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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Putting off peace

The Taliban want deal with US, but some in a bigger hurry than others

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — Afghanistan's Taliban leaders agreed they wanted a deal with the U.S., but some were in more of a hurry than others.

Taliban negotiators were at odds with their Council of Leaders, or shura, about whether to travel to Camp David even before President Donald Trump abruptly canceled the high-stakes meeting planned for last weekend.

According to Taliban officials familiar with the discussions, the shura opposed the trip to Camp David and chastised the negotiators who were eager to attend.

The Taliban have been holding talks with the U.S. for more than a year in the Qatari capital, Doha, where the militant Islamic movement maintains a political office under the banner of The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Suhail Shaheen, a spokesman for the Doha office, told the Taliban Al-Emarah website Tuesday that U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad had invited Taliban negotiators to Camp David in late August.

The Taliban accepted, only to delay, demanding the deal be announced first by Qatar. They also wanted a signing ceremony witnessed by the foreign ministers of several countries, including Pakistan, Russia and China. The delay followed the shura's rejection and admonishment of its negotiators.

This wasn't the first disagreement between the negotiators and the shura, according to Taliban sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of they were not authorized to discuss internal debates with reporters.

Several months earlier, the shura opposed an offer by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the chief negotiator and co-founder of the Taliban, to give the Americans 14 months to withdraw their roughly 14,000 troops from Afghanistan. The shura let Baradar know it wasn't on board with the timeline and that he could not make decisions independent of the shura.

Still, several Taliban officials familiar with the negotiating team and the shura said while opinions differed, the Taliban

leadership debated every article of the agreement and the negotiating team either got the shura to agree or bowed to its decisions.

"What's striking is how the Taliban mobilized at the highest levels to support negotiations with the U.S.," said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Washington-based Wilson Center. "Senior Taliban officials didn't only endorse the talks, they helped lead them."

"This suggests that Washington would have trouble exploiting fractures within the Taliban in an effort to strengthen its hand in negotiations," he said. "There may be divisions within the Taliban, but they presented a relatively common front in the negotiating process. That's more than one can say for the Afghan government or even the Trump administration."

Baradar, the lead negotiator and believed to be the most influential of the Taliban interlocutors, has been pushing a peace deal in Afghanistan even before the U.S. was willing to enter talks. As far back as 2010, he had secretly opened

peace talks with Afghanistan's then-President Hamid Karzai. When neighboring Pakistan found out, Baradar was arrested in a raid jointly carried out with the CIA. He spent eight years in a Pakistani jail — the punishment for trying to sideline Islamabad in talks.

Karzai previously said he asked both Pakistan and the U.S. on at least two occasions to release Baradar but was turned down. The first secret contacts between the Taliban and the U.S. aimed at finding a way to talk reportedly did not occur until 2013.

Even as Washington seeks an exit from war, the Taliban are at their strongest since their ouster in 2001 and hold sway over more than half the country.

Khalilzad's yearlong peace mission has been Washington's most dedicated push for peace, focusing not just on the Taliban, Afghanistan's government and prominent Afghan power-brokers but also on its neighbors, including Pakistan and Russia, who are often blamed for outright interference in Afghanistan.

Report: US will send 150 troops into northern Syria

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military is planning to deploy 150 troops to northeastern Syria to join ground patrols with Turkish forces, possibly marking a slight increase in the number of American forces in the country, The New York Times reported.

The decision, while not finalized, appears at odds with an order from President Donald Trump made in December that

called for a gradual withdrawal of troops from Syria.

The looming deployment comes amid efforts to improve relations with Turkey, which has long complained about U.S. support of Kurdish fighters that Ankara considers terrorists. The Times, citing unnamed U.S. officials, said final approval for the new deployment depends on the success of the initial joint ground patrols that are now underway.

It remains unclear whether the deployment of 150 more troops will be offset by draw-downs in other parts of Syria, where nearly 1,000 U.S. troops remain.

Washington and Ankara have been at odds for years over how to approach the conflict in Syria. In the battle against Islamic State, the U.S. relied heavily on Kurdish fighters to push militants out of their strongholds. Turkey, however,

regards the Kurdish forces as terrorists and has threatened to invade northern Syria to push Kurdish elements away from Turkey's border.

In an effort to address Ankara's concerns, the U.S. military recently began joint ground patrols with Turkish forces along a buffer zone in northern Syria. Differences remain, however, on how large the buffer zone should be.

Combat controller awarded Air Force Cross

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Air Force Staff Sgt. Daniel P. Keller had been fighting for 15 hours when a house rigged with improvised explosives just feet away from the combat controller blew up, forcing him to the ground, injured and dazed.

The sudden blast in the midst of the fight with Islamic State-aligned terrorists in a rocky valley of eastern Afghanistan's Nangarhar province left Keller with a traumatic brain injury. But he kept fighting, eventually braving enemy fire numerous times and directing critical airstrikes on ISIS enemies that ensured 130 members of the

U.S.-Afghan commando force escaped alive and directly led to the deaths of 50 terrorists, according to the Air Force.

For those actions on Aug. 16, 2017, Keller will receive the Air Force Cross on Friday from Gen. David Goldfein, the Air Force chief of staff. He will be only the 11th airman to receive the service's second highest honor for battlefield valor in the post-9/11 wars. One of those airmen, combat controller Tech. Sgt. John Chapman, had his Air Force Cross for actions in Afghanistan in 2002 upgraded last year to the Medal of Honor.

