

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Iran rejects US blame for Saudi oil attack

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A weekend drone attack on Saudi Arabia that cut into global energy supplies and halved the kingdom's oil production threatened Sunday to fuel a regional crisis as Iran denied U.S. allegations it launched the assault and tensions remained high over Tehran's collapsing nuclear deal.

Iran called the U.S. claims "maximum lies," while a commander in its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard reiterated its forces could strike U.S. military bases across the Mideast with its arsenal of ballistic missiles. A prominent U.S. senator suggested striking Iranian oil refineries in response for the assault claimed by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels on Saudi Arabia's largest oil processing facility.

"Because of the tension and sensitive situation, our region is like a powder keg," warned Guard Brig. Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh. "When these contacts come too close, when forces come into contact with one another, it is possible a conflict happens because of a misunderstanding."

Actions on any side could break into the

open a twilight war that's been raging just below the surface of the wider Persian Gulf over the last months. Already, there have been mysterious attacks on oil tankers that America blames on Tehran, at least one suspected Israeli strike on Shiite forces in Iraq, and Iran shooting down a U.S. military surveillance drone.

The attack Saturday on Saudi Arabia's Abqaiq plant and its Khurais oil field led to the interruption of an estimated 5.7 million barrels of the kingdom's crude oil production per day, equivalent to more than 5% of the world's daily supply.

It remains unclear how King Salman and his assertive son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, will respond to an attack targeting what analysts describe as the heart of the Saudi oil industry.

Late Saturday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo directly blamed Iran for the Saudi attack on Twitter, without offering evidence to support his claim.

"Amid all the calls for de-escalation, Iran has now launched an unprecedented attack on the world's energy supply," Pompeo wrote. "There is no evidence the attacks came from Yemen."

The U.S., Western nations, their Gulf Arab allies and U.N. experts say Iran supplies the Houthis with weapons and drones — a charge that Tehran denies.

U.S. officials previously alleged at least one recent drone attack on Saudi Arabia came from Iraq, where Iran backs Shiite militias. Those militias in recent weeks have been targeted themselves by mysterious airstrikes, with at least one believed to have been carried out by Israel.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi on Sunday dismissed Pompeo's remarks as "blind and futile comments."

Separately, Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi's office issued a statement Sunday denying the drone attack came from there. Iraq "abides by its constitutions that prevents the use of its lands to launch aggressions against neighboring countries," the statement said.

Houthi leader Muhammad al-Bukhaiti reiterated his group's claim of responsibility Sunday, telling The Associated Press it exploited "vulnerabilities" in Saudi air defenses to strike the targets. He did not elaborate.

Chemical cleanup at bases may cost over \$2B

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The costs to clean up chemical contaminants suspected at more than 400 current and former military sites could eclipse the \$2 billion estimate that the Pentagon projected in March, defense officials said Thursday.

The increased cost assessment for the Defense Department came as an environmental watchdog organization that monitors drinking water contamination at military sites increased the number of installations where it said perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, have been found in drinking water and

warned that number would continue to increase.

The Pentagon recently established a task force to determine the scope of contamination from PFAS at Defense Department sites and the impact those man-made chemicals have on humans, said Bob McMahon, who is the assistant secretary of defense for sustainment and the chairman of the task force.

Since the 1950s, PFAS have been used worldwide in a variety of products including nonstick cookware, water-repellent fabrics and the firefighting foam commonly used throughout the military. They have been linked to an increase in cancer risks, birth defects

and other health problems, according to the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, or ATSDR.

McMahon said Thursday that the task force is working with ATSDR to better understand the problem the military faces, starting with studies of eight stateside Air Force installations or former installations and their surrounding communities chosen by ATSDR.

The Pentagon has also begun to study the impacts of PFAS on Defense Department firefighters, who through using the firefighting foam — officially known as Aqueous Film Forming Foam, or AFFF — are believed to have received the most exposure to the chemicals

in the department.

The ATSDR study will look at Shepherd Field Air National Guard Base in West Virginia, Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado, Eilson Air Force Base in Alaska, Barnes Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts, the former Reese Air Force Base in Texas, Stewart Air National Guard Base in New York, New Castle Air National Guard Base in Delaware and Fairchild Air Force Base in Washington, as well as the communities surrounding them.

Officials hope to determine the level of PFAS chemicals in humans in those communities and how those levels correlate to health problems.

Acquitted Navy SEAL sues 2 ex-lawyers

Associated Press

SANDIEGO—A Navy SEAL acquitted in a war crimes trial has sued two of his former attorneys and a military legal defense nonprofit.

The San Diego Union-Tribune said the lawsuit filed Fri-

day in Texas by Petty Officer 1st Class Edward Gallagher claims his case was not defended properly.

The filing says attorneys Colby Vokey and Phillip Stackhouse, along with United American Patriots, attempted

to delay the case in an effort to maximize fundraising for the nonprofit.

Stackhouse said he has not yet read the complaint. David Gurfein, CEO of United American Patriots, said he hasn't read it either. A lawyer for Vokey

did not address the complaint in an email to the newspaper Saturday.

A military jury in July cleared Gallagher of murder. He was convicted of a single charge of posing for photos with the corpse of a 17-year-old militant.

