

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US, Europe differ on patrols in Persian Gulf

The Washington Post

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The flare-up in tension here in the Persian Gulf over recent weeks has seen at least two tankers seized by Iranian forces while traversing the narrow Strait of Hormuz.

The dispute threatens to choke a vital trade route for crude oil exports and could potentially lead oil prices to spike, threatening the global economy. Western powers are worried and have proposed plans to escort ships and monitor for threats.

But the waters are cloudy. Even after the plans have been announced, confusion surrounds which nations would be sending important resources like warships to the Persian Gulf.

As tensions rise, the exact mandate remains uncertain, with two separate and possibly competing plans — one led by the United States and one led by Europe — under discussion.

Meanwhile, Iran has rejected the need for Western ships to patrol the waters along its southern coast, instead pledging to secure the Strait of Hormuz itself.

The prospect of warships patrolling the Persian Gulf is reminiscent of the “tanker wars” of the 1980s, when the U.S. Navy es-

corted commercial vessels from Kuwait traversing the Straits of Hormuz due to attacks on tankers by both Iraq and Iran.

But this time, with potentially multiple missions at once, the situation could be more fluid.

The United States has said it envisages a scheme where nations would protect ships that carry their flag but there would be joint operations designed to carry out surveillance on waterways. The plan, dubbed Operation Sentinel by the United States, has been under discussion for over a month.

Mark Esper, then the acting secretary of defense, first called for a joint strategy to protect shipping in the Persian Gulf during a meeting at NATO headquarters in June. Marine Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters in early July that a concrete plan had been formulated and that the role of allies would become clear within weeks.

The United States was “working diligently to build out a maritime security initiative” with “a broad range of countries participating,” Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said July 17. During a speech Tuesday, President Donald Trump said that he felt the United States should not take too much responsibility for ships in the Persian Gulf, suggesting

instead “very rich” countries like Japan and China could do it.

Following the capture of a British tanker on Friday, British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt outlined a separate, Europe-led plan to “to support safe passage of both crew and cargo in this vital region.”

Speaking to British lawmakers on Monday, Hunt said that the plan was different from the U.S. proposal. “It will not be part of the U.S. maximum pressure policy on Iran because we remain committed to preserving the Iran nuclear agreement,” Hunt said.

No nation has yet publicly pledged material support for the U.S.-led maritime security initiative. Experts say some nations may be concerned with being linked with the U.S. maximum pressure campaign on Iran, either hoping to salvage the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement or because they still maintain good relations with Tehran.

Iranian president Hassan Rouhani told a Cabinet meeting on Wednesday that it was the duty of Iran to protect the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

“I do believe that the whole world should be grateful to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps for preserving security in the Persian Gulf,” Rouhani said, according to Mehr News Agency.

Iran open to ship release if UK reciprocates

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — President Hassan Rouhani suggested on Wednesday that Iran might release a U.K.-flagged ship if Britain takes similar steps to release an Iranian oil tanker seized by the British Royal Navy off Gibraltar earlier this month.

His remarks could create an opening to reduce tensions as Boris Johnson becomes prime minister. It’s unclear how the new government will respond to Rouhani’s suggestion or the impasse with Iran.

“We do not seek the continuation of tension with some Eu-

ropean countries,” Rouhani said in comments carried on his website. “Should they be committed to international frameworks and give up their wrong actions, including what they did in Gibraltar, they will receive a proportional response from Iran.”

Britain this week announced plans to develop and deploy a Europe-led “maritime protection mission” to safeguard shipping in the area after Iran’s Revolutionary Guard seized the Stena Impero in the Strait of Hormuz on Friday.

Rouhani said that while Iran does not seek a military conflict, it will not allow threats

to its security in the important waterway.

He described the Iranian seizure of the ship as “professional and brave.”

Iranian officials have alleged the ship was seized after it violated international maritime law by turning off its signaling for longer than is allowed and passing through the wrong channels.

However, Iranian officials have also suggested the ship was seized in response to Britain’s role in impounding an Iranian supertanker two weeks earlier off the coast of Gibraltar, a British overseas territory. The U.K. says the tanker was

suspected of violating sanctions on oil shipments to Syria.

Both sides have called the interception of one another’s ships “hostile acts” and “piracy.”

In past weeks, Iran has shot down a U.S. spy drone, U.S. officials say military cyberforces struck Iranian computer systems that handle missile and rocket launchers, and six oil tankers have been sabotaged near the strait.

Iranian officials on Wednesday reiterated their denial that any Iranian drones were intercepted, after the U.S. military said Tuesday that it took aim at two of them last week.

Senators hear from general's accuser

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senators are hearing closed-door testimony this week about an allegation of sexual misconduct against Air Force Gen. John Hyten as they weigh his nomination for vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

A senior military officer who has accused Hyten of unwanted sexual advances met Tuesday with senators from the Armed Services Committee in a classified setting. Hyten, who was nominated for the post in April, is expected to appear for another classified executive session with the committee Thursday.

The committee chairman, Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., said he was hopeful of moving forward with a vote in the committee possibly next week before the Senate recesses for August.

