

US troops set for August exit from Niger

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. will remove all its forces and equipment from a small base in Niger this weekend and fewer than 500 remaining troops will leave a critical drone base in the West African country in August, ahead of a Sept. 15 deadline set in an agreement with the new ruling junta, the American commander there said Friday.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Kenneth Ekman said in an interview that a number of small teams of 10-20 U.S. troops, including special operations forces, have moved to other countries in West Africa. But the bulk of the forces will go to Europe, at least initially.

Niger's ouster of American troops following a coup last year has broad ramifications for the U.S. because it is forcing troops to abandon the critical drone base that was used for counterterrorism missions in the Sahel, a vast region south of the Sahara desert where groups linked to al-Qaida and Islamic State operate.

Ekman and other U.S. military leaders have said other West African nations want to

work with the U.S. and may be open to an expanded American presence. He did not detail the locations, but other U.S. officials have pointed to the Ivory Coast and Ghana as examples.

Ekman, who serves as the director for strategy at U.S. Africa Command, is leading the U.S. military withdrawal from the small base at the airport in Niger's capital of Niamey and from the larger counterterrorism base in the city of Agadez. He said there will be a ceremony Sunday marking the completed pullout from the airport base, then the final 100 troops and the last C-17 transport aircraft will depart.

Under the junta agreement, two-thirds of U.S. troops and equipment must be out of the country by July 26, Ekman said. That deadline, which forced the Pentagon to move quickly, is a key reason why U.S. Africa Command will complete its withdrawal of all 1,000 troops from Niger early.

But it also leaves a counterterrorism gap that U.S. officials are struggling to fill as security threats from extremist groups

in the Sahel grow.

One of those groups, Jama'at Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, known as JNIM, is active in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger and is looking to expand into Benin and Togo. Those expansion locations could be used initially as hubs to rest, recuperate, get financing and gather weapons, according to U.S. officials, but the group also has increased attacks there.

"Niger was immensely helpful for us as a location because it was in the Sahel and it was adjacent to those areas where the threat is most concentrated," Ekman said. Now, he said, the challenge is battling the insurgency while having to get access from outside Niger, which makes it more difficult.

He said other coastal West African nations are concerned about the Sahel-based threats and want to talk about how they can partner with American forces. Ekman added that the small teams of U.S. troops moving to other West African nations are not combat forces but advisers, as well as special operations, personnel recovery and

intelligence and surveillance forces. Talks with other nations continue, and Ekman said some may be interested but not ready to allow in more U.S. troops.

Speaking to reporters from The Associated Press and Reuters from the U.S. Embassy in Niamey, Ekman said that while portable buildings and vehicles that are no longer useful will be left behind when U.S. troops leave Niger, a lot of larger equipment will be pulled out. For example, he said 18 4,000-pound generators worth more than \$1 million each will be taken out of Agadez.

Unlike the withdrawal from Afghanistan, he said the U.S. is not destroying equipment or facilities as it leaves.

"Our goal in the execution is, leave things in as good a state as possible," he said. "If we went out and left it a wreck or we went out spitefully, or if we destroyed things as we went, we'd be foreclosing options" for future security relations.

Niger's ruling junta ordered U.S. forces out of the country in the wake of last July's ouster of the country's president.

Japan: Chinese vessels near Senkaku Islands again

**BY BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA**

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Three Chinese coast guard vessels entered the 12-mile territorial limit around the Senkaku Islands between Tuesday and Thursday, the third such incident in less than a month, according to the Japanese coast guard.

The three vessels were chasing a Japanese fishing boat and

appeared to be armed with deck-mounted machine guns, according to a Japan coast guard news release.

The first vessel entered waters south of Uotsuri island, the largest of the Senkaku chain, around 1:38 p.m. Tuesday, closely followed by the second at 2:35 p.m. and third at 4:29 p.m. near Minamikojima, according to the release.

A larger contingent of Japanese coast guard ships posi-

tioned themselves between the fishing boat and the Chinese vessels and warned the Chinese by radio and electronic messaging boards to leave the area, a Japanese coast guard spokesman said Friday.

Some government officials in Japan are required to speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

The last Chinese vessel left the area at 8:26 p.m. Wednesday; the first two left at 8:17 a.m.

Thursday, according to the release.

Another Chinese coast guard ship was spotted in Japan's exclusive economic zone but did not intrude, the release said.

The ministry filed multiple complaints with the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo and with the Chinese government in Beijing over the three-day intrusion. "We asked them to leave the area," a ministry spokesman said Friday.

Family members on 2 Navy ships catch up in Mediterranean

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Sailors from the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp visited family members aboard the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, ahead of the aircraft carrier's imminent return to the United States after nearly nine months at sea.

Six service members aboard Wasp were flown on an MH-60 Seahawk helicopter to Eisenhower as both ships transited the Mediterranean Sea on Sunday, the Navy said.

The roughly two-hour visits came as the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group, the Wasp Amphibious Ready Group and the British navy ship HMS Duncan conducted multiple operations together.

