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Futenma move delayed further over coral

By **MATTHEW M. BURKE**
AND **AYA ICHIHASHI**

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The start of landfill work for a new runway into Oura Bay at Camp Schwab will be delayed until Aug. 17 because of concerns about endangered species found at the site.

The announcement regarding the cornerstone of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma's relocation to northern Okinawa was made Tuesday by officials from the Okinawa Defense Bureau, which is an arm of Japan's Defense Ministry.

An endangered type of coral — *Porites okinawensis* — was discovered at the site last July. It faces extinction and is on Japan's Red List of Threatened Species, according to the country's Ministry of Environment. The delay will facilitate the use of an alternative, environmentally friendly construction method to complete a seawall. That work is slated to begin by July.

"I trust the construction will proceed with consideration to the environment,"

Nago City Mayor Taketoyo Toguchi said, according to the Ryukyu Shimpo newspaper. "It is not our interest to stop the construction."

The landfill is seen as the last major hurdle in accomplishing the relocation, which will see Futenma eventually shuttered and air operations relocated to Schwab. The landfill work is expected to be completed by March 31, 2020, a defense bureau spokesman said.

The relocation project is decades in the making. Its genesis can be traced to 1995 when two Marines and a sailor kidnapped and brutally raped a 12-year-old local girl. During mass protests that followed, Ginowan residents called for relocation of Futenma's air operations out of safety concerns.

The air station is in a densely populated urban area in the center of the tiny island prefecture.

The move was agreed upon during bilateral negotiations in 1996; however, some residents were angered a year later when it was decided that the air station would be

kept within the southern island prefecture. It then was decided that a runway would be built at Camp Schwab on Okinawa's remote northern coast and that the base would be expanded to facilitate the move.

Former Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima signed off on a permit to allow the landfill work in 2013. Construction began in August 2014.

A couple of months later, anti-base Gov. Takeshi Onaga was elected on a platform that vowed to block the relocation and to banish MV-22 Ospreys from the island.

Onaga has caused significant delays through two court challenges — the most recent ending in March — but so far has been unsuccessful in stopping the relocation.

Despite the setbacks, and with the project's point of no return looming, Onaga remained defiant on Tuesday.

"I most certainly will cancel the project," he said at a news conference.

Onaga faces re-election in November. He has been battling pancreatic cancer in recent months, but has vowed to push forward with his opposition to the project.

SIGAR: Anti-drug effort in Afghanistan largely futile

By **PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN**
Stars and Stripes

The drug trade in Afghanistan, which helps fund the insurgency and impedes reconstruction efforts, has grown stronger despite billions of dollars spent by the U.S. to fight it, a government watchdog said Thursday.

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR, said in a report that the U.S. needs a new strategy to fight drugs in the country.

It also questioned the military's latest counternarcotics endeavor, which includes a U.S. and Afghan air campaign targeting Taliban drug labs.

SIGAR said while similar campaigns achieved short-term tactical success in the past, they "only had limited impact on longer-term efforts to dismantle drug trafficking networks and cut off financing for the insurgency."

"Ultimately, it is unclear whether target-

ing drug labs through an aerial bombing campaign is cost-effective or strategically wise," the watchdog's report said, adding that if the strikes mistakenly caused civilian deaths, they could alienate rural populations and could strengthen the insurgency.

No program initiated by the U.S. has resulted in a lasting reduction in poppy cultivation or opium production, the report said.

When the U.S. and its allies intervened in Afghanistan in late 2001, poppy cultivation was at a historic low. Last year, cultivation jumped by 63 percent from the year before to a record high of about 1,265 square miles, or more than 20 times the land area of Washington, D.C., according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The country currently produces about 90 percent of the world's illicit opium.

"To put it bluntly, these numbers spell failure," SIGAR boss John Sopko said Thursday at the report's launch at the

Washington-based think tank New America. "We must do a better job if we want to mitigate the ways that the drug trade undermines our goals in Afghanistan."

Not only has the U.S.'s counternarcotics work been expensive — costing \$8.6 billion between 2002 and 2017 — but many American troops, contractors and Afghan civilians have been killed or wounded in related missions, the report said.

SIGAR said better intelligence is needed to disrupt financial flows to insurgent and terrorist groups. The watchdog called on the U.S. director of national intelligence to annually assess funding obtained by the insurgency from the drug trade, which would help to develop better polices to cut off the financing.

The SIGAR report said a new U.S. counternarcotics strategy should include promoting legal work options for rural communities and fighting drug-related corruption within the Afghan government.

Impact of exercise halt remains to be seen

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SINGAPORE — U.S. and South Korean commanders have long stressed the need for joint military exercises to ensure readiness to “fight tonight” and to deter the threat from the North.

ANALYSIS But the idea of using the annual drills as a bargaining chip in nuclear negotiations with North Korea is not new.

China and Russia have called for a “freeze for freeze” in which the exercises would stop and the North would suspend nuclear and missile tests, giving the adversaries room to talk.

The United States also canceled exercises in the early 1990s amid talks that led to the short-lived Agreed Framework.

More recently, U.S. Forces Korea agreed to delay the start of springtime drills until after the Pyeongchang Olympics to facilitate the burgeoning peace process between North and South Korea.

War games or exercises

President Donald Trump rejected the idea of a freeze early in his administration, insisting, as did his predecessors, that the U.S. would accept nothing less than complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization.

