

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## China urges US to 'stop flexing muscles'

Associated Press

BANGKOK — China on Monday urged the U.S. military to “stop flexing muscles” in the disputed South China Sea, a point of persistent friction in a relationship both sides said was generally improving.

A spokesman for the Chinese Ministry of Defense, Col. Wu Qian, told reporters in Bangkok that the South China Sea was among numerous issues discussed earlier in the day when U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper held his first face-to-face meeting with the Chinese defense minister, Gen. Wei Fenghe. They met

for more than half an hour on the margins of a broader Asia defense officials’ conference.

“We agreed to keep talking and engaging frequently,” Esper told reporters afterward in a brief exchange. “We continue to make progress on any number of issues.”

The South China Sea for years has been a major point of contention between Beijing and Washington. China claims the South China Sea as its sovereign territory, but its claims overlap with those of other Asian governments. The United States has no territorial stake but has periodically sailed Navy ships through

areas of the sea that China considers off-limits.

Wu, the Defense Ministry spokesman, told a news conference that Esper and Wei had a “very positive and constructive” meeting and “agreed in many areas.” But he was clear that Beijing is irritated at the U.S. Navy’s presence in the South China Sea. Wu said Wei reaffirmed China’s commitment to safeguarding “territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests” in the South China Sea.

“The Chinese side also urges the U.S. side to stop flexing muscles in the South China Sea and do not provoke and

escalate tensions in the South China Sea,” he said through a Chinese interpreter. Asked by a reporter to be more specific about Chinese objections, Wu said the U.S. should “stop intervening in the South China Sea and stop military provocations.”

Esper spokesman Jonathan Hoffman said in a later statement that the U.S. defense secretary “pointedly reiterated that the United States will fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows — and we will encourage and protect the rights of other sovereign nations to do the same.”

## N. Korea: No US summit without concessions

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea on Monday responded to a tweet by U.S. President Donald Trump that hinted at another summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, saying it has no interest in giving Trump further meetings to brag about unless it gets something substantial in return.

The statement by Foreign Ministry adviser Kim Kye Gwan is the latest call by North Korea for U.S. concessions ahead of an end-of-year deadline set by Kim Jong Un for the Trump administration to offer mutually acceptable terms for a deal to salvage nuclear diplomacy.

Following a U.S. decision over the weekend to call off joint military exercises with South Korea to create space for diplomacy with the North, Trump in a tweet urged Kim to “act quickly, get the deal done”

and hinted at another summit between them, saying “See you soon!”

But Kim Kye Gwan reiterated his government’s stance that Washington must discard what North Korea sees as “hostile” policies to keep the negotiations alive. “Three rounds of DPRK-U.S. summit meetings and talks were held since June last year, but no particular improvement has been achieved in the DPRK-U.S. relations. ... The U.S. only seeks to earn time, pretending it has made progress in settling the issue of the Korean Peninsula,” he said in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency, referring to North Korea by the initials of its formal name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

“We are no longer interested in such talks that bring nothing to us. As we have got nothing in return, we will no longer

gift the U.S. president with something he can boast of, but get compensation for the successes that President Trump is proud of as his administrative achievements.”

Kim Kye Gwan is a veteran diplomat who led the North Korean delegation at much of the now-dormant six-nation nuclear disarmament talks held in Beijing in 2003-08.

His statement came hours after KCNA reported that leader Kim supervised a parachuting drill by military sharpshooters and vowed to build an “invincible army,” displaying more defiance despite the decision by the U.S. and South Korea to shelve their drills.

It was North Korea’s second publicized military drill in three days. A report Saturday said Kim urged combat pilots to prepare against enemies “armed to the teeth” while attending a flight demonstration.

North Korea has been ramping up missile tests and other military demonstrations in recent months in an apparent pressure tactic over the talks.

Negotiations have faltered since a February summit between Kim and Trump in Vietnam which broke down after the U.S. rejected North Korean demands for broad sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

Kim later issued his end-of-year deadline and has also said the North would seek a “new path” if the United States persists with sanctions and pressure.

Working-level talks last month in Sweden broke down over what the North Koreans described as the Americans’ “old stance and attitude.” North Korea last week said the United States has proposed a resumption of negotiations in December.

# F-35 under threat at House panel hearing

*The Washington Post*

The U.S. military's most expensive weapons program seemed to be under threat from all sides at a recent hearing before the House Armed Services Committee as skeptical lawmakers called out supply chain problems that have meant only a third of the Pentagon's F-35 fighter jets are capable of carrying out all the missions for which they were built.

Ellen Lord, a former defense executive who is now the Pentagon's top weapons buyer, admitted that the complicated IT system supporting the fleet's maintenance infrastructure still falls far short of expectations. Lockheed Martin and the Pentagon's Joint Program Office are still embroiled in

a long-running dispute over who owns the F-35's complicated algorithms, a debate that could chart the future of the program.

Some lawmakers criticized the terms of Lockheed's arrangement with the government, saying overly generous intellectual property agreements threaten to lock Lockheed into a wasteful long-term profit machine with limited accountability.

Rep. John Garamendi, D-Calif., threatened to hold up a multibillion-dollar contract if fundamental questions aren't resolved, suggesting there should be a broader sea change in how military agencies work with weapons builders.

