

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, September 10, 2019

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Afghanistan now faces presidential vote

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — President Donald Trump's sudden halt to U.S.-Taliban talks looks like a gift to the beleaguered Afghan president, who has insisted on holding a key election in less than three weeks' time despite widespread expectations that a peace deal would push it aside.

Now, with an agreement to end America's longest war on hold, Afghanistan suddenly faces a presidential vote amid warnings that it's not ready — and the threat of even more violence.

The Taliban have told Afghans to boycott the vote and warned that rallies and polling stations would be targets. Spurned by Trump on the brink of a deal they said had been "finalized" to end nearly 18 years of conflict, the insurgent group is more distrustful than ever and has vowed to keep fighting. The talks are "dead," Trump

said Monday.

The Afghan people, essentially shut out of the talks, want a say in their fate. But if this election is as chaotic as last year's parliamentary vote and the 2014 presidential election, some observers fear the Afghan government could be badly weakened at a pivotal time.

Trump's surprise announcement benefits Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who was sidelined in the negotiations because the Taliban dismiss his government as a U.S. puppet. Ghani insists the Sept. 28 election go ahead, even as the U.S. seemed to be more interested in signing a deal with the Taliban and committing to immediate intra-Afghan talks on the country's political future.

So certain were many candidates that the election would be delayed — and that an interim government might be formed instead — that they hadn't

bothered to campaign. The uncertainty also restricted Ghani; with U.S.-Taliban talks seemingly hurtling toward a deal, he had been holding "virtual" campaign rallies via video conference instead of traveling out of the capital, Kabul. He seeks a second five-year term and what he calls a strong mandate to deal with the Taliban.

"Let the people decide," Ghani declared on Monday, and vowed not to allow the "slightest threat" to the legitimacy of the vote.

Now as many scramble to comprehend the breakdown in the peace process, some are pleading for stability in a country with little of it.

"Today more than ever Afghanistan needs a political leadership who will receive from citizens a renewed democratic mandate to set the country on a course to peace," the European Union's mission to Afghanistan said. "Now is time

for a reduction in violence," the British high commission said. Both are major election funders in a country where the international community pays for much of the process.

The U.S.-Taliban talks could still resume, and the Taliban have signaled they are open to that. But time is quickly running out for a deal before the election. The Taliban have said that under the "finalized" deal the intra-Afghan talks were set to begin on Sept. 23, five days before the vote.

Ghani, who Trump said had been invited to the now-canceled Camp David talks, could still visit Washington if he attends the annual United Nations General Assembly of world leaders that starts on Sept. 24. It's a chance to make his case for an elected Afghan government to speak directly with the Taliban instead of an interim one.

## 2 North Korean launches follow new call for US talks

BY KIM GAMEL  
AND YOO KYONG CHANG  
*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea fired two short-range projectiles Tuesday, officials said, hours after the communist state offered to restart stalled nuclear negotiations with the United States.

The latest launch — the 10th since May — raised pressure on President Donald Trump, who is eager for talks to resume and so far has downplayed the surge in weapons testing as routine.

Experts say the North is likely trying to gain leverage in future negotiations by showing

strength while continuing to improve its weapons capabilities without crossing Trump's red line.

Two short-range projectiles were launched eastward from an area in Kaechon, north of the nation's capital, about 20 minutes apart starting at 6:53 a.m. Tuesday, according to a statement by South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff.

They flew more than 200 miles and reached a maximum altitude of 31 to 37 miles, the military said.

Officials said they could not provide the speed or confirm whether the projectiles had landed in the sea because U.S. and South Korean intelligence

authorities were still analyzing the data.

"This provocative behavior is not helpful to efforts to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula," the JCS said. "We again call on North Korea to stop such actions immediately."

U.S. Forces Korea said it was "aware of reports of two North Korean missile launches" and was "consulting closely with our South Korean and Japanese allies."

South Korea's national security council also expressed "strong concern that North Korea has continued to launch short-range projectiles since May."

On Guam, a U.S. Pacific ter-

ritory, the public information office issued an alert, which it said was a standard practice, announcing that the launches posed no immediate threat.

Japan's Defense Ministry also said it didn't detect a threat to Japanese territory, according to the Kyodo news agency.

The weapons tested previously have apparently included a guided multiple rocket launcher system and short-range ballistic missiles designed to evade U.S. and South Korean defenses. While their traveling distance has been short, experts warned they could pose a threat to South Korea and the 28,500 American troops stationed there.

## Survey: Most vets approve of Trump; some question his military judgment

By NEIL FOTRE  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The majority of veterans surveyed recently said they support President Donald Trump as leader of the armed forces, though some of them question his ability to make the right decision when it comes to using military force and nuclear weapons, according to a report released Tuesday.

The Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan think tank based in Washington, based its results on an online survey of 1,284 military veterans. The survey results from the summer were compiled before the most recent tensions between the United States and Iran.

The purpose of the study was to gauge whether there is a difference of opinion between the veteran community and the general public on the performance and judgment of Trump, according to the report.

Overall, the survey results show veterans generally have a more favorable rating of Trump than the general public. The survey of veterans found 57% approve of Trump in his execution of duties as commander in chief.

