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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Pompeo says Trump wants troops in Afghanistan cut

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Monday that President Donald Trump ordered him to reduce the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan by the 2020 election in some of the clearest comments to date about Trump's intentions for winding down the nearly 18-year conflict.

"That's my directive from the president of the United States," Pompeo said at the Economic Club of Washington. "He's been unambiguous: End the endless wars. Draw down. Reduce. It won't just be us."

Pompeo suggested that a troop withdrawal is connected to how the president views his job performance, saying a reduction of forces is "not only my expectation, it would be job-enhancing."

Trump has expressed frustration with the hundreds of billions of dollars spent in Afghanistan every year and continued violence as the Taliban conduct near daily attacks across the country even as they explore a peace resolution with U.S. diplomats to end America's longest war.

The latest flare-up occurred Sunday with an assault on the office of the Afghan president's running mate and former intelligence chief, resulting in the deaths of at least 20 people, according to The Associated Press. No one immediately asserted responsibility for the attack.

Military officials have said that the Pentagon has voiced its concerns about a precipitous withdrawal, but Trump has empowered his special envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, to reach a deal that allows for a reduction of forces in the country and the ability to continue counterterrorism operations, officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. Military officials have now accepted that Trump, who ran on ending America's "endless wars," will demand at least a partial drawdown of troops.

After Pompeo's remarks, Trump reaffirmed his desire to get U.S. troops out of Afghanistan but declined to say whether they would all be home by Election Day next year.

"Well, I don't know. We're moving a lot of

them out," he told reporters. "There is no military solution in Afghanistan. ... We hope in the coming days we will be able to urge the Taliban to talk."

In the first year of his presidency, Trump's advisers urged him to increase the U.S. troop presence in the country to prevent a total takeover by the Taliban, which controls about half the country. They also reiterated worries that the country could again become a staging ground for terrorist attacks on the United States. In heeding his advisers' warnings, Trump increased troop levels but noted that it went against his instincts.

With little progress to show in the country after more than two years in office, Trump has expressed frustration with his advisers. On Monday, Pompeo described a resolution the president was seeking concerning the war.

"We think there's a path to reduce violence, achieve reconciliation and still make sure that the American counterterrorism effort in Afghanistan has value and the potential to reduce risk in the United States," Pompeo said.

In the U.S. government, the secretary of defense takes orders from the president on troop presence, but Pompeo has taken an expansive role on Trump's national security team. In June, Pompeo took the unusual step of holding meetings with military leaders at U.S. Central Command headquarters in Tampa, Fla., to discuss threats posed by Iran.

Last week, a State Department news release said Pompeo "dispatched" the chairman of the joint chiefs to Kabul to discuss peace in Afghanistan, language that some viewed as disrespectful toward Gen. Joseph Dunford Jr., who does not take orders from the secretary of state.

Another sign of the Trump administration's eagerness to withdraw came last week, when the U.S. and Afghanistan issued a joint statement saying they agreed to "accelerate efforts" to advance the peace process to end the war and reduce the U.S. presence in the country. The statement followed a phone call between Pompeo and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in which the two men agreed to a conditions-based withdrawal.

Insider attack blamed in US soldiers' deaths

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Two paratroopers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, were killed in an insider attack in southern Afghanistan, officials said Tuesday.

Ahmad Sadiq, a spokesman for the Afghan army's 205th Corps, said the soldiers were shot dead Monday by an Afghan soldier at a base in Shah Wali Kot district in southern Kandahar province.

The attacker was wounded and taken into police custody, Sadiq said.

"We and our foreign colleagues are working hard together to eliminate the enemies of this country, the enemies of Afghanistan and humanity," Sadiq said. "It is unfortunate that some of our soldiers will open fire on foreign troops or even on their Afghan colleagues."

Deputy spokesman of Afghanistan's Defense Department Fawad Aman confirmed two U.S. troops were killed in Kandahar on Monday by an Afghan soldier but was unable to provide further details.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi commended the attack in a statement, saying it was carried out by a "sensible Afghan soldier," although not one of the militant group's fighters.

The names of the servicemembers are being withheld until next of kin are notified, which is the Pentagon's policy.

Their unit confirmed in a statement posted online Monday that two of its soldiers had been killed.

"It is with a heavy heart that I inform you of the loss of two Paratroopers from the Brigade during combat operations," unit commander Col. Art Sellers said in the statement. "The expertise of every staff member of this brigade and in the 82nd Airborne Division will be utilized to ensure the families of the fallen are taken care of."

The incident is the first known insider attack in Afghanistan since November, when Maj. Brent Taylor, of the Utah National Guard, was killed by an Afghan soldier at a military training center in Kabul.

Confidence in Hyten is expressed at his hearing

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Several senators said Tuesday they would support President Donald Trump's nominee for vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, calling sexual misconduct allegations against Air Force Gen. John Hyten by a subordinate false.

"I am confident the full truth was revealed in this process, and the truth is Gen. Hyten is innocent of these charges," said Sen. Martha McSally, R-Ariz., a former Air Force officer who earlier this year said she was raped by a superior officer. "Sexual assault happens in the military. It just didn't happen in this case."

