

STARS AND STRIPES®

Sunday, June 5, 2016

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Expansion of deployments of Marines to Australia delayed

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. and Australia have pushed back plans for the deployment of a 2,500-strong Marine Air Ground Task Force to Australia's Northern Territory until 2020 as they nail down the final details, including cost-sharing, Australian officials say.

The Marine Corps started building its presence in the port of Darwin in 2012 and grew its rotational force, which spends six months of the year training there, to just under 1,200 troops by 2014.

However, the growth of the force, which was to have included the task force within five years, has stalled, with U.S. and Australian officials reporting only 1,250 Marines there this summer.

Australian Defence Force officials said in an email that they would work toward rotations of 2,500 Marines and equipment to Darwin by about 2020.

"The US and Australia are working together to determine the exact size and composition of the 2017 rotation," the officials said.

Negotiations about cost-sharing are a factor in the revised timetable for the buildup, which is seen as a hedge against growing Chinese influence in the Western Pacific.

Australian Defence Force officials said in an email May 30 that the two allies are working toward "finalizing cost-sharing arrangements."

"This is a 25-year agreement, so it is important for both countries to ensure that arrangements, including for cost-sharing, are well considered," the officials said.

Australian national security consultant Ross Babbage said the two countries have been negotiating for three years over who would pay costs associated with the rotational force.

The Australian government is spending money on a range of other defense projects that include upgrading air bases in the Northern Territory to accommodate large aircraft, including visiting U.S. planes, he said.

It's unclear how U.S. defense budget issues and the shrinking Marine Corps — which dropped from 201,000 Marines in 2011 to 184,000 in 2016 — plays into the decision.

DOD: 11 GIs infected with Zika this year

USA Today

At least 11 U.S. troops have been infected with the Zika virus since January, nearly all of whom traveled to countries where the mosquito-borne illness is prevalent, the Pentagon disclosed in a health report published Friday.

In addition, four dependents of servicemembers and two military retirees contracted the illness, according to the report. It underscored the risks to military personnel of child-bearing age exposed to the virus.

A fetus infected with the Zika virus during the first three months of pregnancy has about a 1 to 13 percent chance of developing microcephaly, an abnormally small head usually caused by incomplete brain development, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Among the 17 infected are four women, though none was pregnant, said Dr. Jose Sanchez, deputy chief of Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch.

Troops suffering from the Zika were four soldiers, three airmen, a Marine and three members of the Coast Guard, according to Sanchez. The first confirmed case was diagnosed in late January, the report said.

Fifteen of the 17 had traveled to South America or the Caribbean. They included four who visited Colombia, three who went to the Dominican Republic and three who visited Puerto Rico. One person had traveled to Brazil, which is dealing with a Zika epidemic.

"It is a fair assumption that the military is at higher risk for mosquito-borne infections," said Amesh Adalja, a senior associate at the Center for Health Security at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. "The military is stationed all over the world and often have prolonged outdoor exposure."

Mosquito repellents for troops in active Zika zones will be essential, as will minimizing standing water mosquito breeding sites on military bases.

Sailor arrested after wrong-way crashes on Okinawa

BY DAVE ORNAUER
AND CHIYOMI SUMIDA

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A 21-year-old Navy sailor was arrested on suspicion of drunken driving after crashing into two cars while driving the wrong way on an Okinawa highway, police said Sunday.

The incident appeared likely to further inflame anti-U.S. military sentiment on Okinawa that has been exacerbated by the recent arrests of a civilian

U.S. base worker in connection with the slaying of an Okinawa woman and of a U.S. sailor for the rape of a Japanese tourist. Those separate incidents led to tightened liberty restrictions May 27 on Okinawa, including a ban on off-base drinking.

U.S. Forces Japan commander Lt. Gen. John Dolan spoke by phone Sunday with U.S. Ambassador Caroline Kennedy and Pacific Command chief Adm. Harry Harris, then held an emergency meeting with the commanders of Air Force,

Army, Navy and Marine Corps forces in Japan, according to a USFJ statement.

"All acts of misconduct are unacceptable," the statement quoted Dolan as saying. "U.S. military members are expected to maintain the highest standards at all time as representatives of their unit and our nation."

