

US struggles in African nations amid conference

Associated Press

GABORONE, Botswana — The forced U.S. troop withdrawals from bases in Niger and Chad and the potential to shift some troops to other nations in West Africa will be key issues as the top U.S. military officer meets with his counterparts this week at a chiefs of defense conference.

Gen. Charles “CQ” Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrived in Botswana on Monday as the United States faces a critical inflection point in Africa. Increasingly, military juntas that overthrew democratic governments in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are reassessing their ties to the U.S. and the West and turning instead to mercenaries linked to Russia for security assistance.

Speaking to reporters as he traveled to Gaborone, Brown said that as the U.S. pulls its 1,000 troops out of Niger, including

from a critical counterterrorism and drone base there, other West African nations want to work with the U.S. and may be open to an expanded American presence.

The conference, he said, will give him a chance to speak with a number of his African counterparts, and listen to their objections and concerns.

“There’s other countries in the region where we already have either small presence or have relationships,” Brown said. “Part of this is looking at how we continue to build on those relationships, which may provide opportunities for us to posture some of the capabilities we had in Niger in some of those locations.”

The U.S. needs to have a dialogue with those nations to see what type and size U.S. military presence they would want, he said, adding, “That’s why this conference is important.”

Brown and other defense officials have said the conference is a chance to show African leaders the U.S. can listen and accept local solutions. The U.S., said one defense official, has to adjust to the solutions Africans have identified and not impose external Western ideals.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military relationships, said the Botswana meeting is an opportunity to foster military relationships throughout the continent.

The troop cuts at key bases in Africa’s Sahel region raise questions about how to battle what has been a growing tide of violence by extremist groups, including those linked to the Islamic State and al-Qaida.

The defense official said the U.S. is concerned about the spread of extremist activity from multiple groups into coastal West Africa in particular.

Niger’s ruling junta ordered

U.S. forces out of the country in the wake of last July’s ouster of the country’s democratically elected president by mutinous soldiers.

Washington officially designated the military takeover as a coup in October, triggering U.S. laws restricting the military support and aid. The fracture has broad ramifications for the U.S. because it forced troops to abandon the critical drone base at Agadez that was used for counterterrorism missions in the Sahel.

The senior defense official said the withdrawal of U.S. forces and all the equipment from Niger is about 30% complete, and will be completed Sept. 15 as required. The official said the pace of the pullout will ebb and flow, as troops leave based on when their weapons systems and equipment are taken out. Roughly 600 troops currently remain there.

Russia summons US ambassador over missile strike

Associated Press

The Russian Foreign Ministry summoned the American ambassador Monday to protest what it said was the use of advanced U.S.-made missiles in a Ukrainian attack on Russian-annexed Crimea that reportedly killed four people and wounded more than 150.

Washington “has effectively become a party” to the war on Ukraine’s side, the ministry said in a statement, adding, “Retaliatory measures will certainly follow.” It did not elaborate.

There was no immediate comment from U.S. or Ukrainian officials. The Associated Press could not independently verify Russia’s claims about the missiles used.

Kyiv’s forces have relied heavily on Western-supplied weaponry since Russia’s invasion more than two years ago. The military

aid has been crucial in allowing Ukraine to hold the Kremlin’s army at bay, with few major changes along the 620-mile front line in eastern and southern Ukraine for many months.

Some Western countries have hesitated over providing more — and more sophisticated — help for Kyiv’s army because of concerns about potentially provoking the Kremlin. But as Ukraine has at times struggled to hold the line against Russia’s bigger and better-equipped military, Western leaders have gradually relented and granted more support.

In the latest key development, the Pentagon said last week that Ukraine’s military is being allowed to use longer-range missiles provided by the United States to strike targets inside Russia if it is acting in self-defense. Since the outset of the war, the U.S.

had maintained a policy of not allowing Ukraine to use the weapons it provided to hit targets on Russian soil for fear of further escalating the conflict.

Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014 in a move most of the world rejected as unlawful, had long been declared a fair target for Ukraine by its Western allies.

Russian authorities said the dead in Sunday’s attack included two children who were hit by falling debris from Ukrainian missiles that were shot down over a coastal area in Sevastopol, a port city in Crimea. It said cluster munitions, which critics have said harm more civilians than combatants, were also used.

Russia said the missiles were U.S.-made ATACMS, a long-range, guided missile. It summoned U.S. Ambassador Lynne Tracy to the Foreign Ministry.

Japan says Chinese coast guard intruded near Senkaku Islands

By KEISHI KOJA

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Four Chinese coast guard vessels since Thursday have repeatedly entered the 12-mile territorial limit around the Senkaku chain, a potential flash-point approximately halfway between Okinawa and mainland China, according to the Japan coast guard.

The last intrusion, the 23rd of the year, occurred Sunday when two Chinese vessels passed the 12-mile limit between 3:16 p.m. and 3:17 p.m., both vessels were still sailing in Japanese waters Monday, according to a Japan coast guard news release Sunday.

Three other Chinese vessels were in and out of the territorial limit since Thursday, according to the Japan coast guard.

