bulldozer also rammed a vehicle and chain-link fence.

Police said Monday they're asking for help in identifying the man.

Man drowns trying to rescue a pet pig

WA WENATCHEE — Police said a 45-year-old man drowned while trying to rescue a pet pig that had fallen into the Wenatchee River.

KOMO-TV reported the man was floating down the river on an inflatable tube with his adult son and the pig Sunday evening, when the pig fell into the river near the Sleepy Hollow Bridge, according to Sgt. Ken Sisson with the Chelan County Sheriff's Office.

Sisson said the man jumped into the water but immediately began to struggle to stay afloat.

Sisson said the son yelled to shore for help, but witnesses were only able to locate the pig.

800 bottles of booze seized at ski resort

MT HELENA — Montana officials said they confiscated over 800 bottles and cans of alcohol in a new raid just days after Yellowstone Club officials signed a \$370,000 deal to settle charges of serving alcohol at unlicensed bars at the private ski resort.

A Department of Revenue seizure notice said officials took the liquor, wine and beer from the Yellowstone Jet Center on June 25. The terminal serves Yellowstone Club members and others who fly into Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport on private jets.

Revenue spokesman Sanjay Talwani said state officials believe the alcohol belongs to a company owned by two club executives. The company was part of the settlement agreement signed six days earlier that allowed Yellowstone Club bars to continue serving alcohol at the resort for the ultra-rich.

2 kids rescued after adults pass out in car

FL TAMPA — Florida authorities said two children were rescued from the back of a car after two adults were found passed out.

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office said passersby noticed two small children trapped in the back of a parked car near Interstate 275 in Tampa.

Sheriff's office spokeswoman Isabel Castillo said Scott Moreno, 37, and passenger Shikira Ford, 32, were found unresponsive in the car. They were revived with naloxone, a live-saving medication that halts opioid overdoses. Deputies found narcotics inside the vehicle.

The two children were uninjured. Both adults face child neglect charges.

Police: 2 pipe bombs explode at courthouse

SC PICKENS — South Carolina police said two homemade pipe bombs went off in a county courthouse.

Pickens Police told news outlets the two devices went off at the Pickens County Courthouse. The building was closed at the time, and no one was injured. A few glass windows were damaged.

Police said in a news release the two bombs were intentionally set near the courthouse's air-conditioning unit. The remnants of the bombs make them look homemade. No arrests had been made as of last week, and the investigation is ongoing.

From wire reports

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Halep claims her first Wimbledon title

Associated Press

WIMBLEDON, England — Clutching her trophy 20 minutes after becoming Wimbledon's champion, Simona Halep checked out the board inside Centre Court that lists tournament winners. Below all of the mentions of Serena Williams, her opponent in Saturday's final, there already was inscribed: "Miss S. Halep."

Halep was not concerned with preventing Williams from winning a 24th Grand Slam title. All Halep cared about was winning her first at the All England Club. And she played pretty much perfectly.

On top of her game right from start to finish, Halep overwhelmed Williams 6-2, 6-2 in stunning fashion for her second major championship. The whole thing took less than an hour as Williams lost her third Slam final in a row as she tries to equal Margaret Court's record for most major trophies in tennis history.

"She literally played out of her mind. Congratulations,

Simona. It was a little bit 'a deer in the headlights' for me," Williams said. "So, I mean, whenever a player plays that amazing, you just kind of have to take your hat off and give them a nod of the head."

How good was the No. 7-seeded Halep?

She made a mere three unforced errors, a remarkably low total and 23 fewer than Williams.

Not bad for someone who has been frank about how jittery she has gotten in past big matches and began the day having lost nine of 10 matchups against Williams. But after losing each of her first three major finals, Halep now has won two straight, including last year's French Open.

"Well, I had nerves. My stomach was not very well before the match," said Halep, a 27-year-old Romanian, "but I knew there is no time for emotions. I just came on court and I gave my best."

Couldn't have been any better, really.

