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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Navy redesigns subs with women in mind

Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Every submarine in the U.S. fleet was designed with the height, reach and strength of men in mind, from the way valves are placed to how display screens are angled.

That's going to change.

With women now serving aboard submarines, defense contractor Electric Boat is designing what will be the first Navy subs built specifically to accommodate female crewmembers.

The designers are doing the obvious things, such as adding more doors and washrooms to create separate sleeping and bathing areas for men and women and to give them more privacy. But they are also making more subtle modifications that may not have been in everyone's periscope when the Navy admitted women into the Silent Service.

The first vessel built with some of the new features, the future USS New Jersey, is expected to be delivered to the Navy in 2021.

The Navy lifted its ban on women on submarines in 2010, starting with officers.

About 80 female officers and roughly 50 enlisted women are now serving on subs, and their numbers are expected to climb into the hundreds over the next few years.

For now, the Navy is retrofitting existing subs with extra doors and designated washrooms to accommodate women. But Electric Boat in Groton, Conn., is at work on a redesign of the Navy's Virginia-class fast-attack subs and is also developing a brand-new class of ballistic-missile submarines, relying on body measurements for both men and women.

"We have a clean sheet of paper, so from the ground up, we'll optimize for both men and women," said Brian Wilson, Electric Boat director of the new ballistic-missile sub program.

Electric Boat officials had no immediate estimate of how much the modifications will cost.

As anyone who watches war movies knows, submariners are always turning valves, whether to operate machinery, to redistribute water between tanks or to isolate part of a damaged system.

On the Columbia-class boats, valves will generally be placed lower, Wilson said. Sometimes there will be an extension handle, and some will be easier to turn. Sailors will be able to connect their masks into the emergency air system at the side of passageways, instead of overhead.

Emergency air masks are being moved on fast-attack submarines too, but the bulk of the changes on those subs are to ensure privacy.

Seats in the control room on the ballistic-missile submarines will adjust forward a little more so everyone can touch each display and reach every joystick. Steps will be added so shorter people can climb into the top bunk or see into the washers and dryers.

The first Columbia-class ballistic-missile sub is scheduled to join the fleet in 2031.

At 5-foot-6, Lt. Marquette Leveque, one of the first women to serve on a submarine, said she didn't have any trouble reaching valves and other equipment but said the ergonomic changes will be helpful for shorter crewmates.

N. Korean weaponry an issue amid rising tension

The Washington Post

TOKYO — If the U.S. were to strike North Korea, Kim Jong Un's regime would retaliate by unleashing its conventional weaponry lined up on the demilitarized zone that has separated the two Koreas for about seven decades.

And that conventional weaponry is reliable, unlike North Korea's missiles, and could cause major devastation in South Korea, which is a staunch ally of the U.S.

"This becomes a very limiting factor for the U.S.," said Carl Baker, a retired Air Force officer with extensive experience in South Korea.

As tensions between North Korea and the outside world have risen during the past month, there has been increas-

ing talk about the U.S. using military force either to preempt a North Korean provocation or to respond to one.

That talk continues even after it emerged that the Navy had not sent an aircraft carrier strike group to the Korean Peninsula region, as officials, including President Donald Trump, had implied.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said last week that he supported striking North Korea to stop it from developing the capability to reach the U.S. with a missile — even if that came at a huge cost for the region. "It would be terrible, but the war would be over [in South Korea]; it wouldn't be here," Graham said in an interview with NBC.

Although most of the recent focus has been on North Korea's ambition to be able to strike the

continental U.S. with a missile, the people of South Korea have been living under the constant threat of a conventional North Korean attack for decades.

North Korea has "a tremendous amount of artillery" right opposite Seoul, said Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., a senior imagery analyst at 38 North, a website focused on North Korea.

The Second Corps of the Korean People's Army stationed at Kaesong on the northern side of the DMZ has about 500 artillery pieces, Bermudez said. And that is just one army corps; similar corps are on either side of it.

All the artillery pieces in the Second Corps can reach the northern outskirts of Seoul, just 30 miles from the DMZ, but the largest projectiles could fly to the south of the capital. About 25 million people — or half of

the South Korean population — live in the greater Seoul metropolitan area.

"It's the tyranny of proximity," said David Maxwell, who served in South Korea during his 30 years in the Army and now teaches at Georgetown University. "It's like the distance between Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Imagine a million-man army just outside the Beltway with artillery they could use to terrorize Washington."

About half of North Korea's artillery pieces are multiple rocket launchers, including 18 to 36 of the huge 300 mm launchers that Pyongyang has bragged about. State media last year published photos of the system during a test firing that Kim attended.

Mattis in Djibouti to bolster relationship with African nation

Associated Press

DJIBOUTI — U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis on Sunday visited Djibouti to bolster ties with the tiny and impoverished African country that is home to an important base for U.S. counterterrorism forces, including drones.

Mattis, the first Trump administration official to visit Djibouti, planned to meet with President Ismail Omar Guelleh and greet U.S. and French troops. He was accompanied by Marine Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, head of U.S. Africa Command.

The U.S. operates drone aircraft from Djibouti for surveillance and combat missions against al-Qaida-affiliated extremists in Somalia and elsewhere in the region.

China is building a military base in Djibouti, a former French colony on the Horn of Africa.

For years the U.S. has operated a fleet of armed drones,

initially from Djibouti's Camp Lemonnier, where French troops also are based, and now from a separate airfield. Djibouti took on added importance to the U.S. military after the Sept. 11 attacks, in part as a means of tracking and intercepting al-Qaida militants fleeing Afghanistan after the U.S. invaded that country in October 2001.