"We're still aiming to get this done," Inhofe said. "I am personally interested in moving forward with him after we have an executive session."

Other senators, though, have raised

questions about the situation and are insisting on more information. Several senators pressed for this week's classified briefings. The general's nomination has lagged for months, and it is unclear if Hyten has enough support to be confirmed.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., has said both Hyten and the alleged victim need to be heard.

After Tuesday's classified briefing, he said she had "raised very serious allegations."

"They need to be very closely and carefully considered," he said.

Inhofe confirmed that Hyten was expected to appear later this week, likely Thursday, and that the committee could have a public session next week.

The prospect of a full committee session could prove politically challenging as President Donald Trump's nominees have faced a grilling over their personal and professional behavior, especially at a time of heightened awareness of sexual misconduct in the "Me Too" era.

The Associated Press reported on the al-

legations against Hyten earlier this month.

The officer told the AP that Hyten subjected her to a series of unwanted sexual advances by kissing, hugging and rubbing up against her in 2017 while she was one of his aides. She said that he tried to derail her military career after she rebuffed him.

The Air Force investigated the woman's allegations, and found there was insufficient evidence to charge the general or recommend any administrative punishment. The accuser remains in the military but has moved to a different job.

The woman asked to not be identified by name. The AP generally does not identify those who say they have been sexually assaulted.

The accusations came at a time of unusual turmoil in the top ranks at the Pentagon. On Tuesday, the Senate confirmed Mark Esper as defense secretary, filling a role that had only an acting chief for the past six months. Then-Secretary Jim Mattis stepped down and Trump's nominee to replace him, Pat Shanahan, withdrew after revelations about his contentious divorce.

Russia denies airspace violation, wants probe

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Russia wants an investigation into South Korea's allegation that a Russian military plane violated South Korean airspace, a senior lawmaker said Wednesday, citing Moscow's acting ambassador.

The U.S. called for close consultation between Washington and Seoul to deal with similar incidents in the future.

Seoul said South Korean fighter jets fired flares and 360 rounds of warning shots to drive away the Russian reconnaissance plane that entered its airspace twice Tuesday during a joint patrol with other Russian and Chinese bombers. Russia and China said none of their planes entered South Korean territory.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said it will hold talks with officials from the Russian Em-

bassy on Thursday and that it has evidence that proves Russia's territorial trespassing. Senior South Korean presidential official Yoon Do-han later said the evidence includes radar images and photos of the flare firing.

South Korea says the incident marked the first airspace violation by a foreign military plane since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. Seoul officials said the five Russian and Chinese planes, including the Russian reconnaissance aircraft, made a highly unusual joint entrance to South Korea's air defense identification zone Tuesday, prompting South Korean fighter jets to scramble.

Such a zone is not a country's territorial sky and extends beyond it. It is meant to give authorities an early warning of a possible incursion.

Pakistani PM will work with US on Afghan accord

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — After years of tension between Washington and Islamabad, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan insisted Tuesday the two are now on the same page and said he will do his best to persuade the Taliban to open negotiations with the Afghan government to resolve their war.

The U.S. has been engaging with the Taliban, who so far have refused to talk directly to the Afghan government, which they see as a puppet. Afghans are wary of Pakistan's involvement in crafting a future for their country, but Khan said the Taliban need to participate in the next Afghan presidential election in September.

"It's not easy. It's not going to be easy," Khan said about getting the Taliban and the Afghan government to the negotiating table.

Khan said the Taliban del-

egation to the U.S. negotiations asked to meet with him a few months ago probably because the prime minister has maintained there is no military solution to the war in Afghanistan. He said at the time that he didn't do it because the Afghan government didn't want him meeting with the Taliban.

But Khan said he's spoken with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and he will reach out to the militant group when he returns to Pakistan. He met Monday with President Donald Trump.

"Now, I will meet the Taliban and I will try my best to get them to talk to the Afghan government," Khan said at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington. "The election in Afghanistan must be an inclusive election where the Taliban are also participating."

Ex-sailor sentenced for benefits theft

The (Norfolk, Va.) Virginian-Pilot

Camesha Walters was a petty officer 3rd class living in Norfolk, Va. Her husband was a foreign national living in Bangladesh.

But to boost her take-home pay, Walters told the Navy in 2015 her husband was a U.S. citizen living in Brooklyn, N.Y. She said she needed larger housing and cost-of-living allowances to support him.

Walters, 37, was sentenced last week to five months in jail on charges she stole almost \$140,000 from the federal government.

Following her release, she will be on house arrest for six months. She also must perform 200 hours of community service and pay full restitution.

"When a servicemember lies in order to inflate their benefits, that member offends a system built on trust, and insults

those colleagues who approach the system honestly," Special Assistant U.S. Attorney David Layne said in court documents, arguing for a sentence of 10 months in jail.

The charges against Walters, who enlisted in 2013, stem from May 2015 through February 2018 — when she was assigned to the Theodore Roosevelt and George Washington aircraft carriers.