Keller, 34, who has been promoted to technical sergeant since returning from Afghani-

stan, learned he would receive the Air Force Cross on Wednesday. The airman, assigned to the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, was to receive the award in a ceremony at the Kentucky Guard's Louisville headquarters.

"It's very humbling," Keller said Thursday. "It's also — you think about all the other guys in these events, and the amazing stuff you see guys do in combat that might not be recognized. It's weird, man. I'm very honored and humbled that the Air Force thinks what I did that day deserves this recognition."

Keller's memories of that day are painful. He lost a "good friend," Army Staff Sgt. Aaron

Butler, a Green Beret, who died from injuries suffered when the house exploded. Three Afghan commandos also died on the mission and 30 members of the force suffered injuries.

More troops would have died had Keller not taken the actions he did, according to his Air Force Cross citation.

After the explosion knocked him to the ground, Keller quickly returned to his feet and began repelling enemy fighters about 150 meters away with his M4 carbine. Meanwhile, he directed strikes from American aircraft and coordinated a medical evacuation for 13 critically injured troops.

Former Pendleton battalion commander facing charges

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — The former commanding officer of the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion at Camp Pendleton, Calif., will face charges related to the domestic violence allegations that cost him his command in May, the Marines said Thursday.

Lt. Col. Francisco Zavala, 43, is accused of assault, destruction of property, making false official statements and conduct unbecoming an officer. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for early October to determine whether there is enough evidence to proceed with a court-martial.

Zavala was relieved of command in May. The 1st Marine Division said then that he was fired due to a "loss of trust and confidence" in his ability to lead, offering few details.

The military news website Task & Purpose reported Zavala had been the subject of a misconduct investigation stemming from an incident in December, two days after he returned from a deployment to Peru.

According to the site, Zavala

is accused of hitting his wife in the face and taking her phone to prevent her from calling 911.

A redacted copy of the division's investigation, published by Task & Purpose in June, details another incident, in October, in which Zavala is accused of breaking the couple's cellphones in a rage.

Zavala's wife filed for divorce and a restraining order. The Marine Corps issued its own restraining order April 4 and launched its investigation April 17, according to the investigative report.

Zavala is a native of Helotes, Texas, who earned his commission in 2000. He served on multiple deployments, including to South Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan, according to his Marine Corps bio.

Zavala was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with "V" device for combat valor for actions during a deployment to Afghanistan in 2010. According to his award citation, Zavala led an effort to secure the site of a downed helicopter, protecting the bodies of the deceased pilots for 24 hours.

Air Force says only 6% of crews stayed at Turnberry

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Air Force said Thursday it reviewed overnight stays by crew members who stopped at Glasgow Prestwick Airport between 2015 and 2019 to refuel and found about 6% stayed at President Donald Trump's Scottish golf resort.

The House Oversight Committee has been investigating an uptick in stays by the military at the five-star, coastal Trump Turnberry hotel, which is about 30 miles from the airport, to determine whether the president has improperly directed crews to stay at his family owned property.

"We reviewed the vast majority of the 659 overnight stays of Air Force crews in the vicinity at Glasgow Prestwick Airport between 2015 and 2019. Approximately 6% of those crews stayed at the Trump Turnberry," said an Air Force spokesman in an emailed statement.

"As a practice, we generally send aircrews to the closest, most suitable accommodations within the government hotel

rate. The review also indicated that about 75% of the crews stayed in the immediate vicinity of the airfield, and 18% stayed in Glasgow," the spokesman said.

A spokesman confirmed that Turnberry stays were within the Pentagon's distance and cost limits. This week the Air Force launched a review of its selection of lodging accommodations at Trump Turnberry, acknowledging that it "might be allowable but not advisable."

The stays result from two separate agreements that predate Trump's presidency. Before Trump ran for president, the airport agreed to send visiting crews to Trump's course. And while President Barack Obama was still in office, the Air Force agreed to send refueling aircraft to the airport.

Now that Trump is president, those arrangements mean that the Air Force has paid the commander in chief to rent rooms. The House Oversight Committee is investigating, but no evidence has emerged showing that Trump has done anything to alter existing arrangements.

Dems' debate displays liberal-moderate split

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Joe Biden parried attack after attack from liberal rivals Thursday night on everything from health care to immigration in a debate that showcased profound ideological divides between the Democratic Party's moderate and progressive wings.

The prime-time debate also elevated several struggling candidates, giving them a chance to introduce themselves to millions of Americans who are just beginning to follow the race. Biden dominated significant parts of the evening, responding strongly when the liberal senators who are his closet rivals — Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren — assailed him and his policies.

Unlike prior debates in which Biden struggled for words and seemed surprised by criticism from fellow Democrats, he largely delivered crisp, aggressive responses. He called Sanders “a socialist,” a label that could remind voters of the senator's embrace of democratic socialism. And Biden slapped at Sen. Elizabeth Warren's proposed wealth tax.

A two-term vice president under Barack Obama, Biden unequivocally defended his former boss, who came under criticism from some candidates for deporting immigrants and not going far enough on health care reform.

“I stand with Barack Obama all eight years, good bad and indifferent,” Biden declared.