Almost half, or 48%, said they believe Trump administration policies have made the military stronger. That is more than the approximately 41% of the general public that approves of the Trump administration, according to the survey results.

The majority of veterans surveyed said they trust Trump to make the correct decision about the use of military force and nuclear weapons. Approximately 40% said they do not.

In addition, 45% of veterans said Trump is not listening enough to his military leaders.

The survey also asked veterans to identify whether they had significant or traumatic emotional experiences while in combat. Fewer veterans who said they had these experiences, roughly 27%, trust Trump in making decisions about the use of military force and nuclear weapons than the ones who did not have such experiences.

Opinions about Trump also varied based on generations. About 38% of veterans who served in uniform before 9/11 are more likely to trust Trump regarding the use of nuclear weapons, compared with 30% of veterans of the post-9/11 generation.

# Officials: Yokota funds for border wall not an issue

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — CV-22 Osprey operations won't be affected by the diversion of nearly \$87 million from projects supporting tilt-rotor aircraft in western Tokyo, according to U.S. military officials.

Six construction projects planned for Yokota — home of U.S. Forces Japan and 5th Air Force — are included in a Defense Department list of projects being defunded to pay for \$3.6 billion worth of a wall and improvements on the U.S. border with Mexico.

Defunded Yokota projects listed by the Pentagon include munitions structures, a C-130J Super Hercules corrosion-control hangar and other hangars, operations, warehouse and maintenance facilities.

"The [hangar] and warehouse facility are parts of a planned Air Force Special Operations Command CV-22 Campus," Anthony Mayne, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Japan District, said in an email Friday.

Defunded Yokota projects associated with the Ospreys were worth just under \$87 million, he said in a follow-up email Tuesday.

Master Sgt. William Coleman, a spokesman for the 374th Airlift Wing, said in an email Thursday that defunding the Yokota projects "will not change any plans previously made by the [21st Special Operations Squadron] and the [753rd Special Operations Maintenance Squadron]."

The squadrons, which stood up in July, are charged with flying and maintaining five CV-22 Ospreys out of Yokota. Their mission is to deliver "reliable, professional Tilt-Rotor capability in support of [Special Operations Command Pacific] and [Special Operations Command Korea] Missions," according to the Air Force.

Lt. Col. Jason Hock, commander of the 21st, told reporters July 1 that a plan is on track to eventually station 10 Ospreys, supported by 450 personnel, at the base. The units are working out of temporary facilities at Yokota and will stay in them until purpose-built ones have been constructed, he said.

Contracts for the construction of parts of the special operations campus have already been awarded and work will begin within the next year, Mayne said.

"This future construction includes a transmitter facility, roads, apron and utilities," he said.

## Survey finds Americans support NATO, mixed on overseas bases

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. backing of NATO is at an all-time high, but there is less support for basing troops in Europe than in the Pacific or Middle East, according to a survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

"Whether they identify as Democrats, Independents, or Republicans, large numbers of Americans continue to favor the foundational elements of traditional, post-World War II US foreign policy," said the report titled "Rejecting Retreat."

In the 45 years that the Chicago Council survey of American opinion of U.S. foreign policy has been conducted, "support for NATO, military alliances and trade have never been higher," an executive summary

of the findings stated.

The survey results come at a time of confusion about the direction of U.S. foreign policy. President Donald Trump, a frequent critic of NATO and multinational alliances in general, has raised questions about the value of the transatlantic military pact and been critical of traditional U.S. allies.

Germany has been a focal point of Trump's criticism. The president has suggested that some U.S. troops be pulled from the country, which he says doesn't invest enough in its own defense. Trump also has complained about the costs associated with basing troops and conducting exercises in South Korea.

Among the public, though, bipartisan support remains strong for organizations like NATO and historic allies like South Korea and Japan.

# Bolton fired from national security post

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Tuesday he fired national security adviser John Bolton, citing strong disagreements on a number of policy issues.

Trump tweeted that he told Bolton on Monday night his services were no longer needed at the White House and said Bolton submitted his resignation Tuesday morning. Trump said that he “disagreed strongly” with many of Bolton’s suggestions, “as did others in the administration.”

Bolton responded in a tweet

of his own that he offered to resign Monday “and President Trump said, ‘Let’s talk about it tomorrow.’”

Bolton’s ouster came as a surprise to many in the White House. Just an hour before Trump’s tweet, the press office announced that Bolton would join Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin in a briefing.

Bolton was always an unlikely pick to be Trump’s third national security adviser, with a world view seemingly ill-fit to the president’s

isolationist “America First” pronouncements.

He’s espoused hawkish foreign policy views dating back to the Reagan administration and became a household name over his vociferous support for the Iraq War as the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. under George W. Bush.

Bolton even briefly considered running for president in 2016, in part to make the case against the isolationism that Trump would come to embody.

Inside the administration he advocated caution on the pres-

ident’s whirlwind rapprochement with North Korea and against Trump’s decision last year to pull U.S. troops out of Syria.

