

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## N. Korea halts its nuclear, ICBM tests

By KIM GAMEL

*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea said it's suspending nuclear and missile tests as of Saturday and will close its nuclear test site, dealing its first negotiating hand ahead of planned summits with the South and the U.S.

The surprise announcement, however, gave no indication the North was willing to dismantle or scale back its nuclear weapons program, as Washington and Seoul have demanded.

Instead, the isolated nation expressed confidence in its arsenal and said tests were no longer needed after months of heightened activity. North Korea demonstrated alarming progress last year with three intercontinental ballistic missiles and a sixth nuclear test — its most powerful test to date.

Still, the statement boosted optimism a week before North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is to meet with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in the heavily fortified border area on the divided peninsula.

That meeting is to be followed by the first-ever U.S.-North Korea summit, which President Donald Trump has said will be held in May or early June.

"North Korea has agreed to suspend all

Nuclear Tests and close up a major test site," Trump tweeted. "This is very good news for North Korea and the World — big progress! Look forward to our Summit."

The U.S. and its allies are seeking to persuade the North to abandon its nuclear weapons program in a "complete, verifiable and irreversible" way.

The North said only that it "will stop nuclear tests and launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles" starting Saturday.

"The northern nuclear test ground of [North Korea] will be dismantled to transparently guarantee the discontinuance of the nuclear test," the Korean Central News Agency said in a report about a meeting of the ruling Workers' Party.

It also promised to join international efforts "for the total halt to the nuclear test" and said it will never use nuclear weapons or proliferate technology unless it faces a "nuclear threat and nuclear provocation" against its territory.

Intermediaries who have met with Kim have said he expressed a willingness to denuclearize, but the KCNA report was the first direct word from North Korea itself.

North Korea watchers have expressed skepticism that the communist state is willing to completely dismantle its nuclear weapons, and suggested any move in that di-

rection is likely to come with a heavy price for relaxed sanctions or other concessions from the West.

North Korea, which has been ruled by the Kim family dynasty since it was founded in 1948, has agreed to halt its nuclear program in the past only to renege years later.

Some experts point out the North is on the verge of achieving one of its major goals of meeting with a sitting U.S. president and isn't likely to go beyond a freeze.

Kim Jong Un presided over the meeting of the ruling party's central committee as it declared a "great victory" in his so-called "byungjin" policy of simultaneously pursuing economic and nuclear development.

The committee unanimously adopted a resolution calling for shifting the national focus to achieving a strong socialist economy and making "groundbreaking improvements in people's lives," KCNA reported.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called it a positive development but expressed caution. Abe met with Trump last week amid concerns that Japan is being sidelined in the flurry of diplomacy.

"What is crucial here, however, is how this development is going to lead to the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of nuclear arms, weapons of mass destruction and missiles," he said.

## Chemical weapons inspectors reach Syrian site

*Associated Press*

BEIRUT — The global chemical weapons watchdog says a team of inspectors has visited the Syrian town of Douma to collect samples for an investigation into an alleged chemical weapons attack there two weeks ago.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons issued a statement Saturday saying the team "visited one of the sites in Douma, Syrian Arab Republic today to collect samples for analysis" in their investigation.

It added that, "The OPCW will evaluate the situation and con-

sider future steps including another possible visit to Douma."

The organization says the samples it has collected will be analyzed at OPCW-designated laboratories and the team will draft a report based on the findings, "as well other information and materials collected by the team."

The OPCW mission aims to establish whether chemical weapons were used, but is not mandated to apportion blame for the attack.

Inspectors from the OPCW were delayed for one week in Damascus before they could visit the town, just minutes' away from the capital, where the

alleged attack occurred.

The town of Douma was at the time under rebel control and facing a ferocious government air and ground assault. Militants gave up the town days after the alleged attack.

The U.S., France, and Britain blamed the Syrian government for the attack, and struck suspected Syrian chemical weapons facilities one week later.

The Syrian government and its ally Russia denied responsibility for the attack.

A U.N. security team touring Douma on Tuesday came under small arms and explosives fire, leading the OPCW to postpone its visit.

The U.S. and Britain accused the Syrian government and Russia of delaying the investigation to stage a cover-up.

On Saturday, rebels began evacuating three towns in the eastern Qalamoun region in the Damascus countryside, state TV reported.

State-run Al-Ikhbariya TV said several buses left the towns of Ruhaiba, Jayroud and al-Nasriya carrying hundreds of rebels and their families to opposition territory in north Syria.

The station said there could be 3,200 rebels leaving three towns on Saturday. It said the evacuations will continue for three days.

# Sessions told White House he may leave if Rosenstein's fired

*The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — Attorney General Jeff Sessions recently told the White House he might have to leave his job if President Donald Trump fired his deputy, Rod Rosenstein, who oversees the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election, according to people familiar with the exchange.

Sessions made his position known in a phone call to White House counsel Donald McGahn last weekend, as Trump's fury at Rosenstein peaked after the deputy attorney general approved the FBI's raid April 9 on the president's attorney Michael Cohen.

Sessions' message to the White House underscores the political firestorm Trump would invite should he attempt to remove the deputy attorney general. While Trump also has railed against Sessions at times, the protest resignation of an attorney gen-

eral, which would be likely to incite other departures within the administration, would create a crisis for the White House.

