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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Death toll mounts amid Baghdad clashes

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Security forces fired live ammunition and tear gas at protesters in the Iraqi capital and in a southern city Saturday, bringing the death toll to at least 14 as thousands of protesters took to the streets and set fire to political party offices, government and human rights commission members said.

The clashes came hours after authorities lifted a round-the-clock curfew in Baghdad meant to quell the unrest, now in its fifth day and sparked by popular anger over a lack of jobs and endemic corruption in the oil-rich country. The upheaval is the most serious challenge for Iraq since the defeat of Islamic State two years ago.

The bloodiest violence in Baghdad came Friday, when 22

people were killed. Health officials said many of the victims were wounded in the head and chest.

In a desperate attempt to curb the growing rallies, authorities blocked the internet Wednesday and imposed the curfew on Thursday. The curfew, ignored by protesters, was lifted at 5 a.m. Saturday, allowing shops to open and traffic to flow in most of Baghdad. But by early afternoon, dozens of protesters began gathering in the streets around central Tahrir Square, which remained closed to cars. Armored vehicles and troops sealed off the area leading to the square, while special forces and army vehicles deployed around the square and as far as 1.2 miles away.

Health and security officials said four people were killed when forces fired at protesters

gathered in a street near the square.

Hundreds of protesters retreated amid intense tear gas and live fire by security forces, but at least three more were killed by gunfire.

Thousands of protesters later took to the streets in the southern cities of Nasiriyah and Diwaniyah, according to Iraqi officials and a member of the semiofficial human rights commission, defying a curfew that was still in place there.

In Diwaniyah, at least one protester was killed as demonstrators marched toward local government offices, a medical official and human rights official said. They did not provide details.

In the restive city of Nasiriyah, demonstrators torched the offices of three political parties and a lawmaker. Security forces

responded with gunfire, but there was no immediate word on casualties, said the officials, who described the protest as “very large.”

Nearly 40 people were wounded in the capital, said medical officials. All the officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief reporters.

Rasoul Saray, a 34-year-old unemployed Baghdad resident who took part in the protests, said security officials at checkpoints were stopping young men and turning them away in various suburbs, apparently fearing they would join the protests.

Saray said he saw one young man get arrested after security officials inspected his mobile phone and found a recorded protest video.

Iranian hackers’ fake job site targets troops

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. military officials warned troops that Iranian hackers have set up a fake jobs website for veterans that targets servicemembers considering a transition back to civilian life.

A National Guard Bureau memorandum dated Wednesday warned servicemembers to stay away from the website called “Hire Military Heroes,” which appears to offer them assistance finding a job outside the Defense Department via a web application that visitors are encouraged to download. However, the app actually drops malicious malware and spyware into the users’ computer system, according to the

document issued by the guard’s Defensive Cyber Operations office.

Defense officials have determined the website targets servicemembers close to leaving the military. Officials believe the Iranian hackers hope to gain access to Pentagon information technology systems by targeting those individuals.

“They’re targeting active servicemembers looking for jobs with the promise of offering assistance for civilian employment once their service ends,” the memo states. “The hackers are hoping one of their targets would use a DOD system to download and run the malware.”

Officials have determined the chances that the group of the hackers, known as Tor-

toiseshell, successfully gains access to Defense Department systems is unlikely, but nonetheless issued the guidance this week labeling the matter a high risk.

The Cisco Talos Intelligence Group, which monitors cyber threats, first warned of the website’s existence last week. The group noted the website’s name was “strikingly close” to that of a legitimate site run by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce aimed at assisting veterans find employment, www.hiringourheroes.org.

“Americans are quick to give back and support the veteran population, therefore, this website has a high chance of gaining traction on social media where users could share the link in the hopes of support-

ing veterans,” Cisco Talos researchers wrote in the analysis of the fake website.

The Cisco Talos researchers characterized the use of the fake website as a “massive shift” in behavior for the Tortoiseshell group, which has been accused of hacking several Saudi Arabian IT providers during the summer.

Defense officials said the group has not gained access to DOD systems as of Friday. A spokesperson said the guidance was issued this week as a precautionary matter.

If downloaded, the fake application would give hackers the ability to see a variety of information in the infected system, according to Cisco Talos.

US company's quest for Afghan gold marred

BY J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

FAIZABAD, Afghanistan — A year after a U.S.-based company signed contracts to mine for gold and copper in Afghanistan, work still hasn't begun amid fears about insecurity and with allegations of corruption still dogging the company.

"We would love to be drilling out there and doing some bulk sampling," said Centar Ltd. CEO Bradley Barnett. "But there is a lot of risk."

When it signed the contracts on Oct. 5, 2018, Centar said its projects to mine for precious metals in two Afghan provinces would mark "some of the largest foreign direct investment" into the country. Within the first year of operations, Centar could rank among Afghanistan's largest private-sector

employers and taxpayers, with projected economic benefits of more than \$1 billion and nearly 13,000 jobs at peak operations, it said.