He masterminded a quiet campaign inside the administration and with allies abroad to persuade Trump to keep U.S. forces in Syria to counter the remnants of Islamic State and Iranian influence in the region.

Bolton was named Trump’s third national security adviser in April 2018 after the departure of Army Gen. H.R. McMaster.

## Senate vote would block transfer of wall cash from DOD

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate’s top Democrat intends to force a vote to block President Donald Trump from using special emergency powers to transfer money from military base construction projects like new schools to pay for new fences along the U.S.-Mexico border.

That’s according to prepared remarks Tuesday by Sen. Chuck Schumer, who says the

vote would give lawmakers a chance to block Trump “from stealing military funding from their states to foot the bill for an expensive and ineffective wall he promised Mexico would pay for.”

A similar measure passed this past spring with 12 Senate Republican votes but was vetoed by Trump. The rules allow Schumer to retry every few months and don’t allow Repub-

licans to block the vote.

The Pentagon last week identified \$3.6 billion worth of military construction projects it’s willing to kill to build 175 miles of border wall.

The projects included a \$63 million middle school in GOP Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s state of Kentucky, though most of them are located outside the continental U.S.

“This rises to a large and

vital constitutional issue: Does our country truly have checks and balances, particularly important when we have such an overreaching president?” Schumer stated.

Trump says a wall would stop immigrants from entering the United States illegally. He promised repeatedly during his 2016 presidential campaign that Mexico would pay for the wall, but Mexico refused.

## US bombs island in Iraq’s Tigris River ‘infested’ with ISIS

BY CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

Coalition and Iraqi forces carried out airstrikes Tuesday against an island south of Mosul in the Tigris River believed to be a safe haven for Islamic State in Iraq.

Fireballs exploded across Qanus Island, in Iraq’s Salahuddin province, as plumes of smoke billowed up into the sky, a video posted on Twitter showed. Black-clad Iraqi counterterrorism troops are seen watching over the operation from the ground.

Following the early morning strikes, ground clearance operations conducted by the Iraqi special forces were underway

on the island, the U.S.-led coalition said in a statement in the afternoon.

“We’re denying Daesh the ability to hide on Qanus Island,” said Maj. Gen. Eric T. Hill, commander of Special Operations Joint Task Force, referring to ISIS by an Arabic term.

U.S. Air Force F-15 Strike Eagles and F-35 Lightning II aircraft took part in bombing the “Daesh infested-island,” Operation Inherent Resolve spokesman Col. Myles B. Caggins III said on Twitter.

The fighter jets dropped about 80,000 pounds of bombs, he said.

The operation “demonstrates

our continued partnership to enable [Iraqi security forces] to keep its boot on the forehead of ISIS,” Caggins said.

It was aimed at destroying a major transit hub for ISIS members moving from Syria and the Jazeera desert into the Mosul, Makhmour and Kirkuk regions.

The island lies near Qayyarah Airfield West, known as Q-West or Forward Operating Base Endurance, which was home to U.S. forces during the Iraq War of 2003-11.

It was seized by ISIS in 2014 after the Americans left.

The base was recaptured by U.S.-backed forces and used as a staging ground as part of

the nine-month battle to retake Mosul from the terrorist group that began in late 2016.

While ISIS was routed from the last of the territory it held in Iraq in late 2017 and ousted from its last bastion in Syria early this year, the group has continued to carry out targeted killings and arson of crops in both countries. Officials have warned that the group is seeking to regain its capabilities and remains a threat as an insurgent movement in both countries.

“ISIS remains a threat in Iraq and Syria,” the Pentagon’s lead inspector general for the U.S. operation in the region said in a report last month.

# Dems press Trump to intervene on gun bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congressional Democrats pressed President Donald Trump on Monday to intervene with Senate Republicans and demand passage of a bipartisan bill to expand background checks for gun purchases.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said Trump's "urgent, personal intervention is needed to stem the endless massacres of our fellow Americans by gunfire."

They implored Trump in a letter released Monday to "seize this moment when your leadership and influence over Republicans in Congress on the issue of guns is so critical." Trump must not "squander" the opportunity for meaningful action on gun violence "by acceding to

NRA-backed proposals or other weak ideas that will do nothing to stop the continuing, horrific spread of gun violence," the Democrats said.

The letter came as Congress returned to the Capitol from a six-week break, with gun violence legislation at the top of the agenda following a spate of mass shootings that killed dozens of people. A group of U.S. mayors, including some where mass shootings occurred, met with the White House and individual lawmakers to urge approval of a House-passed bill to expand background checks. The bill, approved in February, would expand background checks to cover private sales such as one that allowed a Texas shooting suspect to purchase his weapon before killing seven people last month.

Senate Majority Leader

Mitch McConnell has made it clear that he won't take action on guns without Trump's commitment to sign a bill into law.

But Trump has flip-flopped on guns, first suggesting he'd be open to background checks legislation or other measures to try to stem gun violence, only to backtrack after speaking to the National Rifle Association and others in the gun lobby. McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, wants to avoid a politically uncomfortable situation of forcing Republicans to vote on gun control bills only to have Trump reject them.