"Heretofore, the contractors have had the long end of

the lever, and the government has been on the short end of the lever. ... That is going to change," Garamendi told Lockheed Martin executives assembled at the hearing. "The power is shifting ... with the fulcrum moving closer to the government's side."

Greg Kuntz, a Defense Department spokesman, said the department's Joint Program Office "remains committed to aggressively reducing sustainment costs and improving mission capability rates," adding, "We will continue to partner with Congress and Congressman Garamendi moving forward."

Carolyn Nelson, a Lockheed Martin spokeswoman, said the government is working on a new technical data package

that was not a part of the initial F-35 contract, as well as a separate "performance-based" contract for logistics support. The logistics contract "shifts risks to industry and opens longer term investments," Nelson wrote in an email.

The hearing was the latest skirmish in a long-running fight over who should own the U.S. military's advanced weaponry. Defense spending watchdogs are concerned that manufacturers such as Lockheed have too much ownership over those systems, something that could give them leverage to drive up costs. Government agencies generally prefer the flexibility that comes with owning the systems themselves.

## Man caught at NATO base without license after 25 years

BY MARCUS KLOECKNER  
AND JENNIFER H. SVAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — A German man who drove for 25 years without a license finally had the brakes applied when Air Force guards asked him for a valid ID as he tried to drive onto Spangdahlem Air Base.

The man, 58, had driven up

to the gate at Spangdahlem on Oct. 29 in a car belonging to a construction company that was doing work on the base, German police in the nearby town of Bitburg said in a statement Monday.

When he could not provide a valid license to the guards, the Air Force called the Bitburg police, who discovered the man had long been driving

without the legally required documentation.

The man, whose name was not released, has driven a company vehicle often and may have provided his employer with an invalid license, the police said.

German driver's licenses used to have no expiration date, but since 2013, European Union rules require drivers to renew their licenses every 15 years.

After the police have investigated the man for driving without a license, his case will go to the prosecutor's office to determine whether he should face criminal charges, Bitburg police detective Edwin Gertn said.

The penalty for driving without a valid license in Germany can include up to one year in confinement and a fine, which is based on income.

## Anti-government protesters block roads to crucial Iraq port

*Associated Press*

BAGHDAD — Anti-government demonstrators in southern Iraq blocked roads leading to the country's main port on Monday, while the country's central bank reduced working hours because of ongoing demonstrations, security officials said.

Protesters burned tires, blocking the roads to the Umm Qasr port, responsible for the bulk of the country's commodi-

ties imports, a Basra security official said.

Protesters also cut roads to the airport with burning tires in the holy city of Najaf.

This is the second time the port has been blocked since the protests began on Oct. 1, when thousands of Iraqis, mostly youth, took to the streets denouncing rampant government corruption, failing state services, including electricity cuts, and a lack of job opportunities.

"It was tough times when the port was closed," said a senior port official, referring to previous closures on Oct. 29 that lasted nearly a week. The source said productivity had been cut by nearly half as a result but imports had been rebounding gradually since. The port is an important source of revenue for the government.

Meanwhile, working hours were reduced for employees of the Central Bank in Baghdad,

located on the famous Rasheed Street, because of the ongoing protests. On Sunday, two protesters were wounded when security forces fired tear gas in renewed confrontations with demonstrators on Rasheed Street, close to the central bank building.

At least 320 people have been killed and thousands wounded in the capital and the mostly Shiite southern provinces since the unrest began.



# Trump invited to testify as more witnesses preparing

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi invited President Donald Trump to testify in front of investigators in the House impeachment inquiry ahead of a week that will see several key witnesses appear publicly.

Pushing back against accusations from the Republican president that the process has been stacked against him, Pelosi said Trump is welcome to appear or answer questions in writing, if he chooses.

“If he has information that is exculpatory — that means ex, taking away, culpable, blame — then we look forward to seeing it,” she said in an interview that aired Sunday on CBS’ “Face the Nation.” Trump “could come right before the committee and talk, speak all the truth that he wants if he wants,” she said.

On Monday, Trump tweeted he might be willing to offer written testimony “She also said I could do it in writing. Even though I did nothing wrong and don’t like giving credibility to this No Due Process Hoax, I like the idea & will, in order to get Congress focused again, strongly consider it!”

## Second week

The comments come as the House Intelligence Committee prepares for a second week of public hearings as part of its inquiry, including with the man who is arguably the most important witness. Gordon Sondland, Trump’s ambassador to the European Union, is among the only people interviewed to date who had direct conversations with the president about the situation because the White House has blocked others from cooperating with what it dismisses as a sham investigation.

Testimony suggests he was intimately involved in discussions that are at the heart of the investigation into whether Trump held up U.S. military aid to Ukraine to try to pressure the country’s president to announce an investigation into Democrats, including former Vice President Joe Biden, a leading 2020 candidate, and Biden’s son, Hunter.

Multiple witnesses overheard a phone call in which Trump and Sondland reportedly discussed efforts to push for the investigations. In private testimony to impeachment investigators made public Saturday, Tim Morrison, a former National Security Council aide and longtime Republican defense hawk, said Sondland told

him he was discussing Ukraine matters directly with Trump.

Morrison’s testimony contradicted much of what Sondland told congressional investigators during his own closed-door deposition, which the ambassador later amended.

