

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## DOD head Esper lays out US 'game plan'

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper says that under current plans, all U.S. troops leaving Syria will go to western Iraq and the American military will continue to conduct operations against Islamic State to prevent its resurgence.

Esper, who arrived in the Afghan capital on Sunday, did not rule out the idea that U.S. forces would conduct counter-terrorism missions from Iraq into Syria. But he told reporters traveling with him that those details will be worked out over time.

His comments were the first to lay out specifically where American troops will go as they shift from Syria and what the counter-ISIS fight could look like. Esper, who flew overnight to Afghanistan, said he has spoken to his Iraqi counterpart about the plan to shift about 1,000 troops leaving Syria into western Iraq.

The developments made clear that one of President Donald Trump's rationales for withdrawing troops from Syria was not going to come to pass

any time soon.

"It's time to bring our soldiers back home," Trump said Wednesday.

They are not coming home, although Trump tweeted Sunday: "USA soldiers are not in combat or ceasefire zones" and "Bringing soldiers home!"

As Esper left Washington on Saturday, U.S. troops were continuing to pull out of northern Syria after Turkey's invasion into the border region. Reports of sporadic clashes continued between Turkey-backed fighters and the U.S.-allied Syrian Kurdish forces despite a five-day cease-fire agreement hammered out Thursday between U.S. and Turkish leaders.

Turkey's Defense Ministry said one soldier has been killed amid sporadic clashes with Kurdish fighters.

Trump ordered the bulk of the approximately 1,000 U.S. troops in Syria to withdraw after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made it clear in a phone call that his forces were about to invade Syria to push back Kurdish forces that Turkey considers terrorists.

The pullout largely abandons

America's Kurdish allies who have fought ISIS alongside U.S. troops for several years. Between 200 and 300 U.S. troops will remain at the southern Syrian outpost of Al-Tanf.

Esper said the troops going into Iraq will have two missions.

"One is to help defend Iraq and two is to perform a counter-ISIS mission as we sort through the next steps," he said. "Things could change between now and whenever we complete the withdrawal, but that's the game plan right now."

The U.S. currently has more than 5,000 American forces in Iraq under an agreement between the two countries. The U.S. pulled its troops out of Iraq in 2011 when combat operations there ended, but they went back in after ISIS began to take over large swaths of the country in 2014.

The number of American forces in Iraq has remained small due to political sensitivities in the country after years of what some Iraqis consider U.S. occupation during the war that began in 2003.

Esper said he will talk with

other allies at a NATO meeting this week to discuss the way ahead for the counter-ISIS mission.

Asked if U.S. special operations forces will conduct unilateral military operations into Syria to go after ISIS, Esper said that is an option that will be discussed with allies over time.

He said one of his top concerns is what the next phase of the counter-ISIS mission looks like, "but we have to work through those details." He said that if U.S. forces do go in, they would be protected by American aircraft.

While he acknowledged reports of intermittent fighting despite the cease-fire agreement, he said that, overall, it "generally seems to be holding. We see a stability of the lines, if you will, on the ground."

He also said that, so far, the Syrian Democratic Forces that partnered with the U.S. to fight ISIS have maintained control of the prisons in Syria where they are still present. The Turks, he said, have indicated they have control of the ISIS prisons in their areas.

## CNO outlines priorities to meet security threats

By SCOTT WYLAND  
*Stars and Stripes*

NAPLES, Italy — The Navy must get ships out of the maintenance docks more quickly and keep improving its weaponry to meet changing security threats worldwide, the Navy's top officer said Friday.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday also said during an interview at the Navy base in Naples that while the hardware is important,

training and motivating quality sailors is paramount.

"At the end of the day, it's not high technology that's going to win the fight — it's going to be the individual sailors," Gilday said. "It's going to be that their skill sets and their drive and their passion is better than the adversary."

Gilday visited Navy bases in Europe and attended an international maritime conference in Venice, Italy, over the past week. He is traveling around

the world to gather information and sailors' feedback for a naval guidance plan he is writing.

When asked how the Navy was coming with high-tech weaponry such as laser cannons, hypersonic missiles and rail guns, Gilday didn't comment on specific systems but said the Navy is making progress.

"We are closing capability gaps quickly," Gilday said.

The Navy also is looking at

how to improve traditional weapons, Gilday said.

Modernizing weaponry and cyberwarfare systems are essential, but so is efficiently maintaining ships, Gilday said.

Only 40% of ships undergoing maintenance leave the yards on time, he said, calling that unacceptable.

A Government Accountability Office report in 2018 put the number closer to 30%.

# S. Koreans protest, scale US Embassy wall

*The Washington Post*

At least 19 South Korean university students were arrested Friday after climbing the walls of the official residential compound of the U.S. ambassador to Korea, Harry Harris. Students reportedly were protesting the presence — and cost — of American military forces in the country.

Students can be seen on video using extension ladders to scale the walls of the secure embassy and consulate while others unfurl banners with messages that included “Leave this land, Harris.”

Students shouted, “Stop interfering with our domestic affairs,” and chanted “Get out,” and “We don’t need U.S. troops” before being removed by police, Reuters reported.

A State Department spokesperson who spoke on the condition of anonymity to talk candidly confirmed the Friday breach. Seoul Metropolitan Police entered the U.S. government facility at the embassy’s request and arrested the students.

“We note with strong concern that this is the second instance of illegal entry into the Ambassador’s residential compound in 14 months. We urge the ROK to strengthen its efforts to protect all diplomatic missions to the Republic of Korea,” the spokesperson said.

