

DOD leadership set to face Congress

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley are gearing up for a grilling this week, as the Pentagon leaders prepare to testify before Congress.

Representatives and senators are planning to question them about last month's bloody exit from Afghanistan and a new book that says Milley called China to calm tensions surrounding the 2020 election.

Republicans and many Democrats have criticized President Joe Biden for his handling of the Afghanistan withdrawal, while the parties have split on Milley's reported call to China, in which Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Robert Costa wrote that Milley told Chinese Gen. Li Zucheng that the United States did not intend to attack.

A number of Republicans, including Sens. Marco Rubio of Florida and Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee, have said they be-

lieve Milley's calls were "treasonous" if the book is accurate. Rubio has called on him to resign. But Biden responded that he remains confident in the general, who has also told reporters his calls went according to protocol.

Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, the head of U.S. Central Command who oversaw U.S. forces in Afghanistan, will join them when they appear before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday and the House Armed Services Committee Wednesday.

In a Sept. 23 letter to Austin, Oklahoma's James M. Inhofe, the ranking Republican on the Senate panel, requested a long list of records, intelligence reports and summaries of Pentagon documents relating to Afghanistan, the rushed withdrawal of which last month left behind U.S. citizens and Afghan allies and exposed U.S. servicemembers and Afghans to a terrorist bombing that killed 13 Americans and scores of Afghans.

Inhofe wants an accounting of how many people the military evacuated from the country and of all military equipment left behind. He set an Oct. 8 deadline for the information.

On Sept. 22, five Republican senators on the committee, Josh Hawley of Missouri, Tom Cotton of Arkansas, Kevin Cramer of North Dakota, Rick Scott of Florida and Tommy Tuberville of Alabama, wrote to the chairman, Democrat Jack Reed of Rhode Island, to ask him to allow them extra time to question the Pentagon witnesses.

"The American people want to know how the Administration — including the Department of Defense — failed to prepare for the collapse of the Afghan forces and allowed itself to be blindsided by the Taliban's final advance," they wrote, referencing the quick takeover of the country, as Islamist militants overran a U.S.-backed government.

AUKUS submarine deal leaves India in the dust

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

Defense experts were stunned when the United States and United Kingdom recently announced they would deliver a fleet of nuclear-propelled submarines to Australia under a newly formed security partnership dubbed AUKUS.

Australia Prime Minister Scott Morrison was quick to point out during the announcement at the White House on Sept. 15 that AUKUS would enhance already established partnerships, such as the Quad, a loose strategic grouping of U.S., Australia, Japan and India intended to balance against China's growing military and economic ambitions in the Indo-Pacific.

But the sharing of closely

guarded nuclear-propulsion technology among the three nations left some wondering whether the move will suck all the oxygen out of the room for the parallel grouping of the Quad.

Arun Prakash, once the highest-ranking Indian military officer, wrote in an op-ed Wednesday that AUKUS "places a question mark over the continuing relevance of this forum and its long-overdue actualization."

"While uncharitable comments about 'Anglo-Saxon solidarity' must be ignored, there may be substance in the belief that the 'Anglosphere nations' — which share common cultural and historical ties to the UK — do inspire more confidence in each other," Prakash wrote.

Whether AUKUS will rein-

force or hobble the Quad will likely become clearer after a Quad summit at the White House on Friday.

India has urged the U.S. in recent years to share more defense-related technology, and the submarine deal could embolden India to press for such transfers under the auspices of the Quad grouping.

India commissioned its first nuclear-propelled submarine, the INS Arihant, in 2016, but it is a ballistic-missile sub that is relatively slow moving compared to the general purpose fast-attack submarines that Australia is getting.

India has in the past asked the U.S. to help it acquire such attack subs but has gotten nowhere with the requests.

"India is not a formal ally of

the U.S., which casts into question whether Washington is willing to transfer such sensitive tech as nuclear sub propulsion to New Delhi," Collin Koh, an expert on Pacific naval affairs at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, said in an email Wednesday.

Richard Rossow, an India expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank based in Washington, D.C., said he does not expect the AUKUS deal will raise unrealistic expectations in India.

"Narrowly, India understands that our defense relationships with Australia and the United Kingdom remains well ahead of our defense relationship with India," he wrote in an email Tuesday.

USS Reagan steams into South China Sea

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group, fresh from duty in the Middle East, sailed into the contentious South China Sea on Friday.

The Navy announced the strike group's entry into the area in a news release the same day. Led by the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, the strike group returns to the region after spending nearly three months in the Arabian Sea supporting the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

"We look forward to leveraging our recent out-of-area experience as we return to the South China Sea and our rapidly grow-

ing alliances and partnerships dedicated to the Indo-Pacific," said Rear Adm. Will Pennington, commander of Task Force 70 and Carrier Strike Group 5, in the release.

The strike group, on patrol from its homeport at Yokosuka Naval Base since May, will conduct flight operations, maritime strike operations, anti-submarine operations and tactical training while in the South China Sea, according to the Navy.

