

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Obama: Trust gaps impede talks on Syria

*Associated Press*

HANGZHOU, China — President Barack Obama said Monday the U.S. and Russia have not given up on negotiations that could stem the bloodshed in Syria, but acknowledged leaders are challenged by “gaps of trust” between the rival powers.

Significant sticking points remain in the negotiations over a creation of an unlikely U.S.-Russian military partnership focusing firepower on “common enemies” in Syria, Obama said. He acknowledged that a flurry of diplomacy at an economic summit and a 90-minute meeting with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, earlier Monday did not yield a breakthrough.

“Given the gaps of trust that exist, that’s a tough negotiation,” Obama told a news conference closing the Group of 20 summit. “We haven’t yet closed the gaps.”

Obama didn’t detail the trouble spots, although he suggested the U.S. has concerns about Russia holding up its end of the bargain and enforcing the terms. Any deal would depend on Moscow using its influence with Syrian President Bashar Assad to persuade the Syrian leader to ground planes and to stop the assault on opposition forces. Obama said the aim was to reach “meaningful, serious, verifiable cessations of hostilities in Syria.”

For weeks, Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lav-

rov have been trying to broker a deal that would curb the violence between the Russian ally Assad’s government forces and moderate rebels backed by the U.S.

The deal depends on the two sides agreeing to closer military coordination against extremist groups operating in Syria, something the Russians have long sought and the U.S. resisted.

Obama has expressed skepticism that Russia would hold to its agreement. The State Department has said it wants a nationwide cease-fire between Assad’s military and the rebels, rather than another time-limited agreement like ones that failed before.

## N. Korea launches 3 midrange ballistic missiles

BY KIM GAMEL  
AND YOO KYONG CHANG

*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea test-fired three ballistic missiles that flew about 620 miles Monday before crashing off the coast of Japan in a show of force as G-20 leaders met in China, military officials said.

The presumed Rodong missiles were launched shortly after noon from the western town of Hwangju and traveled across the peninsula before landing some 250 miles inside Japan’s air defense identification zone, according to South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The U.S. and South Korea were still investigating, but the launches were clearly a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions banning the North’s use of ballistic missile technology, the statement said.

“It is considered part of the North’s armed protests aimed at maintaining military tension on the Korean peninsula by showing off its nuclear and missile abilities,” it said, adding the North was taking advantage of the G-20 summit to gain attention. “Our military is fully prepared to deal with North Korean provocations.”

The missile tests also occurred days after the U.S. and South Korea concluded nearly two weeks of war games, which an-

gered the North because it considers them a rehearsal for an invasion.

The White House said the United States was closely monitoring what it described as the latest provocation by North Korea. President Barack Obama was in China, meeting with the leaders of France and Germany about the time of the launch, according to The Associated Press.

It was the latest in a series of missile tests conducted by the North despite U.N. resolutions prohibiting it from using ballistic missile technology. The U.N. Security Council, including China, tightened sanctions against Pyongyang after it staged its fourth nuclear test in January and launched a satellite into orbit a month later.

Many of the earlier missiles failed to launch or exploded in midair, but recent efforts have flown greater distances, leading experts to warn that Pyongyang is learning from its mistakes and making technical progress toward its stated goal of developing a nuclear weapon that could reach the U.S. mainland.

The G-20 leaders of advanced and emerging economies were wrapping up their two-day summit in the Chinese city of Hangzhou. China, the North’s closest ally, has grown increasingly impatient with its fellow communist country’s defiance in pursuing a nuclear weapons program.

Beijing signed off on the recent round of

sanctions, but there have been questions about its commitment to enforcing them, which has been an issue in the past. Beijing has been angered by plans to deploy an advanced U.S. missile-defense system, known as THAAD, in South Korea.

Earlier Monday, South Korean President Park Geun-hye met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and told him that the North’s nuclear and missile programs threaten regional peace as well as bilateral ties between their two countries, the Yonhap news agency reported.

For his part, Xi reaffirmed China’s commitment to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula but also stated his opposition to THAAD. Washington and Seoul insist THAAD is needed solely to defend against the growing missile threat from the North.

South Korea’s military also has been on alert for action by North Korea ahead of the 68th anniversary of its government’s establishment on Friday.

While the impoverished North’s motives for keeping tensions on the front burner all year aren’t clear, there is speculation that leader Kim Jong Un is still trying to consolidate power nearly five years after taking over following his father’s death. His purges, including executions, have continued, and a top-level diplomat recently defected from the country’s embassy in London.

# Dual blasts hit civilians, Afghan forces

BY CHAD GARLAND

*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — Back-to-back blasts near the Afghan Defense Ministry — the first targeting civilians and the second timed as government security forces arrived — killed at least 24 people and wounded 91 Monday, officials said. The Taliban claimed responsibility.

The first explosion occurred among a crowd of civilians on the Pul-e Yak Paisagi pedestrian bridge, a busy Kabul River crossing, said Deputy Defense Minister Gen. Mohammad Radmanish. A suicide bomber detonated the second after police, security forces and civilians rushed in to help the victims.

The attacks happened in an area near government buildings, a market and a major intersection as government employees were leaving work for the day. Streets were jammed with traffic in nearby areas of the city, but several ambulances raced to the site, eyewitnesses said.

