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Navy seeks better training simulators

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Constructing better training simulators for sailors on surface ships is one of the initiatives being undertaken by the Navy as it implements recommendations made after the deadly USS John S. McCain and USS Fitzgerald collisions, Adm. William Moran, the vice chief of naval operations, said Tuesday. Moran discussed the Navy's efforts as a result of the 2017 collisions during a maritime security discussion at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank in Washington.

Moran, who leads the Navy's Readiness Reform Oversight Committee that oversees the implementation of 111 recommendations that came out of two reports after the McCain

and Fitzgerald collisions, was nominated last week to be the next chief of naval operations, the Navy's most senior officer.

During the discussion, Moran said he was encouraged by the progress of the implementation, and that part of the progress included building better training simulators in the Navy.

He was "very disappointed" in the simulators that he saw used by the surface force compared with what he was used to as a naval aviator.

The aviation simulators that he used could train pilots under stressful conditions without risking an aircraft, but they did not exist for surface forces in areas where it was needed, Moran said. The Navy has looked at ways to modify and modernize some of the simulators.

One of the lessons learned from the 2017 collisions was

that there were poor communications and teamwork between the ship's bridge and the combat information center, Moran said.

"So we bolted on [combat information center] simulation to the existing bridge simulators that are in the fleet, and that is helping the instructors teach basic communications but also some skills that are important that we reinforce," he said. "Unfortunately, though, we don't have the capacity I think the fleet needs to do this as much as I think [commanding officers] would like to do it."

The Navy's training simulators for ships such as the littoral combat ships are "the best in the business," Moran said. He wants that type of realistic simulator for every ship class or at least be able to reconfigure one to train a sailor for any ship that they might work

aboard.

The Navy is constructing new buildings in San Diego and in Norfolk, Va., with multiple simulators that will allow sailors to undergo more training.

"That to me will make the biggest difference over time in terms of proficiency, experience, and the kinds of things that we need," he said.

The simulators are not meant to replace experience aboard a ship at sea but to complement it, Moran said.

He said he hopes one day to see training simulators aboard ships in shipping containers with capabilities like the "holodeck" in the "Star Trek: The Next Generation" television series.

"That's probably a vision a little too far but, I tell you, the way things are moving, I'm not so sure," Moran said.

USS Fitzgerald leaves Mississippi dry dock

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The USS Fitzgerald left dry dock Tuesday in Pascagoula, Miss., nearly two years after a collision that killed seven sailors, according to a Navy statement.

The Yokosuka-based destroyer has been undergoing repairs since arriving at Pascagoula's Ingalls Shipbuilding yard in January 2018.

Workers will continue to work on the ship while it's moored pierside, the Navy said.

Repairs are expected to be completed by January, the service said early this year. To date, it has not announced plans

to return the ship to Yokosuka.

"This undocking is a step forward and brings us that much closer to getting Fitzgerald back out to sea — where the ship belongs," Fitzgerald commanding officer Cmdr. Garrett Miller said in the statement. "I'm proud of this crew's hard work over the past year and look forward [to] returning to the fleet with enhanced warfighting capability and lethality."

Most of the work has centered on the hull and topside structures damaged in the collision, the Navy said.

Further restoration will include replacement of the radar and electronic warfare suite, restoration and modernization of the combat system and the

command, control, communications, computers and intelligence system.

The overhaul's complexity has been challenging, said Rear Adm. Jim Downey, deputy commander for surface warfare and commander of the Navy Regional Maintenance Center.

"We're excited to have the ship back in the water where we can begin outfitting and testing efforts in support of getting the ship and crew back underway," he said in the statement.

The ship sustained millions of dollars in damages on June 17, 2017, when it collided with the Philippine-flagged ACX Crystal about 80 nautical miles southwest of Tokyo. So far, the

Navy has spent more than \$300 million on repairs to the ship, according to Defense Department statements and contract announcements.

Two months after the Fitzgerald's crash, 10 sailors died when the USS John S. McCain — also a destroyer based at Yokosuka — collided near Singapore with a civilian oil tanker, which impaled itself into the ship's port side.

The McCain underwent 15 months and more than \$200 million in repairs, including installation of 400,000 pounds of steel plates, before leaving dry dock in November at Yokosuka, the Navy said last June. It remains pierside in Yokosuka.

Iran's lawmakers label US troops in Mideast terrorists

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's lawmakers on Tuesday overwhelmingly approved a bill labeling U.S. forces in the Middle East as terrorists, a day after the U.S. terrorism designation for Iran's Revolutionary Guard formally took effect, state TV reported.

Defense Minister Gen. Amir Hatami introduced the bill authorizing the government to act firmly in response to "terrorist actions" by U.S. forces. It demands authorities use "legal, political and diplomatic" measures to neutralize the American move, without elaborating.

The U.S. move aims at "thwarting Iran's influence," and shows that America's long-standing sanctions against Iran have become ineffective, Hatami told lawmakers.

During the debate, some hard-liner lawmakers had demanded listing the entire U.S. Army and security forces as terrorist.