"Ronald Reagan and all components of its strike group have operated with relentless energy and commitment throughout the deployment, showcasing the strength and resilience of America," said Capt. Fred Goldham-

mer, the Reagan's commander, in the release. "As we continue our mission in the South China Sea, we remain vigilant and ready to answer the call."

The Reagan's arrival comes as tensions continue to rise in an area that China asserts is part of its territorial waters. Beijing has steadily increased its military presence there by building artificial islands and remote military installations.

Last week, Australia announced a new deal with the United States to purchase American-built nuclear-power submarines. News of the deal follows the Royal Navy's announcement earlier this year of an increased presence in the region.

The U.S. has also continued to offer more vocal support of Taiwan. Beijing considers the functioning democracy to be a breakaway province that must be reunited with the mainland, possibly by force.

The head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Adm. John Aquilino, said during a press conference last month that the U.S. is ready for "any contingency that may occur," including armed conflict, when it comes to the Indo-Pacific region and Taiwan.

"We are here to continue to operate to ensure peace and prosperity through the region, and we have to be in a position to ensure that status quo remains as it applies to Taiwan," he said.

US-Greece pact set to give US more access to bases

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

A new defense pact between Washington and Athens could give U.S. forces access to a second naval base on the island of Crete and an air and sea base on an island in the Aegean Sea, a prominent Greek news agency reported last week.

Military officials in Athens told the Kathimerini newspaper that when the two countries sign a new mutual defense cooperation agreement next month, the deal is expected to involve an additional base at Souda Bay, where the U.S. Navy has long operated.

"The new base is part of the national operational plan for the coming years and is linked to the decision for Greece to establish a more permanent presence in the eastern Mediterranean," the paper reported.

While negotiations are ongoing, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias is scheduled to visit Washington on Oct. 14 to finalize the deal. Greece's aim is to add basing at Souda Bay that will enable larger fleets to move in and out of the area.

Another top priority for Athens is to get Washington to include in the new defense agreement an expansion of U.S. military operations into the Aegean Sea.

Specifically, it is seeking air and naval facilities on the island of Skyros that could be used by either rotational or permanent U.S. units, Kathimerini reported.

Skyros is in the center of the Aegean and would give U.S. ships and aircraft quicker access to the Black Sea, where NATO has sought to expand operations over concerns about Russian aggression.

Marines bring Big Ideas to challenges in Indo-Pacific

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP COURTNEY, Okinawa — Marine Maj. Jenkyn Kittrell's experience providing water to thousands of Filipinos in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 yielded innovation from necessity.

"One of the vital things we tried to get in there was water," the 32-year-old from Baltimore recently told Stars and Stripes at Camp Courtney. "We had a lot of water purification and a lot of bulk water sites, but then we couldn't really distribute that to the populace."

Kittrell's simple, cost-effective way to solve that problem earned him the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal from Lt. Gen. Stacy Clardy, commander of III Marine Expeditionary Force. His invention is also being developed for use by the force.

Kittrell's was one of several proposals highlighted Sept. 15 at

an award ceremony for III MEF's second annual Big Ideas Challenge. This year, winners focused on solving problems in humanitarian and expeditionary advanced base operations, a new warfare concept in the Indo-Pacific region.

The challenge is open to U.S. military affiliates in Japan and this year accepted 94 submissions between April 28 and June 6, III MEF spokesman 1st Lt. Kazuma Engelkemier said Tuesday. Clardy presented awards to 11 finalists, including a civilian, at the ceremony at III MEF headquarters aboard Camp Courtney.

The Marines select dozens of innovations each year to further develop, Lt. Col. Matthew Neely, the force logistics innovation officer, said Tuesday at Courtney. He said some are sent to higher headquarters and some are developed within III MEF on Okinawa, depending on cost and scale.

Analyzing Afghan security forces' collapse

The Washington Post

Building Afghanistan's national security forces was one of the most ambitious and expensive aspects of two decades of U.S.-led war.

It resulted in failure.

The United States spent billions of dollars training and equipping police, soldiers and special forces. Despite years of warnings from U.S. and Afghan officials, successive U.S. administrations pledged that the Afghan military was capable of defending the country. President Joe Biden said the Afghan military was "as well-equipped as any army in the world" just a month before its collapse.

Today, not a single unit of the country's security forces remains intact.

A sophisticated Taliban campaign aimed at securing surrender deals lay at the heart of the Afghan military's collapse, but layers of corruption, waste and logistical failures left the country's security forces so underequipped and with such battered morale that it enabled the militants' success.

Interviews with more than a dozen members of the Afghan special forces, army and police in three provinces from May to July illustrate that the collapse of security forces was not abrupt. Instead, it was a slow, painful breakdown that began months before the fall of Kabul.

Early May, Kabul

Death stalked Afghanistan's security forces in the spring. As the pace of the U.S. withdrawal increased, and the Taliban continued its relentless sweep through rural Afghanistan, casualties among government fighters surged.

The last time Niazi's family spoke to him was during a hurried phone call. The Afghan National Army soldier, who goes by one name, was stationed at a remote outpost in Baghlan province.

"He told me he was fine," said his mother, Bas Bigum. But she

could sense from his voice that he feared for his life. "We know what happens when the Taliban surrounds a base."