## No recollection

Trump has said he has no recollection of the overheard call and has suggested he barely knew Sondland, a wealthy donor to his 2016 campaign. But Democrats are hoping he sheds new light on the discussions.

The committee also will be interviewing a long list of others. On Tuesday, it’ll hear from Morrison along with Jennifer Williams, an aide to Vice President Mike Pence; Alexander Vindman, the director for European affairs at the National Security Council; and Kurt Volker, the former U.S. special envoy to Ukraine.

On Wednesday the committee will hear from Sondland in addition to Laura Cooper, a deputy assistant secretary of defense, and David Hale, a State Department official. On Thursday, Fiona Hill, a former top NSC staffer for Europe and Russia, will appear.

## Doctored video

He also tweeted a doctored video exchange between Rep. Adam Schiff, the Democratic chairman of the Intelligence Committee, and Republican Rep. Jim Jordan in which Schiff said he did not know the identity of the whistleblower whose complaint triggered the inquiry. The clip has been altered to show Schiff wearing a referee’s uniform and loudly blowing a whistle.

In her CBS interview, Pelosi vowed to protect the whistleblower, whom Trump has said should be forced to come forward despite long-standing whistleblower protections.

Trump has been under fire for his treatment of one of the witnesses, the former ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, whom Trump criticized by tweet as she was testifying last week.

That attack prompted accusations of witness intimidation from Democrats and even some criticism from Republicans, who have been largely united in their defense of Trump.

# US officials knew about Ukraine’s Trump anxiety

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. State Department officials were informed that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy was feeling pressure from the Trump administration to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden even before the July phone call that has led to impeachment hearings in Washington, two people with knowledge of the matter told The Associated Press.

In early May, staff at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, including then-Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch, were briefed on a meeting Zelenskiy held in which he sought advice on how to navigate the difficult position he was in, according to two people with knowledge of the briefings.

He was concerned that Trump and associates were pressing him to take action that could affect the 2020 U.S. presidential race, the people said. They spoke only on condition of anonymity because of the diplomatic and political sensitivity of the issue.

The briefings show that U.S. officials knew early that Zelenskiy was feeling pressure to investigate Biden, even though the Ukrainian leader later denied it in a joint news conference with Trump in September.

Congressional Republicans have pointed to that public Zelenskiy statement to argue that he felt no pressure to open an investigation and, therefore, the Democrats’ allegations that led to the impeachment hearings are misplaced.

Witnesses have detailed in closed-door depositions and public impeachment hearings that allies of Trump pressed Ukraine to investigate Biden and his son while withholding military aid and a coveted meeting between the newly elected Zelenskiy and Trump.

The U.S. briefings — and contemporaneous notes on Zelenskiy’s early anxiety about Trump’s interest in an investigation — suggest that Democrats have evidence in reach to contradict Republican arguments that Zelenskiy never felt pressure to investigate Biden.

# Suspects sought in Calif. shooting; 4 dead

Associated Press

FRESNO, Calif. — Police in the central California city of Fresno were searching Monday for suspects and trying to determine a motive for the killing of four people at a backyard party and the wounding of six as dozens were watching football on TV.

Fresno police Lt. Bill Doolley said “unknown suspects” sneaked into the backyard about 6 p.m. Sunday and fired into the crowd.

Fresno Deputy Police Chief Michael Reid told the Fresno Bee newspaper and the KSEE and KGPE TV stations that 10 people were shot and that three were found dead in the back-

yard. A fourth person died at the hospital. Six others are expected to survive and were recovering at a hospital.

The victims were men ranging in age from 25 to 35, Reid said.

“What we do know is that this was a gathering, a family and friend gathering, in the backyard,” Doolley said. “Everyone was watching football this evening when unknown suspects approached the residence, snuck into the backyard and opened fire.”

Fresno police spokesman Lt. Mark Hudson did not immediately return messages Monday seeking additional comment.

The victims were taken to

Community Regional Medical Center in critical condition, and some are now in stable condition, the TV stations reported.

About 35 people were at the party when the shooting began, Reid said. “Thank God that no kids were hurt,” he said.

No one had been taken into custody, and authorities said there was no immediate indication that the victims knew the shooter or shooters. Police were going door to door in search of surveillance video that might help them track down the suspects.

Agents from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives field office in San Francisco responded to the

shooting, the Bee reported.

Other shootings have happened recently in the same neighborhood, leaving neighbors frightened, they said.

Choua Vang told the Bee that his neighbor’s house was shot at last week and that he feels unsafe outside after dark.

“We’re thinking about moving out of the neighborhood,” he said. “We don’t know how many more shootings there will be.”

It was at least the second fatal gun attack Sunday in southeastern Fresno, the Bee reported. A man in his 20s was shot to death early Sunday at a home in another part of the city. Police have not said whether the incidents could be connected.

## 3 dead in shooting at Walmart in Oklahoma

Associated Press

DUNCAN, Okla. — Two men and a woman were fatally shot Monday outside a Walmart store in southwestern Oklahoma, the chief of police said.

Two victims were shot inside a car and the third was in the

parking lot outside the store in Duncan, Police Chief Danny Ford said.

Police are looking for witnesses to the shooting, Ford said.

No staff members were involved in the shooting and

the store was not evacuated, Walmart spokeswoman LeMia Jenkins said in an email.

“This was an isolated incident in the parking lot and was not an active shooter situation,” Jenkins said.

