

# STARS AND STRIPES<sup>®</sup>

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Hearing for VA nominee is postponed

BY NIKKI WENTLING

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Senate lawmakers postponed the confirmation hearing for Rear Adm. Ronny Jackson, the nominee for Department of Veterans Affairs secretary, amid an investigation into allegations of his conduct as White House physician.

Jackson was scheduled to face members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee on Wednesday afternoon, but media reports that surfaced Monday night cast doubt on whether the hearing would take place as planned. Jackson faces allegations of creating a hostile work environment as White House physician, overprescribing medications and drinking on the job, *The New York Times* reported.

Leaders of the Senate committee are taking the allega-

tions seriously.

In a letter to President Donald Trump on Tuesday, Sens. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., and Jon Tester, D-Mont., asked the White House to turn over a litany of information about Jackson. Their request includes any communication between the Defense Department and Office of Inspector General "regarding allegations or incidents" involving Jackson since 2006 — the year he became White House physician.

"We take very seriously our constitutional duty to thoroughly and carefully vet each nominee sent to the Senate for confirmation," Isakson, who is the committee chairman, and Tester, the committee's ranking Democrat, wrote in a joint statement. "We will continue looking into these serious allegations and have requested additional

information from the White House to enable the committee to conduct a full review."

The committee has not set a new date for the hearing.

Trump announced via Twitter on March 28 that he intended to nominate Jackson to lead the VA — an agency with more than 375,000 employees and a nearly \$200 billion budget. He was an unexpected choice and a relative unknown among the veterans community.

White House officials stood behind Jackson's nomination as critics expressed concerns about his lack of management experience. On Tuesday morning, they delivered another message of support for him.

"Admiral Jackson has been on the front lines of deadly combat and saved the lives of many others in service to this country," said Hogan Gidley, deputy

White House press secretary. "He's served as the physician to three presidents — Republican and Democrat — and been praised by them all. Admiral Jackson's record of strong, decisive leadership is exactly what's needed at the VA to ensure our veterans receive the benefits they deserve."

During the past week, Jackson met with lawmakers and veterans organizations in Washington, but many of them were looking to Wednesday's confirmation hearing to learn more about the nominee's experience and in what direction he planned to lead the VA.

The atmosphere going into the confirmation process stood in contrast to that of former VA Secretary David Shulkin, who had worked in VA leadership for more than a year before being nominated for the position.

## Chinese carrier group conducts live-fire drills

BY TYLER HLAVAC

*Stars and Stripes*

A Chinese carrier group conducted a series of live-fire drills Sunday in the East China Sea, part of the communist nation's latest show of military force in the region.

China's only operational aircraft carrier — the Liaoning — and an unspecified number of ships conducted anti-aircraft and anti-submarine warfare training that included detecting enemy aircraft with radar and launching jets and anti-aircraft missiles, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported Tuesday.

The vessels "successfully detected and dodged an attack range from enemy submarines," said the report, which

added the exercise was the latest in a series of military drills that have taken place over the past 10 days in the Western Pacific, including in the East and South China seas.

The People's Liberation Army Navy, which marked its 69th anniversary this week, has been showcasing its military capabilities recently, beginning last month with a carrier-led formation of nearly 40 ships in the South China Sea.

China has laid claim to a huge swatch of the sea, and has spent the past several years building up tiny islets and building military facilities, including airstrips, on them.

Earlier this month, the Liaoning and six other warships

conducted drills more than 200 miles south of Japan during which aircraft were launched, Japan's Defense Ministry said.

Chinese activity in the East China Sea has been an issue for Japan. Tokyo protested to Beijing in January after a submarine, presumed to be Chinese, was detected near Okinawa and the disputed Senkaku Islands — an uninhabited chain surrounded by resource-rich waters between Okinawa and Taiwan — that is claimed by both countries but is administered by Japan.

Vice Foreign Minister Shin-uke Sugiyama expressed "great concern" over the issue and urged China not to repeat the incursion.

The Liaoning is about 60 percent lighter and 30 meters shorter than the USS Ronald Reagan — the U.S. Navy's forward-deployed carrier in the Pacific — and carries about 24 fixed-wing aircraft, compared with the Reagan, which can handle more than 55, according to a Center for Strategic and International Studies analysis of the ship.

China's second aircraft carrier — the Shandong — is being prepared for its first sea trial, the *Global Times* reported last month. China's first aircraft carrier was intended to be used primarily for training and collecting data, while the second is "made for combat missions," an unidentified military expert told the *Global Times* in the report.

## At least 11 dead in attacks by Taliban

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A new wave of Taliban attacks across Afghanistan killed at least 11 Afghan soldiers and policemen on Tuesday, officials said, the latest in a particularly deadly week of assaults by militants.

At least five soldiers were killed when their checkpoint was attacked by the Taliban in western Farah province, according to Mohammad Naser Mehri, the provincial governor's spokesman.

Two soldiers were wounded in that attack, in the Bala Buluk district. Mehri said six Taliban fighters were killed and three others were wounded in the battle, which lasted several hours.

"Reinforcements have arrived and right now, the situation is under control," he added.