His vulnerabilities surfaced, however, in the final minutes of the debate, when he was pressed on a decades-old statement regarding school integration. Biden rambled in talking about his support of teachers, the lack of resources for educators and, at one point, seemed to encourage parents to play records for their children to expand their vocabulary before segueing into talk of Latin America.

“That's quite a lot,” quipped Julian Castro, the former Housing secretary who was Biden's frequent foe during the debate.

The candidates debated with polls showing a strong majority of voters believe the country is headed in the wrong direction under the first-term Republican president's leadership. But nine months into their nomination fight, divided Democrats have yet to answer fundamental questions about who or what the party stands for beyond simply opposing President Donald Trump.

The party's 2020 class, once featuring two dozen candidates, has essentially been cut in half by party rules requiring higher polling and fundraising standards.

Just 10 candidates qualified for Thursday's affair, though more than that have

qualified for next month's round.

Those in the second tier, after Biden, Warren and Sanders, are under increasing pressure to break out of the pack. They all assailed Trump. New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker called Trump a racist. Former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke called him a white supremacist. And Kamala Harris, a California senator, said Trump's hateful social media messages provided “the ammunition” for recent mass shootings.

“President Trump, you have spent the last two-and-a-half years full time trying to sow hate and vision among us, and that's why we've gotten nothing done,” Harris charged.

In addition to Trump, Biden's rivals also turned against Obama's legacy at times as they sought to undermine the former vice president's experience.

Sanders insisted that Biden bears responsibility for millions of Americans going bankrupt under the “Obamacare” health care system. Castro raised questions about the Obama-Biden record on immigration, particularly the number of deportations that took place.

The ABC News debate was the first limited to one night after several candidates dropped out and others failed to meet new qualification standards. A few more candidates qualified for next month's debate.

In Baltimore, Trump mocks Dems, vows tax cut

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — President Donald Trump sought to boost the spirits of Republican lawmakers, mocking Democrats and promising a new tax cut package, as he returned to the city he recently disparaged as a “rat and rodent-infested mess.”

Trump spoke on Thursday to House Republicans attending an annual retreat in a hotel on Baltimore's waterfront. Protesters gathered nearby. But inside, the president found a friendly audience of legislators whose political futures are closely tied to how well he performs in next year's election. They greeted him with a chant of “four more years.”

Trump obliquely addressed his earlier insults against Baltimore, promising Republicans would “fight for the future of cities like Baltimore that have been destroyed by decades of failed and corrupt rule.”

He said “the left-wing agenda” of regulations, crippling taxes and “unrestricted migration” has undermined law enforcement and devastated America's inner cities. “We're going to have to step in and do

something about it because we can't allow that to happen to our great cities,” he said.

Trump had lashed out at Baltimore in a series of July tweets critical of Democratic Rep. Elijah Cummings, who represents the city's majority-black 7th Congressional District. Cummings also chairs the House oversight panel conducting numerous investigations into the administration's policies and work.

On Thursday, Trump emphasized some of the biggest wins of his presidency, such as boosting military spending, slashing regulations and expanding a program that gives veterans the option to see private doctors outside the Department of Veterans Affairs medical system. He touted the \$1.5 trillion tax cut package passed in 2017 and promised to deliver another tax cut proposal next year.

“We are working on a tax cut for the middle-income people that is going to be very, very inspirational. It's going to be something that I think it's what everyone's really looking for,” Trump said. “It will be a very, very substantial tax cut for middle-

income folks, who work so hard.”

Lawmakers gave him a standing ovation when he promised to uphold the right to keep and bear arms. The president hasn't committed to specific gun legislation, but White House officials, lawmakers and Capitol Hill staff have held frequent meetings to discuss options aimed at curbing gun violence following shootings in Dayton, Ohio, and El Paso, Texas, that left more than 30 people dead over an August weekend.

The president addressed lawmakers one day after the Supreme Court cleared the way for his administration to deny nearly all asylum claims from Central Americans. He highlighted that win as well as the victories of Republicans Dan Bishop and Greg Murphy in special elections this week in North Carolina. He told the Republicans he expected them to win back the majority in the House next year.

Trump spoke as Democratic presidential candidates debated in Houston. The audience laughed as he mocked some of his top challengers and claimed that more people would be watching him.

Tough new asylum rule put into effect

Associated Press

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico — With a go-ahead from the Supreme Court, the Trump administration Thursday began enforcing a radical new rule denying asylum to most migrants arriving at the southern border — a move that spread despair among those fleeing poverty and violence in their homelands.

A spokeswoman for the Homeland Security agency that manages asylum cases said the policy will be retroactive to July 16, when the initial rule was announced.

The new policy would deny refuge to anyone at the U.S.-Mexico border who passes through another country on the way to the U.S. without first seeking asylum there.

Supreme Court cleared the way, for now, to enforce it while legal challenges move forward.

Migrants who make their way to the U.S. overland from places like Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador would be largely ineligible, along with asylum seekers from Africa, Asia and South America who try to get in by way of the U.S.-Mexican border.

Asylum seekers must pass an initial screening called a “credible fear” interview, a hurdle that a majority clear. Under the new policy, they would fail the test unless they sought asylum in at least one country they traveled through and were denied. They would be placed in fast-track deportation proceedings and flown to their home countries at U.S. expense.

