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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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N. Korea testing freeze puts ball in US court

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea's declaration that it will freeze nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests throws the ball in Washington's court as the sides prepare for a historic summit.

Diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis over the North's nuclear weapons program will be put to their first test Friday when North Korean leader Kim Jong Un meets with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in the heavily fortified border area.

That meeting is largely seen as a precursor to Kim's summit with President Donald Trump, expected in May or early June.

North Korea made its first move when it said it will stop test-firing intercontinental ballistic missiles and will dismantle its northeastern nuclear test site.

Experts noted the North can likely afford to take a break from testing after demonstrating alarming progress with dozens of missile launches and its sixth and most powerful nuclear test last year.

The moratorium also didn't mention short- to medium-range missiles that could target U.S. bases in South Korea and Japan.

And there was no mention of plans to cut its nuclear arsenal. Satellite images suggest the mountainous Punggye-ri nucle-

ar test site, where the North has conducted all six underground blasts since 2006, is already on the verge of collapse.

Kim pointed to his country's "miraculous victory" in developing nuclear weapons and said it was time to shift to economic development.

That was underscored by a resolution adopted by the central committee of the ruling Workers' Party on Friday promising not to use nuclear weapons unless faced with a nuclear threat or provocations itself.

"It's not a shift in policy at all," said Duyeon Kim, a senior visiting fellow with the Seoul-based Korean Peninsula Future Forum. "They're also basically declaring that they're

a nuclear power."

She said it was more likely a public relations ploy aimed at showing the regime is willing to compromise as it prepares to seek concessions in the upcoming talks.

"It's all part of his plan ... to try and wow Washington and the world and weaken Washington's demands before the summit," she said. "The North is going to play a tough negotiating hand with a lot of tricks and traps to try to get away with keeping its nuclear weapons."

Trump, Moon and the leaders of China and Japan welcomed the North's statement as a positive signal after weeks of official silence on the upcoming meetings.

Navy retires F/A-18C Hornet from combat

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

It's the end of an era for the Navy's F/A-18C Hornet as officials announced the jet's recently completed deployment aboard the USS Carl Vinson was its last.

The service recently told Stars and Stripes it no longer will use the jet in combat or regular deployments but will find other uses for the attack aircraft first deployed decades ago.

Though the three-month mission that ended March 12 was the Hornet's final full deployment, Strike Fighter Squadron 34 will fly the jets in the 25-nation Rim of the Pacific exercise this summer, said Lt. j.g. Emily Judstra, a Naval Air Forces Pacific Fleet spokeswoman.

After that, the Hornets mainly will be used in demonstrations and training with the Blue Angels, at the Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center and in reserve squadrons, she said.

The San Diego-based VFA-34 will be the last squadron to transition to the F/A-18E Super Hornets when it does so next February, Judstra said.

The Hornet's similar-looking successor, the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, will continue to be used in deployments and combat.

The Super Hornet, which was rolled out in 1999, is about 25 percent larger, with "increased maneuverability, range, payload and more powerful engines" than its predecessor, according to Boeing.

The F/A-18C's departure creates room for newer fighter jets on flight decks. The Navy's F-35C Lightning II is coming closer to operational status, completing fleet carrier qualifications last month.

The service said last fall that its version of the F-35 — which has drawn scrutiny over a predicted \$1 trillion-plus cost of operations over its expected 60-year life span — will reach initial operational capacity this year.

The Hornet's first C models entered active duty in 1987 and cost \$29 million each. In its earlier years, the jet "[broke] all records for tactical aircraft in availability, reliability and maintainability," the Navy said.

"The F/A-18 demonstrated its capabilities and versatility during Operation Desert Storm, shooting down enemy fighters

and subsequently bombing enemy targets with the same aircraft on the same mission," the Navy said.

Cmdr. Thomas Bodine, U.S. Navy Federal Executive Fellow to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, said the Hornet proved to be a "stalwart, front-line strike fighter for the Navy" over the years.

"The aircraft and her pilots have contributed to every major combat operation ranging from the 1998 Operation Desert Fox in Iraq to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan to the ongoing Operation Inherent Resolve in Syria and Iraq," Bodine said. "The [F/A-18C's] departure from the Navy's operational roster marks an end of an era."

While the Navy's Hornets have seen their final combat action, Bodine said the aircraft's impact will remain.

"Her legacy continues both within the [Marine Corps], whose F/A-18C/D Hornet squadrons are flying her with great precision and lethality, and through the Navy's FA-18E/F Super Hornet, which serves as the only operational strike fighter in the Navy's inventory," he said.

US soldiers shift focus of training for African troops

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

AGADECZ, Niger — The Nigerien troops, 250 miles from their higher headquarters in Agadez, were reluctant at first to call their commanders with information about the unfolding battle simulation.

During Flintlock 2018, the largest U.S. special operations exercise in Africa, a contingent of Green Berets aimed to eliminate that hesitancy.

“I think they realized they can give feedback back up to the headquarters to provide senior level commanders tactical guidance and vision of the battle,” said Capt. Neal, a detachment commander with the 3rd Special Forces Group who is identified by his first name only for security reasons. “This exercise definitely facilitated that conversation.”