Earlier Tuesday, insurgents killed at least four police officers and wounded seven in Ghazni province. The Taliban there targeted the local police security post in the province's district of Jaghatu, said Arif Noori, spokesman for the provincial governor. He also said the gunbattle lasted several hours and that the Taliban used artillery and rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the Farah and Ghazni attacks.

# Report says airman to receive Medal of Honor

BY JAMES BOLINGER

Stars and Stripes

A combat controller killed in action in Afghanistan in 2002 is set to become the first airman awarded the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War, according to a national security news site.

Tech. Sgt. John Chapman will be awarded the medal posthumously later this year, Task & Purpose reported Friday, citing "sources familiar with the matter." Air Force officials told Stars and Stripes on Monday that they could not confirm the report.

"Chappy," as his teammates knew him, was one of two airmen awarded the Air Force Cross, the service's second-highest honor, for actions during the Battle of Roberts Ridge against al-Qaida fighters on a mountainside above Afghanistan's Shah-i-Kot Valley on March 4, 2002. The other was Senior Airman Jason Cunningham, a

pararescueman.

In 2005, the Navy named a cargo ship after Chapman, who fought alongside a SEAL team during the battle.

His award upgrade is based on analysis of video captured by a Predator drone and an AC-130 gunship over the battlefield, the Task & Purpose report said.

Chapman's Air Force Cross citation says he died while engaging an enemy machine gun; however, the aerial footage suggests he fought on, killing one enemy with a gunshot and another in hand-to-hand combat, the report said. When a quick reaction force of 35 Army Rangers arrived in helicopters, Chapman emerged from a bunker to provide cover fire before being gunned down by the enemy.

Chapman's family was told in March that his award had been upgraded to the Medal of Honor, the website reported.

## Vet receives penis, scrotum transplant in medical first

The Washington Post

An American veteran of the war in Afghanistan who had his genitals blown off by a roadside bomb is the recipient of a donated penis and scrotum that doctors hope will restore his ability to function normally after a 14-hour operation that doctors hailed as a medical first.

The veteran, who asked to remain anonymous for privacy-related reasons, received the tissue transplant from a team of 11 doctors — nine plastic surgeons and two urological surgeons — at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore in March. The procedure was the result of years of research, studies and cadaver work, giving doctors hope that if it proves successful, it could be used for injured veterans and other men with severe injuries to their genital regions.

"While extremity amputations are visible and resultant

disability obvious, some war injuries are hidden and their impact not widely appreciated by others," Dr. W.P. Andrew Lee told reporters, speaking of the "devastating impact" that injuries had on men's identity, self-esteem and intimate relationships.

Doctors said they hoped that the patient, who is expected to be released from the hospital this week, would regain "near-normal" urinary and sexual functions as he recovers and his nerves heal over the coming months.

"It's a real mind-boggling injury to suffer; it is not an easy one to accept," the patient said in a news release. "When I first woke up, I felt finally more normal."

The transplant included an entire penis, scrotum and partial abdominal wall from a donor, which made it distinct from the four other penis transplants, which included only the organ. Only a couple of the pro-

cedures have been successful.

For the transplant, the donor's testes were first removed because of what the doctors said were complicated ethical issues, in particular the potential ability to father children with another man's genetic material.

"There were too many unanswered ethical questions with that kind of transplant," Dr. Damon Cooney told reporters.

Another man who lost his penis to cancer was the recipient of a more limited transplant in Massachusetts two years ago, but he has yet to regain full sexual functioning, Curtis Cetrulo, who runs the reconstructive transplantation program at Massachusetts General, told USA Today.

The transplant Johns Hopkins did in March involved connecting blood vessels and nerves from the patient to the tissue material, including three arteries, four veins and two nerves, "to provide complete

blood transfusion and sensation," Dr. Richard Redett said.

The procedure, which was not covered by the patient's insurance, was estimated to have cost between \$300,000 and \$400,000, the majority of which was covered by the hospital.

Little information has been released about the donor, who was from New England, or his cause of death, though his family released a statement through New England Donor Services about the transplant.

"We are all very proud that our loved one was able to help a young man that served this country. We are so thankful to say that our loved one would be proud and honored to know he provided such a special gift to you," the family said. "Please know that this is truly a heartfelt statement, as we have several veterans in the family. We hope you can return to better health very soon and we continue to wish you a speedy recovery."

# Mattis optimistic about N. Korea's nuclear pledge

BY COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Jim Mattis expressed optimism Monday about North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's promise to cease testing long-range missiles and nuclear weapons ahead of his expected upcoming summits with the presidents of South Korea and the United States.

"Right now, I think there is a lot of reasons for optimism that the negotiations will be fruitful, and we'll see," Mattis said Monday in response to a reporter's question just before he met with Thai Defense Minister Prawit Wongsuwan at the Pentagon.

The defense secretary did not further elaborate on the issue. Earlier Monday, Pentagon officials declined to respond to questions about Kim's announcement on April 20 that he would suspend his nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missile programs to focus on economic development.

Some Pentagon officials have privately expressed skepticism about Kim's sincerity, noting North Korea's long history of failing to live up to deals negotiated with the United States, including accords struck by the administrations of former Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

Kim is set to meet Friday with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in the heavily fortified

border area between their two countries. Kim is also expected to meet in late May or early June with President Donald Trump.