Nan Whaley, the mayor of Dayton, Ohio, who has emerged as a leading gun control advocate following a mass shooting that killed nine people in her city last month, said members of the U.S. Conference of Mayors are focusing on background

checks as a first step to stem gun violence. A letter signed by 278 mayors from both parties urges Congress to act on the House-passed bill.

"We want an up-or-down vote on the House bill," said Whaley, a Democrat and one of several mayors who met with White House counselor Kellyanne Conway and other officials Monday.

Asked Monday when he will release his plan to address gun violence, Trump said: "We're dealing with Democrats. We're dealing with Republicans. We're talking about a lot of different things having to do with, as you call it, gun control."

At the same time, "we have to protect our Second Amendment very strongly and we will always do that," he added.

## Big tech's new foes are state prosecutors

Associated Press

Big tech companies have long rebuffed attempts by the U.S. federal government to scrutinize or scale back their market power. Now they face a scrappy new coalition as well: prosecutors from nearly all 50 states.

In a rare show of bipartisan force, attorneys general from 48 states along with Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia are investigating whether Google's huge online search and advertising business is engaging in monopolistic behavior. The Texas-led antitrust investigation of Google, announced Monday, follows a separate multistate investigation of Facebook's market dominance that was revealed Friday.

The state moves follow similar sweeping antitrust tech investigations launched by the Federal Trade Commission and the Trump administration's Department of Justice; the Democrat-led House Judiciary Committee is conducting a similar probe. But should federal officials tire of their work, the state-led efforts could keep them on their toes.

States have worked closely together on other matters, such as the fight to curb opioid abuse. But the sheer number participating in this kind of antitrust effort is unprecedented and gives it more weight, said Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes, a Republican.

"It's just an accumulation of public frustration, whether it's from consumers, other players in the market, regulators, lawmakers," Reyes said in an interview Monday.

Fiona Scott Morton, a Yale economics professor and former antitrust official at the Justice Department under the Obama administration, said it's important that states are taking the lead because the Trump administration is "not really enforcing antitrust law except against companies the president is upset with."

She noted the Trump administration's unsuccessful push to use antitrust law to block AT&T's acquisition of Time Warner, which owns CNN, a frequent target of Trump's criticism, and Friday's announcement that federal antitrust enforcers would investigate automakers

that worked with California on tougher emissions limits.

"That's not what consumers want," she said. "Consumers want to be protected from anti-competitive conduct."

States haven't seriously taken up antitrust enforcement — using laws originally crafted to combat railroad and oil barons in the 19th century — since a major antitrust case against Microsoft about two decades ago. Then, state leadership helped propel federal action.

Back in 2016, Reyes and a Democratic counterpart, Washington, D.C., Attorney General Karl Racine, tried unsuccessfully to get the Federal Trade Commission to reopen an earlier investigation into Google for allegedly favoring its own products in search results.

The FTC declined, leaving European regulators to take the lead in similar probes overseas, Reyes said.

Google's parent company, Alphabet — and peers such as Amazon, Facebook and Apple — have long argued that although their businesses are large, they are useful and beneficial to consumers.

## Todd Palin appears to be seeking a divorce

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Sarah Palin's husband, commonly referred to as "Alaska's first dude" when she was governor, appears to be seeking a divorce from his wife of 31 years.

Paperwork believed to be from Todd Palin cited "incompatibility of temperament" in seeking to end his marriage to the 2008 Republican vice presidential nominee.

The filing Friday in Anchorage Superior Court identified the couple only by initials. The initials, birthdates and wedding date match the Palins', as do the initials given for their only young child.

The documents list the minor as T.P.V.P., born April 18, 2008, the same date Sarah Palin gave birth to Trig Paxon Van Palin, the youngest of the couple's five children.

The Palins married in 1988. After Sarah Palin became governor in 2006, Todd Palin continued to fish commercially and work an oil field job on the North Slope.

From The Associated Press

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Apology for damage to sign comes with \$500

**NE** LINCOLN — An anonymous person has paid \$500 to a Lincoln bar for breaking a sign at the bar 45 years ago.

The Lincoln Journal Star reported that Zoo Bar owner Pete Watters recently found five \$100 bills and a handwritten letter inside an envelope with no return address and no name.

The brief letter reads: “45 years ago I broke the Zoo Bar sign. Here is my restitution.”

Watters said the incident occurred before he owned the bar.

### Deer enters wedding photo, eats bouquet

**MI** HOLLAND — A deer leaned into a wedding photo of a Michigan couple, making a memento of their big day all the more memorable.

The Detroit News reported that the friendly deer seemed drawn by Morgan Mackley’s bouquet of flowers, walked up and began chomping on the roses.

The couple had just walked to the edge of a field with their wedding photographer during their reception last week in Holland.

The photographer, Laurenda Bennett, called it a “special moment” for the newly wed Morgan and her husband of just a few hours, Luke Mackley, when the deer approached. The couple surrendered the bouquet to the deer.

### Reenactor announces 2020 Gettysburg plan

**PA** GETTYSBURG — A veteran Civil War reenactor in Pennsylvania said

he will take over planning a 2020 reenactment of the battle of Gettysburg after the organization behind the annual event said it didn’t intend to host one next summer.

