

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Supreme Court hands Trump wall win

Split decision says construction at border can proceed with Pentagon funds

Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A split Supreme Court said Friday night that the Trump administration could proceed with its plan to use \$2.5 billion in Pentagon funds to build part of the president's wall project along the southern border.

The court's conservatives set aside a lower-court ruling for the Sierra Club and a coalition of border communities that said reallocating Defense Department money would violate federal law.

Friday's unsigned ruling came in response to an emergency filing from the administration during the court's summer recess. The majority said the government "made a sufficient showing at this stage"

that private groups might not be the proper plaintiffs to challenge the transfer of money.

The court's action is a stay of the injunction issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for 9th Circuit, so the litigation continues. The administration wants to finalize contracts for the work before the fiscal year ends Sept. 30.

Chief Justice John Roberts Jr. and Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito Jr., Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh voted to lift the 9th Circuit injunction. Three justices — Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan — would have left it in place.

Justice Stephen Breyer proposed a compromise to which no one signed on: Allow the government to finalize con-

tracts for the project, but not begin construction.

In a tweet after the court's announcement, President Donald Trump declared the development a "Big WIN for Border Security and the Rule of Law!"

The groups opposing the wall construction noted that the litigation continues.

"This is not over. We will be asking the federal appeals court to expedite the ongoing appeals proceeding to halt the irreversible and imminent damage from Trump's border wall," Dror Ladin, staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union's National Security Project, said in a statement. The ACLU represented the groups.

"Our Constitution's separation of powers will be perma-

nently harmed should Trump get away with pillaging military funds for a xenophobic border wall Congress denied."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., also criticized the decision Friday night. "For months, the President has sought to undermine our military readiness and steal from our men and women in uniform to waste billions on a wasteful, ineffective wall that Congress on a bipartisan basis has repeatedly refused to fund. The Supreme Court's decision tonight to allow President Trump to defy the bipartisan will of the Congress and proceed with contracts to spend billions of dollars on his wall undermines the Constitution and the law," she said in a statement.

Smugglers bribe troops to transport migrants across border

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — On the surface, it seemed like a simple task: Drive to a spot a few miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border, pick up people and then drop them off at a McDonald's or another spot past the city of San Diego, and make anywhere between \$500 and \$1,000. No need to cross into Mexico.

Two Marines whose arrests earlier this month for migrant smuggling led to the stunning arrests of fellow Marines at Camp Pendleton described in federal court documents such offers being made to them. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service on Friday said a total of 19 servicemembers have been arrested at the base, including

18 Marines and one sailor, a Navy corpsman, who all serve in the same unit.

The military personnel are accused of various crimes from migrant smuggling to drug-related offenses, but officials have not said exactly how they were involved.

U.S. Border Patrol officials say smuggling rings have been luring U.S. troops, police officers, Border Patrol agents and others to work for them as drivers — a crucial component of moving migrants farther into the U.S. once smugglers get them across the border from Mexico.

Border Patrol agents over the years routinely have caught migrants walking onto Camp Pendleton or floating in skiffs

off the coast nearby. The camp, dissected by Interstate 5 leading to Los Angeles, sits along a well-traversed route used by smugglers.

Transporting migrants with American drivers can be more effective in avoiding detection. Customs and Border Protection has broad authority to question and search within 100 miles of the border.

If the driver is in the armed forces, with a military haircut and credentials, that's a bonus for smugglers because they believe they are more likely to get waved through a checkpoint.

"This is the kind of official corruption that smuggling networks of all kinds, whether it involves people or drugs, really look for," said David Shirk, an

associate political science professor at the University of San Diego.

It's ideal, he added, for criminal networks to use corrupt officials or military personnel, including "young, gullible and greedy" troops, to help them in their illegal activities.

So-called recruiters for smugglers have chatted up people at casinos and bars, passing out their cellphone numbers and saying if they ever want to make money as a driver to give them a call, U.S. Border Patrol spokesman Theron Francisco said. They have also placed ads online.

The 19 arrested at Camp Pendleton have not been charged yet.

Taliban says it won't let Afghanistan be haven for terrorists

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — America's longest war has come full circle.

The United States began bombing Afghanistan after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, to root out al-Qaida fighters harbored by the Taliban. Now, more than 18 years later, preventing Afghanistan from being a launching pad for more attacks on America is at the heart of ongoing U.S. talks with the Taliban.

President Donald Trump's envoy at the negotiating table says he's satisfied with the Taliban's commitment to prevent international terrorist organizations from using Afghanistan as a base to plot global attacks. There's even talk that a negotiated settlement might result in the Taliban joining the U.S. to fight Islamic State militants, rivals whose footprint is growing in mountainous northern Afghanistan.

"The world needs to be sure that Afghanistan will not be a threat to the international community," said the envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, who was born in Afghanistan and is a former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan. "We are satisfied with the commitment that we have received (from the Taliban) on counterterrorism."

Not everyone is convinced.

Some Afghans worry that Trump's desire to pull American troops from Afghanistan will override doubts about the Taliban's sincerity. Early in the talks, Hamdullah Mohib, national security adviser to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, said counting on the Taliban to control other militants could be like "having cats guard the milk."

