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Dems launch impeachment inquiry

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump repeatedly pushed Ukraine's president to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden, according to a rough transcript of a summer phone call that is now at the center of Democrats' impeachment probe into Trump.

In the conversation, Trump told his Ukrainian counterpart, "I would like for you to do us a favor." He urges him to work with Attorney General William Barr and Rudy Giuliani, Trump's personal lawyer.

The president's words set the parameters of the political debate to come, with Democrats saying that it laid the predicate for an impeachment inquiry and Trump dismissing it as a "nothing call." Yet the rough transcript clearly shows Trump's willingness to engage a foreign leader on matters directly related to his reelection prospects.

The new impeachment probe plunges a deeply divided nation into an election year clash between Congress and the commander in chief. The probe injects deep uncertainty into the 2020 election campaign and tests anew the nation's constitutional system of checks and balances.

Trump spent Wednesday meeting with world leaders at the United Nations, a remarkable split screen even for the turbulence of the Trump era. On his schedule: a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, whose contacts with Trump are now central to the impeachment inquiry.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who launched the impeachment inquiry after months of resistance, said Trump's call with Zelenskyy amounted to a "shakedown" to benefit his

Poll: Most oppose removal

The Washington Post

Amid a groundswell of support for impeachment proceedings among House Democrats, a new poll finds a majority of Americans do not favor ousting President Donald Trump from office.

Thirty-seven percent of voters say that Trump should be impeached and removed from office, while 57% say he should not be impeached, according to a Quinnipiac University poll released Wednesday morning.

The poll was conducted from Thursday through Monday, as details were emerging about Trump's July call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in which Trump acknowledged he asked Zel-

enskyy to investigate former vice president Joe Biden and his son.

On Tuesday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., announced the launch of official proceedings, accusing Trump of violating the Constitution in seeking help from a foreign leader to damage a political opponent.

The poll shows a stark partisan divide on the question of impeachment. Among Democrats, 73% support impeachment, while 21% are opposed. Among Republicans, only 4% support impeachment, while 95% are opposed.

The poll is said to have a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

campaign. She declared, "Congress must act."

Trump, who thrives on combat, has all but dared Democrats to move toward impeachment, confident that the specter of an investigation led by the opposition party will bolster rather than diminish his political support.

"Just so you understand, it's the single greatest witch hunt in American history, probably in history," Trump said during a meeting with foreign leaders in New York.

Republicans largely stood by the president and dismissed the notion that the rough transcript revealed any wrongdoing by Trump.

"I think it was a perfectly appropriate phone call; it was

a congratulatory phone call," said Rep. Liz Cheney, the No. 3 House Republican. "The Democrats continually make these huge claims and allegations about President Trump, and then you find out there's no there there."

The call is one part of a whistleblower complaint on the president's activities, though the administration has blocked Congress from getting other details of the report, citing presidential privilege.

The complaint was being reviewed for classified material and could go to Congress by Thursday, according to a person familiar with the issue who was not authorized to discuss it publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

In the rough transcript of the 30-minute phone call with Zelenskyy, Trump encourages the Ukrainian leader to talk with Giuliani and Barr. Immediately after saying they would be in touch, Trump references Ukraine's economy, saying: "Your economy is going to get better and better I predict. You have a lot of assets. It's a great country."

In the days before the call, Trump ordered advisers to freeze \$400 million in military aid for Ukraine — prompting speculation that he was holding out the money as leverage for information on the Bidens. Trump has denied that charge and the aid package does not come up in the conversation with Zelenskyy.

Trump has sought to implicate Biden and his son in the kind of corruption that has long plagued Ukraine. Hunter Biden served on the board of a Ukrainian gas company at the same time his father was leading the Obama administration's diplomatic dealings with Kyiv. Though the timing raised concerns among anti-corruption advocates, there has been no evidence of wrongdoing by either the former vice president or his son.

Biden said Tuesday, before Pelosi's announcement, that if Trump doesn't cooperate with lawmakers' demands for documents and testimony in its investigations the president "will leave Congress ... with no choice but to initiate impeachment."

While the possibility of impeachment has hung over Trump for many months, the likelihood of a probe had faded after special counsel Robert Mueller's Trump-Russia investigation ended without a clear directive for lawmakers.

Army's warfighting plans face obstacles in Europe

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

An Army strategy to work closely with allies to fight future wars could be at risk if the capability gap between the U.S. and some European militaries is allowed to widen, a new study suggests.

The Army outlined in a report called "Multi-Domain Operations 2028" its plan to rapidly deploy and integrate all elements of American military power — from traditional ground and air combat to newer warfighting zones such as cyber, space and information operations — in the event of conflict with powers like Russia or China.

The plan focuses on how to penetrate sophisticated enemy defenses and ensure the U.S. and its allies can maneuver, resupply and reinforce troops.

But there are problems with the strategy, the new study, titled "European Allies in US Multi-Domain Operations," has found.

"There is a risk that if the U.S. does not engage its allies early ... U.S. capabilities will diverge from allied systems, making the level of integration necessary to achieve convergence unworkable," says the report by the Association of the

U.S. Army's Institute of Land Warfare.

