

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Wolters expects more Afghan violence

Associated Press

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia — The top U.S. general for NATO said Friday that he expects increased violence in Afghanistan in the lead-up to the election later this month, adding that allies will make necessary adjustments to military operations there to protect the vote.

Air Force Gen. Tod Wolters, the Supreme Allied Commander, told a small group of reporters that despite recent drama over Afghanistan, the U.S. message to allies is that America and NATO remain committed to the fight. Peace talks between the U.S. and the Taliban collapsed late last week and were declared dead by President Donald Trump after a spate of deadly attacks by the insurgents.

“At this very moment, the signal that we send to our NATO partners is that the U.S. is committed, NATO is committed, and the mission still remains,” said Wolters, who is in Ljubljana for a meeting of allied chiefs of defense, including Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Right now, Wolters added, “there are no discussions” with allies about any troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Trump has said the U.S. would cut troop levels from about 14,000 to about 8,600, but talk of any pullout has been muted since Trump called off the peace talks and canceled a meeting he said he wanted to have with Afghan government leaders and the Taliban

at the Camp David presidential retreat.

Presidential envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has been leading U.S. peace talks with the Taliban and recently had appeared to be close to a deal to end America’s longest war and to trigger talks between the militant Islamist group and Afghans inside and outside the government. Trump’s abrupt decision to end the talks fueled worries about escalating violence and prompted Taliban threats to disrupt the upcoming election.

Wolters didn’t provide details about any potential uptick in U.S. military operations. He said the allies will do all they can to help Afghan security forces ensure a safe and secure presidential election on Sept. 28.

“We anticipate increased violence,” said Wolters, adding that planners will adjust “the stance and speed” of all the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in the country to secure the voting. He said the election “probably won’t be perfect,” but allied troops will support Afghan forces as they work to keep voters safe.

Trump, however, has already signaled an increase in offensive operations, saying Monday that “we’ve hit the Taliban harder in the last four days than they’ve been hit in over 10 years.”

U.S. officials have so far declined to detail how much the U.S. offensive has increased or how many more airstrikes the U.S., allies and Afghans have been conducting.

White House: US operation killed bin Laden’s son

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—The White House announced Saturday that Hamza bin Laden, the son of the late al-Qaida leader who had become an increasingly prominent figure in the terrorist organization, was killed in a U.S. counterterrorism operation in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

A statement issued in President Donald Trump’s name gave no further details, such as when Hamza bin Laden was killed or how the United States had confirmed his death.

Administration officials would provide no more information beyond the three-sentence statement from the White House. American officials have said there are indications that the CIA, not the U.S. military,

conducted the strike.

The White House statement said Hamza bin Laden’s death “not only deprives al-Qaida of important leadership skills and the symbolic connection to his father but undermines important operational activities of the group.” It said Osama bin Laden’s son “was responsible for planning and dealing with various terrorist groups.”

The U.S. officials had suspected this summer that Hamza bin Laden was dead, based on intelligence reports and the fact that he had not been heard from in some time. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters. Defense Secretary Mark Esper told Fox News Channel in a late August interview that it was “my understanding” that Hamza bin Laden was dead.

The younger bin Laden had been viewed as an eventual heir to the leadership of al-Qaida, and the group’s leader, Ayman al-Zawahri, had praised him in a 2015 video that appeared on jihadi websites, calling him a “lion from the den of al-Qaida.”

The U.S. government in February said it was offering \$1 million for help tracking down Hamza bin Laden as part of the State Department’s Rewards for Justice program. The department’s notice said he was married to a daughter of Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, an al-Qaida leader and Egyptian charged for his role in the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa. They were said to have two children, Osama and Khairiah, named after Hamza’s parents.

He was named a “specially designated global terrorist” in January 2017, and he had released audio and video messages calling for attacks against the U.S. and its allies. To mark one 9/11 anniversary, al-Qaida superimposed a childhood photo of him over a photo of the World Trade Center.

As al-Qaida’s leader, Osama bin Laden oversaw attacks that included the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, as well as the bombing of the USS Cole off Yemen.

He and others plotted and executed the 2001 attacks against the United States that led to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. U.S. Navy SEALs killed him in a raid on a house in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in 2011.

IG: US bomb-sniffing dogs dying in Jordan

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. government continued to provide dozens of bomb-sniffing dogs to the Kingdom of Jordan, even as the animals were dying of serious health problems and others were treated so poorly that they had “lost the will to work,” a government watchdog found.

Since 2008, at least 12 U.S.-trained explosive detection dogs provided to the kingdom under an anti-terrorism program died from medical problems. Others were overworked and unhealthy and were forced to live in kennels with “barely existent” sanitation, including some where a deadly virus was rampant, officials said.

The “dire straits” of Jordan’s program were revealed in an evaluation of the State Department’s program by the agency’s inspector general’s office. Released last week, the report calls for the department to stop sending dogs to Jordan until a plan is in place to ensure the animals’ health and welfare.

