

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Trump now vaguer on possible Syria strike

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Thursday that an attack on Syria could take place “very soon or not so soon at all,” arguing he had never signaled the timing of retaliation for a suspected chemical weapons attack that he had suggested was imminent a day earlier.

The president made his latest statement in a tweet Thursday morning. Trump on Wednesday had warned Russia to “get ready” for a missile attack on its ally Syria. But on Thursday, Trump tweeted: “Never said when an attack on Syria would take place.”

At stake in Syria is the potential for confrontation, if not outright conflict, between the U.S. and Russia, former Cold War foes whose relations have deteriorated in recent years over Moscow’s intervention in Ukraine, its interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and, most recently, its support for Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Russian lawmakers have warned the U.S. that Moscow would view an airstrike on Syria as a war crime and that it could trigger a direct U.S.-Russian military clash. Russia’s ambassador to Lebanon said any missiles fired at Syria would be shot down and the launching sites targeted — a stark warning of a potential major confrontation.

Trump, who has often said a commander in chief should never telegraph his military intentions, apparently did so himself, tweeting that missiles “will be coming” in response to the suspected chemical attack that killed at least 40 people near Damascus.

“Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria,” Trump wrote. “Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and ‘smart!’ You shouldn’t be partners with a Gas Killing Animal who kills his people and enjoys it!”

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, however, indicated Wednesday that evidence of what happened was still being studied.

Trump suggested Monday he had little doubt that Syria was to blame, but neither he nor other administration officials have produced hard evidence. This is in contrast to an incident one year ago in which the U.S. government had video and other evidence of certain aspects of an actual attack by Syrian aircraft, which involved the use of sarin gas. Trump responded then by launching dozens of Navy cruise missiles at a Syrian airfield.

In the past, Trump has condemned others for forecasting military plans, repeatedly blistering President Barack Obama during the 2016 campaign. During one speech, he said, “We must as a nation be more unpredictable. We are totally predictable. We tell everything.”

Asked about Trump’s tweet about an impending attack on Syria, former Defense Secretary William Cohen, who ran the Pentagon for President Bill Clinton, said on CNN that it “compromises the mission somewhat.”

## Mattis to lawmakers: Syrian atrocities have ‘got to end’

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Jim Mattis on Thursday railed against the recent chemical weapons attack in Syria, but he stopped short of detailing a potential U.S. response and said no decision on a strike had been reached yet.

Mattis, who made the comments as he testified before a House panel, appeared on Capitol Hill for the first time since a chemical attack in Syria left more than 40 dead and fueled talk of a U.S.-led strike against Syrian President Bashar Assad’s regime.

Mattis told the House Armed Services Committee that the U.S. role in Syria has not changed: defeat Islamic State and not engage in the country’s seven-year civil war. However,

there have been “contrary impulses,” he said, such as last year’s U.S. missile strikes in Syria in response to a chemical attack and now recent discussions for another strike for the same reason.

But for now, President Donald Trump hasn’t reached a decision on a strike despite his tweets to the contrary, Mattis said.

“Some things are simply inexcusable, beyond the pale and in the worst interest of not just the chemical weapons conventions but of civilization itself. So the recognition of that means at times you are going to see contrary impulses,” Mattis told lawmakers. “I’ve never seen refugees as traumatized as coming out of Syria. It’s got to end and our strategy remains the same as a year ago. It is to

drive this to a U.N.-brokered peace but at the same time keep our foot on the neck of ISIS until we suffocate it.”

Thursday’s hearing, which included Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was slated to discuss the Pentagon’s 2019 budget request, but was heavily focused on Syria. Mattis stopped short of detailing any plans by the U.S. or its allies to respond to Syria’s April 7 chemical weapons attack, even as Trump on Wednesday warned Russia through Twitter to “get ready” for the U.S. attack on Syria.

On Thursday, Trump followed up that threat by saying it could happen “very soon or not soon at all.” Trump, who was slated to meet with Mattis and other national security

advisers later Thursday about Syria, later said the decision could be made “fairly soon.”

“We have not yet made any decision to launch military attacks into Syria,” Mattis told Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Hawaii.

Mattis added he didn’t want to speculate about such an attack “not yet in the offing” especially as the president had not yet made a decision and coordination with allies could be needed.

“I don’t want to get into the details of a potential decision by the commander in chief,” Mattis told Rep. Niki Tsongas, D-Mass. “Our strategy is to engage by, with and through allies in all things we do. ... I owe confidentiality to our allies due to the sensitive nature of military operations.”

## UK opens Persian Gulf military base in Bahrain

Associated Press

MANAMA, Bahrain — Britain opened its first permanent military base in the Middle East in more than four decades on Thursday in the Persian Gulf country of Bahrain, giving the U.K. an expansive presence along key shipping routes.

The UK Naval Support Facility can house up to about 500 Royal Navy personnel, including sailors, soldiers and airmen, in a region where maritime security ensures oil shipments and goods make it from Asia to Europe. British officials have described it as the first permanent British base east of the Suez Canal since 1971.

Bahrain, located off the coast of Saudi Arabia and just west of its rival Iran, also plays host to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet.

The new British hub makes it easier for the Royal Navy to conduct longer-term deployments in the Persian Gulf and will offer engineering and logistical support for ships. The facility includes sleeping accommodations, sport facilities and recreational areas for troops.