Since 2005, U.S. special operations forces have been conducting the Flintlock exercise in western Africa. Yet this is the first year when the effort has focused on developing higher level command and control capabilities of the militaries in the region, where local forces are involved in a battle against militant groups that commanders say has gained momentum in recent years.

The transition from training centered on small-unit combat skills to advising higher level teams coincides with shifts in how missions involving U.S. troops in Niger will be conducted.

In the wake of an October ambush in the Nigerien village of Tongo Tongo, the risk U.S. forces face in isolated parts of Africa was brought into focus. Four U.S. soldiers were killed in the attack while on a joint patrol with local forces.

“The threat has been increasing since last fall, and Tongo Tongo was simply an indicator of that, and we have adjusted our activities accordingly,” said Special Operations Command Africa commander Maj. Gen. Marcus Hicks, who was in Niger to observe the Flintlock exercise. “We mitigate risk as we always do.”

Green Berets still conduct patrols with Nigerien forces. However, decisions on when to join Nigerien patrols are given more scrutiny now, Hicks said.

The larger aim is to help soldiers assigned to the new G-5 Sahel, a regional alliance, to be better prepared to fight groups that include al-Qaida and Islamic State affiliates.

“Any time a country can solve its own security issues or threats, that’s what you want and that’s what we are trying to help with,” Neal said.

3-D printer keeps F-35B flying during deployment

BY JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — State-of-the-art parts fabrication is keeping America’s most advanced stealth fighter in the air during its first deployment aboard the USS Wasp.

When a plastic bumper for a landing-gear door wore out this month on an F-35B Lightning II embarked on the amphibious assault ship, a 3-D printer was used to whip up a new one.

The Iwakuni-based jet from Fighter Attack Squadron 121 later flew successfully with the new part, a Marine statement said.

Called “additive manufacturing,” the process from Naval Air Systems Command allowed the Marines of Combat Logistics Battalion 31 to create the new bumper and to get it approved for use within days, the statement said. Otherwise, they would have had to replace the entire door assembly, which is expensive and time-consuming.

“While afloat, our motto is ‘fix it forward,’” Chief Warrant Officer 2 Daniel Rodriguez, CLB-31’s maintenance officer, said in the statement. “3-D printing is a great tool to make that happen.”

The Navy said parts created using the 3-D printer are only a temporary fix, but it kept the jet from being grounded while waiting for a replacement from stateside.

The printer has been used multiple times during the patrol, the Navy said, including to create a lens cap for a camera on a small, unmanned ground vehicle used by an explosive ordnance disposal team.

Templates for the parts will be uploaded to a Marine Corps-wide 3-D printing database to make them accessible to other units.

Navy’s anti-mine program moves forward

The San Diego Union-Tribune

The Navy announced Friday that it has taken another step forward in a \$34 million anti-mine program that relies on flying robots to help Marines hit the beach.

On April 6, the San Diego-based littoral combat ship Coronado successfully completed second-phase operational testing of the Coastal Battlefield Reconnaissance and Analysis system.

Scientists won’t have COBRA ready for service for at least four more years, but the Coronado’s crew proved they can deploy a drone from sea to a potentially hostile shore to ferret out lethal minefields before Marines

storm ashore, a milestone in a program that’s spanned three decades.

Testing by the Coronado’s crew on the highly classified COBRA system began on Feb. 22 and leaned on help from the “Blackjacks” of North Island-based Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 21 and Mine Countermeasure Detachment 6 out of Naval Base San Diego.

The Coronado returned four months ago from a tour of the Far East that began in mid-2016. It’s been tagged as a testing vessel to help the Navy develop the latest technology and tactics for the littoral combat ship’s three missions — hunting and killing enemy surface warships, anti-submarine warfare and

minesweeping.

What began as a Marine program in the 1990s was transferred to the Navy in 2004. Because it relied on incremental development of the latest technology, Pentagon planners divided it into blocks.

During Block I, COBRA was supposed to find unburied mines and obstacles on a beach during the day. Block II, at nighttime. Block III, at all hours, buried and unburied, in the sand and the surf.

The Navy hopes to have the Block II system working by 2022 but has set no deadline for implementing the Block III technology.

Admiral nixes Bible display probe

The San Diego Union-Tribune

Although the Navy vowed to probe complaints by the troops that Navy officials on Okinawa were trying to convert people to Christianity through a Vietnam War display, an admiral in San Diego nixed the investigation.

In a letter dated April 17 and mailed to New York attorney Donald G. Rehkopf Jr., San Diego-based Rear Adm. Paul D. Pearigen said that “neither further review nor an investigation of this matter is necessary.”

That contradicted a message sent to Rehkopf 10 days earlier by Navy Medicine West paralegal David Ostrander, who indicated that “we are investigating the matter now” and would have “more information to follow.”

Rehkopf represents the non-profit Military Religious Freedom Foundation.

On behalf of 26 servicemembers or Department of Defense civilian employees and their

families on Okinawa, the New Mexico-based foundation had filed a seven-page complaint alleging that military leaders had placed a Christian Bible on a Prisoner of War/ Missing in Action display inside U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, the Navy’s largest overseas hospital.

A placard on the “Missing Man” memorial told visitors in English and Japanese that the religious book “represents the strength gained through faith to sustain those lost from our country, founded one nation under God.”

Michael “Mikey” Weinstein, a former Air Force officer and the foundation’s founder, said most of the petitioners were Christian and also included Jews, Buddhists, Shintoists, nonbelievers and a person who followed a Native American faith.

