

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Trump to pick Esper as defense secretary

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's pick for new defense secretary is an Army veteran who served in the first Iraq war and also has experience as a national security adviser on Capitol Hill as well as a defense industry lobbyist.

Trump announced Friday that he would nominate Mark Esper to lead the Pentagon. Trump had already named Esper, his current Army secretary, to lead the Defense Department on an acting basis, starting Sunday.

"I know Mark, and have no doubt he will do a fantastic job!" the president tweeted Tuesday.

He later told reporters: "He's very experienced. He's been around all of the things that we've been talking about for a

very long period of time."

Tuesday's move came after acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan withdrew from the job before his formal nomination had gone to the Senate, citing a "painful" family situation that would hurt his children and reopen "wounds we have worked years to heal."

Esper was sworn in as Army secretary in November 2017 following a seven-year stint as vice president for government relations at defense contractor Raytheon.

That lobbyist background raised immediate alarms from Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, which said that Raytheon had recently won multiple government contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

"While Esper may not have

had sway over these types of deals as Secretary of the Army, as acting Secretary of Defense he will have potential influence over such deals," as well as a proposed merger between Raytheon and United Technologies Corp., CREW executive director Noah Bookbinder said in a statement.

Esper previously served a national security adviser for former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist.

He was policy director for the House Armed Services Committee and a professional staff member on the Senate Foreign Relations committee and also advised former Obama administration Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel when Hagel was in the Senate.

He's also served as a deputy assistant secretary of defense

and was a war planner on the Army staff.

Esper spent more than a decade in the Army, including serving in the Persian Gulf War in 1990 and 1991 with the 101st Airborne Division. He has won the Bronze Star Medal and other awards.

"He has a great background. I know him and I think he'll do very well in the acting role," said Sen. David Perdue, R-Ga., a close Trump ally who speaks frequently with the president.

It is not clear whether Esper's defense industry background might complicate any confirmation prospects.

Shanahan, for instance, came under scrutiny because of his prior career as a Boeing executive and persistent questions about possible conflicts of interest.

Iranian hackers wage cybercampaign on US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Iran has increased its cyberattacks against the U.S. government and critical infrastructure as tensions have grown between the two nations, cybersecurity firms say.

In recent weeks, hackers believed to be working for the Iranian government have targeted U.S. government agencies, as well as sectors of the economy, including oil and gas, sending waves of spear-phishing emails, according to representatives of cybersecurity companies CrowdStrike and FireEye, which regularly track such activity.

It was not known if any of the hackers managed to gain access to the targeted networks with the emails, which typical-

ly mimic legitimate emails but contain malicious software.

The cyber offensive is the latest chapter in the U.S. and Iran's ongoing cyber operations targeting the other, with this recent sharp increase in attacks occurring after the Trump administration imposed sanctions on the Iranian petrochemical sector this month.

Tensions have escalated since the U.S. withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran last year and began a policy of "maximum pressure." Iran has since been hit by multiple rounds of sanctions. Tensions spiked this past week after Iran shot down an unmanned U.S. drone — an incident that nearly led to a U.S. military strike against Iran on Thursday evening.

"Both sides are desperate to know what the other side is

thinking," said John Hultquist, director of intelligence analysis at FireEye. "You can absolutely expect the regime to be leveraging every tool they have available to reduce the uncertainty about what's going to happen next, about what the U.S.'s next move will be."

The National Security Agency would not discuss Iranian cyber actions specifically but said in a statement to The Associated Press on Friday that "there have been serious issues with malicious Iranian cyber actions in the past."

"In these times of heightened tensions, it is appropriate for everyone to be alert to signs of Iranian aggression in cyberspace and ensure appropriate defenses are in place," the NSA said.

"This is not a remote war

(anymore)," said Sergio Caltagirone, vice president of threat intelligence at Dragos, Inc. "This is one where Iranians could quote unquote bring the war home to the United States."

Caltagirone said as nations increase their abilities to engage offensively in cyberspace, the ability of the United States to pick a fight internationally and have that fight stay out of the United States physically is increasingly reduced.

Despite the apparent cyber campaign, experts say the Iranians would not necessarily immediately exploit any access they gain into computer systems and may seek to maintain future capabilities should their relationship with the U.S. further deteriorate.

Fellow SEALs: Chief shot girl, old man in Iraq

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Two Navy SEALs testified Friday that their platoon chief gunned down a young girl and an old man in Iraq in 2017 from his sniper's perch, though neither witnessed him pulling the trigger.

The SEALs said shots came from the tower where Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher was posted and they watched through their scopes as the civilians fell to the ground.

Dalton Tolbert said he and another sniper were in a neighboring tower in Mosul on June

18, 2017, and had fired warnings shots to scatter civilians by the Tigris River because the Islamic State was operating in the area.

An old man in a white tunic began running and then Tolbert heard a third shot come from the neighboring tower where Gallagher was positioned and saw the man fall.

Over the radio, he heard Gallagher say: "You guys missed him, but I got him."

Gallagher, 40, has pleaded not guilty to attempted murder for allegedly shooting civilians. He also faces a murder charge in the alleged stabbing of a wounded captive ISIS fighter.

