

STARS AND STRIPES®

Friday, September 6, 2019

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Taliban attack 3rd provincial capital

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban attacked a third provincial capital in less than a week, killing at least two civilians, an Afghan official said Friday as a U.S. envoy was back in Qatar for unexpected talks on a U.S.-Taliban deal he had described as complete just days earlier.

Farah provincial governor Mohammad Shoaib Sabet said another 15 people were wounded in the latest attack, citing local hospitals, and that airstrikes had been carried out against the militant group.

Also Friday, Afghanistan's president postponed a visit to Washington early next week where he was to discuss the U.S.-Taliban talks on ending

America's longest war, a person familiar with the negotiations said Friday.

The developments emerged after the U.S. envoy negotiating with the Taliban, Zalmay Khalilzad, abruptly returned to Qatar for unexpected talks. The Taliban maintain a political office in the Gulf Arab state.

The agreement "in principle" to begin a U.S. troop withdrawal only needed President Donald Trump's approval, Khalilzad had announced Monday.

The person who told The Associated Press of President Ashraf Ghani's postponed Washington trip was not authorized to talk to reporters and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Since Khalilzad's announce-

ment about the peace deal on Monday, two horrific Taliban car bombings in the Afghan capital, Kabul — one of which killed a U.S. servicemember — and objections to the deal from the Afghan government and several former U.S. ambassadors to Afghanistan have put pressure on Khalilzad as many wonder whether a deal will truly bring peace.

The Taliban have explained their surge in deadly attacks — including on the capitals of northern Kunduz and Baghlan provinces last weekend — as necessary to give them a stronger negotiating position in talks with the U.S., a stance that has appalled Afghans and others as scores of civilians are killed.

House Foreign Affairs

Committee Chairman Eliot Engel has even demanded that Khalilzad testify before the House committee about the negotiations, saying that "I do not consider your testimony at this hearing optional."

The Afghan president has been shut out of the U.S.-Taliban negotiations, and during Khalilzad's visit to Kabul this week, Ghani was shown the agreement but not allowed to keep it.

The Taliban have rejected negotiations with the Afghan government, seeing it as a puppet of the U.S., though it has expressed willingness to meet with Afghan officials in their personal capacity.

Esper urges US allies to counter Russian, Chinese threats

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

LONDON — Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Friday called on U.S. allies in Europe and Asia to act alongside the United States in the face of a new era of great-power competition with Russia and China and help challenge their aggressive attempts to exert influence on other countries around the world.

"Russia and China want to disrupt the international order by gaining a veto over other nations' economic, diplomatic and security decisions. We cannot stand idly by while authoritarian nations attempt to reshape the global security environment to their favor at the expense of others," Esper said during a speech Friday at the Royal United Services Institute, a British defense think

tank.

Esper, who is meeting this week with senior leaders in Germany, Great Britain and France, spoke of military and economic threats posed by Russia and China, which have been identified as "strategic competitors" to America's interests and security in the 2018 National Defense Strategy.

While America focused on "hard-fought battles" the last 18 years in Iraq and Afghanistan and less on preparing for the future, Esper said Russia and China have used that time to study the U.S. military, modernize their armies and expand into the cyber and space domains.

"While the cumulative power of the NATO alliance remains unmatched, some of our comparative advantages have diminished," he said. Esper did not specify which advantages

had been diminished.

Russia and China are disrupting international norms and "are using their military power to intimidate, coerce, and threaten the sovereignty of weaker nations," Esper said.

The defense secretary pointed to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and China's use of economic influence through infrastructure investment in participating countries of its "One Belt, One Road" initiative as examples of security threats posed by the two countries to the rest of the world.

"The United States is facing this challenge head-on, but if we are to preserve the world all of us have created together through decades of shared sacrifice, we must all rise to the occasion," Esper said. "It is imperative that freedom-loving nations recognize the threats

to our security, and commit to doing their part to keep the world safe."

During his trip, Esper has emphasized burden sharing in European defense, specifically that NATO members meet their pledge to increase their own defense spending to 2% of their gross domestic product. That some NATO countries do not meet that threshold has been a major point of contention for President Donald Trump.

Esper called out Germany on Wednesday for not spending enough on defense, though it is a "wealthy country." He said Germany lacked viable plans to meet the 2% goal by 2024 — an agreement reached in 2014 at the NATO summit in Wales. Germany is spending 1.2% of its GDP on defense as of 2018, according to the World Bank.

Bahamians try to evacuate as relief arrives

Associated Press

ABACO, Bahamas — Carrying their meager possessions in duffel bags and shopping carts, hundreds of desperate people gathered at the port in Grand Abaco on Friday in hopes of getting off the hurricane-devastated island, as an international disaster-relief effort took shape.

The search for victims and survivors continued, five days after Dorian blasted the Bahamas with 185 mph winds that obliterated countless homes. Officials said 30 people have been confirmed dead, but the toll is sure to rise.

At the port, some of those who lined up behind a yellow cloth tape arrived as early as 1 a.m., hoping for transportation to the capital, Nassau.

“It’s going to get crazy soon,” said Serge Simon, 39, who drives an ice truck and waited with his wife and two sons, 5 months old and 4. “There’s no food, no water. There are bodies in the water. People are going to start getting sick.”