The company would prospect for gold in nearly 250,000 acres of Badakhshan province, once a relatively peaceful area that didn't fall to the Taliban when they ruled the country from 1996-2001, but now rattled by insecurity. The company has also secured rights for a copper mine project in the northern province of Balkhab.

A recent Afghan government offensive, backed by U.S. airpower, cleared the Taliban from a few Badakhshan districts the insurgents had overrun, giving Barnett hope that gold exploration could soon begin in the region, he said.

If the company finds a signif-

icant deposit, "hundreds of millions of dollars of investment" will follow, Barnett said.

But another cloud hangs over Centar: Watchdog groups have raised concerns about the contracts the company signed a year ago in Washington after a push by President Donald Trump.

Initially awarded in 2014, the agreements languished after President Ashraf Ghani, who was elected that same year, launched a broad review of government contracts amid concerns about corruption.

At issue in Centar's case was its partnership with Sadat Naderi, a former minister of urban development. An Afghan law prohibits senior government officials from bidding on mining contracts until five years after they leave government.

While the contract was

awarded before Naderi was appointed, critics claim that its terms were renegotiated once he was minister to be more favorable to the business.

Barnett, however, claimed the contract was negotiated legally and was "subjected to a very thorough review ... examined from a lot of angles by a lot of people ... by the entire Afghan government."

The U.S. invested more than \$500 million between 2009 and 2016 to help Afghanistan tap into its mineral, oil and natural gas deposits, which are estimated to be worth about \$1 trillion, said a report by the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. But the investment has produced little in the way of revenue for the government, or other positive results.

Taliban, US envoy meet for 1st time since 'dead' deal

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban met with a U.S. envoy in the Pakistani capital, a Taliban official said Saturday, the first such encounter since President Donald Trump announced a month ago that a seemingly imminent peace deal to end Afghanistan's 18-year war was dead.

The official offered few details of Friday's meeting between peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and the Taliban delegation led by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a co-founder of the movement that was ousted in 2001 by the U.S.-led coalition. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the news media.

U.S. officials have been keen to say peace talks haven't resumed, at least not now in Islamabad. Still, the meeting is noteworthy as the United States seeks an exit from what has become its longest military

engagement. More than 14,000 U.S. troops are still in Afghanistan and Trump has repeatedly expressed his frustration with their continued deployment, complaining they have taken on the duties of policing the country, a job he said the Afghan government needed to do.

Khalilzad was in Islamabad for much of last week meeting with senior government officials in what the U.S. State Department described as follow-up meetings to those he held in New York during last month's U.N. General Assembly session. At the time, he met Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, who has been calling for a resumption of peace talks.

The Taliban delegation led by Mullah Baradar — one of its more powerful members — arrived separately in the Pakistani capital for meetings with government officials that they said were being held to discuss a wide range of political issues

relating to the more than 1.5 million Afghans still living as refugees in Pakistan.

Baradar was arrested in Pakistan in 2010 in a joint Pakistani-CIA operation after he secretly opened peace talks with then-Afghan President Hamid Karzai, a move that attempted to sideline Pakistan and went against U.S. policy, which did not support talks with the Taliban.

In 2018, Baradar was released from jail to facilitate peace talks after Khalilzad was appointed U.S. peace envoy.

During the past year, Khalilzad held nine rounds of talks with the Taliban in the Middle Eastern State of Qatar, where the insurgents maintain a political office. In early September a deal seemed imminent, but a fresh round of violence and the death of a U.S. soldier caused Trump to suddenly tweet an end to talks and cancel an agreement-signing ceremony that had been planned for

Camp David and about which few had been aware.

During the Doha talks, Khalilzad and Baradar held one-on-one meetings, and in recent weeks the Taliban had traveled to China, Russia and Iran to drum up support for a return to talks.

But in Afghanistan, the country is still awaiting the results of presidential polls held on Sept. 28.

The leading contenders are President Ashraf Ghani and his current partner in the unity government, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah.

Abdullah has already said he believes he has won, while Ghani's supporters are declaring he has the necessary votes, causing many to fear political chaos. Preliminary results are not expected before Oct. 17 and final results until Nov. 7. If there is no clear winner with 51% of the vote, a second round will be held within two weeks of the final vote announcement.

Turkey threatens operation into Syria

Associated Press

ISTANBUL — Turkey's president, in his strongest warning yet, threatened Saturday to launch a military operation into northeastern Syria, where U.S. troops are deployed and have been trying to defuse tensions between Washington's two allies — Turkey and the Syrian Kurds.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan's threats were a warning that a U.S.-Turkish deal to secure Syria's troubled border with Turkey was faltering. He said a Turkish military operation against the U.S.-backed Kurdish forces could begin "maybe today, maybe tomorrow."

The Turkish military has been dispatching units and defense equipment to southeastern Sanliurfa province in the past month. Erdogan had expressed frustration, threatening a unilateral operation, but this

was his most specific threat amid concerns from the Syrian Kurdish forces of a limited military operation.

"We have given all kinds of warning regarding the (area) east of the Euphrates to the relevant parties. We have acted with enough patience," Erdogan said.