The attack came at a tense time in the Afghan capital, as the country's president and chief executive work to hash out their differences ahead of this month's deadline to enact a set of required changes, part of a power-sharing agreement

brokered two years ago by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. Failure to implement the reforms could undermine the legitimacy of the national unity government.

Afghan officials are also preparing for a conference next month in Brussels at which foreign donors are expected to pledge continuing support for the beleaguered country for the next few years amid questions about the Afghan security forces' ability to defeat the insurgency without continued international assistance. Insurgents have targeted the capital repeatedly this year and made broad inroads in some southern provinces, putting Afghan forces on the defensive and in need of additional support from the NATO-led advise-and-assist mission.

President Ashraf Ghani said the insurgents were attempting to spread fear.

"The enemies of Afghanistan have lost their ability to fight the Security and Defense Forces of the country and thus attack highways, cities, mosques, schools and common people," he said, according to his office.

The militants, in a statement posted online, said the second bomb in Monday's attack was detonated after a large number of ministry officials had gath-

ered. The Taliban claimed to have killed and wounded dozens of high- and low-ranking officers, including the chief of Kabul's 3rd police district.

Conflicting media reports said the attack killed the head of Kabul's 2nd police district, the area where the attack occurred.

The attacks followed a Kabul police announcement earlier in the day that Afghan officials last week had captured four suicide bombers who were attempting to carry out attacks in Kabul.

Abdul Rahman Rahimi, chief of the 101 Asmayee Police Zone in the Afghan capital said the would-be bombers were affiliated with a Taliban group led by Mullah Dadullah, which is active in Logar province and has previously carried out attacks in Logar and Kabul, Rahimi said.

Louis Fintor, a spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, said all embassy officials had been accounted for after the bombings. A spokesman for Resolute Support said the NATO-led train-advise-assist mission had accounted for all its personnel.

U.S. Army Gen. John W. Nicholson, commander of the NATO mission, expressed condolences for the families of the victims and condemned the attack, which he said "shows the contempt the Taliban have for human life."

"Targeting civilians as well as those who defend their fellow citizens directly contradicts the Taliban's earlier promise to protect the civilian population and does nothing to advance the cause of peace."

Monday's attack was one of the deadliest of the two dozen carried out in Kabul this year and came less than two weeks after a complex attack on the American University of Afghanistan that left at least 13 people dead and dozens injured.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the year's deadliest attack. At least 80 people were killed and more than 230 injured when a suicide bomber targeted a demonstration in July.

A massive truck bombing outside the headquarters of Afghanistan's main intelligence agency in April shattered windows across a swath of the capital and shook doors as far as 2 miles away, and left more than 60 dead and nearly 350 wounded, many of them civilians. The Taliban claimed that attack.

Throughout their anti-government insurgency, now in its 15th year, the Taliban have targeted government officials, security forces and foreigners and claim they try to spare civilians. But Afghan civilians often bear the brunt of attacks.

## Naval College adds Russia studies program

*Associated Press*

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The U.S. Naval War College has opened a new institute to zero in on Russia's approach to maritime issues as that country continues to assert itself in Ukraine, Syria and elsewhere.

The college in Newport opened the new Russia Maritime Studies Institute on Wednesday. Faculty and students will study Russian decision-making on maritime issues, the legal and trade implications of the melting sea ice in the Arctic and ques-

tions about deterrence, among other topics.

Institute Director Michael Petersen said the resurgence of the Russian military has enabled Russia to become more "adventurous" in its foreign policy. Russia's annexation of Ukraine's region of Crimea and its military support of Syrian President Bashar Assad's government are just two examples, he added.

"Because of that, the Navy needs to be able to respond as intelligently as it can to these adventuresome and, in some

cases, very challenging activities that the Russians are conducting," he said.

The war college, a one-year, resident program that graduates about 600 students per year, opened a similar institute in 2006 that studies China's growing, modernizing maritime forces.

Research at the Russia Maritime Studies Institute will be tailored to the Navy's needs to help it make smart decisions, Petersen said. Naval leaders will benefit from in-depth and up-to-date information on how

to deter activities more aggressive than those normally seen in peacetime but short of outright war, he said.

The institute plans to share its findings with NATO members and use its research to enhance the education of Navy personnel at the college.

Jeffrey Rathke, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the U.S. government and the broader policy-making community need more expertise on Russia and how to deal with the security challenge Russia increasingly represents.

## US agencies probe Russian bid to subvert 2016 election

*The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies are probing what they see as a broad covert Russian operation in the United States to sow public distrust in the upcoming presidential election and in U.S. political institutions, intelligence and congressional officials said.

The aim is to understand the scope and intent of the Russian campaign, which incorporates cyber tools to hack systems used in the political process.

The effort to better understand Russia's covert influence operations is being spearheaded by James Clapper, the director of national intelligence.

A Russian influence operation in the United States "is something we're looking very closely at," said one senior intelligence official who spoke on the condition of anonymity. Officials are also examining potential disruptions to the election process, and the FBI has alerted state and local officials to potential cyberthreats.

The official cautioned that the intelligence community is not saying it has "definitive proof" of such tampering, or any Russian plans to do so. "But even the hint of something impacting the security of our election system would be of significant concern," the official said. "It's the key to our democracy, that people have confidence in the election system."