In the phone call with McGahn, Sessions wanted details of a meeting Trump and Rosenstein held at the White House on April 12, according to a person with knowledge of the call. Sessions expressed relief to learn that their meeting was largely cordial. Sessions said he would have had to consider leaving the attorney general post had Trump ousted Rosenstein, this person said.

Another person familiar with the exchange said Sessions did not intend to threaten the White House but rather wanted to convey the untenable position Rosenstein's firing would put him in.

A Justice Department representative declined to comment.

Rosenstein's status remains uncertain, but the pressure he

is facing seemed to subside after last week.

Last summer, when it appeared Trump was going to fire Sessions or pressure him to resign, Republican lawmakers and conservative groups rallied to Sessions' side and warned the president not to move against him.

Trump had told senior officials last week that he was considering firing Rosenstein, who was confirmed by the Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support last year.

As of Friday afternoon, more than 800 former Justice Department employees had signed an open letter calling on Congress to "swiftly and forcefully respond to protect the founding principles of our Republic and the rule of law" if Trump were to fire the deputy attorney general, Special Counsel Robert Mueller or other senior Justice Department officials.

# Joe Biden doesn't rule out run in 2020

*The Washington Post*

Former Vice President Joe Biden said in an interview broadcast on Sunday that he has not ruled out a presidential run in 2020 and that he expects to make a decision by the end of the year.

Biden has previously left the door open to a presidential run in 2020, but he gave a newly expansive account of his thinking about a campaign to the Rev. Al Sharpton on MSNBC's "PoliticsNation."

"I'm really hoping that some other folks step up," Biden said. "I think we have some really good people. ... I got to walk away knowing that it is — there's somebody who can do it and can win because we've got to win. We've got to win in 2020."

Biden said that he is still struggling to recover from the 2015 death of his son Beau at 46 from brain cancer. In a December ABC interview, Biden said it could be a year before he might be ready to make a decision.

"It takes time to come back," the former vice president said. "Look, no man has a right to go say help me become president unless I can look at you and say, 'You've got my whole heart, my whole soul, all of my passion, all my attention.' And I know I got to make that decision by, you know, by the end of this year."

Sharpton pressed Biden: "You're not telling me no."

"No, no, I'm not," he replied. "I've been honest about this. If the Lord Almighty, Al, came down and said, 'The nomination is yours now; you have to accept it now,' I would not."

"But," Sharpton interjected, "you say, 'Lord, check with me before the year's up.'"

"Exactly right," Biden said.

# Trump to host Macron for 1st state dinner

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Now it's President Donald Trump's turn to pull off the ultimate charm offensive.

Wined and dined on multiple state visits during his tour of Asia last year, Trump is paying it forward and celebrating nearly 250 years of U.S.-French relations by playing host to President Emmanuel Macron at a glitzy White House state dinner on Tuesday.

Months in the making, it's the first state visit and first big soiree of the Trump era in Washington.

Macron will break bread twice with Trump.

On Monday, the president and Melania Trump will dine privately with Macron and his wife, Brigitte, at Mount Vernon, the home of America's first president, George Washington, on the banks of the Potomac River in Virginia. The White House said the setting will serve as a reminder of France's "unique status" as America's first ally.

Trump ended his first year without receiving a foreign leader on a state visit, making him the first president in nearly 100 years to do so and heightening the stakes for Tuesday.

Approximately 150 guests will take their seats

in the State Dining Room on Tuesday, making for a more intimate affair than those held by President Barack Obama whose guest lists numbered into the hundreds, requiring the events be held in a tented pavilion erected on the South Lawn.

Most of the responsibility for executing a flawless celebration falls to the first lady and her staff.

The Trump-Macron relationship appeared to get off to a bumpy start with a white-knuckler of a handshake when they met for the first time at a NATO summit in Brussels in May. But Macron likely sealed the bond after Trump accepted his invitation to attend the annual Bastille Day military parade in the center of Paris in July.

But the two part company on some significant issues, including the Paris climate accord, which Trump withdrew the U.S. from last year, and the Iran-nuclear deal, another multinational agreement that Trump is itching to pull out of. The president did successfully rally Macron and British Prime Minister Theresa May to mount a joint military operation against Syria in response to an apparent chemical attack this month that killed Syrian civilians.

# Actress arrested in sex trafficking case

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A television actress best known for playing a young Superman's close friend pleaded not guilty Friday to sex trafficking after federal prosecutors said she worked as a slave "master" recruiting unsuspecting women to a cult-like group led by a man who sold himself as a self-improvement guru to the stars.

Allison Mack was accused in an indictment unsealed by the federal court in Brooklyn. She entered her plea and was remanded to custody after Judge Cheryl Pollak refused a request from Mack's lawyers to release her without bail. A bail hearing will be held Monday.

Mack, 35, starred in The CW network's "Smallville." Since that series ended in 2011, she

has played only minor roles. Prosecutors said she helped recruit women for leader Keith Raniere and his cult-like organization called NXIVM. She told the women they were joining what was purported to be a female mentorship group, prosecutors said.

But "the victims were then exploited, both sexually and for their labor," according to federal prosecutors.

