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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Stage set for debate on Choice reform

BY NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs estimated the funds that allow veterans to receive health care in the private sector will last until the end of the year — a projection that establishes a new deadline for when Congress needs to come up with a long-term solution for the Veterans Choice Program.

President Donald Trump signed legislation Aug. 12 immediately providing \$2.1 billion for the Choice program to prevent a funding crisis. VA Secretary David Shulkin had told lawmakers in June that the account was quickly and unexpectedly running out of money because of increased demand.

Now, the money — originally estimated to last until February 2018 — is again being spent faster than predicted.

Shulkin told reporters Wednesday that he's confident

Choice funding will last at least through the end of the year and rebuked a report from The Associated Press that the program would run out of money as early as December. The VA is spending about \$280 million each month to send veterans into the private sector for health care, he said.

"It's a very, very hard program to do accurate financial projections," Shulkin said. "We've always said it's important that Congress needs to act this fall, this legislative session, so we do not get into a funding crisis."

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., sent a letter to Shulkin on Wednesday asking for an accounting of the program, expressing concern about another unexpected shortfall. McCain helped create the Choice program in 2014 in response to the VA wait-time scandal that originated at the Phoenix VA hospital.

Tiffany Haverly, communi-

cations director for the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and the group's chairman, Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., said Roe's office is receiving regular updates on Choice program spending. At the same time, the House committee is working on legislation to reform how the VA balances private-sector care, Haverly said Friday.

"We are continuing to monitor the account and working to move legislation to reform VA's community care programs so veterans can continue accessing care should funding be expended sooner than expected," she said.

House and Senate lawmakers undertook reform efforts following complaints from veterans that the Choice program is complex and bureaucratic. Current rules allow veterans to seek care outside the VA only if they can't receive appointments within 30 days or they live more than 40 miles from VA facilities.

Shulkin said Wednesday that

in order to avoid another funding shortfall, he wants legislation passed before Congress leaves for Thanksgiving break in mid-November.

"I expect we will get this done," he said. "We are in close communication with Congress and the White House on this. No one wants to see us putting veterans at risk."

It's expected the House and the Senate will introduce their versions of Choice program reform in the next few weeks.

Shulkin has devised his own proposal, which is under review by the White House Office of Management and Budget. An early discussion draft of Shulkin's proposal describes a performance-based system in which veterans would be allowed to seek private-sector health care if the quality of VA care in a certain area isn't up to par with that of other providers in that community.

VA publicizes Shulkin's travel schedule amid scrutiny

BY NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs made moves Friday to publicize Secretary David Shulkin's travel schedule following scrutiny over the cost of government-funded travel by other Cabinet members.

The VA announced it will post Shulkin's itineraries of international and domestic trips, as well as who accompanies him and whether he uses private or government aircraft. On Friday, the information was online at the VA's new "Secretary's Travel" page (<https://www.va.gov/opa/secvatravel/>).

"Veterans and taxpayers have a right to know about my official travel as secretary, and posting this information online for all to see will do just that," Shulkin said in a statement.

The announcement came two days after the House Oversight Committee initiated an investigation into the travel of President Donald Trump's administration.

Rep. Trey Gowdy, R-S.C., and Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., leaders of the committee, sent letters Wednesday to the White House and 24 federal agencies, including the VA, asking for senior officials' travel details. The lawmakers cited federal

law that official travel should be "expeditious" and "by no means should include personal use."

Gowdy and Cummings requested responses from each agency by 5 p.m. on Oct. 10.

In August, Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin used military aircraft to fly from New York City to Washington, costing about \$25,000, ABC News reported. The Treasury's Office of Inspector General is reviewing another of Mnuchin's trips, in which he used government aircraft to fly to Kentucky, where he spoke to business leaders and viewed the solar eclipse.

According to several reports, Mnuchin also requested to use a military jet to fly him and his

wife, Louise Linton, to their European honeymoon. The request was withdrawn later.

Another Cabinet member, Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, promised Thursday to repay about \$52,000 for his travel on private charter planes, which costs thousands of dollars more than commercial flights. On Friday, Price resigned in the midst of the controversy.

Also, multiple news outlets reported Scott Pruitt, who leads the Environmental Protection Agency, has taken at least four noncommercial flights since February, costing taxpayers more than \$58,000.

Suspicious package at Osan a false alarm

BY MARCUS FICHTL
Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — A suspicious package prompted Osan officials to evacuate the post office and nearby buildings for more than an hour on Friday but it turned out to be a false alarm.

The post office is in the same complex as the exchange and several fast-food restaurants and stalls on the sprawling base about 30 miles south of Seoul.

The 51st Security Forces Squadron received a phone call about 10:05 a.m. reporting the suspicious package, said Tech Sgt. Ashley Tyler, a 51st Fighter Wing spokeswoman.

She said they found a box

with a white powdery substance on the outside, prompting the evacuation.

“Explosive ordnance experts here checked the package and declared it safe,” Tyler told Stars and Stripes.

“At about 11:30 a.m., the suspicious package emergency was terminated and normal operations resumed,” he said.

The scare comes two years after the Air Force inadvertently shipped anthrax to Osan, exposing 22 airmen.

