

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Thursday, June 27, 2019

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Esper prods allies to help in Persian Gulf

By JOHN VANDIVER

*Stars and Stripes*

Acting Defense Secretary Mark Esper urged NATO allies Thursday to create a new naval security mission to safeguard ships transiting the increasingly volatile Persian Gulf following accusations that Iran has been behind multiple attacks on commercial shipping in the area.

Esper, who was in Brussels for talks with NATO defense ministers after less than one week on the job as Pentagon chief, said he plans to return to alliance headquarters next month to give members a detailed brief on the threat Iran poses.

"The purpose here is to avoid war with Iran," Esper said.

Iran was not on the agenda

of the talks in Brussels but became a focal issue for Washington, which wants alliance members to play a larger role in denouncing Iranian actions.

Esper blamed Iran for attacks on six ships in the Gulf as well as downing a U.S. drone flying in international airspace. Allies need to "voice their opposition to Iran's bad behavior," Esper said.

Tehran has denied it was responsible for the attacks on the oil tankers and maintains the drone had intruded into its airspace when it was shot down by a surface-to-air missile.

In a message to Tehran, Esper said: "We are ready to defend our forces and interests in the region. No one should mistake restraint for weakness."

While the plan is still in the early stages, Esper said he

wants a group of "like-minded" countries to develop a mission focused on maintaining freedom of navigation around the Strait of Hormuz, the world's busiest chokepoint for oil shipments.

The mission could include more air surveillance and a picket line of warships that serve as escorts for commercial vessels, Esper said.

"Most partners in the room acknowledged the challenges we face," Esper said after discussions with his fellow defense chiefs.

He also reiterated the importance of increasing defense spending, a top Trump administration NATO priority.

"Adequate funding underpins everything we do and much more needs to be done," Esper said.

NATO members have steadily boosted military expenditures over the past five years, but most allies still fall short of targets that call for 2% of gross domestic product to be spent on defense by a 2024 deadline. This year, eight of 29 members are expected to hit the target, up from just three in 2014.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said most members will meet the spending benchmark by the deadline. However, Germany still is not on track to meet the mark, which has been a point of contention between Washington and Berlin.

"I count on all allies to step up their efforts even more. This is about our shared security in a more unpredictable world," Stoltenberg said at the end of talks Thursday.

## Navy: SEAL trial witness may face perjury charge

*The San Diego Union-Tribune*

SAN DIEGO — A San Diego-based Navy SEAL who testified in a murder trial last week that he — not the defendant — killed a wounded Islamic State fighter was told he could face perjury charges related to that testimony, according to an email from a Navy attorney.

The news, first reported by The New York Times, is the latest disruption in the prosecution of Navy SEAL Chief Edward R. Gallagher, whose case is being tried at Naval Base San Diego. Gallagher, 40, is charged with killing a wounded teenage ISIS fighter he was treating in Iraq during a 2017 deployment. He's also charged with shooting civilians and, on other occasions, firing indiscriminately at other noncombatants.

Gallagher denies all the charges and has pleaded not guilty.

In an email obtained by The San Diego Union-Tribune, Navy Capt. Don King, the staff attorney for the Navy admiral overseeing the court-martial, told Petty Officer Corey Scott's attorney that Scott was subject to prosecution for perjury.

Scott, a medic who deployed with Gallagher and SEAL Team 7's Alpha Platoon in 2017, testified last week that he and Gallagher were treating the teenage fighter who appeared to be suffering from "blast lung." Part of the treatment involves making an incision just below the Adam's apple and inserting a breathing tube.

Scott testified that he saw Gallagher stab the fighter once with his knife. Then Scott

stunned the court by saying, when asked about how the fighter died, that he, Scott, covered the man's breathing tube with his thumb until the fighter suffocated.

In the Navy's email to Scott's lawyer, King says Scott "testified directly contrary to previous official statements — thus exposing him to prosecution."

Cmdr. Tamara Lawrence, a spokeswoman for Naval Special Warfare in San Diego, said Wednesday the Navy has yet to decide if it will charge Scott.

"SO1 Scott was granted administrative immunity in exchange for a promise of truthful testimony," Lawrence said in an email. "We are reviewing his testimony in light of his previous statements and no decisions have been [made]."

Gallagher's lead civilian de-

fense attorney, Timothy Parlatore, said Wednesday the Navy's threatened charges were "pure vindictiveness."

"They're trying to save face and blame Corey Scott for their failures," Parlatore told the Union-Tribune. "They never properly investigated this case."

Scott testified under a sweeping immunity grant from the Navy and the Justice Department. If Scott is found to have committed perjury, those immunity arrangements go away and Scott could be subject to further prosecution.

Navy prosecutor Lt. Scott McDonald accused Scott of lying on the witness stand, saying that in multiple prior interviews with prosecutors and NCIS, Scott never said the fighter died by suffocation.

## Army officials reviewing air conditioning policies in Germany as temps soar

By JOHN VANDIVER  
AND MARTIN EGNASH  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTT GART, Germany — The military in Germany is sweatier than ever as record high temperatures bake base offices and homes, most of which are without air conditioning even as summer scorches become more frequent.

