

Key Russian bridge to Crimea hit again

Associated Press

An attack before dawn Monday damaged part of a bridge linking Russia to Moscow-annexed Crimea that is a key supply route for Kremlin forces in the war with Ukraine, forcing the span's temporary closure for a second time in less than a year. Two people were killed and their daughter was injured.

Vehicle traffic on the Kerch Bridge came to a standstill, while rail traffic across the 12-mile span was also halted for about six hours.

The strike was carried out by two Ukrainian maritime drones, Russia's National Anti-Terrorist Committee said.

Ukrainian officials were coy about taking responsibility, as they have been in past strikes. But in what appeared to be a tacit acknowledgment, Ukrainian Security Service spokesman Artem Degtyarenko said in a statement that his agency would reveal details of how the "bang" was organized after Kyiv has won the war.

The bridge was previously attacked in October, when a truck bomb blew up two of

its sections and required months of repair. Moscow decried that assault as an act of terrorism and retaliated by bombarding Ukraine's civilian infrastructure, targeting the country's power grid over the winter.

In Monday's blast, the Ukrainian news portal RBK-Ukraine cited a security services source as saying it was carried out by what it called floating drones. A deputy prime minister, Mykhailo Fedorov, later said on the Telegram messaging service that "today, the Crimea bridge was torn apart by sea drones," but it was not clear if he was making an official confirmation or referring to earlier reports.

Hours after Monday's attack, video from Russian authorities showed crews picking up debris from the deck of the bridge, a section of which appeared to be sloping to one side, and a damaged black sedan with its passenger door open.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Marat Khusnullin said authorities were inspecting the damage before determining how long it will take to repair.

The Kerch Bridge is a conspicuous symbol of Moscow's claims on Crimea and an essential land link to the peninsula, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014. The \$3.6 billion bridge is the longest in Europe and is crucial for Russia's military operations in southern Ukraine in the nearly 17-month-old war.

The bridge attack comes as Ukrainian forces are pressing a counteroffensive in several sections of the front line. It also happened hours before Russia announced that it is halting a deal brokered by the United Nations and Turkey which allows the export of Ukrainian grain during the war.

Russian media identified the dead as Alexei, 40, and his wife Natalia Kulik, 36, who were traveling to Crimea for a summer vacation. Their 14-year-old daughter suffered chest and brain injuries.

Russian authorities said the attack didn't affect the bridge's piers but damaged the deck on one of two road links. The damage appeared less serious than in October's attack.

Ukrainians train on Abrams at US base in Germany

**BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN**

Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — A trio of M1 Abrams tanks with Ukrainian soldiers at the controls took turns firing at targets more than a mile away at this vast U.S. Army training area in Bavaria, the blasts echoing across the hilly expanse.

Roughly 200 Ukrainian trainees are learning to operate the most advanced American battle tanks. They'll soon be ready to use them against invading Russian forces in Ukraine, their U.S. military instructors said.

The Pentagon is set to deliver 31 refurbished Abrams tanks to Kyiv by fall, part of the roughly \$50 billion in military aid the United States has given since

the February 2022 start of the Russia-Ukraine war.

"As we continue to train Ukrainian armed forces on more and more advanced weapons systems, we continue to be amazed at how quickly they adapt," U.S. European Command spokesman Capt. William Speaks said at the Grafenwoehr Training Area on Friday.

A small group of journalists were allowed a rare glimpse Friday into the instruction the Army-led Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine has been providing.

The soldiers were not made available for interviews, and military officials did not allow photos or video of the training.

"They want to know as much detail as we can provide.

They're driven, inspired and all in," a U.S. defense official involved in the Abrams training said of the troops. The American trainers were not allowed to be identified under the military's ground rules.

In the only exercise observed, three stationary tanks fired 120 mm cannons twice each at 10-foot-wide targets about 1.2 miles away. All but one shot hit the mark, which the officials indicated was a good performance.

An exercise later that evening involved shooting at targets while the tanks moved, they added. It was week eight of a 12-week crash course designed to get the troops back to the war as quickly as possible. Training will continue after the soldiers leave Germany, and channels

will be set up for crews to contact American experts should problems arise, a U.S. defense official said.

The Abrams runs on a jet turbine engine rather than a diesel engine like many other armored vehicles. It burns through fuel at a rate of about 2 gallons per mile, meaning a ready convoy of fuel trucks is necessary for it to operate. While an Abrams can power through most challenging terrain, fuel trucks sometimes can't. That's one reason analysts believe the German-made Leopard 2 is a more suitable tank for Ukraine.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz insisted he would allow Leopards to be sent to Ukraine only if the U.S. also agreed to send Abrams tanks.

Russia halts Ukraine grain export deal

Associated Press

LONDON — Russia halted a breakthrough wartime deal on Monday that allows grain to flow from Ukraine to countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where hunger is a growing threat and high food prices have pushed more people into poverty.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia would suspend the Black Sea Grain Initiative until its demands to get its own food and fertilizer to the world are met. While Russia has complained that restrictions on shipping and insurance have hampered its agricultural exports, it has shipped record amounts of wheat since last year.