Recent death leaves only 3 USS Arizona survivors

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

Lauren Bruner, who survived the cataclysmic attack on the USS Arizona by Japanese planes on Dec. 7, 1941, died last Tuesday at the age of 98.

His passing means just three surviving crewmembers who were aboard the Arizona that day remain: Don Stratton, 97, Lou Conter, 98, and Ken Potts, 98.

"Lauren was always quick with a laugh and had a smile that would brighten an entire room," Stratton wrote on Facebook on Wednesday. "We are beyond heartbroken."

Bruner regularly attended the annual commemorations of the attack held each Dec. 7 at the Pearl Harbor National Memorial.

During a news conference there in 2014, Bruner announced that he had finally decided to have the urn that would hold his cremated remains interred in the sunken hull of the Arizona.

"Well, I studied it for a long

time," Bruner explained with his characteristic humor. "All my family and friends have been buried in various places, cemeteries. But it seems like after a while, nobody pays attention to them anymore after about five years. I hope that a lot of people will still be coming to the Arizona. I would be glad to see them."

Daniel Martinez, chief historian for the Pearl Harbor National Memorial, which manages the USS Arizona Memorial, said in a tweet that discussions with the family regarding the placement of Bruner's ashes aboard the ship will be forthcoming.

Bruner chronicled his experience of the attack in "Second to the Last to Leave USS Arizona," a book he co-authored in 2017.

Bruner was born Nov. 4, 1920, and enlisted in the Navy in 1938. The following year, he was assigned to the USS Arizona as a fire controlman in charge of the ship's .50-caliber guns.

In a 2014 interview with Ari-

zona Public Radio, Bruner recalled that on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, he raced up from below the ship's deck when the attack began. There, he saw a Japanese plane fly by so closely that he could see the pilot's face with "a big old grin on his face, mouth wide open."

"I could see all those teeth," he said. "You wanted to reach and bust him one."

Bruner raced for his battle station, but a Japanese Zero fixed its sights on him, fellow survivor Stratton recalled in his memoir, "All the Gallant Men."

"A blast from its guns, and bullets bit metal," Stratton wrote. "One of those shots struck flesh, hitting the back of Lauren's lower leg. He limped onto the sky platform, a trail of blood following him."

The Arizona was hit with four bombs, one of them crashing through three levels of the ship and into a powder magazine.

"It blew the heck out of everything, just lifted the bow about 30 feet off the water," Bruner said in the 2014 interview. "It

had one hell of a fire."

Bruner, Stratton and four others were stranded amid the smoke and fire that quickly consumed the Arizona.

The men escaped death by grappling hand-over-hand for 70 feet on a rope to a nearby repair ship, the USS Vestal. Bruner had burns on over 70% of his body.

He was taken to the hospital ship USS Solace and transferred to a mainland hospital after the turn of the year.

After he recovered, Bruner was assigned to the USS Coghlan, participating in eight major engagements in the Aleutian Islands and seven operations in the South Pacific operations.

He retired from the Navy in 1947.

The Dec. 7 attack left Bruner traumatized and he suffered decades of "nightmares, visions of dead bodies and memories of the stench of burning human flesh," according to the preface of his book.

"I chose to face the future and not let my past dictate what might be ahead," he wrote.

US agrees to pay \$11.5M to settle Navy hospital lawsuit

Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. — The federal government has agreed to pay \$11.5 million to settle a medical negligence lawsuit by a Virginia couple involving the birth of their son five years ago

at a military hospital on Guam.

A federal judge on Friday approved the monetary settlement to help the parents care for their child, who suffers severe and permanent brain damage.

The Virginian-Pilot, of Nor-

folk, Va., reported that Deardre and Daniel Bebeau Sr. — Navy petty officers living in Virginia Beach — sued for malpractice after their son was born in 2014 at the U.S. Naval Hospital on Guam. They were stationed there at the time.

A spokesman for the U.S. Attorney for Eastern Virginia — who defended the government — declined to comment.

Court documents show defense attorneys stressed there was no admission of wrongdoing.

Several hurt when decks collapse at firefighters' event

Associated Press

WILDWOOD, N.J. — Multiple levels of decking attached to a building collapsed Saturday evening at the Jersey Shore, trapping people and injuring several, including children, officials and witnesses said.

The collapse happened about 6 p.m. Saturday in Wildwood, N.J., during the annual New Jersey Firemen's Convention.

It was unclear how many people were on or under the decks at the time, but authorities said those who were trapped were quickly removed.

The annual convention attracts thousands of current and former firefighters to the resort town. Firefighters were likely among those hurt or trapped.

The number of injured was unclear, but neighbors said sev-

eral people required hospitalization. Children were among those injured, a witness said. No deaths were immediately reported.

Photos and video on social media showed firefighters trying to lift a piece of decking. Images showed multiple levels of decking ripped away from the building and reduced to beams and splintered wood.

The decks appeared to have been attached to a three-story building and topped by a fourth-floor overhang. The second and third levels appeared to have pancaked onto a first-floor deck. The overhang looked intact.

Wildwood fire Chief Daniel Spiegel said authorities would not make a statement amid attempts to clean up and investigate.