But there is potentially good news for the Army in Europe. Officials are looking at recent weather trends to see if policies that limit the use of air conditioning need to be modified.

“Validated historical weather data is being reviewed and analyzed to determine the impact of recent weather trends on existing policies,” said Ray Johnson, Installation Management Command-Europe spokesman.

The reason air conditioning isn’t everywhere on garrisons is twofold: a desire to save energy costs and a view that the temperatures in Germany are not extreme in the summer.

“Based on historical ambient weather data, air conditioning is generally not considered appropriate for climate conditioning for U.S. installations in Europe, with the exception of Italy,” IMCOM-Europe’s current policy states.

Recent data reveals a warming trend. From 2014 through this month, there were 98 days above 86 degrees in Kaiserslautern, the city that about 50,000 military Defense Department personnel and family members live in or near. In

comparison, the city saw only 39 days above that temperature from 1975 to 1980, and 50 in 1985-90, according to the German Meteorological Service.

Central air conditioning in German homes is a rarity, with most historically built to endure cold winters, though snowfall is typically light in Kaiserslautern.

About 60 miles to the city’s northwest at Spangdahlem Air Base, a family housing brochure states that air conditioning isn’t allowed in government units because homes “should be built to mirror units found in the off-base community.” Air Force installations in Germany also require waivers for air conditioning in hopes of cutting energy costs.

Ramstein said they don’t expect major changes to the base air conditioning policy, which is currently under revision.

“No one would deny that we have very hot days in Germany,” said Lt. Col. Kevin Parker, 86th Civil Engineer Group commander. “However, the number of days and severity, according to cross-service policy, do not warrant the expense of installing or maintaining comfort cooling.”

On Wednesday, Germany recorded its highest June temperature in history, 101.5 degrees.

Garrison commanders can approve portable cooling devices in Army family housing for medical conditions recognized by the Exceptional Family Member Program screening process, Johnson said.

## Green Beret, EOD tech killed Tuesday in Afghan firefight

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN  
AND COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

A 32-year-old Green Beret and a 24-year-old explosive ordnance disposal soldier were killed Tuesday in a close-quarters firefight with Taliban insurgents in southern Afghanistan, Pentagon officials said.

Special Forces Master Sgt. Micheal B. Riley and EOD technician Sgt. James G. Johnston were killed by small-arms fire in Uruzgan province, according to a Pentagon statement issued Thursday. They were working alongside Afghan forces when the firefight broke out, said a defense official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. The official declined Thursday to provide additional details about the operation.

The firefight was under investigation, according to the Pentagon statement.

Riley, of Heilbronn, Germany, was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group at Fort Carson, Colo. Johnston, of Trumansburg, N.Y., was assigned to the 79th Ordnance Battalion, 71st Ordnance Group at Fort Hood, Texas.

Johnston entered active-duty military service in July 2013 as an explosive ordnance disposal specialist and deployed to Af-

ghanistan in March.

He and his wife of more than three years, Krista Johnston, were expecting a baby girl, according to public Facebook posts. Posting photos of her fallen husband in recent days, Krista Johnson encouraged friends and family members to wear Hawaiian shirts on Friday in his honor.

“My heart and everything else is hurting and I don’t really have the ability to keep putting words together, but I thank all of you so much for the kind words and support,” she wrote Thursday on Facebook. “I love you husband, forever and always you better watch over me and our baby girl.”

Riley, who was on his sixth deployment to Afghanistan, was a seasoned and experienced soldier who will always be honored and remembered, 10th Special Forces Group commander Col. Lawrence G. Ferguson said in a statement from U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

“Mike was an experienced Special Forces noncommissioned officer and the veteran of five previous deployments to Afghanistan,” Ferguson said. “We will honor his service and sacrifice as we remain steadfast in our commitment to our mission.”

## Littoral combat ship hits Canadian freighter; no injuries

*The (Jacksonville) Florida Times-Union*

A littoral combat ship scheduled to be stationed at Naval Station Mayport, Fla., was slightly damaged when it hit a cargo ship that was moored in Montreal, the Navy reported Monday.

The not-yet-commissioned Billings hit

the freighter Rosaire A. Desgagnes as the Billings was getting underway the afternoon of June 21, said a Navy spokeswoman, Lt. Cmdr. Courtney Hillson.

No one was injured on either vessel, Hillson said. Hillson described the impact as an allision, meaning one ship striking an-

other that isn’t moving.

Only minor damage was reported from the impact, but Hillson said the Billings remained in Montreal while a full inspection was performed. The Billings is scheduled to be commissioned Aug. 3 and will be home-ported at Mayport.

# Court: Redistricting not judicial matter; census concern on hold

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In two politically charged rulings, the Supreme Court dealt a huge blow Thursday to efforts to combat the drawing of electoral districts for partisan gain but put a hold on the Trump administration's effort to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census.

On the court's final day of decisions before a summer break, the conservative justices ruled that federal courts have no role to play in the dispute over the practice known as partisan gerrymandering. The decision could embolden political line-drawing for partisan gain when state lawmakers undertake the next round of redistricting following the 2020 census.