"Mack and other ... masters recruited ... slaves by telling them that they were joining a women-only organization that would empower them and eradicate purported weaknesses the NXIVM curriculum taught were common in women," prosecutors said.

Prosecutors said she required women she recruited to engage in sexual activity with Raniere,

who paid Mack in return.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Moira Kim Penza said in court that that "under the guise of female empowerment" Mack "starved women until they fit her co-defendant's sexual ideal."

Federal authorities raided an upstate New York residence near Albany where NXIVM was headquartered in March. The organization also ran programs in Mexico.

Raniere, 57, was arrested in Mexico, brought to the U.S. on March 26 and is being held without bail in Brooklyn.

Founded in 1998, NXIVM promoted Raniere's teachings as a kind of mystical, executive coaching designed to help people get the most out of life. Enrollees in its Executive Success Programs paid handsomely for his advice. The organization

also drew criticism from people who likened it to a cult.

Last year, the accusations took a new twist, with women who were part of a NXIVM subgroup coming forward to say that they had been physically branded with a surgical tool against their will.

Prosecutors said in court papers that Raniere created a society within NXIVM called "DOS" — an acronym based on a Latin phrase that loosely translates to "Lord/Master of obedient female companions." Women were required to provide damaging material about their friends and family, naked photos and even sign over their assets as a condition for joining, they said. Many were branded with his initials, they said.

## Calif. dad killed as daughter sits in lap at restaurant

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A homeless man was charged Friday with murder in a random attack on a California father who was stabbed in the neck as his 5-year-old daughter sat in his lap in a crowded beachside steakhouse.

Jamal Jackson, 49, was charged with first-degree murder in the death of Anthony Mele, 35. He was being held in Ventura County jail on a \$1.5 million bail. It's unclear if he has an attorney.

Mele and his wife were eating dinner with their daughter Wednesday at Aloha Steakhouse in Ventura. The girl was sitting in her father's lap when prosecutors say Jackson walked up and stabbed Mele in the neck.

Prosecutor Richard Simon said patrons and a restaurant employee followed Jackson out of the restaurant, even though he still had the knife. They kept track of him until police arrived and arrested him.

Mele died Thursday after being taken off life support.

"It's horrible," Simon said. "You don't think you're going to be killed when you go out to dinner at a nice restaurant with your family and you didn't do anything."

Simon said the two men had not interacted before the attack.

## Duckworth's daughter makes history as 1st newborn in Senate

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Tiny Maile Pearl made Senate history Thursday without making a sound.

The tightly wrapped 10-day-old baby, brought to the well of the chamber by her mother, Sen. Tammy Duckworth, became the first newborn to appear there, just one day after the Senate approved a new rule permitting it.

"It's about time," the Illinois Democrat and Iraq War veteran told reporters on the way in to vote.

The rule had passed without objection — but there had been plenty of grumbling about babies threatening the Senate's cherished decorum. But when it actually happened, even stern Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell appeared to beam. In fact, he left a Senate vote open to allow Duckworth time to get there with little Maile Pearl Bowsbey.

"Thank you very much," Duckworth said to the Kentucky Republican. The double amputee, in a wheelchair with Maile, pronounced "Miley," in her lap, was on the floor for less than three minutes before they took off.

Like newborns, the Senate can be unpredictable.

The first sign that the two would meet

Thursday was a tweet by Duckworth that she might vote on the nomination of Rep. James Bridenstine to run NASA.

"May have to vote today. Maile's outfit is prepped," she tweeted, with a photo of baby clothes. "Made sure she has a jacket so she doesn't violate the Senate floor dress code requiring blazers. Not sure what the policy is on duckling onesies but I think we're ready."

The idea was for Duckworth to vote only if she was needed to break a tie. Vice President Mike Pence arrived for the same reason. In the end, it was unnecessary and Bridenstine was confirmed. Duckworth cast a thumbs-down anyway, before her colleagues descended to coo over the baby.

When Duckworth wheeled around to leave, reporters in the press gallery above got their first glimpse of the baby's face, and a loud "aww" could be heard. The senators on the floor laughed, and Schumer called up to the gallery: "The press is finally interested in something worthwhile."

Senators of both parties had been interested, too, for the past two months. But many of their concerns revolved around whether babies would disrupt "decorum," the relatively civil style of discourse practiced in the Senate over the nation's business.

## Lobbyist tied to EPA chief lease retires

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The fossil-fuels lobbyist tied to the bargain-priced Capitol Hill condo leased by Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt is taking early retirement because of the scandal.

J. Steven Hart sent an email to friends and colleagues Friday announcing he's leaving Williams & Jensen, the powerhouse Washington lobbying firm where he served as chairman.

Hart, 64, said he was planning to retire in November, but that the intense scrutiny resulting from the unusual rental arrangement with the head of the EPA led him to expedite his departure.

Media reports first disclosed last month that Pruitt paid just \$50 a night for the condo to a corporation co-owned by Hart's wife, who is also a lobbyist, triggering several ethics investigations.

The embattled EPA administrator has described Hart as a personal friend and insisted he paid a market rate for the condo, though comparable properties nearby are publicly listed at more than double what he paid.

The EPA's press office did not respond to a request for comment.

A chorus of Democrats and a growing list of Republicans have called for Pruitt's ouster amid a string of ethics issues, including questions about his use of first class air travel and such pricey security precautions as a \$43,000 anti-eavesdropping phone booth for his office.