Rep. Michael Waltz, who did multiple combat tours in

Afghanistan as a U.S. special forces officer, said he's happy to see the Taliban are negotiating, but does not see how Afghanistan can keep from becoming a hotbed for terrorists wanting to strike the United States.

"I have my doubts about the Taliban's sincerity No. 1," said Waltz, R-Fla. "But even if you buy into that ... how does the Taliban have the capability to enforce what a 300,000-man Afghan army, the United States forces and a coalition of armies around the world are continuing to struggle to do?"

Much is at stake.

The conflict in Afghanistan has cost more than 2,300 American lives and hundreds of billions in taxpayer dollars. The Taliban control roughly half the country, although not the cities. About 14,000 U.S. troops plus other NATO-led forces are still there. Senior intelligence officials have warned that a withdrawal could return Afghanistan to a time when the Taliban ruled a country that was an al-Qaida stronghold.

Despite nearly two decades of war, militant groups remain.

A U.N. Security Council report in April 2018 said al-Qaida was "closely allied with and embedded within the Taliban." The report said the Taliban, which have no history of conducting attacks outside Afghanistan, provide operating space for about 20 terrorist groups with thousands of fighters.

Bill Roggio, editor of the Long War Journal at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a conservative think tank in Washington, cites a video al-Qaida released in May that highlights its alliance with the Taliban and shows an image of militants fighting together under both al-Qaida and Taliban flags.

Navy SEAL charged with impersonating someone to obtain nude photos

The (Norfolk) Virginian-Pilot

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — A member of the Navy's elite SEAL Team 6 who was named its Sailor of the Year in 2016 has been charged with pretending to be someone else over text messages so he could get nude photographs from women.

Petty Officer 1st Class Aaron Howard faces a general court-martial at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., although his civilian defense attorney is seeking to have the case dismissed during a hearing this week.

The case is thrusting the ordinarily secretive naval special warfare community into an uncomfortable spotlight once again. On Wednesday, a platoon of San Diego-based SEALs was sent home early from Iraq "due to a perceived deterioration of good order and discipline within the team during nonoperational periods." And earlier this week, Navy Times reported that members of Virginia Beach, Va.-based SEAL Team 10 routinely used cocaine and were able to cheat drug tests before they were caught last

year.

Howard's case began with a broader investigation into spoofing — the practice of disguising a communication to make it appear its from a trusted source — at Naval Special Warfare Development Group, according to defense attorney Michael Waddington.

He said someone was using a program to send text messages from fake phone numbers to SEALs and others in the Virginia Beach-based command, which is also known as DEVGRU or, more popularly, as SEAL Team 6.

Charge sheets accuse Howard of pretending to be multiple people to request the pictures of naked women.

But Waddington said Navy investigators didn't find any nude pictures on Howard's phone, that Howard passed two polygraph tests and the only thing linking him to the messages is that whoever sent them said he or she was once stationed in San Diego and liked to work out with kettle bells.

"We're fighting this to the end," Waddington said.

US D-Day flag unveiled in DC

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — More than 100 veterans gathered at the National Museum of American History on Friday to see the unveiling of a 48-star flag that flew on Landing Craft Control 60 during the 1944 D-Day assault on Utah Beach in Normandy.

Among those in attendance was Herman Zeitchik, who stormed Utah Beach on D-Day. Most of the other veterans in attendance served in Vietnam, and were in Washington as part of the Old Glory Honor Flight from northeast Wisconsin.

The flag is displayed on the

third floor of the museum as part of an exhibition marking the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

During the invasion, LCC 60 guided American vessels to their landing spots on the beach and helped control the armada's movement. After the events at Utah Beach and other fights in France, its flag was brought home by U.S. Navy Reserve Lt. j.g. Howard Vander Beek, who captained LCC 60. After Vander Beek died in 2014, the flag went up for auction. Bert Kreuk, a collector from the Netherlands, purchased it in June 2016 with the intention of someday giving it back to the United States.

US House takes break without decision on impeachment issue

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Midway through the first year of their House majority, Democrats have yet to vote to impeach President Donald Trump. And maybe they never will.

The House recessed Friday for a six-week summer break without opening impeachment proceedings, the Democrats no closer to taking a vote than they were when they swept to power at the start of the year, a searing blow to liberals in the aftermath of former special counsel Robert Mueller's halting testimony on Capitol Hill.

Yet, the House Judiciary Committee filed a fresh lawsuit Friday, its lawyers arguing they need documents from the Trump administration as they pursue questions of impeachment. It mentions the word impeachment 76 times.

The committee chairman, Rep. Jerrold Nadler, of New York, said his panel is pressing ahead with investigating the president, with or without a formal House vote.

"I think too much has been made of the phrase impeachment inquiry," Nadler said

Friday.

"We are using our full Article I powers to investigate the conduct of the president and to consider what remedies there are," he said, referring to the Constitution. "Among other things we will consider are, obviously, recommending articles of impeachment."

The action underscores the tensions among a House majority that's trying to have it both ways, preserving the idea of impeachment while avoiding a potentially risky vote.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, of California, brushed back criticism that she's "running out the clock," as about 100 Democrats in the 435-member House favor opening an impeachment inquiry, according to a tally by The Associated Press. "We will proceed when we have what we need to proceed, not one day sooner," Pelosi said Friday during her weekly news conference.