Source: Bolton exit tied to views on Iran

The Washington Post

John Bolton's departure as national security adviser stemmed from a disagreement Sept. 9 over a suggestion from President Donald Trump that the United States might lift some sanctions on Iran as a negotiation tool, a person close to Bolton said Saturday.

Bolton submitted a letter of resignation Tuesday morning, although Trump tweeted that he had fired his top in-house national security aide. Trump cited multiple policy differences with Bolton, and later claimed Bolton had "set us back" in negotiations with North Korea.

Trump did not mention disagreement over Iran sanctions, and the direct link between the president's alleged interest in easing sanctions and his break with Bolton has not been previ-

ously reported.

Bolton was a main architect of the administration's "maximum pressure" campaign of escalating economic sanctions and threats of retaliation for Iran's alleged support for terrorism. The idea has been to cripple Iran's economy to the point that its leaders feel they must bargain away any nuclear ambitions and missile technology.

Trump has said he wants to open negotiations with Iran as soon as this month for a deal to replace the 2015 international nuclear agreement he called "horrible" and unfair to the United States.

Bolton has not explained the reasons behind his departure publicly. He told The Washington Post and other news outlets that he had resigned and said the same on Twitter.

Taliban in Moscow after US talks 'dead'

Associated Press

MOSCOW — A negotiating team from the Taliban arrived Friday in Russia, a representative told The Associated Press, just days after President Donald Trump declared dead a deal with the insurgent group in Afghanistan.

Russian state news agency Tass cited the Taliban's Qatar-based spokesman, Suhail Shaheen, as saying the delegation had held consultations with Zamir Kabulov, President Vladimir Putin's envoy for Afghanistan. The visit was confirmed to the AP by a Taliban official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to reporters.

The Interfax news agency cited an unidentified Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying the meeting in Russia underlined the necessity of renewing talks between the U.S. and the Taliban, and that the Taliban confirmed their readiness to continuing dialogue with Washington.

It was the Taliban's first international visit following the collapse of talks with Washington. The team was being led by Mullah Sher Mohammad Stanikzai.

"This is a notable development, as it suggests the Taliban wants to underscore its continued interest in dialogue, even after President Trump pulled the plug on the U.S.-Taliban talks," said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Washington-based Wilson Center.

"And how striking that the insurgents have chosen to telegraph a message of conciliation by engaging with Moscow, a key U.S. rival that has made great efforts to deepen ties with the Taliban in recent months."

In a tweet, Trump had called off negotiations and canceled a meeting he said he wanted to have with Afghan government leaders and the Taliban at the Camp David presidential re-

meet in Maryland.

Shaheen told the Taliban's official website Tuesday that the group was still communicating with U.S. negotiators, at least to find out what to do next.

The Taliban shura, or leadership council, opposed its negotiators going to Camp David and admonished those who had accepted U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad's invitation that was extended at the end of August.

Shaheen was quoted on the website as saying the Camp David visit was delayed, saying the Taliban wanted the agreement signed and witnessed by foreign ministers of several countries, including Russia. He said the Taliban also wanted Qatar to announce the agreement before any Camp David meeting.

Moscow has been accused of aiding the Taliban as a safeguard against a burgeoning Islamic State affiliate that has close ties to the Islamic Movement of Afghanistan, a militant group in Central Asia. Russia has stepped up its defenses in Central Asia and has claimed thousands of ISIS fighters were in northern Afghanistan.

Moscow has twice this year hosted meetings between the Taliban and prominent Afghan personalities.

While Washington has been seeking an exit to its longest war, the Taliban are at their strongest since their ouster in 2001 and hold sway over areas of the country, staging near-daily, deadly attacks across Afghanistan.

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 powerbrokers but also on Pakistan and Russia, as well as Iran, which has trained Afghan fighters known as the Fatimayoun Brigade that fought alongside Iran's Revolutionary Guard in Syria.

Bahamas cleanup resumes as storm passes

Associated Press

MCLEAN'S TOWN, Bahamas — Jeffrey Roberts lifted a mustard-yellow curtain from the ground to hunt for passports and other documents at the place where his family's home stood before Hurricane Dorian blasted into Grand Bahama Island.

What was underneath was sodden and unrecognizable. He shuffled across a white tile floor, the only clear sign this had once been a house, and found a pair of rusty old pliers, only to toss them in frustration. They clattered across the tiles, breaking the silence that had enveloped the fishing community of McLean's Town.

Roberts was one of thousands of people beginning to return to salvage what few scraps they can from the devastation of Dorian, even as the dark storm clouds of

Tropical Storm Humberto hovered above as a reminder that the storm season has not yet passed.

"We got to take what God gives us," Roberts said.

In this case, at least, that was a break. Humberto narrowly missed the island over the weekend and was projected to curve north and then northeast, staying well off of Florida's east coast.

By late Sunday morning, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said the storm was located about 180 miles north-northwest of Great Abaco Island and was moving at 7 mph north-northwest with maximum sustained winds of 65 mph. It was still rousing gusty winds across the northwestern Bahamas

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said it would likely become a hurricane by Sun-

day night but would remain far from the Bahamas and the U.S. coast by the time it reaches that strength.

The storm briefly shuttered a couple of small airports, sent people in damaged homes to seek shelter and threatened to interrupt the distribution of sorely needed supplies, including food and water.

