

Merkel tours 'surreal' flooding scene

Associated Press

BERLIN— German Chancellor Angela Merkel surveyed what she called a “surreal, ghostly” scene in a devastated village on Sunday, pledging quick financial aid and a redoubled political focus on curbing climate change as the death toll from floods in Western Europe climbed above 180.

Merkel toured Schuld, a village on a tight curve of the Ahr River in western Germany where many buildings were damaged or destroyed by rapidly rising floodwaters Wednesday night.

Although the mayor of Schuld said no one was killed or injured

there, that wasn't the case in many other areas. The death toll in the Ahrweiler area, where Schuld is located, stood at 112. Authorities said some people are still missing and they fear the toll may still rise.

In neighboring North Rhine-Westphalia state, Germany's most populous, 46 people were killed, including four firefighters. Belgium confirmed 27 deaths.

Merkel said she came away from Schuld, still partly strewn with rubble and mud in bright sunshine, with “a real picture of, I must say, the surreal, ghostly situation.”

Merkel said authorities will

work to “set the world right again in this beautiful region, step by step,” and her Cabinet will approve an immediate and medium-term financial aid program on Wednesday.

Finance Minister Olaf Scholz told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper that more than \$354 million will be needed. And he said officials must set up a longer-term rebuilding program which, from experience with previous flooding, will be in the billions.

Climate scientists say the link between extreme weather and global warming is unmistakable and the urgency to do something about climate change undeniable.

Scientists can't yet say for sure whether climate change caused the flooding, but they insist that it certainly exacerbates the extreme weather disasters on display around the world.

“We must get faster in the battle against climate change,” Merkel said, pointing to policies already set in motion by Germany and the European Union to cut greenhouse gas emissions. “And nevertheless, the second lesson is that we must pay great attention to adaptation” to climate change.

Investing in fighting climate change is expensive, she said, but failing to do so is even more costly.

Last Americans at Bagram rush to secure mementos

By J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — The murals that once celebrated U.S. military units have been painted over and the settings that memorialized the fallen are now empty spaces.

Most of Bagram Airfield, the largest U.S. base in Afghanistan for much of the past 20 years, is a ghost town.

But in the days before coalition troops left on July 2, some of the last to leave scrambled to safeguard war mementos or make sure that what stayed behind wouldn't be left to whatever comes next in a country still at war.

Many of the cavernous, empty structures the U.S. vacated were left open, but one, in particular, remained locked during a recent visit: a squat wooden lodge near the base's airport terminal, once known as the USO Pat Tillman center.

It's where Rebecca Medeiros, former USO country director in Afghanistan, spent the last year cataloging mementos.

“It's important those things came back to the U.S., instead of being left behind in Ba-

gram, where we don't know the future of that location,” Medeiros said. “We don't know if those items would be taken care of, or their meaning would be understood.”

The USO center, named after the former NFL player and Army Ranger who died in Afghanistan, hosted some 2 million troops, contractors and civilians waiting for flights over 16 years, allowing them to watch movies, play video games and connect to Wi-Fi.

The USO kept employees at Bagram as long as possible, in part to ensure that the mementos soldiers left there could be brought home, said Alan Reyes, the organization's chief operating officer.

“We do our best to preserve artifacts of historical or symbolic significance to us,” Reyes said.

The centerpiece was a framed Tillman jersey, “which means a lot to people,” Medeiros said.

Elsewhere around the sprawling base, troops saved a memorial to five soldiers and contractors killed at a 2016 suicide bombing. It's in transit to Fort Hood, Texas, where it will be rededicated, said Michael Garrett, spokesman for the 1st Cavalry Di-

vision Sustainment Brigade.

A steel beam from the World Trade Center, donated to Bagram as a memorial, became a concern after no one could initially remember where it went. They eventually learned it had been relocated in 2015 to Fort Drum, N.Y.

Much of the work done by several people during the final stretch was “sanitizing” Bagram.

“We pulled off stickers, signs went down,” said Kimberly Culverhouse-Steadman, who came to Bagram in February to close the USO and bring back its mementos. “They just didn't want anything reminiscent of American presence.”

Culverhouse-Steadman flew out May 25 with two black suitcases — one with her personal effects, and the other with the Tillman jersey and other keepsakes.

Right before boarding the packed government-chartered flight, she was told she'd have to choose between the bags in order to board.

She chose to leave her personal effects behind. Fortunately, a friend from the post office agreed to mail her that suitcase.

Study: Shaving waivers hinder promotions

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Airmen who receive waivers from the Air Force to grow beards due to a skin condition that worsens with shaving experience significant delays in promotion compared to their beardless counterparts, a new study found.

The delay in promotions affects Black airmen disproportionately because the condition, commonly called razor bumps, is prevalent among them, according to the study published in the journal *Military Medicine* on July 1.

The findings dovetail with an Air Force review of racial disparities in the service released in December, which found inequality in “certain promotion rates” based on race but did not determine the cause.