Voters and elected officials should be the arbiters of what is a political dispute, Chief Justice John Roberts said in his opinion for the court.

The court rejected challenges to Republican-drawn congressional districts in North Carolina and a Democratic district in Maryland.

The decision was a major blow to critics of the partisan manipulation of electoral maps that can result when one party controls redistricting.

The districting plans "are highly partisan by any measure," Roberts said.

But he said courts are the wrong place to settle these disputes.

In dissent for the four liberals, Justice Elena Kagan wrote, "For the first time ever, this court refuses to remedy a constitutional violation because it thinks the task beyond judicial capabilities." Kagan, in mournful tones, read a summary of her dissent in court to emphasize her disagreement.

Federal courts in five states concluded that redistricting plans put in place under one party's control could go too far and that there were ways to identify and manage excessively partisan districts. Those courts included 15 federal judges appointed by Republican and Democratic presidents reaching back to Jimmy Carter.

But the five Republican-appointed justices decided

otherwise.

The decision effectively reverses the outcome of rulings in Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina and Ohio, where courts had ordered new maps drawn, and ends proceedings in Wisconsin, where a retrial was supposed to take place this summer after the Supreme Court last year threw out a decision on procedural grounds.

Proponents of limiting partisan gerrymandering still have several routes open to them, including challenges in state courts. There is a pending North Carolina lawsuit.

In the census case, the court said the Trump administration's explanation for wanting to add the question was "more of a distraction" than an explanation. The administration had cited the need to improve enforcement of the Voting Rights Act.

The Census Bureau's own experts have predicted that millions of Hispanics and immigrants would go uncounted if the census asked everyone if he or she is an American citizen.

# Conditions of migrant children to be inspected

Associated Press

CLINT, Texas — Immigrant advocates have asked a federal judge to issue an emergency order requiring immediate inspections and access for doctors at border detention facilities where they say children are languishing in filthy conditions.

The federal court filing Wednesday follows last week's discovery of children in a Border Patrol facility in Clint, Texas, who were locked up for weeks and tasked with caring for toddlers.

Lawyers say sleep-deprived, flu-stricken immigrant children are being crammed into frigid facilities that threaten to sicken more children. One doctor compared the locations to torture centers.

The attorneys are also asking for the prompt release of children to parents and close relatives.

The filing comes in a decades-old federal court case over detention conditions for immigrant children.

# Trump and Democrats clash over migrant deaths

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump and Democrats clashed Wednesday over who was to blame for the deaths of a migrant father and his daughter whose drowned bodies were seen in searing photos from the U.S.-Mexico border.

"Watching that image of Oscar and his daughter Valeria was heartbreaking. It should also piss us all off," former Obama housing chief Julian Castro said during the first of two nights of Democratic presidential debates. "And it should spur us to action."

Trump, when asked about the image, said, "I hate it." But

he argued the deaths would not have happened without Democrats dragging their feet on congressional legislation to toughen security at the border.

"I know it could stop immediately if the Democrats change the law. They have to change the laws. And then that father, who probably was this wonderful guy, with his daughter, things like that wouldn't happen."

The photo of Oscar Alberto Martinez Ramirez and daughter Valeria, who were trying to cross into the U.S. after fleeing from El Salvador when they were swept into the Rio Grande, added an emotional punch to a debate at the center

of the 2020 White House contest. Trump is campaigning on hard-line immigration policies aimed at reducing the flow of migrants coming to the U.S. — policies Democrats have called inhumane.

Castro, also a former San Antonio mayor, said that if elected, he'd use executive orders to immediately end the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" immigration policies, which briefly led to immigrant families being separated at the border. Other candidates made similar promises, and said they'd work with Congress to hammer out pathways to U.S. citizenship for millions of immigrants living in the country

illegally — especially those brought here as children.

But there wasn't total agreement on immigration among the 10 presidential hopefuls on the debate stage. When former congressman Beto O'Rourke said "we will spare no expense to reunite families" that remain separated, Castro interrupted, demanding to know why his fellow Texan won't agree with him that crossing the U.S.-Mexico border illegally should be fully decriminalized.

Before the debate started, several Democratic candidates visited a detention facility for immigrant teenagers in Homestead, Fla.

# Health care, immigration top issues at debate

Associated Press

MIAMI — Ten Democrats railed against a national economy and a Republican administration they argued exist only for the rich as presidential candidates debated on-stage for the first time in the young 2020 season, embracing inequality as a defining theme in their fight to deny President Donald Trump a second term in office.

Health care and immigration, more than any other issues, led the first of two debates on Wednesday, with another to follow Thursday night. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, more than anyone else, stood out — on her own at times — in calling for “fundamental change” across the nation’s economy and government to address a widening gap between the rich and the middle class.

“I think of it this way. Who is this econ-

omy really working for? It’s doing great for a thinner and thinner slice at the top,” Warren declared shortly before raising her hand as one of the only Democrats on stage willing to abolish her own private health insurance in favor of a government-run plan. “Health care is a basic human right, and I will fight for basic human rights.”

The debate marked a major step forward in the 2020 presidential campaign as Democrats fight to break out from a crowded field that has been consumed by one question above all: Who’s best positioned to defeat Trump? The candidates will spend the next eight months before primary voting scrapping over that question and the broader fight for the direction of their political party.

