

STARS AND STRIPES®

Monday, June 18, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Senate OKs requiring DOD study permanent Poland troop presence

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department soon could be assessing the feasibility of permanently deploying U.S. troops to Poland to counter Russian aggression.

The Senate last week approved a measure to require the Pentagon to study the need for such a deployment and the political ramifications of it.

The language was adopted Thursday by voice vote and added to the Senate's version of the fiscal 2019 defense policy bill, which the Senate was expected to vote on Monday.

Sen. John Boozman, R-Ark., sponsored the amendment. It calls for the Pentagon to submit the report to congressional defense committees by March 1, 2019.

Specifically, the Pentagon is to examine whether a permanently assigned Army brigade combat team would be effective and how Russia might react to such a move.

A brigade typically consists of three to five battalions with about 1,500 to 4,000 soldiers.

Poland currently hosts U.S. Army and NATO forces, who rotate between Poland and the three Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The Air Force also maintains an aviation detachment year-round in Poland, comprising a small group of airmen deployed months at a time to facilitate the staging of the U.S. and NATO in the country.

But Poland is vying to bolster the U.S. presence even more to counter the threat it perceives from Russia, which in 2014 seized

the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine, Poland's eastern neighbor.

Poland is willing to pay for some of that support.

The Polish Defense Ministry earlier this year said in a proposal that it would provide as much as \$2 billion to support the deployment of a permanent U.S. armored division in Poland.

In the proposal, first reported on by the Polish news service Onet, the ministry refers to "aggressive Russian actions" in 2008 in Georgia and from 2014 on in Ukraine.

"Russia is seeking to strengthen its political and economic relations with key European countries at the expense of U.S. national interests," the proposal says. "An increased U.S. permanent presence in Poland will give America the strategic flexibility it needs to confront and deter these threats" while helping to secure "American interests it shares with" European partners.

The Senate amendment says the Pentagon should assess the willingness and ability of Poland to provide host nation support for a brigade combat team and potential locations for such a team.

The amendment doesn't ask the Pentagon to examine which units in the States might help fill the team, but it does ask planners to consider whether future growth in Army "end strength may be used to source additional forces" in Poland.

The report is expected to be unclassified, though the Pentagon may include a classified portion, according to the amendment.

svan.jennifer@stripes.com

Japanese F-15s, commuter plane narrowly avoid collision on Okinawa

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A pair of Japanese fighter jets were at "very high risk" of colliding with an incoming commuter plane after pulling onto an Okinawa runway last week.

The incident happened about 8:25 p.m. Thursday as two Japan Air Self-Defense Force F-15s scrambled at Naha Airport to intercept a potential foreign incursion into Japanese territory, a JASDF spokesman

said.

At the same time, a Bombardier DHC8-Q400 carrying 35 passengers from Miyako was coming in for a landing, according to JASDF and airline spokesmen. The turbo-prop plane from Ryukyu Air Commuter Co. was approximately 3 miles out when it was waved off by air traffic control.

The sortie was canceled, and the jets were recalled from the runway. The commuter plane landed without incident about 8:27 p.m.

From Stripes staff

Report: Russia could have nukes stored near Poland

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The Russian military has renovated an underground bunker 50 miles from Poland that could be an active nuclear weapons storage site, a nuclear watchdog group said Monday.

A series of satellite images analyzed by the Washington-based Federation of American Scientists shows one of three underground bunkers in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad being excavated, renovated and then covered, the group said in a report.

"The latest upgrade obviously raises questions about what the operational status of the site is," wrote Hans M. Kristensen, director of the nuclear information project at the FAS.

Kaliningrad borders Lithuania to the north, Poland to the south and the Baltic Sea to the west. The pictures used for the analysis came from Digital Globe and TerraServer, two commercial providers of satellite images.

It isn't clear whether the bunkers are currently storing nuclear warheads or that they will in the future. The site potentially could function as a forward storage center for warheads, the FAS report said.

"The features of the site suggest it could potentially serve Russian Air Force or Navy dual-capable forces. But it could also be a joint site, potentially servicing nuclear warheads for both Air Force, Navy, Army, air-defense, and coastal defense forces in the region," the report said.

Moscow steadily has boosted its military capabilities in Kaliningrad in recent years, including sophisticated air defense and missile systems. In addition, Russian nuclear-capable submarines and strike aircraft are based in Kaliningrad.

vandiver.john@stripes.com
Twitter: @john_vandiver

Navy's top NCO under investigation

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy has launched a misconduct inquiry into accusations raised against the service's senior enlisted sailor, claiming he has fostered a hostile workplace in his Pentagon office.

The Navy Inspector General's Office is investigating the allegations against Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Steven Giordano, said Cmdr. William Speaks, a service spokesman. Giordano has served as the Navy's senior enlisted sailor since September 2016. In his role, he serves as a chief adviser to Adm. John Richardson, the chief of naval operations, and he develops policy and advocates for the sea service's enlisted force.

"The Navy takes all allegations of misconduct seriously," Speaks said in a statement. "The Navy is conducting an investigation into this matter. As in all investigations, we will safeguard the rights of any complainant and protect the procedural rights of all parties."

Speaks and other Navy officials declined to discuss the nature of the allegations, citing the investigation.