Aimee Mejia, a Navy petty officer 2nd class assigned to the Navy Munitions Command at Kadena Air Base, was traveling south in the northbound

lane of Highway 58, a main artery on Okinawa's west coast, about 11:40 p.m. Saturday near Kadena Gate 3, police said.

Her car crashed into an oncoming vehicle, injuring a 35-year-old woman in the chest. Mejia's car then struck another car, bruising the arm of a 30-year-old man, police said.

A Breathalyzer test revealed a blood-alcohol level of 0.18 percent, six times the legal limit in Japan, police said.

Odd weather patterns in much of US

Associated Press

ATLANTA — A storm developing near Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula prompted officials to take precautions as unusual weather patterns affected many areas of the United States.

In Florida, the governor and top emergency officials are keeping an eye on the system developing off Mexico that could bring anywhere from 5 to 10 inches of rain beginning Sunday. The wacky weather came at the end of a period of scorching temperatures out West and flooding that killed nine soldiers when their military vehicle got caught in the rushing waters of a rain-swollen creek at Fort Hood, Texas.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami said the system off Mexico has a good chance of forming into a tropical cyclone, and even if it doesn't, it will still bring heavy rains along the Gulf Coast. Police in St. Petersburg, Fla., distributed sandbags, and Gov. Rick Scott warned residents, tourists and businesses to be prepared.

Florida's emergency management director, Bryan Koon, said they expected a fast-moving storm, which means it could mature rapidly.

"Even if this system does not develop into a named storm, it still poses significant risks from flooding, damaging winds and tornadoes and rip currents," he said.

In Southern California, nine people were sickened by the heat during a high school graduation ceremony as temperatures flirted with triple digits.

More than 17 million people in Washington, Baltimore, Virginia Beach, Va., and Raleigh, N.C., were looking at an "enhanced" risk of severe thunderstorms Sunday, according to the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center.

Damaging winds, a tornado or two and marginally severe hail were expected from the Southeast to as far north as New York.

US scientists assist S. Korea in a field study of air quality

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — The cockpit warning blared insistently as the plane spiraled downward to 500 feet above Seoul: "Too low, too low, terrain. Pull up, pull up, pull up."

The pilots ignored the automated voice despite a nervous glance from a visiting reporter. Their mission was to take the DC-8 as low or as high as the NASA scientists working in the back required.

The flight was part of a six-week joint Korea-U.S. air-quality field study — known as KORUS-AQ — which officially kicked off on April 29. The timing coincided with the so-called yellow dust season that sees fine particulate matter swept into the air from neighboring China's Gobi Desert.

Koreans check daily dust

forecasts to determine whether to don masks. U.S. Forces Korea has a monitoring system on its website, and the Seoul tower that overlooks downtown from its mountain perch changes color to signal high levels.

The \$20 million KORUS-AQ project, which will last three years including data analysis and preparations, is also trying to determine how much of Korea's pollution comes from outside and how much is generated at home after decades of rapid industrial development and growth in coal-fueled plants.

South Korea ranked 173rd of 180 countries in terms of air quality on this year's Environmental Performance Index released by Yale University. China was next to last.

The findings will help determine the pollutants' origin and gauge how to more effectively use satellites to monitor air quality from space.

There is a growing awareness within Asia about the interconnected dangers from fine dust, which doesn't respect borders. While Korea gets hit by particles from China, it in turn sends polluted air downwind to Japan. The three governments recently agreed to work together on the problem.

Last month, the scientists and crewmembers gathered for a briefing in a hangar near the Osan Air Base flight line. They then boarded the DC-8, which has been transformed into a flying laboratory.

Veteran pilots Richard "Dick" Ewers and Frank Batteas steered the DC-8. Ewers, 69, who is planning to retire after this mission, smiled during a flyover of a Korean research ship near China.

"They're waving to us from the deck," he said. "I'll bet we're going to be on some Facebook pages tonight."

Carter announces he plans to visit China

BY TARA COPP
Stars and Stripes

SINGAPORE — Defense Secretary Ash Carter will visit Beijing later this year to build upon recent overtures on cooperation with China even as the U.S. emphasizes that it will be the primary hedge against future aggression in the South China Sea.

Carter announced the trip during his speech at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue security conference in Singapore, where about 20 defense ministers are discussing security issues in Asia, including China's construction of airstrips and military features on top of reclaimed reefs and islets in the South China Sea that are also claimed by other countries.