There were no government-organized evacuations yet, but the Royal Bahamas Defense Force helped people board a 139-foot ferry that had come to pick up its employees and had room for an additional 160 people.

The crowd waited calmly as marines separated women and children to allow them to board first, followed by the men.

“Our sense is people want to get off Abaco,” said the ship’s commanding officer, Senior Lt. William Sturup.

A British navy ship moored offshore sent in aid on a landing craft, including blankets and 500 boxes of ration packs that feed a family of four. Two private yachts also brought in aid, including pallets of water bottles.

Sturup said that the navy ship would return later with more aid, and that a 210-foot landing craft of the Royal Bahamas Defense Force would come in the afternoon with trucks and supplies.

Another crowd of a few hundred gathered on Thursday at a small airport, hoping to catch a ride aboard the small planes that were picking up the most vulnerable survivors, including the sick and the elderly.

The evacuation was slow, and there was frustration for

some who said they had nowhere to go after the Category 5 hurricane splintered whole neighborhoods.

“They told us that the babies, the pregnant people and the elderly people were supposed to be first preference,” said Lukya Thompson, 23, a bartender. But many were still waiting, she said.

The Bahamian health ministry said helicopters and boats were on the way to help people, though officials warned of delays because of severe flooding.

An array of organizations and companies, including the United Nations, Royal Caribbean and American Airlines, mobilized to send in food, water, generators, diapers, flashlights and other relief supplies.

Diminished Dorian strands North Carolina islanders

Associated Press

WILMINGTON, N.C. — A weakened Hurricane Dorian flooded homes on North Carolina’s Outer Banks on Friday with a ferocity that seemed to take storm-hardened residents by surprise, and hundreds were feared trapped by high water.

Sheriff’s officials sent medics and other rescuers to Ocracoke Island — reachable only by boat or air — amid reports of people being forced to retreat to their attics after defying mandatory evacuation orders along the 200-mile ribbon of low-lying islands.

“There is significant concern about hundreds of people trapped on Ocracoke Island,” Gov. Roy Cooper said. “There are rescue teams ready as soon as they can get in.”

Its winds down to 90 mph, Dorian howled over the Outer Banks as a far weaker storm than the brute that wreaked havoc on the Bahamas at the start of the week. More than a quarter-million residents and visitors had been ordered to evacuate the North Carolina island chain ahead of the storm, officials said.

The Category 1 hurricane lashed communities on the Outer Banks with rain and surging seawater as it hugged the islands that stick out from the Eastern Seaboard like the side-view mirror on a car. Rising

waters coursed into the main floors of elevated homes and smacked them with floating debris.

Around midmorning, the eye of the storm came ashore at Cape Hatteras, Dorian’s first landfall on the U.S. mainland.

“It’s bad,” Ann Warner, who owns Howard’s Pub on Ocracoke Island, said by telephone. “The water came up to the inside of our bottom floor, which has never had water.” She said a skylight blew out, and there were whitecaps in her front yard and underneath her house.

“We’re safe,” Warner added. “But it’s certainly a mess.”

Another Ocracoke Island resident, bookshop owner Leslie Lanier, said via text message that the first floors of some homes had flooded and people had been forced to climb to their attics, but that the water had already begun to drop.

“We are flooding like crazy,” she said, adding: “I have been here 32 years and not seen this.”

The Hyde County Sheriff’s Office said deputies, medics and other rescuers were heading to the island amid reports of “catastrophic flooding.” The governor said that authorities were telling people to get to the highest point in their homes.

To the North in Buxton on Hatteras Island, close to where Dorian blew ashore,

Radio Hatteras volunteer Mary Helen Goodloe-Murphy said that people were calling in to report that “houses are shaking like crazy” and that “it’s never been like this before.”

“The wind is blowing with fury,” she said.

Danny Couch, a resident of nearby Buxton and a Dare County commissioner, said that the storm sent crab traps flying, breaking windshields.

“I was out there, and stuff flying around, road signs and stuff,” he said. “It’s crazy. I don’t want to be a statistic.”

He added: “It’s godawful. It’s a storm of record, no doubt.”

As of 9 a.m., Dorian was moving northeast at 14 mph. It is expected to remain a hurricane as it sweeps up the Eastern Seaboard through Saturday, veering far enough offshore that its hurricane-force winds are unlikely to pose any threat to land in the U.S.

More than 370,000 people were without electricity in the Carolinas and Virginia as Dorian moved up the coast.

At least four people were killed in the Southeast. All were men in Florida or North Carolina who died in falls or by electrocution while trimming trees, putting up storm shutters or otherwise getting ready for the hurricane.

Navy boat, found in Ireland, floated from Va.

The (Norfolk) Virginian-Pilot

Crew members of western Ireland's Doolin Ferry Co. were headed to Inis Oirr, a small island in Galway Bay, on Monday afternoon when they spotted something bright orange floating in the water.

"First I had a feeling of fear, (wondering) if there was people in difficulty 'cause we could only see about a meter of the bow sticking out of the water," Tom Noel, one of the crew members, said in an email to *The Virginian-Pilot* on Thursday. "Then once we got closer and could see the amount of growth on it, I knew it was a long time in the water and that it was only a danger to navigation."

Upon investigating, Noel and the rest of the Doolin Express crew found the boat covered in goose barnacles — it had clearly been in the water for a while — and along with a local fishing boat, towed the boat to the beach at Inis Oirr, where many islanders helped pull it ashore.

