

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Haley: Russia involved in US election

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations says there's no question Russia was involved in the U.S. presidential election and that the actions of the Kremlin will be addressed after the investigations are completed.

"We don't want any country involved in our elections, ever," Nikki Haley said in an interview aired Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

Russian President Vladimir Putin has denied his country meddled in the contest between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton. While the Trump White House rejects any suggestion that Trump or his staff had connections to Russia, Trump himself has said he believes Russian operatives hacked Democratic Party emails but that any Russian involvement in the election didn't affect the outcome.

U.S. intelligence agencies report that Russia tried to help Trump's campaign. The FBI as well as congressional committees are investigating whether the Russian government coordinated with Trump associates.

Trump as president persuaded Haley to leave the governorship of South Carolina to represent the U.S. at the United Nations. In the interview with ABC, she said Trump hasn't told her not to criticize Russia and that she was "beating up on Russia" over issues such as its actions in Crimea and its dispute with Ukraine.

"There's no love or anything going on with Russia right now," she said. "They get that we're getting our strength back, that we're getting our voice back and that we're starting to lead again, and, honestly, at the United Nations, that's the No. 1 comment I get is that they're just so happy to see the United States lead again."

Haley said the U.S. is also pressuring China to take a firmer stand regarding North Korea's nuclear program. China provides diplomatic and economic support to its neighbor but claims that its influence over Kim Jong Un's government is limited.

U.N. resolutions have failed so far to deter North Korea from conducting nuclear and missile tests. Last year, the North conducted two nuclear tests and two dozen tests of ballistic missiles. The U.S. would "no longer take the excuses from China that they're concerned, too," Haley said.

Flynn discloses \$1.3 million for lobbying, speeches, other work

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former Trump administration national security adviser Michael Flynn has disclosed that he earned more than \$1.3 million for work for technology firms, political groups and government contractors, as well as for speeches to Russian companies and for lobbying for a firm owned by a Turkish businessman.

The new disclosures contained two filings, one made last February and a second dated Friday. The earlier disclosure omitted payments to Flynn for three speeches that he made to Russian companies, while the second filing disclosed those payments.

In response to questions about the differences in the filing, Flynn's lawyer said the first filing included the speaking fees in bulk. He noted that the initial filing was a draft and was not followed by consultations with federal ethics officials because Flynn left the administration just days after turning it in.

Flynn's recent financial history, made available Saturday by the White House, comes amid his effort to win immunity from congressional probes in exchange for his cooperation with official inquiries into contacts between Russia and President Donald Trump's campaign in 2016.

The disclosures detail Flynn's business and financial activities dating to 2014, including 2015 payments from Russia's state-supported television network and paid speeches to two other Russian companies. The filing includes the activities of Flynn Intel Group Inc., a consulting firm that he and partners set up in 2015. The company filed as a foreign agent last month with the Justice Department, acknowledging that its lobbying work last year likely benefited the government of Turkey even as Flynn was advising Trump's campaign.

Flynn's ties to Russia have been scrutinized by the FBI and are under investigation by the House and Senate intelligence committees. Both committees are looking into Russia's meddling in the 2016 presiden-

tial election and any ties between Trump associates and the Kremlin.

The two filings came more than a month after Trump asked Flynn to resign as national security adviser, saying he had misled the vice president about a conversation he had with the Russian ambassador to the U.S. during the transition.

The first filing was turned in on Feb. 11, just a few days before Flynn stepped down. It doesn't include an itemized listing of his speaking engagements, including the payments from RT, the Russian television network that U.S. intelligence agencies have described as a propaganda outlet. The later disclosure, filed Friday, cites RT and other Russian clients and breaks out the payments and provides more details on Flynn's paid speeches.

Flynn's attorney, Robert Kelner, said Flynn's first filing was a draft that normally would have been revised through a consultation between the White House counsel's office and the U.S. Office of Government Ethics. "Because he resigned, that usual consultation process was suspended. When the White House contacted him this (last) week and asked him to complete the process, he did so," Kelner said, noting the second filing is the finalized version.

An OGE document obtained under a Freedom of Information Act request by The Associated Press showed there were no written communications between the agency and Flynn's lawyers about his financial disclosure and ethics agreement between the November election and March 17.

The White House on Friday released scores of disclosures from Trump administration officials.

Flynn declared last month in a filing with the Justice Department that his company's lobbying for a Dutch-based firm owned by a Turkish businessman "could be construed to have principally benefited the Republic of Turkey." Flynn's client, Ekim Alptekin, told the AP that the decision to file as a foreign agent had come under pressure from Justice Department officials.

Soldiers virtually test Dragoon Stryker

BY MARTIN EGNASH
Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — With its increasing focus on deterring Moscow's aggression in Eastern Europe, the Army is upgrading 81 of its Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicles to boost their firepower to match those of their Russian counterparts.

The Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment last week began virtually testing the newly developed Dragoon Stryker, equipped with 30 mm cannon. It's the latest version of the armored eight-wheel-drive troop transport built by General Dynamics.

The soldiers are testing the new Stryker on Virtual Battlespace 3, the Army's flagship

virtual gaming platform for training. The software was recently set up in Grafenwoehr to allow 2nd CAV soldiers to get experience with the Strykers well in advance of the arrival of the new vehicles in February.

