

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US to lift Turkey sanctions amid cease-fire

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Wednesday he will lift sanctions on Turkey after the NATO ally agreed to permanently stop fighting Kurdish forces in Syria and he defended his decision to withdraw American troops, saying the U.S. should not be the world's policeman.

"We're getting out," Trump said at the White House, asserting that tens of thousands of Kurdish lives were saved as the result of his actions.

"Let someone else fight over this long-blood-stained sand," he said.

Trump warned that if Turkey does not honor its pledge for a permanent cease-fire, he will not hesitate to reimpose

sanctions. Earlier this month, Trump halted negotiations on a \$100 billion trade deal with Turkey, raised steel tariffs back up to 50% and imposed sanctions on three senior Turkish officials and Turkey's defense and energy ministries.

"The job of our military is not to police the world," Trump said. "Other nations must step up and do their fair share. Today's breakthrough is a critical step in that direction."

Trump earlier in October ordered the bulk of the approximately 1,000 U.S. troops in Syria to withdraw after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Trump in a phone call that Turkish forces were set to invade northeastern Syria. Turkey's goal was to push back the U.S.-allied Kurd-

ish fighters.

Turkey views the Kurds as terrorists and an ever-present threat along its southern border with Syria.

The U.S. pullout was seen as an abandonment of Kurdish fighters, who have incurred thousands of casualties as they fought with U.S. forces against Islamic State militants.

The U.S. troops left, but the conflict was not without repercussions.

Trump's critics say he gave up American influence in the region and signaled to future allies that the United States is no longer a reliable partner. More than 176,000 people have been displaced by the Turkish offensive and about 500 ISIS fighters gained freedom during the conflict.

"There were a few that got out, a small number relatively speaking," Trump said. "They've been largely recaptured."

Turkey is taking control of areas of Syria that it captured in its invasion. Russian and Syrian forces are now overseeing the rest of the border region, leaving the United States with little influence in the region.

Trump said he would "bring our soldiers home" from Syria but then recalibrated, and his administration plans to shift more than 700 to western Iraq. Those troops, however, do not have permission to stay in Iraq permanently. Iraq's defense minister, Najah al-Shammari, told The Associated Press that the U.S. troops will leave the country within four weeks.

Army scientists: Gut can take eating only MREs for 3 weeks

BY J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

Consuming nothing but Meals Ready-to-Eat for three weeks may not be the most appetizing thing to do, but a study by Army scientists has found that it doesn't harm gut health.

That may come as a surprise to anyone whose stomach has rumbled after eating the highly processed military rations for just one day, let alone 21, which is the maximum time the Army says MREs should be the sole source of subsistence for soldiers.

"It's not MREs underlying a lot of anecdotal reports of gastrointestinal discomfort," said Dr. J. Philip Karl, a scientist and research dietitian at the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine and lead author on the study published in this month's *Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry*.

Service members usually eat MREs when they're training or on a mission in harsh terrain, under stress and possibly overseas, where hygiene might not be at high standards, Karl said in a phone interview. They may also be dehydrated, he said.

The study set out to determine if it's the rations or the environment that causes the digestive issues service members often associate with MREs.

Sixty-four people, mostly men, responded to the Army's 2015 call for volunteers to eat only MREs. Four dropped out for reasons including gastrointestinal distress and not sticking to the study protocol.

Participants were divided into two groups, one of which ate their usual diet while the other ate nothing but MREs for three weeks. The MRE group could have water and up to three cups of black coffee a day in addition to the rations, but

that was it.

The volunteers kept logs, while dietitians monitored their weight and adjusted food intake if they gained or lost weight. Researchers collected blood, urine and stool samples from the volunteers several times during the study and analyzed the samples to determine if MREs were affecting health by causing changes to gut microbiota — bacteria, fungi and viruses that live in the intestines.

Research suggests gut microbiota influence our moods, digestion and immune systems, Karl said. Even a small change can alter how nutrients are absorbed, or inflame the intestinal lining, leading to stomach pain and even chronic diseases, he said.

But Karl and his team of researchers found almost no difference in gut chemistry between those who ate only MREs

and those who continued to eat normally.

Those who ate just rations did have one fewer bowel movement per week, the researcher found. The just-MREs group also had lower levels of gut bacteria that have been found in other studies to increase the frequency of defecation.

Many people get those helpful bacteria by eating fermented food, such as yogurts and cheeses, which are not included in MREs.

While MREs contain similar amounts of carbohydrate, fat, protein and fiber as the average American diet, they also need to withstand tough conditions and maintain a three-year shelf life, the Army said in a statement last month. As a result, they contain no fresh foods.

Then again, the average American also consumes too few fresh foods, Karl said.

Russians deploy at Syrian border under deal

Associated Press

AKCAKALE, Turkey — Russian military police began patrols on part of the Syrian border Wednesday, quickly moving to implement an accord with Turkey that divvies up control of northeastern Syria. The Kremlin told Kurdish fighters to pull back from the entire frontier or else face being “steamrolled” by Turkish forces.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan echoed those warnings, saying his military would resume its offensive against Kurdish fighters if the new arrangements are not carried out.

Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin reached an agreement Tuesday that would transform the map of northeast Syria, installing their forces along the border and filling the void left by the abrupt withdrawal of American troops. The Kurdish fighters, who once relied on the U.S. forces as protection from Turkey, were given a deadline of next Tuesday evening to pull back from border areas they have not already left.