As the storm passed, however, Roberts and others were already returning to the task at hand: resuming their cleanup and recovery efforts in communities such as McLean's Town devastated by Hurricane Dorian two weeks ago.

The islands' official death toll from the hurricane remained at 50, and the number of missing at an alarming 1,300 people, although officials cautioned the list is preliminary and many people could just be unable to connect with loved ones.

Hong Kong protesters defy police ban; violence erupts

Associated Press

HONG KONG — Police fired chemical-laced blue water and tear gas at protesters who lobbed Molotov cocktails outside the Hong Kong government office complex Sunday as violence flared anew after thousands of pro-democracy supporters marched through downtown in defiance of a police ban.

A mixed crowd of hardcore protesters in black and wearing masks, along with families with children, spilled into the roads of the Causeway Bay shopping belt and marched for more than 1.2 miles to the central business district. Some waved U.S. and British flags, while others carried posters reiterating their calls for democratic reforms.

Police had turned down a request by the Civil Human Rights Front to hold the march but the demonstrators were undeterred, as they've been all summer.

"I feel this is our duty. The government wants to block us with the ban, but I want to say that the people will not be afraid," said one protester,

Winnie Leung, 50.

The march disrupted traffic, and many shops, including the Sogo department store in Causeway Bay, one of Hong Kong's largest department stores, closed their doors.

Protesters burned Chinese flags and tore down banners congratulating China's ruling Communist Party, which will celebrate its 70th year in power on Oct. 1. In familiar scenes, some protesters smashed glass windows and surveillance cameras at a subway station exit.

Hundreds of protesters later targeted the government office complex, throwing bricks and gasoline bombs through police barriers.

Police responded by firing volleys of tear gas and using water cannon trucks to spray chemical-laced water as well as blue liquid that helped them identify offenders in a repeat of confrontational scenes from the last several weeks of the protests.

Hospital authorities said eight people were injured throughout the day, including three in serious condition.

British PM Johnson blasted by former UK leader Cameron

Associated Press

LONDON — Former British Prime Minister David Cameron says current officeholder Boris Johnson didn't really believe in Brexit when he led the 2016 referendum to take Britain out of the European Union.

Cameron made the charge to *The Times* in a story published Sunday as he seeks publicity for his upcoming memoir. He said of Johnson, "The conclusion I am left with is that he risked an outcome he didn't believe in because it would help his political career."

For his part, Johnson compared himself to the ultrastrong comic book and film character *The Incredible Hulk* in a separate newspaper interview.

Cameron called the referendum and then stepped down when he failed to persuade voters to stay in the EU. He had expected Johnson to support his position, but Johnson became one of the leaders of the pro-Brexit camp.

Johnson did not comment Sunday on Cameron's claim, instead comparing himself to the Hulk as he described his commitment to making Brexit happen by the Oct. 31 deadline

rather than seeking another delay.

"The madder Hulk gets, the stronger Hulk gets," Johnson told *The Mail* on Sunday.

Johnson remains defiant even though Parliament has passed a law requiring him to seek an extension if there is no deal by mid-October. He says he will not do that under any circumstances.

On Monday, Johnson is to have a rare face-to-face meeting with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in Luxembourg. The goal is to see if there can be any progress in the extremely difficult Brexit negotiations, which have failed to produce a deal that can win the backing of Britain's Parliament.

Europe's leaders did not react favorably to Johnson's invocation of a comic book character. The European Parliament's Brexit coordinator, Guy Verhofstadt, said the comments showed a lack of maturity.

"Even to Trumpian standards, the Hulk comparison is infantile," he tweeted. "Is the EU supposed to be scared by this? The British public impressed?"

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Former judge pleads guilty in panties theft

NY CENTRAL ISLIP — A suspended judge pleaded guilty to attempted burglary for trying to sneak into a neighbor's home to steal her underwear.

Robert Cicale pleaded guilty Friday in Suffolk County court.

Prosecutors said Cicale, 50, had several pairs of women's soiled underwear stuffed into his jacket and raincoat when he was arrested on March 29, 2018, after leaving the neighbor's home. They said he admitted that he had entered the home on several occasions and stolen panties from a hamper.

Cicale was removed from the bench after his arrest. He is expected to be sentenced Nov. 15 to five years of probation with sex offender status.

Fugitive emu nabbed by Highway Patrol

CA FRESNO — Authorities captured an emu after the flightless fugitive led officers down a highway.

The Fresno Bee reported Friday that the bird was apprehended following a brief pursuit by California Highway Patrol officers.

Authorities said officers responded to a report that an ostrich was wandering along the right-hand shoulder of U.S. Highway 99 northwest of Fresno. Madera County Animal Services took the bird into custody uninjured.

Store's ban doesn't faze stinky shoppers

MS GREENWOOD — You stink, stay out! That's the message from a Delta convenience store to

workers at a neighboring soybean oil mill.

The Greenwood Commonwealth reported the convenience store has a sign on its door stating "Notice: Bad Smelling Oil Mill People Please Do Not Enter."

Anurag Randive, who manages the Greenwood store, said the sign was posted about three months ago after customers complained about the odor of employees from the Express Grain oil mill across the street. He said he's prevented some odorous workers from entering.