The EPA's inspector general announced last week he will review spending by Pruitt's full-time security detail, the latest in about a dozen ongoing investigations related to Pruitt by various government agencies.

Prior to being tapped by Trump to lead the EPA, Pruitt served as the elected attorney general of Oklahoma. Hart's firm represents OGE Energy Corp., one of the state's electric utilities.

# 4 Palestinians killed by Israeli troops in Gaza border protest

Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Gunfire from Israeli soldiers across a border fence killed four Palestinians, including a 15-year-old boy, and wounded more than 150 others, health officials said, as several thousand people in blockaded Gaza staged a fourth round of weekly protests on the border with Israel.

Huge black plumes of smoke from burning tires engulfed the border area Friday. Some of the activists threw stones toward the fence or flew kites with flaming rags dangling from their tails.

The latest deaths brought to 32 the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli troops in protests since late March. More than 1,600 have been wounded by live rounds in the past three weeks, according to the Gaza

Health Ministry.

The rising Palestinian casualty toll signaled that Israel's military is sticking to its open-fire rules despite international criticism of the use of lethal force against unarmed protesters. Israel says it's defending its border, and alleges Gaza's ruling Hamas uses protests as cover for attacks.

Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian U.N. ambassador, said in a letter to the U.N. Security Council late Friday that Israeli forces continue demonstrating the "cruelty of their occupation machine, responding to the calls of unarmed civilians for freedom and justice with brutal and lethal force." He said one of the latest victims was a 25-year-old disabled man.

Israeli soldiers are positioned on the other side of the border fence, including snipers taking cover behind earthen berms,

and none have been hurt.

Turnout for the marches has fluctuated, with the biggest showing on March 30, but Friday's crowd appeared to have been somewhat larger than the one the previous week.

The marches are part of what organizers, led by Hamas, have billed as an escalating showdown with Israel, to culminate in a mass march on May 15.

Top Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said Friday people should get ready for large crowds spilling across the border that day. "Our people will outnumber the occupation and force it from our land," he said, referring to Israel.

Earlier on Friday, Israeli military aircraft had dropped leaflets urging Palestinians to stay away from the fence and warning that they endanger their lives if they follow Hamas directives.

## Some in GOP urge charges for getting an abortion

Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — Anti-abortion rhetoric is intensifying ahead of midterm elections as officials in Republican-dominant states push legislation that would punish both doctors and patients, even though such laws are likely unconstitutional.

In Idaho, Republicans competing in a crowded field for governor have made it a major campaign issue ahead of the May 15 primary. One candidate promised to back a long-shot effort that would allow women to be prosecuted for getting an abortion, and another offered tepid support but doubted it would survive a legal challenge.

Politicians in states from Ohio to Oklahoma are pushing similar measures or promising to criminalize abortion as they seek office. It comes despite courts temporarily blocking stringent laws passed recently in Mississippi and Kentucky.

Targeting patients for punishment is a stance that traditionally has raised eyebrows even from staunch anti-abortion groups that tend to treat women as victims, not criminals, for choosing to end a pregnancy. However, with President Donald Trump's administration embracing anti-abortion groups and promising to appoint judges who will favor efforts to roll back abortion rights, Republican state leaders have become more emboldened to support the idea without facing backlash from their conservative base.

Supporters of punitive legislation say that believing abortion is murder means the act must be punished as such, which could include life in prison or the death penalty.

The stance openly defies the U.S. Supreme Court, which has ruled that a woman has the right to choose an abortion without "undue interference"

from the state. It also conflicts with other anti-abortion advocates. Many Catholics, for example, oppose both abortion and the death penalty.

The high court legalized abortion in 1973, but anti-abortion advocates hope *Roe v. Wade* will soon be overruled if Trump gets the chance to appoint a justice who would cast the deciding vote against it.

In the meantime, a push for legislation punishing women has taken hold in Idaho. This month, a GOP lieutenant governor candidate said during a forum that "anyone who has an abortion should pay."

State Sen. Bob Nonini later softened his position, clarifying that the threat of prosecution could drastically reduce abortion but he did not believe women would actually face the death penalty.

His comment attracted swift condemnation from groups who fight for abortion rights.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Dispute over bologna, cheese spurs stabbing

**PA** BETHLEHEM — Authorities said a dispute over bologna and cheese at a Pennsylvania rooming house ended in a stabbing that left a man seriously injured.

Bethlehem police said Manuel Martinez and John Scarlata had argued Monday night about food placement in a refrigerator used by all of the home's residents. The dispute soon ended, but somehow was reignited about 1 a.m. Tuesday.

Authorities said Martinez, 62, used a kitchen knife to stab Scarlata in the lower left abdomen and the lower left chest.

Martinez was not injured in the incident. He was charged with attempted homicide, aggravated assault and a weapons count.

### Police: Mother leaves 2 infant girls on curb

**MI** FLINT — Police said a 26-year-old Michigan woman left her two infant daughters inside a suitcase on the side of the road as child welfare workers arrived to take the children away.

Police said officers assisting Child Protective Services workers Wednesday were unable to find the children inside the Flint home. Authorities have not said why the children were being removed.