Japan's Foreign Affairs Ministry has lodged multiple complaints since Thursday with the Chinese Embassy in Japan and with the Chinese government in Beijing, a ministry spokesman said Monday.

"We asked them to leave the area," the spokesman said. Some government officials in Japan are required to speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

The Senkakus — five uninhabited islets and three rocks 105 miles east of Taiwan — are administered by Japan but claimed by China and Taiwan, who refer to them as the Diaoyu and Tiaoyutai, respectively. The area reportedly holds a wealth of natural resources, including fish, oil and natural gas.

The first Chinese vessel Sun-

day passed the territorial limit south-southwest of Uotsurijima, followed by a second vessel south of the same island, according to the release. Both were trailing a Japanese fishing boat.

The Chinese ships were met by a larger contingent of Japanese coast guard vessels, a Japan coast guard spokesman told Stars and Stripes by phone Monday. The Japanese ships positioned themselves between the fishing boat and the Chinese vessels and warned the Chinese by radio and electronic message boards to leave the area.

Chinese ships came within 12 miles of the Senkakus 34 times and remained for a total of 42 days in 2023, the coast guard spokesman said.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping, during a November visit to a Chinese coast guard command in Shanghai, highlighted the necessity to "constantly strengthen" Beijing's claim on the islands, Kyodo News reported in December, citing unnamed sources.

U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel lambasted the plan in January in a post on X. "On New Year's Day [Chinese] leadership announced that they will keep ships in and around Japan's Senkaku Islands for 365 consecutive days, quite the New Year's resolution," he wrote.

Chinese vessels have been spotted sailing within Japan's exclusive economic zone near the Senkakus for 186 straight days, "the longest record ever," according to the coast guard spokesman.

Marine Corps plans new littoral regiment on Guam

By ALEX WILSON

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Marine Corps plans to establish a new littoral regiment on Guam in the next several years to "counter Chinese aggression" in the region, Japanese media reported over the weekend.

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Eric Smith told reporters during a press conference in Washington, D.C., that the new regiment will be able to rapidly deploy into the Philippine Sea "in order to spread the battlespace out and to protect those strategic lines of communication that emanate from Japan, back to the Philippines, back to Hawaii," Kyodo News reported

Saturday.

He did not specify a timeline but said it would be deployed to Guam in a "few years," according to the report.

Spokespeople for the III Marine Expeditionary Force on Okinawa and Marine Corps Camp Blaz on Guam referred all questions about the announcement to the Marine Corps' headquarters in Virginia.

The service had not responded to request for additional details.

The announcement comes less than a year after the Marines in November converted the 12th Marine Regiment on Okinawa into the 12th Marine Littoral Regiment.

Marines wrap up 6 weeks of exercises in Philippines

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

American and Filipino marines recently concluded six weeks of coastal defense and aviation training in the Philippines, a 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing spokeswoman said Monday.

The forces conducted the Archipelagic Coastal Defense Continuum from May 12 to June 7 along with Marine Aviation Support Activity from June 3 until Friday, 1st Lt. Madison Walls said.

Around 2,200 U.S. troops and 590 Filipinos were training in the islands last week, she said.

Elements of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit and 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment, along with other units, were spread across the Philippines, Walls said.

They operated at Fort Boni-

facio, in Manila; Clark and Cesar Basa air bases just north of the capital; Laoag, on northern Luzon; and El Nido, on the island of Palawan, she said.

The coastal defense continuum was a series of exchanges and training events between U.S. and Philippine marines aimed at bolstering the Philippines' coastal defense strategy, she said.

The Marine aviation activity is an annual Philippine-U.S. exercise, Walls said.

The drills allow the Marines to refine their operation in the region in a way "that can be focused and amplified through our ally's military assets and capabilities," Walls said.

The Marine aviation exercise was underway when an ongoing series of clashes between the Chinese and Philippine coast guard and Philippine navy escalated June 17 off the Philippines western coast.

Rail bridge collapses amid Midwest floods

Associated Press

NORTH SIOUX CITY, S.D. — A railroad bridge collapsed during flooding in the Midwestern U.S. that has led to water rescues, evacuations and at least one death and has brought additional misery during a vast and stubborn heat wave.

The bridge connecting North Sioux City, S.D. with Sioux City, Iowa, collapsed into the Big Sioux River late Sunday, an emergency manager said. Images from local media showed a large span of the steel bridge partially underwater as floodwaters rushed over it.

Some of the trusses collapsed, Jason Westcott, an emergency manager in Union County, South

Dakota, told KCAU-TV.

There were no reports of injuries from the collapse, which occurred around 11 p.m. The bridge's owner, BNSF Railway, had stopped operating it as a precaution during the flooding, spokesperson Kendall Sloan said. Trains are being rerouted.

Floodwaters have risen over days of heavy rain in South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska. More rain is forecast, and many streams may not crest until later this week as the floodwaters slowly drain to the Missouri and Mississippi rivers.