Among the 10 Democratic candidates set to debate Thursday is early front-run-

ner Joe Biden.

While Trump is the ultimate target of many Democratic voters, the president wasn’t a major feature for most of Wednesday night. Washington Gov. Jay Inslee was one of the few to go hard after Trump, declaring, “The biggest threat to the security of the United States is Donald Trump.”

Instead of Trump, Democrats leaned into the issue that helped deliver the party the House majority last year: Health care. All supported the concept of providing universal health care, but they differed on how they would reach that goal.

Warren and New York Mayor Bill de Blasio backed abolishing private health insurance. Former Texas Rep. Beto O’Rourke and Sen. Amy Klobuchar, of Minnesota, favored preserving the private insurance market.

## Trump eyes multi-front progress at G-20 summit

Associated Press

OSAKA, Japan — President Donald Trump began his most consequential overseas trip of the year on Thursday with a warm dinner with the prime minister of Australia, a friendly opening act before the impending gauntlet of negotiations on international crises, trade wars and a growing global to-do list.

Trump landed in Osaka, Japan, for the annual Group of 20 summit amid a tropical cyclone that is predicted to turn into a typhoon — a possible metaphor for the four days of high-stakes diplomacy that lie ahead. As his re-election bid heats up, Trump was eager to produce breakthroughs on a series of foreign policy challenges, including the showdown between the U.S. and Iran, a trade war with China,

the threat of fresh election interference by Russia and stalled nuclear talks with North Korea.

As he faces mounting pressures to deliver results, the president began his battery of meetings with world leaders with a dinner with Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

The two men traded praise in the moments of the meal that were open to reporters and Trump said he would “like to” visit Australia later this year for the prestigious Presidents Cup golf tournament. When asked if his “America First” policies strained traditional alliances, Trump insisted that the two nations “worked together very closely” on trade issues.

“I can say very easily that we’ve been very good to our allies, we work with our allies, we take care of our allies,” Trump

said. “I have inherited massive trade deficits with our allies. And we even help our allies militarily. So, we do look at ourselves and we look at ourselves I think more positively than ever before. But we also look at our allies.”

The agenda for his four days in Asia is as laden with hazards for the president as it is light on the ceremonial pomp that marked his recent state visits to Japan and the United Kingdom.

But White House officials are playing down prospects of specific accomplishments in what is the president’s third international trip in a month, even as Trump himself said of his “competitors” from other nations: “That’s OK. We’re doing great. We’re doing better than any of them.”

## Afghan president talks peace during Pakistan visit

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — Afghanistan’s president Thursday praised Pakistan’s efforts to advance the peace process in the region as he reached out to Islamabad for help in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table with the Kabul government, Pakistani officials said.

Ashraf Ghani’s remarks came at the start of a two-day visit to Pakistan, his first since elections that brought Prime Minister Imran Khan to power last year. The

visit is also seen as an attempt by Ghani to reset the often-strained relationship between the two neighbors amid the stalled peace push with the Taliban.

Ghani arrived in Islamabad a day after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Kabul, where he said Washington was hopeful of a peace deal before Sept. 1. His visit also came after dozens of Afghan political leaders — but no Taliban representatives — attended a peace conference in Pakistan last week to pave the way for further Afghan-to-Afghan dialogue. Pakistan

has facilitated ongoing peace talks between Washington and the Taliban as U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad tries to find a negotiated end to the 17-year war in Afghanistan.

Ghani on Thursday first met with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi before holding a one-on-one meeting with Khan.

During his meeting with Qureshi, the Afghan president thanked Islamabad and “praised Pakistan’s role in the peace process,” according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Residents bugged by rash-causing moths

**ME** BANGOR — Maine is in the midst of an especially bad year for prevalence of a species of moth that can cause an itchy rash in humans.

The browntail moth is an invasive European species that has been in Maine for decades. The hairs of their caterpillars cause the rash, and the species can also cause widespread tree defoliation.

The Bangor Daily News reported populations have been growing for the past several years, and they have been especially noticeable this summer in the state's Midcoast region and elsewhere.

## Delivery truck with drugs is stolen

**FL** SARASOTA — Authorities said a delivery truck with prescription drugs was stolen outside a Florida pharmacy.

Sarasota police said the truck was stolen while the driver was inside making a delivery at a Walgreens.

Investigators said the truck was later found abandoned several blocks away and the drugs were missing.

## 27-foot-long sinkhole continues to grow

**NC** ASHEVILLE — A 27-foot-long and 20-foot-deep sinkhole continues to expand in a North Carolina parking lot.

The sinkhole is about half the size of a tractor-trailer and about as deep as a giraffe's height — and it's growing.

Asheville firefighters responded to the scene but said they can't do anything unless

the sinkhole presents a clear public danger, such as gobbling up a truck.

Usually sinkholes on private land are the owner's responsibility, even if the city's aging public infrastructure is to blame. City spokeswoman Ashley Traynum-Carson said Asheville is working to issue permits for emergency repairs. It is unclear who would pay the bill.