## Calif. to join Guard border effort

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California Gov. Jerry Brown accepted President Donald Trump's call to send the National Guard to the Mexican border, but rejected the White House's portrait of a burgeoning border crisis and insisted that his troops will have nothing to do with immigration enforcement.

The Democratic governor broke a week of silence Wednesday by agreeing to contribute 400 troops, though not all will be on the border. Brown's commitment brought the pledges from four states that border Mexico to just shy of the low end of the president's target of 2,000 to 4,000 troops.

Trump praised Brown on Twitter on Thursday, but did not address the governor's comments on immigration. The president said Brown was "doing the right thing and sending the National Guard to the Border. Thank you Jerry, good move for the safety of our Country!"

Brown cast his decision as a welcome infusion of federal support to fight transnational criminal gangs and drug and firearms smugglers.

"Combating these criminal threats are priorities for all Americans - Republicans and Democrats," Brown wrote in a letter to Defense Secretary James Mattis and Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen.

Federal law, notably the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, sharply limits military involvement in civilian law enforcement, creating a supporting role for the Guard. The Pentagon said last week that troops won't perform law enforcement functions or interact with people detained by border authorities without its approval.

Brown released a proposed agreement with the federal government that emphasizes the

widely shared understanding of the Guard's limited role but explicitly bans any support of immigration enforcement. It says troops cannot guard anyone in custody for immigration violations nor participate in construction of border barriers.

The White House praised Brown's decision without addressing his comments on immigration enforcement.

"We're also glad to see California Gov. Jerry Brown work with the administration and send members of the National Guard to help secure the southern border," said White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders.

Reaction in California was limited, with few of Brown's allies or opponents weighing in.

State Sen. Kevin de Leon, a Democratic U.S. Senate candidate and author of California's so-called sanctuary state law, said Guard deployment was unnecessary and not a good use of resources. But he said more can be done to combat border crime and that he appreciated Brown's design of "a clear and limited mission focused on real public safety threats."

"I am confident Governor Brown will not use our National Guard to harass or tear apart immigrant families in California," he said in a statement.

Rob Stutzman, who advised former Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, praised the decision on Twitter, calling Brown's decision to accept money for using the Guard to fight drugs and human trafficking "good government."

Immigration advocacy groups were critical, saying Brown's support was a boost for Trump's agenda. Lillian Serrano, chair of the San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium, acknowledged the governor's proposed limits on the Guard's role but said his decision reflected "flawed logic that we need more boots on the ground."

## UK warship in Japan to enforce N. Korea sanctions

BY TYLER HLAVAC

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A British Royal Navy warship arrived in Yokosuka this week to help enforce sanctions against North Korea and to support free navigation in the region.

The frigate HMS Sutherland — the first of three warships England plans to deploy to northeast Asia — pulled into port Wednesday. The vessels will "safeguard free trade, partake in joint training and exercises, and support UN sanctions against [North Korea]," said

a statement from the nation's Ministry of Defence.

"The deployment of HMS Albion, Sutherland and Argyll demonstrates our unwavering commitment to our international responsibilities and to maintaining peace, security and prosperity in the region," Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson said in the statement. "Until North Korea matches its words with concrete actions, the UK will continue working closely with partners and allies to keep up pressure and strictly enforce existing sanctions."

Sutherland captain Cmdr. Andrew Canale told Stars and

Stripes on Thursday that trade issues in the region also led his navy to increase its presence in the region.

"I think you could look at the Royal Navy's presence in the Pacific in the last 20 years and say there's been very little," he said. "Ever since the UK moved away from Hong Kong, our presence in this part of the world has been less. However, navies move where a country's interest lie, and there is no denying this part of the world is increasing in importance in terms of the bulk volume of UK trade."

Canale said his ship special-

izes in anti-submarine warfare and boasts a crew of more than 200 personnel. He added that the ship, which left its homeport in January, plans to conduct maintenance in Yokosuka before training alongside the U.S., South Korea and Japan.

Williamson announced in February that the Sutherland would transit the South China Sea to assert freedom-of-navigation rights, but did not say whether the British warship would travel within 12 nautical miles of a disputed territory of artificial island built by the Chinese, as U.S. warships have done.

# Searchers find cruiser sunk during WWII

By WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

In the early morning of July 6, 1943, the USS Helena lit up the darkness as its crew unleashed the ship's array of guns at 10 Japanese vessels during the Battle of Kula Gulf near the Solomon Islands.

But it would be the end of the line for the St. Louis-class cruiser, which had been nearly destroyed at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

"At 2:40 a.m., a tremendous explosion hit the HELENA as the first torpedo found its mark, completely tearing off the ship's bow," Frank Cellozzi, a gunner's mate on the ship, recalled in a 1984 memoir. "Twenty seconds later, the second hit amidships. Almost immediately, the third hit amidships. The HELENA died at 2:41 a.m., her back broken amidships."

The captain ordered the crew to abandon ship, and Cellozzi cleared the ship by diving off the top of a 5-foot gun turret. Turning his head for one last look, he saw the bow and stern rising toward each other in the shape of a V.

"With the grinding and rumbling of torn metal, she slid

straight into the dark depths of the Kula Gulf," he wrote.

The Helena lay there undisturbed for 75 years until late last month, when an expedition aboard the research vessel Petrel discovered and filmed the lost ship. It was found about a half-mile below the surface on the floor of the New Georgia Sound off the coast of the Solomon Islands.