Iraq, meanwhile, closed the door on the U.S. military’s attempt to keep the troops leaving Syria on its soil. Iraqi Defense

Minister Najah al-Shammari told The Associated Press that those troops were only “transiting” Iraq and would leave within four weeks, heading either to Kuwait, Qatar or the United States.

Al-Shammari spoke after meeting U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper, who earlier this week had said the American forces from Syria would remain in Iraq to fight Islamic State. Iraq’s military quickly said they did not have permission to do so.

The clumsy reversal underscored the blow to U.S. influence on the ground in the wake of President Donald Trump’s order for U.S. troops to leave Syria. Those forces were allied with the Kurdish-led fighters for five years in the long and bloody campaign that brought down ISIS in Syria.

Now a significant swath of the territory they captured is being handed over to U.S. rivals, and the Kurds have been stung at being abandoned by their allies to face the Turkish invasion launched on Oct. 9.

The Kremlin pointedly referred to that abandonment as it told the Kurds to abide by the Russian-Turkish accord.

“The United States was the closest ally of the Kurds during the last few years, and in the end the U.S. ditched the Kurds and

effectively betrayed them,” leaving them to fight the Turks, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, according to Russian newswires.

“It’s quite obvious that if the Kurdish units don’t withdraw with their weapons then Syrian border guards and Russian military police will have to step back. And the remaining Kurdish units will be steamrolled by the Turkish army,” he said.

The Kurds have enjoyed self-rule in the northeast ever since Syria’s central government had to pull its forces out of the area seven years ago to battle rebels elsewhere at the height of the country’s civil war. With the subsequent alliance with the U.S., the Kurdish fighters had hoped to give their autonomy ambitions further weight.

Turkey considers the Kurdish fighters terrorists because of their links to Kurdish insurgents in Turkey. It has demanded they retreat from the entire border region, creating a “safe zone” where Turkey could also settle some of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees on its soil.

Ankara would gain that goal under the new accord with Moscow along with the agreement last week with the U.S. that put a cease-fire in place.

GAO study: Some troops’ financial literacy lacking

BY STEVE BEYNON

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The military offers a smorgasbord of benefits aimed at setting up troops for success during service and retirement. However, some service members aren’t financially literate enough for long-term financial planning after the recent transition to the new retirement system, according to a new report from the Government Accountability Office.

The study, conducted at the request of Sens. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and Dick Durbin, D-Ill., found the Department of Defense does a lot to inform troops on the new retirement system — known as the Blended Retirement System — but service members across the military aren’t being assessed on their financial literacy.

“According to [Department of Defense] officials, service members will make more financial decisions that may impact their ability to successfully save for retirement under BRS than under the Legacy Retirement System, which makes providing effective financial literacy training to service members particularly important,” the

GAO’s study found.

Among the myriad potential concerns of troops and their families, financial well-being is a top stressor, even topping mental health, according to Rebecca Burgess, a veterans studies research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank.

“Surveys of veterans and military families conducted by Blue Star Families and other consulting firms consistently find that military pay and benefits and financial health are in the top tier of concerns, much more so than mental health issues,” Burgess said. “Veterans consistently say that they think they have enough mental health resources and know where and how to access those, but I’ve yet to see a survey Q&A that asked that same question about veterans and their awareness of available to them financial planning resources.”

It isn’t a matter of inadequate financial training tools, but younger troops without a lot of financial obligations aren’t equipped with the background to understand the basics of retirement, according to researchers at the GAO.

“Junior service members struggle with

contributing to their retirement,” said Charlie Jeszeck, director of education, workforce and income security issues at the GAO.

“The DOD determines BRS lump-sum payments at retirement by applying an interest rate (or discount rate) to calculate the present value of annuity payments service members forgo by taking a lump sum,” the GAO reported. “DOD can take certain steps to help service members understand how to compare the BRS lump-sum payment option with the full annuity option.

“Without this information, service members may not make informed decisions and potentially risk their retirement savings.”

While some formal training sets troops up for success on paper — it doesn’t properly assess their financial literacy, the report found.

That sets up a key challenge for leaders to educate the force on critical background knowledge needed to fully benefit from one of the military’s top perks.

However, troops might not totally grasp the importance of planning their finances and take the time to learn about their options.

Soldier quiet at hearing on fatal crash

Associated Press

FORT STEWART, Ga. — An Army soldier charged in a vehicle rollover that killed a West Point cadet kept quiet Wednesday during a preliminary hearing to help determine whether she will face trial by a court-martial.

Staff Sgt. Ladonies Strong declined to make a statement in her defense during a short hearing that revealed no new details about the June 6 training crash that killed Christopher J. Morgan, 22, and injured 19 of his fellow cadets at the U.S. Military Academy.

The Article 32 hearing, somewhat similar to a civilian grand jury, was held at Fort Stewart in southeast Georgia because Strong is assigned to the Army's 3rd Infantry Division headquartered there.

Strong was charged in September with multiple violations of military law — including counts of involuntary manslaughter, negligent homicide and reckless operation of a vehicle — in the rollover crash on the academy's training grounds in West Point, N.Y.