The Eisenhower group, which includes the destroyer USS Gravelly and the cruiser USS Philippine Sea, entered the Mediterranean Sea on June 22 after more than seven months combating Iranian-backed Houthi militant efforts to disrupt shipping in the Red Sea.

Eisenhower, Gravelly and Philippine Sea left the region Thursday and are in the eastern Atlantic Ocean, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet said Friday.

The Wasp group, which includes the dock landing ship USS Oak Hill, the amphibious transport dock ship USS New York and embarked elements of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, arrived in the area late last month.

For Petty Officer 3rd Class

Daniel Arbodleda, the chance to see family after a lengthy deployment was unexpected but joyful.

"I was ecstatic when I found out that there was a chance that I might actually get to see my husband after being away for nine months," Arbodleda, a logistics specialist aboard Eisenhower, said Friday in a statement. "Before we left, we accepted the fact that we were not going to see each other for at least a year."

Even so, the reunion was bittersweet, "saying our good-byes for the second time was a bit harder than the last," said Arbodleda's husband, Petty Officer 3rd Class Mark Kevin Escalante, a machinist's mate serving on Wasp.

The morale booster also was enjoyed by family members and friends who saw the reunion photo posted to Wasp's Facebook page.

"My handsome husband, my beautiful daughter and her boyfriend all in one photo," said Alexas Gore in a comment on the post.

Petty Officer 1st Class Sherry Moreno said she was grateful to visit her nephew, Petty Officer 3rd Class Marc Diver, an aviation ordnanceman aboard Eisenhower.

"Seeing his face when I walked in and being able to hug him was the best," said Moreno, an aviation support equipment technician. "Our family's excitement seeing us together while both of us are on deployment is something very few can say they have experienced."

Okinawa drafts protest over alleged US sexual offenses

By KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A special committee of Okinawa legislators has drafted a letter of protest to U.S. authorities over a growing list of allegations of sexual crimes committed by U.S. service members since 2023.

In addition to two indictments disclosed recently, including one alleging the kidnap and sexual assault of an underage girl, the committee heard Monday of three arrests on similar allegations going back to February 2023.

As the committee met Thursday to draft its protest, a sixth service member, a U.S. Marine, was arrested that morning on suspicion of touching a woman's breast, according to a spokesman for Okinawa Prefectural Police.

The statement goes to the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly

on Wednesday for its consideration, a spokesman for the prefecture's Political Affairs Research Division said Friday.

If approved, the letter will go to several U.S. officials, including U.S. Forces Japan commander Lt. Gen. Ricky Rupp and U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel, the spokesman said.

The committee's draft calls on the U.S. government to take measures to prevent further incidents, and to apologize to and compensate the girl and the woman identified by police as victims.

The committee also requested that Japan and the United States "drastically revise" the status of forces agreement, saying that it privileges U.S. military members. SOFA establishes the rights and responsibilities of military and civilian personnel in Japan with the U.S. armed forces.

Marines revive in-demand attack helicopter squadron

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — An ongoing need for attack helicopter squadrons led the Marine Corps to revive a unit last week, less than two years after it was deactivated, service officials said.

The Marine Corps bid farewell to its Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 269, known as the "Gunrunners," in December 2022 as part of a service-wide overhaul. But the farewell was not so final, lasting 18 months.

The squadron, which is part of North Carolina-based II Marine Aircraft Wing, was reactivated July 1 after the Marine Corps conducted an analysis on force management.

The analysis found there was a need for an additional attack helicopter squadron on the East Coast to support the II Marine Expeditionary Force, one of three Marine air-ground task forces meant to deploy overseas in response to conflict and crises. The second expeditionary force is based at Marine Corps Air Station New River, and the first and third are at Camp Pendleton and Okinawa, Japan.

Operating the AH-1Z "Viper" attack helicopter and the UH-1Y "Venom" utility helicopter, the squadron will resume providing the Marines air-ground task force with offensive air and utility support, as well as armed escorts.

Biden defiant amid more calls to step aside

Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. — To a defiant President Joe Biden, the 2024 election is up to the public — not the Democrats on Capitol Hill. But the chorus of Democratic voices calling for him to step aside is growing, from donors, strategists, lawmakers and their constituents who have said he should bow out.

The party has not fallen in line behind him even after the events that were set up as part of a blitz to reset his imperiled campaign and show everyone he wasn't too old to stay in the

job or to do it another four years.

On Saturday, a fifth Democratic lawmaker said openly that Biden should not run again. Rep. Angie Craig of Minnesota said that after what she saw and heard in the debate with Republican rival Donald Trump, and Biden's "lack of a forceful response" afterward, he should step aside "and allow for a new generation of leaders to step forward."

Craig posted one of the Democrats' key suburban wins in the 2018 midterms and could be a barometer for districts that

were vital for Biden in 2020.

With the Democratic convention approaching and just four months to Election Day, neither camp in the party can much afford this internecine drama much longer. But it is bound to drag on until Biden steps aside or Democrats realize he won't and learn to contain their concerns about the president's chances against Trump.

There were signs party leaders realize the standoff needs to end. Some of the most senior lawmakers, including Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi and Rep. James Clyburn, were now pub-

licly working to bring the party back to the president. Pelosi and Clyburn had both raised pointed questions about Biden in the aftermath of the debate.