Police said in a Facebook

post that a handgun was found at the scene.

Duncan is about 80 miles south of Oklahoma City.

Just last week, a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, reopened months after an Aug. 3 mass shooting there.

## Police surround trapped protesters in Hong Kong

Associated Press

HONG KONG — As night fell on Hong Kong, police tightened their siege of a university campus where hundreds of protesters were trapped in the latest dramatic episode in months of protests against growing Chinese control over the semi-autonomous city.

The Asian financial center’s workweek began Monday with multiple protests that disrupted traffic, while schools remained closed because of safety concerns stemming from the demonstrations, which began in June but have become increasingly violent in recent weeks.

The pitched battle for control of the campus of Hong Kong Polytechnic University

has been the center of the most recent developments. For days, protesters have fortified the campus to keep out the police. Now cornered by police determined to arrest them, they desperately tried to get out but faced a cordon of officers armed with tear gas and water cannons.

Officers repelled one escape attempt Monday morning with tear gas, driving hundreds of protesters back onto the campus. Later, huge crowds of supporters advanced on foot toward the police from outside the cordon to try to disrupt the police operation.

Some protesters descended by ropes from a footbridge to a road below, where they were

met by motorbike riders helping them flee as police fired tear gas at them. It was unclear whether they got away safely.

Senior government officials said they were trying to deescalate the situation and urged the protesters to peacefully leave the campus and cooperate with police — advice that seemed certain to lead to arrests and, therefore, strengthened the protesters’ resolve to resist.

Local council elections scheduled for Sunday are now at risk of being delayed because of the unrest, said Patrick Nip, Hong Kong’s secretary for constitutional affairs.

“The situation in the past weekend has obviously reduced the chance of holding the elec-

tion as scheduled. And I am very anxious about this,” Nip said, adding that the government “won’t take this step unless absolutely necessary.”

Riot officers broke in one entrance before dawn as fires raged inside and outside the school, but they didn’t appear to get very far. Fiery explosions could be seen as protesters responded with gasoline bombs. Police, who have warned that everyone in the area could be charged with rioting, reportedly made a handful of arrests.

The give-and-take has played out repeatedly during the city’s months of anti-government unrest. The protesters want to avoid arrest. The police want to pick up as many as they can.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Driver summons help for injured bald eagle

**GA** VALDOSTA — Officials said a bald eagle is recovering after a motorist in Georgia spotted the injured bird in a roadside ditch and called authorities for help.

News outlets reported Lowndes County dispatched an animal control officer and a licensed animal trapper to the scene where the eagle was found near the Florida line. They watched over it until a Georgia Department of Natural Resources officer arrived to take it to a veterinarian.

The eagle was taken to the raptor center at Auburn University in Alabama for further rehabilitation.

## Team's uniforms stolen before game

**OR** EUGENE — Police said uniforms were stolen from a visiting Texas university women's basketball team before their match against the University of Oregon.

Texas Southern University's team was in Eugene for a game against the Ducks. Eugene Police said a black duffel bag containing all the uniforms was taken from a downtown hotel conference room.

The team was forced to wear practice uniforms with some players having taped numbers to the back of their maroon tops. Oregon won 99-63.

## Police rescue boy who fell through thin ice

**IN** WINONA LAKE — Police officers, including one who was off duty, rescued an 11-year-old boy who fell through ice on an Indiana pond.

Trooper Jacob Bill said he was off duty and driving his In-

diana State Police car when he saw Winona Lake police driving with lights and siren on. He followed them to a retention pond and ran into the water to save the boy.

Bill and the boy got tangled in broken ice. Winona Lake Officer Dave Swain then got into the water to help the pair.

The boy was treated at a hospital and released.

## Man jailed for assault on pregnant girlfriend

**PA** BETHLEHEM — A man who has fathered 15 children with 14 women is headed to prison for punching his girlfriend in the stomach while she was nine months pregnant with their baby.

Jeffrey Spencer, 41, received a sentence of 14 to 30 years. He was convicted on several charges stemming from the August 2018 attack, including aggravated assault and three counts of intimidating a witness.

Authorities said Spencer repeatedly called the victim from prison and asked her to say she hit herself. They said he also repeatedly told her to lie on the witness stand.

## 2 indicted after dead cats found in home

**MD** BALTIMORE — Baltimore County Police said two residents were indicted after authorities found 74 dead cats and rescued 150 live cats and other animals from a home in Middle River.

The Baltimore Sun reported Garriott J. Cox, 53, and Pamela Arrington, 51, were indicted on Nov. 4. Both are free after posting \$50,000 bail apiece.

Police spokeswoman Officer Jennifer Peach said officials recovered 76 live cats and 15 dead cats from a shed in an Oct. 9 search. More animals were

recovered on Oct. 17 after police obtained a second search warrant.

## Floating ice disk spotted on river

**ME** HAYNESVILLE — A floating disk of ice was spotted in northern Maine, bringing back memories of a large disk that formed last winter that quickly gained international fame.

Chris Gooley said he pulled over near a bridge off Route 2 in Haynesville when he saw someone taking pictures near a bridge. He stopped and saw a large disk on the Mattawamkeag River.

The formation is reminiscent of an unusually large ice disk measuring about 100 yards across that formed in the Presumpscot River in Westbrook in January.

