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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Halt in exercises contingent on results

Pompeo clarifies stance as Trump says North Korean nuclear threat has ended

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SINGAPORE — President Donald Trump will resume military exercises with South Korea if the North stops negotiating in good faith over its nuclear weapons program, the top U.S. diplomat said Wednesday.

The tempered expectations were markedly different from the optimistic tone set by Trump in a series of tweets earlier in the day.

“There’s no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea,” the president wrote, a day after his landmark summit with Kim Jong Un in Singapore.

Trump is gambling that his administration has set the stage for future negotiations to persuade the young leader to agree to the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantling of the North’s nuclear program.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo laid out an ambitious timeline for the North’s denuclearization, saying the administration wants the communist state to take major steps toward

nuclear disarmament in the next 2½ years.

“We’re hopeful we can get it done. There’s a lot of work left to do,” he said after landing in Seoul. He met with Gen. Vincent Brooks, top commander of U.S. Forces Korea, and was due to brief South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Thursday.

Pompeo said Kim understands that “there will be in-depth verification” included in any nuclear deal with Washington.

Trump and Kim signed a joint statement committing to work toward the “complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, hailing it as turning point after decades of hostilities between the two countries.

While many welcomed the agreement as a key step in a process that has tamped down tensions, critics pounced on the fact that the document contained few specific measures.

“While no one exchanged insults or angry tweets ... there was very little to point to in terms of substantive or concrete progress coming out of

the summit,” Paul Haenle, the director of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, said in a commentary.

Trump also drew concern from lawmakers and allies after he announced he was suspending war games that are held regularly with South Korea as talks continue. He called them “provocative” and expensive.

“We save a fortune by not doing war games, as long as we are negotiating in good faith - which both sides are!” he tweeted on Wednesday.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said Trump’s reasoning for halting the exercises was “ridiculous.”

“It’s not a burden onto the American taxpayer to have a forward deployed force in South Korea,” Graham told CNN.

“It brings stability. It’s a warning to China that you can’t just take over the whole region. So I reject that analysis that it costs too much, but I do accept the proposition, let’s stand down (on military exercises) and see if we can find a better way here.”

Pompeo tried to soothe concerns among allies, saying Wednesday he was there when Trump discussed the issue with Kim. The president “made it very clear” that the condition for the freeze was continued “productive, good-faith negotiations,” according to the former CIA chief.

“At the point that it’s concluded they are not, the president’s commitment to not have those joint exercises take place will no longer be in effect,” he said.

Trump has placed heavy weight on his burgeoning personal relationship with Kim, saying he can succeed where past administrations have failed amid decades of false starts in negotiations. His tweets seemed to ignore the North’s estimated stock of some 60 nuclear weapons and the fact that it test-fired three intercontinental ballistic missiles last year.

“Just landed - a long trip, but everybody cannot feel much safer than the day I took office,” he wrote. “There is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea.”

Norway says it needs more Marines to deploy near Russia

BY MARTIN EGNASH
Stars and Stripes

Norway will ask the United States to more than double its Marine presence in the country and to deploy them closer to the Russian border.

The request would raise the contingent from 330 Marines on a six-month rotation to 700, the Norwegian government said in a statement Tuesday. The rotations began last year and have since been routinely

extended.

Norway, like other NATO member states that border Russia, has expressed concern about Moscow’s increased assertiveness, following Russia’s invasion and annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

“The defense of Norway depends on the support of our NATO allies, as is the case in most other NATO countries,” Defense Minister Frank Bakke-Jensen said in a statement. “For this support to

work in times of crises and war, we are totally dependent on joint training and exercises in times of peace.”

Norway is proposing that the Marines continue their short-term rotations for an additional five years. The rotations would include an unspecified number of Marines rotating to the Arctic Troms region, about 250 miles from the Russian border.

The Marines are now based near Trondheim, about 900 miles from Norway’s border

with Russia, but frequent exercises in the frigid north often take the Marines much closer.

In addition to the rotational forces there, the Marines also maintain several massive underground caves in Norway, where essential gear and vehicles are pre-positioned beneath secret locations around the Trondelag region. The gear is often withdrawn and utilized for exercises in northern Europe.

Marines, allies drill in Polish beach town

BY MARTIN EGNASH
Stars and Stripes

The sleepy Polish beach town of Ustka seems like an idyllic place to relax and let your guard down.

That's exactly what the Marines wanted during training late Tuesday night. Under the cover of darkness, they and their allies raided a nearby mock enemy encampment several miles inland of the Baltic Sea.

This high-speed assault, which put an amphibious force behind the lines of an unsuspecting enemy, was the culmination of several beach landings begun last week by Marines, and Polish and Romanian troops. The drills are part of the larger two-week Baltic Operations exercise, which ends Friday. It includes 16 allied militaries and observers from other nations. The exercise is based on a scenario in which instability in the Baltics leads to insurgent groups taking power over much of the region. NATO forces are asked for help.

"The ability to conduct am-

phibious assaults is absolutely essential to the safety of the region, and to NATO," said Marine Maj. Joseph Murphy, the landing force's commander for the exercise.