The review was initiated in the wake of protests and outcry over the death of George Floyd in May 2020 at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer.

The Air Force, like other services, bans beards except for certain religious and medical exceptions. The service regards a clean-shaven face as professional looking and better able to accommodate the tight fit of a gas or oxygen mask, should one ever be needed.

Air Force health care providers issue “shaving profiles” for airmen suffering from razor bumps or other skin conditions that allow more flexibility in shaving.

Several previous studies had found that airmen with shaving waivers perceived delays in promotion, but the new study analyzed data comparing a group receiving waivers with another that did not.

“Shaving waivers were associated with a significantly longer time to promotion compared to the no-waiver group,” the study said. “Cumulative time on a shaving waiver was associated with a progressively longer time to promotion.”

Promotions for those in the waiver group were delayed evenly across race and ethnicity, the study said.

Researchers also found a “significantly larger rate of disciplinary actions reported in the waiver group” and recommended further research to better understand that association.

US: Pacific Patriot drills send message to rivals

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The Army is showing off its ability to quickly move defensive and offensive missiles around the Pacific amid threats to U.S. bases in Japan.

The latest demonstration involves the deployment of Patriot missile defense launchers to Australia for the biennial Talisman Sabre exercise.

The exercise, involving 17,000 U.S., Australian, New Zealand, Japanese, South Korean and British troops, kicked off Wednesday and included a Patriot battery downing a pair of drone aircraft Friday at Shoalwater Bay Training Area, Queensland.

The Patriot’s debut Down Under follows a series of similar maneuvers this year.

The Army sent a Patriot battery to Japan’s southern island of Amami and a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System to the northern island of Hokkaido during the annual Orient Shield exercise, which ran from June 24 to July 9.

Sixty-five soldiers from the 38th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, out of Sagami Gen-

eral Depot in Kanagawa prefecture near Tokyo, and Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, are in Australia for Talisman Sabre, said Maj. Joel Sullivan, executive officer for 1st Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery Regiment, by phone Thursday from Shoalwater Bay.

The troops are operating a pair of Patriot launchers, a radar, power plant, control station and brigade and battalion command posts that arrived in Australia by commercial shipping from the United States, he said.

The Patriot launchers shot down a pair of Phoenix unmanned aerial vehicles, Sullivan said.

A training objective is to demonstrate the Army’s ability to move around the region, said brigade commander Col. Matt Dalton, of Portland, Conn., who oversees air and missile defense units in Japan, including Okinawa, and on Guam.

“We are trying to demonstrate our ability to quickly move our units around the Indo-Pacific to be able to counter any threat that is out there ... our ability to move to different locations quickly, set up and establish defense of a particular asset.”

B-52s bombers, Army I Corps on Guam for dual exercises

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Guam is supporting two simultaneous U.S. military exercises by hosting Air Force bombers and Army soldiers, vehicles and weapons over the coming weeks.

A group of B-52 bombers arrived Wednesday on Guam from Minot Air Force Base, N.D., to support Pacific Air Force’s Bomber Task Force, according to an Air Force news release.

The bombers will also take part in the Talisman Saber exercise, which runs through the end of the month, with the Australian Defense Force.

The Air Force did not disclose the

number of B-52s sent to Guam. Four B-52 Stratofortress bombers deployed there in April from Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

Meanwhile, I Corps, based at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state, is leading the Army’s Pacific Forager 21 exercise from Guam.

The exercise, which runs through Aug. 6, is designed “to test and refine the Theater Army and the Corps’ ability to deploy landpower forces to the Pacific, execute command and control, and effectively conduct multi-domain operations throughout Oceania,” according to an Army news release.

Brown: F-35 jet remains key to Air Force's fleet

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The F-35 Lightning II will remain central to the Air Force's fighter fleet for years to come, the service's top officer said Friday, despite the mechanical troubles and cost overruns that have made the aircraft the most expensive in history.

"The F-35 is going to be the cornerstone of our fighter fleet and it will be for the foreseeable future," Gen. Charles Q. Brown told reporters after visiting with troops at Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany.

Though technical problems have resulted in the F-35 falling short on operational expectations, Brown said he expects those issues to be resolved.

"I'm very confident it will reach our expectations," Brown said, adding that the Air Force is working with the defense industry

to get development and sustainment costs for the aircraft under control.

Last week, the Government Accountability Office issued a report that said failure to control F-35 aircraft cost overruns should force the Pentagon to scale back its fleet of advanced warplanes if new savings aren't found.

The F-35 fighter has faced rising costs for years and efforts to curtail expenses have fallen short, the report said. About 400 F-35s are in service across the military.

The Pentagon plans to procure nearly 2,500 F-35s with an estimated life cycle cost exceeding \$1.7 trillion.

The Air Force faces the greatest challenge in cutting costs, according to the GAO. It is purchasing about 70% of the F-35s and must slash what it spends on each plane by 47%, or the readiness of its squadrons could be "negatively impacted," it said.