Hyten was nominated in April to replace Air Force Gen. Paul Selva as the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Selva is set to retire Wednesday. McSally said she spent three weeks poring over the details of allegations raised in recent months against Hyten, currently the chief of U.S. Strategic Command: that he made a series of sexual advances toward a female Army colonel on his staff in 2017 and sexually assaulted her in her hotel room during a work trip that December. Those allegations were raised by Army Col. Kathryn Spletstoser, who identified herself publicly last week in *The New York Times*.

The Air Force Inspector General conducted an investigation into the allegations, and top Air Force officials, including former Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson, determined that no evidence existed of the wrongful encounters alleged by Spletstoser. Wilson, who left the Air Force for academia earlier this year, testified Tuesday that Hyten was innocent.

On Tuesday, senators including Doug Jones, D-Ala.; Tom Cotton, R-Ark.; Thom Tillis, R-N.C.; Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn.; Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla.; and James Inhofe, R-Okla., the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, expressed confidence in Hyten's innocence.

UN: Number of Afghan civilian deaths drops in 1st half of '19

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The number of civilians killed or wounded in Afghanistan has dropped significantly during the first half of this year but remains "shocking and unacceptable," the United Nations said Tuesday.

The U.N. documented 1,366 civilians killed and 2,446 wounded in its latest report on Afghan noncombatant casualties, which examined a period from January to June. Together, the figure was down by more than a quarter from the first half of last year and is the lowest number for the period since 2012.

Despite the overall decrease, the U.N. said the numbers remained "shocking and unacceptable."

Coalition and Afghan government forces were blamed for more civilian deaths — 717 — than insurgents — 531 — for the second successive quarter. In April, the world body documented more deaths caused by pro-government forces for the first time since it began systematically tracking civilian casualties a decade ago.

Airstrikes, most of which were carried out by the U.S. military, were the leading cause of civilian deaths over the six-month reporting period, followed by ground engagements and targeted killings, the U.N. said. The 363 civilians killed by airstrikes was more than double the number reported during the same period in 2018, "highlighting the lethal character of this tactic," it said.

"UNAMA continues to express concern about the rising level of civilian harm as

a result of aerial operations, particularly those conducted in support of Afghan forces on the ground and strikes on civilian structures," the report said, using an acronym for the U.N. mission in Afghanistan.

The figures correspond with an accelerated U.S. bombing campaign aimed at pressuring the Taliban to negotiate a peace deal. Direct talks between American and Taliban officials aimed at ending the war began months ago in Qatar.

While pro-government forces were most responsible for civilian deaths during the first half of the year, groups like the Taliban and local Islamic State branch were blamed for more overall civilian casualties, which include those wounded, the U.N. said.

However, the 1,968 deaths and injuries attributed to anti-government groups was down 43 percent compared with the same period last year, largely because of fewer deadly suicide blasts. Overall casualties attributed to pro-government forces — 1,397 — rose 31 percent, compared with the same period last year. There were several hundred casualties which could not be attributed to any side in the conflict, the report said.

In Gerishk district in southern Helmand province, where the U.N. documented a deadly airstrike in May, tribal leader Bahram Khan said it was difficult for residents to understand the continuing violence while peace talks continue.

"The only option to get us out of this nightmare of war is to make peace. We don't want bloodshed anymore," Khan said. "We have suffered enough."

Video shows Iran's Guard warning away UK warship as it seized UK-flagged vessel

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — In new video and audio released Monday, an Iranian Revolutionary Guard officer is heard telling a British warship not to interfere or put their "life in danger" as the paramilitary force, using speedboats and a helicopter, seized a U.K.-flagged commercial vessel in the Strait of Hormuz earlier this month.

The video includes a shot apparently filmed on the day of the July 19 incident from above the British warship, *Foxtrot 236*, that was in the vicinity of the U.K.-

flagged *Stena Impero*, showing the British navy unable to prevent Iran's seizure of the ship in the critical waterway. It also offers new glimpses into the tense exchange that took place between the British navy and the Iranian Guard during the seizure.

The *Stena Impero* was seized as it transited the Strait of Hormuz, which lies between Iran and Oman.

The narrow waterway is of critical importance to the world's energy supplies because one-fifth of all global crude exports passes through it.

Marine admits punching taxi driver in Tokyo

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
AND HANA KUSUMOTO

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A 21-year-old Marine who punched a taxi driver in Shinjuku in May pleaded guilty Tuesday in Tokyo District Court to a charge of bodily injury.

Lance Cpl. Kahsai Tyree Hill, assigned to 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, admitted to punching a 24-year-old taxi driver in the face on May 25 that left a bruise that required “two weeks’ medical treatment,” according to prosecutors.

Prosecutors said the incident happened while Hill was sightseeing in Tokyo with fellow Marines. Though his regiment is based at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Hill was residing at Marine Corps Combined Arms Training Center Camp Fuji, which regularly hosts stateside Marines for training exercises.

Hill and his friends spent the evening of May 24 eating and drinking in Tokyo until 11:30 p.m., when the group returned to their hotel, prosecutors said in court Tuesday. Hill later left the hotel to walk around Shinjuku.