"The United States remains

committed to working with China to ensure a principled future," Carter said, noting that China will continue to participate in RIMPAC, the world's largest international maritime exercise, with 27 countries involved this year, increasing the two militaries' interactions. The exercises open June 30 in Hawaii and California.

"In fact, the United States and China will sail together from Guam to Hawaii for RIMPAC, conducting seven exercise events along the way, including an event to practice search-and-rescue," Carter announced.

The approach has been questioned by Republican U.S. senators also attending Shangri-La who see the increased cooperation as a reward for China's aggression.

At a press briefing in Singapore, U.S. Pacific Commander Adm. Harry Harris said the exercises reflect a strategy of "cooperation where we can — but we have to confront [China] if we must," Harris said.

Harris said that despite increased concern over China's militarization of the South China Sea, "We've seen positive behavior in the last several months with China. Every now and then ... you'll see an incident in the air that we may judge to be unsafe — but those really over the course of time are rare.

"We want to cooperate with China in all domains as much as possible," Harris said.

As part of the White House's "Pacific pivot," Carter has visited the region five times in his 16 months in office.

Djokovic caps career slam with French

Associated Press

PARIS — A French Open champion at long last, and the first man in nearly a half-century to win four consecutive major championships, Novak Djokovic grabbed a racket and etched a heart in the very red clay that had given him such heartache in the past.

Then, when he finally was handed the La Coupe des Mousquetaires — the one trophy he truly yearned for, the one he needed in order to complete a career Grand Slam — Djokovic held it overhead, his eyes shut, before kissing it, exhaling and smiling broadly.

In his 12th appearance at Roland Garros, and fourth final, the top-seeded Djokovic earned that elusive title, casting aside a shaky opening set to dominate the rest of the way in a 3-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-4 victory over No. 2 Andy Murray on Sunday, buoyed by a supportive crowd that repeatedly chanted his nickname, “No-le!”

“It’s really a very special moment,” Djokovic said, “perhaps the greatest moment of my career.”

Since losing the 2015 final in Paris, Djokovic has won 28 Grand Slam matches in a row, from Wimbledon and the U.S. Open last year, to the Australian Open in January, and now, at long last, the French Open.

The last man to hold all four major titles simultaneously was Rod Laver in 1969, when he earned a calendar-year Grand Slam. Djokovic now can set his sights on that ultimate tennis achievement, be-

cause he is halfway there.

“This is something that is so rare in tennis,” said Murray, who is now 2-8 in Grand Slam finals. “It’s going to take a long time for it to happen again.”

The 29-year-old Djokovic owns six Grand Slam titles from the Australian Open, three from Wimbledon and two from the U.S. Open to give him a total of 12. Among men, only Roger Federer (with 17), Rafael Nadal (14) and Pete Sampras (14) own more.

Of Djokovic’s 11 career losses at Roland Garros, six came against nine-time champion Nadal, one against Federer. Three came in finals, against Nadal in 2012 and 2014, against Stan Wawrinka a year ago. Djokovic’s 2016 path was unencumbered by any member of that trio: Federer withdrew before the tournament and Nadal before the third round, both citing injury; Wawrinka was eliminated in the semifinals by Murray.

Still, Djokovic’s most imposing adversary might very well have been his own demons — the knowledge that the tournament that meant more to him than any other was the only tournament he simply couldn’t seem to conquer.

Until now.

On Sunday — the weather overcast but dry, unlike so much of the rainy past two weeks — the first choruses of “No-le! No-le!” accompanied Djokovic’s entrance to the court. They returned when an announcer introduced Djokovic during the warmup period. And again when he skipped from sideline to baseline

to receive in the opening game — and, louder still, when Djokovic broke Murray to start.

All in all, it sounded as if this were Belgrade, rather than a neutral site, and Murray complained that fans were calling out between his first and second serves.

The spectators really raised a ruckus when a Murray serve was called a fault by a linesman, immediately overruled by chair umpire Damien Dumusois. Because Djokovic’s return was out, Dumusois declared Murray led 30-love. Djokovic, already convinced there should have been a double-fault there, maintained the point should be replayed.

Dumusois wasn’t buying it. The crowd booed and whistled loudly, delaying play for a full minute, an odd interlude in a Grand Slam final.