3 Texas Dems who fled bill vote get COVID

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Three of the Democratic state lawmakers who fled Texas to stymie a Republican-backed effort to impose broad new voting restrictions have tested positive for COVID-19 and are quarantined, the Texas House's Democratic Caucus director said Saturday.

One lawmaker tested positive Friday and the other two did so on Saturday, according to caucus director Phillip Martin. All three were fully vaccinated against the disease, according to Martin, who declined to release their names or conditions to "respect the privacy of Members and their personal health."

More than 50 Texas lawmakers arrived in Washington on Monday after leaving their home state on a private charter flight. They received criticism from Republicans and others after a photo showed them maskless on the plane, though federal pandemic guidelines don't require masks to be worn on private aircraft.

Rep. Chris Turner, the caucus chairman, said in a statement that the caucus was conferring with health experts in Texas for additional guidance.

"This is a sober reminder that COVID is still with us, and though vaccinations offer tremendous protection, we still must take necessary precautions," Turner said.

COVID-19 infections in people who have been fully vaccinated against the disease — also referred to as "breakthrough" infections — are rare, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Democrats left the state to deny the Republican-controlled Legislature the necessary quorum to pass a bill that would place new restrictions on voting in Texas.

Martin said it is not known where or when the three Texas lawmakers were infected.

"We don't know. In order to be on the plane everybody had to be fully vaccinated," according to Martin.

Members of the group also met with Democratic Sen. Chuck Schumer, the Senate majority leader, but none of the three infected attended that meeting and Schumer's office has been notified of the positive tests, according to Martin.

Turner said the White House was also notified.

South Korea sends new crew after destroyer's outbreak

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea on Sunday sent military aircraft to replace the entire 301-member crew of a navy destroyer on an anti-piracy mission off East Africa after nearly 70 of them tested positive for the coronavirus, officials said.

Two multi-role aerial tankers are bringing the new crew and will then take home 301 sailors aboard the 4,400-ton-class destroyer *Munmu the Great*, Joint Chiefs of Staff and Health Ministry officials said.

They said 68 sailors have so far tested positive and the results of tests for 200 crew are still pending.

Fifteen sailors have been hospitalized in an African country that authorities did not name, while the rest are on the destroyer. None of the crew has been vaccinated for COVID-19 as they left South Korea in early February, before the start of the vaccination campaign, a Joint Chiefs of Staff official said requesting anonymity citing department rules.

The cause of infections hasn't been officially announced. But military authorities

suspect the virus might have spread when the destroyer docked at a harbor in the region to load goods in late June.

The replacement crew of 150 navy personnel will arrive aboard the aerial tankers and move to the destroyer, which is anchored at sea, to sail it back to South Korea on a journey that takes about a month, the Joint Chiefs of Staff official said.

Health Ministry official Sohn Youngrae told reporters that the 301 crew of the destroyer will be sent to hospitals or quarantine facilities upon their return to South Korea early this week. He said the crew were all relatively in good condition.

South Korea has taken part in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2009. Military officials said the *Munmu the Great* was to be replaced with another destroyer next month following a six-month rotational deployment.

The outbreak on the destroyer comes as South Korea is grappling with a spike in infections at home that has forced authorities to place the populous capital region under the toughest distancing rules.

Lightning, new fire feared amid heat wave

The Washington Post

The West is facing a new and serious fire threat as temperatures heat up again and moisture from the Southwest monsoon surges northward, triggering thunderstorms that unleash lightning but little rain. The dry lightning presents a heightened risk of new wildfire ignitions between Sunday and Tuesday across a broad swath of the West, stretching from the California coast into northern Montana.

The fire threat is emerging at the same time a heat wave builds over the northern Rockies and southern Canada, where scores of blazes are already active. The tinderbox conditions from the hot and dry weather, combined with possible dry

lightning strikes could result in a dangerous proliferation in fire activity.

This is a “multiday, multi-region classic monsoon-burst ignition event,” said Brent Wachter, a fire meteorologist in Redding, Calif., with the Predictive Services arm of the National Interagency Fire Center.

Already, 70 large blazes are burning across a dozen states, according to NIFC. On Thursday, it raised the national Preparedness Level to 5, the highest, based on the amount of wildfire activity and need for firefighting resources.

Recent precipitation related to the Southwest monsoon has eased fire conditions in Arizona, New Mexico and in southern Utah and Nevada, but the fire

risk remains high in California, the Pacific Northwest and the Northern Rockies.

While monsoonal thunderstorms are common in summer in the West, especially in the mountains, the level of flammability across the landscape right now is far above normal and breaking records in many areas. Relentless heat, on top of severe drought, has made fires much more likely to ignite and spread rapidly.

Lightning on Sunday through Tuesday will overlap with areas that have seen repeated, record-breaking heat waves in June and July.

