

STARS AND STRIPES®

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Did NATO's Libya attacks help the Islamic State?

By JOHN VANDIVER
AND SLOBODAN LEKIC

Stars and Stripes

As NATO announced the end of its seven-month bombing campaign in Libya that helped topple dictator Moammar Gadhafi, the top military officials expressed their pride in the alliance's achievement.

"A successful chapter in NATO's history is coming to an end," Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen told Libya's new leaders in Tripoli in October 2011, just days after rebels had caught and murdered a fleeing Gadhafi. Rasmussen said he expected a new Libya to arise, "based on freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and reconciliation."

Top U.S. officials also chimed in. "We came, we saw, he died," a triumphant then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared to a television reporter.

Four years after NATO's "successful chapter," Libya is in chaos, a failed state with two rival but powerless governments and dozens of warlords and militia groups fighting it out in the streets of its cities.

The once-thriving oil-based economy — now a waypoint for tens of thousands of refugees from Africa and the Middle East fleeing to Europe — could be the radical Islamic State group's next target.

"I think Libya is probably where ISIL most wants to gain a foothold," Pentagon spokesman Col. Steve Warren said on Monday, using an alternative name for the Islamic State. "They probably have at this point gained at least a toehold in Libya based on the extraordinary amount of unrest and the almost completely deteriorated security situation."

The West is now witnessing the effects of helping to topple a dictator in Libya without any plan to fill the power vacuum, experts say. The same issue could emerge in Syria if President Bashar Assad's government falls to the rebels, many of them linked to al-Qaida or the Islamic State.

The ensuing chaos in Libya should have been predictable, said Patrick Skinner, a former CIA case officer who now manages special projects for the Soufan Group, a New York firm that provides security and intelligence analysis services.

"I tend to be sympathetic to governments that have to make hard decisions, but coming on the heels of the Iraq War, where we learned what a power vacuum was, I probably have less sympathy in this case," Skinner said.

In Libya, NATO's intervention started amid concerns that Gadhafi's forces were poised to carry out a large-scale slaughter of rival tribal groups. But in time, it turned into a broader effort to help rebel fighters eliminate the regime with NATO carrying out 9,600 airstrikes during the seven-month campaign. That's more than double the number of strikes in the ongoing U.S.-led operation against the Islamic

State in Iraq and Syria.

While experts and policymakers disagree about Gadhafi's intentions and whether an actual slaughter of civilians was about to take place, there is broad consensus that the West's declarations of victory were premature, revealing a lack of awareness about the complexity of a post-Gadhafi Libya. The murder of U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens at a diplomatic facility on Sept. 11, 2012, underscored how quickly conditions deteriorated and the extent to which Libya had become a terrorist haven.

"I think it is fair to say there was a premature sense of triumphalism, and that this was a clean intervention," said Frederic Wehrey, a senior associate in the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

While the U.S. was eager to hand off much of the post-intervention responsibility to the Europeans — France was a prime advocate for the intervention, the Libyans themselves were a complicating factor, resisting ideas of international support or a stabilizing force, experts say.

"I think all sides bear some culpability," Wehrey said.

In the intervention's aftermath, heavy weapons once belonging to the old regime flooded out of Libya and into the arms of militants stretching from Syria to Mali and Nigeria. Many fighters the West hoped would emerge as pro-democracy forces proved to be religious militants.

Today, the country remains a hub for arms and human trafficking.

The battlefield has become far more complex since 2011, with two competing governments — as well as militias and now the Islamic State group — all pursuing their own agendas.

Retired Adm. James Stavridis, NATO's former supreme allied commander, who led the military operation, said at the time of the intervention that it wasn't clear who all the rebels were that aimed to overthrow Gadhafi.

"In those pre-Arab Spring days, there was not serious intelligence or analysis to Islamic radicalism," Stavridis said. "If we recall the U.S. experiences in Afghanistan, where we backed what evolved into the Taliban, it is not dissimilar. When you are undertaking complex operations, the natural tendency is to focus on the mission at hand — such as the case in Libya."

