

General: 2020 war game ‘failed miserably’

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military was crippled during a classified war game last year that exposed vulnerabilities the Pentagon is trying to fix, should it ever face off against a sophisticated adversary like China, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said this week.

“Without overstating the issue, it failed miserably,” Gen. John Hyten said of the battle plan during the October exercise, which he detailed Monday at the Emerging Technologies Institute in Washington.

The biggest problem occurred when communication networks came under attack. During the drill, a Pentagon “red team” playing the enemy role “ran rings around us,” Hyten said. “They knew exactly what we were going to do before we did it.”

Unlike in conflicts of the past 30 years, dating to the first Gulf War when the U.S. military had “information dominance,” the force found itself stifled from the get-go during the October war game.

“Well, what happens if right from the be-

ginning that information is not available? And that’s the big problem that we faced,” Hyten said.

The military is now updating its Joint Warfighting Concept with the new “Expanded Maneuver” strategy that seeks to transform how it fights over the next decade.

Part of the plan calls for joint all-domain command and control, which links information into a fully connected “combat cloud” that commanders can access at any time to make fast battlefield decisions, Hyten said.

Should the cloud be cut off by an enemy, plans must be in place so leaders can operate in a more decentralized environment, he said.

Other aspects of the new concept deal with “contested logistics,” which the United States hasn’t faced since trying to get forces to Europe and the Pacific during World War II.

“Contested logistics has been an area of rich study, rich conversation, and we’re changing our entire logistics approach because of it,” he said.

One way the military could overwhelm a complex adversary is to enhance its ability to launch precision fires from all domains simultaneously — which may include air, land, sea, space and cyber — so an enemy force doesn’t know where to defend, Hyten said.

“That’s a purely aspirational requirement, but I hope everybody can see that if you could do that, you would change the equation on any future battlefield,” he said.

Against an enemy that also can hit targets with precision, the U.S. military must be able to mass fires across the force under a single command structure that’s removed from the threat of attack.

“It allows you to disaggregate to survive,” Hyten said.

Now the Pentagon has to figure out how to pay for it all, he said.

The stakes, he said, are high since the U.S. military’s edge over China is “shrinking fast.”

“To deter war is to be prepared for war,” Hyten said.

North, South Korea reopen lines of communication

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

Communication channels between South and North Korea, severed for more than a year, were restored Tuesday to promote “mutual trust” and “reconciliation,” according to separate statements from both countries.

Communication was suspended in June 2020, after North Korea described the South as its “enemy” and said it would “completely shut down all contact ... with South Korea and get rid of unnecessary things.”

The lines were restored at 10 a.m. Tuesday after a system test in which leaders from both countries “communicated about the reestablishment of inter-Korean relations,” Park Soo-hyun, a senior South Korean government official, told reporters in Seoul.

Park said South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un have exchanged letters on numerous oc-

casions since April.

“This restoration of the communication line between South and North Korea is expected to do good to the improvement and development of inter-Korean relations in the future,” Park said.

North Korea’s state-run news agency also confirmed that communication had been restored.

“The whole Korean nation desires to see the North-South relations recovered from setback and stagnation as early as possible,” the Korean Central News Agency said in a statement Tuesday. “In this regard, the top leaders of the North and the South agreed to make a big stride in recovering the mutual trust and promoting reconciliation.”

North Korea cut off its communication channels with Seoul last year, as it accused South Korean activists of “hostile acts” for floating anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the border. Diplomatic rows between the two countries have prompted Pyongyang to

shut off, and then restart, its communications lines throughout the years.

The lines are “merely symbolic” and “serve as effective bargaining chips,” according to Soo Kim, a policy analyst for Rand Corp. and an adjunct instructor at American University.

“The importance of the communication lines hinges on the follow-through and consistency of the two Koreas,” Kim told Stars and Stripes in an email Tuesday. “Unfortunately, the follow-through and consistency have been the hiccups.”

Kim questioned the timing behind restoring communication.

“The Moon administration left the door open to talks with North Korea and has proven quite tolerant of the Kim regime’s antics, but Pyongyang has consistently rebuffed and disdained Seoul’s extension of the olive branch,” Kim added. “Given the abrupt nature of the announcement — not to mention, its timing — we should be asking, ‘Why now?’”

Lightning strikes 2 F-35Bs over Japan

By **MATTHEW M. BURKE**
AND **MARI HIGA**
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A pair of state-of-the-art F-35B Lightning II stealth fighters recently met their match in the form of actual lightning in the skies over Makurazaki in Japan's Kagoshima prefecture.

Both aircraft, assigned to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, landed safely after the strike and neither pilot was injured.

The incident occurred during a routine flight on July 13, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing spokesman Maj. Ken Kunze wrote in an email to Stars and Stripes on Tuesday. The F-35Bs, which are capable of short takeoffs and vertical landings, were en

route to Okinawa when they were struck.