In a shift, he reversed his stance after meeting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Tuesday in Singapore, the first-ever summit between the two countries who have been rivals since the 1950-53 Korean War ended in an armistice instead of a peace treaty.

“We will be stopping the war games ... unless and until we see the future negotiation is not going along like it should,” Trump said, almost as an aside during a press conference.

The president singled out

supersonic bombers deployed from Guam in shows of force, which infuriate the North.

“We’ll be saving a tremendous amount of money. Plus, I think it’s very provocative,” he added.

Trump also said he wanted to remove U.S. troops from the peninsula “but that’s not part of the equation right now.”

His use of terms like “war games” and calling them “provocative” was itself a major departure from the usually cautious military descriptions.

Critics expressed concern that the president had made a key concession to the North — which considers the drills rehearsals for an invasion — while getting little in return.

But many lawmakers and experts said the impact of halting the exercises would depend on the scope. Trump didn’t elaborate on what he meant by “war games,” although the next set of drills was planned for August.

Former Defense Secretary William Cohen said the annual exercises, which are considered a lynchpin of the U.S.-South Korean alliance, are worth the cost.

“To point out how expensive it is misses the point of what strategic deterrence is and how it protects U.S. interests as well as those of South Korea,” he said on CNBC.

Kim, the third leader in a family dynasty that has ruled the communist state since it was founded in 1948, has promised to stop intercontinental ballistic missile tests and to destroy the country’s main nuclear testing site.

But the isolated country still has the components and facilities to make nuclear weapons and is believed to have dozens in its arsenal already.

It also has conventional artillery and more than 1 million troops poised across the heavily fortified border.

Beyond the rhetoric

Going beyond the rhetoric,

the U.S.-South Korean military exercises serve as much a practical purpose as a political one. They come in many forms, from desktop simulations to battalion-size joint training and maneuvers involving thousands of troops, warships and fighter jets.

The highest-profile drills happen twice a year.

Foal Eagle, a field exercise that often includes a Normandy-style Marine amphibious landing, and simultaneous computer-simulated drills known as Key Resolve happen in the spring.

Ulchi Freedom Guardian — another command-post exercise that involves more time staring at computer screens in bunkers than using weapons — is held in autumn.

It’s the messaging that causes tensions to rise and fall.

Last year, the North warned that the U.S. would face “merciless retaliation” if it went through with Ulchi Freedom Guardian, which involved some 17,500 American troops and 350,000 South Koreans.

U.S. and South Koreans lined up in front of a defensive Patriot missile launcher on Aug. 22 to defend the exercises, which the allies insist are defensive in nature.

“A strong diplomatic effort backed by a strong military effort is key because credible combat power should be in support of diplomacy and not the other way around,” Adm. Harry Harris, then the head of U.S. Pacific Command, told reporters at Osan Air Base.

Trump has nominated Harris to be the new ambassador to South Korea.

Low profile

U.S. and South Korean officials say they’re trying to keep a low profile and limit media coverage of training as the mood shifted this year with a flurry of diplomacy that led to the summit.

Advocates of suspending the exercises say it’s an easy way

to maintain the momentum toward peace and point out the drills can be resumed at any time.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Wednesday that Trump “made it very clear” to Kim that the freeze was contingent on continued “productive, good-faith negotiations.”

That didn’t stop the North from gloating, with its state-run news agency reporting that Kim said it was urgent to halt “irritating and hostile military actions against each other.”

The Korean Central News Agency said Trump understood that and “expressed his intention to halt joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises.”

The allies — who fought together in the 1950-53 Korean War — also conduct several smaller-scale drills on land, air and sea throughout the year.

Commanders say that’s important because the troops need to make sure systems work and practice working together to overcome obstacles such as language issues.

“We exercise because — as any athlete or coach knows — the way we practice is the way we play,” William McKinney, a defense analyst and retired Army colonel, wrote in a commentary published on 38 North. “However, since war is not a game, the ‘practice’; that is, the exercise, becomes all that more important and necessary,” he added.

McKinney said the freeze could be an important confidence-building measure.

He argued that the allies could still conduct lower-level unilateral and combined exercises “with a focus on high-level, decision-making” and no publicity.

“Most U.S.-[South Korean] combined exercises are conducted at the operational level and are designed to meet less strategic, high policy level needs,” he said.

Turkey, US agree on plan for Manbij

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey's military said Thursday that Turkish and U.S. officials, meeting in Germany, have reached an agreement on a plan for the strategic Syrian town of Manbij that was a source of tension between the NATO allies.

A military statement said Turkish and U.S. military officials met at the U.S. European Command headquarters in Stuttgart on Tuesday and Wednesday and reached an agreement on a "Manbij Implementation Plan." It said the plan would be discussed by senior officials from the two countries, but provided no details.

Turkey and the U.S. have offered differing descriptions of their roadmap for Manbij, but a U.S.-backed Kurdish militia group is expected to retreat to the east of the Euphrates River, meeting a long-standing Turkish demand.

Turkey repeatedly has called on the U.S. to stop backing the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG, which it considers terrorists and an extension of a Kurdish insurgency within its own borders.