The discovery was announced Wednesday by Paul Allen, the billionaire co-founder of Microsoft and owner of the Petrel.

"We do these missions as testament to the brave souls who served on these ships," Robert Kraft, director of subsea operations for Allen, said in a statement. "Each ship has a story that touches families and friends of those who perished or survived."

The Helena had taken a terrible beating at Pearl Harbor. Just as the crew reached their battle stations, a Japanese torpedo slammed into the side of the ship, leading to flooding of an engine room and boiler room. But the ship was kept afloat, and by the following year it had been repaired and was escorting an aircraft carrier bringing planes

to the South Pacific.

In October 1942 at the Battle of Cape Esperance near Guadalcanal, the crew of the Helena sank the Japanese cruiser Furutaka and destroyer Fubuki.

On July 6, 1943, the Helena was among a group of three American cruisers and four destroyers that squared off against 10 Japanese ships. Within 10 minutes of the opening fire, the Helena had been mortally hit by the torpedoes.

"For the next hour, close to one thousand men bobbed in the water, praying to be rescued," Cellozzi recalled.

Within a half-hour of the sinking, two U.S. destroyers arrived at the scene to begin plucking hundreds of Helena survivors out of the sea. But at daybreak, the ships broke away to pursue enemy vessels.

About 275 survivors made their way onto small boats left at the scene by the destroyers, and the ragtag flotilla quickly made its way to a nearby island. Those sailors were rescued the next day.

A second group of 200 sailors had a rougher time of it.

They had clung to the slowly sinking bow of the Helena before a Navy Liberator bomber

dropped lifejackets and four rubber lifeboats to them.

Cellozzi was among those sailors.

"In the afternoon, we broke out some food supplies — Spam, malted milk balls and Lucky Strike cigarettes," he wrote.

After drifting and paddling for days, the 165 sailors still alive reached the island of Vella Lavella.

"By this time our eyes were swollen almost closed from the sun and our lips were festered from the saltwater," Cellozzi wrote.

"Our raft became impaled on a coral reef about 400 feet from the beach. We had lost our shoes many days before; we walked barefoot over the coral reef, knee deep in saltwater, to get to the beach. We watched our blood rising to the surface as the razor sharp rocks cut through our skin like knives. It took almost an hour to cover that 400 feet."

On July 16 — 10 days after their ship had sunk — the Helena sailors on the island were rescued during the night by four U.S. destroyers.

Of the nearly 900 crew aboard the Helena, 730 survived the ordeal.

## China announces live-fire drills in Taiwan Strait

*Associated Press*

BEIJING — China on Thursday announced live-firing military exercises in the Taiwan Strait amid heightened tensions over increased American support for Taiwan's government.

The announcement by the maritime safety authority in the coastal province of Fujian coincided with a statement from their counterparts in Hainan province that the navy was ending a three-day exercise in the South China Sea one day early.

No explanations were given in either case and the Defense Ministry did not immediately respond to questions. The Fujian authorities said the one-day Taiwan Strait drill will be held next Wednesday.

While Beijing responded mildly to U.S. President Donald Trump's early outreach to Taiwan's independence-leaning government, recent developments have prompted a tougher response. China claims Taiwan, which separated from the mainland dur-

ing the Chinese civil war in 1949, as its own territory and says the sides eventually must be united, by force if necessary.

Despite the lack of formal ties, Washington is legally bound to respond to threats to Taiwan and is the island's main supplier of imported military hardware.

Chinese officials have denounced the recent passage of a U.S. law encouraging more high-level contacts with Taiwan. China says the Taiwan Travel Act violates U.S. commitments not to restore formal exchanges severed when Washington switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979.

An agreement to pass Taiwan submarine manufacturing technology and the appointment of hawkish National Security Adviser John Bolton also have hardened views among anti-American nationalists in China.

Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office on Wednesday warned against addition-

al moves to strengthen relations with Taiwan.

"Any attempt to play the 'Taiwan card' would only be futile," spokesman Ma Xiaoguang said. China, Ma said, would "not hesitate to protect our core interests."

That came after President Xi Jinping last month delivered a strongly nationalistic speech in which he vowed to protect "every inch" of China's territory. "All acts and tricks to split the motherland are doomed to failure and will be condemned by the people and punished by history!" Xi said.

China also has stepped up air force missions in airspace around Taiwan and repeatedly has sailed its sole operating aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, through the 100-mile-wide Taiwan Strait.

The just-completed naval drills off Hainan underscored China's growing capabilities in defending its maritime interests and territorial claims, particularly in the disputed South China Sea.

## Trump blames his myriad challenges on conspiracies

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Russia collusion probe. The Stormy Daniels allegations. Escalating tension with Moscow.

The tempests that have buffeted the White House for months merged into a maelstrom this week and threatened to engulf President Donald Trump, who on Wednesday railed against members of the Justice Department and used Twitter to threaten military strikes in Syria and taunt a nuclear-armed power.

While alarmed aides and allies worried that Trump was the angriest he'd ever been, the president saw conspiracies in the challenges facing his administration and hinted at more chaos. And as Trump's party was rocked by upheaval on Capitol Hill, White House staffers explored whether he has the legal authority to fire the men leading the investigation into

his administration and, as underscored by the seizure of documents from his private lawyer, his business and personal life.

