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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Iran's top diplomat threatens 'all out war'

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran's top diplomat said Thursday that any attack on his country in response to a drone-and-missile strike on Saudi Arabia's oil industry will result in "all-out war," further increasing tensions across the Persian Gulf.

The comments by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif represented the starkest warning yet by Iran in a long summer of mysterious attacks and incidents following the collapse of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, more than a year after President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the accord.

Zarif's comments also appeared to be a response to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who a day earlier while traveling to Saudi Arabia referred to Saturday's attack as an "act of war."

Asked by CNN what would be the consequence of a U.S. or Saudi strike, Zarif said: "All-out war."

It would cause "a lot of casualties," he stressed.

"I am making a very serious statement that we don't want to engage in a military confrontation," Zarif said. "But we won't blink to defend our territory."

He added that any sanctions placed by

the U.S. on Iran after pulling out of the nuclear deal would need to be lifted before any negotiations could be considered.

"They've done whatever they could and they haven't been able to bring us to our knees," Zarif said.

Pompeo, who had just arrived to the United Arab Emirates, did not immediately respond. He met earlier in the day with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Jiddah about the attack on a crucial oil processing facility and oil field, which cut the kingdom's oil production in half. Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels have claimed the attack, but the U.S. alleges Iran carried out the assault.

"The U.S. stands with #SaudiArabia and supports its right to defend itself," Pompeo tweeted. "The Iranian regime's threatening behavior will not be tolerated."

Pompeo did not elaborate. Trump has been noncommittal on whether he would order U.S. military retaliation. He said separately Wednesday that he is moving to increase financial sanctions on Tehran over the attack, without elaborating. Iran already is subject to a crushing American sanctions program targeting its crucial oil industry.

Pompeo met Abu Dhabi's powerful crown

prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The UAE is a close ally of Saudi Arabia and joined the kingdom in its war with the Houthi rebels in Yemen. The 4-year-old war has killed tens of thousands of people and destroyed much of the country, with millions more driven from their homes and thrown into near starvation.

The UAE said Thursday it had joined a U.S.-led coalition to protect waterways across the Middle East after the attack in Saudi Arabia.

The state-run WAM news agency quoted Salem al-Zaabi of the Emirati Foreign Ministry as saying the UAE joined the coalition to "ensure global energy security and the continued flow of energy supplies to the global economy."

Saudi Arabia joined the coalition on Wednesday. Australia, Bahrain and the United Kingdom also are taking part.

Pompeo tweeted his appreciation for the UAE and Saudi Arabia joining the coalition. "Recent events underscore the importance of protecting global commerce and freedom of navigation," he wrote.

The U.S. formed the coalition after attacks on oil tankers that Washington blamed on Tehran, as well as Iran's seizure of tankers in the region.

Attack on oil exposes Saudi defense gaps

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Saudi Arabia spent billions to protect a kingdom built on oil but could not stop the suspected Iranian drone and missile attack, exposing gaps that even America's most advanced weaponry failed to fill.

In addition to deciding whether that firepower should be turned on Iran in retaliation, the Saudis and their American allies must now figure out how to prevent a repeat of last weekend's attack — or worse, such as an assault on the Saudis' export facilities in the Persian Gulf or any of the desalination plants that supply drinking water.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was asked Wednesday on his way to Saudi Arabia how it was possible that the kingdom

could have dropped its guard, failing to stop any of the low-flying cruise missiles or armed drones that struck the Abqaiq oil processing center — the largest of its kind in the world — and the Khurais oil field.

Even the best air defenses sometimes fail, he replied.

"We want to make sure that infrastructure and resources are put in place such that attacks like this would be less successful than this one appears to have been."

Easier said than done.

"This is an attack of a scale we've just not seen before," Pompeo said. He called the strike "an act of war" but not say what military response might follow.

President Donald Trump, in California on a political fundraising trip, said, "We know very much what happened." But he, too, was noncommittal on whether he

would order U.S. military retaliation.

Saudi Arabia has multiple batteries of advanced U.S. Patriot air defense missiles, which are meant to shoot down hostile aircraft or shorter-range ballistic missiles. Patriots provide "point defense" — not protection of wide swaths of territory — and it's unclear whether any were positioned close to the oil sites.

The U.S. provides intelligence and surveillance support to the Saudi military, but that, too, has its limitations.

"We don't have an unblinking eye over the entire Middle East at all times," said Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The U.S. military this summer returned American forces to Saudi Arabia, at Prince Sultan air base south of Riyadh, after an absence of more than a decade.

US takes back \$100M over Afghan corruption

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Washington is taking back \$100 million intended for an Afghan energy infrastructure project, citing unacceptably high levels of corruption in the Afghan government, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced Thursday in a harshly worded statement.

The U.S. will still finish the massive project, Pompeo said, which involves five power substations and a maze of transmission lines in southern Afghanistan. It just won't be spending the money through Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's government, blaming the "Afghan government's inability to transparently manage U.S. Government resources."