## Deer wanders into Walmart, slips around

**OH** WOOSTER — A whitetail went retail for a bit when it entered a Walmart store in Ohio.

Patrons in Wooster in northeastern Ohio said the deer was kicking shelves as it walked through the store.

Bert and Dawn Moore encountered the deer after stopping in for a few things. Bert Moore said he grabbed the deer when it grew tired after slipping on the floor and then lay on it to keep it still.

He, another shopper and store employees helped the animal get out.

## Fire destroys barn at historic estate

**MA** DEDHAM — Authorities said a fire destroyed a more than 100-

year-old barn at a historic site in Massachusetts.

The Boston Globe reported that fire crews were called to the Endicott Estate in Dedham and found flames coming through the roof of a wooden 2½-story barn.

Firefighters from multiple departments quickly got the fire under control, but the barn was deemed a total loss. No injuries were reported.

## Felon remains on ballot for city council

**TX** HOUSTON — A felon will remain on the ballot in the runoff for a seat on the Houston City Council.

The Houston Chronicle reported that a Harris County judge refused to remove Cynthia Bailey from the Dec. 14 runoff election.

Bailey finished second in the Nov. 5 election to Tarsha Jackson in the 14-person race to replace term-limited Councilman Jerry Davis. Third-place finisher Renee Jefferson-Smith sued to remove Bailey from the ballot because of her conviction in 2007 for theft of more than \$200,000.

## Man arrested for arson after 4 fires

**OR** TIGARD — Police in Oregon arrested a man suspected of starting four fires in one day.

Tigard Police said Joseph Tyler Martinez, 26, was arrested for arson.

Police said the first fire caused serious damage to the outside of a business. A second fire burned a trash bin at a shelter, while a third small fire caused minor damage to a fence. There was no damage from the fourth fire.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# Kyle Busch wins 2nd NASCAR top title

Associated Press

HOMESTEAD, Fla. — Kyle Busch casually collected the championship flag from his team and did a slow, subdued celebratory lap. The most polarizing driver in NASCAR had just won his second Cup title and wanted to soak in the moment with his true fans.

He didn't do his customary bow to the crowd, asked NASCAR for permission to take his 4-year-old son along for the ride to Victory Lane, and when the duo finally got there it was then that Busch remembered he'd just won both Sunday's season finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway and his second NASCAR title.

"I do remember taking the white flag and crossing underneath that — I had some tears rolling down my eyes for the last lap and I was just like, 'Come on, man, we've still got to finish this damn thing. Don't be such a siss,'" Busch said. "Emotions were starting to set in. I probably didn't know where the hell my mind was at. I knew we had won and won big and were being a bit more subdued about it."

Busch emerged from the Joe Gibbs Racing juggernaut as NASCAR's latest champion, winning his second title Sunday after teammates Denny Hamlin and Martin Truex Jr. were slowed by pit-road gaffes. He snapped a 21-race losing streak and beat Hamlin, Truex and rival Kevin Harvick for the Cup.

Busch joined seven-time champion Jimmie Johnson as the only active drivers with multiple titles. He's the 16th driver in NASCAR history to win multiple championships, and one of only five to win titles in both the Cup Series and the second-tier Xfinity Series.

The No. 18 crew climbed the pit wall and handed Busch the championship flag for his post-race celebration, and he was met on the frontstretch by son Brexton, who immediately asked: "Dad, are you going to throw me in the air again?" about their celebratory tradition. He also asked to join his father for the final ride into Victory Lane.

Busch had raced for a second championship in each of the last three seasons and fell short a year ago in part because of his crew's own pit error. This time, it was Truex and Hamlin bitten by silly mistakes. Truex dominated early but fell a lap back after his crew put tires on the wrong side of his Toyota.

"You've got to be perfect, one mistake probably cost us the championship," Truex said. "I've never had that happen. I don't even know what to say. It doesn't drive good with the left front on the right front, though, I can tell you that. It's very tight."

Hamlin fell out of contention when an aggressive aerodynamic gamble backfired

## Harvick, Ford overmatched

HOMESTEAD, Fla. — Ford v Toyota flopped for the blue oval at the track.

Kevin Harvick was the lone Ford driver in the championship field, outnumbered by three Joe Gibbs Racing drivers and their Toyotas. Harvick led the first 20 laps in the No. 4 Ford for Stewart-Haas Racing but never made a serious push down the stretch against the JGR fleet. He finished fourth, behind champion Kyle Busch in the No. 18 Toyota, and failed to bring home his first championship since 2014.

Toyota had three of the four drivers vying for the title Sunday, the latest and clearest show of strength for the automaker in NASCAR's premier series. Toyota finished with 19 victories in 36 races this season, all of them from JGR and a modern-era NASCAR record. The powerhouse program placed Busch, Denny Hamlin and Martin Truex Jr. in the final four.

Ford had been able to somewhat keep pace with Toyota thanks to Harvick's prowess as well as that of Team Penske stars Brad Keselowski and 2018 series champ Joey Logano.

"We just needed to do something different," Harvick said. "Those guys, they were so much better than us on the long run. Really our best chance was to have a caution there at the end

and never got one."

Harvick, who won four races this season, was solid on short runs and off restarts, but crew chief Rodney Childers couldn't get much out of the long runs.

"Just no cautions and nothing happening," Harvick said. "When that happens, you know, you just get spread out."