The probe was initiated following a formal complaint by a sailor working for Giordano, alleging he created a toxic work environment and belittled people who worked for him, often demanding they perform menial tasks, according to a report from Navy Times. The report cites more than a dozen unnamed sailors who worked for Giordano during the past two years.

A spokesman for Giordano did not respond to a request for comment about the allegations.

Baltimore native Giordano, who enlisted in 1989, is the 14th master chief petty officer of the Navy, according to his official biography.

Marines boost parental leave

By JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps has changed its parental leave policy so that new mothers and fathers can spend more time with their children.

The update — which went into effect Thursday and can be used by parents whose children were born as far back as Dec. 23, 2016 — adds six weeks of primary caregiver leave that can be taken in conjunction with six weeks of maternity leave, according to the new policy.

The service defines a primary caregiver as the parent primarily responsible for the care of a child in the case of a qualifying birth or adoption.

Primary caregiver leave, which can be delayed for up to one year, also can be transferred to the other parent for dual-military couples, the policy says.

Another major change increases paternity leave — now called "secondary caregiver leave" — from 10 to 14 days.

Marine fathers who have taken 10 days of paternity leave since Dec. 23, 2016, will be given an additional four days.

Lance Cpl. Jacquelyn Bailey, a power line mechanic at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., said giving extra days is a step in the right direction.

"It's difficult to keep up on everything, and I find that I let a lot of things slip that I'm not comfortable with," she said.

"I think that they should keep increasing the

leave for fathers. Fourteen days is not enough recovery time for mom, nor bonding time with the new baby for dad."

Bailey, whose daughter is less than a month old, said fathers miss a lot because they are forced to return to work so quickly after births.

"I honestly believe that if they had more time off to bond with the baby and to strengthen their relationship with the mother of their child, they wouldn't feel like they are missing the best parts of their children's lives," she said. "Less stress at home means better productivity and career progression."

The updated policy requires Marines to identify the primary and secondary caregivers as "early as practical," preferably within 60 days of the anticipated delivery date or date of a qualifying adoption.

The policy also applies to parents designated as primary caregivers who adopted children during the retroactive period. For example, if a parent already has taken 21 days of adoption leave, an additional 21 days are now authorized.

Retroactive leave requests must be taken within 18 months of the birth or qualifying adoption, the policy says.

The decision follows similar changes made by the Air Force two weeks ago. Both policies apply to birth mothers, fathers, same-sex couples and adoptive or surrogate parents.

The Air Force policy is more generous, allowing seven more days of secondary caregiver leave.

Trump announces plan for 'Space Force'

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Vowing to reclaim U.S. leadership in space, President Donald Trump announced Monday he is directing the Pentagon to create a new "Space Force" as an independent service branch aimed at ensuring American supremacy in space.

Trump envisioned a bright future for the U.S. space program, pledging to revive the country's flagging efforts, to return to the moon and eventually to send a manned mission that would reach Mars. The president framed space as a national security issue, saying he does not want "China and Russia and other countries leading us."

"My administration is reclaiming America's heritage as the world's greatest spacefaring nation," Trump said in the East Room, joined by members of his space council. "The essence of the American character is to explore new horizons and to tame new frontiers."

Trump previously had suggested the possibility of creating a space unit that would include portions equivalent to parts of the Air Force, the Army and the Navy. But his directive will task the Defense Department to begin the process of establishing the "Space Force" as the sixth branch of the U.S. armed forces. He said the new branch's creation will be overseen by Gen. Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"When it comes to defending America, it is not enough to merely have an American presence in space. We must have American dominance in space," Trump said. He added, "We are going to have the Air Force and we are going to have the Space Force, separate but equal."

The president also used the White House event to establish a new policy for reducing satellite clutter in space. The policy calls for providing a safe and secure environment up in orbit, as satellite traffic increases. It also sets up new guidelines for satellite design and operation to avoid collisions and spacecraft breakups.

Syria says US strike hit government troops

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Iraqi Shiite forces and Syria accused the U.S. on Monday of targeting their troops inside Syria with an airstrike, a charge the U.S. denied but that ratcheted up tensions in the area.

Iraq's Iran-backed Popular Mobilization Forces, the units' umbrella organization, said in a statement that U.S. aircraft late Sunday night fired two missiles that hit a group of its fighters deployed along the Iraq-Syria border to prevent breaches by Islamic State.

The statement said the attack left 22 fighters dead and 12 wounded, adding that Iraqi and Syrian authorities were

aware of their deployment.

"We demand that the American side issues a clarification for what happened," the Iraqi group said.

Syrian state media had reported earlier that the airstrike against pro-government forces in the far east of the country had caused casualties, while Iraqi officials said it had killed at least 25 Shiite paramilitaries and was just across the border from its own territory.

A Syrian state TV report blamed the attack on the U.S.-led coalition battling ISIS, saying it occurred about midnight in the village of al-Hari, to the southeast of the border town of Boukamal. A coalition spokes-

man denied that it had carried out any strikes in the area.

The state TV report, quoting an unnamed military official, gave no breakdown of the casualties other than saying there "were several martyrs and others were wounded."