Trump expressed optimism about Kim's announcement via Twitter, noting on April 20 "progress being made" and writing Sunday, in a tweet that also disparaged an NBC News anchor, that "we haven't given up anything & they have agreed to denuclearization (so great for World), site closure, & no more testing!"

North Korea has not publicly announced that it is willing to give up its nuclear weapons stockpiles or that the topic is one that they would consider discussing. South Korean officials have said denuclearization would be discussed when Kim and Moon meet.

The United States maintains its long-held goal "for the complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," said Army Col. Rob Manning, a Pentagon spokesman.

White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Monday that the United States is not convinced Kim is ready to part with his weapons programs. But like Mattis, she expressed optimism.

"We're not naive in this process," she told reporters. "We've seen some steps in the right direction but we have a long way to go."

# Army cuts some mandatory training, other requirements

BY CHAD GARLAND  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Army is eliminating on-line training programs and a leave planning requirement as part of a broader push to reduce tasks that take away from time spent on combat readiness.

Army Secretary Mark Esper ended three online mandates this month: media awareness, Combating Trafficking in Persons and the accident avoidance course. He also lifted several requirements related to unit safety programs and inspections.

Esper and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley said in an April 13 memo that mandatory training cannot be available only in online formats and that web-based instruction is not a substitute for training conducted by leaders.

Commanders are free to make "prudent risk-informed decisions" to cut tasks that don't involve combat, the first of four related memos said.

The memos eliminated some headquarters-level requirements, such as the use of the Travel Risk Planning System, or TRiPS.

Esper and Milley cited TRiPS as a "burdensome requirement" that "unnecessarily weighs down our Army from focusing on its core mission." A leave form and safety briefing should be sufficient, they said.

TRiPS travel risk assessments were among the documents many soldiers had to

submit when requesting leave, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Brent Ely, a helicopter pilot trainer deployed to Kandahar Air Field told Stars and Stripes earlier this year.

In all, eight documents were required to take leave in the States, four times the paperwork he had to file to fly missions over the largely Taliban-controlled Kandahar province.

The streamlining is an "encouraging development," said Leonard Wong, a professor at the Army War College and a retired Army officer. Wong co-authored a 2015 study that found a widespread trend of Army officers "fudging" or "pencil whipping" tasks or reports, often because they had too many requirements and insufficient time to complete them.

Senior leaders seem to now be pushing back against a bureaucracy that has gradually expanded at the expense of military professionalism, Wong said.

The Army directives also called on commands to nix any requirement for subordinates to generate reports related to soldier records and proficiencies. Instead, it said commands would rely on existing Army data systems.

Esper and Milley also called on commands to make leaders aware of earlier policy changes meant to reduce the burdens many units face.

# Close panel vote on Pompeo moves nomination ahead

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Mike Pompeo, President Donald Trump's choice for secretary of state, avoided a rare rebuke Monday as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee narrowly

recommended him, but the vote served as a warning shot to the White House as nominees to lead the CIA and Veterans Affairs are hitting stiff resistance.

Pompeo, who's now CIA di-

rector, received the panel's approval only after Trump's last-minute overtures to Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky. Pompeo's nomination now goes to the full Senate, where votes are tallying in his favor and Senate Ma-

jority Leader Mitch McConnell said he looks forward to voting to confirm him later this week.

Trump has been quick to fire his top Cabinet secretaries, but the Senate has not been so fast to confirm replacements.

# Eatery shooting suspect found armed in woods

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Without knowing who he was or what he might do, police briefly had Travis Reinking in their sights days before the deadly assault on a Waffle House restaurant.

Alerted to the theft of a BMW from a car dealer last week, officers decided against a risky police chase, knowing the car had a GPS device and could soon be located.

Sure enough, the car was recovered the same day, outside Reinking's apartment. But police didn't figure out who stole it until Sunday, after the Waffle House attack. By then, police say, the 29-year-old with a troubled past used an assault weapon — the same AR-15 once seized from him at the FBI's request — to kill four people and wound four others.

Reinking escaped on foot from the restaurant after a quick-thinking customer wrestled the gun from his grasp, and he shed the only item of clothing he was wearing, a green jacket. By the time he was captured

in the woods nearby, police had searched his apartment and found the key fob to the stolen BMW.

Nashville Police Department Lt. Carlos Lara told reporters that a detective was tipped to the suspect's presence by some construction workers and confronted Reinking, who lay down on the ground to be handcuffed. He carried a black backpack with a silver semi-automatic weapon and .45-caliber ammunition.

The arrest ended a 24-hour manhunt involving more than 160 law enforcement officers, but it left troubling unanswered questions about official responses to months of bizarre behavior before the restaurant attack, including encounters with police in Illinois and Colorado and an arrest at the White House that raised red flags.

Reinking was not armed in July when he entered a restricted area near the White House, but at the FBI's request, Illinois police revoked his state firearms card and seized four guns from him, including the AR-15 used in the shootings.