The defense said the testimony was unreliable because no witness reported seeing Gallagher pull the trigger. Attorney Tim Parlatore accused the SEALs of organizing a smear campaign through a group text that pressured fellow SEALs to coordinate their stories and get Gallagher ousted permanently.

Tolbert was so upset that when he returned from deployment, he texted members of SEAL Team 7 to say he wanted people to speak up about Gallagher's behavior.

"I shot more warning shots to save civilians from Eddie than I ever did at ISIS. I see an issue with that," Tolbert texted

others.

Another witness, Joshua Vriens, said on another day that he saw Gallagher shoot at a group of adolescent girls in floral hijabs, hitting one in the stomach and sending two scattering.

Vriens said he watched through his scope as a fourth girl dragged the wounded girl over a berm and under a bridge to escape.

During cross-examination, Vriens acknowledged he reported to a superior that day that ISIS was shooting civilians.

Tolbert and Vriens said there were no signs that the old man or the young girl were threats.

Iraq boosts security at base where US trainers stay

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Security measures were increased at one of Iraq's largest air bases that houses American trainers following an attack last week, a top Iraqi air force commander said Saturday. The U.S. military said operations at the base were going on as usual and there were currently no plans to evacuate personnel.

The stepped-up Iraqi security measures at Balad air base, just north of the capital, Baghdad, come amid sharply rising tensions in the Middle East between the United States and Iran.

The current regional crisis is rooted in the U.S. withdrawal last year from the

2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers.

Washington subsequently re-imposed sanctions on Iran, sending its economy into freefall and cutting deeply into its oil exports.

Gen. Falah Fares told The Associated Press by telephone that the measures include a night-time curfew, boosting security inside and near the base as well as surveillance of nearby areas. He said these measures are being carried out in coordination with the U.S.

"All unnecessary movements have been reduced," Fares said, adding that the curfew now lasts from sunset until sunrise. He said the change was made after Balad

air base, home to a squadron of Iraqi F-16 fighter jets, was hit with three mortar shells last week without inflicting casualties. The curfew had previously been from midnight to sunrise, he said.

Col. Kevin Walker, U.S. Air Forces Central Command Director of Force Protection, denied in a statement later Saturday reports that U.S. forces are evacuating contractors or any other personnel from Balad air base.

"Operations at Balad Air Base are continuing as normal. Claims that personnel are being evacuated are categorically false," Walker said. "There are no plans at this time to evacuate any personnel from Balad."

Afghan leaders attending peace summit in Pakistan

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — Dozens of Afghan political leaders attended a peace conference in neighboring Pakistan on Saturday to pave the way for further Afghan-to-Afghan dialogue.

The conference is to be followed by meetings and working sessions over the next two days, all of which come in the run-up to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's visit to Pakistan this week.

Ghani, his political opponents and a broad swath of Afghan civil society have been holding meetings in recent days with

the United States' special envoy to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, who continues to press for talks between the Afghan government, the opposition and the Taliban.

There are no representatives of the Taliban at Saturday's conference, held near the Pakistani capital, Islamabad.

However, attending the conference is Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who struck a peace deal with Ghani's government and was taken off a U.S. terrorist list.

That peace deal was touted as a blueprint for an agreement with the Taliban, although the insurgents dismissed Hekmatyar as a spent force with no military

might.

Still, at the outset of Saturday's meeting, Hekmatyar urged his fellow Afghans to press for the Taliban's demand for a quick and full withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan.

Washington has been holding talks with the Taliban to find a negotiated exit to its 17-year engagement in Afghanistan.

On Saturday, Khalilzad was in Doha where the Taliban maintain a political office, but it still wasn't clear when he would meet again with the militants, who control or wield significant influence in nearly half of the country.

Immigration raids set for major cities

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Trump has directed U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to conduct a mass roundup of migrant families that have received deportation orders, an operation that is likely to begin with predawn raids in major U.S. cities on Sunday, according to three U.S. officials with knowledge of the plans.

The “family op,” as it is referred to at ICE and the Department of Homeland Security, is slated to target up to 2,000 families in as many as 10 U.S. cities, including Houston, Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles and other major immigration destinations, said the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the law enforcement operation.

Acting DHS secretary Kevin McAleenan has been urging ICE, an agency within his department, to conduct a narrower, more targeted operation that would seek to detain a group of about 150 families that were provided with attorneys but dropped out of the legal process and absconded.

McAleenan has warned that an indiscriminate operation to arrest migrants in their homes and at work sites risks separating children from their parents in cases where the children are at daycare, summer camp or friend’s houses. He also has maintained that ICE should not devote major resources to carrying out a mass interior sweep while telling lawmakers it needs emergency funding to address the crisis at the U.S. border.

Trump has been determined to go forward with the family operation after tweeting Monday that the immigration raids were coming next week as a first step toward his pledge for “millions” of deportations. The White House has been in direct communication with acting ICE director Mark Morgan and other ICE officials, circum-

venting McAleenan, three officials said.