A day later, Doolin Ferry Co., which is based near Ireland's famed Cliffs of Moher, posted the account on Facebook. At that point, they guessed the boat was a U.S. Coast Guard rescue boat but were hoping for any details on what brought it so far. The post blew up online.

"We couldn't have predicted the interest from the public that there has been in this boat," Liam O'Brien, the ferry company's owner, later said in a news release.

News outlets across Ireland picked up the mystery. Thousands of people shared their theories on social media. Was it a drug-running boat masquerading as law enforcement? Was it an American military vessel used to spy on the Irish?

Within a day the answer came. A representative for Silver Ships Inc., an Alabama-based shipbuilding company, confirmed it had manufactured the boat in 2015 for the U.S. Navy, the ferry company's Siobhan Nolan said in an email.

It's a high-speed maneuverable surface target that can be guided remotely and is used as target practice by the Navy.

"We believe the boat originated in Norfolk Virginia," Doolin Ferry Co. wrote on its website. "It's likely that it was lost during a training exercise and it remained in the water drifting until it ended up in the water close to Inis Oirr. ... How cool is that?!"

That's more than 3,400 miles of drifting.

Turns out, it's true. Timothy Boulay, a spokesman for the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, said Thursday that the vessel was lost during a missile test and evaluation event about 75 miles off the coast of Norfolk last September.

After realizing the target was lost, the Atlantic Target and Maritime Operations team searched for five hours but couldn't find it and notified the Coast Guard of the potential navigation hazard.

Navy's top auditor to retire amid harassment inquiry

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The Navy's auditor general, under investigation by the Pentagon's inspector general for alleged sexual harassment, has told his staff he plans to retire and has been transferred.

Ronnie J. Booth, the auditor general, informed his staff of the moves this week. He said in an email labeled an "all-hands" alert that he's been reassigned as a "special assistant" to Navy Undersecretary Thomas Modly "for a period not to exceed 30 days."

Booth has been accused of a "pattern of harassment, retaliation and hostility in the workplace" that has been "documented at length in multiple sources" dating to 2007, Rep. Jackie Speier wrote in a July 16 letter to Navy Secretary Richard Spencer and Modly. Booth was promoted to his current job in February despite Navy leaders being aware of the accusations, said Speier, a California Democrat who heads the House Armed Services military personnel panel.

In an Aug. 29 response to Speier, Spencer said that at the time of Booth's selection as auditor general, "there was no documented, substantiated evidence" of alleged improper behavior.

"We are confident that the DOD IG will thoroughly investigate these claims, and we will fully support the DOD IG as it moves forward with its investigation," Spencer wrote of the probe.

While Booth hasn't responded directly to the allegations, he said in an email to his staff in August that the Navy takes "all such allegations seriously" and that the service secretary has "referred these allegations to the entities with appropriate investigational jurisdiction."

Booth's reassignment took effect Sept. 1, according to an official who works for Modly and asked not to be identified. The official said in an email that Booth informed his staff that he intends to retire and that Caral Spangler, a Marine Corps budget planning official, has been named the Navy's acting auditor general.

Report: Army didn't know housing policies

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Top Army commanders and civilian leaders were not familiar with basic service policies governing their relationships with private companies running on-post housing, which contributed to the housing crisis at installations across the United States, an inspector general's report released Thursday determined.

Senior commanders, commanding generals and civilian directors of public works departments at 48 Army installations in the United States reported they did not receive "adequate" training on their powers to oversee privatized military housing on their installations, according to the new Army IG report. Investigators said Army officials at only one of 49 installations that they surveyed demonstrated proper knowledge of their oversight authorities and responsibilities. Officials at the rest reported "general confusion and frustration" about those powers.

Meanwhile, the local managers responsible for running those housing units also were unfamiliar with the Army policies and regulations, according to the report, which was the result of a seven-month investigation.

The IG probe was launched as news reports beginning late last year highlighted prevalent problems across private military housing, which are owned and run by private companies but sit on military installations. Problems included vermin infestations, rampant mold outbreaks, sewage leaks and slow maintenance response times. The IG found the Army and companies that run the housing have already taken initial steps to improve the situation; however, it also recommended the Army implement additional actions to curb the issue.

IG investigators suggested the Army provide senior commanders clearer and more stringent authorities for oversight over the private housing on their installations.

Use of taxpayer money at Trump hotels probed

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Democrats are demanding information on the use of taxpayer money at President Donald Trump's hotels and properties, including during Vice President Pence's trip this week to Doonbeg, Ireland. The push is part of an expanded effort this fall to investigate the president's financial entanglements and business practices.

The House Judiciary and Oversight and Government Reform committees announced Friday that they sent a series of letters regarding "multiple efforts" by the president, vice president and other Trump administration officials to spend taxpayer money at properties owned by Trump. They say the spending could violate the Constitution and bolster the case for Trump's impeachment.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., said in a statement that the spending is "of grave concern" to his committee, which is investigating whether to recommend articles of impeachment to the full House. House Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Elijah Cummings, D-Md., said his panel "does not believe that U.S. taxpayer funds should be used to personally enrich President Trump, his family and his companies."