Infrequent and inconsistent

health and welfare checks on the dogs were among a range of problems plaguing the program, which has supplied over 100 dogs to six foreign countries since 2016, the report said.

Other issues include a lack of policies or standards and a tendency to provide the dogs to foreign governments without agreements on how they will be used, cared for and eventually retired from service.

For more than 20 years, the State Department has provided bomb-sniffing dogs to foreign countries. But the program came under scrutiny in May 2018, nearly a year after a complaint left on an IG hotline alleged a lack of oversight, insufficient health care for the animals and poor working conditions.

The program in Jordan is by far the largest recipient of U.S.-trained dogs, but the department could not provide detailed information about programs in nine other countries that had a total of between 75 and 100 active dogs as of last September, the report said.

The exact number of dogs active in those other countries — Bahrain, Egypt, Indonesia, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Oman and Thailand — were unclear because officials provided “insufficient and contradictory documentation,” the IG said. Dogs were also provided to the Dominican Republic and Afghanistan, but officials provided the IG with no data on those animals and said the program “does not maintain documents related to the welfare of dogs in Afghanistan.”

In Jordan, the dogs were “required to search large numbers of vehicles without proper shelter, sanitation, and care,” officials found in a site visit to assess the country’s program in spring 2016. “The canines observed were well beyond their working years and in need of medical care. [An official] gave several instances of canines dying from heat exhaustion within the past year.”

Heat injuries are not accidents, a veterinarian told the IG; they’re the result of negligence and improper care.

Still, the U.S. sent 20 dogs to Jordan that year, part of a total of at least 66 sent since the site visit. It later sent a pair of mentors to assist the Jordanian program in early 2017 at a cost of \$500,000 per year.

But dogs have continued to suffer severe health problems that were indicative of substandard care, and little progress has been made in Jordan’s ability to care for them, the IG found.

Two of the dogs sent since early 2016 later died of health problems linked with poor working or living conditions, and a third was returned to the U.S. to recover after being found severely underfed and living in a kennel covered in dirt and feces.

Jordanian authorities may be unable or unwilling to provide adequate care without U.S. intervention, the IG said.

In 2018, after persistent problems, the U.S. program paid \$540,000 for a veterinarian and veterinary technician to work with the Jordanians for one year.

Lt. Gen. Pat White takes charge of anti-ISIS fight

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

Lt. Gen. Pat White assumed command of Operation Inherent Resolve from Lt. Gen. Paul LaCamera in a Baghdad ceremony on Saturday.

White commands the Army’s Fort Hood, Texas-based III Armored Corps, and LaCamera leads the service’s XVIII Airborne Corps bases out of Fort Bragg, N.C., which have been trading off command of the coalition for the past several years.

Both headquarters have “created an unstoppable momentum” in the anti-ISIS fight, said Marine Gen. Kenneth E. McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, who presided over

the ceremony.

“Despite the leadership changes, the campaign moves on without pause, and that is by design,” McKenzie said in a statement.

LaCamera had assumed command of the coalition last September and led the alliance of 76 countries and five international organizations during a period that included the ouster of the terrorist group from its last stronghold in Syria this March.

“The milestone date of 23 March ... marked the end of ISIS control of any physical territory, the culmination of a five-year fight, with ISIS reduced to an underground organization,” McKenzie said, praising LaCamera and the XVIII Air-

borne Corps headquarters for “tremendous progress” in Iraq and northeastern Syria. Since then, ISIS’s “aspirations for a global caliphate [were] laid to rest.”

In the last five years, Operation Inherent Resolve and its Iraqi and Syrian partners have regained control of more than 40,000 square miles of territory. But the terrorist group has continued to fight as an insurgency and remains a threat to the region, officials and observers have said. The group has carried out assassinations, kidnappings and crop-burning in both countries since the collapse of its territorial regime.

During LaCamera’s tenure, the coalition trained nearly 60,000 Iraqi and Kurdish secu-

rity forces troops to secure the region, Inherent Resolve said in a statement.

LaCamera thanked service-members and coalition partners for their dedication to the mission.

White assumes command at a challenging time, amid heightened tensions with Iran in and other regional tensions.

Earlier this week, a series of billboards bearing the slogan “Death to America — Death to Israel” had reportedly popped up in the Iraqi capital where the coalition is headquartered, a message from Iran-backed proxy groups in the country who have carried out recent attacks targeting U.S. facilities there.

Huffman gets 14 days in prison for scam

Associated Press

BOSTON — “Desperate Housewives” star Felicity Huffman was sentenced Friday to 14 days in prison for paying \$15,000 to rig her daughter’s SAT scores, tearfully apologizing to the teenager for not trusting her to get into college on her own.

“I was frightened, I was stupid and I was so wrong,” Huffman, 56, said as she became the first parent sentenced in a college admissions scandal that ensnared dozens of wealthy and well-connected mothers and fathers.

The scandal exposed the lengths to which parents will go to get their children into the

“right” schools and reinforced suspicions that the college admissions process is slanted toward the rich.

