

STARS AND STRIPES®

Monday, April 22, 2019

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Navy ends CARAT exercise early after blasts

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
AND CHRISTIAN LOPEZ

Stars and Stripes

After nearly 300 people were killed on Easter Sunday in a series of bombings at public buildings, churches and hotels across Sri Lanka, the U.S. and Sri Lankan militaries have called off their planned Cooperation Afloat and Readiness Training exercise this week, according to the U.S. Navy.

The USS Spruance and USNS Millinocket arrived Thursday at Sri Lanka's Hambantota port, about 160 miles southeast of the country's capital, Colombo, for what was planned as a weeklong exercise. Seven of the eight bombings occurred in or near Colombo, with one in Batticaloa, about 170 miles northeast of Hambantota port.

U.S. 7th Fleet spokesman Clay Doss, in a statement Monday to Stars and Stripes, said that "all U.S. personnel involved in CARAT are accounted for"

after the attacks, and they are now leaving the country.

"We fully support our Sri Lankan partners during this tragic situation and offer our deepest condolences for all of the victims," he said.

The death toll in Sri Lanka rose Monday morning to 290, including dozens of foreigners, The Associated Press reported. Police have arrested 24 people in connection with the attacks.

About 500 people were wounded in the deadliest attack in the country since its civil war ended in 2009, the report said. U.S. authorities said several Americans were among the dead, while Britain, India, China, Japan and Portugal said they, too, lost citizens, according to the AP.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday condemned the violence, saying on his official Twitter account that the attacks "demonstrate the brutal nature of terrorists whose sole aim is to threaten peace & security."

President Donald Trump tweeted that the U.S. "offers heartfelt condolences to the great people of Sri Lanka."

"We stand ready to help!" he added.

The U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka issued a travel advisory Sunday, suggesting visitors "exercise increased caution in Sri Lanka due to terrorism."

"Terrorist groups continue plotting possible attacks in Sri Lanka," the embassy said in a Sunday statement. "Terrorists may attack with little or no warning, targeting tourist locations; transportation hubs; markets/shopping malls; local government facilities; hotels; clubs; restaurants; places of worship; parks; major sporting and cultural events; educational institutions; airports; and other public areas."

This is the 25th year for CARAT, which is the Navy's "oldest and longest continually running regional exercise in South and Southeast Asia,"

according to an April 18 Navy statement. Sri Lanka was the first of seven partner nations to participate in the 2019 iteration.

During CARAT's Sri Lanka phase, the Navy and Marine Corps planned to work with the country's armed forces at sea to test communication and "coordinate and respond to scenarios at sea to include maritime patrol operations; maneuvering exercises; surface gunnery drills; visit, board, search and seizure drills; vertical replenishments operations; flight operations and search and rescue swimmer exercises," according to the statement.

A Navy spokesman would not say how much of the planned exercises took place.

After they leave Sri Lanka, sailors and Marines will continue CARAT with other countries throughout the year including Brunei, Indonesia and Thailand, according to the Navy statement.

Official: Sri Lanka failed to heed warnings of attacks

Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Sri Lankan officials failed to heed warnings from intelligence agencies about the threat of an attack by a domestic radical Muslim group that officials blame for the Easter Sunday bombings that killed at least 290 people, the country's health minister said Monday.

The coordinated bombings that ripped through churches and luxury hotels were carried out by seven suicide bombers from a militant group named National Thowfeek Jamaath, Health Minister Rajitha Senarathne said.

International intelligence agencies warned of the attacks several times, starting April 4,

Senarathne said. On April 9, the Defense Ministry wrote to the police chief about intelligence that included the group's name, he said. On April 11, police wrote to the heads of security of the judiciary and diplomatic security division, Senarathne said.

It was not immediately clear what action, if any, was taken in response. Authorities said little was known about the group except that its name had appeared in intelligence reports.