If the U.S. is to counterattack against a Russian incursion within 21 days, as military plans call for, "there will need to be widespread European cooperation on the movement of personnel and arms across borders," the report said.

Political realities in Europe are among the problems and could undermine the heart of the Army's modernization push, says the report published this week with the London-based Royal United Services Institute.

The top priority in the Army's effort to upgrade its arsenal, for instance, is developing long-range precision fires crucial for countering Russia.

"The intent is to deploy fires in Europe able to outrange Russia's Iskander short-range ballistic missiles to strike railways, ammunition dumps and infrastructure critical to Russia's Integrated Air Defense System in the event of conflict," the report said.

But the report says allies may be concerned that new deployments would set off an arms race, risk aggressive messaging from Russia about its nuclear capabilities and ultimately make European populations feel they are potential targets.

'Joker'-related threat brings CID warning

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

Military commanders in Oklahoma were warned of the potential threat of violence at the theatrical release of the upcoming "Joker" movie, though law enforcement officials are not sure which theaters may be affected.

An Army Criminal Investigation Command memo issued Monday put commanders at Fort Sill, Okla., on notice about an intelligence bulletin that said a Texas law enforcement agency working with the FBI had discovered "disturbing and very specific chatter in the dark web" about the possible targeting of an unknown theater for a mass shooting during the Oct. 4 release.

An image of the memo was posted briefly to the popular Air Force amn/nco/snco Facebook page before being removed Tuesday. The command, which is also known as CID, confirmed its authenticity to Stars and Stripes.

"Out of an abundance of caution, our Fort Sill office distributed the memo to internal military personnel at Fort Sill," said CID spokesman Christo-

pher Grey.

The memo was based on information in a bulletin from the Texas Joint Crime Information Center, Grey said.

An official at the Texas center, who declined to be named to discuss the matter freely, called the threat "valid," but said there was no specific location mentioned.

The warning comes as the upcoming movie, which focuses on the eponymous villain from the Batman comics, played by Joaquin Phoenix, has been winning awards at pre-release film festivals. But it has also come under fire for purportedly glamorizing its villainous and violent main character.

Families of the victims of a 2012 shooting at a screening of the Batman film "The Dark Knight Rises" delivered a letter Tuesday to Warner Bros., the studio behind both that movie and the "Joker," criticizing the latest film portrayal for its "sympathetic" take on the villain's rise from loner to killer, the Guardian newspaper reported. That attack, in Aurora, Colo., left 12 dead and 70 injured.

S. Korea out, China in at Japan's upcoming fleet review

By HANA KUSUMOTO
AND CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

South Korea is out, but China is in this year at the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Fleet Review scheduled for Oct. 14, a JMSDF spokesman said Wednesday.

South Korea last month decided to let expire in November an intelligence-sharing pact with Japan — the General Security of Military Information Agreement. The pact allows the countries to share critical security information, including intelligence on North Korea's

nuclear and missile works.

"Japan-South Korea relations remains very harsh due to negative actions taken by the South Korean side," JMSDF Chief of Staff Adm. Hiroshi Yamamura said during a news conference Tuesday, according to a spokesman.

He did not specify during the conference what he meant by negative actions, the spokesman said.

"We comprehensively determined that we don't have an adequate environment to invite South Korea for [this year's] fleet review," Yama-

mura added, according to the spokesman.

South Korea's decision to end the pact brought criticism from the United States, which has defense treaties with both countries.

"This will make defending [South Korea] more complicated and increase risk to U.S. forces," State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said in a tweet Aug. 25.

South Korean officials have said the decision was made after Japan removed the country from its list of trusted trading partners and announced it

would restrict exports of chemicals considered essential to South Korean manufacturers.

Relations between the countries have been fraught with tension for decades over atrocities that happened during Japan's occupation of South Korea in 1910-45.

South Korea has participated in Japan's fleet review twice in the past, including the most recent one in 2015, according to the JMSDF spokesman.

The spokesman also said China will be participating for the first time.

Some Navy residents will see jump in electricity rates

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — Navy installation officials are scrambling to explain a 68% jump in electricity rates next month for airmen and sailors living in privatized housing in Hawaii.

Residents of Hickam Communities and Ohana Military Communities were notified only two weeks ago that the rate for electricity coming from a Navy-owned power grid would increase from 19 cents per kilowatt-hour to 32 cents per kWh on Oct. 1.

A residence using 500 kWh per month — roughly the Hawaii state average — would see a monthly bill increase from \$95 to \$160.

Hickam Communities and Ohana Military Communities host just over 7,000 residential units.

The Navy is holding a series of town hall meetings in an attempt to explain the increase and the short notice.

“No excuses, no excuses,”

Capt. Marc Delao, head of Naval Facilities Engineering Command Hawaii, told a group of about 200 residents during a Monday evening town hall at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

“I totally get that,” he said. “I will be absolutely honest with you. I failed here. I will take full responsibility for that on behalf of the Navy, the team. I take responsibility.”