The Northern Rockies is in the bull’s-eye of this weekend’s heat wave, with excessive heat warnings and heat advisories in

effect for eastern two-thirds of Montana and southern half of Idaho where temperatures may be as many as 20 to 25 degrees above average. It could now see a significant lightning event over extremely dry vegetation. The threat may be highest on Monday, when the National Weather Service says the fire danger is “critical” and fire weather watches are in effect.

Coleen Haskell, a Predictive Services fire meteorologist in Missoula, Mont., said the pattern will feature “high-based” thunderstorms, with cloud bases 8,000 to 10,000 feet above ground level. This setup usually means that any rain produced will evaporate before it reaches the ground, resulting in strong outflow winds.

Biden: Justice to appeal judge’s ruling on DACA

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden said Saturday that the Justice Department intends to appeal a federal judge’s ruling deeming illegal an Obama-era program that has protected hundreds of thousands of young immigrants from deportation, and he renewed his calls for Congress to create a permanent solution.

He said in a statement that Friday’s decision was “deeply disappointing,” and although the judge’s order did not affect those already covered by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, it “relegates hundreds of thousands of young immigrants to an uncertain future.”

The program has allowed thousands of young people who were brought illegally into the United States as children, or overstayed visas, to live, work and remain in the country.

Many of the recipients, commonly known as “Dreamers,” have now been in the U.S. for a decade or longer.

But Texas and eight other states sued to halt DACA, arguing that President Barack Obama lacked the power to create the program because it circumvented Congress. U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen in Houston agreed, and while his ruling left the program intact for existing recipients, it barred the government from approving any new applications.

In his statement, Biden urged Congress to move forward with legislation to permanently protect those covered by the program.

“Only Congress can ensure a permanent solution by granting a path to citizenship for Dreamers that will provide the certainty and stability that these young people need and deserve,” the president said.

Cuba government rallies backers following protests

Associated Press

HAVANA — Cuban officials rallied tens of thousands of supporters in the streets Saturday — nearly a week after they were stunned by the most widespread protests in decades.

President Miguel Díaz-Canel — accompanied by 90-year-old former President Raul Castro — appeared on the seafront Malecon boulevard that had seen some of the largest protests against shortages and the political system the previous weekend.

He made an impassioned speech blaming unrest on the United States and its economic embargo, “the blockade, aggression and terror,” as a crowd waved Cuban flags and those of the July 26 Movement that Fidel Castro led during Cuba’s revolution.

“The enemy has returned to throw all it has at destroying the sacred unity and tranquility of the citizens,” he said.

He ended without the tradi-

tional cry of “Homeland or Death!” — a slogan mocked last week by protesters shouting, “Homeland and life!”

Havana has been returning to normal in recent days, even if mobile internet data service — which authorities cut on Sunday — remained limited.

“There is political and social erosion ... There is a lot of disgust, we must talk more, do more things and things that were done wrong should be rectified,” said Abel Alba, a 50-year-old civil engineer, speaking Friday. “The president has tried to smooth things over a bit” but he waited “too long” to listen to the demands of the people in the streets.

The protests began Sunday when thousands of Cubans marched along the Malecon and elsewhere to protest food and medicine shortages, power outages and some even calling for political change. Smaller protests continued Monday and Tuesday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman accused of posing as service member

NC GREENVILLE — A Pennsylvania woman was arrested in North Carolina after investigators said she posed as a member of the military and scammed a person out of more than \$7,000, a sheriff's office said.

The Pitt County Sheriff's Office said in a news release that it received a report that a resident met a woman on an online dating site who said she needed money to ship her belongings home from overseas. The unidentified victim provided the woman with \$7,500, the sheriff's office said.

Investigators determined the woman was using a fake name and identified her as a 63-year-old from Greensburg, Pa. The woman was charged with accessing a computer to defraud or obtain property, obtaining property by false pretense and attempt to obtain property by false pretense.

Struck by broken pole, 4 first responders hurt

GA VALDOSTA — A Georgia police officer and three firefighters were injured after being struck by a broken power pole while responding to damage from a thunderstorm, officials said.

The first responders were injured as they dealt with a downed power line following the storm in Valdosta. Police were directing traffic around wires sagging in the road when one of the wires caught on a passing semi truck, Valdosta Police Chief Leslie Manahan said.

"A semi picked up one of the wires and pulled it, and when they pulled it, the power pole broke, which caused the power pole to break in half and shoot across the road," Manahan said.

One firefighter had to have a leg amputated below the knee, Valdosta Fire Chief Brian Boutwell said.

Feds: Suspects used 'call centers' to sell heroin

CA ORANGE — Two Southern California call centers that facilitated illegal drug deliveries distributed at least \$2 million worth of heroin before a federal grand jury indicted 19 people in connection with the scheme, authorities said.

The 13-count federal indictment charges the defendants with offenses tied to narcotics and money laundering. They are expected to be arraigned in federal court in Santa Ana.