The Kremlin's intent may not be to sway the election in

one direction or another, officials said, but to cause chaos and provide propaganda fodder to attack U.S. democracy-building policies around the world.

The Russian government hack of the Democratic National Committee, disclosed by the DNC in June but not yet officially ascribed by the U.S. government to Russia, and the subsequent release of 20,000 hacked DNC emails by WikiLeaks, shocked officials. Cyber analysts traced its digital markings to known Russian government hacking groups.

The Department of Homeland Security has offered local and state election officials help to prevent or deal with Election Day cyber disruptions, including vulnerability scans, regular actionable information and alerts, and access to other tools for improving cybersecurity at the local level. It will also have a cyber team ready at the National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center to alert jurisdictions if attacks are detected.

Last month, the FBI issued an unprecedented warning to state election officials urging them to be on the lookout for intrusions into their election systems and to take steps to upgrade security measures across the voting process. Arizona, Illinois and both the Democratic and Republican parties, as well as the DNC, have been the victims of either attempted or successful cyberattacks that FBI agents with expertise in Russian government hacking are investigating.

## Syrian cities hit by multiple blasts

*Associated Press*

DAMASCUS, Syria — A string of bombings, including a suicide attack claimed by the Islamic State group, struck in and around several Syrian cities Monday, killing at least 43 people, mainly in government-controlled areas.

The SANA news agency reported blasts around the coastal city of Tartus, the central city of Homs, the suburbs of the capital Damascus, and the northeastern city of Hasakeh. The attacks were timed closely together, but authorities have not determined whether they were linked. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the blast in Hasakeh.

Areas controlled by President Bashar Assad's forces have seen several bombings and other attacks during the five-year civil war, with many claimed by Al-Qaida-linked militant groups.

One of Monday's attacks took place in the heavily guarded suburb of Sabbourah, marking a major security breach. SANA said the attack killed one person, while the opposition-run Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said three people were killed.

"It's an area that houses officers and their families. Even before the revolution it was carefully guarded," said opposition media activist Yousef al-

Boustani, referring to the 2011 uprising against Assad, which began with peaceful protests demanding reform.

The Britain-based Observatory, which maintains a network of contacts inside Syria, put the overall death toll at 47. Conflicting casualty figures are common in the Syria war.

Attackers detonated two bombs along the international coastal highway to the government stronghold of Tartus, SANA said, killing 35. A car bomb at the Arzoneh bridge was followed by a suicide bomber, who targeted a crowd that was gathering. The city, a stronghold of support for Assad, is home to a major Russian naval base.

The Observatory said the twin blasts killed 35 people, including an army colonel, and wounded dozens more.

A survivor at the al-Bassel Hospital told state TV the blasts occurred near a checkpoint on the highway.

"My car caught fire and army soldiers pulled us out of the car," he said.

The governor of Homs province said a car bomb struck a military checkpoint in the provincial capital, killing three soldiers and a civilian, and wounding 10 others. The city of Homs is largely under government control.

## Duterte: Obama must not question Philippines on drug war

*Associated Press*

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte warned President Barack Obama on Monday not to question him about extrajudicial killings, or "son of a bitch I will swear at you" when they meet in Laos during a regional summit.

Duterte said before flying to Laos that he is a leader of a sovereign country and is answer-

able only to the Filipino people. He was answering a reporter's question about how he intends to explain the extrajudicial killings to Obama. More than 2,000 suspected drug pushers and users have been killed since Duterte launched a war on drugs after taking office on June 30.

In his typical foul-mouthed style, Duterte responded: "I am a president of a sovereign state and we have long ceased to be a colony. I do not have any mas-

ter except the Filipino people, nobody but nobody. You must be respectful. Do not just throw questions. Putang ina I will swear at you in that forum," he said, using the Tagalog phrase for son of a bitch. Duterte has earlier cursed Pope Francis and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

It isn't clear whether Obama planned to raise the issue of extrajudicial killings with Duterte at the summit of the Association

of Southeast Asian Nations.

Asked in Hangzhou, China, whether he still intends to meet with Duterte and raise the issue of extrajudicial killings, Obama said he had instructed his aides to assess whether it is still possible for the two leaders to have a constructive meeting in Laos.

"I always want to make sure that if I'm having a meeting that it's actually productive, and that we're getting something done," Obama said.

# Iran's leader: Saudis 'murdered' pilgrims

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's supreme leader on Monday said Saudi Arabian authorities "murdered" Muslim pilgrims who were injured during last year's hajj stampede.

"The heartless and murderous Saudis locked up the injured with the dead in containers — instead of providing medical treatment and helping them or at least quenching their thirst. They murdered them," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a statement on his website marking the anniversary of the disaster. He offered no evidence to support the allegations.

The September 2015 stampede and crush of pilgrims killed at least 2,426 people, according to an Associated Press count. Tehran has said 464 of the dead were Iranian and blamed the catastrophe on Saudi mismanagement of the annual pilgrimage. Khamenei has also blamed Saudi Arabia for an earlier crane collapse in Mecca that killed 111 people.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi said the ministry has formed a committee to investigate the issue and to pursue it in international forums, without elaborating.

The hajj stampede caused a new flare-up in tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, regional rivals that back opposite sides in the civil wars in Syria and Yemen. The two countries severed diplomatic relations in January after Saudi Arabia executed a prominent Shiite cleric and angry Iranian crowds overran Saudi diplomatic missions.