About 5:40 a.m., Hill became lost, according to prosecutors. That’s when he got in the taxi, but the driver did not understand where Hill wanted to be taken. He took Hill to the Shinjuku Washington Hotel, which was not where Hill was staying. Hill got out of the cab without paying his fare, and the driver parked his car and chased after him. When Hill saw him approach, he punched the driver and left the scene. The driver then called police.

SOCOM: '18 Syria blast that killed US, UK troops accidental

BY CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

U.S. Special Operations Command on Monday confirmed that a 2018 blast in Syria that killed two special operations soldiers from the U.S. and U.K. was caused by coalition explosives, not a roadside bomb.

Britain’s Defence Ministry said Saturday that British commando Sgt. Matthew Tonroe, who was the first U.K. service-member to die fighting Islamic State in Syria, was killed by an accidental explosion in March 2018 and not an improvised explosive device as had been reported.

“An investigation determined both U.S. Army Master Sgt. Jonathan Dunbar and Sergeant Tonroe died as a result of the accidental detonation of explosives carried by coalition forces, not by enemy action,” SOCOM said in its statement.

Tonroe, 33, and Dunbar, 36, died as a result of the blast, which occurred while they were on a joint operation in Manbij, northern Syria. The Pentagon stated at the time that they were part of a joint U.S.-U.K. team “conducting a mission to kill or capture a known ISIS member.”

Five others with the U.S.-led anti-ISIS coalition were wounded in the explosion and were evacuated for treatment.

“Our thoughts continue to be with Master Sgt. Dunbar and Sgt. Tonroe’s family and friends,” SOCOM said.

Tonroe had enlisted in the

U.K. Army in 2004 and had deployed numerous times to Afghanistan and the Middle East, a statement from the Ministry of Defence said after his death. He served in the 3rd Battalion of Britain’s elite Parachute Regiment.

Britain’s Guardian newspaper reported that he was a sniper with the British Special Air Service, or SAS, and had spent time embedded with SEAL Team 6. He was survived by his mother, a brother and his girlfriend.

Dunbar was assigned to U.S. Army Special Operations Command headquarters at Fort Bragg, N.C. That designation has historically been used for members of the Army’s secretive special operations unit known as Delta Force.

In the months since Dunbar’s death, his father has posted on Facebook praising the unit, which is headquartered in a compound he said he visited in May for a Memorial Day ceremony honoring his son. In one post, he said his son was on an October 2015 mission to rescue ISIS-held prisoners near Hawija, Iraq, that claimed the life of Army Master Sgt. Joshua Wheeler, the first American combat death in the anti-ISIS campaign.

Dunbar, of Austin, Texas, had joined the Army as an infantryman in May 2005 and served as a machine-gunner, a fire team leader and a squad leader at Fort Bragg after initial training, then as squad leader in the 82nd Airborne Division

and as a squad leader in the 38th Cavalry Regiment (Long Range Surveillance) at Fort Hood, Texas. While assigned to Fort Bragg and Fort Hood, he deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq, according to a biography provided by the Army Special Operations Command.

In 2013, Dunbar was assigned to SOCOM and deployed three times in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the biography said.

Growing up, he was “the biggest nerd ever,” his sister, Crystal Dunbar, told Austin’s KUT radio in April 2018.

“He had big, Coke-bottle glasses, and he was always playing the superhero,” she said. “So whether he was playing cops and robbers or cowboys and Indians or anything like that, he was always the superhero.”

He joined the Army to make a better life for his son, Crystal Dunbar said, and it made him a better man.

“He was a young father and he decided he needed to better his life for his son,” she said. “We weren’t for him going into the military just based on our own fear and our own selfishness. But it changed him. It changed him into an amazing father.”

Dunbar’s decorations include three Bronze Stars.

Dunbar left behind a wife, who was pregnant with a daughter at the time of his death, and three children, his obituary said.

Missile launcher found in military officer’s baggage

The Washington Post

When returning home from overseas travel, who doesn’t want a little souvenir to remind you about your trip?

That was the explanation offered by a man who’d packed a missile launcher in his checked bags and was stopped Monday by authorities at Baltimore Washington Inter-

national Thurgood Marshall Airport.

The resident of Jacksonville, Texas, told Transportation Security Administration officers that he was an active-duty military officer returning home from Kuwait and wanted to keep the missile launcher as a souvenir. What he apparently didn’t realize is that military weapons, much like gas

torches and fireworks, are not permitted in checked or carry-on bags.

Fortunately, TSA officials said, the missile launcher was not a live device.

Officials confiscated the item and turned it over to the state fire marshal for safe disposal. The man was then permitted to catch his next flight home.

Intel chief pick's experience questioned

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's pick for national intelligence director has been mayor of a small Texas city, a federal prosecutor and a member of Congress. But questions were already emerging Monday about whether those qualifications are adequate for the position as the nation confronts threats that include foreign election interference, North Korea's nuclear ambitions and the risk of war with Iran.

Republican Rep. John Ratcliffe is also known as a Trump loyalist, which makes his lack of relevant experience even

more striking at a time when current and former government officials expect Russia to look to interfere in the 2020 presidential election just as it did in unprecedented fashion when Trump first ran.