South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it would tighten security for the U.S. Embassy and the ambassador’s residence, according to Reuters.

“Any harm or attack on such

a diplomatic mission cannot be justified under any circumstances, and the government will take all appropriate measures to protect the missions and prevent any acts that disturb their well-being,” the ministry said in a statement.

The Korea Herald, an English-language newspaper based in Seoul, said Friday’s demonstration was a surprise protest by what it characterized as a “progressive civic group” of students.

The U.S. and South Korea have a burden-sharing agreement stemming from a 1953 mutual defense treaty after the halt of the Korean War.

As part of the agreement, roughly 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea.

The cost of maintaining an American military presence

to aid in South Korea’s defense against North Korea has been a point of tension between the U.S. and South Korea in recent months, particularly after President Donald Trump inaccurately claimed during a February Cabinet meeting that “South Korea is costing us \$5 billion a year. And they pay — they were paying about \$500 million for \$5 billion worth of protection.”

According to a previous analysis by The Washington Post, South Korea’s payment to the U.S. last year tallied around \$830 million, which covered approximately 40% of the cost of the U.S. deployment; the total cost for the United States is closer to \$1.25 billion, not the \$5 billion figure Trump stated.

## Marine Corps sells small-arms ammo to Brunei

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

Marine Corps Forces Pacific has sold Brunei \$1.9 million in small-arms ammunition, the first such sale the service has ever made to the tiny Southeast Asian nation nestled on the northern coast of Borneo.

The 5.6- and 9-mm ammunition was delivered on two Air Force C-17 flights, the first arriving Oct. 4, followed by a

second load on Oct. 10, the Marine Corps said in a statement Thursday.

The sale was conducted under terms set by the Acquisition and Cross-Serving Agreement between Brunei and the United States, which allows U.S. armed forces to conduct the military-to-military exchange of logistics and supply services with that nation, the statement said.

“This is a tangible demon-

stration of the close relationship the United States and the Marine Corps have with Brunei, a relationship that grows stronger as we work together toward a more stable and secure Indo-Pacific,” Marine Corps Col. Boyd Miller, who conducted the arms transaction, said in the statement.

While Brunei is tiny — just slightly smaller than the state of Delaware — its coastline lies on the contentious South

China Sea. Brunei, China, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia maintain varying claims of sovereignty over islets and unsubmerged coral reefs in the sea.

While taking no official stance on ownership of the disputed areas, the U.S. in recent years has pushed back on China’s claims of sovereignty over virtually the entire sea and its militarization of certain islands.

## 3 US soldiers killed, 3 injured in Fort Stewart accident

*Associated Press*

FORT STEWART, Ga. — U.S. Army officials said three soldiers were killed and three others were injured when the armored vehicle they were riding in was involved in an accident during training at Fort Stewart in Georgia.

Officials with the Fort Stew-

art-Hunter Army Airfield’s 3rd Infantry Division said in a news release that the accident occurred early Sunday morning.

The news release had few additional details, and a spokesman said the Army was not saying anything more.

The soldiers were with the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team and were in a Bradley

fighting vehicle.

They were not immediately identified.

The Army said the three injured soldiers were taken to an Army hospital.

“Today is a heartbreaking day for the 3rd Infantry Division, and the entire Fort Stewart-Hunter Army Airfield community, as we are all dev-

astated after a training accident this morning on the Fort Stewart Training Area,” said Maj. Gen. Tony Aguto, commanding general of the 3rd Infantry Division. “We are extremely saddened by the loss of three Dogface Soldiers and injuries to three more. Our hearts and prayers go out to all the families affected by this tragedy.”

# Kurds evacuate Syria town in 1st pullout

Associated Press

AKCAKALE, Turkey — Dozens of vehicles rolled out of a besieged Syrian border town Sunday, evacuating Kurdish fighters and civilians and opening the way for Turkey-backed forces to take over in the first pullback under a three-day-old U.S.-brokered cease-fire.

Kurdish officials say the evacuation of the town of Ras al-Ayn will be followed by a withdrawal of their forces from a broader section of the border with Turkey, a central requirement of the cease-fire deal.

The withdrawal is supposed to take place before Tuesday evening, when the pause in fighting is set to end.

Still, questions remain over longer term arrangements. Turkey says it wants a “safe zone” clear of the Kurdish fighters — whom it considers terrorists — across the entire northeast border. That is far longer than the territory the Kurds will leave under the terms of the deal.

The Trump administration negotiated the accord after heavy criticism at home and abroad that it had opened the way for the Turkish invasion by abruptly removing its soldiers from northeast Syria. That move abandoned the Kurdish-led force, which was allied with the Americans in the bloody, yearslong campaign that brought down Islamic

State’s rule over nearly a third of Syria.

For the moment, the pullback focused on Ras al-Ayn, a town that has been a major battle zone since Turkey launched its invasion Oct. 9. The cease-fire deal only calls for fighters to leave. But Kurdish civilians fled in the convoy as well, fearing atrocities by the Turkey-backed Syrian forces.

Those fighters, who are Arab and often Islamist extremists, have been accused of killings of Kurdish civilians and captured fighters during this campaign and in other Syrian territory seized in Turkish campaigns since 2017.