The suspects operated a heroin ring between March 2017 and this April in Orange County, authorities alleged, by obtaining the drugs from suppliers in the U.S. and Mexico.

Report: Woman strips to hide evidence of shooting

LA GRETNA — A New Orleans woman accused of shooting a man then stripping off her bloodied clothes to hide the evidence pleaded not guilty to charges including second-degree murder.

The Times-Picayune-The New Orleans Advocate reported Anthony Fefie, 27, of Harvey was shot to death in Jefferson Parish. The suspect is 19-year-old Tyria Robinson.

Jefferson Parish authorities said she was in the passenger seat of the car Fefie was driving when he was shot. The car swerved and hit a brick fence before crashing into a tree.

Investigators said Robinson flagged down a motorist later and claimed she had been kidnapped and her clothes were ripped away by men chasing her.

Fishermen save newborn horse from drowning

NC COROLLA — Some fishermen came to the rescue of a newborn horse which was in danger of drowning in a canal on North Carolina's Outer Banks.

The Corolla Wild Horse Fund said on its Facebook page that the foal, named Beatrice, was born July 10.

Owen Carson of Asheville posted to Facebook that he and his two fishing buddies saw the foal struggling as its parents stood at the edge of the canal. He said the group circled back and he got out of the boat and waded over to the foal, guided her around a seawall abutment and to the nearest boat slip.

Carson said he carried the foal to shallow water and coaxed her back to her parents.

Car crash pushes pot dispensary off foundation

MI HOLLAND TOWNSHIP — A marijuana shop in western Michigan was pushed off its foundation after a Lexus sedan slammed into it.

A 26-year-old motorist failed to negotiate an intersection in Holland Township, left the roadway and struck the building, according to the Ottawa

County sheriff's office.

No one was inside the building at the time of the crash and the motorist was not injured.

Mayor charged after house raid found guns

NY ROCHESTER — Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren faces criminal charges including weapon possession and child endangerment in connection with a search of the home she shares with her husband, the first charges against her in connection to the raid.

A grand jury indicted Warren and her husband, Timothy Granison, on a felony count of criminal possession of a firearm, as well as two misdemeanor counts of endangering the welfare of a child, Monroe County District Attorney Sandra Doorley said in a statement.

They were also charged with a misdemeanor violation of the Rochester city code for having unsecured weapons.

Tropical fish rare to coast found on beach

OR SEASIDE — A fish rarely found on the Oregon Coast washed up on Sunset Beach north of Seaside, The Seaside Aquarium said.

A 3.5-foot, 100-pound opah was reported to the aquarium, KGW reported.

Aquarium officials said on social media that after seeing photos of the fish, staff responded and recovered it.

The aquarium encouraged people to come look at the "beautiful and odd looking fish."

— From wire reports



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Bucks edge Suns, take 3-2 lead

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Jrue Holiday seized his chance to give the Milwaukee Bucks the lead in the NBA Finals.

He took it right out of Devin Booker's hands, actually.

Holiday's steal and alley-oop pass to Giannis Antetokounmpo for a dunk sealed a wild Game 5 and gave the Bucks a 123-119 victory over the Phoenix Suns on Saturday night.

"It's who he is," teammate Pat Connaughton said. "He's a winner."

For the first time in 50 years, the Bucks have a chance to be winners, too.

Antetokounmpo had 32 points, nine rebounds and six assists. Khris Middleton added 29 points, and Holiday had 27 points and 13 assists.

The Bucks fought their way out of an early 16-point hole by flirting with the best-shooting night in NBA Finals history,

but then won it by making a huge defensive play for the second consecutive game.

They can win their first title since 1971 on Tuesday night in Milwaukee.

"Obviously we know what the deal is. It's one game away from being the NBA champ," said Antetokounmpo, whose post-game press conference was delayed because he was dehydrated.

Booker had 40 points, his second straight 40-plus-point game. But with the Suns rallying and down one with 16 seconds left, he drove into the middle and Holiday wrestled the ball out of his hands.

"I was just trying to score the ball, he was behind me," Booker said. "I turned and he was right there."

Antetokounmpo sprinted down the court to his right and Holiday — rather than pulling the ball out to run the clock down — fired a perfect lob pass that the Greek Freak slammed down while Chris

Paul fouled him to make it 122-119.

"Giannis took off and he was calling for the ball," Holiday said. "At that point, I just threw it as high as I could and only where Giannis could go get it,"

Antetokounmpo missed the free throw, but the Bucks grabbed the rebound and Middleton made one free throw for the final point of the night.

Before the defensive stand, Milwaukee's offense was the story. The Bucks made 32 of 45 shots in the middle two quarters, outscoring the Suns 79-53 during that stretch.

Milwaukee became the first road team to win in the series and will complete its second 2-0 comeback in this postseason with one more victory — along with the fifth in NBA Finals history.