Shortly after Senarathne spoke to reporters, a van parked near one of the bombed churches, St. Anthony's Shrine in Colombo, exploded. While inspecting it, police found three bombs they attempted to defuse but that instead detonated. No injuries

were reported.

Also on Monday, police found 87 detonators near Colombo's main bus depot, officials said.

They declined to comment on whether they were linked to Sunday's attacks.

Because of political dysfunction within the government, Senarathne said, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and his Cabinet were kept in the dark about the intelligence until after the attacks.

President Maithrela Sirisena, who was out of the country at the time of the attacks, ousted Wickremesinghe in late October and dissolved the Cabinet. The Supreme Court eventually reversed his actions, but the prime minister has not been al-

lowed into meetings of the Security Council since October.

All of the bombers were Sri Lankan citizens, but authorities suspect foreign links, Senarathne said. Earlier, Ariyananda Welianga, a government forensic crime investigator, said an analysis of the attackers' body parts made clear that they were suicide bombers. He said most of the attacks were carried out by individual bombers, with two at Colombo's Shangri-La Hotel.

The U.S. State Department confirmed Monday that at least four Americans were killed in the blast.

The department said that in addition to those killed, several others were seriously injured.

Army proposes pay increase for aircrews

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

The Army wants to boost flight pay and award pilots with incentive money for career achievements in a bid to stem a record 10% attrition rate due largely to aging aircrews and competition from commercial airlines.

Maj. Gen. William Gayler, commander of the Army Aviation Center of Excellence, spoke of the adjustments the Army is weighing to retain more experienced pilots at an aviation conference last week.

"We have a commercial airline industry that needs pilots," Gayler said in an Army state-

ment. "All of our services have seen aircrew members migrate out to the commercial world."

The shortage of pilots across the military is most acute in the Air Force, which is facing a deficit of about 2,000 pilots.

The Army is also under its authorized strength for aviators, especially AH-64 Apache pilots, who take longer and are more expensive to train than many other pilots.

The commercial airlines, meanwhile, have stepped up efforts to recruit Army rotor-wing pilots.

To ease a global pilot shortage, U.S. regional airlines are recruiting military pilots by of-

fering tuition reimbursement, sign-on bonuses and higher salaries, Reuters reported in January. Military helicopter pilots need only about 90 days of additional fixed-wing training to qualify for a type rating in commercial flying, according to Reuters.

Gayler said it was "alarming" that almost 30% of warrant officer crew members are eligible to retire, while more than 40% of all warrant officers have more than 17 years of service.

Last year, the Army began offering retention bonuses of up to \$35,000 to more experienced pilots.

Gayler said at the conference that bonuses are only a short-term fix. Instead, he said, the aviation branch has proposed boosting flight pay, which can retain more qualified aviators, he said.

The current rate of up to \$840 per month for active flight pay has not changed in more than a decade.

"It's time for an adjustment again," Gayler said, adding that the new figure hasn't been determined.

The Army may also offer additional incentive money to pilots who achieve a significant milestone, such as becoming an instructor or test pilot, he said.

Army revamping centralized promotion board processes

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

The Army will revamp its centralized promotion board processes over the next few years to focus on advancing senior noncommissioned officers on merit, not time served.

Gone will be annual sequenced promotion lists and the "P" status for promotable NCOs, to be replaced by quarterly forecasts and monthly selection processes for sergeant and above.

Officials also plan to expand the use of merit-based rankings for other uses beyond the promotion process, such as for identifying subpar soldiers for separation,

the Army said in a directive published earlier this month.

The changes are aimed at "promoting the right people at the right time," the service's top enlisted soldier said in a statement last week. The first changes will take effect this year with the master sergeant promotion board, but they are slated to be implemented across the NCO corps in the next three to four years.

"This is the first major overhaul to our enlisted centralized promotion board in the 50 years we've conducted them," said Sgt. Major of the Army Dan Dailey, as quoted in the statement.

The new system is expected to ensure retention of the "most talented" NCOs, said

Dailey, who began efforts to revise the process two years ago.