In Baghdad, Iraqi officials said state-sanctioned Shiite paramilitaries came under attack south of the town of Qaim, just across the border from Boukamal. They said 25 fighters were killed, three are missing and about 30 were wounded. They did not give details into how the attack was carried out, saying only that investigations were underway. They spoke on condition of anonymity because

they were not authorized to talk to the media.

The officials said the dead were mostly members of Iraq's Hezbollah Brigades, which have been active in Syria's civil war fighting alongside government forces. Also killed were some members of the Sayyed al-Shuhada Battalions, they said.

In Syria, an official with the so-called "Axis of Resistance" led by Iran, which includes Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and other groups fighting alongside President Bashar Assad's forces, told The Associated Press that the attack on Syrian and Iraqi positions had been carried out by American drone aircraft.

S. Korea begins defense drills over disputed islets

BY KIM GAMEL
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Despite protests from Tokyo, South Korea kicked off naval drills Monday aimed at practicing for a theoretical fight with Japan over a disputed cluster of islets that sit in the sea between the countries.

The two-day military exercise, which has been held twice each year since 2003, took on

extra significance this year because it occurred even as Seoul was discussing plans to halt joint war games with the U.S. amid a diplomatic push to ease tensions with North Korea.

South Korea and Japan have long feuded over the rocky and largely uninhabited territory, which the South calls Dokdo and Japan calls Takeshima.

Japan's Foreign Ministry lodged a protest over the planned drills on Sunday, according to Japanese broadcaster NHK.

The report said ministry official Kenji Kanasugi called the drills extremely deplorable and said Japan can never accept them in a phone call with a senior official at the South Korean Embassy.

Some six ships and seven aircraft were being deployed for the drills, which included sailors, marines and members of the coast guard, the navy said, adding that the scale of the exercises was the same as last year's.

Ministry spokeswoman Choi Hyun-soo dismissed Japan's complaint during a news briefing, saying the exercise is intended "to prevent outside forces from invading Dokdo, which is a [South Korean] territory."

Continuing disputes between South Korea and Japan have complicated efforts to increase trilateral cooperation with the U.S. to rein in the growing nuclear weapons threat from North Korea.

In first, Marine named both photographer, videographer of year

BY MARCUS FICHTL
Stars and Stripes

A Marine who filmed and photographed artillery strikes on Islamic State in Syria is the first servicemember ever to be named both Military Photographer and Videographer of the Year.

Sgt. Matthew Callahan, 27, was recognized Saturday at the 2018 Eyes of History Gala hosted by the White House News Photographers Association in Washington. The military first began naming a top photographer in 1961. Videog-

raphers followed in 1989.

"What I try to do with my videos or photos is to get at the heart of it all, what it means to be a servicemember, what our missions are, what we do," he told Stars and Stripes during a recent video call.

Callahan documented an eight-month journey of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit and its thousands of men and women as they embarked from Camp Lejeune, N.C., for the Middle East.

Armed with a rifle, drone and camera, Callahan found

himself working alongside artillerymen battling ISIS in Syria last year.

In 2009, Callahan, then 17, and a group of high school friends from Pembroke, Mass., decided to join the Marine Corps. "We all wanted to be hard-chargin' grunts," he said.

The newly minted Marine got his wish, deploying to Afghanistan in 2010, but tragedy struck on his first foot patrol, about a month into his tour. "I jumped a [ravine] and snapped my leg in half. I just ate it," he said.

While healing at a warrior

transition unit in Hawaii, Callahan was asked to photograph a chaplain's barbecue.

Impressed with his work, the chaplain asked him if he wanted to work at the public affairs shop on base while he recovered.

After another year and a half in the infantry, he earned his combat correspondent identifier from the Defense Information School. A military journalism program at Syracuse University in New York honed his skills for the Syria deployment.

As White House blames Dems for border crisis, GOP members rebel

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The White House continued to insist Monday that Democrats are to blame for the administration's forced separation of migrant children from their families at the southern U.S. border as outrage at the policy continued to build, including among some Republicans.

"This is all the Democrats' doing," White House spokesman Hogan Gidley contended during an appearance on "Fox & Friends." He claimed that a change in law is needed to end the separations.

President Donald Trump "doesn't like this, but he also understands it's the law of the land," Gidley said.

Trump and others in the administration have falsely blamed the separations on a law the president claims was written by Democrats. The separations instead largely stem from a "zero-tolerance" policy announced with fanfare last month by Attorney General

Jeff Sessions.

The White House also has interpreted a 1997 legal agreement and a 2008 bipartisan human trafficking bill as requiring the separation of families — a posture not taken by the George W. Bush or Obama administrations.

Democrats argue that Trump is trying to use a manufactured crisis to gain leverage in ongoing deliberations in Congress over immigration to secure funding for a U.S.-Mexico border wall.

"He's playing a game," Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., said during an appearance on CNN on Monday morning. "He knows this family separation policy is very unpopular."

On Twitter over the weekend and again on Monday, Trump blamed Democrats for the current state of affairs and urged them to agree to broader legislation on immigration that includes border wall funding and other White House priorities. In one tweet, he contended that

children "are being used by some of the worst criminals on Earth as a means to enter our country."

The White House's hard-line posture comes as a growing number of Republicans are joining Democrats to urge the administration to change its policy on family separations.

"The President should immediately end this family separation policy," Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., said in a lengthy Facebook post Monday. He said Trump doesn't need Congress to change course on "the horrors of family separation." "The administration's decision to separate families is a new, discretionary choice," he wrote.