But he was quick to add that “there ain’t really a whole lot I can do” about changing the rate that begins Oct. 1, which is the start of federal fiscal year 2020.

“What is done is done for FY20,” he said. “That rate is there.”

The rate increase is the result of a Navy-wide budget reform that converted the engineering command from a self-supporting revolving-fund organization into a general fund entity. Under the new structure, the command is required to bill users the actual costs of utilities and facilities management.

For roughly the past five

years, the engineering command had set the electricity rate paid by residents of Hickam Communities and Ohana Military Communities below what it actually costs the Navy to buy from Hawaiian Electric Co., Delao said.

As of Oct. 1, the Navy will buy electricity from Hawaiian Electric, add overhead costs of management and maintenance and then charge customers based on those real costs, he said.

Delao said he flew to Washington two weeks ago to plead with “corporate headquarters” for relief from the 39 cents per kilowatt-hour the Navy had initially intended for Hawaii.

Last week, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Hawaii learned that the rate for fiscal year 2020 was being lowered to 32 cents per kWh, which is basically the same as Hawaiian Electric’s rate for regular residential customers on Oahu, he said.

Rouhani slams US ‘economic terrorism’

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Iran’s president accused the United States of “merciless economic terrorism” Wednesday, using his U.N. speech to stress that security in the Persian Gulf can be guaranteed only when his nation’s security is as well — and only with the involvement of Iran’s neighbors.

President Hassan Rouhani told the U.N. General Assembly gathering that Iran would not negotiate on the issue of its nuclear program as long as sanctions remain in place.

Iranian state television broadcast Rouhani’s speech live across the country of 80 million people.

He spoke as his country’s nuclear deal with world powers unravels under pressure from the Trump administration. Iran has turned back to expanding its nuclear enrichment program after President Donald Trump’s decision last year to pull out of the accord and reimpose sanctions on Tehran, targeting its ability to export oil.

Rouhani’s highly anticipated remarks at the U.N. came a day after Trump described Iran as “one of the greatest threats” to the planet.

The escalating crisis has raised concerns that direct conflict, with Iran at the center, could break out in the region — a scenario that all concerned parties have stressed they want to avoid.

The United States has sent military reinforcements and beefed up its security presence in the Middle East in past months amid the rising tensions with Iran.

Rouhani’s manner during the speech was measured, but the words he delivered were ominous.

“Our region is on the edge of collapse, as a single blunder can fuel a big fire,” he said.

Navy Exchange will stop selling vape products

BY CHRISTIAN LOPEZ
AND JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

The Navy Exchange is banning concessionaires from selling electronic cigarettes and vape products at its locations starting Oct. 1, an official said Tuesday.

“The NEX does not sell any vaping products, but some NEX locations have concession vendors who do sell these products,” Navy Exchange Service Command public affairs officer Courtney Williams said in an email.

“Therefore, due to recent federal proposals, beginning on 1 OCT, the NEX will prohibit all concessionaires or vendors from selling e-cigarettes or vaping products in all NEX locations,” she said.

Williams said the Navy made the decision Sept. 12, the same day the Army Public Health Center

warned servicemembers to avoid vape products after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said vaping may be linked to hundreds of cases of severe lung disease and at least six deaths in dozens of states.

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service also plans to pull vape products from store shelves starting Monday.

The Marine Corps Exchange, however, hasn’t decided whether to take e-cigarettes and vape products off its shelves, a Marine Corps official said in an email Wednesday.

“No decisions have been made at this time,” said Bryan Driver, of the Plans, Policy and Analysis Directorate, Business and Support Services, Headquarters Marine Corps.

Last week, retail giant Walmart announced it would stop selling the products amid concerns about links to severe lung disease.

Motive still sought in Virginia Beach shooting

The Virginian-Pilot

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — Before anyone could call police, 10 people had been shot dead. Two more had been severely wounded.

Within minutes of the first 911 call, two more would end up dead and two would suffer serious injuries in the May 31 mass shooting in Virginia Beach's municipal complex.

After nearly four months of investigation, more than 750 interviews and thousands of hours of detective work, police still don't know why.

"We have asked the question 'Why. Why did this suspect do what he did?'" Police Deputy Chief Patrick Gallagher said.

"We're still looking to determine motive."

Police cornered the shooter, DeWayne Craddock, 40, six minutes after they entered the building and shot multiple times through a wooden door, Gallagher said in a briefing Tuesday to the City Council and family members of the victims. The gunman was pronounced dead at a hospital a little over an hour after the rampage began.

Tuesday's update on the ongoing criminal investigation was the first time police revealed new information since June 3, when city leaders released the gunman's resignation letter.

The vacuum of information has left already reeling families starved for closure, with

several saying they can't fully grieve without knowing what led up to the tragedy and how it all unfolded. The city invited families and employees to view the update privately.

Nothing in Craddock's past hinted at the tragedy about to unfold. He hadn't been diagnosed with any mental illnesses and wasn't taking any prescription medications, the deputy chief said. He had about \$20,000 in his bank accounts and no credit card debt. He left no manifesto to explain his actions, had no social media accounts and no known group affiliations, Gallagher said.