Soon, Murray closed the first set. As Djokovic bowed his head, Murray ran backward to the changeover chair, pointing at his right temple.

Aside from the first game, Murray was perfect in that set, trying to become Britain’s first male champion in Paris since 1935. Djokovic was off — jitters, perhaps? — and particularly so with his forehand, which offered up seven unforced errors before Murray made one.

Maybe, just maybe, Murray exhaled after grabbing the set. Djokovic found a reserve of resolve. The dynamic shifted completely. Murray’s first-serve percentage dipped and he quickly fell behind 3-0. “No-le! No-le!”

Now Djokovic was the domineering

one, yanking an increasingly exhausted Murray this way and that with just the right shot at just the right moment and creating a 24-6 edge in winners across the second and third sets.

When Djokovic slid to reach a drop shot by Murray and somehow crafted a cross-court backhand winner at an impossible angle to go a double-break up in the third at 4-1, the Serb raised his right index finger — “I’m No. 1!” — then sat and raised a clenched fist.

“No-le! No-le!”

Djokovic broke again to begin the fourth set, and his long, arduous journey to history was soon complete.

Also on Sunday, the French pair of Caroline Garcia and Kristina Mladenovic secured a rare triumph for the home nation, winning the doubles for their first major title in the discipline.

The fifth-seeded pair beat Ekaterina Makarova and Elena Vesnina, the No. 7-seeded duo from Russia, 6-3, 2-6, 6-4. The last French victors in women’s doubles in the clay-court major at Roland Garros were Gail Chanfreau and Francoise Durr, who won in 1970 and then defended their title the following year.

Julien Benneteau and Edouard Roger-Vasselin did win the men’s doubles in 2014, but they were the first French champions since Yannick Noah and Henri Leconte in 1984.

Noah was the last French man to win the singles title, in 1983. Mary Pierce was France’s last women’s singles champion, in 2000.

Rookie Donskoi lifts Sharks to OT victory

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Joonas Donskoi wasn’t even born when the San Jose Sharks started in 1991 and hadn’t taken part in any of a series of playoff disappointments that haunted the franchise over the years.

On a team full of big-name stars, it was a Finnish rookie who wasn’t even supposed to be ready for the NHL this season who delivered perhaps San Jose’s biggest goal ever.

Donskoi’s goal 12:18 into overtime ended the first Stanley Cup Final game ever in San Jose and helped the Sharks bounce back from two straight road losses to beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 3-2 in Game 3 on Saturday night.

“It’s game in, game out different guys stepping up to the plate,” center Joe Thornton said. “It was huge he scored. Some clutch goals. He’s always around the puck. He always wants the puck.”

Joel Ward tied it midway through the third, Justin Braun also scored and Martin Jones made 40 saves to help the Sharks cut Pittsburgh’s series lead to 2-1 with their first victory ever in the final. Game 4 is Monday night in San Jose.

Ben Lovejoy scored and assisted on Patric Hornqvist’s goal that gave the Penguins a 2-1 lead heading into the third. But Matt Murray let Ward’s tying goal in off his glove and then allowed the winner as Pittsburgh lost for just the second time in 51 games when leading after two periods this season.

In an overtime period controlled mostly by Pittsburgh, San Jose got the goal from a player whose signing out of Finland in May 2015 got little attention. But Donskoi has

been a major reason for San Jose’s success this season, solidifying himself as a top six forward who can control possession for his team.

Chris Tierney got the puck to Donskoi behind the net. Donskoi skated out front where he beat Murray high to the stick side, setting off a wild celebration in an arena that was full of tension all night.

“It was a little bit of relief,” Tierney said. “It was finally nice to break through. It kind of felt like, ‘OK. We now can get the next one.’”

Murray made 23 saves and was especially sharp in the second period when San Jose had numerous chances to take its first lead of the series. But Murray couldn’t stop Donskoi’s shot from an odd angle that gave Sharks their first win in five overtime games this postseason.

“There’s always something you could have done,” Murray said. “I was reading the play well, they were rotating trying to get the puck to the net. It kind of bounced up, a little bit of a bad bounce. It happened pretty quick. I’m not sure where the puck was going. He was just trying to get it on net and it snuck by.”

