

## US, S. Korean navies conduct anti-sub drill

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — U.S. and South Korean warships conducted an anti-submarine drill south of the Korean Peninsula over the weekend in response to North Korea's "escalating" missile tests.

The USS Annapolis, a Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine, joined South Korea's Aegis-equipped Yulgok Yi destroyer and the Yi Sun-sin submarine south of Jeju Island to strengthen their response to the North Korean missiles and underwater threats, the South Korean Ministry of National Defense said in a news release Saturday.

The Annapolis arrived at Jeju

Naval Base, about 50 miles south of the mainland, on July 24 to replenish its ordnance, South Korean navy spokesman Jang Do-young told reporters that day.

It is one of three U.S. submarines to visit South Korea so far this year, including the Ohio-class ballistic-missile submarine USS Kentucky, which arrived in Busan on July 18 as a show of force against the North.

In addition to the recent naval exercise, the two militaries carried out a joint air drill on Friday.

An unspecified number of U.S. F-16 Fighting Falcons and South Korean F-35 Lightning IIs and KF-16s took to the skies near the peninsula's west coast for a demonstration of their "rapid and

flexible response options," 7th Air Force said in a news release Friday. The command did not immediately respond to a request for comment by phone Monday.

Pyongyang has fired 17 ballistic missiles in 12 separate days of testing so far this year. The communist regime last fired two short-range ballistic missiles that flew into the Sea of Japan, or East Sea, on July 19.

Pyongyang's nuclear policy may allow the regime to conduct a preemptive nuclear strike due to the Kentucky's port call, North Korean Defense Minister Kang Sun-nam said in a statement released by the state-run Korean Central News Agency on July 20.

The North on Thursday held its

Victory Day parade at Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of Korean War hostilities.

The parade was attended by leader Kim Jong Un, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chinese politburo member Li Hongzhong and included thousands of marching soldiers, several ballistic missiles and drones, according to a KCNA report on Friday. North Korean Defense Minister Kang Sun-nam, in a speech during the parade, described the U.S. and South Korea as warmongers and said their military drills amounted to "[playing] dangerous war games," KCNA reported.

## Russian missiles strike Ukraine leader's hometown

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian ballistic missiles slammed into an apartment complex and a university building in the central Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih on Monday, killing five people and wounding 64 others as the blasts trapped residents beneath rubble, Ukrainian officials said.

One of the two missiles destroyed a section of the apartment building between the fourth and ninth floors, Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said. Video showed black smoke billowing from corner units and burned out or damaged cars on a street.

The dead included a 10-year-old girl and her mother, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who comes from Kryvyi Rih. More than 350 people were involved in the rescue operation, he said in a Telegram post.

The morning attack also destroyed part of the four-story uni-

versity building.

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian artillery strike on partially occupied Donetsk province killed two people and wounded six others in the regional capital, according to Denis Pushilin, the Moscow-installed leader of the illegally annexed province. A bus was also hit as Ukrainian forces shelled the city of Donetsk multiple times Monday, Pushilin said.

Neither side's claims could be independently verified.

A recent Ukrainian counteroffensive, deploying weaponry supplied by Kyiv's Western allies and aimed at driving Russian forces out of occupied areas, intensified last week. At the same time, Ukraine has sought to take the war deep into Russia, reportedly using drones to hit targets as far away as Moscow.

Ukrainian drone attacks on Russia and Moscow-annexed territory, especially Crimea, have become more frequent. The latest

strike, on Sunday, damaged two office buildings a few miles from the Kremlin.

Russia has tightened security in the aftermath of that attack, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday, describing the assault as an "act of desperation."

"The Kyiv regime is in a very, very difficult situation," Peskov said, "as the counteroffensive is not working out as planned."

"It's obvious that the multibillion-dollar resources that have been transferred by NATO countries to the Kyiv regime are actually being spent inefficiently," Peskov said.

"This raises big questions in Western capitals and great discomfort among taxpayers in Western countries."

Russian President Vladimir Putin, analysts say, is wagering that Western support for Kyiv will wane as the war drags on and its cost mounts.

Another Ukrainian drone tar-

geted a district police department early Monday in Russia's Bryansk region, which borders Ukraine, but there were no casualties, the local governor said.

Bombarding populated areas with missiles, artillery and drones has been a hallmark of Moscow's military strategy during the war, an approach that has continued during the Ukrainian counteroffensive that started in June. Russian officials insist they only take aim at legitimate military targets, but Ukraine and its supporters say mass civilian deaths during previous attacks provide evidence of war crimes.

Ukrainian officials didn't acknowledge Sunday's drone attacks in the Moscow region. In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy said: "Gradually, the war is returning to the territory of Russia — to its symbolic centers and military bases, and this is an inevitable, natural and absolutely fair process."

# Bases prep as typhoon nears Okinawa

By MATTHEW M. BURKE

*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The U.S. military on Okinawa is cleaning up, battenning down and getting ready for Typhoon Khanun's expected arrival Wednesday morning.

The storm, with the strength of a Category 4 hurricane, is expected to pass 64 miles southwest of Kadena Air Base around 5 a.m. Wednesday, the 18th Wing Weather Flight said by email Friday.