"The virtual training was very useful for the crews," said Pfc. Phillip Cobb, a Stryker driver. "It allows us to see how the Stryker is going to react in tactical situations. They're not going to drive the same as our current vehicles. They're heavier. With this (virtual) training, I know how it's going to react when we actually get to train with them."

The virtual 30 mm Stryker program allowed the soldiers to prepare for the new vehicle

without the costs of ammunition and fuel.

The Stryker serves primarily an infantry carrier vehicle, capable of transporting nine soldiers onto the battlefield. As one of two U.S. combat brigades based in Europe, and the most heavily armored at that, the unit's lightly armed Strykers have been criticized as inadequate to the goal of defending the Continent against a possible incursion from Russia.

Soldiers with the 2nd CAV are conducting operations in eastern Poland, less than 100 miles from the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad.

The upgraded 30 mm gun will add firepower to the platform, which until now has only been

armed with 12.7 mm machine guns for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The new weapon will allow the Strykers to engage enemy infantry fighting vehicles, scouting vehicles and transports, but not main battle tanks with their 120 mm main guns.

The Stryker's success stems partly from its versatility. Besides the Infantry Carrier Vehicle model, there are Strykers outfitted with mortar capabilities, mobile medical facilities and other special equipment. The Army began testing a new anti-drone Stryker, the Combat Unmanned Aerial Systems Mobile Integrated Capabilities Stryker, in Grafenwoehr, in March.

Air Force band jazzes it up in Ukraine during 10-day tour

BY WILLIAM HOWARD
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Air Forces in Europe jazz band is wrapping up a 10-day tour of Ukraine to mark 25 years of diplomatic relations between Washington and Kiev.

The 14-member band, on its first trip to Ukraine since 2011, played large concerts in Odessa and Kiev and outreach events in surrounding communities. The group was invited by the U.S. Embassy in Kiev and orchestras there and in Odessa.

"The Ukrainians have a deep appreciation for culture, and the American jazz that we've been performing while on tour has been very well-received," Lt. Col. Don Schofield, USAFE band commander and conductor, said Thursday.

"Our goal is to continue to build trust and respect through that people-to-people diplomacy."

The Ambassadors, as the group is known, was set to return home to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, on Sunday.

One of its best receptions was at the Aviation Academy in Kropyvnytskyi before a crowd of more than 600. The school trains pilots, air crews and air traffic controllers.

Before taking the stage, the airmen were treated to folk music and baked goods from Ukrainians wearing traditional dress. After the show, students from the academy invited band members to a spontaneous jam session.

"We just started playing music together, and it was really fun," saxophonist Staff Sgt. Brian Connelly said.

"We were able to connect directly through music."

Connelly added that they used the universal love of music to bridge differences with Ukrainians who may have never met Americans before.

"We were able to cut right through the cultural barriers and immediately share our energy and our commitment through music," Connelly said.

During a small speaking engagement in Odessa, band members fielded questions about their careers and American life.

"They started asking us questions, like where do we shop, and did we know about the Gap, because one had just opened in Odessa," Connelly said. "That was a big deal to them."

The USAFE band conducts concert tours in 104 countries throughout Europe and Africa.

"In all of our travels we are building relationships, underscoring trust and respect and getting to know the people that we perform for," Schofield said. "Through these concerts we were able to make contact directly with the Ukrainian people."

Air Force bands support the service's mission through performances for the U.S. military and at recruiting and community relations events.

The USAFE Band traces its origins to 1943 at Greenwood Army Airfield, Miss., where it was activated as the 386th Army Air Forces Band.

Civilian who died aboard USS Reagan ID'd

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A civilian contractor who died recently after an incident aboard the USS Ronald Reagan has been identified as George Gozdzia, his company and Navy officials said Friday.

Gozdzia, 59, was attended to by medical workers aboard the aircraft carrier at its Yokosuka harbor berth between noon and 1 p.m. on March 17. He was taken to U.S. Navy Hospital Yokosuka, where he was formally pronounced dead.

Details of the cause of Gozdzia's death were not immediately available Friday. However, ship leadership notified the crew that day that a contractor had fallen from a ladder, and that medical personnel had found him unresponsive at the scene, sailors told Stars and Stripes.

Gozdzia was an employee of the New York-based company Indoor Air Professionals.

Military, black history on display

BY MEREDITH TIBBETTS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The National Museum of African American History and Culture, which opened in September, highlights hundreds of personal stories of tragedy, suffering and courage, but some of the bravest heroes are recognized in the section about military history.

In a corner of the museum, with the Washington Monument visible through the windows, sunshine lights the portraits of black Medal of Honor recipients and the descriptions of their heroic acts.

In the middle of the gallery is a single, glass-enclosed Medal of Honor.

The area's simple design gives ample time to take in the stories of the men who have earned the nation's highest military award. More portraits will be added to honor future recipients.

Artifacts in the military section range from then-Gen. Colin Powell's uniform to Purple Hearts and the stories behind them.

There's a letter written by then-Lt. Samuel M. Bruce, a Tuskegee Airman, on July 4, 1943, that mention two pilots who were missing: Lt. Sherman White Jr. and Lt. James McCullin. Neither returned from a July 2 mission. Bruce was killed in action more than a year later, on Jan. 27, 1944.

There's a voucher of payment to former slave Pvt. Prince Simbo, for services rendered during the Revolutionary War. The voucher, dated 1783, is for 13 pounds and 15 shillings.