A Turkish military operation, however, limited, would put major pressure on the more than 1,000 U.S. troops in northeastern Syria and who operate closely with the Kurdish-led forces, whether to implement the security mechanism or in fighting Islamic State.

The Turkish leader has repeatedly expressed frustration with Washington's support for Kurdish groups in Syria. His threats continued despite a deal reached with Washington in August to carry out joint patrols and move Syrian Kurdish

fighters away from the border.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said it is committed to the agreement between Turkey and the U.S. to preserve stability in the region.

"However, we will not hesitate to turn any unprovoked attack by Turkey into an all-out war on the entire border to DEFEND ourselves and our people," SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali tweeted Saturday.

Turkey views the People's Protection Units, or YPG, as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has waged an insurgency against Turkey for 35 years.

Ankara and Washington consider the PKK a terror group but they diverge on the issue of the YPG, which forms the core of U.S.-backed Syrian forces against ISIS and is loosely linked with the SDF.

Woman speaks out after her vet brother commits suicide

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — In the 18 months since her younger brother killed himself in the parking lot of a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital, Alissa Harrington has joined a support network, passed the bar exam, become an advocate for veteran suicide prevention and continued to share his story.

On Saturday, she shared that story again at an event recognizing the first Veterans Suicide Prevention & Awareness Day in Minnesota — an annual statewide observation. Harrington, by appealing to the Minnesota legislature and testifying about her brother, helped create Veterans Suicide Prevention & Awareness Day with a bill that passed in March. Harrington, her husband and father were on the floor of the legislature when representatives voted unanimously in favor of it.

"It was very emotional for me," she said of testifying. "To be there as a witness to

my brother's story and to so many veterans' stories was very powerful. I felt like I had a lot of responsibility to get my point across."

Harrington's brother, Justin Miller, was a Marine Corps veteran who deployed to Iraq in 2005. He went to the emergency room at the Minneapolis Department of Veterans Affairs in February 2018, struggling with suicidal thoughts. After spending four days at an inpatient mental health unit, Miller, 33, was discharged, went to his car and shot himself. Police found his body the following day, his phone full of voicemails and texts from his father, Greg Miller, with one message sent over and over again: "I love you. We love you. Come home."

His treatment was the subject of an investigative report by the VA Office of Inspector General. The office found VA staff made several mistakes in his case, including not providing him with an adequate plan when he was discharged.

"It's absolutely maddening to see on paper the exact plac-

es where the system failed," Harrington said last year, after the release of the report. "Because it's not just the loss of my brother — the tragic, out-of-place loss of my brother — it's now about whether or not his loss could've been prevented."

Now, when Harrington talks about Miller, she shares stories about his life, including his musical abilities. Miller, a trumpet player, was initially assigned to the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing Band out of Cherry Point, N.C. Later, he played taps and the national anthem at military funerals and events.

Harrington also tells how his death has inspired her to reach out to other veterans who may be suffering.

"I've had veterans who have come to me and said, 'I sought help because I heard your story.' That makes me cry out of happiness every time I hear it because that's really what the idea is. There is hope and meaning moving forward for those who are suffering and survivors who are grieving."

Coast Guard announces changes to tattoo policy

mlive.com

The U.S. Coast Guard is keeping up with the times with its latest policy update that addresses tattoos.

The update allows some tattoos to show while in uniform that was previously not allowed.

"The Coast Guard increases the aperture to ensure we are able to recruit and retain the next generation of Coast Guardsman," the policy update says.

It "strikes a balance" between the military branch's sharp appearance standards and individual expression, the policy says.

Body art and tattoos that are consistent with the Coast Guard's values will now be allowed on the chest, but not visible above the uniform crew neck shirt. Hand and finger tattoos — in addition to one ring tattoo per hand — are also now allowed.

North Korea, US resume talks in Sweden

Associated Press

HELSINKI—U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Saturday teams from North Korea and the United States have arrived in the Swedish capital to resume discussions on Pyongyang's nuclear program.

Pompeo, who is in Greece for the last leg of a European tour, said it's too early to know if the weekend talks will yield

any progress that could eventually involve another meeting between President Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un.

"We hope that the North Koreans came with spirit and willingness to move forward to implement what President Trump and Chairman Kim agreed to back in Singapore" last year, said Pompeo in Athens.

Talks are being held at the

Villa Elfvik Strand conference facility in Lidingo, an island in the Stockholm archipelago located northeast of the capital, Swedish news agency TT said. It added that North Korea's chief negotiator, Kim Myong Gil, arrived on Thursday while U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun came on Friday.

"We're mindful that this will be the first time we have had a

chance to have a discussion in quite some time and that there remains a lot of work that will have to be done by the two teams," Pompeo said.

He added that Washington hoped the meeting in Sweden would lead to "a set of dialogues that could take place in the coming weeks and months that will really deliver on the commitments that were made in Singapore."

Trump seethes over inquiry as White House subpoenaed

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is seething over an impeachment inquiry into his conduct after Democrats subpoenaed the White House about contacts with Ukraine and he signaled his administration would not cooperate.