Former White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci also urged Trump to change course. "This is very, very bad for the Republican Party, and this is bad for the president," Scaramucci said during a CNN interview Monday morning.

Trump adviser Stone discloses meeting with Russian

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Special counsel Robert Mueller is examining a previously undisclosed meeting between longtime Donald Trump confidant Roger Stone and a Russian figure who allegedly tried to sell him dirt on Hillary Clinton.

The meeting between Stone and a man who identified himself as Henry Greenberg was described in a pair of letters sent Friday to the House Intelligence Committee and first reported by *The Washington Post*.

Stone and Michael Caputo, a Trump campaign aide who arranged the 2016 meeting, did not disclose the contact in their interviews with the committee. But they now believe the man was an FBI informant trying to set them up in a bid to undermine Trump's campaign. Greenberg could not immediately be reached for comment, but in a text to the *Post* he denied he was working for the FBI when he met with Stone.

The letters obtained by *The Associated Press* and written by Stone and Caputo's lawyers say that in late May 2016, Caputo received a call from his Russian business partner introducing him to Greenberg, who claimed he had information about Clinton that he wanted to share with the campaign.

At Caputo's request, Stone met with Greenberg at a Florida cafe, where Greenberg asked for \$2 million in exchange for the information, according to Stone's lawyer. Stone swiftly rejected the offer, explaining that neither he nor Trump would ever pay for "political information," his lawyer wrote.

The special counsel has spent months investigating Russian meddling in the 2016 election and whether Trump campaign aides played any role in the foreign interference plot. Trump and his lawyer, meanwhile, have tried to discredit the investigation, insisting it's unfounded and plagued by misconduct and political bias.

Strong quake hits western Japan

Associated Press

TOKYO — Residents in western Japan were cleaning up debris Monday after a powerful earthquake hit an area around Osaka, the country's second-largest city of commerce, killing three people and injuring hundreds while knocking over walls and setting off fires.

The magnitude 6.1 earthquake that struck the area early Monday damaged buildings and left many homes without water or gas. The quake also grounded flights in and out of Osaka and paralyzed traffic and commuter trains most of the day.

By the evening, bullet trains and some local trains had resumed operation, with stations swollen with commuters trying to get home, many of them waiting in long lines. An exodus of commuters who chose to walk home filled sidewalks and bridges.

Some commuters took refuge at nearby shelters instead of going home. Video on Japan's NHK public television showed dozens of men wearing ties and carrying briefcases sitting on gym mats at a junior high school gymnasium in Ibaraki city,

where some families also gathered.

A young girl was killed by a falling concrete wall at her school. The two other fatalities were men in their 80s.

The Fire and Disaster Management Agency said 307 people were treated for injuries at hospitals. Most of the injured were in Osaka. Osaka officials did not give details, but the injuries reported in Kyoto and three other neighboring prefectures were all minor.

The quake struck shortly after 8 a.m. north of Osaka at a depth of about 8 miles, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. The strongest shaking was north of Osaka, but the quake rattled large parts of western Japan, including Kyoto, the agency said.

Dozens of domestic flights in and out of Osaka were grounded, while train and subway service in the Osaka area, including bullet trains, were suspended to check for damage. Passengers exited trains on the tracks between stations.

More than 1,000 schools were closed in Osaka and nearby prefectures, Kyodo News reported. Wall cracks and other minor damage were found at several schools.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

9 horses die after eating toxic plant

UT WELLINGTON — Necropsies have confirmed that nine horses in central Utah died earlier this month after eating large amounts of a toxic plant that was cut from their pasture and baled into hay.

Veterinarian Dan Harmer told The Salt Lake Tribune the horses at the farm in Wellington ate equisetum, also known as horsetail or scouring rush. Harmer said he and another veterinarian found it in the alfalfa field from which the horses' hay was cut.

Horsetail is one of about two dozen poisonous plants in the state. Harmer said it is uncommon to find it in an open field and believes it might have spread to the alfalfa field from a now-dry canal nearby.

Man charged with trading box turtles

LA NEW ORLEANS — A New Jersey man has been charged with violating federal and state law by illegally trading Louisiana box turtles.

U.S. Attorney Duane A. Evans said in a news release that Robert Glenn Hennessey, 65, of Bayonne, N.J., faces four counts of violating the Lacey Act, which prohibits trading in wildlife that has been illegally captured, possessed, bought or sold.

Federal court records stated that the offenses occurred between March 2016 and June 2017 in the Gray area of Terrebonne Parish. Evans' office said Hennessey faces up to five years in prison per count and a fine of up to \$250,000 if convicted.

Police: Man threw sword at deputies

FL MELBOURNE — A man is in jail after authorities said he threw a samurai sword at deputies responding to a domestic disturbance call.

Brevard County sheriff's deputies were responding to a 911 call Wednesday from a woman who said her son was threatening her with a pair of swords.

Florida Today reported that when deputies arrived, they found Geoffrey Crane, 24, holding the swords, and he refused to put them down. Investigators allege Crane then threw one of the swords at the deputies. A stun gun was used to subdue Crane.

Crane faces charges, including domestic abuse and aggravated assault on a law enforcement officer.