Morgan, of West Orange, N.J., died when an Army tactical vehicle similar to a large,

open-bed truck overturned during a summer military training exercise for West Point cadets in the wooded hills outside the academy's main gates. It happened on a fire break road as the vehicle was leaving the area where trainees live during the summer.

Some of the 19 injured cadets suffered broken arms and facial abrasions. Two soldiers in the truck's cab were also injured.

Morgan died at the scene. He was a law and legal studies major in the Class of 2020 and had been a standout member of the Army wrestling team.

A 3rd Infantry spokesman, Lt.

Col. Patrick Husted, declined to confirm whether Strong was driving the truck when it overturned, as the charges against her suggest.

Prosecutors and Strong's defense attorney called no witnesses during the hearing, which lasted less than 20 minutes. That means the presiding officer, Maj. Dennis Hernon, will rely on investigative records and other documents to make his recommendation on whether Strong's case should advance to a court-martial. Fort Stewart commanders will make the final decision based on Hernon's written report.

Navy lieutenant, wife arrested after home raid

From wire reports

A Navy lieutenant and his wife were arrested in a joint FBI and NCIS raid Thursday in the area of San Jose, Fla.

The raid occurred at the home of Navy Lt. Fan Yang and his wife, Yang Yang. Documents obtained by First Coast News say Fan Yang holds a top-secret U.S. security clearance and is actively serving in the Navy in a sensitive anti-submarine warfare unit. He was assigned to the Maritime Patrol Reconnaissance Weapons School at Naval Air Station Jacksonville.

Fan Yang was born in China, emigrated to the United States in 1999 as a teenager, and became a U.S. citizen in 2006, according

to the documents. The accusations against the Yangs include conspiracy to defraud the United States, importing and manufacturing firearms, transfer of a firearm to a nonresident and conspiracy to violate federal law (specifically knowing submission of false and misleading export information).

Fan Yang is also charged with illegal possession of a firearm by an alien admitted under a nonimmigrant visa. His wife is accused of submitting false and misleading export information and fraudulently trying to export illegal merchandise from the U.S. to China.

The court documents say the couple worked together to assist a Chinese national in illegally

possessing firearms between March 2017 and September 2019. The documents indicate the couple lied to hide the true nature of that relationship.

One account in the documents says Fan Yang requested time off from work to take his family to Disney. But investigators say credit cards linked to him and his wife show flights purchased to Sioux City, Iowa, and a meal bought in Sioux City, Neb., the weekend they were reportedly at the park.

That same weekend, documents say a one-way flight to an airport 100 miles away from Sioux City, Neb., was also purchased by Fan Yang for the Chinese national.

During an interview, Fan

Yang denied that he and his wife had contact with a foreign national in the last seven years, documents said. He also denied any foreign financial interests despite records showing them having a Bank of China Account.

According to documents, the Chinese national is the chairman of a Shanghai company named Shanghai Breeze Technology Co. From November 2016 through August 2019 approximately \$205,000 was wire-transferred between Shanghai Breeze and BQ TREE LLC. On business cards obtained by the FBI, Yang Yang is listed as the chief consultant and Fan Yang as a consultant for BQ TREE, LLC.

Marine dies in vehicle accident during training in California

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Marine was killed in a vehicle accident during training in California on Sunday, the same day that three soldiers were killed in another training crash in Georgia, the Marine Corps said Tuesday.

Pfc. Christian Bautista, 21, of Cook County, Ill., was killed about 7:15 a.m. in an M-1151 Enhanced Armament Carrier vehicle at the Marine Corps Mountain War-

fare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif., according to a statement by Capt. Stephen Washburn, a spokesman for the 1st Marine Logistics Group. Two Marines in the vehicle attempted life-saving measures before the arrival of paramedics, who pronounced him dead at the scene.

Also Sunday, three soldiers from Fort Stewart, Ga., were killed when the Bradley Fighting Vehicle that they were training in rolled off a bridge and submerged upside down in water. Three other soldiers, who were not named, were injured in the sin-

gle-vehicle accident that occurred about 3:20 a.m.

Bautista, who enlisted in the Marine Corps in September 2018, was a motor vehicle operator serving as a turret gunner for the vehicle, which is similar in appearance to a Humvee, according to Washburn.

Washburn could not say Tuesday whether Bautista was in the turret at the time of the accident, citing the ongoing investigation.

No one else was injured in the accident. No additional details about the accident were provided in the statement.

Diplomat says Trump linked aid, probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A top U.S. diplomat testified Tuesday that President Donald Trump was holding back military aid for Ukraine unless the country agreed to investigate Democrats and a company linked to Joe Biden's family, providing lawmakers with a detailed new account of the quid pro quo central to the impeachment probe.

In a lengthy opening statement to House investigators obtained by The Associated Press, William Taylor described Trump's demand that "everything" President Volodymyr Zelenskiy wanted, including vital aid to counter Russia, hinged on making a public vow that Ukraine would investigate Democrats going back to the 2016 U.S. election as well as a company linked to the family of Trump's potential 2020 Democratic rival.

Taylor, a former Army officer, testified that what he discovered in Kyiv was the Trump administration's "irregular" back channel to foreign policy led by the presi-

dent's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, and "ultimately alarming circumstances" that threatened to erode the United States' relationship with a budding Eastern European ally facing Russian aggression.