But Tazewell County Sheriff Robert Huston said deputies eventually returned the guns to Reinking's father on the promise he would "keep the weapons secure and out of the possession of Travis." Don Aaron, a Nashville Police spokesman, said Reinking's father "has now acknowledged giving them back" to his son. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives special Agent Marcus Watson said Monday that his father's action is "potentially a violation of federal law."

Police said about 20 customers were in the restaurant when Reinking opened fire. The first victims were Taurean Sanderlin, 29, of Goodlettsville, and Joe Perez, 20, of Nashville, shot down in the parking lot. Sanderlin was an employee at the restaurant.

DeEbony Groves, 21, a student at Nashville's Belmont University, and Akilah Dasilva, 23, a rap artist and music video producer, were killed inside the restaurant before customer James Shaw Jr. grabbed the hot muzzle of the assault weapon and wrestled it away.

## Court rules for human in copyright fight over selfie taken by monkey

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A U.S. appeals court on Monday favored humans over animals in a novel copyright lawsuit filed over a series of entertaining selfies taken by a monkey with a toothy grin.

U.S. copyright law does not allow lawsuits that seek to give animals the rights to photographs or other original work, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled.

The three-judge panel unanimously upheld a lower court ruling that dismissed the lawsuit by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals against a photographer whose camera was used by a crested macaque to take the photos in 2011.

PETA's 2015 suit against wildlife photographer David Slater sought financial control of the photographs — including a now-famous selfie of the monkey grinning — for the benefit of the animal named Naruto.

Jeff Kerr, general counsel for PETA, said the group was reviewing the opinion and had not decided yet whether it would appeal.

The court ruled Slater was entitled to attorneys' fees in the case and sent it back to the district court to determine the amount.

Slater, 53, who lives in the United Kingdom, said the attorneys' fees were welcome after the case took a toll financially and emotionally.

In a separate opinion in the selfie case, 9th Circuit Judge N. Randy Smith called PETA's lawsuit "frivolous" and said he would not have ruled on the merits of the copyright claim but would have dismissed the case on other grounds.

Naruto snapped the photos while Slater was on a trip to Sulawesi, Indonesia. Slater later argued that his company, Wildlife Personalities Ltd., owned worldwide commercial rights to the photos.

## Toronto van attack kills 10 pedestrians

Associated Press

TORONTO — A 25-year-old who plowed a van into a crowded Toronto sidewalk was ordered held Tuesday on 10 counts of murder and 13 of attempted murder as Canadian authorities.

Alek Minassian showed little overt emotion as he made a brief appearance in a Toronto courtroom in a white jumpsuit and handcuffs. The judge ordered him detained without bond and scheduled the next hearing for May 10.

Meanwhile, about 20 officers made their way down the van's deadly path on Yonge Street searching for any evidence.

"It was like he was playing a video game, trying to kill as many people as possible," said Panna Patel, 42, who stopped by the memorial and had been at the scene a day earlier, getting cash from an ATM as it occurred. "He was looking people directly in the eye, making eye contact, it was so scary. He wasn't remorseful at all."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau dismissed the possibility of terrorism, saying that authorities see no national security element in the case.

Authorities so far had not disclosed a possible motive or cause, though "the incident definitely looked deliberate," Police Chief Mark Saunders told reporters at a late-night news conference.

Saunders said Minassian, who lives in the Toronto suburb of Richmond Hill, had not been known to police previously.

Authorities released few details in the case, saying the investigation was still underway.

Ali Shaker, who was driving near the van at the time, told Canadian broadcast outlet CP24 that the driver appeared to be moving deliberately through the crowd at more than 30 mph.

"He just went on the sidewalk," a distraught Shaker said. "He just started hitting everybody, man. He hit every single person on the sidewalk. Anybody in his way he would hit."

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Spray-painted tortoise cleaned up, healing

**FL** MONTVERDE — The spray-painted Florida tortoise who became an Internet sensation last week is back to its normal color.

The tortoise was completely covered in red spray paint and the animal's limbs were covered in concrete. The people who found the tortoise took it to an animal rehabilitation facility. The director said he's sleeping soundly and curious about his new environment.

Tortoises are cold-blooded animals that use their shells to control their body temperatures. A layer of paint can severely obstruct that ability.

## Strip club agrees to replace racy billboard

**CT** TOLLAND — The owner of a Connecticut adult entertainment club has agreed to replace a risqué billboard along an interstate.

The Journal Inquirer of Manchester first reported on the billboard for the Electric Blue Cafe in Tolland, which features two scantily clad dancers.

Tolland Town Manager Steven Werbner said several residents and commuters complained about the billboard on Interstate 84.

Werbner said he's aware of the club's First Amendment rights and knew he probably could not force the club to take down the billboard so he wrote owner Ken Denning, asking him to change it voluntarily. Denning agreed.

## Drugged snacks at schools sicken 6

**MD** SPRINGDALE — Maryland police said six students at two high schools reported feeling sick after eat-

ing spiked brownies last week.

News outlets reported one of the students at Charles H. Flowers High School was hospitalized and three others were assessed after eating brownies that may have contained synthetic marijuana. Prince George's County Police are investigating this incident, which happened on Friday.