Express Grain employee Michael Blount said workers who labor in the pits filled with stinking rotten soybeans send less smelly coworkers inside to buy snacks.

Repairs for Black Hawk statue set

IL OREGON — The first steps in repairing a century-old landmark in northern Illinois known as the Black Hawk statue are underway.

Workers began erecting scaffolding Sept. 9 around the 48-foot-tall statue in Lowden State Park in Ogle County.

The 108-year-old monument has spent most of the last five years beneath a plastic covering to protect it from harsh weather.

Erosion endangering historic pavilion

MI MANISTEE — A 400-ton pavilion built in the 1940s could fall 100 feet from a bluff into Lake Michigan if nothing is done to fight erosion from rising waters at a state park in Michigan.

Orchard Beach State Park supervisor Doug Barry said the limestone pavilion sits about 50 feet back from the edge of a

bluff that's eroding at an average annual rate of 6 inches.

Barry added that while the structure isn't in imminent peril, the Department of Natural Resources is working to ensure it doesn't fall off the edge.

Slavery reenactment canceled after outcry

IN RUSSIAVILLE — A middle school's planned "Slave Ship" history exercise has been canceled following an outcry by parents upset that the lesson called for students to portray bound, enslaved Africans aboard a vessel returning to the Americas.

The proposed role-playing exercise at Western Middle School in Russiaville would have had students reenacting the Middle Passage, in which millions of Africans were kidnapped, shipped across the Atlantic in dire conditions and sold into slavery.

The school's eighth grade social studies teacher, Kevin Pax, sent a letter to parents detailing the class. His letter triggered an uproar from parents.

WISH-TV reported Pax sent a email last week canceling the role-playing portion of the lesson.

Hundreds in fights after football game

NY ROCHESTER — Police said hundreds of people were involved in a series of fights that erupted after a high school football game.

The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle reported that it took police more than an hour to disperse the fights that followed Friday's game between East High School and Irondequoit High School.

Police said officers were pelted with rocks and bottles when they tried to stop the

fights. The officers used pepper spray.

Rochester Police Capt. Naser Zenelovic said one officer suffered minor injuries and a 16-year-old's nose was broken. Four adults and four juveniles were arrested.

East High School Superintendent Shaun Nelms said the brawls started outside the stadium. He said "a community issue" is to blame for the violence.

Student charged after locker room attack

FL LAKELAND — Officials said a middle school student was arrested and suspended after a video went viral of him attacking another student in a locker room.

Lakeland police Capt. Steve Pacheco said Thursday that the Blake Academy student has been charged with misdemeanor battery.

Polk County Public Schools Superintendent Jacqueline Byrd said the boy also has been suspended for 10 days, though it wasn't known whether he'd be allowed to return.

Woman sickened by mercury in skin cream

CA SACRAMENTO — A California woman was hospitalized in a semicomatose state after using a skin cream from Mexico that was laced with toxic methylmercury.

California health officials said the 47-year-old Sacramento woman bought the cosmetic at a Jalisco pharmacy.

She was hospitalized with numbness in her hands and face, slurred speech and problems walking, then worsened.

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Capitals' Ovechkin isn't slowing down

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Alex Ovechkin doesn't think he's any lighter going into his 15th NHL training camp.

"The same 260," he said.

That might be a slight exaggeration for a player listed at 235 pounds, though the Washington Capitals captain worked to be leaner and quicker. When the season starts, he'll be 34.

He's made a concerted effort with different summer training to keep up with the ever-quicken pace of the league while remaining undecided about his long-term future.

"The game is getting faster, so you have to get ready for more speed in the game and don't try to lift too much weight and just be quicker," Ovechkin said.

The Russian superstar, who was named playoff MVP in 2018 for leading the Capitals to the Stanley Cup, plays more like a freight train than a Porsche. His physi-

cality makes him stand out in the modern NHL trending toward speed and skill and has helped make him the best goal scorer of this generation.

Ovechkin's 658 goals put him 12th on the all-time list, and there's still speculation he could catch Wayne Gretzky's record of 894 if he keeps producing at his now typical level. It could take Ovechkin playing until he's 40 to even approach Gretzky, and he's not ready to commit to anything beyond the two years left on his current contract.

"After two years, let's talk," Ovechkin said earlier this month at the annual NHL/NHLPA preseason media tour. "We'll see what's gonna happen in two years. I want to play till I can't play."

Ovechkin is showing no signs of slowing down. He scored 51 goals last season and was the oldest to eclipse the 50-goal mark since Phil Esposito in 1974-75.

He and the Capitals could agree to a contract extension as soon as July 1, the

same situation they're in with longtime running mate Nicklas Backstrom and goaltender Braden Holtby. If that's on his mind, Ovechkin isn't showing it.

"I'm not close to that," he said.

Ovechkin could go the way of countrymen Ilya Kovalchuk and Pavel Datsyuk and go home to play in the KHL once this contract is up. Or he could be like San Jose's Joe Thornton and go year to year based on how he's feeling.

"I don't want to be the guy who go out there and just like play (like) a joke," Ovechkin said. "If I'm gonna be in the same level, yeah."