"Everybody has the liberty and the luxury to espouse their own position," she said, "and to criticize me for trying to go down the path in the most determined positive way."

Pelosi said she has "no com-

plaints" against those pushing for impeachment. Their advocacy, she said, "only gives me leverage."

With the House unable, or unwilling, to impeach Trump, it intensifies the pressure on the party to figure out how to defeat the president in the 2020 election.

House Democrats capped their 200th day in the majority with a long list of bills — on raising the minimum wage, strengthening immigration protections — that give voters a view of how their party would govern in the White House. An outside group started running ads, including on Fox News last week, to promote their agenda.

"These people are clowns," Trump said Friday in remarks at the White House. "The Democrats are clowns."

Pelosi said at the news conference, "What we're advocating for is a progressive agenda for our country."

Yet no sooner had Pelosi stepped away from the podium than members of the Judiciary Committee stepped up to declare they were essentially well on their way to impeachment proceedings.

Pelosi, 'AOC' meet to 'clear the air' after public spat

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two of the most recognizable women in Democratic politics put down their weapons, stood close and tweeted their unity to the world.

The photo of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was intended to "clear the air" between the two and among Democrats broadly after weeks of public griping. But during the 30-minute, face-to-face meeting in Pelosi's soaring Capitol suite, they may well have recognized themselves in each other as key figures in the arc of Democratic politics.

"I don't think there ever was any hatchet" to bury, Pelosi told reporters just after the summit, described by two Democrats with knowledge of the meeting as being just between the two lawmakers.

Born a half-century apart, the 30-year House veteran and the New York newcomer dubbed "AOC" share a commitment on stalwart issues like lower-cost health care and prescription drugs.

They are political dynamos who consider it something of an honor to have been vilified by President Donald Trump and his GOP allies as the "crazy," "nervous" and un-American faces of the Democratic Party.

Also, they're giving each other an education — sometimes in public — on how to tread a path that winds from the House to social media ahead of the 2020 elections.

"In our caucus we have our differences," Pelosi said later. "Respect that instead of making a big issue of it."

Too late.

The pair had quarreled publicly over the clout of the freshmen who handed House control back to the Democrats — and returned the speakership to Pelosi, who is second in line to the presidency.

US man accused of trying to join Taliban

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Federal authorities arrested a New York City man Friday on charges accusing him of seeking to join the Taliban to fight American forces.

The FBI intercepted Delowar Mohammed Hossain on Friday morning at Kennedy Airport before he could carry out a plan to travel to Afghanistan, prosecutors said.

Hossain, 33, of the Bronx, was ordered held without bail after appearing in federal court in Manhattan. He is charged with one count of attempting

to provide material support for terrorism.

Defense attorney Amy Gallicchio declined to comment Friday.

A criminal complaint says that starting in 2018, Hossain expressed interest in joining the Taliban and sought to recruit a government informant to do the same. It claims he told the informant: "I want to kill some kufars (non-believers) before I die."

Hossain's preparations included buying equipment such as walkie-talkies and trekking gear, prosecutors said. He in-

structed the informant to save enough money "to buy some weapons" once they reached Afghanistan, it added.

The case follows a series of arrests of self-radicalized terror suspects on charges they tried to join or support the Islamic State group by making contacts on social media.

FBI official William Sweeney said in a statement: "The lure of radical ideologies comes from many sources, and just because the Taliban may seem like an old and out of vogue extremist group, it shouldn't be underestimated."

Panel: Russia exploits US election 'seams'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Senate report on Russian interference in U.S. elections highlights one of the biggest challenges to preventing foreign intrusions in American democracy: the limited powers and ability of the federal government to protect elections run by state and local officials. That has given fuel to those who argue for a larger federal role.

The Senate Intelligence Committee on Thursday issued the first part of its report into Russian interference in the 2016 election, noting that Russian agents "exploited the seams"

between federal government expertise and ill-equipped state and local election officials. The report also emphasized repeatedly that elections are controlled by states, not the federal government.

It called for the reinforcement of state oversight of elections — a view blasted as inadequate by Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat on the committee. He called on Congress to establish mandatory cybersecurity requirements across the country.

"We would not ask a local sheriff to go to war against the missiles, planes and tanks of the Russian Army," Wyden

wrote. "We shouldn't ask a county election IT employee to fight a war against the full capabilities and vast resources of Russia's cyber army. That approach failed in 2016 and it will fail again."

As the 2020 elections loom, questions of who bears responsibility for securing the vote are becoming more dire — even as President Donald Trump has been largely silent on the subject and the Republican-controlled Senate has refused to consider legislation by Wyden and others to fortify election security.

Tensions flared in August 2016, when then-Homeland Se-

curity Secretary Jeh Johnson raised the possibility of designating the nation's election system, comprising some 10,000 separate jurisdictions, as critical infrastructure to free up federal resources to support states. Some state officials decried it as a "federal takeover" of elections.

Concerns were compounded in September 2017 when Homeland Security officials notified election officials in 21 states that their systems had been targeted by Russians. Authorities have since said they believe all states were targeted to varying degrees.