There was no apparent pattern to those he targeted, Gallagher said. Six were women,

10 were men. Some were black, some were white. There were also people he encountered in the building that he chose not to fire at.

"He shot people he knew, he shot people he didn't know," the deputy chief said.

The only hint of what was to come was discovered in his computer history. He did a Google search for maps of Building 2 and the Municipal Center, police said.

Detectives have conducted nearly all the interviews that they plan to do. But they still have thousands of documents, emails and other information to scour before they complete their investigation, Gallagher said.

Tropical storm dumps rain on Puerto Rico

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Authorities in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands reported limited power outages, flooding and landslides as Tropical Storm Karen swirled away from the northeast Caribbean on Wednesday.

Schools remained closed in Puerto Rico, although government offices reopened. Meanwhile, everything reopened in the U.S. Virgin Islands except for offices and schools in St. John.

Crews also temporarily closed some coastal roads in southeastern Puerto Rico

that flooded after Karen hit the island Tuesday, leaving up to 29,000 customers without power at one point. An islandwide outage was reported in neighboring St. Thomas on Tuesday morning, followed by smaller outages that afternoon.

Forecasters warned of more rain showers for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands throughout Wednesday, but those were expected to dissipate by Thursday as Karen heads north.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said the storm might slow and loop back toward the west by the weekend.

Karen was located about 155 miles north northeast of San Juan early Wednesday and was moving north at 14 mph.

Meanwhile, Jerry became a post-tropical cyclone and was expected to pass near Bermuda on Wednesday.

In addition, Lorenzo became the fifth Atlantic hurricane of the season and was projected to become a major hurricane by the end of the week, although it is not expected to affect the Caribbean. It was centered about 640 miles southwest of the southernmost Cape Verde Islands and had maximum sustained winds of 80 mph.

Pakistan begins cleanup after deadly earthquake

Associated Press

MIRPUR, Pakistan — Authorities began distributing tents, food and water among thousands of earthquake victims in Pakistan-held Kashmir on Wednesday as the death toll from a powerful magnitude 5.8 temblor that rocked a large swath of the country's northeast a day earlier jumped to 37, officials said.

Kashmir bore the brunt of Tuesday's quake in which hundreds of other people were injured. One person was killed in

Jhulum, a city in northeastern Punjab province.

Fearing aftershocks, many spent the night in the open in the hardest hit areas in Mirpur, a district in Pakistan-held Kashmir where hundreds of homes and buildings were damaged, affecting thousands in the city of some 5 million residents.

Authorities said rescue work in quake-hit areas was completed and authorities were still assessing damages.

According to a military statement, army chief Gen. Qamar

Javed Bajwa on Wednesday visited quake-affected areas in Kashmir.

Earlier, under cloudy skies, some residents complained they had not received any aid 24 hours after the quake rattled the region and some were seen by an Associated Press reporter picking through ruined buildings. Others sat in shock as relatives and a small number of volunteers provided small amounts of food.

"I came out of the (office) building and a part of the roof collapsed on my head. I was

injured on my head and back," resident Muhammad Mehmood said. "After receiving treatment, I came to my home and saw seven rooms of my house had collapsed but my family members were safe."

Mehmood said he was frustrated at having to wait for assistance.

Government aid arrived in Mirpur after Mohammad Afzal, chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority, said tents, food and blankets should start reaching affected areas later Wednesday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman guilty of trespassing for selfie

ND BISMARCK — A Mandan woman pleaded guilty to trespassing after authorities say she jumped a guard rail at Bismarck's Dakota Zoo in July and approached a primate cage to take a selfie.

Ashlee Brown, 18, was fined \$300 after Monday's guilty plea and will be on unsupervised probation for nearly a year. She can keep the incident off her record if she stays out of trouble during that time.

Authorities said Brown touched a siamang, which is a small ape, and took a photograph.

Canceled festival of the undead revived

DE DEWEY BEACH — A horde of undead is once again expected to flood the streets of a small Delaware town.

Organizers of Milton's 2019 Zombie Fest announced the event's resurrection on Monday, unveiling a new name and location. The new, all-ages Milton Theatre Zombie Fest will take place Oct. 19 in Dewey Beach.

The original festival was killed in August, with organizers blaming town leaders for the loss of an event that nearly doubles Milton's population each year.

Organizer and theater director Fred Munzert said the cancellation announcement led 11 other Delaware towns to offer to host the growing festival.

Man cited after gun found in luggage

WV HUNTINGTON — Officials said a

West Virginia man was caught with a loaded gun at an airport checkpoint.

The Transportation Security Administration on Monday said the man was stopped with a 9 mm handgun in his carry-on bag at the Huntington Tri-State Airport on Sunday.

The TSA didn't release the name of the man, who they said was cited by police on a weapons violation. The gun had a bullet in the chamber and there were 13 bullets in his bag.

