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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Iran denies claims US shot down drone

BY CHAD GARLAND
AND CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — Iranian officials denied Friday that a U.S. Navy ship had destroyed an Iranian drone in the Strait of Hormuz this week, following statements a day earlier from the White House and the Pentagon that the drone was taken down after flying toward the ship.

Senior Iranian officials said that none of the country's drones in the region had been destroyed, although a top military spokesman in the country suggested that one had approached the USS Boxer, the American amphibious assault ship at the center of the incident.

President Donald Trump said Thursday that the U.S. ship was in international waters, traveling into the strait, when a drone

came within about 1,000 meters of it. The unmanned aircraft ignored "multiple calls to stand down" and "was immediately destroyed," Trump said, adding that the drone was "threatening the safety of the ship and the ship's crew."

Trump said the drone was Iranian. Pentagon spokeswoman Cmdr. Rebecca Rebarich said separately that it "was assessed to be Iranian."

Calling Trump's claims "delusional and groundless," Iran's Brig. Gen. Abolfazl Shekarchi told the semi-official Mehr news agency on Friday that all of Iran's drones in the area, "including the one mentioned by the U.S. president," had returned safely to their bases after completing scheduled surveillance and control operations.

Iran's deputy foreign minister posited in a tweet on Friday that the American war-

ship may have downed a U.S. unmanned aircraft system.

"We have not lost any drones in the Strait of Hormuz nor anywhere else," Seyyed Abbas Araghchi said. "I am worried that USS Boxer has shot down their own UAS by mistake!"

The Boxer, which carries the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit and a combat helicopter squadron, arrived in Middle East waters in late June with the amphibious transport dock USS John P. Murtha and the amphibious dock landing ship USS Harpers Ferry, the Navy has said. The amphibious ready group replaced one led by the USS Kearsarge, which had been in 5th Fleet waters since April. The drone "closed within a threatening range" of the ship at about 10 a.m. on Thursday, Jonathan Hoffman, chief Pentagon spokesman, said.

Goldfein: US-Turkey military relations haven't changed

BY SLOBODAN LEKIC
Stars and Stripes

SPANGDAHLEM AIR BASE, Germany — U.S. Air Force operations are continuing normally at Incirlik Air Base even as Turkey's acquisition of a sophisticated air defense system resulted in the NATO ally's expulsion from the F-35 program, the service's top general said Friday.

Asked whether he was concerned over the continuation of normal operations at Incirlik — a major U.S. base in southern Turkey near the border with Syria — due to the escalating dispute between Washington and Ankara, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein replied: "No."

"Military-to-military relations have not really changed," he said in an interview with Stars and Stripes. "That's often the case as we work through the diplomatic and policy issues."

The U.S. relationship with

Turkey has been strained for several years in the wake of a 2016 attempted coup in the country and subsequent crackdowns on free speech. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government blamed the failed attempt on a U.S.-based cleric who denied involvement.

However, Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 air defense system has further complicated relations. Earlier this week, Turkey accepted delivery of the S-400 system, which will be based at Murted air base in Ankara.

In response, Washington announced that Turkey will no longer acquire or be part of the F-35 program. The Turkish air force had been planning to purchase more than 100 F-35s at a cost of about \$11 billion as a key element of its modernization program.

Turkish aircrews were training at Luke Air Force Base, Ariz., until recently, when the Pentagon notified Ankara it

would discontinue their training due to the Russian system purchase. However, the Air Force remains committed to a positive relationship with the Turkish airmen, Goldfein said.

"As a matter of fact, one of the things I've talked a couple of times to the commander of Luke Air Force Base where the Turks are flying is that we treat them with dignity, respect and professionally," Goldfein said.

Luke Air Force Base trains 70% of the world's F-35 pilots. The jet program includes participation from 12 nations, including Australia, Canada, multiple NATO allies, Japan and South Korea.

Turkey has denied suggestions that the Russians could glean information on the F-35 through joint U.S. operations involving the S-400 system, saying the two systems would not operate together. But Goldfein made clear that would not be an option.

"These are two computers,"

Goldfein said. "The F-35 has got incredible computing capacity. The S-400 has also got a significant capacity. You don't hook up these computers, it's incompatible."

Washington has also warned it could impose economic sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, but so far President Donald Trump's intentions on sanctions have been unclear.

"So military-to-military there has actually been very little change in the relationship," Goldfein said.

Goldfein, a former wing commander at Spangdahlem, briefly visited the base on Friday and met with airmen. He was on the final leg of a weeklong trip to several European countries, including NATO member Estonia and Finland, a neutral nation that shares a long border with Russia.

Married colonels take command of NC units

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

In two separate Marine Corps change-of-command ceremonies Friday in North Carolina, Col. Ebitz took the reins.

In the morning, Col. Amy Ebitz stepped in to lead Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Installations East at Camp Lejeune. Then in the afternoon, her husband, Col. Curtis Ebitz took command of nearby Marine Corps Air Station New River. The two bases are about 10 miles apart and each Ebitz had planned to attend the other's ceremony with their two children, Curtis, 12, and Sevina, 8, by their sides.

Married since 2003, this isn't the first time they've commanded a unit at the same time. But it is the first time that they assumed their leadership roles on the same day.