In a date-by-date account, detailed across several pages, the seasoned diplomat who came out of retirement to take over as charge d'affaires at the embassy in Ukraine, details his mounting concern as he realized Trump was trying to put the newly elected president of the young democracy "in a public box."

"I sensed something odd," he testified, describing a trio of Trump officials planning a call with Zelenskiy, including one, Ambassador Gordon Sondland, who wanted to make sure "no one was transcribing or monitoring" it.

Lawmakers who emerged after nearly 10 hours of the private deposition were stunned at Taylor's account, which some Democrats said established a "direct line" to the quid pro quo at the center of the impeachment probe.

It's illegal to seek or receive contributions of value from a foreign entity for a U.S. election.

"President Trump has done nothing wrong," said White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham. "This is a coordinated smear campaign from far-left lawmakers and radical unelected bureaucrats waging war on the Constitution. There was no quid pro quo."

Taylor's testimony opens a new front in the impeachment inquiry, and it calls into question the account from Sondland, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union, who told Congress last week that he did not fully remember some details of the events and was initially unaware that the gas company Burisma was tied to the Bidens.

Lawmakers described the career civil servant's delivery as credible and consistent, as he answered hours of questions from Democrats and Republicans, drawing silence in the room as lawmakers exchanged glances.

3 senators seek info on Ukraine via FOIA

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Presidential hopeful Kamala Harris and two of her Democratic Senate colleagues are trying to force the Trump administration to release documents related to Ukraine and potential investigations into the president's domestic political rivals through the federal Freedom of Information Act.

Harris, of California, joins Richard Blumenthal, of Connecticut, and Sheldon Whitehouse, of Rhode Island, in filing a request Wednesday with the Department of Justice seeking documents related to Ukraine, China and various investigations into companies associated with Hunter Biden, the son of Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden.

The request comes as the U.S. House of Representatives seeks its own information via its impeachment inquiry into Trump. The administration routinely ignores requests from Congress for documents and witnesses,

including from Democrats in the House who have subpoena power.

The three senators, all members of the Judiciary Committee, say they are turning to the public records law because of the Republican administration's resistance to sharing information.

But requests via the Freedom of Information Act can take months or even years to fulfill, meaning it's unlikely the senators will get documents soon, said Thomas Blanton, director of the National Security Archive and an expert on the Freedom of Information Act. He said Congress has a history of using the law to try to pry loose documents from the executive branch.

The information request seeks communications to, from or with officials in the attorney general's office that include roughly 75 words or phrases, such as Giuliani, the last name of the president's personal attorney.

US highway fatalities fall for 2nd straight year

Associated Press

DETROIT — Traffic deaths in the U.S. fell slightly in 2018 for the second straight year, the government's road safety agency said Tuesday.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration attributed the 2.4% drop partially to technology in newer vehicles that can prevent crashes. A total of 36,560 people died on the nation's roads last year, the latest full-year statistics available.

The agency said the downward trend is continuing into 2019. First-half estimates show fatalities down 3.4%.

"This is encouraging news, but still far too many perished or were injured, and nearly all crashes are preventable, so much more work remains to be done to make America's roads safer for everyone," Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, whose department oversees the NHTSA, said in a statement.

Pedestrian deaths rose 3.4%, and the number of people killed on bicycles and other pedaled

vehicles went up 6.3%. People killed in large-truck crashes rose just under 1%.

The agency reported 6,283 pedestrian deaths, the highest total in 28 years, according to Consumer Reports, which said pedestrian fatalities have risen about 53% since 2009.

The agency said the number of deaths in crashes with distracted drivers hit 2,841 in 2018, or 7.8% of total traffic deaths. But the 2018 number is down 12.4% from 2017, according to the agency.

The Truck Safety Coalition, an advocacy group, said crashes involving at least one large truck killed 4,951 people last year. In a statement, the group said fatalities involving large trucks have increased 46.5% in the past decade, yet the administration of President Donald Trump has pushed for proposals that would make it easier for truck drivers to work 17-hour days, and to remove a 30-minute break requirement for truck drivers after eight hours of work.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman breaks in, takes toilet paper

NC CHARLOTTE — A foul-mouthed toilet tissue thief was caught red-handed in North Carolina after she allegedly broke into a home, cursed the owner, then fled with his toilet paper, according to the Iredell County Sheriff's Office.

Investigators identified the suspect as Sarah Noel Davis, 34. She was charged with felony breaking and entering and felony larceny after breaking and entering, a news release said.

"The victim advised the deputies Davis walked into his home, and started cussing him. She then walked (past) him, and removed a roll of toilet paper," the news release said.

SWAT team chasing suspect ends party

NM ALBUQUERQUE — A SWAT team looking for a suspected accomplice in a forged-check case was forced to break up a birthday party for an 8-year-old Albuquerque boy.

KOAT-TV reported the armed SWAT team surrounded Christina Rain's home as she held a birthday gathering for her son.

A suspect had fled police from a Walmart and eventually barricade himself in the storage shed in Rain's backyard.

Police ordered Rain and the rest of the partygoers out of the house and to a nearby park.

Authorities said the man was taken into custody.

Man takes ambulance to escape torture

OH LEBANON — Police in Ohio said a man

accused of stealing an ambulance from a fire department told them he escaped in it after being held against his will and tortured for days at a nearby residence.