ICE spokeswoman Carol Danko declined to discuss the operation, saying only that “as a law enforcement agency, ICE’s mission is to uphold the rule of law; operations targeting violators of immigration laws are not only standard practice but within the statutory authority prescribed by Congress.”

DHS and White House officials did not respond to requests for comment.

ICE has been preparing agents and equipment for the operation, which is expected to unfold across several days starting Sunday morning, the officials said. Discussions about the scope of the operation continued Friday at ICE, DHS and the White House, two officials said.

The agency is planning to use hotel rooms as temporary staging areas to detain parents and children until all the members of a family are together and ready for deportation. Officials also acknowledge that they might arrest individuals they cannot immediately deport — known as “collateral arrests” — and likely will release those people with ankle monitoring devices.

As news of the looming raids reached the Democratic-run cities on the ICE list, some local and state officials blasted the Trump administration and said they would not provide police support.

Morgan, deputy ICE director Matt Albence and others are eager to begin the operation despite the risk of public backlash against the agency after calls to “Abolish ICE” intensified in the wake of the administration’s failed “zero tolerance” crackdown last year that separated more than 2,700 children from their parents.

ICE agents have limited intelligence on the locations of the families with court-ordered deportations beyond their last known addresses.

Last abortion clinic in Mo. loses license

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Missouri’s only abortion clinic lost its license to perform the procedure on Friday, though it remains open at least temporarily under a judge’s order.

The state health department notified the Planned Parenthood clinic in St. Louis that its abortion license will not be renewed. A letter from the state cited “serious and extensive” deficiencies.

The state’s decision came at the deadline set by St. Louis Circuit Judge Michael Stelzer. During a brief hearing, Stelzer said a preliminary injunction he previously issued would remain in place, meaning the clinic can continue to perform abortions at least until he issues a final ruling outlining the next steps. He offered no timetable for that ruling.

M’Evie Mead, director of

Planned Parenthood Advocates in Missouri, stressed after the hearing that the bottom line is that the clinic remains open.

“You can still come to Planned Parenthood today for all of your reproductive health care, and that is a good day for women,” Mead said.

The fight between the Republican-led Missouri state government and Planned Parenthood has raged since the state health department allowed the clinic’s license to lapse effective June 1. Stelzer ruled earlier this month that the state needed to be more definitive and set the Friday deadline to either approve or deny the license.

The fate of the clinic has drawn national attention because Missouri would become the first state since 1974, the year after the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision, without a functioning abortion clinic if it closes.

2020 Democratic hopefuls take the spotlight in SC

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Almost the entire sprawling Democratic presidential field of more than 20 candidates took the same stage in the South’s first primary state, looking to make connections in a primary battleground that has helped propel the party’s last two nominees.

Former Vice President Joe Biden reintroduced himself to South Carolina voters at gatherings he’s attended many times before. His rivals tried to convince a boisterous throng at a Friday event to consider a new path.

“I think I’ve been in every one of your counties over the years,” Biden said at House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn’s annual fish fry, a long-standing event that this year has blossomed into a centerpiece ahead of the 2020 election.

The 76-year-old Biden touted his friendship with Clyburn and other South Carolina politicians, including former Sen. Fritz Hollings, whom the Democratic front-runner eulogized earlier this year.

Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, meanwhile, made her usual detailed policy pitch. Sen. Kamala Harris of California, one of two major black candidates, called attention to civil rights heroes in a state where black voters typically make up a majority of Democratic primary electorates. And lesser known candidates tried to capitalize on the spotlight, with the likes of entrepreneur Andrew Yang getting a boisterous welcome despite barely registering in national polls.

The fish fry is a highlight of a big political weekend in South Carolina.

US-China trade war in summit spotlight

Associated Press

BANGKOK — Southeast Asian leaders will commit to conclude a long-delayed regional trade pact this year despite lingering odds to fend off risks from a protracted U.S.-China trade war as they gather for a weekend summit in Thailand.

The Chinese sinking of a Philippine boat, which endangered 22 Filipino fishermen, is also expected to put the South China Sea territorial conflicts under the spotlight in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations meetings. The two-day summit got underway Saturday in the Thai capital of Bangkok, where ASEAN was founded in 1967 in the Cold War era.

Other key issues include the

planned repatriation of more than 700,000 Rohingya Muslim refugees, who have fled a military crackdown in Buddhist-majority Myanmar since August 2017 to neighboring Bangladesh in a crisis that has tested ASEAN.

Critics have hit the regional bloc for failing to address the abuses in Myanmar's Rakhine state that the United Nations has called ethnic cleansing.

A confidential draft of a post-summit communique, which is expected to be issued by the host, Thailand's junta leader and newly proclaimed Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, would commit ASEAN to conclude the negotiations for the massive trade pact within the year. The draft statement urg-

ing economic ministers "to exert relentless efforts to reach this target" was seen by The Associated Press.

"We remained concerned over the unabating tide of protectionism and anti-globalization sentiments that continue to plague the global economy and put multilateralism under threat," the statement said.

Many of the leaders fear the rise of protectionism could have a devastating impact on the regional and global economy.