In sentencing Huffman, U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani noted the outrage the case has generated, adding that it “isn’t because people discovered that it isn’t a true meritocracy out there.” The outrage, she said, was because Huffman took steps “to get one more advantage” in a system “already so distorted by money and privilege.”

Prosecutors had sought a month in prison for Huffman, while her lawyers said she should get probation.

A total of 51 people have been charged in the scheme, the big-

gest college admissions case ever prosecuted by the Justice Department. Prosecutors said parents schemed to manipulate test scores and bribed coaches to get their children into elite schools by having them labeled as recruited athletes for sports they didn’t even play.

Huffman paid \$15,000 to boost her older daughter’s SAT scores with the help of William “Rick” Singer, an admission consultant at the center of the scheme. Singer, who has pleaded guilty, allegedly bribed a test proctor to correct the teenager’s answers. Huffman pleaded guilty in May to a single count of conspiracy and fraud as part of a deal with prosecutors.

The amount Huffman paid

is relatively low compared with other bribes alleged in the scheme. Some parents are accused of paying up to \$500,000.

Huffman must report for her prison sentence in six weeks. She also must pay a \$30,000 fine and perform 250 hours of community service.

“I would like to apologize again to my daughter, my husband, my family and the educational community for my actions,” Huffman said in an emailed statement after the sentencing hearing. “And I especially want to apologize to the students who work hard every day to get into college, and to their parents who make tremendous sacrifices supporting their children.”

Bolton replacement list shows GOP divisions

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump entered his next phase of vetting for a new national security adviser, interviewing his top hostage negotiator Robert O’Brien at the White House on Friday and combing through a growing list of candidates with diplomatic, military and business experience.

The ouster of his hawkish national security adviser, John Bolton, has set off a contest among the Republican Party’s hawks and doves to install an

adviser who will help guide the president as he seeks to broker a landmark nuclear deal with North Korea, a withdrawal from Afghanistan and an easing of tensions with Iran.

The president’s most trusted foreign policy adviser, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, is quietly supporting three of his close colleagues, according to U.S. officials and congressional aides familiar with the matter.

Those candidates include O’Brien; Brian Hook, special envoy for Iran; and Ricky Wadell, assistant to the chairman

of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Vice President Mike Pence’s national security adviser, Keith Kellogg, and the president’s ambassador to Germany, Richard Grenell, are also under consideration for the position, officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss personnel decisions.

Each candidate is coming under scrutiny from influential advisers who have a stake in who becomes the next coordinator of America’s vast foreign policy apparatus.

In the deliberations, U.S.

officials have questioned the loyalty of Hook, who entered the State Department under former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and has come under attack by Fox News host Tucker Carlson, who has called him an “unapologetic neocon” with an “undisguised contempt for Donald Trump.” Those criticisms have been blunted by the president’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who has worked with Hook on Middle East issues and spoke up for him during a recent meeting with Trump, said a senior U.S. official.

Hook declined to comment.

Capsules to treat peanut allergies backed by experts

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Government experts on Friday backed an experimental treatment for children with peanut allergies that could become the first federally approved option for preventing life-threatening reactions.

The treatment is daily capsules of peanut powder that

gradually help children build up a tolerance.

The outside panel of advisers to the Food and Drug Administration voted overwhelmingly in favor of the treatment from Aimmune Therapeutics. The nonbinding vote amounts to an endorsement for approval.

The FDA is expected to make its final decision by January.

The panelists said the medi-

cation was an important option for parents and children dealing with peanut allergies. However, several also said they had concerns because the pill has to be taken continuously to maintain its effect.

An estimated 1.6 million children and teenagers in the U.S. would be eligible for the medication, to be sold as Palforzia, which is intended for ages 4 to

17. Peanut allergy is the most common food allergy in the country and the standard treatment involves strictly monitoring what children eat.

That approach doesn’t always work and accidental exposure is common, sending 1 in 4 children with peanut allergies to the emergency room every year.

Biden pledges to release medical records

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden is shrugging off thinly veiled criticism from younger rivals that he is too old for the Oval Office.

The former vice president, 76, told reporters Friday that he'll prove his fitness through the campaign, even asking one questioner jokingly: "You wanna wrestle?" And he pledged to release his medical records "when I get my next physical" before the Iowa caucuses begin the voting process in February.

"There's no reason for me not to release my medical records," Biden said.

Age has been an undercurrent of the Democratic primary for months, with

Biden, Sen. Bernie Sanders, 78, and Sen. Elizabeth Warren, 70, leading the crowded field vying to take on President Donald Trump, who is 73.

The issue spilled into the open Thursday, when candidate Julian Castro, 44, used the third Democratic primary debate to suggest during a health care discussion that Biden was confused about his own proposals.

"Are you forgetting what you said two minutes ago?" Castro asked, wrongly accusing Biden of misstating how people would secure health insurance coverage under his proposal for a Medicare-like "public option" plan to compete alongside private insurance.

Sen. Cory Booker, who is 50, added after

the debate in a CNN interview that there are "a lot of people who are concerned about Joe Biden's ability to carry the ball all the way across the end line without fumbling."