About 125 Marines from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit participated in the raid. Romanian scouts identified targets and Marines used surprise to gain the upper hand on the enemy, which was played by Polish forces. M1A1 Abrams tanks were loaded onshore days before to provide heavier firepower.

To set up the raid, Marines and Romanian naval infantry landing forces found an area where they could come ashore to minimize rocket fire and casualties from anti-access weaponry.

During the amphibious landings, high-speed Romanian rigid-hull inflatable boats scouted ahead, and Marine amphibious assault vehicles attacked the enemy on the beach to make room for landing craft to bring more troops and tanks ashore.

Taliban still fighting despite cease-fire

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban remained on the offensive Wednesday, mounting attacks in northern Afghanistan a day after the Kabul government's pause in combat operations against the group began.

At least eight Afghan soldiers were killed and 16 injured in overnight clashes with the Taliban in Badakhshan province's Jarm district Wednesday, said Gen. Mohammad Radmanish, acting Defense Ministry spokesman. He would not say whether any posts were overrun. Media reports said as many as 20 soldiers had been killed.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced last week that the eight-day truce would begin Tuesday and stretch through the Eid holiday that marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The gesture aimed at bringing the Taliban into peace talks halted Afghan, U.S. and coalition offensives against the Taliban but not against other militants.

However, the Taliban said it would maintain a holiday cease-fire with Afghan troops for only three days of Eid and that foreign troops remain targets.

Over the weekend, attacks killed scores of Afghan troops, and Tuesday saw no ebb in Taliban violence. The Taliban overran a remote district in northwestern Faryab province, set off an explosives-laden Humvee in eastern Ghazni province and fought an hours-long gunbattle after assaulting a district in northern Sar-e Pol province.

Ghani was busy Tuesday meeting with Pakistan's army chief, who also met with Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and coalition commander U.S. Army Gen. John Nicholson. Pakistan has long been accused of backing the insurgency.

In another sign of holiday charity, the Taliban said it released 15 prisoners in Helmand province Monday — 14 security forces members and one tribal leader. It is common during the end of Ramadan for authorities on both sides to pardon prisoners.

New MEU leader: Okinawa Marines 'ready to fight tonight'

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Incoming 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit commander Col. Robert Brodie said his Marines remain "ready to fight tonight," regardless of what's going on in the world of international diplomacy.

Brodie took command of the nation's only permanently forward-deployed MEU from Col. Tye Wallace during a ceremony Wednesday at Camp Hansen's parade grounds.

Lt. Gen. Lawrence Nicholson, III Marine Expeditionary Force commander, said having an F-18 pilot take control of the Pacific's seaborne quick-re-

action force was a "historical moment."

Brodie, who comes to Okinawa from a joint assignment with the 1st Air Force, 601st Air Operations Center as its combat plans division chief, vowed to continue Wallace's work.

That legacy includes an unprecedented level of integration with U.S. naval forces in the region, the first operational deployment of the F-35B stealth fighter and development and implementation of the "up-gunned expeditionary strike group," which attaches cruisers, destroyers or frigates to the traditional three-ship strike-group template.

Wallace also shepherded the 31st MEU through trying times

after an MV-22 Osprey crashed into the sea off the Australian coast on Aug. 5, killing three Marines.

Nicholson lauded Wallace for his many accomplishments during what essentially became a transitional period for the MEU and the Marine Corps in general as the service took dramatic steps toward modernization and increasing its lethality.

Wallace served on four deployments with the 31st MEU since taking command in May 2016.

Wallace praised the approximately 10,000 Marines who had spent 10 out of 24 months at sea with him over the past two years and traveled to Vietnam,

South Korea, Australia and the Philippines and traversed the South China Sea or supported those operations.

Brodie graduated from The Citadel in 1994 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant. He later became an F/A-18 Hornet pilot and participated in Operation Southern Watch, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom and graduated from the Naval Fighter Weapons School, known as "TOPGUN."

Brodie served on the ground in Iraq as a forward air controller for special operations units and has battled Islamic State in Operation Inherent Resolve.

He received his first command assignment in 2011.

Military seeks more training, newer aircraft

By CLAUDIA GRISALES

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — More training time for pilots and newer aircraft are needed to stem the recent deadly flow of aviation crashes, a panel of military officials told a congressional committee on Wednesday.

Maj. Gen. John Rauch Jr., Air Force chief of staff and commander of the Air Force Safety Center, told lawmakers that pilots are undertaking inherent risks by flying older planes.

The Air Force has seen a higher rate of deadly aircraft crashes, with a 53 percent

spike in some of its more serious aviation mishaps so far this year, he said.

“The environment that we live in with aging aircraft and the engineering that’s required to sustain those aircraft ... we are certainly setting up hazards there that have to be mitigated” without new planes, Rauch testified before the House Armed Services Committee subpanel on tactical and land forces.

The congressional hearing comes in the wake of a troubling year for the military dominated by a rash of aviation crashes and readiness concerns. More U.S. servicemembers have died

in aircraft crashes than while serving in war-torn Afghanistan, said Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio, chairman of the tactical and land forces subcommittee.

This past weekend, an F-15 fighter jet assigned to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa crashed while performing routine training maneuvers in the sixth Air Force-related aircraft crash in the last year. The pilot survived.