"It's the worst storm, forecasted, we've had in five years," Air Force Capt. William Hanson, weather flight commander, said by phone Monday. "Definitely review the typhoon guide and get prepared."

Khanun at 3 p.m. Monday was 349 miles southeast of Kadena, according to the Joint

Typhoon Warning Center. The storm was just shy of becoming a super typhoon and moving north-northwest at 10 mph with sustained winds of 132 mph and 161 mph gusts at its center.

It is expected to bring 6 to 9 inches of rain, according to the weather flight.

U.S. military planners are predicting minor damage, possible power outages and flooding in low-lying areas.

Khanun's strength may exceed Hinnamnor, which lashed the island with 74-mph gusts and 7 to 8 inches of rain in September, Hanson said. That storm caused power outages across Marine Corps Camp Courtney near the island's eastern coast.

Marines, sailors, civilian employees and their families at Camp Foster cleaned up their yards, buttoned up their homes and

made last-minute commissary runs on Monday.

Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Sidney Johnson, 23, a preventive medicine technician who arrived at Foster in March, was originally "very concerned" ahead of her first typhoon, but more experienced friends allayed her fears, she said.

"I prepared on Sunday; I got a little bit more snacks but other than that, I'm good," she said Monday at Foster's commissary. "I've been charging up my electronics at home. I got water."

U.S. bases on Okinawa entered Tropical Cyclone Condition of Readiness 2 at 6 p.m. Sunday, meaning destructive winds were anticipated within 24 hours. Condition of Readiness 1-C, or sustained winds of 40-56 mph, was expected around 3 a.m. Tuesday.

## Country star Craig Morgan reenlists in Army at 59

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA

*Stars and Stripes*

The Army's recruitment numbers were so dire in the fall that country singer Craig Morgan turned to his friend, Sen. Marsha Blackburn, and told her that he wanted to reenlist.

There was one problem: At 58, the Army veteran was only a few years away from the military's mandatory retirement age of 62.

So Blackburn, then a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, decided to step in and help. She began working with the Defense Department and the Army, pressing them to allow Morgan to step back into uniform.

It worked.

Morgan was sworn into the Army Reserve on Saturday night in front of a crowd of concertgoers at the storied Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tenn. He was joined on stage by Gen. Andrew Poppas, commander of Army Forces Command, Command Sgt. Maj. Todd Sims and Blackburn, R-Tenn.

"I realized that there's so much that I've missed — the friends, the feeling of the sense of accomplishment," Morgan said in a video explaining his decision. "I realized that I've missed it so much and I truly believe that I still have more to give."

Morgan's initial stint in the military last-

ed 17 years, nearly a decade of them on active duty. He deployed to South Korea and served in the Army and Army Reserve as a staff sergeant and fire support specialist with the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions. In 1989, he participated in the U.S. invasion of Panama.

"This was my first test in combat, the real crucible of a soldier," Morgan wrote of Panama in his book, "God, Family, Country: A Memoir." "You never know how you're going to react when the bullets fly until you face them. I think we did well."

Morgan said he grew up poor and the Army gave him a place to stay and a way to take care of his family. He credited his service with showing him the world and giving him an appreciation for America and the little things in life.

"We all had a goal of doing and being a part of something that was bigger and greater than just ourselves," he said. "I have taken that with me on everything that I have done since I've been out."

Blackburn said she often hears from veterans who regret leaving the military and jumped at the chance to bolster the Army's ranks, even by one soldier.

"We all need to be paying attention to recruiting numbers," she said. "When you hear that only 9% or 10% of today's young people want to consider a military career,

we should be asking why that is."

The Army is on track to miss its recruiting goal by 10,000 this year, Blackburn said. The shortfall is smaller than last year's 15,000 enlistment gap but still presents a worrying trend for lawmakers.

Blackburn said Morgan is setting an inspiring example for potential Army recruits and offering the Army a familiar face for its recruiting efforts.

"There are people that are Craig Morgan fans all across the globe," she said. "The fact that you've got somebody that's a Grand Ole Opry member and somebody who is a well-known country music star, and they're going to put on that uniform and serve their country, help recruit, help build morale — I think it's awesome."

Morgan has been a frequent presence at concerts for troops for years, performing in Afghanistan, Iraq and more recently at the Army garrison in Grafenwoehr, Germany, in December.

"He's always out there, he visits soldiers everywhere, whether it's in the States, overseas," said Poppas, who administered the oath of service to Morgan.

"I've seen him in combat locations and he's always engaging, he's always entertaining and he's always inspiring those that have put themselves in harm's way. He's a hell of a patriot."

# Mar-a-Lago worker in court for Trump documents case

Associated Press

MIAMI — The property manager of Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate made his first court appearance on Monday on charges in the classified documents case against the former president, but did not enter a plea because he has not found a Florida-based attorney to represent him.

Carlos De Oliveira is accused of scheming with Trump to try to delete security footage sought by investigators probing the former president's hoarding of classified documents at his Palm Beach, Fla., club.

De Oliveira was added last week to the indictment with Trump and the ex-president's valet, Walt Nauta, and faces charges including conspiracy to obstruct justice and lying to investigators.