"This change now truly rewards the most qualified soldiers who are seeking advancement, instead of simply promoting people based on seniority," he said.

The current system, which dates to 1969, relies on long-range projections of soldiers leaving the force, sometimes created 24 months in advance — which has at times resulted in surpluses of promotable soldiers, said Gerald Purcell, an Army personnel official and retired sergeant major responsible for integrating NCO professional development policies. The new system is meant to fix such inefficiencies, he said.

For Earth Day, local divers collect trash off Okinawa

BY CARLOS M. VAZQUEZ II
Stars and Stripes

CHATAN, Okinawa — Divers collected more than 120 pounds of trash Saturday from the seafloor at Sunabe Seawall South Steps in Okinawa for an early Earth Day celebration

The event, sponsored by the owners and instructors at Mermaid Island Diving and the nonprofit organization Project

AWARE, drew 72 scuba and snorkeling volunteers for three hours to collect trash from the ocean environment.

Each month, the owners of Mermaid Island Diving, Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Scott Dahn and his wife, April, meet with students and other divers at the Sunabe Seawall steps, a site they've adopted as their own through Project AWARE.

The nonprofit has worked

with scuba divers for more than 25 years to protect the ocean in their own communities and to supply them with cleanup kits, according to the organization's website.

The turnout Saturday for the south steps cleanup was the largest for a one-day event and double the turnout last month, the Dahns said.

The group filled 10 large garbage bags with plastic contain-

ers, metal cans, glass bottles and bits of Styrofoam, among other items.

"Our goal is to get as much trash out," Scott Dahn told Stars and Stripes on Saturday.

The amount of trash collected this month fell short of the 350 pounds gathered last month, maybe a sign the group is making a difference in this corner of the East China Sea.

US tougher on nations buying Iran's oil

Associated Press

The Trump administration said Monday that it will no longer exempt any countries from U.S. sanctions if they continue to buy Iranian oil, stepping up pressure on Iran in a move that primarily affects the five remaining major importers: China and India and U.S. treaty allies Japan, South Korea and Turkey.

President Donald Trump made the decision as part of the administration's "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran that aims to eliminate all of its revenue from oil exports that the U.S. says funds destabilizing activity throughout the Middle East and beyond.

"This decision is intended to bring Iran's oil exports to zero, denying the regime its principal source of revenue," the White House said in a statement.

Announcing the step, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said no more sanctions waivers would be granted when the current waivers expire on May 2, choking off Iranian income that had been more than \$50 billion a year.

"The goal remains simply to deprive the outlaw regime of the funds that it has used to destabilize the Middle East for decades and incentivize Iran to behave like a normal country," Pompeo told reporters at the State Department.

The administration had

New chief of Iran's Guard appointed

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's supreme leader on Sunday appointed a new chief of the country's powerful Revolutionary Guard, picking a general with a history of threatening the U.S. just days after America designated the paramilitary force a terrorist organization.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's decision replaces the commander of a force that controls the Islamic Republic's ballistic missile program and has had tense encounters at sea with American warships. The decision comes as Iran's nuclear deal with world powers is in tatters following President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the U.S. from the accord and restore crippling sanctions, which has sparked outrage in Iran.

Taking over will be Gen. Hossein Salami, 59, who had been serving as a deputy commander in the Guard. Salami joined the Guard at the outbreak of the bloody 1980s Iran-Iraq war, later

rising in the ranks to the head of its air forces.

He replaces Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari, who had been in charge of the Guard for more than 11 years. Leaders of the force have typically served for around 10 years.

A statement from Khamenei's office praised Jafari and said he picked Salami based on the outgoing commander's advice.

The Revolutionary Guard is separate from Iran's standing military and runs its own intelligence operations.

This month, the Trump administration designated the Guard a terrorist organization. Iran responded by designating the U.S. military's Central Command as a terrorist organization.