The letters come after Pence stayed at Trump's resort in Doonbeg, Ireland, this week. Doonbeg is on the other side of Ireland from Dublin, where he had meetings. The Democrats also sent letters to the White House and Secret Service about Trump's suggestion earlier this month that his Miami-area golf course host next year's Group of Seven summit with foreign lead-

ers. The Democrats say those instances, among others, could violate the Constitution's emoluments clause, which bans the president from taking gifts from foreign governments.

The push comes as Democrats are trying to keep public attention on their investigations of Trump. They have spent much of the year probing episodes detailed in special counsel Robert Mueller's report, which did not exonerate the president on obstruction of justice. But lawmakers say they think the American public may have even more interest in Trump profiting off of his presidency as they weigh whether to move forward on impeachment.

"We have been focused on the Mueller report, and that is a very small part of the overall picture," said Maryland Rep. Jamie Raskin, a member of the Judiciary panel.

Brexit crisis grows as snap election rejected

Associated Press

LONDON — Britain's bedeviling Brexit dilemma intensified Friday, as opposition parties refused to support Prime Minister Boris Johnson's call for an election until he secures a delay to Britain's exit from the European Union — something he vows he'll never do.

Johnson insists Britain must leave the EU in 55 days, and says an election is the only way to break the deadlock that has seen lawmakers repeatedly reject the divorce deal on offer, but also block attempts to leave the EU without one.

He wants to go to the public on Oct. 15, two weeks before the scheduled Brexit day of Oct. 31, but needs the support of

two-thirds of lawmakers to trigger a snap election.

Johnson lost a vote on the same question this week, but he plans to try again Monday.

After discussions Friday, lawmakers from several opposition parties said they would not back an election unless the government asked the EU to postpone Brexit, removing the risk the U.K. could crash out without a deal. Johnson says he would "rather be dead in a ditch" than delay Brexit.

Parliament is trying to force his hand, passing an opposition-backed law that would compel Johnson's Conservative government to seek a three-month Brexit

postponement if no divorce deal is agreed by Oct. 19.

The legislation was approved Friday by the unelected House of Lords, after gaining backing from the elected House of Commons earlier this week. It will become law within days once it gets the formality of royal assent.

But pro-EU lawmakers want to hold off on triggering an election until the Brexit delay has actually been secured, fearing Johnson will try to wriggle out of the commitment.

"I do not trust the prime minister to do his duty," said Liz Saville Roberts, leader in Parliament of the Welsh party Plaid Cymru.

Airline mechanic admits to tampering with plane

Associated Press

An American Airlines mechanic is accused of sabotaging a flight over stalled union contract negotiations. According to a criminal complaint affidavit filed in federal court, Abdul-Majeed Marouf Ahmed Alani admitted during an interview Thursday that he tampered with a navigation system on the plane so that he could collect overtime work.

The plane, with 150 people on board, was scheduled to fly from Miami to Nassau in the Bahamas on July 17. As the pilots powered up the plane at Miami International

Airport, they saw an error message for a system that tracks speed, nose direction and other critical flight information and aborted the takeoff.

When mechanics examined the plane, they found a piece of foam glued inside a navigation system part called an air data module.

Video from an American Airlines surveillance camera captured a person who drove up to the plane, got out and spent seven minutes working around the compartment containing the navigation system, according to the affidavit.

The person was later identified by co-

workers as Alani, in part by his distinctive limp, the affidavit said. When he was interviewed Thursday, "Alani stated that his intention was not to cause harm to the aircraft or its passengers," according to the affidavit by Jose A. Ruiz, a federal air marshal who serves on an FBI terrorism task force.

Alani explained that stalled contract negotiations between American Airlines and the mechanics' unions were hurting him financially, and he tampered with the plane "to cause a delay or have the flight canceled in anticipation of obtaining overtime work," Ruiz wrote.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Burglar breaks into home, cooks breakfast

FL SAFETY HARBOR — Authorities say a burglar broke into a Florida home, cooked himself an early morning meal and told the resident there to “go back to sleep.”

The home’s occupant told investigators he awoke to discover the man cooking and eating sometime after 4 a.m. Tuesday.

Fox 13 in Tampa reported the burglar ran from the house when the resident called 911. Deputies from the Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office tracked down the suspect in a wooded and swampy area behind the home.

Deputies said Gavin Crim, 19, a Marine, allegedly entered the home through an unlocked rear door. An arrest report mentioned that the suspect may have been under the influence of alcohol.

Two-headed rattlesnake found in Pine Barrens

NJ PEMBERTON TOWNSHIP — It looks like something from a science fiction movie.

A newborn two-headed timber rattlesnake has been found in New Jersey’s Pine Barrens. Herpetological Associates of Burlington County CEO Bob Zappalorti said the snake has two brains and each head acts independently of the other.

Two employees at the organization spotted the reptile in a nest where a timber rattlesnake was giving birth late last month.

Zappalorti told NJ Advance Media it’s the only two-headed timber rattlesnake ever found in New Jersey. He said it likely wouldn’t be able to survive in the wild because its heads could get snagged on something.

Chicken truck crash snarls morning commute

CA SAN PABLO — Officials say a truck carrying hundreds of live chickens crashed and erupted in flames, killings hundreds of the birds and snarling Thursday morning’s commute in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The California Highway Patrol said the crash at about 3:30 a.m. shut down the westbound lanes of the busy Highway 80 in San Pablo at San Pablo Dam Road. The lanes remained closed at 7:30 a.m. and crews continued clearing the highway of cages filled with burned chickens.