While stationed in Okinawa,

Japan, Curtis Ebitz commanded Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron One with 1st Marine Aircraft Wing from 2013 to 2015, while Amy Ebitz commanded the 3rd Law Enforcement Battalion for III Marine Expeditionary Force from 2012 to 2014. That time, their tenure as commanders overlapped about one year.

Friday's ceremonies kicked off their efforts to do what they call "balance excellence," and ensure their family at home and their Marine Corps family get the proper attention.

"It has been a journey, but it's a family journey," Amy Ebitz, a law enforcement officer, said in an interview recorded and posted online by Marine Corps Installation East public affairs. "It's very much like running a business in some respects. There's a lot of coordination that goes on and takes place

behind the scenes and a lot of moving pieces that always have to be lockstep for everything to come together in the way that it should."

The Marine Corps, like the other services, does have a policy to "minimize separations" when both spouses are active duty. They are one of about 3,444 Marine couples on active duty, according to Marine Corps Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Amy and Curtis Ebitz met in 2001 as captains attending Amphibious Warfare School at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va. They married two years later.

"It's not as negatively stigmatized as it used to be to have two Marines who want to have a career," said Amy Ebitz. "It used to be that it was always the woman has to get out or one of them has to get out, especially if children come into the

picture. I don't think that's the case anymore."

"It's a 50-50 relationship," said Curtis Ebitz, a Marine aviator. "It's what we like to call balanced excellence — finding the right balance between personal and professional life. Additionally, it's been nice to have a sounding board for work-related issues and knowing when to separate work from family."

Sometimes that balance includes a high-five as they pass each other in the airport going to and from work trips, he said.

In the early years of marriage, the two admit they faced challenges. They spent about half of their first four years together deployed to Iraq — separately and concurrently.

Leading Marines and parenting children are two very different tasks and part of the challenge has been learning to separate the two.

New Marine One helo scorches White House lawn

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The presidential helicopter isn't supposed to leave scorch marks on the White House lawn. So the Navy and Lockheed Martin Corp. are working to fix a "high risk" problem after the new Marine One did just that in a test without the president on board.

The first in a \$5 billion fleet of new Marine One helicopters is supposed to be ready to go into service by September 2020. President Donald Trump already has showcased the new aircraft with a flyover during his Fourth of July appearance in Washington.

The previously undisclosed episode occurred last September, during a test "conducted in a manner very different than normal Marine Helicopter Squadron One operations to the White House South Lawn," Lt. Col. Mike Andrews, a spokesman for the Pentagon's testing office, said in an email.

He said the cause of the incident involving the helicopter, which is designated VH-92A, was under investigation and more information will be released when it's available.

Greg Kuntz, a spokesman for the Naval Air Systems Command, said that "under certain conditions, the VH-92A exhaust can affect a grass landing zone," and "discoloration of landing zone grass occurred" during the September test.

The Navy, which labeled the problem "high risk," projects that the helicopter will eventually meet all its key performance requirements. But the Government Accountability Office said in an April report that it "has yet to demonstrate performance requirements related to landing zone suitability, which includes a requirement to land on the White House South Lawn without causing damage to the lawn."

The Navy's "assessment of this risk has increased since

our last report" and "according to program officials, Lockheed's Sikorsky unit expects to have a solution for this requirement by November 2020," according to the GAO. That's after the helicopter is supposed to be declared ready for initial operations.

No lawn damage resulted from 13 other White House test flights the same day in September and more this year, according to the Navy, including a June 14 landing when Trump inspected the helicopter.

The Navy plans to buy as many as 23 of the new aircraft at a cost of about \$214 million each, including research and development, training devices and government-furnished equipment. The fleet is used to transport the president and vice president in Washington and when they travel, in tandem with Air Force One planes. Presidents have traveled by helicopter since Dwight D. Eisenhower was in office.

The present Marine One program replaced an ill-fated effort that was canceled in 2009 after its projected cost more than doubled to \$13 billion.

The Navy last month approved limited production, awarding a \$542 million contract to Sikorsky to build six helicopters. Sikorsky was given a \$1.1 billion development contract in 2014.

Dave Banquer, Sikorsky's VH-92A program director, said in an email that the program is on track to meet required milestones on or ahead of schedule.

In the meantime, the Defense Contract Management Agency said in an assessment earlier this year that one option to avoid damage to the lawn had already been discarded: Protecting it or other landing areas "by staking down a protective blanket."

"The amount of time needed to place and secure the blanket would make this option impractical," the agency said.

Oh, man! Berkeley, Calif., bans terms that are gender-specific

Associated Press

BERKELEY, Calif. — There will be no manholes in Berkeley, Calif. City workers will drop into “maintenance holes” instead.

Nothing will be man-made in the liberal city but “human-made.” And students at the University of California, Berkeley will join “collegiate Greek system residences” rather than fraternities and sororities.

Berkeley leaders voted unanimously this week to replace about 40 gender-specific words in the city code with gender-neutral terms — an effort to be more inclusive that’s drawing both praise and scorn.

That means “manpower” will become “human effort” or “workforce,” while masculine and feminine pronouns like “she,” “her,” “he” and “him” will be replaced by “they” and “them,” according to the measure approved Tuesday by the City Council.

The San Francisco Bay Area city is known for its long history of progressive politics and “first of” ordinances. Berkeley was among the first cities to adopt curbside recycling in the 1970s and, more recently, became the first in the U.S. to tax sugary drinks and ban natural gas in new homes.