Washington is withholding another \$60 million in additional aid, saying Ghani's government has been neither transparent nor accountable in its public spending. The U.S. is also cutting off all financial assistance to the Afghan government's Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, saying it's not doing its job and "is incapable of being a partner in the international effort to build a better future for the Afghan people."

After 18 years of war and more than \$800 billion dollars spent in Afghanistan — the biggest chunk on security, including the cost of U.S. forces in Afghanistan — this is one of the rare times Washington has withdrawn money from the Afghan government, which is almost entirely dependent on international assistance.

Thursday's announcement and punishing sanctions on Ghani's government would also seem to be intended to reinforce Pompeo's earlier call for a "credible and transparent presidential election" when Afghans go to the polls Sept. 28.

Taliban claims bombing that kills 20, devastates hospital

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A powerful suicide truck bomb devastated a hospital in southern Afghanistan early Thursday morning, killing 20 people and wounding 97 others, according to the province's governor, while a deadly drone strike in the country's east was blamed on U.S. forces.

The Taliban, who claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing, have carried out nearly daily attacks since peace talks with the U.S. collapsed this month.

Thursday's massive explosion destroyed part of the hospital in Qalat, the capital of southern Zabul province, and left a fleet of ambulances broken and battered.

Local residents, many of whom had come to see their sick family members, used shawls and blankets to carry the wounded inside the destroyed building, while authorities scrambled to take the worst of the wounded to hospitals in nearby Kandahar.

Zabul province Governor Rahmatullah Yarmal said the death toll was 20 with many of the 97 injured in critical condition. There were contradictory figures of the dead and wounded immediately after the 6 a.m. suicide truck bombing.

Morning prayers had just finished when worshippers were stunned by the ear-splitting blast that destroyed parts of a mosque adjacent to the hospital and the hospital building, said Mahboob Hakimi, a resident of Qalat. Windows in his home more than a mile away were shattered by the blast, he said.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahed, said in a tweet the target was a nearby intelligence office, which he claimed was destroyed and "tens of intelligence operatives killed/wounded."

Provincial council chief Atta

US draws fire after drone strike kills, wounds dozens

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. military was under fire Thursday from Afghan officials who said an American drone strike in Nangarhar province had killed at least 30 people and wounded more than 40 others.

"This is the cruelest act — how could you not see that they were all poor laborers?" said Mumtaz Arifzai, a member of the local council in Khogyani district, where the strike occurred.

"These attacks cause a lot of distrust. If they continue, people will surely start supporting the Taliban."

However, The Washington Post reported that Nangarhar Gov. Shahm Mahmood Miakhel later disputed the reports of civilian casualties. He said all those killed were militants.

The U.S. military confirmed it conducted a precision airstrike targeting Islamic State fighters in the area. A spokesman said claims of civilian casualties were being investigated.

"We are fighting in a complex environment against

those who intentionally kill and hide behind civilians," U.S. Forces-Afghanistan spokesman Col. Sonny Leggett said. "We are aware of allegations of the death of non-combatants and are working with local officials to determine the facts."

The victims of the strike were farm laborers sleeping in tents, said Arifzai. Provincial council member Ajmal Omar confirmed that more than 30 laborers had been killed in the strike.

The provincial governor's office said 16 people were killed and eight others wounded in what it said was a planned U.S. drone strike that happened at 1 a.m. Thursday.

If investigations confirm that civilians were killed in the operation, it would add to a growing number of non-combatant fatalities blamed on U.S. forces in recent months.

American airstrikes in Afghanistan were at their highest level of the year in August, even as the U.S. held peace talks with the Taliban, a report released last week showed.

Zubair Babakarkhail contributed to this report.

Jan Haqbayan said the wall of the National Security Department building was damaged. He couldn't say whether any personnel were among the casualties.

On Twitter, an Afghan National Security Forces personnel posted a picture of a 6-month-old child saying they were searching through the

rubble for the parents and sought the public's help.

President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman, Sediq Sediqqi, condemned the attack in Zabul, tweeting that the Taliban "continue to target civilians while their leaders travel to Iran and Russia," a reference to the Taliban negotiators' recent forays seeking support abroad.

More seen spent on GIs at Trump resort

The Washington Post

The U.S. military has spent more than \$184,000 at President Donald Trump's golf resort in Scotland since he took office, far more than previously known, according to documents released Wednesday by the House Oversight Committee.

The figure was disclosed in letters exchanged between the Pentagon and top Democrats on the committee, which is probing whether Trump has violated a constitutional provision that prevents presidents from enriching themselves through the office.

The Air Force has used Glasgow Prestwick Airport with greater frequency during Trump's presidency, placing some of its crews at Trump Turnberry, which is about 30 miles away, during overnight stopovers in Scotland.

In a letter dated Wednesday, leaders of the Democratic-led committee voiced frustration with the limited scope of a response last week from the Pentagon to requests for detailed information on the cost of the stays.

"Although the Department's response is belated and deficient, it still reveals that far more taxpayer funds have been spent at the President's resort than previously known," said the letter signed by House Oversight Chairman Elijah Cummings, D-Md., and Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., a subcommittee chairman.

The congressmen said information provided by the Pentagon indicated that taxpayer funds had been used to pay for more than three dozen separate stays, significantly more than have come to light in recent news coverage.