A magistrate judge in Miami's federal court read De Oliveira the charges against him and ordered him to turn over his passport and sign an agreement to pay \$100,000 if he doesn't appear in court. The judge scheduled his arraignment for Aug. 10 in Fort Pierce.

The developments in the classified documents case come as Trump braces for possible charges in another federal investigation into his efforts to cling to power after he

lost the 2020 election. Trump, the early front-runner in the 2024 Republican presidential primary, has received a letter from special counsel Jack Smith indicating that he is a target of that investigation, and Trump's lawyers met with Smith's team last week.

Trump, who pleaded not guilty in June, has denied any wrongdoing. He posted on his Truth Social platform last week that the Mar-a-Lago security tapes were voluntarily handed over to investigators and that he was told the tapes were not "deleted in any way, shape or form."

Prosecutors have not alleged that security footage was actually deleted or kept from investigators.

Nauta has also pleaded not guilty. U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon had previously scheduled the trial of Trump and Nauta to begin in May, and it's unclear whether the addition of De Oliveira to the case may impact the case's timeline.

The latest indictment, unsealed on Thursday, alleges that Trump tried to have security footage deleted after investigators visited in June 2022 to collect classified documents he took with him after he left the White House.

# Trump wants GOP to rally around him

Associated Press

NEW YORK — At a moment of growing legal peril, Donald Trump ramped up his calls for his GOP rivals to drop out of the 2024 presidential race as he threatened to go after Republican members of Congress who fail to focus on investigating Democratic President Joe Biden.

Trump also urged a halt to Ukrainian military aid until the White House cooperates with congressional investigations into Biden and his family.

The former president and GOP front-runner said it was time for Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and others he dismissed as "clowns" to clear the field, accusing them of "wasting hundreds of millions of dollars that Republicans should be using to build a massive vote-gathering operation" to take on Biden in November.

The comments came two days after federal prosecutors unveiled new criminal charges against Trump as part of the case that accuses him of illegally hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago club and refusing to turn them over to investigators. The superseding indictment unsealed Thursday alleges that Trump and two staffers sought to delete surveillance at the club in an effort to obstruct the Justice Department's investigation.

Nevertheless, Trump has remained the dominant early figure for the Republican nomination and has only seen his lead grow as the charges have mounted and as his rivals have struggled to respond.

Their challenge was on display at a GOP gathering in Iowa Friday night, where they largely declined to go after Trump directly. The only one who did — accusing Trump of "running to stay out of prison" — was booed as he left the stage.

In the meantime, Trump has embraced his legal woes, turning them into the core message of his bid to return to the White House as he has accused Biden of using the Justice Department to maim his chief political rival. The White House has said repeatedly that the president has had no involvement in the cases.

At rallies, Trump has tried to frame the charges, which come with serious threats of jail time, as an attack not just on him, but those who support him.

"They're not indicting me, they're indicting you. I just happen to be standing in the way," he said in Erie.

# Idaho mother faces sentencing in deaths of 2 children, romantic rival

Associated Press

ST. ANTHONY, Idaho — Idaho mother Lori Vallow Daybell faces up to life in prison without parole Monday as she is sentenced in the murders of her two youngest children and a romantic rival in a case that included bizarre claims that her son and daughter were zombies and that she was a goddess sent to usher in the Biblical apocalypse.

Vallow Daybell was found guilty in May of killing her two youngest children, 7-year-old Joshua "JJ" Vallow and 16-year-old Tylee Ryan, as well as conspiring to kill Tammy Daybell, her fifth husband's previous wife.

The husband, Chad Daybell, is awaiting trial on the same murder charges. Vallow Daybell also faces two other cases in Arizona — one on a charge of conspiring with her brother to kill her fourth husband,

Charles Vallow, and one of conspiring to kill her niece's ex-husband. Charles Vallow was shot and killed in 2019, but her niece's ex survived an attempt later that year.

The case began in July 2019, when Vallow Daybell's brother, Alex Cox, shot and killed her estranged husband, Charles Vallow, in a suburban Phoenix home. Cox told police he acted in self-defense.

He was never charged in the case and died later that year of what authorities determined were natural causes.

Vallow Daybell was already in a relationship with Chad Daybell, a self-published author who wrote doomsday-focused fiction loosely based on Mormon teachings. She moved to Idaho with her kids and brother to be closer to him.

The children were last seen alive in September 2019.



# Phoenix reaches 31st 110-degree day

*Associated Press*

PHOENIX — Phoenix sizzled through its 31st consecutive day of at least 110 degrees Fahrenheit and other parts of the country grappled Sunday with record temperatures after a week that saw significant portions of the U.S. population subject to extreme heat.

The National Weather Service said Phoenix climbed to a high of 111 F before the day was through.

July was so steamy that scientists calculate it will be the hottest month ever recorded and likely the warmest human civilization has seen. The World Meteorological Organization and the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service on Thursday proclaimed July beyond record-smashing.

The historic heat began blasting the lower

Southwest U.S. in late June, stretching from Texas across New Mexico and Arizona and into California's desert.

Triple-digit heat was expected in parts of the central San Joaquin Valley through Monday, according to the National Weather Service.