The TV report said 204 lawmakers approved the bill, out

of 207 present at the session in the 290-seat chamber. Two lawmakers voted against it and one abstained.

It remains unclear how the bill's passage in parliament would affect the Guard's activities in the Persian Gulf, where the U.S. Navy has in the past accused Iranian patrol boats of harassing American warships.

The Revolutionary Guard has forces and wields influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen and is in charge of Iranian missiles that have U.S. bases in their range.

The Guard's designation — the first-ever for an entire division of another government — adds another layer of sanctions to the powerful paramilitary force and makes it a crime under U.S. jurisdiction to provide it with material support.

Depending on how broadly "material support" is interpreted, the designation may complicate U.S. diplomatic and military cooperation with certain third-country officials, notably in Iraq and Lebanon, who deal with the Guard.

Court lowers cash award in Futenma suit

CAMPFOSTER, Okinawa — A high court in Japan reduced the monetary award Tuesday for Okinawa residents who had sued over aircraft noise in the area surrounding Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

Chief Judge Masamichi Ohkubo of the Fukuoka High Court Naha Branch announced the reduction of a previous award of \$22.6 million by just over \$3 million.

A three-judge panel ruled that the previous amount

— granted by Okinawa City Branch of Naha District Court in November 2016 — was too much.

The suit was originally filed in March 2012 by 3,417 residents of the communities around Futenma, who cited physical and mental damage that was the result of sleep deprivation and other issues related to air operations at the base.

They will now individually see less than the \$6,614 per plaintiff, before legal expenses, that they had been due.

From staff reports

Top Marine in Japan is tabbed for new post after 8 months

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The III Marine Expeditionary Force's commander will likely soon depart Okinawa after a short tenure marked by loosened liberty restrictions and an apparent slaying-suicide perpetrated by a servicemember.

Lt. Gen. Eric Smith was nominated by President Donald Trump last week to serve as deputy commandant for combat development and integration, as well as command general for Marine Corps Combat Development Command at Marine Corps headquarters in Washington, according to a Defense Department statement released last week.

The announcement was made by acting Secretary of Defense Pat Shanahan.

Smith's replacement will be the current military deputy to the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, Lt. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III, a subsequent statement said.

It remains unclear when the transition will take place.

Smith's eight-month tenure is remarkably short for the top Marine in Japan. He took over III MEF from Lt. Gen. Lawrence Nicholson on Aug. 2. Terms of service in the post have generally been around two to three years.

Marine officials on Okinawa referred Stars and Stripes to Manpower and Reserve Affairs for comment. It did not reply by Wednesday afternoon Japan time.

The move comes at a delicate time for the U.S. military and Marine Corps on Okinawa.

The bodies of Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Gabriel Olivero, 32, of North Carolina, and Tamae Hindman, 44, of Okinawa, were found Saturday at Hindman's apartment in the Kuwae district of Chatan. Oki-

nawa police allege Olivero — a Navy corpsman attached to the 3rd Marine Division — fatally stabbed Hindman before taking his own life.

Crimes committed by U.S. servicemembers on Okinawa are amplified by a core subset of the population advocating for fewer U.S. troops in the prefecture. Seventy-two percent of voters voted against the relocation of Marine air operations within the prefecture during a February referendum.

Clardy is no stranger to the complex environment and challenges presented by the command on Okinawa. He served as 3rd Marine Division commander from July 2013 to June 2015.

Clardy was commissioned in 1983 after graduating from the University of South Carolina, his Defense Department biography states.

He served as a platoon commander with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment; as company commander in the 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion; held command assignments in operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom; and held the role of community policy, planning and liaison officer for Marine Corps Bases Japan.

Prior to his job in the undersecretary's office, Clardy was J8 deputy director for force management, application and support on the Joint Staff, his biography said. He holds two master's degrees.

When Smith arrived on Okinawa, he vowed "steady, slow, dependable, improvement."

In November, he loosened liberty restrictions for Marines ranked sergeant and below by providing an extra hour of liberty time from midnight to 1 a.m. He also relaxed liberty buddy requirements and made it easier for younger Marines to drive on the island.

Barr tightens rule for detained asylum-seekers

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Detained asylum-seekers who have shown they have a credible fear of returning to their country will no longer be able to ask a judge to grant them bond.

U.S. Attorney General William Barr decided Tuesday that asylum-seekers who clear a “credible fear” interview and are facing removal don’t have the right to be released on bond by an immigration court judge while their cases are pending.

The attorney general has the authority to overturn prior rulings made by immigration courts, which fall under the Justice Department.

It’s Barr’s first immigration-related decision since taking office. The American Civil Liberties Union said late Tuesday that the plan was unconstitutional and that it planned on suing.

Typically, an asylum-seeker who crosses between ports of entry would have the right to ask a judge to grant them bond for release. Under the new ruling, they will have to wait in detention until their case is adjudicated.

“There will be many, many people who are not gonna even have the opportunity to apply for release now,” said Gregory Chen, director of government relations for the American Immigration Lawyers Association. Chen said that about 90 percent of asylum-seekers pass their credible fear interview, the first step in seeking asylum.