The letter from the Pentagon relayed that it had tallied \$124,578.96 in expenditures "specifically associated with the Trump Turnberry." The letter said that amounted to an average of \$189.04 per overnight stay, which it said was significantly less than an allowable per diem. The Pentagon also identified an additional \$59,729 in expenditures that the House Oversight committee leaders said was associated with Turnberry.

Dems block DOD bill amid border wall battle

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Democrats on Wednesday blocked debate on the almost \$700 billion Pentagon budget and other spending bills amid a feud between the chamber's leaders over the rules of engagement for translating this summer's hard-won budget deal into binding legislation.

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer orchestrated the party-line filibuster vote, claiming Senate GOP leaders were doing President Donald Trump's bidding on the U.S.-Mexico border fence and paying for it by shortchanging health and education programs. Both sides accused the other of violating the bipartisan spirit of July's budget blueprint, which gave Trump a must-have increase in the government's borrowing limit and new spending "caps" to avert sweeping cuts to the Pentagon and domestic programs.

Democrats are chiefly upset that the Senate GOP would permit Trump to again shift money from military accounts to wall funding that he has otherwise been unable to win from Congress. He's seeking \$5 billion more after winning only \$1.4

billion for the current year.

"It does nothing to prevent the president from stealing billions of dollars more from our troops to pay for the president's cynical campaign promise to build a gigantic wall across our southern border," said top Appropriations Committee Democrat Patrick Leahy, of Vermont.

Also at play is Democrats' desire to hold the Pentagon budget back as leverage in future endgame negotiations.

Republicans countered that Democrats are injecting abortion- and wall-related fights with Trump into a time-tested appropriations process that relies on bipartisanship and compromise that is in increasingly short supply in the halls of Congress.

"Congressional leaders and the president laid the groundwork for sensible, bipartisan funding process. But instead over the past week and a half, we've seen our Democratic colleagues suggest that they may try to shoehorn their longstanding disagreements with President Trump into this appropriation process," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said.

In Niger, AFRICOM chief praises ally's anti-terrorism efforts

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Africa Command's Gen. Stephen Townsend met with American troops in Niger on Thursday during a visit to assess security in West Africa, which is grappling to counter several Islamic militant groups.

Townsend's visit to Niger, his first since he took over as head of AFRICOM in July, came in the midst of a 90-day review ordered by Defense Secretary Mark Esper into whether the U.S. should hold force levels on the African continent steady or make additional cuts.

U.S. troops are training with their Nigerien counterparts in a country that has proven dangerous but remains central to the military's strategy in the region.

"Niger has been a willing and engaged partner in the fight against violent extrem-

ist organizations," Townsend said. "Niger is committed to building its defense capacity and containing and degrading terrorist networks in Africa."

An ambush in which militants killed four U.S. soldiers in October 2017 brought intense scrutiny to operations in the country and raised questions about the purpose of the American mission. While the U.S. has scaled back some of its operations and shifted more of its focus to higher level unit training rather than joint combat patrols in Niger, there are still risks. In June, American troops escaped serious injury when the U.S. military vehicle in which they were traveling hit a roadside bomb.

Despite the dangers, the U.S. appears committed to keeping forces in Niger for the long haul.

In August, the U.S. Air Force began flying surveillance aircraft out of a new base

in central Niger that has been years in the making. Known as Nigerien Air Base 201 in Agadez, the site is expected to improve intelligence gathering in the region.

AFRICOM has said operations there will expand over time.

"Nigerien Air Base 201 will ultimately possess an ability to support an array of aircraft and missions to include added ISR options," AFRICOM said in a statement, referring to intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations. The capabilities that the base will eventually have "will benefit the entire region," Townsend said.

Townsend's visit, which included meetings with senior Nigerien defense officials and the country's president, Mahamadou Issoufou, was part of a tour through the region. Earlier in the week, he held talks with officials in neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso.

Intel watchdog mum on content of report

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The government's intelligence watchdog declined on Thursday to discuss the substance of a whistleblower complaint that reportedly concerns President Donald Trump making an unspecified promise to a foreign leader. Trump rejected the report as fake news and "presidential harassment."

The inspector general's testimony at a closed-door meeting of the House intelligence committee was described by two people with knowledge of the proceedings. They were not authorized to discuss the meeting by name and were granted anonymity.

The Washington Post reported the complaint involves an intelligence official's allegation that Trump made the promise

to an unidentified foreign leader in a telephone call. The Post cited two anonymous former U.S. officials.

The Associated Press has not confirmed the report.

"Another Fake News story out there — It never ends!" Trump tweeted. "Virtually anytime I speak on the phone to a foreign leader, I understand that there may be many people listening from various U.S. agencies, not to mention those from the other country itself. No problem!"

He asked: "Is anybody dumb enough to believe that I would say something inappropriate with a foreign leader while on such a potentially 'heavily populated' call?"

Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., said inspector general Michael Atkinson determined

the whistleblower complaint was "credible and urgent" and should be "transmitted to Congress."