B.B. King guitar sells for \$280K at auction

MS JACKSON — A guitar given to B.B. King for his 80th birthday has sold for \$280,000 at an auction of items from the blues legend's estate.

Julien's Auctions said King often used the black Gibson ES-345 prototype that was one of several guitars he called "Lucille." A spokeswoman for the auction house, Mozell Miley-Bailey, said Monday the buyer wants to remain anonymous.

Before the auction, Julien's estimated the guitar's value at \$80,000 to \$100,000.

The auction of more than 550 items from King's estate took place in Los Angeles on Saturday, a few days after what would have been his 94th birthday.

Officer who arrested 6-year-olds is fired

FL ORLANDO — A police officer who arrested two 6-year-old students at a Florida elementary school last week has been fired.

Orlando police Chief Orlando Rolon announced Officer Dennis Turner's termination Monday afternoon. He said he reminded other officers of department policy that prohibits arrests of children under 12

without a manager's approval.

State Attorney Aramis Ayala, head prosecutor of Orange and Osceola counties, said earlier Monday she was dismissing misdemeanor battery charges against both children. Officials didn't say what prompted the arrests.

Man smoking sprayed with fire extinguisher

UT SALT LAKE CITY — A business owner has apologized after spraying a man smoking a cigarette in the face with a fire extinguisher in downtown Salt Lake City.

KSL-TV reported that Jon Bird was smoking a cigarette near the Gallivan Center on Friday evening when a business owner confronted him several times about smoking near his eatery. Bird said he was volunteering at an event and security personnel gave him permission to smoke at the spot.

In a widely shared video, business owner Alex Jamison can be seen spraying Bird from a few feet away as Bird shields his face. Jamison said he overreacted and apologized to Bird.

Stolen camera sends pictures, ID suspect

LA WOODWORTH — Louisiana wildlife agents said a stolen cellular game camera kept sending pictures, letting them identify the man who had it. He and the man he said he'd bought it from were arrested.

A Department of Wildlife and Fisheries statement Monday said Kurt Wiggins, 55, is accused of theft and Ernie Jenkins, 53, of possessing stolen items. Both are from Woodworth.

Department spokesman

Adam Einck said a U.S. Department of Agriculture feral hog trapper reported Sept. 16 that his game camera, mount and battery pack were stolen from a trap site in the Kisatchie National Forest near Woodworth. Einck said agents with a search warrant found the items Sept. 19 at Jenkins' home.

Couple accused of \$1M restaurant theft

NM ROSWELL — A New Mexico couple is accused of stealing more than \$1 million from the Cattle Baron Restaurant in Roswell.

The state attorney general's office said Brian Casaus and his wife, Tammy, are facing numerous charges that include tax fraud and money laundering.

Criminal complaints allege Brian Casaus used his position as the restaurant's controller and office manager to transfer funds from the restaurant's bank account to personal accounts belonging to him and his wife. Tammy Casaus worked as the restaurant's payroll coordinator.

Police deliver trashed Amazon packages

MA BURLINGTON — Officers in a Massachusetts police department briefly turned into Amazon delivery drivers after a stash of undelivered packages was found in a cemetery.

Burlington police said a "diligent groundskeeper" at a cemetery in the town northwest of Boston found the packages Monday morning in a trash receptacle and contacted police.

Because the packages were addressed to Burlington residents, police took it upon themselves to deliver them.

From wire reports

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Reporting
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Nats sweep Phillies, lock up wild card

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Dave Martinez's words were drenched with emotion as he stood in a booze-soaked clubhouse, Washington Nationals players celebrating all around after clinching an NL wild card exactly four months after they woke up with a 19-31 record and calls for him to be replaced as manager.

It's been quite a turnaround for Martinez — and for his club.

"They don't want to go home. They want to keep playing," Martinez said Tuesday night, wearing the same red T-shirt reading "Let's get wild" as his players had on. "They don't quit."

Trea Turner's go-ahead grand slam in the sixth inning lifted Washington to a 6-5 comeback victory over the Philadelphia Phillies for a doubleheader sweep that assured the Nationals of extending their season and eliminated the Phillies from playoff contention.

"They're resilient. Perfect example: Tonight they were down, but they never feel like they're out," Martinez said. "They stick together. And here we are, going to the postseason."

He missed three full games and part of another this month because of a heart issue; the 54-year-old skipper was back in the dugout four days after having a cardiac catheterization.

"They keep telling me how much they want to play for me," Martinez said in the mayhem, his voice cracking. "And I tell them it's not about me. It's about us. Just play for us."

Washington is returning to the playoffs for the fifth time in eight years after sitting out October in 2018, when the team went 82-80 in Martinez's rookie year as a manager.

Things started roughly in 2019: Washington was 12 games below .500 after a loss on May 23 concluded a four-game sweep at the New York Mets.

At that point, the Nationals

were fourth in the NL East, thanks to defensive sloppiness, bad baserunning and, above all, unreliable-as-can-be work from the bullpen.

Martinez retained his always-sunny disposition and remained in his post, unwilling to publicly criticize his players and, in a participation-trophy sort of way, often pointing out how hard they had tried in defeat.