Trump pushed back Thursday on reports of disarray, insisted he did not consider firing special counsel Robert Mueller in December. The president denied a report in The New York Times, saying: "If I wanted to fire Robert Mueller in December, as reported by the Failing New York Times, I would have fired him. Just more Fake News from a biased newspaper!"

On Wednesday, Trump tweeted, "Much of the bad blood with Russia is caused by the Fake & Corrupt Russia Investigation, headed up by the all Democrat loyalists, or people that worked for Obama. Mueller is most conflicted of all (except Rosenstein who signed FISA & Comey letter). No Collusion, so they go crazy!"

## Scalise says he won't run against McCarthy

WASHINGTON — It was the race that wasn't.

House Majority Whip Steve Scalise on Thursday threw his support behind House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy to succeed Speaker Paul Ryan as the House GOP leader.

"I've never run against Kevin, and wouldn't run against Kevin," the Louisiana Republican said on Fox News on Thursday morning.

There is some wiggle room for Scalise, because it assumes McCarthy runs for the slot. If McCarthy, of California, opted not to run for the position, Scalise would be a natural person to run.

Ryan, who announced on

Wednesday he would not seek re-election but would stay through the current term, including as speaker, said at his own press conference Thursday morning that Scalise had endorsed McCarthy.

Ryan said that Scalise said this morning that after the election McCarthy should be the one to replace him.

"It shows you we have an intact leadership team," he said.

Ryan said he's talked to a lot of members who think it's in House Republicans' "best interest" to keep the current leadership team through the end of the year.

From CQ-Roll Call

## USAF blames pilot in crash that destroyed A-10s

WASHINGTON — A pilot training to become an instructor was at fault in a crash in September at the Nevada Test and Training Range near Las Vegas that destroyed two A-10C Thunderbolt II attack jets, according to an Air Force investigation released Thursday.

The pilot failed to adhere to

his assigned altitude and did not hear audible signals notifying him that he was climbing higher than that altitude, investigators with the Air Combat Command Accident Investigation Board determined. The pilot's jet eventually climbed into another pilot's assigned altitude, colliding with his aircraft,

# Mo. governor says report of affair, abuse a 'witch hunt'

Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens calls it an "entirely consensual relationship." But the woman with whom he has acknowledged having an affair says Greitens spanked, slapped, grabbed and shoved her during a series of sexual encounters that at times left her crying and afraid.

The woman's graphic testimony was revealed in a report released Wednesday by a special Missouri legislative committee that now is expanding its mission to recommend whether lawmakers should begin impeachment proceedings against the Republican governor.

Some prominent politicians — including Republican state Attorney General Josh Hawley and Democratic U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill, whom Hawley is challenging — are calling on Greitens, a Rhodes Scholar and former Navy SEAL officer who was once considered a rising GOP star, to immediately resign.

But Greitens is vowing to remain in office and prove his innocence against mounting allegations that he denounced as "lies and falsehoods."

Greitens, 44, is to go to trial May 14 in St. Louis on a felony indictment of invasion of privacy for allegedly taking and transmitting a nonconsensual photo of the woman while she was partially nude. Separately, the special House committee is to recommend after the legislative

session ends May 18 whether to pursue impeachment.

The legislative report was signed by all five Republicans and two Democrats on the committee. It describes the woman's testimony as credible and notes that Greitens has so far declined to testify or provide documents to the panel.

The woman told the committee Greitens took a photo of her after manipulating her into a compromising position during an unwanted sexual encounter in his home and told her "everyone will know what a little whore you are" if she told anyone about him. Greitens has refused to directly answer media questions about whether he took the photo, but he has steadfastly denied any criminal wrongdoing.

"This is a political witch hunt," Greitens told reporters Wednesday.

Republican House Speaker Todd Richardson called the woman's testimony "beyond disturbing" and defended the integrity of the investigation. He said: "Let me be very clear about this: This is not a witch hunt, and the committee had no political agenda."

Greitens first acknowledged having an extramarital affair on Jan. 10, when St. Louis TV station KMOV ran a story revealing that the woman's ex-husband had released a secret audio recording of a 2015 conversation in which she told him about the photo Greitens took at his home.

according to the investigation.

The pilot assigned to fly at the higher altitude, an instructor with the Weapons Instructor Course, could not see the other aircraft when it hit his plane and could not have avoided the crash, investigators determined. They also found the training pilot's mistake was not intentional.

The pilots' identities were

not released publicly with the report. The crash on Sept. 6, 2017, cost the Air Force an estimated \$30 million, according to the report. Both pilots were facing "uncontrollable" planes and were able to eject from their aircraft, suffering only minor injuries, according to the investigation.

From staff reports

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Police seek women who took cardboard ad

**VT** SOUTH BURLINGTON — Police in Vermont are looking for two women shown on airport video surveillance removing a life-sized cardboard cutout advertisement of a restaurant owner.

Police said the women had just gotten off an inbound flight at Burlington International Airport and took the sign on their way out the night of March 23.

The display sign of the owner of Leunig's Bistro in Burlington was standing in the baggage claim area.

Police said the ad has "significant monetary value."

## Robbery suspect trying to impress Taylor Swift

**CT** ANSONIA — Police said a Connecticut man with a crush on singer Taylor Swift robbed a bank, then went to the pop star's Rhode Island mansion, where he threw cash over a fence in an attempt to impress her.

Bruce Rowley, 26, of Derby is charged with robbing an Ansonia bank on April 4.