Dustin Heisey, of Manheim, who said he has been taking part in reenactments since he was 14, told The (Hanover) Evening Sun that he wants to keep the tradition of honoring the soldiers alive.

The Gettysburg Anniversary Committee said last week it “does not anticipate organizing or hosting a 157th reenactment.”

Heisey said he plans some changes aimed at creating an 1860s atmosphere, and may use a T-shirt campaign and sponsorships to raise money.

### Marker recognizes black paratroopers

**OR** PENDLETON—History buffs, local officials and a sociology professor recently dedicated a historical marker in Oregon recognizing a segregated Army battalion comprising the nation’s first black paratroopers.

Eastern Washington University sociologist Bob Bartlett said 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion soldiers thought they were heading to Japan when they stopped at Pendleton Army Airfield in the spring of 1945.

Bartlett told Oregon Public Broadcasting the soldiers were instead assigned to fight forest fires as smokejumpers. They were also expected to find and dismantle bomb-carrying hydrogen balloons that Japan launched to drift across the Pacific.

The interpretive panel on Main Street in Pendleton describes the unit known as the Triple Nickles and their work.

### Bottle with ashes resumes journey

**FL** MIRAMAR BEACH — A bottle containing four \$1 bills, a couple of notes and a man’s ashes is back on its journey, returning to the sea after making a brief stop at a coastal community in Florida’s Panhandle.

The bottle carries the ashes of a 39-year-old Florida man who died this year and whose family wanted to give him an adventure.

The bottle began drifting off the shore of Destin, Fla., before washing ashore 20 miles down the coast.

It was turned in to the Walton County Sheriff’s Office.

Sgt. Paula Pendleton got the bottle and read the notes in it from the man’s mother and his daughter. Pendleton lost her husband last year and was touched.

On Friday, a friend with a boat took the bottle far into the Gulf to let it continue its journey.

### Deputy: 2 on meth hallucinate kidnapping

**WV** CHARLESTON — Authorities in West Virginia said a couple was hallucinating while smoking methamphetamine when they falsely reported a hostage situation.

A Kanawha County Sheriff’s Office statement says a man and woman called 911 early Monday and said they were escaping from kidnappers and that there was an explosion.

Deputies said they found the couple in a car and had them flown to a hospital.

The statement says the woman told deputies she and her husband were smoking meth and hallucinated the kidnapping. She said her husband

made a device with black powder to distract their imagined captors.

Deputies said the device exploded and burned the man’s hands.

### Man reels in rifle while fishing at lake

**TX** FORT WORTH — The Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported that a man who was fishing on Saturday at a North Texas lake reeled in something unusual: a semi-automatic rifle.

Police said the man was fishing with relatives at Lake Arlington, about 13 miles west of Fort Worth, when he hooked a Galil ACE rifle.

After reeling in the weapon, the man went to a park and called police.

Authorities took possession of the weapon and have it in their property room.

### Fish to be poisoned, park lake restocked

**MT** GLACIER NATIONAL PARK — Officials plan to poison fish to help other fish species repopulate two lakes and a creek in Glacier National Park.

The project in the upper reaches of Camas Creek will attempt to keep native westslope cutthroat trout from breeding with non-native Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

Park and state wildlife officials plan to use the poison rotenone to remove the non-native Yellowstone cutthroat from Lake Evangeline, Camas Lake and Camas Creek. They will restock the lakes and creek with westslope cutthroat and bull trout.

The area will be closed to the public through next spring.

From wire reports

Your objective source for military news  
updated 24/7 from bases  
around the world.  
Now online at [www.stripes.com](http://www.stripes.com).

STARS AND STRIPES®

# Lutz's last-second field goal lifts Saints

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Drew Brees and Wil Lutz supplied the accuracy and poise New Orleans needed to overcome another officiating gaffe and its defense's late collapse.

Lutz made a 58-yard field goal as time expired, and the Saints beat the Houston Texans 30-28 on Monday night in a game that had three scoring plays in the final minute.

"That one's got to be a top-one moment for me," Lutz said, adding that as much as he tries to treat each kick the same, "I got to be honest. That one felt a little different."

New Orleans had lost its previous five season openers. And after last season ended with a bitter loss in the NFC title game, the Saints had expressed urgency to start the 2019 campaign well.

"I knew how big this win would be," Lutz said.

The moment the ball left Lutz's foot, punter Thomas Morstead, who holds on field goals, turned toward his kicker, triumphantly flexing both arms at his side. Moments later, the crowd noise in the Su-

perdome reached an ear-splitting crescendo as the ball split the uprights and Saints players jubilantly streamed onto the field.

Deshaun Watson threw a 37-yard touchdown pass to ex-Saints receiver Kenny Stills with 37 seconds left, capping a two-play, 75-yard drive that put the Texans in front after they began their final possession down by six with 50 seconds left.

But that left just enough time for Brees, who capped a 370-yard, two-touchdown performance by completing a 15-yard pass to Ted Ginn Jr., an 11-yarder to Michael Thomas and another pass to Ginn for 9 yards in quick succession. That allowed New Orleans to save its final timeout until just 2 seconds remained and set up Lutz's career-long kick.