The incident is considered a Class A mishap because the combined projected repair cost is expected to exceed \$2.5 million, Kunze said. Class A mishaps involve repair costs exceeding \$2 million or the death or permanent disability of a service member.

Lightning strikes on aircraft are fairly common and can severely damage critical and essential systems, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. However, they rarely result in catastrophic effects, according to NTS, an Anaheim, Calif., industrial technology firm.

In an unrelated incident Tuesday, a U.S. military helicopter landed in a field due to an in-flight emergency.

No injuries or damage were reported after the AH-1Z Viper assigned to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma landed at 8:44 a.m. Tuesday in Kushima, Miyazaki prefecture, on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu, Kunze said in a separate email Tuesday. The pilot set the attack helicopter down after identifying a possible mechanical issue.

The Viper was one of a pair that had just departed the Japan Air Self-Defense Force's Nyutabaru Air Base for MCAS Futenma when the issue arose, Kyodo News reported Tuesday. The helicopters had been at the air base since Sunday due to bad weather, a Kyushu Defense Bureau spokesman told Stars and Stripes.

Improving allied navies drives Cutlass Express '21 drill

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — A 15-nation exercise designed to offer mostly African countries U.S. support in developing their navies and fighting piracy, trafficking and illegal fishing kicked off this week in Djibouti.

Cutlass Express 2021, a two-week exercise sponsored by U.S. Africa Command and led by U.S. Naval Forces Europe-

Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet, includes maritime forces from Comoros, Djibouti, Georgia, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The U.S. Navy is emphasizing outreach and partnerships in Africa, as China gains economic resources and looks to

enlarge its military footprint on the continent. Beijing already has an East Africa base near the U.S. installation in Djibouti, and is looking to build another naval base in West Africa that would give it ready access to the Atlantic Ocean, AFRICOM chief Gen. Stephen Townsend told The Associated Press in May.

The exercise is designed,

among other objectives, to improve information sharing and promote security in East Africa, a Naval Forces Europe-Africa and 6th Fleet joint statement said.

No U.S. Navy ships or other military assets are participating in the exercise, said Lt. Joelle Schmitz, Cutlass Express spokeswoman. The exercise ends Aug. 6.

Biden orders the end of the US combat mission in Iraq

By **COREY DICKSTEIN**
Stars and Stripes

President Joe Biden has ordered the end of the combat role for American troops in Iraq in the coming months, a move that will retain U.S. service members in the country as advisers for now, he announced Monday at the White House.

"Our role in Iraq will be ... just to be available, to continue to train, to assist, to help and to deal with ISIS as it arises, but we're not going to be, by the end of the year, in a combat zone," Biden said alongside Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, according to a White House pool report.

The two leaders spoke briefly to reporters before entering an Oval Office meeting.

The Iraqi prime minister, who has faced internal political pressure over the presence of foreign troops in his country, welcomed the development Monday. It is a change that al-Kadhimi has sought in recent months as his forces continue to fight remnants of Islamic State, which has remained capable of attacks in Iraq. ISIS, for example, claimed responsibility for the bombing one week ago of a market in a Baghdad suburb that killed 30 people.

"Today, our nation is stronger than ever," al-Kadhimi said about ending the

American combat role in his nation.

The announcement comes just months after Biden's announcement in April of the formal withdrawal of nearly all American troops from Afghanistan, as the president looks to disentangle the U.S. military from its two-decade focus on counterterrorism operations ushered in by the 9/11 terrorist attacks. American troops have nearly completed their pullout from Afghanistan, where some 600 service members will remain past August to secure the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, U.S. officials have said. It was unclear Monday, however, what impact the mission change in Iraq will have on the U.S. military presence there.

'We will not flinch': Austin takes aim at China

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Tuesday stressed the "strategic imperative of partnership" in confronting challenges in the Indo-Pacific and said the United States and its allies "will not flinch when our interests are threatened" by China.

Austin, in his remarks during the International Institute for Strategic Studies' Fullerton Lecture in Singapore, said regional conflicts are not isolated incidents, and that ensuing conflicts affect the broader global landscape.

"Today, amid this merciless pandemic, we stand together at another hinge moment, and we face another choice between the power of partnership and the dangers of division," he said. "I am confident that — through our collective efforts — the Indo-Pacific

will again rise to the challenge. And America will be right at your side, just as an old friend should."

The defense secretary said he believed the success of countries in Southeast Asia depends upon "common principles," which include "a profound commitment to transparency" and "a dedication to freedom of the seas."

Austin, taking aim at China, said "this region has witnessed actions that just don't line up with those shared principles."

Referring to territorial clashes in the South China Sea and the Senkaku Islands, Austin said: "Unfortunately, Beijing's unwillingness to resolve disputes peacefully and respect the rule of law isn't just occurring on the water."

"We have also seen aggression against India, destabilizing military activity and other forms of coercion against the people of

Taiwan, and genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang."

President Joe Biden's administration has prioritized the economic and political threats posed by China, which he described in March as having an "overall goal to become the leading country in the world, the wealthiest country in the world and the most powerful country in the world."