If Ovechkin maintains this level, 894 isn't out of the question. If he keeps up his trademark durability, he'll surpass 700 goals this season.

"It's always a chance," he said. "I have to play the same way, I have to do the same thing, I have to use my chances and we will see."

Briefly

Fury overcomes bloody cut to defeat Wallin

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Blood was flowing down Tyson Fury's right cheek, and Otto Wallin was in his face. His scheduled rematch with Deontay Wilder suddenly in jeopardy, Fury needed to dig deep in a fight that wasn't supposed to be this hard.

Fury did just that Saturday night, overcoming a bloody cut over his right eye to pound out a unanimous decision over his Swedish opponent and set up a lucrative heavyweight rematch with Deontay Wilder.

Fury remained unbeaten in 29 fights and retained his claim to the lineal heavyweight title against a fighter who was little known but gave the big Englishman all he could handle.

"I couldn't see out of my eye," Fury said. "I got cut over my eye and it changed the fight completely."

With blood streaming down his face, Fury dominated from the middle rounds on in what was supposed to be little more

than a tune-up fight for his scheduled February rematch with Wilder. He was a 30-1 favorite at fight time, but after being cut in the third round had to reach deep to pull out the win.

The three ringside judges had Fury winning by scores of 118-110, 117-111 and 116-112. The Associated Press had Fury winning 116-112.

Spain wins World Cup; Gasol nets double

BEIJING — Spain has captured its second World Cup championship, defeating Argentina 95-75 Sunday to give Marc Gasol a rare double-title year.

Tournament MVP Ricky Rubio scored 20 points and Sergio Llull added 15 for Spain (8-0), the ninth team to make it through a World Cup or world championship unbeaten. Gasol scored 14 for the winners, who never trailed.

Gasol becomes the second player to win an NBA title and

a FIBA world gold medal in the same year, joining Lamar Odom — who did it for the Los Angeles Lakers and USA Basketball in 2010.

Pettersen, Europe win Solheim Cup

GLENEAGLES, Scotland — The most sensational finish in Solheim Cup history went down to the final putt of the entire match by a veteran player who many thought was lucky to even be selected.

Suzann Pettersen didn't let Europe down.

By rolling in a left-to-right birdie from 6 feet on the 18th hole, the 38-year-old Pettersen regained the biggest team prize in women's golf for the Europeans in a 14½-13½ win over the United States at Gleneagles.

"Just unbelievable. Never been a better moment," said European captain Catriona Matthew, whose contentious decision to choose Pettersen as one of her wild-card picks paid off.

Reddick stretches gas to a win in the desert

LAS VEGAS — Tyler Reddick stretched his final tank of fuel Saturday to win the NASCAR Xfinity Series race at Las Vegas Motor Speedway and wrap up the regular-season championship.

Christopher Bell had the most dominant car but Reddick's Richard Childress Racing team gambled on fuel strategy to beat Bell for the win. The reigning series champion has five wins this season.

Reddick made it 70 laps on his final tank of gas. Bell wound up second.

"It's the second time this year we got beat by circumstances," Bell said. "Very, very disappointing."

The race was the final event before the playoffs begin for NASCAR's second-tier series, but the 12-driver championship field had essentially been set on points prior to the green flag.

Top 25 college football roundup

Lawrence, No. 1 Clemson rout Syracuse

Associated Press

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Trevor Lawrence threw for three touchdowns and ran for another and top-ranked Clemson beat nemesis Syracuse 41-6 on Saturday night.

Clemson (3-0, 2-0 Atlantic Coast Conference) has won 18 straight games, a school record and the longest streak in the nation. It's the second-longest winning streak by an ACC member in conference history, trailing a 29-game run by Florida State from 2012-14.

No. 2 Alabama 47, South Carolina 23: Tua Tagovailoa threw for a career-high 444 yards and tied his personal best with five touchdowns to help the Crimson Tide open Southeastern Conference play with a defeat of the host Gamecocks.

No. 3 Georgia 55, Arkansas State 0: Jake Fromm threw for 279 yards and three touchdowns before taking the rest of the day off, and the Bulldogs defense turned in a dominating performance over the visiting Red Wolves.

No. 4 LSU 65, Northwestern State 14: Joe Burrow completed 21 of 24 passes for 373 yards and two touchdowns, and the host Tigers pulled away in the second half. Burrow has played through the third quarter only once in three games because of lopsided scores. He's 75-for-90 (83.3%) passing for 1,122 yards

and 11 touchdowns this season.

No. 5 Oklahoma 48, UCLA 14: Jalen Hurts racked up 439 scrimmage yards, became the first Sooners quarterback to pass for 200 yards and rush for 100 in the first half and led visiting Oklahoma to the win.

No. 6 Ohio State 51, Indiana 10: J.K. Dobbins ran for 193 yards and scored twice, Justin Fields threw three touchdown passes and the Buckeyes won on the road.

No. 7 Notre Dame 66, New Mexico 14: Ian Book threw a career-high five touchdown passes and the Fighting Irish defense came up with three first-half interceptions in its final tuneup at home before a showdown at No. 3 Georgia.

No. 8 Auburn 55, Kent State 16: Ja'Tarvious Whitlow rushed for 135 yards and two touchdowns and Bo Nix ran and passed for scores to lead the host Tigers.