Black rag dolls intended for abuse pulled from stores

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — Black rag dolls that came with instructions to "find a wall" and slam the toy against it have been pulled from three stores in New Jersey after customers and a lawmaker said they were offensive.

The "Feel Better Doll" featured instructions to "whack" the doll "whenever things don't go well and you want to hit the wall and yell."

The president of One Dollar Zone said roughly 1,000 dolls

were pulled last week from its store in Bayonne and two others, also in New Jersey.

The dolls were made of black fabric with yarn hair of red, green, black and yellow in the style of dreadlocks and featured large white eyes and a white smile.

State Assemblywoman Angela McKnight, a Democrat whose district includes Bayonne, called the dolls "offensive" and "inappropriate" after seeing a post on social media.

Bayonne Mayor Jimmy Davis

said in a Facebook post that the dolls were "insensitive" and "can certainly be considered racist."

One Dollar Zone President Ricky Shah apologized for the dolls' appearance in the stores and said they were pulled last Monday after someone posted images online.

The Paterson-based company didn't adequately check a large lot of items it had received before distributing them to stores, he said.

"This somehow slipped through the cracks," he said.

The dolls were included in a shipment of about 35,000 pieces of closeout merchandise, Shah said, mostly with an "I Love NY" theme, including mugs and picture frames.

The supplier that shipped the order offered to credit One Dollar Zone for the cost of the dolls, Shah said.

The dolls' manufacturer, the Harvey Hutter Co., couldn't be reached at several phone numbers and email addresses at its location just north of New York City.

Judge reduces \$2B award in Monsanto case to \$87M

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — A judge has cut a jury award in a lawsuit that found that Monsanto's Roundup herbicide caused cancer in a California couple from \$2.055 billion to \$87 million, the third time a judge has reduced an award in a lawsuit over the disputed chemical.

The judge said Thursday that evidence supports the jury's conclusion that Roundup was "a substantial factor" in causing non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

in Alva and Alberta Pilliod, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

Alameda County Superior Court Judge Winifred Smith said evidence also supported the finding that Monsanto knew the herbicide's active ingredient, glyphosate, could be dangerous and failed to warn the couple from Livermore.

But Smith said the punitive damages were much higher than constitutional limits set by the U.S. Supreme Court, which has said should generally be

no more than four times the amount of damages awarded as compensation to victims.

A jury in May awarded the Pilliods \$1 billion each in punitive damages, in addition to a combined \$55 million in compensatory damages. Smith reduced punitive damages to \$70 million. She also reduced the compensatory money the jury awarded to the couple for past and future pain and suffering to \$17 million.

The couple had anticipated the reduction, and their lawyer

said the overall ruling was "a major victory."

Although "the reduction in damages does not fairly capture the pain and suffering experienced by Alva and Alberta," attorney Brent Wisner said in a statement, "the judge rejected every argument Monsanto raised and sustained a very substantial verdict."

Monsanto's parent company, the German pharmaceutical firm Bayer AG, said it would appeal.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Boy selling lemonade again after permit flap

NY BALLSTON SPA — An 8-year-old boy's lemonade stand was open for business a year after it was temporarily shut down by the New York state health department for not having a permit.

Brendan Mulvaney's stand was shuttered last summer after a health inspector said he needed a permit to sell 75-cent lemonade. State officials said vendors at the nearby Saratoga County Fairgrounds had complained about the competition. The health department later apologized and said the permit requirement is usually not enforced against children's lemonade stands.

Man sentenced in SEC impersonation scam

MA BOSTON — A Pennsylvania man was sentenced to three years in prison for his role in a scam in which he and others pretended to be employees of the Securities and Exchange Commission to cheat people out of money.

The U.S. attorney's office in Boston said Frank Gregory Cedeno, 28, of Mahanoy City, Pa., was also sentenced to three years of probation and ordered to pay \$366,000 in restitution.

Prosecutors said in one common version of the scam, victims received emails that used documentation with the SEC seal to get them to pay a fee to receive a portion of a legal settlement.

One-time candidate for governor arrested twice

OK TULSA — A Tulsa man who ran unsuccessfully for the Republican gubernatorial nomination in

Oklahoma is jailed after being arrested twice in a 24-hour period.

Tulsa County jail records show Christopher Barnett, 36, was being held without bond on complaints of shooting with intent to kill and threatening an act of violence. Police said Barnett was arrested after wounding a process server Wednesday. After his release, he was arrested again Thursday. Barnett told TV station KTUL he shot the process server after the man pulled a gun.

Barnett finished eighth in a 10-person field for the GOP gubernatorial nomination in June 2018.

Thief steals van that gives books to kids

MD BALTIMORE — The manager of a Baltimore center that donates free books to children said its bookmobile van was stolen from outside their warehouse.

Kimberly Crout of the Maryland Book Bank said when the van isn't being used to pick up donations, it sits outside the book bank so people can drop off and pick up books.

The colorful van touts the motto: "Donate a book, change a child's life" and was on track to help the center deliver more than 400,000 books this year.

Girl rescued after head gets stuck in ladder

IA ESTHERVILLE — City workers and firefighters rescued a 7-year-old girl whose head became stuck between two rungs of a water tower ladder in northern Iowa.