To receive the housing allow-

ance, Walters signed multiple documents regarding her husband's Brooklyn address. To prove her claims, she also provided a signed lease and a notarized letter supposedly from a property owner suggesting the apartment's utilities were contained in the rent.

Layne said Walters was not entitled to the inflated allowances because her husband never lived in Brooklyn, and never visited the U.S., he said.

Coast Guard has plan for Chinese aggression

BY JOSEPH DITZLER

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — The U.S. Coast Guard's commandant is pushing for a better way to deal with island nations in the western Pacific — one designed to counter "antagonistic, aggressive behaviors" from the Chinese.

"I think what we would champion is transparent engagement," Adm. Karl Schultz said Tuesday from Saipan. "I think we have seen behaviors out of the Chinese coast guard — the maritime militia — that are not consistent with the rule-based order."

Siding with the United States in the global power competition in the Indo-Pacific region

means receiving a used Coast Guard cutter. It also means assistance with everything from enforcing international fishing regulations to search and rescue operations and training in maritime law enforcement, Schultz said.

"I think there needs to be an international pushback to say, 'We reject the types of behavior, the antagonistic, aggressive behaviors that are not consistent with the rule-based order,'" he said.

The commandant announced a 30-day deployment of a Juniper-class buoy tender and a fast-response cutter as part of efforts to beef up the Coast Guard presence in the Northern Marianas, a U.S. com-

monwealth in the western Pacific that includes Guam and Saipan.

Schultz spoke as the potential for conflict in the region continues to simmer. On Friday, Vietnam demanded China remove a survey vessel and coast guard ships from the Vanguard Bank, the westernmost area of the disputed Spratly Islands and site of gas and oil deposits.

Schultz said the U.S. has provided Vietnam, Sri Lanka and the Philippines with surplus high-endurance, 378-foot-long Hamilton-class cutters to patrol their maritime territory.

Schultz said his goal for the Coast Guard "is to be a partner of choice in the region" that tailors its services to the needs of

the nation it is supporting. He said allies must meet the wave of vessels large and small that China puts to sea with a partnership and a commitment to rule of law.

Schultz said the Coast Guard will soon station a buoy tender and a patrol boat in American Samoa for an extended period as a "proof of concept."

In the next three years, the Coast Guard plans on stationing three Sentinel-class, fast response cutters in Guam, he said.

Schultz also said the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Stratton is taking up the station in the western Pacific previously occupied by the cutter Bertholf.

Japanese amphibious unit tests rapid reaction skills

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

BOWEN, Australia — U.S. troops in Australia for this month's Talisman Sabre exercise have been working alongside Japan's newly formed Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, a force modeled after the U.S. Marine Corps and charged with defending outer islands.

On Tuesday, members of the Japanese amphibious unit landed in a CH-47 Chinook helicopter at an airfield in the coastal

Queensland town of Bowen that had been secured by the Marines in a drill the day before.

Some Japanese troops joined the Marines in defensive positions while others set up communications equipment.

"They're setting up a command operations center," said Capt. Stewart Conor, 32, of Averill Park, N.Y., commander of the force securing the airfield — the Camp Pendleton, Calif.-based Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment. The Japanese soldiers' mission involved seizing another objective — a nearby sports complex, he said.

The presence of its troops in such a challenging, multinational exercise is evidence that Japan is making progress in its efforts to develop amphibious capability.

Members of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force began observing and participating in amphibious training with U.S. Marines on Okinawa in 2012.

The training, which was off-limits to media, was part of a multiyear effort to develop

amphibious capability that included new helicopter carriers and landing craft.

The buildup has taken place amid tensions in the East China Sea, where China has challenged Japan's claim to the Senkaku Islands (known as Daiyou by the Chinese) and the nearby oil and gas resources.

Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Capt. Hiroshi Watanabe, who was on the ground at Bowen, said 300 out of the now 2,000-strong amphibious brigade are participating in Talisman Sabre.

Mueller says Trump not exonerated in probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former special counsel Robert Mueller on Wednesday dismissed President Donald Trump's claims that his investigation had exonerated the president of obstructing his probe into Russia's efforts to help Trump win the 2016 election.

"The president was not exculpated for the acts that he allegedly committed," Mueller declared at the opening of congressional hearings into his investigation.

He described the Russian government's efforts to interfere in American politics as among the most serious challenges to democracy he had encountered in his decadeslong career, which included steering the FBI after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The televised Capitol Hill appearance, Mueller's first since wrapping his two-year Russia probe last spring, unfolded at a moment of deep divisions in Congress and the country, with many Americans hardened in their opinions about the success of Trump's presidency and whether impeachment proceedings are necessary. It was unclear whether hours of testimony

will shape public opinion about Trump's acts.

Democrats hoped his testimony would weaken Trump's reelection prospects in ways that Mueller's book-length report did not. They hope that even if his testimony doesn't inspire impeachment demands — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has made clear she will not pursue impeachment, for now — Mueller could nonetheless unambiguously spell out questionable, norm-shattering actions by the president.

In the first of the day's two hearings, Republicans, by contrast, immediately defended Trump and criticized the Democrats for continuing to go after him.