"When you have Drew as your quarterback, all I cared about was getting ready for the kick, because I knew with 37 seconds left there was going to be a chance," Lutz said.

Had the Saints lost, it would have marked the second straight game in the Superdome in which a league-ac-

knowledged officiating mistake worked against New Orleans. In last season's NFC championship game, missed pass interference and helmet-to-helmet contact fouls against the Los Angeles Rams went uncalled in the final minutes. This time, a botched ruling left the Saints with 15 fewer seconds to run their hurry-up offense at the end of the first half. New Orleans had to settle for a 56-yard field-goal try that Lutz narrowly missed.

The Saints came back from an 11-point, third-quarter hole to win anyway, but Brees wasn't letting the officials or the league off the hook.

"That can't happen. That's a game changer," Brees said. "If we had 15 more seconds, are you kidding me?"

The 40-year-old Brees completed 32 of 43 passes, mirroring his NFL-record 74.4 completion percentage last season. One of his TD passes went to reserve QB and utility player Taysom Hill, who also subs in as a tight end or slot receiver. The other went to second-year pro Tre'Quan Smith.

"Playing on the road against a great quarterback like Drew

Brees, you've got to be able to put the game away," Watson said. "We had the opportunities."

## Clock questions

The officiating mistake occurred when replay review officials stopped the game with 26 seconds left in the first half to determine if Thomas' catch was long enough for a first down after he was initially marked just short. After the review resulted in a first down, officials called for a 10-second runoff to begin from when the game was stopped, not when Thomas came down with the ball 15 seconds earlier.

Brees animatedly disputed the decision, which left the Saints just 16 seconds to work with from their own 47.

After the game, NFL vice president of officiating Al Rive-ron said: "We should have reset it to 41 (seconds), not 26, and then ultimately to 31 (seconds) after the 10-second runoff."

Fans in the Superdome, who won't soon forget last year's officiating gaffes, booed during the runoff and after Lutz's long miss.

# Brown-less Raiders post convincing win over Broncos

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — The night started with Oakland Raiders fans derisively chanting at former disgruntled receiver Antonio Brown and ended with coach Jon Gruden celebrating a victory in the Black Hole.

The saga that consumed the football world for days didn't hamper the Raiders a bit.

Derek Carr threw a touchdown pass on the opening drive of the season, rookie Josh Jacobs ran for two scores and the Raiders responded to a tumultuous week surrounding Brown by beating the Denver Broncos 24-16 on Monday night.

"As much as people talked about it, I mean my god. I feel like somebody was smashing

my temple on the side of the head," Gruden said. "Get over it, man. It's over. We were good this preseason without him. We were fine without him. We wish him the best. We gave it a shot. Now New England gets their turn. Good luck to them. I can't deal with it anymore."

The Raiders (1-0) responded with a convincing win over the AFC West rival Broncos (0-1). The offensive line cleared holes for Jacobs and protected Carr, and the defense harassed Joe Flacco into three sacks and kept Denver out of the end zone until 2:15 remained in the game.

The victory spoiled the Denver debuts for Flacco and coach Vic Fangio and ended the NFL's longest opening weekend winning streak at seven games.

"Disappointed but we're not discouraged," Broncos outside linebacker Von Miller said. "First game of the season. Hats off to the Raiders, they outplayed us today. Killed us on third down in the first half."

The final scheduled home opener at the Coliseum before the Raiders' planned move to Las Vegas next season began with derisive chants from the boisterous fans toward Brown. Those only grew louder after each successful pass play as both the fans and Raiders players seemed relieved to have the monthlong saga over Brown in the past.

He arrived with optimism following a trade from Pittsburgh in March. But a bizarre foot injury, fight with the NFL

over his helmet, skipped practices, multiple fines, a run-in with general manager Mike Mayock and odd social media posts ultimately led to the decision to release the game's most prolific receiver two days before the opener.

Brown agreed to a deal with New England hours after being granted his wish to be released by Oakland on Saturday and the Raiders wasted little time proving they had moved on.

"He's gone. I wish him the best," Carr said. "There's no hurt feelings. There's no anger in me. It stung as a friend seeing him go somewhere else, but I wish him the best."

The Raiders took the opening kickoff and marched 75 yards in 10 plays.

# NHL labor talks produce cautious optimism

Associated Press

Representatives from the NHL and NHL Players' Association have met numerous times in the past eight months and not once in a secret underground bunker or a dark parking garage.

Unlike previous collective bargaining negotiations that spilled out into the public, few details are emerging from behind closed doors, a development that provides more than a little quiet optimism that hockey won't face its third work stoppage in two decades.

"It's probably the way it should be, and I think that's probably a good sign that there is some mutual respect and both sides are trying to come to agreements," Chicago Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews said. "You have mutual dedication to keeping our game going down the same path and not disrupting that."

Players have until Sunday to decide whether to opt out of the current labor contract effective

September 2020 after owners decided earlier this month not to trigger their opt-out clause. The sides met twice in the past five days to try to hammer out a CBA extension, and the fragments of reports coming out of talks suggest an environment of cooperation that is less contentious than previous negotiations.