Trade tensions between the U.S. and China over Beijing's technology policy and other market access issues have added to strains within the region, especially since President Donald Trump took office in early 2017 and declared

his "America First" preference for bilateral trade deals and distrust of international institutions.

The two sides have imposed tariffs on billions of dollars of each other's products in a standoff that has shown no sign of abating.

ASEAN member states and six other Asia-Pacific countries have been negotiating the market-opening pact, called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, or RCEP. The accord includes giants such as China and India but not the U.S. and is expected to encompass nearly half the world's population and 40% of world trade.

Special prosecutor ordered to examine Smollett probe

Associated Press

CHICAGO — A judge decided to appoint a special prosecutor Friday to investigate the decision by Cook County prosecutors to dismiss all charges against actor Jussie Smollett, who was accused of lying to the police by claiming he was the victim of a racist and homophobic attack in downtown Chicago in January.

In a ruling that leaves open the possibility that Smollett could be charged again, Cook County Judge Michael Toomin suggested that the county's state's attorney, Kim Foxx, mishandled the Smollett case by appointing a top aide to oversee it after she recused herself.

Foxx had been in contact with a relative of the actor and had been approached by former first lady Michelle Obama's one-time chief of staff on behalf of Smollett's family, and she explained at the time that she was recusing herself to avoid "even the perception of a conflict" of interest.

In his ruling, Toomin said he had no problem with Foxx's

February recusal, but that it should have included a request for a special prosecutor to take over the case. He said she had no right to hand it off to someone from her office, which he said amounted to naming her own special prosecutor.

"The unprecedented irregularities identified in this case warrant the appointment of independent counsel to restore the public's confidence in the integrity of our criminal justice system," the judge said.

Toomin also left open the possibility that the special prosecutor could charge Smollett again — either with the original charges accusing him of lying to police or with other counts.

Toomin is now required by law to ask the state's attorney general's office or the state appellate prosecutor to serve as special prosecutor. If they decline, he must make the same request to elected state's attorneys throughout Illinois.

If none of those prosecutors agree to take the case, the city can hire a private attorney to handle it.

Drug to boost low sex drive in women gets OK

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. women will soon have another drug option designed to boost low sex drive: a shot they can give themselves in the thigh or abdomen that raises sexual interest for several hours.

The medication OK'd Friday by the Food and Drug Administration is only the second approved to increase sexual desire in a women, a market drugmakers have been trying to cultivate since the blockbuster success of Viagra for men in the late 1990s. The other drug is a daily pill.

The upside of the new drug "is that you only use it when you need it," said Dr. Julia Johnson, a reproductive specialist at UMass Memorial Medical Center who was not involved in its development. "The downside is that it's a shot — and some people are very squeamish."

The drug's developer, Amag Pharmaceuticals, could also face some of the same hurdles that have plagued the lone pill previously approved for the

condition, including unpleasant side effects and limited insurance coverage. The company declined to release price information.

The FDA approved the new drug, Vyleesi (pronounced vie-LEE'-see), for premenopausal women with a disorder defined by a persistent lack of interest in sex, causing stress. The most common side effect in company studies was nausea. The approval was based on women's responses to questionnaires that showed increases in sexual desire and decreases in stress related to sex. The women didn't report having more sex, the original goal for the drug.

"Women are not desiring more sex. They want better sex," said Dr. Julie Krop, Amag's chief medical officer.

Flushing, injection site reactions and headache are other common side effects.

Women with high blood pressure or heart disease should not take the drug because increases in blood pressure were observed after injections, the FDA said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Effort underway to ID 2 1944 fire victims

CT HARTFORD — An effort is underway to identify the remains of two victims of a massive fire at a Connecticut circus 75 years ago.

The Hartford Courant reported that a judge hearing an exhumation request asked for additional information and ordered public service announcements to be placed in two media outlets to make sure anyone with an interest in the exhumations has an opportunity to be heard.

The July 6, 1944, fire in Hartford killed 168 and injured 682.

Five victims remain unidentified and buried in a Windsor cemetery.

City to launch reality show about government

NV LAS VEGAS — The city of Las Vegas launched a reality show on streaming services that will tell behind-the-scenes stories about how the government navigates local issues.

Las Vegas officials announced that the show "Inside Vegas" will be available on Roku, Amazon Fire, Apple TV and the city's GoVegas app.

The show's first season includes three episodes detailing a massage parlor suspected of prostitution, a nonprofit in trouble with police and the city's grappling with party houses and short-term rentals.

Woman accused of stealing dying mom's ID

DE LINCOLN. — A Delaware woman was accused of stealing her terminally ill mother's identity and buying a \$50,000 life insurance policy

that named herself as the sole beneficiary.

The News Journal of Wilmington reported Arlene Belfield, 51, was arrested and charged with offenses including crimes against a vulnerable adult and insurance fraud. Officials said Belfield knew her mother's death was imminent when she bought the policy.

The Delaware Department of Insurance Fraud Prevention Bureau said Belfield stole her mother's identity in November 2017 to buy the AAA Insurance policy. It said she then tried to collect on the policy just days after her mother's death.