The decision doesn’t affect asylum-seeking families because they generally can’t be held for longer than 20 days. It also doesn’t apply to unaccompanied minors.

Barr’s ruling takes effect in 90 days and comes amid a frustrating time for the administration as the number of border

crossers has skyrocketed. Most of them are families from Central America who are fleeing violence and poverty. Many seek asylum.

There were a total of 161,000 asylum applications filed in the last fiscal year and 46,000 in the first quarter of 2019, according to the Executive Office for Immigration Review, which oversees immigration courts.

Sarah Pierce, policy analyst for the Migration Policy Institute, said the number of decisions by immigration judges that the administration of President Donald Trump has referred to itself for review is unprecedented. The administration — under both Barr and former Attorney General Jeff Sessions — has reviewed a total of 10 immigration rulings. That’s compared with four under all of President Barack Obama’s tenure and nine during George W. Bush’s.

Woman wanted in Colorado threat found dead

Associated Press

LITTLETON, Colo. — A young Florida woman who traveled to Colorado and bought a shotgun for what authorities feared would be a Columbine-inspired attack just days ahead of the 20th anniversary of the shooting was found dead Wednesday in an apparent suicide after a nearly 24-hour manhunt.

Jefferson County Sheriff Jeff Shrader said Sol Pais, 18, was discovered by the FBI with an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.

The manhunt had led to the closing of Denver-area schools as a precaution.

During the manhunt, the FBI said Pais

was “infatuated” with Columbine and made threats ahead of Saturday’s anniversary of the attack that killed 13 people at Columbine High School in 1999. The FBI described her “extremely dangerous.”

The Miami Beach high school student flew to Colorado on Monday night and bought a pump-action shotgun and ammunition, authorities said.

Agents had focused the search around the base of Mount Evans, a popular recreational area about 60 miles southwest of Denver.

All classes and extracurricular activities for about a half-million students were canceled as a precaution, though sheriff’s spokesman Mike Taplin said the young

woman’s threats were general and not specific to any school.

“This has become a massive manhunt ... and every law enforcement agency is participating and helping in this effort,” said Dean Phillips, agent in charge of the FBI in Denver.

Authorities said Pais was last seen not far from Columbine — in the Jefferson County foothills outside Denver — in a black T-shirt, camouflage pants and black boots. The alert also said police who come into contact with her should detain her and evaluate her mental health.

Pais’ parents last saw her on Sunday and reported her missing to Florida authorities on Monday night.

Sanders’ town hall on Fox draws largest audience yet

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Sen. Bernie Sanders took heat from some Democrats for holding a town hall on Fox News Channel but there’s one result hard to argue with: It was the most-watched candidate event in the election campaign so far.

An estimated 2.55 million people saw Sanders’ town hall Monday in Bethlehem, Pa., the Nielsen company said. Not only did that beat the 1.35 million people who saw Sanders on CNN on Feb. 25, the Fox telecast aired before prime time when traditionally the largest audience gathers.

Sen. Kamala Harris’ CNN town hall in

January was seen by 1.95 million viewers, the previous high for a 2020 presidential contender.

The Vermont senator also apparently had one prominent viewer in Washington. President Donald Trump tweeted on Tuesday that it was “so weird to watch Crazy Bernie” on Fox News. He said Bret Baier, who co-anchored the event with Martha MacCallum, and the audience was “so smiley and nice.”

Baier later tweeted his thanks to Trump for watching, and said he’d like to have the president on a town hall or for an interview on his nightly news show.

While Trump is a frequent interview subject on Fox, he tends to avoid newsier personalities like Baier and Chris Wallace.

During the town hall, Sanders noted the criticism he’d gotten from some Democrats for appearing on Fox and took a few shots at the network, at one point drawing a rebuke from Baier.

Fox says it is in talks with other Democrats to have town halls on the network, but hasn’t said who.

Fox chose not to preempt its opinionated prime-time lineup of Tucker Carlson, Sean Hannity and Laura Ingraham to show Sanders on Monday.

Notre Dame donations reach nearly \$1B

Associated Press

PARIS — Nearly \$1 billion has already poured in from ordinary worshippers and high-powered magnates to restore the fire-ravaged Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris after the French president set a controversial five-year deadline to get the work done.

Construction teams brought in a huge crane and a delivery of planks of wood to the site Wednesday morning. Firefighters are still examining damage and shoring up the structure after Monday's fire collapsed the cathedral's spire and destroyed the roof.

French President Emmanuel Macron ratcheted up the pressure by setting a five-year deadline to restore the 12th-century landmark. Macron is holding a special Cabinet meeting Wednesday dedicated to the Notre Dame disaster, which investiga-

tors believe was an accident possibly linked to renovation work.

Bells will toll at cathedrals around France on Wednesday evening in honor of the monument. Remarkably, no one was killed in the fire as firefighters and church officials speedily evacuated the site during a mass.

Presidential cultural heritage envoy Stephane Bern told broadcaster France-Info on Wednesday that \$995 million has been raised in just a day and a half since the fire. Contributions came from Apple and magnates who own L'Oreal, Chanel and Dior to Catholic parishioners and others from small towns and cities around France and the world.