That flight of civilians is likely to be repeated in other areas

the fighters withdraw from, though most have already fled their homes in the past days of fighting. Turkish TV showed a line of vehicles driving through agricultural areas out of town Sunday. The Turkish military said at least 86 vehicles were involved. The convoys passed through corridors opened by Turkish-backed forces and headed to the town of Tal Tamr further south.

A senior official in the Kurdish-led forces, Redur Khalil, told The Associated Press the evacuation was completed in the afternoon. “We now have no fighters inside the city,” he said.

The pullout elsewhere had not yet begun, he added.

## Trump cancels plan to host G-7 at his Doral golf resort

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Responding to stinging criticism, President Donald Trump has abruptly reversed his plan to hold the next year’s Group of Seven world leaders’ meeting at his Doral golf resort in Florida.

Trump announced a rare backtrack Saturday night after facing accusations that he was using the presidency to enrich himself by hosting the international summit at the private resort owned by his family.

“Based on both Media & Democrat Crazy and Irrational Hostility, we will no longer consider Trump National Doral, Miami, as the Host Site for the G-7 in 2020,” Trump tweeted. He said his administration “will begin the search for another site, including the possibility of Camp David, immediately.”

The striking reversal raises further doubts about the position of the president’s acting chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, who held a news conference Thursday announcing the choice of Doral for the sum-

mit. He insisted his staff had concluded it was “far and away the best physical facility.” Mulvaney said the White House reached that determination after visiting 10 sites across the country.

The vociferous criticism only intensified with Thursday’s official announcement, drawing wide condemnation from Democrats and even some Republicans. Trump insisted he would host the summit at cost, though he refused to disclose financial details. The annual heads-of-state gathering would at minimum have provided goodwill value to his property.

On Thursday, Mulvaney had discounted Camp David, the government-owned presidential retreat, as the site for the summit, claiming, “I understand the folks who participated in it hated it and thought it was a miserable place to have the G-7.”

Mulvaney said then that unspecified sites in Hawaii and Utah had also been on the short list. It was unclear if they were still under consideration.

## 70K Calif. wildfire victims may not get the payments

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — As many as 100,000 Californians are eligible to receive payments for the damages they suffered from a series of devastating wildfires over the last several years. But tens of thousands of them have not sought compensation.

They face a Monday deadline to file claims against Pacific Gas & Electric, the utility blamed for many of the fires and required to cover a wide range of wildfire-related losses as part of its bankruptcy plan.

Concerned that as many as 70,000 victims may miss out on payments, attorneys filed court papers Friday to alert the bankruptcy judge that wildfire survivors — many still traumatized and struggling to get back on their feet — aren’t aware of their rights to file a claim.

“People really are overwhelmed and don’t understand what they need to do,” said Cecily Dumas, an attorney for the Official Committee of Tort Claimants, a group appointed by the court to represent all wildfire victims in the

bankruptcy.

“Renters, lower-income people were simply too exhausted by their day-to-day circumstances to deal with it,” she said.

PG&E filed for bankruptcy protection in January as it faced billions of dollars of damages from wildfires that have killed scores of people over the past couple of years and destroyed thousands of homes. The investor-owned energy company set aside \$8.4 billion for payouts to wildfire victims and mailed 6.2 million claim forms to possible victims, calling attention to the process through websites, email, social media and radio and television ads.

However, many victims said in court papers supporting a deadline extension that the legal notice didn’t reach them because they have been displaced, or if they did receive it, they mistook it as a scam.

Dumas said wildfire survivors can additionally claim for hardships such as lost wages, lost business and emotional distress. Renters can seek to recover the cost of finding alternate housing.

# Hong Kong chaotic as protesters defy ban

Associated Press

HONG KONG — Hong Kong streets descended into chaotic scenes again Sunday as protesters set up roadblocks and torched businesses on a main tourist drag and police responded with tear gas and a water cannon following an unauthorized pro-democracy rally.

Protesters tossed firebombs and took their anger out on shops with mainland Chinese ties as they skirmished late into the evening with riot police, who unleashed numerous tear gas rounds on short notice, angering residents and passers-by.

Police had beefed up security measures ahead of the rally, for which they refused to give permission, the latest chapter in the unrest that has disrupted life in the financial hub since early June.

As the procession set off,

protest leaders carried a black banner that read “Five main demands, not one less” as they pressed their calls for police accountability and political rights in the semiautonomous Chinese territory.

Supporters sang the protest movement’s anthem, waved colonial and U.S. flags and held up placards depicting the Chinese flag as a Nazi swastika.

Many protesters wore masks in defiance of a recently introduced ban on face coverings at public gatherings, and volunteers handed more out to the crowd.

Some front-line protesters barricaded streets at multiple locations in Kowloon, where the city’s subway operator restricted passenger access.

A water cannon truck and armored car led a column of dozens of police vans up and down Nathan Road, a major artery lined with shops, to spray a stinging blue-dyed liquid as

police moved to clear the road of protesters and barricades.

At one point, the water cannon sprayed a handful of people standing outside a mosque. Local broadcaster RTHK reported that the people hit were guarding the mosque and few protesters were nearby. The Hong Kong police force said it was an “unintended impact” of its operation to disperse protesters and later sent a representative to meet the mosque’s imam.

As night fell, protesters returned to the streets, setting trash on fire at intersections.

Residents jeered at riot police, cursing at them and telling them to leave. The officers, in turn, warned people that they were part of an illegal assembly, told them to leave and unleashed tear gas to disperse the crowds.