WTOP reported that two days earlier, a 15-year-old Maryland girl was charged with selling brownies that may have contained THC/CBG, a component of marijuana. The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office said those brownies caused two students at Great Mills High School to be hospitalized.

## Authorities seek nude beachgoer in assault

**OR** PORTLAND — Oregon State Police are investigating after a man told law enforcement officials he was held down and punched several times by a nude man upset that the reputed victim's dog was not on a leash at a clothing-optional beach.

Oregon State Police announced on Sunday they are asking for the public's help in identifying the suspect. The incident took place Thursday at Collins Beach, a privately owned nude beach near the Sauvie Island Wildlife Area.

Police said the incident resulted in "visible injury" for the victim, who was not identified.

Police said they believe the suspect is a regular at the beach and reportedly has accosted others about dogs not on their leashes.

## Police: Man punched girl, knocking her out

**FL** ST. PETERSBURG — Authorities said a man walked into a Florida gas station and punched a 13-year-old

stranger unconscious.

Hillsborough County sheriff's officials said the girl was inside a convenience store Saturday afternoon while her parents pumped gas outside. They alleged that Kolbe Smith walked into the store and punched the girl in the face, causing her to fall to the ground. Authorities said Smith was not provoked and didn't know the girl.

Several citizens stood outside the store and detained Smith until deputies arrived. Authorities said Smith, 27, repeatedly resisted arrest so they deployed a Taser. They said he later admitted he was on LSD.

## Intentional collision, carjacking probed

**DE** BEAR — Delaware State Police are investigating a carjacking set up by an intentional motor vehicle crash.

Authorities said the incident happened the night of April 18 on state Route 71 in Bear when a woman's car was rammed from behind by another vehicle.

After both drivers pulled over and got out of their cars, the suspect entered the woman's car and drove off. A second suspect, who was a passenger in the striking vehicle, then moved to the driver's seat and drove off in that car.

## Squirrel wins Berkeley student senate seat

**CA** BERKELEY — The University of California, Berkeley has elected a squirrel to its student senate.

The Sacramento Bee reported "Furry Boi" was named on April 13 to the Associated Students of the University of California Senate.

The squirrel initially took the form of a critter living among campus trees, running on platforms such as easier acorn

access. The man behind the campaign, sophomore Stephen Boyle, posted his real intentions and policy platforms Monday to Facebook.

Boyle, who at times wore a squirrel costume, said he is focused on issues such as environmentalism, disabilities and mental illness.

## Man gets 50 years for \$1.2M theft of fajitas

**TX** BROWNSVILLE — A Texas man has been sentenced to 50 years in prison for stealing \$1.2 million worth of fajitas over nine years.

Gilberto Escamilla, 53, was sentenced Friday after pleading guilty to theft by a public servant. Escamilla had been intercepting fajitas that he ordered through the Cameron County juvenile center where he worked and delivering them to his own customers.

His scam was uncovered when he missed work for a medical appointment and a fajita delivery arrived at the center, which doesn't serve fajitas.

## Man jailed in sale of black rhino horn

**LA** LAKE CHARLES — A Louisiana man was sentenced to six months in prison for selling a stolen black rhinoceros horn to undercover federal agents, according to court records.

U.S. District Judge Donald Walter also sentenced Patrick Dylan Drawl, 31, of Lake Charles, to one year of supervised release after his prison term ends.

Drawl pleaded guilty in December to violating the federal Lacey Act, a charge that carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# 76ers' lineup makes them global threat

Associated Press

MIAMI — Philadelphia's six leading average scorers so far in the playoffs, in order are Ben Simmons, Dario Saric, Joel Embiid, JJ Redick, Marco Belinelli and Ersan Ilyasova.

Their homelands: Australia, Croatia, Cameroon, the United States, Italy and Turkey.

Philadelphia — a melting pot of humanity for more than 300 years — has a basketball team probably as diverse as the city itself. The 76ers, 19-1 in their last 20 games and suddenly looking very much like an NBA Finals contender, will try to close out the Miami Heat and clinch their Eastern Conference opening series when they play host to Game 5 on Tuesday night.

About a dozen languages and dialects can be spoken in the locker room at any time, but clearly, winning is a universal language.

"It's all basketball, but the true side of how people coach, speak, say, play the game is different," 76ers coach Brett Brown said. "And that collection

now that I have with everybody is like is a melting pot of all people's experiences. That equals a team. I mean, I love it. I love the geopolitical conversations. I love that diversity on the court, off the court. I enjoy it."

There might be no coach better-suited for this particular gig than Brown, too.

He spent nearly two decades living overseas, spending most of that time coaching in Australia before getting hired by the San Antonio Spurs — another franchise that has found championship ingredients from all over the world — back in 2002. Brown went to Philadelphia in 2013, took loss after loss after loss for his first four seasons when The Process was playing itself out, and now is reaping the rewards.

The 76ers are young. They're brash. They're fearless. And they're legit.

"A lot of the guys growing up overseas, we have that European style of play," Simmons said. "It's a lot different than the U.S. style."