“Our Supreme Court is sen-

tencing people to death. There are no safeguards, no institutions to stop this cruelty,” the immigration-assistance group Al Otro Lado said in a statement.

The Mexican government likewise called the high court’s action “astonishing.” The effects of the new policy could fall heavily on Mexico, leaving the country with tens of thousands of poor and desperate migrants with no hope of getting into the U.S.

Acting U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Mark Morgan called the Supreme Court’s go-ahead a “big victory” in the Trump administration’s attempt to curb the flow of migrants.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services said in a statement the policy was important.

“Until Congress can act with durable, lasting solutions, the rule will help reduce a major ‘pull’ factor driving irregular migration to the United States and enable the administration to more quickly and efficiently process cases originating from the southern border, leading to fewer individuals transiting through Mexico on a dangerous journey,” said Jessica Collins, a spokeswoman for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The American Civil Liberties Union lawyer who is representing immigrant advocacy groups in the case, Lee Gelernt, said: “This is just a temporary step, and we’re hopeful we’ll prevail at the end of the day. The lives of thousands of families are at stake.”

Vaping illnesses reclassified; count falls to 380 in 36 states

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The U.S. government has refined how it is measuring an outbreak of breathing illnesses in people who vape, now counting only cases that are most closely linked to electronic cigarette use.

Health officials on Thursday said 380 confirmed cases and probable cases have been reported in 36 states and one U.S. territory. That marks a decrease from the 450 cited last week when officials were also including “possible” cases.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state officials have been investigating an outbreak that began materializing in the Midwest in July.

Doctors say the illnesses resemble an inhalation injury, with the body apparently reacting to a caustic substance that someone breathed in. Symptoms have included shortness of breath, fatigue, chest pain, diarrhea and vomiting.

Many young and previously healthy adolescents and young adults required machines to help them breathe. Six deaths have been reported, all adults and at least some with pre-existing lung problems or other conditions that may have made them more susceptible.

The illnesses are seen as a new phenomenon, and it’s taken weeks for CDC officials to come up with a case definition and for states to start following it. Thursday’s tally from the CDC was the first based on the new case definition, which counts only breathing illnesses with abnormal chest x-rays, a recent history of vaping, and lab work done to rule out infectious diseases or other possible causes.

“These cases look very much like overwhelming infection, like viral or bacterial pneumonia,” but lab tests fail to find germs in lung fluids and blood, said Dr. Zack Moore, chief epidemiologist for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

Two weeks after Dorian, 1,300 Bahamians missing

Associated Press

MCLEAN’S TOWN, Bahamas — They scan social media, peer under rubble or try to follow the smell of death in an attempt to find family and friends.

They search amid alarming reports that 1,300 people remain listed as missing nearly two weeks after Hurricane Dorian hit the northern Bahamas.

The government has cautioned that the list is preliminary, and many could be staying in shelters and just haven’t been able to connect with loved ones. But fears are growing that many died when the Category 5 storm slammed into the archipelago’s northern region with winds in excess of 185 mph and severe flooding that toppled concrete walls, cracked trees in half and ripped swings off playgrounds as Dorian battered the area for a day and a half.

“If they were staying with me, they would’ve been safe,”

Phil Thomas Sr. said as he leaned against the frame of his roofless home in the fishing village of McLean’s Town and looked into the distance.

The boat captain has not seen his son, 30, his two grandsons or his granddaughter since the storm. They were all staying with his daughter-in-law, who was injured and taken to a hospital in the capital, Nassau, after the U.S. Coast Guard found her — but only her.

The loss weighs on Thomas, who said he tries to stay busy cleaning up his home so he doesn’t think about them.

“It’s one of those things. I’m heartbroken, but life goes on,” he said. “You pick up the pieces bit by bit. ... I’ve got to rebuild a house. I’ve got three more kids. I’ve got to live for them until my time comes.”

Meanwhile, a cluster of heavy thunderstorms is heading toward the Bahamas and is expected to further drench the communities bashed by Dorian.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Chief: Officer was right to punch suspect's head

SC COLUMBIA — A South Carolina police chief says one of his officers was right to punch a suspect in the head.

News outlets report Columbia Police Chief Skip Holbrook said the officer followed protocol when he stopped Jacob Cohen, 21, on Sunday for reportedly crossing a street illegally. He said Cohen fled the stop and the officer gave chase, only hitting Cohen after Cohen grabbed the officer's wrist. Video shows the officer pinning Cohen to a car and punching him.

The video cuts to a scene of Cohen on the ground while the officer handcuffs him and bystanders sing "Bad Boys" by Inner Circle, the theme to the TV show "Cops." A man in a referee shirt helps to hold Cohen down before another officer arrives and assists with arresting Cohen on charges including unlawful entry of a roadway.

Bank worker trapped by hurricane sandbags

SC HILTON HEAD ISLAND — A 911 transcript has revealed the plight of a South Carolina bank worker who found himself all alone at the office with Hurricane Dorian approaching.

The Island Packet reports Charlie Labassi called 911 on Sept. 4 after everyone else had left to prepare for the storm.

Wells Fargo spokeswoman Amy Amirault says the Hilton Head branch was closed at the time in compliance with Beaufort County's evacuation order.

Labassi, a treasury management consultant, told dispatchers that he couldn't get out because two dozen sandbags were blocking the door.