“When the part of the Black Sea deal related to Russia is implemented, Russia will immediately return to the implementation of the deal,” Peskov said.

The suspension marks the end of an accord that the U.N. and Turkey brokered last summer to allow food to leave the Black Sea region after Russia’s invasion of its neighbor worsened a global food crisis. The initiative is credited with helping lower soaring prices of wheat, vegetable oil and other food commodities.

Ukraine and Russia are both major global suppliers of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other affordable food products that developing nations rely on.

The suspension of the deal sent wheat prices up about 3% in Chicago trading, to \$6.81 a bushel, still about half what they were last year during last year’s peaks, but fell later in the day.

Analysts don’t expect more than a temporary bump to global food commodity prices because places like Russia and Brazil have ratcheted up wheat and corn exports. But food insecurity worldwide is growing as developing countries also struggle with climate change, conflict and economic crises. Finding suppliers outside Ukraine that are farther away also could raise costs.

The grain deal provided assurances that ships won’t be at-

tacked entering and leaving Ukrainian ports, while a separate agreement facilitated the movement of Russian food and fertilizer. While Western sanctions do not apply to Moscow’s agricultural shipments, some companies may be wary of doing business with Russia.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he wanted to keep the initiative going even without Russia’s safety assurances.

The Russian Foreign Ministry again declared the area “temporarily dangerous.”

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said officials were talking with Russia and that he was hopeful the deal would be extended.

Medal of Honor monument backers eye spot on Mall

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

Supporters of a monument in Washington, D.C., to honor the Medal of Honor asked members of Congress on Thursday to grant an exemption to federal law and allow it to be built on the National Mall near the Lincoln Memorial.

The National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation, which is the driving force behind the monument, has asked for the location because President Abraham Lincoln established the medal in 1861 and presented the first awards in 1863. To do so, Congress would need to provide an exception to a 20-year-old law prohibiting any new commemorative works in what’s known as “the reserve,” a no-build zone that encompasses most of the National Mall.

“This monument is a way for Lincoln’s voice of reason to continue gently whispering into the future, admonishing us to focus

on the things which unite us and on our shared values,” retired Navy SEAL Britt Slabinski, a Medal of Honor recipient and foundation board member, said to the House Committee on Natural Resources subpanel on federal lands. The Medal of Honor is the highest valor award available to military members, and Slabinski said the monument is not intended to honor valor or the 3,560 recipients of the medal but rather the “enduring values which motivate the citizen soldier to risk their life for those around them.”

Reps. Blake Moore, R-Utah, and Marc Veasey, D-Texas, introduced the Hershel “Woody” Williams National Medal of Honor Monument Location Act in April, after their joint effort to get the monument built on federal land in the nation’s capital became law in 2021. Williams died last year as the last living Medal of Honor recipient from World War II.

House pushes bill that would let troops file malpractice claims

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Rep. Darrell Issa said he wants to make certain active-duty service members who experience medical malpractice at a Defense Department facility can take their claim to district court.

“We’re not implying that medical malpractice is rampant, but it does happen. And when it does happen, we want to make sure that those who are serving in uniform be treated as well as those who have served in uniform and their families,” the Republican from California said Thursday.

Issa, a former Army captain, is pushing legislation with Reps. Richard Hudson, R-N.C., Jimmy Panetta, D-Calif., and Michael Waltz, R-Fla., that continues to expand on a law passed by Congress in 2019 called The Sgt. First Class Richard Stayskal Military Medical Accountability Act.

The law allows troops to file

claims with the Defense Department alleging malpractice by military health care providers. The process also allows them to seek damages for economic losses, pain and suffering.

Stayskal was an Army Green Beret diagnosed with lung cancer in 2017 at age 36. He had undergone chest scans earlier that year for diving school and was told his results were normal. He discovered, however, the military hospital had misread the exams and failed to recognize the tumor in his upper-right lung. Stayskal wanted to sue for malpractice but a 1950 Supreme Court case banned military malpractice lawsuits, declaring the government was not liable for injuries to service members on active duty.

The new bill — Healthcare, Equality and Rights for Heroes, or HERO Act — was introduced in the House on June 23 and referred to the Judiciary Committee of which Issa is a member.

Northeast drying out after flood kills 5 in Pa.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON CROSSING, Pa. — An already saturated Northeast began drying out Monday after a second round of heavy rain in a week, including a flash flood in Pennsylvania that claimed at least five lives over the weekend.

A 9-month-old boy and his 2-year-old sister remained missing in Upper Makefield Township in Bucks County, Pa., which is along the Delaware River, after they were swept away late Saturday afternoon while traveling in a vehicle.

Fire Chief Tim Brewer said the area got about 6 1/2 to 7 inches of rain in 45 minutes.

The children are part of a Charleston, S.C., family visiting family and friends. They were on their way to a barbecue when their vehicle got stuck in the flash flood, Brewer said.