Clearcreek Township police said the ambulance was taken from a township fire station and found at a Dayton hospital where a 22-year-old Cincinnati man was being treated for injuries.

A police news release said the Cincinnati man said he had been "held against his will" at a residence across from the fire station and escaped in the ambulance.

Police said Christopher Edwards, 38, who lived at the residence where the man said he was held, was arrested on felonious assault and kidnapping charges.

Police: Man in monkey mask robbed bank

WV BECKLEY — Police in West Virginia were searching for a man they said robbed a bank while wearing a monkey mask.

Beckley police Lt. David Allard told The Register-Herald that the man was unarmed when he entered the City National Bank in a hoodie and mask. Allard said the man handed a note detailing his demands to a clerk, who complied and provided the man with an undisclosed amount of cash.

He said witnesses reported seeing the robber flee the scene on a bicycle that was later found abandoned. The mask and pieces of the robber's clothing also were found discarded.

Man admits stealing toothpaste formula

NJ NEWARK — A New Jersey man pleaded

guilty to scheming to steal his employer's proprietary toothpaste formula to sell overseas.

Muamer Reci pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud conspiracy. He's scheduled to be sentenced in February.

The U.S. attorney's office said the 57-year-old Haskell resident conspired with others to set up a company in North Macedonia to manufacture and sell a toothpaste named Eurodent using Reci's employer's formulas.

Reci allegedly sent emails to someone at the overseas company that included attachments of different formulas stolen from his company as well as proprietary laboratory procedures.

Man seen atop car has 1 charge dropped

TN NASHVILLE — A Tennessee judge dropped a charge against a man accused of riding for 20 miles atop a car driving down an interstate at high speeds.

Ronnie Sellars, 31, no longer faces a "clinging to a vehicle" charge in Wilson County, but disorderly conduct charges are still pending in neighboring Davidson County, The Tennessean reported.

The district attorney's office said Judge Haywood Barry ruled that the language of the law doesn't match what Sellars was accused of doing.

Sellars was arrested in September after a joyride during which witnesses recorded him sitting, lying, smiling and waving from atop a four-door sedan.

Sheriff: Crop heists are 'major league'

MI DETROIT — Authorities said a "well-organized machine" of thieves

appears to be behind the theft of tons of apples and pumpkins from orchards and farms in Michigan and Indiana.

An estimated 7,000 pounds of apples were discovered missing from Spicer Orchards in Fenton during the same week that 1,000 pumpkins were pilfered from McCallum's Orchard in Jeddo. There were also 50,000 apples reportedly stolen from Williams Orchard in LaPorte County, Ind., just south of the state line.

Genesee County Sheriff Robert Pickell told the Detroit Free Press on Monday that investigators do not have any suspects, but he called the heists "a major league operation."

Police: Man arrested on 10th DWI charge

LA RACELAND — Louisiana State Police said a man was arrested for driving while under the influence for the 10th time.

The Houma Courier reported Jessie Joseph III, 34, was charged with DWI, driving with a suspended license, speeding and having an open alcohol container.

Senior Trooper Jesse LaGrange said a trooper clocked Joseph going 89 mph in a 70 mph zone. LaGrange said the trooper performed a standard sobriety test and Joseph failed.

If convicted, Joseph could face up to 30 years in prison.

Lafourche Parish Sheriff's spokesman Brennan Matherne told The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate in 2015 that Joseph was arrested on his seventh DWI charge, his first in Lafourche Parish. Matherne said Joseph had six DWI charges in California.

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Soto homers, doubles as Nats edge Astros

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Juan Soto and the Washington Nationals quickly derailed the Cole Express.

A prodigy with a passion for the big moment, Soto homered onto the train tracks high above the left field wall and hit a two-run double as the Nationals tagged Gerrit Cole and the Houston Astros 5-4 Tuesday night in the World Series opener.

“After the first at-bat, I just said, ‘It’s another baseball game,’” Soto said. “In the first at-bat, I’m not going to lie, I was a little bit shaking in my legs.”

Not even a history-making home run by postseason star George Springer — and another shot that nearly tied it in the eighth inning — could deter Washington.

Ryan Zimmerman, still full of sock at 35, also homered to back a resourceful Max Scherzer and boost the wild-card Nationals in their first World Series appearance — tres bien for a franchise that began as the Montreal Expos in 1969.

“They waited a long time,” Nationals manager Dave Martinez said.

Otherworldly almost all season, Cole looked downright ordinary. Trea Turner singled on the second pitch of the game and the Nationals were off and running, ending Cole’s 19-game winning streak that stretched back 25 starts to May.

Not what Cole or anyone else at Minute Maid Park expected, especially after he led the majors in strikeouts, topped the AL in ERA and finished second in the big leagues in wins to teammate Justin Verlander.

Cole had breezed through the AL playoffs, too.

Yet it was a further testament to an eternal truth about baseball: It doesn’t matter what you do the whole season if you don’t

get it done in October.

Soto finished with three hits and a stolen base. Three days shy of his 21st birthday, the wunderkind left fielder also snared Michael Brantley’s late try for a tying hit.

Relentless at the plate, he’s already become one of those rare players — like Springer — who seems to turn pressure into production. How’s he do it? Better launch angle? Improved swing path?

Uh, not really.