The military section, a walk from the earliest days of American military history to the present, is a treasure trove of information and artifacts on people who fought for their country even as their country failed to treat them equally.

Dive team searches atoll for WWII wrecks linked to MIAs

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

KWAJALEIN, Marshall Islands — The deep lagoon of Kwajalein Atoll is a graveyard for dozens of Japanese and American ships and planes that sank during World War II.

The wrecks make for some of the finest scuba diving in the Pacific. But for a small group of divers who live on this remote Army missile test base, finding ruins holding the remains of Americans killed in action has become an all-consuming passion.

"It's a thrill beyond words," Dan Farnham, leader of the Kwajalein MIA Project, said of the moments when the project team discovered a downed aircraft.

The 29-member team, which includes researchers who live on the U.S. mainland, has found four of the eight U.S. aircraft that crashed in the lagoon during World War II. The unaccounted-for remains of 11 MIAs are associated with those eight planes.

The project is working closely with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency in Hawaii, which sent a team in August to take a closer look.

Kwajalein Atoll was the scene of a short but intense battle by U.S. soldiers, sailors and Marines in February 1944 to retake from the Japanese a strategically important chain of roughly 100 small islands. The Japanese had built airstrips on Kwajalein and Roi-Namur islands.

The best way to visualize Kwajalein Atoll is to think of a volcano jutting up thousands of feet from the ocean floor, with coral islands growing over thousands of years around the rim.

Farnham, who works for mission control with the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site, came to Kwajalein on a two-year contract but is now in his 11th year on this tiny island. Diving became his main pastime.

"The people I dive with, we're all history buffs," he said.

A WWII rescue story

Farnham first came across a reference to a plane that had gone down in the lagoon on Jan. 31, 1944. That Kingfisher float plane had been a spotter off the battleship USS New Mexico and had crashed after taking Japanese anti-aircraft fire from Ebeye Island, only a few miles from Kwajalein Island.

"So we decided, hey, let's go look for the Kingfisher because it will be another World War II plane we can dive to, another history-related wreck," he said.

It would become far more than that. One of his friends in the states began researching the crash, discovering that the radioman in the back seat, Harrison Miller, had been rescued from the crash by a minesweeper, and he was still alive and living in Florida.

"It took on a whole new meaning because as I was talking to this gentleman on the phone, he's telling me about the story from 70 years ago. And it obviously still bothered him. OK, so now we're on a mission."

Miller died in 2014, but one of his rescuers aboard the minesweeper recalls the moment.

"He had been sitting there about six hours — or something like that — on the pontoon of the plane," said Burl Sousa, 94, who lives in Oregon. "He was sopping wet with fuel."

After getting Miller on board, they hooked a steel cable to the plane, which was upside down in the water. But the minesweeper was soon taking heavy fire from a nearby island, and the cable snapped when the ship raced forward.

Expanding the search

The Kwajalein divers are still hunting for the elusive Kingfisher that sparked their pursuit in the first place. But their quest led the team to expand their search for all other downed planes in the lagoon with associated MIAs.

For all their love of diving, most of their searching starts out standing aboard a small boat dragging a sonar behind, "like mowing a lawn," Farnham said. Each sweep covers about an 800-foot swath.

With the borrowed sonar that they used up until last fall, they traveled about 3 mph during the search. A new sonar recently purchased by the project will allow them to move a bit faster, with vastly better imaging, he said. The waters are generally calm enough to sonar search only between May and October.

Assembling history

The Kwajalein divers slowly pieced together the stories surrounding each crash by collecting military records, ship-deck logs, squadron reports and eyewitness accounts. They've obtained blueprint manuals for each of the downed aircraft to identify fragments.

"When we find a wreck, we keep the GPS coordinates a strictly guarded secret because we don't want tourism diving on the spots," he said. "We only dive long enough to get photos and video that we need to verify what we found, and then we stay away from it. That keeps the site in pristine condition until the DPAA team can come in and do their part."

The project is in contact with the next of kin for all but two of the 11 MIAs in the lagoon. Two of them are sons of the MIAs who "have memories of sitting on their fathers' knees," Farnham said.

The team assembles all the information it has on a missing family member and the circumstances of the death, then delivers it to the surviving kin they locate.

"We see what an effect it has on the families when we pass this information on to them," he said. "It makes it that much more profound for us, and it drives our determination even more to go find the rest of these airplanes."

At least 200 die in Colombian avalanche

Associated Press

MOCOYA, Colombia — A grim search for the missing resumed at dawn Sunday in southern Colombia after surging rivers sent an avalanche of floodwaters, mud and debris through a small city, killing at least 200 people and leaving many more wounded and homeless.

People pried through piles of rocks and wooden planks that entombed homes.

Streets were covered in thick sand, mud and tree limbs from the rivers and rainforest that surround the city.

There was little drinking water and no power, which forced authorities to suspend the search-and-rescue effort

during the night.

The National Disaster Agency said Sunday that the death toll was at 200, with another 200 wounded, but authorities conceded it could easily go higher because many people were still unaccounted for and dozens were airlifted to hospitals in other cities and were in critical condition.

Bodies were being placed in a temporary morgue where three teams of medical examiners were working around the clock to swiftly identify the remains.

Authorities and residents in the city tucked between mountains along Colombia's southern border spent Saturday tending to victims, trying

to find homes on streets reduced to masses of rubble and engaged in a desperate search to locate loved ones who disappeared in the dark of night. Authorities expect the death toll to rise.