“As they tried to escape the fierce floodwaters, Dad took his 4-year-old son while the mother and the grandmother grabbed the two additional children,” he said. The father and son were “miraculously” able to get to safety. “However the grandmother, the mother, and the two children were swept away by the floodwaters,” Brewer said. The mother was among those later found dead.

A news conference was planned for Monday morning.

Flash flooding hit parts of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey over the weekend. A confirmed tornado touched down Sunday morning in North Brookfield, Mass., but no injuries or major property damage were reported. In New Hampshire, where some roads caved in several towns, heavy rain postponed Sunday’s NASCAR race at the New Hampshire Motor Speedway by a day.

Vermont reported no immediate safety threats following historic flooding nearly a week ago that dumped up to two months’ worth of rain in two days. U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg planned to visit the state later Monday.

More rain was in the forecast for Tuesday.

Sunday’s strong storms led to hundreds of flight cancellations at airports in the New York City area, and hundreds were delayed.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said 5 inches of rain fell within two hours in Suffolk County on Long Island. The state saw \$50 million in damages from storms in the past week.

Death Valley sizzles as brutal heat wave lasts

Associated Press

DEATH VALLEY, Calif. — Long the hottest place on Earth, Death Valley put a sizzling exclamation point Sunday on a record warm summer that is baking nearly the entire globe by flirting with some of the hottest temperatures ever recorded, meteorologists said.

Temperatures in Death Valley, which runs along part of central California’s border with Nevada, reached 128 degrees Fahrenheit on Sunday at the aptly named Furnace Creek, the National Weather Service said.

The hottest temperature ever recorded on Earth was 134 F in July 1913 at Furnace Creek, said Randy Ceverny of the World Meteorological Organization, the body recognized as keeper of world records. Temperatures at or above 130 F have only been recorded on Earth a handful of times, mostly in Death Valley.

“With global warming, such temperatures are becoming more and more likely to occur,” Ceverny, the World Meteorological Organization’s records coordinator, said in an email. “Long-term: Global warming is causing higher and more frequent temperature extremes. Short-term: This particular weekend is being driven by a very very strong upper-level ridge of high pressure over the Western U.S.”

Furnace Creek is an unincorporated community within Death Valley National Park. It’s home to the park’s visitor center, which includes a digital thermometer popular with tourists.

On Sunday afternoon, dozens of people gathered at the thermometer — some wearing fur coats as a joke — hoping to snap a picture with a temperature reading that would shock their friends and family.

That digital thermometer hit 130 degrees at one point on Sunday, but it’s not an official reading.

The National Weather Service said the highest temperature recorded on Sunday was 128 F — a high that was unlikely to be surpassed as the sun went down.

Death Valley’s brutal temperatures come amid a blistering stretch of hot weather that has put roughly one-third of Americans under some type of heat advisory, watch or warning. A heat wave in parts of the South and Midwest killed more than a dozen people last month.

Georgia mass shooting suspect killed during search; 3 cops hurt

Associated Press

HAMPTON, Ga. — Officers on Sunday shot and killed a man wanted in four weekend killings near Atlanta during an exchange of gunfire, with a sheriff’s deputy and two police officers wounded while trying to take the suspect into custody, authorities said. Officials said Andre Longmore was shot during an intense search for the 40-year-old suspect. The exchange of gunfire came a day after Saturday morning’s shootings rocked a bucolic subdivision in Hampton, south of Georgia’s main city.

Officials said Longmore was killed about 15 miles to the north of Hampton in suburban Jonesboro. Clayton County police said a Henry County sheriff’s deputy saw the SUV that Longmore stole from one of the victims

and began chasing him, calling for help. After exchanging gunfire with Longmore, Clayton police said he ran away. Justin Robinson told WAFB-TV that Longmore entered the backyard of a townhouse.

“He had a gun, he was bleeding, he was naked,” Robinson said.

Robinson said he alerted police officers, who were greeted with gunfire when they entered the townhouse where Longmore had hidden.

“Soon as they open the back door this guy starts shooting, shoots at the cops,” Robinson said. “The police start shooting.”

A Henry County sheriff’s deputy and two Clayton County police officers were injured in the attempt to arrest Longmore, officials said.

Brutal heat wave hits southern Europe

Associated Press

ROME — Italian health officials intensified heat warnings as southern Europe began a brutally hot week on Monday with temperatures expected to top 40 degrees Celsius — or 104 degrees Fahrenheit — on a continent already overburdened by tourists.

The health ministry issued 10 recommendations to protect elderly people, the sick and pets from the heat, urging people to stay indoors during the hottest hours, drink nearly half a gallon of water a day and refrain from strenuous exercise at peak daylight times.

The culprit was a high-pressure anticy-

clone dubbed Cerberus, the multi-headed dog that guards gates to the underworld in Greek mythology.

“The bubble of hot air that has inflated over southern Europe has turned Italy and surrounding countries into a giant pizza oven,” Hannah Cloke, a climate scientist and physical geographer at the University of Reading, said in a statement.