Saudi authorities have not released the findings of their investigation into the hajj disaster. Preliminary statements suggested the crush was caused when at least two large crowds intersected.

## Group: Giant panda off endangered species list

Associated Press

BEIJING — A leading international group has taken the giant panda off its endangered list thanks to decades of conservation efforts, but China's government discounted the move Monday, saying it did not view the status of the country's beloved symbol as any less serious.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature said in a report released Sunday that the panda is now classified as a "vulnerable" instead of "endangered" species. It said the wild panda population jumped to 1,864 in 2014 from 1,596 in 2004, the result of work by Chinese agencies to enforce poaching bans and to expand forest reserves.

The report warned that although better forest protection has helped increase panda numbers, climate change is predicted to eliminate more than 35 percent of its natural bamboo habitat in the next 80 years, potentially leading to another decline.

China's State Forestry Administration said Monday that it disputed the classification change because pandas' natural habitats have been splintered by natural and human causes.

## Rotary Club: WHO confirms 3rd case of polio in Nigeria

Associated Press

LAGOS, Nigeria — The World Health Organization has confirmed a third case of polio in Nigeria, Rotary Club said Monday: a crippled toddler found in an area newly liberated from Boko Haram Islamic extremists.

The West African nation that once was the global epicenter of the wild polio virus had been declared polio-free last year, along with the African continent. But two cases were discovered last month among refugees from areas recently won back by Nigeria's military from Boko Haram.

More cases are expected to be discovered in those areas. It is an indicator that Nigeria's war on polio cannot be won until it overcomes the insurgency by extremists who are violently opposed to Western medicine.

Rotary Club's field coordinator,

Aminu Muhammad, told The Associated Press the new case was found in Monoguno local government area. The others were farther south in Jere and Gwoza. All are in northern Borno state.

Rotary is part of a new emergency immunization drive that vaccinated more than 1.5 million children last week in Borno, where the WHO has said the virus has been circulating undetected for five years and where Boko Haram began its Islamic uprising in 2009.

The campaign is to spread across the country, with a plan to reach 25 million children before the end of the year.

But the U.N. Children's Fund has warned that about 1 million children are in areas too dangerous to access.

Nigeria's military has helped with the vaccination drive, which included logistics and other aid from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the United

Nations and Britain's Save the Children as well as government health workers. Military helicopters flew vaccines into places too dangerous to reach by road, and truckloads of troops and armored cars escorted vaccinators elsewhere.

Muhammad said they were using "hit-and-run" tactics to reach kids in areas where Boko Haram is present.

Nigeria's military has said it has the insurgents "on the run" and needs only to clear them out of areas bordering Cameroon, Chad and Niger as well as their northeastern stronghold in the Sambisa Forest. But a map used in the vaccination campaign shows almost all of Borno state is only "partially accessible," with four northern areas "inaccessible" and only the extreme south "accessible."

There has been no major attack in months by Boko Haram, which is in the throes of a leadership struggle.

## Former N.W.A manager Jerry Heller dies at 75

The music manager who helped introduce N.W.A to the masses has died. Jerry Heller was 75 years old.

Heller's cousin, Gary Bal-

len, says Heller died Friday in Southern California.

Heller started his career in the 1960s as an agent and promoter, working with such acts as Pink Floyd, Marvin Gaye and Creedence Clearwater Revival. He co-founded Ruthless Records with Eazy-E, which re-

leased N.W.A's seminal album "Straight Outta Compton" in 1988, launching the West Coast gangsta rap movement. Ruthless was also behind such artists as J.J. Fad, Michel'le and Bone Thugs-N-Harmony.

From The Associated Press

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Facebook Live post leads to arrest of felon

**IL** EVANSTON — A convicted felon is back in custody after Evanston police say they saw him in a Facebook Live video firing a gun at a shooting range in violation of his parole.

The Evanston Police Department says an investigator with its intelligence unit was monitoring social media last week and recognized an Evanston gang member firing a handgun in a real-time video post.

The investigator recognized the firing range in Winthrop Harbor, 30 miles north, and contacted police there. Officers immediately went to the shooting range and arrested the man.

Demarcus Curtis, 25, of Des Plaines, was charged with aggravated unlawful use of a weapon by a felon.

Police arrested a second convicted felon with him — Nicholas Mayfield, 25, of Country Club Hills.

## Inmate released in error turns himself in

**CA** SAN FRANCISCO — An inmate mistakenly released from a San Francisco county jail has turned himself in.

San Francisco television station KRON reported Victor Rodriguez turned himself in at the city's Hall of Justice on Saturday.

Rodriguez, 20, was released Wednesday after a court clerk accidentally indicated that all charges against him had been dismissed.

He said he told officials he shouldn't be released, but that they told him he had to go home.

Rodriguez had several months left on his sentence and

was booked last November on suspicion of robbery, battery and resisting arrest. He was twice charged with making threats against police.

## State to host North American Manure Expo

**SD** BROOKINGS — It may not be the most glamorous topic, but for the ag industry, a trade show coming to South Dakota in 2018 brings important information.

South Dakota State University and SDSU Extension have announced that the state will be hosting the 2018 North American Manure Expo.