Eduardo Vargas, 29, was asleep with his wife and 7-month-old baby when he was awoken by the sound of neighbors banging on his door. He quickly grabbed his family and fled up a small mountain amid the cries of people in panic.

"There was no time for anything," he said.

Vargas and his family huddled with about two dozen other residents as rocks, trees and wooden planks ripped through their neighborhood

below.

They waited there until daylight, when members of the military helped them down.

When he reached the site of his home Saturday, nothing his family left behind remained.

"Thank God we have our lives," he said.

President Juan Manuel Santos traveled to Mocoa and declared the city a disaster zone Saturday.

The Air Force transported 19 patients to a city farther north and said 20 more would be evacuated soon.

Medicine and surgical supplies were being sent to the city as the area's regional hospital struggled to cope with the magnitude of the crisis.

Pope visits Italian region devastated by 2012 quake

Associated Press

CARPI, Italy — Greeted by tens of thousands of faithful, Pope Francis on Sunday visited Italy's northern Emilia Romagna region, which has largely been rebuilt after a pair of deadly earthquakes five years ago, an example meant to give hope to central Italy, which was still reeling from more devastating temblors last year.

Francis' first stop was the quake-damaged Carpi Cathedral, where he laid a bouquet of white flowers at the foot of a statue of the Madonna inside. After years of restoration, the cathedral reopened just over a week ago.

"There are those who remain buried in the rubble of life," the pope said in his homily before an estimated 20,000 gathered in the piazza outside the cathedral for an open-air Mass. "And there are those, like you, who with the help of God rise from the rubble to rebuild."

During his daylong visit, the pope also will meet with families who lost loved ones

in the quake and hold a discussion with priests, nuns and seminarians.

The Emilia Romagna model of rebuilding after the magnitude-6.1 and magnitude-5.8 quakes that killed 28 people in 2012 has often been cited as exemplary. It included bringing together politicians, entrepreneurs and bishops to decide common priorities.

The papal visit was meant to show gratitude for the rebuilding, the archbishop of Carpi, Monsignor Francesco Cavina, told the Italian Bishops' Conference television TV2000. But, he said, it's also "a sign of hope that rebuilding is possible for the people of central Italy who, unfortunately, suffered what we did much more dramatically."

A magnitude-6.1 quake on Aug. 24, 2016, in Italy's central regions of Umbria, Abruzzo and Marche killed nearly 300 people; toppled thousands of buildings, including churches, historic buildings and museums; and rendered many town centers uninhabitable.

Pakistani shrine custodian, accomplices kill 20 in ritual

Associated Press

MULTAN, Pakistan — The custodian of a local shrine and his accomplices murdered 20 devotees after intoxicating them in eastern Punjab province, police said Sunday, in what officials are calling a cult ritual.

Senior police Officer Mohammad Bilal said the shrine custodian in a village near the city of Sargodha, some 200 miles north of Multan, was arrested Sunday morning along with four others for killing worshippers with batons and knives. Bilal said another four people remain wounded and in critical condition.

A doctor at a Sargodha hospital told the Geo TV channel that the victims were murdered nude, and the bodies bore multiple stab wounds and blunt weapons marks.

Liaquat Ali Chatta, government administrator of the area, said the custodian, Abdul Waheed, and his four alleged accomplices have been arrested, and the matter is being investigated. Chatta said Waheed

is a retired government employee and seemed "mentally unstable."

Chatta said the custodian was allegedly in the practice of "beating and torturing" devotees to "cleanse" them. He said Waheed had confessed to the murders.

Rana Sanaullah, the law minister for the Punjab provincial government, said an initial investigation showed that Waheed had a collection of followers who would regularly visit the shrine and face torture in the name of religious cleansing.

The shrine was built about two years ago on the grave of local religious leader Ali Mohamamd Gujjar. Shamsheer Joya, a local police officer, said Waheed would come to the shrine twice a week from Lahore, and his followers would submit to "beating and torturing with a red hot iron rod."

Police said the victims were killed at a house adjacent to the shrine and their clothing was found burned.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Officials: Wife spiked man's beer with acid

ND FARGO — A Fargo woman is accused of trying to kill her husband by pouring battery acid into his beer.

KFGO radio reported that Nyabenda Spes was charged with one count of reckless endangerment.

Authorities said Spes told them she was unhappy in her relationship and also wanted to kill herself by drinking from the same bottle.

Police: Women left kids in car to get tattoos

FL PANAMA CITY BEACH — Police said a mother and her adult daughter left two small children unattended in the back of a car while the adults were getting tattoos.

The Panama City News Herald reported that police arrested Shannon Anderson, 45, and Hannah Anderson, 21, on March 24.

The Panama City Beach Police Department said officers discovered a 2-year-old and a 3-year-old in the backseat of a pickup parked outside a tattoo parlor. Police said the children were crying and screaming.

The women were charged with child neglect and marijuana possession before being released from jail after posting bond.

Pig that fell from truck on way to new home

SD SIOUX FALLS — Wally the pig is headed to hog heaven.

The 250-pound pig was rescued last month after he fell off a truck on Interstate 90 in South Dakota, just a few miles from a

hog-processing facility. He has been staying at the Sioux Falls Humane Society.