The French government is gathering donations and setting up a special office to deal with big-ticket offers.

Some criticism has already surfaced

among those in France who say the money could be better spent elsewhere.

Meanwhile Macron's five-year deadline — which happens to coincide with the 2024 Paris Olympics, which the government wants to make a major showcase — struck many as unrealistic.

Pierluigi Pericolo, in charge of restoration and security at the St. Donatian basilica in Nantes, said it could take two to five years just to secure Notre Dame, given its size.

"It's a fundamental step, and very complex, because it's difficult to send workers into a monument whose vaulted ceilings are swollen with water," he said on France-Info. "The end of the fire doesn't mean the edifice is totally saved. The stone can deteriorate when it is exposed to high temperatures and change its mineral composition and fracture inside."

Trump vetoes resolution to end US aid to Yemen

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump vetoed a resolution passed by Congress to end U.S. military assistance in Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen.

The veto — the second in Trump's presidency — was expected, and Congress lacks the votes to override it. But passing the never-before-used war powers resolution was viewed as a milestone for lawmakers, who have shown a renewed willingness to assert their war-making authority after letting it atrophy for decades under presidents from both parties.

"This resolution is an unnecessary, dangerous attempt to weaken my constitutional authorities, endangering the lives of American citizens and brave service members, both today and in the future," Trump wrote in explaining his Tuesday veto.

Congress has grown uneasy with Trump's close relationship with Saudi Arabia as he tries to further isolate Iran, a regional rival.

Many lawmakers also criticized the president for not condemning Saudi Arabia for the

killing of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi who lived in the United States and had written critically about the kingdom. Khashoggi went into the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October and never came out. Intelligence agencies said Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was complicit in the killing.

The U.S. provides billions of dollars of arms to the Saudi-led coalition fighting against Iran-backed rebels in Yemen. Members of Congress have expressed concern about the thousands of civilians killed in coalition airstrikes since the conflict began in 2014. The fighting in the Arab world's poorest country also has left millions suffering from food and medical care shortages and has pushed the country to the brink of famine.

Trump said the measure was unnecessary because except for counterterrorism operations against Islamic State militants and al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, the United States is not engaged in hostilities in or affecting Yemen.

Sources: US, Poland near deal to build 'Fort Trump'

Bloomberg

Poland is nearing a deal with the U.S. to establish an American military base in the former communist bloc country, according to people familiar with the matter — an outpost the Poles see as a deterrent to Russian aggression and that the Kremlin would likely consider a provocation.

If a deal is reached, President Donald Trump is considering traveling to Poland in the fall, in part to commemorate the agreement.

It's unclear whether he fully supports the idea, even after he said during a September meeting with Polish President Andrzej Duda that the U.S. was looking "very seriously" at establishing a base. Duda, who joked that it could be named "Fort Trump," remains committed to contribute \$2 billion for its construction.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki planned to visit Washington this week to discuss the proposal with Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton but his trip was postponed, according to

two people familiar with the matter. He's traveling to Chicago and New York instead.

Trump has often criticized NATO allies for not spending enough toward their own defense, and he's considered demanding that countries hosting U.S. forces pay the full cost of the bases, plus as much as a 50 percent premium for the privilege, according to people familiar with the matter.

But the American president has an affinity for Poland, a NATO member whose government has repeatedly clashed with European Union leaders in Brussels over rule-of-law issues. Duda has employed Trump-style anti-migrant and nationalist rhetoric.

The U.S. now rotates about 4,000 troops in and out of Poland. Rather than immediately begin constructing a base, that arrangement could be bolstered, according to a person familiar with the White House's thinking.

Polish and U.S. officials now don't want an eventual base to be named "Fort Trump," according to a person familiar with the discussions.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police say substitute teacher drank in class

KY GEORGETOWN — A substitute teacher in Kentucky was jailed for allegedly endangering middle school students by teaching while drunk.

WKYT-TV reported Brook Ellen West, 32, was arrested Monday on charges of public intoxication and endangering the welfare of a minor.

Scott County sheriff's deputies said she told authorities she had four shots of vodka while teaching a class at Royal Springs Middle School in Georgetown. They said she smelled of alcohol, cursed at the children, and had a blood alcohol content level of .317.

Police: Teen on phone drove nearly 100 mph

MN MINNEAPOLIS — Authorities said a Minnesota teen was video chatting on her cellphone and driving nearly 100 mph when a state trooper pulled her over on a busy highway near St. Peter.

The Star Tribune reported that Theresa Redenius, 18, of Lakeville was charged with careless driving.

Redenius told the newspaper that she did not realize how fast she was going but said she used the phone correctly and had both hands on the wheel.

Student's bag held 9 empty whisky bottles

SC UNION — Authorities said a South Carolina middle schooler who passed out in class last week had a backpack filled with nine empty mini bottles of Fireball Cinnamon Whisky.

The State reported the Union County Sheriff's Office report

said a search of the 13-year-old's bag also revealed another half-empty mini bottle and two unopened bottles.

The report said the boy took the whisky from his unwitting grandfather and passed out an undetermined number of bottles to other Sims Middle School students.