Atkinson testified behind closed doors at the Capitol, but it appeared he did not disclose details to lawmakers. Instead, the appearance mainly involved a discussion of the process for whistleblower complaints, the sources said.

Schiff told reporters he cannot confirm a press report that said a whistleblower's complaint concerned a promise Trump made on a phone call to a foreign leader. He also said the acting director of national intelligence is withholding the complaint from Congress in an unprecedented departure from the law.

Joseph Maguire, acting director of national intelligence,

has refused to discuss details.

Schiff subpoenaed Maguire, saying he was withholding a whistleblower complaint from Congress and questioning whether he had been directed to do so by the White House or the attorney general. Maguire is expected to testify publicly about the whistleblower complaint on Sept. 26.

Both Atkinson and Maguire are to appear next week before the Senate intelligence committee, according to Sen. Mark Warner, of Virginia, the ranking Democrat on the panel.

In a letter Tuesday, the general counsel for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Jason Klitenic, wrote that the agency is protecting the whistleblower and argued the allegation does not meet the definition of "urgent concern."

Rescues underway as storm drenches Texas, Louisiana

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Rain from Tropical Depression Imelda deluged parts of Texas and Louisiana on Thursday, prompting hundreds of water rescues, a hospital evacuation and road closures in areas east of Houston that were hit hard by Hurricane Harvey two years ago.

Forecasters warned that Imelda could bring up to 35 inches of rain this week in some areas of Texas through Friday. The storm system also brought the risk of severe weather and prompted tornado warnings Thursday morning in the areas hit hardest by the flooding.

In Winnie, a town of about 3,200 people 60 miles east of Houston, a hospital was evacuated and water was inundating several homes and businesses. The Chambers County Sheriff's Office said Winnie is "being devastated by rising water" and water rescues are ongoing.

The worst of the flooding is east of Houston, and some local officials said the rainfall

Thursday is causing flooding worse than what happened during Hurricane Harvey.

In Beaumont, a city of just under 120,000 people that's located about 30 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, authorities said all service roads are impassable and two local hospitals are inaccessible, the Beaumont Enterprise reported.

The Beaumont Police Department said on Twitter that 911 has received requests for more than 250 high water rescues and 270 evacuations.

"It's bad. Homes that did not flood in Harvey are flooding now," Jefferson County Judge Jeff Branick said.

The National Weather Service issued a flash flood emergency for several counties, saying "life-threatening amounts of rainfall" have fallen and more is expected in the area Thursday. Imelda's center was about 110 miles north of Houston early Thursday and was moving north-northwest at 5 mph, according to the National Hurricane Center.

Suspected airline saboteur linked to ISIS, officials say

Associated Press

MIAMI — A mechanic accused of sabotaging an American Airlines jetliner had expressed a desire for Allah to hurt non-Muslims, stored violent Islamic State videos on his cellphone and has a brother in Iraq possibly involved with the extremist group, according to new evidence unveiled at his bail hearing Wednesday.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Chris McAliley cited those revelations from prosecutors in ordering pretrial detention for Abdul-Majeed Marouf Ahmed Alani at the hearing in Miami federal court. Alani is accused of disabling a critical navigation component on the Boeing 737, which had 150 passengers and crew aboard.

Other evidence revealed Wednesday including that Alani, 60, recently sent a \$700 wire transfer to someone in Iraq — where he has extended family — and that he traveled to Iraq in March but did not disclose that to authorities after

his arrest.

Prosecutors also presented evidence that Alani has a brother in Iraq who may be involved with ISIS as well as statements Alani made about wishing Allah would use "divine powers" to harm non-Muslims. Alani had videos on his cellphone depicting ISIS mass murders he shared with others, according to prosecutors.

"You may be very sympathetic to terrorists," McAliley told Alani at the hearing. "That's very disconcerting."

Alani is a naturalized U.S. citizen from Iraq who has worked as an airline mechanic for 30 years, with no prior criminal record. He's not charged with a terror-related crime, but Assistant U.S. Attorney Maria Medetis said the potential links to ISIS give rise to the possibility that his actions had a darker purpose beyond what he insisted was a labor issue.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman sparks fire by burning love letters

NE LINCOLN — It seems this love was too hot to handle.

Police in Lincoln said a 19-year-old woman sparked an apartment fire by burning love letters from her ex in her bedroom.

Police said the woman used a butane torch to burn the letters and left some of them on the floor. She then went to another room to take a nap. Police said she awoke a short time later to find the carpet on fire.

Officials say the fire caused an estimated \$4,000 in damage to the building. No one was injured.

Bull leads police on nearly 20-mile chase

NH BRISTOL — Police said an aggressive bull took authorities on a 14-hour, 18-mile chase through three New Hampshire communities before they had to shoot and kill it.

NECN.com reported police in Bristol said they had no choice but to euthanize the 3,000-pound animal before it hurt someone.

Police said at the request of the animal's owner, Melissa Traber, they euthanized the bull as soon as they could do so safely.

Project underway to explore shipwrecks

ME PORTLAND — A new project to explore the wreck of the ship dubbed as New England's Titanic is underway.

The Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution partnered with NOAA's Office of Marine Sanctuaries and Marine Imag-

ing Technologies as a part of a three-year project to explore shipwrecks.

The Portland Press Herald reports researchers reached the SS Portland shipwreck Monday and will livestream their work to schools and museums around the country.

The luxury steamship carried passengers between Portland and Boston before it sank in 1898, killing about 200 people on board.

Researchers nurse, study injured rare whale

MS GULFPORT — Veterinarians say that a rare whale found stranded along the Mississippi coast with shark bite wounds is showing signs of improvement in his recovery.

News outlets reported fishermen spotted the melon-headed whale near Cat Island. Institute for Marine Mammal Studies researchers said the juvenile whale had bite marks and lesions on his body.

Veterinarian Christa Barrett said he's making strides, and she hopes to get him swimming and eating on his own before releasing him.

Amish males abandon horse-and-buggy

OH NORTH BLOOMFIELD — Two Amish males ran from sheriff's deputies after they were pulled over in Trumbull County, leaving behind a horse-drawn buggy that had beer and a stereo system inside, according to reports.

WKBN Channel 27 reported deputies still haven't found the two males, who ran into a wooded area.

The buggy was towed and the horse is being care for until an owner comes forward.

Deputies reportedly found a 12-pack of Michelob Ultra on top of the buggy and several

open bottles were found inside. The buggy also was equipped with a stereo system, WKBN reported.

Cougar inside house lies down in bathroom

CA SONORA — Officials said a mountain lion wandered inside a California house and was captured in a photo lying on a bathroom floor.

The Tuolumne County Sheriff's office said in a Facebook post that family members and the mountain lion ran away from each other after the cougar entered the home when the door was opened to let in cool air.

The big cat dashed to the second-story bathroom of the home in the Sierra Nevada foothill town of Sonora and the family ran away from it.

The mountain lion was coaxed out of the bathroom window by sheriffs' deputies and state wildlife officers. Then it jumped to the ground.

Chief: Woman found with maggots in wounds

LA CROWLEY — Police in Louisiana said an elderly woman found with maggots in wounds on her legs and ankles is now recovering in an extended-care facility.

News outlets reported a relative took the unidentified woman to a hospital in Crowley and police were called.

Officers questioned Raymond Hoffpauir, 57, and Dustin Welch, 27, who were reportedly the woman's caregivers.

Crowley police Chief Jimmy Broussard said both men admitted to neglecting the woman. The chief said the woman hadn't received needed insulin injections in weeks and she may have been bitten by a rat and roaches inside her home.

Hoffpauir and Welch are charged with cruelty to the infirm.

Woman sells classic cars, memorabilia

MO CAPE GIRARDEAU — A massive collection of classic cars, vintage service station pumps, spark plugs and signage is headed to the auction block.

The Southeast Missourian reported that Joan McPherson, 80, of Cape Girardeau said it's time to let somebody else enjoy the collection that she amassed with her late husband, Wayne. But she said she has "mixed emotions" about Saturday's sale.

During 56 years of adventures trailing Southeast Missouri State University baseball — 70 games per season — they filled three garages and a house with autos, taxidermy, memorabilia and paintings.

Squad on probation after banner displayed

NC NEW LONDON — A high school cheerleading squad in North Carolina is on probation after some cheerleaders posed with a banner supporting President Donald Trump before a football game.

Stanly County Schools Superintendent Jeff James told The Associated Press in an email that the warning was levied by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association.

It happened before the Aug. 30 game at North Stanly High School, northeast of Charlotte. News outlets reported that the banner read: "Trump 2020: Make America Great Again."

The superintendent said all North Carolina schools have a policy against displaying political signs.

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Irish meet Bulldogs in top-10 matchup

Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga. — The Georgia players know it's a big game. They can read the polls. They can hear all the chatter around campus.

That doesn't mean they're well-versed on Notre Dame's storied past.

George Gipp?

"Uhh, no," tight end Eli Wolf conceded Monday.

The Four Horsemen?

"That rings a little bit more of a bell," Wolf said, dropping his head and chuckling a bit but offering no further details.

Rudy?

"Yeah, I've seen 'Rudy,'" he shot back quickly, clearly proud of himself for knowing at least the Hollywood version of a revered chapter in Fighting Irish history. "Some people say they cry at the end. I was never one to get too emotional, but it's a good movie."

Of course, it won't be a history class they're taking Saturday night.

It's a football game that could have reverberations all the way

to the College Football Playoff.

No. 3 Georgia (3-0) will host No. 7 Notre Dame (2-0) for the first time between the hedges (aka Dooley Field at Sanford Stadium), a showdown that has been eagerly anticipated in these parts pretty much since the series was announced five summers ago.

"It's going to be electrifying in that stadium, that's for sure," said former Georgia coach Vince Dooley, whose name was officially added to the massive facility less than two weeks ago.

It will be only the third meeting between these famed programs.

The first came at the 1981 Sugar Bowl, when a Georgia team coached by Dooley and starring Herschel Walker sealed what remains the school's only consensus national championship with a 17-10 victory over the Fighting Irish.