In a series of tweets Saturday sent as the presidential motorcade ferried him to his Virginia golf course, Trump defended his comments and lashed out at critics, including a past foil, Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah.

"This is a fraud against the American people!" he tweeted.

The inquiry reached deeper into the White House when the House sent a letter Friday to Trump's acting chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, informing him that the White House was being subpoenaed for documents it had refused to produce. The move capped a tumultuous week that widened the constitutional battle between the executive branch and Congress and heightened the political standoff with more witnesses, testimony and documents to come.

Trump received support from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who dismissed questions about Trump's attempts to push Ukraine and China to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden as a "silly gotcha game."

"The president has every

right to have these sets of conversations," Pompeo told reporters while traveling in Greece. He insisted the administration's foreign efforts were reasonable, responsible and necessary to target graft, ensure aid is spent properly and protect American democracy.

"There has been some suggestion somehow that it would be inappropriate for the United States government to engage in that activity, and I see it just precisely the opposite," he said.

It is illegal to solicit campaign help from a foreign government.

Trump, who has described his conduct as "perfect," said Friday he would formally object to Congress' impeachment inquiry, even as he acknowledged that Democrats "have the votes" to proceed. Still, he predicted such a move would hurt them politically.

"I really believe that they're going to pay a tremendous price at the polls," Trump said.

Democrats accused Trump of speeding down "a path of defiance, obstruction and cover-up." They warned that defying the House subpoena would in itself be considered "evidence of obstruction" and a potentially impeachable offense.

Lawmakers are focused on Trump's efforts to push Ukraine to investigate former Vice President Biden and his son, Hunter.

Bernie Sanders had heart attack, campaign reveals

Los Angeles Times

Bernie Sanders suffered a heart attack this week, his presidential campaign disclosed Friday as the Vermont senator was discharged from a Las Vegas hospital.

The disclosure, which came 2½ days after Sanders was first hospitalized, is likely to bring further scrutiny of the 78-year-old's health as he seeks to resume campaigning to become the nation's oldest president.

Sanders, 78, waved as he walked out of the hospital Friday afternoon. Sanders had been treated after experiencing chest pain at a Tuesday campaign event; doctors placed two stents into his heart to correct a blocked coronary artery, according to his campaign.

The candidate plans to participate in the Oct. 15 Democratic debate in Ohio, but it's not clear how soon he will return to the campaign trail after canceling upcoming events.

"I want to thank the doctors, nurses and staff at the Desert Springs Hospital Medical Center for the excellent care that they provided," Sanders said in a statement. "After two and a half days in the hospital, I feel great, and after taking a short time off, I look forward to getting back to work."

Roy Behr, a Democratic strategist who is unaffiliated with any presidential candidate in the race, said the additional

detail that Sanders had suffered a heart attack is "clearly not helpful to his campaign." But Behr added that health concerns tend to be more politically harmful when they are "cumulative" — building a narrative about the candidate that can be hard to reverse.

Sanders' campaign had previously disclosed that he had been treated for a blocked artery, a relatively common and low-risk procedure. In the campaign's statement Friday, Sanders' doctors revealed that he was also diagnosed with a myocardial infarction, another term for a heart attack, which describes when the heart suffers from a lack of oxygen due to a blocked artery or slow blood flow. The campaign did not say why it had not released details about the heart attack sooner.

"After presenting to an outside facility with chest pain, Sen. Sanders was diagnosed with a myocardial infarction," said the statement, attributed to Dr. Arturo E. Marchand Jr. and Dr. Arjun Gururaj.

"He was immediately transferred to Desert Springs Hospital Medical Center. The senator was stable upon arrival and taken immediately to the cardiac catheterization laboratory, at which time two stents were placed in a blocked coronary artery in a timely fashion. All other arteries were normal.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Mother charged for selling vape products

WI KENOSHA — Kenosha County prosecutors said the mother of two brothers accused of manufacturing vaping cartridges with THC oil was aware of the illegal activity and allowed some products to be manufactured at her real estate office.

A criminal complaint alleges some vape cartridges were assembled in the Realty Executives office of Courtney Huffhines, 43, before the operation was moved to a condo rented by Huffhines' son under a fake name.

Officials said they found a locked cabinet at the real estate office that had equipment used to make vaping products.

Man cutting scooter brake lines arrested

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — Authorities said they've arrested a Florida man who was cutting the brake lines of electric rental scooters.

A Fort Lauderdale police news release said Randall Williams, 59, was arrested Sept. 29. He was charged with felony criminal mischief, along with misdemeanor counts of resisting an officer and prowling.

Police said surveillance video first spotted Williams tampering with a scooter Sept. 22. Authorities said officers caught him in the act and found a total of 20 scooters with severed brake lines in the area.

Cockfighting raid leads to 5 arrests

NE BELLEVUE — Authorities in eastern Nebraska said the police raid of a suspected cockfighting ring has led to the seizure of more

than 160 birds and five arrests.

The Omaha World-Herald reported that the raid, conducted by police and the Nebraska Humane Society, occurred Sept. 24 at a Bellevue property.