WNEM-TV reported that officers looked outside and found the girls in the luggage. They were listed in good condition at a hospital. Police did not provide their names or ages.

Police said the mother apparently ran away, but was arrested and is being evaluated at a hospital. Police said she has a history of mental illness.

WSMH-TV reported that other children were found inside the home.

### Rescue center takes in 4 black bear cubs

**VA** WAYNESBORO — The Wildlife Center of Virginia took in its first black bear cubs of the year, including two bears rescued by a state trooper.

The center said it recently admitted four cubs. Two female cubs from Nelson County were separated from their mother. A male cub and a female cub from Franklin County were orphaned when their mother was killed by a car on a highway. They were rescued by a Virginia State Trooper.

The nonprofit center adopts sick, injured and orphaned wild animals from around Virginia. The center said it will limit human interaction with the cubs and will release them next spring.

### School dismissed early after teen sets fires

**CT** HARTFORD — A Connecticut high school canceled classes early after a teen set fires in two bathrooms.

Hartford police said garbage and paper were burned in two bathrooms at Hartford Public High School on Thursday. The fires were extinguished quickly, but fire officials recommended an early dismissal to clear the smoke.

No one was injured and police said they've identified the culprit through surveillance video. They said a teen boy had been placed into custody but had not yet been charged.

### College apologizes after professor curses

**NJ** MIDDLETOWN — A community college in New Jersey has issued an apology after one of its professors

was captured on video cursing at a student who considers himself a conservative.

Howard Finkelstein used the vulgarity to Christopher Lyle during a sociology debate about sexual harassment, saying "f--- your life."

In a statement released Wednesday, Brookdale Community College said "the faculty member acted in an uncivil manner." The school said the matter remains under investigation and it will determine "an appropriate course of action."

Lyle told the Asbury Park Press he was singled out because he's conservative and supports President Donald Trump. He said he doesn't want the professor fired or to lose retirement benefits.

### Century-old tiaras stolen from museum

**MO** ST. LOUIS — Two gem-encrusted tiaras that are more than 100 years old were stolen from a St. Louis museum.

Staff at the Missouri History Museum noticed the gold-and-silver tiaras were gone during a routine check Monday of an exhibit on St. Louis history. The tiaras were awarded in 1894 and 1896 to debutantes at the Veiled Prophet ball, which is held each December. The ball dates to 1878.

The museum said in a statement that it had turned over all evidence and security footage. The tiaras have been in the Missouri Historical Society's collection since the 1960s.

### Bus driver removed after leading prayer

**MN** MINNEAPOLIS — A Minneapolis-area church pastor who also drives a school bus said his rights to free speech and to practice his religion were violated when he

was taken off his route for leading students in prayer.

It is not the first time George Nathaniel has faced consequences for leading prayers. Nathaniel was fired from driving children in the town of Burnsville, Minn., four years ago for the same reason.

The Star Tribune reported that Quality Care Transportation removed Nathaniel from his route last week. He drove children to Nasha Shkola, a charter school in Brooklyn Park focused on Russian language and culture.

Quality Care owner Muk Musa said school officials received complaints that Nathaniel was forcing minors to pray. He said Nathaniel isn't fired, but hasn't received a new route, either. Nathaniel said he wants to turn people to Christianity, but he never forced students to pray.

### Town to vote on dissolving government

**ME** ATKINSON — A Maine town that has tried to stop existing three times because of high property taxes is now close to official dissolution.

Atkinson would be the largest town in Maine to dissolve if residents vote for dissolving into unorganized territory this November. The Bangor Daily News reports Republican Gov. Paul LePage signed a bill to authorize the upcoming vote on April 12.

Residents of the Piscataquis County town have tried unsuccessfully three times to dissolve Atkinson, with the most recent attempt coming in 2004.

Residents consistently have cited high property taxes as their primary reason for wanting to dissolve local government.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# Pacers rally, beat Cavaliers

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Pacers kept insisting this team was different.

Anyone who doubted them coming into the playoffs understands now.

On Friday, the one-year anniversary of a historic playoff collapse against Cleveland, Indiana flipped the script by rallying from a 17-point halftime deficit and held on for a 92-90 victory over the Cavaliers to take a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven series. They can take command of the series by winning Sunday on home court.

“Last year’s team, I don’t know if we would have gone

down 17, I don’t know if we would have overcome it,” forward Thaddeus Young said. “But this team, we’ve been resilient all year. We’ve overcome adversity.”

And on Friday they did it against a Cavaliers team that was 39-0 in the regular season when leading after three quarters.

Bojan Bogdanovic scored 19 of his playoff career-high 30 points in the second half, finishing 7-for-9 on three-pointers. Victor Oladipo added 18 points, six rebounds and seven assists.

Bogdanovic also spent most of the game defending LeBron James, who finished with

28 points, 12 rebounds, eight assists and six turnovers. He joined Michael Jordan as the only players in league history with 100 double-doubles in the postseason. Jordan had 109.

James almost single-handedly rallied his team twice from seven-point deficits in the final 3½ minutes.

The three-time defending Eastern Conference champs were outscored 52-33 over the final 24 minutes.

“We were more aggressive in the first half. We had tempo, they didn’t,” James said. “Then they were more aggressive in the second half, they had tempo, and we didn’t.”