Niazi's Afghan army unit was attacked inside its own base after being surrounded by Taliban fighters. The unit's commander fled. Niazi was injured in the subsequent battle, and he later died of his wounds at a Kabul hospital.

May, Kandahar province

As the war intensified, many of Afghanistan's police on the front line were entering their sixth month without pay, a widespread problem that took a toll on government forces' morale and made them vulnerable to Taliban offers.

At a small outpost south of Kandahar city, Noor Ahmad Zhargi was on guard duty. The Eid holiday marking the end of Ramadan was approaching and even if he was granted leave, he said he wouldn't go home.

"I would be too ashamed to look at my children with empty hands," he said.

When he joined Afghanistan's police force, all he was given was a gun — no training or documentation.

"Next month, if the government doesn't pay me, maybe I should just sell this to the Taliban," he said holding the rifle. He said he had heard the Taliban were paying around \$2,000 for Afghan government weapons like his. He insisted he would never join the Taliban but dodged a question about whether he would surrender.

Two months later, Zhargi's post had fallen to the Taliban, along with nearly every other district in Kandahar, except for the provincial capital. Other police in the city said they heard everyone at the post had surrendered, and many were taken by the militants. No one knew if they were still being held as prisoners or had been executed.

Afghanistan's most highly trained fighters were assigned to defensive operations as the Tali-

ban pushed closer to provincial capitals and as U.S. air support disappeared. Elite fighters were tasked with running dangerous resupply missions that made them susceptible to Taliban ambushes.

"This is not what we were trained to do," said Lt. Abdul Hamid Barakzai of the Afghan commandos, referring to the drives between outposts where Taliban fighters often placed snipers or roadside bombs. He said the commandos were given the task because they were one of the few units with heavily armored vehicles.

As one team arrived at a small mazelike base to drop off bread and energy drinks, a Taliban sniper round ricocheted off the side of a heavily armored vehicle, sending shrapnel into the stomach of one of the soldiers. He quickly wrapped a scarf around the wound and brushed it off.

"They shoot at us like this every day," one of the other men said.

July, Kunduz province

By July, the Afghan government had lost control of large swaths of the country and was relying on elite units — the best trained, equipped and generally most motivated — to lead the fight.

But without U.S. oversight, the troops were being mismanaged and overworked.

"We knew how to defeat the Taliban, but the leadership at the top didn't listen," said a captain in one of Afghanistan's most elite units. He spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

As the U.S. withdrew its forces, Afghanistan special operators were largely moved under the command of the Defense Ministry. The shift robbed the units of a degree of independence that had insulated them from the corruption that handicapped other branches of the country's security forces, the captain said.

He said he presented his supervisor with multiple plans to reor-

ganize the country's security forces and to push back the militants' advances. But each time he was rebuffed.

"Instead, we were sent to conduct clearing operations with no support," he said. "That is not how you win a war. We were letting the enemy choose the battle space; we should have been taking the fight to them."

July, Kandahar

By late July, the Taliban were closing in on nearly all the country's provincial capitals. Afghan security forces that hadn't been killed by the Taliban had deserted or repeatedly fled, steadily retreating from remote outposts into city centers.

Those who remained on the country's front lines were some of the least capable.

"The Taliban are everywhere now, even inside the city," said Obidullah Bilal, a wounded policeman in Kandahar's central hospital. He was driving an unarmored police truck through eastern Kandahar to resupply a checkpoint when he was caught by a Taliban ambush.

"It's because of our leadership that we are in this position," he said, referring to the massive territorial losses the government had suffered in a matter of weeks.

"Our leaders sell our checkpoints," he said. "They've already sold our blood."

One police commander said the only men from his unit willing to hold positions against the Taliban were drug addicts.

"It keeps them awake," said Mirza Wali, a police commander attending the funeral for one of his men, Nik Mohammad, who had been killed by the Taliban ambush the night before.

Mohammad was estranged from his family because of his meth addiction, but his sister and mother attended the funeral.

"The addicts are the only one who can stand being on the front line," Wali said. "If they weren't using drugs, they would go crazy."

At least 3 dead in train derailment in Montana

Associated Press

JOPLIN, Mont. — At least three people were killed Saturday afternoon when an Amtrak train that runs between Seattle and Chicago derailed in north-central Montana, toppling several cars onto their sides, authorities said.

The westbound Empire Builder train derailed about 4 p.m. near Joplin, a town of about 200, Amtrak spokesman Jason Abrams said in a statement. The accident scene is about 150 miles northeast of Helena and about 30 miles from the border with Canada.

Liberty County sheriff's dispatcher Starr Tyler told The Associated Press that three people died in the derailment. She did not have more details. Amtrak confirmed the deaths and said there were multiple injuries.

"We are deeply saddened to learn local authorities are now confirming that three people have lost their lives as a result of this accident," Abrams said.

The train had about 141 passengers and 16 crew members onboard, Abrams said. The train had two locomotives and 10 cars, eight of which derailed, he said.

Megan Vandervest, a passenger who was going to visit a friend in Seattle, told The New York Times that she was awakened by the derailment.