Officials said the girl is autistic and was reported missing a little before 10 a.m. Thursday from her home in Estherville. She soon was spotted on the tower near her home, clinging

to the ladder near its top.

Firefighters deployed a ladder with a basket attached, and a city electrical department staffer helped cut her free.

Mennonites forgive boy who caused crash

MO FARMINGTON — A Mennonite minister in Missouri said the community has forgiven a 16-year-old who slammed into a horse-drawn carriage and killed 7-year-old Mervin Shirk.

Clay Zimmerman, of the Farmington Mennonite Church, said men in the community met with the teen because they wanted him to know they weren't "harboring ill will" and that they "didn't want him to carry a heavy burden throughout life."

Authorities said it's unlikely the teen will face a manslaughter charge because he wasn't drunk or driving recklessly before the July 11 crash in St. Francois County.

Bomb squad agents injured in explosion

NC RALEIGH — Two state bomb squad agents were taken to a burn center after explosive materials blew up while they were working to render them safe.

The State Bureau of Investigation issued a news release saying two of its agents were assisting the Sampson County Sheriff's Office east of Fayetteville when the explosion happened early Friday.

Deputies had called the SBI agents late Thursday to help with a search that uncovered bomb-making materials. The SBI said that as the agents worked to render the materials safe, they were both injured in an explosion.

10 years for man who killed friend with gun

OR PORTLAND — A 20-year-old man who killed his friend while playing with a loaded handgun last year was sentenced to nearly 10 years in prison.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reported Ulizes Escobar pleaded guilty July 19 in to second-degree manslaughter. He was sentenced last week. The Nov. 20, 2018, shooting killed 19-year-old Luis Diego Hernandez-Garcia.

Hernandez-Garcia and Escobar were among several people gathered at another friend's home in Hillsboro. Prosecutors said Escobar brought a revolver and a pistol to the home, pointed the revolver at his friends and pulled the trigger several times. They said he then pointed the pistol toward Hernandez-Garcia, pulled the trigger and a round hit him. Escobar told police he thought both guns were unloaded.

Couple catch gator in park, tape mouth shut

NY NEW YORK — A New York City couple captured a 3-foot alligator in their local park and taped its mouth before calling police.

Authorities believe the gator was an illegally owned pet that escaped.

The New York Post reported that Staten Island resident Don Walters spotted the alligator in a park near his home.

Walters had lived in Florida so he was familiar with alligators. He told the Post he threw bait at the reptile, then held its head while his wife, Kim Walters, taped its mouth shut.

The couple called 911 and police took the alligator to an animal care facility.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Several big names among NFL holdouts

Associated Press

Teammates shrug and go about their work.

Coaches say they can deal only with the players on hand.

Fans worry that this summer rite in the NFL, training camp holdouts, won't hurt their team's chances for a championship.

This year's crop of no-shows includes an All-Pro receiver, the Saints' Michael Thomas; a versatile and rugged running back, the Cowboys' Ezekiel Elliott; a standout offensive tackle who might be the key to the Redskins' offense, Trent Williams; and budding stars: defensive ends Jadeveon Clowney of the Texans and Yannick Ngakoue of the Jaguars, and running back Melvin Gordon of the Chargers.

Elliott was not on the Cowboys' charter plane to training camp in California, and Friday team owner Jerry Jones confirmed that his star back was "late." How late Elliott might wind up being is mere projection, but he has proved to be an irreplaceable part in Dallas.

He is due to make \$3.9 million in the fourth year of his rookie contract and \$9.1 million in the final year, which is a team option. The fourth overall pick from the 2016 draft has won two rushing titles in his

three seasons.

"Everybody is under contract," Jones said. "It's a part of what goes on in football. Football is business. It's pro football, you know where you are on every contract. Every contract we have an agreement."

The common denominator in all of this is, naturally, money.

The common approach is for teams to publicly say nothing but nice things about the missing-in-action players while taking a hard line in negotiations.

Such as:

"I can tell you unequivocally that we want Jadeveon Clowney here," Houston coach Bill O'Brien said. "He's a part of this team. We want him here. There's always a difference when you're talking about money relative to wanting him on the team. That's something that the agent and our organization are working on, but ... we would love to have him here. He's a really talented football player that's made a lot of good plays for us in the past."

And:

"He's trying to get this thing done," Jacksonville coach Doug Marrone said of Ngakoue. "We're trying to get this thing done. We're excited for him. He's going to come. He will report. I don't know when. I know it'll be before a certain date.

And, when he comes, we'll be excited about it."

While money always is an issue, the dynamics of the holdouts are dissimilar for Williams and Clowney compared to Elliott, Thomas, Gordon and Ngakoue.

Both are veterans, Williams heading into his 10th season, Clowney his sixth. The others are on rookie deals and believe they have far outperformed those wage-scaled contracts.

Williams, while injury prone, is considered a leader in Washington and, even at less than full strength, the Redskins' best blocker. He is upset with the team's handling of his health, including the removal of a growth on his head earlier this year. His beef is as much about trust as dollars and cents.