The U.S. has a long-term agreement with Djibouti for hosting American forces; that pact was renewed in 2014.

Djibouti has a highly prized port on the Gulf of Aden. The country is sandwiched between Somalia and Eritrea, and also shares a border with Ethiopia.

Mattis is using his early months as defense secretary to renew or strengthen relations with key defense allies and partners, such as Djibouti, whose location makes it a strategic link in the network of overseas U.S. military bases.

Djibouti also has been instrumental in international efforts to counter piracy over the past decade.

Mattis' predecessor at the Pentagon, Ash Carter, never visited Djibouti during his two years as President Barack Obama's defense secretary.

Over the past week, Mattis has met with leaders in Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt and Qatar. In Doha, Qatar's capital, he told ruler Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on Saturday that he would personally tend to the relationship.

"Your highness, relationships get better or weaker, and I'm committed to making it better from our side," Mattis said.

The U.S. has a fleet of fighter, bomber, transport, surveillance and refueling aircraft at Qatar's Al Udeid Air Base, which also is home to an operations center that coordinates U.S. air missions throughout the Mideast and in Afghanistan.

Vinson trains with Japanese destroyers

Associated Press

TOKYO — An American aircraft carrier heading toward the Korean Peninsula began joint exercises Sunday with Japanese naval ships in the Philippine Sea.

Two Japanese destroyers joined the USS Carl Vinson and

The exercise is designed to improve combined maritime response and defense capabilities as well as joint maneuvering proficiency.

two other U.S. warships as they continued their journey north in the western Pacific Ocean, the U.S. Navy said in a statement.

The Vinson had canceled a scheduled visit to Australia to divert toward North Korea in a show of force, though it still conducted a curtailed training exercise with Australia before doing so. Tensions are elevated on the Korean Peninsula, with the Trump administration saying all options are on the table and indications North Korea may be preparing to test a nuclear weapon or long-range missile.

Two Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyers left Sasebo port in southern Japan on Friday to join the Vinson strike group. The U.S. group also includes a guided-missile cruiser and a guided-missile destroyer.

The Navy called the exercise "routine" and said it is designed to improve combined maritime response and defense capabilities as well as joint maneuvering proficiency.

Trump awards Purple Heart to Army sergeant

Associated Press

BETHESDA, Md. — President Donald Trump on Saturday awarded a Purple Heart to an Army sergeant recently wounded in Afghanistan, the first of many Trump likely will award during his service as commander in chief of the U.S. military.

"When I heard about this ... I wanted to do it myself," Trump said during a brief ceremony at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., outside Washington. The medal went to Sgt. 1st Class Alvaro Barrientos, who was wounded in action on March 17 in Afghanistan during what is now America's longest war. The White House did not release Barrientos' hometown.

"Congratulations on behalf of Melania and myself and the entire nation. Tremendous," said Trump, mentioning his wife.

It was Trump's first visit as president to the military hospital.

Barrientos, whose right leg below the knee had been amputated, was brought into a hospital atrium in a wheelchair, accompanied by his wife, Tammy.

Trump kissed Barrientos' wife before pinning the medal on the sergeant's left shirt collar, grasping Barrientos by the shoulders and then shaking his hand. The Purple Heart is awarded to servicemembers who are wounded or killed in action.

Besides Barrientos, Trump met privately with about a dozen servicemembers who are receiving care at the medical center.

Before leaving the White House, the president tweeted that he looked forward to "seeing our bravest and greatest Americans."

Trump's decision to allow news media coverage of the medal ceremony was in sharp contrast to former President Barack Obama, who awarded Purple Heart medals during his own regular visits to Walter Reed but always did so behind closed doors.

Congress returns to budget impasse

BY DIANNA CAHN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Congress returns from recess Monday to reckon with the looming threat of a government shutdown and the likelihood that no matter what resolution lawmakers reach for the stalled budget process, appropriations for the military will fall short of what the service chiefs say they need.

Temporary government funding — the second stopgap bill since 2016 spending ran out in September — expires Friday, giving lawmakers five days to break through a deep political impasse and pass an omnibus appropriations bill that includes defense.

Bipartisan leaders from both houses have been working behind closed doors to reach consensus on the omnibus deal that would not resolve long-term spending issues but would take some of the immediate burden off the Department of Defense. Before the break, service chiefs testified before the House Armed Services Committee that continuing the stopgap funding measures could devastate military readiness — halting critical training, grounding ships and aircraft and disrupting pay raises and bonuses for servicemembers.

Congressional leaders had voiced optimism — Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said two weeks ago that he believed the bill would be passed by the deadline. But White House maneuvering appears to have soured those hopes. White House budget director Mick Mulvaney told The Associated Press that President Donald Trump is insisting on funding for a wall on the Mexican border — a nonstarter for Democrats — that prompted reports negotiations had stalled.

“Everything had been moving smoothly until the administration moved in with a heavy hand,” said Matt House, a spokesman for Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

Given the challenges to an omnibus spending deal and the alternative of triggering a government shutdown, there’s

a strong chance legislators will put yet another patch into place that will buy them more time to iron out the 2017 budget or to kick the can down the road to the 2018 budget battle.

Either way, defense spending likely will feel the pinch — not exactly the military boon that a Republican Congress and presidency had advertised, said Mark Cancian, a former senior official in the Office of Management and Budget and a retired Marine Corps colonel.