They highlighted Mueller's conclusion of insufficient evidence to establish a criminal conspiracy between the Trump campaign and Russia.

"Those are the facts of the Mueller report. Russia meddled in the 2016 election," said Rep. Doug Collins, the top Republican on the House Judiciary Committee. "The president did not conspire with Russians. Nothing we hear today will change those facts."

Mueller frequently gave terse, one-word answers to lawmakers' questions and referred back to the wording in his report. He at times appeared stilted and halting, and several times asked for questions to be repeated.

Pressed as to why he hadn't investigated a "dossier" of claims that the Republicans insist helped lead to the start of the probe, he said that was not his charge.

That was "outside my purview," he said repeatedly.

Though Mueller declared at the outset that he would be limited in what he would say, the hearings nonetheless carried the extraordinary spectacle of a prosecutor discussing in public a criminal investigation he conducted into a sitting U.S. president.

Mueller, known for his taciturn nature, warned that he would not stray beyond what's already been revealed in his report.

Additionally, the Justice Department instructed Mueller to stay strictly within those parameters, giving him a formal directive to point to if he faced questions he does not want to answer.

Officials say immigration raids resulted in 35 arrests

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An immigration enforcement operation that President Donald Trump said was part of an effort to deport "millions" of people from the United States resulted in 35 arrests, officials said Tuesday.

Trump billed the operation targeting families as a major show of force as the number of Central American families crossing the southern border has skyrocketed. There are about 1 million people in the U.S. with final deportation orders; the operation targeted 2,100.

Of those arrested, 18 were members of families and 17 were collateral apprehensions of people in the country illegally who were encountered by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers. None of those arrested resulted in the separation of family, officials said.

The effort was demonized

by Democrats as a full-force drive to deport families and trumpeted by Republicans as a necessary show of force to prove there are consequences for people coming here illegally. But career ICE officers described it as a routine operation, one expected to net an average of about 10% to 20% of targets.

A separate nationwide enforcement operation targeting immigrants here illegally who had criminal convictions or charges netted 899 arrests. Officers also handed out 3,282 notices of inspection to businesses that may be employing people here illegally.

Acting ICE director Matthew Albence said the operations would be ongoing, stressing the importance of enforcement.

"Part of the way you stop people from coming is having a consequence to the illegal activity when you do come," he said.

Boris Johnson becomes new UK prime minister

Associated Press

LONDON — Boris Johnson became Britain's new prime minister Wednesday, vowing to lead the U.K. out of the European Union, "no ifs, ands or buts."

Standing outside the shiny black door of 10 Downing St., Johnson said that "after three years of unfounded self-doubt, it is time to change the record."

He derided "the doubters, the doomsters, the gloomsters" who believe the ebullient but chaotic Johnson cannot succeed in breaking the Brexit impasse that defeated his predecessor, Theresa May.

Johnson has just 99 days to make good on his promise to deliver Brexit by Oct. 31, come what may.

The former mayor of London and foreign secretary is getting Britain's top job in politics after winning a contest to lead the governing Conservative Party.

Famed for his bravado, quips

in Latin and blond mop of hair, Johnson easily defeated Conservative rival Jeremy Hunt, winning two-thirds of the votes of about 160,000 party members across the U.K.

He replaces May, who announced her resignation last month after Parliament repeatedly rejected the withdrawal agreement she struck with the 28-nation bloc. That has left Britain stranded in Brexit limbo as the U.K.'s departure from the EU was delayed past its long-scheduled March exit date.

Johnson took office in a day of carefully choreographed political drama that began with May attending the weekly Prime Minister's Questions period in the House of Commons for the last time.

The usually boisterous session was subdued, with Conservative colleagues praising May's sense of duty and opposition leaders offering best wishes.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Baby alligator found in swimming pool

NY BAYPORT — Authorities said a Bayport, Long Island, family found an 8-inch baby alligator swimming in their pool over the weekend.

The Suffolk County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation are trying to determine how the alligator was found in the area. It is illegal to possess alligators in New York.

The SPCA said it took custody of the alligator to protect the public, and it encourages anyone who has an illegal pet to turn it in.

Several Apollo 14 'moon trees' are lost

NM ALBUQUERQUE — Five trees planted in New Mexico from seeds taken to the moon during the Apollo 14 mission and given to the state by NASA have all died or been forgotten.

KOAT-TV in Albuquerque reported officials where the trees were planted decades ago admit they have lost track of the trees.

Other states have kept up with moon tree locations.

Moon trees were grown from 500 seeds taken into orbit around the moon by former U.S. Forest Service smokejumper Stuart Roosa during the 1971 mission.

Jeep Wrangler tires slashed at seashore

NC OUTER BANKS — Authorities in North Carolina said a tire-slasher at Cape Hatteras National Seashore is apparently targeting Jeep Wranglers.

The Charlotte Observer reported Bodie and Hatteras islands saw a rash of vandalism that left seven cars with slashed tires, sometimes including the spare.

A news release from park services said seven owners in the past two weeks have reported puncture damages to their tires.