Hilton Head Fire Rescue

workers arrived to free Labassi, enabling him to get home to Shipyard Plantation just ahead of the storm that night.

Woman sitting outside home killed by bullet

PA PHILADELPHIA — Authorities say a woman shot and killed while she sat on the front steps of her Philadelphia home apparently was an innocent bystander struck by a stray bullet.

The shooting occurred around 9:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Authorities say Crystal Roman-Benitez, 23, was struck in the head. She was taken to a hospital but died there a short time later.

A 54-year-old man was also hit by a stray shot and suffered a graze wound to his right shoulder. His name has not been released. It's not clear how many shooters may have been involved in the incident. Authorities say at least one shooter apparently fled the area in a car and remains at large.

Sheriff: 43 dogs saved, 2 arrested in puppy mill

GA MACON — A Georgia sheriff said deputies shut down a puppy mill, removing a dead puppy and 43 dogs, some with severe injuries, from a home with "deplorable conditions."

The dogs were a mix of poodles and Maltese, and Maltipoo puppies. Monroe County Animal Shelter Director Dawn Kennedy said seven of them had no lower jaws.

A Monroe County Sheriff's statement says deputies checked the home in response to a complaint of abandoned and neglected dogs.

News outlets report Lynda Cummings and her daughter, Brandi Marzka, were arrested and charged Monday with 36

misdemeanor counts of failing to provide the dogs with an adequate lifestyle. Cummings was also charged with seven felony counts of maliciously harming animals.

The surviving dogs are now in the care of the Atlanta Humane Society.

Passenger charged with opening door of plane

AK ANCHORAGE — A rural Alaska man suspected of opening a cargo door of a small commercial airplane while in flight has been charged with felony assault and criminal mischief.

The Anchorage Daily News reported Calvin Chase, 40, of Anvik, was arrested Tuesday. He's jailed at Yukon Kuskokwim Correctional Center in Bethel.

Ryan Air President Lee Ryan said Chase was a passenger on a flight that departed Aniak for Anvik. A pilot and three other passengers also were on board.

Ryan said that about 12 minutes into the flight, Chase removed his seat belt and opened the airplane's rear cargo door.

The other passengers restrained him.

The pilot returned to Aniak.

Containers of discarded mail found on street

PA PHILADELPHIA — Officials are trying to determine how dozens of containers of mail ended up on a street in Philadelphia.

WPVI-TV reported the letters were found late Wednesday on 6th and Wingohocking streets in the city's Hunting Park section. Officials believe it may have been stolen.

Some of the mail was open. Some of the containers had bills, school report cards and packages. Police and postal workers were picking it up.

Iconic cable cars shut down for repairs

CA SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco's iconic cable cars stopped running for 10 days starting Friday while they undergo the final repairs in a three-year restoration project of the gearboxes that propel the world-famous system up the city's notoriously steep hills.

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency said Wednesday that shuttle buses will run along the three cable car routes.

The agency says it needs to get the manually operated cable cars off the streets to rehabilitate the gearboxes that power the system that started in the 1890s.

Renting scooters made tougher for children

NE OMAHA — Two companies are making it harder for kids to rent their electric scooters in Omaha, following the crash of a 9-year-old boy into the side of a bus.

Spin and Lime officials said they're now requiring people to use driver's licenses to verify their ages before renting the battery-powered scooters. The verification will be done through the rental apps the companies provide.

The companies have been operating in Omaha as part of a pilot program approved by Mayor Jean Stothert in May. Before the change announced Wednesday, the Lime and Spin apps required riders to confirm they were at least 18 years old but allowed them to vouch for their own ages.

Alex Youn, of Lime, said his company is pleased with the Omaha program and said most people ride responsibly.

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Goal-line stand helps Bucs top Panthers

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — When Cam Newton left the shotgun and began creeping toward the line of scrimmage, Buccaneers cornerback Vernon Hargreaves knew exactly what was coming.

The Bucs snuffed out a fourth-and-1 play from the 2-yard line with Hargreaves shoving Christian McCaffrey out of bounds with 1:22 left to preserve a 20-14 win over the Carolina Panthers and cap off a terrific defensive performance on Thursday night.

Jameis Winston threw for 208 yards and a touchdown, Chris Godwin had 121 yards receiving and a score and Peyton Barber ran for 82 yards, but it was the Bucs defense that won this game. Tampa Bay held the Panthers without a touchdown and limited McCaffrey to 53 total yards to give coach Bruce Arians his first victory with the team.

The goal-line stand, particu-

larly the fourth-down play, was just the icing on the cake.

As Newton cleared out of the way, McCaffrey took the direct snap from center, faked a reverse to Curtis Samuel and raced around left end but couldn't find the edge. He tried to extend the ball, but didn't pick up the first down as Hargreaves rode him out of bounds.

"You watch any football and you've seen it a few times," Hargreaves said of the play. "Once I saw Cam walk up to the line of scrimmage and act like he was talking to me, I had a pretty good idea what was going on."

It would be hard to imagine the Panthers taking the ball out of their 6-foot-5, 245-pound quarterback's hands in the past. Even Hargreaves said a few years ago, Newton "definitely, 100 percent" would have tried to run and score.