"Biden is who our country needs," Clyburn said late Friday after Biden's interview with ABC aired.

Biden roundly swatted away calls Friday to step away from the race, telling voters at a Wisconsin rally, reporters outside Air Force One and ABC's George Stephanopoulos that he was not going anywhere.

"Completely ruling that out," he told reporters at the rally.

Biden assails Project 2025, Trump's denials

Associated Press

MIAMI — Donald Trump has distanced himself from Project 2025, a massive proposed overhaul of the federal government drafted by longtime allies and former officials in his administration, days after the head of the think tank responsible for the program suggested there would be a second American Revolution.

"I know nothing about Project 2025," Trump posted on his social media website. "I have no idea who is behind it. I disagree with some of the things they're saying and some of the things they're saying are absolutely ridiculous and abysmal. Anything they do, I wish them luck, but I have nothing to do with them."

The 922-page plan outlines an expansion of presidential power and a plan to fire as many as 50,000 government workers to replace them with Trump loyalists. President Joe Biden's reelection campaign has worked to draw more attention to the agenda, particularly as Biden tries to keep fellow Democrats on board after his disastrous debate.

"He's trying to hide his con-

nections to his allies' extreme Project 2025 agenda," Biden said of Trump in a statement released by his campaign Saturday. "The only problem? It was written for him, by those closest to him. Project 2025 should scare every single American."

Trump has outlined his own plans to remake the government if he wins a second term, including staging the largest deportation operation in U.S. history and imposing tariffs on potentially all imports. His campaign has previously warned outside allies not to presume to speak for the former president and suggested their transition-in-waiting efforts were unhelpful.

Heritage Foundation President Kevin Roberts said on Steve Bannon's "War Room" podcast Tuesday that Republicans are "in the process of taking this country back." Former U.S. Rep. Dave Brat of Virginia hosted the show for Bannon, who is serving a four-month prison term.

"We are in the process of the second American Revolution, which will remain bloodless if the left allows it to be," Roberts said.

Beryl expected to hit Texas, regain hurricane strength

Associated Press

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas — The outer bands of Beryl brought rain and intensifying winds to Texas on Sunday as coastal residents boarded up windows, left beach towns under evacuation orders and braced for the tropical storm that forecasters expected to strengthen back into a hurricane before landfall.

Much of Texas' shoreline was under a hurricane warning and landfall was expected early Monday. Officials in several coastal counties urged tourists along the beach for the Fourth of the July holiday to leave.

The earliest storm to develop into a Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic, Beryl caused at least 11 deaths as it passed through the Caribbean on its way to Texas. The storm ripped doors, windows and roofs off homes with devastating winds and storm surge fueled by the Atlantic's record warmth.

"We're seeing the outer bands of Beryl approach the Texas coast now and the weather should be going downhill, especially this afternoon and evening," Eric Blake, a senior hur-

ricane specialist with the National Hurricane Center, said Sunday morning. "People should definitely be in their safe space by nightfall and we're expecting the hurricane to make landfall somewhere in the middle Texas coast overnight."

Beryl would be the 10th hurricane to hit Texas in July since 1851 and the fourth in the last 25 years, according to Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach.

Three times in its one week of life, Beryl has gained 35 mph in wind speed in 24 hours or less, the official weather service definition of rapid intensification.

Beryl's explosive growth into an unprecedented early whopper of a storm shows the literal hot water of the Atlantic and Caribbean, and what the Atlantic hurricane belt can expect for the rest of the storm season, experts said.

Texas officials warned people along the entire coastline to prepare for possible flooding, heavy rain and wind. The hurricane warning extended from Baffin Bay, south of Corpus Christi, to Sargent, south of Houston.

Prime minister seeks UK unity with 'reset'

Associated Press

LONDON — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer headed off Sunday to the four corners of the United Kingdom as part of an “immediate reset” with governments in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Starmer, who said he has a “mandate to do politics differently” after his party’s landslide victory, will meet Scottish First Minister John Swinney in Edinburgh in an effort to “turn disagreement into cooperation.”

“That begins today with an immediate reset of my government’s approach to working with the first and deputy first ministers,” he said. “Meaningful co-operation centered on respect will be key to delivering change across our United Kingdom.”

While each of the devolved nations in the U.K. elects mem-

bers to the House of Commons in London, they also have their own regional parliaments.

Starmer’s Labour Party trounced Swinney’s Scottish National Party for seats in Parliament. But the SNP, which has pushed for Scottish independence, still holds a majority at Holyrood, the Scottish parliament.

The trip to build better working relations across the U.K. is part of Starmer’s broader mission to work toward serving people as he tackles a mountain of problems.

The Labour government inherited a wobbly economy that left Britons struggling to pay bills after global economic woes and fiscal missteps. It also faces a public that is disenchanted after 14 years of chaotic Conservative rule and fiscal austerity that hollowed out public service-

es, including the revered National Health Service, which Starmer declared broken.

Starmer said he wants to transfer power from the bureaucratic halls of government in London to leaders who know what’s best for their communities.