Last month, the House Armed Services Committee approved a plan to create an independent National Commission on Military Aviation Safety to review and assess the

causes fueling such mishaps from 2013 and 2018 and make related safety, training, maintenance, personnel and other policy recommendations.

Military leaders told lawmakers on Wednesday that a majority of the more serious crashes are related to human factors, while a minority, less than 20 percent, are related to issues connected to aircraft equipment.

They all agreed that as a result, training is critical to address the problem.

Elite forces in Germany bound for Baumholder

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany—Green Berets and SEALs operating out of a congested Army post here are slated to move to a new home in Baumholder, Germany, a small garrison town now poised to become the main hub for some of the military’s most elite troops.

U.S. Special Operations Command Gen. Tony Thomas confirmed the plan, saying it would boost readiness for the command’s Europe-based

units.

Approval has been granted “to move tactical United States special operations forces from the increasingly crowded and encroached Stuttgart installation of Panzer Kaserne to the more open training grounds of Baumholder,” Thomas said during a change-of-command ceremony in Stuttgart on Tuesday.

A timeline for the move was not provided, but it will likely take a few years following discussions with German officials and facility renovations.

The eventual arrival of several hundred Stuttgart-based special operators means that Baumholder will play host to a mix of elite troops. U.S. Africa Command has already quietly established a presence in the town, where a crisis-response force has been set up in recent years as well as a mission command element from the Africa-focused 3rd Special Forces Group.

Special Operations Command Europe will be placing operators from the 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group

(Airborne) and Naval Special Warfare Unit 2.

The moves also will put the troops closer to flight lines at nearby Ramstein Air Base, which will hasten transport.

For years, there has been talk of uprooting the special operations community in Stuttgart, a cosmopolitan area with limited access to nearby training grounds and a small but noisy shooting range that has bothered some in the local community.

Study: Japanese destroyers could support F-35B jets

By JAMES BOLINGER

Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — Japan’s largest ships can be modified to support F-35B Lighting II stealth fighters, according to the nation’s Defense Ministry.

A study released by the ministry on April 27 concludes that flat-top Izumo-class helicopter destroyers can be retrofitted to support the short-takeoff, vertical-landing jets.

“This was a basic study nec-

essary to objectively understand the maximum potential ability of Hyuga-class and Izumo-class destroyers,” a Defense Ministry spokeswoman told Stars and Stripes in an email.

This spring, Iwakuni-based F-35Bs completed their first patrol aboard the Sasebo-based USS Wasp, an amphibious assault ship similar to the Japanese minicarriers.

The study also looked at the Japanese ships’ ability to launch American military drones — the MQ-8C Fire Scout

unmanned helicopter and the fixed-wing RQ-21A Blackjack — the spokeswoman said.

A May 2 article in The Diplomat suggested that the Japanese destroyers were built to carry the F-35B with decks able to withstand jet exhaust and elevators to take them to and from internal hangars.

The ships could provide rear-line support to the U.S. military during joint military operations. However, modifications to accommodate the F-35B on the Izumo-class ships would require the installation of a ski-

jump, according to the study. In 2015, Australia canceled plans to buy a dozen F-35Bs because of modifications that would be required for its two amphibious assault ships.

The \$1.2 billion JS Izumo was commissioned three years ago and will likely operate for another 40 years, the Defense Ministry spokeswoman said.

A second Izumo-class destroyer, the JS Kaga, was commissioned in June 2017. They are the largest Japanese warships, at 814 feet, and can carry up to 28 helicopters.

Calif. petty crime up after penalties reduced, data show

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California voters' decision to reduce penalties for drug and property crimes in 2014 contributed to a jump in car burglaries, shoplifting and other theft, researchers reported.

Larcenies increased about 9 percent by 2016, or about 135 more thefts per 100,000 residents than if tougher penalties had remained, according to results of a study by the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California released Tuesday.

Thefts from motor vehicles accounted for about three-quarters of the increase. San Francisco alone recorded more than 30,000 auto burglaries last year, which authorities largely blamed on gangs. Shoplifting may be leveling off, researchers found, but there is no sign of a decline in thefts from vehicles.

Proposition 47 lowered criminal sentences for drug possession, theft, shoplifting, identity theft, receiving stolen property, writing bad checks and check forgery from felonies that can bring prison terms to misdemeanors that often bring minimal jail sentences.

While researchers can link the measure to more theft, they found it did not lead to the state's increase in violent crime.

Violent crime spiked by about 13 percent after Proposition 47 passed, but researchers said the trend started earlier and was mainly because of unrelated changes in FBI and Los Angeles Police Department crime reporting. The FBI broadened its definition of sexual crimes in 2014, while the LAPD improved its crime reporting after previously underreporting violent crimes. If it weren't for those changes, researchers found California's violent crime rate would have increased 4.7 percent from 2014 to 2016.

Researchers compared California's crime trends with those in other states with historically similar trends. They found the increase in California's violent crime rate was less than that of comparison states, but larcenies jumped in California as they declined elsewhere.

California still has historically low crime rates despite recent changes in the criminal justice system aimed at reducing mass incarceration and increasing rehabilitation and treatment programs, said Lenore Anderson, executive director of Californians for Safety and Justice, who led the drive to pass Proposition 47. The ballot measure led to the lowest arrest rate in state history in 2015 as experts said police frequently ignored crimes that brought minimal punishment.