"My first thought was that we were derailling because, to be honest, I have anxiety and I had heard stories about trains derailling," said Vandervest, who is from Minneapolis. "My second thought was that's crazy.

We wouldn't be derailling. Like, that doesn't happen."

She told the Times that the car behind hers was tilted, the one behind that was tipped over, and the three cars behind that "had completely fallen off the tracks and were detached from the train."

Speaking from the Liberty County Senior Center, where some passengers were being taken, Vandervest said it felt like "extreme turbulence on a plane."

Residents of communities near the crash site quickly mobilized to help the passengers.

Chester Councilwoman Rachel Ghekiere said she and others helped about 50 to 60 passengers who were brought to a local school.

"I went to the school and assisted with water, food, wiping dirt off faces," she said. "They appeared to be tired, shaken but happy that they were where they were. Some looked more disheveled than others, depending where they were on the train."

A grocery store in Chester, about 5 miles from the derailment, and a nearby religious community provided food, she said.

The passengers were taken by buses to hotels in nearby Shelby, said Ghekiere, whose husband works for the local emergency services agency and was alerted to the crash.

The National Transportation Safety Board will send a 14-member team, including investigators and specialists in railroad signals and other disciplines, to investigate the crash, spokesman Eric Weiss said.

4 accused of plotting attack on Columbine anniversary

Associated Press

DUNMORE, Pa. — Four teenagers have been charged with a plot to attack a Pennsylvania high school in 2024, on the 25th anniversary of the massacre at Colorado's Columbine High School, authorities said.

A 15-year-old girl and 15-year-old boy are charged as adults and two other teenagers face juvenile charges in the plan to attack Dunmore High School, outside Scranton, on April 20, 2024, authorities said. Investigators said the girl's mother told police that her daughter was "obsessed with Columbine," The Times-Tribune reported Friday.

"While the investigation is ongoing, I want to assure the parents, students and staff at Dunmore High School that we do not believe there is any active threat at this time," District Attorney Mark Powell said in a statement. "We are relieved that this plot was uncovered before anyone was hurt and urge anyone who has information about potential threats of school violence to contact police immediately."

A Molotov cocktail, components for bombs, writings on how to make bombs, and handwritten lists of guns, ammunition and tactical gear complete with prices were found at the girl's home, investigators said in a criminal complaint.

The mother of one of the teens charged as a juvenile discovered text messages on her child's cellphone July 6 in which a group discussed plans to "shoot up the school," investigators said in the complaint. The teen told investigators that he thought it was bluster until he saw 20 to 30 Molotov cocktails under the girl's porch.

Dunmore schools Superintendent John Marichak told the newspaper he was appalled but relieved by the arrests. A statement on the district's website said authorities had assured officials that there was "no current danger to students or staff."

Principal Timothy Hopkins, who was one of the officials targeted, said he knows the two teens charged as adults and described them as quiet children who weren't troublemakers. He said he had no idea why they would seek to harm him, other than his position as principal.

"It's a little bit disturbing to find out something like that was being plotted," he told the Times-Tribune.

Forecasters say Sam a major hurricane, but intensity to vary

Associated Press

MIAMI — Hurricane Sam was a Category 4 storm early Sunday, but forecasters said the system could fluctuate in strength over the next day or so as it churns far from land over the Atlantic Ocean.

Sam was centered about 940 miles east-southeast of the northern Leeward Islands on Sunday morning, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said. It was mov-

ing west-northwest at 8 mph.

Forecasters said Sam had maximum sustained winds around 145 mph. Wind speeds were expected to vary in intensity over the next day or so, followed by some slow weakening.

No coastal watches or warnings were in effect, however swells from Hurricane Sam could cause dangerous rip current conditions off the coast of the Lesser Antilles early this week, officials said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman arrested after throwing puppy into water

GA TYBEE ISLAND — A woman who witnesses said threw an injured puppy into the ocean has been arrested on a felony charge of aggravated cruelty to animals, police in a Georgia island town said.

Candy Selena Marban was taken into custody on a felony charge of aggravated cruelty to animals, Tybee Island police said.

Tybee Island police officers encountered Marban and retrieved the puppy from the beach, the agency said in a statement. Police said she told officers her dog had been injured a week earlier, and she did not have the money to seek medical treatment.

Officers took the puppy in for emergency medical treatment in Savannah. A veterinarian decided the puppy would have to be euthanized because its injuries were so severe, police said.

State monitors school funds after fraud case

NM SANTA FE — New Mexico education officials said they are demanding additional oversight of a narrow slice of federal funding awarded to Albuquerque Public Schools following a criminal probe into a former employee.

District officials reported the alleged fraud this summer after staff first noticed irregularities in contracts in the career and technical education department in 2018. That led to a criminal investigation regarding about \$5 million in questionable contracts.

Rep. Sheryl Williams Stapleton, who served as the district's technical education department coordinator, was fired from her job and resigned from the Legislature.

State officials said they will

withhold around \$1 million in federal funds until the district hires an independent auditor, and trains staff on an improved plan to prevent waste and fraud.