## Huge wooden troll returns at new site

**CO** BRECKENRIDGE — A giant wooden troll is ready to greet fans again after being moved and rebuilt in a Colorado ski town.

The Summit Daily reported the 15-foot troll, named Isak Heartstone, returned in Breckenridge on Tuesday.

The new Trollstigen trail was created to access the site.

The troll, built by Danish artist Thomas Dambo, was originally assembled beside a trail last summer for a festival, but it was dismantled in November after nearby homeowners complained about the crowds.

## Postal service says old stolen mail found

**HI** HONOLULU — The U.S. Postal Service said it has found mail stolen in Hawaii more than a decade ago.

KHON-TV reported that the family of a now-deceased postal worker discovered the stolen mail inside a storage unit and turned the mail over to officials.

The mail dates back about 13 to 15 years ago.

The stolen mail was mostly First-Class and Priority Mail and newspapers and magazines. Officials haven't identified the postal worker or his or her route.

## K-9 recovering from stabbing during chase

**MS** BAY ST. LOUIS — Authorities said a police K-9 is recovering after being stabbed while chasing a suspect through a wooded area in Mississippi.

WLOX-TV reported the dog named Loco underwent surgery after being injured in Hancock County on June 18. Loco's veterinarian said the dog needed at least 100 stitches. He is expected to make a full recovery.

Jeremy Mitchell, 30, is accused of stabbing Loco. Mitchell is charged with aggravated assault on a law enforcement officer and other charges.

## Man fleeing trooper plunges into lake

**WA** SEATTLE — The Washington State Patrol said a person fleeing a trooper jumped off the 520 bridge near Seattle into Lake Washington.

KOMO-TV reported a state trooper had stopped to help the driver of a vehicle that became disabled about halfway across the bridge when a license plate check revealed that the vehicle was stolen.

The state patrol said as the driver realized he might be arrested, he ran and tried to jump from one bridge span to the other, not realizing there is a large space between them. Officials said he fell about 60 feet into the water.

A harbor patrol boat crew pulled him from the water.

## Woman tries to flee by swimming across river

**MO** COLUMBIA — Authorities said a Columbia woman was arrested after allegedly swimming

across the Lamine River to escape capture.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reported that Jasmine Bronger, 25, initially took off while deputies were arresting a 55-year-old Sedalia man on outstanding warrants.

Police said she was arrested on an outstanding Boone County burglary and theft warrant after she was spotted walking toward a home.

## Oxycodone is found inside stuffed toys

**PA** NORRISTOWN — Prosecutors said more than a dozen people were arrested in a ring they alleged mailed Oxycodone pills concealed in toy teddy bears and rabbits from California to suburban Philadelphia for sale by drug dealers.

The Montgomery County district attorney's office said 13 people were arrested and three more are being sought on various charges related to drug trafficking, firearms trafficking and forgery.

Authorities allege the group also dealt in illegal firearm sales, marijuana and other drugs.

## Police seek person who tossed kittens

**NJ** TOMS RIVER — Police in New Jersey are seeking the person who threw two kittens from a vehicle.

Toms River police posted on Facebook that witnesses observed a passenger in the vehicle toss the kittens onto Route 70. One of the kittens was struck and killed by another vehicle.

The second kitten was rescued but ran off into the woods and has not been found.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# US women, France set for showdown

Associated Press

It wasn't just fans who were looking forward to a quarterfinal clash between France and the defending champion United States at the Women's World Cup. Megan Rapinoe clearly was too.

"I hope it's huge and crazy. That's what it should be," Rapinoe said just after the match was set.

"This is the best game, this is what everybody wanted. I think we wanted it, seems like they're up for it, you guys are, of course, up for it, and all the fans."

While the players said the focus for the United States was always on one game at a time,

Rapinoe voiced the underlying truth about the match in Paris on Friday: It was circled on everyone's World Cup calendar since December's draw.

"It's going to be totally awesome. This is what everybody wants. And these are the biggest games that you kind of dream about as a kid," Rapinoe said.

The United States advanced with a physically challenging win over Spain in the round of 16, while France scored in extra time to get past resilient Brazil.

The top-ranked U.S. team breezed through its group stage at the World Cup, but Spain posed a challenge to the three-

time champions in the Round of 16.

Players said the difficult match was crucial to the team's preparation going into the quarterfinal against the fourth-ranked French, the first time the U.S. has faced the host in a World Cup. The Americans could also face No. 3 England if they go through to the semifinals.

"I think this game was extremely important to us, looking forward to France," Alex Morgan said. "It was a very challenging game and it showed a little bit of what we might see in France."

France also got a tough test out of the way.

Les Bleues finished atop their group with three wins before surviving their knockout opener. Captain Amandine Henry redirected Amel Majri's free kick for a tiebreaking goal in the 107th minute of a 2-1 victory Sunday night in Le Havre.

Afterward, French coach Corinne Diacre was critical of her team, saying, "We weren't at our best."

The match Friday, while great for the sport, also means one of the favorites will be headed home on Saturday.

A lopsided draw put three of the world's top teams on one side of the bracket, while No. 2 Germany tops the other.