Baltic exercise a show of strength

BY SCOTT WYLAND
Stars and Stripes

BORNHOLM, Denmark — Russia wasn't invited to a 22-nation exercise aimed at deterring them, but the U.S. and NATO military planners of the event knew they'd be watching.

The point of Baltic Operations 2018 at the tactical level is training, but at the strategic level, analysts say it is a show of strength — and that means the allies want Russia's full attention.

The two-week exercise is scheduled to end Friday after bringing together 5,000 servicemembers from 16 militaries, as well as six nations who observed or provided staff, for training operations on and around the Baltic Sea.

"It sends a strong message of commitment to the stability and security of this region," Vice Adm. Lisa Franchetti, 6th Fleet commander, told Stars and Stripes in Bornholm. "So on many levels it's a very important exercise."

Several participating nations have been wary of Russia's intentions since 2014, when it invaded and annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

NATO countries must strengthen their teamwork and resolve in exercises like this one as the Russian threat grows "more forbidding," said James Holmes, professor of strategy at the Naval War College.

"Deterrence is the name of the game in our strategic competition with Russia, and alliances only deter if they display power and unity," Holmes said.

The exercise known as BALTOPS began in 1972 and has gone through considerable changes since the end of the Cold War and wavering relations with Russia.

Russia participated in BALTOPS 19 times, Franchetti said, but NATO rescinded the invitation after Russia annexed Crimea.

"This year, they (Russians) are uninvited observers at BALTOPS," said Adm. James Foggo, the U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa commander.

The Baltic Sea poses many challenges — heavy ship traffic, inclement weather, murky water — that give visiting navies like those of the U.S. and Britain a chance to learn from regional navies familiar with this sea, said British Rear Adm. Guy Robinson.

"It's a very busy and complex environment," Robinson said. "The underwater conditions as well — whether it's submarine warfare or mine warfare — they're very challenging. [Regional navies] bring a lot of expertise for this very difficult place to conduct warfare."

This year's event included several training mainstays. Warships fended off simulated attacks from smaller, faster vessels; teams practiced anti-submarine warfare and mine countermeasures; Marines launched amphibious landings; and others simulated search-and-rescue operations for sailors and downed pilots.

However, the "free play," or unscripted parts of the exercise, intensified to better train navies to react to unanticipated tactics. The red teams, which play enemy combatants, had free rein to improvise and attack.

British Navy Lt. Lauren Weber said the boat she commands, the HMS Puncher, and four other small vessels constituted a red team that simulated assaults on warships from the U.S., Britain, Denmark, Germany and Finland.

They attacked the ships one at a time, using different tactics on each one, she said.

Franchetti said BALTOPS remains an evolving exercise, with room for new elements.

"It's good to have this exercise that's run for 46 years," Franchetti said. "Build capabilities, but also build relationships between the navies."

Navy, Marine Corps begin CARAT drills in Thailand

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

The Navy and the Marine Corps have kicked off a series of bilateral exercises aimed at strengthening professional skills and building friendships with several Southeast Asian nations.

The 24th annual Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training, or CARAT, which began Wednesday in Thailand, also includes stops in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei and Bangladesh. Similar training also will occur with Vietnam and the Philippines.

"The CARAT exercise series provides a unique and vital opportunity for our navies to understand the challenges inherent in a complex maritime environment, and on how to work through them in a cooperative manner," Capt. Lex Walker, commodore

of Destroyer Squadron 7, said in a Navy statement.

The exercises, which will not run back to back, will continue throughout the summer, said 7th Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Clay Doss.

During CARAT's Thailand leg, the Royal Thai Navy will participate in cooperative exercises at sea with the guided-missile destroyer USS Mustin, the expeditionary fast transport USNS Brunswick, the diving and salvage ship USNS Salvor and a P-8 Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft, the Navy said. On land, Marines will take part in jungle training and live-fire drills.

"This CARAT exercise provides valuable opportunities for our navies to learn from each other and increase our ability to work cooperatively together in a variety of realistic scenarios," Capt. Thumrong

Supunpong, commander of the Thai Navy exercise task unit, said in the Navy statement.

The Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5 will work on construction projects at a Thai school, while medical personnel, mine-countermeasure experts, diving and salvage crews and explosive ordnance disposal technicians give symposiums to "enhance the complexity and diversity of the training," the Navy said.

Walker said he looks forward to continuing CARAT exercises in the future.

"Having been part of last year's CARAT exercise, this year marks a significant growth in our collective ability to work together in even more sophisticated scenarios, and I look forward to continuing this effective engagement next year and beyond," he said in the statement.

NY is suing Trump over his charity

The Washington Post

The New York attorney general on Thursday filed suit against President Donald Trump and his three eldest children alleging “persistently illegal conduct” at the president’s personal charity, saying Trump repeatedly misused the nonprofit to pay off his businesses’ creditors, to decorate one of his golf clubs and to stage a multimillion-dollar giveaway at his 2016 campaign events.

In the suit, filed Thursday morning, Attorney General Barbara Underwood asked a state judge to dissolve the Donald J. Trump Foundation. She asked that its remaining \$1 million in assets be distributed to other charities and that Trump be forced to pay at least \$2.8 million in restitution and penalties.

Underwood also asks that Trump be banned from leading any other New York nonprofit for 10 years — seeking to apply a penalty usually reserved for the operators of small-time charity frauds to the president of the United States.