Along the way, protesters trashed discount grocery shops and a restaurant chain because

of what they say is the pro-Beijing ownership of the companies. They also set fire to ATMs and branches of mainland Chinese banks, setting off sprinklers in at least two, as well as a shop selling products from Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi.

The police used a bomb-disposal robot to blow up a cardboard box with protruding wires that they suspected was a bomb.

Organizers said ahead of the march that they wanted to use their right to protest as guaranteed by Hong Kong’s constitution despite the risk of arrest.

“We’re using peaceful, rational, nonviolent ways to voice our demands,” Figo Chan, vice convener of the Civil Human Rights Front, told reporters. “We’re not afraid of being arrested.”

“What I’m most scared of is everyone giving up on our principles.”

# Group scours ocean for ships sunk at Midway

Associated Press

MIDWAY ATOLL, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands — Deep-sea explorers scouring the world’s oceans for sunken World War II ships are focusing on debris fields deep in the Pacific, in an area where one of the most decisive battles of the time took place.

Hundreds of miles off Midway Atoll, nearly halfway between the United States and Japan, a research vessel is launching underwater robots miles into the abyss to look for warships from the famed Battle of Midway.

Weeks of grid searches around the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands have already led the crew of the Petrel to one sunken warship, the Japanese ship the Kaga. Last week, the crew deployed equipment to investigate what could be another.

Historians consider the Battle of Midway an essential U.S. victory and a key turning point in WWII.

“We read about the battles; we know what happened. But when you see these wrecks on the bottom of the ocean and everything, you kind of get a feel for what the real price is for war,” said Frank Thompson, a historian with the Naval History and

Heritage Command in Washington who is onboard the Petrel. “You see the damage these things took, and it’s humbling to watch some of the video of these vessels because they’re war graves.”

Until now, only one of the seven ships that went down in the June 1942 air and sea battle — five Japanese vessels and two American — had been located.

The expedition is an effort started by the late Paul Allen, the billionaire co-founder of Microsoft. For years, the crew of the 250-foot Petrel has worked with the U.S. Navy and other officials around the world to find and document sunken ships. It is illegal to otherwise disturb the underwater U.S. military gravesites, and their exact coordinates are kept secret.

The Petrel has found 31 vessels so far. This is the first time it has looked for warships from the Battle of Midway, which took place six months after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor and left more than 2,000 Japanese and 300 Americans dead.

A piece of the Japanese aircraft carrier was discovered in 1999, but its main wreckage was still missing — until earlier this month. After receiving some promising sonar readings, the Petrel used under-

water robots to investigate and get video. It compared the footage with historical records and confirmed last week it had found the Kaga.

The other three Japanese aircraft carriers — the Akagi, Soryu and Hiryu — and the Japanese cruiser Mikuma are still unaccounted for.

The Petrel crew hopes to find and survey all the wreckage from the entire battle, an effort that could add new details about Midway to history books.

Earlier this year, they discovered the USS Hornet, an aircraft carrier that helped win the Battle of Midway but sank in the Battle of Santa Cruz near the Solomon Islands less than five months later. More than 100 crew members died. The Petrel also discovered the USS Indianapolis, the U.S. Navy’s single deadliest loss at sea. Rob Kraft, director of subsea operations on the Petrel, said Allen gave him and his crew a mission to preserve history, educate people about the past and honor those who fought on these great ships. Allen died last year.

“We’re still carrying on Paul’s legacy to honor our service members,” Kraft said.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Woman rescued after plunging into pit

**NY** NEW YORK — A woman was rescued after plunging about 5 feet into a pit on a sidewalk near New York City's Madison Square Garden.

Witnesses said the woman fell around 3 p.m. Friday when a flimsy piece of plywood covering the pit gave way.

Christopher Mele, walking a few feet behind the woman at 35th Street and 8th Avenue in Manhattan, said she may have hit her head but never lost consciousness.

Mele called 911 and rescue personnel arrived quickly to pull the woman to safety.

## Beeping shopping tag causes security scare

**GA** ATLANTA — A discarded security tag caused a scare in downtown Atlanta.

An employee reported a beeping sound coming from a trash bin outside a state government building in the heart of downtown Friday. Police evacuated the building and summoned bomb technicians.

As a search was underway, a woman who worked in the building told officers she knew what was in the bin.

The woman said a pair of shoes she bought online came with a security tag attached. When she cut it off, it began to beep. She tossed the tag in the bin on her way into work.

## Police: 144 pounds of meth found in shed

**MO** KANSAS CITY — Federal prosecutors said police seized 144 pounds of methamphetamine in tires stored at a shed at a Kansas

City man's home.

Jorge Rodriguez-Gonzalez, 38, was charged last week in U.S. District Court with drug trafficking.

Prosecutors said that on Oct. 10, Rodriguez-Gonzalez was arrested after showing up for a drug buy with his wife and two young children. Police confiscated weapons, vehicles and drugs, including the methamphetamine inside four tires in a shed near Rodriguez-Gonzalez's home.

## Officer sentenced in road rage incident

**MD** BALTIMORE — A Baltimore police officer was sentenced to five years in prison for a road rage incident in which he drew his gun on a pedestrian who threw tea on his new car.

The Baltimore Sun reported Officer Michael Gentil was sentenced Wednesday following his August conviction on assault and using a gun in a crime of violence.

Kevin Miller said he was stepping out to cross Edison Highway in East Baltimore in January when he was nearly hit by a car. Prosecutors said the driver failed to yield to the pedestrian.