The trade show will include livestock producers in the dairy, beef, pork, and poultry industries; manure handlers, applicators and brokers; and crop consultants.

The SDSU Extension says it is currently considering a number of potential locations where the show could take place in southeast South Dakota along the Interstate 29 corridor.

## Mother, daughter arrested in mall thefts

**MI** BATTLE CREEK — A southwestern Michigan mother and her teenage daughter were jailed after police said they tried to steal \$2,300 worth of merchandise from a mall.

The adult was arrested Friday night in the parking lot of the Lakeview Square Mall in Battle Creek. Her 15-year-old daughter was arrested across the street after running from a mall security guard.

The pair are from Kalamazoo. They are being held on organized retail fraud and other charges. Stolen women's clothing and marijuana were found in the mother's vehicle.

Police said shopping bags

were modified to block electronic security tag signals attached to the clothing. The clothing was returned to several stores in the mall.

The security guard was struck by the mother's vehicle, but was not injured.

## City drops \$75 littering ticket issued to girl, 2

**DC** WASHINGTON — City officials in Washington are tearing up a littering citation issued to a toddler.

The Washington Post reported Harper Westover, 2, received a "Notice of Violation" Thursday from the Department of Public Works, with a \$75 fine.

Her mom, attorney Theresa Westover, also received a citation. She called a solid waste inspector, who told her a city worker had found unopened envelopes with her name and Harper's name in an alley.

Westover said the inspector refused to rescind Harper's ticket, even amid assurances that they're not a family of litterbugs. The case drew ridicule after Westover's husband, Chuck, posted about it online.

A Public Works official stopped by the family's home Friday just as Theresa Westover was about to do a TV interview. He said he would drop both tickets.

## Officials fret over Japanese beetle

**OR** PORTLAND — Agriculture officials are concerned about a Japanese beetle outbreak in Northwest Portland.

The (Salem) Capital Press reported that officials are scrambling to determine the size of the infestation.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture said 265 beetles

were caught in traps this summer near Northwest Saltzman and Northwest Thompson roads. Others were found feeding on homeowners' roses.

Officials believe a localized breeding population has established itself in the area. They've probably been present for a year.

Japanese beetles are not native to the Pacific Northwest. In the past, they've been found near Portland International Airport, suggesting they hitched a ride on air cargo containers.

Officials said the beetles feed on a variety of plants and pose a particular threat to crops such as cannabis, hops, nursery plants and wine grapes.

## County tells grandma to remove her treehouse

**FL** MIAMI — Miami-Dade County says a woman's open-air treehouse was built illegally, is unsafe and must be demolished in the next four months.

The Miami Herald reported Shawnee Chasser, 65, refuses to remove her treehouse nestled against the forked trunks of an oak and a strangler fig in the wooded front yard of her late son's Biscayne Gardens home.

The fight sets up an only-in-Miami showdown between a \$7 billion government and a grandmother who sells bags of organic popcorn at Whole Foods.

Chasser, who discovered her aversion to indoor living decades ago, has slept in a tree since 1992 after she moved her family back to Miami from California.

The county said its issue with Chasser's abode isn't specifically that she lives there, but that it's unsafe.

From news services

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# Texas tops Irish in 2 OT

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — After two losing seasons and with the pressure of an entire program bearing down, Charlie Strong turned his team over to a freshman quarterback for Texas' opener, something no Longhorns coach had done in more than 70 years.

He even called Shane Buechele's mom the night before to say her son would start against No. 10 Notre Dame. She started crying.

"I told him don't let her down," Strong said.

Buechele didn't, and instead delivered big time with 280 yards passing and a pair of touchdowns before Tyrone Swoopes, the senior he beat out for the job, punched in a lunging 6-yard touchdown in the second overtime for a thrilling 50-47 win Sunday night.

"I said a year ago we proba-

bly would have lost that football game because we didn't know how to finish," Strong said.

Buechele was the first freshman quarterback to start a season-opener at Texas since Bobby Layne in 1944.

"You knew [Buechele] could handle it. You knew the stage wouldn't be too big," Strong said.

Yet it was Swoopes who won it in the end. Disappointed not to start, Swoopes still played a huge role in the offense with three touchdowns and big runs that punished Notre Dame tacklers who struggled to bring him down.

On the winning score, Swoopes broke a tackle, burst up the middle and stretched the ball across the line. Swoopes has been booed by Texas fans the last two seasons and was treated to a chorus of "Swoooooopes" from the

Texas-record crowd of 102,315.

"With that chant and booing, I can't really tell the difference," Swoopes said.

Notre Dame quarterback DeShone Kizer rallied the Irish from a 31-17 deficit in the third quarter and finished with 215 yards passing and five touchdowns.

Texas went ahead 37-35 on D'Onte Foreman's 18-yard touchdown run before Notre Dame blocked the extra point and Shaun Crawford returned it for a 2-point score that tied it at 37 with just under four minutes left.

Strong, and Longhorn fans, had seen Texas collapse and lose games late the previous two seasons.

"This is a great start for us," Strong said. "Our fans really needed that. We've been down for so long. ... It was a night for us to just make it right."

# Nadal falters in US Open 4th round

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Rafael Nadal kept making a stand, kept coming back, kept showing he would not depart quietly from this U.S. Open. Facing a much younger, much-less-accomplished opponent, Nadal twice erased a set deficit. Then he staved off a trio of match points.