Health officer 'broken' after threats to safety

MI GRAND RAPIDS — The public health officer in the Grand Rapids area said he's a victim of "brute mob hatred" after ordering masks in schools in Kent County to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Adam London told county commissioners that a woman tried to run his vehicle off the road in August immediately after the mask order. He is no longer making public appearances because of concerns about violence.

"There is a sickness in America ... far more insidious than COVID," London said in an Aug. 22 email, two days after his mask order.

"I need help. My team and I are broken," London wrote. "I'm about done. I've done my job to the best of my ability. I've given just about everything to Kent County, and now I've given some more of my safety. If you want to fire me, or censure me, or pass a resolution condemning me, by all means, please proceed."

Public defender sues court over trial delays

CA SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco's public defender sued San Francisco Superior Court on behalf of nearly 400 people languishing in jail after being denied a speedy trial because of COVID-19 restrictions.

San Francisco Public Defender Mano Raju said he filed the lawsuit in San Francisco Superior Court against the court, its presiding judge and its CEO. The suit said the court has violated the rights of hundreds of people by failing to hold jury trials within 60

days as required by law.

Raju said trial delays began with the lockdown last year but that even though COVID-19 restrictions have eased, the court has failed to expedite criminal jury trials, creating a huge backlog that keeps growing as the courts fail to reopen closed courtrooms, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

Board: Universities cannot require vaccine

MS JACKSON — The board that governs Mississippi's public universities has voted to prohibit schools from requiring COVID-19 vaccines for students and staff.

The Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning decided to vote again because there was confusion about whether officials at individual schools could choose to mandate the shots if they wished to, said Caron Blanton, communications director for the board.

"Except for clinical settings within institutions, centers, departments, and programs, institutions are directed to refrain from mandating the COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of enrollment or employment," the new motion passed Friday reads.

GOP sue over excess campaign donations

MI LANSING — The Michigan Republican Party sued to stop Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's reelection campaign from collecting excess donations, contending that an exception letting her raise unlimited amounts because of attempts to recall her from office is unconstitutional.

The lawsuit in federal court, also brought by party chairman Ron Weiser, seeks to prohibit Democratic Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson from allowing the "recall exemption" in the 2022 govern-

nor's race. Benson has been considering a conservative group's challenge to \$3.4 million in contributions to Whitmer that exceeded the \$7,150 per-person limit.

The Democratic governor's campaign has cited a 1984 ruling from a prior secretary of state that says donor limits cannot apply to officeholders facing a recall election. But Republicans have said people never "actively" sought to recall Whitmer because the long-shot efforts fell way short of the necessary voter signatures.

Flames shoot up side of arena's roof, put out

LA NEW ORLEANS — Smoke and flames shot up the side of the Superdome's roof after a pressure washer being used to clean the roof of the New Orleans sports and entertainment arena caught fire.

The New Orleans Fire Department confirmed firefighters responded to flames on the building's roof. The fire appeared to be under control a short time later.

New Orleans Emergency Management Services said on Twitter that they were transporting one person to the hospital for "minor burns."

Agencies to get grants to help crime victims

SC SPARTANBURG — Millions of dollars in government grants will soon flow to a variety of agencies that work with crime victims, state officials announced.

The South Carolina Attorney General's Office announced that more than \$32 million will go to groups that help crime victims across South Carolina.

The grants are being given to police departments, solicitor's offices, private nonprofit groups, sheriff's offices and state agencies, WYFF-TV reported.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

No. 9 Clemson among several upset victims

Associated Press

For about 45 minutes late Saturday afternoon, college football was on overload.

North Carolina State went from agony to ecstasy against No. 9 Clemson. Baylor stopped a 2-point conversion to upset No. 14 Iowa State. No. 16 Arkansas finished off No. 7 Texas A&M to claim a Lone Star state title.

No. 19 Michigan held off Rutgers; UTSA remained unbeaten with a last-second field goal against Memphis; an LSU transfer rallied Auburn from behind against Georgia State; and UConn ALMOST won.

It was a time for multiple screens and social media reactions, and a fun reminder that any random Saturday in the college football season can feel like the first couple of days of the NCAA basketball tournament.

There was just so much going on.

The most significant development was in Raleigh, N.C., where N.C. State missed a potential game-winning field goal in the closing seconds, but still managed to beat Clemson in double overtime.

The six-time defending Atlantic Coast Conference champion Tigers have lost two games in September for the first time since 2014, the last time they failed to win the league and go to the College Football Playoff.

Clemson's offense is ineffective, at best. The Tigers have scored five offensive touchdowns in three games against FBS opponents, and needed overtime against the Wolfpack to get No. 5.

D.J. Uiagalelei has still not thrown for more than 200 yards in a game this season. The running game has been no better. Dabo Swinney was asked the last time Clemson was so disjointed offensively and he said

maybe 2010.

That was back before Clemson had become the program that challenged Alabama for supremacy of college football. That was before two generational talents at quarterback — Deshaun Watson and Trevor Lawrence — led Swinney's teams to a couple of national titles and two more championship game appearances.

Uiagalelei was supposed to be next in line, but after he passed for more than 800 yards in two starts last season, filling in for Lawrence, the former five-star recruit from Southern California seems lost behind an offensive line that isn't giving him enough protection.