The Guard long has been a bastion for hard-liners and is believed by analysts to hold a significant portion of Iran's economy through its many enterprises. Salami, like other Guard leaders, routinely delivers speeches laced with harsh rhetoric toward Israel, Tehran's main regional rival.

granted eight waivers when it reimposed sanctions on Iran in November after Trump pulled the U.S. out of the landmark 2015 nuclear deal. The waivers were issued in part to give those countries more time to find alternate energy sources but also to prevent a shock to global oil markets from the sudden removal of Iranian crude. Three of those waivers — for Greece, Italy and Taiwan — are no longer needed because they have all halted their imports of Iranian oil.

The other five continue to import Iranian oil and had lobbied for their waivers to be extended. NATO ally Turkey has made perhaps the most public case for an extension, with senior officials telling their U.S. counterparts that Iranian oil is critical to meeting their country's energy needs. They have also made the case that as a neighbor of Iran, Turkey cannot be expected to completely close its economy to Iranian goods.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu criticized the decision, saying it "will not serve regional peace and stability."

In a message posted on Twitter Monday, Cavusoglu said, "Turkey rejects unilateral sanctions and impositions on how to conduct relations with neighbors." Cavusoglu added that the decision would harm the people of Iran.

US voices dismay at delay in Afghan-Taliban talks

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called Afghanistan's president over the weekend to express Washington's disappointment over the indefinite postponement of Afghan talks with the Taliban, according to a statement released Monday.

The talks were scheduled to start this coming Friday in Qatar, where the Taliban maintain an office, but were scuttled

after a falling out between the two sides over who should attend.

The gathering would have marked the first time that the Taliban and Kabul government officials sat together, a potential milestone in efforts to reach a negotiated end to the war in Afghanistan, America's longest, and the eventual withdrawal of U.S. troops.

The State Department said that in his call with President Ashraf Ghani on Saturday,

Pompeo encouraged both sides to come together to agree on participants, saying the talks are Afghanistan's best chance for peace.

U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, who has met on several occasions with the Taliban and has pressed for Afghan-to-Afghan talks, had expressed hope the Qatar meeting would bring the sides closer to a "road map" for a future Afghanistan.

A statement said that in Kabul, Khalilzad will "consult

with the Afghan government and other Afghans to encourage all parties to work towards intra-Afghan dialogue and negotiations to determine a final peace settlement."

In Qatar, Khalilzad will meet again with the Taliban to focus on "national security issues," an apparent reference to guarantees Washington is seeking that Afghanistan will not again be used as a staging area for terrorist attacks.

Lawmaker, vet Moulton joins 2020 race

Associated Press

BOSTON — U.S. Rep. Seth Moulton is the latest Democrat to jump in the race for the White House.

The Massachusetts lawmaker and Iraq War veteran made the announcement Monday.

“I’m here to tell you and to tell America that I’m running for president of the United States,” Moulton said on ABC’s “Good Morning America.” Moulton said he wanted to run a presidential campaign that would “bring this country back together,” talking “about patriotism, about security, about service.”

“These are issues that for too long Democrats have ceded to Republicans,” he said.

Moulton first came to prominence in 2014 when he unseated

long-term incumbent Rep. John Tierney in a Democratic primary and went on to represent the state’s 6th Congressional District, a swath of communities north of Boston including Salem, home of the infamous Colonial-era witch trials.

Speculation about a possible Moulton run has been simmering as far back as 2017, when he spoke at a Democratic political rally in Iowa, home of the first-in-the-nation presidential caucuses. At the time, he brushed aside talk of a presidential run.

But talk ramped up during last year’s election, when the former U.S. Marine helped lead an effort to get other Democratic military veterans to run for Congress — a cause he continues to push.

“Sixteen years ago today,

leaders in Washington sent me and my friends to fight in a war based on lies. It’s still going on today,” Moulton said in a recent tweet. “It’s time for the generation that fought in Iraq to take over for the generation that sent us there.”

Moulton, 40, also gained national attention for helping lead an effort within the party to reject Nancy Pelosi as House speaker after Democrats regained control of the chamber. Moulton said it was time for new leadership.