“Sometimes I just put gum in my mouth,” Soto said. “But most of the time, just take a deep breath and focus. It’s just the pitcher and me.”

“Everybody around, I forget about everybody around. It’s just you and me,” he said, adding, “try to enjoy it.”

The MVP when Houston won its first crown in 2017, Springer set a record by connecting in his fifth consecutive Series game to make it 5-3 in the seventh. But reliever Daniel Hudson threw a fastball past rookie Yordan Alvarez with the bases loaded to end the inning.

In the eighth, Springer put a charge into a drive to deep right-center, and it appeared as though he might’ve hit a tying, two-run homer. Springer took a couple of hops out of the batter’s box to watch, and had to settle for an RBI double when the ball glanced off the glove of a leaping Adam Eaton at the fence.

Heavily favored at the start, the 107-win Astros will try to get even Wednesday night when Verlander faces Stephen Strasburg in another matchup of aces.

Scherzer slipped in and out of trouble for five innings. But every time the stadium got rollicking, he found a way to get out of jams.

Projected Game 4 starter Patrick Corbin threw a scoreless sixth for the Nationals.

Springer connected off Tanner Rainey for his 14th career postseason home run before Hudson fanned Alvarez on three pitches.

Hudson retired Jose Altuve, and Sean Doolittle got Brantley on a lineout to strand Springer at second in the eighth. Doolittle then closed for a save to give the Nats their seventh straight win and 17th in 19 games dating to their September playoff run.

Leading the way was Soto, whose eighth-inning hit in the wild-card win over Milwaukee sent the Nationals on their path.

“He’s got kind of the ‘it’ factor,” Astros manager AJ Hinch said. “He’s got the twitch. He’s got fast hands. He’s got no fear.”

Soto looked overmatched when he struck out on Cole’s 99 mph heater in the first inning. Turned out Soto was just getting warmed up.

He justified his place in the 4-spot, launching a leadoff drive in the fourth to make it 2-all. He became the fourth-youngest player to homer in the Series, behind Andruw Jones, Miguel Cabrera and Mickey Mantle.

After the game, Soto agreed to donate his home run ball to the Hall of Fame.

Washington took the lead in the fifth. Eaton hit a tiebreaking single and Soto doubled with two outs for a 5-2 advantage.

Zimmerman hit the first World Series homer in Nationals history, connecting in the second. He was the first player drafted by the team for the 2005 season.

Cole left after the seventh. Watching from the front row behind the plate was someone who also knows a lot about pitching — Astros executive, Texas great and Hall of Famer Nolan Ryan, the Ryan Express himself.

Yuli Gurriel put Houston ahead with a two-run double in the first.

Cole’s streak ends as Astros ace roughed up in opener

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Gerrit Cole trudged slowly off the mound, wiped the sweat from his upper lip and took a handshake and pat on the backside from manager AJ Hinch.

Walking away without a lead — not something Cole and the Houston Astros are used to. Certainly not what they expected in the World Series opener.

“He’s been so good for so long that there builds this thought of invincibility and that

it’s impossible to beat him,” Hinch said. “So when it happens it is a surprise to all of us.”

The Washington Nationals roughed up Cole for five runs in seven innings Tuesday night, beating Houston 5-4 to jump ahead in the best-of-seven series.

Cole suffered his first loss since May 22. Set to cash in as a free agent this offseason, he had won a single-season record 19 consecutive decisions. His postseason prior to Tuesday was nearly perfect: 3-0 record,

one run allowed, and 32 strikeouts in 22⅓ innings.

In his first World Series appearance and ninth postseason game, the 29-year-old right-hander gave up his most runs since the White Sox tagged him for six in that May 22 loss.

“I didn’t have my A-game tonight,” Cole said. “Outside of a few pitches that tacked on a few runs, we worked pretty well with what we had. These are the two best teams in the world right now so you try not to beat yourself up too much.”

The Astros gave Cole a lead with a two-run first, but a shot by Ryan Zimmerman an inning later cut the advantage to 1. Cole didn’t even turn around to watch where that one landed, simply throwing his right hand up and preparing for the next pitch.

Houston still had the lead when Juan Soto knocked a fastball from Cole onto the train tracks atop left field. Soto struck again in the fifth, lining a two-run double that stretched Washington’s edge to 5-2.

VanVleet's career night lifts Raptors

Associated Press

TORONTO — The Toronto Raptors slipped on shiny new rings, unfurled a championship banner, then got their title defense started with a hard-fought victory.

Fred VanVleet scored a career-high 34 points, Pascal Siakam fouled out with 34 points and 18 rebounds, and the defending champion Raptors beat the New Orleans Pelicans 130-122 in overtime on Tuesday night in the NBA's season-opening game.

"Pascal and Freddy, they are the young core, they are the guys who will carry this thing on," Raptors guard Kyle Lowry said. "I'm so happy for those guys to go out and perform like tonight. We'll see them grow all year."

Lowry scored 22 points, including a pair of free throws that put Toronto in the lead for good, and Serge Ibaka had 13

as the Raptors won their seventh straight season opener and posted their eighth win in nine meetings with the Pelicans.

"It's very fun to be in the position that we're in where we just won it but we're kind of on the climb again," VanVleet said.

Pelicans guard Jrue Holiday tied it at 122 by making a pair of free throws with 2:23 left in overtime. Lowry answered with his foul shots, VanVleet hit a corner three, and Lowry also connected from long range to cap an 8-0 run.