In the suit, Underwood noted that Trump had already paid more than \$330,000 in reimbursements and penalty taxes since 2016. New York state began probing the Trump Foundation in response to an investigation by *The Washington Post*.

But she asked the judge to go further and require Trump to pay millions more. She said a 20-month state investigation found that Trump had repeatedly violated laws that set the ground rules for tax-exempt foundations — most importantly, that their money is meant to serve the public good and not to provide private benefits to their founders.

The White House and the Trump Organization did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Trump has been president of the foundation since he founded it in 1987. In late 2016, he had promised to shut down the Trump Foundation but could not while the attorney general’s investigation continued.

Prosecutors: Tunisian made ricin for attack in Germany

Associated Press

BERLIN — German prosecutors said Thursday they’ve thwarted an Islamic extremist plot to launch an attack with the deadly toxin ricin.

They said a Tunisian, identified only as Sief Allah H., 29, who was arrested Wednesday, started procuring material online including seeds needed for the creation of ricin in mid-May.

The suspect succeeded in creating the toxin this month and investigators found it in a search of his Cologne apartment, federal prosecutors in Karlsruhe said in a written statement.

“He procured 1,000 castor bean seeds online as well as an electronic coffee grinder,” they said. The shell of the castor bean plant seed is highly poisonous and can be used to create ricin.

The authorities are still investigating exactly

how the suspect planned to use the toxin, but said he was working on a “biological weapon” attack in Germany.

Prosecutors said they currently have no evidence of a connection with any extremist organization.

They didn’t immediately comment on a *Bild* newspaper report that American intelligence tipped off German investigators.

Bild also reported that the suspect bought bomb-making material and chemicals used in the production of the ricin.

The daily newspaper wrote that H. lived in the Chorweiler neighborhood of Cologne with his wife and four children. He supposedly used instructions for the making of a ricin bomb that had been posted online by Islamic State.

‘Like dominoes’: Utah homes burn amid wildfires in West

BY COLLEEN SLEVIN
AND LINDSAY WHITEHURST
Associated Press

DENVER — A fast-moving brush fire destroyed eight homes in the Utah tourist town of Moab, while more than 3,000 people in Colorado and Wyoming fled multiple wildfires scorching the drought-stricken U.S. West on Wednesday.

The blaze in Moab, known for its dramatic red rocks, started in a wooded area Tuesday night and quickly spread to homes over less than a square mile, Police Chief Jim Winder said. Crews were extinguishing embers Wednesday.

Moab residents Tim Clark and his girlfriend, Tina Saunders, grabbed their dogs, family photos and a laptop, evacuating with their home in flames.

“Those houses just started going like dominoes,” Clark told the *Salt Lake Tribune*. “Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam!”

Police said the early investigation has ruled out natural causes for the blaze that ignited

near a creek that is frequently used as a walkway in a largely blue-collar neighborhood. It was not near the tourist-heavy areas in the town known for its proximity to Arches and Canyonlands national parks.

Moab resident Shane Tangren told the newspaper that he arrived home from work Tuesday evening to find flames nearby. He was trying to protect the house he’s lived in since he was 16 by wetting it down, but the wind shifted and sent the flames barreling right toward him. He fled.

“I sat there and watched it burn to the ground,” Tangren, 55, told the newspaper. “Everything — photographs, birth certificates, memories — it’s all gone. My first car — that was a 1970 (Pontiac) GTO. Up in flames. I bought it when I was 15.”

In Colorado’s mountains, residents have evacuated more than 1,300 houses — condos, apartments and pricey homes — as flames threatened an area known for its ski resorts.

Firefighters, with help from aircraft, got a quick jump on a fire near Silverthorne after it was reported Tuesday and have managed to keep it from spreading beyond about 91 acres in heavy timber, including trees killed by pine beetles.

Summit Fire Chief Jeff Berino said Wednesday night that lightning did not play a role in the fire and that “some type of human element is probably likely” as a cause.

Across the state, Colorado’s largest fire has burned about 43 square miles over nearly two weeks. Residents could go back to about 180 homes no longer threatened at the northern edge of the fire Wednesday, but others remained out of more than 1,900 houses.

The blaze about 13 miles north of Durango is in the Four Corners region where Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Utah meet and which is in the middle of a large swath of exceptional drought. Much of the U.S. West is experiencing some level of drought.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Howitzer moved to new site by vets group

NJ ROSELAND — A piece of World War II history in the form of a howitzer gun made a slow journey to its new posting in New Jersey last weekend.

Roads were closed, police officers halted traffic and motorists watched the 30-mile journey of the 9.5-ton howitzer. The Record reported the howitzer was moved from a Veterans of Foreign Wars post in Woodcliff Lake to another VFW post in Roseland.

The Woodcliff Lake Post was founded by veterans returning home from World War II and had a number of new members following the Korean War. Officials at that post said they can't maintain the howitzer.

The U.S. Army still owns the howitzer and approved the move.

Donated puppies have chance to be K-9s

VA RICHMOND — Four puppies born to a dog seized by animal control officials are now on track for a shot at joining the Richmond police department.

The Richmond Times-Dispatch reported the four Belgian Malinois puppies are being raised in a collaborative effort between the police department and Richmond Animal Care and Control.

Once the puppies get older, experts will determine whether they would make a good fit for the K-9 unit.