Deb Kempema lost her home decor store, First Impressions, after a river levee broke in north-

western Iowa's Rock Valley, forced evacuations and destroyed shops.

It was "7,000 square feet of very pretty, pretty things. And it's all gone," she told KELO-TV. "But I like to reinvent myself, so we're going to come back better."

The Big Sioux River stabilized Monday morning at around 45 feet, over 7 feet higher than the previous record, Sioux City Fire Marshal Mark Aesoph said. Evacuations have begun for homes at low elevations, and more are expected as waters rise.

Thirteen rivers flooded in that part of Iowa, said Eric Tigges of Clay County emergency management. Entire neighborhoods, and

at least one whole town, were evacuated, and the Iowa town of Spencer imposed a curfew Sunday for a second night after flooding that surpassed a record set in 1953.

"When the flood gauge is underwater, it's really high," Tigges said at a news conference.

Gov. Kim Reynolds declared a disaster for 21 counties in northern Iowa, including Sioux County. In drone video posted by the sheriff, no streets were visible, just roofs and treetops poking above the water.

National Guard troops helped with water rescues and carted needed medications lost in flooding.

High court to weigh bans on gender-affirming care

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday jumped into the fight over transgender rights, agreeing to hear an appeal from the Biden administration seeking to block state bans on gender-affirming care.

The justices' action comes as Republican-led states have enacted a variety of restrictions on health care for transgender people, school sports participation, bathroom usage and drag shows. The administration and Democratic-led states have extended protections for transgender people, including a new federal regulation that seeks to protect transgender students.

The case before the high court involves a law in Tennessee that restricts puberty blockers and hormone therapy for transgender minors. The federal appeals court in Cincinnati allowed laws in Tennessee and Kentucky to take effect after they had been blocked by lower courts. (The high court did not act on a separate appeal from Kentucky.)

"Without this Court's prompt intervention, transgender youth and their families will remain in limbo, uncertain of whether and where they can access needed medical care," lawyers for the transgender teens in Tennessee told the justices.

Actor Elliot Page, the Oscar-nominated star of "Juno," "Inception" and "The Umbrella Academy," was among 57 transgender people who joined a legal filing in support of Supreme Court review.

Arguments will take place in the fall.

Last week, South Carolina became the 25th state to adopt a law restricting or banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors, even though such treatments have been available in the United States for more than a decade and are endorsed by major medical associations.

Most of the state restrictions face lawsuits. The justices had previously allowed Idaho to generally enforce its restrictions, after they had been blocked by lower courts.

Car dealerships use pens, paper after cyberattacks

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Car dealerships in North America continue to wrestle with major disruptions that started last week with cyberattacks on a software company used widely in the auto retail sales sector.

CDK Global, a company that provides software for thousands of auto dealers in the United States and Canada, was hit by back-to-back cyberattacks Wednesday. That led to an outage that has continued to impact operations.

For prospective car buyers, that may mean delays at dealerships or vehicle orders written up by hand, with no immediate end in sight.

On Monday, Group 1 Automotive Inc., a \$4 billion automotive retailers, said that it continued to use "alternative processes" to sell cars to its customers.

CDK Global is a major player in the auto sales industry. The company, based just outside of Chicago in Hoffman Estates, Ill., provides software technology to dealers that helps with day-to-day operations — like fa-

cilitating vehicle sales, financing, insurance and repairs.

CDK serves more than 15,000 retail locations across North America, according to the company. Whether all of these locations were impacted by the cyberattacks is unclear.

CDK is investigating a Wednesday "cyber incident" and the company shut down all of its systems out of an abundance of caution, according to spokesperson Lisa Finney.

"We have begun the restoration process," Finney said over the weekend in a prepared statement. "Based on the information we have at this time, we anticipate that the process will take several days to complete, and in the interim we are continuing to actively engage with our customers and provide them with alternate ways to conduct business."

The company has warned customers about "bad actors" posing as members or affiliates of CDK to try to obtain system access by contacting customers. It urged them to be cautious of any attempted phishing.

Brown warns over Israel offensive into Lebanon

Associated Press

ESPARGOS, Cape Verde — The top U.S. military officer warned Sunday that any Israeli military offensive into Lebanon would risk an Iranian response in defense of the powerful Hezbollah militant group there, triggering a broader war that could put U.S. forces in the region in danger.

Air Force Gen. Charles “CQ” Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Iran “would be more inclined to support Hezbollah.” He added that Tehran supports Hamas militants in Gaza, but would give greater backing to Hezbollah “particularly if

they felt that Hezbollah was being significantly threatened.”

Brown spoke to reporters as he traveled to Botswana for a meeting of African defense ministers.

Israeli officials have threatened a military offensive in Lebanon if there is no negotiated end to push Hezbollah away from the border. Just days ago, Israel’s military said it had “approved and validated” plans for an offensive in Lebanon, even as the United States works to prevent the months of cross-border attacks from spiraling into a full-blown war.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that he hoped a diplomatic solution could be achieved, but said he would solve the problem “in a different way” if needed. “We can fight on several fronts and we are prepared to do that,” he said.