Williams also lost in straight

sets against Angelique Kerber in the Wimbledon final a year ago, and against Naomi Osaka at the U.S. Open last September.

The 37-year-old American hasn't won a tournament since the 2017 Australian Open, when she set the professional-era record of 23 Grand Slam championships (Court won 13 of her titles against amateur competition). Williams was pregnant when she won in Australia and then took more than a year off the tour; her daughter, Olympia, was born in September 2017.

Since returning to tennis, Williams has dealt with injuries but still managed to remain among the game's elite. In part because of a bad left knee, she only had played 12 matches all season until Wimbledon.

"Just got to keep fighting," Williams said, "and just keep trying."

Didn't take long on Saturday for Halep to demonstrate this was not going to be easy for Williams.

Not by any means.

Showing off the talents and traits that once lifted her to No. 1 in the rankings, Halep never really gave Williams a chance to get into the match.

Halep tracked down everything, as is her wont. She didn't merely play defense, though, managing to go from retrieving an apparent point-ending stroke by Williams to lashing a winner of her own in a blink.

Her returns were exceptional, repeatedly getting back serves that left Williams' racket at 115 mph or more.

On this cloudy, cool afternoon, with the temperature in the low 70s, Halep began with a pair of service breaks and even delivered the match's first ace, at 106 mph, which put her out front 4-0 after 11 astonishing minutes.

Halep won 14 of the first 18 points, with many in the crowd roaring for each of the rare ones that went Williams' way. Halep produced eight winners before a single unforced error, avoiding a miscue until the seventh game.

Federer's 9th crown goes through No. 1 Djokovic

Associated Press

WIMBLEDON, England — If Roger Federer's going to win a record ninth championship at Wimbledon, he'll need to follow up a victory over Rafael Nadal with one over defending champion Novak Djokovic.

Federer has played both at the same Grand Slam tournament only once, at the 2011 French Open: He beat Djokovic in the semifinals, but lost to Nadal in the final.

As is the case with Nadal, Federer has faced Djokovic so many times over the years that each knows the other's game so well. And as is the case with Nadal, Djokovic has managed to get the better of Federer head-to-head so far.

"It's the same like going into a Rafa match: I think the moment you've played somebody,

probably, more than 15 times — especially in recent years, also, a few times — there's not that much more left out there. Especially, you know where the players go when it really matters," the No. 2-seeded Federer said, looking ahead to Sunday's final, his 12th at the All England Club.

"How much can you still surprise somebody?"

This will be the 48th time Federer and Djokovic play against each other as pros, which is eight more than Federer vs. Nadal has happened.

It's also the 16th showdown between Federer and Djokovic at a Grand Slam tournament, breaking a tie with Djokovic vs. Nadal for the most by a pair of men in the Open era, which began in 1968.

Djokovic leads 25-22 overall, 9-6 at the majors, 3-1 in

Grand Slam finals and 2-1 at Wimbledon.

Plus, Djokovic has won their four most recent showdowns.

"At the end of the day, it comes very much down to who's better on the day, who's in a better mental place, who's got more energy left," Federer said. "Who's tougher when it really comes to the crunch."

He is 8-3 in past finals at the grass-court tournament he's ruled the way no other man has. Two of those defeats were in 2014 and 2015 against Djokovic; the other came in 2008 against Nadal.

Federer and Nadal hadn't played since then at Wimbledon until their semifinal Friday.

This time, Federer came through, although he needed five match points to secure his 7-6 (3), 1-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory.

For Djokovic, this is his sixth

Wimbledon final as he chases what would be a fifth trophy.

There is history at stake whenever members of the Big Three find themselves in a Grand Slam final, which happens with remarkable frequency.

Whoever comes out on top Sunday, the 2019 Wimbledon title will be the 11th Slam in a row won by Federer, Djokovic or Nadal — and the 54th in the past 65.

Perhaps Federer, who turns 38 on Aug. 8, will extend his lead on the career list to a men's-record 21 championships, which would leave him three ahead of Nadal, who is 33 years old, and six ahead of Djokovic, who is 32.