Wally has been adopted by the SoulSpace Farm Sanctuary in New Richmond, Wis.

Wally was not eager to get back on the road. It eventually took a pole and a harness to get him inside a trailer.

College official accused of offering aid for sex

LA NEW ORLEANS — A Delgado Community College admissions counselor has been arrested on suspicion of demanding sexual favors from a student in return for reducing her tuition.

Rashad Harold, 36, was arrested Thursday on one count of misdemeanor sexual battery. The New Orleans Advocate reported a magistrate judge set his bail at \$5,000.

The victim, who had just started her first semester at Delgado, said the incident occurred in Harold's office March 3. She said she went there to check the status of her application.

Police were notified March 17.

Emeralds from sunken galleon set for auction

FL KEY WEST — Emeralds from a Spanish galleon that sank off the Florida Keys in 1622 are going up for auction in New York City.

Manuel Marcial de Gomar, of Emeralds International in Key West, owns the jewels. According to a report by The (Key West) Citizen, de Gomar was paid in emeralds by treasure hunter Mel Fisher, who discovered the wreck of the Nuestra Senora de Atocha in the 1980s.

The shipwreck gems are among 20 loose emeralds and 13 pieces of emerald jewelry from de Gomar's collection that

will be auctioned April 25 at Guernsey's auction house. Bids also will be accepted online.

Man convicted of 2nd DUI in scooter crash

NV RENO — A 57-year-old Sparks man has been convicted of his second drunken-driving offense after crashing his scooter in Reno last summer.

Gerald Henderson faces up to 15 years in prison after he was found guilty last week of one count of driving under the influence of alcohol with a prior felony driving under the influence. Police said he had a blood-alcohol level nearly three times the legal limit when he was arrested in July.

Witnesses told Reno police he crashed his scooter, got back on and drove a short distance before crashing again.

Henderson was treated for his injuries at a local hospital before he was booked into jail. Prosecutors said he was convicted in 2001 of DUI causing substantial bodily harm.

10 kids have breathing problems at water park

PA POCONO SUMMIT — Officials said about 10 children were sickened at an indoor Pennsylvania water park, complaining of breathing problems and nausea.

The Times-Tribune in Scranton reported four people were taken to hospitals Thursday over the ordeal at Kalahari Resorts park in Pocono Summit.

Emergency dispatchers told the newspaper that chlorine likely was the cause of the reactions.

Kalahari officials said in a statement the incident was isolated to a single attraction, and officials shut down that ride.

Man charged in crash that killed his fiancée

ID FILER — A Utah man charged last week with vehicular manslaughter was in Idaho with his fiancée to tell her mom they were getting married.

The Times-News reported that the trip turned tragic when he ran a stop sign, killing his fiancée and leaving him to raise their 5-month-old son.

Sean David Rees, of West Valley City, Utah, was released Friday from the Twin Falls County Jail on his own recognizance. He had been in custody since March 21 in lieu of \$50,000 bond.

Rees is charged with misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter for running a stop sign and causing the crash June 14 that killed Ashley Webb, of Filer.

Police release names of officer, man in shooting

MD BALTIMORE — Authorities have released the names of a Baltimore police officer and a man he fatally shot in an incident during which two young children were threatened with a butcher knife.

Police identified the dead man as Reno Joseph Owens, 39, a homeless man with no fixed address.

Officer Zachary Wein, a 14-year veteran assigned to the SWAT team, has been placed on administrative duty.

Authorities said a Baltimore family called police to report that Owens was holding a knife to a 1-year-old boy and 4-year-old girl at a home where he had spent the previous night.

Police said Owens was shot after he refused to drop the knife.

From wire reports

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Meeks' big night lifts UNC to title game

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Kennedy Meeks relentlessly attacked the boards, posting up deep in the paint and playing with an aggressive edge that hasn't always been there through his North Carolina career.

The Tar Heels needed every bit of it, too, to survive against Oregon in the Final Four.

The 6-foot-10 senior matched his career high with 25 points to go with 14 rebounds — ripping one down to seal the win — to help the Tar Heels beat the Ducks 77-76 in Saturday's national semifinals of the NCAA Tournament. That sent the Tar Heels (32-7) back to the national championship game for the second straight season to face fellow 1-seed Gonzaga, putting them on the doorstep of their season-long goal to return and win.

It was a huge moment for Meeks, who battled weight issues early in his career, arriving on campus in 2013 at more than 300 pounds. He shed weight to the 260-range but struggled at times to finish explosively around the rim, particularly in a 1-for-8 shooting performance that included several misses on close shots in last year's loss to Villanova in the championship game. And he occasionally drew the ire of coach Roy Williams — who kept pushing and pushing him for more.

Consider this the return on all that investment.

"Kennedy, I thought, was awesome,"

Williams said. "I thought he controlled everything inside. ... I thought he was just sensational."

On a night when the Tar Heels sputtered through much of their execution, Meeks made 11 of 13 shots and had three steals in 30 minutes.

"I just knew that we had to be aggressive in the paint," Meeks said. "Coach told us it was going to be a man's game, and us four big men had to do a great job on the inside."

That didn't happen. Senior Isaiah Hicks continued his abrupt late-season fade by missing 11 of 12 shots and finishing with 2 points. Luke Maye didn't make a shot from the field and got in foul trouble. And 6-10 freshman Tony Bradley Jr. made just one basket.