Defenders raise money for books, phone calls

LA NEW ORLEANS — The public defenders' office in New Orleans launched an online fundraising campaign to help pay for books and telephone calls for jailed defendants.

The Orleans Public Defenders office said many of its clients must leave jobs and loved ones behind when accused of a crime because they cannot afford bail.

They said books and phone calls are part of efforts to "mitigate the emotional and psychological impact" of jail time.

Longhorn sets record for longest horns

AL GOODWATER — A Texas longhorn in Alabama broke the Guinness World Record for longest horns, with a horn span wider than the Statue of Liberty's face.

News outlets reported Guinness World Records announced last week that Poncho Via's horns measured just over 10-foot-seven-inches as of last month, beating all previous re-

ords. The 7-year-old steer belongs to a family in Goodwater, southeast of Birmingham.

Man in iguana case found competent

OH PAINESVILLE — A man accused of pulling an iguana from under his shirt and throwing it at an Ohio restaurant manager was found competent to face trial on misdemeanor charges of disorderly conduct and animal cruelty.

Arnold Teeter also agreed to surrender the injured lizard in exchange for being released from custody under GPS monitoring.

The animal suffered a fractured leg and had been in protective custody after the April confrontation at a Perkins Restaurant in Painesville, roughly 30 miles northeast of Cleveland.

The iguana initially was thought to need surgery but healed enough to avoid it.

Shark bites child in 3rd attack this season

NC BALD HEAD ISLAND — North Carolina officials said a shark bit an 8-year-old boy in what is now the third attack this season along the North Carolina coast.

News outlets reported the boy was swimming in open water when a shark grabbed him by the leg, causing multiple bite wounds. WECT reported the child was transported on a ferry to the hospital and is expected to make a full recovery.

A week ago, a 19-year-old was bitten by a shark in Ocean Isle, about 100 miles down the same coastline from where a 17-year-old girl lost most of her leg to a shark attack earlier this month.

Teen lucky to survive knife impaling his face

KS KANSAS CITY — A 15-year-old Kansas boy got a large knife to the face, and doctors said he's extremely lucky.

Jimmy Russell said her son, Eli Gregg, was playing outside of their home in Redfield, about 90 miles south of Kansas City when she heard him scream. She found him with a 10-inch knife jutting from just below his eye and called 911.

The knife was embedded in his skull and extended to just under his brain. The blade's tip, meanwhile, was pushing against his carotid artery, which supplies the brain with blood.

A team of surgeons put together an intricate plan to remove the blade. The operation went without a hitch and the artery remained intact.

Man steals flatbed truck, heads for Canada

ME BANGOR — Police said a Massachusetts man stole a flatbed truck in Maine and drove 80 miles north, saying he was on a mission to haul "missiles up to Canada."

The Bangor Daily News reported that a 26-year-old man was arrested last weekend at a home in Herseytown Township, about 45 miles from Canada.

The truck was reported stolen from American Concrete Industries in Veazie. The company's owner said the truck had unsecured manhole assemblies that could've been lethal if they'd fallen off.

The arresting trooper said the defendant exhibited signs of instability during his interrogation, and a judge ordered a mental health examination.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

NBA free agency promises to be wild

Associated Press

Now on the clock: Chaos. The NBA offseason is about to kick into high gear.

A draft that had good bits of intrigue — at least after New Orleans' Zion Williamson, Memphis' Ja Morant and New York's R.J. Barrett were chosen first, second and third in moves that were widely expected for weeks — is now done. Up next is free agency, which will be much more unpredictable when it begins on June 30.

Kawhi Leonard, Kevin Durant, Kemba Walker and Kyrie Irving all were All-Star starters this past season and may soon change addresses. So might fellow All-Stars Khris Middleton, Nikola Vucevic and Klay Thompson. Al Horford has apparently decided to leave Boston. Anthony Davis has already been traded to the Los Angeles Lakers, or at least will be traded when the new league year begins July 6.

"We'll have more answers then," Boston Celtics President Danny Ainge said.

In the meantime, questions abound.

More than 200 players are free agents. The available salary cap space around the league for next season alone exceeds \$500 million. Add up the value of every deal that's going to be signed starting on July 6, and it's conceivable that teams will combine to commit more than \$2 billion in new salaries over the next four or five years.

"I feel like I'm going to need every dollar," Philadelphia 76ers general manager Elton Brand said.

He's not alone. It is going to be a spending frenzy.

Luxury real estate agents in the New York area might be drooling at the thought of the Brooklyn Nets and New York Knicks having well over \$100 million in cap space to play with this summer. That sort of available cash means both the Nets and Knicks could conceivably lure two max-salary players to their clubs, and both franchises are certain to pursue the big names like Leonard, Durant,

Walker and Irving.

"I don't know what they're going to be interested in, but when they look at Brooklyn from afar we've got to give them some credit because the guys that are free agents, all of them have spent the last year or two surveying the league," Brooklyn Nets general manager Sean Marks told reporters early Friday. "They know where they want to go and what they want to be a part of."