U.S. officials have tried to broker a diplomatic solution to the conflict. The issue is expected to come up this week as Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant visits Washington for meetings with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other senior U.S. officials.

President Joe Biden’s senior

adviser, Amos Hochstein, met with officials in Lebanon and Israel last week in an effort to deescalate tensions. Hochstein told reporters in Beirut on Tuesday that it was a “very serious situation” and that a diplomatic solution to prevent a larger war was urgent.

Brown also said the U.S. won’t likely be able to help Israel defend itself against a broader Hezbollah war as well as it helped Israel fight off an Iranian barrage of missiles and drones in April. It is harder to fend off the shorter-range rockets Hezbollah fires routinely across the border into Israel, he said.

Seoul: N. Korea resumes trash balloon launches

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea resumed launches of balloons likely carrying trash toward South Korea on Monday night, South Korea’s military said, in the latest round of a Cold War-style campaign on the Korean Peninsula.

The launches came days after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a major defense deal that observers worry could embolden Kim to direct more provocations at South Korea.

A statement from South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said the North Korean balloons were moving south. It said earlier Monday that the military was closely monitoring North Korean moves because northerly or northwesterly winds, favorable for the balloon launches, were forecast.

The statement asked South Korean citizens not to touch North Korean balloons and report them to military and police authorities. The military didn’t say how it would re-

spond to new balloon launches.

Starting in late May, North Korea launched a series of balloons that dropped manure, cigarette butts, scraps of cloth, waste batteries and vinyl in various parts of South Korea. No highly dangerous materials were found. North Korea said its balloon campaign was a tit-for-tat action against South Korean activists who flew political leaflets critical of its leadership across the border.

Kim’s influential sister, Kim Yo Jong, suggested Friday that North Korea would resume its balloon campaign in retaliation for South Korean civilian groups’ new round of leaflet activities. A South Korean group said it sent 20 balloons carrying 300,000 propaganda leaflets, 5,000 USB sticks with South Korean pop songs and TV dramas and U.S. one-dollar bills across the border on Thursday night.

“When you do something you were clearly warned not to do, it’s only natural that you will find yourself dealing with something you didn’t have to,” Kim Yo Jong said.

Russian cities mourn after Islamic militant rampage

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia’s southern region of Dagestan held the first of three days of mourning Monday following a rampage by Islamic militants who killed 20 people, mostly police, and attacked Christian and Jewish houses of worship in assaults in two cities.

Sunday’s violence in Dagestan’s regional capital of Makhachkala and nearby Derbent was the latest that officials blamed on Islamic extremists in the predominantly Muslim region in the North Caucasus. It was also the deadliest in Russia since March, when gunmen opened fire at a concert in suburban Moscow, killing 145 people.

The affiliate of the Islamic State in Afghanistan that claimed responsibility for March’s raid quickly praised the attack in Dagestan, saying it was conducted by “brothers in the Caucasus who showed that they are still strong.”

The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War argued that ISIS’ North Caucasus branch, Vilayat Kavkaz,

likely was behind the attack, describing it as “complex and coordinated.”

Dagestan Gov. Sergei Melikov blamed members of Islamic “ sleeper cells ” directed from abroad, but didn’t give any other details.

He said in a video statement that the assailants aimed at “sowing panic and fear,” and attempted to link the attack to Moscow’s military action in Ukraine — but also provided no evidence.

President Vladimir Putin had sought to blame the March attack on Ukraine, again without evidence and despite the claim of responsibility by the ISIS affiliate. Kyiv has vehemently denied any involvement.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Putin has received reports on Sunday’s attacks and efforts to help the victims.

The Investigative Committee, the country’s top state criminal investigation agency, said all five attackers were killed. Of the 20 people killed, at least 15 were police.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Firefighters rescue hiker clinging to tree

H HONOLULU — A hiker who ventured off a trail above Sunset Beach Elementary was rescued by Honolulu firefighters as he clung to a tree on a cliff.

According to a Honolulu Fire Department summary, rescuers responded to a 911 call reporting a hiker in distress near the Ehukai Pillbox Trail. Rescuers were told that a 21-year-old man was hiking alone on the trail when he left the trail “for unknown reasons,” HFD officials said.

Personnel aboard the HFD’s Air 1 helicopter located the hiker and lowered a rescuer on a rope, officials said. He was secured in a harness with the rescuer, and they were flown safely to the landing zone.

Judge: State prisons defy rules for solitary

NY ALBANY — New York’s state prison system has been holding inmates in solitary confinement for too long, in violation of state law, a state judge ruled.

State Supreme Court Justice Kevin Bryant said that the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision did not provide sufficient evidence to refute allegations that it has failed to follow the limits on solitary confinement. State law limits solitary confinement in most cases to three consecutive days, or six days in any given 30-day period.

But prisoners can be confined alone for longer periods for specified “heinous and destructive” acts, such as injuring

someone or acquiring a deadly weapon. In those cases, the “extended segregation” limit is 15 consecutive days, or 20 days in a 60-day period.