After his brief tour, he’ll return to England, where he plans to meet with regional mayors, saying in his first news conference Saturday that he would engage with politicians regardless of their party.

“There’s no monopoly on good ideas,” he said “I’m not a tribal political.”

Starmer continued to speak with other world leaders, having separate calls with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

He spoke with both about his

priorities for a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip, the return of hostages to Israel and an increase in humanitarian aid, a spokesperson said.

He told Abbas that the recognition of a Palestinian state as part of a peace process was the “undeniable right of Palestinians” and told Netanyahu it was important to ensure the long-term conditions for a two-state solution, including ensuring financial means for Abbas’ Palestinian Authority to operate effectively.

On Tuesday, Starmer will jet off to Washington for a NATO meeting.

Meanwhile, his top diplomat, Foreign Secretary David Lammy, was due in Poland and Sweden on Sunday after visiting Germany on Saturday for his first trip abroad to strengthen ties with European partners.

Ukraine: Strike targeted ammo dump in Russia

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A village in a border region of western Russia was evacuated Sunday following a series of explosions after debris from a downed Ukrainian drone set fire to a nearby warehouse, local officials said.

Social media footage appeared to show rising clouds of black smoke in the Voronezh region while loud explosions could be heard in succession.

Gov. Aleksandr Gusev said that falling wreckage triggered the “detonation of explosive objects.” No casualties were reported, but residents of a nearby village in the Podgorensky district were evacuated, he said. Roads were also closed with emergency services, military and government officials working at the scene.

A Ukrainian security official told The Associated Press that a strike had been carried out on a

warehouse storing ammunition in the village of Serhiivka in the Voronezh region.

“The enemy stored surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles, shells for tanks and artillery, and boxes of cartridges for firearms,” said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to give the information to the media. “It is from this warehouse that the occupiers supply ammunition to their troops in Ukraine.”

Russia’s Ministry of Defense did not address the strike in their morning briefing, but said air defense systems had destroyed a Ukrainian drone over the Belgorod region.

Authorities in Russia’s Krasnodar province said Saturday that a fire at an oil depot had also been caused by falling drone debris. Russia’s emergency services said the blaze was extinguished Sunday morning.

Israeli protesters block roads, call for cease-fire

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Marking nine months since the war in Gaza started, Israeli protesters blocked highways across the country Sunday, calling on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to step down and pushing for a cease-fire that could bring back the hostages held by Hamas.

The demonstrations come as international mediators have renewed efforts to broker a deal. Hamas over the weekend appeared to have dropped a key demand for an Israeli commitment to end the war, according to Egyptian and Hamas officials who spoke to The Associated Press.

The war, triggered by the Palestinian militant group following a cross-border attack on Oct. 7, saw 1,200 people killed and 250 others taken hostage. A retaliatory Israeli air and ground offensive has killed over 38,000 Palestinians, according to the territory’s

Health Ministry.

Sunday’s “Day of Disruption” started at 6:29 a.m., the moment Hamas militants launched the first rockets toward Israel in October. Protesters blocked main roads and demonstrated outside of the homes of members of parliament. Near the border with Gaza, Israeli protesters released balloons to symbolize those who were killed and abducted.

About 120 hostages remain captive after more than 100 hostages were released as part of a November cease-fire deal. Israel has already concluded that more than 40 of the remaining hostages are dead.

Netanyahu had previously said while he was open to pausing the war as part of a hostage deal, Israel would press on until it reached its goals of destroying Hamas’ military and governing capabilities and bringing home all those held captive by Hamas.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Flight diverted after man exposes himself, urinates

NY BUFFALO — A flight to Manchester, N.H., was diverted after a man allegedly exposed himself and urinated in the aisle of the airplane, officials said.

The 25-year-old Oregon man was arrested and charged with indecent exposure after the flight landed at Buffalo Niagara International Airport. He was released after making an initial appearance in federal court in Buffalo, according to a release from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of New York.

The man told officers he was flying from Portland, Ore., to Manchester and had several whiskey and colas before boarding the flight, and then more of them during a layover in Chicago and after boarding there. He said he got up to use the restroom and was coming back to his seat, but he has a medical urination problem, according to the criminal complaint.

Senate OKs bill urging ban on students' phone use

PA HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania's Senate on Wednesday approved a bill to encourage school districts to start a pilot program that effectively bans students' use of cellphones during the school day in an effort to improve their mental health and academic performance.

The bill, which passed 45-5, would authorize grants to school districts to buy locking bags after the district creates a policy requiring students to leave their phones in such bags

for the whole school day. It now goes to the state House for consideration.

The bill's sponsor, Republican state Sen. Ryan Aument of Lancaster, said he hopes that limits on phone use will result in improvements in students' mental health and academic performance.

Under the bill, the policy must provide exemptions for students who have a documented medical condition that requires them to use a cellphone.

Participating school districts must track changes over two school years in student mental health, bullying, violence and academic performance.

1 dead, 2 injured after blast at weapons plant

AR CAMDEN — One person has died after an explosion at a defense weapons plant in Arkansas, the facility's operators confirmed Friday.