And then, more than 4 hours into the toughest test he's put his left wrist through since returning from injury, Nadal faltered. He missed a short forehand, pushing it into the net. Nadal knew what he'd done and covered his eyes with both hands. One point later, the match was over.

Nadal was upset in the U.S. Open's fourth round by 24th-seeded Lucas Pouille of France 6-1, 2-6, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (6) on Sunday, prolonging the 14-time Grand Slam title winner's quarterfinal drought at major tournaments.

Pouille was joined in the quarterfinals by a pair of countrymen, No. 9 Jo-Wilfried Tsonga and No. 10 Gael Monfils, giving France three men's quarterfinalists at the American Grand Slam tournament for the first time in 89 years.

Pouille will face Monfils, a 6-3, 6-2, 6-3 winner over 2006 Australian Open runner-up Marcos Baghdatis.

The other quarterfinal on that side of the draw will feature Tsonga against No. 1 Novak Djokovic.

Tsonga got there by eliminating the last U.S. man in the field, No. 26 Jack Sock, 6-3, 6-3, 6-7 (7), 6-2.

In the women's quarterfinals, it'll be 2015 runner-up Roberta Vinci vs. No. 2 Angelique Kerber or No. 14 Petra Kvitova, and two-time finalist Caroline Wozniacki vs. 48th-ranked Anastasija Sevastova.

# SEC takes hits in first weekend

Associated Press

The mighty Southeastern Conference has taken more hits than usual in the opening week of the college football season, raising questions about the SEC's status as the nation's premier conference.

Red flags went up around the country after the SEC, which has won over 80 percent of its nonconference games since 2006, went just 6-5 against non-league opponents. The first-week schedule of marquee matchup ends Monday with No. 11 Mississippi facing No. 4 Florida State of the Atlantic Coast Conference in Orlando, Fla.

No matter what happens in the Rebels-Seminoles matchup, it is too early to believe the SEC won't be in the national championship conversation all year. No. 1 Alabama crushed No. 20 Southern California 52-6, No. 18 Georgia beat No. 22 North Carolina 33-24 and Texas A&M defeated No. 16 UCLA 31-24 in overtime.

Still, there were chinks in the SEC armor.

No. 5 LSU fell 16-14 to unranked Wisconsin at Lambeau Field, more fodder for the argument the SEC wouldn't fare so well in nonconference games if its teams left the South more often. LSU had won a Football Bowl Subdivision record 52 consecutive regular-season nonconference games.

Kentucky blew a 35-10 lead in a 44-35 home loss to Southern Mississippi. Missouri fell 26-11 at West Virginia. Mississippi State lost 21-20 at home to 28-point underdog South Alabama when a potential game-winning 28-yard field-goal attempt bounced off the left upright in the closing seconds. The SEC is not used to celebrating moral victories, but the one loser with reason to feel good about itself was Auburn, which was competitive in a 19-13 home loss to No. 2 Clemson.

Some of the SEC's wins were as concerning as the losses.

No. 9 Tennessee needed over-

time to beat 20-point underdog Appalachian State 20-13. Arkansas converted a fourth-and-goal for the winning touchdown with 6:37 left in a 21-20 squeaker over 25-point underdog Louisiana Tech. No. 25 Florida, a 36½-point favorite, only led 10-7 at the start of the fourth quarter before pulling away for a 24-7 triumph over Massachusetts.

The Crimson Tide handed USC its most lopsided loss in a half-century and may have found a quarterback in freshman Jalen Hurts, who threw two touchdown passes and ran for two more scores. Georgia's Nick Chubb rushed for 222 yards and showed that he was all the way back from a knee injury that ended his 2015 season in October. Texas A&M's defense sacked UCLA quarterback Josh Rosen five times and forced him into three interceptions.

"Do I think we can get a lot better? Yes I do," Texas A&M quarterback Trevor Knight said. "But that's a big-time win."

# Truex holds off Harvick

Associated Press

DARLINGTON, S.C. — Martin Truex Jr. has already won two of NASCAR's most coveted races. Now, he's seeking a much bigger honor.

Truex led the final 28 laps and held off Kevin Harvick's powerhouse car to win the Southern 500, closing the summer season with a second of Sprint Cup's "crown jewel" races on Labor Day weekend. He began things by winning at Charlotte Motor Speedway on Memorial Day weekend.

Truex stamped himself as a contender to be reckoned with when the Sprint Cup playoffs start in two weeks.

"We're hungry. We're working hard," Truex said. "This is just the beginning for us, I think."

Many others think that, too, especially after Truex patiently stayed in the top 10 throughout and pounced when the opportunity struck, moving past leader Ryan Newman and never surrendering the top spot.

It was Truex's fifth NASCAR win and first in 11 career Darlington races.

Crew chief Cole Pearn said winning two crown jewel races in a season is something special, but the team's focus is on the championship Chase that starts at Chicagoland Speedway in two weeks.

"You've got to take the highs when they're here and then get back to work," he said.

Truex pulled up to the inside wall to

greet his crew after the win, then taking off for some celebration donuts at the track "Too Tough To Tame."