Police said "it seemed he wanted to propose" to Swift, so he drove about 60 miles to Westerly, R.I., and started throwing some of the roughly \$1,600 he's charged with stealing over Swift's fence.

Rowley was pursued by Rhode Island State Police back to Connecticut, where he was arrested. That's where police said he told them about his plan.

## Mummified monkey found in old store

**MN** MINNEAPOLIS — Workers renovating the old Dayton's department store in downtown Minneapolis discovered a mystery:

the mummified remains of a monkey.

A spokeswoman for The Dayton's Project, an office, retail and restaurant complex going into the century-old building, said workers found the carcass in an air duct on the seventh floor last week.

Old Minneapolis, a historic site, posted a photo of the monkey on its Facebook page and solicited answers. Alan Freed, one of the site's co-administrators, said the likely solution came from a poster who said a longtime Dayton's employee told him a monkey had escaped from an eighth-floor pet store into the air conditioning ductwork in the 1960s.

## Statue of Jack Daniel's founder stolen off porch

**MA** WRENTHAM — A life-sized statue of the founder of the Jack Daniel's whiskey brand was stolen off the front porch of a Massachusetts home.

Police say the plastic statue disappeared from a home in Wrentham last week. The department said on Facebook that the statue has sentimental value to the owners and they simply want it returned.

Jack Daniel founded his famed whiskey distillery in the 1800s in Lynchburg, Tenn.

## Dog's barking helps owner escape fire

**ME** FAIRFIELD — A rescue dog is being hailed as a hero for helping her owner escape a fire in Maine.

A Fairfield man said the 3-year-old tan-and-white pit bull named Sabrina was persistent in barking and nibbling at his clothing to wake him up.

Mitchell MacArthur Jr., 28, told the Morning Sentinel that he opened a door to find his home filled with smoke. They

couldn't escape through the living room because ammunition was going off, so they slipped outside through the kitchen.

## Rare wildflower no longer endangered

**CA** DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK — Federal officials said a rare desert wildflower that only grows in Death Valley National Park is no longer endangered.

The U.S. Department of the Interior said the Eureka Valley evening primrose is no longer in need of protection.

The large flower with white petals and green leaves can be spotted on the sandy desert floor of the Eureka Valley area on the California side of the enormous park.

The primrose has adapted to life in one of the hottest places on Earth by blooming at night and taking advantage of pollinators such as moths that avoid the heat of day.

## Nude man jogs through city's streets

**MD** BALTIMORE — With Baltimore temperatures hovering around 40 degrees Fahrenheit, a naked jogger may have pruned, but he certainly proved to be no prude.

The Baltimore Sun reported that the sight of the naked man jogging through downtown Baltimore jolted commuters during Monday's morning rush hour. In addition to clothes, the man eschewed shoes as he slowly trotted past a hospital and a courthouse.

Witnesses reported the man didn't seem lost or confused.

Baltimore police spokeswoman Detective Nicole Monroe said officers drove up the street in response to several 911 calls, but the man had disappeared, evading an indecent-

exposure charge.

## Woman offers to trade car for candy wafers

**MA** REVERE — A Florida woman really loves Necco Wafers, the colorful candies made by a Revere-based company that is at risk of shutting down.

The Boston Globe reported Katie Samuels, 23, reached out to candy wholesaler Candystore.com to offer her 2003 Honda Accord for all of their stock.

Samuels has childhood memories of pretending the candies were communion at her grandmother's home.

In March, Necco announced that 395 workers could be laid off if the company does not find a buyer. Necco, which has produced the candies since 1847, said sales have jumped since the Globe first reported their financial troubles.

## Educator suspected of teaching while drunk

**IA** MAYNARD — Authorities charged a 49-year-old man suspected of teaching while drunk at a high school in northeast Iowa.

Court records said Daniel Reisner of Sumner is charged with public intoxication. Court records don't list the name of an attorney who could comment for Reisner.

An officer sent Monday to the West Central Community School District school in Maynard said Reisner smelled of alcohol, had bloodshot and watery eyes and failed field sobriety tests. Court records said Reisner's breath test at the Fayette County Jail showed his blood alcohol level was over the legal limit to drive.

The district superintendent says Reisner has been suspended.

From wire reports

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# NBA's first round set after furious finish

Associated Press

The NBA playoffs that start this weekend already have an extremely tough act to follow.

The regular season ended with a flourish.

Wednesday's final night of the regular season was well beyond dramatic — an overtime game between Minnesota and Denver to decide the last berth, another overtime game between Miami and Toronto to determine some East fates, a 46-point first quarter by Philadelphia, an absurd 20-rebound, 19-assist night from Russell Westbrook.

And now, the best time of the NBA year is finally here.

The playoffs are back, with Golden State and Cleveland — who've met in the last three NBA Finals — not exactly looking like the overwhelming favorites the league has come to expect. A fourth straight Warriors-Cavs matchup is no guarantee. A fourth straight trip by either of those teams alone is far from certain, either.

It all starts Saturday, the 16-team tournament that will be a two-month grind following the six-month grind of the regular season.

"I feel pretty ready," Toronto guard Kyle Lowry said. "We're ready to go."

So are 15 other teams.

Start with the East pairings: Lowry and the top-seeded Raptors play No. 8 Washington, No. 2 Boston faces No. 7 Milwaukee, No. 3 Philadelphia gets No. 6 Miami and No. 4 Cleveland — with LeBron James bidding for an eighth consecutive appear-

ance in The Finals — opening against No. 5 Indiana, a surprise team at the start of the season and one that isn't a surprise anymore.