The 43-year-old Harvick made the championship four for the fifth time in the last six years and finished third in the final standings. Harvick has never finished outside the top-five at Homestead since he joined SHR in 2014. He scored his first win at the track in 2014 to earn his first Cup championship.

Ford and Chevrolet remain in chase mode, trying to find a way to catch up to a Toyota organization that romped its way to 19 wins through the season.

It wasn't a total loss for Ford this weekend. "Ford v Ferrari" raced to an estimated \$31 million debut and a No. 1 finish at the box office. The movie dramatizes the Ford Motor Co.'s push to unseat perennial power Ferrari at France's 24 Hours of Le Mans race in 1966.

From The Associated Press

because a large piece of tape placed across the front of his car caused his engine to overheat. Hamlin had to make an unscheduled pit stop to remove the tape.

Truex recovered to finish second, but Hamlin didn't have enough time to overcome the miscue and was a disappointing 10th.

"I feel like I did all I could. I don't feel I could have done a better job. I didn't leave anything out there," Hamlin said. "I was thinking we got a chance and it just didn't work out. We got a little aggressive there and it cost us."

Harvick, the only Ford driver in the title field, never had anything on long runs for the Gibbs cars and finished fourth.

"On the restarts I could do what I wanted to do and hold them off for 15 or 20 laps," Harvick said. "This race has come down to that every year. You kind of play toward that and they were quite a bit better than us on the long run. We had a really good car for those first 15 to 20 laps on the restarts and had a lot of speed, we just never got to try to race for it there."

The finale pitted a trio of Toyota drivers from Hall of Fame owner Gibbs against Harvick, the hand-picked driver of former Gibbs protege Tony Stewart at Stewart-Haas Racing. The Gibbs group had the edge

based on its tremendous season — Busch's win was the 19th out of 36 races for the organization — and the trio insisted it would continue its note-sharing all weekend.

Hamlin, Harvick and Truex had all won playoff races, and Hamlin's win at Phoenix last week gave him all the momentum. But with friend and fan Michael Jordan in attendance, Hamlin failed to win his first championship in his third try. Hamlin is the only driver in the final four without a Cup title.

"Our year was fantastic in every way you can think of, and it just didn't pan out in one race in our favor," said Hamlin, who won the Daytona 500 and five other races.

Busch gave Gibbs his fifth Cup title and bookended a season in which the Gibbs cars opened the year 1-2-3 at the Daytona 500. Gibbs this entire year has been mourning the death of his son, JGR co-chairman J.D. Gibbs, and the organization promoted a "Do it for J.D." theme the entire weekend.

The season ended with a 1-2-3 finish in the finale as it was Busch, Truex and Erik Jones across the finish line for Gibbs.

"I know J.D. was looking down on us all year long," Busch said. "I mean, damn, what a season Joe Gibbs Racing put together."

Busch gave Toyota its third drivers' championship in five seasons.



## NFL roundup

## Vikings overcome 20-0 deficit, stun Broncos

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The Minnesota Vikings erased a 20-0 halftime deficit with touchdowns on each of their four drives in the second half, fending off the Denver Broncos by forcing three straight incomplete passes in the end zone over the final 10 seconds to preserve a 27-23 victory on Sunday.

This was the first time in five years — a span of 100 games including the playoffs — that an NFL team won after trailing by 20 or more points after two quarters.

Kirk Cousins went 29-for-35 for 319 yards and three scores for the Vikings (8-3), overcoming a system-wide failure in the first half that included a lost fumble of his during a sack that led to one of three field goals by Brandon McManus for the Broncos (3-7).

Cousins hit Stefon Diggs for a 54-yard touchdown pass that brought the crowd noise to a deafening level and cut the lead to 23-20. McManus went wide right from 41 yards on his fourth attempt, and Cousins found Kyle Rudolph wide open for a 32-yard score on the next possession with 6:10 left. Both of those throws by Cousins came off bootleg rollouts to his left, the type of passing play he has long thrived on.

Brandon Allen, the fill-in quarterback after the injury to Joe Flacco and the impending debut of rookie Drew Lock, admirably drove the Broncos to the cusp of a comeback of their own with a drive that included three fourth-down conversions.

With first-and-goal from the 4, but only 10 seconds and no timeouts remaining, Allen had three chances at the winner. Trae Waynes knocked down the first one, Jayron Kearse had a hand on the second one and the last try for Noah Fant sailed past the rookie tight end after he and Kearse tussled for position.

**Ravens 41, Texans 7:** Lamar Jackson threw four touchdown passes, ran for 86 yards and helped host Baltimore roll past Houston to its sixth straight victory.

The game was billed as a matchup between first-place AFC teams and two of the best double-threat quarterbacks in the NFL.

Jackson and the Baltimore defense made it a one-sided affair, and the Ravens (8-2) are riding their longest winning streak since a seven-game run in 2000, their first Super Bowl season.

Deshaun Watson went 18-for-29 for 169 yards with a lost fumble and an interception for the Texans (6-4). Houston fell behind 34-0 before Carlos Hyde ran for a 41-yard touchdown with 7:10 remaining.

**Patriots 17, Eagles 10:** Julian Edelman threw a go-ahead 15-yard touchdown pass to Phillip Dorsett and visiting New England rallied for a victory over Philadelphia.