Five of those vehicles were Wranglers. Cape Hatteras officials didn't speculate on why Wranglers were targeted.

4 deputies injured, horse punched at fair

CA TURLOCK — Authorities said four Northern California deputies were injured, a horse was punched and five people were arrested in a brawl at the Stanislaus County Fair.

The Modesto Bee said sheriff's deputies watching a line at a beer booth Sunday noticed a man wearing gang clothing who appeared to be drunk and trying to start fights. Authorities said the fair doesn't allow gang symbols or clothing.

Sheriff's Sgt. Josh Clayton said while deputies talked to that man, that another man began throwing punches, hitting two deputies, and other crowd members got involved. Authorities said a man punched a Sheriff's Department horse that had knocked him down, spilling his beer.

The department says the deputies and the horse are fine.

Sign leads some to leave church service

VA APPOMATTOX — The sign outside a church in Virginia reads "America: Love it or leave it." Several congregants decided to leave the church.

Pastor E.W. Lucas said some

members walked out of the Sunday service over the sign. Lucas said he stands by the Friendship Baptist Church sign and it is meant to make a statement about the political divisions in Washington.

The pastor has said that people who want to criticize the president and the country should "go over there and live in these other countries for a little while."

His comment echoes President Donald Trump, who recently tweeted that four minority congresswomen should return to "the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came."

Woman posts selfie with a zoo monkey

ND BISMARCK — Police said a Mandan woman could be charged with trespassing for jumping a protective fence at the Dakota Zoo in Bismarck.

Authorities said the 18-year-old woman scaled a fence at the monkey exhibit and touched one of the animals. She posted a selfie on social media.

Police said the Bismarck city attorney is reviewing the case.

Goose freed from pizza driver's grille

VT BURLINGTON — Authorities said a goose that got stuck in a pizza delivery driver's car grille in Vermont is expected to make a full recovery.

Driver Ryan Harrington told WCAX-TV he saw a goose waddling across the road in Burlington on Saturday. He slammed his brakes, but heard a thud and knew he struck the bird. He wasn't prepared to see it stuck in his car — and alive — when he returned to work.

His manager reached a police

dispatcher who alerted authorities and a nonprofit animal rescue group. The fire department arrived to help free the goose.

The goose was taken to a wildlife rehabber in Poultney who said it may have a broken pelvis, but they expect it will survive.

Bill would outlaw declawing cats

MA BOSTON — Massachusetts lawmakers are weighing a ban on the practice of declawing cats.

Supporters of the measure say declawing is cruel and painful. They say cats rely on their paws and claws to groom themselves and to help protect and defend their bodies. The practice involves amputating a cat's toes to the first knuckle.

A public hearing on a bill that would prohibit declawing was held Monday before the Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure.

Police dog dies after sniffing drugs

AL MONTGOMERY — A prison search dog in Alabama that was injured after sniffing synthetic marijuana was expected to make a full recovery, but now authorities say he has died.

The Alabama Department of Corrections announced the dog, named Jake, died over the weekend when he developed pneumonia.

The prison system said the dog was searching a housing dorm for contraband at Staton Correctional Facility with emergency response teams. Jake became unresponsive after alerting on a powdery substance that turned out to be synthetic marijuana.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Tokyo marks one year until Olympics

Associated Press

TOKYO — With exactly one year to go until the Tokyo Olympics open, organizers marked the day by unveiling the gold, silver and bronze medals that will symbolize the 2020 Games.

Thousands of politicians, sponsors, and fans jammed a massive exhibition hall in central Tokyo on Wednesday, piling on speeches, musical interludes and dancing performances to celebrate the one-year mark.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made a cameo appearance to welcome the guests. And IOC President Thomas Bach repeated what he has said often in various places around the world.

"I can truly say," Bach said, "I have never seen an Olympic city as prepared as Tokyo with one year to go before the Olympic Games."

Despite all the talk and theatrics, the center stage belonged to the medals by Japanese designer Junichi Kawanishi.

Kawanishi wrote that the medals are to "resemble rough stones that have been polished and which now shine with light and brilliance."

The front side carries the Tokyo Olympic emblem, with the Greek goddess of victory on the back.

Bach, a fencing gold medalist in the 1976 Olympics, conducted a mock fencing duel earlier in the day with a junior high student — another chance to

draw attention to the one-year milestone. The games will be held July 24-Aug. 9, 2020.

Tokyo is spending about \$20 billion to prepare the city to host the games, though exact Olympic spending is disputed and difficult to track. Five of the eight new venues are already finished, and the centerpiece, the \$1.25 billion National Stadium, is to open by the end of the year.

Ticket demand by Japanese residents appears to be a least 10 times above supply — maybe more — with demand also surging abroad. A recent law banning unauthorized ticket resales in Japan is sure to be tested because of glaring loopholes.

Organizers are also preparing for Tokyo's typically hot summer weather, though this summer has been wet and cool. Traffic and subway congestion is also a concern, as is earthquake preparedness.