Elderly man robbed, forced to strip naked

NY NEW YORK — Police said robbers forced a 77-year-old man to strip naked before taking off with \$30,000 and his clothes.

The Staten Island Advance reported Saturday that police were still looking for the man and woman suspected in Wednesday's robbery at a Staten Island tile shop.

Police said the suspects went into the man's office, pulled a knife and demanded his clothes, along with cash, two cellphones, car keys and credit cards.

Mom who forced teen to drink gets 20 years

KY SOMERSET — A woman accused of forcing her 14-year-old daughter to drink whiskey until she fell has had her probation revoked.

The Lexington Herald-

Leader reported the 35-year-old woman was sentenced last week to 20 years in prison. She'd previously been placed on five years' probation on several charges, including burglary.

A judge ruled she violated the terms of probation, which included a ban on possessing or drinking alcohol.

In March, Somerset police were tipped off to a video in which the woman was heard saying they could get "a thousand million dollars" for the recording of her daughter. She told police she was trying to teach the girl drinking was bad.

Man flees hospital nude, attacks resident

MA NEWBURYPORT — Police said a Massachusetts man fled naked from a hospital, broke into a nearby home and attacked its resident with a hammer.

Newburyport officers said Robert Girard, 26, of Amesbury, fled Thursday night from Anna Jaques Hospital after removing his IVs and GPS monitoring bracelet. Officers found him after a resident living nearby reported a man broke into her home and attacked her partner with a hammer.

The male victim, 50, was treated at the hospital and released Friday.

Girard pleaded not guilty to attempted murder, assault and battery with a dangerous weapon and aggravated burglary at his arraignment Friday.

Unprepared hikers rescued in mountains

NH FRANCONIA — New Hampshire authorities said two Massachusetts hikers who got lost in the White Mountains were carrying almost no useful gear or supplies.

Fish and Game officials said

the hikers, from Winthrop and Allston, walked past the trail they planned to take Saturday and ended up on the Garfield Ridge Trail near the Skookumchuck Trail in Franconia. They called 911 Saturday night, and conservation officers were able to locate them about 10:45 p.m. and guide them to safety.

Authorities said the pair were dressed in shorts and T-shirts, and were unprepared to stay overnight.

Ferry sunk off coast to be part of reef

DE CAPE HENLOPEN — A 320-foot-long ferry has been intentionally sunk to become part of an artificial reef off Delaware's coast.

The state's natural resources department said the M/V Twin Capes is the latest underwater attraction in Delaware's artificial reef system. It said the old ferry will help enhance habitat for marine creatures and offer recreational diving opportunities.

The Twin Capes was scuttled Friday by Coleen Marine, a Norfolk, Va.-based contractor. The ferry joins a decommissioned destroyer and a one-time harbor tug intentionally sunk off regional coastlines.

Police investigating moonshine operation

AL EUFAULA — Police in Alabama are investigating after finding an illegal moonshine operation and dozens of fermentation barrels.

Eufaula Police Sgt. Donald Brown told news outlets last week that 36 fermentation barrels were found in a wooded area.

He said the barrels could produce about \$7,500 on each run.

From wire reports

Your objective source for military news
updated 24/7 from bases
around the world.
Now online at www.stripes.com.

STARS AND STRIPES®

Koepka wins second straight US Open

Associated Press

SOUTHAMPTON, N.Y. — For a guy who has won all of three PGA Tour events, Brooks Koepka has a golf legacy that already is secure.

That's how it should be for winning back-to-back U.S. Opens.

Koepka became the first man to turn that impressive trick in nearly three decades by handling a Shinnecock Hills course that varied from beastly to benign. His one-stroke victory Sunday over Tommy Fleetwood even topped Koepka's first major victory a year ago at Erin Hills.

"I don't want to say I didn't think I could do it, but I knew that it was going to be that much more difficult," Koepka said after closing with a 2-under 68 and a 1-over 281 total. "And to finally do it, it's much more gratifying the second time. I can really appreciate how hard it is to win a major, and to win back-to-back is special, and my second major is cool."

Even better is that he won on two different style courses. Erin Hills had spacious fairways. Shinnecock Hills had tighter landing areas and tougher greens. They look nothing alike. Koepka, however, said he felt they played similar.

"Shinnecock plays incredibly tough, and you knew that going in even par was going to be a really good score," he said. "And it turned out it was almost impossible to shoot even."

Not in the final round it wasn't, one day after the USGA conceded it lost a handle on

the golf course. While Koepka's 68 separated him from a four-way tie to start the final round, there were 14 other subpar rounds — including Fleetwood tying the U.S. Open record with a 63 after he missed an 8-foot birdie putt on the final hole.

The easier conditions Sunday allowed a bunch of players to challenge: Koepka's buddy and playing partner Dustin Johnson, who led or shared the lead in each of the first three rounds; Masters champion Patrick Reed; Saturday co-leaders Tony Finau and Daniel Berger; and Fleetwood.

But the prize went to Koepka, whose composure, confidence and competitiveness served him well. All of those traits came together a year ago, and defined his victory this time.

"This one's a lot sweeter," he said.

Lots will be written and said about Koepka, 28, when the U.S. Open heads to Pebble Beach in 2019 and he tries to match Willie Anderson (1903-05) as the only golfer to win three in a row. Koepka has played there once, finishing eighth in the PGA Tour event that uses three courses.