"We're one of 16 teams that have a chance to win a championship," James said. "That's all you can ask for."

Philadelphia, after years of the rebuilding saga known as "The Process," has a chance as well. The 76ers are going into the playoffs on a 16-game winning streak.

"Take a deep breath, then reload," 76ers coach Brett Brown said, talking about what he wants his team to do before getting ready for Game 1.

Out West, it's No. 1 Houston meeting No. 8 Minnesota — which earned its berth by topping Denver in the NBA's first win-and-get-in, lose-and-go-home regular-season finale in 21 years. No. 2 Golden State opens its quest for a third championship in four seasons against No. 7 San Antonio, No. 3 Portland drew No. 6 New Orleans and No. 4 Oklahoma City opens against No. 5 Utah.

"The playoffs are about moments, and you just want a chance to have those moments," Miami guard Dwyane Wade said.

For the Timberwolves, Wednesday was a moment in itself. They needed overtime to beat the Nuggets and get into the postseason. It's Minnesota's first berth since 2004, and ended what was the NBA's longest playoff drought (which now is bequeathed to the Sacramento Kings, who last played a playoff game in 2006).

"They just made the plays at the end," Denver's Will Barton said of the Timberwolves. "Give them credit."

There are some rematches from the 2017 playoffs already waiting. Cleveland swept Indiana in the first round last year, and Boston needed seven games to oust Washington in a thrilling East semifinal series.

But the most intriguing should be the Golden State-San Antonio matchup — because once again, just like a year ago, the Spurs will almost certainly be without Leonard.

Those two teams played in the West finals last season, and the Spurs were up by 23 points when Leonard left in the third quarter after getting injured on a play where he tried a jumper and Warriors center Zaza Pachulia closed out aggressively. Leonard got hurt when he stepped on Pachulia on the landing; he and the Spurs haven't been the same since.

Leonard never returned to that series, and played in only nine games for the Spurs this season.

"There is no pressure on us," Spurs star LaMarcus Aldridge said.

There is on Golden State.

The Warriors are trying for a third title in four seasons, and will play this first round more than likely without Curry while he continues recovering from a knee injury. Golden State went 7-10 in its final 17 games, and clearly sputtered across the finish line.

But the records all reset now, and the Warriors have been waiting to get the postseason started.

"It'll be our first meaningful game in about a month," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "Looking forward to that."

## Westbrook averages triple-double again

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — For most point guards, grabbing 16 rebounds to achieve a milestone would seem a daunting task.

For Russell Westbrook, it seemed a foregone conclusion.

The Thunder star entered Wednesday's regular-season finale against the Memphis Grizzlies needing 16 rebounds to become the first player to average a triple-double in multiple seasons. He had four rebounds at the end of the first quarter, then snagged seven in the second in just under nine minutes. He had five rebounds in the first 2:42 of the third

quarter to reach his goal, and the crowd gave him a standing ovation.

He finished with just six points, but he had a career-high 20 rebounds and 19 assists in a 137-123 win. He finished the season with averages of 25.4 points, 10.1 rebounds and 10.3 assists.

"I'm very, very thankful and blessed, man, to go out and compete," Westbrook said. "Like I've said many, many times, I don't take this game for granted. I don't take going out on the floor and competing for granted. When God has got something planned, ain't nobody who can stop it."

After averaging a triple-

double and setting a single-season NBA record with 42 triple-doubles last season, he added 25 more this season, and the Thunder won 20 of those games. He ranks fourth in NBA history with 104 career triple-doubles, three behind Jason Kidd.

"His numbers help them win," Grizzlies coach J.B. Bickerstaff said. "They're not meaningless numbers. You get numbers on a bad team or in a blowout game or whatever it is, but he shows the consistency every single night, going out and performing at a high level. There's very few guys, maybe a handful of guys that play with that level of intensity, with a

burning fire, to be the best player on the floor every single night. He's one of those guys."

Longtime teammate Nick Collison said Westbrook continues to amaze him.

"I've seen him lock in, and I want to really appreciate how good of a player he is and the production he's had these last two years," Collison said. "It's not just that. I'm not too much into the statistics. They're amazing, but seeing him put the organization on his back and lead the organization through a tough time and the way that he's able to show up every night and produce and compete and lead the team has been really fun to watch."

# Rockets' trio hoping it's their time

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Chris Paul has a long history of playoff heartbreak.

So does James Harden.

And Mike D'Antoni has more than either of them combined.

Separately, they've never gotten it done at playoff time. Together, their fortunes might change. They've led the Houston Rockets to the NBA's best record going into these playoffs, and in a league that Golden State and Cleveland have dominated in recent years, it may not be overly surprising to see the Paul-Harden-D'Antoni triumvirate win it all this spring.

With two regular-season games left, the Rockets had already piled up a franchise-record 64 wins to secure the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference. But this group — perhaps fueled by past playoff shortcomings — knows it has much more work to do.

"The ultimate goal is holding that trophy up," Harden said. "So until we do that there's no celebrations ... we haven't done anything yet."

D'Antoni, who'll turn 67 next month and would be the oldest coach to win an NBA title if Houston gets it done, has

revived his career in Houston. He got the Rockets to the West semifinals in his first year with them last season. And on the eve of these playoffs, D'Antoni insists he won't spend a second thinking about all the times things went wrong in his previous postseason trips.