Clowney has not signed his franchise tag, which is tendered at \$16 million, preferring a long-term deal. Le'Veon Bell set a precedent last season when the then-Steelers running back sat out rather than sign. He's now with the Jets. But it's more likely Clowney will reach an agreement by September, or take the \$16 million for 2019.

Another pass rusher, Ngakoue, comes off a career-best year and is entering his fourth season. As a third-round draftee in 2016, he isn't making top dol-

lar yet, set to be paid just over \$2 million this year. Considering his numbers are as good or better than several other defensive ends who cashed in recently (Frank Clark, Demarcus Lawrence), it's hardly surprising Ngakoue is idle.

But he must report to the Jaguars 30 days before their first game to accrue his fourth season and have a shot at unrestricted free agency in 2020. So Aug. 9 would seem to be a firm deadline for him to show up.

Thomas is the focal point for Drew Brees' passes in New Orleans' high-wire offense. Talk about numbers, try 125 receptions, 1,405 yards and nine touchdowns as, by far, the only proven Saints wideout.

In the final year of his rookie contract, Thomas would make more than \$1.14 million as a 2016 second-rounder. So there's nothing surprising about his holdout when the likes of Odell Beckham Jr., Sammy Watkins and Nike Evans have cashed in.

Saints coach Sean Payton says he's not surprised by Thomas' holdout, which the receiver foreshadowed on social media by writing: "I want every penny that's mine. I don't want a penny more or a penny less."

Pac-12 expected to have several morning start times

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The Pac-12 has heard plenty of criticism from fans and coaches about a third of games being played at night last year.

That has led Commissioner Larry Scott to possibly try a new scheduling approach this season.

Instead of "Pac-12 After Dark", welcome to "Breakfast with the Pac-12".

Scott said Fox and conference athletic directors are in preliminary talks about morning kickoffs for some games, which would put them in the

network's key noon Eastern time slot. Any morning kickoffs, which would be at 9 a.m. Pacific and 10 a.m. Mountain, would be voluntary and not dictated by Fox.

"That would be new and somewhat out of the box, but I've tried to put everything on the table," Scott said. "I think there are some schools and markets that might respond positively."

Coaches are split about the possibility of a morning kickoff. Utah coach Kyle Whittingham said the sooner they can start, the better.

"We'd adjust. We've played

those games before. It's been few and far between, but we've had those 10 a.m. kickoffs in the past. We'd jump at the chance for that," he said.

Stanford's David Shaw said he would be somewhat resistant.

"All the studies we've all read and conducted ourselves on our campus, our sleep studies, it is better for young people to perform athletically if they get a full night's sleep," Shaw said. "And I don't know that you can find any group of 18- to 22-year-old young people that are going to go to bed at 10 o'clock at night to get up at 6 o'clock in

the morning to make sure they can perform athletically."

Something to prove: Oregon quarterback Justin Herbert remembers watching as a boy as Jeremiah Masoli, Darron Thomas and Heisman Trophy winner Marcus Mariota led the Ducks to conference titles.

After deciding to return to school instead of declaring for the NFL Draft, Herbert hopes to join that fraternity of quarterbacks as a senior.

Herbert threw for 3,151 yards and 29 touchdowns as a junior last season but Oregon still finished fourth in the Pac-12 North.

Colombia's Egan Bernal all but seals Tour de France

Associated Press

VAL THORENS, France — Perpetuating the tradition of great Colombian climbers, Egan Bernal left his mark on the Tour de France in the mountains. But unlike his flashy predecessors, he is also poised to win cycling's biggest race.

Bernal kept the yellow jersey Saturday after the last Alpine stage, and barring a crash or a last-minute health issue, he will become the first Colombian to win the Tour when it ends on Paris' Champs-Élysées with a largely processional stage on Sunday.

At age 22, Bernal will also become the youngest post-World War II winner of the Tour.

"I still need to reach Paris, but today it was incredible, I can't believe it. I will need some more days to understand what happened to me," Bernal said.

Long before Bernal was born, Colombian riders like Lucho Herrera and Fabio Parra conquered the hearts of cycling fans with long and spectacular raids in the Tour mountains. But for all their brilliance, they never came close to winning the race.

This year's route, the highest in race history with five summit finishes, including three stages finishing above 2,000 meters and only 54 kilometers of time trialing, gave natural born climber Bernal a golden opportunity.

Unlike Bradley Wiggins, four-time champion Chris Froome and Geraint Thomas — the three other riders who won the Tour for the British outfit Ineos — Bernal is not a race-against-the-clock specialist. He has built his success on consistent performances in the Pyrenees and a tremendous attack in the Alps after losing ground in the individual time trial.

"The talent is there to see, he was born to go uphill fast," said Bernal's teammate and now deposed champion Geraint Thomas. "He has got many, many great years in front of him. A very bright future."

Thomas, lagging 1 minute and 11 seconds behind overall, should finish runner-up to give the Ineos team a 1-2 finish in Paris.

Weighing only 130 pounds, the super-light Bernal thrived in rarefied air, and it was fitting that he delivered his fatal blow in the Col de l'Iseran, the Tour's highest point this year at 2,770 meters.