Testimony revealed Gentil stopped, pointed his gun at the pedestrian and ordered him facedown on the pavement.

## Lawyer pleads guilty over bogus threats

**OK** OKLAHOMA CITY — The former top lawyer for the Oklahoma State Department of Health pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor counts over sending bogus threatening emails to herself.

Julia Ezell was pretending to be the target of an angry marijuana advocate. She pleaded

guilty Wednesday to misdemeanor counts of using a computer to violate the law and falsely reporting a crime.

Ezell, 38, was initially charged in July 2018 with two felonies and a misdemeanor for allegedly sending the threats and then lying to investigators about it.

## Climbing cliff closed to preserve nature

**HI** WAILUKU — Hawaii has closed access to a cliff face in a nature reserve over concerns that rock-climbing activities are threatening native plant species and modifying the rock face, officials said.

The state Board of Land and Natural Resources approved the cliff closure in the Lihau section of the West Maui Natural Area Reserve, The Maui News reported Tuesday. The closure will continue for up to two years, officials said.

The state Division of Forestry and Wildlife requested the change to protect rare and endangered plants on the cliff and in the surrounding area.

## DNA leads to arrest in decades-old rape case

**DE** NEWARK — Authorities said information from a genealogical website and DNA from a rape kit led to an arrest in a decades-old attack on a Delaware woman.

News outlets reported Newark police and Delaware Attorney General Kathy Jennings on Tuesday announced the October arrest and September sexual assault indictment of Jeffrey King, 54, of Coatesville, Pa. King is accused in the 1993 rape of a 22-year-old woman who was attacked from behind as she walked down a Newark street.

The case grew cold and was reopened about two years ago as part of the state's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative, which seeks to process untested rape kits. Police Lt. Andrew Rubin said detectives obtained a "discarded item" from King this year that contained his DNA, which matched the rape kit sample.

## 2 men charged in turtle-poaching ring

**FL** FORT MYERS — Florida wildlife officials said they arrested two men for poaching thousands of turtles and selling them.

A Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission news release said Michael Boesenberg, 39, and Michael Clemons, 23, were arrested last week and face multiple poaching-related charges.

Investigators said Boesenberg led a well-organized ring of wildlife traffickers, operating mostly in Lee County. Poached turtles sold wholesale for up to \$300 each and retailed for as much as \$10,000 each in Asia.

## Excursion train ending over local tax dispute

**PA** JIM THORPE — A popular excursion train in eastern Pennsylvania is shutting down next month because of a tax dispute with the local borough.

The Lehigh Gorge Scenic Railway will cease operations Nov. 25 after 15 years of running vintage coaches along the Lehigh River through Glen Onoko and into Lehigh Gorge State Park.

In September, a tax collection agency filed suit saying Jim Thorpe borough was owed about \$95,000 in unpaid amusement taxes from 2016 to 2018.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# Altuve's HR sends Astros to World Series

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Jose Altuve, the 5-foot-6 driving force of Houston, delivered a swing that will play in Astros' highlights forever.

Altuve homered off Aroldis Chapman with two outs in the ninth inning and Houston outlasted the New York Yankees 6-4 Saturday night to advance to the World Series for the second time in three years.

"That's one of the best moments of post-season history," Houston general manager Jeff Luhnow said.

In a bullpen Game 6 with a back-and-forth finish, DJ LeMahieu hit a tying, two-run shot off Astros closer Roberto Osuna in the top of the ninth. Altuve answered with a two-run drive to left-center, setting off a wild celebration at Minute Maid Park and earning himself AL Championship Series MVP.

"Beautiful game," Altuve said.

Astros ace Gerrit Cole was waiting to pitch a potential Game 7 on Sunday. Instead, the postseason star — undefeated since May 22 — can be lined up for Game 1 at home against the NL champion Washington Nationals on Tuesday.

Yuli Gurriel hit a three-run home run in the first inning, and flashy outfield defense helped Houston's relievers defeat the Yankees and their vaunted bullpen.

It almost fell apart in the ninth. Gio Urshela singled off Osuna leading off for his third hit of the game, and LeMahieu put a ball into the first row of seats in right field

— inches over the glove of leaping George Springer — to tie it at 4.

Altuve, a sparkplug touted as Houston's heart and soul, didn't let this one get away.

"I get asked to describe Jose Altuve all the time," manager AJ Hinch said. "I think MVP is what he is."

The teams combined to use 14 pitchers in a drawn-out game that lasted 4 hours, 9 minutes.

Houston's Will Harris, who got four outs over the sixth and seventh innings and has yet to allow a run this postseason, was glad Houston's bullpen got to show its stuff.

"We have a lot of guys with a lot of pride that are really good at their jobs," he said. "And I was excited for the opportunity for us to prove that today."

The defense helped. Right fielder Josh Reddick dived for Brett Gardner's liner for the second out of the sixth. An inning later, left fielder Michael Brantley laid out for Aaron Hicks' shallow floater and doubled off Aaron Judge at first.

Gurriel, a holdover from Houston's 2017 championship team, was 1-for-20 to start the ALCS before his drive in the first inning. He jumped all over a high-and-tight fastball from opener Chad Green, and his shot into the Crawford Boxes was his first connection this postseason.

It's the third time Houston has eliminated New York in the past five postseasons. The Astros won the 2015 wild-card game in the Bronx and beat the Yankees in seven

games in the 2017 ALCS before winning their first title.

"The work never ends," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "We'll continue to try and I guess close that gap."