"Ratcliffe comes to the job with the least national security experience and the most partisan political experience of any previous director of national intelligence," said Michael Morell, a former acting CIA director who now hosts the "Intelligence Matters" podcast.

The director of national intelligence has oversight of the nation's 17 intelligence agencies, a significant job touching

all corners of national security policymaking. If confirmed, Ratcliffe would be the principal intelligence adviser to Trump, who has appeared determined to surround himself with vocal protectors and defenders even in national security positions that haven't historically been perceived as overtly partisan.

It is unclear what specific experience Ratcliffe will bring in helping thwart foreign government efforts to interfere in American politics. Also unknown is whether skepticism he has voiced in Congress about special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into ties between Russia and the Trump

campaign will affect his preparation for, or response to, any foreign influence or cyberattacks on campaigns.

Ratcliffe, who was among the most aggressive Republican questioners of Mueller at public hearings last week, would replace outgoing director Dan Coats at a time of broader reshuffling within the national security leadership structure.

"It's a moment when Donald Trump can deepen his personal stranglehold over the intelligence function and knock out any voices of dissent to his particular worldview," said Democratic Rep. Jamie Raskin, of Maryland. "That's a scary thing for the country."

Black Va. lawmakers boycott Trump in Jamestown

Associated Press

JAMESTOWN, Va. — President Donald Trump marked the 400th anniversary of the rise of American democracy on Tuesday by celebrating "four incredible centuries of history, heritage and commitment to the righteous cause of American self-government."

His speech in historic Jamestown played out against a backdrop of tension over his recent disparaging remarks about minority members of Congress and was boycotted by black Virginia state legislators.

In his remarks, Trump noted that 1619 also was the year the first enslaved Africans arrived in the colonies, saying, "We remember every sacred soul who suffered the horrors of slavery and the anguish of bondage."

Trump described the rise of democracy in the New World as "truly a momentous occasion."

"Self-government in Virginia did not just give us a state we love — in a very true sense it gave us the country we love, the United States of America," he said.

His speech was interrupted

by a protester, who stood up and held signs that read "deport hate" and "reunite my family." The man was led out of the speech site as some members of the crowd chanted "Trump, Trump, Trump."

Ahead of his speech, Trump said the black legislators who announced a boycott of the event were going "against their own people."

Trump claimed blacks "love the job" he's doing and are "happy as hell" with his recent comments criticizing a majority black district in the Baltimore area and its con-

gressman. In fact, blacks continue to be overwhelmingly negative in their assessments of the president's performance. According to Gallup polling, approval among black Americans has hovered around 1 in 10 over the course of Trump's presidency, with 8% approving in June.

A last-minute announcement that the president would participate in the Jamestown commemoration of the first representative assembly in the Western Hemisphere injected tension into an event years in the making.

Johnson tries to reassure on Brexit as pound slumps

Associated Press

LONDON — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was visiting Wales on Tuesday as part of a national tour intended to reassure Britons that his hard-Brexit push won't hurt the economy and rip apart the U.K.

He faces a tough reception from farmers — a group central to the Welsh economy — who fear economic havoc if

Britain leaves the European Union without a divorce deal. They say millions of sheep might have to be slaughtered if tariffs are slapped on lamb exports to the EU.

Johnson's office argues that leaving the 28-nation bloc and its rules-bound Common Agricultural Policy will be "a historic opportunity to introduce new schemes to support farming" and will open up new markets for U.K. agricultural

exports.

The trip follows a visit Monday to Scotland, where Johnson was booed by protesters and warned by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon that his vow to take Britain out of the EU on Oct. 31 with or without a deal was "dangerous."

Johnson, who took office last week, also plans to visit Northern Ireland, the only part of the U.K. to share a land border with the EU. The status of that

currently invisible frontier with the Republic of Ireland has become the main stumbling block to a Brexit deal.

The pound has fallen sharply in recent days as businesses warn that no amount of preparation can eliminate the economic damage if Britain crashes out of the 28-nation trading bloc without agreement on the terms. The currency fell early Tuesday to \$1.2120, its lowest since March 2017.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Researchers move bees to study them

GA VALDOSTA — Nearly 100,000 bees have found a new home on the rooftop of a campus building at a south Georgia university.

Researchers at Valdosta State University relocated the bees from other places on campus to increase their population.

The Valdosta Daily Times reported that multiple departments at the university hope to study them for clues as to why bees across the nation are dying off.

'Pink Lady Bandit' suspects arrested

NC HAMLET — The FBI said two suspects have been arrested in what's been dubbed the "Pink Lady Bandit" bank robberies on the East Coast.

An FBI news release said Circe Baez, 36, and Alexis Morales, 38, were arrested Sunday at a Charlotte, N.C., hotel. Investigators believe Baez robbed four banks and Morales was an accomplice.

The robberies began July 20 in Carlisle, Pa., followed by another on July 23 in Delaware. The next day the suspect hit a small town in North Carolina. The latest robbery was Friday, also in North Carolina.

Authorities nicknamed the primary suspect the "Pink Lady Bandit" because she carried a pink handbag in two robberies.

Both suspects are being charged with the two robberies in North Carolina.