At the time, Biden said, "that's not going to happen on my watch, because the United States is going to continue to grow and expand."

The Defense Department adhered to Biden's policy goal through the creation of a special China Task Force in June to reassess the U.S. military strategy on China and provide classified recommendations to military leaders.

Following his visit to Singapore, the first trip to Southeast

Asia by a Biden Cabinet member, Austin is scheduled to meet with officials in Vietnam and the Philippines.

Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman was in China earlier this week, meeting with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng.

Austin in his speech said the U.S. does "not seek confrontation," but "we will not flinch when our interests are threatened."

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs appeared to put the U.S. on notice during Austin's tour of Southeast Asia earlier Tuesday.

"The United States shall not even try to obstruct or ever interrupt China's development," the ministry said in several statements on Twitter.

"The United States must not violate China's national sovereignty, let alone undermine China's territorial integrity."

VA mandates medical staff to get coronavirus vaccine

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs announced Monday that it will require its hundreds of thousands of medical workers to receive coronavirus vaccines.

The department is the first federal agency to implement a vaccine mandate. Employees have until Sept. 20 to be fully vaccinated, VA Secretary Denis McDonough said in a statement.

"Whenever a veteran or VA employee sets foot into a VA facility, they deserve to know that we have done everything in our power to protect them from [the coronavirus]," McDonough said. "With this mandate, we can once again make — and keep — that fundamental promise."

President Joe Biden confirmed news of the mandate while speaking in the Oval Office, where he was meeting Monday with Mustafa al-Kadhimi, Iraq's prime

minister.

"Veterans Affairs is going to, in fact, require that all doctors working in facilities are going to have to be vaccinated," Biden said.

The mandate applies to all Title 38 employees, which includes VA physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, registered nurses, physician assistants and chiropractors, as well as medical workers who visit VA facilities.

As of Monday, 300,099 department employees were vaccinated against the virus. The department employs about 378,000 people, including 367,000 full-time health care professionals.

Since the start of the pandemic, 146 VA workers have died from the coronavirus. Four employees — all of whom were unvaccinated — died in recent weeks.

The VA said Monday that there was an outbreak of the virus among unvaccinated employees and trainees at a VA law enforcement training center.

Moderna expanding kids vaccine study for safety

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Moderna said Monday that it plans to expand the size of its COVID-19 vaccine study in younger children to better detect rare side effects, such as a type of heart inflammation recently flagged by U.S. health authorities.

The company said it is in talks with the Food and Drug Administration to enroll more study participants under age 12. It had intended to test the vaccine in about 7,000 children, with some as young as 6 months. The Cambridge, Mass.-based company said via email it hasn't decided on how many kids might be added.

The announcement comes as U.S. COVID-19 cases are rising and schools prepare to welcome students back to classrooms. At the same time, regulators continue to review cases of a rare type of heart inflammation called myocarditis that has been reported in a small number of teenagers

who got the Moderna or Pfizer shots.

Pfizer said on Monday that if it makes changes to its vaccine testing in children, it will provide an update then. The New York-based company is testing its vaccine in up to 4,500 children in the United States and Europe.

The FDA said in a statement it could not comment on its discussions with companies, but added "we do generally work with sponsors to ensure the number of participants in clinical trials are of adequate size to detect safety signals."

U.S. officials and independent medical experts said last month that the benefits of the vaccines outweigh the risks of the side effect, which has been reported in several hundred people younger than 30. But any vaccine safety issues could slow uptake, particularly among parents wary of taking any health risk with their children.

Police detail violence as riot hearings open

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — “This is how I’m going to die, defending this entrance.”

Capitol Police Officer Aquilino Gonell told House investigators Tuesday he could feel himself losing oxygen as he was crushed by rioters — supporters of then-President Donald Trump — as he was defending the Capitol during the Jan. 6 insurrection.

Metropolitan Police Officer Michael Fanone, who rushed to the scene, told the new House committee investigating the attack that he was “grabbed, beaten, tased, all while being called a traitor to my country.” Doctors later told him he’d had a heart attack.

Daniel Hodges, also a D.C. police officer, said he remembers foaming at the mouth as rioters crushed him between two doors and bashed him in the head with

his own weapon, injuring his skull.

“I did the only thing I could do, scream for help,” Hodges said.

Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn said one group of rioters, perhaps 20 people, screamed the n-word at him as he was trying to keep them from breaching the House chamber.

The four officers gave emotional, occasionally angry, accounts of the attack, in which they were beaten and verbally abused as the mob of Trump supporters overwhelmed them, broke through windows and doors and interrupted the certification of Democrat Joe Biden’s presidential win. The new committee is launching its probe with a focus on the law enforcement officers who protected them — an effort by the panel to put a human face on the violence of the day.

Tensions on Capitol Hill have only

worsened since the insurrection, with many Republicans playing down or outright denying the violence that occurred and denouncing the Democratic-led investigation as politically motivated. Democrats are hoping to win public support for the probe by reminding people how brutal it was, and how the law enforcement officers who were sworn to protect the Capitol suffered serious injuries at the hands of the rioters.