Both Castro and Booker are lagging far behind the top tier and looking for ways to gain a toehold in a campaign dominated by septuagenarians. Biden said Friday, as he has before, that his age is a legitimate issue for his opponents to use and voters to consider. But the Thursday debate marked a new turn, with Booker and Castro directly raising the issue.

If Biden is elected, he would be 78 on Inauguration Day, older on his first day as president than Ronald Reagan was when he left office in January 1989.

O'Rourke scrambles Dems' gun message

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Beto O'Rourke's "hell, yes" moment at the Democrats' presidential debate is scrambling his party's message on guns.

The Democrats have long contended their support of gun control laws does not mean they want to take away law-abiding citizens' firearms. But on Friday, they struggled to square that message with their presidential contender's full-throated call on national TV for confiscating assault rifles.

"Hell, yes, we're going to take your AR-15, your AK-47 and we're not going to allow it to be used against your fellow Americans

anymore," the former Texas congressman declared during Thursday night's debate.

O'Rourke's hometown of El Paso was the site of a mass shooting last month that killed 22 people, and he has put the issue of gun violence at the center of his campaign effort. On Friday, his campaign hawked T-shirts emblazoned with his debate vow.

However, some fellow Democrats chastised him and fretted that his remarks may have made things harder for gun control supporters as they negotiate with President Donald Trump on legislation to respond to this summer's mass shootings.

"I frankly think that that clip will be played for years at Second Amendment

rallies with organizations that try to scare people by saying Democrats are coming for your guns," Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., told CNN on Friday. "I don't think a majority of the Senate or the country is going to embrace mandatory buybacks. We need to focus on what we can get done."

His fears about new rages against gun control supporters seem sure to be borne out.

"This is what their goal is. We've always said it, now they're saying it," said Alan Gottlieb, of the Second Amendment Foundation, based in Washington state. "Now they've said it, and we're going to make them eat it."

Yemen rebels claim drone attacks on Saudi oil sites

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Drones claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels attacked the world's largest oil processing facility in Saudi Arabia and a major oilfield operated by Saudi Aramco early Saturday, sparking a huge fire at a processor crucial to global energy supplies.

It wasn't clear if there were any injuries in the attacks in Buqyaq and the Khurais oil field, nor what effect it would have on oil production in the kingdom. The attack also likely will heighten tensions further across the wider Persian Gulf amid a confrontation between the U.S. and Iran over its unraveling nuclear deal with world powers. The Houthis are backed by Tehran amid

a yearslong Saudi-led war against them in Yemen.

Online videos apparently shot in Buqyaq included the sound of gunfire in the background.

Smoke rose over the skyline and glowing flames could be seen a distance away at the Abqaiq oil processing facility.

Saudi state television later aired a segment with a correspondent there as smoke from the blazes clearly rose behind. That smoke also was visible from space.

The fires began after the sites were "targeted by drones," the Interior Ministry said in a statement carried by the state-run Saudi Press Agency. It said an investigation into the attack was underway.

In a short address aired by the Houthi's

Al-Masirah satellite news channel, military spokesman Yahia Sarie said the rebels launched 10 drones in their coordinated attack on the sites. He warned attacks by the rebels would only get worse if the war continues.

"The only option for the Saudi government is to stop attacking us," Sarie said.

Saudi Aramco, the state-owned oil giant, did not immediately respond to questions from The Associated Press.

The kingdom hopes soon to offer a sliver of the company in an initial public offering.

Saudi Aramco describes its Abqaiq oil processing facility in Buqyaq as "the largest crude oil stabilization plant in the world."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man in parachute dies after hitting power line

TX EUSTACE — Authorities said a man in a powered parachute died after hitting a power line in rural East Texas.

Henderson County Sheriff Botie Hillhouse said the man died in the incident near Eustace, located about 60 miles southeast of Dallas.

Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Lynn Lunsford said preliminary information indicates the parachute hit a power line.

Momma black bear bites woman's ankle

FL LONGWOOD — Officials said a Florida woman was bitten on the ankle by a black bear outside her home.

A Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission news release said she was attacked at a Longwood gated community.

FWC spokesman Chad Weber said she had let her dog out shortly after midnight when the dog encountered a female bear with two cubs. The woman suffered an ankle injury that wasn't considered life-threatening. The dog wasn't hurt.

Contractor fined for not hiring ample black firms

MD BALTIMORE — The city of Baltimore fined a construction contractor \$40,000 for failing to turn enough work over to black-owned firms.

The Baltimore Sun reported it's the first time the city has penalized a contractor for not meeting minority contracting goals requiring them to send a certain amount of work to firms

owned by racial minorities and women.

Virginia-based sewer company AM-Liner won an \$11 million city contract in 2014, but a black business owner accused an AM-Liner employee of using a racial slur during a meeting that year.

He pulled his utilities firm out of the deal, and AM-Liner reportedly failed to hire another black-owned company in its place.

Zombie March to be held for charities

IA IOWA CITY — It's that time of year, when zombies gather in Iowa City to help their fellow undead.