And in Burbank, Calif., about 10 miles north of Los Angeles, the summer heat may have been responsible for some unusual behavior in the animal kingdom: Police in the city responded to a report of a bear sighting in a residential neighborhood and found the animal sitting in a Jacuzzi behind one of the homes.

As climate change brings hotter and longer heat waves, record temperatures across the U.S. have killed dozens of people, and the poorest Americans suffer the most. Air

conditioning, once a luxury, is now a matter of survival.

Last year, all 86 heat-related deaths indoors were in uncooled environments.

"To explain it fairly simply: Heat kills," said Kristie Ebi, a University of Washington professor who researches heat and health. "Once the heat wave starts, mortality starts in about 24 hours."

It's the poorest and people of color, from Kansas City to Detroit to New York City and beyond, who are far more likely to face grueling heat without air conditioning, according to a Boston University analysis of 115 U.S. metro areas.

Back in Phoenix, slight relief may be on the way as expected seasonal thunderstorms could drop temperatures Monday and Tuesday.

## Farmers turn to high-tech ways to cool animals as temps surge

*Associated Press*

CHICAGO — Hotter summers mean heat stress for animals that can result in billions of dollars in lost revenue for farmers and ranchers. But technology can insulate livestock.

Many American farmers have apps to forecast animal comfort in the heat. There are computer-controlled "cooling pads" for sows. Dairy farmers lower barns' temperatures with misters, air conditioning and giant fans. Special pedometers, the cow version of a Fitbit, measure vital signs that give clues to animals' health.

"Those innovations bring me a lot of hope," said Mario Herrero, a professor of food systems and global change at Cornell University who coauthored the Lancet Planetary Health study. "It's a matter of how do we deploy them."

This winter, the McAllister family of New Vienna, Iowa, installed new fans above the beds where their cows lie, and they're happy with the updates. Their cows are already showing signs of improved welfare, like chewing more cud, and there's more heat ahead this summer.

"We're going to do what's best by our cows no matter what is or isn't going on with climate change," said Megan McAllister, a sixth-generation dairy farmer. Her husband's family has been farming for five generations.

"We want to make the right investments to better our cows, better our businesses that are our dairies, and make sure we're here for the long haul and that we are thinking about sustainability," she said.

Making that investment has a price: more fans for cooling means higher energy bills. That's something Dr. Michelle Schack, a dairy veterinarian based in Arizona, has noticed as well. She said that the farmers she works with are well-prepared for the blistering heat the state has seen this year, because as research on animal health has improved, they've invested in infrastructure.

But it costs a lot.

"Fans and misters, let's not forget, are hugely expensive, not only to install but the amount of electricity they take is insane," Schack said.

That could be partly addressed with cheaper solar power integrated into agricultural projects. But regardless, "it's going to be a challenge, a financial challenge" for more farms to adopt heat mitigation strategies, said Gerald Nelson, a professor emeritus at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a coauthor on the Lancet Planetary Health study.

Nelson described how different, heat-tolerant animal species or even something as simple as shade structures and extra water supplies can make a big difference when adapting to heat.

## Erratic winds add challenge to fight of 2 Calif. blazes

*Associated Press*

MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE, Calif. — A massive wildfire burning out of control in California's Mojave National Preserve was spreading rapidly amid erratic winds, while firefighters reported progress against another major blaze to the southwest that prompted evacuations.

The York Fire that erupted Friday near the remote Caruthers Canyon area of the vast wildland preserve crossed the state line into Nevada on Sunday and sent smoke further east into the Las Vegas Valley.

Wind-driven flames 20 feet high in some spots charred more than 110 square miles of desert scrub, juniper and Joshua tree woodland, according to an incident update. There was zero containment.

"The dry fuel acts as a ready ignition source, and when paired with those weather conditions it resulted in long-distance fire run and high flames, leading to extreme fire behavior," the update said. No structures were threatened.

To the southwest, the Bonny Fire was holding steady at about 3.4 square miles in rugged hills of Riverside County. More than 1,300 people were ordered to evacuate their homes Saturday near the community of Aguanga that is home to horse ranches and wineries.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Judge blocks law allowing librarians to be charged

**AR** LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas is temporarily blocked from enforcing a law that would have allowed criminal charges against librarians and booksellers for providing “harmful” materials to minors, a federal judge ruled Saturday.

U.S. District Judge Timothy L. Brooks issued a preliminary injunction against the law, which also would have created a new process to challenge library materials and request they be relocated to areas not accessible by kids. The measure, signed by Republican Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders earlier this year, was set to take effect Aug. 1.

A coalition that included the Central Arkansas Library System in Little Rock had challenged the law, saying fear of prosecution under the measure could prompt libraries and booksellers to no longer carry titles that could be challenged.

## Man gets nearly 57 years in death of 2-year-old girl

**KS** TOPEKA — A Kansas man whose 2-year-old daughter died after going days without food while he was passed out drunk was sentenced to nearly 57 years in prison Friday.

Jeffrey Exon, 47, called 911 on Jan. 5, 2021, telling a dispatcher that his daughter, Aurora Exon, had stopped breathing. He also said she recently had been “starving herself.”

She was cold to the touch when found, and appeared to have been dead for several days, Shawnee County District Attorney Mike Kagay said. The coro-

ner blamed her death on a form of malnutrition called marasmus.