The third heat wave in a month was expected to affect much of the Mediterranean and last until Wednesday. The mercury in Rome hit 102 F by 3 p.m. on Monday. Italy’s capital was expected to be even hotter on Tuesday, topping 104 F, as were several other cities, in particular in Sardinia and Sicily.

Power outages were hitting parts of Rome as electric grids suffered under heavier demand from air conditioners as people sought relief. Italian farm lobby Coldiretti, meanwhile, issued an alarm about the plight of domestic and farm animals, noting that cows are producing around 10% less milk as a result of the heat.

Elsewhere in Spain, a wildfire that started Saturday on the Canary island of La Palma continued to burn out of control Monday, although authorities say weaker winds and cooler temperatures in the area are helping firefighters combat it. The blaze has burned 11,300 acres of mostly woody hill land and 20 houses and buildings.

Santos uses campaign cash to pay himself back \$85K

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Embattled freshman U.S. Rep. George Santos, a Republican from New York charged with a host of financial crimes, including embezzling money from his campaign, withdrew \$85,000 from his campaign to help repay hundreds of thousands of dollars he loaned himself to get elected in 2022.

Congressional campaign records released Friday show Santos raised a relatively paltry \$138,000 during the last three months for a reelection bid that is expected to be one of the country’s most-watched and hotly contested races in 2024.

The records show he spent nearly

\$118,000, the bulk of it to begin repaying the more than \$700,000 he loaned himself for his successful but surprising victory last year.

The underwhelming fundraising suggests potential struggles in fending off a challenge from fellow Republican Kellen Curry, an Afghanistan War veteran and former J.P. Morgan banker, who raised more than \$200,000 and spent \$36,000 during the same period.

Meanwhile, the top Democrat vying for New York’s 3rd Congressional District, Nassau County legislator Joshua Lafazan, has raised more than \$345,000, with much of it still in the bank.

Santos pleaded not guilty in May to a 13-count federal indictment charging him with looting his campaign coffers, fraudulently receiving unemployment and lying to Congress about being a millionaire. He faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted.

A day later, he signed an agreement with Brazilian officials that allowed him to avoid prosecution for forging two stolen checks in 2008.

Despite his legal woes, Santos has vowed to fight to keep his congressional seat, which mostly encompasses the western suburbs of Long Island but also straddles parts of the Queens borough in New York City.

Rabbits have residents hopping into action for help

Associated Press

WILTON MANORS, Fla. — When Alicia Griggs steps outside her suburban Fort Lauderdale home, Florida’s latest invasive species comes a-hoppin’ down the street: lionhead rabbits.

The bunnies, which sport an impressive flowing mane around their heads, want the food Griggs carries. But she also represents their best chance of survival and moving where this domesticated breed belongs: inside homes, away from cars, cats, hawks, Florida heat and possibly government-hired exterminators.

Griggs is spearheading efforts to raise the \$20,000 to \$40,000 it would cost for a rescue group to capture, neuter, vaccinate, shelter and then give away the estimated 60 to 100 li-

onheads now populating Jenada Isles, an 81-home community in Wilton Manors.

They are descendants of a group a backyard breeder illegally let loose when she moved away two years ago.

“They really need to be rescued. So we’ve tried to get the city to do it, but they’re just dragging their feet,” Griggs said. “They think that if they do that, then they’ll have to get rid of iguanas and everything else that people don’t want around.”

Monica Mitchell, whose East Coast Rabbit Rescue would likely lead the effort, said capturing, treating and finding homes for them “is not an easy process.” Few veterinarians treat rabbits and many prospective owners shy away when they find out how much work the animals require. Griggs agreed.

“People don’t realize they’re exotic pets and they’re complicated. They have a complicated digestive system and they have to eat a special diet,” said Griggs, a real estate agent. “You can’t just throw any table scraps at them.”

Wilton Manors is giving Griggs and other supporters time to raise money and relocate the rabbits rather than exterminate them, even though the city commission voted in April to do just that after receiving an \$8,000 estimate from a trapping company.

The vote came after some residents complained the lionheads dig holes, chew outdoor wiring and leave droppings on sidewalks and driveways. City commissioners also feared the rabbits could spread into neighboring communities and cities and become a traffic hazard if they ventured onto major streets.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Officials search for otter harassing visitors in water

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Wildlife officials were trying to capture a wayward sea otter Thursday that has been wresting surfboards away from surfers and aggressively approaching kayakers off the coast of Santa Cruz, Calif.

The 5-year-old female otter has shown aggression toward people for several weeks and poses a public safety risk, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said in a statement.

Video and photographs shared on social media show the marine mammal getting on top of different surfboards — on at least one occasion biting and tearing chunks off a board — and aggressively approaching surfers.

Experts with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the nearby Monterey Bay Aquarium were working to capture and put the animal in a new home, the service said.

City pays \$600K to settle police discrimination suit

GA COLUMBUS — A Georgia city is paying \$600,000 to settle claims that a Black former police chief racially discriminated against two white officers by not promoting them.