Today, high-profile attacks by the Islamic State, such as the beheading of Egyptian Christians in February and the recent slaughter of about 30 Ethiopian Christians in Libya, are indications of the group's intent to bolster its profile in the country.

There also are growing concerns about militants mingling with migrants transiting Libya. Stavridis says NATO should consider increasing the presence of warships in the Mediterranean as a precaution.

"A big concern would be ISIS radicals entering the EU via the large numbers of migrants. This is an easy, open door to Italy, which would be a very attractive target to ISIS given the presence of Rome,

the pope, and other highly evocative elements of the Catholic/Christian faith," he said, using an abbreviation for the Islamic State group.

While it's likely to make further inroads into Libya, the Islamic State group faces unique challenges that could make it difficult for the militants to match the gains it they achieved in Iraq, according to experts. The Islamic State has been able to exploit sectarian Sunni-Shiite rivalries in Iraq, but in Sunni-dominated Libya there aren't the same sectarian rifts. As Sunni foreign fighters have flocked to Iraq to take up arms against the Shiite-dominated government of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Libya doesn't necessarily present the same worldwide call to arms.

The one advantage the Islamic State has is brand recognition that could serve as a lure for disaffected Libyan youth.

There also are other troubling developments as fighters from neighboring states creep onto the scene. Jihadists from Algeria, Sudan and Tunisia are among the recent arrivals.

"That's another scary development that concerns me a lot," said Mattia Toaldo, a Libya expert with the European Council on Foreign Relations.

The Islamic State also could serve as a magnet for former Gadhafi regime members, he said. In Iraq, such a scenario has been a part of the group's success as former Iraqi officers under Saddam Hussein play a key advisory role on the battlefield.

"There have been signs that the rank-and-file members of the former regime have shown a willingness to join ISIS," Toaldo said. "That's another scary development because they have the expertise in the field. It is fair to say ISIS in Libya has big potential."

Still, with limited financial resources inside Libya — Islamic State doesn't control any of Libya's oil wealth — the group continues to operate more as a criminal gang than a group attempting to establish a formal state, Toaldo said.

"It's unclear to me what's next for them. They don't have substantial revenue so they can't provide services," said Wehrey, the Carnegie associate. "They haven't been able to tap into societal grievances yet."

For its part, NATO still argues the military mission in Libya was a success, though officials acknowledge more should have been done by the United Nations and European Union to stabilize Libya and rebuild its political institutions in the wake of Gadhafi's 42-year-long dictatorship.

"It was about protecting civilians against attacks from the regime; NATO fulfilled that (U.N.) mandate with unprecedented precision," a NATO official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to comment, said on Wednesday. "There should have been more follow-up, more presence of the international community after the military operations ended in 2011. However, ultimately it is up to the people of Libya to build a new Libya."

Carter says Europe 'not doing enough' on defense

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Ash Carter chided America's European allies on Wednesday, saying a long slide in European defense spending calls into question its ability to partner with the U.S. military at a time of growing security threats across Europe.

"They're not doing enough," Carter said in an unusually blunt assessment of the Europeans' defense efforts.

He said they are spending a smaller share of their overall economic wealth on defense than they did in the past.

"It's too low," he said. "And if Europe wants to be a force in the world it needs to be more than a moral and political and economic force, which Europe is because it shares many of our values and demonstrates them around the world. But it has to have the military power that goes with that as well."

"It has to have the military power to be a capable ally of ours, and we see that slipping. It has got to turn around. It's not that they don't have the money to do it."

Carter made his comments in response to a question from his audience at Georgetown University after delivering a speech about eradicating sexual assault from the military and providing help for assault victims.

Carter has not visited Europe since taking office in February. He is expected to attend his first meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels in June.

He noted that at the alliance's meeting last September in Wales the leaders agreed to reverse the trend of declining defense budgets and to spend more wisely. They agreed that any NATO member not spending at least 2 percent of its gross domestic product on defense will "aim to move toward" that goal within a decade.

U.S. defense secretaries have long complained that the Europeans spend too little on their own defense but they usually are not as blunt about it as Carter.

"They've got the money to do this," he said, adding that when the Cold War ended in 1990 — and with it the threat of invasion or attack by the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies — U.S. allies in Europe concluded that their security problems were over.