Moulton has also been a frequent critic of President Donald Trump — from foreign policy, including Trump’s recent veto of a resolution to end U.S. military assistance in Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen, to his push for a wall at the south-

ern border. Also, when Trump claimed to be the target of the “single greatest witch hunt of a politician in American history,” Moulton responded that “as the Representative of Salem, Mass., I can confirm that this is false.”

Despite occasionally differing with some on the most liberal wing of the party, Moulton has staked out familiar policy positions for those seeking the Democratic nomination.

He’s called health care “a right every American must be guaranteed,” pushed to toughen gun laws, was a co-sponsor of the Green New Deal, has championed a federal “Green Corps” modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s, and has called for an end to the Electoral College.

Ukraine’s president-elect faces daunting challenges

Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Political mandates don’t get much more powerful than the one Ukrainian voters gave comedian Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who as president-elect faces daunting challenges along with an overwhelming directive to produce change.

With nearly all ballots counted, Zelenskyy had 73% of the vote, compared with incumbent President Petro Poroshenko’s 24%. Monitors for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said the election took place with respect for “fundamental freedoms” and set the stage for a “democratic and orderly transfer of power.”

The first-time candidate, who stars in a TV sitcom about a high school teacher who becomes president almost by accident, appeared to have won in both the west and the east, a rarity in post-Soviet Ukraine. Zelenskyy campaigned on unifying Ukraine, which is torn by bitter debates over national identity

and a bloody conflict with Russia-backed separatists.

The separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine and Russia’s annexation of Crimea are likely to dominate the agenda of a leader with no previous political or government experience. Zelenskyy, a Russian speaker from central Ukraine, vowed to step up efforts to bring the east back under Kiev’s wing but offered no details on what that entailed.

Zelenskyy’s campaign adviser, Oleksandr Danylyuk, told The Associated Press on Monday the new leader’s team “does not have a magic wand” to deal with the issue of the occupied territories but favors jump-starting talks with Russia via European mediators. The president-elect’s advisers also reject the idea of the Ukrainian government using force to regain control of the east and of Crimea, Danylyuk said.

Russia seized Crimea in 2014 in a move that Ukraine and almost all of the world views as illegal.

Trump, firm sue to block financial records subpoena

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump and his business on Monday sued House Oversight Committee Chairman Elijah Cummings, D-Md., in a bid to block a congressional subpoena of his financial records.

The lawsuit seeks a court order to prevent Trump’s accounting firm from complying with what his lawyers say is an improper use of subpoena power by congressional Democrats.

“Democrats are using their new control of congressional committees to investigate every aspect of President Trump’s personal finances, businesses and even his family,” the filing by Trump claims. “Instead of working with the president to pass bipartisan legislation that would actually benefit Americans, House Democrats are singularly obsessed with finding something they can use to damage the president politically.”

The filing, in U.S. District Court for the District of Colum-

bia, further escalates a clash between the White House and the Democratic-controlled House over congressional oversight.

Last week, Cummings subpoenaed Mazars USA, an accounting firm long used by Trump.

For more than a decade, Mazars and a predecessor firm signed off on financial statements for Trump that he used when seeking loans. Some of the statements include frequent exaggerations or inaccuracies and were accompanied by a note from the firm saying it was not responsible for the accuracy of the information.

The Oversight Committee on March 20 asked the company for copies of “statements of financial condition” and audits prepared for Trump and several of his companies, including the one that owns the Trump International Hotel in downtown Washington.

The company said last week that it “will respect the legal process and fully comply with its legal obligations.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

City OKs free beer samples for shoppers

MS OXFORD — Free beer tomorrow, the old joke goes, but it's coming true in one Mississippi city.

The Oxford Eagle reported that city aldermen voted 5-1 on April 16 to allow stores that specialize in selling beer to offer free 1-ounce samples to shoppers.

A store could offer a customer up to five samples in a 24-hour period.