NHLPA executive director Don Fehr described talks as cordial and pleasant. NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman called it joint problem-solving. That doesn't mean there aren't disagreements, but they may not be big enough to cause the cancellation of games, which is what happened in 2012-13 and 2004-05.

"This is an outgrowth of a relationship that is many years old, even with Don in hockey coming over from baseball," Bettman said. "It's a dialogue that continues. It's a relationship that's important, there's mutual respect, there's good communication flow and we're busy focused on what may for

each of our constituents be the appropriate path forward."

On the job since 2010, Fehr said these talks have so far been "free from rancor" and deemed that a big improvement. It's certainly a divergence from the past two CBA disputes in the NHL that were marred by leaks. It all leads labor expert Stephen F. Ross to infer talks are progressing better this time around.

"The NHL has a particular history that I think would allow a, not 100 percent choice, but a relatively optimistic interpretation of silence," said Ross, director of the Penn State Institute for Sports Law, Policy and Research. "The fact that there's nothing public and no leaks suggests to me a high likelihood that things are going well and nobody wants to damage the good relations."

Toews and other prominent players have made it known they're not happy with some financial aspects of the CBA, namely the escrow payments connected to the 50/50 split

of hockey revenues with owners. Health care and Olympic participation are also issues, though there could be other topics moving to the forefront privately.

That's no accident.

"We've been told to give the answer that we're working on it," Arizona Coyotes player representative Derek Stepan said. "Everyone's on the same page, and that's huge. I went through the one in 2012 and it seemed a little more chaotic. But this one, it seems a little more organized and guys are on the same page, and that's a huge thing."

Bettman and the owners showed a unified front in announcing they would like to maintain labor peace for the next few years because the league is healthy. It's no surprise given the owners' gains in the 2005 and 2013 agreements that they feel this way, and players were always the ones most likely to reopen this CBA to tweak some things.

## After weather-delayed game, Huskies try to regroup

Associated Press

SEATTLE — When Chris Petersen finally went back to watch what happened to No. 23 Washington after enduring a delay he'd never experienced as a coach and a game that ended at an hour never seen in school history, he didn't see glaring issues.

It was a lot of little problems that cumulatively added up to a loss on one of the strangest nights in Washington's football history.

"A lot of it, three quarters of it was really good football. ... Played well on tape," Petersen said. "And then there's a handful of things you just would love to have back. That's the game. That's why we're still a work in progress."

Eventually the multitude of factors that went into Washington's surprising 20-19 loss to California will likely be for-

gotten. The Huskies missed several red-zone opportunities, settling for field goals instead of touchdowns; had some untimely penalties; and put up little resistance to the Golden Bears' rushing attack in the third quarter.

This game will always be remembered for the severe weather early in the first quarter that caused a delay of 2 hours, 39 minutes. The game restarted at 10:30 p.m. and ended at 1:22 a.m. Sunday, shortly after Cal kicker Greg Thomas hit a 17-yard field goal for the winning points.

Petersen said after the game and again on Monday the delay was not an excuse for Washington's lapses.

"I feel like the game picked up right back where it was," Washington safety Myles Bryant said after the game. "But we just needed to come out with a little bit more edge and

energy, and I don't think we did a good job doing that."

It wasn't even a sure thing that the game would resume.

Petersen said Monday there was constant communication with Cal's staff, including coach Justin Wilcox, about the options as lightning continued to flash within an 8-mile radius around the stadium and restart a 30-minute delay clock with every bolt. There appeared to be a consensus that if the game couldn't be restarted by 11 p.m., it would be called off and the teams would try to reschedule.

But the emphasis was on trying to play that night since the teams didn't have a mutual open date on the calendar.

"We were trying to figure out if we were going to play is really what we were doing. We were looking at the weather and how long this was going to take," Petersen said. "I think we were getting close, both sides were

getting very close to calling it off if we couldn't get that thing started by about 10:30. Kept talking about 11 o'clock, that's too late for the guys."

When the game did restart, California's secondary caused problems for Washington quarterback Jacob Eason, who completed just 18 of 30 passes for 162 yards. And the Bears were especially troublesome in the red zone, where Washington was forced to kick three field goals after getting inside the Cal 20. In the opener against Eastern Washington, the Huskies had four TDs in six red-zone trips.

Petersen knows the Huskies will need to be better at finishing drives with Hawaii visiting on Saturday. The Warriors already have wins over Arizona and Oregon State and are averaging 38 points and over 425 yards passing through two games.

# Yanks end Red Sox's reign atop AL East

Associated Press

BOSTON—The music blared in the clubhouse behind the door to manager Aaron Boone's office — "New York, New York" was playing through the speakers, and a few voices could be heard joining in on the lyrics.

The New York Yankees had an extra reason to be happy after ending their longtime rivals' run atop the AL East.

New York officially stopped Boston's three-year reign as division champion, blanking the Red Sox 5-0 Monday night behind another big effort by James Paxton.

"Absolutely, it's awesome," Paxton said. "We feel really confident as a team right now and it feels great to knock those guys out."