Simmons is still a kid, in the

NBA sense. He's 21. But he's already seen the world with a basketball in hand. He's played all over Australia, represented his country in Lithuania at the FIBA World U17 Championships as a 15-year-old, ended up going to high school in Florida and spent his lone year of college at LSU.

"I've seen a lot," Simmons said. "I've played everywhere."

The poise shows, with the rookie shining in his first playoffs.

Embiid, also in his first playoffs and with a mask protecting his surgically repaired face, has handled playing injured with ease. Belinelli has been a steadying force since he got to Philadelphia two months ago. Saric has been doing things in these playoffs that can draw comparisons to what that countrymen Drazen Petrovic and Peja Stojakovic did before him. Ilyasova has been a key player for Philadelphia since getting rescued from Atlanta in February.

They all think differently, many learned the game differ-

ently, and the backgrounds are wildly different.

But it works.

A record 62 players from 33 countries were on playoff rosters across the NBA this season, and no one had more of them than Philadelphia — the 76ers have seven international guys with them for the post-season, matching Utah for the league lead.

"My English isn't that good, Dario's isn't that good, but we try to be a great group," Belinelli said. "And we are. We go to dinner all together, we spend a lot of time together in the locker room after practice. It's just part of the work, I think. Having all these guys from different parts of the world, it's a good thing."

Brown, a coach in three Olympics, couldn't agree more.

"This global instinct and sort of global feeling that we have in Philadelphia interests me very much," Brown said. "I embrace it. For me, it's another layer of why I enjoy coaching this team."

## NBA roundup

# Jazz rout Thunder to take 3-1 series lead

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Shutting down the Utah Jazz offense is proving easier said than done for the Oklahoma City Thunder.

For a second straight game, a late second-quarter surge by Utah carried over into the second half and it allowed the Jazz to pull away for a 113-96 victory Monday night. The Jazz used a 20-3 run spanning the end of the second quarter and the start of the third to break open the game.

Utah takes a 3-1 series lead back to Oklahoma City. Game 5 in the best-of-seven playoff is Wednesday night.

Donovan Mitchell had 33 points and seven rebounds to lead the Jazz to their third

straight win in the series. Joe Ingles added 20 points, hitting five three-pointers.

Mitchell's willingness to attack the rim put the Thunder on their heels throughout the second half.

"He's done a good job of getting in there and finishing or dropping it off," Jazz coach Quin Snyder said. "It's an important part of what we do. He's our most dynamic offensive player."

Rudy Gobert added 16 points and 10 rebounds. Ricky Rubio chipped in 13 points, eight assists and six boards. Derrick Favors also scored 13.

Paul George had 32 points and Russell Westbrook added 23 points and 14 rebounds to lead the Thunder, who shot 39 percent from the field.

"I thought we played downhill a lot more," coach Billy Donovan said. "I thought we were at the rim a lot more. From there, we probably missed some opportunities to move the ball. I thought our ball movement was sporadic and sometimes it was very good."

The Thunder opened a 26-19 lead late in the first quarter when Carmelo Anthony capped a string of three straight Oklahoma City baskets with an alley-oop layup. They held onto the lead for much of the second quarter until Utah finally woke up on offense.

**Rockets 119, Timberwolves 100:** James Harden gave Houston quite the jump-start with 22 of the team's 50 points in the third quarter as the Rockets cruised past Minnesota Tim-

berwolves to take a 3-1 lead in their first-round playoff series.

Chris Paul scored 15 of his 25 points in the near-record third for the Rockets, who turned a 50-49 halftime edge into a 31-point advantage after the torrid 12-minute span. The only team in the history of the NBA playoffs with more points in one quarter was the Los Angeles Lakers, who scored 51 points in the fourth on March 31, 1962, in a loss to the Detroit Pistons.

Clint Capela added 14 points and 17 rebounds and Eric Gordon finally got going with 18 points off the bench.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 22 points and 15 rebounds for the Timberwolves, who were dominated on both ends of the floor during the decisive third.

# Red Sox, Nats on track to pay luxury tax

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Boston Red Sox and Washington Nationals are the only teams on track to pay baseball's luxury tax this year, according to opening-day payroll totals compiled by Major League Baseball and obtained by The Associated Press.

Boston's payroll at the start of the season for purposes of the tax was \$233.9 million, which would cause the Red Sox to pay a \$9.4 million tax. Washington's payroll was \$201 million, which would result in a tax of \$1.2 million.

San Francisco was just below the \$197 million tax threshold at \$196.66 million. The Giants were followed by the Chicago Cubs at \$183.9 million, Houston at \$182.4 million, the Los Angeles Dodgers at \$181.99 million and the New York Yankees at \$178.8 million.

New York was over the threshold from 2003-17, paying \$341 million. The Dodgers have had the highest tax bill for the past four seasons and have paid nearly \$150 million over the last five years.

By not paying tax this year, the Yankees and Dodgers would reset their base tax

rates in 2018 from 50 percent to 20 percent of the amount over next year's threshold of \$206 million. That would put them in better position heading into a free-agent class that includes Bryce Harper, Manny Machado, Josh Donaldson and potentially Clayton Kershaw, who has the right to opt out of his deal with the Dodgers.