"Now they're beginning to wake up," he said, referring to such recent security crises as the Russian military intervention in eastern Ukraine, the January terrorist attack on the Paris office of the Charlie Hebdo satirical newspaper, and Turkey's proximity to the Islamic State violence in Iraq and Syria.

Saudi-led strikes hit Yemeni rebels

The Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen — Saudi-led airstrikes targeted Iran-backed rebels and their allies in Yemen on Wednesday, hours after Riyadh declared an end to a nearly monthlong air campaign that has claimed hundreds of lives but left the Shiite rebels in control of the capital and much of the country's north.

The continuing strikes suggest that the U.S.-backed offensive, aimed at restoring Yemen's internationally recognized president, is entering a new phase in which military action will be scaled back but not halted.

The air raids hit rebel positions in the southern port of Aden and central city of Taiz as ground fighting between the rebels and supporters of exiled President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi continued in both areas, Yemeni officials said.

The capital, Sanaa, was calm however, as residents experienced their quietest night in almost four weeks and did not wake up to new scenes of devastation.

The strikes in Taiz hit the Shiite rebels, known as Houthis, as they gathered at a military headquarters they control near the old airport to the city's southeast, the officials said. Also targeted was the southern port city of Aden, where aircraft blasted rebel forces in outlying districts.

Street fighting continued in both cities, especially Taiz, where the officials said pro-government forces control most of the city but have been in heavy combat with the rebels, leaving dozens killed on both sides. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity.

Embattled DEA chief to resign following 'sex parties' scandal

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The head of the Drug Enforcement Administration is stepping down in mid-May, following revelations about "sex parties" involving prostitutes overseas and other misconduct among its agents.

Michele Leonhart, who has served at the helm of the DEA since 2007, has come under heavy criticism on Capitol Hill since an inspector general report last month documented a series of episodes in which agents hired prostitutes. Agents were also found to have had sex parties with some women hired by Colombian drug cartels.

Attorney General Eric Holder announced Leonhart's pending departure in a statement Tuesday in which he noted she was the first woman at

the agency to reach the rank of special agent in charge.

Leonhart testified before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee last Wednesday, telling lawmakers that the "activity" described in the inspector general report "has not and will not be tolerated."

At last week's hearing, the committee released a summary of a separate report prepared by the DEA's Office of Professional Responsibility that found agents were having sex parties with prostitutes paid for by Colombian drug cartels as early as 2001.

The report described "literally dozens" of such parties at residences paid for with U.S. government funds, Cummings said.

Ring of Ky. bourbon thieves indicted

The Associated Press

FRANKFORT, Ky. — A bourbon theft ring targeting the Buffalo Trace and Wild Turkey distilleries operated for years as a lucrative business, involving tens of thousands of dollars in whiskey, and the scheme began to unravel only when stolen barrels were discovered behind a shed, officials said.

The man accused of leading the ring was a rogue distillery employee — Gilbert "Toby" Curtsinger — who wore shirts promoting Buffalo Trace as he delivered the purloined barrels covered by a tarp in a pickup truck, according to authorities.

"He made a lot of money off

of it," Franklin County sheriff's detective Jeff Farmer said.

Curtsinger was among nine people indicted Tuesday on charges of spiriting away large volumes of whiskey, by the bottle and the barrel since 2008.

Curtsinger often relied on go-betweens to find customers, and some middle men are among the people under indictment, Farmer said. The group often made connections through softball tournaments, he said.

The theft included some prestigious brands, such as pricey Pappy Van Winkle bourbon, officials said. Sheriff Pat Melton estimated the recovered whiskey alone is worth at least

\$100,000.

All nine defendants are charged with engaging in organized crime as members of a criminal syndicate.

Barrels were worth \$3,000 to \$6,000, depending on the type and age of whiskey, but the theft ring sold them for \$1,200 to \$1,500 apiece, officials said.

The heists included more than 20 cases of Pappy Van Winkle bourbon, 50 to 70 cases of Eagle Rare bourbon and other barrels of whiskey that were stolen but not recovered, said Zachary M. Becker, an assistant Franklin County prosecutor. One recovered barrel contained 17-year-old Eagle Rare bourbon valued at \$11,000.