“There just isn’t enough money to maintain the military we want, no matter how you slice it,” said Cancian, an expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

A lasting problem

Lawmakers have been at loggerheads over spending and have failed to pass a defense spending bill on time for the better part of a decade. To tide the Pentagon over, they frequently implement a temporary patch known as a continuing resolution that locks defense spending at prior year levels with no ability to expand, to add training or to start new projects or programs — nor to halt old ones.

Last fall, with elections looming, lawmakers passed a three-month resolution in October, the start of the 2017 fiscal year. After the election of Trump, they passed a second resolution in December to allow the new Republican president to weigh in. That one expires Friday.

Trump has proposed a big defense buildup for 2018 and a supplemental increase for 2017 of \$30 billion. The supplemental funding would help the services recover from the steady drip of underfunding, stemming from continuing resolutions, a 2013 shutdown that hobbled the force and the impact of sequestration — across-the-board budget cuts triggered by the 2011 Budget Control Act, a measure aimed at forcing Congress to reach agreement on reducing the deficit by creating spending caps.

In March, the House passed a \$578 billion defense spending bill for 2017 — a modest plan

that came in close enough to those caps that avoiding sequestration is possible — but there has been no Senate legislation. The Senate’s 52 Republicans would need eight Democrats to pass the spending bill, but experts say any compromise for Democrats will alienate conservative Republicans who support Trump’s push to cut domestic spending. Democrats want every added dollar for defense to be matched for domestic spending.

In addition to ideological obstacles, observers say Democratic senators are likely to be less inclined to compromise after the Senate majority leader pushed through the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch in early April by imposing an unprecedented rule change that stifled debate over the nation’s top justices.

Democrats also have political incentive to let the government shut down, as damaging as it might be to programs, said Paul Brace, an author and professor of political science at Rice University in Houston.

“It will make the Republicans look awful,” Brace said. “There’s no middle ground for the Democrats in the budget, so why not step back and let the Republicans deal with the heat?”

Targeting ‘priorities’

Mulvaney was plucked from the fiscally conservative House Freedom Caucus to direct the White House Office of Management and Budget. He has insisted that the \$30 billion supplemental funding for defense be offset by \$18 billion in domestic cuts. The supplemental increase is intended to boost shortfalls in personnel, training, operations, maintenance, procurement and modernization.

Mulvaney told the AP that the White House delivered an offer to negotiators Wednesday night that set as top demands funding for the border wall, the \$30 billion supplement and a controversial provision allowing the administration to deny certain grants to cities that refuse to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement.

The White House demands appear to be endangering what had been described as good headway in the negotiations.

‘Rough road’ ahead

One thing everyone seems to agree on is that another continuing resolution is bad for the business of governing and particularly bad for defense.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., declared before the break that he would rather force a shutdown than vote for another such resolution.

Paul Scharre, a senior fellow and director of the Future of Warfare Initiative at the Center for a New American Security, said the current budget crisis reflects the broken process.

“Defense has been held hostage to this broader budgetary gridlock for years, and what’s pretty apparent is that having Republicans in control of all of government doesn’t really fix that,” Scharre said. “I think it’s going to be a rough road for the next couple of years for defense spending.”

Scharre said defense officials have their hands tied. They don’t have enough funding for the missions the government is tasking them with, but Congress won’t let them make any long-term cuts or address the possibility that America has to alter its role in the world if it wants to cut defense spending to Budget Control Act levels.

The likely solution, he said, is another temporary fix: funneling extra money to defense through Overseas Contingency Operations, an emergency war fund that does not fall under the Budget Control Act and has been used to skirt the political logjam. If lawmakers opt for another continuing resolution, defense will get enough to cover payroll for the troops and some continued training and maintenance.

It’s not a long-term solution, but using the noncapped war fund, the military could muddle through, Cancian said — at least until Congress picks up the next hot potato: the 2018 spending bill, with Trump’s proposed \$54 billion increase in defense spending.

Doctor's arrest spotlights use of procedure on girls in US

Associated Press

DETROIT — Zehra Patwa learned only a few years ago that during a family trip to India at age 7, she was circumcised, which is common for girls in parts of Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Patwa, 46, doesn't remember undergoing the procedure, which is also called female genital mutilation or cutting and which has been condemned by the United Nations and outlawed in the U.S. But she doesn't want to.

"I have no desire to get that memory back. ... Psychologically, it feels like a violation, even though I don't remember it," said Patwa, a technology project manager from New Haven, Conn., who now campaigns against the centuries-old practice.

The recent arrest of a Michigan doctor accused of performing the procedure on two 7-year-old girls from Patwa's own Shiite Muslim sect, the Dawoodi Bohra, highlights how female genital mutilation is alive and well in parts of the Western world where its adherents have migrated and formed communities.

Depending on the culture, the procedures are performed on girls of various ages and by various methods, and they are seen as a way of controlling a girl's sexuality, maintaining her purity or even making her more fertile as she grows into adulthood. Critics say it can cause complications during child-

birth, make intercourse painful and eliminate any pleasure a woman can derive from sex.

Dr. Jumana Nagarwala is accused of performing the procedure on two Minnesota girls that left them with scars and lacerations. Her attorney, Shannon Smith, insists that Nagarwala conducted a benign religious ritual that involved no mutilation.