Washington is seeking its first championship in the 51-season history of the Montreal Expos/Nationals franchise. The original Washington Senators won their only championship for the nation's capital in 1924 and last reached the World Series in 1933 before becoming the Minnesota Twins for the 1961 season.

Gary Sanchez had an RBI single in the second and Urshela homered in the fourth for the Yankees.

Alex Bregman gave the Astros an insurance run with an RBI on a forceout in the sixth inning.

Brantley's double play elicited one of the loudest ovations of the night — before Altuve's blast — from the sellout crowd of 43,357 which included Hall of Famers Nolan Ryan and Craig Biggio and Rockets stars James Harden and Russell Westbrook, who watched from the front row in personalized orange Astros jerseys.

New York was 1-for-6 with runners in scoring position and 3-for-24 over the final five games of the series. The franchise lost its fourth straight ALCS after falling in 2010, 2012 and 2017. The Yankees will go without a World Series appearance in a calendar decade for the first time since the 1910s.

## 'Savage' Yankees sluggers strike out in ALCS

Associated Press

HOUSTON — A record-setting season by Savages in the Box ended with a string of strikeouts and another October bust for the New York Yankees.

For the first time since the 1910s, the 27-time champions have gone through an entire calendar decade without even making it to a World Series.

An AL Championship Series of squandered chances ended when Aroldis Chapman allowed Jose Altuve's pennant-winning, two-run homer in the ninth inning Saturday night that gave the Houston Astros a 6-4 win and the pennant in six games.

"No matter how games we won in the regular season or what else we did, the season's a failure," Aaron Judge said.

"I just think about the missed opportunities."

Altuve became only the second player to eliminate the Yankees in the postseason with a walk-off homer, the first since Bill Mazeroski's homer off Bill Terry won Game 7 of the 1960 World Series for Pittsburgh.

"It will serve us well going forward when we get to the top of the mountain," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said.

After a regular season with 306 homers, the Yankees got two more to overcome a 3-0, first-inning deficit, a solo shot by Gio Urshela and DJ LeMahieu's two-run drive off Roberto Osuna in the ninth.

"Extremely disappointing. We set out to win the whole thing," LeMahieu said. "Everybody was extremely focused. I

think we all had belief we were going to win the series one way or another."

But after talking all year about how important it was to gain home-field advantage, the Yankees showed what a slight let-up in the last 10 days of the regular season meant. Houston finished with 107 wins and the Yankees 103, giving the Astros hosting rights for the first two games of the ALCS and the last two.

And so after losing Game 7 at Minute Maid Park two years ago, the Yankees lost their fourth straight ALCS since their last World Series title in 2009.

New York went 1-for-6 with runners in scoring position, finishing 6-for-35 (.171) in the series with 42 runners left on

base — that after leading the majors with a .294 RISP during the season. The Yankees lived and died by the homer, scoring 15 of their 21 runs in the series on 10 long balls. They struck out 11 times in Game 6, raising their series total to 64.

Edwin Encarnacion was 1-for-18 with 11 strikeouts and no RBIs, Gary Sanchez 3-for-23 with three RBIs, Judge 6-for-25 with two RBIs, Didi Gregorius 5-for-23 with no RBIs. Brett Gardner, the 36-year-old outfielder uncertain about his future with the Yankees, was 3-for-22 with one RBI and 10 strikeouts.

"A couple timely hits, this series might be different," Judge said. "We might not even be playing a Game 6."

## NHL roundup

## Jost's hat trick lifts Avs past Lightning

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Tyson Jost had three goals, Pavel Francouz made 44 saves, and the Colorado Avalanche beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 6-2 Saturday night to remain the only NHL team without a regulation loss this season.

Colorado's 7-0-1 start is the second-longest opening point streak in franchise history, behind only the 9-0-2 start in 2000-01.

Jost completed his first career hat trick with a pair of goals coming 2:49 apart early in the second period.

Colorado also got goals from Gabriel Landeskog, Nazem Kadri and Mikko Rantanen. Colin Wilson had three assists.

**Devils 1, Canucks 0:** Jack Hughes scored his first career goal in his first NHL game against older brother Quinn Hughes, helping host New Jersey top Vancouver.

Mackenzie Blackwood stopped 25 shots in his third career shutout, sending the Devils to their second straight victory after starting the season with six straight losses.

Jack Hughes, 18, played in his eighth NHL game after he was selected by New Jersey with the No. 1 overall pick in this year's draft. Quinn Hughes, 20, was a first-round selection by Vancouver in 2018.

**Knights 3, Penguins 0:** Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 29 shots against his former team, leading Las Vegas to the road win.

Fleury recorded his 445th win, tying Terry Sawchuk for seventh on the NHL career list. Fleury, who made his second career start for the Golden Knights against Pittsburgh, also registered his 57th career shutout.

**Leafs 4, Bruins 3 (OT):** Morgan Rielly scored his second goal of the game on a deflection of Mitch Marner's shot 3:54 into overtime, giving host Toronto the victory over Boston.

Alexander Kerfoot and Dmytro Timashov also scored for the Maple Leafs, and Marner had two assists. Frederik Andersen stopped 42 shots.

**Stars 4, Flyers 1:** Roope Hintz, Esa Lindell and Corey Perry scored to help visiting Dallas snap a five-game losing streak.

Ben Bishop stopped 38 shots for the slow-starting Stars, who improved to just 2-7-1. Dallas only took 16 shots against a listless Philadelphia team playing its first home game in 10 days.