France says extremist accidentally shot self

The Associated Press

PARIS — An Islamic extremist with an arsenal of loaded guns was prevented from opening fire on Sunday morning churchgoers because he accidentally shot himself, French officials said.

The 24-year-old computer science student, who was also suspected in the death of a young woman whose body was found

Sunday just ahead of his arrest, had been flagged as a risk before but there was no specific reason to open a judicial investigation, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said Wednesday.

A French security official said the suspect — an Algerian who had lived in France for several years — was arrested in Paris on Sunday after he apparently shot himself by accident and called for an ambulance.

He was waiting outside for first aid when police arrived at the scene. They discovered a blood trail leading to his car, which contained loaded guns and notes about potential targets.

"Documents were also found and they prove, without any ambiguity, that the individual was preparing an imminent attack, in all probability, against one or two churches," Cazeneuve said.

Escobar's HR lifts Nationals

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Heading toward a throng of excited Washington Nationals teammates after his first game-ending homer in four years, Yunel Escobar jumped head-first toward the plate. “He’s got life to him. Teammates love him here,” Nationals pitcher Gio Gonzalez said afterward. “He’s just a different ballplayer.”

Returning to the lineup after sitting out two games with a groin injury, Escobar drove an 89 mph fastball from former teammate Carlos Villanueva to left with two outs in the bottom of the 10th inning, lifting the Nationals to a 2-1 victory over the St. Louis Cardinals on Tuesday night.

It was the second homer of 2015 for Escobar, acquired this offseason in the deal that sent setup man Tyler Clippard to Oakland. Escobar was supposed to be Washington’s starting second base-

man but has been filling in at third while Anthony Rendon is on the disabled list. “He would play anywhere we ask him to,” manager Matt Williams said.

Escobar went to the plate looking for a fastball from Villanueva (1-1), the seventh pitcher for the Cardinals — and that’s just what he got.

“He ambushed me,” said Villanueva, who was on the Toronto Blue Jays with Escobar in 2011-12.

Villanueva hadn’t pitched since April 12 against Cincinnati.

“I don’t see that being a factor,” he said.

The Nationals have won five of six games to get back to .500 after starting the year 2-6. They ended the Cardinals’ five-game winning streak.

After Gonzalez managed to keep the Cardinals off the scoreboard despite giving up eight hits and four walks in six innings, Aaron Barrett (2-0) earned the win

by pitching the 10th. He worked around a leadoff single and stolen base by Pete Kozma — forever associated around these parts with the Cardinals’ 2012 NL Division Series Game 5 comeback.

Thanks to Bryce Harper’s RBI single in the third — when he also wound up getting doubled off base on an appeal — the Nationals led 1-0 heading into the ninth inning, when closer Drew Storen blew the save. Matt Holliday tied the game with an RBI single, making him 4-for-4, extending his hitting streak to 12 games.

In the clubhouse later, Escobar used his phone to snap a photo of a baseball inscribed with “Walk off HR” — the third of his career but first since April 2011.

The Cuban said he never before had employed his unusual head-first celebration, explaining through a translator: “I’m just trying to have fun.”

Chicago wins 3OT thriller

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — They played for 101 grueling minutes, beginning Tuesday night and running into early Wednesday morning.

The Chicago Blackhawks, looking for control of the first-round series. The Nashville Predators, searching for a split of their first four playoff games.

Enter Brent Seabrook, a physical defenseman with a penchant for big postseason goals.

Seabrook scored on a booming slap shot 1 minute into the third overtime, and the Blackhawks beat the Predators 3-2 in the longest game of this year’s NHL playoffs so far.

“Long game, it was a late night,” a smiling Seabrook said. “It’s nice to end that one.”

Seabrook’s long drive off a pass from Patrick Kane beat a screened Pekka Rinne on the 100th shot of the longest game in Nashville history. Rookie Scott Darling made 50 saves for Chicago.