The advocacy groups argued that the corrections department was holding people in extended segregation even though they don’t meet the narrow criteria spelled out in the law.

Paul Pelosi’s attacker convicted of kidnapping

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A man sentenced to 30 years in federal prison in the attack against former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s husband was convicted of aggravated kidnapping, a conviction that mandates life behind bars without the possibility of parole.

A San Francisco jury found David DePape also guilty of first-degree burglary, false imprisonment of an elder, threatening a family member of a public official and dissuading a witness.

The convictions on the additional charges in the state trial come weeks after a federal judge sentenced DePape, 44, for the 2022 attack against Paul Pelosi.

AG to give funds to groups combating drugs

KY FRANKFORT — Kentucky will distribute more than \$12 million in the latest round of funding to groups at the front lines of combating drug addiction, state Attorney General Russell Coleman said.

Several dozen organizations will share in the latest influx of funding to bolster prevention,

treatment and enforcement efforts statewide, the Republican attorney general said. It comes as Kentucky achieves some progress in an addiction epidemic that’s far from over.

The Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission is funneling the money to an array of programs. The commission is responsible for distributing Kentucky’s share of nearly \$900 million recovered in settlements with opioid companies.

State Senate passes bill cutting use of plastics

MA BOSTON — The state Senate has passed a bill curtailing the use of plastics, including barring the purchase of single-use plastic bottles by state agencies.

The bill also bans carry-out plastic bags at retailers statewide and requires stores to charge 10 cents for recycled paper bags.

It also requires straws and plasticware to be available only by request and creates a program to recycle large items like car seats. It now heads to the House.

Communities representing 70% of the state’s population already have bans.

Climate change suit filed by youths is settled

HI HONOLULU — The governor and lawyers for youth plaintiffs announced they settled a lawsuit alleging Hawaii violated the state constitution by operating a transportation system that harmed the climate and infringed upon the children’s right to a clean and healthy environment.

The settlement reached in *Navahine v. Hawaii Department of Transportation* recognizes children’s constitutional rights to a life-sustaining climate, Gov. Josh Green and attorneys at the public interest law firms Our Children’s Trust and Earthjustice said in separate statements.

The agreement confirms the department’s commitment to plan and implement changes to reach the state’s goal of net-negative emissions by 2045, the governor said.

The plaintiffs complained the department consistently prioritized building highways over other types of transportation.

Health care minimum wage increase delayed

CA SACRAMENTO — Democrats in California have agreed to delay a minimum wage increase for about 426,000 health care workers to help balance the state’s budget.

The agreement between Gov. Gavin Newsom and legislative leaders is part of a larger plan to close an estimated \$46.8 billion shortfall — the second year in a row the nation’s most populous state has had a multibillion-dollar deficit.

Health care workers were supposed to get a raise July 1, part of a plan to gradually increase their pay to \$25 per hour over the next decade. Now, if approved by the Legislature, they could get that raise Oct. 15 — but only if California’s revenues between July and September are at least 3% higher than what officials have estimated.

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Lyles shows flash, speed in winning 100

Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. — The bright red running suit, the white pearls and the gold medal said it all.

Noah Lyles is the flashiest, and the fastest, sprinter in the United States — maybe even the world.

We'll all get to find out later this summer in Paris thanks to a come-from-behind victory for Lyles in the 100 meters at the U.S. track trials Sunday — a 9.83-second sprint that secured his spot at an Olympics where he has his sights set on electrifying his sport.

"This was basically the plan, and the plan is working right now," Lyles said.

Lyles came from the back half of the field to match his best time ever in the sprint that crowns the Fastest Man in the World.

He beat 200-meter specialist Kenny Bednarek by .04. Fred Kerley, the 2022 world cham-

pion, finished in third and will also go to Paris. Christian Coleman, the 2019 world champ, was in the lead with about 30 meters left but finished fourth.

The Lyles win makes the American sprint favorites 2-for-2 after three days of these trials. It comes a day after Sha'Carri Richardson also lived up to expectations and won the women's 100 to earn her trip to Paris.

Both of these sprinters shine in their own way. Lyles is on a mission to lift up an entire sport that has been dimmer ever since Usain Bolt exited stage right after the Olympics in 2016.

In keeping with that theme, the 26-year-old Lyles showed up to Hayward Field in a neatly tailored sports coat and pants and was handed a briefcase containing his freshly pressed racing uniform. He wore white pearls for the race, and when he was introduced, he leaped and jumped about 30 yards down

the track, imploring the crowd to get on its feet.

Snoop Dogg was in the house and has taken in some of the action with Lyles' mother, who is almost as entertaining to watch as her son; up in the stands, she fell to her knees after Noah reeled in Kerley to his right, then Coleman and Bednarek to his left.

"Every step I took felt more powerful than the last," Lyles said. "I was like 'I got this race.' I told myself I wasn't going to ease up."

But he did, lifting his index finger in the air just before the line and beating his chest after he crossed it.