Sgt. Stuart Hannah said the partnership could help save the department money. He said if the department goes through a vendor, each dog can cost \$5,000 to \$7,000.

Wedding guest is arrested after fight

NH SALEM — Police responding to a fight that broke out at a wedding reception at a New Hampshire bar arrested a guest, saying he choked someone and fled.

NH1 reported that Colby Dion, 24, of North Andover, Mass., was confronted by several guests in a Salem bar where the wedding party took place last weekend. Police said the victim had injuries consistent with being choked.

Dion was charged with domestic violence and resisting arrest.

Woman takes dead roaches to meeting

TX CORPUS CHRISTI — A South Texas woman gave a small bag of dead cockroaches to a city official to protest newly planted palm trees that she blames for more unwanted bugs in her neighborhood.

Patricia Polastri on Tuesday told the Corpus Christi City Council that she's seen more rodents and unwanted insects, including cockroaches, since the trees were planted. She asked council members to reconsider the landscaping.

Police: Woman carried 2 kids in pet kennels

TN MEMPHIS — Police in Tennessee said a woman was charged with transporting two young children in pet kennels inside her vehicle.

Media outlets reported Leimome Cheeks, 62, was charged with two counts of child endangerment.

According to a Memphis police affidavit, Cheeks said there was no room inside her vehicle so she told the children ages 7

and 8 to get inside the kennels.

There were no air-conditioning vents in the back of the vehicle and the children told police they became hot.

2 bear cubs separated from mom are freed

MT BILLINGS — Two young Montana bears separated from their mother by eager photographers are back in the wild.

Game wardens and a wildlife biologist released the yearling cubs in south-central Montana earlier this week.

In September, the cubs and their mother were near the town of Harlowton when people stopped to take photos. At some point, people chased the bears and got between the mother and her still-nursing cubs. The cubs ran east but the mother ran west to avoid the people.

Wildlife officials captured the two cubs and held them for a day to try to find the mother, but she had left the area. They were raised in captivity over the winter.

Woman pleads not guilty to sex in church

NJ SEASIDE HEIGHTS — A homeless woman accused of having sex with a man beneath a statue of the Virgin Mary at a Roman Catholic church in New Jersey pleaded not guilty to lewdness and other charges.

Noelle Smart entered the pleas Tuesday in Seaside Heights Municipal Court.

Authorities said Smart, 48, and Anthony Getchius, 43, were found May 22 in "a sacred area" on the grounds of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which is next door to police headquarters.

Smart told the Asbury Park Press she and Getchius were homeless and staying behind the church. She said "the act of

lewdness wasn't happening."

Getchius was charged with lewdness, disrobing in public and other offenses.

WWII-era buildings to be reassembled

ND BISMARCK — Some buildings from a World War II internment camp in Bismarck have been saved from demolition and will be reassembled into a lasting piece of history.

The Bismarck Tribune reported that Mike Beck, 78, for the past year has been reassembling a Fort Lincoln internment camp building at Buckstop Junction, a pioneer village east of Bismarck.

The structure was set for demolition in 2011 after serving for more than 40 years as the maintenance building at Bismarck State College.

Beck and others rescued the barracks building and took the pieces to Buckstop Junction.

Zoo tadpoles released in Puerto Rico

MI ROYAL OAK — More than 11,000 tadpoles born in the Detroit Zoo have been released in Puerto Rico in an effort to restore an endangered toad to the Caribbean island.

The Detroit Zoological Society said more than 52,000 other Detroit zoo-born tadpoles have been shipped to Puerto Rico over the past decade.

They are monitored to determine if the toads are surviving and breeding.

The toads thrived on Puerto Rico until sugar growers introduced a foreign toad they hoped would eat pests that feed on sugar cane.

The introduced toad ate the native toad's young and took over its habitat.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

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Germany aims to repeat in World Cup

Associated Press

MOSCOW — After raising the World Cup eight miles from Copacabana Beach four years ago, Germany hopes to lift the trophy four miles from the Kremlin on July 15 and become the first repeat champion in more than a half-century.

The soccer world gathered at 12 stadiums in 11 cities across the European portion of Russia Thursday for a 32-day, 64-match championship. Much has changed since Die Mannschaft humiliated the host Seleção 7-1 in the 2014 semifinals, then left Rio de Janeiro's Maracana Stadium with a 1-0 extra-time win over Argentina on Mario Goetze's 113th-minute goal.

The United States will be missing from soccer's showcase after seven straight appearances. Four-time champion Italy will be watching from home for the first time since 1958, its streak of 14 consecutive appearances ended by a play-off loss to Sweden. The Netherlands, which lost the 2010 final to Spain, missed out after slumping to third in its qualify-

ing group. And Chile failed to qualify after consecutive Copa America titles.

Iceland and Panama are World Cup debutantes, Peru is back for the first time since 1982, and Egypt ends an absence dating to 1990.

Germany and Brazil are the pre-tournament favorites, and France is fancied behind them with a young roster. England will try to end more than five decades of hurt since winning its only major title on home soil in 1966. Mexico will try to advance past the second round for the first time since 1986, but El Tri opens against Germany and its likely second-round opponent is Brazil.

There also has been a generational change within FIFA. Many of its leaders have moved from penthouses to prisons following indictments by the U.S. Department of Justice that detailed kickbacks to be as much a part of soccer as free kicks.