Walker could command \$221 million from Charlotte, though he has said he will take less. Durant could get the same from Golden State, and he hasn't said he would take less. Leonard is probably the biggest mystery case that needs solving; the now two-time NBA Finals MVP could end up with the Los Angeles Clippers, he could stay with the NBA champion Toronto Raptors, or look to New York. And as is almost always the case with Leonard, there have been no real hints.

Some oddsmakers in Las Vegas already say the Lakers

— with Davis teaming alongside LeBron James and potentially a third star player — are the favorites to win the 2020 NBA title. Those odds could swing big-time in the next few weeks.

"If you're asking now, with the way the Western Conference looks or the league looks in general, I couldn't even venture a guess kind of how that stacks up because we're so far from the off-season really ending," Oklahoma City general manager Sam Presti said. "Every team is going to do what they can to come back better."

It was already going to be a wild summer, and the decisions that are looming got even more interesting — unfortunately so — when Durant and Thompson endured major injuries during Golden State's loss to the Raptors in the NBA Finals. Durant tore an Achilles, Thompson tore an ACL.

Both will miss, at minimum, most of next season. Still, the Warriors clearly want to retain them.

Devils take center Hughes with top pick in NHL Draft

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — The first round of the NHL Draft wasn't so much unpredictable as the game is becoming more international.

That was Dallas Stars general manager Jim Nill's observation following an opening round Friday that featured an international theme and numerous twists.

Selected by New Jersey, center Jack Hughes became the eighth American chosen No. 1, and first since Auston Matthews was selected by Toronto in 2016. Red Wings general manager Steve Yzerman began putting his stamp on Detroit by selecting German defenseman Moritz Seider. The U.S. matched Canada with 11 picks apiece.

And the first round also included four players from Swe-

den, three from Finland and the host Vancouver Canucks choosing Russian forward Vasily Podkolzin at No. 10.

"There's good players all over the world now. It's the evolution of our game," said Nill, who selected U.S. defenseman Thomas Harley with the 18th pick. "It's good for hockey."

The draft opened mostly as expected with the Devils selecting Hughes, the top-ranked North American prospect. Finland's Kaapo Kakko was chosen second by the New York Rangers. And the Chicago Blackhawks rounded out the top three selections by choosing Canadian forward Kirby Dach.

With Hughes going first, it marked the fourth consecutive draft that a Canadian wasn't selected No. 1.

Doug Armstrong, general

manager of the Stanley Cup champion St. Louis Blues, doesn't see a decline in Canada's dominance of the sport.

"We have a lot of Canadians, and we're Stanley Cup champions," Armstrong said. "That's not disrespecting the Russians or the Swedes or the Americans. I think what the game is is global. It think it's great for the game to be global."

That's certainly becoming evident with the USA Hockey National Team Development Program, which produced a program-record eight first-round selections.

It began with Hughes.

From Orlando, Fla., the 5-foot-10, 170-pound playmaking center had 74 goals and 154 assists to set the NTDP's two-year record with 228 points in 110 games.

"Obviously, Kaapo Kakko

had a great year ... but I was pretty confident and pretty calm, cool collected through the whole process," said Hughes, who had a lengthy dinner with Devils GM Ray Shero during the pre-draft combine in Buffalo this month. "I've said this like eight times already, but I'm pumped to be a Devil and I'm so excited."

Kakko is a 6-foot-2 winger, who helped Finland complete an international gold-medal sweep at the world championships, world juniors and Under-18 tournament. He had 22 goals in the Finnish Elite League, the most by a draft-eligible player.

The first round featured only one trade, with the Arizona Coyotes giving up a second-round pick to Philadelphia and moving up three spots to select Swedish defenseman Victor Soderstrom at 11.

College World Series roundup

Michigan, Vanderbilt earn finals berths

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Michigan has gone from being an anxious team playing not to lose the Big Ten regular-season championship a month ago to one that is carefree and just two wins away from the national championship.

The Wolverines ended up letting that conference title slip away, and it was a lesson learned.

“Now they’re loose and laughing and smiling and having a great time and not thinking ahead, not making the moment too big,” Wolverines coach Erik Bakich said. “They’re just playing pitch to pitch and competing as hard as they can. When they make mistakes, they’re aggressive mistakes. That’s a sign of a group that isn’t scared and the moment isn’t too big for them.”

Michigan had no problem playing free and easy Friday. The Wolverines scored in all but one inning against a struggling Texas Tech pitching staff and beat the Red Raiders 15-3. Next stop is the College World Series finals, where they’ll open a best-of-three series against Vanderbilt on Monday night.

“I think something that’s kind of been pretty beneficial for us is not really thinking about

playing in the national championship or the stage that we’re on,” said Michigan starter Karl Kauffmann, who beat Tech for the second time in a week. “It’s literally been a one-game, one-pitch mindset.”

Jimmy Kerr homered twice and had four hits, Jesse Franklin had three hits and four RBIs and the Wolverines scored double-digit runs for the 20th time this season.

One of the last four teams to receive an at-large bid to the 64-team tournament, the Wolverines (49-20) were sent to Corvallis, Ore., as a No. 3 regional seed and have won eight of their last 10 games since. That includes winning two of three against No. 1 national seed UCLA in the super regionals.

