

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Chaos grips Kabul as thousands storm streets

Special to The Washington Post

KABUL, Afghanistan — Ordinary life came to a standstill in the Afghan capital on Sunday with businesses largely shut and many people forced to stay indoors as thousands of young men brandishing knives and assault rifles took to the streets and fired indiscriminately, mostly into the air.

The chaos, which lasted for more than eight hours, further underlined the weakness of U.S.-backed President Ashraf Ghani's government, which is locked in deep internal discord and is facing rising militancy.

The firing — including by masked teenagers riding in convoys of motorcycles and vehicles with tinted windows — left at least 13 people wounded, according to the Public Health Ministry.

It was part of an annual commemoration of the death anniversary of Ahmed Shah Massoud, a top anti-Taliban commander who was slain 17 years ago by suspected al-Qaida operatives posing as journalists.

The gunmen drove at high speed from one part of the city to another on Sunday, firing various types of weapons. In some parts, the firing was so intense that it was reminiscent of the civil war era in Afghanistan.

Some of the young men were only kids — and some were not even born — when

Massoud passed away. Several chanted, “Long live Massoud.”

Massoud's family and old comrades distanced themselves from the day's events.

The firing subsided and some of the gunmen dispersed when a suicide bomber on a motorcycle targeted part of the convoy in a central area of Kabul.

Initial reports showed that three men in the convoy were killed and 14 were wounded, but officials said the toll could rise.

Earlier in the day, security forces said they opened fire and wounded a man seeking to blow himself up in a crowd of marchers at the memorial built for Massoud close to the U.S. Embassy.

With parliamentary polls next month and a presidential vote in April, the scenes on Sunday shocked many people.

“I think everyone has had enough,” Saad Mohseni, director of the MOBY Group and a man known as Afghanistan's media mogul, said in a tweet.

As the day was coming to an end, there were reports that dozens of security personnel had perished in Taliban attacks.

The deadliest one occurred in northern Baghlan province, where the militants overran an army base after hours of clashes.

Taliban attack Afghan security forces in north

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Taliban insurgents launched separate attacks on Afghan security forces in the country's north, killing at least 52, provincial officials said Monday.

Mohammad Yusuf Ayubi, head of the provincial council in Kunduz province, said that at least 13 security forces were killed and 15 others wounded in an attack on a checkpoint they were manning in Dashti Archi district. The firefight began late Sunday and continued into Monday morning.

Meanwhile in Jawzjan province, Provincial Police Chief Gen. Faqir Mohammad Jawzjani said the Taliban attacked Khamyab district from different sides, forcing Afghan forces to withdraw from the district headquarters to avoid civilian casualties.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the group for the attacks in Kunduz and Jawzjan provinces.

The Taliban also killed another 14 local Afghan policemen and pro-government militiamen in the Dara Suf district of Samangan province, provincial spokesman Sediq Azizi said, adding that six others were also wounded.

Azizi added that three Taliban fighters were killed and four others wounded during the Monday morning battle.

Turkey braces for another surge of Syrian refugees

Bloomberg

Turkey massed tanks and commandos at its frontier and accelerated work to cope with a possible surge of refugees after Russia refused to call off an offensive against the last rebel bastion in Syria.

Howitzers and armored cars were also headed for the border with Syria's Idlib province on Monday, according to state-run Anadolu Agency, and the army

reinforced 12 outposts on Syrian territory where Turkish soldiers along with Russians and Iranians monitor flare-ups of violence, according to reports.

Turkey regards the presence of its troops inside Idlib as a deterrent against a large-scale assault by forces of Syrian President Bashar Assad and his allies. “The Russian jet fighters and the regime ground forces cannot afford attacks while Turkish soldiers are there,”

Ibrahim Kalin, spokesman for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, wrote in a newspaper column at the weekend.

Turkey is worried fighting will push a new wave of refugees toward its border, while the routing of moderate rebels triggers the collapse of international peace efforts supposed to guarantee Ankara-backed forces a say in post-war Syria. President Donald Trump has warned Assad against commit-

ting a “slaughter” in the Syrian province.

Turkey's worries over Syria aren't limited to Idlib. It is also alarmed by efforts by U.S.-backed Kurdish YPG forces — regarded by Ankara as an affiliate of PKK separatists it has been battling for decades — to recapture northern areas held by Turkish forces. The fall of Idlib could make their defense harder.

China vows retaliation if US imposes more tariffs

Associated Press

BEIJING — China on Monday promised retaliation if President Donald Trump escalates their tariff battle, raising the risk Beijing might target operations of American companies as it runs out of imports for penalties.

The threat came after Trump said Friday he was considering extending penalties to an additional \$267 billion of Chinese products in their battle over Beijing's technology policy. That would be on top of \$50 billion of goods already hit by 25 percent duties and another \$200 billion on which Washington is poised to raise tariffs.

"If the United States insists on imposing another round of tariffs on Chinese products, China will definitely take countermeasures to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said.

Geng gave no details, but the government said in June it would impose unspecified "comprehensive measures" if necessary. That left American companies on edge about whether Beijing might use its control over the heavily regulated economy to disrupt their operations by withholding licenses or launching tax, anti-monopoly or other investigations.

China matched Washington's first round of tariff increases on \$50 billion of its goods, but their lopsided trade balance means Beijing is running out of imports for retaliation.