The officers emotionally detailed the horror of their experiences, their injuries and the lasting trauma as they begged the lawmakers to investigate the attack. They wiped away tears and paused to compose themselves as they spoke.

Rebuking Republican lawmakers who have resisted the hearings, Fanone said, “I feel like I went to hell and back to protect them and the people in this room.”

Family: Last victim ID’d in Fla. condo building collapse

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — The final victim of the condo building collapse in Florida has been identified, a relative said Monday, more than a month after the middle-of-the-night catastrophe that ultimately claimed 98 lives and became the largest non-hurricane related emergency response in state history.

Estelle Hedaya, an outgoing 54-year-old with a love of travel, was the last to be identified, ending what her relatives described as a torturous four-week wait. Her younger brother, Ikey Hedaya, confirmed the news to The Associated Press. A funeral was scheduled for Tuesday.

It comes just days after rescuers officially concluded the painstaking and emotionally heavy task of removing layers of dangerous debris and pulling out dozens of bodies.

“She always mentioned God anytime she was struggling with anything,” he said, adding he was drawing strength from God, just as he’d seen his sister do in

troubling times.

The site of the June 24 collapse at the oceanside Champlain Towers South has been mostly swept flat, with the rubble moved to a Miami warehouse. Forensic scientists and rabbis are still at work, including examining the debris at the warehouse, seeking to recover any additional remains and personal items. In the end, crews found no evidence that anyone who was found dead had survived the initial collapse, Fire Chief Alan Cominsky has said.

Search teams spent weeks battling the hazards of the rubble, including an unstable portion of the building that teetered above, a recurring fire and Florida’s stifling summer heat and thunderstorms. They went through more than 14,000 tons of broken concrete and rebar before finally declaring the mission complete.

“For the past 33 days, they have searched the rubble as if they were searching for one of their own,” Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said during a news conference Monday.

Man admits guilt in 4 spa killings

Associated Press

CANTON, Ga. — A man accused of killing eight people, most of them women of Asian descent, at Atlanta-area massage businesses pleaded guilty Tuesday to four of the murders and was handed four sentences of life without parole.

Robert Aaron Long, 22, still faces the death penalty in the four other deaths, which are being prosecuted in a different county. His shooting spree at three different businesses in March ignited outrage and fueled fear among Asian Americans, who were already facing increased hostility at the time linked to the coronavirus pandemic. Many were particularly upset when authorities suggested that Long’s crimes were not racially motivated but were instead born of a “sex addiction,” which is not recognized as an official disorder.

In comments sure to further frustrate those outraged over Long’s apparent targeting of Asian women, a prosecutor reiterated Tuesday that Cherokee County investiga-

tors saw no evidence of racial bias. That’s at odds with the hate crime enhancement that Long, who is white, faces just miles away in the four deaths in Atlanta.

“This was not any kind of hate crime,” District Attorney Shannon Wallace said.

In Atlanta, Long could be sentenced to death if convicted in the four deaths. There, he also faces charges of domestic terrorism in addition to murder, and prosecutors have said they will seek to have the deaths classified as a hate crime.

Wallace explained that Cherokee County prosecutors came to a different conclusion. When Long walked through the first spa “shooting anyone and everyone he saw,” Wallace he was motivated by a “sex addiction” and his desire to eliminate sources of temptation at businesses where he engaged in sex acts.

As for gender bias, Wallace said a hate crime enhancement based on hatred of women would not have significantly extended his sentence.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

State using dogs to sniff out alcohol in prisons

MD HAGERSTOWN — The state of Maryland has begun to deploy dogs to sniff out illicit alcohol in correctional facilities.

Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services Secretary Robert Green told The Washington Post the new team of canines was created in part after he saw an increase in alcohol-related activities and overdoses during the coronavirus pandemic. Many prisoners were having their meals brought to their cells, increasing the access to ingredients that can be used to make alcohol.

The new team consists of four dogs that work across the state with facilities in Cumberland, Baltimore, Jessup, Hagerstown and the lower Eastern Shore, the Post reported.

Man cited for killing bear in neighbor's yard

NC ASHEVILLE — A western North Carolina man is facing charges after wildlife authorities said he used a 12-gauge shotgun with buckshot to fatally shoot a bear on his neighbor's property.

The incident occurred in a neighborhood in Buncombe County, northeast of Asheville, the Citizen-Times reported.

Officials with the N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission said a man reported that his neighbor shot the bear from across the street. Given that the bear was not aggressive, was not attacking anyone and was on another person's property, officers told the newspaper there

was no reason for the shooting in the confines of a neighborhood.

The 70-year-old man faces a minimum fine of \$2,000 after being charged with negligent hunting, taking a wild animal and hunting during the closed season.

Gas station cited after cars break down

NY ONONDAGA — State officials have issued violation notices to a central New York gas station after motorists complained their cars broke down after filling up there.