## Karlsson among players who decided to stay put

BY STEPHEN WHYNO

Associated Press

Erik Karlsson wanted some time and space.

When the San Jose Sharks acquired the Norris Trophy-winning defenseman in a trade last September, he and his wife told them up front they wouldn't sign a long-term contract until they played a season to see if it was a fit. They gave general manager Doug Wilson their word they would make a decision in enough time to let the Sharks plan their offseason.

Karlsson signed two weeks before free agency opened.

"They were letting me play hockey and getting adjusted to everything, and that meant the world to me," Karlsson said after signing for \$92 million over eight years. "I'm very happy with how everything happened and that they didn't force me into making a decision earlier than this."

Karlsson is one of several players who might have landed richer contracts via free agency and opted instead to re-sign with their teams. For Karlsson, Philadelphia's Kevin Hayes, Vancouver's Alex Edler, Buffalo's Jeff Skinner, Washington's Carl Hagelin and Tampa Bay's Braydon Coburn, staying put won out over the risk of the open market.

"You never know what's going to be out there if you go to free agency," Edler said. "There's a lot of factors coming up here in the next few years with the potential lock-out (and) there's an expansion draft (for

Seattle)."

A lower-than-expected salary cap set at \$81.5 million also means there will be less money available all around on July 1.

Of course, it's not like most of these deals were hometown discounts. Karlsson got the richest salary for a defenseman in NHL history, Hayes signed for \$50 million and Skinner turned a career year into \$72 million. No matter the cap, the possibility existed that free agent frenzy could land them bigger deals.

They just didn't want to find out.

"Going to July 1 is nice, (but) it's kind of nice to be able to get it over with and sign with a tremendous team," Hayes said. "July 1 and unrestricted free agency is definitely an intriguing idea. But when I sat down with my agent and we kind of thought about what type of team I'd want to go and where I'd fit into the organization and the team, the Flyers were at the top of the list."

The Flyers acquired the rights to Hayes from Winnipeg in early June and had to sell him on the benefits of playing in Philly. Elsewhere, familiarity helped. Just as Karlsson and wife Melinda got to know the Bay Area and Sharks organization over nine months, Skinner's 40-goal season in Buffalo convinced him to stay.

"Going through the process, you think about everything, you weigh the pros and cons," Skinner said. "We just didn't feel the need to get to that point because I like it here and I didn't feel like it needed to get to that point where I wanted to look

elsewhere."

Coburn, who took a pay cut to sign a \$3.4 million, two-year contract, said Tampa feeling like home off the ice and "unfinished business" on the ice made staying his family's top choice. After finishing 21 points ahead of the rest of the league and getting swept in the first round of the playoffs, the Lightning are the early favorites to win the Stanley Cup next season.

"We have an unbelievable team here and I want to be a part of it," Coburn said.

Hagelin feels the same way about the Capitals after playing only 27 regular-season and playoff games with them since late February. The 30-year-old feared Washington's salary-cap squeeze might impede him from sticking around but was willing to take a lower salary than he could've gotten on the open market to get an \$11 million, four-year deal with a team he believes can win a championship in that time like it did in 2018.

"I wouldn't have signed with Washington if I didn't believe there's still a good chance to win the Stanley Cup," Hagelin said.

Edler last played a playoff game in 2014 and the Canucks are in the midst of a rebuild. Combine that with him being 33 and it might have been easy to understand Edler wanting to test the market. Instead, he had no wanderlust and agreed to a \$12 million, two-year deal after 13 seasons with the Canucks.

"I've said from the beginning that if a deal was available with Vancouver, that was my No. 1 priority," Edler said.

# Vanderbilt routs Michigan, wins CWS

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Vanderbilt swept the Southeastern Conference regular-season and tournament titles, set the league record for wins, tied the record with 13 draft picks and lost back-to-back games just twice.

Now the Commodores are national champions.

Mason Hickman and Jake Eder combined for 14 strikeouts, Michigan ace Karl Kauffmann was knocked out in the fourth inning, and the Commodores won the College World Series with an 8-2 victory in Game 3 of the finals Wednesday night.

Vandy (59-12) won its second title in its four CWS appearances, all since 2011. The other one came in 2014.

“I felt we were going to hit well, I felt we were going to play well. I thought this was going to be a nice night for the kids,” coach Tim Corbin said.

Freshman Kumar Rocker, who was dominant in two CWS starts, was selected the Most Outstanding Player.

Hickman struck out 10 in six innings and limited the Wolverines (50-22) to one hit after he

gave up three in a row to start the game. Kauffmann, making his third start in the CWS, struggled with his control, and Vandy broke open the game with three runs in the third inning and two in the fourth.

When Ako Thomas flew out to center to end the game, the Vandy dugout and bullpen emptied and catcher Philip Clarke sprinted to the mound to embrace Eder.

During the postgame celebration, Vandy players invited Teddy and Susan Everett to join them on the stage set up behind home plate. Their son, Donny Everett, was a star freshman pitcher on the 2016 team and drowned before the start of that year’s NCAA Tournament. The seniors on this year’s team were his teammates.

“Those two mean so much to this program and all the players and the seniors,” shortstop Ethan Paul said. “To this day, every time I look at Teddy I think of Donny, and just being able to share that moment with them was something we all really wanted to do.”