Reduced penalties mean fewer drug addicts now seem to be getting treatment, then "are stealing to support their habit," said San Luis Obispo County Chief Probation Officer Jim Salio, president of Chief Probation Officers of California.

Trump critic Rep. Sanford loses GOP primary in SC

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Rep. Mark Sanford, a vocal critic of President Donald Trump, lost his South Carolina congressional seat hours after the president injected himself into the bitter Republican primary by stoking memories of the incumbent's public extramarital affair several years ago.

In the most dramatic result in primaries across five states Tuesday, Sanford was the second incumbent House Republican to lose a primary this year — the latest victim of intense divisions among the GOP in the Trump era. Though he has a generally conservative voting record, his criticism of Trump as unworthy and culturally intolerant made him a target of the president's most dedicated supporters.

Sanford was defeated by state Rep. Katie Arrington, who spent her campaign blasting Sanford as a "Never Trumper." And hours before polls closed, Trump posted a startlingly personal attack on Twitter, calling Sanford "very unhelpful."

"He's MIA and nothing but trouble," Trump continued. "He is better off in Argentina."

The swipe was a reference to Sanford's unexplained disappearance from the state in 2009, which he later said was part of an affair he was carrying on with a woman in Argentina.

Even for a political figure with no shortage of confidence wading into his own party's decision-making, Trump's attack was a bold case of going after a sitting member of Congress. It's almost certain to make other Republicans even more reluctant to take him on, even as Trump stirs division on trade, foreign policy and the Russia investigation.

Sanford was unbowed Tuesday night, saying, "I stand by every one of those decisions to disagree with the president."

Sanford had never lost a political race in South Carolina, and his defeat Tuesday was an abrupt end to a roller-coaster political career. Despite the scandal over the affair, he completed his second term as governor, and voters sent him to Congress two years later.

After declaring victory Tuesday, Arrington asked Republicans to come together. And she reminded them who she thinks leads them: "We are the party of President Donald J. Trump."

Puerto Rico issues new data on storm deaths

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Eight days after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, Efrain Perez felt a pain in his chest.

Doctors near his small town sent him to Puerto Rico's main hospital for emergency surgery for an aortic aneurysm. But when the ambulance pulled into the parking lot in the capital, San Juan, after a more than two-hour drive, a doctor ran out to stop it.

"He said, 'Don't bring him in here, I can't care for him. I don't have power. I don't have water. I don't have an anesthesiologist,'" Perez's daughter, Nerybelle, recalled.

The 95-year-old Perez died as the ambulance drove him back to southwestern Puerto Rico but he is not included in the island's official hurricane death toll of 64 people, a figure at the center of a growing legal and political fight over the response to the Category 4 storm that hit Puerto Rico on Sept. 20, 2017.

Facing at least three lawsuits demanding more data on the death toll, Puerto Rico's government released new information Tuesday that added detail to the growing consensus that hundreds or even thousands of people died as an indirect result of the storm.

According to the new data, there were 1,427 more deaths from September to December 2017 than the average for the same time period over the previous four years. Additionally, September and October had the highest number of deaths of any months since at least 2013. But the statistics don't indicate whether the storm and its aftermath contributed to the additional deaths.

The Puerto Rican government said it believes more than 64 people died as a result of the storm but it will not raise its official toll until George Washington University completes a study of the data being carried out on behalf of the U.S. territory.

The issue is clouded by the fact that the federal government and U.S. states and territories have no uniform definition of what constitutes a storm-related death. The National Hurricane Center counts only deaths directly caused by a storm, such as a person killed by a falling tree. It does not count indirect deaths, such as someone whose medical equipment fails in a blackout.

Puerto Rico began by counting mostly direct deaths, with some indirect ones. Then it stopped updating its toll entirely while it waits for the George Washington University study, due later this summer.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Plane held up on tarmac by alligator

FL ORLANDO — Most times it's bad weather or bird strikes that delay flights. This time it was an alligator.

Anthony Velardi said his plane had just landed at Orlando International Airport on Monday when he spotted the large reptile casually lumbering across the tarmac toward a pond. He posted a 10-second video on Facebook.

Velardi said the Spirit Airlines flight had to wait about five minutes before it could taxi to the gate.

He said an airport truck arrived at the pond to make sure the alligator didn't return to the runway.

Police: Man robs bank, makes getaway in a cab

MA PEABODY — A Boston man charged with robbing a bank and making his getaway in a taxi is expected to be charged in two other bank robberies.

Leo Willwerth, 31, was held without bail after pleading not guilty Tuesday to robbing a Peabody bank Monday.

Police alleged Willwerth claimed to have a bomb. After the teller handed him money he allegedly ran to a nearby mall and jumped in a cab with a woman.

With the help of the cab company, the vehicle was tracked to Boston. State police said Willwerth will be charged with bank robberies in Boston on June 5 and 7.

Inmates flood chief's office with sewage

KY LOUISVILLE — Inmates housed in an aging lockup flooded a Ken-

tucky police chief's office with sewage by flushing jumpsuits and shredded bedding down the toilets.