Syracuse.com reported that more than a dozen drivers said their cars broke down after they got gas at B&K Food Mart in Onondaga, and that the number could be higher based on social media posts.

The problems began about two weeks ago. Most of the motorists reported water was found in their gas tanks, and said the repairs cost as much as \$1,300. One driver reported a gas tank half-filled with water.

State regulators found a leak when inspecting the station's underground fuel storage tanks, and a leaking recovery valve was repaired. The leak combined with recent heavy rainfalls in the region is considered a possible cause of the problem.

Retired professor given Polish medal for WWII

KS LAWRENCE — A retired University of Kansas professor received Poland's Medal of Valor recently more than 75 years after he fought with the Polish resistance against the occupying

forces of Nazi Germany during World War II.

Polish Air Force Maj. Gen. Cezary Wisniewski, who is based at the Polish Embassy in Washington, visited Jarek Piekiewicz's home in Lawrence, Kan., to give him Poland's second-highest combat honor on his 95th birthday.

Wisniewski said the honor was overlooked during the war, and then the postwar communist government of Poland refused to honor the country's wartime resistance fighters.

Man arrested after suspected kidnapping

CA WEST HOLLYWOOD — A man seen carrying an unconscious woman into a white van and driving away was arrested and charged with kidnapping, Los Angeles County sheriff's officials said.

The woman had just left a bar in West Hollywood when witnesses saw a man with gray hair carry her into a 1997 Dodge Ram, said sheriff's Lt. Jose Aguirre.

As the van pulled away, a witness flagged down a passing sheriff's patrol car and reported what he had seen, according to the Los Angeles Times.

When the patrol car began following the Dodge, the driver parked the van and walked away, officials said. The woman was found disoriented but not hurt inside the van.

Woman to become rare 2-time organ donor

NC WILSON — A North Carolina woman is set to join the elite ranks of two-time living organ donors.

Surgeons in New York will take part of 54-year-old Stephanie Allen's liver and transplant it into her brother, Eric Allen, The Wilson Times reported. Stephanie Allen, a delivery driver and mother of four, previously donated a kidney to her sister in 2006.

"Right now, she is the sunshine in my world," said Eric Allen, whose liver was failing after two years of battling primary sclerosing cholangitis and Crohn's disease.

According to the United Network for Organ Sharing, just 91 people have donated two organs to two people since April 1994.

"Doctors have told me I don't have any more organs to give," Stephanie Allen said. "But if I had one and my other siblings needed it, I'd give it. It is hard to watch someone you love suffer and do nothing."

Man's water walk ends short of reaching NY

FL BUNNELL — A man in a cylindrical floating contraption washed ashore in Florida in an apparent attempt to walk on water to New York.

The Flagler County Sheriff's Office reported that the man left St. Augustine in the vessel with the goal of reaching New York.

WOFL-TV in Orlando reported the man was trying to raise money for charity.

It wasn't Reza Baluchi's first time trying to cross Atlantic waters in a flotation device. In 2014, the U.S. Coast Guard rescued him while he tried to reach Bermuda from Florida in a homemade "hydro pod."

— From wire reports

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Biles withdraws, US settles for silver

Associated Press

TOKYO — Simone Biles came to Tokyo as the star of the U.S. Olympic movement and perhaps the Games themselves. She convinced herself she was prepared for the pressure. That she was ready for the spotlight.

Only, as the women's gymnastics team final approached on Tuesday night, something felt off for the American star. So rather than push through the doubts that crept into her head as she's done so many times before, she decided enough was enough.

Biles withdrew from the competition following one rotation, a stunning decision that opened the door for the Russian Olympic Committee team to surge to gold. Her American teammates held on for silver after the 24-year-old realized following a shaky vault

she wasn't in the right headspace to compete.

"I didn't want to go into any of the other events second-guessing myself," Biles said. "So, I thought it would be better if I took a step back and let these girls go out there and do their job."

Biles spent the final three rotations serving as head cheerleader while Grace McCallum, Sunisa Lee and Jordan Chiles carried on without her. The U.S. drew within eight-tenths of a point through three rotations. The ROC, however, never wavered on floor. And its gymnasts erupted when 21-year-old Angelina Melnikova's score assured it of the top spot on the podium.

The victory came a day after the ROC men's team edged Japan for the top spot in the men's final.

Great Britain edged Italy for

bronze.

The U.S. entered the finals hoping to bounce back from a shaky performance in qualifying, when the Americans came in second to the ROC. It marked the first time in 11 years the U.S. found itself looking up at the scoreboard at someone else.

Biles posted on social media Monday that she felt the weight of the world on her shoulders. It affected her practice. It affected her confidence. And when she stepped onto the vault runway, it finally found its way into her performance, too.

Biles was scheduled to do an "Amanar" vault that requires a roundoff back handspring onto the table followed by 2½ twists. Biles instead did just 1½ twists with a big leap forward after landing. She sat down and talked to

U.S. team doctor Marcia Faustin, then headed to the back while her teammates moved on to uneven bars without her.