Brandon Saad and Antoine Vermette also scored for the Blackhawks, who grabbed a 3-1 series lead and can close out the Predators with a win in Nashville on Thursday night.

Colin Wilson and James Neal scored for Nashville, which carried a 2-1 lead into the third period. Rinne finished with 45 stops.

The game finally came to an end when Seabrook scored his 14th career playoff goal at 1:16 a.m., helped by a screen in front by rugged forward Bryan Bickell.

Capitals 2, Islanders 1 (OT): Nicklas Backstrom scored 11:09 into overtime to lift Washington to a victory, and even its first-round playoff series against host New York at 2-2.

Alex Ovechkin also scored and assisted on the decisive goal, which came off a faceoff to the right of the Islanders net. Backstrom dug the puck out in the right corner and worked his way up the boards.

He snapped a shot near the blue line that went through a crowd and sneaked inside the far post.

Red Wings 3, Lightning 0: Petr Mrazek made 22 saves for his first postseason shutout, and Pavel Datsyuk, Riley Sheahan and Luke Glendening scored for Detroit in a victory over visiting Tampa Bay that gave the Red Wings a 2-1 lead in their playoff series.

The 23-year-old Mrazek was coach Mike Babcock’s choice to start in this series instead of Jimmy Howard, and the youngster has acquitted himself well in his postseason debut.

Flames 3, Canucks 1: Jiri Hudler had a goal and an assist and host Calgary earned a win over Vancouver.

Calgary’s Johnny Gaudreau scored his first playoff goal and 18-year-old rookie Sam Bennett had his second in as many games.

Calgary leads the Western Conference series 3-1.

Plawecki helps Mets win 9th straight

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Catcher Kevin Plawecki made an impressive big league debut, contributing with his bat and glove as the banged-up New York Mets won their ninth straight by beating the Atlanta Braves 7-1 Tuesday night.

The Mets extended their longest winning streak since a 10-game run in 2008. The team record is 11 in a row, last done in 1990.

Curtis Granderson drove in four runs and Jonathon Niese (2-0) pitched shutout ball into the seventh inning, helping the Mets stretch the best home start in club history to 8-0 at Citi Field.

A highly regarded prospect, Plawecki got two hits, scored twice and threw out a runner trying to advance on a ball in the dirt.

Plawecki was promoted from Triple-A earlier in the day to replace catcher Travis d’Arnaud, out for at least three weeks after breaking a finger when he was hit by a pitch Sunday.

Royals 6, Twins 5: Mike Moustakas hit a two-run homer, then drove in the go-ahead run with a single in the eighth inning, as host Kansas City rallied past Minnesota.

The Royals trailed 5-3 in the sixth when Christian Colon started their comeback with an RBI double. Colon added a run-scoring groundout off Casey Fien (0-1) in the eighth to knot the game, and Moustakas fileted a single to left off Glen Perkins to take the lead.

Red Sox 1, Rays 0: Wade Miley and four relievers combined on a four-hitter and visiting Boston took advantage of an error to beat Chris Archer and Tampa Bay.

Miley (1-1) gave up three hits, four walks and had three strikeouts over 52/3 innings. Alexi Ogando, Robbie Ross Jr., and Junichi Tazawa combined to retire seven straight batters. Koji Uehara allowed a

leadoff single in the ninth before finishing for his second save.

Yankees 5, Tigers 2: Chris Young and Stephen Drew homered in a three-run seventh and Nathan Eovaldi earned his first win with visiting New York.

Eovaldi (1-0) gave up a run on eight hits and a walk in seven-plus innings.

The Tigers scored in the ninth when Andrew Miller walked Nick Castellanos and Rajai Davis to force in a run. He then struck out Jose Iglesias for his fifth save.

Giants 6, Dodgers 2: Tim Lincecum shut down first-place Los Angeles with some sparkling double-play defense behind him, and host San Francisco came out of its first day off seemingly refreshed.

Cubs 9, Pirates 8: Starlin Castro went 3-for-5 with 4 RBIs, including a game-tying two-run single in the ninth, and visiting Chicago rallied to beat Pittsburgh.