Berkeley also was the birthplace of the nation’s free-speech movement in the 1960s and where protests from both left- and right-wing extremist groups devolved into violence during a flash point in

the country’s political divisions soon after President Donald Trump’s election.

Rigel Robinson, who graduated from UC Berkeley last year and at 23 is the youngest member of the City Council, said it was time to change a municipal code that makes it sound like “men are the only ones that exist in entire industries or that men are the only ones on city government.”

“As society and our cultures become more aware about issues of gender identity and gender expression, it’s important that our laws reflect that,” said Robinson, who co-authored the measure. “Women and nonbinary people are just as deserving of accurate representation.”

When the changes take effect in the fall, all city forms will be updated and lists with the old words and their replacements will be posted at public libraries and the council chambers. The changes will cost taxpayers \$600, Robinson said.

Not everyone agreed with the ordinance. Laramie Crocker, a Berkeley carpenter, said the changes just made him laugh.

“If you try to change the laws every time someone has a new opinion about something, it doesn’t make sense. It’s just a bad habit to get into,” Crocker said.

Crocker, 54, said he would like city officials to focus on more pressing issues.

“Let’s figure out how to get homeless people housed and fed,” he said. “He, she, they, it — they’re wasting my time.”

Trump: Pentagon computer contract will be reviewed

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Thursday that the administration will “take a very long look” at a massive multibillion-dollar contract the Pentagon is preparing to award for a cloud computing system, citing “tremendous complaints” he’s heard about the process.

Amazon Web Services Inc., a division of Amazon, and Microsoft Corp. are finalists for the contract, estimated to be worth up to \$10 billion over a decade.

Trump said during an unrelated event at the White House that companies that are no longer in the running to land the deal, known as Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure, or JEDI, have lodged complaints about the process.

Republican lawmakers troubled by the Pentagon’s handling of the contract also took their concerns directly to the president.

“I’m getting tremendous complaints about the contract with the Pentagon and with Amazon,” Trump said when he was asked about the matter during an Oval Office appearance with the Dutch prime minister. “They’re saying it wasn’t com-

petitively bid.

“We’re looking at it very seriously,” the president said. “It’s a very big contract, one of the biggest ever given having to do with the cloud and having to do with a lot of other things.”

Trump said some of the “greatest companies in the world” were among those complaining about Amazon, and he said the administration will look “very closely” at the contract because “I have had very few things where there’s been such complaining.”

Trump is a critic of Amazon, the e-commerce retailer owned by Jeff Bezos. Bezos also owns The Washington Post, and Trump has criticized the paper’s coverage of the administration.

The president’s comments injected new uncertainty into a project the Defense Department has said is vital to maintaining the U.S. military’s technological advantage over adversaries. Whichever company wins the contract will have the monumental task of storing and processing vast amounts of classified data. The Pentagon says it will enable troops to advance the use of artificial intelligence in warfare.

Lawmaker: Secret DOD tests caused rise in Lyme disease

The Washington Post

Ticks are swarming, carrying myriad diseases such as Lyme and Rocky Mountain spotted fever and making people ill. And, as one congressman believes, these ticks came from secret Pentagon experiments to turn ticks into biological weapons.

Rep. Christopher Smith, R-N.J., is so concerned about an alleged tick-bioweapon project that he led an effort to pass an

amendment ordering the Defense Department to investigate it. Specifically, the amendment orders the department’s inspector general to determine whether government scientists experimented with bioweapons — specifically in ticks — and whether those arachnids ended up making their way out of the labs and into the public between the 1950s and the 1970s.

Citing a rise in Lyme disease cases, Smith asked whether

there “was any accidental release anywhere or at any time of any of the diseased ticks.”

There are many natural reasons Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses are on the rise. As development near areas with wildlife that carry ticks increases, the number of such disease cases also goes up. “Suburban development in these areas has increased the spread of these germs because people, ticks, deer, and tick hosts

such as mice and chipmunks are in close contact,” according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Smith said he hopes the investigation will better inform what he called a “culture of denial” and that he wants more information to help those who are sick or may become sick.

“I just wanted to do it with a profound sense of public interest,” Smith said of the amendment.

President disavows 'send her back' chant

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has chided his supporters who chanted “send her back” when he questioned the loyalty of a Somali-born congresswoman, joining widespread criticism of the campaign crowd’s cry after Republicans warned about political blowback from the angry scene.

In a week that has been full of hostile exchanges over race and love of country on both sides, Trump also claimed he had tried to stop the chant at a reelection event Wednesday night in North Carolina — though video shows otherwise.

The crowd’s “send her back” shouts resounded for 13 seconds as Trump made no attempt to interrupt them.

“I started speaking really quickly,” he told reporters Thursday. “I was not happy with it. I disagree with it” and “would certainly try” to stop any similar chant at a future rally.

The taunt’s target — Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar, of Minnesota — responded defiantly Thursday. She told reporters at the Capitol that she believes the president is a “fascist” and cast the confrontation as a fight over “what this country truly should be.”

“We are going to continue to be a nightmare to this president because his policies are a nightmare to us. We are not deterred. We are not frightened,” she told a cheering crowd that greeted her like a local hero at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport as she returned from Washington.