First, though, he'll travel to Carnoustie for the British Open, where he should feel at home. Koepka spent much of his early pro career in Europe before becoming a PGA Tour regular in 2015.

The final major of the year is the PGA Championship at Bellerive in St. Louis.

Still, questions about the future for Koepka focused on the U.S. Open, in which Curtis Strange was the last to successfully defend in 1989. Strange, who walked the course

with Koepka and Johnson as a broadcaster for Fox Sports, believes Koepka can lengthen his streak.

"He's proven he can win on a classic" course, Strange said. "Hell, I came close, and he'd beat me like a yard dog."

The pressure the third time is even more extreme, said the only person alive who would know.

"For me, it was," Strange said. "He looks like water off a duck's back, both times. I look like I'm wound a little differently. He seems to move right on through life, which is a good thing."

Koepka is especially appreciative of this good thing because he was sidelined for four months by a wrist injury, only returning in May and missing the cut in a team event in New Orleans. He had a second-place showing at the Colonial in his preparation for Shinnecock Hills.

While not playing or practicing every day wasn't a big deal to him as he recovered from the wrist injury, not having those competitive juices flowing on the course was.

"I didn't miss it until I knew I wasn't going to be at Augusta," he said. "I missed the preparation. I missed the competitiveness."

He looked at the shiny U.S. Open trophy sitting on a table next to him.

"I looked at all these names a million times, it felt like, last year, just looking at everybody," Koepka said. "To have my name on there twice is pretty incredible, and to go back to back is even more extraordinary. It feels so special."

Allgaier leads 182 of 250 laps en route to Xfinity win

Associated Press

NEWTON, Iowa — Justin Allgaier won all three stages and the NASCAR Xfinity Series race Sunday at Iowa Speedway for his second victory of the season.

Racing for Dale Earnhardt Jr. in JR Motorsports' No. 7 Chevrolet Camaro, Allgaier led 182 of 250 laps and survived an unlucky late caution by winning the restart.

Allgaier also won last month at Dover. He has seven career victories — but few of those runs were as dominant as the one Allgaier pulled off in the searing heat on Iowa's short track.

"We had a great car," Allgaier said. "Incredible ... how could

you not enjoy this?"

Despite Allgaier's dominance, Christopher Bell made him work to keep the lead throughout the final stage — at times closing to within a tenth of a second of taking the lead — before finishing second.

"We were really close," Bell said. "We could never pass [Allgaier]...I could never get outside of him, I could never get inside of him."

Daniel Hemric was third, followed by Cole Custer and Brandon Jones, and Riley Herbst was sixth in his series debut.

Points leader Elliott Sadler lost a tire at the end of stage one. He finished 28th and saw his lead dwindle to just four points.

Allgaier's Dover win came with an asterisk, as a post-race

penalty cost him his playoff points and the virtual guarantee of a postseason spot that comes with a victory.

But Allgaier made sure he'll have a say in the championship hunt, piloting the fastest car in the field through all three stages.

Austin Cindric, driving the No. 22 Team Penske car that Brad Keselowski, Joey Logano and Ryan Blaney already won in this season, won his first career pole earlier Sunday. Cindric led the first 58 laps after leading just six in his career prior to the race, but Allgaier snuck past him with two laps left.

Cindric never threatened after that, finishing 11th.

Allgaier's dominance continued in stage two, which he took

by a full second over Bell. Allgaier then kept the lead for the final stage, but Bell had managed to get side-by-side with Bell on a long green-flag run.

Pit strategy looked like it might decide the race before had Chad Finchum hit the wall with 51 laps to go. But Allgaier again beat Bell by a second on the ensuing stop.

The final caution came when Brandon Hightower clipped the wall with 18 laps to go. But since everyone had already had enough fuel and was on their last set of tires, Allgaier simply jumped back out in front and cruised to a win — one that clinched his second consecutive multi-victory season.

Allgaier also won twice last year.

Belgium rolls past Panama in opener

Associated Press

SOCHI, Russia — Dries Mertens' perfectly struck volley finally opened up Panama and allowed Romelu Lukaku to take full advantage.

Lukaku scored two goals in a six-minute span in the second half as Belgium earned a 3-0 victory over Panama in its World Cup opener on Monday.

Saddled with massive expectations and a lineup of talent the envy of other teams in the tournament, Belgium finally showed flashes of being the dominant team worthy of title consideration.

The two goals from Lukaku came shortly after Mertens scored from about 18 yards in the opening moments of the second half, finally relieving some pressure after Belgium was unable to break down Panama for the first 45 minutes.

Lukaku's first goal came 20 minutes later, but the pass from Kevin De Bruyne made

it possible. Rather than shooting through a crowd of Panama defenders, De Bruyne cut a pass with the outside of his right foot onto Lukaku's head and into the net.

Lukaku added a second on a breakaway minutes later, chipping Panama goalkeeper Jaime Penedo as he left his net.

Belgium is now unbeaten in its last six World Cup openers, dating back to 1986.