"It takes you a long time to really get over that you don't have to score to be effective, you don't have to shoot all the shots to be effective," Meeks said. "You can do other things, rebounding. ... So I just took it upon myself to do the best job I could, whether it was having a great defensive game, scoring the ball when I can, or getting all the rebounds."

The Tar Heels nearly saw their goals slip away amid a haze of mistakes and missed free throws in the final minute. It was Meeks who came up with the clinching play, shaking off two missed free throws with 5.8 seconds left to beat Jordan Bell to a rebound when teammate Joel Berry II followed with his own misses.

After ripping the ball away in traffic, he kicked it out to Theo Pinson to run out the final 4 seconds on the clock.

"He was the guy that kept us in there," junior Justin Jackson said.

"It was hard to get kind of used to that zone that they were playing, but he kept on competing inside for the boards and he posted extremely low today," Jackson said. "And when we found him, he was able to finish."

It marked Meeks' fourth straight game with at least 11 rebounds, including a career-high 17 against the Wildcats in the South Regional final. But he provided the offense too after scoring just 12 points on 3-for-7 shooting during the two-game regional stay in Memphis, Tenn.

Jackson (22 points) was the only other Tar Heel finding any offensive success, while point guard Berry struggled to a 2-for-14 shooting night while hobbled by two ankle injuries.

UNC survived it all, thanks to Meeks having the kind of moment Williams had always envisioned.

"I just think the kid's living in the moment," said Sean May, UNC's director of player personnel and a former Final Four Most Outstanding player for the Tar Heels in 2005. "He realizes this is his senior year, this is it. ... Coach, he's rode him, and he'll tell you he's rode him. For him to have a night like he did tonight for us is pretty amazing."

Zags reach championship in first Final Four

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Gonzaga watched big man Przemek Karnowski fall to the floor in a heap and holding his eye as he headed to the locker room. The Zags saw a 14-point lead evaporate in a South Carolina flurry and traded punches with the Gamecocks over the tense closing minutes.

Gonzaga absorbed the blows, counterpunched and now has another game to play, this one for the national championship. The Zags face North Carolina on Monday night.

Led by the poise of point guard Nigel Williams-Goss and freshman center Zach Collins, Gonzaga turned its first trip to the Final Four into one big Zag party after beating South Caro-

lina 77-73 on Saturday.

"We said all year that we're a tight group," Williams-Goss said. "We said we're brothers and we stick together and it shows. Coach always says we can't just talk the talk, we had to walk the walk. And when things got tough we banded together and pulled through."

The big knock on Gonzaga in the past was its inability to handle adversity. The Zags were remarkably consistent, making 19 straight trips to the NCAA Tournament, yet could never get past that Final Four roadblock.

Gonzaga broke through that with a hard-fought win over West Virginia in the Sweet 16 and a blowout over Xavier in the Elite Eight.

Their Final Four jinx over,

the Zags headed back to Arizona, where they burst onto the national consciousness with an Elite Eight run in 1999.

Waiting for them were fiery Frank Martin and the big-game Gamecocks — and they took them head on for a tense 40 minutes.

"I was just really, really proud of our guys, our late-game execution," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "I think that's been a topic of speculation, because we haven't really had many close games. But we practiced it a lot. And I mean, the guys executed it perfectly, especially down the last four minutes."

Gonzaga looked as if it was going to run away from South Carolina, as it had in the previous round against Xavier.

Instead, the Zags (37-1) had another "rock fight," as Few called the West Virginia game, against the just-as-physical South Carolina.

Williams-Goss was the catalyst early, pulling up for jumpers, hitting threes, setting up teammates for easy baskets. He kept it going as Gonzaga pushed a nine-point halftime lead to 14 midway through the second half.

The West Coast Conference player of the year, Williams-Goss finished with 23 points on 9-for-16 shooting, with six assists and five rebounds.

"I think the respect thing has to go out the window," he said. "You have 37 wins in a college season, I mean that's just unbelievable."

Nats, Red Sox savor Annapolis outing

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — The Boston Red Sox and Washington Nationals took a memorable tour of the U.S. Naval Academy before engaging in one last inconsequential baseball game prior to Opening Day.

Playing within the guarded walls of the academy on Navy's home diamond, the Nationals and Boston played to a 4-4 tie Saturday in a tiny stadium jammed with 1,030 fans — most of them Midshipmen in uniform.

Max Scherzer allowed two runs over five innings for Washington in a game called after nine innings.

For the players and coaches, the most significant part of the day occurred long before Sean J. Stackley, acting Secretary of the Navy, threw out the ceremonial first pitch.

The bus tour included a visit to the largest single dormitory in the world — which houses the entire brigade. The most stirring stop was at the site of the honor roll of all academy graduates who have died in

military operations.

Nationals center fielder Adam Eaton said he was struck by “the seriousness of it all,” noting, “We don’t understand the focus that it takes, the structure, the dedication to train and survive with one another and protect the country.”

The players dressed in a small locker room at the Navy football stadium before traveling to the ballpark by bus. It was not at all convenient, but Red Sox manager John Farrell considered Annapolis to be a worthwhile detour before the team headed home to face Pittsburgh in Monday’s opener.

“One thing I hope our players take from it is, they had an opportunity to see behind the scenes of the Naval Academy,” Farrell said. “We knew it was going to be little bit out of the norm, but for a special occasion like this we’re certainly flexible. This is a special day for all of us.”