He was arrested and charged with drunkenness and liquor law violations. The report said he was released into his mother's custody.

Cheer event may end over sportsmanship

NM ALBUQUERQUE — A statewide high school cheerleading and dance competition in New Mexico may be terminated thanks to a rash of terrible sportsmanship.

The Albuquerque Journal reported the New Mexico Activities Association is considering canceling the 2020 State Spirit Competition following death threats and inflammatory social media posts.

Association Executive Director Sally Marquez said she will go before the group's commission next month to discuss options, which include cancellation.

Judge awards just \$35 in wage dispute

IN GOSHEN — A northern Indiana man who sought wages for lunch breaks he didn't take has won his claim, although a judge awarded him just \$35.

Joe Lehman was seeking \$3,543 he said Thor Industries' Postle Aluminum division owed him for lunch breaks he didn't take while working as a truck driver for about a year and a half.

The Elkhart Truth reported that an Elkhart County magis-

trate ruled in Lehman's favor, but granted him a judgment of only \$35, plus \$125 in court costs.

Lehman submitted just five daily driving logs to support his claim. Based on those, the court calculated that the Elkhart man was owed \$7 for each half-hour break period he'd worked through during those five days.

Woman jailed in theft from self-checkouts

OR PORTLAND — A woman convicted of stealing tens of thousands of dollars from Fred Meyer self-checkout machines was sentenced to three years in prison.

KPTV-TV reported Emily Tallman, 37, was convicted in March of 14 counts of theft and seven counts of aggravated theft. Prosecutors said she stole nearly \$230,000 from the machines.

Prosecutors said she used her employee badge to enter the store after hours and open the self-checkout machines, and held a clipboard to block the store's surveillance cameras as she withdrew cash.

The company had investigators start looking into the thefts after Tallman reported she was unable to figure out why the self-checkout machines kept coming up short on cash.

Woman freed from pipe at closed plant

PA CARMICHAELS — State police were investigating how a woman became trapped in a drainpipe at a closed power plant in western Pennsylvania.

Emergency crews in Greene County were called to FirstEnergy's now-shuttered Hatfield Power Plant in Carmichaels on Monday.

Trooper Forrest Allison said

a worker was about to drain a pond on the property into the nearby Monongahela River when he heard the woman shouting from the drainpipe below.

Rescue crews were called and helped the 39-year-old Greene County resident out.

Military license plates bill gets initial OK

NE LINCOLN — Nebraska motorists could show off their military affiliation or support for U.S. troops on their license plates by 2021 under a bill advanced by lawmakers.

Lawmakers gave the measure first-round approval Monday on a 37-0 vote.

The bill by Sen. Carol Blood, of Bellevue, would require the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles to design plates honoring people who served in the armed forces or as reservists, and those who served in Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam, the Gulf War or the global war on terrorism.

Two additional votes are required before the legislation goes to the governor.

Winning ticket found with day to spare

MO O'FALLON — Karen Moore, of St. Peters, Mo., rummaged around in the glove box of her vehicle earlier this month, and not a moment too soon: She found a Lottery ticket worth \$50,000 that was a day away from expiring.

Moore happened to open the glove box on April 3 and found a few forgotten Powerball tickets. She took them in to have them scanned and one read, "Claim At Lottery."

From wire reports

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Jackets sweep Lightning out of playoffs

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Sullen and speechless, the Tampa Bay Lightning had little explanation for how they followed up a glorious regular season by getting bounced from the playoffs with record-setting haste.

The Columbus Blue Jackets capped a stunning sweep of the Presidents' Trophy winners with a 7-3 victory Tuesday night. Tampa Bay became the first team in the expansion era, which began in 1967-68, to go winless in the first round of the playoffs after leading the league in points during the regular season.

And what a season it was. Tampa Bay tied the record for wins with 62 and amassed 128 points, fourth in NHL history.

"Yeah, it sucks," said Lightning forward Nikita Kucherov, who had 128 points in the regular season but was kept off the scoresheet until Tuesday night.

"Nothing was our way in the series," he said. "I don't know what to say."

The Blue Jackets, meanwhile, didn't clinch the second Eastern Conference wild-card spot until the 81st game. But they outplayed the Lightning with a smothering forecheck and stellar goaltending by Sergei Bobrovsky.

Columbus won its first-ever playoff series on its fifth try and advances to play the winner of the Boston-Toronto series, which the Maple Leafs lead 2-1.

"It's a great feeling to finally get one," Blue Jackets defenseman David Savard said. "The job's not done. We have to keep going."

Bobrovsky carried the day again for the Blue Jackets, finishing with 30 saves.

With Columbus clinging to a 4-3 lead in the third period, Tampa Bay had wrested the momentum from the Blue

Jackets but still couldn't solve Bobrovsky. The Blue Jackets' final three goals came late in the period after the Lightning had pulled goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy for an extra skater.

"They were the better team," said Tampa Bay captain Steven Stamkos, who also didn't score until Game 4. "They executed their game plan. I don't know what to say. If we had the answers we would have found a way to win a game."