KTVU reported crews and CHP officers collected about 50 surviving birds that were wandering around the highway.

Jail guard charged with helping drug dealers

MO ST. LOUIS — A St. Louis jail guard has been charged with allowing two heroin and fentanyl dealers to use her apartment to stash their drugs and guns.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that Teneisha Moore, 26, was arrested Wednesday after a raid at her home. Moore, a correctional officer at the St. Louis Medium Security Institution, was at home with her 4-year-old child. She is charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute a controlled substance and one count of aiding and abetting the possession of firearms in furtherance of that drug trafficking crime.

Court documents say a wire-tapped conversation between Moore’s gang-member cousins captured them discussing using Moore’s apartment as a “stash house.” Her cousins have been indicted on drug charges. Prosecutors say they supplied multiple lower-level dealers.

Police investigate missing headstones

IN WEST LAFAYETTE — Northwestern Indiana police are investigating after two headstones were apparently removed from a rural cemetery.

Sand Ridge Cemetery’s caretaker reported the missing headstones Tuesday, telling Tippecanoe County Sheriff’s deputies the stones had been removed from their concrete bases.

The Journal & Courier reported that the caretaker told deputies he last mowed the graveyard just southwest of West Lafayette about three weeks ago and didn’t recall anything out of place at that time.

Both of the missing headstones were engraved with the same family name.

Deputies said the cemetery’s trustee would be contacting that family to alert them that their deceased relatives’ headstones are missing.

Strong winds overturn big rigs on interstate

AZ TONOPAH — Authorities say strong winds during a rainstorm blew over six big rigs in multiple wrecks on Interstate 10 in southwestern Arizona, killing one person and injuring another.

Officials said the wrecks involving tractors pulling box trailers occurred at about 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and that traffic soon after that was able to get around the wrecks by driving on the shoulder or an unaffected lane.

The state Department of Public Safety said the wrecks occurred on both sides of the freeway about 60 miles west of Phoenix and that all affected lanes were cleared by 5 a.m.

Thursday.

The National Weather Service said data was not immediately available on wind strengths Wednesday evening in the area.

Deer lottery is not just about a few bucks

ME AUGUSTA — Maine’s deer hunters will learn this week if they’ve been selected for a permit that allows them greater ability to hunt the animals.

Maine manages its large deer population with “any deer” permits that allow hunters to hunt antlerless deer and bucks that have antlers less than three inches in length. Hunters without such a permit can only take longer-antlered bucks.

The any deer permit lottery was scheduled for Friday.

The state intends to issue a little more than 68,000 any deer permits this year. That represents a reduction of about 20% from the previous deer season. Hunters harvested more deer than the state’s objective last year.

Pool crew leaves behind trail of blue on cliff

OH ROCKY RIVER — Police say a crew coating a swimming pool near Cleveland got caught “blue-handed” dumping waste over a cliff into a river.

Authorities in Rocky River said a paddle boarder alerted them to the dumping last week after seeing bright blue streaks running down the rocky cliff.

Police said the pool waste was being dumped over the cliff and into the Rocky River where it meets Lake Erie.

Officers arrested a member of the crew that was working on the swimming pool.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

On a mission to provide credible reporting and daily news to America’s military, wherever they serve.

Mobile apps available: www.stripes.com/apps.

Packers' 'D' smothers Trubisky, Bears

Associated Press

CHICAGO — To open its celebration of its 100th season, the NFL got a throwback to, well, the 1920s.

You know, one of those knock-down, dragged-out defensive confrontations that ends up 10-3.

That's the score the Green Bay Packers beat the Chicago Bears by on Thursday night. And while it was ugly on offense, likely in great part due to the lack of action so many regulars on that side of the ball got in the preseason, it was a thing of beauty for the defenders in green, gold and white. On this night, the Packers were the Monsters of the Midway.

"I think we woke a lot of people up," defensive end Montravius Adams said. "A lot of people didn't believe in us. They had us ranked low, but we don't care about that outside noise."

There was plenty of noise heading into Soldier Field about Chicago's D, which was dominant in 2018 as the Bears won the NFC North. And it played quite well against Aaron Rodgers and the Pack, sacking Rodgers five times and yielding only 213 yards.

But the Packers were stingier.

"Yeah, it was fun to watch," Rodgers said. "It's been a long time since I've seen a performance like that. Obviously, a lot of credit to Mike Pettine and his staff, but to those players, just incredible."

"We didn't do them a whole lot of favors with our performance on offense. I mean every time we needed something, a stop, they came up with some really big plays."

Including five sacks of their own on a clearly befuddled Mitchell Trubisky. Plus the only turnover of the game, a fourth-

quarter pick in the end zone by former Bears safety Adrian Amos.

"It's just sweet. It really is," Rodgers added. "I didn't play great tonight, but to watch a defense like that, man, that gives you a lot of confidence about where this team can go."

Green Bay went into the end zone on an 8-yard jump ball reception by tight end Jimmy Graham — a former college basketball player who boxed out to perfection on the play. That was the difference, thanks to the stingy Packers D.

"Before we started, we came together as a team, I told everybody, 'Let's shock the world on three,'" said linebacker Za'Darius Smith, a free agency addition. "And I felt like we did that tonight."