Wellington Castillo followed Castro’s big hit with an RBI groundout off Pittsburgh closer Mark Melancon (0-1) as Chicago overcame a late three-run deficit to win for the third time in four games.

Reds 16, Brewers 10: Jay Bruce and Todd Frazier each hit two-out grand slams, powering visiting Cincinnati past Milwaukee.

Zack Cozart hit two homers for the Reds, whose offense has reawakened for 22 runs in two games in Milwaukee after manager Bryan Price went on a profanity-laced tirade in his pregame media session Monday.

Blue Jays 13, Orioles 6: Edwin Encarnacion smashed a pair of home runs and Jose Bautista added another to power host Toronto past Baltimore.

Encarnacion’s first was a leadoff shot that landed on the batter’s eye beyond center field and sparked a six-run second inning.

Indians 6, White Sox 2: Carlos Carrasco struck out eight in five innings in his first start since being hit in the face

by a line drive and Carlos Santana and David Murphy smacked solo home runs to lead Cleveland over Chicago.

Carrasco (2-1) allowed one earned run on four hits and no walks, looking strong a week after White Sox outfielder Melky Cabrera’s liner struck him in the first inning of a 4-1 loss last Tuesday.

Angels 14, Athletics 1: Johnny Giavotella hit a three-run shot for his first homer with host Los Angeles after the inning was extended by a replay and the defending AL West champions so thoroughly roughed up Oakland that first baseman Ike Davis pitched.

Phillies 7, Marlins 3: Ryan Howard hit a go-ahead two-run homer and Freddy Galvis also connected to back Jerome Williams as host Philadelphia beat Miami.

Williams (1-1) allowed three runs — two earned — and eight hits, striking out six in six innings.

Rangers 7, Diamondbacks 1: Prince Fielder homered and drove in three runs to lead visiting Texas past Arizona.

Fielder took reliever Daniel Hudson (0-1) deep into the seats in right field in the eighth after a pair of errors allowed the Rangers to break a 1-1 tie.

Padres 7, Rockies 6: Derek Norris hit a tiebreaking, two-run double in the eighth inning and visiting San Diego rallied past Colorado.

Clint Barmes homered and Wil Myers had three hits for San Diego.

Astros 6, Mariners 3: Jose Altuve helped Collin McHugh win his 10th straight decision with a go-ahead three-run double in the eighth inning that lifted visiting Houston over Seattle.

Down 3-1 entering the eighth, the Astros scored five times against the Mariners bullpen.



Ship's Store official new car program

Exclusive Navy at-sea offers:
www.navyauto.com or nasinfo@navyauto.com

Rockets take 2-0 series lead on Mavs

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Friends since preschool, but teammates for the first time since they were teenagers, Dwight Howard and Josh Smith have been itching for this opportunity. On Tuesday night the Rockets teammates proved an unstoppable combination in a key run that helped Houston to a 111-99 victory over the Dallas Mavericks and a 2-0 lead in the Western Conference playoff series. The Mavericks scored the first four points of the fourth quarter to take a three-point lead. But with James Harden on the bench, Houston scored the next 11 points, powered by three alley-oop passes from Smith to Howard, who had 28 points, to take a 92-84 lead with about 8 minutes left. “Man, like they were little boys again,” Harden, who finished with 24 points, said referring to their time playing AAU ball together. Cast aside by Detroit, Smith is ecstatic to have found success in Houston. Smith, who connected with Howard on six alley-oop passes, finished with 15 points, nine assists and eight rebounds. “We just saw something, a little wrinkle in their defense and we just tried to take advantage of it,” Smith said. Howard, who missed more than two months late this season with swelling in his right knee, played just 17 minutes in Game 1 because of foul trouble. On Tuesday night he played more than 33 minutes, showing that he’s back to form after an injury-plagued regular season. He had 12 rebounds and two blocks. “I don’t care about how many points I get, my job is to