But this is a different time for the ninth-year quarterback. Although he has more TDs rushing than any other QB in

the league, he has just minus-2 yards on five carries this season with two fumbles.

"He can't take them hits like that," Hargreaves said. "It's going to eat his body up. So, not really. We expected more throwing as he is getting older in his career."

Panthers coach Ron Rivera said there is nothing wrong with Newton's shoulder or foot that prevented him from running the ball. He believed the Panthers had the right play called.

"Unfortunately, it didn't work," Rivera said. "That's all I can tell. We felt good about the play."

The Buccaneers (1-1) got plenty of pressure on Newton with three sacks coming from Shaquil Barrett. The Panthers failed to reach the end zone, only scoring on Joey Slye's four field goals and a safety by Luke Kuechly.

Winston avoids turnovers: After throwing two pick 6's last week, Winston played a turn-

over-free game.

And with the defense playing well, that was good enough.

"I thought he was outstanding," Arians said. "He had a hell of a week as far as mentally preparing and getting ready for this ball game. I think that's the type of game he can play."

Newton throws deep: After fielding plenty of questions about only attempting only one pass of more than 20 yards downfield in the season opener against the Rams, Newton connected on a 44-yard strike to Curtis Samuel late in the first quarter. It was one of a handful of deep balls the quarterback threw.

Jeers to cheers: After fumbling his first two punt return attempts, Ray-Ray McCloud was greeted sarcastically with cheers as he fielded his third punt cleanly. But the jeers quickly turned to cheers when McCloud raced up the middle of the field for a 39-yard return.

Newton, Carolina reeling after starting season 0-2

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Carolina Panthers fans voiced their displeasure more than once with boos during a 20-14 loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Thursday night.

Perhaps being soaked by an early evening thunderstorm that delayed game action in the first quarter for 25 minutes led to their ill mood. But those who remained at Bank of America Stadium throughout had to be wondering how a Panthers season that started with high expectations is now teetering on the brink of disaster after an 0-2 start.

That became certain after Christian McCaffrey's fourth-and-1 fake reverse was stopped for no gain with 1:22 to play.

"It came down to the ball is in my hands and I've got to make a play at the end of the game, and I didn't," McCaffrey said.

It marked the third time Carolina was unable to convert a fourth-and-1 play. Quarterback Cam Newton was stopped in the first quarter, and a pass by Newton was incomplete earlier in the fourth quarter.

The Panthers were just 3-for-14 on third downs, too.

Oh, and they failed to score a touchdown.

"It's extremely frustrating knowing that you're getting opportunities and you're not putting the ball in the end zone," Newton said.

Carolina's loss came on a night in which the Panthers were afforded numerous opportunities to even their record following a 30-27 home loss five days earlier against the Los Angeles Rams.

Tampa Bay had a missed touchdown catch on a drive that resulted in a missed field goal late in the third quarter, and the Buccaneers committed 12

penalties.

But the Panthers offense misfired time and again on a night in which Carolina's points came on four field goals and a safety by Luke Kuechly.

"Through my lens, it's hard to look defensive guys in the eyes after a game like this," Newton said. "Offensively, we've got to hold up our end of the bargain. We just didn't uphold our end. And we're past due."

Newton, who had offseason shoulder surgery, was questioned earlier in the week about his team's lack of deep throws.

He appeared to answer those critics with a 44-yard completion to Curtis Samuel late in the first quarter. But offensive line breakdowns led to pressure on six throws and Newton was sacked three times. He completed 25 of 51 passes for 333 yards.

Additionally, Newton's usually effective running game was

again non-existent.

The third all-time rushing quarterback in NFL history, Newton followed his career-low minus-2 yards in Sunday's loss with a second-worst game of two carries for zero yards. For the season, Newton now has five carries for minus-2 yards with two fumbles.

McCaffrey followed last Sunday's 209 total yards on 29 touches with 53 yards on 18 touches.

Were McCaffrey's struggles a result of Newton's inability to establish a running game that has churned for 4,808 yards in his first eight NFL seasons?

"I don't know," McCaffrey said. "We'll have to see."

The home loss was the team's fifth straight. That is tied for fourth-longest in franchise history.

Newton said he heard — and understood — the fans' frustration in the form of boos.

Army ready to bounce back after loss

Associated Press

Army came agonizingly close to beating Michigan.

Now it's time to regroup.

After its near-upset in the Big House, the U.S. Military Academy heads to Texas to face UTSA in San Antonio's Alamodome on Saturday. Army has more than 20 players from Texas and the military-friendly city has hosted the Black Knights twice before. San Antonio is home to one of the largest concentrations of military bases in the U.S., as well as the Defense Department's largest medical center.

This will be the first time Army is a favorite to win there and the Black Knights should have plenty of road support in the stands.

Army had its chance for the academy's first win over a top-10 team since 1963 as the Black Knights' ball-control, option offense kept Michigan off-balance all day. It was nearly identical to their near-upset of Oklahoma last season, but both efforts ended with losses in overtime.

"Our kids were very hurt. It still stings. It's hard to swallow being that close to beating an-

other top-10 team and falling short," Army coach Jeff Monken said. "But, gosh, I can't say enough about the belief that our guys had that they were going to win. ... Now we move on."

The Roadrunners must regroup from a much different kind of loss: a 63-14 road whipping at Baylor. UTSA gave up 368 yards rushing and must quickly recover in that department before facing Army's methodical run game.