Eventually, things clicked. Washington went on a real roll, even playing winning baseball while Max Scherzer took two trips to the injured list with a back muscle problem.

Perhaps fittingly, it was three-time Cy Young Award winner Scherzer (11-7) who got the clinching win despite a rocky start, allowing a pair of homers to Brad Miller as Washington fell behind 4-2. But much like the way the entire season went, the Nationals dug themselves out.

"We knew nothing was going to be won or lost in the first

five months," said Turner, who had three hits in the day's first game, a 4-1 win for the Nationals, "and now we're in a good spot."

The Nationals entered Tuesday hoping to beat Philadelphia twice plus get a loss by the Chicago Cubs at Pittsburgh — and each of those things happened.

Right after center fielder Victor Robles made a running catch for the last out of the second game in Washington, the Nationals Park scoreboard showed the Cubs vs. the Pirates.

Many of Washington's players stood on their stadium's infield and watched the end of the Cubs' 9-2 defeat, then started celebrating there before heading indoors for the real deal, which included red cans of Budweiser, blue cans of Bud Light, white cans of Stella Artois and bottles of Campo Viejo Cava.

"With everything we went through as a group," reliever Sean Doolittle said, "it feels so much sweeter."

Brewers down Reds, move closer to playoff berth

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — The clubhouse rocked with music played by a DJ. Television screens showed the Cubs losing again, moving the Brewers to the verge of another postseason berth.

"Yes!" one Brewer yelled as the Pirates piled it on against Chicago.

Already, it was quite a party. The real one was now only one more win away.

Ryan Braun added to his impressive total of homers at Great American Ball Park, and the Brewers moved one win away from clinching a wild-card berth Tuesday night, beating the Cincinnati Reds 4-2 for their fifth straight victory.

"To do it here tomorrow would be incredible," said Brent Suter (4-0), who attended Ken Griffey Jr.'s high school in

Cincinnati. "I'm hoping for it."

Just like last season, when Milwaukee put on a late rush to take the NL Central title, the Brewers have closed in on a playoff spot with a September flourish. They've won 16 of 18, positioning themselves for one of the NL wild cards along with Washington.

"They've recognized what's at stake," manager Craig Counsell said. "I think the common theme in both cases is we were chasing something, and that's lent some urgency to everything we've done. And I think our players have responded really well to that sense of urgency."

A win at Great American on Wednesday night or losses by the Cubs and Mets would give Milwaukee a second straight playoff appearance. The Brewers trail the Cardinals in the NL Central.

With 2018 National League MVP Christian Yelich sidelined by a broken right knee-cap, the Brewers have turned to their deep bullpen and different combinations of hitting stars each night. Milwaukee has the best record in the majors in September at 18-4.

"I've seen glimpses of it being there, but it all started to fall into place for us," said Adrian Houser, who worked the first four innings.

Braun connected for his 21st homer off Sonny Gray (11-8), making the final start of his All-Star season. Braun's 27 homers at Great American are his most in any road ballpark, and his 44 career against Cincinnati are his highest total against any team.

Braun has been a solid contributor lately, going 9-for-21 in his last seven games. He also singled off Gray, who went five

innings and fanned six to top 200 strikeouts for the first time in his career.

"It means a lot," Gray said. "I know we lost, and I hate to lose, but it's a good feeling. It's been quite a ride this year. I'm overwhelmed with emotion."

Yasmani Grandal's double tied it at 2 in the third, and Keston Hiura put the Brewers ahead to stay with a sacrifice fly.

Houser gave up a broken-bat RBI double by Aristides Aquino and a run-scoring single by Tucker Barnhart in the first inning. The Reds lead the majors with 128 runs and 125 RBIs in the first inning.

Suter allowed three hits in three innings. Josh Hader allowed a pair of hits in the ninth before fanning Kyle Farmer on a slider for his 36th save in 42 chances.

MLB roundup

Twins move closer to AL Central title

Associated Press

DETROIT — The Minnesota Twins took another step toward an AL Central title with a 4-2 win over the Detroit Tigers on Tuesday night.

More importantly, they think they dodged an injury that could have significantly hampered their chances in October.

After allowing one run and two hits in the first six innings, Twins starter Jake Odorizzi caught manager Rocco Baldelli's attention with some odd arm movements as he warmed up for the seventh. Odorizzi's arm wasn't the problem.

"He asked about my shoulder and I said that was fine — I was just getting the blood flow going again — but my hamstring was cramping a little," Odorizzi said. "I could have kept going, but taking me out was probably the smart thing."

Baldelli agreed and brought in Kyle Gibson.

"Under different circumstances, I would have left Jake out there, but this way we are sure he's going to be fine going forward," he said.

Minnesota's magic number to clinch the division is two over Cleveland. The Indians beat the White Sox 11-0 later Tuesday.

Indians 11, White Sox 0: Jose Ramirez hit a grand slam

and a three-run homer in his first two plate appearances after missing a month with a broken hand, and Cleveland pounded host Chicago.