The loss ended a surprising postseason for Michigan, which went from being one of the last

four teams picked for the 64-team NCAA Tournament to becoming the first Big Ten team to play in the finals since Ohio State in 1966. It was Michigan’s first CWS since 1984.

“They have inspired future generations of Michigan baseball players with the belief that winning a national championship is possible,” coach Erik Bakich said. “The only way you can have an Omaha program is to have an Omaha team. This is very much a tipping point for us.”

Michigan staved off elimination in the first two rounds of the national tournament after squandering leads. The Wolverines knocked off No. 1 national seed UCLA to reach the CWS.

“We were hoping it would end in a better way,” first baseman Jimmy Kerr said. “We’ll look back — maybe not in a week or in a month — but down the road it will be fond memories.”

Bakich was an assistant to Corbin from 2003-09 at Vanderbilt, and the two remain close friends.

“He’s put together a remarkable year with those guys,” Corbin said. “Where they came from ... they gave us everything

we wanted and more.”

Vandy is the sixth national champion from the SEC since 2009 and 12th overall, second only to the 18 won by the Pac-12 and its previous iterations. At No. 2, Vandy became the highest national seed to win it all since Miami in 2001.

Hickman gave up three straight singles to start the game, leading to Michigan’s first run. He retired nine of the next 10, striking out six, and got out of trouble when the Wolverines loaded the bases in the fourth. He retired the last six he faced before turning the game over to Eder.

Hickman fanned nine or more in five of his final six starts and allowed one or fewer runs in nine of his last 13.

Though the Commodores brought to Omaha an offense ranked in the top five nationally in the major categories, it was pitching that carried them for most of their stay.

Vandy had eight runs on nine hits Wednesday, but its .221 average in six CWS games was the lowest for a national champion in the aluminum bat era that started in 1974.

## CONCACAF Gold Cup

# Altidore returns as US men top Panama, win group

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — Jozy Altidore made an impression in his first return to the United States’ starting lineup.

Altidore scored on an overhead kick in his first start for the national team in 20 months, lifting the U.S. over Panama 1-0 Wednesday night as the Americans finished first in their CONCACAF Gold Cup group.

Altidore got the goal from 29 yards following a corner kick in the 66th minute that was redirected by Matt Miazga. Coming back from a hamstring injury that slowed him at the start of

training camp, the 29-year-old Altidore scored his 42nd goal in 113 international appearances.

After the match, he walked by reporters and did not stop to respond to questions.

The defending champion United States went 3-0 in group play and outscored opponents 11-0. The 30th-ranked Americans play No. 79 Curacao in the quarterfinals at Philadelphia on Sunday, and the winner faces Jamaica or Panama in the semifinals.

“This is a team we can’t take lightly,” U.S. coach Gregg Berhalter said. “We’re going to go in fully prepared. They have talent. They can score goals.”

The plus-11 goal difference was the best in the Gold Cup for the Americans, topping plus-nine in 2013. The Americans did not allow a goal in a three-match group stage for the second time, the first since 2007, and improved to 36 wins, one loss and four draws in the Gold Cup group stage.

“I talked to Jozy at halftime and asked how much more he had in him,” Berhalter explained. “He said, ‘I want to stay on the field.’ When you hear that from a player, it makes you feel great. When that player goes out and scores the winning goal, it makes you feel even better.”

Both teams already had clinched quarterfinal berths. Berhalter changed all 11 starters and Panama nine. Altidore had not started since the loss at Trinidad and Tobago on Oct. 10, 2017, that ended the Americans’ streak of seven straight World Cup appearances.

Defender Omar Gonzalez captained the U.S. for the first time. Goalkeeper Sean Johnson made his second competitive appearance, his first since a Gold Cup match against Costa Rica in July 2013.

The U.S. had nearly two-thirds possession, and pressure increased after Christian Pulisic entered in the 65th minute.

# Abreu's HR lifts White Sox over Red Sox

Associated Press

BOSTON — Jose Abreu hit a two-run homer over the Green Monster in the ninth inning — his third hit of the game — and Chicago recovered after blowing the lead in the eighth to beat Boston 8-7. Abreu had four RBIs, and Leury Garcia also had three hits for Chicago.

James McCann had an RBI single and added a solo home run against Boston starter Chris Sale as Chicago pounced on Sale for five runs in the first three innings. In all, Sale allowed six hits and a walk, hit-

ting two batters and striking out 10 against his former team.

"I've got to find a way to get out of the gate better," said Sale, whose most recent regular-season win at Fenway was July 11, 2018. "The last couple of times out, early in the game, I just put us in a hole. I've got to find a way to get out of that."

Chicago had leads of 3-0, 5-2 and 6-4 before the Red Sox scored three in the eighth to take a 7-6 lead and hand White Sox closer Alex Colome (3-1) his first blown save in 17 opportunities. But Matt Barnes

(3-3) gave up three straight hits in the top of the ninth — Garcia was caught stealing — including Abreu's 19th homer of the season.

"When they took the lead, we didn't feel down," Abreu said through an interpreter. "We kept our head up and we kept fighting until the end."