Family gets dog back 6 months after theft

IN EAST CHICAGO — A northwestern Indiana

family is celebrating their dog's return nearly six months after the beloved pet was stolen from their yard.

Josephine Lopez filed a police report but had little hope of seeing Zino, a Maltese mix, after the dog was taken from her East Chicago yard in February. But The (Northwest Indiana) Times reported that Zino was recently found on the streets of St. Cloud, Minn., some 500 miles away.

Zino's microchip provided authorities with the information needed to contact Lopez. A dog rescue group helped fly Zino home. The canine was reunited Thursday with Lopez and her family in Chicago.

Mine rescue teams to compete in tests

WV MORGANTOWN — Members of mine rescue teams from across the country are in West Virginia this week to compete in readiness tests.

West Virginia University said the National Mine Rescue Association Post 5 contest was to begin Tuesday and run through Thursday at Mylan Park in Morgantown. Competing will be representatives from 20 mine rescue teams. The competitions will include mine rescue, first aid, pre-shift and bench.

Representatives from mining regulatory agencies representing West Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania and federal personnel will judge the teams.

Pedestrian signals to help the blind on way

IL CHICAGO — Chicago is making it easier for people who can't see very well or are blind to walk around the city.

The Chicago Sun-Times re-

ported that as many as 100 accessible pedestrian signals that use tones or otherwise nonvisual cues to alert pedestrians when it's safe to walk will be installed over the next two years.

Visually impaired residents will help identify 50 intersections where signals should go and another 50 signals will be installed as traffic signals are upgraded.

Man dies after tree falls on boat at lake

MI BATTLE CREEK — Authorities said a man died after being struck by a tree that fell onto a boat at a lake in southern Michigan.

Battle Creek police said several people were on the pontoon boat, which was docked Sunday afternoon at Goguac Lake when the tree fell. No other injuries were reported.

The man's name wasn't immediately released, but police said he was 30 and from Battle Creek. Police didn't say why the tree fell.

Experts are restoring cemetery headstones

MO EASTON — Cemetery restoration experts in Missouri have begun restoring and reerecting fallen headstones at a 150-year-old burial site.

Tim Wiedmaier found the neglected Kessler Cemetery in 2008 when he was searching for his great-great-grandfather's headstone.

Community activist Mary Bray was one of the first to help clear away the brush and realized they needed professional help.

Jacob's Ladder Cemetery Restoration Specialists recently began restoring and reerecting about 40 stone tablets, The St. Joseph News-Press reported.

There are 73 grave burials in the cemetery.

Cigarette butts targeted on coast

GA BRUNSWICK — Anti-litter groups in Georgia's beach and waterfront communities are targeting smokers in a summer campaign with a blunt title: Georgia's Coast is Not an Ashtray.

The Brunswick News reported groups across Georgia's 100-mile coast are working to reduce the number of cigarette butts left crushed on the ground or flicked into water.

Lea King-Badyna, of Keep Golden Isles Beautiful, said her organization is handing out free car and pocket ashtrays and distributing 8,000 coasters printed with the campaign's message to bars and restaurants. The group is also adding public cigarette butt receptacles at waterfront parks.

The campaign is being funded by a \$10,000 grant from the nonprofit group Keep America Beautiful.

Metal from overturned truck flattens tires

OH CLEVELAND — Scrap metal from an overturned tractor-trailer flattened dozens of tires on cars on an Ohio interstate last week.

Authorities said the accident happened July 23 on Interstate 77 in Cleveland near Interstate 490, causing the highway to shut down. Drivers were asked to take an alternate route to avoid that stretch of highway.

Cleveland police said those who experienced damage can file an online report with the agency.

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Trade rules forcing teams to deal earlier

Associated Press

NEW YORK — If Madison Bumgarner, Noah Syndergaard, Trevor Bauer, Mike Minor or Robbie Ray are going to get dealt to contenders desperate for arms, it will happen this week or not at all.

Baseball's trade window shuts Wednesday afternoon — completely, not like in years past.

Marcus Stroman, Jason Vargas, Andrew Cashner, Jordan Lyles, Drew Smyly, Homer Bailey, Jake Diekmann and Derek Holland are among the pitchers dealt as the deadline approached. Most of the big names fans envisioned changing jerseys have stayed put in this new era of baseball economics, where prospects and youth are more prized than ever.

"Teams are doing a better and better job of understanding younger and younger players, and that's why you see the value in teams trying to keep prospects," Toronto general manager Ross Atkins said Monday after dealing Stroman, a first-time All-Star, to the New York Mets for a pair of pitching

prospects. "The younger players seem to be really increasing in value."

Major League Baseball's deadline for trades without waivers was June 15 from 1923 through 1985, and has been July 31 or Aug. 1 each year since. Players who cleared waivers could be dealt after the deadline, but they had to be in an organization by Aug. 31 to be eligible for the postseason.

That changed in March, when MLB and the players' association agreed to a rules change that prohibits trades from Aug. 1 through the World Series. The only way a player can change clubs during that period is to be claimed on waivers or get released and sign with a new team.