The Ledger Enquirer of Columbus reported that the Columbus City Council voted 9-0 on Tuesday to settle the 2022 federal lawsuit against the city. Lt. Ralph Dowe, Lt. Tony Little and their lawyers will get \$200,000 apiece.

Dowe and Little alleged that former Police Chief Freddie Blackmon, who was pushed into

retirement earlier this year by city officials, broke federal law when Blackmon passed over them. They also alleged the city's affirmative action plan was "facially discriminatory."

Dowe, president of the local chapter of the Fraternal Order of Police, had a role in Blackmon's ouster, testifying before the Columbus City Council in 2022 that a union survey showed officers lacked confidence in Blackmon.

Chemical plant explosions force residents indoors

LA PLAQUEMINE — A fire at a Louisiana chemical plant triggered explosions that shook homes several miles away and sent flames and smoke billowing into the air, prompting emergency officials to urge a few hundred nearby residents to shelter indoors for several hours and to turn off their air conditioners.

Flames erupted late Friday at Dow Chemical's plant on the Mississippi River near Plaquemine. Iberville Parish officials told The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate that the fire started in an area of the plant that handles ethylene oxide, a flammable and toxic chemical.

The parish's sheriff, Bret Stassi, said no one was injured.

Residents of roughly 350 households within a half-mile of the plant were told to shelter inside for several hours overnight. As Dow Chemical and environmental officials monitored the air for hazardous materials, emergency officials urged sheltering residents to shut off their air conditioners and ceiling fans.

The Iberville Parish Council

said in a statement early Saturday that no hazards had been detected and that people could leave their homes.

Attorney: Murder victim cheated multiple times

HI HONOLULU — A Hawaii man charged with murder in the shooting death of the acupuncturist who was having an affair with his wife wasn't the only person with a motive to kill him, a defense attorney told jurors at the start of the trial.

Eric Thompson was arrested on Valentine's Day last year and has been under house arrest in an upscale Honolulu neighborhood. Police said he shot Jon Tokuhara, an acupuncturist treating Thompson's wife, after discovering the affair through Instagram messages and videos.

Tokuhara "had a track record of cheating," including with women who had families, Thompson's defense attorney said. Jilted women ghosted by Tokuhara would have had the same motive, attorney David Hayakawa said, the Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported.

City to relocate residents near polluted rail yard

TX HOUSTON — Houston plans to spend millions of dollars to relocate residents from neighborhoods located near a rail yard polluted by a cancer-linked wood preservative that has been blamed for an increase in cancer cases, the city's mayor announced Thursday.

Texas health officials in 2019 identified a cancer cluster in Houston's historically Black Fifth Ward and Kashmere Gardens neighborhoods. A second cluster was identified in 2021.

Health officials have found higher rates of respiratory cancers as well as childhood cancers, including acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

Residents and local officials have long blamed the high number of cancer cases on contamination from a Union Pacific rail yard near both neighborhoods. Creosote, which has been associated with an increased risk of contracting cancer, was used at the site until the 1980s. City officials said the contamination has reached the groundwater in the neighborhoods.

Mayor Sylvester Turner said the city has spoken with Union Pacific for months about helping relocate residents, but the company has indicated it wants to wait until additional testing is complete. Testing is set to be conducted through September, with the results scheduled to be released by December.

Earthquake off coast causes tsunami advisory

AK SAND POINT — A 7.2 magnitude earthquake triggered a tsunami advisory for southern Alaska, monitoring bodies reported late Saturday.

The U.S. Geological Survey wrote in a social media post that the earthquake occurred 65.8 miles south of Sand Point, Alaska, at 10:48 p.m. Saturday. The U.S. National Weather Service sent a tsunami advisory saying the quake occurred at a depth of 13 miles.

The Hawaii Emergency Management Agency said there was no threat to the islands.

— From wire reports

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Analysis: Alcaraz is who we thought

Associated Press

Novak Djokovic knows a thing or two about the talents and intangibles required to win big matches against the best players.

He's been in 35 Grand Slam finals. He's won 23 of them. He played Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer a total of 109 times, with head-to-head edges against both. He went 9-5 against them in title matches at majors.

So it seemed only natural to ask Djokovic to whom he'd compare the new star of men's tennis — Carlos Alcaraz — after losing to him across five sets and more than 4½ hours brimming with brilliant play and dramatic moments in the Wimbledon final on Sunday.

"People have been talking in the past 12 months or so about his game consisting of certain elements from Roger, Rafa and myself. I would agree with that," Djokovic began, the bitterness of the 1-6, 7-6 (6), 6-1, 3-6, 6-4 defeat, and the end of his reign at the All England Club, still sharp.

"I think he's got basically

(the) best of all three worlds," Djokovic said.

Left there, that would stand out as a rather striking endorsement of the precocious Alcaraz, a Spaniard who won the U.S. Open last year and now is one of just five men to collect multiple Grand Slam trophies before turning 21.

Then Djokovic got into specifics.