# Bell holds off teammate Gragson in Xfinity race

Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Christopher Bell grabbed the lead from Noah Gragson shortly after a restart to begin the final stage and held off his Joe Gibbs Racing teammate after a late challenge to win the NASCAR Xfinity Series race at Richmond Raceway on Friday night.

Bell led by nearly 0.6 seconds at one point during the final stage, then had Gragson close onto his rear bumper with about 10 laps to go. But just as quickly as Gragson mounted a challenge in his first career start, Bell again pulled away for his second career victory in the series.

“That was pretty special there,” Bell said. “I had to work for it.”

At the end, Bell said, he could feel his car fading and just ran as hard as he could and hoped for the best.

“I think the word teammate kind of goes out the window when you’re racing for a win, other than the fact that you try not to crash each other,” Bell said. “Track position, man. That’s what ultimately won me the race.”

Bell climbed from fifth to second in the points race, 29 behind Elliott Sadler and two ahead of Tyler Reddick, who finished 11th.

Gragson seemed more distressed at having come up short than having had an impressive debut.

“It’s kind of great to finish second in my first race, but I really wanted to win,” he said, adding that he had some regrets for listening to his spotter, instead of his own instincts, when he thought he could catch Bell over the final 20 laps.

Points leader and Virginia native Sadler finished third and won a \$100,000 bonus as the top finisher in the Dash for Cash.

Sadler also won the second stage, his first stage win of the season, but restarted the final stage third and never challenged again.

## NBA Roundup

# Wiz take Game 3 from Raptors

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — All of about 2½ minutes into the game, Washington forward Markieff Morris and Toronto’s OG Anunoby needed to be separated after a near-fight that drew in other players.

Early in the third quarter Friday night, Raptors guard Kyle Lowry was called for a flagrant foul when he swiped a hand across Bradley Beal’s forehead as the Wizards guard went in for a breakaway layup. Later in that period, things really came close to spiraling out of control, but John Wall’s bodyguard interceded when Washington’s All-Star jawed with Toronto’s Serge Ibaka.

As that scene unfolded on the court, spectators directed “U-S-A! U-S-A!” chants at the opponents from Canada, and Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the U.S.A.” blared over the arena’s speakers. Amid all the ruckus, Beal and Wall kept their heads and helped the Wizards pull further and further away for a 122-103 victory.

What was once a dull, lop-

sided series is suddenly quite interesting.

Beal heeded his coach’s plea to “do his job” by scoring 21 of his 28 points in the first half, Wall delivered 28 points and 14 assists, and the eighth-seeded Wizards cut their Eastern Conference first-round playoff deficit to 2-1.

“They came out and punched us,” Toronto coach Dwane Casey said. “And we allowed them to.”

**Bucks 116, Celtics 92:** Length and athleticism make Milwaukee a dangerous team with the ball.

When the Bucks defend the way they did on Friday night against visiting Boston, they’re nearly unstoppable.

Khris Middleton scored 23 points, Giannis Antetokounmpo added 19 and the Bucks used a dominating first half to overwhelm the Celtics, narrowing their deficit in the first-round playoff series to 2-1.

Eric Bledsoe and Jabari Parker each added 17 for the energized Bucks, who held the Celtics without a field goal for nearly an 11-minute stretch of

the first half.

Milwaukee found its defense after a disheartening 14-point loss in Game 2, getting contributions from up and down the roster.

“We realized how important this game was ... Everybody that played came in ready to go,” Antetokounmpo said.

Backup center Thon Maker scored 14 points and had five of the Bucks’ 12 blocks. Pesky guard Matthew Dellavedova, a veteran of a championship run with the Cleveland Cavaliers, helped hold young Celtics point guard Terry Rozier to nine points on 2-for-7 shooting.

The Bucks were the aggressors all night long.

“The activity, if you take the stat sheet out of it, the activity and the energy that we brought ... as you go through the game, that’s what you need, is the energy first,” coach Joe Prunty said.

Game 4 is Sunday in Milwaukee. The Celtics will need to get off to a much better start if they want to avoid going home with a 2-2 series tie.

# Avalanche stun Predators, stay alive

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Injuries left the Avalanche playing their backup to the backup goaltender while needing a victory to stave off elimination.

The goalie nicknamed the “Hamburglar” came through.

Andrew Hammond made a career-high 44 saves for his first postseason victory, and Colorado rallied to beat the Nashville Predators 2-1 on Friday night and sent the first-round series back to Denver for Game 6.

“Obviously, it was a lot of fun,” said Hammond, who was mobbed in the locker room. “We’re excited to have another game. We didn’t want this to be the last one of the season, and I think to a man, we all did whatever we could to make sure that wasn’t the case.”

This is the third time the Avalanche had trailed 3-1 in a series since moving to Colorado. They lost the first two but have a chance Sunday to push

the defending Western Conference champs to a seventh game after rallying with two goals in the final 4:11.

They also became the first to win a playoff game in regulation when trailing in the final 5:00 of the third since Chicago won at Boston in Game 6 of the 2013 Stanley Cup Final.

Gabriel Landeskog started the rally with his goal into an empty net with Nashville goalie Pekka Rinne caught outside the crease with his own teammate Ryan Ellis in his lap. Then Sven Andrighetto gave the Avs the lead off a rebound of a shot by J.T. Compher with 1:28 left that stunned a sold-out Nashville crowd that had expected to celebrate advancing to the second round.