"This year Tokyo is chilly rather than hot," Yoshiro Mori, the president of the organizing committee, said. "It's quite different from what we experienced last year."

Mori said Japanese Emperor Naruhito had accepted a role "as honorary patron" of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. He will be expected to announce the opening of both the Olympics and Paralympics.

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike was asked a few days ago to justify spending billions on

the Olympics. Organizers have been under pressure to cut costs, and they say they have cut billions by using existing venues. Tokyo is building eight new venues, but using 35 "temporary" or older venues.

Koike described the Olympics and Paralympics as an "accelerator" to get things done, though research shows that the Olympic deadlines drive up costs. And Tokyo is famous for building things — with or without the Olympics.

"I'd like the legacy of the 2020 Games to be something more intangible, a new way of thinking for people and for society," she said. Koike described the Paralympics, which open Aug. 25, 2020, as a "springboard" to make the city more accessible to people with disabilities.

The goals for next year are more modest than they were in 1964 when the Tokyo Olympics showcased bullet trains, futuristic designs, and a new expressway to document Japan's recovery after World War II.

A group of anti-Olympic activists have held small protests and other events in recent days under the Japanese title "Hangorin no Kai" — which translates roughly to No Olympics. They oppose Olympic spending, which they say cuts into budgets for local housing and environmental issues.

They also call for more money to rebuild Fukushima prefecture, northeast of Tokyo. Organizers say Fukushima is

a main focus of the Olympics, locating baseball, softball and soccer games there to persuade the world the area is safe.

"For us, the Olympics are a disaster," Misako Ichimura, a spokeswoman for the anti-Olympic group, said on Tuesday. She said the billions spent on the Olympics should be used instead in to rebuild Fukushima, which was devastated by a 2011 earthquake, tsunami and the meltdown of three nuclear reactors.

"The Olympics is scary entertainment for us," she added.

Tokyo organizers have shattered records for local sponsorship revenue, which has passed \$3 billion — about three times more than any previous Olympics. Much has been raised by giant Japanese advertising company Dentsu Inc.

There have also been glitches and scandal.

Tsunekazu Takeda, the head of the Japanese Olympic Committee, was forced to quit earlier this year when he was implicated in a vote-buying scheme to land the games. He has denied wrongdoing, but acknowledged he signed off on about \$2 million that French investigators allege went to buy votes.

Tokyo organizers were also forced to redesign their logo when the original draft faced charges of plagiarism, and an international labor union has alleged work-safety violations at Olympic venues, largely regarding migrant labor.

White to compete at skateboarding worlds

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Shaun White is pressing forward with plans to shoot for the Summer Olympics in skateboarding.

White said Tuesday on NBC's "Today" show that he will compete at world championships in September "and see what happens" before deciding whether to try to earn a spot on the U.S. team for skateboarding's Olympic debut next summer.

The three-time Olympic snowboarding champion has won five of his 23 X Games medals on the summer side in

skateboarding.

But when snowboarding became an Olympic sport, and with no similar option on the Summer Games side, White focused on the Winter Games.

He announced last summer that skateboarding was in his plans but only competed in one contest last year.

Street and park skateboarding are on the 2020 Olympics program, neither of which is considered White's specialty.

He is expected to focus on the park version, which mixes vertical jumps like those seen on the halfpipe with street features

like rails and stairs.

Josh Friedberg, the CEO of USA Skateboarding, said last month "the question we always get is the Shaun White question."

"The answer is, if anyone can do it, it's Shaun, but he has a long, hard road in front of him," Friedberg said.

White, 32, has acknowledged as much, and stopped short of saying Tuesday that he's all-in for a run at the Olympics.

"I thought, why don't I test the waters, compete a little and see what happens," he said. "After that I'll probably make the big announcement of what I'm going to do."

Pellegrini wins 200 freestyle at worlds

Associated Press

GWANGJU, South Korea — Federica Pellegrini defeated a field of younger competitors, minus ailing Katie Ledecky, to win the 200-meter freestyle at the world swimming championships on Wednesday night.

Sun Yang was back in the pool but with none of the rancor from the previous night when he was booed and shunned on the medals podium. The Chinese star with a history of doping failed to medal in the 800 free.

Pellegrini overtook 18-year-old Australian Ariarne Titmus down the stretch to earn her fourth career gold in the event. The 30-year-old Italian touched in 1 minute, 54.22 seconds.

"I am too old for this," she said afterward.

Titmus, who stunned Ledecky in winning the 400 free, took silver in 1:54.66.

Sarah Sjöström, of Sweden, earned bronze in 1:54.78. She received oxygen on the pool deck

after the race, but appeared for the medal ceremony.

Ledecky hasn't been at the pool since Monday. She withdrew from the 200 free heats and the 1,500 free final on Tuesday with an illness. The American star is being monitored by doctors, but no diagnosis has been disclosed.

Pellegrini joined Katinka Hosszu, of Hungary, and Sjöström as the only women to win an event at least four times at worlds. Pellegrini's other golds came in 2009, 2011 and 2017.

Kristof Milak, of Hungary, won the 200 butterfly, breaking Michael Phelps' 10-year-old world record.