Trailing 2-1 entering the third, the Sharks’ season was on the line as only one team has ever recovered from an 0-3 deficit to win the Cup final. They got their chance when Nick Bonino was sent off for a double-minor for high-sticking Thornton.

San Jose generated good chances on the four-minute power play but it seemed like the Penguins would kill it off as the clock ran down. But just before Bonino stepped out of the box, Ward beat Murray with a blast from the high slot that deflected off the goalie’s glove and in for the equalizer.

“We know this is a team that relies on their power play

in the playoffs,” Lovejoy said. “We’ve been pretty disciplined and we have to stay out of the box. It’s their trump card. We killed 3:59 and we needed to find a way to kill that last second.”

The first Stanley Cup Final game ever in the Bay Area came with plenty of fanfare with an elaborate pregame laser show and a raucous crowd that had waited 25 years for this moment.

The start didn’t go as planned as the Penguins struck first less than six minutes in when Lovejoy’s point shot deflected off defenseman Roman Polak and past Jones for a 1-0 lead.

But the fans stayed loud throughout, giving energy to the Sharks.

“They were incredible,” Thornton said. “They waited so long for this chance to cheer for the Sharks in the finals. Just from warmups on, they were incredible for us.”

The Sharks didn’t even get a shot on goal for more than eight minutes but made a strong push after getting the tying goal on Braun’s point shot past a screened Murray. Braun, who scored San Jose’s only goal in Game 2, had goals in back-to-back games for the first time in his career.

The Penguins didn’t need much from Murray the first two games when they controlled the play for long stretches. But in the second period when the Sharks made one of their strongest pushes of the series, Murray stood tall by robbing Brent Burns and stopping Ward on a two-on-one.

Pittsburgh then regained the lead when Hornqvist deflected Lovejoy’s point shot past Jones in the final minute of the period.



Ship’s Store official new car program

Exclusive Navy at-sea offers:

www.navyauto.com or nasinfo@navyauto.com

Diaz starts home run barrage vs. Giants

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Aledmys Diaz got the green light on 3-0. It was no big surprise, considering how much the rookie has meant to the St. Louis Cardinals.

Diaz lined a tying, three-run shot off the foul pole in the fifth inning, one of four homers in a span of nine at-bats against Jeff Samardzija, and the Cardinals rallied past the San Francisco Giants 7-4 on Saturday night.

“I just knew it was pretty close and I kept running,” Diaz said. “I looked at the umpire and he said, ‘fair ball,’ so that’s good.”

Brandon Moss got the long-ball binge started with his 11th leading off the fifth. Stephen Piscotty and Matt Adams hit consecutive homers in a matter of three pitches to open the sixth for a 6-4 cushion.

The 25-year-old Diaz got the starting shortstop job after Ruben Tejada was injured at the end of spring training and will stay there when Jhonny Peralta returns next week. He’s batting .324 with eight homers, 29 RBIs.

“It’s not just a one-size-fits-all when you get to a 3-0 green light,” manager Mike Matheny said. “It didn’t look like he tried to do too much, because at times you’ll see a 400-foot shot pulled foul when a guy gets too big on an advantage count.”

The rally rescued Michael Wacha, who left trailing 4-0 after five, seemingly on track for a seventh consecutive loss. Wacha has allowed 23 earned runs in his last 23 innings.

Rangers 10, Mariners, 4: Rougned Odor got a standing ovation from Texas Rangers fans when he came to bat for the first time after finishing his seven-game suspension for punching

Jose Bautista.

The scrappy second baseman, already with a long running catch of a popup for the last out in the top of the first, then got a single and scored in the bottom of the inning when the Rangers went ahead to stay in a 10-4 victory over the Seattle Mariners on Saturday night.

Tigers 7, White Sox 4: J.D. Martinez homered and drove in three runs, Mike Pelfrey ended an 18-start winless string and host Detroit beat Chris Sale and the White Sox.

Sale (9-2) failed again to become the first 10-game winner in the majors. He allowed four runs on nine hits in 6¹/₃ innings, and is now 0-2 in his last three starts.

Indians 7, Royals 1: Francisco Lindor hit one of host Cleveland’s three home runs, leading the Indians into first place in the AL Central with a win.