Or maybe Djokovic will push his total to 16, just two behind Nadal and four away from Federer.

Alaphilippe reclaims yellow after De Gendt's 8th stage Tour victory

Associated Press

SAINT-ETIENNE, France — Thomas De Gendt won the eighth stage of the Tour de France after a long breakaway in the Massif Central as Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe claimed back the race leader's yellow jersey with a well-timed move near the finish.

Defending champion Geraint Thomas was caught in a crash 15 kilometers from the end but escaped unscathed and crossed the finish line 20 seconds behind Alaphilippe.

The Frenchman finished the stage in third place in Saint-Etienne behind Thibaut Pinot.

Alaphilippe, who had lost his yellow jersey two days ago at the Planche des Belles Filles, made the most of the last of the seven climbs on the day's program to attack alongside Pinot.

He went over the top in second position behind De Gendt and claimed five precious bonus seconds before keeping the pressure in the final kilometers.

Thomas was slowed down by the pile-up involving Ineos teammates and did not move when Alaphilippe and Pinot went away. He finished the race safely in the pack with other Tour contenders.

It was unclear whether Thomas actually hit the ground. He had already been involved in a crash during the opening stage last week in Belgium.

De Gendt rode the whole day at the front after he moved away from the pack outside Macon, soon after the start of the 200-kilometer trek which took riders across seven short but leg-punishing climbs.

Custer gets 5th Xfinity win

Associated Press

SPARTA, Ky. — Cole Custer was never really challenged down the stretch. He just acted like Christopher Bell was in his rear-view mirror, an approach that motivated him to keep a safe distance.

Custer grabbed an Xfinity Series-high fifth victory of the season Friday night with a win over Bell at Kentucky Speedway.

"He got a little close and I was definitely sweating a little bit," said Custer, who fell backward off his car during the victory lane celebration. "He was definitely our competition there at the end, but we had the better car. I was sweating after that green flag pit stop because he closed in on me and I had trouble with lappers, but we had a good enough car to pull away."

Custer, Bell and reigning series champion Tyler Reddick have dominated the series all year and finished 1-2-3 at Ken-

tucky. Bell, who has four wins this season, won the first two stages and led 72 laps. Reddick, the series points leader and a three-time winner this season, didn't lead a lap.

"We were able to win the two stages, so we got a couple more playoff points," Bell said. "Just got to work on a couple more things and we'll be good."

It was Custer who dominated by leading 88 of the 200 laps in a Ford for Stewart-Haas Racing. He took the lead for the final time on lap 155 and beat Bell by 1.651 seconds.

Michael Annett and Chase Briscoe completed the top five. Only the top five cars finished on the lead lap.

Custer has now won consecutive races on 1.5-mile tracks following his win at Chicago two weeks ago. He's won three of the last six races and has seven career wins in 88 Xfinity starts.

Reddick leads the point standings by 67 over Bell.

Angels combine on memorable no-hitter

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Los Angeles Angels put on Tyler Skaggs' No. 45 jerseys and stood solemnly on the field while his mother, Debbie, delivered a heartbreakingly perfect strike on the first pitch.

The Angels then proceeded to play their heavy hearts out in their first home game since their beloved pitcher's death.

Two Angels pitchers combined to throw the 11th no-hitter in franchise history, and Mike Trout drove in six runs in a stunning 13-0 victory over the Seattle Mariners on Friday night.

On the day before what would have been Skaggs' 28th birthday, these astonishing Angels played a practically perfect game with his memory in their minds.

"Tonight is about him," injured Angels infielder Zack Cozart said before the game. "We're going to do what we can to honor him and keep his legacy going."

This tribute ended up exceeding all logic and expectation, however.

Still reeling from the loss of their left-handed starter early last week in Texas, the Angels somehow excelled in every aspect of the game while wearing replicas of Skaggs' red jersey.

The Angels scored eight runs on seven hits in the first inning alone, with Trout delivering a two-run homer and a two-run double.