Game 5 winners of a tied series have won the series 21 of 29 times in the NBA Finals.

US Olympic coach has to love play of NBA Finals trio

Associated Press

The happiest basketball coach in the world right now should be Milwaukee's Mike Budenholzer, since he's one win away from the NBA title.

The second-happiest should be USA Basketball's Gregg Popovich.

Consider what Jrue Holiday, Khris Middleton and Devin Booker did in Game 5 of the NBA Finals on Saturday night: They combined for 96 points, all scoring between 27 and 40. They were in top form, which was great news for USA Basketball.

Game 6 of the Finals is Tuesday in Milwaukee, when the Bucks can win their first title in 50 years. Game 7, if necessary, is Thursday in Phoenix. When the series is over, Holiday, Middleton and Booker will trade their green, white and orange uniforms for red, white and blue at the Tokyo Olympics. They all say they're going to honor the commitment to play, even though the Finals will have just ended and then a flight halfway around the world awaits.

The Americans have not exactly been a high-octane steamrolling machine in their Tokyo tune-ups, with a 1-2 record in three exhibitions in Las Vegas and now coming off some roster revamping following the vi-

rus-related withdrawal of Bradley Beal and an injury-related withdrawal by Kevin Love. Keldon Johnson and JaVale McGee take their place.

It looks like the United States will absolutely need Holiday, Middleton and Booker if it's going to get the job done in Tokyo. And there's a very real chance that the Americans will have no more than one practice with their entire Olympic team together before they open their quest for a fourth consecutive gold medal next Sunday in Tokyo against France.

It was never going to be easy for the U.S.; having almost no time as a team together before things get real in Tokyo will only make it that much tougher.

"I have watched the games," Popovich said a few days ago when asked if he's watching the NBA Finals while on USA Basketball duty in Las Vegas. "I have to admit that I watch three guys more than I watched the teams. I just can't help myself. I keep watching them, I keep hoping that they stay healthy. And then, we all think about what would be the best way to include them and blend them into the group. There's no formula for that."

He didn't say which three guys. He didn't have to. It's obvious.

USA Basketball knew it was rolling the dice by choosing players that had a shot of

going to the NBA Finals, but it had no choice given the timeframe. They ended up with three and it could have been more; the Americans took a run at getting Phoenix's Chris Paul to commit to Tokyo, but he ultimately decided not to play on the team.

The plane carrying the Olympic team — some of it, anyway — to Tokyo leaves Las Vegas on Monday morning. Middleton, Holiday and Booker won't be on that flight; they'll be at their real jobs.

Popovich can't be thrilled about that part, of course. But he must have been downright giddy with how his Olympic trio did Saturday night, particularly at crunch time.

Middleton — who has picked the perfect time to play the series of his life — made a stepback three to put Milwaukee up eight with 2:23 remaining. Booker answered on the next possession to get the Suns within six, then a three-pointer with 1:24 left to cut the lead to 120-117. And when Phoenix was within one, it was Holiday who stripped Booker and then found Giannis Antetokounmpo for an alley-oop dunk with 13.5 seconds remaining.

Even a successful coach like Popovich isn't sure how this will work. But if Holiday, Middleton and Booker bring this form to Tokyo, the struggling Americans could be just fine.

Shooting outside park halts Nats game

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The game between the San Diego Padres and Washington was suspended in the sixth inning Saturday night after a shooting outside Nationals Park that caused echoes of gunfire inside the stadium and prompted fans to scramble for safety in the dugout.

The shooting, an exchange of gunfire between people in two cars, left three people injured, according to Ashan Benedict, the Metropolitan Police Department's executive assistant police chief. One of the people who was shot was a woman who was attending the game and who was struck while she was outside the stadium, he said. Her injuries weren't considered life-threatening.

Two people who were in one of the cars later walked into a local hospital with gunshot wounds and were being questioned by investigators, Benedict said, and the extent of their injuries wasn't immediately clear. Investigators were still trying to locate the second vehicle involved in the shooting.

The gunshots caused panic among fans inside the stadium, some of whom ducked for cover, hiding underneath tables and behind seats as announcers warned people to stay inside the park.

The Padres had just taken the field for the bottom of the sixth when several loud pops were heard from the left field side of the ballpark.

Fans sitting in left field quickly began leaving through the center field gate. A short time later, fans along the first base side began briskly leaving their seats.

Some fans crowded into the Padres' dugout on the third base side for cover, while sirens could be heard from outside the park.

The Padres led 8-4 when the game was halted. It will be resumed Sunday afternoon, followed by the regularly scheduled game.

Yankees 3, Red Sox 1 (6): Gerrit Cole (10-4) struck out 11 and host New York beat Boston in a game called after six innings because of heavy rain.

Gary Sánchez and Gleyber Torres hit back-to-back homers in the sixth off Hirokazu Sawamura (4-1) as the Yankees beat the rival Red Sox for the first time in eight meetings this year.