It certainly was different. The wall in dead center was 390 feet from the plate, the foul pole in left was at 318 feet and the pole

in right stood a mere 300 feet away. Yet no one homered.

The clock on the scoreboard posted military time, and Farrell said he couldn’t remember working before so small a crowd.

“It’s amazing just to see what they have to go through to protect our country,” Red Sox outfielder Mookie Betts said. “Some of us take those things for granted, but to actually get to see it first hand, it makes you appreciate it a lot more.”

Nationals right fielder Bryce Harper got into the spirit by wearing a Navy hoodie during warmups, and the curly “W” on Washington’s caps had a stars-and-stripes design.

This was the first of three exhibition games the Nationals are to host at Navy through 2019. One tradition likely to continue is the players from both teams mingling together for the tour.

“It was the best thing we could have done,” Nationals general manager Mike Rizzo said. “This place, if nothing else, reminds you that we’re united in a lot of ways besides being in baseball.”

With velocity rising, how long can arms last?

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Even Jose Canseco is uncertain he could take the heat.

With all those 100 mph fastballs flying through the strike zone these days from Aroldis Chapman, Noah Syndergaard and others, flame-throwers are the norm rather than the exception — in rotations and bullpens alike.

“We had big, strong, powerful characters. We had entertainers, really. I think today they’re throwing harder, too. The pitching is amazing,” said Canseco, an ex-sluggo 16 years removed from his last big league game. “You see every other starter throwing 100 mph. Back then, we didn’t have that. Back then, a good quality fastball was 92-93 mph. Today, it’s almost 100, so I think you have to give credit to all these hitters to where they have less time to react. You get guys throwing harder, you get a rotation of two or three out of the five guys throwing 95 or above, you get relievers coming in it’s almost criteria you’ve got to throw 100 mph.”

Last season alone, 31 pitchers hit 100 mph at least once, while Chapman threw 538 of his 972 pitches for the New York Yankees and Chicago Cubs — a jaw-dropping, swinging-and-missing 55.35 percent — at 100 mph or more, according to Major League Baseball’s Advanced Media Statcast system. And he regularly reached 102 to 103.

Mauricio Cabrera of the Braves had the second-most with 344 of 644, or 53.42 percent, while the Mets’ Syndergaard was next with 94.

“If you can command and throw hard, I think it’s one of the most exciting things in the game,” said Goose Gossage, a 22-year big league pitcher who was a Yankees guest instructor this spring. “You know pretty much what you’re going to get is a fastball and here it is, hit it if you can. To throw like Chapman or throw the ball hard with command is a tremendous asset.”

Yet here’s the pressing question: How long will their arms sustain all that wear and tear?

There were 18 Tommy John

surgeries last year for players on 25-man major league rosters, down from a high of 36 elbow ligament replacements in 2012, according to Baseball Heat Maps.

“This seems to be a growing topic in baseball. No doubt velocity has gone up for starters and relievers,” said Stan Conte, former Giants and Dodgers head athletic trainer turned consultant. “Although the number of Tommy John surgeries in the majors was down from previous highs of over 30 in 2012 and 2014, there was an increase in the minor leagues. There is a direct relationship with velocity and stress on the UCL ligament.”

So much so that A’s catcher Stephen Vogt has some serious concerns.

He sees young pitchers throwing so hard they can’t even locate their pitches, and considers it a dangerous pattern — what he calls a “use them until they blow out and move on mentality.”

“We’re seeing so many young kids come up, they throw 95, 98, as hard as they can for a

full season and then they come back and their arm’s gone. Our bodies are not designed to withstand that much velocity. If you do, you’re a freak,” Vogt said. “But I think it’s become a mentality of a lot of organizations is, ‘Well, let’s just use this guy ‘til he can’t pitch anymore and then next in line.’ And I’m not a big fan of that. ...”

“The years of 15- to 20-year relief pitchers is going away. It’s becoming younger and younger, come in and throw as hard as you can because if you can’t throw 95-plus you’re not going to make it. There’s a lot of people out there teaching just max velocity, they’re not teaching how to pitch. I can’t tell you how many high school kids they’re like, ‘Hey, can you catch a bullpen?’ And they’ll come out and they’re throwing as hard as they can, and I’m diving for the ball. I’m like, ‘Hey, come here, what are you working on?’ ‘Like I just want to throw hard.’ I’m like, ‘You’re not going to get anybody out.’ We’re teaching kids how to throw hard, we’re not teaching kids how to pitch.”

Butler guides surging Bulls past Hawks

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Jimmy Butler scored 33 points and hit two free throws with 2.1 seconds left to lift the Chicago Bulls to a 106-104 victory over the Atlanta Hawks on Saturday.

Butler scored the Bulls' final nine points. His free throws gave the Bulls a two-point lead and capped a 15-4 run.

"I see guys doing what they're supposed to be doing — playing hard, shooting the ball when they're open, not trying to do too much," Butler said. "That's what we need."

Tim Hardaway Jr. then missed a three-pointer for Atlanta as time expired, giving the Bulls their third straight win. That put them in a tie with Miami and Indiana for the final two playoff spots in the Eastern Conference. The sixth-place Hawks, who had won two straight after dropping seven in a row, trail Milwaukee by a game.

Rajon Rondo had a season-high 25 points and added 11 rebounds. Denzel Valentine scored 13 points as the Bulls stopped a

seven-game losing streak to Atlanta.