The explosion happened Wednesday at the General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems' plant in Camden, about 86 miles south of Little Rock, a company spokesperson said. The person who died was initially reported as missing.

Two other people were injured in the blast. One was airlifted to an out-of-state hospital and the other has since been released from an area hospital in Camden where they were treated, the company said.

Production remains paused at the building where the explosion occurred while regulatory and local authorities conduct an investigation into the cause.

The Camden plant supports military programs such as the Hellfire and Javelin missiles

and various mortar munitions, according to the company's website.

Man charged in shooting at Juneteenth event

CA OAKLAND — A 23-year-old Oakland man has been charged in connection with a mass shooting that broke out at a Juneteenth celebration in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Prosecutors charged JaJuan Kelly, 23, with four counts of felony assault with a semiautomatic firearm for the shooting of four people at the Oakland event, the Alameda County district attorney's office said in a statement.

Authorities are looking for multiple suspects, and District Attorney Pamela Price said she was "deeply relieved to announce that one of the individuals" has been charged.

Kelly was one of 14 people shot and wounded June 19 at an unsanctioned sideshow following a peaceful celebration attended by thousands. No one was killed, and those injured ranged from 20 to 30 years old. Police initially said 15 people had been shot, but later revised the figure.

Cop fatally shot suspect in alleged hostage situation

SD SIOUX FALLS — South Dakota police said a deputy fatally shot an armed suspect Wednesday who allegedly was holding several employees hostage at a Sioux Falls gas station.

A Sioux Falls police officer was by the gas station when someone began firing at the officer, who fired back, Sioux Falls Police Chief Jon Thum told the

Argus Leader. Police received an emergency call about the shooting at roughly the same time.

Backup arrived, Thum said, and a Minnehaha County Sheriff's deputy and SWAT officer used a sniper rifle to shoot the suspect.

Law enforcement found a hostage hiding in a bathroom and another who had been near the suspect, Thum said. Another hostage had already fled.

2 charged with conspiring to bribe juror enter pleas

MN MINNEAPOLIS — Two of five people charged with conspiring to bribe a Minnesota juror with a bag of \$120,000 in cash in exchange for the acquittal of defendants in one of the country's largest COVID-19-related fraud cases pleaded not guilty Wednesday.

Said Shafii Farah and Abdulkarim Shafii Farah were arraigned before U.S. Magistrate Judge Tony Leung in Minneapolis. A third co-defendant already pleaded not guilty. They are each charged with one count of conspiracy to bribe a juror, one count of bribery of a juror and one count of corruptly influencing a juror.

Court documents revealed an extravagant scheme in which the accused researched the juror's personal information on social media, surveilled her, tracked her habits and bought a GPS device to install on her car. Authorities believe the defendants targeted the woman, known as "Juror 52," because she was the youngest and they believed her to be the only person of color on the panel.

— From wire reports



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James, US focused only on gold medal

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — He first played on the U.S. Olympic team as a 19-year-old. He did it again in his 20s, twice. And now, a few months from turning 40, he's back for one more run.

LeBron James didn't need another Olympic experience to complete some missing box on his résum  or add to a legacy that was secured long, long ago. He decided to play this summer for one simple reason—because he wants to.

Taking his first steps toward becoming the first U.S. men's basketball player to compete at the Olympics in three different decades, James hit the floor Saturday with the team that the Americans are sending to the Paris Games later this month. Training camp opened in Las Vegas, the start of a 5½-week quest where the only acceptable ending will be the U.S. winning gold for a fifth consecutive time.

"I'm still playing a high level," James, a three-time Olympic medalist — two golds and one bronze—said Saturday after the

first workout. "I still love the game of basketball. And Team USA has done well by me, so I felt like it was important for this summer to be able to go out there and play with the rest of the guys."

The first practice came on a day of another first for the James family; the workout in Las Vegas was simultaneous to the Los Angeles Lakers' first game in the California Classic summer league — the pro debut of Bronny James, the son of the NBA's all-time scoring leader.

It would have been very easy for James to ask for Day 1 off, to go see his son's debut. It was never a consideration. He took the floor shortly after the buses rolled in, slapping hands with teammates, throwing down dunks and reconnecting with two of his former coaches — Erik Spoelstra and Tyronn Lue, both of whom won NBA titles with James on their squads.

"I was blown away by how hard he practices," U.S. coach Steve Kerr said. "I went to Ty and Spo, and I said, 'Is this nor-

mal?' And they said, 'Every day, every day.' And then I said to Spo, 'What about way back when you got him?' And Spo said, 'Every day, every drill, every walk-through.'"

Kerr has coached against James in four NBA Finals, all of which featured Golden State guard Stephen Curry — who plays for Kerr with the Warriors and is making his Olympic debut this summer.

And it's fair to say that teaming up was part of what intrigued James and Curry when it was time to decide whether to play in Paris.

"I've talked to both of them about this idea of being together after going against one another with such high stakes over the years," Kerr said. "They obviously fit really well together. The idea of Steph playing off the ball, and LeBron pushing it in transition, that's pretty intriguing. Obviously, Steph will play on the ball as well. And LeBron has become such a good shooter, but they're both so good at so many different areas of the

game. I think they're really excited to compete together for the first time."