A cycling star in the making, Bernal took the race lead Friday when Stage 19 was dramatically cut short by a landslide across the route to the Alpine ski station of Tignes and by a violent hailstorm that made road conditions too icy for riders racing on two wheels barely wider than their thumbs.

He'd moved away from Julian Alaphilippe, the punchy rider who did more than anyone to make this Tour the most exciting in decades and held the race lead for 14 days, on a super-difficult climb to the Iseran. When the race was then stopped with Bernal racing away on the downhill, organizers decided the riders' timings to the top of the Iseran climb would be used to determine the overall standings.

And that put Bernal in yellow and on course to become the first Colombian to win the Tour.

Bernal wrapped up his victory during Saturday's Stage 20 to Val Thorens, won by 2014 champion Vincenzo Nibali. Shortened to just 36 miles because of a landslide on the route, it featured a 33-kilometer climb up to the ski station that was too difficult for Alaphilippe, who cracked after starting the day in second place and allowed Steven Kruijswijk to secure a third-place finish overall.

If he wins, Bernal will achieve a feat unmatched by the Tour's greatest champions — five-time winners Eddy Merckx, Jacques Anquetil, Bernard Hinault and Miguel Indurain — who were all older when they first won.

Dressel makes history with 6th gold at worlds

Associated Press

GWANGJU, South Korea — Caeleb Dressel made history — again — at the world swimming championships.

The American won three gold medals in a span of about two hours Saturday night, duplicating his feat from two years ago in Budapest, Hungary.

Dressel has six golds and seven medals overall with one night remaining in the meet. He tied Michael Phelps' record of seven medals — all gold — at a single worlds in 2017.

"It was not easy in '17, it was not easy this year," the 22-year-old Floridian said. "I don't want it to be easy. I really don't."

He capped his momentous night by leading off the victorious mixed 4x100-meter freestyle relay. Dressel joined Zach Apple, Mallory Comerford and Simone Manuel in setting a world record of 3 minutes, 19.40 seconds.

That lowered the mark of 3:19.60 set by the U.S. in 2017.

Manuel dueled with Australian anchor Bronte Campbell over the final 50. The American clocked 52 seconds to Campbell's 52.36 to keep Dressel golden.

"I had a lot of help on that relay," he said, pointing out that his 100 split of 47.34 would only have been good enough for bronze in the individual event. "Every time I do a race I always look for the bad."

There wasn't much to criticize on this night.

Dressel opened the evening with a win in the 50 free to complete a 50-100 free sweep. He touched in 21.04 seconds, bettering the championship record of 21.08 set by Brazil's Cesar Cielo at the 2009 worlds in Rome during the height of the rubber suit era.

Bruno Fratus of Brazil and Kristian Gkolomeev of Greece tied for silver in 21.45.

Coming back just 34 minutes later, Dressel won the 100 fly in 49.66 a night after breaking Phelps' world record in the semifinals.

"Caeleb was amazing," said South Africa's Chad le Clos, the bronze medalist in the fly.

Dressel wraps up his meet Sunday in the 4x100 medley relay.

"I'll be ready to swim one tomorrow and swim one fast," he said.

Katie Ledecky won her first gold medal in her final event of an illness-plagued worlds, rallying on the last lap to claim the 800 free.

"That girl's tough as nails," Dressel said.

Ledecky led the first seven laps before Simona Quadarella took over. The Italian was in front the next seven laps before it all came down to the final 50 meters.

"Simona was having a great race and pulled up right next to me," Ledecky said. "When she did that I kind of felt like I could stick with her and rely on my speed, so just tried to stay calm, relaxed from the 500 to the 750."

That's when Ledecky turned on the jets and completed the last lap in 29.19 seconds to Quadarella's 30.76.

"Just put my legs into it and got my hand to the wall," she said.

Ledecky won in 8:13.58. Quadarella, who won the 1,500 free in Ledecky's absence, took silver in 8:14.99.

Ariarne Titmus of Australia earned bronze in 8:15.70. Titmus stunned Ledecky to win the 400 free on the first night before the American got sick and withdrew from the 200 free preliminaries and 1,500 final.

Ledecky took silvers in the 400 free and 4x200 free relay.

Regan Smith, Dressel's 17-year-old teammate, won the 200 backstroke in 2:03.69, the second-fastest time in history.

"To be 2:03 two nights in a row, I was super, super stoked," Smith said.

She set the world record of 2:03.55 in Friday's semifinals and was on pace to lower it again before fading on the last lap.

Turner's eighth-inning HR lifts Dodgers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Coming into their series with Washington fresh from an off day, the Los Angeles Dodgers wanted to get into the Nationals' bullpen early.

Everything seemed to be going according to plan after Washington starter Anibal Sanchez needed 31 pitches to get through a shaky first inning, but the veteran settled down and the Dodgers had to go to Plan B.

Manager Dave Roberts stuck with his lefty bats against lefty pitching once Sanchez was gone, and then Justin Turner delivered the decisive blow.

Turner hit a three-run homer with two outs in the eighth and Los Angeles beat the Nationals 4-2 on Friday night to open a

three-game series between NL playoff contenders.

"For Justin, who took two neck balls and then stayed in there at 3-1 and get a pitch up and out over and hit a homer, it was a big homer, obviously," Roberts said.