In his letter, Pearigen, the Navy Medicine West commander, said the exhibit had been “part of the tradition and

custom of the military and the nation for many years.”

Pearigen reasoned that the Bible wasn’t the focal point of the display but was one of nine ceremonial items. As for the placard, Pearigen said it didn’t promote religion but instead recalled “the strength and resolve required of POWs and MIA personnel in the most difficult of times.”

When asked for comment for this story, Pearigen’s staff promised a statement this week.

Weinstein told the newspaper by telephone and email that his legal team has requested an investigation into Pearigen and his clinic by the Department of Defense’s inspector general.

“Rear Adm. Pearigen is horribly wrong on both the law and the attendant historical facts in this matter at hand,” Weinstein said. “Sadly, he appears to need a little history lesson about the origins of the POW/MIA table.”

Marines in training with Aussies

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps is learning to operate with Australia’s amphibious warships and will embed 40 logisticians on the HMAS Adelaide during summer’s Rim of the Pacific exercise in Hawaii, according to the commander of U.S. rotational forces Down Under.

The Marines’ annual six-month deployment to the Northern Territory, which got underway last month, includes nearly 1,600 Marines, eight MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft and an artillery battery of six M777 Howitzers.

Marine Rotational Force-Darwin commander Col. Jay Schnelle told Stars and Stripes in a phone interview Friday that his Marines will prepare for future operations on Australia’s landing helicopter dock ships, the HMAS Canberra and HMAS Adelaide.

Marine Corps Ospreys have already landed on the \$3 billion mini-aircraft carriers, which are capable of handling more than 1,000 troops, 100 vehicles and up to 18 helicopters.

The rotational force in Darwin is working toward embarking a company of Marines on the Australian amphib, Schnelle said.

“There’s preparation toward where we would have a portion of Marine Rotational Force-Darwin embarked on [a landing helicopter dock ship],” he said.

One of the vessels could eventually serve as a platform for a disaster-response drill involving U.S. and Australian forces, he added.

The Marines in Darwin will work with three Australian army brigades this year, Schnelle said. “There’s going to be an amphibious capability within each of their brigades.”

Amphibious forces could be key to victory in any conflict in the Western Pacific, where China is aggressively expanding its territory by occupying small islets, reclaiming land and building military facilities in the South China Sea.

Brunswick quick to thrive in drills

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

A Navy high-speed, shallow-draft transport ship is proving its worth this month during disaster-response drills in Southeast Asia, said the vessel’s British commander.

The USNS Brunswick has deployed to the region along with the hospital ship USNS Mercy for Pacific Partnership 2018, the Asia-Pacific’s largest humanitarian assistance and disaster-relief preparedness mission, which kicked off in February and runs through June.

The Brunswick is visiting Yap, Palau, Malaysia and Thailand, while the Mercy, which was recently in Indonesia, has scheduled stops in Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Vietnam. The ships are carrying servicemembers from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, along with personnel from Australia, Canada, France, Japan,

South Korea and the United Kingdom.

British Royal Navy Capt. Peter Olive, who is skippering the Brunswick and serving as Pacific Partnership’s deputy mission commander, told reporters during a teleconference this month that the uniquely designed transport ship’s speed makes it ideal for visits to far-flung Micronesian islands.

“She is a real friend of the Western Pacific,” he said.

Ships like the Brunswick, which was launched in May 2015, can travel up to 1,200 nautical miles at up to 45 knots carrying personnel, equipment and supplies, the Navy said.

The Brunswick replaced a similar ship, the USNS Fall River, which was slated to join this year’s Pacific Partnership until a pre-deployment inspection revealed the need for maintenance and repairs.

The Fall River visited Kuching — capital of the Malaysian

state of Sarawak on the island of Borneo — during last year’s Pacific Partnership mission. Getting there required the ship to enter a river and turn with limited space, U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia Kamala Lakhdir said during the teleconference.

“And so the presence of this different kind of vessel has expanded the reach and scope of Pacific Partnership,” she said. “That we are having both the Mercy and the Brunswick allows us greater flexibility in what we can do.”

The Mercy recently arrived at Port Klang, near the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur, and the Brunswick will be in Tawau on Borneo later this month.

The visits focus on military and civilian preparedness for a natural disaster, Lakhdir said.

“This exercise really supports Malaysia and the U.S. in their military relationship,” she said.

Man opens fire at Nashville Waffle House, killing 4

The Washington Post

Police are looking for a man who they said opened fire at a Waffle House restaurant near Nashville early Sunday morning, killing four and injuring several.

The man arrived at the restaurant just before 3:30 a.m. and shot two people outside with a rifle, killing them, Metro Nashville Police Department spokesman Don Aaron told reporters. The man then went inside and fired several more shots, killing a third person, Aaron said.

Police later identified the suspect as Travis Reinking, 29.

At one point, Aaron said, a customer saw the gunman struggling with the rifle and wrestled the weapon away from the suspect and tossed it across the counter. The shooter ran away, taking off a green jacket a short distance from the restaurant and apparently walking nude in the area.

Police said a man believed to be Reinking was last seen in a wooded area near an apartment complex less than a mile from the Waffle House. He was wearing black pants and no shirt.