The event is still fresh in the minds of the local South Korean population, which routinely protests over fears of another accidental anthrax shipment.

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World War II-era shells detonated off Okinawa

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — More than 100 shells from World War II were disposed of during a controlled explosion Thursday in waters off Okinawa’s Naha Airport.

The 103 American-made 81mm mortar and 40mm field-artillery shells were found in the harbor last spring by metal detectors during shore-protection work for Naha’s port, a city spokesman said. It is believed to be the largest amount of wartime shells ever disposed of at one time on Okinawa.

“The disposal was conducted without any trouble,” the spokesman said.

The shells, which had been moved about 3 kilometers offshore of the airport’s runway, were detonated by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force about 11 a.m., the spokesman said. The surrounding area was off limits for approximately three hours.

Finding unexploded ordnance isn’t uncommon for the island prefecture.

The Battle of Okinawa, which happened in the spring and summer months of 1945, is known in Japan as the Typhoon of Steel because of the sheer ferocity of the fighting and the number of munitions expended.

On Sept. 23, a 110-pound bomb was neutralized near a Naha street popular with tourists. There have been controlled underwater explosions of dozens of other munitions in recent years.

Nearly 2,000 tons of unexploded munitions have been recovered and detonated by the nation’s self-defense forces since the island prefecture was returned to Japan in 1972, according to the 15th Brigade Okinawa of the Ground Self-Defense Force. That number does not include those disposed of by American forces before 1972.

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USS Lake Champlain gets new commander

BY TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A new commander has taken charge of a Navy cruiser that collided with a fishing vessel east of the Korean Peninsula earlier this year.

Capt. Jen Ellinger assumed command of the guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Champlain from Capt. Chris Cegielski on Thursday in San Diego, a Navy statement said.

Cegielski was in charge of the Ticonderoga-class cruiser when it collided with a South Korean fishing vessel on May 9.

The Navy hasn’t released many details about the accident, although the Lake Champlain was able to finish its 5½-month deployment before returning to San Diego in June.

The accident was one of several incidents involving U.S. warships in the Pacific this year.

In January, the USS Antie-

tam ran aground and spilled roughly 1,100 gallons of hydraulic fluid into Tokyo Bay; in June, a collision between the USS Fitzgerald and a merchant ship killed seven sailors; and last month, a collision between the USS John S. McCain and a merchant vessel killed 10 sailors.

Unlike those three ships, which belong to the Yokosuka, Japan-based 7th Fleet, the Lake Champlain is assigned to the San Diego-based 3rd Fleet.

Third Fleet Spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Tim Hawkins said the change of command was routine and was not related to the May collision.

The captains of both the Antietam and the Fitzgerald were relieved after the collisions involving their ships.

Ellinger assumes command of the cruiser after a roughly one-year tour as deputy commodore for the San Diego-based Destroyer Squadron 21.

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Parakeet found at US base reunited with elderly owner

BY LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A blue-and-white parakeet found near Stars and Stripes’ office in western Tokyo has been reunited with its Japanese owner in neighboring Kanagawa Prefecture.

The mysterious avian visitor, found Sept. 14 in the newspaper’s Yokota parking lot, fluttered into the hearts of Stripes employees who launched a social media search for its caretaker.

Nine Yokota residents who saw a Facebook post about the bird offered to adopt it; however, it didn’t take long to track

down where it really belonged.

Within hours, Kumi Sato saw a photograph of her mother’s missing parakeet on Twitter and got in touch.

It turned out that the bird — named Ao-chan — had absconded through an open doorway at its home in Sagami City on Aug. 5. It survived a nearly 15-mile gantlet of cat-filled neighborhoods, territorial crows and military aircraft propellers.

Ao-chan is a therapy pet for Sato’s elderly mother, who suffers from dementia. The bird’s sweet nature and beautiful plumage helped calm her down, she said.

President calls critics 'ingrates' for panning post-hurricane effort

Associated Press

BRANCHBURG, N.J.—President Donald Trump on Sunday scoffed at “politically motivated ingrates” who had questioned his administration’s commitment to rebuilding Puerto Rico after a hurricane and said the federal government had done “a great job with the almost impossible situation.”

The tweets coming from a president ensconced in his New Jersey golf club sought to defend Washington’s efforts to mobilize and coordinate recovery efforts on a U.S. territory in dire straits almost two weeks after Hurricane Maria struck.

San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz on Friday begged the president, who is set to visit Puerto Rico on Tuesday, to “make sure somebody is in charge that is up to the task of saving lives,” and appealed for help “to save us from dying.”

Trump’s weekend tweets have shown him to be contemptuous of complaints of a laggard U.S. response to the natural disaster.

“We have done a great job with the almost impossible situation in Puerto Rico. Outside of the Fake News or politically motivated ingrates,” he tweeted on Sunday.

Cruz told “This Week” on ABC: “I know the good heart of the American people, and I know that when a mayday

sound goes off, they come to the rescue.”

The day before, Trump had tweeted, “Such poor leadership ability by the Mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico, who are not able to get their workers to help.”