“We’ve got a series again going home, and it’s going to be exciting,” Landeskog said. “As we talked about before tonight, just to win one. We don’t have to win three in one night.”

This was not only Hammond’s first playoff victory, it

was his first postseason start since April 17, 2015, with Ottawa and just the third of his career. He started only one game during the regular season after being traded to Colorado in November.

“You never know when you’re going to get a second chance,” Hammond said. “I’ve played two games basically since the start of January — at times it felt as though that day would never come again when you’re going to play again. You keep battling in practice, you stick to the process, when you get your chance, you’re ready.”

Colorado coach Jared Bednar said he loved Hammond’s demeanor since learning he would be starting.

“He’s waited a long time this year for this opportunity, and he’s making the most of it,” Bednar said.

The series winner will face Winnipeg in the second round.

Nick Bonino scored for Nashville.

This game was scoreless until

Bonino’s goal with 9:42 left, a big change for a series that had been the highest-scoring of the first round averaging 7.25 goals per game coming into Game 5.

The Predators peppered Hammond, and the only time Nashville beat him was when Mattias Ekholm’s shot bounced off his left pad and went in off Bonino’s right skate. The official on the spot immediately waved it off. Officials huddled, then reviewed the play.

During the review, fans sang “Let It Be” while holding up their cellphones with the flash on. Referee Kevin Pollock announced the call on the ice had been overturned, starting a long-awaited celebration.

The lead didn’t last long as the Avs rallied.

“It’s not like we didn’t have opportunities,” Nashville coach Peter Laviolette said. “They did a pretty good job in front of him. We had lots of looks, lots of opportunities. We couldn’t get in.”

## NHL playoffs roundup

# Jets shut out Wild to close out first-round series

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Minnesota Wild forward Eric Staal got right to the point.

“It couldn’t have gone any worse at the start for us, and it couldn’t have gone any better for them,” Staal said. “They got the momentum and ran with it, especially early.”

Jacob Trouba, Bryan Little, Brandon Tanev and Joel Armia scored in the first 11:59 to chase Minnesota goalie Devan Dubynk and the Winnipeg Jets beat the Wild 5-0 on Friday night to win a playoff series for the first time in franchise history.

Winnipeg will face the winner of the Nashville-Colorado series in the second round. Colorado beat Nashville 2-1 later Friday night to force Game 6.

Connor Hellebuyck made 30 saves for his second shutout of the series, and Mark Scheifele added a goal in the third to help the Jets finish off the Wild in five games.

“I guess I did my job, right?” Hellebuyck said with a chuckle. “I didn’t let any in. ... I thought the team was great in front of me. The guys’ details are fantastic. Any time you can get that many (goals) in the first period, that kind of sinks the other team, especially deep in a series like this. They definitely got this one early.”

The 30-year-old Little joined the Jets franchise in 2007-08 when it was based in Atlanta.

“Playing in Atlanta, I wasn’t sure I’d ever get to experience playing on a team like this and playing in a city like this, where hockey is loved this much,” said

Little, who tipped in a goal. “I just feel lucky to be a part of it.”

**Flyers 3, Penguins 2:** Sean Couturier’s long shot from the point got past Matt Murray with 1:17 left and visiting Philadelphia beat Pittsburgh to force a sixth game in the first-round series.

The Flyers cut the Penguins’ series lead to 3-2 going into Game 6 on Sunday in Philadelphia.

After missing Game 4 with a lower-body injury, Couturier extended his team’s season at least two more days by picking up his second goal of the series. Claude Giroux, Valtteri Filppula and Matt Read also scored for the Flyers. Michal Neuvirth stopped 30 shots, including a diving stop on the doorstep to deny Penguins star Sidney

Crosby shortly after Couturier’s knuckler put Philadelphia in front.

Jake Guentzel and Bryan Rust scored for the Penguins. Matt Murray made 21 saves but had no chance on Couturier’s winner as the puck found its way through a sea of players and into the net.

A series that figured to be taut instead started with four straight blowouts, most of them ending with the Flyers skating off the ice wondering what they needed to do to keep pace with cross-state rivals.

Philadelphia coach Dave Hakstol, perhaps fighting for his job, made his first significant change in an effort to keep his team’s season alive, giving Neuvirth his first playoff start in nearly two years.

## Nationals' Scherzer outduels Kershaw

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The Dodgers didn't make it easy on Max Scherzer. In the end, though, he was just better than Clayton Kershaw.

Scherzer allowed one run over six innings in the 13th all-time meeting of three-time Cy Young Award winners and the Washington Nationals beat Los Angeles 5-2 on Friday night.

Scherzer (4-1) scattered four hits, struck out nine and walked a season-high three in the first such matchup since 2006.

"Their lineup is tough and they present a lot of problems," he said. "But you don't measure yourself against the worst, you measure yourself against the best."

Kershaw (1-3) gave up four runs and nine hits in seven innings while striking out a season-low four against no walks. The left-hander started the 2009 season with the same record.

"Max limited the damage better than I did," Kershaw said. "Just not enough good pitches with runners in scoring position. When you're going against Max, it's going to be tough."