When Biles returned several minutes later, she hugged her teammates and took off her bar grips. And just like that, her night was over.

"It's very uncharacteristic of me," Biles said. "So it just sucks that it happens here at the Olympic Games than have it happen at any other time. But, you know, with the year that it's been, I'm really not surprised."

Biles is scheduled to defend her Olympic title in the all-around final on Thursday. She also qualified for all four event finals later in the Games. She said she will regroup on Wednesday before deciding whether to continue.

Japan beats Americans to capture softball gold

Associated Press

YOKOHAMA, Japan — Japan won its second straight Olympic softball gold medal, beating the United States 2-0 Tuesday in an emotional repeat of its 2008 victory in Beijing that again left the Americans in tears.

Yukiko Ueno took a one-hitter into the fifth inning, five days after her 39th birthday, and Japan snuffed out an American rally attempt with an acrobatic double play in the sixth inning that will long be replayed.

Japan led 2-0 when Michelle Moultrie singled leading off the sixth off hard-throwing 20-year-old left-hander Miu Goto.

Goto dealt Haylie McCleney her first strikeout of the Olympics with a 69 mph pitch at the hands, then allowed a single to Janie Reed.

With two on and one out, Amanda Chidester lined a rocket to third. The ball bounced off

the left wrist of third baseman Yu Yamamoto and ricocheted to perfectly positioned shortstop Mana Atsumi, who stuck out her glove for a backhand spear, then made a Derek Jeter-like jump throw to second baseman Yuka Ichiguchi to double up Moultrie.

Reed then made a leaping catch at the left-field wall to rob Yamato Fujita of a two-run homer in the bottom half.

Ueno (2-0) re-entered in the seventh and retired Valerie Arioto on a flyout, Ali Aguilar on a groundout and Delaney Spaulding on a foul out to the catcher, setting off a celebration.

No. 9 batter Atsumi had a run-scoring infield hit in the fourth inning and Fujita lined an RBI single off Monica Abbott in the fifth in building a 2-0 lead.

Ueno improved to 9-1 in her Olympic career, allowing two hits, striking out five and walking two.

Alaskan teen shocks world's breaststrokers

Associated Press

TOKYO — Alaska is renowned for its majestic natural beauty. The snowy peaks. The glistening glaciers. The sparkling fjords.

An Arctic paradise, for sure.

Swimming?

That's never been much of a thing in the 49th U.S. state. Until now.

Seventeen-year-old Lydia Jacoby pulled off a stunning victory in the women's 100-meter breaststroke on Tuesday, upsetting American teammate and defending champion Lilly King.

Alaska — of all places — has a champion at the pool.

"I was definitely racing for a medal. I knew I had it in me," said Jacoby, who hails from Seward (population: 2,733). "I wasn't really expecting a gold medal, so when I looked up and saw the scoreboard it was insane."

Only a handful of Alaska

swimmers had even qualified for the U.S. Olympic trials. Jacoby was the first to ever make the team.

When she touched the wall first, it set off a giddy celebration back home.

"A lot of big-name swimmers come from big, powerhouse clubs," Jacoby said. "Me coming from a small club, in a state with such a small population, really shows everyone that you can do it no matter where you're from."

Jacoby's winning time was 1 minute, 4.95 seconds. Tatjana Schoenmaker of South Africa claimed the silver in 1:05.22, while King gave the Americans another medal by taking the bronze in 1:05.54.

Britain went 1-2 in the men's 200 freestyle. Russia did the same in the men's 100 backstroke. And the Australian women claimed their second gold of the Tokyo Games.

'A bit much': Osaka cites pressure in loss

Associated Press

TOKYO — It wasn't the ending that Naomi Osaka — nor her multitudes of fans across Japan and worldwide — had expected.

The start of the Tokyo Olympics, however, will forever be a bright memory for the tennis superstar.

Osaka herself said after lighting the Olympic cauldron during last week's opening ceremony that it was "undoubtedly the greatest athletic achievement and honor I will ever have in my life."

So maybe — just maybe — that will allow Osaka to cope with her unexpected 6-1, 6-4 loss to former French Open finalist Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic in the third round of the Olympic tennis tournament on Tuesday.

Not immediately, though.

"I'm disappointed in every loss, but I feel like this one sucks more than the others," Osaka said.

As a four-time Grand Slam champion, the highest-paid female athlete in the world and

the host country's poster girl for the Games, the huge expectations were hard to handle.

"I definitely feel like there was a lot of pressure for this," Osaka said. "I think it's maybe because I haven't played in the Olympics before and for the first year (it) was a bit much."

The second-ranked Osaka, who was born in Japan and grew up in the United States, struggled with her usually reliable groundstrokes while the left-handed Vondrousova produced a series of drop-shot winners and other crafty shots that drew her opponent out of her comfort zone.