"I think one of the things we're going to find in the next couple of days as a result of there being no August trades anymore, there's going to be a lot of teams looking to make moves to fortify their depth," Philadelphia general manager Matt Klentak said Monday, when he acquired the left-handed Vargas from the Mets.

In a season of record home runs, most contenders think

they'll need more pitching to survive the pennant races and the postseason. With the season about two-thirds over, there had been just 31 complete games entering Monday — only slightly ahead of the pace that led to a record-low 42 last year. That's down from 104 in 2015, 209 in 2003 and 302 in 1998, a sign of just how much the sport has transformed in two decades. Managers want plenty of power arms available inning after inning, leading rebuilding teams to sell off their veterans to clubs hoping to win now.

The Los Angeles Dodgers, New York Yankees and Houston Astros have large leads and the Atlanta Braves are comfortably atop their division. But the Yankees' starting pitching has stumbled in the past week, leading them to consider deals for starters and relievers with teams hungering for top young players such as Gleyber Torres, Miguel Andujar, Clint Frazier and Deivi Garcia.

Houston is looking for a starter to join a rotation headed by Justin Verlander, Wade Miley and Gerrit Cole. The Dodgers have been seeking relievers from a market that may include

Joe Biagini, Ian Kennedy, Ken Giles, Mychal Givens, Shane Greene, Francisco Liriano and Seth Lugo.

About a half-dozen teams in each league are competing to reach the wild card playoffs, forcing some to them to make critical decisions whether to go for it or give up and stock for the future.

Even though the Mets are 50-55, first-year general manager Brodie Van Wagenen's approach is win now.

"Brodie understands that I know we can win now. He knows that we can win now," manager Mickey Callaway said. "We both feel like we can win and get on a run and get into this thing."

With so many teams still contending — or at least thinking they are contending — some GMs might push for a later trade deadline to be considered for 2020. Already there will be one big change next year — the active roster limit from Sept. 1 on will be 28, down from 40. In exchange, the maximum from the start of the season through August will increase from 25 to 26.

Phillies bolster rotation by acquiring Vargas from Mets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Philadelphia Phillies bolstered their beleaguered rotation.

Left-hander Jason Vargas was acquired from the New York Mets on Monday for Double-A catcher Austin Bossart.

The 36-year-old is 6-5 with a 4.01 ERA, winning his last three starts. He became expendable when the Mets acquired right-hander Marcus Stroman from Toronto on Sunday night for a pair of pitching prospects.

"Jason Vargas is battle-tested and has been relatively effective for the better part of a decade now," Phillies general manager Matt Klentak said. "He gives his team a chance

to win the game every time he takes the ball. I like the fact it's a different look. He's a soft-tossing lefty. We have a lot of hard-throwing righties. He's a good complement to our pitching staff."

Vargas is expected to start this weekend against the Chicago White Sox. Zach Eflin, who is scheduled to pitch Friday, has a 10.46 ERA in his last six starts. Vargas could take that spot on regular four days' rest.

Vargas is owed \$2,666,667 of his \$8 million salary for the remainder of this season, and his contract includes an \$8 million club option for 2020 with a \$2 million buyout. He receives a \$250,000 assignment bonus.

New York agreed to pay

\$666,667 to the Phillies to offset part of Vargas' 2019 salary, with \$333,333 payable Sept. 2 and \$333,334 on Oct. 1, and \$250,000 to offset the assignment bonus. In addition, the Mets will pay \$2 million in 2020 to offset the salary or the buyout.

Philadelphia's commitment will be either \$2 million for the rest of this year or \$8 million for the rest of this year plus 2020.

"It's too early for us to commit to that," Klentak said of exercising the option.

The Phillies were off Monday after losing two of three to the NL East-leading Braves and falling 7½ games behind. But they're only one game behind the second NL wild card head-

ing into a three-game series against San Francisco starting Tuesday.

Vargas' ERA would be second to Aaron Nola on Philadelphia's staff and his WHIP (1.27) would rank first. Opponents are batting just .228 against Vargas despite a fastball that averages just 85 mph.

The Phillies already added a starting pitcher last week when they signed lefty Drew Smyly after he opted out of a minor league deal with Milwaukee. Smyly allowed one run in six innings in a 2-1 win at Pittsburgh on July 21 in his first start and take the mound again Tuesday night against the Giants.

Vargas is 98-95 with a 4.26 ERA in 266 starts and 21 relief appearances with five teams.

Rendon's slam leads Nats past Braves

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As the entire stadium erupted around him, Anthony Rendon put his head down for another routine trip around the bases.

The notoriously even-keeled Rendon hit a tiebreaking grand slam in the sixth inning, and the Washington Nationals beat the Atlanta Braves 6-3 on Monday night in the opener of a three-game series to close within 4½ games of the NL East leader.

"Hit it far and loud," manager

er Dave Martinez said. "It was clutch."

With the score 2-2, Rendon connected off of Chad Sobotka for his 23rd home run this season and third career slam, raising his career RBIs total to 500. Rendon, who had two hits, is hitting .370 in his last 19 games with nine doubles, three homers and 20 RBIs.

"I wanted to be ready for the fastball, be on time, just see something over the middle of the plate," the soft-spoken Ren-

don said.