The game also was marked by sloppy offense and penalties. But the Packers made the fewest mistakes and now lead the league's longest series 98-95-6. Green Bay has won 16 of the last 19 regular-season meetings, and Rodgers is 17-5.

Chicago's defense hardly slacked, getting five sacks — tying the most it has had against Rodgers. But it could do little with the ball and Trubisky never found his stride. He even was sacked on Chicago's final offensive play.

"I think it was just sloppy by myself and as an offense as a whole," Trubisky said. "Just going through all our procedures, it was just tough. We couldn't find a rhythm."

Kicking game: Mason Crosby made a 39-yard field goal in the final period for Green Bay, while Chicago got a 38-yarder from Eddy Pineiro. Bears fans rejoiced in relief on the first score of the season: Pineiro's first-quarter field goal. The last such kick on Soldier Field was Cody Parkey's double-doink off the goalpost and crossbar that sent

Chicago home from the wild-card round. Pineiro, a second-year player from Florida, was an immediate hero in the Windy City.

Flags: Each team had 10 penalties, there was a total of only 467 yards of offense, and several drops. At one point, Chicago had three straight penalties to put it in a first-and-40. No, the Bears didn't convert.

New Packers coach Matt LaFleur made an ill-advised challenge, claiming offensive pass interference on a catch by Chicago's Taylor Gabriel. He lost in the first such challenge in NFL history after interference calls were added to replay reviews this season.

Inept, then in front: The opening series couldn't have been uglier for Green Bay. A run and a pass netted zero yards, then Rodgers was sacked heavily by Roy Robertson-Harris for a 10-yard loss.

Well, maybe it could. Rodgers was sacked again on the next three-and-out and Chicago took over at the Packers 36 after a punt. Chicago had forced 17 yards in losses on those series, and the Packers had minus-12 yards through one period.

Rodgers erased such ineffectiveness quickly at the start of the second quarter, launching a 47-yard completion to Marquez Valdes-Scantling. Two more completions got the Pack to the 8, and Graham then scored.

By halftime, Green Bay had outgained Chicago 119 yards to 98.

Third-down failures: Chicago was a pitiful 3-for-15 on third downs and 0-for-2 on fourth downs. Green Bay was even worse trying to convert, going 2-for-12 on third downs.

"I am not in panic mode," Bears coach Matt Nagy said.

Chicago's offense struggles in season-opening loss

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Errant passes. Shaky blocking. Questionable play-calling.

It sure looked as if Mitchell Trubisky and company could have used more preseason work.

Trubisky and the Chicago Bears were shut down by the Green Bay Packers on Thursday night, losing 10-3 in an ugly NFL opener that showered cold water on any championship dreams in the Windy City.

"Three points is ridiculous," coach Matt Nagy said. "It was a frustrating game. Couldn't get into a rhythm offensively. Then when we did get into a rhythm we'd have penalties."

There was no sign of any improvement

for Trubisky in his second year under Nagy. He missed several throws and finished 26-for-45 for 228 yards.

Chicago had just 46 yards on the ground after trading leading rusher Jordan Howard to Philadelphia in March. Trubisky was sacked five times, and a handful of penalties torpedoed a couple of drives.

"It just seemed a little scattered tonight, with all our personnels," Trubisky said, "and just trying to find a rhythm and trying to find our identity on offense. We just put ourselves in bad situations and shot ourselves in the foot."

Nagy showed a deft touch while coaching the Bears to a 12-4 record and the NFC North title in his first season in charge. Trubisky passed for 3,223 yards and 24

touchdowns, and Nagy was named NFL Coach of the Year.

Looking to stay healthy, Nagy barely played his biggest stars in the preseason. Trubisky was behind center for three plays in the first exhibition game, handing off each time.

"You could maybe attribute it to that," Trubisky said. "But I think that's kind of a stretch. It's just we were uncharacteristic of who we usually are tonight as an offense."

Nagy brushed off the idea altogether.

"Is it a preseason thing? No, it's not a preseason thing," he said. "Our defense, they played pretty well today not playing in the preseason. But what it comes down to is just us needing to be better."

Serena advances to final of US Open

Associated Press

NEW YORK — By no means was Serena Williams perfect at the start of her U.S. Open semifinal.

She faced three break points in the opening game and managed to pull it out. She trailed 40-love in the second, then came through again. Another trio of break points arrived later in that initial set. Once more, Williams was up to the task. Soon enough, she was on her way to yet another final at Flushing Meadows — and yet another shot at Grand Slam singles trophy No. 24.

Williams turned in an increasingly impressive performance for a 6-3, 6-1 victory over No. 5-seeded Elina Svitolina of Ukraine at Arthur Ashe Stadium on Thursday night, reaching her fourth final in the past six major tournaments.

“To be in yet another final, it seems, honestly, crazy,” said Williams, a six-time U.S. Open champion who will face 19-

year-old Bianca Andreescu of Canada on Saturday. “But I don’t really expect too much less.”

Nor does anyone else at this point.

“That’s why she is who she is. You are playing in front of the best tennis player in the world,” Svitolina said. “If you don’t take it, she just grabs it. And there’s no chance to take it back.”

Since returning to the tour last season after more than a year away while having a baby, she was the runner-up at Wimbledon twice, losing to Angelique Kerber in 2018 and to Simona Halep in July, and was also the runner-up, of course, a year ago at the U.S. Open, losing to Naomi Osaka.