For Dooley, who grew up attending Catholic schools in Mobile, Ala., and listening to Fighting Irish games on the radio, all while dreaming of

playing in South Bend, the significance of beating the school of Knute Rockne and the Gipper only added to the celebration nearly four decades ago.

"The main thing was playing for the national championship," the 87-year-old Dooley recalled Monday. "We would have been happy playing anybody. But especially Notre Dame."

Two years ago, the teams met for the first time in South Bend. Under the gaze of Touchdown Jesus, the red-clad Georgia fans stormed into town by the thousands to cheer the Bulldogs to a 20-19 victory that signaled the beginning of their return to national prominence under coach Kirby Smart.

Georgia went on to capture the Southeastern Conference title and make it all the way to the national championship game, where the Bulldogs lost to Alabama in overtime.

Smart refused to discuss Notre Dame through the first three weeks of the season, which proved to be little more than a run of glorified scrimmages. The Bulldogs romped

past Vanderbilt, Murray State and Arkansas State by a cumulative score of 148-23.

Now, finally, he's ready to talk about the Fighting Irish.

"It's a great game to have, a nonconference game you play at home and a school with such a tradition as Notre Dame," the fourth-year coach said. "I know a lot of Georgia fans have had this one marked on the schedule for a long time. So have a lot of Notre Dame fans."

Georgia is even bringing in some extra seats, adding temporary aluminum bleachers accommodating 500 people in the west end zone plaza that will ensure a record crowd of more than 93,000.

They probably could've sold another 100,000 tickets for this one, judging by the demand on the secondary market. As of Monday, the asking price on StubHub for the priciest set of lower-level tickets was \$4,750; even the worst of the nosebleed seats, way up in the third level, were going for nearly \$300 apiece.

Michigan's Bredeson heads home to face Wisconsin

Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Ben Bredeson had a chance to cash in on his potential this year in the NFL.

The All-America offensive guard, though, chose to stay at Michigan for his senior season and to take out an insurance policy, providing some financial protection if an injury hurts his stock in the draft.

Bredeson acknowledged he has "not much" money in the bank right now.

"I'm a college kid," he said, shrugging his broad shoulders.

And, Bredeson does not regret the college-over-money choice he made.

"I absolutely feel good about my decision every single day," he said. "By the time I'm done here in December, I will have graduated and played four years

with the best friends I could've at Michigan. I was able to take three trips overseas to see two different continents all over the world.

"The things I've been able to do here have just been unimaginable when I was 17 making this decision."

When the 11th-ranked Wolverines (2-0) play 13th-ranked Wisconsin (2-0) Saturday at Camp Randall Stadium, he will get another chance to let the home team know it let one of the state's top recruits get away.

"He's a really good player and it looks to me like he loves playing the game," Badgers coach Paul Chryst said. "He's a leader on their team and that says a lot. I have a ton of respect for him."

Bredeson was a highly touted recruit in Hartland, Wis., at

Arrowhead High School about 50 miles east of the Badgers' campus. Bredeson estimated about one-third of his graduating class attends Wisconsin.

Like everyone around him, he grew up rooting for the Badgers on Saturday and Green Bay on Sunday.

Jim Harbaugh was in his first full recruiting year at Michigan when he signed Bredeson, a key player he needed to improve one of the weak links of the program.

"Somebody that was older than his years when we were recruiting him, a mature guy physically," Harbaugh recalled.

Bredeson has lived up to the billing, starting a team-high 35 games during his three-plus year career. The 6-foot-5, 320-pound Bredeson was a second team All-America player last

year.

Bredeson is big, talented and experienced enough to coast in college. Instead, he has pushed himself to constantly improve his fundamentals and techniques to be one of the best linemen not in the NFL. He regularly leans on offensive line coach Ed Warninner for advice and also asks former Michigan and NFL offensive lineman Jon Jansen for tips.

"He has really developed over the last couple of years by concentrating on the little things like the way he takes his first step and where his puts his hands," Jansen said. "When NFL coaches and scouts are looking at him, they'll see a player who got better at something during each of his four years and that's what they want to see."

Injury keeps Newton out of workouts

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Panthers coach Ron Rivera is confident backup quarterback Kyle Allen can get the job done if Cam Newton can't play Sunday against the Cardinals, a scenario that seems increasingly likely each day.

Allen took reps with the first team again Wednesday after Newton missed his second straight day of practice with a mid-foot sprain. If Allen's number is called, he would start Sunday against his former college teammate Kyler Murray and the Arizona Cardinals.

"Kyle is a very bright quarterback who understands the game and grasps it very well," Rivera said. "He's got a good arm and he's a good decision maker and he plays very fast. He has all of the intangibles you want in a quarterback."

Rivera wasn't ready to name Allen the starter, even though Newton remains in a boot after aggravating his foot injury last Thursday night in a 20-14 loss to the Buccaneers. He said Newton has still been involved in the quarterback meetings and is "doing all the things he needs to do."

But all signs are pointing to Allen getting his second NFL start for the Panthers (0-2).

If that happens, it will mean a matchup between Allen and Murray, who split time at quarterback with Texas A&M in 2015.