The 14th Iowa City Zombie March takes place Sept. 21 in downtown Iowa City. Zombies will assemble at College Green Park, and assistance with zombie makeup will be available.

Proceeds from the march will go to support Table to Table, a program that collects otherwise wasted food from donors and distributes it to agencies that serve the hungry, homeless and at-risk. The march will also support CommUnity Crisis Services and Food Bank.

The Zombie March has been supporting local charities since 2006.

Police get approval for regular drone use

CA LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles Police Department won permanent permission to fly drones.

The Daily News reported the police commission voted 5-0 to allow the LAPD to use the small, remote-controlled aircraft on a regular basis.

A year-long test of the drones ended in July.

The newspaper said the commission's vote allows LAPD to

move forward with its drone program, but officers will be limited in how they can use them.

Charge dropped for man who put leash on wife

PA YORK — Authorities dropped a simple assault charge against a Maryland man who used a dog leash to lead his wife around a Pennsylvania fair because she has late-stage dementia.

Court documents show York County District Attorney Dave Sunday found the husband "made an ill-advised decision while attempting to provide his dying wife a trip to the fair." A judge signed the order dismissing the charges.

Health officials warn of attacks by fox

CT EASTLYME — Public health officials warned of a fox attack in a coastal Connecticut community.

The Ledge Light Health District said the fox attacked two people in East Lyme.

Police said one person suffered bites to the leg and the other to the arm. One was hospitalized.

The fox was not captured so there was no word on whether it had rabies or any other ailment.

Bearded dragon found in student's backpack

FL PANAMA CITY — It would have made for a very interesting show and tell but this little creature didn't even make it out of its backpack into a Florida classroom.

Bay County School District officials said they found a bearded dragon in a middle school student's backpack.

In a Facebook post, the school said they found the stowaway in a fancy designer backpack and put him in a box until an adult could take him home.

The student said they brought Jango to school because they didn't want him to be sad home alone all day.

Man dressed as Elmo accused of groping

NY NEW YORK — A man dressed as the children's character Elmo was charged with groping a 14-year-old girl who posed for a photo with him in Times Square.

The New York Post said the man, Inocente Andrade-Pacheco, 54, denied the allegations through his lawyer. The Post said the man from Passaic, N.J., was released without bail after his arraignment on charges including forcible touching.

Town says no thanks to electric scooters

AL HUNTSVILLE — Leaders in Huntsville said no to a proposal to allow electric scooters in the north Alabama city.

News outlets reported that City Council members rejected a move to bring a scooter pilot program to downtown on a 3-2 vote.

The scooters have drawn complaints about safety and other problems in some cities, including Atlanta. But they're also popular with riders who use them as cheap, efficient transportation.

The council vote effectively kills the program for now in Huntsville, a city of about 195,000 people.

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Jackets starting over after losing stars

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The offseason drama churned up by the exodus of some of their top stars is now behind the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Now they open training camp with some burning questions.

Can veteran Joonas Korpi-salo, rookie Elvis Merzlikins or someone else step into the huge skates vacated by star goalie Sergei Bobrovsky?

How will Columbus replace the scoring of forwards Artemi Panarin and Matt Duchene?

Can Blue Jackets stalwarts like Cam Atkinson, Josh Anderson and Pierre-Luc Dubois make the Columbus faithful stop grumbling about the superstars who spurned the city and get the team to the playoffs for a fourth straight year?

General manager Jarmo Kekalainen, for one, is indignant that anyone thinks the Blue Jackets will take a step backward following the offseason exodus of talent. He's tired of talking about it already.

"We're very, very confident in our core group," Kekalainen said. "And I'm a little aggravat-

ed by the doubters, to be honest with you, because it shows disrespect to our core group that brought us all that success we've had in the past three years."

Kekalainen decided to go with a strategy of counting on trusted veterans to step up their offensive production along with moving up NHL-ready prospects to help fill the void left by Panarin — who made it clear a year ago he didn't want to re-sign with the team and subsequently left for the New York Rangers — and Duchene, a trade-deadline rental who signed with Nashville.

"We're all going to have to do it by committee," said Atkinson, who had a career-high 41 goals and 28 assists last season. "Hopefully, the guys who get the opportunity seize the moment, step in and step up for us because we're going to need everyone."

Alexandre Texier and Emil Bemstrom, both 20, are among the prospects expected to contribute. Texier came to the U.S. at the end of last season, had a short stay in the minors and then showed flashes of what he

could do down the stretch for the Blue Jackets. Bemstrom starred in the Swedish professional league and comes to camp amid plenty of hype.

"(Panarin) is a very good player, he's a game-breaker. But I'm not going to sit here and say that's a hole," said coach John Tortorella, who acknowledged he has a chip on his shoulder because of the predictions of doom. "It just gives other people an opportunity to fill that, and I feel very comfortable where we're going with some of our young kids."

Kekalainen's biggest offseason move was adding veteran help with Gustav Nyquist, a top-six forward who had a career-high 22 goals and 38 assists last season with Detroit and San Jose.