Trump’s critical response was an unusually pointed rebuke in the heat of a disaster. But it was a reminder of the president’s unrelenting penchant for punching back against critics, whatever the circumstances.

Ohio’s Republican Gov. John Kasich, another Trump critic, echoed the outrage.

“It’s not appropriate. I mean, when people are in the middle of the disaster, you don’t start trying to criticizing them,” he said on CNN. “I just — I don’t know what to say.”

Thousands more Puerto Ricans have received water and rationed food as an aid bottleneck began to ease. But many, especially outside the capital, remain desperate for necessities.

Trump’s administration has tried in recent days to combat the perception that he failed to quickly grasp the magnitude of Maria’s destruction and has given the U.S. commonwealth less attention than he’d bestowed on states like Texas, Louisiana and Florida after they were hit by hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

Trump says Tillerson ‘wasting his time’ on North Korea talks

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — President Donald Trump said Sunday that negotiating with North Korea is “wasting” time, criticizing his secretary of state over his efforts to defuse rising tensions over the communist state’s nuclear weapons program.

The comments, made in a series of morning tweets, came a day after Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that Washington has “lines of communication to Pyongyang” even as the two sides trade threats and personal insults.

“I told Rex Tillerson, our wonderful Secretary of State, that he is wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man,” Trump wrote, using his nickname for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

“Save your energy Rex, we’ll do what has to be done!” he added.

Trump has said in the past he would be willing to talk to Kim under the right conditions. But he has recently adopted a hard line, warning that military options are on the table.

Tillerson, meanwhile, has left the door open for dialogue

and said Saturday that the U.S. was probing the North’s willingness to talk. But he insisted that it was up to the North to halt missile launches.

“We have lines of communication to Pyongyang. We’re not in a dark situation, a blackout,” Tillerson told reporters during a visit to China. “We can talk to them; we do talk to them.”

He reiterated that Washington would not recognize North Korea as a nuclear power but also has no plans for regime change.

Tillerson, who met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and other top officials, didn’t elaborate and the State Department later appeared to walk back the remarks.

“North Korean officials have shown no indication that they are interested in or are ready for talks regarding denuclearization,” U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said in a statement.

North Korea has made alarming progress toward its goal of developing a nuclear-tipped missile that could reach the U.S. mainland. It has test-fired dozens of missiles, including two intercontinental ballistic missiles in July.

O.J. Simpson free after 9 years in prison for robbery

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Former football player O.J. Simpson is a free man Sunday after serving nine years for a botched hotel room heist in Las Vegas that brought the conviction and prison time he avoided in the killings of his ex-wife and her friend after his 1995 acquittal in the “trial of the century.”

Simpson was released at 12:08 a.m. PDT from Lovelock Correctional Center in northern Nevada, state prisons spokeswoman Brooke Keast told The Associated Press.

Tom Scotto, a close Simpson friend who lives in Naples, Fla., said by text message

that he was with Simpson following his release. Scotto didn’t respond to questions about where they were going or whether Simpson’s sister, Shirley Baker, of Sacramento, Calif., or his daughter, Arnelle Simpson, of Fresno, Calif., were with him.

The three had attended Simpson’s parole hearing in July at the same prison where Simpson spent his term and was released just minutes into the first day a parole board set for his possible release.

Simpson has said he wanted to move back to Florida, where he lived before his armed robbery conviction in Las Vegas for a September 2007 confrontation with two

sports memorabilia dealers.

Simpson, 70, gains his freedom after being granted parole at a hearing in July. Unlike the last time he went free, 22 years ago, he will face restrictions — up to five years of parole supervision — and he’s unlikely to escape public scrutiny as the man who morphed from charismatic football hero, movie star and TV personality into suspected killer and convicted armed robber.

Simpson was looking forward to reuniting with his family, eating a steak and some seafood and moving back to Florida, his attorney Malcolm LaVergne said recently.

Man kills 2 in knife attack at France train station

Associated Press

MARSEILLE, France — A man with a knife attacked people at the main train station in the southeastern French city of Marseille on Sunday, killing two women before soldiers fatally shot the assailant, officials said.

French police warned people to avoid Saint Charles train station, tweeting that an operation was underway. Soldiers and police took up positions outside the station, which was evacuated.

Three police officials said one woman was stabbed to death. Two of the officials said the other woman's throat was slit. The assailant was shot dead by soldiers who were patrolling the station. The officials were speaking on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak pub-

licly about the operation.

The Paris prosecutor's office said a counterterrorism investigation has been opened. No further details were immediately given, including the motive for the attack. Interior Minister Gerard Collomb tweeted that he would travel to the scene.

About 7,000 French soldiers patrol major tourist sites, places of worship, train stations and airports across France. The so-called Sentinelle Operation has been in place since deadly extremist attacks in France in 2015.

Earlier this month, four American college students were attacked with acid at the same train station in Marseille. At the time, French authorities said the assailant was suffering from a mental illness and it was not investigated as a terrorist attack.

Canadian police investigate attack on officer as terrorism

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — A car-and-knife attack on a police officer outside a football game and a high-speed chase of a moving van that left four people injured in the western city of Edmonton in Canada are being investigated as terrorist acts by a suspect who had an Islamic State flag in his vehicle, Canadian authorities said Sunday.