Expect controversy on a regular basis.

Following the drug-testing scandal that engulfed the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, FIFA's

medical committee chairman said no Russians will be involved in collection of urine and blood samples, which will be flown to Lausanne, Switzerland, for analysis.

VAR will be the acronym of the moment: video assistant referees in soccer-speak, instant replay for most viewers at home.

And as soon as the final whistle of the tournament is blown at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium, attention will shift to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, moved to Nov. 21 through Dec. 18 because of summer desert heat and compressed to 28 days because it is in the middle of the European club season. Gianni Infantino, who succeeded the disgraced Sepp Blatter as FIFA president in 2016, has discussed increasing the World Cup field from 32 to 48 in 2022, four years ahead of schedule.

Some of the top storylines likely to dominate play in Russia:

Messi and Ronaldo

Lionel Messi and Cristiano

Ronaldo have split the last 10 FIFA Player of the Year awards, and this is likely their last chance to win a World Cup. Messi turns 31 on June 24, two days before Argentina finishes the first round against Nigeria, and has lost four finals with the national team. Ronaldo, 33, helped Portugal win the 2016 European Championship for its first major title.

Breakout stars?

Brazil's Neymar, England's Harry Kane, Egypt's Mohamed Salah, France's Antoine Griezmann and Belgium's Kevin De Bruyne are stars who could lift themselves into Player of the Year contention with stellar World Cups.

Back to back

Italy in 1934 and '38, and Brazil in 1958 and '62 are the only teams to win consecutive World Cups. Germany was 10-0 in qualifying, the only European team with a perfect record, and outscored opponents 43-4.

Host Russia earns first win with rout of Saudi Arabia

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Inspired by the home crowd in the opening match of the World Cup, Russia ended a 16-year wait for victory.

Substitute Denis Cheryshev scored two goals Thursday to lead the host nation over Saudi Arabia 5-0 in Group A with President Vladimir Putin watching from the stands alongside FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

It was Russia's first World Cup win since 2002 and ended a seven-game winless run overall — the national team's longest winless streak in 20 years.

Yuri Gazinsky initially put Russia ahead with a header from Alexander Golovin's cross when the Saudis failed to clear a corner in the 12th min-

ute. Gazinsky charged forward to meet the ball as Saudi player Taisir Al-Jassam stumbled, leaving him a simple finish.

Putin and Infantino smiled and shrugged as they sat next to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the VIP box. Putin then reached over to shake the prince's hand.

Cheryshev chipped the ball over two Saudi defenders in the 43rd minute and shot over goalkeeper Abdullah Al Muaiouf's right side. He later chipped the ball in for Russia's fourth goal in stoppage time.

After Cheryshev's first goal, Artyom Dzyuba made an instant impact off the bench to make it 3-0 in the 71st with a header from Golovin's cross. Golovin added the fifth from a free kick.

Following a lavish opening

ceremony featuring British singer Robbie Williams, Putin welcomed visiting fans and promised Russia would be a "hospitable and friendly" host.

In a World Cup first, the video assistant referee system was available for the match between the tournament's lowest-ranked teams, though it wasn't used.

The Saudis, who last won a match at the World Cup in 1994, failed to get a single shot on target.

Group dynamics: The win for Russia is a big boost to its hopes of advancing, but it will still face a tough test against Egypt on June 19 and Uruguay six days later.

But with the five goals against the Saudis, a draw could be enough against either of its two remaining opponents.

Saudi Arabia's route to the knockout round is much more difficult. The Saudis will face Uruguay on June 20 and then Egypt on June 25. Egypt and Uruguay play Friday in Yekaterinburg.

Key to success: Russia's players were significantly taller and heavier than the Saudis, a help when challenging for the ball and when the penalty area was crowded.

That had an effect on Gazinsky's goal, which came after the Saudis struggled to clear a Russian corner, and the header from the tall and stocky Dzyuba.

One concern for Russia, however, is that creative midfielder Alan Dzagoev appears to have injured a hamstring in the first half.

UNC offense is firing on all cylinders

Associated Press

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — North Carolina's offense is racking up hits, working counts to get on base and coming up with timely hits to bring runners home.

The timing couldn't be any better, either.

The Tar Heels head to the College World Series for the first time in five years with an offense that has been at its best in big moments in the postseason. They're averaging nearly 10 runs and 12 hits while batting .335 in the NCAA Tournament entering Saturday's Omaha opener against No. 3 national seed Oregon State.

"I guess that's the easiest term, is: yes, your guys get in there and get a little bit more locked in and maybe get a little bit better swing off," UNC coach Mike Fox said Tuesday. "It's what you have to do when you get to the NCAA Tournament. You have to raise your level of play."

North Carolina (43-18), the No. 6 national seed, started 7-7 but led the Atlantic Coast Conference in league play with 210 runs (7.24 per game) and a .294 batting average. And they've rolled that momentum right into the NCAAs, winning all five games while tallying 48 runs, 58 hits and six home runs.

The Tar Heels had made going to Omaha seem almost routine with six trips in eight years under Fox from 2006-13. This group lacks the same type of top-tier offensive threat such as All-Americans Dustin Ackley or Colin Moran from those past teams.

Rather, as Datres put it: "It's been 1 through 9."