Patrick Corbin (9-5) allowed two runs and five hits in six innings, striking out eight and walking one. Sean Doolittle gave up a home run to pinch-hitter Charlie Culberson in the ninth.

Dallas Keuchel (3-4) gave up four runs, six hits and four walks in 5 1/3 innings, dropping to 0-3 with a 5.08 in five starts against Washington. Making his eighth start for the Braves since signing in June, he is 0-2

in three outings since winning at San Diego on July 12.

"Very disappointing. That's about it," said Keuchel, who expressed frustration with umpire Adam Hamari's strike zone. "I thought I punched out about 10 guys. I got rewarded with extra at-bats. That's where that lies."

Atlanta's Ronald Acuna Jr. went 0-for-4, ending his on-base streak at a career-best 32 games.

MLB roundup

Reds score 10 runs in second inning, blast Pirates

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — All nine Reds crossed the plate in a parade unseen in Cincinnati since the days of the Big Red Machine. All the down-and-out Pirates could do was watch glumly.

Jose Iglesias' grand slam completed Cincinnati's 10-run second inning and the Reds beat the Pirates 11-6 Monday night after Pittsburgh traded scheduled starter Jordan Lyles to the Brewers.

The last-place Pirates lost their ninth straight, their longest skid since they dropped 10 in a row in 2011.

"It's hard right now, there's no doubt about it," manager Clint Hurdle said. "We battle adversity in different areas just about every night."

Lyles was dealt to Milwaukee — which has an injury-depleted rotation — in the afternoon for pitching prospect Cody Ponce. Alex McRae (0-3) took Lyles' spot, his first major league start after seven relief appearances. He retired only four batters and was replaced during Cincinnati's biggest inning in four years.

McRae learned when he got to the ballpark about four hours before game time that he was going to make his first start.

"I was excited, obviously a little bit of nerves the first inning," McRae said. "No excuses though."

Ten days earlier, the Reds gave up a 10-run inning by the Cardinals during a 12-11 loss at Great American Ball Park. This time, they were on the other end of one.

They piled up six hits and three walks while sending 13 batters to the plate. Joey Votto singled home a pair of runs, first baseman Josh Bell had a throwing error, and Iglesias' second career grand slam off Montana DuRapau made it 10-1.

After he rounded the bases, Iglesias rubbed his hair in the dugout and told teammates he'd make good on a promise.

"I told them before the game that 'If I hit a home run, I would paint my hair like you guys,'" Iglesias said.

What color?

"Purple or yellow," he said.

Every Reds player scored in an inning for the first time since Sept. 3, 1975, when they beat the Dodgers 13-2, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. Cincinnati hadn't scored so many runs in an inning since it also had 10 in the sixth against Detroit on Aug. 24, 2015.

"That doesn't happen a lot, but we've been so in tune with

our players and our offense these days," manager David Bell said. "An inning like that can be really good for offense."

Sonny Gray (6-6) gave up four runs in 5 1/3 innings, including Starling Marte's 18th homer and Bryan Reynolds' ninth. Colin Moran hit his third career grand slam off Wandy Peralta.

The game matched the NL Central's bottom teams. The Pirates have anchored themselves in last place by going 2-15 after the All-Star break, prompting them to trade Lyles two days before the deadline.

Rockies 9, Dodgers 1: Jon Gray allowed three hits over eight innings to win for the first time in a month, and host Colorado beat Los Angeles for its third win in 11 games this season against the NL champions.

Nolan Arenado had a two-run single in a five-run fifth inning, David Dahl hit a two-run homer in the eighth, and Ian Desmond finished a home run short of the cycle.

Marlins 11, Diamondbacks 6: Caleb Smith endured a bad stretch after a baserunning adventure and recovered to pitch seven innings as host Miami beat Arizona.

Smith laid down a bunt in the second inning and wound up at third base thanks to two errors

on the play. The jaunt may have taken a toll, because in the next inning he gave up three hits, including a three-run homer by Ketel Marte.

Blue Jays 7, Royals 3: Cavan Biggio hit the go-ahead homer in the eighth inning, Randal Grichuk and Teoscar Hernandez also went deep, and Toronto rallied past host Kansas City.

Top prospect Bo Bichette singled in the first at-bat of his big league career, and the Blue Jays got a strong spot start from Thomas Pannone in the opener of a 10-game trip.

Tigers 7, Angels 2: Jordan Zimmermann got his first win in 18 starts dating to last season and Detroit beat host Los Angeles.

Zimmermann (1-8) allowed two runs in 5 1/3 innings to get his first victory since Sept. 5, 2018.

Padres 8, Orioles 1: Rookie Fernando Tatis Jr. and Franmil Reyes homered on David Hess' first two pitches, and Eric Hosmer connected twice and drove in five runs in host San Diego's win over Baltimore.

Luis Urias also went deep for the Padres, who hit four homers off Hess and five overall. The long balls carried rookie Chris Paddack (7-5) to his second victory in three starts.

Protests may cause problems for Quinn

Associated Press

OXNARD, Calif. — Dallas defensive end Robert Quinn says he chose his new team before an offseason trade from Miami because it felt like the right fit when he visited the Cowboys.