Officers seized 114 roosters/gamecocks and 49 hens and chicks. Humane Society spokeswoman Pam Wiese said two of the birds had to be euthanized. The surviving birds are being cared for by the Humane Society. Four dogs, four kittens and a goat also were seized from the property because of allegations of animal neglect.

Man accused of filming up skirt

DC WASHINGTON — Court records said Whole Foods customers helped detain a man accused of filming under the skirt of a 13-year-old girl standing in a store checkout line.

Citing D.C. Superior Court records, news outlets reported Daniel Izquierdo, 25, was spotted standing "unusually close" to the girl in March. Records said a witness noticed Izquierdo appeared to be filming under the girl's dress and began yelling, leading customers to detain Izquierdo until police arrived.

Records said Izquierdo refused to let police view any video on his phone. Police Chief Peter Newsham said at a news conference Tuesday that officers obtained search warrants and, with the FBI's assistance, found the upskirting video, along with videos of 34 other women.

Driving drunk on mower ruled same as a vehicle

WI MADISON — A Wisconsin appeals court has ruled that operating a riding mower while drunk carries the same penalties as driving a

car while intoxicated.

The ruling Tuesday came in the case of a northern Wisconsin man who was arrested for drunken driving in 2017. Police pulled Keith Shoeder over while he was operating a riding mower on the streets of Rhineland after leaving a tavern.

Shoeder argued that the charge should be dismissed, contending the riding mower was an all-terrain vehicle and not a motor vehicle and, therefore, he was not subject to the same penalties.

But the 3rd District Court of Appeals disagreed.

Officer fired after refusing a drug test

NJ PALISADES PARK — A New Jersey police officer who has been arrested twice on drug charges has been fired for refusing to take a drug test.

Richard Giacobone had been suspended without pay from the Palisades Park force after anabolic steroids, cocaine, marijuana and high-capacity ammunition magazines were allegedly found.

While he was still on suspension, Giacobone was arrested again for drug possession after a motor vehicle stop.

Authorities said Giacobone did not comply with a mandated urine test and was dismissed from the force Sept. 24.

11-foot python makes an escape from home

WV RICHWOOD — A second large python has escaped and is on the loose in West Virginia.

Richwood police Chief Charles Burkhamer on Monday said the 11-foot snake got out of its owner's tank and broke through a window screen late on Sept. 29.

He said animal control workers and other officials have been searching for the python but have not yet found it. Residents nearby have been notified to keep watch over small children and house pets.

Driver shot when dog jumps onto console

OK ENID — An Oklahoma woman was shot in the thigh when a dog inside the vehicle with her jumped onto a back seat console, causing a gun under the console to fire.

The Enid News & Eagle reported that Tina Springer was in the passenger seat of the vehicle that had stopped Thursday to wait for a train in Enid, in northern Oklahoma. The yellow Labrador retriever, which belongs to the driver, Brent Parks, 79, was in the back seat and jumped onto the folding console. That's when the .22-caliber handgun under the console went off.

Swastikas painted on school arts center

NE BEATRICE — Beatrice High School officials said two freshmen students have admitted painting swastikas on the front balcony of the school's fine arts center.

Radio station KWBE reported that the vandalism, which included glue sprayed on the center's carpet, was discovered Friday morning. A Beatrice police school resource officer and city police are investigating and working with school officials.

Principal Jason Sutter said the school was able to identify the students involved and that the two boys later admitted their involvement.

From wire reports

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NLDS roundup

Nationals, Cardinals pull even in series

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The bullpen gate swung open and out trotted ... Max Scherzer? Yep, Washington's ace surprised the Los Angeles Dodgers and even a few teammates in the eighth inning Friday night.

"All the chips are on the table right now," Scherzer explained.

"We weren't expecting that," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said.

Stephen Strasburg turned in another dominant playoff outing, Scherzer struck out the side and Washington held off the Dodgers 4-2 Friday night to even their NL Division Series at a game apiece.

Even with Scherzer's bullpen bombshell, Washington's shaky relief corps still ran into trouble. Daniel Hudson labored through the ninth, loading the bases with two outs before striking out Corey Seager for the save. The tense final inning also included a twisting, falling grab by third baseman Anthony Rendon on Cody Bellinger's

pop fly in shallow left field, as well as a gutsy intentional walk by manager Dave Martinez that brought the winning run to bat.

Game 3 is back in Washington on Sunday night, where Scherzer was expected to face major league ERA leader Hyun-Jin Ryu.

"I'm going to see how he feels tomorrow," said Martinez, adding Anibal Sanchez would start Sunday if Scherzer doesn't.

"Honestly, it doesn't matter," Scherzer said. "You bring it when you're told to bring it."

Pitching on the shortest rest of his career, Strasburg took a perfect game into the fifth inning while outdueling Clayton Kershaw. Strasburg pitched one-run ball for six innings and struck out 10, lowering his career postseason ERA to 0.64 — the best in history for players with at least four starts. He edged out Dodgers great Sandy Koufax (0.95 ERA), who watched from the front row.