Clemson fans are turning on offensive coordinator Tony Elliott. What the heck is happening here?

"You know what? That comes with the territory because the expectation and the standard at Clemson and who we are, we're not meeting it. It's just that simple," Swinney said.

More than a month before Halloween and Clemson's CFP streak is in grave danger.

"The curse is broken, N.C. State fans, finally," N.C. State coach Dave Doeren chuckled after the Wolfpack snapped an eight-game losing streak against Clemson.

The ACC is a mess.

North Carolina State's signature victory, its first against a top-10 opponent in nine years under Doeren, came two weeks after the Wolfpack took a beating at Mississippi State.

North Carolina got a lot of offseason hype, but is now 2-2 after getting walloped by Georgia Tech.

The only unbeaten teams left in the conference are Wake Forest and Boston College, two other members of an Atlantic Division that Clemson has run roughshod over in recent years.

There is a chance no ACC team will be ranked in the next AP Top 25.

Calling the hogs

When Arkansas hired Sam Pittman, the former offensive line coach who had never led a program of his own, it seemed as if the Razorbacks had settled.

Coming after the awful two-year tenure of Chad Morris, Arkansas was stuck in a huge hole at the bottom of the toughest division in college football.

Even Arkansas native Eli Drinkwitz passed on the Razorbacks' head coaching job to go to Missouri. That opened the door for Pittman.

Pittman's team showed promise last season, but still only won three games. At least Arkansas looked competent again.

The Hogs are way more than that now. Arkansas beat up Texas A&M and might just be the SEC West's second-best team.

"Our toughness showed tonight," coach Pittman said.

The Razorbacks are 4-0 for the first time since 2003 and have beaten Texas and Texas A&M in the same season for the first time since 1989.

As for the Aggies, this was supposed to be the season that Jimbo Fisher's team closed the gap on Alabama. Instead, they have been passed by Arkansas and Pittman.

Don't worry, Aggies fans. After the latest contract extension, Fisher has nine more seasons to figure it out.

With QB Coan out, No. 12 Irish beat No. 18 Badgers

Associated Press

CHICAGO — To win more games than any coach in the storied history of Notre Dame football, Brian Kelly has needed to be adaptable.

Maybe never more than the first month of this season. The Fighting Irish have used three quarterbacks and four left tackles, moved away from their run-first mentality and added new wrinkles on defense to head into October unbeaten.

Chris Tyree returned a kickoff 96 yards for a touchdown and

Drew Pyne threw a fourth-quarter touchdown pass in relief of an injured Jack Coan, helping No. 12 Notre Dame pull away from No. 18 Wisconsin 41-13 on Saturday at Soldier Field.

The Fighting Irish (4-0) have shown plenty of vulnerabilities as they retooled a team that went to the College Football Playoff last season. But they keep winning.

"We got a long way to go still, but they're getting better each week," Kelly said. "I'm having fun coaching them. They're not perfect by any means, but they're going to be

better in November."

With victory No. 106 in 12 seasons at Notre Dame, Kelly (106-39) surpassed the legendary Knute Rockne (105-12-5).

"Last year, we were a veteran team. We hunkered down, we put three tight ends on the field. This is what we were and kind of lived with it," Kelly said. "This is, like, we're trying to figure it out as we go."

Graham Mertz threw four interceptions for the Badgers (1-2), including two that were returned for touchdowns in the final 2:30 to

blow the game open. The Fighting Irish scored the final 31 points and Wisconsin lost its seventh straight to a ranked team.

Running back Chez Mellusi called the collapse "embarrassing."

Coan, a Badgers transfer, left with a left leg injury in the third quarter with the game tied at 10. Kelly said it was a soft tissue injury, but didn't appear to be a severe ankle sprain.

"Jack Coan is our starter," Kelly said. "If he's physically able, he'll be our starter against Cincinnati."

Anderson, Army improve to 4-0 mark

Associated Press

WEST POINT, N.Y. — Christian Anderson ran for a pair long first-half touchdowns and Army remained undefeated with a 23-10 victory over Miami (Ohio) on Saturday.

Anderson sprinted 72 yards on the Black Knights' third play, then eclipsed that personal best with a 75-yard score in the second quarter. He had a career-high 236 yards rushing on 15 carries before leaving with just over six minutes to go in the fourth quarter with an apparent shoulder injury. Anderson had to exit the game twice in the first half with injuries before returning both times.

It was a 42-yard run by Anderson in which he broke free of tacklers near the Army goal line that might have been the game's big play. Anderson's scamper came after a goal-line stand and was part of an 18-play drive that took nearly 11 minutes and ended with Anthony Adkins' 4-yard score early in the fourth quarter for a 23-3 lead.

Air Force 31, Florida Atlantic 7: Haaziq Daniels ran for two early touchdowns, including a 94-yard jaunt, and the host Falcons scored the game's first 24 points in a rout of the Owls.

Air Force's ground game was at its best. It rushed for 309 yards in the first half and finished with 446. Daniels had 164 rushing yards and completed 2 of 4 passes for 70 yards to give the Falcons a total of 516 for the game.