Rookie Alexandre Texier, who was brought over after his season ended in the Finnish league, scored his first NHL goal and later added one of the empty-netters. Pierre Luc-Dubois had a goal and a pair of assists.

A dozen different players scored for Columbus in the series.

"I'm so happy for them because I think they really can see if you're a unit you can get some things accomplished,"

said Columbus coach John Tortorella, who led Tampa Bay to a Stanley Cup championship in 2004. "As we approach the second round, wherever it may be, it's going to have to be even tighter. I think this is a really good foundation, (and) you can do some really crazy things if you stay together as a unit."

Stamkos, Cedric Paquette and Brayden Point scored for Tampa Bay, which never led in this elimination game. The Lightning tied it at 3 on Point's goal late in the second period, but Oliver Bjorkstrand scored 54 seconds later to put Columbus ahead for good.

"A bounce here, a bounce there maybe it's a different game," Lightning wing Ryan Callahan said. "But at the end of the day it wasn't good enough top to bottom from our team. A very structured team over there, played to their systems, didn't waver and outplayed us for four games."

NHL roundup

Islanders finish off Pens; Jets even series with Blues

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Barry Trotz had questions when he took over the New York Islanders last summer. About the defense. About the goaltending. About where the scoring would come from if star John Tavares bailed in free agency.

One by one over the last 10 months, the Islanders have answered them all. The team that couldn't stop anyone a year ago is now the team that stops nearly everyone — Sidney Crosby and the Pittsburgh Penguins included.

Four games. Four wins, each one more impressive than the next, culminating in a typically gritty 3-1 victory in Game 4 on Tuesday night that finished off a stunning sweep of the Penguins and sent the Islanders into the second round of the playoffs for just the second

time in 26 years.

"It's not like we came in and thought we were going to win it in four games," said New York goaltender Robin Lehner, who stopped 135 of the 141 shots he faced in the series, including 32 of 33 in the clincher. "But we felt confident coming in playing against these guys. We really did."

The Islanders trailed for less than five minutes across four games, responding every time Pittsburgh made a push. When Penguins forward Jake Guentzel scored 35 seconds into the first period to give Pittsburgh an early jolt, Eberle responded 1:34 later to tie the game. The Islanders never trailed again, taking the lead for good on Brock Nelson's third of the playoffs late in the first period. Josh Bailey flipped in an empty-netter with 38 seconds to go in the third.

New York will face either Washington or Carolina in the second round. Trotz led the Capitals to the franchise's first Stanley Cup last spring.

Jets 2, Blues 1 (OT): Kyle Connor scored 6:02 into overtime and visiting Winnipeg beat St. Louis to even their Western Conference series at two games apiece.

Mark Scheifele also scored and Connor Hellebuyck made 31 saves for the Jets, who arrived in St. Louis down 2-0. It is the only first-round series in which the home team has failed to win a game.

Game 5 is Thursday night back in Winnipeg.

Vladimir Tarasenko scored early in the third period and Jordan Binnington made 37 saves for the Blues.

Scheifele tied it at the 7:33 mark, tipping in a feed from Connor.

Connor ended it when he banged home a feed from Scheifele for his third goal in two games.

Golden Knights 5, Sharks 0: Max Pacioretty had two goals and two assists, Marc-Andre Fleury earned his 15th playoff shutout and host Vegas blanked San Jose for a 3-1 lead in their best-of-seven Western Conference series.

Vegas can eliminate the Sharks from the postseason for the second consecutive year on Thursday in San Jose.

Since losing Game 1 on the road, the Golden Knights have never trailed and they've outscored the Sharks 16-6.

Fleury, who made 28 saves, has stopped 87 of 93 shots in the last three games. Shea Theodore, Alex Tuch and Jonathan Marchessault also scored. Nate Schmidt and Reilly Smith each had two assists.

Paxton, Yankees batter Sale, Red Sox

Associated Press

NEW YORK — James Paxton and Chris Sale came out firing in this year's first edition of baseball's biggest rivalry.

Paxton pumping 99 mph, and Sale nearing 98.

Only one of those hard-throwing lefties got results to match.

Paxton struck out 12 in his first pinstriped clash with Boston, Sale found his fastball but still got smacked around, and the New York Yankees three-hit the Red Sox 8-0 on Tuesday night in the first game this season between the struggling AL East foes.

Paxton (2-2) pitched two-hit ball for eight innings, walking one and going to just two three-ball counts in a swift game that took only 2 hours, 23 minutes.

"I felt like I was searching before this," Paxton said. "I felt like I really found something tonight."

Mike Tauchman hit his first major league homer and drove in four runs, and Clint Frazier and Gleyber Torres also went deep

for the Yankees. New York had dropped five of six and is 7-9 a year after winning 100 games.

Sale (0-4) reached 97.5 mph — a positive sign for Boston after his velocity sagged this spring — but still allowed four runs and seven hits over five innings. He struck out six and walked one while the World Series champions dropped to 6-12.

"I stink right now," Sale said. "I don't know what it is."

The longtime rivals hadn't played with both teams below .500 this deep into a season since 1992.