This marks the second national title in the 100 for Lyles, who has three 200-meter world titles but reimaged his goals after a disappointing third-place finish at the Tokyo Games in that race. Last summer, the world saw the work start to pay off.

Lyles won the world championship at 100, 200 and the 4x100 relay last year in Budapest. His 100 time on a cool, still night in Eugene matched the mark he ran to win worlds. If he can pull off the triple again, he would be in company with Bolt, the Jamaican great who went 3-for-3 all three times he raced at the Olympics.

"He's the package," Lyles' coach Lance Brauman said. "That doesn't mean that we don't have to do some things to get better and keep going forward. But he enjoys that part of it. He loves to be at the track. He loves to be at training. I mean, he loves the race. It's just who he is."

Lyles, who races next weekend for a spot in the 200, might even be in the mix to win four medals. No. 4 could come in the 4x400, and if he does that, he would be in the company of the likes of Carl Lewis and even Jesse Owens.

Manuel wins 50 freestyle to earn individual event

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Simone Manuel was feeling a bit down as she prepared for her final shot to swim an individual event at the Paris Olympics.

So she pulled out some video of her greatest hits.

Talk about a confidence boost.

The first Black female swimmer to win an individual gold medal at the Olympics, Manuel earned an individual spot on the final night of the U.S. swimming trials with a victory in the 50-meter freestyle Sunday.

Coming back from overtraining syndrome, which hampered her preparations leading up to the Tokyo Games, Manuel won the frantic dash from one end of the pool to the other in 24.13 seconds.

She looked a bit surprised when she saw the "1" beside her name on the scoreboard, pumping her fist emphatically. She kept shaking her head as she walked across the deck.

"I wasn't feeling real confident after last night," said Manuel, who was only the fourth-fastest qualifier in the semifinals,

nearly a half-second behind Gretchen Walsh. "I spent a lot of time watching races where I won. I wanted to channel that Simone because I know I'm a winner."

Speaking of winners, Bobby Finke will head to the Olympics looking to defend his titles in the two longest freestyle events.

He won the final event of the trials, blowing away the field in the 1,500 freestyle with a time of 14 minutes, 40.28 seconds. He already had qualified in the 800 free, the other event he won in Tokyo.

The real race was for the final spot on the Olympic team between David Johnston and Luke Whitlock. They were neck and neck nearly the entire race, before Johnston started to pull away with six laps remaining.

Manuel had already clinched a spot at her third Olympics on the 4x100 freestyle relay, but now she's got an event all to herself. Walsh claimed the second spot in Paris at 24.15, beating out Abbey Weitzeil (24.26) and Torri Huske (24.33).

Manuel will try to add to an already impressive résumé, highlighted by her star-

ring role at the the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games when she captured two gold medals and two silvers.

Manuel's times began to slip ahead of the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games. After she stunningly failed to qualify in the 100 freestyle, she revealed that she had been diagnosed with overtraining syndrome.

After the games, Manuel was ordered by her doctor to shut down all physical activity until her body healed. She finally returned to the pool in early 2023, but didn't even attempt to qualify for the world championships last summer.

But a move to Arizona, where she trained under Michael Phelps' longtime coach Bob Bowman began to pay dividends.

Now, she's got another Olympic race to show for it after coming up short in the 100 free with a fourth-place showing.

When she made the team in the 50 free three years ago, it felt like the longest lap of her life.

She had that same feeling again Sunday, her arms churning and legs kicking in swimming's most hectic event.

Bell takes NASCAR race on rain tires

Associated Press

LOUDON, N.H. — Christopher Bell raised a broom over his head and clutched a 24-pound lobster in victory lane all because he earned his third Cup win of the season in an outcome that would have been impossible before this NASCAR season.

Heck, it still looked pretty grim for most of Sunday at a rainy track.

Once the skies cleared, NASCAR busted out its latest creation it had saved for a rainy day — wet weather Goodyear tires that allowed the race at New Hampshire Motor Speedway to continue all the way to a thrilling end.

Bell mastered the Cup Series' first race that ended with cars running on rain tires and pulled away after a 2-hour, 15-minute weather delay to beat darkness and the field and win Sunday at New Hampshire.

He also swept the weekend at New Hampshire following Sat-

urday's win in the Xfinity Series.

"Hopefully that was entertaining because it was something different, something new and nobody knew what to expect and what to do," Bell said. "The guys that figured it out the quickest were the most successful."

On Friday, Bell spoiled the reveal that Chase Briscoe is joining him at Joe Gibbs Racing in 2025. Then he ruined Briscoe's best shot at his first win of the season, holding him off over the final two laps of the overtime finish.

With darkness falling, Bell cruised past Josh Berry and Briscoe and remained the driver to beat at New Hampshire. He has four wins in the Xfinity Series at Loudon and won a Cup race at the track for a second time.

This time, he won with 86 laps raced on the new tires.

"It was dark. It was very, very dark. That was creeping up in a

hurry to being too dark to race," Bell said. "Certainly there were dry parts on the track, but there were still a lot of wet parts on the track, too. I can't tell you how far away it was, but in my opinion I didn't think it was ready for the dry tires yet."