Lindor, whose two-run homer came in the seventh inning, became the first Indians player to record three extra-base hits in a game this season. He also started an outstanding defensive play in the ninth. Playing in a shift near second base, he made a backhand stop of Kendrys Morales’ hard-hit grounder and flipped to third baseman Jose Ramirez, who was playing behind second. Ramirez threw to first for the out.

Dodgers 4, Braves 0: Clayton Kershaw held visiting Atlanta to three hits over six innings and Los Angeles’ bullpen closed things out to help the Dodgers.

Kershaw (8-1) struck out four and walked one in his shortest outing of the season. Joe Blanton, Pedro Baez and Kenley Jansen pitched an inning each.

Cubs 5, Diamondbacks 3: Jason Hammel allowed one hit over seven innings and snapped a tie with a two-run

single to lead sizzling host Chicago.

Dexter Fowler added his 17th career leadoff home run, Anthony Rizzo hit his 13th homer and Hector Rondon pitched a perfect ninth to earn his 10th save for the Cubs, who have won four straight and 10 of 11.

Reds 6, Nationals 3: Stephen Strasburg gave up Joey Votto’s two-run homer and limped off the field a few pitches later, and host Cincinnati overcame a pair of rain delays while rallying to beat Washington for its fourth straight win.

Adam Duvall hit Shawn Kelley’s fourth pitch for a tiebreaking three-run homer following a 64-minute rain delay in the bottom of the eighth, extending Cincinnati’s best winning streak of the season.

Astros 6, Athletics 5 (12): Carlos Correa had three hits and his RBI single with one out in the 12th lifted host Houston.

After Jed Lowrie hit a tying home run with two outs in the ninth for Oakland, the Astros came back to win.

Mets 6, Marlins 4: Michael Conforto ended an 0-for-20 skid with an RBI single in the eighth and scored the tiebreaking run on pinch hitter Matt Reynolds’ two-out single later in the inning to help visiting New York rally.

Conforto also hit a sacrifice fly in the sixth. The left fielder was a last-minute addition to the lineup when slugger Yoenis Cespedes was scratched because of a sore right hip, the latest in a wave of injuries for the Mets.

Brewers 6, Phillies 3: Domingo Santana hit a tiebreaking solo homer in the eighth inning, Jonathan Villar went deep for the third straight game and visiting Milwaukee beat Philadelphia.

Santana connected off Hector Neris (1-3) leading off the eighth for his fourth homer and first since returning from the disabled list on Friday. Villar had three hits and two RBIs.

Pirates 8, Angels 7: Gregory Polanco and Matt Joyce hit home runs during a five-run seventh inning, Jeff Locke got his career-best fourth straight win and host Pittsburgh held off Los Angeles.

Red Sox 6, Blue Jays 4: David Ortiz added two more RBIs to his torrid start in what he says will be his final season, Mookie Betts had two hits and drove in two runs for host Boston.

The 40-year-old Ortiz entered the day leading the majors in RBIs and raised his total to 53, helping Boston snap a three-game losing streak. He announced his retirement on his birthday in November.

Rays 7, Twins 4: Evan Longoria homered for the third straight game, and Matt Andriese worked five innings in a rain-shortened start to pick up his fourth win as visiting Tampa beat the Minnesota.

Yankees 8, Orioles 6: Starlin Castro and Austin Romine each had two RBIs, Alex Rodriguez had three hits and New York squandered most of a seven-run lead before escaping with a win over host Baltimore.

New York led 7-0 before the Orioles hit three homers in a six-run seventh.

Padres 4, Rockies 3: Wil Myers homered, singled and doubled, missing the cycle by a triple for the second time in four games, and Derek Norris hit a two-run homer to lead host San Diego.

Bisping wins 1st UFC title

Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Michael Bisping waited 10 years and 26 fights for the chance to win a UFC title.

When he finally got it, Bisping stunned Luke Rockhold and the mixed martial arts world.

Bisping won the UFC middleweight championship with a first-round knockout of Rockhold on Saturday night, earning his first title belt at UFC 199.

Bisping (30-7) spectacularly won the UFC 185-pound title just over two weeks after accepting the bout as an injury replacement for former champion Chris Weidman.

Bisping abruptly knocked down Rockhold midway through the round with a left hand to the jaw of the backpedaling champion. Rockhold (15-3) bounced back up and engaged Bisping, who knocked him down for good with another left hand, finishing it with 1:24 left in the round.