The back-and-forth captured the potential impacts of Trump’s willingness to inject racist rhetoric into his reelection fight. Trump’s allies distanced themselves from the chant, fretting over the voters it might turn off in next year’s election and beyond. Democrats, meanwhile, pointed to the episode as a rallying cry

to energize and mobilize their supporters to vote Trump out of office.

Trump started the week’s tumult by tweeting Sunday that Omar and three other freshmen congresswomen could “go back” to their native countries if they were unhappy here. His other targets — all Trump detractors — were Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, of New York; Rashida Tlaib, of Michigan; and Ayanna Pressley, of Massachusetts.

All are American citizens, and all but Omar were born in the U.S. She fled to America as a child with her family from violence-wracked Somalia.

Heat wave forecast prompts housing checks in Chicago

Associated Press

Public housing officials in Chicago were planning well-being checks on residents as the heat and humidity are expected to mount to dangerous levels as part of a wave of sweltering weather covering a substantial portion of the U.S.

Routine checks also will be done to make sure the temperature in housing units are at safe levels. Window air conditioners are available for emergency situations, Chicago’s Housing Authority said Thursday.

Excessive heat warnings were posted Thursday by the National Weather Service from central Nebraska and Missouri into western Ohio and parts of West Virginia. An excessive heat watch was put in place for the Cleveland area, part of New York State and parts of the East Coast.

Temperatures topping 100 degrees were expected for the southern and central High Plains.

Detroit was expected to reach 90 degrees Fahrenheit Thursday, according to the National Weather Service. A high of 91 degrees Fahrenheit was forecast for Chicago and the Bal-

timore and Washington areas. Cleveland was to see 92 degrees Fahrenheit, while a high of 96 degrees was expected in Louisville, Ky., and St. Louis.

Ambulances in Oklahoma’s two largest metropolitan areas of Oklahoma City and Tulsa have responded to more than 40 heat-related calls since Tuesday, most in the late afternoon as the temperature peaks.

“We’ve had people who have been walking,” said Emergency Medical Services Authority spokesman Adam Paluka in Tulsa. “We’ve had people who have been gardening. It doesn’t matter how much you’re doing or how little you’re doing, the heat can still affect you.”

Heat exhaustion and heatstroke are the primary health issues emergency rooms could see through Saturday. Both can occur after temperatures hit 80 degrees or the humidity rises above 75%, according to Eskenazi Health, in Indianapolis.

Heatstroke can lead to permanent brain damage and death if not treated promptly, said Dr. Tyler Stepsis, medical director of the Michael & Susan Smith Emergency Department at Eskenazi Health.

Rematch of Biden, Harris in 2nd set of Dem debates

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The second set of summer Democratic presidential debates will feature a rematch with a twist, plus the first showdown of leading progressives as the party wrestles with its philosophical identity and looks ahead to a 2020 fight against President Donald Trump.

Former Vice President Joe Biden and California Sen. Kamala Harris will take center stage in Detroit on July 31, barely a month after Harris used the first debates to propel herself into the top tier with an aggressive takedown of the 76-year-old Biden’s long record on race.

CNN, which is broadcasting the debates, assigned candidates randomly with a drawing Thursday night, with 20 candidates spread evenly over two nights, July 30-31.

This time, Harris, the lone black woman in the field, will be joined by another top black candidate, New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, who also has been an outspoken critic of Biden. Booker had denounced Biden for his recollections of the “civility” of working in a Senate

that included white supremacists and for his leadership on a 1994 crime bill that the New Jersey senator assailed as a mass incarceration agent in the black community.

Meanwhile, Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts lead the July 30 lineup, allowing the two progressive icons to compete directly for the affections of the party’s left flank.

Biden and Harris will be joined on the stage July 31 by Booker; New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio; Colorado Gov. Michael Bennet; former Obama Cabinet member Julian Castro; New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand; Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard; Washington Gov. Jay Inslee; and entrepreneur Andrew Yang.

Flanking Sanders and Warren on the stage July 30 will be Montana Gov. Steve Bullock; Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Ind.; former Maryland Rep. John Delaney; former Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper; Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar; former Texas Rep. Beto O’Rourke; Ohio Rep. Tim Ryan; and author Marianne Williamson.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Stolen ice cream truck leads to wild chase

CA RANCHO CORDOVA — Authorities have captured a man they said carjacked two vehicles in Northern California — one of them an ice cream truck — and led sheriff's deputies on a wild chase.

The Sacramento County Sheriff's Office said the man stole the truck in Rancho Cordova at around 1:30 p.m. Wednesday and fled but then crashed in a ditch.

A witness tells the Sacramento Bee that a woman in a BMW pulled over to see if the driver was injured and was carjacked at gunpoint.

The BMW then hit a compact car, which rolled over. The driver of that car had minor injuries.

The BMW driver then got out and ran into a field, where he was captured. He was taken to the hospital for treatment of minor injuries from the crash.

Disgruntled employee plows into storefront

NC RALEIGH — North Carolina authorities said a disgruntled employee drove her car through a Massage Envy spa in Raleigh.

News outlets report nobody was seriously injured when a woman is said to have plowed through the storefront, shattering the glass and creating a massive hole.

Brian Murray told WRAL he was inside. He's quoted as saying he saw the woman hit the store, back up and drive off. He said it appeared intentional.