Jackson Beer Co. owner Allen Jackson said the ordinance will allow him to hold tasting events without making food available, as is required now.

Large brawl involves 300 teenagers at park

MO KANSAS CITY — Authorities said officers responded to a brawl involving up to 300 teenagers at the Worlds of Fun amusement park.

The Kansas City Police Department said several law enforcement agencies were called to the park Saturday night when an off-duty Clay County sheriff's deputy reported several large fights involving mostly teenagers.

Kansas City police said no injuries were reported and no one was arrested. Police said the Clay County sheriff's office issued some citations to people at the scene.

Police: Man tried to sell someone's house

AL ELBA — A man faces a charge of first-degree attempted theft after he listed for sale a house that belonged to someone else.

Al.com reported that Tony

Glen Grimes, 56, of Enterprise, was arrested Friday and transported to the Coffee County Jail.

He was being held on \$150,000 bond.

According to the complaint, Grimes put a house on the market in late February with an asking price of \$168,000. The house Grimes marketed is in Enterprise but he does not own it.

Baby found in car next to 275 pounds of pot

TX BROWNSVILLE — Border patrol agents found a baby sitting in the backseat of a car next to 275 pounds of marijuana in south Texas, according to charging documents.

On April 12, a person in Brownsville called border patrol saying a large amount of narcotics was just loaded into a white Ford Escape.

An agent pulled over the car in which Ashley Renee Resendiz, 22, and Carla Michelle Resendiz, 47, were riding, officials said.

The agent said large bundles of drugs were clearly visible in the backseat. Ashley Resendiz's infant son was in a car seat next to the pile of drugs, according to charging documents.

Both women were arrested and charged with possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

The baby was released into a relative's custody.

Boy, 5, calls 911 to ask for McDonald's

MI WYOMING — A 5-year-old Michigan boy had a craving for McDonald's but his grandmother was sleeping so he called 911 and made a request.

WZZM-TV in Grand Rapids reported that Izhah Hall asked a Wyoming dispatcher: "Can you bring me McDonald's?" Dispatcher Sara Kuberski said she told him no but reached out to the police.

Wyoming police officer Dan Patterson said the April 14 request made him laugh, so he stopped at McDonald's on his way to check on Izhah's home.

Patterson said he thought, "I'm driving past McDonald's on my way there and I might as well get him something."

The officer said the first thing the boy said to him was, "My grandma's gonna be so mad. Can you please go away?"

Worker hospitalized after zoo tiger attack

KS TOPEKA — City officials said a tiger mauled a zookeeper at the Topeka Zoo in northeastern Kansas.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported the incident happened about 9:30 a.m. Saturday, when a Sumatran tiger named Sanjiv attacked the worker in a secured, indoor space.

Topeka Zoo Director Brendan Wiley said the zookeeper was awake and alert when she was taken by ambulance to a hospital.

Wiley said he did not know the extent of her injuries.

The zookeeper's name has not been released.

City spokeswoman Molly Hadfield said the zoo was open at the time of the attack and was witnessed by some people.

The zoo reopened about 45 minutes after the attack.

Fake officer tries to pull over real officer

FL PLANT CITY — Authorities said a Florida

man impersonating an officer flipped the red-and-blue lights on his SUV while unknowingly trying to stop a car with a real officer.

The Tampa Bay Times reported that Matthew Erris, 26, was arrested on a charge of impersonating a public officer.

An arrest report says Erris turned on the red-and-blue lights on his SUV in Plant City to try to stop the car in front of him.

The driver was an undercover Hillsborough County sheriff's detective in an unmarked car.

He didn't pull over. Instead, he called dispatchers to alert other deputies, who later stopped Erris.

Erris admitted he installed the lights and used them to get through heavy traffic.

Man in only underwear assaults officers

CT WESTPORT — Westport police said a man walking through town wearing only underwear assaulted police officers.

Police said they responded to multiple calls about the man on Friday.