James was part of the U.S. teams that won bronze at the 2004 Olympics in Athens and the 2006 world championships (now called the World Cup) in Japan. And ever since then, the Americans have gone unbeaten when James is wearing USA across his chest in international play.

Starting with the bronze medal game in Japan 18 years ago, the U.S. has played 36 games — 10 at the FIBA Americas tournament in 2007, then four exhibitions before and eight games at the 2008 Beijing Games, then five more exhibitions and eight games at the 2012 London Games — with James in uniform. The record: 36-0. He hopes it's 47-0 when this summer's run ends.

"I'm here to have a good summer," James said.

Only Carmelo Anthony has played in four Olympics for the U.S. men to this point; Kevin Durant will play in his fourth this summer as well.

Clark becomes first WNBA rookie to post triple-double

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Caitlin Clark posted the first triple-double by a rookie in WNBA history to help rally Indiana to an 83-78 victory over New York on Saturday at Gainbridge Fieldhouse, snapping the Fever's nine-game losing streak to the Liberty.

Clark finished with 19 points, 13 assists and 12 rebounds for Indiana (9-13). The No. 1 pick in the WNBA Draft was one rebound shy of a triple-double two games ago in an 88-82 road victory over the Phoenix Mercury.

"Obviously, it's really cool," Clark said. "My teammates have been finishing the ball really, really at a high rate. My assist numbers, that's because of them."

Indiana coach Christie Sides was impressed by Clark and the fact that the Fever outscored the Liberty by 12 in the final period.

"Caitlin with a triple-double, my gosh, that's incredible," she said after the game. "Holding New York to 16 points in the fourth quarter, that's huge for us. That's the No. 1 team in the league."

Clark had 11 points in the first quarter, making three of four from 3-point range. She topped double figures in assists in the third quarter and passed the 10-rebound mark in the fourth.

Clark had a three-point play and Kelsey Mitchell followed with a 3-pointer to tie the game at 75 with 2:31 to go. Aliyah Boston scored off a steal by Mitchell to give Indiana a two-point lead and Lexie Hull's reverse layup increased the lead to 79-75 at the 1:24 mark.

New York's Sabrina Ionescu answered with a 3-pointer but missed one the next time down the court with a chance to give the Liberty the lead. Boston made two free throws with 17 seconds left and Mitchell hit

two with 11 seconds remaining to wrap up the upset.

New York made only 10 of 42 attempts from beyond the arc.

"We defended well the whole game," Boston said. "Those last few minutes, especially those last few possessions, were great for us."

Boston scored 18 points on 8-for-12 shooting and had eight rebounds for the Fever. Mitchell scored 14, topping double figures for the ninth straight game. NaLyssa Smith, the second overall pick in the 2022 draft, added 12 points and 11 rebounds for her fifth double-double this season.

Ionescu scored 22 to lead New York (17-4), which had won five straight games. Betnijah Laney-Hamilton finished with 20 points, making four 3-pointers. Breanna Stewart added 14 points, six rebounds and six assists. Jonquel Jones had 12 rebounds to go with six points and three steals.

Alcaraz holds off Humbert; Keys retires

Associated Press

LONDON—Defending Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz came up with the big shots when it mattered most to hold off Ugo Humbert and reach the quarterfinals with a 6-3, 6-4, 1-6, 7-5 win on Centre Court on Sunday.

The match had seemed all but over when Alcaraz clinched the second set by chasing down several seemingly out-of-reach shots on set point, even falling over after hitting one forehand and quickly getting back up to get to the next ball.

Asked to describe his play on that point, Alcaraz just said: “Unbelievable, I guess.”

But Humbert nearly staged a surprising comeback and threatened to take the match into a fifth set when he held three

straight break points for a 5-3 lead in the fourth.

Alcaraz came back to win that game with the help of a couple of aces, then broke for a 6-5 lead by hitting a deep forehand winner.

He set up match point with one of his delicate forehand drop shots and converted it with a service winner.

“I felt great playing today, I think I played at a really high level,” said Alcaraz, who will next play the winner between No. 12 Tommy Paul and Roberto Bautista Agut.

Earlier, French Open runner-up Jasmine Paolini reached her first Wimbledon quarterfinal when Madison Keys had to retire with a leg injury at 5-5 in the third set of their fourth-round match.

Keys had served for the match at 5-2 in the last set, but then started limping more and more and needed a medical timeout to get her left leg worked on after Paolini made it 5-4. She had her left thigh taped as she served for the match for a second time but was broken again — double-faulting on break point — and was in tears by the end of that game, with her movement clearly restricted.

Keys tried to play on but the American finally went to the net to tell the chair umpire on No. 1 Court that she was retiring after Paolini hit an ace for 15-15 in the final game.

The Italian had won the first set 6-3, before Keys won the second 7-6 (6).

Keys had been two points from the win when the score

was deuce at 5-2 in the third.