Prosecutors on Friday charged two other Bohras, Dr. Fakhruddin Attar and his wife, Farida Attar, with conspiracy. Fakhruddin Attar owns the Detroit-area clinic where the procedures are suspected to have been performed in February, and investigators say the couple knew Nagarwala was doing the procedures after business hours.

There are more than a million Bohras in the world, most of whom live in India. No one knows how many there are in the U.S., but it's estimated there are about 25,000 and that they have about 20 mosques and gathering places.

Patwa, who is part of the activist group Speak Out on FGM, said that given its clandestine nature, it's hard to estimate how many people perform the procedure in the U.S.

The World Health Organization said the practice of removing or injuring female genital organs has no known health benefits but has been performed on roughly 200 million women and girls in 30 countries.

Voting for French president begins

Associated Press

PARIS — Amid heightened security, French voters began casting ballots for their next president Sunday in a first-round poll that's seen as a litmus test for the spread of populism around the world and a vote on the future of Europe.

More than 50,000 police and gendarmes were deployed to the 66,000 polling stations for Sunday's election, which comes after Thursday's deadly attack on the Champs-Elysees in which a police officer and a gunman were slain. The presidential poll is the first ever to be held during a state of emergency, put in place since the Paris attacks of November 2015.

Voters are choosing between 11 candidates in the most unpredictable contest in decades.

The vote "is really important, mainly because we really need a change in this country with all the difficulties we are facing and terrorism," said Paris resident Alain Richaud, who was waiting to cast his vote.

Opinion polls point to a tight race among the four leading contenders vying to advance to the May 7 presidential runoff, when the top two candidates will go head to head.

Polls suggest far-right nationalist Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron, an independent centrist and former economy minister, were in the lead. But conservative Francois Fillon, a former prime minister who was embroiled in a scandal over alleged fake jobs, appeared to be closing the gap, as was far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon. France's 10 percent unemployment, its lackluster economy and security were issues that top concerns for the 47 million eligible voters.

Trump administration removes surgeon general

The Washington Post

U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy has been removed by the Trump administration and replaced temporarily by his deputy, Rear Adm. Sylvia Trent-Adams.

Murthy, a holdover from the Obama administration, was asked to resign, according to a statement released Friday night by the Department of Health and Human Services. The statement said that "after assisting in a smooth transition into the new Trump administration," Murthy "has been relieved of his duties." Trent-Adams, a 24-year veteran of the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps and a former chief nurse officer of the Public Health Service, will fill the role for now, the statement said.

In a post on Facebook, Murthy wrote that "for the grandson of a poor farmer from India to be asked by the President to look

out for the health of an entire nation was a humbling and uniquely American story. I will always be grateful to our country for welcoming my immigrant family nearly 40 years ago and giving me this opportunity to serve." His dismissal came on the eve of the March for Science, which drew thousands of demonstrators to the National Mall.

A physician, Murthy, 39, is a longtime believer that gun violence is a public health issue, a view that stalled his nomination in the Senate for more than a year and probably did not align him well with the current administration. He took office in December 2014, and in an interview with The Washington Post four months later, he did not back off those views.

In 2015, amid a serious measles outbreak, Murthy urged parents to have their children vaccinated, adding his voice to the

chorus trying to counter the small-but-burgeoning anti-vaccination movement. "The most important message I have is to please, please, please get your child vaccinated," he said at the time. Later that year, he called for a walking campaign to combat chronic disease and obesity.

Sometimes known as the "nation's doctor," the surgeon general has little power beyond the ability to call attention to serious public health problems and to offer data and solutions. He or she oversees the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, more than 6,600 uniformed public health care personnel who work in various parts of the federal government. Some worked on the recent Zika and Ebola crises.

Murthy had nearly two years left on his four-year term as surgeon general. The news release said he was asked to resign, then was relieved of his duties.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Deputies: School nurse stole student's meds

SC TAYLORS — Authorities said a middle school nurse in South Carolina was arrested after she allegedly stole medicine that was supposed to be given to a student.

Greenville County deputies told media outlets that the principal at Northwood Middle School in Taylors asked for the investigation.

Investigators say they found one student had many fewer pills than expected and also found nurse Dawn McGill, 37, forged a document to try to hide the theft.

McGill is charged with forgery and theft of a controlled substance. School officials said she resigned Friday about the time she was arrested.

Police: Car kills owner in apparent accident

NM LASCRUCES — Las Cruces police said a 62-year-old woman died after being struck and pinned under her own car in what appears to be an accident.

Police said investigators believe Jill Thompson mistakenly started the car while the automatic transmission was in reverse instead of park and then was struck as the car drove in reverse while she was opening gates at the end of her driveway Thursday.

A relative found Thompson under the car after becoming concerned when she heard the car's engine running.

Slain dog could hold clues in couple's killing

OH CLEVELAND — Investigators say a slain dog could hold clues to the shooting deaths at a Cleveland

car dealership of the couple who owned the business.

Investigators haven't made any arrests in the deaths of Michael Kuznik and Trina Tomola, who were found April 14 by their 19-year-old son. They had been shot in the head.

Cleveland.com reported that Cleveland police detectives have asked the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's office to swab the dog's mouth for forensic evidence.

Detective said they believe the dog, named Axel, may have bitten a robber and its mouth might contain DNA of the suspect.

Police said the robbers stole at least two cars along with surveillance equipment and computers containing records of business purchases.

NTSB: Pilots in crash didn't know of closure

CO DENVER — Two pilots who crashed a jet into a snowplow while landing at Telluride's airport during a winter storm told investigators they didn't know the airport was closed.