Hours after the defending World Series champion Red Sox

parted ways with team president Dave Dombrowski, and right after former star David Ortiz returned to Fenway Park three months after being shot, they were shut out at home for the first time this season.

Boston dropped 18½ games behind the division-leading Yankees with 18 games left.

The Red Sox are still in playoff contention, but just barely. They remained eight games behind the second wild-card spot.

Paxton (13-6) won his eighth straight start, allowing four hits in 6⅔ innings, as the Yankees increased their lead to nine games over second-place Tampa Bay. New York is tied with Houston for the best record in the majors.

Austin Romine and Gio Urshela each hit solo homers for the Yankees, who took the final

three of a four-game series and finished the season 14-5 against their longtime rivals. New York increased its club record to 270 homers, a night after setting the mark.

"It's not about talent. We're very talented, it just happened that over 19 games they were better than us," Boston manager Alex Cora said.

Last year, the Red Sox clinched the East in Yankee Stadium, and also knocked them out of the playoffs there in the divisional round.

"We wanted to be in a position to win this division," Boone said. "We know the Red Sox, defending world champs. We know how great they were a year ago. To play well against that team is satisfying. As far as who you knock out, we want to win a little more to shore up the division."

Paxton struck out seven and walked three in setting a career best in victories.

Eduardo Rodriguez (17-6) gave up one run in six innings, striking out nine with five hits and a walk while throwing a season-high 117 pitches. He was 4-0 with a 1.03 ERA in his last four starts, and the Red Sox lost for just the second time (12-2) when he started at Fenway Park.

Romine sliced his homer down the right-field line past the Pesky Pole, making it 1-0 in the fifth.

New York broke it open by getting three runs off Darwinzon Hernandez in the seventh. Urshela led off with his homer into the Green Monster seats. DJ LeMahieu had an RBI double and scored on Gleyber Torres' sacrifice fly.

## MLB roundup

# Alonso, deGrom powers Mets past Diamondbacks

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Pete Alonso hit two home runs to take the major league lead, Jacob deGrom struck out 11 and the New York Mets beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 3-1 Monday night in the opener of a crucial four-game series for both teams.

The Diamondbacks slipped to 2½ games behind the Cubs for the second NL wild-card spot and the Mets trail by four.

Alonso hit a solo drive in the first inning, then connected for his 47th home run in the fifth. He moved two ahead of Mike Trout for most in the majors and closed within five of Aaron Judge's rookie record set two years ago.

DeGrom (9-8) allowed one run and three hits in seven innings. He gave up a home run to former teammate Wilmer Flores in the fifth.

Seth Lugo pitched two innings for his fifth save.

**Astros 15, Athletics 0:** Zack

Greinke (15-5) struck out five in six strong innings, Robinson Chirinos and Yordan Alvarez each homered twice as host Houston hit a major league-record six home runs in the first two innings during a rout of Oakland.

After a 21-1 win over Seattle on Sunday, the Astros set a franchise record for runs scored in consecutive games with 36.

Houston hit six of its seven homers in the first two innings for an 11-0 lead. The seven shots matched a franchise record for homers in a game set Sept. 9, 2000, against the Chicago Cubs.

**Braves 7, Phillies 2:** Mike Foltynewicz (6-5) threw seven impressive innings, Josh Donaldson and Ronald Acuna Jr. hit homers and NL East-leading Atlanta beat visiting Philadelphia.

Atlanta increased its lead over Washington to 9½ games and reduced its magic number to 10 with 17 games remaining.

The Phillies fell three games behind the Cubs for the second wild-card spot in the NL.

**Brewers 8, Marlins 3:** Rookie Trent Grisham had a career-high five hits and drove in two runs, and visiting Milwaukee won its fourth straight.

Yasmani Grandal hit a two-run homer and Lorenzo Cain had three hits and knocked in a run for the Brewers in a game that lasted 4 hours, 8 minutes.

Milwaukee moved within six games of idle first-place St. Louis in the NL Central. The Brewers remain two games out of the second wild-card spot occupied by the division rival Chicago Cubs.

**Pirates 6, Giants 4:** Rookie Bryan Reynolds hit a go-ahead single against his former team during a four-run rally in the ninth inning that sent visiting Pittsburgh over San Francisco.

Down 4-2, the Pirates used three pinch-hitters and came back against three Giants relievers in the ninth.

**Indians 6, Angels 2:** Shane Bieber pitched seven stellar innings of five-hit ball in his first career start at his hometown stadium, and rookie Yu Chang hit his first major league homer in visiting Cleveland's win over Los Angeles.

Bieber (14-7) struck out eight without a walk while allowing only one run for the first time since July. He retired 17 of his final 18 hitters.

**Cubs 10, Padres 2:** Touted prospect Nico Hoerner had three hits and four RBIs in his big league debut and made some nice plays at shortstop as visiting Chicago beat San Diego and snapped a three-game losing streak.

The 22-year-old Hoerner, the Cubs' first-round draft pick out of Stanford in 2018, was promoted from Double-A Tennessee earlier in the day because All-Star shortstop Javier Baez and Addison Russell are sidelined by injuries.