"There's obviously a lot of expectations, there's a lot of

excitement in games," Strasburg said, "but I really tried over the years to train my mind into thinking that every single game is just as important and just sticking to my approach."

Rookie Will Smith broke up Strasburg's perfect bid with a two-out single. The three-time All-Star allowed his first earned run in 23 consecutive postseason innings dating to the 2014 NLDS against San Francisco and limited Los Angeles to three hits and no walks.

"Stras was on top of his game and really throwing the daylights out of the ball," Scherzer said.

Scherzer came on for the eighth and punched out Gavin Lux, Chris Taylor and Joc Pederson on 14 pitches. The 35-year-old right-hander threw 77 pitches in the NL wild-card game Tuesday, yet he topped out at 99 mph in his fourth career playoff relief appearance.

Braves 3, Cardinals 0: Adding another chapter to his remarkable turnaround season, Mike Foltynewicz threw

seven crisp innings before pinch-hitter Adam Duvall hit a two-run homer that carried host Atlanta Braves to a victory over St. Louis, evening the NL Division Series at one game apiece.

Foltynewicz, who spent a good chunk of his summer in Triple-A after a miserable start, has been a different pitcher since returning from the minors. He went 6-1 with a 2.65 ERA over his last 10 starts — a dominating run that carried right into the postseason.

The best-of-five series now shifts to St. Louis, where Mike Soroka gets the ball for the Braves in Game 3 on Sunday against Adam Wainwright.

Going against St. Louis ace Jack Flaherty, who had one of the great second halves in baseball history, Foltynewicz allowed only three hits, didn't walk anyone and struck out seven during an 83-pitch outing that kept the Cardinals from mounting any semblance of offense.

ALDS roundup

Yankees overpower Twins; Astros ease past Rays

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New postseason, same old story for the New York Yankees and Minnesota Twins.

DJ LeMahieu homered and drove in four runs, Gleyber Torres broke a tie with a two-run double and the Yankees extended their October mastery of Minnesota with a 10-4 victory Friday night in the AL Division Series opener.

Aaron Judge made two diving catches in right field to help the AL East champions hand Minnesota its major league-record 14th consecutive playoff defeat — 11 of them to the Yankees since 2004. The second

grab thwarted a potential rally and left grateful reliever Zack Britton with both hands on his head to end the top of the seventh, when the Twins were still within striking distance.

"That was huge," Judge said. "This is the postseason — you've got to make those plays."

Brett Gardner also went deep for the Bronx Bombers in a playoff matchup between teams that finished neck-and-neck for the most home runs in baseball history. Minnesota's Bomba Squad socked 307, one more than New York as both clubs blew away the previous mark of 267 set by the Yankees

last year.

Astros 6, Rays 2: Justin Verlander looked every bit the October ace, Jose Altuve polished his postseason résumé and host Houston kept rolling, beating Tampa Bay to open their AL Division Series.

The Astros, who won a franchise-record 107 games for the best record in the majors, began their quest for a second World Series title in three years against a Rays team that downed Oakland 5-1 in the wild-card game this week.

Verlander kept up his dominant run this year when he posted an MLB-most 21 wins, allowing just a soft single in

seven shutout innings. He struck out eight and improved to 8-0 in 12 career ALDS appearances.

Rays starter Tyler Glasnow had given up just three singles when he walked Josh Reddick on four pitches to begin the fifth. He struck out George Springer, but Altuve then tagged him for a two-run homer, lining a fast-ball into the left field seats.

The sellout crowd of 43,360, which included Astros Hall of Famers Nolan Ryan and Craig Biggio, erupted into deafening cheers and fans twirled bright orange towels as Altuve trotted around the bases, a huge grin plastered on his face.

3 returning players to give Chiefs boost

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Defensive back Morris Claiborne returned to the practice field with the Kansas City Chiefs on Wednesday after serving his four-game suspension for violating the NFL's substance-abuse policy.

He wasn't alone.

The Chiefs also welcomed back wide receiver Tyreek Hill, who has been sidelined since Week 1 with a collarbone injury, and running back Damien Williams, who has been nursing an ankle injury.

It's unclear how much they'll play when the Colts visit Arrowhead Stadium on Sunday.

Claiborne, a former sixth overall pick of the Dallas Cow-

boys, missed most of training camp before the Chiefs signed him to what amounted to a prove-it contract. He played part of the preseason, but he was barred from practice and games until earlier this week.

"It's going to be fun. I think he has a lot to bring to this team," Chiefs cornerback Bashaud Breeland said. "We're all excited to get him out there with us."

The 4-0 Chiefs have been better against the pass this season under new defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo, but they still rank 20th in the league against the pass. Claiborne should provide veteran help right away and could push for a starting job as the season progresses.

He's coming off the best two-year stretch of his career with the New York Jets.

"We'll see how he does out here," said Chiefs coach Andy Reid, who was unwilling Wednesday to make any changes to his lineup. "We'll get him back in and see how he rolls."

Reid is also taking a wait-and-see approach to his offensive playmakers.