Panama was unable to duplicate what Senegal accomplished in 2002 as the last team to win in its World Cup debut. The Central Americans played their style — physical, aggressive, sometimes looking more like wrestling than soccer — and managed to hang with the Red Devils for more than an hour. But they never created threatening scoring chances — Panama scored only nine goals in 10 World Cup qualifying matches — and eventually Belgium finished its opportunities.

The emotion was heavy for the Panama-

nians who flocked to the Black Sea resort town to see the country play its first World Cup match. Fans cried at hearing their national anthem and the players on the field fought their own emotions while singing. Their voices rose with every Panama attack and the singing and dancing almost never stopped. Panama's players stayed on the field to salute the fans several minutes after the match ended.

Luminaries like Panama President Juan Carlos Varela Rodriguez and baseball star Mariano Rivera were in attendance. They would have just preferred something a little less challenging than one of the pre-tournament favorites.

Group dynamics: Even if it wasn't pretty for a half, Belgium did what it was supposed to do in Group G. The victory keeps the team on track for its final group match against England, which is likely to determine the top spot.

Brazil in unfamiliar spot

Associated Press

SOCHI, Russia — This is unfamiliar territory for five-time World Cup champion Brazil.

The last time it didn't win its first game in a World Cup, Pele had just retired from soccer. The "Selecao" had won every one of its opening matches since 1978, a year after "The King's" farewell.

Brazil drew Sweden 1-1 back then, the same score of its match against Switzerland in Rostov-on-Don on Sunday, when all the hype surrounding Neymar and his teammates turned into disappointment and concern.

The result that ended Brazil's nine-match winning streak in openers left the national team two points behind group leader Serbia, which defeated Costa Rica 1-0 earlier Sunday.

One of the main title favorites, Brazil suddenly sees itself having to come from behind to keep alive its hopes of winning the team's first world title since 2002. But although the result felt like a loss, there was no reason to panic yet, as Brazil remains heavily favored to advance. Switzerland, No. 6 in the world, was considered Brazil's toughest opponent in Group E.

Another consolation was the fact that in 2010, Spain lost its

opener against Switzerland but went on to win the title anyway. Also, Argentina and Germany also failed win in their openers in Russia, while Spain and Portugal drew when they played each other in their initial match.

"Nobody can win or lose the World Cup in the first match," Brazil forward Gabriel Jesus said. "We have two decisive matches ahead of us. Of course we didn't want to draw, but we also didn't lose. We are more alive than ever."

Brazil next faces Costa Rica on Friday and anything but victory will be a disaster.

"This is only the beginning," defender Miranda said. "We knew it wasn't going to be easy. We have to move on and keep going match by match. We'll try to win the three points in the next one."

Brazil now hasn't won in three straight World Cup matches, following the 2014 losses to Germany in the semifinals and to the Netherlands in the third-place match at the home tournament. It's a winless streak that hadn't happened since 1978, when it reached four World Cup games without a victory.

Sweden benefits from review against Korea

Associated Press

NIZHNY NOVGOROD, Russia — Sweden got the break it needed from the video review system, and team captain Andreas Granqvist didn't waste the chance.

Granqvist slid his penalty kick into the bottom right corner of the net in the 65th minute to give Sweden a 1-0 victory over South Korea on Monday at the World Cup.

"I was calm. I waited for the goalie and then I put it in the corner," said Granqvist, a central defender. "We got the penalty, we scored, and then it was just a fight to the end."

The Swedes, playing in their first World Cup since 2006, were awarded the penalty after Salvadoran referee Joel Aguilar consulted a video screen on the sideline. Aguilar had originally waved play on after South Korea substitute Kim Min-woo slid into a tackle and collided with Viktor Claesson. But he took another look and decided Kim had tripped Claesson as he tried to clear the ball.

"There was no doubt it was a penalty and should have been

called right away," Sweden coach Janne Andersson said.

It was the third penalty to be awarded because of a video review in the first 12 games at this year's World Cup. France and Peru also benefitted from the technology, though the Peruvians missed their penalty kick.

The video review system, making its World Cup debut in Russia, appears to be working so far.

"We do agree that it was a good call," South Korea coach Shin Tae-yong said.

Sweden is now tied for first place in Group F with Mexico, which beat Germany 1-0. The Swedes will next face the Germans on Saturday, while South Korea plays Mexico on the same day.

Although Sweden used the video review to win, it was the better team and showed most of the attacking intent. The Swedes just couldn't beat goalkeeper Jo Hyeon-woo until the penalty.

Shin fielded Jo, the team's third-choice goalkeeper, because he is the tallest of the three keepers and the Koreans wanted to use his height.

CWS roundup

Aggies stun Gators in CWS opener

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Texas Tech cleared the hurdle of winning a College World Series opener. It was a high one, too.

Gabe Holt hit a tiebreaking single in the fifth inning and drove in an insurance run in the ninth, leading the Red Raiders to a stunning 6-3 win over defending national champion Florida on Sunday night.

The Red Raiders (45-18) won their CWS opener for the first time in their three appearances, and they did it against the No. 1 overall seed in the NCAA Tournament and a first-round draft pick in starting pitcher Brady Singer.

"There are a lot of good teammates on this team, and they're thankful we're in the position we're in. They don't take it for granted," Tech coach Tim Tadlock said. "There aren't too many guys in there after we won tonight saying, 'Hey, we've got this figured out.'"