Micah Davis added 93 yards and Brad Roberts ran for 77 yards for Air Force (3-1).

After Daniels scored on a run of 4 yards midway through the first quarter, his 94-yarder on the next possession broke the game open. Roberts added a 24-yard TD run in the second quarter and the Falcons added a field goal for a 24-0 lead.

FAU quarterback N'Kosi Perry scored on a 34-yard run to make the halftime score 24-7.

Davis closed out the scoring with a 6-yard TD run late in the third quarter.

Houston 28, Navy 20: Ta'Zawn Henry ran for a pair of second-half touchdowns to lead the host Cougars in an American Athletic Conference opener.

Henry's 2-yard touchdown run pulled Houston (3-1, 1-0) to 17-10 late in the third quarter. Clayton Tune threw a 47-yard touchdown pass to Marcus Jones early in the fourth before Henry's 1-yard TD run stretched the Cougars' lead to 28-17.

Henry finished with 54 yards rushing on 11 carries. Tune was 22-of-30 passing for 257 yards. Marcus Jones returned a punt 73 yards for a touchdown in the first quarter for Houston.

Xavier Arline had a 40-yard touchdown run for the Midshipmen (0-3, 0-1) in the first quarter. Isaac Ruoss scored on a 1-yard run that gave Navy a 17-7 lead at the break. Bijan Nichols made field goals from 30 and 36 yards.

Volkanovski, Shevchenko defend belts at UFC 266

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Alexander Volkanovski defended his featherweight title with a bloody, tumultuous unanimous decision over Brian Ortega, and Valentina Shevchenko defended her flyweight belt with a fourth-round stoppage of Lauren Murphy at UFC 266 on Saturday night.

Nick Diaz also lost his first mixed martial arts fight in nearly seven years, declining to go on after Robbie Lawler knocked him down with punches early in the third round in an entertaining show at T-Mobile Arena.

Volkanovski (23-1) dominated the scorecards — 49-46, 50-45 and 50-44 — in his 20th consecutive victory, but the Australian still had to survive an extraordinary challenge from Ortega (15-2), who was relentless despite a bloodied face and a clearly damaged nose. Volkanovski survived a spectacular third round in which both fighters appeared to be moments from finishing the other.

"I thought I was in his head, and then he came back even stronger," Volkanovski said. "Credit to him. ... It's just preparation. I'm a normal human being. Hard work got me to where I am. Everyone can do what I've done."

Volkanovski largely controlled the first two rounds with his usual impressive work rate and striking, but a bloodied Ortega knocked him down dramatically with a left hand in the third round.

Ortega pounced and nearly finished the champ with a guillotine choke, but Volkanovski willed his way out of it and got back on top — only for Ortega to escape and to trap Volkanovski in a triangle choke that the champ also barely escaped.

"It was, 'I'm about to lose this ... belt' deep," Volkanovski said of the guillotine. "That was as deep as it can get. I remember I was making weird noises. Just opened a little bit of space."

Ortega was allowed to continue after a visit from the ringside doctor despite his apparently broken nose. In the fourth, Ortega got another takedown and nearly landed another choke, but Volkanovski gave a thumbs-up to the referee before escaping and finishing the round raining blows down on a prone Ortega, whose face was bloodied again.

"That absolutely was the best (featherweight) fight I've ever seen," UFC President Dana White said.

Usyk takes heavyweight belt from Joshua

Associated Press

LONDON — Slumped helplessly on the ropes, Anthony Joshua greeted the final bell — and what he knew was the end of his second reign as world heavyweight champion — with a wry smile.

Oleksandr Usyk knew it, too, dropping to his knees and looking to the sky.

In just his third fight since stepping up from the cruiserweight division, Usyk delivered a clinic in movement and fast punching to claim a unanimous points win over Joshua in front of 66,267 stunned fans inside Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London on Saturday.

Usyk became the third man, after Evander Holyfield and David Haye, to win world titles at cruiserweight then heavyweight. Six years after Wladimir Klitschko's long heavyweight reign ended, Ukraine has another champion in boxing's marquee division.

"The fight went exactly as I expected it to go," Usyk said through a translator.

After the judges scored the fight 117-112, 116-112 and 115-113 in favor of the 34-year-old Usyk, Joshua — sporting a closed right eye — walked over to Usyk's corner and congratulated the Ukrainian's team.

US has its biggest Ryder Cup lead yet

Associated Press

SHEBOYGAN, Wis. — The final team session that left the Americans on the cusp of winning back the Ryder Cup ended in a tie that was open to interpretation.

Scottie Scheffler made the biggest putt of his young career, helping the Americans flip a fourballs match late Saturday afternoon and giving them an 11-5 lead.

Not only is it their largest lead in the modern era dating to 1979, no team has ever won the Ryder Cup when trailing by more than four points going into the final session of singles.

"No one is taking tomorrow for granted at all," U.S. captain Steve Stricker said. "We are totally focused on what we need to do to get the job done."

For the Europeans, simply not losing a session for the first time all week at least showed them they have some fight. That won't make the task any easier.