Acquired from Seattle in an offseason trade, Paxton adjusted well after Yankees special adviser Carlos Beltran informed the left-hander he was tipping pitches during a lousy start last week in Houston. Yankees manager Aaron Boone also said before the game he thought Paxton's stuff had dulled a bit since spring training.

Between starts, Paxton watched some old film of himself and tweaked his mechanics to match. It all clicked Tuesday.

He drilled away with upper 90s fastballs, striking out four of his first six batters and six straight later.

"When I'm throwing that fastball like that, everything plays off of it," Paxton said.

He saluted the cheering crowd after retiring AL MVP Mookie Betts to end his night.

"I think it's a little bit different than anywhere else, being in Yankee Stadium and getting that ovation," Paxton said.

Boston's starters entered with a 7.18 ERA, worst in the majors, leading the club to bring up touted game-caller Sandy Leon from Triple-A and put him at catcher. Blake Swihart was designated for assignment.

Sale responded with some extra juice, just not enough. He entered with a 1.61 ERA in 17 games against the Yankees, best by any pitcher against New York since 1920 with a minimum of 75 innings.

"Throwing was better but still need to pitch better," Sale said. "Got to get results."

MLB roundup

Astros win league-best 10th straight game

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Collin McHugh has had a few close calls on the mound — nothing like this line drive he somehow dodged with an acrobatic maneuver that allowed the Astros to turn a nifty double play behind him.

The ball hit by Kendrys Morales in the second inning of Houston's 9-1 win against the Athletics on Tuesday skimmed in front of McHugh's face as his body bent backward and went parallel to the ground, reminiscent to the old Limbo dance. The ball touched the tip of the pitcher's ring finger, a much better option than his head or jaw — "probably the best place it could have hit me."

"I saw the ball come off the bat but I was in a weird fielding position so I kind of like whiffed on it with my glove and then by that time I was just already falling over so it was like, I just kept going and the ball just kept tracking," McHugh said. "It

would have tested how strong my jaw is for sure. Thankfully we were able to get a double play out of it. Routine, just how you draw it up. ... I don't know if it gets much closer than that."

Alex Bregman hit a grand slam and Josh Reddick connected for a two-run homer against his former team in the Astros' majors-best 10th straight win.

Bregman's second career grand slam gave McHugh (3-1) all the run support he needed on the way to winning his third straight start. Bregman's other slam came May 14, 2017, at the Yankees.

Phillies 14, Mets 3: Scott Kingery and J.T. Realmuto each had three hits and five RBIs as host Philadelphia routed New York.

Pirates 5, Tigers 3 (10): Starling Marte hit a two-run homer in the 10th inning to lift Pittsburgh over host Detroit.

Rays 4, Orioles 2: Tyler Glasnow allowed two runs over seven innings in winning

his fourth consecutive start to begin the season and Avisail Garcia drove in three runs as host Tampa Bay beat Baltimore for its seventh win in eight games.

Cubs 4, Marlins 0: Jose Quintana gave up six hits in seven innings to lead Chicago over host Miami.

Giants 7, Nationals 3: Evan Longoria, Brandon Belt and Steven Duggar homered off fastballs from Stephen Strasburg and light-hitting San Francisco powered past host Washington.

Diamondbacks 9, Braves 6: Christian Walker homered leading off the ninth inning and visiting Arizona rallied against the shaky Atlanta bullpen.

Blue Jays 6, Twins 5: Teoscar Hernandez and Justin Smoak hit two-run singles as Toronto rallied past host Minnesota.

Brewers 8, Cardinals 4: Christian Yelich hit a three-run homer, his eighth against St. Louis this season, to help send host Milwaukee to the win.

Rangers 5, Angels 0: Mike Minor threw a three-hitter for his first career shutout, backed by two-run homers by Joey Gallo and Asdrubal Cabrera, as host Texas beat Los Angeles.

White Sox 5, Royals 1: Yoan Moncada hit a pair of solo shots for his first multihomer game and Leury Garcia added a two-run drive to power host Chicago past Kansas City.

Rockies 8, Padres 2: Nolan Arenado homered for the third straight game — a two-run shot on his 28th birthday — and Jon Gray pitched seven strong innings as Colorado beat host San Diego for a two-game sweep and its first three-game winning streak of the season.

Indians 4, Mariners 2: Shane Bieber struck out five and combined with three relievers to hold host Seattle to six hits as Cleveland stretched its winning streak to three games.

Dodgers 6, Reds 1: Joc Pederson hit a two-run homer for the second straight game for host Los Angeles.

NBA roundup

Murray rallies Nuggets to win

Associated Press

DENVER — Jamal Murray just couldn't get the bad taste out of his mouth, and even a bite of pretzel he poached from a kid after tumbling into the stands in the third quarter wasn't exactly satisfying.

"It was really dry," Murray said.

Maybe it was just what Murray needed, however, helping spark his fabulous fourth quarter that fueled the Denver Nuggets' 114-105 comeback over the San Antonio Spurs and knotting their playoff series 1-1.

Murray's late heroics may very well have salvaged Denver's season.

Teammates told him to keep shooting the ball when his shots kept rimming out. Finally, he found his touch, scoring 21 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter.