That one in New York was, and forever will be, overshadowed by Williams’ extended argument with chair umpire Carlos Ramos, who docked her a point, then a game — and was barred by the U.S. Tennis Association from officiating any

matches her or her older sister, Venus, played in this year’s tournament.

The 15th-seeded Andreescu reached her first major title match in only her fourth appearance at a Slam by eliminating No. 13 Belinda Bencic of Switzerland 7-6 (3), 7-5.

“If someone told me a year ago that I would be in the finals of the U.S. Open this year, I would have told them, ‘You’re crazy,’” said Andreescu, who took her semifinal’s last five games after trailing 5-2.

She is the first player to get this far in her debut in New York since Venus Williams was the runner-up in 1997.

“It’s just surreal,” Andreescu said about the prospect of facing Serena Williams next. “Like, I really don’t know what to say.”

So much of what the younger Williams does nowadays must be seen through the prism of tennis history, and that is certainly the case in this instance.

Her 101st career match win at Flushing Meadows tied Chris Evert’s tournament record.

“It’s just impressive, I guess,” Williams said. “I don’t think about it. I just come out here and do what I can.”

By getting to the final, Williams set a mark for longest gap between first career Grand Slam title match and most recent such appearance: It’s almost exactly 20 full years since she won the 1999 U.S. Open as a teenager.

Most importantly, if she can beat Andreescu, Williams will equal Margaret Court with 24 Grand Slam singles titles, more than anyone else in a sport that dates to the 1800s.

“I watched her win most of her Grand Slam titles. I think she’s fighting for her 24th on Saturday. I’m sure she’s going to bring her ‘A’ game,” Andreescu said. “I’m going to try to bring my ‘A’ game, too. Hopefully, I guess, may the best player win.”

Michigan hopes it’s ready for Army’s triple option

Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — No. 7 Michigan is facing a team it has been preparing to play since spring practice, when defensive coordinator Don Brown carved out extra time to study a scheme rarely seen in modern college football.

Army, which runs a triple option, is coming to the Big House to resume a series that has been idle for more than a half-century.

“They have a unique style on offense which is very, very effective,” Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh said. “We kind of decided to play the game for the challenge of it.”

“Historically, they’re 5-4 ahead of us, so we’d like to even that up.”

Army won the first five meetings and the Wolverines won the next four with the last matchup coming in 1962.

Michigan is a heavy favorite to even the all-time series, but the Black Knights should have plenty of confidence Saturday after winning a program-record 11 games last season. They have won 10 straight, trailing only Clemson’s current run, since losing at Oklahoma in overtime.

Army is facing a top-10 team for a third straight year.

“I don’t know that we need to play games like that every single week, but to play a game like that each year is really important to this program,” coach Jeff Monken said. “It certainly is to the guys that play here, but it’s also important to the legacy of the guys who play here to play those kind of games and challenge the very best teams in America.”

Here are some other things to watch:

See how they run: Army averaged more than 300 yards

rushing per game last season, trailing only Georgia Tech, and led the nation with 63-plus rushing attempts a game.

It wasn’t a fluke.

The Black Knights led major college football in rushing two years ago and ranked second in 2016.

Senior Kelvin Hopkins ran for 1,017 yards and 17 touchdowns last season. He averaged fewer than eight passes per game, totaling 1,026 yards passing with six touchdowns and three interceptions. Hopkins ran for a touchdown and threw for a score on one of three passes he completed in eight attempts in last week’s 14-7 win against Rice.

Quite a comeback: The Wolverines weren’t sure a month ago when or if cornerback Ambry Thomas would return from a bout with a colitis diagnosis that landed him in the hospital. He was able to prac-

tice about a week before the season began and clearly was ready to play, intercepting a pass and recovering a fumble in his first career start.

“Everybody was just thrilled for Ambry,” Harbaugh said.

Going for it: Army led the nation in fourth-down conversions last season, successfully going for it 31 of 36 times. The 86% success rate validated Monken’s penchant for gambling when most coaches would choose to punt.

“If the analytics book says go for it on fourth-and-1, most people wouldn’t do that even if that’s what the book says,” Hopkins said. “Coach Monken believes in what we do here and he believes in us as a team. We’ve got to come through on that. More times than not, that’s something we want. We’re begging him to let us go for it. We’ve just got to capitalize.”

Fried lets loose as Braves close on NL East title

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Max Fried knew his night was about done. So, with the final pitch of the most dominating performance of his big league career, he unleashed a 96 mph fastball.

“Just leave it all out there,” Fried said. “If he got me, he got me.”

No worries. Juan Soto swung and missed.

Strike three.

Fried allowed just one baserunner over seven innings — an infield single in the first — to push the Atlanta Braves a step closer to their second straight NL East title, beating Stephen Strasburg and the Washington Nationals 4-2 in the opener of a four-game series between the division’s top teams Thursday.

“I felt really good,” Fried said. “I know how important this series is.”

The only player to reach base against Fried (16-4) was Anthony Rendon, who beat out an infield dribbler with two outs in the first. After that, the left-hander retired the last 19 hitters he faced with nine strikeouts, needing just 90 pitches to breeze past the Nats.

“He just seemed to have it all,” said Trea Turner, Washington’s leadoff hitter.