No. 9 Florida 29, Kentucky 21: Kyle Trask relieved an injured Feleipe Franks and rallied the host Gators with three fourth-quarter touchdown drives, including a go-ahead, 4-yard scoring run with 4:11 remaining.

No. 11 Utah 31, Idaho State 0: Tyler Huntley threw for 282 yards and three touchdowns and Zach Moss ran for 106 yards and another score in the win for the host Utes.

No. 12 Texas 48, Rice 13: Sam Ehlinger threw for 279 yards and three touchdowns, Jake Smith caught six passes for 75 yards and two touchdowns and the Longhorns won on the road against the Owls.

No. 13 Penn State 17, Pittsburgh 10: Journey Brown ran for 109 yards and a touchdown and the host Nittany Lions held off the Panthers in their 100th meeting.

No. 15 Oregon 35, Montana 3: Justin Herbert threw for 316 yards and five touchdowns in the host Ducks' victory, their final tuneup before opening Pac-12 play at Stanford next week.

No. 16 Texas A&M 62, Lamar 3: Freshman Isaiah Spiller ran for 116 yards and two touchdowns and Kellen Mond threw for 317 yards with a touchdown pass and a run in three quarters to lead the host Aggies.

No. 17 UCF 45, Stanford 27: Freshman Dillon Gabriel threw for 347 yards and four touchdowns in his second college start, leading the host Knights past the Cardinal.

Arizona State 10, No. 18 Michigan State 7: Eno Benjamin reached the ball to the goal line for a 1-yard touchdown run with 50 seconds remaining, and the Sun Devils beat the host Spartans, who had a tying field goal negated for having

too many men on the field.

No. 19 Iowa 18, Iowa State 17: Nate Stanley threw for 201 yards and ran for a score, and the Hawkeyes made a big fourth-down stop, allowing them to beat the host Cyclones for the fifth straight time.

Temple 20, No. 21 Maryland 17: Kenny Yeboah put the host Owls ahead on a one-handed touchdown catch late in the fourth quarter, and Temple used two clutch stops at the goal line to beat the Terrapins.

No. 22 Boise State 45, Portland State 10: John Hightower returned a kickoff for a touchdown and caught another, and Hank Bachmeier threw for 238 yards as the host Broncos defeated the Vikings.

No. 23 Washington 52, Hawaii 20: Jacob Eason threw a 47-yard touchdown pass to Hunter Bryant on the third play of the game and added two more and the host Huskies rebounded from a loss.

BYU 30, No. 24 Southern California 27, OT: Dayan Ghanwoloku intercepted a tipped pass in overtime after Jake Oldroyd kicked a 43-yard field to give the host Cougars the win.

No. 25 Virginia 31, Florida State 24: Wayne Taulapapa ran for three touchdowns, the last with 2:34 remaining, and the host Cavaliers hung on to beat the Seminoles.

Service academies roundup

Remsberg carries Air Force to OT victory

Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. — Kadin Remsberg scored on a 25-yard run to start overtime Saturday and Air Force beat Colorado 30-23 after squandering a 13-point lead in the fourth quarter.

"People know us as hard workers and it's true," Remsberg said. "We're going to get the work in. We are going to work our

craft and we are going to come out and beat people."

Army 31, Texas-San Antonio 13: The Black Knights moved on quickly from an emotional loss to Michigan.

Army (2-1) generated season-highs in total yards with 358 and rushing yards with 340 against UTSA (1-2).

Navy 42, East Carolina 10: Midshipmen quarterback Malcolm Perry ran for

four touchdowns and threw for two scores. Operating as the focal point of the triple option, he carried 24 times for 156 yards. J

ust as impressive: Perry completed 5 of 7 passes for 151 yards to become the first Midshipmen quarterback to amass at least 150 yards both running and passing since Ricky Dobbs against Arkansas State in November 2010.

MLB roundup

Braves rip Nats, clinch playoff spot

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Ronald Acuna Jr. ignited a four-run rally with the go-ahead, two-run double, and the NL East-leading Atlanta Braves clinched a playoff berth with a 10-1 victory over the Washington Nationals on Saturday.

Acuna's double down the left-field line off reliever Fernando Rodney added fuel to a dramatic seventh inning for the Braves (93-57), who reduced their magic number to four to clinch their 19th division title.

Earlier in the seventh, Charlie Culberson was struck directly on the right cheekbone by a 91-mph fastball on Rodney's first pitch of the game.

Culberson remained on his back for several minutes as trainers pressed a towel to his face. He was eventually helped to his feet and onto the back of a cart.

The Braves have won the last 11 games started by Mike Foltynewicz (7-5), who pitched six solid innings.

Wander Suero (5-8) was charged with the loss as the Washington bullpen gave up nine runs over the final four innings. The Nationals saw their lead in the NL wild card race shrink to 1½ games over the Chicago Cubs.

Athletics 8, Rangers 6: Mark Canha's two-run home run off the left-field foul pole broke a fifth-inning tie as Oakland won at Texas.

The A's scored all their runs on homers. Matt Chapman (three-run homer in the third inning), Josh Phegley (two-run homer in the fourth) and Matt Olson (solo in the sixth). Oakland's 242 home runs are one short of the franchise record set in 1996.