Tom Brady threw for 216 yards, leading New England (9-1) back from a 10-0 deficit, but it was Edelman, the Patriots' wide receiver, who found a target in the end zone. The Pats defense sacked Carson Wentz five times and forced one turnover.

This was nothing like the thrilling matchup between the two teams in Super Bowl 52. Nick Foles led the Eagles to a 41-33 victory over the Patriots to capture the franchise's first NFL title since 1960. The teams set or tied 29 Super Bowl records, including most yards in any game (1,151) in league history.

**49ers 36, Cardinals 26:** Jimmy Garoppolo threw a 25-yard touchdown pass to Jeff Wilson Jr. with 31 seconds left for his fourth TD pass of the game and host San Francisco rallied for a victory over Arizona.

The 49ers' rally from a 16-0 hole marked the biggest deficit erased by the team in a win since rallying from 20 points down to beat Philadelphia on Oct. 2, 2011. San Francisco also overcame a 17-point deficit in the NFC title game at Atlanta following the 2012 season.

**Rams 17, Bears 7:** Todd Gurley and Malcolm Brown ran for touchdowns and Los Angeles was able to ground out a victory over visiting Chicago.

Gurley tied a season high with 97 yards on 25 carries, scoring on a 1-yard carry up the middle with 3:28 remaining in the first half to extend Los Angeles' lead to 10-0.

The Bears (4-6) ran 22 more plays than the Rams but averaged only 3.6 yards. Mitchell Trubisky was 24 of 43 for 190 yards with a touchdown and interception. Chase Daniel replaced Trubisky for the final series.

**Saints 34, Buccaneers 17:** Drew Brees threw for 228 yards and three touchdowns to lead New Orleans over host Tampa Bay.

The NFC South leaders (8-2) rebounded from a 26-9 loss to struggling Atlanta, with NFL receptions leader Michael Thomas becoming the first player in league history with 90-plus catches in the first 10 games of a season and Brees tossing TD passes of 16 yards to Thomas, 3 yards to Jared Cook and 6 yards to Ted Ginn Jr. after being held out of the end zone by the Falcons.

**Cowboys 35, Lions 27:** Dak Prescott threw for 444 yards and three touchdowns, lifting visiting Dallas over Detroit.

The Cowboys (6-4) have won three of four games, leaning on the league's top offense.

**Colts 33, Jaguars 13:** Jacoby Brissett threw one touchdown pass, ran for another score and used an impressive ground game to get host Indianapolis back on track with a victory over Jacksonville.

The Colts (6-4) ended a two-game losing streak and pulled back into a tie with Houston for the AFC South lead.

**Bills 37, Dolphins 20:** Josh Allen tied a career high with three touchdown passes and ran for another score to help visiting Buffalo complete a season sweep of Miami.

The Dolphins couldn't keep up against the Bills' smothering defense. Buffalo totaled a season-high seven sacks and allowed only 23 yards rushing.

The victory gave the Bills (7-3) their best 10-game record since 1999, but they won for only the second time in the past four games.

**Falcons 29, Panthers 3:** Atlanta intercepted Kyle Allen four times and sacked him five times, Kenjon Barner returned a punt 78 yards for a touchdown and the visiting Falcons beat Carolina for their second straight lopsided win against an NFC South foe.

The Falcons (3-7) had only two interceptions all season — and none since Week 2 against the Eagles — but intercepted Allen three times in the first half to build a 20-0 lead.

Matt Ryan improved to 7-1 in his past eight starts against the Panthers, throwing for 311 yards including a 6-yard touchdown pass to Calvin Ridley.

**Jets 34, Redskins 17:** Sam Darnold more than made up for an ill-timed interception by throwing for 293 yards and a career-high four touchdowns, and New York routed rookie quarterback Dwayne Haskins and host Washington for its second consecutive victory.

Darnold was 19 of 30 passing and tossed touchdowns to Daniel Brown, Robby Anderson, Ryan Griffin and former Redskins receiver Jamison Crowder. Despite getting picked off deep in his own territory by Jon Bostic, the 2018 third overall pick bounced back and now has 11 TDs and 10 INTs this season.

**Raiders 17, Bengals 10:** Derek Carr passed for 292 yards and a touchdown, Josh Jacobs had his fourth 100-yard game in the past six weeks, and host Oakland beat winless Cincinnati.

Maxx Crosby had a team rookie-record four sacks as the Raiders harassed Bengals rookie quarterback Ryan Finley and shut down Cincinnati's offense after Joe Mixon had given it a lift in the first half.

## NHL roundup

# Karlsson, Fleury lead Vegas in win over Calgary

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — William Karlsson had his third straight multipoint game, Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 34 shots for his league high-tying 10th victory this season and the Vegas Golden Knights beat the Calgary Flames 6-0 on Sunday night.

Fleury, who improved to 14-4-1 all-time against Calgary, got his fifth career shutout against the Flames and 58th all time, which moved him into a tie for 19th in NHL history with Jon Ross Roach.

Karlsson had two goals and an assist, giving him seven goals and seven assists over the last 11 games for Vegas and a team-leading 23 points.

Paul Stastny, Max Pacioretty and Cody Eakin also scored for Vegas, while defenseman Nate Schmidt had four assists, a new career-high for the defenseman for points in a game.

Cam Talbot made 31 saves to drop to 1-5-0 this season for Calgary, which has never won inside T-Mobile Arena.