Harvick, who led 214 of 367 laps, had some words for his crew, too — much angrier and pointed about their poor performance in the pits. During one 16.6-second stop, Harvick fell from first to 12th and while he got to back to second, correctly said on the radio after that stop, "It's pretty much over at this point."

The 2014 Sprint Cup champion said it was time for the crew to perform. "I'm over being a cheerleader. Those guys get paid a lot of money to perform on pit road and cheerleading really hasn't been working," he said. "You've got to get after it on pit road and do your job."

Last week's winner at Michigan, Kyle Larson, finished third and Denny Hamlin was fourth. Joey Logano was fifth, followed by Matt Kenseth, Kasey Kahne, Ryan Newman, Brad Keselowski and Chase Elliott.

It's the second time in the past six Southern 500s that single-car Furniture Row Racing wound up in Victory Lane. Regan Smith stunned the Sprint Cup garage in 2011 with his win here.

Truex, among the four finalists in last year's championship Chase, is locked in again this year and has stamped himself a significant contender for the Sprint Cup crown.

"It was definitely worth the wait," he said.

# Eagles tab rookie Wentz as starter

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The Carson Wentz Era is now for the Philadelphia Eagles.

Wentz will start Week 1 against the Cleveland Browns despite missing the final three preseason games after injuring his ribs in the opener.

Coach Doug Pederson made the announcement Monday, two days after the Eagles traded Sam Bradford to the Vikings for a 2017 first-round pick and a 2018 conditional fourth-round pick.

"Everybody feels like this kid is ready to go," Pederson said. "We drafted him to take on the reins. It's something now that we're prepared to do. He's such a special guy. This stage not too big for him."

The Eagles traded up twice in the draft to select Wentz at No. 2 overall. They recovered some of the draft picks they lost by dealing Bradford to the desperate Vikings, who lost Teddy Bridgewater for at least the 2016 season following a severe knee injury.

"It was right for this football team," Pederson said of the blockbuster trade. "It's something that we believe in. I believe in. This is why we drafted (Wentz). Would an ideal situation be later than sooner? Sure. But right now, where we are, we've got a good football team around him. All the pieces are here for him to be successful and us to win some games."

## Cowboys sign QB Sanchez

FRISCO, Texas — The Cowboys signed Mark Sanchez and waived Jameill Showers on Sunday in a swap of backup quarterbacks behind rookie starter Dak Prescott.

Dallas had to make room on the 53-man roster for Sanchez after signing the six-year veteran to a one-year contract. Tony Romo remained on the active roster amid uncertainty on how long he will be out with a broken bone in his back sustained in a preseason game.

If the Cowboys place Romo on the injured reserve-return list, he will miss the first seven games. If not, he can return sooner.

## Ravens, Hester reach deal

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — The Baltimore Ravens and kick returner Devin Hester have agreed to a one-year contract.

Over a 10-year career Hester has returned 20 kicks for touchdowns, the most in NFL history. Selected to four Pro Bowls, the 33-year-old has played in 144 games with Chicago and Atlanta.

The Ravens spent much of the preseason trying to find a punt returner. Michael Campanaro and Keenan Reynolds were among those who took back kicks, with unspectacular results.

# US soccer star Rapinoe kneels in support of Kaepernick during anthem

Associated Press

CHICAGO — U.S. soccer star Megan Rapinoe knelt during the national anthem Sunday night before the Seattle Reign's game against the Chicago Red Stars "in a little nod" to NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick.

Kaepernick's refusal to stand for the national anthem to protest racial injustice and minority oppression came to public notice when he remained seated on the bench before a preseason game against Green Bay. On Thursday night in San Diego, he and safety Eric Reid knelt during the anthem before a game against the Chargers.

"It was very intentional," Rapinoe told American Soccer Now after Seattle's 2-2 tie in the National Women's Soccer League game. "It was a little nod to Kaepernick and everything that he's standing for right now. I think it's actually pretty disgusting

the way he was treated and the way that a lot of the media has covered it and made it about something that it absolutely isn't. We need to have a more thoughtful, two-sided conversation about racial issues in this country.

"Being a gay American, I know what it means to look at the flag and not have it protect all of your liberties. It was something small that I could do and something that I plan to keep doing in the future and hopefully spark some meaningful conversation around it. It's important to have white people stand in support of people of color on this. We don't need to be the leading voice, of course, but standing in support of them is something that's really powerful."

Seattle Seahawks cornerback Jeremy Lane showed his support for Kaepernick by sitting on the bench during the national anthem at a preseason game in Oakland.

# A's spoil no-hit by Boston's Rodriguez

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Even before the video review, Eduardo Rodriguez realized speedy Marcus Semien was safe at first base.

Rodriguez's no-hit bid for the Boston Red Sox was broken up after a replay reversal with two outs in the eighth inning, and Khris Davis hit a game-ending double in the ninth that sent the Oakland Athletics to a 1-0 victory Sunday.

Retiring Red Sox slugger David Ortiz offered Rodriguez a hug after he came off the field and these words: "You did the best job you could do — buen trabajo in Spanish," Rodriguez recalled.

Trying to complete Boston's first no-hitter in eight years, Rodriguez stuck out his right leg to knock down Semien's grounder in the eighth. The left-hander had to search

for the ball in the dirt on the mound before scooping it up and making a quick throw to first.