Milak touched in 1:50.73 to lower the mark of 1:51.51 that Phelps set at the 2009 worlds in Rome during the height of the high-tech suit era.

The 19-year-old swimmer became the first teenager to win a world title in the event since Phelps at age 18 in 2003.

"It's an amazing feeling,"

said Milak, who climbed out of the pool and took two deep bows as the crowd cheered.

Chad le Clos, of South Africa, was out under world-record pace through the first lap before Milak gained the lead after 150 meters.

Daiya Seto, of Japan, earned silver in 1:53.86. Le Clos settled for bronze in 1:54.15.

Italy's Gregorio Paltrinieri won the 800 free in 7:39.27.

Henrik Christiansen, of Denmark, earned silver and David Aubry, of France, took bronze.

Three-time world champion Sun was never a factor and finished sixth. He was cheered by fans from his country as he came on deck and waved to the crowd as he walked off.

There was none of the booing that rained down on him a night earlier when Sun won the 200 freestyle after Danas Rapsys of Lithuania finished first and then got disqualified for a false start.

On the medals podium, Sun

was shunned by co-bronze medalist Duncan Scott, of Britain. Sun told Scott, "You lose, I win" before they walked off. FINA sent warning letters to both swimmers.

"Both competitors had an inadequate behavior on this occasion, which is not acceptable," FINA said, citing a specific rule in its constitution that the world governing body's executive board had met to tweak shortly after the confrontation.

Sun also was ignored by silver medalist Mack Horton, of Australia, on the podium after the Chinese star won the 400 free.

Horton and Scott, along with other swimmers, are angry at FINA for allowing Sun to compete in Gwangju ahead of a September hearing before the Court for Arbitration in Sport. Sun faces allegations of clashing with drug testers and destroying samples at his home last year. He faces a lifetime ban if found guilty.

Sports briefs

Italy's Trentin captures 17th stage of Tour de France

Associated Press

GAP, France — Italian rider Matteo Trentin used a solo attack to win Stage 17 of the Tour de France on Wednesday after pulling clear of a group of breakaway riders.

It was Trentin's third career stage win at the Tour, but first since 2014.

Trentin rode at the front for most of the stage after taking part in a breakaway that formed just after the start of the 200-kilometer hilly ride from Pont du Gard to Gap.

The European champion moved clear of the leading group about 14 kilometers from the finish at the bottom of the Col de la Sentinelle. He was first at the summit and went all out in the downhill leading to Gap.

Kasper Asgreen was second,

37 seconds behind, with Olympic champion Greg Van Avermaet completing the podium.

"I was scared of Asgreen and I was right because he finished second after getting a free ride in the break," Trentin said. "His tactic was to wait and wait, and so I went for it because he's also strong on the climbs and fast in a sprint."

The overall contenders crossed more than 20 minutes behind but there was not any significant change in the overall standings as Trentin and his breakaway companions were not a threat. Julian Alaphilippe, of France, has the yellow jersey, with defending champion Geraint Thomas in second place overall.

In the final stage before three decisive days at high altitude, the hilly trek to the foothills of

the Alps was the last opportunity for riders without ambition in the general classification to fight for a stage victory.

Yankees put Sanchez on injured list

MINNEAPOLIS — New York Yankees All-Star catcher Gary Sanchez has gone on the injured list for the second time this season, a day after straining his left groin.

Sanchez was hurt when he stepped on first base while grounding out in the eighth inning of the Yankees' 14-12, 10-inning win over Minnesota on Tuesday night. He was replaced by Austin Romine.

Sanchez also was sidelined between April 10 and 24 because of a strained left calf. He had a strained right groin last

season that caused him to go on the disabled list from June 25 to July 19 and from July 24 to Sept. 1.

He said he planned to have an MRI on Wednesday.

The 26-year-old, an All-Star for the second time, is batting .229 with 24 homers and 58 RBIs.

Bengals sign WR Boyd to 4-year extension

CINCINNATI — Receiver Tyler Boyd signed a four-year contract extension on Tuesday, coming off his breakthrough season with the Cincinnati Bengals.

Boyd was a second-round pick out of Pittsburgh in 2016 and was entering the final year on his contract. The extension runs through the 2023 season.

Turner hits for cycle as Nationals roll

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Trea Turner knows better than most what it takes to hit for a cycle. The key, he says, is quite a bit of good luck.

Turner hit his second career cycle, Stephen Strasburg earned his major league-leading 13th win and the Washington Nationals routed the Colorado Rockies 11-1 Tuesday night.

Turner led off the first inning with homer, singled in the second and tripled leading off the fifth. After grounding into a double play in the sixth, he doubled home a run during Washington's eight-run seventh.

"Didn't screw it up this time," Turner said. "Had a chance earlier in the year to do it and needed a single and didn't do it. For me it's almost more funny than anything that I got lucky enough to get the right hits. I

think it's kind of a lucky stat because you've got to put the ball in the right place at the right time."