Sale, who allowed six of the first seven batters to reach safely, retired the last 10 he faced, striking out the side in the sixth. He avoided the loss when Xander Bogaerts hit a two-run single in a three-run eighth in-

ning to make it 7-6 — Boston's only lead of the game.

Rafael Devers, who went 4-for-4 on Tuesday night, had three more hits and scored three times for Boston.

J.D. Martinez hit a two-run homer and also had an RBI double for the Red Sox.

After blowing the save in the eighth, Colome walked Jackie Bradley Jr. to lead off the ninth and then retired the next three batters to end it.

"He's not a guy that lets it bother him," Chicago manager Rick Renteria said.

## MLB roundup

### Bruce's walk-off double in 10th powers Phillies past Mets

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Jay Bruce ripped a walk-off RBI double in the bottom of the 10th inning against his former team, and Philadelphia rallied to beat reeling New York 5-4 on Wednesday.

Mets lefty Jason Vargas tied a career high with 10 strikeouts in his first start since being fined for an expletive-filled confrontation with a reporter, but was pulled after only 77 pitches and the Phillies overcame a 4-0 deficit against New York's leaky bullpen.

Rhys Hoskins drew a walk from Stephen Nogosek (0-1), and J.T. Realmuto singled. Roman Quinn ran for Hoskins and Bruce, traded by the Mets twice in the last two years, sent a long drive over center fielder Juan Lagares' head to give Philadelphia its third straight win over New York after a seven-game losing streak.

**Indians 5, Royals 3:** Trevor Bauer struck out a season-high 12 in 6<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings, and host Cleveland beat Kansas City.

Bauer (6-6) had the 23rd double-figure strikeout game of his career and his fourth this season. The right-hander gave up one run and didn't allow a hit until rookie Humberto Arteaga singled with two outs

in the fifth.

**Yankees 8, Blue Jays 7:** Gleyber Torres lined a game-winning single in the ninth inning and host New York hit two more homers to beat Toronto.

Didi Gregorius and DJ LeMahieu connected as the Yankees extended their major league record to 29 straight games with a home run. The AL East leaders overcame two homers and a double by Lourdes Gurriel Jr., plus an early 5-0 deficit, to finish a power-packed 9-1 homestand.

**Athletics 2, Cardinals 0:** Beau Taylor and Matt Chapman homered, and Daniel Mengden pitched six scoreless innings to lead Oakland to a win in St. Louis.

Mengden (2-1) gave up four hits and struck out five for his first win since May 18 at Detroit. He took the starting rotation spot of Frankie Montas, who was suspended 80 games June 21 for testing positive for a performance-enhancing substance.

**Padres 10, Orioles 5:** Franmil Reyes hit two of San Diego's five homers in a win at Baltimore.

Eric Hosmer drove in four runs and the Padres finished a two-game sweep.

Greg Garcia got the long ball

barrage started with a two-run drive in the second inning off Dylan Bundy (3-10). After Reyes hit a solo shot in the third and a two-run drive in the fifth to make it 6-3, Hosmer went deep with a runner on in the sixth and Hunter Renfroe connected leading off the seventh.

**Rockies 6, Giants 3:** David Dahl hit a go-ahead grand slam in the third and drove in a career-high five runs to lead Colorado to a win in San Francisco.

Dahl connected off Jeff Samardzija for his second career grand slam, with the other coming last Sept. 10 against Arizona. It marked the first grand slam ever hit by a Rockies player in San Francisco.

**Diamondbacks 8, Dodgers 2:** Eduardo Escobar's three-run homer gave host Arizona a four-run lead before Los Angeles recorded an out.

The Dodgers, with the best record in the majors at 55-27, lost for just the second time — both to the Diamondbacks in the three-game series — in nine games.

**Rangers 4, Tigers 1:** Mike Minor allowed five hits in his second complete game of the year, and Willie Calhoun, Jeff Mathis and Danny Santana homered in the fifth inning to lift Texas to a win at Detroit.

**Nationals 7, Marlins 5:** Matt Adams hit a three-run homer to lead Washington to a win at Miami.

Patrick Corbin pitched seven solid innings and snapped a four-game road losing streak. Corbin (7-5) allowed one run and three hits, walked one and struck out nine.

**Angels 5, Reds 1:** Justin Bour hit two homers, Mike Trout scored the tiebreaking run in the eighth inning and host Los Angeles got back above .500.

**Twins 6, Rays 4:** Nelson Cruz had three hits, including a go-ahead, three-run double after Tampa Bay starter Charlie Morton left in the seventh inning to lead host Minnesota.

**Mariners 4, Brewers 2:** J.P. Crawford drove in three runs and Wade LeBlanc struck out six in five innings to help Seattle win at Milwaukee.

**Braves 5, Cubs 3:** Dallas Keuchel earned his first win for Atlanta, backed by Nick Markakis' three-run homer against host Chicago.

**Pirates 14, Astros 2:** Josh Bell hit his 21st homer, Corey Dickerson had four hits and three RBIs, and rookie Dario Agrazal threw six strong innings to earn his first major league win as Pittsburgh won at Houston.