Five empty liquor bottles were found in Exon’s bedroom, investigators said. They determined that Exon would not feed or attend to his children for days because of his addiction issues.

## AG to lawmaker: Repay over \$600K in relief

**SD** PIERRE — South Dakota’s attorney general called on a state lawmaker Thursday to repay more than \$600,000 in federal COVID-19 relief funding she received for her preschool business.

Attorney General Marty Jackley gave fellow Republican state Sen. Jessica Castleberry, of Rapid City, 10 days to return the money she accepted for Little Nest Preschool, which she owns. In a letter dated Wednesday, Jackley cited a 2020 South Dakota Supreme Court advisory warning state lawmakers that it is unconstitutional for them to accept federal pandemic funding.

Castleberry said she believed her company was eligible for funding after speaking with a lawyer. She said she “communicated directly and transparently” with Social Services staff regarding her grant applications.

## Congressman shouted vulgarities at teen pages

**DC** WASHINGTON — A freshman Republican congressman from Wisconsin yelled and cursed at high school-aged Senate pages during a late night tour of the Capitol last week, eliciting a bipartisan rebuke from Senate leaders Thursday evening.

Rep. Derrick Van Orden used a profanity to describe them as lazy and another to order them off the floor of the Capitol Rotunda on Wednesday night, according to a report in the online political newsletter PunchBowlNews. The pages were lying down to take photos in the Rotunda, according to the publication.

In a statement responding to the report, Van Orden did not deny it — and he doubled down on the sentiment.

“I have long said our nation’s Capitol is a symbol of the sacrifice our servicemen and women have made for this country and should never be treated like a frat house common room,” Van Orden said.

Van Orden, a former Navy SEAL who was outside of the Capitol during the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection, also appeared to embrace the presence of alcohol in his office that same evening after images were posted on social media showing bottles of liquor and beer cans on a desk in his office. Van Orden said on X, the platform previously known as Twitter, that the alcohol was from constituents.

## Police find woman dead in apartment refrigerator

**IL** CHICAGO — Officers searching the apartment of a Chicago man accused of fatally stabbing a man on a restaurant’s roof discovered the body of a young woman stuffed into his refrigerator, authorities said.

Brandon Sanders, 33, has not been officially charged in the death of Iman Al-Sarraj, 18, whose beaten body was found in early July in a refrigerator at his apartment in Chicago’s West

Ridge neighborhood.

But he was arrested June 29 and charged with murder, robbery and burglary in the May killing of Rasim Katanic, a 69-year-old who was a Bosnian War refugee, WLS-TV reported.

Prosecutors said surveillance footage shows Sanders climbing a stairwell on May 12 to a rooftop where Katanic was working on a cooler compressor atop Tahoorra Sweets & Bakery. Katanic was later found stabbed to death on that roof.

## City’s tap water safe to drink week after fuel spill

**TN** MEMPHIS — A Tennessee city told its 40,000 residents Thursday that they can drink their tap water again, a week after they were ordered to stay away after diesel fuel spilled into a reservoir at a treatment plant and tainted the Memphis suburb’s supply.

Officials in Germantown said those who live and work in the city must flush their plumbing systems before they can resume the normal use of the water that flows into their homes and businesses.

The city said July 20 that the diesel fuel spill at a treatment plant contaminated the water supply system. The order came after residents reported a fuel smell in their water. A generator being used at the plant because the facility lost power during recent storms had spilled the diesel fuel into a reservoir, officials said.

As a result, people were told to stop using water for everything except flushing toilets. The city had been distributing free bottled water.

— From wire reports

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# Mets' GM insists New York isn't rebuilding

Associated Press

NEW YORK — After trading Max Scherzer to the Texas Rangers, general manager Billy Eppler insisted the Mets are not tearing down their underachieving team.

"I do want to be clear that it's not a rebuild. It's not a fire sale," Eppler said Sunday at Citi Field. "It's not a liquidation."

So maybe Justin Verlander will stay put in the end. But now, would he actually choose to be traded?

"I think it largely depends on how the organization views next year. I think Max is a tough sign for trying to go back at it," Verlander said. "So I'm committed to trying to win a championship here, but if the organization decides that that's not exactly the direction that they think is a best fit for next year and go for it again next year then yeah, I would be more open to it."

New York traded Scherzer to AL West-leading Texas for minor league infielder Luisangel Acuña in a high-profile deal both teams announced Sunday after news of the agreement broke Saturday evening.

Acuña, the younger brother of Atlanta star Ronald Acuña Jr., was rated one of Texas' top prospects. The Mets said he will be optioned to Double-A Binghamton, where he will initially play shortstop.

Scherzer, 39, waived his no-trade clause to complete the deal, and the Mets will send cash to Texas. The three-time Cy Young Award winner also agreed to opt in on the final year of his contract in 2024 at \$43.3 million, according to reports that said the Mets will pay about \$35 million of the remaining \$58 million on the right-hander's contract.

"A bit surprised with that one," Verlan-

der said. "Max was obviously an integral part of our team for next season. So when you see that happen, you can't help but think (about) what's in store for next year. We play this game to win. We want to win a championship and we want to have the opportunity to do so. It changed my opinion a little bit, so tough to see it happen."