The Braves jumped on Strasburg (16-5) for two runs in the first, sparked by Ronald Acuna Jr.’s leadoff single. He added to the lead with a mammoth homer in the fifth, launching one into the Chop House restaurant for his 37th homer. Right fielder Michael A. Taylor took only a couple of steps before stopping to watch the ball sail into the dinner crowd.

“It’s huge,” Acuna said through a translator. “We already have a playoff atmosphere that is fun to play in.”

Strasburg turned in another strong outing, giving up just four hits before he was pulled after the sixth. He walked four and struck out seven.

The wild card-leading Nationals likely need to win at least three of four in SunTrust Park to have any chance of chasing down the Braves.

Brewers’ Moran K’s bro in debut

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Brian Moran waited 10 years to make his major league debut. As he began pitching to his younger brother Colin, he realized he wouldn’t have wanted it any other way.

Brian struck out Colin, becoming the first player in big league history to make his debut while facing his brother on the mound, in the Marlins’ 10-7 victory over the Pittsburgh Pirates on Thursday night.

“It’s incredible,” Brian said. “I think the last three days have been some of the most exciting, moving days that I’ve experienced. I don’t think you could dream up a cooler situation. I’m so excited I got to share it with my family. I got to get out on a big league mound.”

Brian (1-0) entered in the fourth inning with the Marlins trailing 5-2. After Bryan Reynolds led off with a groundout, Colin stepped to the plate having doubled in each of his first two at-bats.

The 30-year-old Brian fell behind 3-1 before throwing back-to-back sliders to strike out Colin looking. The 26-year-old Colin shouted toward the mound on his way back to the dugout.

“He’s been my inspiration my whole life,” Colin said. “He’s never given up. That’s kind of been the theme of his career. I would’ve given up, probably. A lesser man would have given up with the road he’s had to go through.”

Moran hit Josh Bell with a pitch and then got Melky Cabrera to fly out in his only in-

ning of work.

The Marlins rallied for four runs in the fifth, allowing Brian to get the win. Colin finished 2-for-4.

They became the first siblings to face each other in a pitcher-batter scenario with one of the brothers making his major league debut, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

The older Moran was 2-3 with a 3.15 ERA in 43 appearances for Triple-A New Orleans this season. He made his professional debut in Seattle’s farm system with rookie-level Pulaski in 2009.

“There’s a certain element of it being meant to be,” said Brian, who blew a kiss to his wife, Jackie, as he came off the field. “It’s been everything and more. It’s worth the wait, and I couldn’t be more excited.”

Roundup

Schwarber’s slam powers Cubs past Brewers

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Kyle Schwarber helped the Cubs put some distance between themselves and the Milwaukee Brewers.

Schwarber launched a grand slam to cap a five-run sixth inning that sent Chicago to a 10-5 victory over Milwaukee on Thursday night in the opener of a crucial four-game series.

“That ball was beyond properly struck,” Cubs manager Joe Maddon said. “That ball was kilt. It was K-I-L-T, kilt.”

The third-place Brewers dropped 7½ games behind first-place St. Louis in the NL Central and five back of the Cubs for the second wild card. Chicago remained 2½ games behind the Cardinals.

Cardinals 10, Giants 0: At St. Louis, Dakota Hudson (15-6) pitched six innings of one-hit ball and hit a two-run single for his first big league RBIs.

San Francisco has lost five of six and eight of 10, dropping 9½ games back for the NL’s second wild card at 67-73.

Reds 4, Phillies 3: At Cin-

cinnati, Phillip Ervin homered against Nick Vincent (1-3) leading off the 11th, an opposite-field drive to right that barely eluded a leaping Bryce Harper, and Philadelphia dropped four games behind the Cubs.

Athletics 10, Angels 6: Robbie Grossman hit a two-run triple over center fielder Mike Trout as part of a seven-run eighth inning, when host Oakland benefited from four consecutive walks and rallied from a 6-1 deficit to complete a three-game sweep.

The A’s opened a one-game lead over Cleveland for the second AL wild card.

White Sox 7, Indians 1: Chicago’s Reynaldo Lopez (9-12) pitched a one-hitter for his first complete game in 75 career big league starts, and host Cleveland lost for the fifth time in seven games.

The Indians fell 6½ games behind the AL Central-leading Twins heading into a three-game series at Minnesota.

Astros 11, Mariners 9 (13): Michael Brantley hit a two-run homer in the bottom of the 13th

inning to give Houston a victory over visiting Seattle in a game they trailed by seven runs.

Twins 2, Red Sox 1: At Boston, left fielder Eddie Rosario threw out Rafael Devers at home plate for the final out, dropping the defending World Series champs 6½ games back for the second AL wild card.

Rays 6, Blue Jays 4: At St. Petersburg, Fla., All-Star Austin Meadows broke a 4-4 tie against Buddy Boshers (0-3) when he led off the seventh with his 27th homer, then added an RBI double in the eighth against Ryan Tepera.

Tigers 6, Royals 4: At Kansas City, Jordy Mercer put his team ahead with its third home run of the fourth inning, and Detroit overcame a three-run deficit in a victory for the first time this year.

Rangers 3, Orioles 1: Texas rookie Kolby Allard (4-0) allowed one run and eight hits in 6⅓ innings to win his third straight start, and Nick Solak hit a go-ahead, two-run homer off Baltimore’s John Means (10-10) in the seventh inning.