“I’m so sorry for her. To end the match like this, it’s bad,” Paolini said in her on-court interview. “What can I say? We played a really good match. It was really tough. A lot of ups and downs. I’m feeling a little bit happy, but also sad for her. It’s not easy to win like that.”

Paolini is the fifth Italian woman to reach the Wimbledon quarterfinals in the professional era, and will try to become the first to make the semifinals. She will face the winner between No. 2 Coco Gauff and 19th-seeded Emma Navarro, who played later on Centre Court.

Keys, the 2017 U.S. Open runner-up, was trying to reach the last eight for the second year in a row at the All England Club, and third time overall.

Hamilton wins British GP for first victory since '21

Associated Press

SILVERSTONE, England — Lewis Hamilton held off Max Verstappen’s late charge to win a thrilling British Grand Prix on Sunday and secure his first victory since the penultimate race of the 2021 season.

Hamilton became the first F1 driver to win on any track nine times and also extended his F1 record to 104 wins. His last came at the Saudi Arabian GP in December 2021 — the year he lost the title to Red Bull driver Verstappen.

“You’ve got to continue to dig deep even when you are feeling the bottom of the barrel,” Hamilton said. “My fans around the world have been so supportive.”

It was a fitting way for Hamilton to end his last British GP with Mercedes, before joining Ferrari next year.

“This is my last race here with this team, so I wanted to win this so much for them because I love them and I appreciate them so much,” he said.

“I was coming ‘round and there’s just no greater feeling than to finish at the front here.”

The seven-time F1 champion beat defending champion Verstappen by 1.5 seconds, with Lando Norris finishing third for McLaren ahead of teammate Oscar Piastri.

A tearful-sounding Hamilton thanked his team over the radio and was still emotional several minutes later as he struggled to compose himself.

“I’m still crying,” Hamilton said as he addressed the crowd. “There’s definitely been days between 2021 and here when I didn’t feel I was good enough.”

There were high hopes for a home win at Silverstone, with Hamilton’s Mercedes teammate George Russell on pole position ahead of Hamilton and with Norris going from third and Verstappen fourth.

Russell’s hopes of a second straight F1 win ended on Lap 34 of 52 with a suspected water system issue on his car. A few

laps later, McLaren botched Norris’ tire change.

Verstappen overtook Norris with four laps left but could not catch Hamilton, to the delight of most of the 164,000 fans attending the race.

Moments after crossing the line, Hamilton jumped into the arms of mechanics and then shared a long hug with his father. Then it was time to absorb the applause from the home fans. Carrying a British flag, he jumped over a crash barrier and then held it aloft.

“I can see you lap by lap, there’s just no greater feeling,” he told the cheering crowd.

The start saw Russell and Hamilton get away cleanly while Verstappen overtook Norris.

Rain started falling about 25 minutes into the race and made the 3.7-mile track greasier.

After Hamilton took the lead from Russell on the damp track, Norris took advantage of a Russell error to move into second.

Verstappen, Norris and both Mercedes cars pitted for new tires shortly after the halfway point of the race. But McLaren kept Piastri out a little longer, which ultimately cost him a chance of victory.

After the tire-change shakeup, Norris was just over three seconds ahead of Hamilton while Verstappen was drifting back at that point.

The next tire changes, with a little more than 10 laps remaining, proved crucial.

Verstappen, Hamilton and Norris made quick changes but McLaren took too long on Norris’ rears — 4.5 seconds — and he came out 2.4 seconds behind race leader Hamilton, with Verstappen now making up ground fast.

Although Verstappen is not winning as much, he is still extending his gap because Norris is finishing behind him.

He is 84 points ahead of Norris in the standings, 255-171, with Charles Leclerc in third place.

Yankees hammer Red Sox to end skid

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Ben Rice became the first Yankees rookie to homer three times in a game and drove in seven runs as New York snapped a four-game slide with a 14-4 victory over the Boston Red Sox on Saturday.

Alex Verdugo hit a two-run homer and drew the ire of the Red Sox with a 32-second trot around the bases. D.J. LeMahieu also drove in a pair of runs as the Yankees won for just the fifth time in 19 games. Aaron Judge added two hits.

Rafael Devers had a long homer and two RBI for Boston, which had its five-game winning streak halted.

Rice led off the game with a drive to right off Josh Winckowski and added a three-run shot off reliever Chase Anderson as part of a seven-run fifth inning. The 25-year-old first baseman capped his day with a second homer off Anderson in the seventh inning.

“What a game!” New York manager Aaron Boone said. “To set the tone right away in the first inning with a homer and put together a legendary day. Something he’ll never forget.”

After Rice’s third homer, Juan Soto stepped out of the batter’s box to allow the rookie to take a curtain call. Rice had to be encouraged by the entire New York dugout to step out to acknowledge the cheers.

“It was all happening so fast,” Rice said. “Thankfully got it in. That was pretty awesome!”

Blue Jays 5, Mariners 4: Yariel Rodríguez allowed one hit over six shutout innings for his first victory, Alejandro Kirk had three hits and drove in two runs and visiting Toronto held off Seattle.

Rodríguez (1-3) had arguably the best start of his brief major league career and followed up on a terrific outing his last time out against Houston. He went 6⅓ innings allowing one run to the Astros earlier this week, then was even better against an-

other AL West opponent.