WTVD reported a Massage Envy worker called police before the crash and said an employee was upset and trashed the store. WNCN said 911 calls released by Raleigh police

show a manager attempting to talk with the employee but that employee became angry.

A worker called 911 again, saying the upset employee crashed into the building.

High school to change Redskins mascot

ID BOISE — A high school in Idaho will retire its Native American mascot after 90 years.

The Idaho Statesman reported Tuesday that the Teton School District voted 4-1 in favor of renaming the Teton Redskins in a Tuesday meeting.

The superintendent said replacing school uniforms and removing signage would cost about \$30,000, but the vote stipulates taxpayer money would not be used.

Two tribes said they have urged the high school to refrain from using the mascot and term because they find it offensive.

Officials say 11 other Idaho high schools still use Native American mascots.

Man injured in pipe bomb explosion

TN LAFAYETTE — Authorities said a pipe bomb exploded in a Tennessee garage while a man was working on it, injuring his hand.

WKRN-TV reported an explosion occurred in a Macon County garage early Thursday morning.

The man's girlfriend told Macon County Sheriff Martin Gammons he was injured while loading shotgun shells. Gammons said deputies went into the home and found a live pipe bomb in the garage in addition to one that exploded.

The extent of the man's injuries wasn't immediately released.

Juvenile accused of sparking brush fire

CO GRAND JUNCTION — A juvenile has been charged with arson after authorities said he sparked a brush fire by setting off illegal fireworks in western Colorado.

The Daily Sentinel reported Thursday that the July 4 fire burned about 9 acres near Connected Lake State Park in Grand Junction. The fire prompted evacuations of seven homes but none were damaged.

The juvenile has been charged with felony tampering with physical evidence and misdemeanor unlawful use, sale or possession of fireworks in addition to the misdemeanor arson charge.

Mesa County Sheriff's Office spokesperson Megan Terlecky said the felony charge stems from the juvenile's attempt to remove the fireworks from the scene.

Pilot arrested after crashing while landing

NV MESQUITE — Authorities said a Washington state man was arrested on suspicion of operating an aircraft while under the influence of alcohol after his plane crashed while landing and caught fire at an airport in southern Nevada.

The Mesquite Police Department said Ryan Dashiell, 41, of Spokane was the only person on board the twin-engine jet when it crashed Wednesday night at Mesquite Municipal Airport.

A Federal Aviation Administration spokesman said the plane was traveling from Pasco, Wash., to Henderson, Nev.

The cause of the crash wasn't immediately known.

FAA spokesman Ian Gregor said the FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board are investigating.

Man passes out after breaking into bank

MO BOONVILLE — Authorities said an apparently drunken man fell asleep for nearly three hours inside a bank after breaking a window to get inside.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reported that Eric Preston Miller, 35, of Boonville, was charged this week with second-degree burglary in the July 7 break-in at First State Community Bank. A Boonville police officer wrote in charging documents that Miller appeared intoxicated in security footage and passed out as he climbed through a broken window.

He later regained consciousness, then kicked through an interior window, setting off an alarm. The officer wrote that Miller walked around the interior of the bank for a few minutes before leaving.

Woman finds man who sent post card in 1993

IL SPRINGFIELD — A woman who recently got a 1993 postcard in her mailbox has tracked down the man who sent it to his children more than two decades ago.

Kim Draper's story about the Hong Kong postcard was published in The State Journal-Register in Springfield and picked up by The Associated Press.

Masrour Kizilbash sent the postcard to his family while working overseas in 1993. Kizilbash's family was living in Springfield at the time. He always figured that they had received the postcard. With the help of social media, Draper learned that a son now lives in suburban Chicago. A reunion with the postcard is planned.

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Rays may have hidden gem in Brosseau

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Three years ago, Mike Brosseau was a college graduate surrounded by teenagers on minor league backfields in Florida. His batting gloves were tattered, his cleats falling apart and his bank account essentially empty.

This week, he was batting third at Yankee Stadium, facing a Cy Young Award winner in the thick of a postseason race.

“I don’t think anybody would admit they were thinking that would happen,” Brosseau said.

The thrifty, innovative Tampa Bay Rays believe they have found a hidden gem in Brosseau, an undrafted infielder from Oakland University in Michigan who signed for \$1,000 — “about \$600 after taxes,” he noted — and bolted to the big leagues. Three weeks after his major league debut, the 25-year-old infielder has become a middle-of-the-order option for manager Kevin Cash as Tampa Bay chases the star-studded Yankees in the AL East.

“He forced our hand,” Cash said.

A slew of injuries led to Brosseau’s initial call-up in late June, and in 15 games entering Friday, he is batting .320 with four homers and a .986 OPS. Cash had no expectation that the 5-foot-10 Brosseau would slug his way into the heart of

the order, but he has become important enough that the Rays sent big league veteran Guillermo Heredia to Triple-A this week instead of Brosseau when they needed to recall a pitcher.

“The trust to be able to throw him in the 3-hole and play at any position, that’s showing right there how much we believe in him,” hitting coach Chad Mottola said.

It’s certainly not what Brosseau expected after going undrafted following his senior season in 2016. The Indiana native batted .355 his last year at Oakland, and scouts led him to believe he would be selected in the draft. His name was never called, though, and the Rays’ James Bonnici was the only scout to reach out afterward. Tampa Bay offered Brosseau a \$1,000 signing bonus, and he quickly accepted.