Semien initially was ruled out by umpire Laz Diaz. A's manager Bob Melvin challenged the call, which was overturned after a brief review that lasted approximately 19 seconds.

Replays clearly showed Semien was safe, just as Rodriguez knew they would. And the infield single ended his run at a no-hitter in frustrating fashion.

"You've got to ask everybody who's lost a no-hitter how it feels," said Rodriguez, who came the closest he ever has to throwing a no-no.

Rodriguez got the final out of the eighth, keeping the game scoreless. After that, his day was done.

"He was outstanding and unfortunate-

ly he gets a ball off his shoe that he can't seemingly find, and that's the end of a potentially history-making day here," Red Sox manager John Farrell said.

In the ninth, Brock Holt misplayed Davis' double in deep left field for an error that allowed Danny Valencia to score from first base.

Valencia drew a leadoff walk against Craig Kimbrel (2-4), and the A's averted a three-game sweep.

Oakland snapped a five-game losing streak overall, and a nine-game skid to Boston.

Ryan Madson (5-4) pitched the ninth for the win.

Oakland has not been held without a hit since four Orioles pitchers turned the trick on July 13, 1991 — the longest active streak in the majors.

## Shoemaker's skull fractured by line drive

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Matt Shoemaker turned his head just enough to avoid taking Kyle Seager's 105 mph line drive square in the face, then stumbled before falling to the infield grass.

"That was probably the scariest thing I've ever seen on a baseball field," Seager said.

Shoemaker was hospitalized with a small skull fracture and small hematoma from the line drive during the Los Angeles Angels' 4-2 win over the Seattle Mariners on Sunday.

Shoemaker was struck on the right side of his head with one out in the second inning, getting his face out of the way but failing to get his mitt up in time to stop the hard-hit ball.

After the game, the Angels announced that a CT scan revealed Shoemaker suffered the small fracture and hematoma. He was to be seen by a neurologist and remain in Seattle overnight for observation.

"It just gives you that feeling where you have a pit in your stomach," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said.

Shoemaker never lost consciousness. He was tended to in the Angels clubhouse for a short time before being taken to a local hospital.

"The fact of the matter is he was conscious and at least all his reactions were what they were supposed to be on the assessment. I think we could exhale a little bit," Scioscia said. "Just to get him up and walking off the field let you feel a little bit better about what could have been happening. It's tough."

Shoemaker is in his third full season with the Angels, emerging as a rookie in 2014 when he went 16-4 with a 3.04 ERA.

"I had a good view of it and when you see it square someone up like that it's scary," Angels catcher Jett Bandy said. "First thing first, you forget about baseball and you think about his health."

Albert Pujols and C.J. Cron hit back-to-back home runs in the first inning and six relievers combined to shut down Seattle after Shoemaker was struck.

**Cardinals 5, Reds 2:** Randal Grichuk and Kolten Wong homered, Carlos Martinez carried a shutout into the seventh inning and visiting St. Louis snapped a three-game losing streak with a win over Cincinnati.

**Mets 5, Nationals 1:** Seth Lugo kept pitching like a play-off-tested ace rather than a rookie, and New York got two-run homers from Curtis

Granderson and Jay Bruce to beat visiting Washington.

**Blue Jays 5, Rays 3:** Russell Martin hit a tiebreaking, two-run homer in the eighth inning to help visiting Toronto overcome a poor start by 17-game winner J.A. Happ and avoid a three-game sweep.

**Yankees 5, Orioles 2:** Chase Headley and Austin Romine had two RBIs apiece, and New York beat host Baltimore to prevent a three-game sweep and remain afloat in the AL wild-card race.

**Cubs 3, Giants 2 (13):** Jason Heyward hit a tying single in the ninth inning and a game-winning single in the 13th as host Chicago took three of four from San Francisco in a possible playoff preview.

**Indians 6, Marlins 5:** Lonnie Chisenhall capped a three-run rally with a two-out RBI single in the ninth inning against Fernando Rodney, leading host Cleveland over Miami.

**Astros 7, Rangers 6:** George Springer and Evan Gattis homered to help Houston avoid a series sweep and snap host Texas' seven-game winning streak.

**Brewers 10, Pirates 0:** Domingo Santana had his first two-homer game, pinch-hitter Jonathan Villar delivered his first grand slam and Chris

Carter connected for his 32nd home run as Milwaukee completed a three-game sweep and handed host Pittsburgh its sixth straight loss.

**Dodgers 7, Padres 4:** Jose De Leon struck out nine while winning his major league debut, pinch-hitter Yasmani Grandal drove in three runs, including a go-ahead single in the fifth inning, and host Los Angeles rallied to beat San Diego.

**Tigers 6, Royals 5:** Justin Upton hit a two-run homer with two outs in the eighth inning, sending Detroit past host Kansas City.

**White Sox 13, Twins 11 (12):** Jose Abreu hit two three-run homers and drove in a career-best seven runs, and Chicago used Tim Anderson's two-run double in the 12th inning to get a wild win.

**Braves 2, Phillies 0:** Julio Teheran pitched six sharp innings, Matt Kemp homered and last-place Atlanta beat host Philadelphia for its sixth consecutive win.

**Diamondbacks 8, Rockies 5:** Socrates Brito snapped a seventh-inning tie with a three-run homer, and Arizona held off a late rally to beat host Colorado.