Edmonton police Chief Rod Knecht said officers took the suspect, later described as a 30-year-old Edmonton man, into custody, and he is believed to have acted alone. Knecht said the flag was found in the car that hit the officer. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called it a terrorist attack.

The attack began outside a Canadian Football League game at Commonwealth Stadium on Saturday night when police say a white Chevrolet Malibu rammed a traffic-control barricade and sent an officer flying 15 feet into the air.

Knecht said the driver then got out and attacked the officer with a knife before fleeing on foot.

The officer was taken to a hospital and treated for injuries that weren't life-threatening, and a manhunt was launched.

"It's not critical," Knecht said of the officer's condition.

A few hours later, a U-Haul van was stopped at an impaired driving checkpoint north of downtown. Knecht said the name of the driver was similar to the name of the registered owner of the car that hit the officer.

He said the van then sped off toward downtown with police in pursuit.

Police said the vehicle swerved at pedestrians at crosswalks throughout the chase. Four people were hurt, but the extent of their injuries was not immediately known.

The van eventually flipped near a downtown hotel and the suspect was arrested. Knecht said the man was known to police but did not release his name.

"It is believed at this time that these two incidents are related," Knecht said. "It was determined that these incidents are being investigated as acts of terrorism."

Knecht said Edmonton police are working with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's National Security Enforcement Team and other Canadian security agencies. He advised the public to remain vigilant and observant of their surroundings.

Witness Pat Hannigan told reporters he saw police pull a man from the windshield of the toppled van and estimated that 30 police cars had been chasing it.

Melee during Catalonia vote

Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain — Spanish riot police smashed their way into polling stations in Catalonia and fired rubber bullets Sunday at protesters outside one Barcelona polling station to try to halt a disputed independence referendum. Over 460 people, including some police, were injured in the melee, officials said.

The officers fired the rubber bullets while trying to clear protesters who were trying to prevent National Police cars from leaving after police had confiscated ballot boxes from the voting center. The Spanish government has ordered police to stop the voting process in Catalonia, saying it's illegal.

The chaotic confrontations led to a war of words as each side blamed the other for the deteriorating situation.

"Police brutality will shame forever the Spanish state," Catalan President Carles Puigdemont said as crowds cheered.

Police acted with "firmness and proportionality," declared Spanish Deputy Prime Minister Soraya Saenz de Santamaria, adding that authorities weren't going after voters but referendum material.

Catalonia's government spokesman said 337 people have been injured during the police crackdown Sunday; Spain's Interior Ministry said 11 police officers were injured.

The regional government's spokesman, Jordi Turull, blamed the violence on Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy. He said actions by Spanish National Police and Civil Guard forces on Sunday were politically motivated and showed "a clear motivation to harm citizens."

Catalan international affairs director, Raul Romeva, said regional authorities would appeal to European authorities to examine the violations of human rights by Rajoy's government.

Manuel Condeminas, 48, an IT manager who tried to block police from driving away with the ballot boxes, said agents had kicked them before using their batons and firing the projectiles, which were ball-shaped.

Elsewhere, Civil Guard officers, wearing helmets and carrying shields, used a hammer to break the front door glass and a lock cutter to break into the Sant Julia de Ramis sports center near the city of Girona. At least one woman was injured outside the building and wheeled away on a stretcher by paramedics.

Clashes broke out less than an hour after polls opened, and not long before Catalonia regional President Carles Puigdemont was expected to turn up to vote at the sports center. Polling station workers inside the building reacted peacefully, breaking into songs and chants challenging the officers' presence.

Puigdemont was forced to vote in Cornella de Terri, near the northern city of Girona, his spokesman told The Associated Press.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Coach kicks 2 off team after anthem protest

TX CROSBY — The football coach of a private high school near Houston has thrown two players off the team after one knelt and another raised a fist during the national anthem prior to a game.

Head coach Ronnie Mitchem told the Houston Chronicle that he had an understanding with his players at Victory and Praise Christian Academy in Crosby that they would not protest during the anthem.

Mitchem, a former Marine, says he doesn't oppose acts of protest but said doing so during the anthem is offensive to veterans and others.

After the anthem concluded Friday, he told the two players to remove their uniforms and that they were dismissed from the team.

The mother of one of the players says she supports the players' actions and considered Mitchem's punishment excessive.

Cops: Friends unwitting accomplices in theft

MT GREAT FALLS — Police in Montana say a man told friends he needed help moving and got their unwitting help in stealing \$40,000 worth of items from another man's home.

One of the friends rented a U-Haul without knowing it would be used in a suspected crime.

The other told police he became suspicious and left after he saw military medals in the Great Falls home.

He doubted Patrick Joseph Adams Jr., 36, served in the military.

Investigators said the true homeowner came home later that night, found his home had

been burglarized and called 911.

Prosecutors charged Adams on Thursday with burglary and criminal mischief, both felonies.

Troopers: Man threw kitten from moving car

NY GRANVILLE — State troopers said an upstate New York man was arrested after witnesses reported he threw a kitten from the window of a moving pickup last week.