**Panthers 3, Predators 2 (SO):** Vincent Trocheck scored the deciding goal in the shootout to give Florida the road win.

Denis Malgin and Brett Connolly scored in regulation for the Panthers, who have won two of three. Florida has gone to overtime in four of its eight games this season.

**Islanders 3, Jackets 2 (OT):** Brock Nelson scored 33 seconds into overtime, lifting visiting New York to its fourth straight win.

Nelson beat Joonas Korpisalo from the slot off a feed from Nick Leddy.

**Canadiens 5, Blues 2:** Brendan Gallagher, Jonathan Drouin and Nick Suzuki scored in the second period, leading Montreal to a win at St. Louis.

Jordan Weal and Shea Weber also scored for the Canadiens, who won for the third time in four games. Carey Price made 32 saves in his 325th win, passing Sean Burke for 27th on the NHL career list.

**Coyotes 5, Senators 2:** Conor Garland had a goal and an assist, Antti Raanta stopped 34 shots and host Arizona outlasted Ottawa.

Kyle Capobianco posted his first NHL goal for the Coyote.

**Sabres 4, Sharks 3:** Zemgus Girgensons scored with 7:45 left and Buffalo continued its surprising start with a victory at San Jose.

Marcus Johansson had a goal and an assist for the Sabres (7-1-1), who are coming off their sixth straight losing season.

The Sabres are looking to end an eight-year playoff drought. They have the Eastern Conference's best record.

**Kings 4, Flames 1:** Jeff Carter had a goal and assist, Jonathan Quick made 23 saves and host Los Angeles snapped a three-game losing streak.

Tyler Toffoli, Anze Kopitar and Ilya Kovalchuk also scored for the Kings.

## Bucks, 76ers are the favorites in East with Leonard out

Associated Press

Giannis Antetokounmpo and the Milwaukee Bucks were a couple wins from beating Toronto. The Philadelphia 76ers were maybe a couple bounces from doing it a round earlier.

Neither team was good enough to finish the job last season, but both think this is their time after Kawhi Leonard went back to the Western Conference.

That left the NBA champions weakened and the Bucks and 76ers looking like the favorites to represent the East in the NBA Finals — where perhaps they'd have to deal with Leonard again.

The Bucks appeared headed

there in 2018-19, right up until midway through the East finals. Milwaukee had the league's best record at 60-22, with Antetokounmpo eventually winning MVP and Mike Budenholzer the Coach of the Year. But the Bucks couldn't get another victory after taking a 2-0 lead over the Raptors, who won the next four games to reach the finals.

The Bucks think they addressed some of their weaknesses and are ready to take another run at it.

"I think everybody on this team wants to show that last year wasn't just, you know, a year by accident that we just won 60 games," Antetokounmpo said. "I think we had

a great team. We got better but obviously there's going to be a lot of teams that expect us. They know us now and they're going to play hard."

It took Leonard's shot that bounced on the rim four times before falling in at the buzzer in Game 7 to knock out Philadelphia in the second round. The 76ers come back with Al Horford and Josh Richardson but without Jimmy Butler or JJ Redick, hoping they've given coach Brett Brown the right mix around All-Stars Joel Embiid and Ben Simmons.

"We know what the expectations are and we embrace it. It's not just Brett, it's all of us," general manager Elton Brand said.

"We're in that position now where just getting to the first round, getting to the second round, those expectations are gone. We're expected to win big and we embrace it."

Leonard went to the Los Angeles Clippers, but the Raptors still have Marc Gasol and Pascal Siakam in their frontcourt that finally slowed down Antetokounmpo. He knows there will be many more teams gearing up to do the same.

"We've just got to be ready," he said. "They're not going to give us nothing. We've got to go out there and take everything that we want and we've got to earn everything that we've got to earn this year."

## Top 25 college football roundup

# Illinois stuns No. 9 Wisconsin

Associated Press

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — James McCourt kicked a 39-yard field as time expired and Illinois pulled off the biggest upset of the college football season, knocking off No. 6 Wisconsin 24-23 on Saturday.

Tony Adams picked off a pass by Jack Coan for the 30 1/2-point underdog Illini (3-5, 1-3 Big Ten) at midfield with 2:33 remaining. Dre Brown's tackle-breaking 13-yard run got Illinois to the Wisconsin 25, setting up McCourt to attempt the winner. The junior's kick was down the middle to give coach Lovie Smith the most significant victory of his four-year tenure in Champaign.

**No. 1 Alabama 35, Tennessee 13:** With Crimson Tide Tagovailoa hurt, Alabama turned to the defense and Najee Harris to pull out a victory over the visiting Volunteers.

The Crimson Tide (7-0, 4-0 Southeastern Conference) faced its first test of the season without last season's Heisman Trophy runner-up against the five-touchdown underdogs. Both starting quarterbacks left the game before halftime, and Tennessee (2-5, 1-3) put up a fight much of the way.

**No. 7 Penn State 21, No. 16 Michigan 21:** Sean Clifford threw three touchdown passes and ran for another score to lead the host Nittany Lions.

Clifford hit KJ Hamler on 25- and 53-yard scoring strikes and hooked up with tight end Pat Freiermuth for a 17-yard touchdown pass in a game Penn State (7-0, 4-0 Big Ten) never trailed.