Cubs 4, Diamondbacks 2: Willson Contreras capped a three-run ninth inning with a two-run homer, sending visiting Chicago past Arizona.

Chicago was down 2-1 before it rallied

with two out in the ninth. Rafael Ortega doubled and scored on Robinson Chirinos' pinch-hit single off Joakim Soria (1-4). Contreras then hit a drive to left for his 14th homer.

Dodgers 9, Rockies 2: Max Muncy had two home runs and four hits, Mookie Betts had a homer among his four extra-base hits before leaving with a hip problem and visiting Los Angeles won its fourth straight.

Walker Buehler (10-1) pitched seven strong innings to reach double digits in wins. He set down the last 13 batters he faced after yielding a double with two outs to Ryan McMahon in the bottom of the third.

Angels 9, Mariners 4: David Fletcher extended the second-longest hitting streak in Angels history to 26 games with three doubles and five RBIs, and Taylor Ward homered and drove in three runs in host Los Angeles' victory over Seattle.

Alex Cobb (7-3) yielded five hits over 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings. Jack Mayfield and Taylor Ward (three hits) also homered for the Angels.

Tigers 1-5, Twins 0-4: Miguel Cabrera's blop single scored Jonathan Schoop from first base, and host Detroit beat Minnesota for a doubleheader sweep.

The second game was tied at 3 after seven innings, and the Twins went in front when pinch-runner Nick Gordon scored on a wild pitch by Joe Jiménez (3-1) in the eighth.

But the Tigers rallied in the bottom half. Schoop hit a tying RBI single off Taylor Rogers (2-4). After Robbie Grossman struck out, Cabrera dropped a hit into shallow center as Schoop raced around the bases.

Detroit kicked off the doubleheader with a victory. Grossman hit a leadoff homer, and four pitchers combined on a two-hitter.

White Sox 10, Astros 1: Lucas Giolito pitched a three-hitter, José Abreu launched a three-run homer and host Chicago beat Houston in a matchup of AL division leaders.

Tim Anderson (three hits), Zack Collins and rookies Gavin Sheets and Jake Burger also went deep as the White Sox broke out against the Astros. Giolito (8-6) struck out eight and walked none while throwing 107 pitches in his fifth career complete game.

Pirates 9, Mets 7: Jacob Stallings' grand slam in the bottom of the ninth inning off closer Edwin Díaz rallied host Pittsburgh over stunned New York.

Trailing 6-0, the Pirates scored all their runs in the final two innings — five in the

eighth and four in the ninth. Stallings got his sixth career game-ending RBI.

Indians 3, Athletics 2: Franmil Reyes hit his 15th home run into a luxury suite in center field, and visiting Cleveland beat Oakland for its fourth win in five games

Cal Quantrill (2-2) threw five effective innings to win his second consecutive start, finishing with five strikeouts and allowing one run. James Karinchak pitched the ninth for his 10th save.

Braves 9, Rays 0: Joc Pederson hit a two-run homer in his first start with host Atlanta, Max Fried had a two-run double among three hits while throwing seven dominant innings and the Braves shut out Tampa Bay.

Fried (7-5) did not allow a baserunner to reach second. The left-hander gave up four hits with one walk and had seven strikeouts.

Brewers 7, Reds 4 (11): Christian Yelich doubled home the go-ahead run in the 11th inning and visiting Milwaukee beat Cincinnati to widen its lead in the NL Central.

The Reds loaded the bases in the bottom of the 11th, but with an empty bench, manager David Bell sent pitcher Wade Miley up to pinch hit for reliever Ryan Hendrix. He grounded out to second to end the game.

Cardinals 3, Giants 1: Kwang Hyun Kim tossed six shutout innings, Tyler O'Neill and Paul Goldschmidt homered and host St. Louis snapped San Francisco's five-game winning streak.

Kim (5-5) has not allowed a run over his last 21 innings, covering three starts. The South Korean-born left-hander was pitching in front of his wife and two children for the first time in the United States.

Orioles 8, Royals 4: Ryan Mountcastle and Ramón Urias each had two RBIs, and visiting Baltimore ended a five-game losing streak by beating Kansas City.

The Orioles got six consecutive hits in a five-run third inning as they chased starter Brady Singer and opened a 7-0 lead.

Marlins 2, Phillies 2 (Suspended): The game between visiting Miami and Philadelphia was suspended due to rain with no outs in the top of the 10th inning. The game will resume on Sunday, followed by the regularly scheduled series finale.

The Phillies appeared headed to their ninth win in 13 games before the Marlins tied it with a pair of runs in the ninth off Ranger Suárez, who blew his first save in his fourth chance since being elevated to the closer role.

Morikawa wins second major on first try

Associated Press

SANDWICH, England—Colin Morikawa won the British Open on his links debut and became the first player to capture two different majors at the first attempt.