Boston's base tax rate was 30 percent in 2016 but reset to 20 percent because the Red Sox dropped under the threshold last year. Under the surtax rules in the collective bargaining agreement that began last year, the rate for the Red

Sox rises to 32 percent on the amount above \$217 million this year, and the rate would rise to 62.5 percent on any amount above \$237 million.

Because Washington paid tax last year, the Nationals' base rate is 30 percent and would rise to 42 percent on any amount above \$237 million.

Luxury tax payrolls are based on the average annual values of contracts of all players on 40-man rosters and include \$14,044,600 in benefits. End-of-season totals also will include earned bonuses plus reflect roster changes made throughout the season.

## MLB roundup

# Skaggs dazzles, helps Angels shut out Astros

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Los Angeles manager Mike Scioscia called Martin Maldonado the star of the game on the defensive side.

Maldonado threw out Yuli Gurriel at third base to end the game after an original safe call was reversed on replay, giving the Angels a big 2-0 win Monday night over a division rival that ended the Houston Astros' six-game winning streak.

Gurriel singled off Keynan Middleton leading off the ninth inning. Alex Bregman then walked. After a pair of strikeouts, Middleton threw a slider in the dirt to Max Stassi that bounced off Maldonado's leg toward third base. The catcher pounced on the ball and threw to third where Luis Valbuena tagged Gurriel, who slid head first. Umpire Cory Blaser signaled safe. After the replay was shown on the video board, fans started filing out even before the out call was given about 90 seconds after the tag. Middleton earned his sixth save.

On Sunday, Blaser called Colorado's Nolan Arenado safe at home plate trying to advance on Brandon Morrow's bases-loaded slider in the dirt

at Wrigley Field. That call was then reversed on replay for the final out in the Chicago Cubs' 9-7 win.

Astros manager A.J. Hinch said Maldonado is the reigning American League Gold Glove Award winner for a reason.

"It's a tough way to end the game, but I can't fault Yuli for trying to be aggressive," Hinch said. "It's a result-oriented decision, right? We love it when it happens and it's second and third and we have a pitch where a bloop single, a sharp single, a ball in the gap, and we score two and we tie the game we're probably still playing right now."

"So, when it doesn't go that way, it can be frustrating because the game ends without an out being recorded by the hitter. But I certainly think Yuli basically got caught in a situation where their guy made an exceptional play and ended the game."

Tyler Skaggs (3-1) allowed four hits in seven innings as Houston struggled to make solid contact against his off-speed pitches, especially his changeup. The Astros had outscored the White Sox 27-2 to

complete a three-game sweep over the weekend.

**Yankees 14, Twins 1:** Streaking rookie Miguel Andujar homered and doubled to extend his barrage of extra-base hits, Didi Gregorius had a grand slam and host New York hammered Minnesota for its first three-game winning streak under new manager Aaron Boone.

Slumping slugger Giancarlo Stanton homered in going 4-for-4.

**Dodgers 2, Marlins 1:** Cody Bellinger drove in the go-ahead run with a sacrifice fly in the eighth, prized prospect Walker Buehler tossed five scoreless innings in his first major league start and host Los Angeles defeated Miami.

Buehler topped out at 99 mph while allowing four hits in an 89-pitch outing. The 23-year-old right-hander struck out five and walked three in helping the Dodgers (11-10) move above .500 for the first time this season with their third straight win.

**Giants 4, Nationals 2:** Mac Williamson hit a two-run homer to lead Chris Stratton and host San Francisco past

Washington.

**Indians 2, Orioles 1:** Carlos Carrasco outpitched Kevin Gausman in a tight duel, and Yonder Alonso's two-run homer carried visiting Cleveland past Baltimore.

**Reds 10, Braves 4:** Jesse Winker's bases-loaded single provided his team's first lead in six games, and host Cincinnati — off to the worst start in its history — rallied to beat Atlanta for their first victory under interim manager Jim Riggleman.

**White Sox 10, Mariners 4:** Jose Abreu had four hits, including two home runs, Yoan Moncada was a single shy of the cycle and host Chicago beat Seattle to stop a seven-game losing streak.

**Athletics 9, Rangers 4:** Marcus Semien hit a tiebreaking homer on the first pitch of the ninth inning and visiting Oakland defeated Texas for its third straight victory.

**Padres 13, Rockies 5:** Carlos Asuaje homered and had a career-high four RBIs, Franchy Cordero went deep during a nine-run seventh inning and visiting San Diego romped past Colorado.

# Caps end series, advance to face Pens

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — After dropping the first two playoff games at home in overtime, the Washington Capitals picked up momentum that only got stronger as they took down the Columbus Blue Jackets in four straight.

Now they'll strive to keep the intensity high as they advance to a second-round rematch with the Pittsburgh Penguins.

The Capitals, who manhandled the Blue Jackets 6-3 on Monday to cap the opening-round series, are looking to avenge second-round playoff losses to Pittsburgh in each of the past two seasons.

"I can't wait to take a step forward," said Washington star forward Alex Ovechkin, who had two goals on Monday, in-

cluding his 50th playoff tally. "They know how to play; they know the pressure. It's a huge series for us."