Eppler said he was engaged in conversation with different teams about Scherzer and that when he talked with him Friday, he mentioned a trade was possible. After pitching Friday night, Scherzer said he wanted to speak with the front office about the direction of the team.

"Obviously, (you) kind of leave the stadium and see some of the comments that he made and wonder what happened because obviously things came together really quickly," Verlander said.

## Olson drives in 5 runs as Braves sweep Brewers

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Matt Olson says it's no mystery why he's leading the majors in RBIs.

In Atlanta's powerful lineup, Olson is often hitting with runners on base.

Olson drove in five runs with two homers, including a two-run shot in the eighth, and the Braves beat the Milwaukee Brewers 8-6 on Sunday to cap their sweep of the high-scoring series.

Olson has 35 homers, tops in the NL, and 88 RBIs. The Braves scored 29 runs in the three-game sweep in the matchup of NL contenders.

"There's always dudes on base," Olson said. "I feel like I'm rarely taking at-bats with the bases empty."

With the sweep, the Braves won five of six against the Brewers in the last two weeks, including two of three in Milwaukee on July 21-23.

Atlanta (67-36) leads the NL East by 1½ games over Miami. Milwaukee's loss coupled with Cincinnati's win at the Dodgers dropped the Brewers (57-49) into second in the NL Central.

**Orioles 9, Yankees 3:** Adam Frazier hit a three-run homer as part of a seven-run first inning for host Baltimore, and the Orioles took two of three in the weekend series.

The Orioles led 6-0 before they even made an out against Luis Severino (2-5). The win kept Baltimore 1½ games ahead of Tampa Bay atop the AL East. The Yankees are 3½ behind the last playoff spots in the American

League after missing a chance to gain on Houston and Toronto.

**Reds 9, Dodgers 0:** Elly De La Cruz, Joey Votto and Matt McLain homered, and visiting Cincinnati took over sole possession of first place in the NL Central.

De La Cruz went 4-for-5 and scored twice as the Reds rapped out 14 hits in taking two of three from the NL West-leading Dodgers. It was LA's worst loss since a 15-0 defeat to San Francisco on June 17.

**Rays 8, Astros 2:** Brandon Lowe hit a two-run homer and drove in three, Josh Lowe capped a four-run first with a three-run double and visiting Tampa Bay beat Houston.

The Rays got to Houston starter Brandon Bielak (5-6) for four runs in the first, with Yandy Diaz scoring on a fielding error by José Abreu before Josh Lowe hit his three-run double. Bielak allowed six runs — three earned — on eight hits with four strikeouts in five innings.

**Padres 5, Rangers 3:** Gary Sanchez homered twice, Juan Soto doubled in Fernando Tatis Jr. from first base and left-hander Blake Snell had another strong start for host San Diego, which beat Texas for a three-game sweep.

**Angels 3, Blue Jays 2 (10):** Hunter Renfroe hit a two-run home run in the 10th inning and visiting Los Angeles beat Toronto to avoid a three-game sweep.

**Giants 4, Red Sox 3 (11):** Joc Pederson singled in Patrick Bailey in the 11th inning, and host San Francisco earned its first home se-

ries win against Boston since 2004.

**Pirates 6, Phillies 4 (10):** Josh Palacios hit a two-run home run in the 10th inning, and host Pittsburgh rallied twice from two runs down to clinch the three-game series.

**Marlins 8, Tigers 6:** Garrett Cooper and Jean Segura homered, newly acquired relievers Jorge López and David Robertson played key roles and host Miami beat Detroit.

**Mariners 4, Diamondbacks 0:** Luis Castillo threw six sharp innings, J.P. Crawford connected for a solo homer and visiting Seattle took two of three games in the weekend series.

**Royals 2, Twins 1:** Freddy Fermin hit a homer, Maikel Garcia had an RBI double, Ryan Yarbrough gave up one run over seven innings and host Kansas City completed a sweep of Minnesota.

**Cardinals 3, Cubs 0:** Steven Matz and two relievers combined on a five-hitter, and host St. Louis snapped Chicago's eight-game winning streak.

**Guardians 5, White Sox 0:** José Ramírez homered twice and drove in three runs, helping Aaron Civale and visiting Cleveland earn a split of the four-game series.

**Mets 5, Nationals 2:** Francisco Lindor homered and had three hits, and Justin Verlander earned his 250th career victory in what could be his final start for host New York.

**Rockies 2, Athletics 0:** Ryan McMahon had two hits and drove in both runs, Ty Blach tossed five strong innings and host Colorado salvaged the final game of the three-game series.



# Australia shocks Canada at World Cup

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Haley Raso scored her first career Women's World Cup goals at just the right time, with a first-half brace in Australia's 4-0 victory over Canada in Monday's pivotal group-stage finale.

The Matildas, who also got goals from Mary Fowler and Steph Catley in the second half, clinched the top spot in Group B and a place in the round of 16 at the expense of the Olympic champion.

Australia needed a victory to guarantee progression to the next round. The co-host secured a resounding win. Canada, needing to avoid defeat to avoid elimination, is out of the tournament after slipping from the lead to third place in the group behind Australia and Nigeria.