Roberto Perez and Oscar Mercado also went deep for the Indians, who won for the sixth time in seven games to remain a half-game back of Tampa Bay for the second AL wild card.

Rays 2, Yankees 1: Ji-Man Choi hit a game-ending home run in the 12th inning that helped host Tampa Bay remain on track for an AL wild-card berth after New York's CC Sabathia pitched a perfect inning in his first regular-season relief appearance.

Tampa Bay remained a half-game ahead of Cleveland for the second AL wild card.

Angels 3, Athletics 2: Homer Bailey lost for the first time in eight starts and visiting Oakland suffered a setback in its postseason pursuit.

The A's let their lead for the top AL wild card drop to a half-game over Tampa Bay and one game over Cleveland. Their magic number to clinch a playoff spot remained at five with five games left.

Diamondbacks 3, Cardinals 2 (19): Ildemaro Vargas had a game-tying pinch-hit homer in the ninth inning and then singled with the bases loaded in the 19th at 1:34 a.m. local

time to lift host Arizona past St. Louis.

St. Louis had its lead in the NL Central cut to 2½ games over Milwaukee. The Cardinals have four games remaining, while the Brewers have five.

Rockies 8, Giants 5 (16): Colorado and host San Francisco combined to use a major league-record 25 pitchers, and Charlie Blackmon hit a three-run homer in the 16th inning to end it.

The game lasted 5 hours, 31 minutes, with Giants manager Bruce Bochy making 12 pitching changes — hardly taking it easy in his final week on the job.

Pirates 9, Cubs 2: At Pittsburgh, freefalling Chicago committed five errors, including two in a seven-run seventh inning, and moved to the brink of elimination with its seventh straight loss.

The Cubs dropped to 82-75 and would be eliminated with one more loss or Milwaukee win.

Mets 5, Marlins 4 (11): Three outs from postseason elimination, host New York tied it 4-all in the ninth when Michael Conforto clocked his second two-run homer of the game, connecting off Jose Urena for his 33rd long ball of the season.

Astros 3, Mariners 0: Gerrit

Cole won his 15th consecutive decision, striking out 14 and walking none while pitching two-hit ball for seven innings to lead visiting Houston.

Cole (19-5) is unbeaten in 21 starts since losing to the Chicago White Sox on May 22.

Dodgers 6, Padres 3: Max Muncy hit his first career grand slam and visiting Los Angeles clinched home-field advantage throughout the NL playoffs even before it beat staggering San Diego.

The seven-time NL West champion Dodgers (101-56) locked up home field when NL East champion Atlanta (96-62) lost 9-6 at Kansas City.

Red Sox 12, Rangers 10: Eduardo Rodriguez labored through five innings to get his 19th win, allowing more runs than he had in his previous seven starts combined, and visiting Boston beat Texas.

Royals 9, Braves 6: In its first game after manager Ned Yost announced he will retire after the season, host Kansas City burst to a six-run lead in the first three innings and beat NL East champion Atlanta behind three hits and two RBIs from Nicky Lopez.

Orioles 11, Blue Jays 4: Trey Mancini had a career-high five hits, DJ Stewart hit a two-run homer and visiting Baltimore beat Toronto.

Fink likely to be starting QB for No. 21 Southern Cal

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Quarterback Kedon Slovis is in the concussion protocol for No. 21 Southern California, increasing the likelihood of Matt Fink making his first career start at No. 17 Washington this weekend.

Coach Clay Helton confirmed Tuesday night that Slovis isn't currently cleared to practice or play.

Slovis was injured on the second play of the Trojans' victory

over then-No. 10 Utah last Friday. Fink stepped in and passed for 351 yards with ample help from his outstanding receivers in USC's 30-23 win.

Fink is likely to lead the underdog Trojans against the defending Pac-12 champion Huskies (3-1, 0-1). Offensive coordinator Graham Harrell is working overtime to train his third starting quarterback in five games — and the non-quarterbacks who would be Fink's backup, including a

walk-on safety and a starting receiver.

"We plan on playing Fink," Harrell said. "And if something happens, you're in a scramble situation and you've got to make the best of what you've got."

The Trojans (3-1, 2-0 Pac-12) installed a completely new Air Raid offense this season under Harrell, but have still managed a solid start despite upheaval at the scheme's most important position.

J.T. Daniels was lost to a sea-

son-ending knee injury right before halftime in USC's season opener, and 18-year-old freshman Slovis stepped in to start the next three games. He was outstanding in a victory over a ranked Stanford team, but threw three interceptions in an embarrassing overtime loss at BYU.

Fink realizes he could be playing for the permanent starting job if he performs well in Slovis' absence, but it's all tied to the Trojans' overall success.

Pettis' early struggles lead to big TD

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Dante Pettis' roller-coaster start to his second season in the NFL has led him to the end zone for the biggest touchdown of the year for the San Francisco 49ers.

Pettis came into the year expected to build on a promising rookie season to become the No. 1 receiver in San Francisco's offense. Instead, he struggled in training camp and drew public criticism from coach Kyle Shanahan, barely saw the field in the opener, wasn't targeted a single time in Week 2 and had an interception go off his hands in the first half this past week against Pittsburgh.