The bigger worry for the Mariners was Julio Rodríguez after he was removed from the game following the first inning. Rodríguez appeared to be moving cautiously in the outfield a day after fouling a pitch off his left knee. There was no immediate word from the team about why he was removed.

Twins 9, Astros 3: Jose Miranda matched a major league record with hits in 12 straight plate appearances and Byron Buxton and Brooks Lee homered, leading host Minnesota to a win over Houston.

Miranda, playing third base, entered the game with the team record of hits in 10 straight at-bats. The 26-year-old singled in his first two official at-bats Saturday and tied the MLB record set by the Chicago Cubs’ Johnny Kling (1902) and matched by Boston’s Pinky Higgins (1938) and Detroit’s Walt Dropo (1952). His streak ended in the sixth inning on a routine flyout to left field.

Guardians 5, Giants 4: Major league batting leader Steven Kwan hit a solo homer and scored twice, Jhonkensy Noel homered and drove in two runs, and AL Central-leading Cleveland beat visiting San Francisco.

Kwan, who will start in the outfield at the All-Star Game, went 2-for-4 to raise his average to .365. He extended his inter-league hitting streak to 11 games and is batting .413 against National League foes.

Marlins 4, White Sox 3: Dane Myers had a go-ahead, two-run homer in the seventh inning and finished with three hits and three RBIs as host Miami beat Chicago in a matchup of teams with the worst records in the major leagues.

Myers’ 420-foot drive off White Sox reliever Michael Soroka (0-9), his second homer of the season, erased a 3-2 deficit and scored Jake Burger, who had reached on a leadoff walk. The Marlins snapped a five

game skid and improved to 31-58, next to last in MLB.

Athletics 19, Orioles 8: Brent Rooker and Max Schuemann hit 3-run homers and host Oakland had five home runs overall in a rout of Baltimore.

The A’s homered in each of the first four innings for the first time since 2003, with Shea Langeliers and Tyler Nevin also leaving the park. Kyle McCann hit a two-run shot in the eighth. Oakland led 10-0 after two innings and 17-1 after six.

Nationals 14, Cardinals 6: Top prospect James Wood launched his first career major league home run — a three-run shot — and added a two-run double for a career-high five RBIs as host Washington beat St. Louis.

Wood’s 383-foot, three-run, opposite-field homer put the Nationals ahead 7-0 in the second inning. He has reached base in all six games as a National, tied with Ian Desmond (2009) for second overall in club history.

Braves 5, Phillies 1: Rookie Spencer Schwellenbach gave up only one run in six innings, Marcell Ozuna and Ozzie Albies hit two-run homers and host Atlanta beat Philadelphia.

Schwellenbach (2-4) out-pitched Ranger Suárez (10-3) by allowing seven hits with no walks. The 24-year-old right-hander recorded six strikeouts.

Dodgers 5, Brewers 3: Shohei Ohtani and Miguel Vargas hit solo shots in the eighth inning, Will Smith became the first franchise player to homer in four consecutive at-bats in a decade as Los Angeles beat visiting Milwaukee.

After Christian Yelich went deep to tie the game at 3-all in the top of the eighth, the Dodgers responded with two homers to win their second straight in the matchup of National League division leaders.

Diamondbacks 7, Padres 5 (10): Christian Walker’s two-run single with no outs highlighted visiting Arizona’s three-

run 10th as it won against San Diego, which scored once in bottom of the inning and then left the bases loaded.

With Corbin Carroll as the automatic runner, the Diamondbacks loaded the bases against Wandy Peralta (2-2) on Geraldo Perdomo’s bunt single down the third-base line and pinch-hitter Randal Grichuk’s walk. Walker then singled past diving shortstop Ha-Seong Kim into center field. Jake McCarthy’s grounder brought in Grichuk to make it 7-4.

Angels 7, Cubs 0: Tyler Anderson threw eight dominant innings and Jo Adell homered to help visiting Los Angeles end a five-game skid with a victory over Chicago.

Anderson (8-8) gave up a leadoff single, then retired the next 13 Chicago batters before allowing another hit to cruise to his third win in his last five starts. The lefty matched his career-best 10 strikeouts and allowed just three hits with no walks.

Rockies 3, Royals 1: Brenton Doyle homered for the fourth time in five games, Austin Gomber (2-5) won for the first time in seven weeks with seven innings of one-run ball and host Colorado beat Kansas City.

Rangers 4, Rays 3: Slumping second baseman Marcus Semien hit his first homer in nearly a month, a go-ahead shot in the seventh inning to lead Texas to a victory over visiting Tampa Bay.

Mets 5, Pirates 2: Luis Torrens had three hits, including a three-run double, and Edwin Diaz got the save after his 10-game suspension ended earlier in the day as visiting New York defeated Pittsburgh.

Tigers 5, Reds 3: Pinch-hitter Wenceel Pérez hit a two-run homer and Mark Canha doubled home the go-ahead run in the eighth inning as visiting Detroit locked up its first series win in two weeks, rallying to beat Cincinnati.