The Tar Heels grind it out at the plate, typically showing enough discipline to lay off the off-plate pitches and forcing pitchers to work for outs. They rank eighth nationally by drawing 337 walks this season, with No. 9 seed Texas Tech (347) the only team headed to Omaha with more.

U.S. Open

One-time major winners battle with each other at Shinnecock

Associated Press

SOUTHAMPTON, N.Y. — Jordan Spieth considers himself lucky.

As hard as he made it look, winning the U.S. Open three years ago felt easy. He was two months removed from his victory at Augusta National. No matter what happened at Chambers Bay, he was the Masters champion for the rest of the year, and a major champion for life.

"House money," he described that week.

And then he won another major with a birdie-double bogey-birdie finish, helped by Dustin Johnson three-putting from 12 feet to lose by one. Spieth was 22 when he became the first player in 74 years — Craig Wood in 1941 — to win his first major and then add a second major in his next try.

It didn't come that quickly for Tiger Woods, even after a 12-shot victory at the 1997 Masters in his first major as a pro. Woods played 10 more majors, half of them while overhauling his swing, before he won his next one.

Winning one major is great. Winning multiple majors commands a new level of respect.

"You could make an argument that it could be harder to get the second one than it is the first," PGA champion Justin Thomas said Tuesday. "You could make an argument that every major is the hardest. But I just think that to be known as a multiple major champion as opposed to, 'He won the PGA,' it has a little better ring to it. So I hope to have that to my name, sooner rather than later."

Identifying the best player without a major has been a topic for the better part of 30 years. Given the depth of talent, it might be time for a different question.

The best with only one major.

It's a long list, from as young as Thomas (24) to Henrik Stenson (42).

All it takes is one week, one more major — perhaps this week at Shinnecock Hills — for such a player to enter a different conversation.

Dustin Johnson might lead that list.

He finally broke through for his first major at Oakmont in the 2016 U.S. Open, and given his 18 victories on the PGA Tour, he probably should have more. If not for getting in his own way, he might have more by now.

There was the 82 at Pebble Beach when he had a three-shot lead in the 2010 U.S. Open. He hit an errant drive into a patch of sand that he didn't know was a bunker at Whistling Straits that same year in the PGA Championship. The bogey dropped him into a three-man playoff. Grounding his club in the sand for a two-shot

penalty dropped him out of it. And then at Chambers Bay, he was 12 feet away for eagle and the U.S. Open until it took three putts and a par for a runner-up finish.

He is No. 1 in the world, and wants to get major No. 2.

"It's hard to get No. 2 right now, but it was hard to get No. 1," Johnson said with a smile. "I think it's hard to get any of them. It's just a tough task. There's only four majors, and to win a major you have to have everything working very well. You've got to play really good all four rounds. ... I'd love to get that second one. But it's one of those things where, like I said, everything has got to work well for four days."

Jason Day has 12 victories on the PGA Tour, and only the 2015 PGA Championship among majors. He spent 47 consecutive weeks at No. 1 the year after winning his major, and had only one good chance. Justin Rose won the 2013 U.S. Open at Merion for his first major. Rose has won at least somewhere in the world every year since 2010, and he has won on prestigious courses — Muirfield Village, Congressional, Aronimink, Doral — and he was one putt away from adding Augusta National to that list.

But he's still stuck on one.

So is Adam Scott and Sergio Garcia, Brooks Koepka and Webb Simpson.

Add to that list Louis Oosthuizen, who has been runner-up in all four majors since his 2010 victory in the British Open at St. Andrews.

"I mean absolutely zero, no disrespect to guys that have won one — obviously, myself included," Thomas said. "But it's a lot easier to get hot one week than it is to do it again and win another major. Because when you're a major champion, you have more asked of you. You have more expectations on yourself, more expectations from other people to where if you do get in the hunt, then you're asked, 'How is it going to feel to get your second major?' You're constantly reminded of that."

The top players when Woods was in his prime years were Phil Mickelson, Ernie Els and Vijay Singh. Woods rarely fails to mention Retief Goosen on that list, mainly because when Woods was at his best, Goosen was the only other player with multiple majors. He won his second U.S. Open at Shinnecock Hills in 2004.

Seventeen players at Shinnecock Hills this week have only one major and would love to add another.

If they don't? It's still better than being on that other list occupied by the likes of Rickie Fowler, Hideki Matsuyama and Jon Rahm.

They're young. But they would settle for one.

Haniger helps Mariners sweep Angels

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Something about the big moments brings out the best in Mitch Haniger.

His two-run home run in the ninth on Wednesday, after a stellar defensive play in the top of the inning, gave the Seattle Mariners an 8-6 victory and sweep of the three-game series over the Los Angeles Angels.

“We have such a powerful lineup,” Haniger said. “On any given night it can be somebody else and that’s kind of the vibe. There’s no panic.”

Haniger, who has 16 home runs this season and 52 RBIs, has an MLB-best 11 game-winning hits — including his second game-ending homer on Wednesday.

After Jean Segura singled to center off reliever Oliver Drake (0-1), Haniger sent a pitch over the left-field wall to end it.

Nelson Cruz and Ryon Healy also homered for Seattle. Healy’s upper-deck shot in the eighth inning tied the game at 6-6. Cruz hit a two-run homer in the second inning, his fourth in his last five games and

16th of the season.