After missing two group-stage matches with a calf injury sustained on the eve of the tournament, Australia's star striker Sam Kerr was available and on the bench but did not play in the match. The closest she got to the pitch was carrying drinks for her teammates.

In front of a vocal, pro-Australia crowd of 27,706 in Melbourne, Canada became the first reigning Olympic champion to be eliminated in group play in the subsequent Women's World Cup.

Australia's progression ensured this year's Women's World Cup would not be

the first without a host nation in the knockout stage.

With its victory over Canada and Nigeria's 0-0 draw with Ireland, Australia finished first in Group B with six points. Nigeria finished second with five points.

**Japan 4, Spain 0:** At Wellington, New Zealand, Japan scored three times from lightning breaks in the first half, once in the second and defended resolutely to trounce Spain 4-0 on Monday and top Group C at the Women's World Cup.

Hinata Miyazawa scored twice, Riko Ueki scored once and both were instrumental in each other's goals as Japan switched swiftly from defense to counterattack and scored from its only three attempts on goal before halftime.

Mina Tanaka came off the bench to score the last in the 82nd minute as Japan, with only 22% of possession, turned on a counterattacking master class in front of 21,000.

Both teams had already clinched places in the round of 16, Japan for the fourth World Cup in succession and Spain for the second. Both had beaten Zambia 5-0 and Spain had the better goal differential after both teams beat Costa Rica. A draw would have been enough to see Spain finish atop a group for the first time in its history.

**Zambia 3, Costa Rica 1:** At Hamilton, New Zealand, Lushomo Mweemba scored

the fastest goal at this year's Women's World Cup, and Barbra Banda added the 1,000th goal in tournament history, as tournament newcomer Zambia earned its first ever win with a victory over Costa Rica.

The victory sent Zambia home from its first World Cup on an emotional high. Both teams had already been eliminated from the knockout stage before the match.

The Copper Queens' opening goal, the first in their history, came after just 2 minutes and 11 seconds off Avell Chitundu's corner kick. Mweemba lofted a volley into the roof of the net over goalkeeper Daniela Solera.

**Nigeria 0, Ireland 0:** At Brisbane, Australia, Nigeria used a scoreless draw against Ireland to advance to the round of 16, finishing second in Group B behind co-host Australia.

After a relatively quiet first half, the Nigerians picked up the intensity in hopes of scoring the goal that would move them to the top of the group. A diving save from Ireland's Courtney Brosnan in the 52nd minute kept her clean sheet intact and secured Ireland's first point in its debut appearance at the tournament.

Nigeria came closest to breaking the deadlock when Toni Payne found the head of Uchenna Kanu. A diving save by Brosnan was needed to keep the game scoreless.

# Hodges win 3M Champions for first PGA Tour victory

Associated Press

BLAINE, Minn. — Lee Hodges rarely gets rattled, except perhaps during Alabama football games when he's rooting for his beloved Crimson Tide.

After using that unflappable demeanor to keep control of the 3M Open, Hodges finally let loose.

Hodges shot a 67 in the final round on Sunday for a wire-to-wire title and his first tour victory, setting tournament records with a 260 and a seven-stroke win.

"The process I went through, I'll take this week forever," Hodges said. "I'll just try to keep replicating this week every time I show up to a tourna-

ment."

Hodges, who started the day with a five-stroke lead on J.T. Poston, was up by three entering the par-5 last hole on his 65th career start. After Poston's go-for-broke approach yielded a triple bogey, Hodges tapped in a short putt for his third birdie of the round.

"I had to try and give it a shot and see if there was some way I could make 3 there at the end and put some pressure on Lee," Poston said.

The 28-year-old Alabama native hugged and hoisted his wife, Savannah, in celebration after she hustled out to the green to greet him. Then Jay Seawell, Hodges' college coach

at Alabama, surprised him with a special appearance and a milkshake in hand. Not bad for a guy from the small town of Ardmore.

"I'm super proud to be from there and represent those people," Hodges said.

"Man, I'm sure there is a party going on in north Alabama right now."

Poston shot a 69 to drop into a three-way tie for second place with Martin Laird and Kevin Streelman. Dylan Wu shot a 64 to match Keith Mitchell for fifth at 16 under.

Tony Finau, the defending champion and highest-ranked player at 10th in the FedEx Cup standings participating in this

field, shot a 70 to land in a three-way tie for seventh.

Hodges shot a 63 on Thursday, a 64 on Friday and a 66 on Saturday to take a commanding lead into the final round at the TPC Twin Cities course in Blaine on a former sod farm in suburban Minneapolis. He had two eagles and two bogeys on Sunday.

With one previous top-three finish in 2022 at The American Express in La Quinta, Calif., Hodges said on Saturday he couldn't recall a five-shot lead in his entire career, amateur competition included, and felt as if he was "playing with house money" with his place on the tour next season secured.

# Buescher earns berth in NASCAR playoffs

Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Chris Buescher was already in good position to qualify for NASCAR's playoffs.

Now, even something remarkable over the last four races of the regular season won't keep him out.

Buescher pulled away on a restart with three laps to go to win at Richmond Raceway on Sunday and snag one of the final spots in NASCAR's playoff field.