A total of six people were shot, Aaron said. One of them — the

fourth fatality — later died at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Two others remain in critical condition at the medical center, hospital spokeswoman Jennifer Wetzel said.

Southern Hills Medical Center treated two other people associated with the shooting for minor injuries, and they have been released.

Police initially identified Reinking, of Morton, Ill., as a person of interest, but Aaron told reporters witnesses' description of the gunman matched Reinking's picture.

"No warrants have been issued, but I think it's safe to say that person of interest and suspect in this matter is synonymous," he said.

Police have not detailed a motive for the shooting. Investigators also do not know why the suspect was in the Nashville area, more than 400 miles from his hometown, or whether he has local ties. Aaron told reporters that investigators have reached out to Illinois law enforcement and have since learned that Reinking had been "known to associate with firearms."

Aaron said he did not have information yet on the identities of the victims or whether they were customers or employees.

Dozens killed when bomb targets voter registration center

By PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — A suicide bomber killed at least 57 people at a voter registration center in western Kabul on Sunday, officials said, the latest in a string of attacks seeking to curtail the country's upcoming parliamentary elections.

Public Health Ministry spokesman Wahid Majro said more than 100 others were wounded by the blast, claimed by Islamic State.

The group's AMAQ news agency did not name the attacker, who detonated himself in the predominantly Shiite Muslim neighborhood of Dasht-e-Barchi. ISIS often targets Shiites.

Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danish said the bomber approached the registration center on foot as people gathered to collect national identification cards. He said women and children were among the victims.

President Ashraf Ghani con-

demned the "heinous" attack on Twitter.

"I wish Allah's mercy upon those who martyred, speedy recovery to the wounded and convey my deep condolences to victims' families," he said.

The United Nations also expressed outrage at the bombing.

"Compounding the callous disregard for the lives of civilians, the killing appears to be part of a wholly unacceptable effort by extremists to deter Afghan citizens from carrying out their constitutional right to take part in elections," said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the U.N. Secretary-General's special representative for Afghanistan.

Security has been a major concern in the run-up to Afghanistan's long-delayed parliamentary elections, scheduled to be held in late October.

Voter registration began on April 14.

Since then, at least two other registration centers in different parts of the country have reportedly been targeted.

'Austin Powers' actor Verne Troyer dies at 49

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Verne Troyer, who played Dr. Evil's small, silent sidekick "Mini-Me" in the "Austin Powers" movie franchise, has died. He was 49.

A statement provided by Troyer's representatives that was also posted to his Instagram and Facebook accounts said the actor died Saturday.

No cause of death was given, but the statement describes Troyer as a "fighter" who was unable to overcome a recent bout of adversity then goes on to discuss depression and suicide.

"Over the years he's struggled and won, struggled and won, struggled and fought some more, but unfortunately this time was too much," the statement said.

"Depression and suicide are very serious issues. You never know what kind of battle someone is going through inside. Be kind to one another. And always know, it's never too late to reach out to someone for help."

Troyer became a celebrity and pop culture phenomenon after starring alongside Mike Myers as "Mini-Me," the tiny, hairless clone of villain Dr. Evil in two of the three "Austin Powers" films.

"Verne was the consummate profession-

al and a beacon of positivity for those of us who had the honor of working with him," Myers said in a statement. "It is a sad day, but I hope he is in a better place. He will be greatly missed."

Troyer appeared in 1999's "Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me" and 2002's "Austin Powers in Goldmember," in which "Mini-Me" switches sides and becomes a miniature version of Powers. Both hero and villain were played by Myers, who also put Troyer in his 2008 film "The Love Guru."

Troyer was born in 1969 in Sturgis, Mich., with achondroplasia, a genetic condition that kept him less than 3 feet tall.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Inmate faces 111 years after furlough

NM CLOVIS — A New Mexico inmate who was granted a brief furlough before an expected seven-year sentence now faces 111 years in prison after he, according to authorities, returned late after allegedly committing new crimes.

The Eastern New Mexico News reported Brandon Wagner, 33, was arraigned last week on new charges of shoplifting and aggravated assault. Those charges came after prosecutors said Wagner returned over 16 hours late to the Curry County jail following a March 27 plea conference.

A judge had granted a five-hour furlough, so Wagner could visit his family before being sentenced for identity theft and forgery convictions. According to prosecutors, during his furlough Wagner is accused of stealing \$5,000 in rings, trying to smuggle heroin into jail and attacking a health care worker.

Police: Man asleep in drive-thru had pills

MS GULFPORT — The drive-thru lane of a Sonic Drive-In is no place to fall asleep, particularly if drugs are in plain sight inside your car.

Police in Gulfport, Miss., said officers found Robert Ashton Kerns, 24, fast asleep in the passenger seat of his still-running car.

The Sun Herald of Biloxi reported Thursday on the criminal complaint of a federal drug task force. It said a smoking pipe and nearly 50 oxycodone pills were in plain view. A search turned up 302 oxycodone pills, 1,515 alprazolam pills and a Glock 9 mm pistol.

Kerns was arrested on drug trafficking charges.

Bus leaves for New York, goes to Toledo

OH CLEVELAND — Greyhound said it is investigating how a bus meant to take passengers from Cleveland to New York ended up in Toledo.