New York State Police arrested Christopher Normile on animal cruelty and traffic charges Friday.

The Post-Star of Glens Falls reported that Normile was arrested after witnesses saw the kitten fly from his Chevrolet truck on Route 22 on Tuesday.

The newspaper said the 4-month-old orange kitten was treated at a nearby animal shelter for minor injuries. It said the kitten already has been adopted.

Burglars caught on wildlife camera

SC CAMDEN — Two burglars were captured by an outdoor wildlife camera in South Carolina.

Kershaw County Sheriff Jim Matthews said a homeowner's camera recorded images of the thieves, who are accused of stealing a second camera from the home and electronics from other homes.

Matthews said an officer from another county and a resident identified the men, one of whom was recorded urinating off the front porch of a home.

Matthews said Shondale Ingham, 34, and Sandy Tarte, 48, are charged with five counts of burglary each.

Man in prison despite nudist-exempt claim

PA YORK — A Pennsylvania man will spend up to three years in prison for sharing child pornography images online despite his claim that he should be exempt from prosecution as a "third-generation nudist."

Donald Herbert Webb Jr., 69, was sentenced Wednesday by a York County judge after pleading guilty in June to the dissemination charge.

State police said they tracked down the Manheim Township man in a motel in February after receiving dozens of tips about porn sharing by Webb since 2013 through the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Police said Webb told them the images were legal because he was just sharing images collected by other nudists, noting his father and grandfather also were nudists. But county prosecutors say some images showed children engaged in sexual acts or "adult" poses, which made the images illegal.

Fatal shooting sparked by dispute over pets

MA SPRINGFIELD — A fatal shooting in Springfield last week was apparently sparked by a dispute between neighbors over pets.

The Republican newspaper reported that Francisco Guadalupe, 42, of Springfield, was held without bail after pleading not guilty Wednesday to charges including first-degree murder and possession of a firearm without a license in the Tuesday shooting.

The 23-year-old victim's name has not been released.

According to police accounts of the shooting, the victim and

a neighbor began arguing and then fighting over each other's pets. The exact nature of the dispute was not disclosed.

Police said the neighbor called Guadalupe, who is either his stepfather or his mother's boyfriend, and when he arrived he shot the victim and fled, police allege.

Police: Man leaves baby, steals crane

MI MUSKEGON — Police said a man left a baby at a business in western Michigan before stealing a small, self-propelled crane from another business nearby.

Muskegon police said the 32-year-old Fruitland Township man took the construction crane Sept. 25, reportedly knocking down power lines and driving through a fence.

Police said a 2-month-old girl was discovered at a nearby business. The child didn't appear to be harmed, but was taken to a hospital for evaluation along with the man.

Police said the man indicated that he was the baby's father. Child Protective Services is involved in the investigation.

Steer that fled from county fair recovered

ME UNITY — A rare steer is back with its owner after escaping from a Maine county fair last month.

The Kennebec Journal reported Jason Stutheit captured his Wagyu steer Sept. 20 near the fairgrounds. Stutheit's 13-month-old steer jumped out of the stall while at the Common Ground County Fair in Unity.

The steer evaded searchers by traveling at night and cooling off in the shade during the day.

From wire reports

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No. 1 Crimson Tide crush Ole Miss

Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — The most dominant two-game stretch of football Alabama has ever played under Nick Saban — and that's saying something for a team with four national championship trophies in the last eight years — left the coach seemingly no more satisfied than if his players had just had a solid day of practice.

"We're pleased with the outcome," Saban said. "Nothing's perfect, but we need to certainly work on the things we need to improve."

Jalen Hurts threw two touchdown passes and ran for a score and No. 1 Alabama let loose on Mississippi 66-3 on Saturday night. The Crimson Tide emphatically put down a foe that had been problematic in recent years with its highest-scoring performance in 11 seasons under Saban.

It was the most points Alabama had scored in a game since 1979 and the first time it has scored 50-plus in consecutive Southeastern Conference games since 1945.

Alabama has scored at least 50 in four of

its last five SEC games, a fact that Saban was not the least bit interested in addressing after beating Ole Miss.

"You know what? I don't really care about how many points we scored in the last four games," Saban said. "I'm only worried about how many we score in the next game. So I don't have any feelings about how many points we scored in the last five games or however many SEC games we've played. I'm really worried how many we score in the next game and how we stop the next team that we play. That's the focus on what we need to dominate next."

Ole Miss (2-2, 0-1 Southeastern Conference) had won two of the last three meetings with Alabama (5-0, 2-0), scoring 109 points — more than any other Tide opponent over the last three years. The Rebels are the only SEC team to beat the Tide since 2014, and they handed Alabama its only home loss in the past 30 games at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

Saban said leading up to the game that sometimes the "ultimate disrespect" is when another team quietly believes it has

your number. Not anymore. Coach Hugh Freeze is gone — resigning amid a university investigation into his personal conduct — and the days of Ole Miss being a threat to Alabama left with him and all those blue-chippers he brought to Oxford.

"It was just us doing our job," said defensive back Minkah Fitzpatrick, who had eight tackles and a sack. "They come to our house and Coach Saban said we had to defeat somebody, not just win the game. I think we did a real good job of defeating them, demoralizing them, and playing our game."