Buescher led 88 laps and was ahead by nearly 6 seconds when a caution came out with under 10 laps to go. That erased his lead over Virginia native Denny Hamlin, who was booed by his hometown crowd before the race.

But Hamlin got a poor final restart and Buescher easily pulled away for his first Cup Series win of the season, the third of his career.

"I knew that last restart was going to be tough, but I knew we had the speed in this thing," Buescher said.

He and RFK Racing teammate Brad Keselowski led a combined 190 of the 400 laps in their Fords. Keselowski, now a part owner of the team, led 102 laps on the 0.75-mile oval.

Buescher started 26th and had to drive through the field for the win that locked him into the 16-driver playoff field. Buescher became the 13th race winner this year, and there are three playoff spots up for grabs over the next month.

It was the 139th Cup win for primary team owner Jack Roush, and the second since Keselowski joined the ownership group.

Ford now has 723 wins in NASCAR's top Cup Series.

"Everybody at RFK Racing who has worked so hard to get us to this point," said Buescher.

Hamlin, winner last week at Pocono, finished second in a Toyota for Joe Gibbs Racing. Kyle Busch was third in a Chevrolet for Richard Childress Racing, followed by the Fords of Joey Logano from Team Penske

and Ryan Preece of Stewart-Haas Racing.

"One win is good, but you get three or four or five and then you feel a lot better," Keselowski said. "It sure beats not having any at all, but we want to keep going. It's nice to have one car locked in the playoffs. We need to get both cars locked in the playoffs. We have a good points gap, but we want wins and this is where we need to be."

Keselowski, despite being winless this season, is still mathematically in contention for the playoffs.

The race was slowed just three times by caution flags, with the final yellow sending the leaders to pit road for four tires with eight laps to go. When the green flag was shown again, Buescher used the inside line to pull away for his third career victory.

Hamlin's bid for the victory ended on the second lap of the final sprint when he drove in too deep in the first turn and slid up the track. He finished 0.549 sec-

onds behind Buescher.

"I got a bad restart," Hamlin said. "I had to recover too much ground from what I lost on the front stretch. Almost got to the outside, and then in turn four, almost got to the outside again, and then in turn one, I was like, 'I'm just going to ship it in there and try to get to the outside one more time' and I just carried way too much speed and locked up the left front tires."

Kyle Larson, angered last week when Hamlin caused him to hit the wall while leading while Hamlin went on to win, was running a few laps down when he nudged Hamlin out of the way with 70 laps to go during Sunday's race.

Larson, who won at Richmond in April, finished 19th.

"I think he was having a frustrating day," Hamlin said. "It's all good."

The series next moves to Michigan where Kevin Harvick, winless so far in this his final season, is the defending champion.

# Verstappen wins Belgian Grand Prix for 8th straight victory

Associated Press

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS, Belgium — Defending Formula One champion Max Verstappen enters the midseason break in unstoppable form, after emphatically winning the Belgian Grand Prix on Sunday for an eighth straight win and 10th overall of a crushingly dominant season.

Despite starting from sixth place, he finished 22.3 seconds ahead of teammate Sergio Perez to give Red Bull an easy 1-2. It moved Verstappen ominously closer to a third straight world title and his own F1 record of 15 wins from last year.

Verstappen is 125 points ahead of Perez after just 12 races, and his next target is matching Sebastian Vettel's F1 record of nine straight wins with a victory at the Dutch GP when the lopsided season resumes on Aug. 27.

"I just want to have a nice time now, have a bit of time with family and friends," Verstappen said.

Ferrari driver Charles Leclerc finished in third for a third podium of the season, with

Lewis Hamilton in fourth for Mercedes ahead of Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso.

George Russell was sixth for Mercedes, with Lando Norris (McLaren), Esteban Ocon (Alpine), Lance Stroll (Aston Martin) and Yuki Tsunoda (AlphaTauri) completing the top 10.

Leclerc started on pole ahead of Perez, with Hamilton and Ferrari's Carlos Sainz Jr. behind them. McLaren rookie Oscar Piastri was on the next row alongside Verstappen — who was fastest in Friday's qualifying but took a five-place grid penalty for a gearbox change and had to avoid early traffic.

"It was just about surviving turn one. I could see it was all getting really tight," Verstappen said. "I've been in that position before myself so I am just going to stay out of that and it worked out. From there onwards, I made the right overtakes."

Verstappen won from 14th last year, and once he overtook Perez on Lap 17 of 44, his 45th career win was seemingly inevitable.

"Really enjoyable to drive once I got in

the lead," Verstappen said. "It was again a great race."

Red Bull extended its record to 13 straight wins, including the final race of last season.

Hamilton came in on the penultimate lap for a tire change and the move paid off as he took the bonus point for fastest lap from Verstappen — a very minor blip for the dominant Dutchman.

It was yet another stellar weekend for Verstappen, who also won Saturday's sprint race. The only issue was some more bickering with his race engineer Gianpiero Lambiase over the radio, as they continued their spat from Friday's qualifying.

"Don't forget Max, use your head, please," Lambiase told Verstappen when he questioned why Perez was making his first tire change on Lap 14.

Verstappen defused any talk of tension with Lambiase.

"It's fine. We know each other very well and we have a very good relationship," he said. "I think it's really important."