WEWS-TV reported that the bus left Cleveland several hours late on Thursday and was headed east through Pennsylvania when it started experiencing problems. The company said the driver was instructed to head back to Cleveland and get a new bus but instead drove about two hours past it, to Toledo. The driver then went back to Cleveland.

Passenger Morgan Staley said they spent about seven hours “just going in a circle.”

Owner posts personal ad for lovelorn goose

MS OCEAN SPRINGS — Lucy is a lover of long walks and a shared dinner of weeds, and she’s looking for love.

That’s according to an ad her owner placed on a Facebook page asking for possible gander suitors. Brandy Hall told The Sun Herald of Biloxi that she has taken it upon herself to find love for her pet Emden goose.

Lucy is currently enamored with Hall’s Great Pyrenees, but the dog isn’t very happy with the match. Hall said there haven’t been many serious responses to her post so far, though someone did ask how much Lucy would cost.

Town’s tornado sirens activated by hand

KS SOUTH HUTCHINSON — South Hutchinson authorities are warning residents not to rely on the city’s outdoor sirens to alert

them to violent weather.

The city’s police department said last week that the sirens cannot be activated remotely because of recent changes in the system.

The Wichita Eagle reported the sirens will be activated by hand by police, fire or city maintenance crews until scheduled updates are completed.

Emergency management officials said tornado sirens are meant to warn only those people who are outside. South Hutchinson police urged residents to be sure their weather radios are working and to download weather alert apps on their mobile devices.

Feds: Inmate tried to send bomb via phone

SC COLUMBIA — Authorities said a man serving 50 years in prison for killing his ex-wife’s father has been convicted of trying to send her a bomb through the mail by using a contraband cellphone.

Federal prosecutors said Michael Young Jr., 32, was convicted in a trial last week. He was charged with transport of an explosive with the intent to kill, conspiracy and other charges.

Authorities said Young wanted to keep his ex-wife from testifying in any potential new trial for killing Robert Bell, 49, in the parking lot of a Columbia mall in 2007. Police said Young was stalking his ex-wife and shot her and her father.

Prosecutors alleged that Young also ran a drug ring on his cellphone behind bars.

Police: Alert led man to ram, shoot at van

IA ALTOONA — Police in central Iowa arrested a Missouri man accused of ramming and firing shots at a van he mistakenly thought was in-

involved in an Amber alert.

The Des Moines Register said Matthew Golden, 41, of Kearney, Mo., called 911 just before 3 a.m. Tuesday after spotting a white van with Florida plates on Interstate 80 in Altoona. An Amber alert had been issued earlier for two Toronto, Iowa, children in a silver sedan with Illinois plates.

Police said Golden rammed the back of the van and fired two shots at it. Altoona Police Chief Greg Stallman said Golden ignored dispatchers’ commands to stop. The van’s driver, who also called 911, wasn’t hurt.

Police found Golden stripped to his underwear lying face-down in the road. Officers said he had two guns and 16 grams of marijuana. He’s charged with assault and other counts.

Mom: Preschool’s ban of ‘best friend’ is silly

MA GEORGETOWN — A Massachusetts family is looking for a new preschool for their daughter because her current school has barred use of the term “best friend.”

Christine Hartwell said her daughter, Julia, 4, appeared sad recently when she came home from the Pentucket Workshop Preschool in Georgetown. The little girl told her mother she was upset because her teacher told her she couldn’t call one of her classmates her “best friend.”

In a letter to the Hartwells they said, “It has been our experience ... that the use of the term ‘best friend,’ even when used in a loving way, can lead other children to feel excluded.”

Hartwell called the ban “outrageous” and “silly.” She said children should be allowed to speak from their heart.

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A's Manaea tosses no-hitter

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Sean Manaea might've been the only person at the Oakland Coliseum who didn't realize he was still working on a no-hitter.

After a dropped popup in the fifth inning, the Athletics lefty figured it was over.

"I didn't even think about it until I looked up in the seventh or eighth," Manaea said, "and I was like, 'Oh my God, why is there still a zero on there?'"

Because it was ruled an error. And because his shot at history remained intact.

Manaea became the first pitcher to throw a no-hitter against Boston in almost exactly 25 years, with an overturned call on the bases preserving the gem Saturday night in Oakland's 3-0 win over the streaking Red Sox.

Manaea struck out 10, walked two and threw 108 pitches to finish off Oakland's first no-no since Dallas Braden tossed a perfect game against Tampa Bay in 2010.

Manaea got Hanley Ramirez to ground out to complete the first no-hitter versus the Red Sox since Seattle's Chris Bosio did it April 22, 1993.

Boston looked as if it had a hit with two outs in

the sixth at the Oakland Coliseum. Andrew Benintendi hit a grounder to the right side, tried to dodge a tag by first baseman Matt Olson and was called safe.

Benintendi ran onto the grass in foul territory to get around Olson. The umpires then conferred and, without going to replay, ruled Benintendi was out for going wide of the baseline.

"Do I agree with it? No," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "It is what it is."

Said Benintendi, "It's just a missed call."

Sandy Leon reached in the Red Sox fifth when A's shortstop Marcus Semien ranged into shallow center field and dropped a popup trying to make an over-the-shoulder catch. The play was scored as an error.

In Manaea's mind, it was a single.

"I just thought it was a hit, so from there until the eighth or ninth, I thought it was just a one-hitter," Manaea said.