The Denver Post reported Friday the pilots said air traffic controllers never informed them of the closure as they were cleared to approach the runway. No one was hurt when the Hawker Beechjet 400 — registered in Mexico and carrying five passengers and two crew — hit the plow at 100 mph in December 2015.

The National Transportation Safety Board said the airport operator entered a computer notice that the airport was closed at 1:50 p.m. Eight minutes later, an air traffic controller cleared the plane for approach.

The pilots, however, didn't change their radio frequency to the airport's common traffic advisory frequency, which is recommended by the NTSB.

Man convicted in fatal fight over gumbo spices

FL PANAMA CITY — A man charged with fatally stabbing a Florida restaurant worker and former Florida State University mascot in a fight over gumbo spices has been found guilty of second-degree murder.

Orlando Thompson was found guilty Thursday in the 2015 death. He faces up to life in prison.

Panama City police said Halley, 33, was working at Buddy's Seafood Market when he and Thompson, 26, a co-worker, began arguing about how much spice to add to the restaurant's gumbo. Authorities said Thompson slashed Halley across the torso. He died two days later.

4 ex-officers accused of attacking inmate

MO KANSAS CITY — Four former corrections officers at a jail in Missouri's Jackson County are accused in a federal indictment of assaulting a shackled inmate, violating his civil rights.

The four-count indictment unsealed Friday in Kansas City accuses Terrance Dooley Jr., Jen-I Pulos, Travis Hewitt and Dakota Pearce.

The indictment said Hewitt and Pearce were Jackson County Detention Center sergeants while Dooley and Pulos were on a team that intervenes in inmate altercations and neutralizes threats.

The indictment alleges the four carried out a planned attack on an inmate in retaliation for his altercation with another officer.

The indictment said the inmate was handcuffed, shackled and confined when punched and struck.

Man gets 18 years for shooting romantic rival

TX NEW BOSTON — Authorities said a northeastern Texas man who shot a romantic rival in the back, then drove the victim to a hospital, must serve 18 years in prison.

Barry Kendall Green, 35, of Simms was sentenced Thursday in New Boston. Green earlier pleaded guilty to assault causing serious bodily injury.

Green sought probation over last September's attack on Michael Brad Hooks, 40.

Prosecutors said Green argued with a woman he dated and she threatened to resume a relationship with Hooks, prompting Green to say he'd make sure that wouldn't happen.

Bowie County sheriff's investigators said Green told them he grabbed a shotgun, drove to Hooks' home, shot the victim and then took him to a hospital.

Principal sorry for racially tinged email

FL ST. PETERSBURG — The new principal of a predominantly black elementary school apologized after emailing her staff that white students should be in the same class.

Christine Hoffman sent the email last week to the staff at Campbell Park Elementary School. According to the Tampa Bay Times, Christine Hoffman was setting criteria for setting up classes for next year. Of the school's 606 students, 49 are white.

Hoffman sent emails and letters to her staff and parents apologizing, saying she will learn from her mistake. The Pinellas County School District said it is developing a corrective plan for Hoffman. The NAACP called the email baffling.

From wire reports

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Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Point of focus

Associated Press

Anytime Connor McDavid, Alex Ovechkin or Sidney Crosby goes over the boards, everyone in the arena is watching and waiting for something special to happen.

From the opposing bench, tireless efforts have gone into preventing that.

Nothing gets more attention in the Stanley Cup playoffs than a superstar, from the likes of McDavid, Ovechkin and Crosby to rookie of the year front-runner Auston Matthews and game-changing defensemen Erik Karlsson and Brent Burns. Slowing them down takes days of preparation and scouting.

"Those guys are difference-makers in the game," said coach Peter DeBoer, whose San Jose Sharks have held McDavid of the Edmonton Oilers to three points in five games. "When you look at the analytics and the percentage of the offense he's involved with with their team, it's something you'd be crazy not to pay attention to."

There's a reason lesser-known players Zack Kassian, Bobby Ryan, Jaden Schwartz and Jake Guentzel lead the playoffs in game-winning goals with so much attention devoted to bottling up and frustrating the stars.

"Everybody probably more focused in the D-zone and everywhere and try to be smart all three zones. Nobody wants to lose," Washington Capitals defenseman Dmitry Orlov said. "Just kind of simple things defensively, but it's not always easy to do."

Hockey is considered the ultimate team sport because it's more difficult for a single player to make a significant impact than in other sports, but the process of stopping him is more complex. Columbus coach John Tortorella said "you can't map it out like football where you have a 3-4 defense" and Capitals defenseman Matt Niskanen said it's not realistic to try something like a box and one in basketball.

Taking away a player's "time and space" is a time-honored hockey cliché, but it's also the best way to contain a star.

"Good players, if they have space, they're going to pick you part," Niskanen said. "The quicker you can get on him and force him to make good plays under heavy pressure, I think that's your best chance of negating his creativity and his ability to operate."

In Game 1 of Washington's series against the Toronto Maple Leafs, Jay Beagle seemed at times almost glued to Matthews. Sharks center Logan Couture, an elite talent in his own right, is meanwhile always trying to stay in front of McDavid in the neutral zone to negate the team captain's speed. Couture also knows he has to take part in battles on the boards and mind the transition attack from Edmonton, even when he's on offense.

"You're putting yourself in defensive spots first," Couture said. "Even if it's in the O-zone, you want to be above him because he is so quick and he's got that extra step. If you can get above him and try to slow him down it only helps us."