As an independent, Army will be bouncing around the country, from coast to coast and even deep into the Pacific at Hawaii, as it seeks a fourth consecutive bowl bid. The Black Knights are the last non-conference opponent for UTSA before the start of the Conference-USA schedule.

Army had a similar schedule in 2018, when it won 11 games, the most in academy history.

"We've just got to move on and win every game the rest of the year," Army senior linebacker Cole Christiansen said.

A few things to watch for when Army meets UTSA:

Big load: The Roadrunners count on quarterback Frank Harris to do it all in the offense, but he had a rough game

against Baylor with just 3 yards rushing and 93 passing in the blowout loss. He'll need to get one of those elements rolling to keep the Black Knights' offense off the field.

"I shared with him that you don't need to carry the burden," UTSA coach Frank Wilson said "That falls on my shoulders."

Breakout freshman: UTSA would like to lean on freshman tailback Sincere McCormick to share the load with Harris. The first Roadrunners true freshman to start a season opener since the program's inaugural season in 2011, he had 87 yards on 12 carries against Baylor. Most of that came on a 54-yard touchdown run.

No turnovers please: Last year, Army ranked second nationally with only eight turnovers, losing just five fumbles in more than 900 snaps. That's a big key for a team whose offense relies on keeping the ball away from its opponents — Army led the nation in time of possession at more than 38 minutes per game in 2018. Through two games this season, the Black Knights have four turnovers — three lost fumbles and one interception and possession time is down

more than five minutes.

"That's not our game," said senior running back Kell Walker, who had one of Army's two lost fumbles against Michigan. "We've got to take care of the ball."

Tackling drills: Black Knights senior defensive back Elijah Riley was a force against Michigan with 13 tackles, two sacks and a forced fumble in the double-overtime loss. He'll be the guy the Roadrunners offense has to account for on every snap. Christiansen had 12 tackles and a forced fumble as Army held Michigan to 340 total yards.

UTSA, meanwhile, missed more than 30 tackles against Baylor. "You can't beat anybody missing 30-plus tackles," Wilson said.

Just for kicks: The field goal units for both of these teams are mostly untested. Army kicker Cole Talley's only attempt this season was a missed 50-yarder on a potential game-winner against Michigan at the end of regulation. The Roadrunners haven't even attempted a field goal through two games, but kicker Hunter Duplessis is perfect on seven extra points.

Americans trail Europe after first day of Solheim Cup

Associated Press

GLENEAGLES, Scotland — Jessica and Nelly Korda put their arms around each other's waists and laughed their way down the 14th fairway en route to one of the biggest foursomes wins in Solheim Cup history.

Apart from the 6 and 4 victory for the first siblings to play together in the competition, there was little else to smile about for the Americans on Friday in the opening shots of the title defense.

Europe finished the foursomes session with a 2½-1½ lead on a sunny morning at Gleneagles, winning the last two matches after Carlota Ciganda and Bronte Law came from 1

down with two holes to play to grab a half-point from the lead-off match against Morgan Pressel and Marina Alex.

There were also four fourballs matches to play on Day 1 as the U.S. team looks to win the Solheim Cup for a third straight time.

The Korda sisters were split up for the fourballs, with U.S. captain Juli Inkster perhaps hoping they can spread their strong play across two matches. They proved far too good for Caroline Masson and Jodi Ewart Shadoff.

Jessica Korda — the elder of the sisters by five years — played the senior role after skipping onto the raucous first tee and throwing some moves

to the backdrop of ABBA's "Dancing Queen."

She rolled in a birdie putt at No. 1 to immediately put the U.S. 1 up and chipped in for eagle from the fringe at No. 10 to keep the sisters 5 up. In those first 10 holes, the Kordas made four birdies and an eagle, giving them a chance of posting a record foursomes win.

They settled for clinching victory on the 14th hole, celebrating on the green.

Coping well with a loud, singing, flag-waving crowd in the No. 1 grandstand, Pressel — appearing in her sixth Solheim Cup — found the fairway with the nerve-wracking opening tee shot of the event but found herself 2 down with Alex after

four holes against Ciganda and Law in the first match.

Pressel and Alex won three straight holes to go 1 up and they retained that lead until the 16th when the Europeans moved all square. Ciganda holed a 30-foot birdie putt to halve the 17th and both teams parred the par-5 last.

Lexi Thompson, at No. 3 the highest-ranked player in this event, lost in foursomes for the first time in four Solheim Cup matches as she and Brittany Altomare fell to a 2-and-1 loss to Georgia Hall and Celine Boutier.

Charley Hull and Azahora Munoz beat Megan Khang and Annie Park 2 and 1 in the last match to finish.

Athletics take three of four from Astros

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Oakland Athletics left Houston feeling pretty good on Thursday night after taking three of four games from the imposing Astros as they look to lock down a playoff spot.

Matt Olson hit a two-run homer to back a solid start by Homer Bailey and the Athletics beat the Astros 3-2 to take over the AL wild-card lead.

Oakland shook off a 15-0 loss in the opener of this four-game series to win three in a row, beating Cy Young Award front-runner Justin Verlander in the finale.

The A's moved a half-game ahead of Tampa Bay atop

the AL wild-card standings. Cleveland is one game behind Oakland.