Chinese leaders agreed in May to narrow that trade gap by purchasing more American soybeans and other products. But they reject Trump's demand to roll back official industry plans such as "Made in China 2025," which calls for state-led creation of global champions in robotics, artificial intelligence and other technologies.

USS Ronald Reagan welcomes new leader with ceremony at sea

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The nation's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier welcomed a new leader during a ceremony at sea Monday.

Capt. Patrick "Fin" Hannifin assumed command of the Yokosuka-based USS Ronald Reagan from Capt. Michael "Buzz" Donnelly, according to the ship's official Facebook page.

Hannifin previously served as commanding officer of the Norfolk, Va.-based amphibious transport dock ship USS Arlington. He is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and received a master's in international relations from the University of San Diego, according to his Navy profile. The formal naval aviator also was selected to attend the Air Force's Test Pilot School.

Donnelly's next assignment was not immediately clear. He had commanded the Ronald Reagan since 2016.

The carrier deployed last month to patrol the Indo-Pacific region.

Military academies take top 3 spots on US News & World Report's list

USA Today

Three service academies are the top public national liberal arts schools in U.S. News & World Report's new 2019 college rankings.

The U.S. Military Academy was first, followed by the U.S. Naval Academy and the U.S. Air Force Academy.

The result's not too surprising. The ranking of public national liberal arts schools was exactly the same for 2018, and the Naval Academy, the Military Academy and the Air Force Academy made up the top three for 2017.

U.S. News uses a variety of factors to compile its annual rankings, which include Best Colleges for Veterans picks for schools that participate in federal initiatives helping veterans and active-duty servicemembers pay for their degrees.

This year, for the first time, the schools were evaluated based on how well they enroll and graduate low-income students. The report also breaks out the colleges where students get the best value for their money after need-based grants kick in.

That now includes an analysis of the graduation rates

of students who receive Pell Grants, federal subsidies for low-income students, and the differences in graduation rates of Pell Grant students and students who didn't receive that funding. As part of the U.S. News methodology shift, the category called student outcomes, which was weighted 30 percent last year, is now at 35 percent.

"A university is not successful if it does not graduate its students, which is why the Best Colleges rankings place the greatest value on outcomes, including graduation and retention rates," Robert Morse, chief data strategist at U.S. News, said in a statement. "By including social mobility indicators, U.S. News is further recognizing colleges that serve all of their students, regardless of economic status."

Here are the top schools in some of the major categories:

Best national universities

1. Princeton University
2. Harvard University
3. Columbia University (tie)
3. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (tie)
3. University of Chicago (tie)
3. Yale University (tie)

Best national liberal arts

1. Williams College
2. Amherst College
3. Swarthmore College (tie)
3. Wellesley College (tie)

colleges

1. Williams College
2. Amherst College
3. Swarthmore College (tie)
3. Wellesley College (tie)

Best public schools

National universities

1. University of California-Los Angeles
2. University of California-Berkeley
3. University of Virginia

National liberal arts colleges

1. United States Military Academy
2. United States Naval Academy
3. United States Air Force Academy

Best value schools

National universities

1. Princeton University
2. Harvard University
3. Massachusetts Institute of Technology

National liberal arts colleges

1. Williams College
2. Pomona College
3. Amherst College

Best historically black colleges and universities

1. Spelman College
2. Howard University
3. Hampton University (tie)
3. Morehouse College (tie)

Woodward: Trump tweet risked provoking North Korea into war

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — President Donald Trump drafted a tweet calling for the evacuation of family members of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, nearly provoking a war with the North, the author of a new book about the administration said.

Americans on a major military base in Seoul took the reported revelation in stride, saying having family present is a boost for morale but they will do as ordered.

“If it’s for the safety of the families, the dependents and children, of course,” America Sotres said Monday as she had lunch in the food court at Yongsan Garrison with her soldier husband and 3-year-old twins. “It’s hard on families to be split up, but it’s like any other deployment.”

The tweet was proposed as tensions soared over Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons program, with Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un trading threats in a fierce war of words, Bob Woodward said in an interview with CBS News that aired Sunday.

It’s not the first time the idea has been raised. Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham called for families of military personnel to be evacuated in December, shortly after North Korea successfully tested an intercontinental ballistic missile.

Woodward called it the most “dangerous moment” of the standoff, which has subsided with a series of diplomatic moves that began earlier this year and peaked on June 12 with an unprecedented summit between Kim and Trump.

“He drafts a tweet saying ‘we’re going to pull our dependents from South Korea — family members of the 28,000 people there,’” Woodward said as he discussed his book “Fear: Trump in the White House.”

Woodward, whose reporting

on the Watergate scandal led to the downfall of the Nixon administration, told CBS the tweet was never sent because of back-channel communications with North Korea that made clear that an evacuation would be a sign the United States was preparing to attack.

“At that moment, there was a sense of profound alarm in the Pentagon leadership that, ‘My God, one tweet and we have reliable information that the North Koreans are going to read this as an attack is imminent,’” Woodward said.

He didn’t provide more details in the interview that aired Sunday, but the Telegraph reported that the book claims the tweet was proposed earlier this year and “scared the daylights” out of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.

The report was the latest in a series of excerpts released before the book goes on sale Tuesday.

Trump has denounced the book. The White House called it “nothing more than fabricated stories, many by former disgruntled employees, told to make the president look bad.”