A week after the wastewater overflow, more repairs are needed before Louisville Metro Chief Steve Conrad can use his office again.

Police spokeswoman Jessie Halladay told news outlets he's using another workspace in the meantime.

The June 5 flooding was revealed during a Metro Council budget hearing Monday.

The inmates were in a 1950s-era lockup above police headquarters that was initially closed a decade ago because it didn't meet safety standards.

Shark caught; bigger shark then attacks it

VA SANDBRIDGE — Several researchers off the coast of Virginia recently got front-row seats to the cannibalistic nature of the great white shark.

The Virginian-Pilot reported Monday that Virginia Institute of Marine Science researchers caught a 4-foot black tip shark on Friday during a long-line fishing survey.

They were about 3 miles off the coast of Sandbridge when a 12- to 13-foot great white showed up and stole the show — and the smaller shark. The crew scrambled to save the other sharks they caught while the great white tore into the black tip.

Raccoon caught in power lines starts fire

UT SALT LAKE CITY — Authorities said a raccoon that got up in power lines was responsible for a small brush fire in Weber County.

The Salt Lake Tribune reported that Riverdale fire Chief

Jared Sholly said Monday that the raccoon accidentally set himself on fire and then fell off the power line, starting the brush fire.

Sholly said firefighters went to the scene near Interstate 84 and Riverdale Road at 3 a.m. Monday.

The fire was extinguished in about 20 minutes. Nobody was hurt, but the raccoon died.

Vehicle crashes into hot dog stand

NJ BERKELEY TOWNSHIP — Authorities said an SUV crashed into a roadside hot dog stand at the New Jersey shore, seriously injuring the stand's owner.

The crash occurred shortly after 8 a.m. Monday at the Wunder Wiener stand on Route 9 south in Berkeley Township.

The stand's owner, Gerald LaCrosse, 74, was flown to a hospital.

Witnesses told the Asbury Park Press he was conscious and talking when emergency responders arrived and removed him from the debris.

Witnesses said the SUV skidded when the driver tried to avoid a vehicle that was stopped to make a turn. The SUV then struck a utility pole and the stand.

The driver suffered an arm injury that wasn't believed to be serious. The driver's name wasn't released.

Report: Man offered 2 pythons to officer

FL CORAL SPRINGS — Authorities said a Florida man tried to sell members of the longest snake species in the world to an undercover officer.

The Sun-Sentinel cited a report from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Com-

mission that says authorities received a tip that two reticulated pythons were listed for sale online.

An undercover officer then met with Cody Griffin in a parking lot of a TGI Fridays restaurant in Coral Springs.

The two juvenile snakes were seized and turned over to a licensed facility. Each was about 5 feet long; the southern Asia natives can grow up to 20 feet. A special permit is required to own a reticulated python in Florida.

New bourbon flavored by rodent secretions

NH TAMWORTH — Beaver-flavored whiskey, anyone?

A New Hampshire distillery has a new bourbon, Eau De Musc, flavored partly by secretions from a beaver's castor sacs.

Tamworth Distilling says the secretions, called castoreum, have a history of being used as a flavoring and is on a small list of FDA ingredients called "generally recognized as safe."

Spilled potatoes close section of interstate

KS SALINA — A 6-mile stretch of Interstate 70 in eastern Kansas was closed for nearly six hours as workers picked up a semitrailer load of potatoes.

The Kansas Highway Patrol said the potatoes were dumped Tuesday morning in Saline County near Solomon when the driver hit a bridge rail, separating the truck and trailer.

The trailer landed in a ditch, and the truck caught fire. The load of potatoes spilled, covering the road.

No one was hurt.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

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US Open course has traditional feel

Associated Press

SOUTHAMPTON, N.Y. — Such is the stature of century-old Shinnecock Hills that it seems everyone can't wait for the U.S. Open.

"Shinnecock looks epic," Russell Knox said after he qualified.

Phil Mickelson has been critical at times for how the USGA prepares a golf course for what it calls the "ultimate test." He was runner-up at Shinnecock Hills in 2004, when only three players broke par on the weekend, none on Sunday. Asked if it was unfair, Mickelson said that day, "I played some of the best golf of my life and still couldn't shoot par. So you tell me."

He has been back to the Long Island gem twice in recent weeks and was raving about it.

"I think it's the greatest setup I've ever seen in a U.S. Open," he said.

No one is more excited about a return to Shinnecock Hills than the USGA, which has tradition on its side for the 118th U.S. Open championship. As

much as it tries to present the ultimate test, lately it has seemed more like a trivia quiz.

Twice in the last three years, the U.S. Open has gone to golf courses barely a decade old — Chambers Bay in the Pacific Northwest and Erin Hills in the heart of Wisconsin's pastureland — that featured wide fairways and the wrong kind of weather.

It reached a point where Jack Nicklaus, whose name is on the gold medal awarded the winner, feared the U.S. Open was losing its identity. For him, that identity was narrow fairways, thick rough and hard, fast greens.

"Take me with a grain of salt," Nicklaus said. "You're partial to what you grew up with. All the (four) Opens I won were set up that way."