The home run by Haniger, who was 2-for-5 and scored two runs, was his second big play of the ninth inning. He also made an outstanding defensive play in right field for the second consecutive game.

With one out and a runner at first, Martin Maldonado hit a fly ball to deep right that was tailing away from Haniger. However, he raced to make the catch before throwing it on the fly to Healy in the infield. Healy ran to first to double off Jabari Blash, who was pinch running for Albert Pujols.

The Mariners have won six of their last seven games and 11 of their last 13. Roenis Elias (2-0) earned the win with two scoreless innings of relief, and Seattle starter Marco Gonzales allowed seven hits and three runs in five innings.

Wednesday’s game had plenty of drama — including two times when the game was tied and two lead changes.

“I don’t know where to start with this game,” said Seattle manager Scott Servais. “It had a little bit of everything in it.”

Seattle built a 4-1 lead in the third inning and led 4-3 before the Angels came back to tie it in the sixth inning on a sacrifice fly by Luis Valbuena. Home runs by Nolan Fontana and Chris Young gave the Angels a 6-4 lead in the seventh.

The Angels had won six consecutive games before coming to Seattle.

“It says a lot the way our guys came back,” Los Angeles manager Mike Scioscia said. “But unfortunately it was one of those days when our bullpen was stretched a bit after having to use them a lot, and we couldn’t get it done at the end.”

Injured Angels: Angels starting pitcher Garrett Richards left the game after two innings because of tightness in his left hamstring. Shortstop Zack Cozart left in the fourth inning because of a shoulder strain.

Seager scratched: Seattle third baseman Kyle Seager was a late scratch from the starting lineup Wednesday, but he is not injured. Mariners officials said it was a personal issue, and Andrew Romine started at third in his place.

MLB roundup

Sale dominates as BoSox sweep woeful O’s

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Chris Sale took a two-hitter into the seventh inning before being ejected, and the Boston Red Sox completed a three-game sweep of the Baltimore Orioles with a 5-1 victory Wednesday.

After issuing two walks to open the seventh in a 5-0 game, Sale (6-4) was lifted by manager Alex Cora. As he was making his way to the dugout, the left-hander yelled at plate umpire Brian Knight and was promptly ejected.

Sale struck out nine, allowed one run and gave up two hits in ending a run of three straight losing starts. Mookie Betts and J.D. Martinez homered for the Red Sox, who are 9-1 against the Orioles this season. Baltimore has lost seven straight and 14 of 16.

Betts, the major league leader in batting average, came off the disabled list Monday after missing 14 games with an abdominal strain. He played Monday, was rested Tuesday and

returned to the top of the lineup in the series finale. Betts hit a 3-2 pitch from Yefry Ramirez over the center-field wall in the third for his 18th home run. A three-run fifth made it 4-0, and Martinez hit his team-leading 22nd in the seventh.

Ramirez (0-1) gave up three runs and four hits over 4¹/₃ innings, striking out six.

Nationals 5, Yankees 4: Teenage rookie Juan Soto homered twice and drove in four runs, becoming the youngest player in 29 years to go deep in a regular-season game at Yankee Stadium, and Washington beat New York.

Astros 13, Athletics 5: Evan Gattis hit two home runs, including the first of back-to-back shots with Marwin Gonzalez during a seven-run second inning, and streaking Houston beat host Oakland for its seventh straight win.

Reds 7, Royals 0: Tyler Mahle allowed three hits while pitching into the seventh, Adam Duvall hit a ninth-inning grand slam and visiting Cincinnati

beat skidding Kansas City.

Dodgers 3, Rangers 2 (11): Enrique Hernandez dodged home on a wild throw by pitcher Matt Bush in the 11th inning and, hours after a hard collision at the plate led to a bench-clearing incident and a pair of ejections, host Los Angeles edged Texas.

Rockies 7, Phillies 2: Ian Desmond hit a two-run homer in a five-run fourth inning, Tyler Anderson pitched seven strong innings and Colorado routed host Philadelphia to end a five-game losing streak.

Brewers 1, Cubs 0: Lorenzo Cain homered and Jhoulys Chacin combined with three relievers on a six-hitter to give Milwaukee its second straight shutout of visiting Chicago.

Tigers 5, Twins 2: Victor Reyes’s RBI single keyed a four-run eighth inning and host Detroit rallied to beat Minnesota.

Padres 4, Cardinals 2: Eric Lauer carried a shutout into the sixth inning, Manuel Margot had three hits and visiting San

Diego beat St. Louis to win its fifth straight series.

Pirates 5, Diamondbacks 4: Jordy Mercer homered and had three RBIs, Jameson Taillon pitched seven effective innings and Pittsburgh beat host Arizona to avoid a sweep.

White Sox 3, Indians 2: Dylan Covey carried a shutout into the eighth inning, continuing his impressive June and helping Chicago beat Trevor Bauer and visiting Cleveland.

Rays 1, Blue Jays 0: Matt Duffy’s RBI single with two outs in the ninth drove in the only run in host Tampa Bay’s victory over Toronto.

Braves 2, Mets 0: Mike Soroka did not allow a hit until the seventh inning, Freddie Freeman homered and drove in both runs, and Atlanta beat visiting New York.

Marlins 5, Giants 4: Brian Anderson hit a game-ending sacrifice fly in the ninth inning to lift host Miami over San Francisco.