make sure I dominate the paint,” Howard said. Dallas coach Rick Carlisle lamented the number of alley-oops Houston had. “Those are a problem,” Carlisle said. “We’ve going to have to find a way to better combat that.” Monta Ellis had 24 points for Dallas, but big men Dirk Nowitzki and Tyson Chandler combined for just 21 points. Game 3 is in Dallas on Friday night. A fourth alley-oop connection came soon after the big run and Smith dished it to Corey Brewer for two straight dunks seconds later to make it 98-88. Smith had another highlight with about 2 minutes left when he grabbed a bounce pass from Harden and sailed over Chandler for a one-handed dunk that made it 109-96. Houston coach Kevin McHale raved about Smith’s performance. “He and Dwight had some beautiful hook ups and lob passes, and he just did a wonderful job of getting into spots and making the next play and breaking down the defense,” McHale said. The Mavericks played without Chandler Parsons, who missed the game with a right knee injury. Parsons, who averaged 15.7 points in the regular season, played in Game 1 after sitting out the last six before the postseason with the same problem. Carlisle said they are “very concerned” about Parsons and that he would be re-evaluated on Wednesday. The Mavericks’ Rajon Rondo got into foul trouble early, and didn’t play after picking up his fourth with more than 11 minutes left in the third quarter. He finished with four

points. **Wizards 117, Raptors 106:** John Wall had 26 points and 17 assists, Bradley Beal scored 28 points as visiting Washington took a 2-0 lead in its first-round series. Marcin Gortat scored 16 points, Otto Porter had 15 and Paul Pierce added 10 for the Wizards, who host Game 3 on Friday night. Jonas Valanciunas had 15 points and 10 rebounds and Sixth Man Award winner Lou Williams scored 20 points for the Raptors, who have lost four straight playoff games over the past two seasons. Washington lost 15 of its final 19 regular season road games, but has won seven of eight away from home in the playoffs over the past two years. DeMar DeRozan scored 20 points, Patrick Patterson had 15 and Amir Johnson added 10 for Toronto, which has won just one playoff series in six previous postseason appearances. **Cavaliers 99, Celtics 91:** LeBron James scored 30 points, Kyrie Irving added 26 and host Cleveland finally shook off Boston in the fourth quarter to take a 2-0 series lead. James scored 15 points in the fourth quarter, moved past Hall of Famer Jerry West on the career playoff scoring list and made sure the Cavs didn’t slip up at home. He and Irving combined for all of Cleveland’s 24 points in the final period. Timofey Mozgov added 16 points and Tristan Thompson had 11 rebounds for Cleveland. Isaiah Thomas scored 22 points for the Celtics, whose bench outscored Cleveland’s 51-7. Game 3 is Thursday night in Boston.

Slugger Hamilton close to reporting to Angels

The Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Los Angeles Angels left fielder Josh Hamilton is close to reporting to extended spring training in Arizona. Hamilton, who has been recovering from surgery on Feb. 4 to repair the AC joint in his right shoulder, was visited by manager Mike Scioscia in Houston last week prior to the Angels’ weekend series with the Astros. Arbitrator Roberta Golick ruled April 3 that Hamilton cannot be disciplined under Major League Baseball’s drug agreement for his self-reported relapse into alcohol and cocaine use. Hamilton missed all of spring training, and will need time to get back into shape. The Angels will evaluate Hamilton when he reports to their complex in Tempe.

Lions release Austin after assault charges

ALLEN PARK, Mich. — The Detroit Lions released guard Rodney Austin on Tuesday, four days after police in Charlotte, N.C., charged him with assault on a female and assault on a child under 12. According to the Mecklenburg County Sheriff Department’s website, the 6-foot-4, 330-pound Austin was also charged with interfering in an emergency communication and misdemeanor larceny. An undrafted rookie free agent out of Elon in 2012, Austin joined the Lions as a member of the practice squad. He appeared in two games during his three seasons, including the team’s NFC wildcard game against Dallas last season. The 26-year-old Austin played high school football in Charlotte. Bond was set at \$2,000. In other NFL news: ■ The Cincinnati Bengals have extend-

ed coach Marvin Lewis’ contract by one year through the 2016 season. Lewis has coached the Bengals for 12 seasons, the second-longest current tenure with one team of any coach, behind Bill Belichick in New England. He is Cincinnati’s winningest coach by far with 100 victories; he has lost 96 games and tied two. Lewis led the Bengals to the playoffs in each of the last four seasons, but they’ve been eliminated in the first round.