"Zero," he said when asked how much he thinks about his playoff failures. "Twenty-nine teams look back every year. It's hard to win."

D'Antoni might know that better than most.

In 2004-05, his Phoenix Suns won 62 games in the regular season and reached the conference finals before losing to eventual champion San Antonio in five games. The Suns advanced to the conference finals again the following year, but were eliminated by Dallas in six games. They lost in the second round in 2007, the first round in 2008.

More failures followed in his stints with New York and the Los Angeles Lakers.

The Knicks were swept by Boston in 2011, the Lakers swept by the Spurs in 2013, both of those coming in the first round. Before last season, D'Antoni hadn't won a playoff game in nine years.

"We've had a great regular season, but it doesn't matter," he said. "But what it does mean is that we're pretty good and if we make big shots and do what we're supposed to do ... then we'll see if we can do it."

Paul's failures in the postseason may be even more scrutinized. The nine-time All-Star, who came to Houston in an offseason trade, has made nine playoff trips without advancing past the second round. The worst of those flops came in 2015, ironically against Houston, when Paul and the Clippers had a 3-1 lead in the conference semifinals. They got blown out in Game 5, wasted a 19-point second-half lead in Los Angeles in Game 6, then fell in Game 7 at Houston.

That was then, Paul said.

"It is cool when you stop and think about it," Paul said. "But for us right now we're trying to enjoy the moment. Trying to enjoy the process and not worry about all that stuff. Maybe after it's all said and done you can reflect on it."

Harden knows playoff pain as well. His splendid 2016-17 season was so promising, especially after Houston routed San Antonio, on the road, in Game 1 of the West semifinals. The

Spurs won four of the next five, including a 114-75 embarrassing series-clincher in Houston where Harden was held to 10 points.

"These last few years I've learned that obviously you can't do it by yourself," Harden said. "You need guys to step up, make big shots, make big plays and so we have enough guys in here on any given night that can change a playoff series. So that's what you need. That's what puts you over the top."

Paul might be the topper Harden needed.

From the moment Paul arrived in Houston, Harden raved about what he would bring to the team. After playing with him for a season, the normally reserved Harden was even more effusive in his praise of the fellow guard.

"I don't mean to sound too mushy or what-not but it was like love at first sight," Harden said. "It was just meant to be."

This will be Harden's ninth playoff appearance after three trips with the Thunder and five in Houston. He's led the Rockets to the postseason in each of his seasons in Houston, but his failure to shine in big games has dogged him for years.

## Road to East still goes through LeBron James

Associated Press

MIAMI — It only looks like parity.

Consider it an April tradition: A new postseason, a new No. 1 seed in the Eastern Conference. This time, it's Toronto doing the honors — the Raptors' win over Indiana on Friday makes them the seventh different club in the past seven years to get the top line on the East bracket, following Chicago, Miami, Indiana, Atlanta, Cleveland and Boston.

It's an unprecedented run of top-seed diversity for the NBA, at least since the league started seeding by conference in 1973.

Of course, those top seeds usually find out that finishing ahead of LeBron James in April is easier than ousting him in May.

"Listen, it doesn't matter to me if I'm a 6 seed, or a 3 seed, or a 2 seed, or an 8 seed," James said. "If I come into your building for a Game 1, it will be very challenging."

So make no mistake, the East still goes through James.

He is trying to reach the NBA Finals for the eighth consecutive season. James' teams are 24-2 in East series as the higher seed, 6-2 in East series as the lower seed. And while the Raptors will be the favorites, there will be a certain amount of skepticism until someone knocks James off his perch atop the conference.

"What he does in a playoff series is very unique," Atlanta coach Mike Budenholzer said.

It's been almost predetermined for the past few years, regardless of who's seeded where, that James' team would be the one winning the East.

But this year, it might not be so simple.

"You've got to go through whoever it is anyway," Cavaliers coach Tyronn Lue said.

The Raptors are enjoying their best season in history, with a franchise-record 57

wins and counting and now knowing that the road for anyone to win the Eastern Conference title will go through Canada. But while the Raptors haven't exactly been sprinting across the finish line there have been some teams hitting their best stride, namely Cleveland and Philadelphia.

The Raptors know plenty of pundits won't be penciling them in for a trip to the NBA Finals, even with the knowledge that Kyrie Irving — who has had some incredible playoff moments with James and Cleveland in recent years — won't be playing for Boston in these playoffs because of knee surgery.

"We really just have to maintain focus on ourselves and not worry about who says this, that, what happens," Toronto guard Kyle Lowry said. "All we can do is focus on our team, our organization and the things that we do. We don't really care to be talked about. We just go out there and have to prove what we need to prove."

## NHL playoffs roundup

# Penguins whip Flyers in series opener

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The sluggish opening three months. The so-so finish. The only occasional attention to detail on defense. None of it matters anymore.

The playoffs are here. The champs are, too.

Sidney Crosby and the Penguins provided proof in Pittsburgh's 7-0 dismantling of the Philadelphia Flyers in the opening game of their first-round series Wednesday night.

Crosby performed more stick wizardry on his way to his third postseason hat trick, Evgeni Malkin added a highlight-reel goal of his own and the Penguins overwhelmed their seem-

ingly overmatched cross-state rivals to begin their quest for a third straight Stanley Cup with a blowout that seemed to indicate the grudge match could be a mismatch.