The U.S. has maintained troops on the peninsula since the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended in an armistice instead of a peace treaty. Many bring their families with them.

Sotres, of Austin, Texas, said she was concerned when her husband was deployed to South Korea nearly a year ago but she wanted to keep the family together.

“There were sleepless nights,” she said, adding that after the recent moves toward peace, “It’s fine.”

Army Spc. Sarai Fong, who brought her husband and four children to Seoul earlier this year, said they have participated in biannual military exercises preparing for the possibility of evacuations.

“I’m just blessed that they got to come with me, but we’ll do what the Army says is best,” she said.

Anniversary celebrations wrap up

Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea — Tens of thousands of North Korean students rallied in Pyongyang’s Kim Il Sung Square on Monday night in the final major event of the country’s 70th anniversary, an elaborate celebration that has showcased the nation’s aspirations for economic growth and Korean unity.

The rally featured a sea of university and high school students carrying torches that spelled out giant slogans and words when seen from above the square. Leader Kim Jong Un did not attend.

This year’s anniversary downplayed the missiles and nuclear weapons that brought the country to the brink of conflict with the United States just one year ago.

It highlighted what has been a series of stunning recent changes for North Korea, beginning with Kim’s announcement on New Year’s Day that he would seek better relations with the South and that the North was willing to participate in the Winter Olympics held in South Korea.

He followed that up with an announcement in April that he would stop nuclear tests and long-range missile launches, claiming that, having perfected his nuclear arsenal, he was ready to pursue talks with Washington on easing tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

US threatens ICC sanctions; Palestinian US mission closed

From staff and wire reports

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration pledged Monday to protect Americans and their allies from prosecution by the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes and human rights violations in Afghanistan and other conflict zones and ordered the closure of the Palestinian diplomatic mission in Washington, citing the refusal of Palestinian leaders to enter into peace talks with Israel.

In remarks to the conservative Federalist Society, national security adviser John Bolton said the court is “illegitimate” and threatens the “constitutional rights of Americans and U.S. sovereignty.”

“The United States will use any means necessary to protect our citizens and those of our allies from unjust prosecution by this illegitimate court,” Bolton said. “We will ban its judges and prosecutors from entering the United States” if the ICC pursues an investigation of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. “We will sanction their funds in the U.S. financial system and we will prosecute them in the U.S. criminal system. We will do the same for any company or state that assists in an ICC investigation of Americans.”

Bolton also said the United States would close the Palestinian office in Washington — a move the Palestinians claimed dismantles decades of U.S. engagement with them.

The State Department said the U.S. step — the latest in a series targeting the Palestinians — came after a review of the office of the Palestine Liberation Organization centered on the fact that no “direct and meaningful negotiations with Israel” are underway despite previous warnings.

“To the contrary, PLO leadership has condemned a U.S. peace plan they have not yet seen and refused to engage with the U.S. government with respect to peace efforts and otherwise,” spokeswoman Heather Nauert said in a statement.

Moonves done at CBS after #MeToo woes

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The #MeToo movement fighting sexual misconduct had already claimed one of Hollywood's top movie moguls in Harvey Weinstein. Now it has done the same for Leslie Moonves, one of the television industry's most powerful executives.

The CBS Corp. announced its chairman's exit late Sunday, hours after The New Yorker magazine posted a story with a second round of ugly accusations against Moonves. A total of 12 women have alleged mistreatment, including forced oral sex, groping and retaliation if they resisted him. Moonves denied the charges in a pair of statements, although he said he had consensual relations with three of the women.

CBS said \$20 million will be donated to one or more organizations that support #MeToo and workplace equality for women. That sum will be deducted from any severance due Moonves, a figure that won't be determined until an outside investigation led by a pair of law firms is finished.

Chief Operating Officer Joseph Ianniello will take over Moonves' duties as president and CEO until its board of directors can find a permanent replacement, CBS said.

Group says Chinese officials destroy crosses, burn Bibles

Associated Press

BEIJING — China's government is ratcheting up a crackdown on Christian congregations in Beijing and several provinces, destroying crosses, burning Bibles, shutting churches and ordering followers to sign papers renouncing their faith, according to pastors and a group that monitors religion in China.

The campaign corresponds with a drive to "Sinicize" religion by demanding loyalty to the officially atheist Communist Party and eliminating any challenge to its power over people's lives.

Bob Fu, of the U.S.-based group China Aid, said during the weekend that the closure of churches in central Henan province and a prominent house church in Beijing in recent weeks represent a "significant escalation" of the crackdown.

"The international community should be alarmed and outraged for this blatant violation of freedom of religion and belief," he wrote in an email.

Under President Xi Jinping, China's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong, religious believers are seeing their freedoms shrink dramatically even

as the country undergoes a religious revival. Experts and activists say that as he consolidates his power, Xi is waging the most severe systematic suppression of Christianity in the country since religious freedom was written into the Chinese constitution in 1982.

Fu also provided video footage of what appeared to be piles of burning Bibles and forms stating that the signatories had renounced their Christian faith. He said that marked the first time since Mao's radical 1966-76 Cultural Revolution that Christians had been compelled to make such declarations under pain of expulsion from school and the loss of welfare benefits.

A Christian pastor in the Henan city of Nanyang said crosses, Bibles and furniture were burned during a raid on his church on Wednesday.