A few innings later, he noticed what everybody else already knew — no-hitter in progress.

"So after that, my adrenaline started pumping a little bit again, and I really wanted to finish this thing out," he said.

Pujols lifts Angels with hit No. 2,992

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — It took a milestone hit by Albert Pujols to give the Los Angeles Angels their first lead of the week.

Pujols drove a go-ahead, two-run homer into the seats in right-center in the sixth inning for career hit No. 2,992 and the Angels beat the San Francisco Giants 4-3 on Saturday night to snap an ugly four-game losing streak.

Mike Trout and Jefry Marte also went deep for the Angels, and Garrett Richards matched his career high with 11 strikeouts in six innings. The Giants struck out 17 times.

Pujols, 38, hit a no-doubt, opposite-field shot to right-center on an 0-1 pitch from lefty Derek Holland with one out in the sixth.

"I just got a good pitch up and away and went with it," said Pujols, who went 1-for-4 as the designated hitter. "I think I've been swinging the bat pretty well, making solid contact."

He needs eight hits to become the 32nd member of the 3,000-hit club.

"Right now, that's not my focus," Pujols said. "I'm telling you from my heart it is what it is. I really don't think about it. At the end of the day, it's not about my numbers; it's about helping this organization and helping this ballclub to win and that's my main goal every day."

His manager and teammates sure enjoyed the homer.

"It's a huge hit at the time," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He drove it the other way, which is a great sign for Albert."

Trout was waiting at the top step of the dugout to give Pujols a bro hug before the slugger began high-fiving teammates.

"We were all lit," Richards said. "We were all excited. It put us ahead. He really looked like Albert Pujols again. He's coming around. A lot of guys are coming around. Hopefully, we're coming out of this rut and can put together a good string of runs."

MLB Roundup

Braves rally, slide past Mets

Associated Press

ATLANTA — A pair of perfectly placed ground balls helped the Atlanta Braves pull off an unexpected win over the New York Mets.

Johan Camargo tripled home the tying run, then scored on Ender Inciarte's bunt single as the Atlanta Braves scored twice in the ninth inning off Mets closer Jeurys Familia to beat New York 4-3 Saturday night.

Astros 10, White Sox 1: Josh Reddick hit a grand slam and a solo homer, and visiting Houston pounded reeling Chicago.

Already struggling on the field — and especially on the mound — the White Sox were dealt another blow Saturday when they learned that reliever Danny Farquhar suffered a brain hemorrhage while collapsing in the dugout Friday.

Brewers 6, Marlins 5: Jesus Aguilar homered on the 13th pitch leading off the bottom of the ninth inning, and host Mil-

waukee rallied for its fifth consecutive win.

Indians 4, Orioles 0: Mike Clevinger pitched a two-hitter in his first career complete game, and visiting Cleveland hit three solo homers off Chris Tillman.

Yankees 9, Blue Jays 1: Aaron Judge hit an early homer off respected Twitter rival Marcus Stroman, then scored on a disputed play during a seven-run sixth inning that sent host New York over Toronto.

Diamondbacks 6, Padres 2: Zack Godley settled down after a shaky start to throw 5¹/₃ solid innings and singled home a run as Arizona beat San Diego.

Cardinals 4, Reds 3: Yadier Molina hit a tiebreaking home run in the seventh inning and rookie reliever Jordan Hicks got Scooter Gennett to ground into a game-ending double play with the bases loaded, lifting host St. Louis over Cincinnati.

Phillies 6, Pirates 2: Rhys Hoskins hit a go-ahead three-

run homer, Aaron Nola tossed seven impressive innings and host Philadelphia beat Pittsburgh.

Rockies 5, Cubs 2: Nolan Arenado had two hits to back six strong innings from Tyler Anderson and host Colorado used a big fifth inning to beat Chicago.

Rays 10, Twins 1: C.J. Cron hit a pair of two-run homers and Blake Snell won his third straight for host Tampa Bay.

Tigers 12, Royals 4: Nicholas Castellanos homered and drove in three runs, and host Detroit routed Kansas City.

Dodgers 4, Nationals 0: Joc Pederson, Kike Hernandez and Cody Bellinger all homered, and Hyun-Jin Ryu pitched seven innings of two-hit ball to lead Los Angeles.

Mariners 9, Rangers 7: Nelson Cruz homered for the 100th time at his former home, Robinson Cano hit a tiebreaking shot and visiting Seattle held on to beat Texas.

Davis dominates as Pelicans sweep Blazers

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Anthony Davis sat on the court, a scowl on his face and his biceps flexed on each side of his head.

The Pelicans All-Star had just converted a layup as he fell to the court after a hard foul. His strength-projecting celebration afterward was that of a franchise player determined to lay the foundation of his playoff legacy with a dominant performance in the clutch.

“In a close-out game and then the magnitude of the situation, this is probably the best game he’s played since I’ve been here,” Pelicans coach Alvin Gentry said. “He just was not going to let us lose.”

Davis scored 33 of his franchise playoff-record 47 points in the second half — including 12 points in the final five minutes — and New Orleans completed a first-round playoff sweep of the Portland Trail Blazers with a 131-123 victory on Saturday night.

“It was fun,” Davis said. “It was an amazing feeling for me to go out and sweep these guys and play the way that I played.”