There remains one issue unaddressed with owner Jerry Jones: protesting during the national anthem.

Quinn raised his fist during the anthem while he was with the Rams and then the Dolphins. Jones has always taken a hard stance against such displays by his players, saying a year ago at training camp: “Our policy is that you stand at the anthem, toe on the line.”

Quinn said he hasn’t addressed the topic yet with Jones.

“It might come up,” Quinn told The Associated Press on Sunday when asked if he planned to discuss it with Jones. “Right now, it’s not on

my mind. I’m here to play football right now. Focus on my new journey.”

Asked if he and Jones had to get on the same page on the issue before the season, Quinn told the AP, “I don’t know. You’ll have to talk to Jerry about that one.” Jones declined to comment Monday.

The Cowboys open the regular season at home against the New York Giants on Sept. 8. Their preseason opener is Aug. 10 in San Francisco.

Since Colin Kaepernick sparked the debate in 2016 by kneeling during “The Star-Spangled Banner,” players have been kneeling, sitting or raising fists during the anthem to protest police brutality, social injustice and racial inequality. Quinn said he grew frustrated with the reporting on the issue during his time with the Dolphins because he thought the message getting out was too much about “war and prison.”

“Until we start talking about

peace, love and happiness, this world will never get better,” Quinn said. “That’s my message. To you and whoever wants to listen, my message is peace, love and happiness. If you can’t find peace, love and happiness within yourself, you’ll never find it in somebody else.”

“As sorry as it is, the type of world we live in, we’ve just got to, again, like I said, peace love and happiness within yourself. Just try to make the best out of every day. It’s frustrating. But only so much you can control. I got my family I need to take care of and some other folks. It sucks the way this world is. You can’t fight a war by yourself.”

Last year, the NFL quickly scrapped a proposed compromise that would have allowed players to stay in the locker room during the anthem while subjecting them to potential punishment for any displays during the anthem.

Jones said he wouldn’t even support players staying in the

locker room, then offered his “toe on the line” declaration.

The closest any Dallas player has come to protesting during the anthem came in 2017, when defensive linemen David Irving and Damontre Moore raised their fists briefly as the song ended. They weren’t disciplined. Neither player is still with the Cowboys.

When the anthem issue flared again early in the 2017 season following strong criticism of the players by President Donald Trump, the Cowboys decided on a show of unity before a game in Arizona. Before the anthem was played, Jones knelt with the players in a long line of locked arms. They stood before the anthem started.

Jones has said he understands the point of view of players who have said they weren’t protesting the flag or the military. But that didn’t change his strong views about the flag.

“The priority is about the flag, and be real clear about that,” he said last year.

US Soccer says it paid women’s team more than men

Associated Press

Facing mounting public pressure in a fight over equitable pay, U.S. Soccer said the World Cup champion women’s national team has been paid more than the men’s team.

According to a letter released Monday by U.S. Soccer President Carlos Cordeiro, the federation paid out \$34.1 million in salary and game bonuses to the women between 2010 and 2018 as opposed to \$26.4 million paid to the men. The total does not include the value of benefits received only by the women, like health care.

The federation released the figures as it moves toward mediating a federal lawsuit in which players for the women’s team accused U.S. Soccer of “institutionalized gender discrimination” that includes inequitable compensation when compared to players on the men’s team.

Comparing compensation between the two teams is difficult because the pay structure is based on different collective bargaining agreements. For example, players for the women’s team have a base salary while the men are paid primarily based on matches and performance.

“In the weeks ahead, we’ll focus on preparing for mediation and resolving this matter in the best interests of the WNT and U.S. Soccer. I want you to know that U.S. Soccer is committed to doing right by our players, and I’ve been encouraged by the public comments from players expressing their desire for a cooperative approach. I remain optimistic that we can find common ground,” Cordeiro wrote. “Together, I believe we can get this done.”

Molly Levinson, a spokeswoman for the players in matters involving the lawsuit,

called the letter “a sad attempt by USSF to quell the overwhelming tide of support the USWNT has received from everyone from fans to sponsors to the United States Congress.”

“The USSF has repeatedly admitted that it does not pay the women equally and that it does not believe the women even deserve to be paid equally,” Levinson said. “This is why they use words like ‘fair and equitable,’ not equal in describing pay.”

Cordeiro said the federation recently conducted an extensive analysis of its finances over the past 10 years, seeking to clear up what he called confusion based on the pay structures for both teams.

U.S. Soccer said it pays the women’s national team players a base salary of \$100,000 per year, and an additional \$67,500 to \$72,500 per player as a salary for playing in the National

Women’s Soccer League. The women also have health care benefits and a retirement plan.

Players on the men’s national team are paid by training camp call-ups, game appearances and through performance bonuses. The federation acknowledged the men have the ability to earn higher bonuses than the women. The men’s team did not make the field for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, while the women have won back-to-back World Cup titles.

The collective bargaining agreements are not made public, and U.S. Soccer did not provide details about the men’s bonus structure.

USFF also says the men’s team generates more revenue. The women’s team generated \$101.3 million over the course of 238 games between 2009 and 2019 while the men generated \$185.7 million over 191 games, according to the federation.