The pastor, who asked not to be identified by name to avoid repercussions from authorities, said several people entered the church just as it opened its doors at 5 a.m. and began removing items.

He said the church had been in discussions with local authorities who demanded it "reform" itself, but no agreement

had been reached or official documents released.

Chinese law requires religious believers to worship only in congregations registered with the authorities, but many millions belong to so-called underground or house churches that defy government restrictions.

A local official reached by phone at the Nanyang city government disputed the account, saying officials respected religious freedom. The man declined to give his name, as is common with Chinese bureaucrats, while a person answering phones at the local religious affairs bureau said they were "not clear" about the matter.

In Beijing, the Zion church was shut on Sunday by about 60 government workers who arrived at 4:30 p.m. accompanied by buses, police cars and firetrucks, the church's pastor, Ezra Jin Mingri, said Monday. Zion is known as the largest house church in Beijing, with six branches.

The officials declared the gatherings illegal and sealed off church properties, Jin said, after already freezing the pastor's personal assets in an apparent attempt to force him to comply with their demands.

New Miss America glad she didn't have to don swimsuit

Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — The first woman to win the Miss America crown without having to don a swimsuit says she's glad she didn't have to.

Nia Imani Franklin, who won the title Sunday night in Atlantic City while competing as Miss New York, said the changes in the 98-year-old contest are a welcome modernization.

Meeting reporters soon after winning the crown, Franklin said she's glad there was no swimsuit competition because it enabled her to eat a little

more.

"These changes, I think, will be great for our organization," she said. "I've already seen so many young women reaching out to me personally as Miss New York, asking how they can get involved, because I think they feel more empowered that they don't have to do things such as walk in a swimsuit for a scholarship.

"And I'm happy that I didn't have to do so to win this title tonight because I'm more than just that," Franklin said. "And all these women on stage are more than just that."

A classical vocalist whose pageant platform is "advocating for the arts," Franklin sang an operatic selection from the opera "La Boheme" on Sunday night.

Franklin won a \$50,000 scholarship along with the crown in the first Miss America pageant to be held without a swimsuit competition.

She said during her onstage interview that she was one of only a small number of minority students in school growing up, but used her love for music and the arts to grow and to fit in.

The fourth runner-up was Miss Massachusetts Gabriela Taveras, the third runner-up was Miss Florida Taylor Tyson, the second runner up was Miss Louisiana Holli' Conway, and the first runner-up was Miss Connecticut Bridget Oei.

Behind the scenes, a revolt is underway among most of the Miss America state organizations. Unhappy with how the swimsuit decision was reached, 46 of the 51 state pageant organizations demand that national chairwoman Gretchen Carlson and CEO Regina Hopper resign.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Subway station hit by 9/11 attack reopens

NY NEW YORK — A New York City subway station has reopened for the first time since it was destroyed in the World Trade Center attack 17 years ago.

Cheers erupted as the first train rolled into the new WTC Cortlandt station at noon Saturday.

The old Cortlandt Street station on the subway system's No. 1 line was buried under the rubble of the twin towers on Sept. 11, 2001.

The new station cost \$181 million and features a mosaic that uses words from the Declaration of Independence.

Camera put in stroller to catch scofflaws

RI PORTSMOUTH — Police in a Rhode Island town had a surprise for motorists who ignore rules requiring them to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks.

WPRI-TV reported that officers in Portsmouth conducted a sting operation to catch drivers in the act. An undercover police officer with a baby stroller made several attempts to cross a busy street in a crosswalk. The stroller carried a hidden camera instead of a baby.

The camera recorded a number of vehicles zipping through the crosswalk without stopping to allow the pedestrian to cross. Police said they issued nine tickets in a span of a few hours.

Hundreds of fun-loving bicyclists ride nude

PA PHILADELPHIA — Hundreds of fun-loving bicyclists who had been gearing up for a ride around Philadelphia on Saturday took off — their clothes.

Some of the nude cyclists sported body paint, glitter or fancy hats as they made the annual Philly Naked Bike Ride, pedaling 10 miles on a course taking them past sights including Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell.

Participants in the ride can go as bare as they dare. Some were in their birthday suits while others sported underwear or masks. The ride is to protest dependence on fossil fuels, advocate for the safety of cyclists on the road and promote positive body image.

Man says ex tried to sell his items online

WI STURTEVANT — A woman faces misdemeanor theft charges after her ex-boyfriend accused her of trying to sell his possessions online — everything from a swimming pool to sandwich baggies.

The Racine Journal Times reported that Ashley Marie Smith, 24, was arrested Thursday and held on an \$850 bond.

Racine police said her ex-boyfriend began noticing things missing from his home in March. Police said he contacted authorities in May after seeing his property for sale on Facebook and other online sites.

Pilots fly glider to world record heights

NV LAS VEGAS — Pilots from a Nevada glider team flew to record heights above the Andes Mountains in Argentina using only wind as their engine.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal reported that an experimental sailplane built by a Minden-based Perlan Project team set an unofficial world altitude record for engineless flight on Sept. 2, then broke

that record by more than a half-mile two days later.

Pilots Jim Payne and Miguel Iturmendi flew the Perlan 2 aircraft to 63,776 feet on Sept. 4, 3,107 feet higher than the flight two days earlier by Payne and Morgan Sandercock. That's about 3 miles above the highest altitude used by commercial flights.