The club put him on its rookie-level Gulf Coast League roster, an affiliate filled largely by players signed out of high school or internationally.

“Being a 22-year-old, non-drafted guy in the Gulf Coast League surrounded by a bunch of 18-year-olds, it was definitely eye-opening,” he said.

Some of his teammates had gotten substantial signing bonuses, and Brosseau watched enviously as boxes of gear piled up next to their lockers. Pro players with the right connec-

tions go through three or four pairs of cleats per month, but a budget-conscious Brosseau — players in the GCL make about \$1,000 per month only through the end of the season — made his college spikes last all summer. The heel split open on one of them when he lunged for a ground ball, and for the final few weeks of the season, the shoe would fall off his foot nearly every time he rounded first base.

“I was slumming it hard, for sure,” he said.

Using team-provided stock bats and batting gloves shredded full of holes, Brosseau batted .319 that summer and .321 the next year across two Class A levels. After a strong stint in the Australian winter league following the 2017 season, he signed with an agent who helped upgrade his gear, then hit a career-best 13 homers in 2018 with Double-A Montgomery. He was invited this year to major league spring training, where he hit .316 and put himself on the radar for the big league coaching staff.

“Every time he came in in the back end of a game, and then eventually in some starts, he just controlled the at-bat every time,” Mottola said.

Brosseau opened the season hitting .317 with 15 homers with Triple-A Durham, and he’s been even more dominant

in the majors.

With low hands and a high leg kick, the undersized Brosseau has a swing reminiscent of another late-blooming slugger — the Dodgers’ Justin Turner. Brosseau said the similarities are coincidental, and unlike Turner, there was no major overhaul in his swing that got him launching balls with more authority. He made one small adjustment in the minors — trying to hit the ball farther out in front of home plate — and everything has clicked from there.

“Your natural swing comes up the farther you come out, and that helps me lift the ball a little bit more,” he said. “Turn those singles into gap shots.”

He looked like a natural to Mottola in spring training. The hitting coach described Brosseau’s hands as “unbelievable” in their quickness, especially when he gets caught off balance.

Brosseau has shown that off since his call-up. He had a two-homer game against Baltimore last weekend, and this week in the Bronx, he singled and scored against CC Sabathia, crossing home plate in fresh spikes with a bright, white logo. There’s no slumming in big league clubhouses.

“It’s been a great three years,” Brosseau said. “Obviously happy to be here.”

Giants ace Bumgarner shines in no-decision

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — You bet Madison Bumgarner pleaded to Bruce Bochy to start the 10th inning. And of course the big left-hander remained a little irked afterward considering he didn’t get the chance.

“I didn’t try to make it much of a conversation but he wasn’t having it. Usually if I really want to I can get my way with him, but he wasn’t having it today,” Bumgarner said, then chuckled adding, “How many times do you get to go out for the 10th?”

If this happened to be Bumgarner’s final start for San Francisco, he left another lasting memory — even if everybody wound up

groggy by the time this game finally ended in 4 hours, 47 minutes.

Bumgarner pitched nine superb innings but had nothing to show for it aside from an ovation of sheer appreciation, and the San Francisco Giants rallied past the New York Mets on Donovan Solano’s 16th-inning RBI single for a 3-2 win Thursday night.

“He lobbied, trust me, he did. In fact, I came in after the game he’s still mad at me for not letting him go out there in the 10th,” Bochy said. “He did his job.”

The Giants finished their season-best sixth straight victory hours after Bumgarner wrapped up his longest start since a

nine-inning shutout against Arizona on July 10, 2016. He threw just 94 pitches.

The Mets went ahead on rookie Pete Alonso’s 32nd home run leading off the 16th before San Francisco made it 2-2 on Brandon Crawford’s double in the bottom half. Solano delivered against Chris Mazza (0-1) for his second career walkoff hit and RBI — the other also came against the Mets for the Marlins on Oct. 2, 2012.

Williams Jerez (1-0) worked two innings for his first career win.

The Mets followed a season-best 14 runs and 17 hits in Wednesday’s 14-4 road victory against the Twins by having their four-game winning streak snapped.

Strasburg leads Nats past Braves

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Washington Nationals manager Dave Martinez may have found a new pinch-hitter in his team's latest win.

Stephen Strasburg showed he can shine in the batter's box as well as on the mound.

Strasburg had a three-run homer among his three hits and set a franchise-record for a pitcher with five RBIs, as the surging Nationals beat the Atlanta Braves 13-4 on Thursday night.

Strasburg's hitting made up for a so-so night on the mound, as he allowed three runs and eight hits in 5¹/₃ innings.

"Stephen wasn't as sharp as he could be but man he swung the bat really well," Martinez

said. "He might be a pinch-hitter coming up here for the rest of these games."

Strasburg is the first Nationals pitcher to drive in five runs in a game and have two hits in one inning.

His homer was the highlight of an eight-run third inning that also included a two-run double by Victor Robles, an RBI triple by Adam Eaton and a run-scoring double by Anthony Rendon.

The Nationals, who have won 14 of their last 18 games, cut Atlanta's lead to 5¹/₂ games in the NL East by winning the opener of a four-game series. The Braves have lost three straight.