Taylor Cole opened with two perfect innings before Felix Pena came on for seven more, allowing only a fifth-inning walk in the performance of his life.

Before the game, Skaggs' presence was strong.

"He's still a part of the team, even though he's not here," Angels manager Brad Ausmus said before the game.

His jersey hung in his untouched locker in the clubhouse, his pristine cleats and gloves ready for a ballgame. The big stereo system in the

room's center is silent because the affable left-hander who controlled the Angels' musical choices is no longer here.

And on the far wall of the clubhouse, two photos of Skaggs now flank his competitive catchphrase printed in tall letters: "WE'RE NASTY."

"He's the life of the team, honestly," said Cozart, Skaggs' teammate for the past two seasons. "We're family in here. We're around each other all day, every day. You just hurt so much for Tyler's family. ... It's so sudden and so tragic. Forty-five will always be in my mind."

The baseball season's relentless pace forces the Angels to heal while they play, and they went back to work after a somber All-Star break during which Skaggs was honored at the game in Cleveland.

"In some respects, sometimes keeping busy can help," Angels general manager Billy Eppler said. "I don't really know if that's the right way to go about it, because you do need to grieve. Everybody has those moments, personal to them. I've had a couple of those myself. But for a lot of us, seeing each other again is nice."

During a poignant pregame ceremony, both teams lined the basepaths as Skaggs' family took the mound led by Debbie Skaggs, the longtime softball coach at Santa Monica High School.

Debbie Skaggs threw a brisk strike to Andrew Heaney, Skaggs' best friend and fellow Angels rotation member.

The Angels then battered Seattle starter Mike Leake in a surreal seven-run, eight-hit first inning highlighted by Trout, who has been relentless at the plate ever since Skaggs' death.

Trout crushed a 454-foot, two-run homer to left-center on the first pitch he saw from Leake. The two-time AL MVP appeared to look toward Skaggs' family in the stands as he crossed the plate after an unusually long home run trot.

Cubs squeak by Pirates in return from break

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Jason Heyward and Kris Bryant rescued the Chicago Cubs with a clutch swing and some nifty baserunning.

Heyward hit a tiebreaking RBI single with two out in the eighth inning, and the Cubs edged the Pittsburgh Pirates 4-3 on Friday in their first game after the All-Star break.

Bryant set up Heyward's winning hit with a one-out walk off Kyle Crick (3-5). The All-Star slugger advanced on Victor Caratini's two-out walk, took a smart lead and hustled home from second on Heyward's crisp opposite-field liner to left, sliding home just ahead of the tag attempt by catcher Elias Diaz.

"KB, I've talked about it before, he's a real good baserunner," manager Joe Mad-don said. "If you take a secondary lead, you're a great teammate. It was one of those weird, close-cut games all day, but give our guys credit."

NL Central-leading Chicago blew a late

3-0 lead before earning its third win in four games in the opener of an important nine-game homestand.

Yu Darvish struck out eight while pitching six sparkling innings in one of his best starts since signing with the Cubs before last season.

Darvish retired his first 13 batters. He allowed two hits and walked one, but remained winless in 13 appearances at Wrigley Field since joining the Cubs.

Darvish entered Friday's game 0-5 with a 6.03 ERA in 12 previous starts as a Cub at Wrigley.

Bryant snapped a scoreless tie when he led off the seventh with his 18th homer, a drive to left off Chris Archer after Melky Cabrera had trouble tracking his foul fly to right in the afternoon sun.

Robel Garcia added a sacrifice fly off Michael Feliz and pinch hitter David Bote made it 3-0 when he walked with the bases loaded. But the Cubs wasted a chance for more when Kyle Schwarber grounded into

an inning-ending double play.

The Pirates then tied it in the top half of the eighth. With two out and runners on first and second, Starling Marte hit a long drive onto Waveland Avenue against setup man Pedro Strop. It was Marte's first homer since June 27 and No. 13 on the year.

"We could have folded when Marte hit the three-run homer," Bryant said. "It kind of took the wind out of our sails, but I was very pleased to see us come together and score right away."