Highway rerouted for migrating debris blob

AK ANCHORAGE — Alaska highway workers have moved the Dalton Highway away from a gigantic mass of frozen debris that is oozing down a hillside so the road doesn't get T-boned by the so-called blob.

Transportation officials said the roughly milelong frozen debris lobe — consisting of dirt, ice and trees — threatened to bulldoze away a section of the road more than 200 miles north of Fairbanks in three to four years.

The Anchorage Daily News reported Friday that motorists were rerouted onto the new gravel road starting Aug. 31. It will be 20 or so years until the blob can threaten the road again.

9-year-old breaks 2 national race records

KS WICHITA — A Wichita girl has become the fastest 9-year-old in the country.

Juliah Bolden won the 100- and 200-meter national championships in the 9-year-old division last month at the AAU Junior Olympic Games, the Wichita Eagle reported. Juliah broke the national record in both races the year before in the 8-and-under division.

Juliah comes from a family of athletes. Her father led Wichita State basketball during

the 1992-93 season. Her sister, Jewell, won seven Kansas high school state championships in track and field, and her mother, Shirley Bolden, was a three-time All-Big Ten sprinter at Michigan State and Big Ten Freshman of the Year in 1989.

Afternoon shoeshine turns into a holdup

LA NEW ORLEANS — A midafternoon shoeshine in the heart of New Orleans' French Quarter turned into a holdup.

According to the city police department's "major offense log" for Saturday, a man, 62, and a woman, 22, were approached shortly before 4 p.m. Friday by a stranger.

The stranger asked if the man wanted his shoes shined. After the shoeshine, he offered the stranger \$3.

He said the shoeshine man grabbed him and put him in a headlock, then let him go but grabbed the woman, demanding that they pay \$40. Police said the two complied and the attacker ran off.

House is torched as owner burns weeds

ME BRUNSWICK — Maine fire officials said a homeowner accidentally torched her house while attempting to burn away weeds with a torch.

The Brunswick Fire Department said the woman contacted them last week after the side of her house caught fire.

The Portland Press Herald reported the homeowner and multiple pets made it out of the home without injury.

Fire Capt. David Hunter said the fire was extinguished quickly, and damage was confined to the front of the building.

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Week 1: No loss, or win, for Browns

Associated Press

Browns tie! Browns tie! Browns tie!
It's not a win, but Cleveland will take it after going 0-16 last year and 1-15 in 2016. The Browns rallied from a 14-point deficit in the fourth quarter against the rival Steelers and snapped a 17-game losing streak with a 21-21 result that left fans celebrating in the rain. They had a chance to win the game, but Pittsburgh's T.J. Watt blocked Zane Gonzalez's 43-yard field-goal attempt with 9 seconds left in overtime.

For a while, it seemed the Steelers would cruise to another easy win over the Browns even without Le'Veon Bell. The All-Pro running back is still holding out over a bitter contract dispute, causing some animosity among his teammates. Backup James Conner had 135 yards rushing and two touchdowns and caught five passes for 57 yards. But Ben Roethlisberger threw three interceptions and fumbled twice, and Conner's fumble in the fourth quarter helped the Browns rally.

Conner, a star at Pitt who became a city favorite while recovering from a cancer diagnosis in November 2015, may have cost Bell some leverage with his strong performance.

Tyrod Taylor's 17-yard touchdown pass to Josh Gordon sent it to overtime, and neither team could find a way to win it on a wet, sloppy field.

In case you missed it, here are the other top topics after the NFL season's opening Sunday:

Breathe easy, Wisconsin: Aaron Rodgers returned in the second half after being carted off the field with a knee injury and led the Packers back from a 20-0 deficit to a 24-23 win over the Bears. Rodgers threw three touchdown passes, including a 75-yarder to Randall Cobb with 2:13 left in the game. The stadium fell silent and everyone in Green Bay panicked when Rodgers went down. The Packers missed the playoffs after losing Rodgers last season and are 6-10-1 without him since 2013. Backup DeShone Kizer threw a pick six to Khalil Mack, who disappeared in the second half after a dominant start in his first game for Chicago.

Beckham is back: Odell Beckham Jr. had 11 catches for 111 yards and drew two pass interference penalties on the same drive in his first game since last October following ankle surgery. Beckham won the 1-on-1 battle against outspoken All-Pro cornerback Jalen Ramsey, but the New York Giants lost the game. The Jaguars got a pick six by Myles Jack in a 20-15 victory.

Philly Philly: Needing a spark for his sputtering offense, Eagles coach Doug Pederson turned to a familiar coach play in the third quarter of Philadelphia's 18-12 victory over Atlanta on Thursday night. Quarterback Nick Foles caught a 15-yard pass from wide receiver Nelson Agholor to extend a drive that ended with a touchdown. Foles caught a 1-yard TD pass from tight end Trey Burton in the first half of Philadelphia's 41-33 win over New England in the Super Bowl. That play was called "Philly Special." This

one was "Philly Philly." Pederson used the same personnel group, but a different formation this time around.