"It's tough for her also playing in Japan and in the Olympics," the 42nd-ranked Vondrousova said. "It's so much pressure, I cannot imagine."

Osaka won her opening two matches in straight sets following a two-month mental health break. But conditions were different Tuesday with the roof closed because it was raining outside.

"I've taken long breaks before and I've managed to do well," said Osaka, who initially did not comment after her loss, then came

back out and met with a small group of reporters. "I'm not saying that I did bad right now, but I do know that my expectations were a lot higher."

"I feel like my attitude wasn't that great because I don't really know how to cope with that pressure, so that's the best that I could have done in this situation."

The day wasn't a complete loss for Japan since Kei Nishikori, a bronze medalist in 2016, beat Marcos Giron of the United States 7-6 (5), 3-6, 6-1 to reach the last 16.

Third-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece also defeated an American, Frances Tiafoe, 6-3, 6-4.

And Novak Djokovic added another medal event to his program by entering the mixed doubles draw with Serbian partner Nina Stojanovic.

Tsitsipas is also entered in mixed with Maria Sakkari, who lost to fourth-seeded Elina Svitolina of Ukraine in singles in three sets.

Svitolina's quarterfinal opponent will be Camila Giorgi of Italy, who defeated Wimbledon finalist Karolina Plisova.

Ex-Army engineer makes Olympic rugby debut

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A former Army specialist made his Olympic debut in a key position for the U.S. rugby team when they took on South Africa on Tuesday.

Cody Melphy, who joined the Army in 2017, was an enlisted bridge engineer and a member of the Army World Class Athlete Program at the start of the year. In February, he finished his enlistment and became a full-time professional rugby player.

The Littleton, Colo., native was only called into the Olympic squad after an injury forced 2016 Olympian Ben Pinkelman to withdraw earlier this month. On July 8, Melphy was named the 13th player in the squad, which meant he could join the team at any time.

That turned out to be the Americans' third pool game against South Africa, the country whose 15-a-side Sprinkboks team won the Rugby World Cup in Japan in 2019.

Running onto the field, the 29-year-old had an "unbelievable

feeling of nervousness, adrenaline and, funny enough, calmness," he said after the game.

The playmaker had a big smile on his face when he took the field because, he said, his dreams had officially come true.

"I've trained hard. I knew that I was ready. Just needed to go out and do my job and I'd be all right," he said.

The Americans, who beat Ireland and Kenya on Monday, fell to South Africa 17-12 before narrowly losing their quarterfinal game against Great Britain 26-21.

Melphy's "flyhalf" position is crucial in rugby and akin to a football quarterback.

His role involves receiving the ball from the halfback and distributing it to other backs or moving it upfield himself. At the same time, he must make tackles on defense and kick goals.

Melphy has also become a TikTok sensation since arriving in Japan's capital city. His short videos giving the world an in-

sider's look at the Olympians' lives are garnering millions of views on the social media platform. One video, titled "Things that just make sense in the Olympic Village," had 3.1 million likes, 36,500 shares and 13,600 comments and as of Tuesday evening in Tokyo.

The 5-foot-10, 185-pound back honed his skills while serving in the Army. Melphy didn't deploy to any hotspots during his time in uniform but, in an email before game, said Army life had its challenges.

"I was able to keep a smile on my face through most of it," he said. "Even though I did have to do thousands of pushups for smiling."

The Olympian first played rugby at age 18 after joining a friend's team. He made the All-Army team twice and won "gold" at the U.S. military's multiservice rugby tournament two years in a row.

He was also a member of Life University's Division I national championship winning, 15-a-

side team and was selected as an All-American twice in sevens and twice in 15s.

Army service taught Melphy discipline and perseverance, he said.

His message to troops in Japan?

"Thank you for your service," he said in his email. "We appreciate and love you all and we will be representing the flag and our freedoms to the best of our abilities out here in Tokyo. Rock On!"

Melphy isn't the only rugby player in Tokyo for the Olympics with an Army pedigree.

Army Spc. Nana Fa'avesi, 29, of Sacramento, Calif., is a 2016 Olympian who plays prop and came to Japan as an alternate for the U.S. women's sevens team. Army Capt. Kasey McCravey, 27, of Scottsdale, Ariz., is a hooker/flyhalf and also in Japan as an alternate for the women's team. They begin their quest for gold on Thursday.

Red Sox rally, extend lead over Jays

Associated Press

BOSTON — Alex Verdugo hit a two-run homer in the eighth inning and the AL East-leading Boston Red Sox rallied late for the second straight game, beating Toronto 5-4 on Monday night in the opener of an important series for the Blue Jays.

Boston star Rafael Devers added a solo homer on the four-year anniversary of his first major-league shot.

Bo Bichette hit a two-run homer for fourth-place Toronto, which fell 10 ½ games behind in the East.

Adam Ottavino (3-3) worked a scoreless inning for the win. Matt Barnes got the final three outs for his 22nd save.