Strasburg (12-4) improved to 3-0 against Atlanta this season by winning his fifth straight

start. His effort on the mound was overshadowed by his career highs in hits and RBIs.

Strasburg led off the third with a single to center. After the Nationals knocked rookie right-hander Kyle Wright (0-3) out of the game in the long inning, Strasburg hit Touki Toussaint's second pitch 420 feet over the Washington bullpen behind the left-field wall for an 8-1 lead.

Strasburg's big night continued when he hit a two-run single off Toussaint in the fifth.

All the time spent running the bases, including scoring from first on Eaton's triple, may have drained Strasburg. He was pulled in the sixth after giving up a run-scoring triple to Ozzie Albies and Brian McCann's RBI single.

NFL won't suspend Chiefs' Hill

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Tyreek Hill has been cleared to report to Chiefs training camp next week after the NFL said Friday it would not suspend the star wide receiver under its personal conduct policy after a domestic violence case involving his 3-year-old son.

The league spent eight hours interviewing Hill late last month about the case, which came to light after a recording of Hill and his fiancée, Crystal Espinal, aired on television station KCTV5.

During the conversation, Espinal accused Hill of hurting their son. Police launched an investigation into potential child abuse, but the Johnson County, Kan., district attorney announced he could not charge Hill because it was not clear how the boy had sustained his injuries.

"Based on the evidence presently available, the NFL cannot conclude that Mr. Hill violated the Personal Conduct Policy," the NFL said in a statement. "He may attend Kansas City's training camp and participate in all club activities. He has been and will continue to be subject to conditions set forth by the District Court, Commissioner (Roger) Goodell, and the Chiefs, which include clinical evaluation and therapeutic intervention."

The Chiefs report to training camp at Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph, Mo., next week. Their first full-squad workout is scheduled for July 27.

"Based on the information provided to us by the league, we have decided it is appropriate for Tyreek to return to the team at the start of training camp," the Chiefs said in a statement. "The club fully supports the conditions for return laid out by the league and will continue to monitor any new developments in the case. We are glad to welcome Tyreek back to the team."

MLB roundup

Yankees win doubleheader

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Yankees manager Aaron Boone got fired up at a rookie umpire in a profane rant, and New York awoke from a sleepy start to rally past the Tampa Bay Rays 6-2 in a doubleheader opener Thursday.

New York rallied to win the second game 5-1 and reopen an eight-game AL East lead over the second-place Rays. Luke Voit tied the score in the fifth with his first home run since June 14, and catcher Mike Zunino caused Charlie Morton to balk home the tiebreaking run in a four-run sixth that included Didi Gregorius' two-run single. The Yankees won three straight after wasting a ninth-inning lead in the series opener and improved to 34-11 against the AL East, including 12-5 against Tampa Bay.

After Domingo German (12-2) gave up solo homers to his first two batters in the first game, Gio Urshela hit a tying home run in the second off Yonny Chirinos (9-5), and Gary Sanchez smashed a go-ahead

110 mph single off the glove of third baseman Yandy Diaz during a three-run fifth. Diaz had helped the Yankees come alive when he dropped Gregorius' leadoff popup in the second for a two-base error.

Phillies 7, Dodgers 6: Bryce Harper tied it with an RBI single and Rhys Hoskins ripped a two-RBI single in the seventh inning to rally host Philadelphia over Los Angeles.

Indians 6, Tigers 3: Trevor Bauer (9-7) struck out 10 in 6²/₃ innings, Jose Ramirez hit a go-ahead home run in the sixth and host Cleveland beat Detroit for the 11th straight time.

Red Sox 5, Blue Jays 0: Chris Sale (4-9) and two relievers combined on a two-hitter, and the Boston left-hander struck out 12 in six innings for his first regular-season win at Fenway Park in more than a year.

Cardinals 7 Reds 4: Tommy Edman snapped a sixth-inning tie with his first career grand slam, Paul DeJong hit a two-run homer and visiting St. Louis beat Cincinnati for its

fifth win in six games.

Twins 6, Athletics 3: Pinch-hitter Eddie Rosario drove a go-ahead, three-run homer on the first pitch from reliever Yusmeiro Petit (2-2) in the seventh inning and host Minnesota beat Oakland.

Astros 6, Angels 2: George Springer and Alex Bregman homered, Wade Miley (8-4) pitched two-run ball into the sixth inning and visiting Houston beat Los Angeles.

Brewers 5, Diamondbacks 1: Orlando Arcia hit a tie-breaking single in the eighth inning to decide a duel between visiting Milwaukee's Zach Davies (8-2) and Arizona's Merrill Kelly.

Marlins 4, Padres 3: Brian Anderson doubled home the winning run with one out in the ninth inning and host Miami earned its first walkoff victory of the year.

Royals 6, White Sox 5: Cheslor Cuthbert and Jorge Soler homered in a five-run third inning, and host Kansas City stayed hot by completing a four-game sweep of Chicago.

Lowry, Holmes tied for British Open lead

Associated Press

PORTRUSH, Northern Ireland — Shane Lowry of Ireland goes into the weekend with a share of the lead at the British Open.

Lowry opened with three straight birdies and became the first player to reach double figures under par when he holed a 40-foot birdie putt on the 10th hole as the roar from the gallery pierced the heavy air and rain.