National anthem: Miami Dolphins receivers Kenny Stills and Albert Wilson were the only two players to kneel during the national anthem opening weekend. Colin Kaepernick called them "brothers" and thanked them on social media. Dolphins teammate Robert Quinn raised his fist. Niners receiver Marquise Goodwin did the same at San Francisco's game at Minnesota. Broncos receiver Demaryius Thomas and linebacker Brandon Marshall, and Seahawks linemen Duane Brown and Quinton Jefferson, retreated to their respective tunnels while the anthem played. In Los Angeles, Chargers left tackle Russell Okung raised his fist.

Trolling the boys: Former Cowboys receiver Dez Bryant had fun taking shots at his old team during an 18-6 loss at Carolina. Bryant wrote on Twitter: "It's kind of cool calling out all of the signals and knowing which route players are about run." He engaged with fans, suggested he'd have success in New England or Washington and said he didn't think Cowboys owner Jerry Jones wanted him out of Dallas.

Jimmy Garoppo(Nooooo): Playing his first game since signing his megadeal with San Francisco following seven career starts, Jimmy Garoppolo didn't look like a \$137.5 million quarterback. He tossed three interceptions in a 24-16 loss to Minnesota, including a pick six.

Djokovic ties idol Sampras with 14th major

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The U.S. Open final suddenly appeared to be slipping away from Novak Djokovic. He dropped three consecutive games. He was barking at himself, at his entourage, at a crowd vocally supporting his opponent, Juan Martin del Potro. He was, in short, out of sorts.

And then came Sunday's pivotal game, a 20-minute, 22-point epic. Three times, del Potro was a point from breaking and earning the right to serve to make it a set apiece. Three times, Djokovic steeled himself. Eventually, he seized that game — and del Potro's best chance to make a match of it.

A year after missing the U.S. Open because of an injured right elbow that would require surgery, Djokovic showed that he is unquestionably back at his best and back at the top of tennis. His returns and defense-to-offense skills as impeccable as ever, Djokovic collected his 14th Grand Slam title and second in a row by getting through every crucial moment for a 6-3, 7-6 (4), 6-3 victory over 2009 champion del Potro at Flushing Meadows.

"There was always part of me that imagined and believed and hoped that I can get back (to) the desired level of tennis very soon," said Djokovic, whose operation was in February. "But at the same time, life showed me that it takes time

for good things, it takes time to really build them, for things to fall into place, so you can center yourself, balance yourself and thrive. The last two months have been terrific."

This was Djokovic's third championship in New York, along with those in 2011 and 2015. Add in the trophies he has earned at six Australian Opens, one French Open and four Wimbledons, most recently in July, and the 31-year-old Serb pulled even with Pete Sampras for the third-most majors among men, trailing only Roger Federer's 20 and Rafael Nadal's 17.

"He's my idol. Pete, I love you," Djokovic said.

Federer lost in the fourth round in New York, while

Nadal retired from his semifinal against del Potro because of a bad right knee. That put the 29-year-old Argentine back in a Grand Slam final for the first time since his breakthrough nine years ago, a comeback for a guy who had four wrist operations in the interim.

"I believe he'll be here again with the champion's trophy. I really do," said Djokovic, who gave his pal a hug at the net, and then went over to console del Potro as he wiped away tears at his sideline seat.

Djokovic was better than del Potro on their many lengthy exchanges, using his trademark body-twisting, limb-splaying court coverage to get to nearly every ball.

NFL roundup

Rodgers returns from injury, rallies Pack

Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Slowed by a sore knee, Aaron Rodgers picked up the pace behind center.

Remarkably, the two-time NFL MVP was more effective against the Chicago Bears after returning from what initially looked like a serious injury.

The hobbling quarterback threw three touchdown passes in the fourth quarter after returning from injury, and the Green Bay Packers overcame a 20-point deficit for a thrilling 24-23 win over the Bears on Sunday night.

Rodgers connected with receiver Randall Cobb for a catch-and-run through the secondary for a 75-yard touchdown and the go-ahead score with 2:13 left in the game.

"You've seen it time and time again. That guy's a warrior," Cobb said.

Rodgers was hurt in the second quarter after slipping to the turf while under pressure from linebacker Khalil Mack and defensive lineman Roy Robertson-Harris. The lineman landed on Rodgers, who grabbed the back of his left leg. He had ACL surgery on his left knee in college.

Rodgers was carted back to the locker room. Doctors determined he did not suffer a major injury and cleared him to return in the second half.

The Packers had to make a slight adjustment with their normally mobile quarterback limited to the pocket.

"Got to get the ball out. Can't be moving around a whole lot back there," Rodgers said. "And we did a good job mixing things up in the second half with some of our quicker-hitter stuff and actually some of our more vertical stuff, too."

Rodgers also had touchdown passes to Geronimo Allison (39 yards) and Davante Adams (12 yards) in completing the rally from a 20-0 deficit with 9:14 to go in the third quarter.

Rodgers finished 20-for-30 for 286 yards, including 17 of 23 for 273 yards in the second half.

Browns 21, Steelers 21 (OT): Cleveland ended its 17-game losing streak on Sunday with a tie against visiting Pittsburgh, but they missed a chance at their first victory since 2016 when kicker Zane Gonzalez's 43-yard field-goal attempt with 9 seconds left in OT was blocked by T.J. Watt — who also had four sacks.

It was the NFL's first tie in Week 1 since 1971 and the league's first overall since Washington and Cincinnati ended in a 27-27 deadlock on Oct. 30, 2016. The Browns remain winless since Dec. 24, 2016.