"We are not going to give up," Sergio Garcia said. "I will give my all to them, and I know they will do the same thing for me. We are going to try out hardest. We know it's going to be difficult. But we're going to do our best."

The pressure and drama so typical of a Ryder Cup on Saturday was evident. The only real suspense, however, was whether Europe could make a game of it.

Instead, the Americans held their own over the final hour. Dustin Johnson completed a perfect week of team playing by winning his fourth match, three of them

with Collin Morikawa at his side, and the six U.S. rookies did their part by going a combined 9-1-2.

Two of them are Xander Schauffele and Patrick Cantlay, who rolled over Lee Westwood and Matt Fitzpatrick with a five-hole stretch of clutch play and big shots around the turn. Cantlay was walking over a bridge to the 10th tee when he said, "It's time to put our metal spikes down on their (expletive) necks."

Another is Scheffler, who teamed with Bryson DeChambeau in the last match on the course. The match was all square until Scheffler holed a 15-foot birdie putt on the 15th hole, leading to a fierce chest bump with the bulked up DeChambeau. Scheffler held his own with that, too.

Rays clinch their second consecutive AL East title

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — The Tampa Bay Rays clinched their second straight AL East title, with Mike Zunino hitting a go-ahead homer and Brandon Lowe later adding a pair of RBI doubles to beat the Miami Marlins 7-3 on Saturday.

Pete Fairbanks retired Lewis Brinson on a foul popup with the bases loaded for the final out, giving the Rays the chance to celebrate on the field. Earlier in the day, Tampa Bay's magic number was cut to one when the New York Yankees beat Boston 5-3.

There was a standing ovation from the season-high crowd of 23,783 at Tropicana Field when the Yankees' victory was announced after the top of the sixth inning.

Tampa Bay improved to 96-59 and won its fourth division title since becoming a major league team for the 1998 season. The club debuted as the Devil Rays then, and wore jerseys with that name during this clinching victory.

Yankees 5, Red Sox 3: Giancarlo Stanton hit a go-ahead grand slam over the Green Monster in the eighth inning and visiting New York tied Boston for

the top spot in the AL wild-card race.

Both teams are two games ahead of Toronto and three up on Seattle in the chase for two post-season spots. But the Yankees now have a chance to nudge in front of their longtime rivals in Sunday night's series finale at Fenway Park.

Stanton connected off reliever Darwinzon Hernandez with two outs to give New York a 5-2 lead. The slugger also had three hits and a three-run homer Friday night to help the Yankees win the series opener.

Cardinals 8, Cubs 5: St. Louis set a franchise record with its 15th straight win, boosted when catcher Yadier Molina and center fielder Harrison Bader helped pull off a wild double play at Chicago.

Bader, Tyler O'Neill and Paul DeJong homered as these Cardinals broke the team record of 14 wins in a row set in 1935, a year after Dizzy Dean and the Gas House Gang won the World Series.

Braves 10, Padres 8 (10): Jorge Soler hit a go-ahead double with one out in the 10th inning for his fourth RBI, and visiting Atlanta maintained its 1½-game

lead in the NL East while eliminating San Diego from playoff contention.

The Padres were one out from a win in regulation when Eddie Rosario hit a tying single off major league saves leader Mark Melancon, who was trying for his 39th.

Brewers 2, Mets 1: Corbin Burnes pitched seven brilliant innings to win his ninth consecutive decision and host Milwaukee moved to the brink of clinching the NL Central title with a victory over New York.

Phillies 3, Pirates 0: Ranger Suarez pitched a four-hit shut-out, Bryce Harper homered and host Philadelphia kept up its playoff push by beating Pittsburgh for a fifth straight win.

Giants 7, Rockies 2: Brandon Belt went deep twice as San Francisco set a franchise record for home runs in a season, and the Giants won at Colorado to extend their NL West lead.

Diamondbacks 7, Dodgers 2: Ketel Marte and Carson Kelly homered early off Clayton Kershaw, Zac Gallen pitched one-run ball for six innings and host Arizona kept Los Angeles from reaching 100 wins.

Athletics 2, Astros 1: Starling

Marte hit a game-ending double with one out in the ninth inning to lift host Oakland over Houston.

Blue Jays 6, Twins 1: Teoscar Hernández, Marcus Semien and George Springer homered, and Toronto held its position in the playoff chase by winning at Minnesota.

Angels 14, Mariners 1: Shohei Ohtani tripled in his first two at-bats and host Los Angeles damaged Seattle's playoff chances by ending its six-game winning streak.

Indians 6, White Sox 0: Eli Morgan allowed one hit in six innings and José Ramírez drove in three runs, powering host Cleveland past AL Central champion Chicago.

Tigers 5, Royals 1: Miguel Cabrera drove in four runs, including a go-ahead double in the sixth inning, and host Detroit downed Kansas City.

Orioles 3, Rangers 2: Kelvin Gutierrez homered to cap a three-run seventh inning and host Baltimore beat Texas.

Reds 7, Nationals 6: Nick Castellanos hit a solo home run with one out in the bottom of the ninth inning to give Cincinnati a win over visiting Washington.