Replacing Bobrovsky, a two-time Vezina Trophy winner, is the toughest order. Columbus will give Korpi-salo a chance to be the everyday guy. Korpi-salo has played well in stretches as Bobrovsky's backup for the past four seasons. He'll compete with the flashy 25-year-old Merzlikins, who has been outstanding in the Swiss league

and in international play.

Players who have been here a while insist the naysaying will go away if they win.

"We feel confident with what we have in this room," All-Star defenseman Seth Jones said. "We understand what the narrative is probably going to be this year, and I think now more than ever we have to maintain the tight chemistry in this room and not let outside noise interfere with what we're trying to accomplish."

The Blue Jackets, who got to the second round of the playoffs after a stunning sweep of Tampa Bay in the opening round last spring, will skate together for the first time Saturday free of the drama Panarin and Bobrovsky dragged around all last season after both made it known they didn't want to stay in Columbus any longer than necessary.

"Maybe we don't have the shiny pieces people like to talk about," captain Nick Foligno said. "But there's going to be a lot of headlines, a lot of great plays going on because of the skill we have."

Korda sisters come through again for US at Solheim Cup

Associated Press

GLENEAGLES, Scotland — The dream team was reunited and the Korda sisters delivered again for the United States in a record-tying win at the Solheim Cup.

The performance of Morgan Pressel and Marina Alex was just as impressive Saturday.

The U.S. team kept in touch with Europe by sharing the morning foursomes 2-2 on a blustery Day 2 at Gleneagles, leaving the score at 6½-5½ to the Europeans.

Some familiar faces brought home the points for the Americans.

Jessica and Nelly Korda — the first sisters to play together at a Solheim Cup — won in another blowout, beating Carlota

Ciganda and Bronte Law 6 and 5 to tie the record for the heaviest margin of victory in foursomes. It followed up a 6-and-4 win in the same alternate-shot format on Friday before they were split up for the fourballs.

Pressel, playing in her sixth Solheim Cup, and Alex, one of six U.S. rookies this year, lost four holes from Nos. 2-6 against Anna Nordqvist and Anne van Dam before launching an astonishing fightback in winds that reached speeds of 32 mph on the PGA Centenary Course.

The Americans won seven of the next nine holes, eventually securing a 2-and-1 victory.

Europe won the other two matches through pairings yet to lose this week.

Georgia Hall and Celine Boutier won in foursomes for

the second time this week, beating Lizette Salas and Ally McDonald 3 and 2. Salas stood out Saturday morning by wearing giant, thick earmuffs to accompany the hand-warmer around her waist.

Charley Hull and Azahara Munoz defeated Danielle Kang and Megan Khang, 4 and 3, and have 2½ points from three matches.

Chappell shoots 59 at The Greenbrier

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, W.Va. — Kevin Chappell shot an 11-under 59 on Friday in the second round of A Military Tribute at The Greenbrier for the 11th sub-60 round in PGA Tour history.

Chappell missed a 10-foot

birdie putt on the par-4 ninth to fall a stroke short of Jim Furyk's tour record.

"I was trying to keep the mindset, keep the foot on the gas and attack," Chappell said. "All in all, couldn't be happier with where I'm at."

Jim Furyk set the record in 2016 with a 58 in the final round of the Travelers Championship.

Chappell was 10 under for the tournament. He opened with a 71.

It was the first sub-60 round on the PGA Tour since Brandt Snedeker's 59 at the 2018 Wyndham Championship. Stuart Appleby shot 59 at The Greenbrier in the final round in 2010 to win by one stroke in its inaugural season in 2010.

Patriots' Brown eligible to play vs. Miami

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Antonio Brown is said to be eligible to play against Miami. Whether he actually does after just three practices with the Patriots is still not clear.

"We're determining that," coach Bill Belichick said Friday. "I'm not gonna hand out a copy of the game plan. We'll do what we think is best for the team."

The star wide receiver was not placed on the commissioner's exempt list, two people with direct knowledge of the decision told The Associated Press on Friday. They spoke on condition of anonymity because the decision has not been announced.

Belichick, whose team faces the Dolphins on Sunday, would not confirm the move by the NFL before practice.

Brown has been accused of

rape and sexual assault in a civil case in Florida and denies the allegations by his former trainer. He won't go on the exempt list this week because no criminal charges have been filed and because the NFL hasn't fully developed its investigation. Players on the list can't play in games or practice with a team but are still paid. A player can be placed on the exempt list at any point.

Brown signed with New England after requesting and receiving his release from the Oakland Raiders.

Since the lawsuit became public, the ordinarily flamboyant Brown has kept the lowest of profiles.

He arrived in Massachusetts on Monday in search of a fresh start following a trail of follies with the Raiders that included a bizarre foot injury, a dispute with the NFL over his helmet,

missed practices, multiple fines and a run-in with Oakland general manager Mike Mayock.

Now Brown is trying to acclimate himself to perhaps the most regimented environment in the NFL.