Maple Leafs forward Eric Fehr, who played a shutdown role during the Pittsburgh Penguins' Stanley Cup run last spring, said defending an elite talent means being laser focused no matter where the puck is.

"It's a game inside the game," he said. "When you're playing against the same guy the whole series, every game, you start to get a little 1-on-1 rivalry. You just try to do your best to wear him out and make sure that every shift is difficult for him."

The work to stop a star begins well before he takes a shot on net. Like the Sharks with McDavid, Maple Leafs defenseman Matt Hunwick said, slowing down top players in the neutral zone is essential because once they cross the blue line they can crisscross, change lanes and become dangerous — evading even the best-designed coverages.

"Just be cognizant of where they're at," Hunwick said. "You have to know exactly where those guys are because the top goal-scorers in the league, somehow they seem to get lost sometimes."

Oilers advance with victory over San Jose

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — After more than a decadelong playoff drought in Edmonton, the Oilers are in no hurry to leave the NHL's postseason party.

Leon Draisaitl and Anton Slepyshev scored on breakaways in the opening minutes of the second period as the Oilers advanced to the second round of the playoffs with a 3-1 victory in Game 6 over the San Jose Sharks on Saturday.

"I think we're a little bit more mature than people give us credit for and I think we showed that tonight," said captain Connor McDavid, who sealed the

game with an empty-net goal in the final second.

The three goal scorers in the clincher are among the nine skaters on the Oilers who are younger than 25 and had been almost entirely untested in the rigors of the postseason.

But they managed to bounce back from a blown lead and overtime loss in Game 1 and a 7-0 shellacking in Game 4 to beat a veteran team that had gone all the way to the Stanley Cup Final a year ago.

"We were anxious. I'm not going to lie to you," coach Todd McLellan said. "There were lessons learned for us."

Rangers, Blues move on to second round

Associated Press

NEW YORK — After pulling out a tough first-round series with three straight wins, the New York Rangers get a couple days to regroup for the next round.

It's a routine they know well.

Mats Zuccarello scored twice and the Rangers beat the Montreal Canadiens 3-1 in Game 6 on Saturday night to advance to the Eastern Conference semifinals. New York will face the winner of the Ottawa-Boston series, which the Senators lead 3-2.

A year ago, the Rangers were bounced out of the first round by Pittsburgh, which went on to win the Stanley Cup. Now, they're on to the second round for the fifth time in six years.

Getting there this time wasn't easy.

The Rangers were on the verge of taking a 2-0 series lead before Tomas Plekanec tied it for the Canadiens with less than 18 seconds left in Game 2 and Alexander Radulov won it midway through overtime. Then, New York struggled to generate many chances in Game 3, and a 3-1 loss put Montreal up 2-1.

That was the Rangers' sixth straight home loss in the postseason, and critics questioned if their struggles at Madison Square Garden — they lost eight straight (0-5-3) on home ice down the stretch in the regular season before winning the final two home games — would doom them.

Instead, they responded with three wins in five days, including Games 4 and 6 at home.

Blues 4, Wild 3 (OT): Magnus Paajarvi scored at the 9:42 mark in overtime, giving St. Louis a victory over host Minnesota in Game 5 of their playoff series, eliminating the Wild in the first round following the best season in franchise history.

The Blues advanced to play Nashville in the second round, with Game 1 against the Predators at home in St. Louis.

Jake Allen made 34 saves for the Blues, who led 2-0 and 3-1 before a furious rally by the Wild to try to keep their season alive forced the extra frame.

Paajarvi's first career playoff goal gave Blues coach Mike Yeo the satisfaction of beating the team that fired him a little over a year ago.

Hawks rout Washington

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Hawks are back in the series, and the bad blood with the Washington Wizards shows no signs of letting up.

Paul Millsap scored 29 points, Dennis Schroder had 27 and Atlanta delivered an early knockout blow in a 116-98 victory Saturday, slicing the Wizards' lead to 2-1 in the opening-round playoff matchup.

After two tight losses in Washington exposed plenty of ill will between the teams, Millsap and Washington's Markieff Morris continued to go at it in Game 3.

"He's a crybaby," Morris said afterward. "You get all the calls when you're a crybaby. That's how it went tonight."

Those comments were quickly relayed to Millsap at the post-game news conference.

"It definitely got personal now," he replied, before offering Morris some unsolicited advice: "Take his loss and go back to the hotel, be ready for the next game."

Cheered on by a raucous home crowd, the Hawks built a 25-point lead by late in the first quarter and were never seriously challenged by the Wizards.

John Wall kept up his dazzling play in the series, scoring 29 points, but he was essentially a one-man team. The other Washington starters combined to score 30 points on 14 of 45 shooting.

Bradley Beal, in particular, had a miserable night after averaging 26.5 points in the first two games. He was held to 12 points on 6-for-20 shooting, missing all six of his attempts beyond the arc.

"That's probably the most I've ever seen him air-ball in one game," Wall said. "He'll figure it out."

Game 4 is Monday night in Atlanta.

"They jumped on us in that first period," Wizards coach Scott Brooks said. "Their sense of urgency was very high. I wouldn't say we came out relaxed, but we came out missing shots, and we let that affect our defense."

Gasol lifts Grizzlies

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Grizzlies guard Mike Conley said he was an option to take the final shot and that the San Antonio Spurs thought so, too, on a night when he scored a franchise postseason record 35 points.