The Flyers have lost all five meetings with Pittsburgh this season, giving up at least five goals each time. Nothing that happened during the regular season, however, compared to Wednesday night. The Penguins pumped five goals in the first 29:01 to chase goalie Brian Elliott, and the Flyers simply could not keep pace.

**Jets 3, Wild 2:** Defenseman Joe Morrow broke a tie with 6:13 left and host Winnipeg beat Minnesota in Game 1 for

the first playoff victory in franchise history.

In its only other playoff appearances since joining the NHL in 1999 in Atlanta, the franchise was swept in 2007 by the New York Rangers and in 2015 by Anaheim.

Nikolaj Ehlers set up the Morrow at the point for a one-timer that beat goalie Devan Dubnyk. Morrow was acquired at the trade deadline from Montreal in exchange for a fourth-round draft pick this summer.

Mark Schiefele, with a power-play goal, and Patrik Laine also scored for Winnipeg.

**Golden Knights 1, Kings 0:** Marc-Andre Fleury made 30 saves for his 11th career play-

off shutout, Shea Theodore scored in the first period and host Vegas beat Los Angeles to win the franchise's first playoff game.

Fleury got his first playoff shutout since last May, when his Penguins beat the Ottawa Senators 1-0 in Game 2 of the Eastern Conference finals.

The Kings entered with a combined 928 games of playoff experience, but Vegas came out looking like a seasoned bunch ready for the postseason.

Theodore got on the board 3:23 into the first. Tomas Nosek came from behind the goal to fire a pass to Theodore, and he blasted a wrist shot through traffic for the only goal.

## MLB roundup

# Yankees, Red Sox brawl, hours after Padres-Rockies fight

Associated Press

BOSTON — Tyler Austin rushed the mound after being hit by a pitch from Red Sox reliever Joe Kelly, triggering a bench-clearing brawl in a ramped-up rivalry as the New York Yankees ended Boston's nine-game winning streak with a 10-7 victory Wednesday night.

Benches cleared briefly in the third after Austin's spikes clipped Brock Holt's leg on a slide into second base. Holt took issue with the contact and they exchanged words before being separated.

Then with the Yankees leading 10-6 in the seventh, Kelly caught Austin on the side with a 98 mph fastball. Austin slammed his bat on the plate, threw it down and took four steps toward the mound while hollering. Kelly waved at him, and things quickly escalated.

Austin, Kelly, New York reliever Tommy Kahnle and Yankees third base coach Phil Nevin were ejected.

**Rockies 6, Padres 4:** At

Denver, Colorado star Nolan Arenado charged the mound after a fastball from San Diego's Luis Perdomo sailed behind him, setting off a brawl that resulted in five ejections in a game Colorado won.

**Braves 5, Nationals 3 (12):** Peter Bourjos drove in two runs with a bases-loaded single in the 12th inning off Ryan Madison (0-1) for visiting Atlanta.

**Twins 9, Astros 8:** Max Kepler hit his second home run of the game, connecting for a solo drive with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning off Brad Peacock (1-1) as host Minnesota rebounded after blowing an 8-1 lead.

**Brewers 3, Cardinals 2:** Matt Albers got his first save for visiting Milwaukee, retiring Kolten Wong and Dexter Fowler to strand a pair of runners.

**White Sox 2, Rays 1:** Matt Davidson hit a two-run homer off Austin Pruitt (1-2) in the eighth inning and Chicago improved to 1-5 at home, matching its worst home start since 1975 at Comiskey Park.

**Mariners 4, Royals 2:** Kyle Seager hit a go-ahead homer with two outs in the eighth off Justin Grimm (0-1) for visiting Seattle.

**Diamondbacks 7, Giants 3:** Paul Goldschmidt and John Ryan Murphy hit home runs and visiting Arizona won its fourth straight series to start a season for the first time since beginning play in 1998.

**Indians 5, Tigers 1:** Detroit pitcher Jordan Zimmermann bruised the right side of his jaw when hit in the face by a line drive off the bat of host Cleveland's Jason Kipnis and left after two batters. Zimmermann said after the game he should be able to take his next turn.

**Orioles 5, Blue Jays 3:** Jonathan Schoop drove in two runs, and Kevin Gausman (1-1) allowed three runs and six hits in six innings for host Baltimore. Brad Brach worked the ninth for his third save.

**Phillies 4, Reds 3 (12):** Scott Kingery hit a game-ending sacrifice fly in the 12th off Austin

Brice (0-1), two innings after center fielder Odubel Herrera robbed Scooter Gennett of a two-run homer. J.P. Crawford hit his first career homer, and Cesar Hernandez also connected for host Philadelphia.

**Mets 4, Marlins 1:** Miami lefty Jarlin Garcia was pulled after pitching six hitless innings in his first major league start after 68 relief appearances last year as a rookie.

**Cubs 13, Pirates 5:** Javier Baez homered twice for the second straight day and scored the go-ahead run in the sixth after striking out and reaching on a wild pitch by Tyler Glasnow (0-1) in Chicago.

**Angels 7, Rangers 2:** Shohei Ohtani had an RBI single that put his team ahead to stay, and visiting Los Angeles improved to 10-3 for the first time since 1982.

**Athletics 16, Dodgers 6:** Khris Davis, Matt Chapman and Jed Lowrie each went deep, and visiting Oakland pounded out 21 hits in a win over Los Angeles.