The Tide made it look easy. Hurts hooked up with a wide-open Josh Jacobs down the middle for an 18-yard score early in the second quarter, and then mimicked holstering his finger guns after tossing the TD pass. Hurts tumbled over tacklers on a 10-yard keeper that made it 35-3 at the half.

In the last two weeks, Alabama has outscored Vanderbilt and Ole Miss by a combined 125-3. The 63-point margin was the Tide's largest since beating Vandy 66-3 in 1979.

Surging Troy upsets No. 25 LSU in Bayou

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — Troy quarterback Brandon Silvers basked in the scene of teammates cupping their hands around their ears to better hear the triumphant howls of several hundred traveling fans in a mostly empty, 102,000-seat Tiger Stadium.

Silvers was in the stands the last time Troy visited Death Valley in 2008, when LSU overcame a 31-3 second-half hole for the largest comeback in Tigers history. Memories of that game provided Silvers with particular satisfaction in being part of another Trojans squad that also took an early lead — and held on this time.

Jordan Chunn ran for 191 yards and a touchdown, Troy forced four turnovers and the surging Trojans upset the 25th-ranked Tigers 24-21 on Saturday night.

"Walking off that field man

and seeing the fans in the stands who made the trip to be able to send them home with a win is fantastic," said Troy quarterback Brandon Silvers, who was an efficient 16-for-28 for 157 yards without an interception.

"They were there for us and we got to be there for them tonight. This is a huge win for the program."

Troy (4-1) became the first team from outside the Southeastern Conference to win at Death Valley since UAB in 2000. They snapped the Tigers' streak of 49 straight home victories over non-league opponents.

Although the Tigers (3-2) were three-touchdown favorites, the result wasn't entirely unfathomable. LSU had looked vulnerable in a tense victory over Syracuse a week earlier, while Troy came in on a three-game winning streak and is among the favorites to win the Sun Belt Conference after a 10-victory 2016 campaign.

No. 2 Clemson beats No. 12 Virginia Tech

Associated Press

BLACKSBURG, Va. — Kelly Bryant left Virginia Tech defenders grasping at air, laying on the ground and wondering how they'd missed him.

And they missed him plenty, and No. 2 Clemson has three victories against Top 25 programs engineered by its new quarterback.

"When we got here, I could sense the energy and the excitement," Bryant said. "The coaches did a great job of preparing us."

Making just his fifth start, the junior ran for 94 yards, hit Tavien Feaster with a pass the speedy running back took 60 yards for a score and avoided mistakes as the Tigers beat the No. 12 Hokies 31-17 in a game that the Tigers had control of seemingly throughout.

He also might have reminded some of Deshaun Watson when he kept alive a scoring drive after scrambling left on a play

that started at the 5, dodging three Hokies, shaking free from an ankle tackle and eventually turning back upfield at the 23. He zig-zagged back to the 4.

"I just have a never quit attitude," Bryant said. "The guy tackled me by I just kept my legs going and saw the lane and tried to hit it."

Hokies defensive coordinator Bud Foster was more impressed by the player than the plays his guys missed.

"What a dynamic kid," Foster said. "We couldn't get him on the ground."

Added Tigers coach Dabo Swinney: "He decided to run 50 yards in a box. Unbelievable."

The defending national champion Tigers (5-0, 3-0 Atlantic Coast Conference) have also beaten No. 13 Auburn 14-6 and No. 17 Louisville 47-21. This triumph was their 12th in a row on the road, and fifth in a row against Virginia Tech, including the 2016 ACC championship.

Academies

Army, Navy pick up wins

Associated Press

WEST POINT, N.Y. — Army snapped its two-game losing streak and coach Jeff Monken was plenty happy — just not ecstatic.

Andy Davidson rushed for 100 yards and one touchdown, Ahmad Bradshaw threw his first scoring pass of the season, and Army beat UTEP 35-21 on Saturday on a windy day at Michie Stadium.

The Black Knights (3-2), coming off road losses to Ohio State and last week to Tulane, broke open a tight game with two touchdowns in the third quarter and another early in the fourth as Bradshaw finally displayed some nice touch throwing the ball. He finished 3 of 5 for 80 yards and rushed for 93 yards on 11 carries.

Navy 31, Tulsa 21: The Midshipmen have made a habit of utilizing a blistering running game and it was on full display again on Saturday.

Zach Abey rushed for 185 yards and three touchdowns on 36 carries, while also throwing for 90 yards, to help unbeaten Navy overcome an early 14-0 deficit to claim a victory over host Tulsa.

Malcolm Perry gained a career-high 104 yards and a touchdown on 10 rushes, while also adding 53 yards on two receptions, and Chris High ran for 89 yards on 13 carries as Navy (4-0, 3-0 The American) continued to display a devastating ground game. The Midshipmen rolled up 511 yards of total offense, 421 rushing.

Navy is 4-0 for the second time in the last three seasons and just the third time in the last 38 years.