The 24-year-old American closed with a bogey-free, 4-under 66 Sunday for a two-shot victory over Jordan Spieth to follow up his victory at last year's PGA Championship on debut, just 11 months ago.

This time he did it in front of a crowd, with 32,000 spectators

at Royal St. George's on a day of immaculate weather to witness a Californian making a historic start to his career in the majors. Morikawa is the first player since Bobby Jones in 1926 to win two majors in eight or fewer starts, and his total of 15-under 265 was a 72-hole record score at the Sandwich links.

He made three straight birdies from the seventh hole to overtake Louis Oosthuizen, who was seeking a wire-to-wire win and a second claret

jug, and then made key par saves at Nos. 10 and 15, pumping his first after both. A birdie putt up and over a ridge on the 14th green gave him a two-stroke advantage he never lost.

By making par at the last following a tension-free walk to applause — and then a standing ovation — down the 18th fairway, Morikawa didn't drop a shot in his final 31 holes on a course that has perpetually confounded many of the world's greatest players because of its quirky bounces

and undulating fairways.

All the more remarkable was this was his first links test.

Oosthuizen, the 2010 Open champion and runner up at the last two majors, had another near miss in a career full of them. He never recovered from losing his lead — for the first time since the 12th hole on Friday — after making bogey by hitting from one bunker to another at the par-5 seventh hole, and shot 71.

He tied for third place with Jon Rahm (66).

1st positive virus tests for athletes in Olympic Village

Associated Press

TOKYO — Two South African soccer players have become the first athletes inside the Olympic Village to test positive for COVID-19, with the Tokyo Games opening on Friday.

An official with the South African soccer team also tested positive, as did a fourth member of South Africa's contingent, the head coach of the rugby sevens team. The rugby team was in a pre-Games training camp in another Japanese city.

Organizers confirmed the positive tests for the two athletes in the Olympic Village in Tokyo on Sunday, but didn't identify them other than to say they were non-Japanese.

The South African Olympic committee later confirmed the three COVID-19 cases in its soccer delegation at the village — two players and a video analyst. All three were now in isolation at the Tokyo 2020 isolation facility, the South African Olympic committee said. The players were defender Thabiso Monyane and midfielder Kamohelo Mahlatsi.

The rest of the South Africa soccer squad had tested negative for the virus twice and was "following closely all the recommendations of the local health authorities," the South African Olympic committee said.

South Africa is due to play Japan in its first game of the men's soccer competition on Thursday at Tokyo Stadium.

South African rugby sevens coach Neil Powell tested positive on Saturday and is in an isolation facility in the southern city of Kagoshima, where the team is preparing for the

Olympics. Powell will have to stay in isolation for 14 days and will miss the rugby sevens competition, South Africa's national rugby body said.

Powell had been vaccinated against COVID-19 with the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine in South Africa on May 24, team spokesman JJ Harmse told The Associated Press.

South African Olympic and soccer officials didn't immediately confirm whether the two soccer players and official who tested positive had been vaccinated. South Africa's Olympic committee said in May, however, that it would offer all its Olympic athletes going to Tokyo the J&J vaccine.

Tokyo Olympic organizers also said Sunday that another athlete had tested positive, but this person was not residing in the Olympic Village. This athlete was also identified as "non-Japanese."

Also on Sunday, the first International Olympic Committee member was reported as positive. He recorded a positive test on Saturday upon entering a Tokyo airport.

The International Olympic Committee confirmed the test and identified him as Ryu Seung-min of South Korea. He won an Olympic gold medal in table tennis in the 2004 Olympics.

He was reportedly being held in isolation. Reports said he was asymptomatic.

IOC President Thomas Bach said last week there was "zero" risk of athletes in the village passing on the virus to Japanese or other residents of the village.

Pogacar wins second straight Tour de France

Associated Press

PARIS — Tadej Pogacar won the Tour de France for a second straight year after a mostly ceremonial final stage to the Champs-Elysees on Sunday in cycling's biggest race.

The Slovenian rider with UAE Team Emirates successfully defended his huge lead of 5 minutes, 20 seconds over second-place Jonas Vingegaard.

The 22-year-old Pogacar won his first title last September when he became the Tour's youngest champion in 116 years. He is now the youngest double winner of the race.

Wout van Aert won the 21st stage in a mass sprint. That prevented Mark Cavendish from beating Belgian great Eddy Merckx's record of 34 stage wins which the British sprinter equaled earlier in the race.

The mostly flat 67-mile leg began in Chateaufort just outside Paris and concluded with eight laps up and down the famed avenue.

Richard Carapaz finished third overall, 7:03 off the pace.

Pogacar and his teammates rode at the front of the pack together as they reached the Champs-Elysees, and the Slovenia champion raised his fist in the air in celebration.

Pogacar's gesture acted as a signal for those fighting for a prestigious stage win as the first accelerations took place. But the attackers' efforts did not pay off and the stage ended in a mass sprint.