They reached the CWS for the first time since 1984 and will play for their first national championship since 1962.

Vanderbilt 3, Louisville 2: Vanderbilt came to the College World Series ranked in the top five in all the major offensive categories. The Commodores have a .400 hitter, the No. 4 overall draft pick and three of the top 20 run producers in the nation.

Through 8¹/₃ innings against Louisville pitcher Luke Smith they did virtually nothing.

But once Smith started to go through the order a fourth time, Vandy couldn’t be held back any longer.

Pat DeMarco chopped a grounder over third base in the ninth inning to give Vanderbilt its first lead and the Commodores advanced to the finals.

Vandy coach Tim Corbin said his team’s ability to maintain its poise was a big factor.

“We certainly had to stabilize their offense because runs were very expensive tonight,” Corbin said. “Luke Smith certainly pitched extremely well. He frustrated us. He was landing a lot of pitches. He was landing his off-speed pitches and secondary pitches, and we couldn’t get anything going. But then just at the end, we got some very clutch hits.”

When Smith came out for the ninth, Vandy had three hits and had scored its only run on a double-play grounder. Smith retired .400 hitter Austin Martin but then walked JJ Bleday.

Louisville coach Dan McDonnell had closer Michael McAvene ready to go in the bullpen but stayed with Smith (6-1). Ethan Paul ripped a double into the right-field corner on a 2-0 pitch to score Bleday and tie it at 2.

“His pitch count was over 110, and I knew that he was

close to his end,” Paul said, “so I just wanted to get a pitch that I could handle. I wasn’t going to expand for him or chase or anything like that. Just got in a hitter’s count and got the pitch I was looking for and put a barrel on it.”

McAvene came on, and Philip Clarke’s bloop single behind second base put runners on the corners with one out. DeMarco then hit a bouncer that went over third baseman Alex Binelas and landed just inside the line, bringing Paul in for the lead.

McDonnell, whose team lost for the first time in 46 games when leading after eight innings, said he wouldn’t second-guess himself about leaving Smith in after Bleday walked. McDonnell said Smith kept batters off balance, and when he walked Bleday, it wasn’t as if his pitches were missing by much.

“That’s the challenge in coaching,” McDonnell said. “You don’t want to take our pitcher out too early. You don’t want to take him out too late.”

Smith struck out a career-high 10, the most in Louisville’s 14 games over five CWS appearances.

Vandy starter Mason Hickman limited Louisville to two hits in six shutout innings.

Germany eliminates Nigeria from Women’s World Cup

Associated Press

Germany advanced to the Women’s World Cup quarterfinals for the eighth straight time, beating African champion Nigeria 3-0 Saturday at Grenoble, France.

Germany captain Alexandra Popp, playing in her 100th international match, scored in the 20th minute. Sara Dabritz made it 2-0 in the 27th with a penalty kick and Lea Schuller got the final goal in the 82nd.

Second-ranked Germany,

which has outscored opponents 9-0, plays the winner of Monday’s match between Sweden and Canada on June 29 at Rennes, a weeklong layoff that gives time for midfielder Dzsennifer Marozsan’s broken toe to heal. The Germans, who won the tournament in 2003 and 2007, have never failed to reach the quarterfinals.

No. 38 Nigeria was in the knockout phase for the second time, the first since it lost in the quarterfinals to Brazil in 1999, and it joined Cameroon

to become the first pair of African teams to reach the knockout stage in the same Women’s World Cup. The Indomitable Lionesses play England on Sunday.

Popp scored on a 4-yard header off Lina Magull’s corner kick, her 48th international goal. A video review upheld the goal after determining Svenja Huth, who was in an offside position, did not obstruct the view of goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie.

Dabritz scored on a low

penalty kick beyond the outstretched left hand of Nnadozie, her third goal of the tournament and 13th of her international career. Evelyn Nwabuoko had tried to clear a ball but made a studs-up follow through into Magull, causing the penalty.

Nigeria had an excellent chance to cut its deficit in the 50th when second-half substitute Rasheedat Ajibade streaked up a flank and passed to an open Desire Oparanozie, but the ball rolled just past her outstretched foot.

MLB roundup

Vazquez HR in the 10th caps Red Sox rally

Associated Press

BOSTON — Christian Vazquez hit a two-run homer in the 10th inning to cap Boston's comeback from four runs down in a 7-5 defeat of Toronto on Friday.

The Red Sox trailed 5-1 before scoring three runs in the seventh on Andrew Benintendi's RBI single and J.D. Martinez's two-run single, and tying it in the eighth on pinch-hitter Rafael Devers' run-scoring single.

Jordan Romano (0-1) got two quick outs in the 10th before hitting Marco Hernandez with a pitch. Vazquez then drove a 3-2 pitch out to right for his ninth homer of the season to give the Red Sox their eighth win in nine games.

Brandon Workman (6-1) pitched a scoreless 10th for the Red Sox.

Randal Grichuk homered for the Blue Jays, who got six strong innings from rookie Trent Thornton.