Shinnecock should at least look like a traditional U.S. Open, even if it will be different from the last time it was there in 2004. For starters, the course has added 10 new tees that have lengthened it by 450 yards. Most of the additional tees have been moved back at

angles, instead of straight back, to try to restore the shot values that architect William Flynn had in mind.

The fairways were widened in a renovation project just over five years ago. Then in a response to the swing-for-the-fences style that wide-open Erin Hills allowed, the USGA had 200,000 square feet of turf removed from the sides of the fairways and replaced it with fescue.

"The U.S. Open really is, we consider, golf's ultimate test and accuracy needed to play a bigger role in that," said Mike Davis, the USGA's chief executive.

Fairways that were an average of 26 yards wide for 2004 were widened to about 65 yards under the renovation, and then brought in to about 41 yards for the U.S. Open. The greens were enlarged. And gone is the thick rough framing the greens, meaning errant shots will travel along short grass farther from the hole.

"Skill is brought into play with the short game there,"

Mickelson said. "I think that it will reward the best player as opposed to having luck be a big element on some of the bounces in the fairway, bounces around the green, how it comes out of the rough."

Mickelson suffered one of his six U.S. Open heartaches at Shinnecock Hills, three-putting from 5 feet on the 17th hole for a double bogey to finish two shots behind Retief Goosen. Equally memorable was the state of Shinnecock that weekend, so bone dry by the final round that 28 players couldn't break 80. The par-3 seventh green was baked to the point that USGA officials had no choice but to spray water on it during the final round.

"I think we're happy that we have a mulligan," Davis said. "It was certainly a bogey last time. ... But it's great to be back to one of the greatest courses on the planet Earth, and if you can't tell, we are incredibly excited to be back. It is a national treasure."

Woods looking for win, the final piece of his return

Associated Press

SOUTHAMPTON, N.Y. — Tiger Woods returned to the U.S. Open for the first time in three years and hardly anyone noticed.

Then again, it was late Sunday afternoon. Shinnecock Hills was practically empty.

"A bizarre experience," said Jordan Spieth, who played nine holes with him.

Such a quiet moment was rare for Woods in his celebrated return following four back surgeries. A year that began with intrigue soon gave way to hysteria over anticipation of his first victory in nearly five years.

That time has not arrived as Woods heads into the second major of the year.

"Golf is always frustrating," Woods said Tuesday after going

nine holes with Dustin Johnson and Bryson DeChambeau, winners of the last two PGA Tour events. "There's always something that isn't quite right, and that's where we as players have to make adjustments. You've seen the tournaments I've played this year. There's always something. Hopefully, this is one of those weeks where I put it all together and even it out. And we'll see what happens."

It has been 10 years since Woods won his last U.S. Open, his 14th and last major. All it takes for him to temper any frustrations is to look back at last year, when he didn't know if he would even play another U.S. Open.

He was at a low point in his career and his personal life. While recovering from fusion surgery — his fourth surgery

on his back in three years — he was arrested on a DUI charge and found to have a mixture of two painkillers, the sleeping aid Ambien, the anti-anxiety drug Xanax and the active ingredient for marijuana in his system. He entered a clinic to get help and pleaded guilty to a reckless driving charge that kept him out of jail.

Asked about the video of his arrest and how his life has changed, Woods replied, "It's gotten better."

That seems like longer than a year ago because Woods has been such an active part of the PGA Tour again. In some instances, he looks like the same Woods.

He hit one drive past Johnson on the par-5 fifth hole Tuesday that left him a 2-iron to the front of the green. He had two chances to win in March, miss-

ing a long birdie putt on the last hole in Innisbrook and hitting a drive out-of-bounds on the 16th hole at Bay Hill the following week.

But no trophies. No fist pumps.

"There's two ways of looking at that," Woods said. "I've given myself chances to win, which I didn't know if I was ever going to do again. And then again, not happy with the fact that I didn't win because I loved how it felt being there. ... And so, yeah, I've had my opportunities. Also, I'm very thankful to have had those opportunities. I didn't know if I was going to have them again."

What kind of opportunities will Shinnecock Hills offer?

Tuesday was the busiest day of practice under a clear sky, warm weather and a course that just about everyone is raving about.

North America to host 2026 World Cup

Associated Press

MOSCOW — North America will host the 2026 World Cup after FIFA voters overwhelmingly opted Wednesday for the financial and logistical certainty of a United States-led bid over a risky Moroccan proposal for the first 48-team tournament.

The soccer showpiece will return to the U.S. for the first time since 1994 after gaining 134 votes, while Morocco got 65 at the FIFA Congress in Moscow, where the 2018 tournament starts Thursday.

“Thank you for entrusting us with this privilege,” U.S. Soccer Federation President Carlos Cordeiro told the congress. “The beautiful game transcends borders and cultures.”

President Donald Trump tweeted after the victory: “Congratulations, - a great deal of hard work!”

While Trump has been feuding with Canadian Prime

Minister Justin Trudeau over tariffs and policy after the G-7 meeting and with Mexican leaders about his proposed border wall, the heads of state are not heavily involved in this World Cup bid. Even if Trump wins re-election, his presidency would end before the 2026 World Cup.

The vote by national football federations was public, in contrast to secrecy surrounding the 2010 vote when FIFA’s elected board members picked Russia to host in 2018 and Qatar in 2022, defeating the U.S.