**Blackhawks 4, Sabres 1:** Patrick Kane extended his goal-scoring streak to six games, and host Chicago got its fourth straight win.

Kirby Dach scored twice as the resurgent Blackhawks improved to 6-1-1 in their last eight. Jonathan Toews added his fourth of the season, and Corey Crawford made 33 saves.

Kane has eight goals and nine assists during a nine-game point streak.

Jack Eichel scored his fifth goal in two days, but banged-up Buffalo lost for the seventh time in eight games. Carter Hutton had 23 saves.

The Sabres played without forward Kyle Okposo, who left the previous game with a possible head injury. Okposo accidentally collided with Ottawa defenseman Ron Hainsey after a line change.

## Top 25 roundup

# UConn upsets No. 15 Florida

Associated Press

STORRS, Conn. — Christian Vital scored 15 points and made a key late steal and UConn upset No. 15 Florida 62-59 on Sunday.

Tyler Polley also scored 15 points, and Josh Carlton added 13 for the Huskies (2-1).

A layup by Florida's Keyontae Johnson with just over a minute to go cut the lead to 60-59, but those would be the last points the Gators scored. Vital hit two free throws with 17 seconds left and Florida had a chance to tie. But Alterique Gilbert tipped the ball out of Johnson's hands and Vital grabbed it and dribbled away.

Kerry Blackshear Jr. had 15 points and eight rebounds for Florida (2-2).

**No. 4 Louisville 87, North Carolina Central 58:** Jordan Nwora scored 17 points and

the host Cardinals routed the Eagles.

Louisville (4-0) once again had the hot hand on offense. The Cardinals entered the game ninth in the country in shooting at 54.1%, and they shot 66.7% against North Carolina Central. It marked the fifth time in the past decade Louisville shot better than 60 percent from the floor, and was its best shooting effort since making 65.2% in an 80-68 victory at Pittsburgh on Jan. 25, 2015.

**No. 12 Seton Hall 83, Saint Louis 66:** Myles Powell scored 26 points and Sandro Mamukelashvili added 17 in the Pirates' victory over the visiting Billikens.

Quincy McKnight added 12 points to help Seton Hall (3-1) rebound from a 76-73 loss to No. 3 Michigan State on Thursday night.

**No. 14 Oregon 67, Texas Arlington 47:** Payton Pritchard scored 24 points to lead the host Ducks in a ragged victory.

The senior guard also led Oregon (4-0) with eight rebounds and three assists.

**No. 18 Saint Mary's 79, Cal Poly 48:** At Moraga, Calif., Jordan Ford scored 21 points, Malik Fitts added 12 and the Gaels beat the Mustangs.

Saint Mary's (3-1) hasn't lost to Cal Poly since Nov. 26, 2006.

**No. 19 Arizona 83, New Mexico State 53:** Zeke Nnaji did not miss a shot for the second straight game while scoring 19 points, Jemarl Baker added 16 points and the host Wildcats rolled over the Aggies.

Arizona (4-0) took advantage of short-handed New Mexico State (2-2) to be at their free-flowing offensive best, shooting 53%.

## NBA roundup

# Kings edge streaking Celtics

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Buddy Hield scored a season-high 35 points, Richaun Holmes hit two free throws with 13.3 seconds remaining to give Sacramento the lead, and the Kings snapped the Boston Celtics' 10-game winning streak with a 100-99 victory Sunday.

Marcus Smart had a chance to win it for Boston, but his runner in the lane hung on the rim before trickling off as the buzzer sounded.

Jaylen Brown scored 18 points and Kemba Walker had 15 for Boston. Jayson Tatum and Daniel Theis each added 14. The Celtics lost for the first time since their Oct. 23 opener at Philadelphia.

**Lakers 122, Hawks 101:** LeBron James scored 12 of his 33 points during a breathtak-

ing opening nine minutes for host Los Angeles, which raced to a 25-point lead and handed Atlanta its second ugly loss in 24 hours at Staples Center.

Trae Young scored 31 for the Hawks, who were routed 150-101 on Saturday night by the Clippers.

**Nuggets 131, Grizzlies 114:** Jamal Murray rebounded from a poor shooting night with a season-best 39 points in visiting Denver's victory over Memphis.

Paul Millsap had 23 points and Juancho Hernangomez finished with 15 to help Denver win for the sixth time in seven games. Jaren Jackson Jr. led Memphis with 22 points, hitting a career-high five three-pointers.

**Magic 125, Wizards 121:** Nikola Vucevic had 30 points and 17 rebounds and Evan Fournier added 25 points and

nine assists to help host Orlando hold off Washington.

Markelle Fultz scored 19 points and Terrance Ross had 15 in Orlando's fourth win in five games.

**Pelicans 108, Warriors 100:** J.J. Redick scored 26 points, hitting his sixth three-pointer of the game from the left corner with 1:09 left, and New Orleans beat visiting Golden State.

Eric Paschall scored 30 points for injury-depleted Golden State. The Warriors have lost seven in row to fall to an NBA-worst 2-12.

**76ers 114, Cavaliers 95:** Tobias Harris scored 27 points, Joel Embiid had 14 and Philadelphia routed host Cleveland.

Collin Sexton had 17 points for Cleveland. The Cavaliers nearly pulled off an upset in Philadelphia on Tuesday night before falling 98-97.