Yankees 4, Astros 1: Gary Sanchez and Gleyber Torres each homered for the third game in a row, providing a pair of two-run shots that sent host New York past skidding Houston for its seventh straight victory.

Aaron Judge was hitless in his return to the lineup — batting leadoff — but James Paxton (5-3) won consecutive starts for the first time with the Yankees,

who matched their longest winning streak of the year.

The Astros wasted a strong start from Brad Peacock (6-5) and have dropped six in a row for the first time since July 2015.

Cardinals 5, Angels 1: Albert Pujols drew huge cheers in his long-awaited return to St. Louis, but Marcell Ozuna spoiled the homecoming with a home run that helped his former team beat Los Angeles.

Pujols spent the first 11 years of his All-Star career with the Cardinals, helped them win the 2011 World Series and then signed with Angels as a free agent. Due to inconsistent inter-league scheduling, this was the first time the Angels have visited St. Louis since Pujols left. He went 1 for 2 with a walk.

Dodgers 4, Rockies 2: Walker Buehler struck out a career-high 16 in his first complete game and host Los Angeles rallied on Matt Beaty's two-run homer in the bottom of the ninth.

With two outs, Max Muncy walked and Beaty followed with a shot to center field off Jairo Diaz (1-2).

Buehler's nine innings were a career high. He gave up two homers, and the only other hit he allowed was a single to Charlie Blackmon in the ninth.

Marlins 2, Phillies 1: Sandy Alcantara pitched 7²/₃ sharp innings, Bryan Holaday hit a solo homer and Miami handed

visiting Philadelphia its fifth straight loss. Alcantara (4-6) gave up one run.

Nationals 4, Braves 3: Dallas Keuchel labored through five innings in his Atlanta debut, coughing up a three-run lead in a loss at Washington.

Keuchel (0-1) made his first first major league appearance since starting Game 3 of last year's AL Championship Series for the Houston Astros. He never retired the Nationals in order and gave up four runs, three earned, on eight hits.

Pirates 2, Padres 1: Joe Musgrove pitched five-hit, one-run ball through seven innings, and host Pittsburgh capitalized on two errors by Manny Machado in a win over San Diego.

Musgrove (5-7) struck out eight. Felipe Vazquez gave up one hit in the ninth and picked up his 18th save.

Mets 5, Cubs 4: Jeff McNeil homered and drove in three runs in his first career start in right field as New York won at Chicago.

Michael Conforto also connected and the slumping Mets won for just the fourth time in 11 games. Brooks Pounders (1-0) got four outs for his first victory since he was acquired in a deal with Cleveland last week.

Indians 7, Tigers 6: Jason Kipnis hit a tiebreaking triple in the eighth inning, right fielder Tyler Naquin made a game-saving play in the ninth, and host Cleveland beat Detroit.

Kipnis' triple — which was initially ruled a home run, a call that was overturned after a replay review — and Jake Bauers' sacrifice fly put the Indians ahead 7-5.

White Sox 5, Rangers 4 (10): Eloy Jimenez scored on a sacrifice squeeze bunt by Yolmer Sanchez in the 10th inning and Chicago won at Texas in a game that included two impressive home runs.

Zack Collins got his first big league start for the White Sox and went deep in the second inning. His three-run homer to center was measured at 447 feet by MLB's StatCast.

Twins 8, Royals 7: Max Kepler's single drove in the tiebreaking run and Eddie Rosario added a run-scoring hit to cap Minnesota's three-run rally in the eighth in a win at Kansas City.

Giants 11, Diamondbacks 5: Alex Dickerson had a grand slam and six RBIs in his debut with his new team, Kevin Pillar had four RBIs and San Francisco rolled to a win at Arizona.

Rays 5, Athletics 3: Willy Adames homered and threw out a runner at home, and Tampa Bay won at Oakland to snap a four-game losing streak.

Mariners 10, Orioles 9: Kyle Seager, Dylan Moore and Mac Williamson all homered and host Seattle handed Baltimore its 10th straight loss.

Mallex Smith reached base five times.

Reds top Brewers for 7th consecutive win

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Derek Dietrich turned a hitless night into a decisive contribution.

Dietrich was hit by a pitch three times and walked, scoring each time, and the Reds withstood another homer from major league leader Christian Yelich, beating the Milwaukee Brewers 11-7 on Friday night and extending their winning streak to a season-high six games.

"Dietrich, I don't know how to explain

that," Reds manager David Bell said. "I've seen other guys have that. I don't know if it's an ability or inability to get out of the way or whatever, knack, but that was actually a big part of the game."

Yelich hit a two-run homer in the fifth, his third in three games, and extended his hitting streak to a career-high 18 games. He has 29 homers this season, tying him with Prince Fielder in 2007 for the most in franchise history before the All-Star break.

Cincinnati scored three runs in the first with just one hit and led 6-1 before Yelich and Mike Moustakas homered off starter Sonny Gray in the fifth to make it 6-4, but the Brewers did not get closer and lost their fifth straight.

"So many things happened in that game, the bottom line is our offense was really good," Bell said. "Great at-bats all night, big hits, big home runs. That was really the story of the game."