Blue Jays starter Thomas Hatch made just his second big-league start after being sidelined with a shoulder impingement since spring training. The 26-year-old righthander gave up three runs on seven hits in 3 ⅓ innings. Trevor Richards (1-1) took the loss.

Angels 6, Rockies 2: Shohei Ohtani pitched seven strong innings and hit an early RBI single as host Los Angeles beat Colorado.

Ohtani (5-1) gave up one run and five hits with five strikeouts.

Jack Mayfield added a two-run homer for the Angels. Raisel Iglesias worked a scoreless ninth for his 22nd save in 26 chances.

Phillies 6, Nationals 5: Andrew

McCutchen hit a three-run homer in the bottom of the ninth inning to give host Philadelphia a victory over sinking Washington.

Rhys Hoskins also had a three-run homer for the second-place Phillies, who are 3 ½ games behind the New York Mets in the NL East.

Braves 2-0, Mets 0-1: Jeff McNeil laced his second go-ahead hit in two days when his RBI double in the fifth inning sent host New York to a victory over Atlanta and a doubleheader split.

Kyle Muller threw five sharp innings to earn his second big league victory in the opener, a win for the Braves.

The Mets have split nine of their 11 doubleheaders this season and swept the other two.

Royals 4, White Sox 3: Jorge Soler hit two home runs for the second straight game and Kansas City extended its winning streak to six games with a win over visiting Chicago.

Mike Minor (8-8) gave the Royals their fifth quality start in the last six games. He allowed two runs on three hits over six innings. He walked two and struck out seven. Scott Barlow worked the final two innings and picked up his sixth save.

Twins 6, Tigers 5 (10): Max Kepler's RBI single in the bottom of the 10th inning against All-Star closer Gregory Soto gave Minnesota a win over visiting Detroit.

Soto walked the bases loaded in the ninth before striking out Williams Astudillo on three pitches. Soto had two outs in the 10th, but walked Andrelton Simmons and then gave up Kepler's ninth career game-ending hit.

Cubs 6, Reds 5: Pinch-hitter Javier Báez hit a bases-loaded single in the bottom of the ninth inning to give host Chicago a win over Cincinnati.

Anthony Rizzo homered in his second straight game for the Cubs. Willson Contreras also homered.

Joey Votto homered for the third time in three games and drove in three runs for Cincinnati, which dropped its second straight and lost for the seventh time in 10 games. Kyle Farmer added a homer as the Reds' winning streak against Chicago ended at four.

Heath Hembree (2-5) took the loss. Craig Kimbrel (2-3) struck out three straight to end the top of the inning after putting two men on.

Mariners 11, Astros 8: Dylan Moore hit a grand slam in the eighth inning to lift Seattle to a comeback win against visiting Houston.

The Astros scored six runs in the first and led 7-0 in the fourth before the Mariners started to rally. The seven-run deficit is the most Seattle has overcome this season, and the largest cushion AL West-leading Houston has lost.

Surf's up! Moore wins inaugural event for US

Associated Press

ICHINOMIYA, Japan — After a series of underdogs stole the show at the beginning of surfing's historic Olympic debut, two of the sport's most seasoned superstars took home the gold medals.

Carissa Moore of the United States and Italo Ferreira of Brazil became the first Olympic surfing champions on Tuesday, more than a century after the sport first tried to get on the program.

The 28-year-old Moore, the darling child prodigy who could beat the boys and grew up to be the youngest world champion surfer, persevered after struggling in the early heats.

"It's been a crazy couple of

days," Moore said. "A little bit of a roller coaster of emotions just trying to figure out the break, find my rhythm, learning how to trust myself without my family here."

The relatively modest beach break conditions were so unlike the world class waves she's used to as a veteran of the professional tour and at home in Hawaii. By the end, the methodical and well-loved surfer finally got in rhythm with the ocean in time to deliver the kind of standout performance that has defined her career.

The picture-perfect ending even included a rainbow that popped into the sky as Moore, who is the only Native Hawaiian surfer at the Games, shredded

waves in the final against South African rival Bianca Buitendag.

Calling it "divine intervention," the 17th-ranked Buitendag won silver after pulling off upset after upset over the three-day competition, starring in some of the contest's biggest moments in her path to the Olympic podium.

She then said she was retiring from the sport.

"I felt like this was the perfect opportunity for closure," the 27-year-old Buitendag said. "I'm ready for the next season of my life."

When the clock ran out in the men's final, Ferreira turned to the ocean, collapsed his hands together in a prayer and wept, nearly knocked over by the

waves crashing onto shore as he thanked God for a dominant showing throughout the inaugural contest.

He won his final handily against Kanoa Igarashi of Japan despite crashing through an air to land on a broken board. The incident required a quick board switch on shore near the beginning of the heat, which didn't seem to rattle the man who had so little growing up that he first learned to surf on a cooler.

"I broke my good board on my first wave. That board gives me good speed, the other one is more slow," the 27-year-old Ferreira said. "It's super hard out there, but I knew that there was a lot of opportunities around."