Hill was hurt in the opener in Jacksonville when his shoulder was driven into the ground on a play along the sideline. He wound up spending the night in the hospital, where his collarbone was stabilized without surgery.

The two-time All-Pro was seen catching passes from Chiefs quarterback Patrick

Mahomes during warmups last week in Detroit, the first sign that Hill could soon be back on the field.

"He's hard to hold down. He's wired different," Reid said. "He's bouncing around and wants to go, but this one here, the doctors really have to keep checking on him. We'll see how the time goes."

Williams has struggled with an ankle injury most of the season, continuing a career-long trend of nagging injuries. In the meantime, LeSean McCoy has taken over the No. 1 job in the Kansas City backfield, and Darrel Williams has proven a capable backup.

McCoy ran for 56 yards and a score against the Lions. Darrel Williams had two TD runs.

American Muhammad sets world record in hurdles

Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — The message American hurdler Dalilah Muhammad kept telling herself when her career was running into roadblocks: Why not me?

The message Qatari high jumper Mutaz Essa Barshim kept receiving from an adoring home crowd yearning to celebrate a champion: We love you!

On a thrill-filled night at the track and field world championships Friday, Muhammad answered her own question — again — by setting her second world record in 10 weeks, while Barshim loved everyone back by becoming a repeat world champion, winning this one on home turf.

"I've won a lot of gold medals, but this one is home," Barshim said. "It feels different. I just felt love."

The late-blooming, 29-year-old Muhammad smoothed her way through the 400-meter hurdles in 52.16 to break, by .04 seconds, the world record she had set at the U.S. national championships in July.

Both she and Barshim — they call him "The Qatari Falcon" — will head into the Tokyo Games next year as reigning

world champions. Muhammad will also go in as the defending Olympic champ — and almost certainly as the world record holder, too.

"I didn't even know who won the race," Muhammad said. "I was looking to see who won, and then I noticed, when they said 'world record,' that I had broken it."

Simply winning the race has become more difficult because of the rapid rise of Sydney McLaughlin, the 20-year-old phenom who juggles, rides a unicycle and seems destined to win a gold medal one day.

McLaughlin also finished second to Muhammad at nationals — but that one was by .68 seconds. This one was by .07, and her time of 52.23 would have been the world record had she run it 10 weeks ago.

"We came into this season knowing who the main opponent was going to be," said McLaughlin's coach, Olympic gold medalist Joanna Hayes. "It's not a surprise. Dalilah has experience over Syd, so all I wanted her to do was get some experience. And run her best. And she's surpassed that."

How close did Muhammad

come to missing out on this? Shortly after graduating from Southern California in 2012, she went to Olympic trials and completely flopped. Out in the first round, she had neither a spot at the London Games nor a sponsor.

Things changed: She won nationals in 2013, then a silver medal at worlds. Then they changed again: She faltered in 2015 and watched those world championships from home.

"I had an epiphany one day, 'Why not me?'" Muhammad said. Now, she has an Olympic title and a world championship.

She barely broke stride in clearing the 10 hurdles. It was, she said, much closer to the perfect race that she decidedly did not think she had run at national championships in the rain, in Des Moines, Iowa.

And yet, this race still came down to a lean at the line against an opponent who's only getting better.

"Next year's going to be amazing," Hayes said.

Close as the race was, though, the men's steeplechase was even closer.

Consensus Kipruto and Lamecha Grima rambled over barri-

ers and through the water over 3,000 meters, and as they approached the finish, there was nothing separating them. With fans in the jam-packed crowd screaming, they sprawled as they reached the line. A photo finish showed Kipruto had crossed in 8 minutes, 1.35 seconds. That was one-hundredth of a second faster than Grima.

"I was praying, 'Let me be faster than him,'" Kipruto said. "I waited. I prayed. I saw the screen and saw it said 'Consensus.' It was my name. I was definitely happy."

In the men's 400 meters, Steven Gardiner of the Bahamas won gold over Anthony Zambrano of Colombia and American Fred Kerley. Finishing 1-2 in the discus were Cubans Yaime Perez and Denia Caballero, who ran to the stands to share hugs with their small group of fans.

But no win brought more joy throughout the stadium than Barshim's.

He brought the fans out of their seats every time he cleared a height, and not long after it was over, he was sharing a hug with the ruling emir of his country.

Cincinnati pulls off upset of No. 18 UCF

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — As a reward for his game-turning interception, freshman cornerback Ahmad Gardner was invited to address teammates in the locker room as the Cincinnati Bearcats celebrated a breakthrough win.

Nothing shy about this freshman, on the field or in front of the team.

"We brought him up to say a few words, and we had to cut him off," coach Luke Fickell said.

There was plenty to talk about after the Bearcats finally beat the team that had dominated them, taking control of the

American Athletic race with quite a defensive performance.

Gardner returned an interception for a go-ahead touchdown and Cincinnati clamped down on freshman quarterback Dillon Gabriel and No. 18 UCF's high-scoring offense Friday night for a 27-24 victory that ended the Knights' streak of 19 conference wins.