Allen started the season and had the Aggies off to a 5-0 start but was benched after having three interceptions returned

for touchdowns against Alabama and then struggling against Mississippi. Murray replaced him for three games before Allen returned as the starter to close the season.

After that season, both QBs transferred — Allen to Houston and Murray to Oklahoma.

"It's wild," Allen said of the prospect of facing Murray. "We were together at A&M for seven months there and then split and went different ways. Seeing his career and my career, they were two completely different paths."

Allen went undrafted in 2018, while Murray was the No. 1 pick in the NFL Draft earlier this year.

It would also be a homecoming for Allen, who grew up in Scottsdale, Ariz., and attended several NFL and college games at the Cardinals' home stadium, including when Newton led Auburn to a win over Oregon in the 2011 BCS national championship game. Also, Allen's best friend is Cardinals wide receiver Christian Kirk, another former Aggies teammate.

The Panthers don't have much film on Allen, but what they have they seem to like.

Allen led Carolina to a 33-14 win over the Saints in the 2018 regular-season finale in his only NFL start. He had three touchdowns in that game — two passing and one rushing — before exiting in the fourth quarter with an injury. But he showed enough in that game to impress teammates and coaches with his confidence.

Allen said that gave him immeasurable

confidence and it carried over to this summer, where he beat out rookie third-round draft pick Will Grier for the No. 2 QB spot behind Newton.

Panthers veteran tight end Greg Olsen said Allen is incredibly confident, and nothing seems to faze him. He said that's partly because the rollercoaster ride he experienced in college.

"You have those ups, you have those downs and you learn a lot about yourself," Allen said. "Through all that crap that I went through in college, and even here, getting released last year, I think you build that resolve. You build that confidence. And no one can really take that from you."

Said Olsen: "The biggest thing for him now is just gaining experience."

He could get that with Newton sidelined indefinitely.

Olsen, who has known Newton as long as anyone in the Panthers locker room, said he knows Newton will be doing everything he can to get back on the field. He also said the 2015 league MVP gave him no indication that he'd re-injured his foot during the Bucs game, but said that doesn't surprise him.

"Guys that play at a level like him, guys that play in this league a long time, you almost have to protect them from themselves sometimes," Olsen said.

"He's going to play until you tell him otherwise. It's just a credit to him and how he's wired. You weren't getting him off the field that game."

Battered Eagles replace practice with walkthrough

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — With two games in five days coming up, the Philadelphia Eagles eased into preparations.

Coach Doug Pederson canceled practice Wednesday and the injury-plagued team held a walkthrough instead. Six players didn't participate and six others were limited.

"I want these guys as fresh as possible obviously for these next two weeks," Pederson said. "I have to think of the big picture here, obviously. It's early in our season, keeping guys as fresh as possible now so we can make a push later in the season. So that's also a factor in

this decision."

Wide receivers DeSean Jackson and Alshon Jeffery, tight end Dallas Goedert, running back Corey Clement and defensive tackle Tim Jernigan were hurt in a 24-20 loss at Atlanta.

Quarterback Carson Wentz took a hard shot to the chest and was later checked for a concussion but he said he's fine. Jackson and Jeffery played only a few snaps against the Falcons before going to the sideline. Jackson has an abdominal strain and Jeffery has a calf strain. Goedert was ruled out before the game started because of a calf injury. Clement injured his shoulder on a kick-

off return. Jernigan broke his foot and will be out for a while.

The Eagles (1-1) host the Detroit Lions (1-0-1) on Sunday. They visit the Packers (2-0) on Thursday night the following week.

"We understand that we could miss a player or two, but at the same time, we can't focus on that," Pederson said.

"We have to get the next guy ready to go, and we go in and coach that player up and get him prepared. But from a game-plan standpoint, we're playing a good football team in the Lions, and they're coming off a victory, and we have to be prepared."

Despite missing three of his top five receivers, Wentz rallied the Eagles from a 17-6 deficit and helped them take a 20-17 lead over the Falcons in the fourth quarter. After the defense allowed a go-ahead score, Wentz nearly gave Philadelphia the lead again with less than two minutes left but Nelson Agholor dropped a pass that would've gone for a 60-yard score.

"Nelly's great. He's the ultimate team guy," Wentz said. "He'll do whatever is asked of him. Obviously people look at the drop, but he made a lot of plays and helped choreograph the offense."

Cards' Wainwright tops Nats' Scherzer

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Adam Wainwright has pitched in his share of big games throughout a distinguished career. Taking the mound against an ace in a matchup with postseason implications, he delivered once more.

Wainwright put on another sharp performance to top Max Scherzer, right fielder Dexter Fowler made a sensational catch and the NL Central-leading St. Louis Cardinals beat the Washington Nationals 5-1 on Wednesday.

"That's as good as it gets right there in the regular season, competing against a future Hall of Famer and competing against a great quality team over there," Wainwright said.

"As far as competing, that's every guy's dream right there, competing against the best in this kind of atmosphere in September down the stretch. That's the kind of stuff I live for," he said.