New Mexico 56, Air Force 38: The Lobos' Richard McQuarley's five rushing touchdowns tied a New Mexico school record and he finished with 179 yards to help the Lobos overcome a sluggish first half to come back for a victory over the visiting Falcons.

Saints blank Fins in London

Associated Press

LONDON — It took Drew Brees and the New Orleans Saints six days and a first half before they finally found their footing in soggy Britain.

Brees threw for 268 yards and two touchdowns and the Saints scored all but three of their points in the second half as they defeated the Miami Dolphins 20-0 on a rainy Sunday afternoon at Wembley Stadium.

Michael Thomas had a touchdown reception in the third quarter, Alvin Kamara added one in the fourth and Will Lutz made two of his three field-goal attempts for New Orleans (2-2), which arrived for the game on Monday and won the lowest-scoring game ever held in London.

"The defense got a shutout," Brees said. "Offensively, we sustained drives, we did all the things you need to do for winning football."

It was expected to be a big homecoming for the Dolphins' Jay Ajayi, who was born in the city, but the running back finished with 46 yards on 12 carries.

Lutz missed his first try, a 41-yarder, wide right on the second play of the second quarter, and the teams threatened to have the first scoreless opening half since Week 14 of the 2011 season until Lutz connected from 43 yards with no

time remaining.

Brees found Thomas, who had eight catches for 89 yards, on a 4-yarder to push the score to 10-0 in the third quarter, and Kamara took a shovel pass from Brees 12 yards into the end zone with 3:57 remaining to wrap up the victory.

Kamara finished with 96 total yards, including 71 receiving, and fellow running back Mark Ingram ran for 45 yards.

Jay Cutler completed 20 of 28 passes for Miami (1-2), which finished with 185 yards, its fewest since its last shutout, a 19-0 loss at Buffalo on Dec. 22, 2013.

New Orleans' last shut out an opponent on Dec. 16, 2012, a 41-0 win against Tampa Bay.

"Obviously those first two weeks weren't what we aspired to be, we played two real good teams, the Vikings and Patriots," Brees said. "Basically now, two road wins ... I felt we had a great plan coming out here, obviously it's a tough trip coming across the pond."

Streif's Strife: Saints right tackle Zach Streif, active despite missing time in practice during the week with a knee injury, left the game after sustaining a knee injury on the first play of the fourth quarter when a Dolphins defender fell on his legs. He did not return.

US dominates at Presidents Cup

Associated Press

JERSEY CITY, N.J. — The International team lost just about everything but its sense of humor.

A long and demoralizing day at the Presidents Cup ended with Anirban Lahiri making two clutch birdies in a fourballs match that spared his team the indignity of watching the Americans celebrate another victory — on Saturday, no less.

From the sun rising over the Manhattan skyline until the chill of twilight at Liberty National, the Americans poured it on with such frightening force that they were one match away from clinching the cup one day early. The International team went 13 straight matches without winning until Lahiri and Kim won on the 18th hole.

"They got a standing ovation when they walked in our team room tonight," International captain Nick Price said with a smile. "First time we had seen a match go our way for a long

time."

And that means it will be a short Sunday.

The Americans had a 14½-3½ lead and need only one point from the 12 singles matches on Sunday.

This is a powerful U.S. team playing to its full potential, and the result is the biggest blowout since the Presidents Cup began in 1994.

Phil Mickelson set a Presidents Cup record with his 25th victory, breaking the record set by Tiger Woods. Mickelson hit two wedges into birdie range in the morning foursomes session with Kevin Kisner, when the Americans won three matches and halved the other.

Jordan Spieth's best intentions cost him a hole in a ruling rarely seen in match play, though that didn't matter. All that did was inspire Spieth and Patrick Reed to win yet another match. They are 8-1-3 as a partnership in the Presidents Cup and Ryder Cup.

Justin Thomas made another big birdie on the 14th hole and cupped his hand to his ear, covered by a beanie in the chill, to fire up a crowd that didn't need much help. Even in the lone loss of the day, the Americans made it hard on them. Charley Hoffman chipped in from short of the 17th green and body-slammed partner Kevin Chappell, a celebration that lasted only long enough for Lahiri to match his birdie with a 20-foot putt and keep a 1-up lead.

"Our goal coming in was to try to win every session, and we've done that up till now," Daniel Berger said after teaming with Thomas for his first point of the week. "Tomorrow, we're going to go out and try to do the exact same thing."

The 11-point margin is the largest going into the 12 singles matches, breaking the International record of nine points set in 1998 at Royal Melbourne, the only time it has ever won the Presidents Cup.

Red Sox beat Astros, clinching division

Associated Press

BOSTON — The hard chopper bounced off first baseman Mitch Moreland's glove and high into the air. Second baseman Brock Holt jumped to glove the ball and flipped it to first, where David Price was covering.

When the Boston Red Sox needed him, Price was there.

The one-time ace came out of the bullpen in relief of Drew Pomeranz and squelched a dangerous seventh-inning rally on Saturday, helping the Red Sox beat the Houston Astros 6-3 and clinch the first back-to-back AL East titles in franchise history.

With the win, the Red Sox avoided a possible tiebreaker against the rival New York Yankees.