The A's have won 10 of its last 12 games.

Rays 3, Angels 1: Travis d'Arnaud broke open a scoreless game with a three-run double in the sixth inning, and Tampa Bay improved its standing in the AL wild card race

with its 13th win in 16 games, winning at Los Angeles.

D'Arnaud's drive went over the head of left fielder Michael Hermosillo to clear the bases for the Rays, who struggled for five innings against Angels starter Jaime Barria (4-9) before breaking through.

Although the Rays managed just five hits, their second straight victory coupled with Cleveland's two losses in a doubleheader at Minnesota left Tampa Bay (89-61) 2½ games clear of the Indians (86-63) for the second wild card spot.

Yankees 13, Blue Jays 3: James Paxton pitched five innings to win his ninth straight start, Brett Gardner homered twice and drove in five runs and New York hit five homers to win at Toronto.

Gleyber Torres and Luke Voit also homered for the Yankees, going back-to-back off right-hander Brock Stewart in the fifth, as the AL East leaders won for the 14th time in 19 games.

Mets 3, Dodgers 0: Rajai Davis hit a three-run double off Julio Urias with two outs in the eighth inning following a brilliant pitchers' duel between New York's Jacob deGrom and Hyun-Jin Ryu, and the host Mets maintained their slim wild-card hopes

DeGrom and Ryu both pitched shutout ball for seven innings and neither walked a batter in a game in which each team got just three hits. New York remained three games behind the Chicago Cubs for the second NL wild card with 14 games left and also trails Milwaukee.

Cubs 14, Pirates 1: Kris Bryant and rookie Nico Hoerner each homered among three hits, and host Chicago went deep four times to set a club record with 237 home runs while pounding Pittsburgh.

Bryant hit a two-run shot in the fourth and had four RBIs. Hoerner's second homer in two days, a three-run drive in the

sixth, broke the Cubs' old mark of 235.

Twins 9-2, Indians 5-0: Miguel Sano's grand slam capped a five-run eighth inning and Minnesota grabbed firm control of the AL Central, sweeping a day-night doubleheader from Cleveland.

The sweep pushed the Twins 5½ games ahead of the Indians going into the final game of the showdown series Sunday.

Five Minnesota pitchers combined to stop Cleveland's offense and the Twins beat the Indians 2-0 in the first game of a doubleheader.

Brewers 5, Cardinals 2: Mike Moustakas and Yasmani Grandal homered to help Milwaukee win at St. Louis.

The Brewers moved four games behind the first-place Cardinals in the NL Central. Milwaukee remained one game behind the Chicago Cubs for the second wild card spot. The Cubs, who beat Pittsburgh, cut the Cardinals' division lead to three games.

Only one of the two runs Brewers starter Jordan Lyles (11-8) allowed was earned. He gave up six hits and struck out four over six innings.

Red Sox 2, Phillies 1: Pinch-hitter Andrew Benintendi's sacrifice fly in the top of the ninth inning lifted Boston to a win at Philadelphia.

The Phillies were mathematically eliminated from the NL East race when the Braves beat Washington earlier in the day to increase their lead in the division to 10½ games over the Nationals. Philadelphia fell 3½ games behind the Chicago Cubs for the second wild card spot and also trails the Brewers and Mets.

Diamondbacks 1, Reds 0: Merrill Kelly pitched seven scoreless innings, Nick Ahmed's triple led to the game's only run and host Arizona snapped a six-game losing streak by beating Cincinnati.

It was a much-needed win for the Diamondbacks, who are

trying to stay in a crowded NL wild-card race. They're still 4½ games behind the Chicago Cubs for the final playoff spot with 13 games remaining.

Tigers 8, Orioles 4 (12): Victor Reyes hit a tying home run with two outs in the ninth inning and John Hicks had the game-winning grand slam in the 12th to lift host Detroit past Baltimore.

The Orioles lost their 100th game for the second straight season after finishing 47-115 a year ago.

Astros 6, Royals 1: Zack Greinke finally beat his old club and Yordan Alvarez belted a pinch-hit three-run homer as Houston won at Kansas City.

Alex Bregman hit his 36th homer and rookie Kyle Tucker was 4-for-4 for the AL West-leading Astros.

Rockies 11, Padres 10: Charlie Blackmon homered to start a six-run inning, Daniel Murphy had four hits and 4 RBIs, and host Colorado hung on to beat San Diego.

Tony Wolters had a pair of hits and drove in two runs and Trevor Story doubled and singled and drove in a run. Manny Machado hit a three-run homer for the Padres.

Marlins 4, Giants 2: Miguel Rojas doubled in the go-ahead run in the top of the eighth inning, Jorge Alfaro hit a massive home run off Madison Bumgarner, and rookie Robert Dugger pitched 6 solid innings as Miami won at San Francisco.

Rojas broke a 2-2 tie with a run-scoring double to left off Giants reliever Shaun Anderson (3-5). Lewis Brinson singled in Rojas to make it 4-2.

Mariners 2, White Sox 1 (10): Omar Narvaez hit a game-ending home run against his former team, Felix Hernandez turned in his best outing of the season and host Seattle beat Chicago.