The regional bid proved more appealing this time and the North Americans even collected 11 votes from Africa.

“The United bid was strong and if it was just the United States, I think Morocco would have beaten them,” said Cameroon federation official Kevin Njomo, whose country voted for Morocco. “People have a soft spot for Mexico, especially looking at Mexico as a little

bit under-developed and giving them a chance. Canada is a good tourist destination.

“But I think where it had the advantage was the World Cup would be more profitable in America and it is a capitalist world.”

North America is optimistically promising to deliver \$14 billion in revenue helped, while the tournament won’t require major construction work required on the 16 planned stadiums, all of which already exist.

The U.S. proposed staging 60 out of the 80 games in 2026, when 16 teams will be added to the tournament, leaving Canada and Mexico with ten fixtures each. But FIFA President Gianni Infantino suggested the split of games could change.

“They have made a decision among themselves but ultimately it will be up to FIFA to decide,” Infantino said.

Morocco appeared too hazardous as a potential host when all 14 venues had to be built

or renovated as part of a \$16 billion investment in new infrastructure. The vote leaves Morocco reeling from a fifth failure in a World Cup hosting vote, with the continent’s sole tournament coming in 2010 in South Africa.

The 87,000-capacity MetLife Stadium outside New York — home of the NFL’s Giants and Jets — is proposed for the final. It’s just miles from where federal prosecutors spearheaded an ongoing investigation into FIFA corruption. More than 40 soccer officials and businesses indicted, convicted or pleaded guilty.

The bribery scandal put the governing body on the brink, Infantino told the congress ahead of Wednesday’s vote.

The North American victory suggests current FIFA leaders don’t hold grudges against a country whose government has jailed corrupt sports leaders.

Spain fires coach two days before its opening match

Associated Press

With only two days to go before Spain’s opening match at the World Cup, Julen Lopetegui was fired as national team coach because he accepted a job to lead Real Madrid next season.

Spanish soccer federation president Luis Rubiales, who made the announcement on Wednesday in Krasnodar, Russia, later said Fernando Hierro would replace Lopetegui as coach for Spain’s match against Portugal in Sochi on Friday.

The 50-year-old Hierro, a former national team player and Real Madrid captain, had been acting as the federation’s sports director and was already in Russia with the national team.

Rubiales said firing Lopetegui wasn’t the best solution but it was needed after the federation was caught by surprise by Real Madrid’s

announcement.

“The federation cannot be left out of a negotiation by one of its workers and be informed five minutes before the press release,” Rubiales said. “We have been compelled to act.”

Rubiales, who took over as president last month, said Lopetegui betrayed the federation’s values and it was the only decision he could make.

“It’s a difficult situation, but we are not the ones who determined the action that had to be taken. The federation has its values and it has to maintain them,” Rubiales said. “It may look like a weakness now, but with time this will make us stronger.”

Lopetegui did not attend the news conference but was expected to talk to the media later.

“We have to work on a series of decisions that come just two days before the opener,” Rubiales said. “There’s a lot to do.”

Hierro spent most of his career as a defender for Real Madrid and finished his playing days with English club Bolton in 2005. He played in four World Cups with Spain, from 1990 to 2002, and in two European Championships, 1996 and 2000.

Hierro was Carlo Ancelotti’s assistant at Real Madrid after Zinedine Zidane left the post in 2014.

He coached second-division club Real Oviedo two seasons ago and was Malaga’s general manager after leaving his sports director position with the Spanish federation in 2011.

After Madrid’s announcement that it hired Lopetegui, critics immediately began questioning some of the coach’s decisions with the national team, including his choice to leave some Barcelona players such as Sergi Roberto out of the World Cup squad. There were also questions about how

Lopetegui would be able to fully focus on the national team while also having to discuss off-season signings for his new club.

There are six Madrid players on Spain’s World Cup team.

Lopetegui’s name had not been mentioned by Spanish media among the probable candidates for the Madrid job, which opened up after Zidane unexpectedly quit. Last month, Lopetegui agreed to extend his contract with the national team through 2020.

“I admire and respect Lopetegui a lot. He is a top coach, and that made it harder to make this decision,” Rubiales said. “Winning is important, but above that, we need to know how things have to be handled.”

The 51-year-old Lopetegui took over from Vicente del Bosque after the 2016 European Championship.

Gregorius, Yankees shut out Nationals

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Didi Gregorius was pleased after ending a long power outage with a pair of home runs. Bryce Harper felt relieved after escaping serious injury when twice hit by a pitch.

CC Sabathia was just surprised, not realizing why the crowd gave him a prolonged ovation in the fourth inning of a superb outing.

Playing a team with a winning record for the first time this month, the New York Yankees beat the Washington Nationals 3-0 Tuesday night for their 10th win in 12 games.

In a matchup of division leaders, Harper gave the Nationals a scare when he fell to the ground in pain after getting hit on the right elbow by a 90 mph pitch from Sabathia in the fifth inning. The 2015 NL MVP re-

mained in the game but then came out after he was hit on the left foot by Dellin Betances' 89 mph slider leading off the eighth.