"He's got this mental resilience and, really, maturity for someone who is 20 years old. It's quite impressive," said Djokovic, who had won Wimbledon four years in a row and seven times in all. "He's got this 'Spanish bull' mentality of competitiveness and fighting spirit and incredible defense that we've seen with Rafa over the years."

With a smile, Djokovic tacked on what he sees of himself in the youngster.

"He's got some nice sliding backhands that (have) some similarities with my backhands. Two-handed backhands. Defense. Being able to adapt. That has been my personal strength for many years," Djokovic said. "He has it, too."

When the gist of that assessment was relayed to the No. 1-ranked Alcaraz, his eyes widened and he exhaled under the white bucket hat that became his trademark news conference accessory.

Alcaraz was asked how he would describe himself.

"It's crazy that Novak (would) say that, honestly. But I consider myself a really complete player. I think I have the shots, the strength physically, the strength mentally, enough to (handle) these situations," he said. "Probably he's right. But I don't want to think about it. ... I'm 'full Carlos Alcaraz,' let's say, but probably I have some great ability from every player."

Living up to expectations is never easy, and so much has been expected of Alcaraz. Somehow, he is living up to all the hype.

He brings abundant athleticism, quickness, strength and reflexes to the game. He is equipped with a booming forehand and the touch to implement the softest of drop shots.

He produced more than twice

as many winners as Djokovic on a windy afternoon, 66 to 32. He broke five times across 23 return games Sunday — something that Djokovic's prior six opponents managed to accomplish just three times across 103 games. He hit serves at up to 135 mph at Wimbledon. He showed an adroitness at the net. He performed in the clutch against Djokovic, coming back from a set point down in the tiebreaker, winning a 32-point epic of a game in the third set and saving a break point early in the fifth before converting his own chance to take the lead for good.

"I haven't played a player like him ever, to be honest," said Djokovic, who at 36 would have been the oldest men's champion at the All England Club. "Roger and Rafa have their own, obviously, strengths and weaknesses. Carlos is a very complete player. Amazing adapting capabilities that I think are a key for longevity and for a successful career on all surfaces."

Now he is the first man other than Djokovic, Federer, Nadal or Andy Murray to win Wimbledon since 2002.

Source: Titans, Hopkins agree on two-year contract

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Tennessee Titans hope they've filled their major need at wide receiver with three-time All-Pro wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins, agreeing to terms on a two-year deal worth \$26 million with incentives that could push that to \$32 million, a person familiar with the agreement said Sunday.

The Titans had the advantage of being the first NFL team Hopkins visited after being released by Arizona in May. Hopkins arrived in Nashville in June and documented on social media his visit to CMA Fest's final night at Nissan Stadium, where the Titans play. Hopkins also visited

the New England Patriots later that week.

The deal was first reported by AtoZSports. The person confirmed the agreement to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because Hopkins has not signed the contract.

Hopkins, who turned 31 on June 6, would bring much-needed experience to Tennessee's young wide receiving group. Head coach Mike Vrabel had more career touchdown catches with 12 in his own NFL career as a linebacker than anyone currently on the Titans' roster.

The three-time All-Pro would have led Tennessee last season with his 64 catches for 717 yards

for Arizona despite a six-game suspension after testing positive for performance-enhancing drugs. He also missed the final two games with a knee injury.

Arizona released the five-time Pro Bowl receiver in a salary cap move May 26 after failing to find a trade partner in the off-season.

The Cardinals cut Hopkins three seasons after acquiring him in a blockbuster trade with Houston in 2020, and they had signed him to a \$54.5 million extension through 2024. Hopkins would have counted close to \$31 million against the cap for Arizona, which still took on a dead cap hit of \$22.6 million.

Hopkins ranks 36th in NFL history with 11,298 yards receiving in his 10 seasons over 145 games. He immediately became a popular free agent, with his former Houston quarterback Deshaun Watson making a pitch for the receiver to join him in Cleveland.

Hopkins shared a photo of him with Titans running back Derrick Henry on social media on Sunday. Hopkins followed up later Sunday night on social media defending his choice of Tennessee as a free agent.

"I always loved having haters and doubters but I appreciate it even more now. Titan up!!" Hopkins wrote.

Messi introduced by Inter Miami, MLS

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Lionel Messi walked out from behind a curtain, took a few steps along a rain-slicked runway set up over the field at Inter Miami's stadium and headed toward David Beckham for a big hug.

His journey was complete. Inter Miami's wait was over.

At long last, Messi has arrived.

Inter Miami — after years of plotting, pleading and hoping — introduced arguably the game's biggest star on Sunday night, presenting their new franchise player with his pink No. 10 jersey that millions of people will be buying over the coming weeks and months.

"I'm sure we're going to have many wonderful experiences," Messi told the crowd.

Sunday was the first one. Almost every seat was filled despite horrible weather conditions that delayed the show, and nobody seemed to mind soaking rain that pounded down

throughout the evening.

"I'm very much moved to be here in Miami, to be with you," Messi said. "I want to thank you, all of you, on behalf of my family, for the kindness that you have given me."

Beckham, the team's co-owner and president, had huge dark blotches on his blue blazer because of the rain.