Buccaneers 48, Saints 40: Ryan Fitzpatrick highlighted a 417-yard, four-touchdown performance with two scoring strikes of more than 50 yards in a win over host New Orleans.

Saints cornerback Marshon Lattimore, the 2017 Defensive Rookie of the Year, had arguably the worst performance of his short career trying to cover receiver Mike Evans, who caught seven passes for 147 yards, including a 50-yard touchdown that put the Bucs up 41-24 late in the third quarter.

Bengals 34, Colts 23: Andy Dalton rallied visiting Cincinnati with three scores in the final 19 minutes and Clayton Fejedelem scored on an 83-yard fumble return with 24 seconds to go, snapping an eight-game losing streak in Indy.

The loss spoiled the Colts' season opener — and the return of Andrew Luck, who made his first start in more than 20 months. Luck looked rusty initially with his first official pass since Jan. 1, 2017, being picked off by linebacker Preston Brown, but finished 39 of 53 with 319 yards with two touchdowns.

Vikings 24, 49ers 16: Kirk Cousins passed for two touchdowns in his much-anticipated Minnesota debut, and the Vikings forced four turnovers to stick 49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo with his first loss in eight games as an NFL starter.

Cousins connected with Stefon Diggs in the second quarter

and Kyle Rudolph in the third quarter for scores, and the defense finished the job with three sacks and three second-half interceptions of Garoppolo.

Ravens 47, Bills 3: Host Baltimore harassed and embarrassed Buffalo quarterback Nathan Peterman on a rainy afternoon, while Joe Flacco threw three touchdown passes, one to each of the new receivers.

Flacco went 25-for-34 for 236 yards before being replaced in the third quarter by rookie Lamar Jackson, who did little more than hand off after entering with a 40-0 lead.

Baltimore had six sacks and limited Buffalo to 153 yards.

Patriots 27, Texans 20: At Foxboro, Mass., Tom Brady threw for 277 yards and three touchdowns, hitting Rob Gronkowski for 123 yards and a score.

Brady and Gronkowski, who both floated the possibility of retiring over the offseason, connected seven times, including a 21-yard touchdown.

The Texans' Deshaun Watson, who missed the final nine games last season with a torn right ACL, completed 17 of 35 passes for 176 yards, one score and one interception.

Jaguars 20, Giants 15: Linebacker Myles Jack scored on a 32-yard interception return early in the fourth quarter visiting Jacksonville spoiled the New York debuts of coach Pat Shurmur and second-overall draft pick Saquon Barkley, and the return of Odell Beckham Jr.

Blake Bortles threw a short touchdown pass and led two other first-half field goal drives. The Jags dominated, living up to preseason Super Bowl hype.

Chiefs 38, Chargers 28: At Carson, Calif., Tyreek Hill scored three touchdowns, Patrick Mahomes passed for his first four NFL scores and Kansas City opened the season with a victory.

Hill also had 169 yards on seven receptions, which is the second-most yards by a Chiefs receiver in an opener, according to Pro Football Reference.

Carlos Carson had 173 yards receiving against New Orleans in 1985.

Broncos 27, Seahawks 24: Von Miller sacked Russell Wilson three times, forced two fumbles and recovered one in helping Case Keenum win his debut in Denver.

It was the Broncos' 18th win in their past 19 home openers. Keenum threw for 329 yards and three touchdowns, but was also intercepted three times.

Dolphins 27, Titans 20: Jakeem Grant scored on a tiebreaking 102-yard kickoff return with 14 minutes to go, and host Miami overcame two weather delays to win the longest game since the 1970 NFL-AFL merger.

Titans starting quarterback Marcus Mariota threw two interceptions in the third quarter and then came out of the game with an elbow injury. Tight end Delanie Walker was carted off the field later in the period with a right leg injury, and tackle Taylor Lewan suffered a concussion in a miserable head coaching debut for Mike Vrabel.

Redskins 24, Cardinals 6: Alex Smith carved up the Arizona defense for 255 yards and two touchdowns, Adrian Peterson rushed for 96 yards and a score and visiting Washington spoiled the coaching debut of Steve Wilks.

The Redskins outgained the Cardinals 429-213 and had 30 first downs to Arizona's 14 and it was even more one-sided before the Cardinals showed some life late in the game when David Johnson ran 2 yards for a touchdown with 5:47 to play.

Panthers 16, Cowboys 8: Cam Newton ran for 58 yards and a score, and host Carolina's defense turned in a dominant performance to beat Dallas.

Luke Kuechly had 13 tackles, Kawann Short sacked Dak Prescott twice and Mario Addison had a huge strip-sack of the Cowboys quarterback with 1:23 left to seal the victory. Carolina's defense had six sacks in all and limited the Cowboys to 232 yards.

Cardinals rally past Tigers

Associated Press

DETROIT — The St. Louis Cardinals needed something to get them going on Sunday against the Detroit Tigers.

Out of nowhere — again — a squirrel appeared.

In an episode sure to revive St. Louis fans' memories of the 2011 Rally Squirrel, this game at Comerica Park was scoreless going into the seventh inning. That's when a squirrel took up residence between second and third base.

There was a delay and, with some prompting from the Tigers infield, the critter moved into foul territory and eventually made its escape in right field.