Wainwright (13-9) has won all four of his starts this month, allowing just one earned run in 27 innings. The 38-year-old righty limited the Nationals to an unearned run in seven innings.

"It's just sort of simplifying and figuring out exactly who I needed to be," Wainwright said. "I've been searching for that correct mix all year, and now I'm really trying to read hitters and just only focusing on executing pitches."

Trailing by four, the Nationals put two on with one out in

the eighth. Asdrubal Cabrera hit a drive off Andrew Miller that had the distance to leave the park, but Fowler jumped and reached far over the wall to make the grab.

Fowler had started the game in center field but moved to right when Harrison Bader stayed in the game after pinch-running for Matt Carpenter in the fifth inning.

"Dexter earned his Air Jordans," Cardinals manager Mike Shildt said. "That was a big-time play."

"I did hoop," Fowler said. "I thought those days were over, but I guess Asdrubal drew me out again."

Tommy Edman and Matt Wieters homered for St. Louis, which began the day with a two-game division lead over

Chicago and Milwaukee. The Cardinals play the Cubs seven times in their final 10 games, beginning with a four-game series at Wrigley Field that starts Thursday night.

"We won that game and now we got a little momentum here, beat two very good pitchers here this series, and now we've got to beat those Cubs in Chicago," Wainwright said. "We haven't beat them all year in Chicago. We've got to beat them this time."

The Nationals started the day with a 1½-game lead over the Cubs and Brewers in the NL wild-card race. Washington has lost nine of its last 14, and is 1-2 under bench coach Chip Hale, filling in since manager Dave Martinez had a heart procedure this week.

MLB roundup

Meadows' HR helps propel Rays past Dodgers in 11th

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Austin Meadows homered leading off the 11th inning, sending Tampa Bay to an 8-7 victory over Los Angeles that helped the Rays keep pace in the AL wild-card race and prevented the New York Yankees from clinching the AL East title.

Tampa Bay remained two games behind Oakland for the top wild card and a half-game ahead of Cleveland for the second spot.

Meadows slugged his 32nd homer off Josh Sborz (0-1), and Ji-Man Choi's sacrifice fly tacked on an insurance run after the Rays had rallied for two runs off closer Kenley Janzen in the ninth.

Tommy Pham had a career-high five hits for the Rays, who ended a two-game skid.

The teams combined to use 18 pitchers, two more than on Tuesday.

Colin Poche (5-5) got the win. Pete Fairbanks earned his second save.

Astros 3, Rangers 2: Gerrit Cole struck out 10 batters, including his 300th of the season, in eight strong innings, Yuli Gurriel and Jose Altuve homered and host Houston beat Texas to lock up a postseason berth.

The Astros won their fifth straight and 100th game of the season, becoming one of six teams in major league history to win at least 100 games in three straight seasons.

Houston (100-53) has the best record in the majors and can clinch the AL West as early as Friday with a win and loss by Oakland. Cole (18-5) allowed two runs on six hits in earning his 14th straight win.

Padres 2, Brewers 1: Dinelson Lamet struck out a career-high 14 and Kirby Yates fanned pinch-hitter Ryan Braun with a runner on second base to close out San Diego's win at playoff-contending Milwaukee.

Mets 7, Rockies 4: Pete Alonso hit his major league-leading 49th homer and drew a bases-loaded walk during a

four-run rally in the ninth inning that sent New York to a win at Colorado.

Indians 2, Tigers 1 (10): Yasiel Puig hit an RBI single off the top of the right-field wall with two outs in the 10th inning and host Cleveland kept up its playoff push, beating Detroit.

Phillies 4, Braves 1: Bryce Harper hit a two-run homer, Zach Eflin pitched seven solid innings and Philadelphia won its second straight game at Atlanta.

White Sox 3, Twins 1: Held without a hit until the sixth inning, Minnesota managed only three in a loss to visiting Chicago.

Mariners 4, Pirates 1: Kyle Lewis hit his fifth home run since debuting Sept. 10, Tom Murphy homered and Seattle won at Pittsburgh for its fourth straight win.

Angels 3, Yankees 2: Relief pitcher Adam Ottavino sailed a 30-foot throw home on Albert Pujols' tiebreaking chopper, and Los Angeles won at New York.

Athletics 1, Royals 0 (11): Mark Canha hit an RBI double with two outs in the 11th inning and host Oakland edged Kansas City to hold its lead atop the AL wild-card race.

Diamondbacks 5, Marlins 4: Mike Leake worked effectively into the seventh inning, Domingo Leyba had two RBIs and host Arizona beat Miami.

Giants 11, Red Sox 3: Stephen Vogt hit a two-run homer and San Francisco gave Bruce Bochy his 2,000th career victory as a manager in the majors with a win at Boston.

Blue Jays 11, Orioles 10: Randal Grichuk hit a grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning, and Toronto rebounded from an ineffective start by Clay Buchholz to rally to a win at Baltimore.

Reds 3, Cubs 2 (10): Jose Iglesias had an RBI double in the 10th inning and five Cincinnati pitchers combined for a four-hitter in their second straight win at playoff-contending Chicago.