Bisping, an Englishman who lives in Orange County, Calif., had never fought for a title in a decade with the UFC.

“This was my dream. Nobody was taking this away from me,” Bisping said. “Two weeks? Two days, two hours, two minutes. I’ll fight anybody on a moment’s notice.”

Dominick Cruz also defended his UFC bantamweight title with a clear unanimous decision over Urijah Faber, settling a nine-year feud in the third bout between the two California fighters.

Sad day for Foreman, last of legendary trio

Associated Press

They were young then and, oh, so proud. Three magnificent gladiators on a collision course with history, they fought fearlessly, battling each other on the biggest stages and in the oddest places.

Joe Frazier, George Foreman and Muhammad Ali. The names roll off the tongue like they were made to be together.

They’ve been linked together now for nearly a half century, united by the special bond created when two men step into the ring. Enemies, rivals and sometimes friends, they fought in a golden era for heavyweights.

When Foreman woke up Saturday, it was with the unsettling knowledge that he was the only one left.

“We were like one guy,” Foreman said. “But this morning I realized that the greatest piece of us all was Muhammad Ali.”

Ali, of course, was the greatest, and the worst part of being muted by Parkinson’s in his later years had to be that he couldn’t keep telling his rivals that. Not that Foreman had to be told, because he was a convert ever since shortly after the night in Africa 42 years ago that changed everything.

Ali was supposed to be old, and he was supposed to be shot. It was going to be easy pickings for Foreman, a way to earn a big payday and get on with the business of fighting real fighters.

“I heard rumors Muhammad Ali was out of money and having a rough time,” Foreman said. “If I took the fight with him he could make \$5 million. I said that’s good, I’ll give him a chance to make a few

bucks and kill him.”

Foreman could afford to be charitable. He had knocked Frazier down six times in two rounds the year before, and stopped Ali’s nemesis, Ken Norton, in the second round of his last fight.

Big and strong, he had never lost as a pro and was the most fearsome slugger around.

“I thought I could beat anybody,” he said from his Houston home. “I devastated Frazier and Norton. I thought this would be the easiest fight of my life. I’d run all over him.”

Ali had other plans in the early morning heat in Kinshasa, Zaire. He took Foreman’s biggest punches early, taunting him all the way.

“Is that all you got George?” Ali said after each punch landed.

“I knew I was in trouble,” Foreman recalled. “I knew this was something different. I put everything I had into the third round and he was still standing.”

Ali would famously employ his rope-a-dope strategy to wear Foreman out before suddenly unleashing a flurry of punches in the eighth round that floored him. Ali was the heavyweight champion once again, much to the delight of the crowd who spent much of the fight shouting “Ali booma-ya (Ali kill him).”

The fight didn’t just restore a title. It restored the faith of boxing fans in Ali, allowing him to fight for six more years.

Foreman would soon be out of boxing, content to be a preacher in his Texas church for the better part of a decade before making a remarkable comeback that would end with him knocking out Michael Moorer to become the oldest heavy-

weight champion ever.

He resented Ali at first, and had no plans to become his friend. But Ali began calling, trying to get him to come out of retirement and take care of Norton, who still had Ali’s number.

“He said, ‘George, I need you to do me a favor. You can beat Norton and I can’t. I’ll let you use my training camp and everything,’” Foreman recalled. “I said I’m a preacher now and am not coming back and he said, ‘Remember what David did to Goliath? You can come back and fight for God.’”

Foreman would wait until Ali was retired to come back, but still their friendship grew.

“I loved the guy,” Foreman said. “There was something about him, you see his face and you have to smile. My heart would beat fast around him. It was like the most exciting human being I ever met in my life.”

Foreman watched in dismay as the years and the Parkinson’s took their toll on his friend. Before, they had talked on the phone and Ali would come down to Houston to visit.

In his later years, though, Foreman had to be content with memories of a better time. Frazier died in 2011, Ali didn’t travel nearly as much, and he could no longer talk on the phone.

He’s proud to be one of the three. He’s also sad his friend is gone and he’s the only one left.

“He was the greatest man I ever knew,” Foreman said. “People say he was the greatest heavyweight, but I say that’s a putdown. He was simply the greatest man, period.”