Marc Gasol laughed and insisted he didn't know his teammate was an alternative on the game-winning play. Zach Randolph backed up his All-Star center, too.

"He told me he was going to get it and go to his fadeaway, and that's what he did," Randolph said.

Gasol hit a 12-foot floater with 0.7 seconds left in overtime, and the Grizzlies beat the Spurs 110-108 on Saturday night to even up their Western Conference first-round series at 2-2.

The Grizzlies won despite blowing a 10-point lead with 7:38 left in regulation and franchise postseason-high 23 turnovers that San Antonio turned into 31 points.

Gasol finished with 16

points after shooting 5-for-12 for the game. He also had 12 rebounds.

The Grizzlies overcame another postseason personal best from Kawhi Leonard, who had 43 points. He rallied the Spurs by scoring the last 16 points of regulation, but missed a 21-footer short of the rim with James Ennis defending him just before the buzzer ending regulation. Leonard also tied it at 108 with 17 seconds left in overtime with a three from the left corner.

"That was great game," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "Both teams played their hearts out. Just a fantastic basketball game. The fans got their money's worth tonight for sure. At the end, Marc made a great shot. L.A. (LaMarcus Aldridge) contested it very, very well, and it went down."

Game 5 is Tuesday night in San Antonio. Conley also had eight assists and nine rebounds. Randolph added 12 points and 11 rebounds.

Golden State rallies to win

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Stephen Curry wasn't trying to be a hero. He just wanted the win.

Curry scored 34 points — including a three-pointer with just about a minute left that all but sealed the victory — and the Golden State Warriors overcame a slow start to beat the Portland Trail Blazers 119-113 and take a 3-0 lead in their first-round playoff series.

Playing without both Kevin Durant and coach Steve Kerr, the Warriors came back Saturday night from a first-half 17-point deficit. Golden State can clinch the series with a win Monday night in Game 4 at the Moda Center.

"It's not necessarily 'hero ball'; it's being aggressive in those spots that you have," Curry said. "You might need to force the issue. That might mean taking a shot, it could be trying to get your feet in the paint and make a play, defensively trying to assert yourself — whatever the game calls for, getting ready for those moments."

Klay Thompson added 24 points in the victory, which Curry said was marked by a handful of "boneheaded mistakes" in the first half. A 19-1 run in the third quarter brought the Warriors back.

Afterward, Curry said he gave the game ball to general manager Bob Myers to give to Kerr, who stayed back at the team hotel because of illness.

The Warriors took a 108-100 lead, their biggest of the game, after Andre Iguodala's dunk with 4:05 to go.

Noah Vonleh's dunk got Portland within four at 110-106 with 1:29 left, but Curry answered with his three-pointer sent fans streaming for the exits.

CJ McCollum led the Blazers with 32 points, while Damian Lillard added 31. No team has ever come back from a 3-0 deficit in the playoffs.

"I don't think it's ever been done, coming back from 3-0, especially against a team like Golden State," Lillard said afterward. "But I'm sure a lot of you guys know I'm not one to quit and I'm very optimistic."

Raptors even series

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — DeMar DeRozan reverted back to his playmaking form. The Toronto Raptors reasserted themselves on defense.

They're headed back to Canada after winning a bruiser of a first-round game on Saturday over the Milwaukee Bucks.

DeRozan scored 33 points, and Kyle Lowry had 14 of his 18 points in the second half of Toronto's 87-76 victory to tie the Eastern Conference series at two games apiece.

The Raptors turned up their intensity before a hostile road crowd after getting embarrassed in a 27-point loss to Milwaukee in Game 3. They forced 21 turnovers.

"I've always said we play better with our backs against the wall," coach Dwane Casey said. "It's a tough way to live, but I love our team's resilience and personality."

Toronto reclaimed home-court advantage in the best-of-seven series. Game 5 is Monday at the Air Canada Centre.

Tony Snell led Milwaukee with 19 points, including five three-pointers, both playoff career highs.

His three with 3:14 left got the Bucks within seven. Lowry answered with a bucket before setting up another basket with a drive-and-dish to center Jonas Valanciunas for a layup in traffic.

While Toronto's star guards produced in the clutch, the defense threw up roadblocks after the Bucks ran roughshod all over the court on Thursday.

Milwaukee shot 37 percent overall in Game 4, but 31 percent (13-for-42) in the second half.

"Our tempo was extremely slow," coach Jason Kidd said. "Give [Toronto] credit, they slowed us down."

Report: Kerr out for rest of round

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Steve Kerr didn't coach the Golden State Warriors in Game 3 of their playoff series Saturday because of an illness, and according to one report the coach will miss the rest of the first round.

The reigning NBA Coach of the Year missed the morning shootaround, and the team announced about three hours before the game against the Portland Trail Blazers that Kerr would not be on the sidelines. Top assistant Mike Brown was acting head coach in Kerr's place.

The San Jose Mercury News reported Kerr was not expected back for the remainder of the team's series against Portland.

The Warriors went into the game with a 2-0 advantage over the Blazers in the first-round series.

The Warriors practiced in Oakland on Friday before flying to Portland, and Kerr clearly wasn't feeling well then.

The 51-year-old still experiences lingering symptoms from complications following two back surgeries after the franchise's run to the 2015 championship. He missed the first 43 games last season dealing with symptoms such as headaches, nausea and an aching neck. He hadn't missed a game this season, though he did miss two shootarounds.