"We played well against them at our place and this is probably the toughest place in the American League to play," manager Bob Melvin said. "To be able to come in and take three out of four and do it in different fashions every night, yeah, it felt good."

The Athletics got Verlander (18-6) for three runs in the first three innings before he settled in to pitch three scoreless frames.

Bailey (13-8) yielded three hits and one run in 5¹/₃ innings to win his fourth straight decision. He matched his career high in wins set in 2012 with

Cincinnati.

"We pulled it out, won the series," Bailey said. "We've been playing so good against these guys and also New York, and it just goes on further to show that we believe that we can play with any team in this league."

It was a much better outing than in his first start against Houston this season when the Astros jumped on him for eight hits and nine runs — both season highs — in just two innings of an 11-1 loss on July 22.

The Astros missed opportunities in both the eighth and ninth innings to tie it or take the lead on a night they went 0-for-10 with runners in scoring position.

Jose Altuve's solo home run

off Yusmeiro Petit got Houston within a run with one out in the eighth inning. The Astros loaded the bases with two outs but Blake Treinen struck out rookie Kyle Tucker to leave everyone stranded.

Houston had runners on first and third with two outs in the ninth, but Liam Hendriks struck out Michael Brantley for his 21st save.

The Athletics tagged Verlander right away in his second start since tossing his third career no-hitter on Aug. 1. Marcus Semien singled on his first pitch and he struck out the next two batters before Mark Canha walked. Seth Brown gave Oakland an early lead with an RBI double to left field.

MLB roundup

Cubs win, remain tied with Brewers for 2nd wild card

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Yu Darvish and the Chicago Cubs are heading back to Wrigley Field feeling better about their situation than they had in several days.

Darvish struck out a season-high 14 and allowed only two hits in six innings, and the Cubs beat the San Diego Padres 4-1 Thursday to remain tied with Milwaukee for the NL's second wild-card spot.

"Everyone has confidence for sure," Darvish said. "I know the last 10 days was tough, but we still have to compete each day."

If not for two walks in the fifth inning, Darvish might have gone deeper.

"He wants to be out there," manager Joe Maddon said. "Those couple walks, I mean, he could have got seven. That one inning when he walked (Ty) France and (Luis) Urias, that put him at 88 after five. I'm always counting pitches and I'm looking, this is a possible seven innings, at least, and then the walks just did not permit that to happen. But he's uncanny coming out of his breaking ball. It's ridiculously good, especially

against left-handers.

"There's nothing to say negative about his performance. It was great."

The Padres scored in the ninth when Manny Machado was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded and two outs, but Rowan Wick struck out Luis Urias to end it.

Chicago split the four-game series and won for just the second time in seven games. The Brewers beat the Miami Marlins 3-2.

Darvish (6-6) retired his first eight batters before allowing his first hit, an infield single by starter Dinelson Lamet.

Brewers 3, Marlins 2: Ryan Braun broke a tie with a two-run homer in the third inning and visiting Milwaukee beat Miami to complete a four-game sweep that extended its winning streak to seven.

Mets 11, Diamondbacks 1: Juan Lagares hit a grand slam and a two-run shot and host New York set a team record with six home runs in a home game, routing Arizona for a four-game sweep.

Yankees 10-6, Tigers 4-4: All-Star catcher Gary Sanchez

became his team's latest injury concern when he left the second game of a doubleheader with left groin tightness as visiting New York beat Detroit to complete a sweep.

In Game 1, Luke Voit put the Yankees ahead in the first with his first home run since July 22, a two-run drive off Matt Boyd (8-11). Chad Green (4-4) was the winner.

Red Sox 7, Blue Jays 4: Xander Bogaerts became the latest franchise slugger to reach 50 doubles, Marco Hernandez drove in two runs and visiting Boston beat Toronto to avoid a three-game sweep.

Dodgers 4, Orioles 2: Rich Hill struggled with his control during his first start since June 19, and visiting Los Angeles broke a sixth-inning tie by scoring two runs on a passed ball in the victory over Baltimore.

Rangers 6, Rays 4: Nick Solak homered off Peter Fairbanks, the pitcher he was traded for two months ago, and host Texas dropped Tampa Bay out of the AL wild-card lead.

Phillies 9, Braves 5: Cesar Hernandez hit one of his team's four home runs and added an

RBI single to help host Philadelphia beat Atlanta.

Cardinals 10, Rockies 3: Dexter Fowler and Kolten Wong opened the game with successive home runs and visiting St. Louis connected five times in all to beat Colorado.

Royals 6, White Sox 3: Hunter Dozier hit a tiebreaking, three-run home run in the sixth, Jorge Soler had his third homer in two days and visiting Kansas City beat Chicago.

Pirates 4, Giants 2: Joe Musgrove (10-12) pitched five shutout innings and hit a triple, Jacob Stallings homered and visiting Pittsburgh beat San Francisco.

Nationals 12, Twins 6: Anthony Rendon and Juan Soto each homered and drove in three runs as visiting Washington cut Minnesota's lead in the AL Central to 3½ games ahead of a critical series in Cleveland.

Reds 11, Mariners 5: Freddy Galvis connected for a go-ahead grand slam, Eugenio Suarez hit his 45th home run and visiting Cincinnati overcame another drive by Seattle's Kyle Lewis.