"They made a couple of big plays at the end that gave them separation," Pelicans coach Alvin Gentry said. "That was the difference in the game."

Brandon Ingram scored 22 points and Josh Hart had 15 points and 10 rebounds for New Orleans, which began the season without No. 1 pick Zion Williamson. JJ Redick scored 16 points, Nicolo Melli had 14 and

Holiday added 13.

The Pelicans made 19 turnovers, leading to 22 Toronto points. Twelve of New Orleans' turnovers came in the second half and overtime.

"We played hard, but we've also got to play smart," Gentry said. "We didn't play smart down the stretch there."

Lowry made a pair of free throws to tie it 117-all with 29 seconds left in regulation, and Toronto's Norman Powell grabbed the rebound on a missed shot by Holiday, giving the Raptors one last shot with 8.9 seconds to go.

Powell got the ball, but his long three-pointer hit the back of the rim and bounced out, sending it to overtime.

Before the game, the Raptors received the biggest championship rings in NBA history and unfurled a banner celebrating their six-game triumph over Golden State last June.

"I have to start lifting more weights so I can carry it around," VanVleet joked. The Raptors lost NBA Finals MVP Kawhi Leonard to the Los Angeles Clippers in free agency, and also saw guard Danny Green leave for the Lakers.

Before the game, Gentry said losing a star player doesn't always hurt a team's fortunes.

"Bryce Harper is gone, too, but where are the Nationals?" Gentry asked. "I wouldn't count these guys out just yet."

Williamson is expected to miss at least six weeks after right knee surgery Monday. The 6-foot-6, 285-pound former Duke star averaged 23.2 points in four preseason games. He missed New Orleans' final exhibition game in New York last Friday night. Toronto was without forwards Rondae Hollis-Jefferson (left groin) and Patrick McCaw (left knee).

Leonard, bench lead Clippers past Lakers

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Injured Los Angeles Clippers star Paul George arrived at Staples Center on Tuesday wearing a tuxedo jacket and bow tie.

On a night when the NBA's season-opening matchup carried the trappings of a Hollywood spectacle, the black-tie outfit felt more appropriate than overdressed.

As celebrities and California Gov. Gavin Newsom watched, the matchup of NBA A-list stars that had been anticipated since the game's August announcement lived up to its promise in the Clippers' 112-102 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers.

A sold-out crowd of split allegiances alternately booed and celebrated Kawhi Leonard, LeBron James and Anthony Davis — and then the game started.

After missing his first two shots and turning the ball over twice — a start that mirrored his team's disastrous first four minutes offensively — Leonard made seven consecutive shots and assisted on two others to turn an 11-point Clippers deficit into a second-quarter lead. He finished with 30 points, six rebounds and five assists. Sixteen of his points came in the second

quarter.

Just as Leonard, the reigning most valuable player of last season's NBA Finals, appeared unguardable for stretches, so too did the Lakers' All-NBA duo of James and Davis in moments that led Clippers fans to boo and Lakers fans to chant "MVP!"

James finished with 18 points, two of which came on a transition dunk during the third quarter that he followed by starting down Clippers guard Lou Williams. James, who also had nine rebounds and 10 assists, later chased down Clippers guard Landry Shamet on a fast break to erase his attempted layup before it touched the rim.

The Lakers fed Davis a steady diet of passes into the post, where he sized up the Clippers' front line with back downs and floaters en route to 25 points and 10 rebounds. When they found their lanes to the basket blocked by the length of the Clippers' long-armed defenders, they found Danny Green for 18 third-quarter points, an outburst that fueled a 15-0 Lakers run that helped level the score at 85-85 entering the fourth quarter.

For all of the control James, Leonard and Davis held over the game, it was a pair of nonstars who decided one of the game's

most pivotal moments.

With the Clippers leading 107-99 with 3:10 to play in the fourth quarter, Patrick Beverley — the Clippers guard whose career began in Ukraine, Greece and Russia — grabbed an offensive rebound over James and passed to Williams, whose assist found forward Montrezl Harrell for a layup and foul.

The sequence gave the Clippers bench that led the NBA in scoring one year ago 60 points. Lakers reserves managed 19 points.

In the days leading up to Tuesday's sound and fury from the stands, the Lakers and Clippers both said the season's first game would signify "nothing," as Clippers coach Doc Rivers reiterated before tipoff.

When the teams meet next on Christmas Day, things will certainly be different: George is expected to be playing for the Clippers, and Kyle Kuzma and Rajon Rondo for the Lakers.

And yet, the charged atmosphere in the building certainly appeared to underscore something — the prediction that the Western Conference could eventually run through Los Angeles.

NHL roundup

Eichel leads Sabres past Sharks in OT

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Jack Eichel capped a two-goal, two-assist game by scoring 3:13 into overtime to lead the Buffalo Sabres to a 4-3 win over the San Jose Sharks on Tuesday night.

The Eastern Conference-leading Sabres overcame a 2-0 first-period deficit and responded after San Jose's Erik Karlsson tied the game with 8:33 remaining in regulation.

Jeff Skinner and Sam Reinhart also scored for the Sabres, who improved to 8-1-1. Carter Hutton stopped 25 shots and Buffalo completed a home-and-home sweep of the Sharks following a 4-3 win at San Jose on Saturday.