Despite all the lows, Shanahan and quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo still decided to go in Pettis' direction with the Niners trailing late against the Steelers. The move paid off with a 5-yard TD catch that gave the 49ers a 24-20 victory

Sunday for their first 3-0 start in 21 years.

"It was good. There obviously have been a lot of ups and downs. I know that's part of sports. I've been around professional sports my whole life," said Pettis, whose father, Gary, is a former major league outfielder.

"I know what happens. You're not just going to be good every single day. Now that I know what it's like to go through that, I know I can do this. I know I'm here for a reason."

The 49ers were counting heavily on Pettis heading into this season after a strong finish to his rookie season. Pettis caught a 22-yard TD pass from Garoppolo in his NFL debut last year before struggling with knee injuries that limited him to three catches through the first nine games of the season.

But Pettis had 17 catches for 338 yards and four TDs during a four-game stretch late in the season before re-injuring his

knee, showing why the Niners traded up into the second round to take him in the 2018 draft.

That success didn't carry over into this season as Pettis struggled throughout training camp, leading him to play deep into some exhibitions when most established players were already done for the night as Shanahan said he hadn't earned a starting role.

Pettis then managed to get on the field for two snaps in the opener at Tampa Bay, catching one pass for 7 yards. After a good week of practice, he got more time in Week 2 in Cincinnati but threw more passes (one) than he had thrown his way (zero) as he once again came off the bench.

"He's just gotten better each week," Shanahan said. "We all know how he finished last year. Had a few bumps in the road throughout training camp, which I think has been well documented and I talked about. But, I've been extremely

impressed with how he's responded since the first week of the season. He's taken the challenge. He's been working as hard as anyone on our team."

That led to Pettis getting his first start of the season against the Steelers, although that didn't start well with the early interception off his hands and only three catches for 15 yards until the closing minutes.

Then with the game on the line, Garoppolo didn't hesitate to go in his direction when Pettis got open between two defenders at the goal line.

"Dante's phenomenal in practice," Garoppolo said. "I know you guys aren't seeing all that and everything, but he battles in practice. Great mindset of when his number's called, he's ready. You've got to appreciate a guy like that. Having all that competitiveness, you love to see it as a quarterback, because you can trust that."

NHL making effort to keep fans coming to arenas

Associated Press

DETROIT — Red Wings season ticket holder Matt Larson pays about \$74 for two of the cheapest seats in Little Caesars Arena.

The 32-year-old fan gets a pair of chairs set up behind a counter — giving him plenty of space for food and drink — in a spacious area perched near the rafters behind a net.

"There's nothing better than watching hockey in person," Larson said recently while watching Detroit host Chicago in a preseason game.

The Red Wings, and every other NHL team, hope there are a lot of people who agree with him.

Detroit is desperately trying to keep fans filing into its arena, which is a little more than two years old, as the allure of the spectacular facility wears off while the team trudges through a multiyear rebuild.

Despite another season without a trip to the playoffs, the Red Wings said the arena was filled to 98% of capacity on average. They ranked in the middle of the pack in a league that generally is able to draw fans to watch its high-speed, full-contact product in person. Ten teams averaged sellouts and just five of 31 franchises had an average attendance last season that didn't fill at least 90% of their arenas.

While Detroit did not have trouble selling tickets last year, it wasn't always playing in front of a packed house because some fans simply couldn't get people to take and use their tickets. To make unoccupied seats stand out less on TV for Red Wings and Pistons games, the red material covering chairs has been replaced by black to blend in throughout Little Caesars Arena.

"It was an expensive choice,"

Larson said. "I would've hated to foot the bill for it."

Like franchises in other sports and leagues, NHL teams are invested in enhancing game-day experiences, knowing there is a lot at stake to keep them coming to arenas instead of staying at home.

"Our biggest competitor is Netflix," San Jose Sharks vice president Doug Bentz said. "The one advantage we have over Netflix is you're a part of a community at a Sharks game. We want more of that in our world where so many are stuck on devices in isolation or binge-watching on a couch maybe with one other person."

On streets and in living rooms, St. Louis is still buzzing from its first Stanley Cup.

The Blues will raise a championship banner Oct. 2 before opening the season against the Washington Capitals. Blues season-ticket holder Mike Bus-

chhorn plans to be there for the party, deciding not to cash in on his tickets by selling them and watching the festivities on TV.

"You have to be at a hockey game in person to get it," the Blues fan said. "TV doesn't do it justice. It is the most exciting sport to be at."

The price of tickets, however, plays a part in keeping some fans at home.

"It's a lot cheaper for a 12-pack on the weekends," Blues fan John Fuchs said.

The Carolina Hurricanes have gotten creative, trying to climb up from the bottom of the NHL's attendance figures in terms of percentage of capacity. Carolina sold a little more than three-fourths of its tickets at its Raleigh arena last season to rank ahead of only Ottawa after a three-year run of being last in the league.