It was the fourth cycle for the Nationals since relocating to Washington in 2005, half of them by Turner against the Rockies. He's the 26th player to hit for multiple cycles and the third to do it twice against the same team after Fred Clark (1901, 1903 versus Cincinnati) and Christian Yelich (2018 versus Miami), according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

"Too be able to do it twice, that to me is a testament to how good a player Trea really is," manager Dave Martinez said. "What I like about him is that he's really staying on top of the ball and back-spinning balls. When he does that, he hits the ball hard."

Turner increased his average to .286, and the team's resurgence has coincided with his

return after missing 38 games with a broken finger.

Strasburg (13-4) pitched six innings for his sixth straight win as the Nationals kicked off a 10-game homestand. He allowed three hits and two walks while striking out eight. The right-hander is 10-1 with a 3.17 ERA in his past 12 starts.

"He had the curveball going tonight," Colorado's Ryan McMahon said. "He kind of was throwing it when guys weren't expecting it. Throwing it well, too. He kept the ball down really well, went up when he wanted to."

Colorado rookie Peter Lambert (2-2) gave up three runs and nine hits. He struck out eight with a walk but is winless in his last six games.

The Rockies, who have lost seven of eight, had exactly one baserunner in five of six innings against Strasburg.

"They've got a pretty lengthy

lineup there and guys who can hit the ball out of the ballpark, but you've just got to be in the moment and try to make one pitch," Strasburg said.

Secret weapon: Strasburg singled his first time up, giving him hits in four straight at-bats before he grounded out in the fourth inning. Martinez joked that Strasburg might pinch hit during Wednesday's day-night doubleheader.

"No, streak's over," Strasburg said. "I'll take a day."

Welcome back: Former Nationals Ian Desmond (2009-15) and Daniel Murphy (2016-18) returned to Nationals Park. Both received warm ovations and tipped their helmets to the crowd before their second-inning at-bats. Desmond went 1-for-3 and Murphy was 0-for-4. Desmond is the last player drafted by the Montreal Expos still active in the majors.

MLB roundup

Red Sox down Rays, move into second in AL East

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Christian Vazquez hit a tie-breaking home run in the seventh inning, Marcus Walden bailed Boston out of a bases-loaded jam in the ninth and the Red Sox beat the Tampa Bay Rays 5-4 on Tuesday night to move into second place in the AL East for the first time since the second day of the season.

The defending World Series champions have recovered from a 3-8 start and improved to a season-high 10 games over .500 at 56-46, moving one percentage point ahead of the Rays (57-47), who have lost seven of eight.

Chris Sale (5-9) allowed two runs on Travis d'Arnaud's third-inning homer and limited the Rays to just three other hits. He struck out 10 in six innings.

Yankees 14, Twins 12 (10): Aaron Hicks made a game-

saving catch in center field for the final out in the 10th inning, Didi Gregorius had five hits and seven RBIs, and visiting New York beat Minnesota in a game that featured five lead changes or ties in the final three innings.

Angels 5, Dodgers 4: Kole Calhoun had a homer and two doubles before he threw out Cody Bellinger at the plate to end the Angels' Freeway Series victory over the visiting Dodgers.

Giants 5, Cubs 4 (13): Pablo Sandoval homered with one out in the 13th inning, lifting host San Francisco past Chicago.

Mets 5, Padres 2: Robinson Cano hit three home runs, leading Jason Vargas and host New York over San Diego.

Cardinals 4, Pirates 3: Paul Goldschmidt homered for the second straight night, Jose Martinez added his 10th home run and Dakota Hudson (10-4)

rebounded from a shaky start to lead visiting St. Louis past Pittsburgh.

Blue Jays 2, Indians 1 (10): Justin Smoak tied the game with a homer in the ninth inning and knocked in the winning run with a two-out single in the 10th as host Toronto beat Cleveland.

Royals 5, Braves 4: Lucas Duda delivered Kansas City's first pinch-hit homer of the season to break a tie in the eighth inning, and visiting Kansas City beat NL East-leading Atlanta.

Reds 14, Brewers 6: Eugenio Suarez hit his third two-run home run in two games and visiting Cincinnati battered Zach Davies (8-3) for seven runs in a rout of Milwaukee.

Orioles 7, Diamondbacks 2: Dwight Smith Jr. hit a three-run home run, Dylan Bundy (5-11) pitched six solid innings and visiting Baltimore beat Arizona.

Rangers 7, Mariners 2: Rougned Odor homered twice, Nomar Mazara reached the third deck with an impressive shot and visiting Texas ended an eight-game skid with a win over Seattle.

Marlins 5, White Sox 1: Caleb Smith (6-4) retired his first 17 batters and cruised through seven innings of two-hit ball, and visiting Miami beat Chicago.

Athletics 4, Astros 3 (11): Matt Olson hit a three-run home run in the ninth inning and Ramon Laureano added a ground-rule RBI double with one out in the 11th, giving visiting Oakland a win over Houston.

Phillies 3, Tigers 2 (15): Scott Kingery tripled to lead off the 15th inning and scored on a single by Rhys Hoskins as visiting Philadelphia outlasted Detroit.