Goaltender Braden Holtby relieved a struggling Philipp Grubauer in Game 2 and was great the rest of the way. He had 35 saves Monday in a game in which his team was outshot 38-28. Fifteen of the saves were in the third period, when the desperate Blue Jackets turned up the heat.

"[He's] been fantastic," Ovechkin said. "He's stepping up big-time. He's top goalie in the league, and he showed it today and he showed it in the series."

For his part, Washington coach Barry Trotz wasn't ready to talk about Pittsburgh yet after a taut opening-round series.

"Please let me breathe," he said. "We haven't taken a breath since this started."

Chandler Stephenson had a goal and an assist, and Dimitry Orlov, Devante Smith-Pelly and Lars Eller also scored Monday for Washington, which never trailed in Game 5's overtime victory on Saturday. The Capitals won each of the three games in Columbus.

One of the stories for Washington was its ability to defend Columbus' power play. After the Blue Jackets went 4-for-8 with a man advantage in the first two games, the Caps held them to 0-for-16 in the last four. Meanwhile, Washington took advantage of Columbus penalties, scoring on the power play in each of the six games.

"I think going into the year there wasn't a lot of people who

said we would finish first in the Metro, and we did that," Trotz said. "And it's just creating a pretty consistent culture, and it's having good players, too. It was a tremendous test for us. We didn't get off to a good start and had to dig ourselves out."

Trotz said he leaned on veterans Ovechkin, Nicklas Backstrom, Evgeny Kuznetsov and others to keep the Capitals on an even keel through the tumult of the season.

"We've had lots of different adversity through this year and in the past, and we've grown up a little bit in some ways," he said. "We understand that our core group is really, really strong, they believe in each other. We've got a lot of young guys in the room. We've had to rely on our core to push us forward, and we have."

# Leafs win for city, force seventh game with Boston

Associated Press

TORONTO — The Toronto Maple Leafs won this one for their city.

Frederik Andersen stopped 32 shots to lead the Maple Leafs to a 3-1 win over the Boston Bruins on Monday night, forcing a decisive Game 7 in the first-round series.

The victory came hours after 10 people were killed when a van drove onto a sidewalk in Toronto's north end and struck multiple pedestrians. Most of the players woke from their pregame naps to learn of the incident at 1:30 p.m. that also injured 15 people.

"We're sending all our love," said Maple Leafs forward Mitch Marner, who scored the tiebreaking goal and added an assist. "This is a big win for us after an emotional day."

There was a moment of silence for the victims and their families prior the opening faceoff at Air Canada Centre.

"Very tragic event," Bruins forward Brad Marchand said.

William Nylander and Tomas Plekanec also scored for To-

ronto. Nikita Zaitsev added two assists, and Plekanec also had one. The Maple Leafs, who trailed the series 3-1 before winning two straight, were behind 1-0 early in the second period of this one.

Jake DeBrusk scored for the Bruins, and Tuukka Rask — pulled in Game 5 at home, finished with 27 saves.

Game 7 is Wednesday night in Boston with the winner advancing to face Tampa Bay in the Eastern Conference semifinals.

Scoreless after an end-to-end first period, the Bruins grabbed a 1-0 lead 1:02 into the second when David Krejci won a faceoff after an icing against Auston Matthews right to DeBrusk, beat Andersen between his arm and body.

Toronto responded just 35 seconds later when Nylander buried a rebound of a Jake Gardiner shot from the point for his first goal of the playoffs.

The Leafs appeared to go ahead at 3:04 when Zach Hyman beat Rask with a no-look backhand as he fell to the ice. The

Bruins challenged the play for goalie interference, and replays showed the forward knocked the stick out of Rask's hands as he cruised through the crease just before scoring.

Boston appeared to control the play after that as Toronto could barely get out of its own zone or complete a clean breakout. Andersen — who recorded 42 stops in a 4-3 victory in Game 5 on Saturday — made great saves off Rick Nash, Marchand and Patrice Bergeron to keep things even.

"Just enjoying the moment," Andersen said of the turnaround in his play. "Being in a do-or-die position, I think we all embrace that as a team."

The Maple Leafs, however, went ahead with 6:35 left in the period when Marner was quickest to a loose puck in the slot and beat Rask with a backhand to the far post after Marchand couldn't clear.

Toronto killed off its first penalty early in the third, and was then left fuming when David Backes elbowed Andersen in the mask, but was only

assessed an offsetting roughing minor when Roman Polak came to his goalie's defence.

The Leafs couldn't connect on their third power play moments later, and Andersen stoned Sean Kuraly with under 10 minutes to go.

Rask then robbed Nylander off a great feed from Auston Matthews.

The Bruins went back to the power play with under six minutes left, but the best chance came when Rask stopped Kasperii Kapanen on a 2-on-1 that turned into a breakthrough before stoning Krejci on a one-time shot that brought the towel-waving crowd to its feet.

Rask followed that up by stopping Matthews on another 2-on-1 off a pass from Plekanec before Plekanec sealed the win with an empty-netter with 1:14 to play.

"Give them credit, they protected their house," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said.

Both goalies were on their game in the first as the clubs combined for 27 shots on goal, including 17 from Boston.