Bell was used to the rain — he won last month's rain-shortened Coca-Cola 600 with 151 laps left in the race.

New Hampshire actually needed four extra laps. Briscoe finished second and Berry was third. Kyle Larson and Chris Buescher completed the top five.

"I think we could have probably started with the track a little bit wetter," Briscoe said. "The beginning was pretty fun. We were all over the place. Five wide at times and slipping and sliding around."

Even with the start of the race bumped up a half-hour, New Hampshire was a mess about from the moment the green flag

was dropped. The race was marred by wrecks that wiped some of NASCAR's biggest stars out of contention — all while the rest of the field tried to remain in contention and beat the looming rain that hovered over the entire weekend.

Tyler Reddick, who won at Talladega this season, held the lead when the race was red-flagged because of rain with 82 laps left in the scheduled 301-lap race.

Fans fled the grandstands and drivers went back to their motorhomes with seemingly no chance of a return as the gloomy weather worsened. New Hampshire and NASCAR waited out a tornado watch, nearby lightning strikes and a severe thunderstorm warning before it could resume the race after a delay of more than 2 hours — and after crew members swept standing water off pit road — and cars all hit the 1.058-mile track on new tires.

Pulisic goal, assist lead US in Copa America opener

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Christian Pulisic spread his arms wide with a big smile, then wanted to find the coach in the stands who drew up the fastest goal for the U.S. against a South American team.

Plenty of emotion against an overmatched opponent, in a tournament the Americans call their biggest test ahead of co-hosting the 2026 World Cup.

Pulisic scored in the third minute and assisted on Folarin Balogun's goal in the 44th as the United States cruised past Bolivia 2-0 in their Copa America opener on Sunday night.

"I feel like I'm always pretty excited after I score," Pulisic said. "This is a big moment. It's a major tournament."

Pulisic joined Clint Dempsey as the only U.S. players with a goal and an assist in a Copa

America match and reached 30 goals in 69 international appearances, the fewest among Americans.

"We came out flying with a lot of intensity. Obviously, that early goal helped us a lot," Pulisic said. "All around, a pretty dominant performance. I think we could have put it away and had more goals there."

Among six invited guests to South America's championship, the U.S. is expected to advance from Group C to the quarterfinals along with Uruguay.

"It's a start that's massive for us. Build the confidence," American defender Antonee Robinson said. "If we were being picky, we could have been a lot more clinical. We could have put another two, three goals away."

Bolivia lost its 13th straight Copa America match dating to

2015 and has one win in its last 31.

"I'm not happy because I think we can deliver more. We had a match against an opponent that had a better physical performance," Bolivia coach Antonio Carlos Zago said through a translator. "Minute three there was a goal, and it was downstream from there."

The 11th-ranked U.S. plays Panama on Thursday in Atlanta and closes the group against Uruguay on July 1.

A crowd of 47,873 attended the match under the retractable roof at 80,000-seat AT&T Stadium, which will host a World Cup semifinal in 2026.

Playing a day before his 30th birthday, goalkeeper Matt Turner had three saves in his 25th international shutout. The U.S. improved to 6-0 at AT&T as the Americans opened their fifth

Copa America appearance, the first since reaching the semifinals as host in 2016.

The U.S. had 18 touches inside the attacking penalty area in the first half to Bolivia's none.

"I'm happy with the performance," U.S. coach Gregg Berhalter said. "A lot of guys got their first Copa America game, first Copa America win, first Copa America shutout. And we're in a good position."

Pulisic put the U.S. ahead 2:23 in, the fastest American goal in 34 competitive matches against South American opponents. He played a short corner kick to Tim Weah and ran toward the penalty area. Weah returned the ball to Pulisic, who took a touch and from just inside the area curled a right-foot shot off the outstretched fingertips of goalkeeper Guillermo Viscarra and into the far upper corner.

Valdez leads Astros to sweep of Orioles

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Framber Valdez pitched seven solid innings and Jeremy Peña and Yainer Diaz had three RBIs apiece to give the Houston Astros an 8-1 win over the Baltimore Orioles on Sunday and complete a three-game sweep.

"That's Astros baseball right there," manager Joe Espada said. "That's what we expect from our team. ... We did so many things so well. That was a series we needed as a club."

It's just the second time the Orioles have been swept this season after losing three in a row to the Cardinals from May 20-22.

Valdez (6-5) allowed six hits and a run with seven strikeouts in seven innings to bounce back after consecutive losses.

Jose Altuve hit a leadoff homer as the Astros jumped on Albert Suárez (3-2) for four runs in the first. Alex Bregman had a season-high four hits for Houston, which extended its winning streak to five games.

Jordan Westburg homered for a second straight game to extend Baltimore's franchise-record streak of games with a home run to 22. But the Orioles couldn't do much else offensively as they managed just one run for a second straight game.