**No. 15 Texas 50, Kansas 48:** Cameron Dicker made a 33-yard field goal as time expired and the host Longhorns survived the Jayhawks' desperate upset bid after the teams exchanged six touchdowns in the fourth quarter.

**No. 2 LSU 36, Mississippi State 13:** Joe Burrow threw for 327 yards and four touchdowns to break the Tigers' sea-

son record with 29.

Visiting LSU (7-0, 3-0 Southeastern Conference) had 415 yards of total offense and averaged 6.9 yards per play.

**No. 3 Clemson 45, Louisville 10:** Trevor Lawrence overcame two early interceptions to throw three touchdown passes, Travis Etienne ran for 192 yards and a score and the visiting Tigers routed the Cardinals for their 22nd consecutive victory.

**No. 5 Oklahoma 52, West Virginia 14:** Jalen Hurts passed for 316 yards and three touchdowns and rushed for 75 yards and two more scores for the host Sooners.

**No. 9 Florida 38, South Carolina 27:** Kyle Trask threw a career-high four touchdown passes, three in the fourth quarter, to help the visiting Gators bounce back from their loss at LSU.

Florida (7-1, 4-1 Southeastern Conference) slogged through a soggy field from Tropical Storm Nestor for much of the game. The Gators rallied past a Gamecocks (3-4, 2-3) team looking to take down a Top 10 opponent for the second straight week after its 20-17 double-overtime win at Georgia. Instead, it was Florida, off its 42-28 defeat at LSU, that kept making plays on the way to its best start since 2015.

**No. 10 Georgia 21, Kentucky 0:** D'Andre Swift's 39-yard touchdown run in the third quarter snapped a scoreless tie, and the host Bulldogs overcame a slow start to beat the Wildcats.

**No. 11 Auburn 51, Arkansas 10:** Bo Nix passed for three touchdowns and ran for another for the visiting Tigers (6-1, 3-1 Southeastern Conference).

**No. 12 Oregon 35, No. 25 Washington 31:** Justin Herbert hit Jaylon Redd for a 5-yard touchdown with 5:10 left, the last of his four scoring passes, and the visiting Ducks overcame a 14-point deficit to beat the Huskies.

**No. 13 Utah 21, No. 17 Arizona State 3:** Zack Moss broke the host Utes' career rushing record and scored two touchdowns in a victory over the Sun Devils.

**BYU 28, No. 14 Boise State 25:** Baylor Romney threw for 221 yards and two touchdowns in his first career start to help the host Cougars upset the Broncos and snap a three-game losing streak.

**No. 18 Baylor 45, Oklahoma State 27:** Charlie Brewer completed 13-for-17 passes for 312 yards and a touchdown and ran for another score and the visiting Bears extended their winning streak to nine games.

**No. 19 SMU 45, Temple 21:** Shane Buechele set career highs with six touchdown passes and 457 passing yards to help the host Mustangs improve to 7-0.

**No. 20 Minnesota 42, Rutgers 7:** Rodney Smith ran for 111 yards and two touchdowns and the visiting Golden Gophers improved to 7-0 for the first time since winning the national title in 1960.

**No. 21 Cincinnati 24, Tulsa 13:** Gerrid Doaks ran for a pair of touchdowns and turned a short pass into a 28-yard score, helping the host Bearcats hold on after losing their top running back.

**Vanderbilt 21, No. 22 Missouri 14:** Riley Neal came off the bench and threw a 21-yard touchdown to Cam Johnson with 8:57 left, and the host Commodores upset the Tigers with a stifling defensive performance.

**No. 23 Iowa 26, Purdue 20:** Mekhi Sargent scored on a 14-yard run with 2:16 left and the host Hawkeyes held off the Boilermakers to snap a two-game losing streak.

**No. 24 Appalachian State 52, Louisiana-Monroe 7:** Zac Thomas threw for 214 yards and three touchdowns and ran for another score and the host Mountaineers earned their first victory as a Top 25 team.

## Service academies

# Falcons, led by backup, top Hawaii

Associated Press

HONOLULU — It's likely that Mike Schmidt won't soon forget his first trip to Hawaii.

Air Force's backup quarterback came off the bench to account for four touchdowns and the Falcons beat Hawaii 56-26 Saturday night.

Air Force (5-2, 3-1 Mountain West), which had 324 total yards by halftime, scored touchdowns on its first four possessions and seven of 10 overall.

Schmidt, a fourth-year senior with just three carries for 28 yards — and no pass attempts — in five career games prior to Saturday, relieved starter Donald Hammond III, who left the game midway through Air Force's first possession after falling on his right (throwing) shoulder.

Schmidt rushed for 120 yards on 14 carries, including scores of 1, 61 and 18 yards. He also completed 5 of 6 passes for 147 yards, with a 75-yard TD pass to Geraud Sanders, who finished with three receptions for 116 yards.

**Navy 45, Tulsa 17:** Malcolm Perry rushed for 218 yards and three touchdowns on 20 carries to lead the Midshipmen to a rare away win.

Jamale Carothers, Nelson Smith and C.J. Williams also scored rushing touchdowns for Navy (4-1, 2-1 American), which outscored Tulsa 21-0 in the second quarter to take control of the game.

**Georgia State 28, Army 21:** Georgia State quarterback Dan Ellington passed for three touchdowns, Aubry Payne caught the go-ahead score midway through the fourth quarter and Georgia State's defense held on the final drive in Atlanta.

Quavian White picked off quarterback Kelvin Hopkins at the 3-yard line in the closing minute to end Army's last chance.