Despite his prolonged absence, the Warriors went 73-9 last season and played in the NBA championship game. Kerr was named Coach of the Year.

Carter, Yanks get to Pirates

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Chris Carter spent most of the winter waiting for the phone to ring and a good portion of the spring waiting for the power that produced 41 home runs with Milwaukee last season to show up for the New York Yankees.

With one swing of the bat on Saturday, that power was finally on display. Carter delivered a pinch-hit, three-run homer in the eighth inning off reliever Felipe Rivero to lift the Yankees to an 11-5 win over the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Despite tying for the National League lead in home runs in 2016, Carter languished on the free-agent market and didn't sign with New York until mid-February. The transition from starter to platoon player has been bumpy. Carter stepped to the plate in the eighth hitting .148 on the season with no homers and just one extra-base hit.

That number doubled when Carter sent an 86 mph changeup from Rivero (1-1) beyond the center-field fence to put New York up to stay.

"This is right up there," Carter said. "First time with the Yankees. Big situation. We needed it late in the game and I'm happy to come through when we needed it."

Starlin Castro added a three-run shot of his own and Aaron Judge hit his team-high sixth home run for New York, a 457-foot blast in the ninth. Ronald Torreyes had four hits and two RBIs.

Dellin Betances (2-1) earned the win in relief, stranding a runner at third in the seventh to preserve a tie before New York took advantage of some sloppy Pittsburgh defense in the eighth.

Tigers 5, Twins 4: Twins slugger Miguel Sano punched Tigers catcher James McCann in the mask during a bench-clearing scrap in the fifth inning of visting Detroit's win.

Cubs 12, Reds 8: Willson Contreras hit his first career grand slam and Anthony Rizzo and Jason Heyward each added a three-run shot to power visiting Chicago past Cincinnati.

Nationals 3, Mets 1: Gio Gonzalez pitched no-hit ball into the sixth inning to win again at Citi Field as Washington beat host New York for its sixth straight victory.

Athletics 4, Mariners 3: Adam Rosales and Ryon Healy each homered in the first inning while Jharel Cotton pitched six innings of two-run ball as host Oakland earned its fifth straight win.

Rays 6, Astros 3: Tim Beckham's third straight hit came during a four-run sixth inning that helped carry host Tampa Bay over AL West-leading Houston.

Beckham, who tripled and singled in two at-bats against starter Charlie Morton (1-2), drove in a run with his single in the sixth off reliever Will Harris. Evan Longoria had a two-run double for the Rays, who have won four of five.

Orioles 4, Red Sox 2: Trey Mancini and Jonathan Schoop homered in succession off knuckleballer Steven Wright while Jayson Aquino won his first big league start as Baltimore beat Boston for its fourth straight victory.

Phillies 4, Braves 3 (10): Maikel Franco hit a two-run single with two outs in the bottom of the 10th inning to lift Philadelphia over Atlanta.

Adonis Garcia's infield single drove in the go-ahead run in the top of the 10th after Brandon Phillips hit a tying solo homer off Edubray Ramos with two outs in the ninth, but Philadelphia rallied against Jim Johnson (2-1).

Indians 7, White Sox 0: Carlos Carrasco pitched eight innings of three-hit ball, helping Cleveland shut out host Chicago for the second straight night.

Carrasco (2-1) struck out eight and did not allow a runner to reach second base.

Cardinals 4, Brewers 1: Pinch-hitter Aledmys Diaz delivered a go-ahead homer in the seventh and Lance Lynn pitched six strong innings as St. Louis defeated host Milwaukee.

Rangers 2, Royals 1: Elvis Andrus hit an RBI single with one out in the ninth inning as

host Texas topped Kansas City.

Rougned Odor led off the ninth with a sharp single off Travis Wood (0-2), who didn't face another batter before Peter Moylan took over. After Odor stole second base, Andrus hit a sharp single to left field.

Diamondbacks 11, Dodgers 5: Yasmany Tomas homered twice and David Peralta hit a team-record four doubles to lead host Arizona over Los Angeles.

Chris Herrmann and Jake Lamb each hit a two-run homer for the Diamondbacks. Peralta scored three times and Tomas drove in his third run by drawing a bases-loaded walk as part of a three-run seventh inning.

Rockies 12, Giants 3: Antonio Senzatela got his third win in four major league starts while Trevor Story homered for the second straight night as host Colorado beat San Francisco.

Charlie Blackmon tripled and homered and Mark Reynolds also went deep for the Rockies, who have won five of six.

Giants center fielder Denard Span left the game after crashing into the wall shoulder-first while catching Blackmon's deep drive for the final out of the second. The team said Span has a mild shoulder sprain and was scheduled for X-rays.

Marlins 6, Padres 3 (11): Dee Gordon scored on his own swinging bunt in a crazy play during the 11th inning and Giancarlo Stanton homered twice as visiting Miami beat San Diego.

The Marlins went ahead 4-2 with no outs in the 11th thanks to San Diego's sloppy defense. With Justin Bour aboard on a pinch-hit single, reliever Jose Torres (1-1) fielded Gordon's dribbler and threw it away, with the ball rolling all the way into the right-field corner to allow Bour to score. Hunter Renfroe had difficulty picking up the ball, allowing Gordon to sprint home.

Angels 5, Blue Jays 4: Andrelton Simmons hit a tie-breaking grand slam and Tyler Skaggs pitched into the eighth inning as host Los Angeles held off Toronto.