And when Davis wasn’t devastating the Blazers, Jrue Holiday was giving Portland fits with explosive drives or pull-up jumpers. Holiday capped his 41-point night with an 18-footer that gave the Pelicans a six-point lead with 40 seconds left.

Rajon Rondo had 16 assists, and Davis also had 11 rebounds and three blocks for New Orleans, which is moving on to the second round of the playoffs for only the second time since the NBA returned to the

city 16 seasons ago.

Rondo has said he came to New Orleans to play with what he viewed as the best “Big Three” in the NBA — Davis, Holiday and DeMarcus Cousins. Misfortune struck Cousins in late January, when he was lost for the season to a left Achilles tear. Davis and Holiday had to raise their games, and have come through beyond expectations.

Portland never gave up, trimming a 15-point second-half deficit to a single point on Al-Farouq Aminu’s layup with 5:08 to go, but Davis responded with 12 points over the final 4:56, starting with a layup as he was fouled and a three-pointer. Holiday scored six points during the final 2:52, starting with his three-pointer. The pair combined for all but one of New Orleans’ points during that pivotal stretch.

“You put the ball in these two guys’ hands and they delivered for us,” Rondo said. “I couldn’t ask for a better duo right now, especially at the time of the game where we needed to get the ball in the hole.”

C.J. McCollum scored 38 for the Trail Blazers, who responded to a blowout loss in Game 3 by keeping Game 4 close until the final minute. Aminu scored 27, Damian Lillard added 19 points and Jusuf Nurkic had 18 points and 11 rebounds before fouling out.

The sweep represented a quick, unceremonious and somewhat surprising end to a season that saw the Blazers climb to third in the Western Conference on the strength of a recent 13-game winning streak. But Portland seemed to cool off shortly before the regular season ended, and never re-

gained peak form.

“It’s not how we envisioned it happening for us, especially getting home court,” Lillard said. “We just weren’t playing our best basketball like we had been during that stretch of 13 games. And then we come in here against a team that probably played their best stretch of basketball when they had to.”

Talking tough: Leading up to Game 4, Lillard spoke of the need for the Blazers to ramp up their intensity and physicality. From the tip, it looked as though they’d done so.

In stark contrast to Game 3, when New Orleans led by 18 in the first quarter, this game was tight and testy.

Anthony and Ed Davis received double technical fouls after bumping one another following one of Anthony Davis’ dunks — and that was just the beginning.

McCollum was called for a flagrant foul when he stormed into the lane behind E’Twaun Moore and grabbed the Pelicans guard by the shoulders to thwart a driving layup attempt. Moore then shoved McCollum and was assessed a technical foul.

And in the final seconds of the half, double technical were assessed to Rondo and Portland center Zach Collins after Rondo lowered his forehead into Collins’ chest and Collins shoved back.

“I live for those moments,” a grinning Rondo said. “I was trying to stay smart as far as not getting thrown out. ... We knew what kind of game it was, especially when Dame came out with the comments he made.”

Roundup

Sixers’ Simmons tallies triple-double in win over Heat

Associated Press

MIAMI — Ben Simmons had the first playoff triple-double by a rookie in nearly 40 years, JJ Redick scored 24 points and the Philadelphia 76ers outlasted the Miami Heat 106-102 on Saturday to move within a victory of the second round.

The 76ers lead the Eastern Conference series 3-1 and can close out the Heat when play resumes in Philadelphia on Tuesday night.

Simmons became the first rookie since Magic Johnson in 1980 to post a playoff triple-double — 17 points, 13 re-

bounds, 10 assists. Joel Embiid finished with 14 points and 12 rebounds for Philadelphia.

Timberwolves 121, Rockets 105: Jimmy Butler hit four three-pointers among his 28 points and Karl-Anthony Towns snapped back from a bad start to the series with 18 points and 16 rebounds, leading Minnesota past visiting Houston for its first postseason victory in 14 years.

Jeff Teague scored 23 points and Andrew Wiggins pitched in 20 points with another four three-pointers, helping the Timberwolves match the fire-away Rockets from behind the

arc and cruise down the stretch behind a 50 percent shooting performance.

Derrick Rose added 17 points off the bench for the Wolves, who will try to even the series with a win in Game 4 on Monday night.

James Harden led the way for Houston with 29 points. The Rockets went just 15-for-41 from three-point range.

Jazz 115, Thunder 102: Ricky Rubio had 26 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for Utah’s first playoff triple-double in 17 years, and Donovan Mitchell added 22 points to lead the host Jazz past Oklahoma

City for a 2-1 lead in their first-round series.

Joe Ingles, who had 21 points, made two three-pointers around two free throws to spark a 13-0 surge that ended on Mitchell’s three to put Utah up by 20 points in the fourth quarter.

Rubio’s triple-double was the first by a Jazz player in the postseason since John Stockton in the 2001 playoffs against Dallas.

Paul George scored 23 points and Carmelo Anthony, Russell Westbrook and Raymond Felton each had 14 for the Thunder.

NHL playoffs roundup

Backstrom lifts Caps with goal in OT

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Overtime came at the perfect time for the Washington Capitals.

Outshot, outskated and outplayed by the Columbus Blue Jackets in a lopsided third period of Game 5, the Capitals went into their locker room at intermission Saturday with no choice but to talk about what went wrong in blowing yet another lead.