He's been mostly insulated off the field by the team. The four-time All-Pro has yet to address reporters since joining New England. He has been seen only on the practice field. The stall to his locker has been closed whenever reporters had access to the room, suggesting he has left for the day. He has been trying to learn a new playbook and system and earn the trust of quarterback Tom Brady.

Belichick said there's no way to gauge how long it takes a new player to get comfortable enough in New England's system.

The most recent example of a

receiver to join the Patriots on a timeline similar to Brown's was Josh Gordon last season. After wearing out his welcome in Cleveland following an inconsistent four-year stint, Gordon was traded by the Browns to the Patriots on Sept. 18 of last year.

Gordon practiced with the team for three days but was inactive that week when New England lost at Detroit. He debuted the following week, though he played only 18 of 81 offensive snaps, catching just two passes. He caught his first touchdown pass as a Patriot a week later.

Gordon said getting up to speed with the Patriots isn't something that happens overnight. He said the support in the Patriots' locker room helped him adjust as fast as he did.

College football roundup

No. 20 Washington State pulls away from Houston

Associated Press

HOUSTON — After No. 20 Washington State struggled to get going early on Friday night against Houston before pulling away in the second half for a win, coach Mike Leach lamented that his team didn't have more time to play.

"I almost wish we had a fifth quarter because I thought we had more work to do and we could have grown a little bit more," he said. "I thought we were playing our best football at the end."

Anthony Gordon threw for 440 yards and three touchdowns for his third straight 400-yard game as Washington State got the 31-24 victory.

Gordon threw a 7-yard touchdown pass in the fourth quarter and had two 39-yard scoring throws, including one in the third quarter that gave Washington State (3-0) the lead for good.

"I thought we were frantic the first half both offensively and defensively," Leach said. "Then when we settled in I thought we played well the second half."

D'Eriq King had 128 yards passing and a score and added 94 yards rushing and two touchdowns on a night Houston (1-2) led 14-7 at halftime. But Houston struggled to move the ball in the second half, lost two fumbles and didn't get in the end zone after halftime until King's 12-yard run with 2:21 left cut the lead to 31-24.

Brandon Arconado had nine receptions for 115 yards and Max Borghi added 61 yards receiving and ran for a touchdown in the third quarter to help Washington State to the victory.

Kansas 48, Boston College 24: Carter Stanley threw for three touchdowns, Khalil Herbert rushed for 187 yards on just 11 carries and the visiting

Jayhawks stunned the Eagles for their first road win over a Power Five school in nearly 11 years.

Kansas (2-1), which entered as a three-touchdown underdog, won its first road game against a power conference opponent since a victory at Iowa State on Oct. 4, 2008, a span of 48 straight losses. Pooka Williams ran for 121 yards on 22 attempts with a TD, and Herbert added a late score. Stanley was 20-for-27 for 238 yards with an interception.

AJ Dillon ran for 151 yards on 27 carries and Anthony Brown went 18 for 36 with 195 yards a TD pass for the Eagles (2-1). Brown also caught a TD.

Kansas went into the locker room with a 28-24 lead at the end of a wide-open first half that saw the teams combine for 623 yards (BC 313, Kansas 310). They also totaled 17 plays of 10 yards or more.

Wake Forest 24, North Car-

olina 18: Jamie Newman came up with a pair of big plays on a clock-draining fourth-quarter drive, helping the host Demon Deacons hold off the Tar Heels' comeback bid.

Newman hit Scotty Washington for a 27-yard gain, then had a 4-yard scramble on third down to keep possession and help Wake Forest (3-0) take 5 minutes off the clock and add a field goal to a dwindling lead.

UNC (2-1) had a final drive with no timeouts with a chance for a third straight fourth-quarter comeback, but the game ended when Michael Carter didn't get out of bounds in time on a run to set up a final desperation heave from just across midfield.

Wake Forest (3-0) dominated the first half to lead 21-0, only to see freshman quarterback Sam Howell lead the Tar Heels on two fourth-quarter TD drives to get back in it.

Cubs keep pace, blast Pirates

Associated Press

CHICAGO — After a rough start, Anthony Rizzo, Willson Contreras and the Chicago Cubs rebounded with an overwhelming response at the plate.

Rizzo hit a grand slam, Contreras launched two long solo homers and the Cubs kept pace in the NL wild-card race with a 17-8 win over the Pittsburgh Pirates on Friday.

Rookie Nico Hoerner hit a two-run shot for his first major league homer and had four RBIs for the Cubs, who moved one game ahead of Milwaukee for the second wild card. The Brewers lost to the NL Central-leading Cardinals on Friday night.

Contreras, Hoerner and Nicholas Castellanos each homered in the first with the wind blowing out as Chicago scored five times — and then kept on rolling — after Pittsburgh jumped on Jon Lester for a 4-0 lead.

“Weirdly, I was expecting that response,” manager Joe Maddon said. “I really thought that under the circumstances the energy level was great, then to answer as quickly as we did... I want to believe that’s going to continue.”