The Cardinals wound up scoring five times in the inning and avoided a series sweep with a 5-2 victory.

"I don't think you can discount that factor," manager Mike Shildt said. "The squirrel shows up and we score five runs. We only had six in the whole series before that."

The Cardinals lost the first two games of the series in walk-off fashion and didn't have a baserunner until the sixth against Michael Fulmer.

St. Louis, which has a one-game lead for the second NL wild card spot, won for the third time in eight games.

"You never want to get swept by anybody," said Kolten Wong, who drove in the Cardinals'

first run. "We knew they could be dangerous, because they have nothing to lose, and they gave us a battle. Luckily, we were able to get one."

Detroit's four-game winning streak was snapped.

John Gant (7-5) allowed two runs on five hits and a walk in 6²/₃ innings. He struck out six.

"I knew I really needed to bear down, because we needed this game," Gant said. "I had to go out there and give my best effort."

Carlos Martinez pitched the ninth for his second save. After the game, Shildt said Martinez will replace Bud Norris as the team's closer.

Fulmer (3-11) was perfect through five innings but only got four more outs. He allowed five runs on five hits and three walks in 6¹/₃ innings, striking out five.

"He was cruising, and then everything fell apart behind him," Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire said. "We didn't make a couple plays, we dropped a ball and they found a bunch of holes. I don't think they hit a ball hard off him."

Fulmer fell to 0-6 in his last nine starts, with the Tigers losing all nine.

"My job is to help this team win games, and I'm obviously not doing that," he said. "But I can feel the progress every time. This is the best I've felt in two years."

Matt Carpenter and Shildt were both ejected after Carpenter was called out on strikes to end the ninth.

Moreland walks off Red Sox

Associated Press

BOSTON — Mitch Moreland put some recent struggles behind him with a clutch hit in the ninth inning. He helped the major league-leading Boston Red Sox do the same with their weekend woes, too.

Moreland singled in the winning run with two outs in the ninth and the Red Sox beat the Houston Astros 6-5 on Sunday night to avoid a three-game sweep in a matchup of AL division leaders.

"Yeah, I'll take those every time if I could," he said, breaking into a grin. "It was at the right time to do it, I guess."

Coming into the game in a 2-for-26 slump, the first baseman had a pinch-hit single in the eighth before his walkoff bloop.

"Yeah, he gets jammed and he gets a single," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said, adding "we need this guy to get going offensively. We know how good he is."

With runners on first and second, Moreland sent his opposite-field single to left against Hector Rondon (2-3), and pinch-runner Tzu-Wei Lin raced home easily. Left fielder Marwin Gonzalez tried to bare-hand the ball for a quick throw but lost his grip and let it dribble toward the Green Monster.

J.D. Martinez hit his 40th homer and drove in four for Boston, which snapped Houston's seven-game winning streak even after the Astros rallied with a four-run sixth inning to tie the game at 5.

The East-leading Red Sox sliced their magic number to 11 for their third straight division title. Boston leads the second-place Yankees by 8¹/₂ games after they lost at Seattle.

Jose Altuve and Gonzalez each hit a solo homer for the West-leading Astros, who saw their lead over Oakland cut to 2¹/₂ games. The Athletics beat Texas earlier in the day.

"This was a really good game, really good series," Houston manager A.J. Hinch said.

MLB roundup

Red-hot A's dominate Rangers

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Stephen Piscotty homered and the A's rallied from an early three-run hole to beat Texas 7-2 to win its fourth straight and sixth in seven games.

Matt Olson had two hits including a double for the A's, who are 30 games over .500 (87-57) for the first time since closing out 2013 at 96-66. They've won nine of their last 10 against the Rangers.

Blue Jays 6, Indians 2: Right fielder Randal Grichuk was injured in a bizarre collision with a security guard's chair, and replacement Teoscar Hernandez hit a three-run homer to lead host Toronto.

Rays 8, Orioles 3: Brandon Lowe hit a three-run homer in a five-run first inning and

Tampa Bay tied a team record with its 11th consecutive home win.

Mets 6, Phillies 4: On a rainy afternoon, the fading Phillies stumbled again when Vince Velasquez wasted a two-run lead in a loss to host New York.

Angels 1, White Sox 0: Andrew Heaney tossed three-hit ball over seven innings and struck out a career-high 12, lifting visiting Los Angeles to the three-game sweep.

Brewers 6, Giants 3: Jonathan Schoop hit a grand slam after Ryan Braun was hit by a pitch in a tense sixth inning, and host Milwaukee preserved its lead in the NL wild-card race.

Twins 3, Royals 1: Williams Astudillo hit a two-out, two-run homer in the bottom of the ninth

inning to lift host Minnesota.

Dodgers 9, Rockies 6: Justin Turner hit a two-run homer and finished with four hits as visiting Los Angeles moved closer to the first-place Colorado in the NL West.

Braves 9, Diamondbacks 5: At Phoenix, Ender Inciarte hit a three-run homer during a six-run rally in the ninth as Atlanta increased its lead in the NL East to 4¹/₂ games.

Mariners 3, Yankees 2: Mitch Haniger scored the go-ahead run on a grounder in the eighth inning, then made a diving catch for the final out to give host Seattle the win.

Padres 7, Reds 6: Eric Hosmer led off the ninth inning with a home run as visiting San Diego picked up the win.