“We knew we had to be better,” Nicklas Backstrom said.

Better they were in a dominant overtime that Backstrom ended 11:53 in with his second goal of the game to give Washington a 4-3 victory and a 3-2 lead over the Blue Jackets in the first-round series. Thanks to goaltender Braden Holtby making 15 of his 39 saves in the third period and Backstrom’s first two goals of these playoffs, the Metropolitan Division champions can close out Columbus on the road Monday in Game 6.

“I think we’ve always re-

grouped at intermissions and came back,” said Holtby, who has stopped 102 of 109 shots since replacing Philipp Grubauer in net two periods into Game 2. “It shows our confidence and our experience in a lot of areas.”

The playoff-tested Capitals took punch after punch when they were outshot 16-1 by the Blue Jackets in the third period, including Oliver Bjorkstrand’s deflection goal 2:30 in that tied it. Holtby made saves in quantity and quality, most notably on Columbus No. 1 center Pierre-Luc Dubois on a rebound and again on an attempt to bat the puck out of the air, to get to overtime for the fourth time in five games this series.

That’s when everything changed. Suddenly, two-time Vezina Trophy-winning goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky was besieged, having to stop Alex Ovechkin and John Carlson from point-blank range early in overtime.

“We just came out as a new

team,” Carlson said. “We’ve went out and attacked in every game that we’ve won. That was our mindset, and I think we played a great overtime.”

The road team won the first four games of a Stanley Cup playoff series for the fifth time over the past 10 years. Holtby’s 39 saves, including a big one on Bjorkstrand in overtime, made sure the home team won Game 5 for the fifth time.

“One of our best players, our goalie, was our best player again,” Washington forward Brett Connolly said. “He’s come in here and he’s played three amazing games. Kudos to him. He’s been great for us and we obviously need him to keep playing this way if we’re going to be successful.”

Lightning 3, Devils 1: Nikita Kucherov and host Tampa Bay Lightning are moving on in the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Kucherov scored his 27th career postseason goal and Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 26 shots as the top seed in the East-

ern Conference ended its first-round series in five games.

Mikhail Sergachev became the youngest player in Lightning history to score a playoff goal and Ryan Callahan, back in the lineup after missing the previous two games with an upper-body injury, sealed it with an empty-netter with 1.7 seconds remaining.

Maple Leafs 4, Bruins 3: Tyler Bozak and James van Riemsdyk scored 1:19 apart in the second period, and then Toronto killed off a 5-on-3 and three more power plays in a row to beat host Boston and avoid elimination.

Connor Brown and Andreas Johnsson each scored his first career playoff goal in the first period, and the Maple Leafs took a 4-1 lead to chase Tuukka Rask in the second. Toronto also led 4-1 in Game 7 of the teams’ 2013 playoff series before the Bruins won in overtime en route to their second Stanley Cup final berth in two years. This time, Boston cut the deficit to one goal but the Leafs held on.

Kyle Busch wins third straight Cup race

Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Kyle Busch raced to his third straight victory, celebrated, and then got yelled at by his boss.

Joe Gibbs, it seems, hadn’t seen Busch climb into the crowd to acknowledge what appeared to be friendly fan.

“You did?” Gibbs said. “Oh my gosh! You should not do that. You run a risk.”

For Busch, though, it seemed appropriate, coming at the end of a week marked by ample discussion of his dustup with Dale Earnhardt Jr. at Richmond a decade earlier. That race, many believe, is what cemented Busch’s reputation as NASCAR’s newest on-track villain.

“It was the 10-year anniversary of you know what,” Busch explained, and he could see fans wearing his gear.

On the track, Busch pulled away on a restart in a two-lap overtime sprint to the finish in NASCAR’s Cup Series.

Busch, who started 32nd but quickly

worked his way into contention, outran Chase Elliott and teammate Denny Hamlin for his fifth career victory at Richmond Raceway, the most among active drivers. The victory is his 46th overall and came from the deepest starting spot in the field of his career. It also is the deepest starting position for a winner at Richmond, surpassing Clint Bowyer, who started 31st in 2008.

The points leader also matched Kevin Harvick’s three-race winning streak from earlier in the season.

The race went more than 350 laps with the only cautions coming after stages one and two, both won by defending race champion Joey Logano, who finished fourth. It remained clean until Ryan Blaney and Ricky Stenhouse Jr. crashed on Lap 353, bringing out the first on-track yellow.

Busch took the lead after the next caution, brought out by the smoking car of Ryan Newman, when he was running sec-

ond to Truex heading onto pit road and got out first. He also beat Hamlin and Harvick off the line on a restart with six to go, and then never let anyone contend when the race went back to green for the final time on lap 400.

“The pit crew tonight, they won this race for us,” Busch said. “They got us off pit road first those last two times and got us where we needed to be.”

The three-race winning streak is the second of his career. The first came in 2015, when he won his only championship.

“I don’t know if you can shoot for four in a row,” he said. “It’s hard to go to Talladega with this much of a winning streak and think that you can get to Victory Lane.”

The end was a bitter pill for Truex, who ran up front all night. He and Busch were dueling after a restart with 23 laps to go, and after Busch pulled away, Truex seemed to be closing ground until a spin by David Ragan brought out the yellow.