But he dropped a shot on the 14th, and a bogey on the 18th hole gave him another 67. He was 8-under 134 and tied with J.B. Holmes of the United States.

Local golfer Darren Clarke made a triple bogey on the final hole to finish the second round at 3-over overall, which may be too high to make the cut and play this weekend.

The 2011 champion, who lives in Portrush and knows the course well, shot an even-par 71 in the first round and was still even heading down the 18th fairway on Friday. But his bogey putt from close range was short and his next attempt went right of the hole. He finally tapped in for a 7.

Tiger Woods is headed home early from the British Open.

Woods began the back nine at Royal Portrush with two birdies and had a chance to post a good score at 3 under through 11 holes. But that was his last birdie, and he closed with two straight bogeys for 1-under 70.

He was at 6 over, virtually certain to miss the cut for the second time this year in a major in a season that began with him winning the Masters for the fifth time.

Holmes is showing no signs of slowing down.

After an opening 66, the first-round leader added a 3-under 68 to take the lead until Lowry pulled even with him.

Also making a move was Lee Westwood, who was a shot back, tied with England's Tommy Fleetwood.

Fleetwood made a birdie putt from 15 feet on the final hole to get into the clubhouse at 7-under 135 after rounds of 68-67.

Jordan Spieth and four-time major winner Brooks Koepka were among a group of four players at 5 under, along with Andrew Putnam and Dylan Frittelli.

It looks like players will

have to be near even par if they want to play the weekend, with the early projected cut at 1-over-par.

Spieth briefly moved into a tie for the lead after going birdie-birdie-eagle-birdie beginning at the fifth hole. He bogeyed the ninth to finish the front nine in 4-under 32.

"I always get pumped up for major championships," Spieth said. "Clearly I try to peak for majors. And then this style of golf I always — I've always found to fit my game pretty well."

That game really started to shine in 2015 when Spieth won the Masters and U.S. Open. He then finished a stroke out of a playoff in the British Open at St. Andrews. He capped his major season with a second-place finish at the PGA Championship.

In 2017, he won the British Open, finishing three strokes ahead of Matt Kuchar at Royal Birkdale. That was his last victory.

Spieth had an up-and-down day in the first round this year, but with the improved weather on Day 2 came a better score.

"I putted a bit better. Different wind change so certain holes played harder than oth-

ers and others became easier," said Spieth, who finished his round about an hour before the rain started to fall. "I felt like I played the easy holes well and then I avoided the pot bunkers today more than I did yesterday. But I certainly found the rough more today than I did yesterday.

"At some point I hope to be playing off the short grass this week."

Although he failed to improve his score late in the round, he did manage to make par on some of the toughest holes on the course.

The par-3 16th and par-4 18th are rated as two of the hardest. Spieth landed his tee shot just right of the green on 16, chipped up the sharp slope and nailed a short putt for par. On the 18th, he drove down the middle of the fairway, one of the few he hit Friday, put his approach on the green and just missed his birdie putt.

"I'm in contention," Spieth said. "I feel like if I can continue to improve each day, hit the ball better tomorrow than I did today, and better on Sunday than Saturday, then I should have a chance with how I'd feel on and around the greens."

Alaphilippe wins time trial, stretches lead in Tour

Associated Press

PAU, France — Inspired by his yellow jersey, Julian Alaphilippe held off defending champion Geraint Thomas to win the only individual time trial stage of this Tour de France on Friday, a shock victory to raise French hopes that he could go all the way in yellow to Paris next week.

Cheered on by boisterous crowds hammering on roadside barriers, Alaphilippe sprang a surprise in his margin of victory on the tricky, hilly, turn-filled loop south of Pau, with spectacular views of the Pyrenees.

Having previously predicted that he'd lose time to Thomas, an expert in the race against

the clock, Alaphilippe stunned even himself by emphatically relegating the Welshman to second place, 14 seconds slower.

"It's incredible," Alaphilippe said, adding that his performance reduced members of his team to tears. "I didn't think I'd win."

All eyes turn to the Pyrenees to see whether Alaphilippe can continue his dream race on Saturday ascending the legendary Tourmalet, the first of seven climbs to above 6,500 feet in the highest Tour in the race's 116-year history.

Alaphilippe also won Stage 3 and has held the race lead for a total of nine days, wowing French fans crossing fingers and toes for their first home-

grown champion since Bernard Hinault in 1985.

Alaphilippe has said he expects to suffer in the high mountains, where the likes of Thomas and specialist climbers are expected to shine. But given how Alaphilippe has continued to confound expectations with his punchy riding and gritty determination to stay in yellow, fewer will be predicting he can't ride up the Champs-Elysees in the lead on July 28.

Belgian rider Thomas De Gendt, third on Stage 13, was among those saying Alaphilippe could go all the way, after his demonstration of strength in Pau.

"He can surprise everybody,"

De Gendt said.

Belgian Wout van Aert, a Tour de France rookie who won Stage 10, was forced out of the race with a leg wound after he plowed into a roadside barrier and crashed in a right-hand curve close to the finish of the time trial.

Van Aert had been one of the quickest riders Friday on the 16.9-mile course before catching the barrier and hitting the deck. Medics treated him at the side of the road and then transported him away by ambulance.

His team, Jumbo-Visma, said he was conscious but out of the Tour with a flesh wound on his right upper leg.