Phillies 4, Diamondbacks 1: Christopher Sánchez (5-3) tossed seven scoreless innings a day after receiving a new contract,

Bryce Harper doubled and singled, and NL-best Philadelphia beat visiting Arizona.

David Dahl hit a two-run single, and Bryson Stott and Nick Castellanos also had RBIs for the Phillies. Philadelphia took two of three in the series that was a rematch of last season's NL Championship Series, won by Arizona.

Braves 3, Yankees 1: Max Fried shut down New York for five innings before tiring on a blistering afternoon, Jarred Kelenic drove in two runs and visiting Atlanta got the victory for its eighth win in 10 games following a five-game losing streak.

Fried (7-3) allowed three singles in the first five innings, then gave up three hits in the sixth that included Anthony Volpe's RBI double. Fried improved to 4-1 in his last six starts, giving up six hits in six innings with four strikeouts and no walks.

Mets 5, Cubs 2: Luis Severino (5-2) tossed six shutout innings, Francisco Lindor and Brandon Nimmo hit back-to-back homers and visiting New York topped Chicago after closer Edwin Díaz was ejected in the ninth before throwing a pitch.

Díaz came on to try to seal the victory, but was tossed for having a foreign substance after umpires inspected his hands and glove. He is now facing up to a 10-game suspension.

Rays 3, Pirates 1: Yandy Díaz hit a home run off the first pitch

from Paul Skenes before leading off a two-run eighth inning with a single, sparking a win for visiting Tampa Bay over Pittsburgh.

Díaz opened the first inning by driving Skenes' near-100 mph first-pitch fastball off the right-field foul pole. He was 3-for-4 with two hits off Skenes, stretching his hit streak to 16 games.

Tigers 11, White Sox 2: Colt Keith and Akil Baddoo homered in a five-run first inning and Riley Greene cleared the fences in a four-run second, lifting host Detroit to a win over Chicago.

The Tigers scored more runs in two at-bats on Matt Vierling's leadoff triple and Keith's two-run homer than in any of the previous six games, and they were just getting warmed up in the series-winning rout.

Marlins 6, Mariners 4: Nick Gordon and Jesús Sánchez homered as host Miami beat Seattle.

Jazz Chisholm Jr. had two hits and an RBI for the Marlins, who clinched the three-game series against the AL West-leading Mariners.

Red Sox 4, Royals 0: Connor Wong and Rob Refsnyder each hit two-run homers as visiting Boston took the series from Cincinnati with a victory.

Rangers 4, Royals 0: Three-time Cy Young Award winner Max Scherzer retired 15 of the 16 batters he faced over five scoreless innings in his season debut,

rookie Wyatt Langford extended his RBI streak to five games and host Texas beat Kansas City to complete a three-game series sweep.

Cardinals 5, Giants 3: Sonny Gray (9-4) allowed one hit over seven innings, Alec Burleson drove in two runs and host St. Louis completed a three-game sweep with a win over San Francisco.

Guardians 6, Blue Jays 5: Steven Kwan and Josh Naylor hit solo homers as AL Central-leading Cleveland scored five straight runs in the third and fourth innings, helping it beat visiting Toronto.

Brewers 6, Padres 2: Rookie Tobias Myers continued his terrific June by winning his fourth straight start and Blake Perkins highlighted a five-run second inning with a two-run single as NL Central-leading Milwaukee beat host San Diego to avoid a four-game sweep.

Twins 3, Athletics 0: Pablo López took a perfect game into the sixth inning and matched a career high with 14 strikeouts in eight scoreless innings as visiting Minnesota beat Oakland in the rubber match of a three-game series.

Nationals 2, Rockies 1: Lane Thomas doubled in the tying run and Joey Meneses singled to drive in the go-ahead run as visiting Washington rallied in the ninth inning to beat Colorado, taking the three-game series.

Tennessee forces 3rd CWS game with win over Texas A&M

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Tennessee's prodigious home run prowess arrived too late in Game 1 of the College World Series finals.

It showed up right on time in Game 2.

Tennessee's Dylan Dreiling hit the go-ahead homer in the seventh inning, Cal Stark went deep in the eighth and after Nate Sned turned back a scoring threat by Texas A&M in the bottom of the ninth, the Volunteers had forced a deciding third game with a 4-1 victory Sunday.

One of the teams will win its first national

title in baseball and became the fifth straight champion from the Southeastern Conference when they meet Monday night.

"I felt we were more true to who we were today in pregame, in the dugout, during the game," Vols coach Tony Vitello said. "It's easy to say that because we end up doing OK on the scoreboard. But I'd rather go into battle with that group the way they showed up today, and hope they do the same (Monday)."

Tennessee (59-13) is trying to become the first No. 1 national seed to win the cham-

pionship since Miami in 1999.

This will be the fifth CWS finals since 2018, and second straight, to go three games.

"To think you're going to roll right through it in two games would be ... That would have been nice," Aggies coach Jim Schlossnagle said. "We get to play the last college baseball game of the season, and that's awesome."

The Vols, who lost the finals opener 9-5 Saturday, haven't dropped consecutive games since March 16-17 at Alabama.