"That was important: Just get it done today," star Hanley Ramirez said afterward in the Red Sox clubhouse, where music blared, the lockers were covered in

plastic and players wore goggles to protect their eyes from the spray of beer and domestic sparkling wine.

With the Boston win, the Yankees were left with a wild-card spot and a one-game matchup against the Minnesota Twins for the right to play Cleveland in the best-of-five AL Division Series. The Astros' loss meant the Indians, with the tiebreaker over Houston and 101 wins entering Saturday, clinched the best record in the AL.

Boston's win set up an immediate rematch with the AL West champion Astros in the ALDS, starting Thursday in Houston.

"This is a good team across the way. We're a good team. We're both division champions," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "We'll obviously see a lot of each other over the next 10 days."

Boston leads New York by two games with one to play, the remnants of what had been a five-game lead when the Red Sox

returned to Fenway Park for a season-ending homestand. A loss Saturday — coupled with the Yankees' 2-1 win over Toronto — would have forced Boston to use Chris Sale on the final day of the season to avoid a tiebreaker on Monday.

The AL East has not had needed a one-game playoff since Bucky Dent's homer cleared the Green Monster to help the Yankees eliminate Boston in 1978.

"We get a chance to get a couple of days rest," said manager John Farrell, who scratched Sale from Sunday's start and said Hector Velazquez will pitch instead. "Chris is deserving of a couple of extra days to just get some rest."

Mookie Betts homered and scored three times, and Pomeranz (17-6) had a two-hit shutout through six innings. With a heavy rain beginning to fall in the top of the seventh, the Astros rallied against Carson Smith and made it 5-2 before Price came in.

Roundup

Dodgers lock up home field through playoffs

Associated Press

DENVER — The Los Angeles Dodgers secured home-field advantage throughout the Major League Baseball playoffs Saturday by beating Colorado 5-3 on a night when the Rockies clinched their first postseason appearance since 2009.

It was the Dodgers' 103rd win of the season, the most since the team moved to Los Angeles. At 103-58, they're assured of the best record in baseball.

Cardinals 7, Brewers 6: Milwaukee was eliminated from playoff contention when it squandered a six-run lead in a loss to host St. Louis, handing baseball's final postseason spot to Colorado.

Milwaukee's loss clinched the second NL wild card for Colorado, which plays at division rival Arizona in the wild-card game Wednesday. The winner advances to a best-of-five Division Series against the NL West champion Los Angeles Dodgers.

Pirates 4, Nationals 1: At Washington, Nationals ace

Max Scherzer was pulled with a hamstring cramp while tuning up for the playoffs.

Tigers 3, Twins 2: Andrew Romine became the fifth player in baseball history to play all nine positions in one game, helping the visiting Detroit to the win.

Romine, a 31-year-old utilityman, played catcher for the first time in his career and got one out on the mound. He was the first player to accomplish the feat since Shane Halter for Detroit against Minnesota on Oct. 1, 2000.

Yankees 2, Blue Jays 1: Aaron Judge hit his 52nd homer, powering host New York to the win.

Padres 3, Giants 2: Matt Cain pitched five shutout innings for host San Francisco, then raised his arms and waved his cap, fighting off tears amid a standing ovation as he walked off the mound for final time.

Marlins 10, Braves 2: At Miami, slugger Giancarlo Stanton remained at 59 home runs, but Derek Dietrich connected for the Marlins.

White Sox 2, Indians 1: Carson Fulmer pitched five strong innings and Kevan Smith drove in two runs, leading visiting Chicago to the road win.

Cleveland clinched the best record in the AL earlier in the day when Houston lost to Boston. The AL Central champions will play the winner of the wild-card game between the Yankees and Twins in the AL Division Series.

Royals 4, Diamondbacks 3: Jorge Bonifacio hit a three-run homer with two outs in the sixth inning to help host Kansas City to the victory.

Cubs 9, Reds 0: Jon Lester struck out seven over five innings and Kyle Schwarber hit his 30th home run as host Chicago earned its 15th win in 18 games.

Lester (13-8) allowed four hits and walked none in a possible tuneup for Game 1 of the NL Division Series against Washington. The veteran left-hander has allowed one run in 11 innings over his past two outings after posting an 8.22 ERA in his previous five starts.

Mariners 6, Angels 4: Mitch Haniger had five hits and Kyle Seager launched a three-run homer in a five-run eighth inning that rallied visiting Seattle to the win.

Rangers 8, Athletics 4: Joey Gallo hit his 40th and 41st home runs, Andrew Cashner pitched six solid innings and host Texas beat the Oakland.

Gallo belted a two-run drive in the second inning and a solo shot in the third, becoming the sixth Ranger to hit 40 homers in a season and the first since Josh Hamilton had 43 in 2010.

Rays 4, Orioles 3: Chris Archer won for the first time since Aug. 22, and Brad Miller hit a three-run homer for host Tampa Bay.

Mets 7, Phillies 4 (11): Asdrubal Cabrera hit a three-run homer with two outs in the 11th inning, sending New York to the road win.

Cabrera extended a Mets record with the club's 224th homer of the season, sending his drive to left-center off Adam Morgan (3-3).