Marc-Edouard Vlasic and Dylan Gambrell also scored for San Jose, which at 3-5-1 matched its worst start since 2005-06. Martin Jones stopped 25 shots, but had little chance on Eichel's decisive goal.

Bruins 4, Maple Leafs 2: David Pas-trnak scored his league-leading 10th goal and added an assist as host Boston beat Toronto.

Brad Marchand also had a goal and an assist, and Brett Ritchie and Par Lindholm also scored for the Bruins, who were playing for the first time since a 4-3 loss in overtime at Toronto on Saturday night. Tuukka Rask made 28 saves in his 500th career game.

Kasperi Kapanen and Alexander Kerfoot had a goal and assist apiece for the Maple Leafs, who were coming off an overtime

loss to Columbus at home on Monday night. Michael Hutchinson stopped 35 shots.

Panthers 4, Penguins 2: Jonathan Huberdeau had a goal and an assist to lift host Florida past Pittsburgh.

Denis Malgin had a goal and an assist, and Noel Acciari, and Frank Vatrano also scored goals for the Panthers. Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 22 shots. Aleksander Barkov had a pair of assists.

Patric Hornqvist and Teddy Blueger scored for the Penguins. Matt Murray made 18 saves.

Florida has won two of its past three games. After winning five in a row, the Penguins lost their second straight game.

Coyotes 3, Rangers 2 (OT): Christian Dvorak scored 1:04 into overtime to lift Arizona to a win at New York.

Lawson Crouse and Alex Goligoski also scored for the Coyotes. Darcy Kuemper made 17 saves while holding opponents to two or fewer goals for the 13th straight start.

Tony DeAngelo scored twice and Alexander Georgiev stopped 32 shots as the Rangers lost their fifth straight (0-4-1).

Predators 6, Ducks 1: Roman Josi and Viktor Arvidsson each had a goal and an assist to lead host Nashville past Anaheim.

Colton Sissons, Rocco Grimaldi, Mattias Ekholm and Calle Jarnkrok also scored as the Predators snapped a two-game losing streak. Pekka Rinne made 26 saves to earn the victory.

Ryan Getzlaf had the lone goal for the Ducks, losers of two straight.

Canucks 5, Red Wings 2: Bo Horvat scored three of Vancouver's five goals in the third period for his first career hat trick, and the Canucks rallied from two down to win at skidding Detroit.

Jake Virtanen got the game-winner and Tim Schaller also scored for Vancouver, which has won six of seven. Elias Pettersson and defenseman Quinn Hughes had two assists apiece. Jacob Markstrom stopped 31 shots.

Wild 3, Oilers 0: Eric Staal broke out of an early slump with two goals and an assist, and host Minnesota beat Edmonton.

Brad Hunt also scored for the Wild, who may be without goaltender Devan Dubnyk for a while. Dubnyk was upended early in the second period after Minnesota's Ryan Donato fell to the ice while battling the Oilers' Brandon Manning. Dubnyk tried to leap over both sliding players, but fell hard on his backside and appeared to hit the back of his head on the ice.

Golden Knights 2, Blackhawks 1 (SO): Marc-Andre Fleury made 31 saves through overtime and two more stops in the shootout, leading Vegas to a win at Chicago.

Kings 3, Jets 2: Anze Kopitar scored a power-play goal in the third period and Los Angeles won at Winnipeg.

Capitals 5, Flames 3: Washington defenseman John Carlson scored twice to help Washington win at Calgary. Alex Ovechkin had a goal and an assist and Tom Wilson also scored for the Capitals.

Vikings' balance mitigates the loss of Thielen

Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — When Adam Thielen left the previous game in Detroit because of a hamstring injury he suffered in the first quarter, the Minnesota Vikings didn't miss a beat without their two-time Pro Bowl wide receiver.

The passing clinic that Kirk Cousins put on during the 42-30 victory over the Lions could prove to be good practice, because Thielen might not be ready to play on Thursday night when the Vikings host Washington.

Though he has never missed

a game in his NFL career, participating in 90 consecutive contests including the playoffs, Thielen will get only three days for the muscle to heal in time. He was held out of practice on Tuesday afternoon.

"I don't know what the percent chance is, but I feel great. Obviously it's a short week," Thielen said, later adding: "I'm just trusting this training staff. I have a lot of confidence in them. I'm doing everything I can, they're doing everything they can, and I'm hopeful."

With difficult road games against Kansas City and Dallas

looming in November to start the second half of the schedule, giving Thielen a full two weeks to recover could yield a greater reward than from the risk, however small it might be, of putting him on the field against the Redskins. The way this balanced and diversified offense has been playing in October would figure to make that decision easier.

After Thielen was hurt on his touchdown reception, the Vikings crossed the goal line five times in their next seven possessions. One drive ended with a missed field goal after

Stefon Diggs had an on-target throw slip through his hands in the end zone.

The play-action passes set up by running back Dalvin Cook's continued gains in the ground game allowed Cousins to not only go deep to Diggs but find tight ends Kyle Rudolph and Irv Smith Jr. and fullback C.J. Ham underneath the secondary. Then there was the emergence of wide receiver Olabisi Johnson, the seventh-round draft pick.

"We're going to call on them throughout, whether Adam's healthy or not," Cousins said.