"Everybody told me to stick with it," Murray said. "I don't think I scored a field goal until the fourth. I just stuck with it. They all believed in me."

The Nuggets were in danger of losing a second straight game at the Pepsi Center after posting the NBA's best home record (34-7) during the regular sea-

son. They trailed 78-59 late in the third quarter before closing the game on a 55-27 run.

"Coach said we are a team that never gives up," Nuggets center Nikola Jokic said. "That's true. We never give up. We lost the first game. We were down 19. That's all excuses. But we never gave up. There is something about this team. We have a heart. We're never going to let you win so easy."

It was looking very much like an easy win for San Antonio, which frittered away two 19-point leads.

"We gave up 38 points (actually, 39) in the fourth quarter. End of story," fumed Spurs coach Gregg Popovich, who drew a technical foul during the Nuggets' comeback.

Nuggets coach Michael Malone said he never considered benching Murray because he didn't want to crush his confidence. He said he took him aside at halftime and told him to take a deep breath and trust his shots would start falling.

"Never once did I think about pulling him from the lineup," Malone said.

Good thing, too, because Murray, the goat in Game 1 after missing an open jumper

and turning the ball over in the closing seconds, might have salvaged the Nuggets' season while going 8-for-9 in the fourth quarter.

"We had to have this one," Denver's Paul Millsap said. "Going down 0-2 into San Antonio would've been a tough situation for us. To pull this one off the way we did was unbelievable."

Raptors 111, Magic 82: Kawhi Leonard scored 37 points, Kyle Lowry bounced back from a scoreless playoff opener with 22 and host Toronto routed Orlando, evening their Eastern Conference first-round series at one win apiece.

Pascal Siakam had 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Raptors, who never trailed and led by as many as 34.

Despite playing in foul trouble for much of the night, Leonard finished with a career playoff-high 15 field goals. He made his first nine attempts from inside the arc before missing a layup. He shot 15-for-22 before leaving to a standing ovation with 4:46 remaining and Toronto ahead 104-73.

Lowry, who missed all seven attempts in Game 1, shot 8-for-13.

Blazers top OKC

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — CJ McCollum likes when games get gritty.

The guard scored 33 points as the Portland Trail Blazers took a 2-0 lead in their playoff series against the Oklahoma City Thunder with a 114-94 victory on Tuesday night.

Tense at times with plenty of jawing back-and-forth between the teams, the series now heads to Oklahoma City for Game 3 on Friday.

"I love it, that's what I live for," said McCollum, who missed 10 games late in the regular season because of a knee injury. "Just like playing on the playground."

Damian Lillard added 29 points for the third-seeded Blazers, who opened a playoff series with two wins for the first time since the 2014 playoffs, when they beat Houston in six games.

Russell Westbrook, who had his ninth career postseason triple-double in Oklahoma City's Game 1 loss, finished with 14 points, nine rebounds and 11 assists. He was pulled with 3:31 left with most of his fellow starters after Portland built a 112-91 lead.

Westbrook was just 5-for-20 from the field, including 1-for-6 on three-point attempts. Collectively, the Thunder were 5-for-28 from the perimeter.

"I've got to play better," Westbrook said. "Tonight, the loss, I'm going to take full responsibility of tonight because the way I played was unacceptable. I'm going to be better."

Paul George had 27 points despite lingering questions about his right shoulder.

Portland's victory in Game 1 snapped a 10-game postseason losing streak that included four-game sweeps the past two seasons — first by the Warriors and then last year by the Pelicans. Lillard had 30 points in the 104-99 win on Sunday.

Warriors' Cousins out with torn quad

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — DeMarcus Cousins has a torn left quadriceps muscle that will sideline the Golden State center indefinitely, a devastating injury that the Warriors feared was serious when he went down in the first quarter of their first-round playoff loss to the Clippers.

An MRI exam Tuesday morning on Cousins' left leg revealed the tear. The two-time defending NBA champion Warriors said Cousins will begin rehabilitation immediately and updates will be "provided as appropriate."

Coach Steve Kerr said after the Warriors' 135-131 Game 2 loss on Monday night that Cousins would be out for a significant period.

Playing in just his second career postseason game after a nine-year wait, Cousins went down in the first quarter in front of the Golden State bench after swiping a ball from Patrick Beverley in the back court. He immediately grabbed at his left quad. Cousins hobbled to the locker room at

the 8:09 mark.

Cousins had just returned in January from a nearly yearlong absence following surgery for a torn left Achilles tendon suffered while with the Pelicans last season.

He had two points, two rebounds and an assist in less than 4 minutes Monday. He fouled out of Saturday's 121-104 Game 1 win with nine points, nine rebounds and four assists in 21 minutes.

"I know it's frustrating for him. I've been through something like that, getting hurt, getting all the way back and then getting hurt again, so I know how frustrating it is," Warriors center Kevon Looney said. "He is a resilient guy. He's been through adversity before and I know he's going to bounce back. His spirit is probably low right now, but he's a tough guy and he'll be back better than ever."

Kerr is likely to use a combination of shot-blocking presence Andrew Bogut and Looney going forward this postseason.