It was going to take more than a downpour to ruin this party, one where fans roared and music boomed.

"Tonight is a typical Miami welcome for one of the greatest players to ever have played the game," Beckham said during the telecast of the show. "The fact that we have our fans in here, celebrating this moment ... this is what we have created and we're very proud of that."

Added primary owner Jorge Mas: "When David and I first met and we dreamt of what Inter Miami represents, it started off with the freedom to dream. And we dreamed of not only bringing

elite players and the best players but the best player to ever don boots — and his name is Lionel Andrés Messi."

When Inter Miami began floating the notion that it would be the team to land Messi and bring the World Cup champion to Major League Soccer, there were no shortage of people who were, to put it mildly, skeptical about how realistic a plan that was.

Among them: MLS Commissioner Don Garber. Yes, even the man running the league had a bit of doubt.

Not anymore. Messi to Miami isn't just crazy talk. It happened, with Messi now tasked to lift a team that currently has the fewest points in the MLS standings and is mired in an 11-game winless streak.

"Here we are today with a player that I think, without doubt, is not only a generational player but in my opinion the greatest of all time," Garber said. "Went through a process

throughout his decision-making period over the last number of months, if not the last year, to determine where he was going to play. Many of you have heard us say that we want MLS to be a league of choice, a league of choice for players, for fans, for partners, and ultimately for investors.

"And when you have the best player of all time making Major League Soccer his league of choice, I think it's a real testament to where MLS is and where it's going in the years ahead."

It's the start of a busy week of events for Messi with his new club. His first official training session that will be open to reporters is set for Tuesday and — if all goes to plan — he will play Friday in a Leagues Cup match against Cruz Azul. That could also be the Miami debut of World Cup winner Sergio Busquets, a Spanish midfielder who completed his long-awaited signing with the club Sunday through the 2025 season.

Women's World Cup brings attention to abuse in soccer

Associated Press

Sinead Farrelly wasn't sure she'd ever come back to soccer.

Farrelly, whose story was at the center of an abuse scandal that rocked women's soccer in the United States, hadn't played for more than six years before re-embracing the sport this spring.

"I wouldn't have been able to do it unless I was able to get that off my chest and get that story out, because the healing and liberation from that had to occur before I could ever play again," she said.

Now headed to the Women's World Cup with Ireland, Farrelly's presence at the tournament is a testament to her own resilience and healing. But it also underscores the larger realities of sexual, verbal and emotional abuse in women's soccer and what is being done about it on the global stage.

Allegations of abuse, often sexual, have affected national teams around the world in recent years, including reported cases in Haiti, Venezuela, Zambia, Argentina, Col-

ombia and Afghanistan, where the women's team was disbanded because of Taliban rule.

"The degree of abuse in football, I think, is widely underestimated. And the systems currently are not able to either protect, properly investigate and support ultimately the victims and survivors," FIFPRO General Secretary Jonas Baer-Hoffmann said.

FIFPRO, the global players' union, has acknowledged that while important steps have been implemented to protect players, "cases are often only brought to light once they have already reached a tragically high human cost."

Soccer's global governing body is paying attention. FIFA rolled out a safeguarding program at the under-20 Women's World Cup in Costa Rica last summer, aimed at keeping participants and fans safe from abuse, exploitation and harassment. Games were staffed by a safeguarding official and all participants were briefed about abuse and how to report it.

FIFA will do much the same at the Women's World Cup that starts this week. Among the programs for players, teams and other stakeholders are pre-tournament educational presentations. Every participating nation must designate a player welfare official, required to complete a safeguarding course. FIFA is also unveiling a training and shadow program to develop competition safeguarding officers.

There will also be confidential ways around the clock to report abuse with what FIFA has said is a "victim-centered approach."

During the tournament, FIFA will also implement an initiative designed to protect players from abuse on social media, developed along with FIFPRO. First used at the men's World Cup in Qatar, the service uses artificial intelligence to identify problematic posts, which are then reported. Players and teams also have access to moderation software to hide posts that are abusive, discriminatory or threatening.

Lundgaard wins at Honda Indy Toronto

Associated Press

TORONTO — Christian Lundgaard couldn't wait to shave off his mustache, removing the hair from his upper lip right there on victory lane at the Honda Indy Toronto.

Lundgaard started on the pole and took advantage of the car troubles of IndyCar standings leader Alex Palou to hang on to victory Sunday. His first win on North America's top open-wheel

auto racing circuit also brought to an end a pact with his best friend to keep his mustache until he climbed atop an IndyCar podium.

Lundgaard said he was happy to be rid of the facial hair.

"But I haven't seen it yet, so I don't really know what it looks like," said the 21-year-old Dane, who rubbed his upper lip throughout the post-race news conference. "I guess I'll wait and see."

Lundgaard took the pole Saturday as steady rainfall made the street course around Toronto's Exhibition Place slippery. The son of 2000 European rally car champion Henrik Lundgaard, the IndyCar sophomore took advantage of his off-roading background to secure the No. 1 start position in the race.