Washington improved to 7-3 on the road and ended the Dodgers' four-game winning streak.

The Nationals wasted no time in getting to Kershaw.

Trea Turner doubled on his first pitch — a 91 mph fastball — to open the game. After Howie Kendrick flied out, Bryce Harper banded an 87-mph, first-pitch slider into right field for an RBI single. He took second on Kershaw's wild pitch. Ryan Zimmerman followed with an RBI double to center for a 2-0 lead.

"I was ready to hit the first pitch," Zimmerman said. "The deeper you go into at bats with him, the harder it gets."

Kershaw retired 11 in a row after his messy start in front of 50,211 on an unseasonable 62-degree evening.

## Red Sox keep up winning ways

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Even with slugger J.D. Martinez getting a rare day off, the Boston Red Sox had more than enough power in their lineup to keep the best start in franchise history going.

Mitch Moreland hit a grand slam, Jackie Bradley Jr. added a three-run homer and the streaking Red Sox won their eighth in a row, beating the Oakland Athletics 7-3 on Friday night.

Boston extended the best start in the franchise's 118-year history, improving to a major league-leading 17-2. The Red Sox have won 17 of 18 since los-

ing to Tampa Bay on opening day.

"They're doing something special, let's be honest," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "There's a lot of people watching the team now and there's a lot of people talking about the team. You can't help it. You flip the channels and they're talking about what's going on."

Hundreds of Boston fans decked in red showed up at the Oakland Coliseum. They saw Moreland hit the fifth grand slam by the Red Sox this season — they didn't hit any last year.

Eduardo Nunez had three hits and scored while Hanley Ramirez singled twice for the

Red Sox.

Jed Lowrie matched his career high with four hits for Oakland. Lowrie, who doubled in a run in the first, leads the majors in hits (32) and RBIs (22). The A's had won four in a row.

Moreland homered on the first pitch from reliever Emilio Pagan in the sixth. Mookie Betts, Andrew Benintendi and Ramirez opened the inning with three consecutive singles off starter Kendall Graveman (0-4) before Moreland's towering shot to right.

This is the first time the Red Sox have hit five slams before May 1.

## Roundup

### Ross loses bid for Padres' first no-no in eighth

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Tyson Ross lost his bid to pitch the first no-hitter in the history of the San Diego Padres when rookie center fielder Franchy Cordero appeared to misplay a ball with two outs in the eighth inning of Friday night's 4-1 win over the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Playing their 7,835th game since joining the majors in 1969, the Padres again came agonizingly close to their first no-no. They remain the only team that has never thrown a no-hitter.

Ross had a 1-0 lead with two outs in the eighth when Christian Walker lined a drive to deep center. Cordero seemed to get a late break on the ball, then had it sail just over his outstretched glove for a double that made it 1-all. Ross was pulled after throwing a career-high 127 pitches.

**Mets 5, Braves 3 (12):** Yoenis Cespedes, who struck out in his previous four at-bats, hit a tiebreaking single with two outs in the 12th to lift visiting New York over Atlanta.

**Astros 10, White Sox 0:** Justin Verlander pitched six sparkling innings, Carlos Correa homered twice and Hous-

ton pounded host Chicago.

**Tigers 3-2, Royals 2-3 (10 innings, first game):** Detroit rookie first baseman Niko Goodrum dropped Jon Jay's grounder and then made a wild throw, allowing the tiebreaking run to score in the ninth inning as Kansas City snapped a nine-game losing streak, rallying past the host Tigers in the second game of a split doubleheader.

Detroit won the afternoon opener on a solo homer by Jacoby Jones in the 10th.

**Orioles 3, Indians 1:** Dylan Bundy pitched six innings of five-hit ball and struck out nine to secure his elusive first win of the season, and Baltimore beat visiting Cleveland to end a six-game losing streak.

**Cardinals 4, Reds 2:** Michael Wacha kept up his strong pitching against Cincinnati, as host St. Louis spoiled Jim Rigglesman's debut as interim manager.

**Blue Jays 8, Yankees 5:** Lourdes Gurriel Jr. made an impressive major league debut with two hits and three RBIs as visiting Toronto beat New York.

**Phillies 2, Pirates 1:** Odubel

Herrera hit a go-ahead triple in the eighth inning to lift host Phillies over Pittsburgh.

**Rays 8, Twins 7 (10):** Pinch-runner Johnny Field scored the winning run from second base in the 10th as reliever Zach Duke missed first base after taking a flip from Joe Mauer on Denard Span's two-out grounder, leading Tampa Bay past visiting Minnesota.

**Mariners 6, Rangers 2:** Jean Segura hit a two-run double in a four-run ninth inning, lifting visiting Seattle over Texas.

**Brewers 8, Marlins 0:** Ryan Braun and Travis Shaw hit back-to-back homers, helping host Milwaukee to a victory over Miami.

**Cubs 16, Rockies 5:** Javier Baez and Kyle Schwarber each had a homer and four RBIs, and visiting Chicago used a seven-run sixth inning to rout Colorado.

**Giants 8, Angels 1:** At Anaheim, Calif., Andrew McCutchen hit a towering, three-run homer, Mac Williamson slugged a two-run homer in his first big league game this season and Nick Hundley also connected in San Francisco's win against Los Angeles.