"We're going to need a lot of that in the second half because there are going to be times when that happens and we're going to have to respond accordingly."

Randy Rosario (1-0) the fourth of five Cubs relievers, got the last out of the eighth for the win. Craig Kimbrel pitched a perfect ninth for his third save in four chances.

Archer struck out a season-high 10 in six-plus innings, allowing three runs and three hits.

Roundup

BoSox open '18 World Series rematch with rout

Associated Press

BOSTON — Xander Bogaerts hit a three-run homer, Eduardo Rodriguez struck out 10 and Boston beat Los Angeles 8-1 in the opener of a three-game rematch of the 2018 World Series.

Rafael Devers and Christian Vazquez also homered for the Red Sox, who broke the game open with a five-run rally that was interrupted by a one-hour rain delay in the seventh inning.

The Red Sox, who beat the Dodgers in five games to win their ninth World Series title, returned from the All-Star break with their fifth straight victory.

Rodriguez (10-4) tied his season high for strikeouts and held the Dodgers to five hits in seven innings.

Alex Verdugo hit his 10th homer and Kenta Maeda struck out seven in 5²/₃ innings for the Dodgers.

The Dodgers fell to 1-6 at Fenway Park in the few regu-

lar-season meetings between the franchises.

Twins 5, Indians 3: Visiting Minnesota slowed Cleveland's charge in the AL Central as Jorge Polanco's two-run double in the seventh inning helped end the six-game winning streak.

Indians starter Mike Clevinger allowed just one run — the homer to Nelson in the first — over five-plus innings and was in line to get the win before Cleveland's bullpen had a rare meltdown.

Rays 16, Orioles 4: Tommy Pham and Nate Lowe homered and Tampa Bay emerged from the All-Star break by scoring seven runs in the first inning in the rout of host Baltimore.

Lowe had a career-high four hits and three RBIs, and Kevin Kiermaier had three hits, scored three runs and drove in two.

Yankees 4, Blue Jays 0: Domingo German cruised through six innings of three-hit ball, Edwin Encarnacion hit a three-run double and New York beat visiting Toronto.

New York has won 17 of 21 and boasts the American League's best record at 58-31.

Marlins 8, Mets 4: Garrett Cooper, Curtis Granderson and Brian Anderson all homered and drove in two runs to power host Miami past New York.

The Marlins beat the Mets for the fourth straight time.

Nationals 4, Phillies 0: Stephen Strasburg struck out six in six innings, Victor Robles hit a two-run single and visiting Washington blanked Philly.

Strasburg (11-4) allowed seven hits and walked one, extending his dominance over the Phillies. He's 13-2 against them, 6-0 in Philadelphia.

Royals 8, Tigers 5: Martin Maldonado and Jorge Soler hit late homers and Whit Merrifield scored on a wild pitch as host Kansas City beat Detroit.

Rangers 9, Astros 8: Danny Santana lined a game-winning single with two outs in the ninth inning and host Texas rallied from a four-run deficit to beat Houston after major league strikeout leader Gerrit Cole ex-

ited the game.

Giants 10, Brewers 7 (10): Buster Posey hit a grand slam in the top of the 10th inning to lift San Francisco over host Milwaukee.

Diamondbacks 4, Cardinals 2: Jake Lamb and Ketel Marte homered, Robbie Ray allowed just two hits over 6¹/₃ innings, and Arizona beat host St. Louis.

Rockies 3, Reds 2: Daniel Murphy hit a go-ahead solo shot in the eighth for his first homer at Coors Field as a member of his new team and Colorado snapped a six-game skid by beating Cincinnati.

Athletics 5, White Sox 1: Mike Fiers pitched into the eighth inning to win his seventh consecutive decision, his team hit three solo home runs and Oakland beat visiting Chicago.

Braves 5, Padres 3: Josh Donaldson homered twice and drove in four runs, Ronald Acuna Jr. had a 455-foot shot and Dallas Keuchel pitched seven strong innings to lead NL East-leading Atlanta over host San Diego.