After the Nationals had retired 22 straight batters, reliever Tony Sipp (1-2) walked Joc Pederson and gave up a single to Alex Verdugo before exiting with two outs in the eighth. Kyle Barraclough, called up earlier in the day from Double-A, came in and immediately gave up Turner's drive to center field, his 15th homer of the season.

"I didn't know it was 22 straight, but it was good to see Joc get that left-on-left at-bat to get our first baserunner in a while," Roberts said.

Joe Kelly (4-3) retired Anthony Rendon to end the seventh. Kenley Jansen walked home a run before striking out Howie Kendrick with the bases loaded for his 25th save.

"We're all so confident in him," Turner said. "We want him to have the ball in the ninth inning and he knows it. Wouldn't have it any other way."

Sanchez retired the final 20 batters he faced. He struck out six while allowing one run and three hits.

"Awesome," Nationals manager Dave Martinez said. "He was really, really good. He gave us seven innings. We had to pinch-hit for him down a run. But he was great."

Dodgers starter Hyun-Jin Ryu allowed eight hits and one earned run in 6²/₃ innings.

The NL West leaders snapped a two-game skid, while the Nationals lost back-to-back games for the first time since June 22-23 against Atlanta.

The Dodgers took a 1-0 lead in the first on Cody Bellinger's RBI single into shallow center field. It was their third single of the inning but their last hit until the eighth.

The Nationals tied it 1-all in the seventh on Adam Eaton's bases-loaded single that scored Victor Robles. Pinch-hitter Gerardo Parra, who reached on a sacrifice bunt and fielding error by Turner at third base, was thrown out at the plate by left fielder Verdugo. The Nationals challenged the call and whether catcher Russell Martin had blocked the plate, but the ruling was upheld after video review.

MLB roundup

Betts homers three times as Red Sox blast Yankees

Associated Press

BOSTON — Mookie Betts hit three home runs against James Paxton during the first four innings Friday night in the Boston Red Sox's 10-5 victory over the New York Yankees, whose starting pitchers have stumbled this week in historic fashion.

Betts homered on Paxton's eighth pitch in a three-run first that included J.D. Martinez's two-run homer, went deep again leading off the third for a 4-0 lead and hit a two-run drive in the fourth for a 7-0 advantage.

Betts added an RBI double in the sixth off David Hale to give him five RBIs and grounded out in the eighth. With his fifth career three-homer game, Betts raised his season total to 18 homers.

Andrew Cashner (10-5), coming off losses in his first two starts after Boston acquired him from Baltimore, allowed three runs and 10 hits in 6²/₃ innings.

Martinez had three RBIs for

the Red Sox, who won the opener of the four-game series 19-3 and have pulled within nine games of the AL East-leading Yankees.

Twins 6, White Sox 2: Nelson Cruz homered for the seventh time in his last five games, and visiting Minnesota became the fastest team to reach 200 homers in major league history during a win over Chicago.

Max Kepler hit a three-run drive in the second inning for the landmark homer in Minnesota's 103rd game of the season. The previous mark was 122 games by the Texas Rangers in 2005.

Cardinals 5, Astros 3: Paul Goldschmidt extended his homer streak to a career-high five games with a three-run drive in the eighth inning, and surging St. Louis took over first place in the NL Central with a win over visiting Houston.

Mets 6, Pirates 3: Trade candidate Zack Wheeler showed off a live arm in his return from the injured list, Jeff

McNeil hit the first of four Mets homers and host New York beat slumping Pittsburgh.

Brewers 3, Cubs 2: Ben Gamel hit a go-ahead, two-run single in the eighth inning, and Milwaukee rallied to beat visiting Chicago and knock the Cubs out of first place.

Giants 2, Padres 1 (11): Pablo Sandoval homered with two outs in the 11th inning and San Francisco beat host San Diego for its 18th victory in 22 games.

Rockies 12, Reds 2: Daniel Murphy hit a three-run homer and a three-run double for a career-high six RBIs, leading visiting Colorado over Cincinnati and giving the Rockies consecutive wins for the first time since June 28 and 29.

Braves 9, Phillies 2: Ronald Acuna Jr. had two hits and three RBIs, Brian McCann hit a solo homer and Atlanta cruised past host Philadelphia.

Indians 8, Royals 3: Jose Ramirez homered for the second consecutive game, a three-

run shot that sent rookie Zach Plesac and visiting Cleveland past Kansas City.

Rays 3, Blue Jays 1: Ryan Yarbrough won his fourth straight decision, Travis d'Arnaud hit a two-run single and Tampa Bay beat host Toronto.

Marlins 3, Diamondbacks 2: Harold Ramirez hit a sacrifice fly in the ninth inning to lift Miami past visiting Arizona.

Orioles 9, Angels 3: At Anaheim, Calif., Asher Wojciechowski pitched seven strong innings and Renato Nunez and Trey Mancini homered to lead Baltimore over Los Angeles.

Mariners 3, Tigers 2: Mallex Smith hit an RBI single with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning to give host Seattle a win over Detroit.

Rangers 5, Athletics 2: Lance Lynn struck out eight in six innings and Willie Calhoun homered in his return to the majors, helping visiting Texas beat Oakland.