But after qualifying, Lundgaard was pessimistic about having the fastest car in the actual

race. Ultimately, he felt he had the race under control from start to finish.

"We struggle, especially on the super speedways," said Lundgaard, who led the race for 53 of the 85 laps. "We're moving forward even though we don't have the pace and performance on the super speedways."

"It just means we're going to be doing pretty good elsewhere, and I think we proved that today."

White Sox stop Braves' series winning streak at 11

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Chicago White Sox stopped a pair of Braves streaks: games with home runs and series wins.

Dylan Cease won for the first time in nearly two months, Luis Robert Jr. had four hits that included a two-run homer and the White Sox beat Atlanta 8-1 on Sunday.

Reynaldo López, Aaron Bummer and Jesse Scholtens finished a five-hitter and ended the Braves' streak of consecutive games with home runs at a franchise-record 28. Atlanta had won 11 consecutive series.

"That was just kind of one of those that got away from us," Braves manager Brian Snitker said. "Their pitching was pretty good. Their bullpen has got some nice arms in it. It was just a little too much to try to overcome today."

Cease (4-3) had eight straight no-decisions since beating Cleveland on May 23, the most within a season in White Sox history. He allowed one run and three hits in five innings.

"It just shows we can play with anybody," White Sox manager Pedro Grifol said.

Royals 8, Rays 4: Bobby Witt Jr. homered and tripled with three RBIs, and host Kansas City earned its second win in 10 games.

In a game that sped by in 1 hour, 54 minutes, Brady Singer (6-8) allowed four runs and seven hits in a season-high eight innings as Kansas City improved to 27-67, the second-worst record in the major leagues and ahead of only Oakland.

Orioles 5, Marlins 4: Kyle Bradish took a shutout into the eighth inning and Danny Coulombe retired Luis Arraez on a game-ending lineout with a runner on second as

host Baltimore held off Miami's late rally.

The Orioles won their eighth straight game, but not before nearly blowing a 5-0 lead in the ninth. Arraez, flirting with .400 for much of the season, lined out to left field to end it. He went 0-for-5, dropping his batting average to .380.

Rangers 6, Guardians 5: Josh Jung's two-run single capped a four-run eighth inning as host Texas rallied to complete a three-game series sweep.

All four runs in the inning came off Trevor Stephan (4-4), who walked Marcus Semien and Corey Seager with one out before giving up an RBI single to Nathaniel Lowe, an RBI double to Adolis Garcia and a single to Jung.

Mets 2, Dodgers 1 (10): After failing to get a bunt down, pinch-hitter Luis Guilmorme doubled home the winning run in the 10th inning to give host New York a victory over Los Angeles.

Max Scherzer held the NL West leaders to one hit in seven shutout innings, and New York stopped the Dodgers' six-game winning streak. Brandon Nimmo had an RBI groundout as the Mets snapped a four-game skid with their first victory since the All-Star break.

Blue Jays 7, Diamondbacks 5: Danny Jansen hit a three-run double in the eighth inning to give host Toronto what turned out to be an important cushion, and the Blue Jays beat Arizona for a three-game sweep.

Giants 8, Pirates 4 (10): Michael Conforto and Patrick Bailey hit two-run doubles in a five-run 10th inning, and visiting San Francisco beat Pittsburgh to finish a three-game sweep and extend its winning streak to five.

Brewers 4, Reds 3: Visiting Milwaukee

opened a two-game lead over Cincinnati in the NL Central, overcoming a two-run deficit to beat its division rival for the fifth time in a six-game stretch, behind rookie Andruw Monasterio's tiebreaking single in a two-run eighth inning.

Astros 9, Angels 8: Alex Bregman connected for a two-run homer with two outs in the ninth inning for his fourth hit of the game, Chas McCormick went deep twice and visiting Houston rallied from a four-run deficit to defeat Los Angeles despite Shohei Ohtani's major league-leading 34th homer of the season.

Phillies 7, Padres 6 (12): Kyle Schwarber hit his 25th home run and ended the game with a 12th-inning sacrifice fly, leading host Philadelphia over San Diego.

Rockies 8, Yankees 7 (11): Nolan Jones led off the 11th inning with a tying, two-run homer off Nick Ramirez, Alan Trejo hit a game-ending drive off Ron Marinaccio and host Colorado beat New York to take two of three.

Red Sox 11, Cubs 5: Masataka Yoshida hit a grand slam and a two-run triple, powering Kutter Crawford and visiting Boston to a blowout of Chicago.

Twins 5, Athletics 4: Alex Kirilloff homered in the fifth inning and hit a three-run double in the seventh, leading visiting Minnesota to a series sweep of Oakland.

Mariners 2, Tigers 0: Bryce Miller tossed five sharp innings in his return from the injured list, Cal Raleigh hit his 12th home run and host Seattle blanked Detroit to avoid a three-game sweep.

Cardinals 8, Nationals 4: Jack Flaherty won a fourth straight start for the first time in two years, and host St. Louis beat Washington to take two of three in the series.