Contreras, who said he was just trying to hit

pitches to right center, boosted his homer total to 23. The All-Star catcher has four home runs in six games since returning from a hamstring injury.

“I knew that we were going to have a good game,” Contreras said. “We were hungry. It was just the first inning and we never gave up and we came back.”

Hoerner elevated a low pitch to the center field batter’s eye in his first plate appearance at Wrigley Field. He drove in two more runs with a single in Chicago’s seven-run fifth.

The 22-year-old infielder made his debut with the Cubs on Monday at San Diego after the team announced All-Star shortstop Javier Baez would miss the rest of the season with a hairline fracture in his left thumb. Hoerner, who played at Double-A before joining Chicago, is hitting .350 with eight RBIs through his first five games.

“To come here and contribute like he’s been doing, hopefully that continues for us,” Lester said. “He’s been a little bit of a spark plug.”

Castellanos’ 26th homer, a two-run shot, tied his career high and was his 15th in 40 games with Chicago since arriving at the trade deadline from Detroit. He added his 50th double to tie for the major league lead.

Davis homers twice as A’s top Rangers

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Khris Davis will probably miss the hitter-friendly home of the Texas Rangers more than most.

The Oakland slugger might not quite be finished at Globe Life Park.

Davis homered twice, Ramon Laureano connected on the game’s fourth three-run shot to break a tie in the sixth inning and the Athletics stayed in front in the AL wild-card race with a 14-9 victory over the Rangers on Friday night.

The 21st and 22nd long balls of the season for Davis put him within one of Jason Giambi’s record 20 homers by an opposing player in a ballpark that’s being replaced next year by a retractable-roof stadium across the street. The A’s have two more games this weekend.

“I feel pretty confident just because the fans are almost cheering for me,” said Davis, whose 32 homers against the Rangers are his most against any team. “They’re giving me a hard time but I can hear them and they tell me to take it easy on them, so that gives me some confidence.”

The A’s (88-60) won their fourth straight, a streak that started with three victories in Houston following a 15-0 loss to the AL West-leading Astros.

Oakland remained a half-game ahead of Tampa Bay, which beat the Los Angeles Angels and has the second wild-card spot. Cleveland, rained out at home against Minnesota, is 1½ games behind the A’s.

Laureano’s 22nd homer, well over the 14-foot fence down the line in left, came against rookie reliever Ian Gibaut (1-1) after Texas manager Chris Woodward ordered an intentional walk of leadoff hitter Marcus Semien on a 3-0 count with an open base in a 7-7 game.

Texas matched a season high by allowing five homers, four of them with two outs, including both of the three-run shots. The A’s scored 12 two-out runs.

Roundup

Kershaw, Dodgers get past Mets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Noah Syndergaard got caught again, this time by the smart-swinging Los Angeles Dodgers.

Syndergaard kept wobbling with Wilson Ramos behind the plate while Clayton Kershaw was right in the pocket, sending the Dodgers over the New York Mets 9-2 Friday night.

Coming off a four-game sweep of Arizona, Syndergaard and the Mets fell flat. They dropped three games behind Chicago and Milwaukee for the second NL wild-card spot. Philadelphia also is ahead of New York, which was eliminated from contention in the NL East.

Kershaw (14-5) stopped a rare three-start skid and improved to 10-0 in regular-season play against the Mets. Kershaw threw a season-high 105 pitches as the Dodgers won their ninth in a row at Citi Field dating to 2016.

Cardinals 10, Brewers 0: Paul Goldschmidt hit a grand slam and a three-run homer and Adam Wainwright pitched six innings of two-hit ball in St. Louis’ victory over visiting Milwaukee.

Rays 11, Angels 4: Willy Adames, Austin Meadows and Jesus Aguilar homered in the third inning, and Tampa Bay kept pace in the AL wild-card race with a victory over host Los Angeles.

Braves 5, Nationals 0: Mike Soroka allowed one hit over six innings, Ozzie Albies homered and finished with the three hits in Atlanta’s win over host Washington.

Reds 4, Diamondbacks 3: Joey Votto and Josh VanMeter homered, Luis Castillo pitched five solid innings and Cincinnati beat host Arizona.

Astros 4, Royals 1: George Springer hit a tiebreaking, three-run homer in the ninth inning, Gerrit Cole won his

13th straight decision and visiting Houston beat Kansas City to stop a three-game skid.

Rockies 10, Padres 8: Nolan Arenado hit his 40th home run and Trevor Story connected twice as host Colorado beat San Diego.

Orioles 6, Tigers 2: DJ Stewart and Trey Mancini homered to lead visiting Baltimore past Detroit in the first meeting in 50 years of major league teams both 50 or more games under .500.

Blue Jays 6, Yankees 5 (12): Bo Bichette hit his first game-ending home run, a drive that lifted Toronto past visiting New York.

Giants 1, Marlins 0: Buster Posey drove in the game’s only run as San Francisco beat visiting Miami.

White Sox 9, Mariners 7: Jose Abreu and Eloy Jimenez hit solo home runs, Yoan Moncada drove in four runs and visiting Chicago beat Seattle.