"I feel fine. Elbow feels OK, and the big toe just hurts a little bit," Harper said. "I already got an X-ray on the toe. I'm fine."

Gregorius has had a "That's Life" season, following the song's lyrics of "You're riding high in April, shot down in May."

He hit .327 with 10 homers and 30 RBIs through the season's first full month, slumped to a .151 average with one homer and five RBIs in May and began the night with no homers and one RBI in June.

"It's just getting to know myself through that slump," he said. "I'm still not out of it."

He drove a hanging curveball from Tanner Roark (3-7) into the Yankees bullpen in

right-center during a two-run second that also included Austin Romine's sacrifice fly. It was just the second home run for Gregorius since April 27. He sent a fastball into the right-field second deck leading off the sixth for his fourth multihomer game, third this season. Gregorius has hit 11 of his 13 long balls in homer-friendly Yankee Stadium. New York leads the major leagues with 105.

"When Didi's at his best," Yankees manager Aaron Boone explained, "he's into the ground — his feet really drive into the ground."

A big league-best 43-19, New York was coming off a 7-2 trip. Sabathia (4-1) allowed four hits in 5 2/3 innings in his first outing against Washington since 2009 and lowered his ERA to 3.27. He is 11-0 in 17 regular-season starts following a Yankees loss since the start of the

2017 season.

Fans applauded at length in the fourth when the video board informed fans the strikeout of Michael A. Taylor was Sabathia's 1,500th since joining the Yankees for the 2009 season. The 37-year-old left-hander's three strikeouts raised his career total to 2,893.

"I didn't know what was going on, and Ro told me turn around," Sabathia said, referring to Romine.

Only then did Sabathia toss the ball to the dugout as a keepsake. Boone wasn't surprised by Sabathia's obliviousness to his own exploits.

"For being a superstar and everything, he's so not into himself," Boone said.

Chad Green, Betances and Aroldis Chapman finished up, with Chapman completing the five-hitter for his 18th save in 19 chances.

MLB roundup

Tigers lose Cabrera for season during loss to Twins

Associated Press

DETROIT — Miguel Cabrera ruptured his left biceps tendon Tuesday night, an injury that will sideline the Detroit slugger for the rest of the season, and the Tigers lost 6-4 to the Minnesota Twins.

The two-time AL MVP will have surgery this week, the Tigers said. Cabrera, playing his 12th game since missing 26 with a hamstring strain, exited in the third inning and underwent an MRI during the game.

Cabrera missed three games earlier this season with spasms in his left biceps.

Ehire Adrianza hit his first career grand slam to help Minnesota rally.

The Twins trailed 2-1 going into the seventh inning, but Tigers starter Blaine Hardy left after allowing a leadoff single to Eduardo Escobar.

Louis Coleman (3-1) only threw nine strikes in a 23-pitch outing, walking two batters to

load the bases with two outs. Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire brought in Warwick Saupold, who went to a 3-1 count on Adrianza before throwing a fastball that ended up in the right-field stands.

Astros 6, Athletics 3: Evan Gattis hit a three-run homer and drove in five runs, Carlos Correa returned from a four-game absence and homered on the first pitch he saw, and visiting Houston earned its sixth straight win by beating Oakland.

Mariners 6, Angels 3: Mitch Haniger and Ryon Healy each homered twice as first-place Seattle shook off two homers by Mike Trout for the second consecutive night to beat visiting Los Angeles.

Dodgers 12, Rangers 5: Joc Pederson, Max Muncy and Yasiel Puig homered off Bartolo Colon, sending host Los Angeles past Texas.

Brewers 4, Cubs 0: Chase Anderson pitched seven innings of one-hit ball, and host Milwaukee moved back into first in the NL Central.

Red Sox 6, Orioles 4: Home runs by Rafael Devers and Andrew Benintendi helped Eduardo Rodriguez (8-1) win his fifth straight start, and visiting Boston downed Baltimore.

White Sox 5, Indians 1: Yoan Moncada and Yolmer Sanchez homered to lead off host Chicago's three-run first, and James Shields (2-7) won for the first time since opening day.

Phillies 5, Rockies 4: Aaron Nola (8-2) struck out 10 in another dominant performance and Scott Kingery hit a three-run homer, leading host Philadelphia past Colorado.

Braves 8, Mets 2: Ozzie Albies hit a grand slam and Freddie Freeman homered during host Atlanta's six-run sixth inning.

Diamondbacks 13, Pirates 8: Jon Jay, acquired June 6 in a trade with Kansas City, got his first three hits with his new team, including a three-run homer, and host Arizona won its fifth game in a row with a sloppy victory over Pittsburgh.

Rays 4, Blue Jays 1: Wilson Ramos homered, and six relievers combined for a five-hitter to lead host Tampa Bay past Toronto.

Marlins 3, Giants 1: Trevor Richards (1-3) pitched six effective innings for his first major league win, helping host Miami top San Francisco.

Padres 4, Cardinals 2: Eric Hosmer homered and visiting San Diego carried a perfect game into the sixth inning of its 10th win in 14 games.

Reds 5, Royals 1 (10): Joey Votto hit a bases-loaded triple for host Cincinnati in the 10th inning after Billy Hamilton slipped out of a rundown.