Texas Tech pitchers limited the Gators to five hits but issued five walks. That was more than good enough against a Florida offense that has struggled for three straight games.

To have a chance to repeat as champions, the Gators (47-20) must win four straight to reach the best-of-three finals. Only Oregon State in 2006 and South Carolina 2010 have lost their Omaha openers and made it to the finals since the tournament went to its current structure in 1999.

Arkansas 11, Texas 5: Luke Bonfield hit the go-ahead home run in the fifth inning and Arkansas broke it game with an eight-run sixth in an 11-5 victory over Texas on Sunday in the College World Series at Omaha, Neb.

The Razorbacks (45-19) scored double-digit runs for the fourth time in six NCAA Tournament wins and had their highest total in 28 CWS games. The Longhorns (42-22), in the CWS for a record 36th time, lost their third straight Omaha opener since 2011.

The Razorbacks swept the Longhorns 13-4 and 7-5 in Fayetteville in March, but this was the first time they had been matched in the CWS since 2004. The Razorbacks won for the first time in four such meetings.

Big 12 player of the year Kody Clemens, son of seven-time Cy Young Award winner Roger Clemens and one of the hottest hitters in the postseason, was 1-for-5 with two strikeouts.

Red-hot Astros top Royals

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Houston Astros keep finding ways to win, while the Kansas City Royals keep inventing ways to lose.

Carlos Correa and the Astros won their 11th straight game, finishing off a dominant 10-0 road trip by rallying past the Royals 7-4 Sunday.

The World Series champion Astros swept their swing through Texas, Oakland and Kansas City, outscoring opponents 74-35.

Last season, Houston had an 11-game winning streak end in Kansas City. This time, the Astros trailed 4-3 in the eighth inning before Correa led off with a tying homer. Evan Gattis, who had three hits,

then put them ahead during a three-run burst.

"We just have a great team. It's hard to find any holes on this team. I don't think there are any," Correa said.

Correa has three home runs and eight RBIs in six games after missing four games with discomfort in his right side. He had a first-inning single and added a sacrifice fly in the ninth.

Gattis hit .366 with five home runs and 19 RBIs on the Astros' trip. He singled home Yuli Gurriel in the eighth, and Marvin Gonzalez added an RBI single in the inning.

The Royals have lost six straight and 12 of 13. They have dropped 26 of 36 home games.

MLB roundup

Blue Jays sweep Nationals

Associated Press

TORONTO — Washington Nationals reliever Ryan Madson had spent the past couple of weeks thinking about how long he'd gone between giving up home runs.

He won't have to wonder about it any more after the Toronto Blue Jays burned him with back-to-back blasts.

Teoscar Hernandez and Yangervis Solarte broke a tie with consecutive home runs in the eighth inning, Randal Grichuk added a pair of solo shots and the Toronto Blue Jays beat the Washington Nationals 8-6 on Sunday to complete a three-game sweep.

"I've been thinking about it a little bit because it seemed like it had been a while," Madson said of his year-plus streak. "It's kind of been on my mind for the last couple of weeks."

Madson last gave up a home run on June 4, 2017, while pitching for Oakland. Washington has lost five of six.

Rays 3, Yankees 1: Wilmer Font held the high-scoring Yankees in check in the latest Tampa Bay game started by a reliever, and the visiting Rays held off New York to avoid a sweep.

Angels 6, Athletics 5 (11): Jonathan Lucroy hit an RBI single off the center-field wall in the 11th inning in host Oakland's comeback victory over Los Angeles.

Mets 5, Diamondbacks 3: Brandon Nimmo and Asdrubal Cabrera homered off Brad Boxberger in a four-run ninth inning and visiting New York rallied to beat Arizona.

Cardinals 5, Cubs 0: Jack Flaherty and four relievers combined on a four-hitter,

Matt Carpenter homered and host St. Louis snapped a season-high four-game skid.

Phillies 10, Brewers 9: Maikel Franco homered and drove in four runs and visiting Philadelphia held off Milwaukee's ninth-inning rally.

Rangers 13, Rockies 12: Jose Trevino blooped a two-run single, capping a four-run rally in the ninth inning that sent host Texas past Colorado.

Giants 4, Dodgers 1: At Los Angeles, Nick Hundley and Brandon Belt hit two-run home runs and Chris Stratton pitched six solid innings to help San Francisco avoid a three-game sweep.

Red Sox 9, Mariners 3: Rafael Devers, Jackie Bradley Jr., and Xander Bogaerts homered to help Boston rout host Seattle.

Tigers 3, White Sox 1: Nicholas Castellanos homered and Blaine Hardy pitched one-run ball into the sixth, leading visiting Detroit past Chicago for its fifth straight win.

Indians 4, Twins 1: Shane Bieber pitched one-run ball into the sixth inning in his first major league win, helping host Cleveland beat Minnesota.

Braves 4, Padres 1: Julio Teheran pitched six no-hit innings before being pulled from his first start since coming off the disabled list, and Atlanta relievers gave up six hits in the win over visiting San Diego.

Orioles 10, Marlins 4: Jace Peterson and Mark Trumbo homered, and host Baltimore beat Miami to snap a nine-game losing streak.

Reds 8, Pirates 6: Eugenio Suarez homered in the second straight game as visiting Cincinnati beat Pittsburgh.