After getting blown out their last two games against the two-time defending American Athletic champs, the Bearcats (4-1, 1-0) gave themselves an early edge in the race by finding a way to finally keep up with UCF (4-2, 1-1). They rotated cornerbacks and safeties to keep them

fresh against UCF's quick-snap offense.

That approach made the difference in front of a capacity crowd that stormed the field. The Bearcats had lost their last 13 straight games against ranked teams since 2009.

"The biggest win for this school in a long time," tight end Josiah Deguara said.

In addition to Gardner's 16-yard interception return, the Bearcats picked off Gabriel's passes at the Cincinnati 2 and 6 as they took control and closed it out, taking advantage of his inexperience.

"He's a freshman," Gardner said. "We were going to

try to get into his head. That's what the adjustment was. It worked."

UCF's Tre Nixon turned a short pass into a 45-yard touchdown that cut it to 27-24 with 3:11 to go, but the Bearcats ran out the clock, converting a fourth-and-1 at midfield in the closing seconds.

"I guess there's no sweeter way to seal the deal against a team that's the best in the league, been the best the last two years," said Fickell, who didn't hesitate to call the quarterback sneak. "The only way you're going to knock off the best is to continue to be aggressive."

NHL roundup

Konecny scores twice as Flyers top Hawks in Prague

Associated Press

PRAGUE — It was a successful home debut for Flyers coach Alain Vigneault — a long, long way from Philadelphia.

Travis Konecny had two goals and Vigneault won his first game with his new team, directing the Flyers to a season-opening 4-3 victory over the Chicago Blackhawks on Friday night.

Oskar Lindblom and Michael Raffl also scored for the Flyers in front of a sellout crowd of 17,463 at Prague's O2 Arena as part of the NHL's Global Series. Carter Hart stopped 28 shots.

It was the first regular-season game outside of North America in Philadelphia's 52-year history.

"I think tonight's game, everybody was down there, everybody was consistent in what we were doing and it was a team win," Philadelphia captain Claude Giroux said. "It was a lot of fun."

Patrick Kane had a goal and two assists for Chicago, which opened the 2009-10 season in Finland. Alex Nylander and Alex DeBrincat also scored.

"I like the way we fought

back," said Kane, who had a career-high 110 points last season. "Whatever the numbers were tonight, I still think I have more to give to the team."

The Blackhawks are hoping to return to the playoffs after a two-year absence, but defensemen Dennis Gilbert and Slater Koekkoek each made a costly mistake after the blue liners struggled last year.

Konecny turned Gilbert's turnover into a 1-0 lead for Philadelphia 6:24 into the first, beating Corey Crawford on the glove side.

Lindblom was credited with a power-play goal 6:28 into the second when his shot bounced off the crossbar and was deflected by Koekkoek into his own net. Konecny then converted a backhand with 1:56 left in the period, giving the Flyers a 3-1 lead.

Chicago played without defensemen Calvin de Haan and Connor Murphy due to injuries.

"We turned way too many pucks over. That's where we exposed ourselves defensively," coach Jeremy Colliton said.

Vigneault became the 21st coach in Flyers history in April

after they missed the playoffs for the fourth time in seven seasons. He also has coached Montreal, Vancouver and the New York Rangers.

He was behind the bench as Philadelphia held off Chicago in the 26th NHL regular-season game played in Europe, and the fifth in Prague.

Capitals 2, Islanders 1: T.J. Oshie scored the tiebreaking goal, Ilya Samsonov stopped 25 shots in his NHL debut and visiting Washington spoiled New York's season opener.

Jakub Vrana scored his second goal in two games to help the Capitals remain perfect.

Devon Toews scored for the Islanders, and Semyon Varlamov made 26 saves.

Maple Leafs 4, Blue Jack-ets 1: Mitch Marner scored twice and added an assist, Frederik Andersen made 28 saves and visiting Toronto beat Columbus.

Auston Matthews had a goal and a pair of assists, and Cody Ceci — who came from Ottawa in an offseason trade — got his first goal as a Maple Leaf. Cam Atkinson scored for the Blue Jackets in a sixth straight season opener, the longest active

streak in the NHL.

Jets 5, Devils 4 (SO): Kyle Connor and Blake Wheeler scored shootout goals and visiting Winnipeg spoiled the debut of No. 1 overall pick Jack Hughes by rallying from a 4-0 deficit to beat New Jersey.

Dmitry Kulikov, Jack Roslovic, Mathieu Perreault and Neal Pionk scored in regulation, and Laurent Brossoit made 35 saves for the Jets. Blake Coleman had two goals for New Jersey, including a spectacular one-handed shot while falling down. Nilita Gusev also scored in his first NHL game, Sami Vatanen added a goal, and newcomer P.K. Subban had two assists.

Golden Knights 5, Sharks 1: Tomas Nosek scored two goals and had an assist and Marc-Andre Fleury made 34 saves as visiting Vegas beat San Jose.

Nosek and Brayden McNabb scored in a 90-second span late in the second period to break open a 2-0 game.

The Golden Knights swept the season-opening, home-and-home series with the Sharks and improved to 7-1-2 all-time against San Jose in the regular season.