Dennis Schroder led the Hawks with 29 points while Hardaway scored 20.

Clippers 115, Lakers 104: At Los Angeles, Blake Griffin scored 36 points and Chris Paul added 29 as the host Clippers beat the Lakers, giving coach Doc Rivers his 800th career victory.

J.J. Redick added 19 points for the Clippers, who moved within a game of the idle Jazz for the No. 4 playoff seed in the West. The Clippers have won three in a row and seven of nine.

The series between the Staples Center co-tenants has been dominated by the Clippers of late. They've won 18 of 20 since the start of the 2012-13 season.

Trail Blazers 130, Suns 117: Damian Lillard scored 31 points as Portland continued its late-season push for the playoffs with a sixth straight victory, beating visiting Phoenix.

CJ McCollum added 29 points for Portland, which holds the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference. The

Blazers (38-38) led by as many as 25 points and got back to .500 for the first time since they were 12-12 on Dec. 9.

The Blazers were playing their first game without Jusuf Nurkic since announcing that he had a fractured right leg and will miss the rest of the regular season.

Nets 121, Magic 111: Brook Lopez scored 30 points and Trevor Booker had a season-high 23 as host Brooklyn beat Orlando.

Sean Kilpatrick added 15 points for the Nets, who snapped a two-game losing streak. Brooklyn had a season-high 72 points in the paint.

Kings 123, Timberwolves 117: Buddy Hield tied a career high with 22 points, going 4 of 6 from three-point range, as Sacramento got 66 points from its bench in a victory over host Minnesota.

Andrew Wiggins scored 32 points for the Timberwolves, who had won five of their last six at home. A game after scoring a career-high 33, Ricky Rubio had 11 points on just 1-of-10 shooting, and added 13 assists.

Stolarz fills in for Neuvirth to lift Flyers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Flyers rookie goalie Anthony Stolarz made the best of a scary situation.

Stolarz stopped 26 shots after replacing Michael Neuvirth early in the first period and the Philadelphia Flyers beat the New Jersey Devils 3-0 Saturday night.

Stolarz, who arrived at the Wells Fargo Center just five minutes before the opening faceoff as an injury replacement for Steve Mason, entered the game 7½ minutes into the first period after Neuvirth collapsed in his crease.

Neuvirth was carted off the ice on a stretch and later taken to Pennsylvania Hospital, where he was "awake and alert," according to Flyers general manager Ron Hextall. Neuvirth stopped all six shots he faced.

"We sent him to the hospital for precautionary reasons and everything so far has been good," Hextall said, adding that Neuvirth will not make the team's trip to New York for Sun-

day night's game against the Rangers.

Brayden Schenn, Colin McDonald and Jordan Weal scored for the Flyers, who won their fourth straight game to remain in the Eastern Conference playoff hunt. Philadelphia remained six points behind Boston for the second wild card playoff spot in the East with four games remaining for each team.

Oilers 3, Ducks 2 (OT): Leon Draisaitl scored off a pass from Connor McDavid 1:26 into overtime to lift host Edmonton into a tie with Anaheim atop the Pacific Division.

Edmonton's 44 wins are the most the team has had in a season since the Oilers won the Stanley Cup in 1987-88. Edmonton and Anaheim each have 97 points, with four games remaining for each club and the Oilers currently holding the tiebreaker.

Jets 4, Senators 2: Mathieu Perreault scored the go-ahead goal 7:46 into the third period, lifting host Winnipeg to its fourth straight win.

Blake Wheeler and Adam

Lowry also scored for Winnipeg, which has its first four-game win streak of the season.

Maple Leafs 5, Red Wings 4: Auston Matthews scored twice to lead visiting Toronto past Detroit.

Matthews' second goal of the night with 1:09 left, gave Toronto a 5-3 lead, but proved to be the winner when Detroit's Mike Green tallied with 44.2 seconds remaining in regulation.

Canadiens 2, Lightning 1: Alexander Radulov scored 51 seconds into overtime to lift visiting Montreal past Tampa Bay.

Phillip Danault also scored and Carey Price stopped 21 shots for the Atlantic Division-leading Canadiens.

Stars 3, Hurricanes 0: Jason Spezza scored, Kari Lehtonen earned his third shutout of the season and visiting Dallas snapped a two-game skid.

John Klingberg and Devin Shore added empty-netters to help the Stars deal a serious blow to the Hurricanes' already slim playoff chances.

Cam Ward stopped 21 shots for Carolina, which is six points

behind Boston for the East's final playoff spot with six games left.

Predators 3, Wild 0: Filip Forsberg and Kevin Fiala scored 10 seconds apart late in the second period, and host Nashville snapped a two-game skid.

Pekka Rinne made 31 saves for his third shutout this season as the Predators pulled into a tie with St. Louis at 91 points. The Blues hold the tiebreaker, and the Predators visited St. Louis on Sunday.

Bruins 5, Panthers 2: David Krejci scored after a poor clearing attempt by Florida goalie Reto Berra, leading host Boston to the win.

Patrice Bergeron scored twice, Brad Marchand got his team-leading 39th goal and Noel Acciari also scored for the Bruins, who trail both Toronto and Ottawa by a point in the Atlantic Division, but hold a four-point edge over Tampa Bay for the Eastern Conference's final wild-card spot.