Creamer suggests women’s Masters

DALY CITY, Calif. — Paula Creamer is calling for a women’s Masters at Augusta National. Creamer would love for organizers to at least listen to the idea of women playing a Masters in consecutive weeks with the men’s tournament. She reiterated her thoughts Tuesday at Lake Merced Golf Club, where the Bay Area native is preparing for this week’s Swinging Skirts LPGA Classic. On April 14, Creamer posted on Twitter: “I hope The Masters will consider a Women’s Masters soon. They do so much to grow the game. Fastest area of golf growth is women! #6Majors?”

Thunder center Kanter has knee surgery

OKLAHOMA CITY — Thunder center Enes Kanter has undergone arthroscopic surgery on his left knee and will return to normal offseason work in 4-6 weeks. Kanter, who was acquired on Feb. 19 from the Utah Jazz, started all 26 games after the deal and averaged 18.7 points and 11.0 rebounds while shooting 57 percent from the field.

Patriots-Steelers set for season opener

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Among the Patriots’ rewards for winning the Super Bowl is hosting the season opener. The opposition this year is another team with a championship pedigree: the Pittsburgh Steelers. New England and Pittsburgh will begin the NFL season on Thursday night, Sept. 10, with a game matching quarterbacks with six Super Bowl rings and nine Super Bowl appearances: Tom Brady vs. Ben Roethlisberger. Since Brady became New England’s starting quarterback in 2001, he is 6-3 against the Steelers — he missed the 2008 game while injured — including 2-0 in the playoffs. Other prime-time matchups on opening weekend will have the New York Giants at Dallas on Sunday, Sept. 13; Philadelphia at Atlanta, followed by Minnesota at San Francisco in a Monday night doubleheader. Both conference championship rematches will be Sunday night affairs: Seattle at Green Bay in Week 2, Patriots at Colts on Oct. 18. Yet another Sunday game will be the latest Brady-Peyton Manning faceoff when the Patriots are at Denver on Nov. 29. Three days earlier, the traditional Thanksgiving Day games will feature Detroit hosting the Eagles, followed by Carolina visiting the Cowboys. The holiday evening contest is a renewal of the NFL’s longest-running rivalry, with Chicago at Green Bay. The Packers reportedly will honor Brett Favre that night, placing his jersey on the facade of Lambeau Field. The Packers also open the season at Chicago. Three games in London will have the Jets against the host Dolphins at 9:30 a.m. ET on Oct. 4; Buffalo facing host Jacksonville

on Oct. 25; and Detroit against host Kansas City on Nov. 1. Among the oddities: ■ Philadelphia opens with three road games in four weeks because Pope Francis will be holding Mass in Philadelphia on Sept. 27. That forced the league to schedule the Eagles at the Jets. ■ Tennessee won’t travel for five weeks. After opening with two road games, the Titans are home in Weeks 3, 5, 6 and 7, and have a Week 4 bye. In 1990, as the Houston Oilers, the franchise also had four straight home games. ■ Two teams have a pair of three-game homestands, Baltimore and Detroit. The Ravens are home in Weeks 8, 10 and 11, with a bye in Week 9, and again in Weeks 14-16. Detroit doesn’t leave Ford Field in Weeks 5-7 and again in Weeks 11-13. Since the 1970 merger, 10 franchises have had multiple three-game homestands in a season, most recently the 2008 Chicago Bears. This will be the first time the Ravens or Lions have done it, according to STATS. ■ According to STATS, the last team with a four-game homestand was the 2008 Houston Texans. The last team not to leave home for five straight weeks was the 1993 Buffalo Bills. They had a bye in Week 3, a three-game homestand between Weeks 4-6, and then another bye in Week 7. ■ In all, 10 teams have three-game homestands. Four have the dreaded three-game road trips: Atlanta (Weeks 14-16); Buffalo (10-12); Miami (8-10); and Jacksonville (3-5). Among the most anticipated games is the first visit to MetLife Stadium by new Bills coach Rex Ryan to face his former club, the Jets. That occurs on Thursday night, Nov. 12.