They said an officer approached to check on his welfare and was immediately struck in the face and a struggle ensued.

They said additional officers arrived and attempted to subdue the man, who resisted being taken into custody and bit an officer.

The man and two officers were taken to a local hospital to be treated.

From wire reports

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Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Road teams at home in playoffs

Associated Press

Road, sweet road.

There were eight NBA playoff games this weekend, and all eight were won by the road team. It's the first time in NBA history there were eight road playoff wins in a two-day span.

"Road wins are the best, especially in the playoffs," Toronto's Kawhi Leonard said.

The Raptors were one of the eight road winners this weekend, prevailing at Orlando on Sunday. Other Sunday road winners included Boston over Indiana, Golden State over the Los Angeles Clippers and Portland over Oklahoma City.

On Saturday, it was Philadelphia over Brooklyn, Denver over San Antonio, Houston over Utah and Milwaukee over Detroit.

The Nuggets' win in San Antonio was their first since 2012. Denver had lost three straight

postseason games in San Antonio dating to their last playoff matchup in 2007 and had also lost 13 straight regular season games on the road to the Spurs.

"It's an unbelievable win," said Paul Millsap, one of the few Nuggets with previous postseason experience. "I can't put into words the magnitude of this win."

Through 30 games of this year's playoffs, road teams are 16-14. Home teams went 3-0 on Wednesday, and went 2-12 in the four days that followed. Since the NBA went to the 16-team playoff format in 1984, there has never been a first round where road teams won more than home teams.

Home teams won 71 percent of playoff games last season, the NBA's highest such clip since 2008.

Celtics eliminate Pacers

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Gordon Hayward and Marcus Morris took care of some housecleaning Sunday.

They dusted off their three-point shooting touch in time to help the Boston Celtics complete a clean sweep.

Hayward scored 20 points, Morris added 18 and the duo combined for five threes over the final 5½ minutes to give Boston a 110-106 victory and its first 4-0 series victory in eight years.

"I knew there was going to be a spark off the bench. [On Sunday] and that person was Gordon Hayward," All-Star guard Kyrie Irving said. "This is his city. I'm glad he had a chance to put on a performance like that in a closeout game."

Just how rare is a sweep for a franchise with a league-record 17 titles?

Since 1986-87, the Celtics had done it just once — in the first round against the New York Knicks. And between the Celtics' title-clinching sweep over the Minneapolis Lakers in 1958-59 and their perfect run through the 1985-86 Eastern Conference finals against Milwaukee, the Celtics achieved it just twice — in 1979 against Houston and in 1980 against Chicago.

So when coach Brad Stevens was asked Saturday about how he'd react if his players earned some time off, Stevens said he wasn't sure.

Now, last year's Eastern Conference runner-ups can start a new to-do list with a potential matchup looming against the top-seeded Bucks.

"It's going to take everything we have," Hayward said. "That's why it's good we finished this series. We can rest up, prepare, and have some extra time."

Bojan Bogdanovic scored 22 points and Tyreke Evans scored a playoff career-high 21 as the Pacers got swept for the second time in three years — the only two times it has happened in franchise history.

Durant, Thompson help Warriors take 3-1 lead in series

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A little scoreboard watching inspired Klay Thompson and Golden State. Seeing Houston up 3-0 on Utah combined with having dropped a game at home, the Warriors got back to business.

Kevin Durant scored 33 points and Thompson added 32 in a 113-105 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers on Sunday that gave the Warriors a commanding 3-1 lead in their first-round playoff series.

"We came in with that mindset to put our foot on the throttle and not let go," Thompson said. "We let go in Game 2 and we won't do that the rest of the playoffs. I really believe that."

After a quiet 12 points in Game 3, Thompson broke out for 27 points by halftime, when Durant had 19.

"In the first quarter, we really didn't need to do anything special. Klay was just amazing. K.D. was consistent the whole game," Stephen Curry said. "For us, obviously with the threats we have out there, it is just a matter of trying to be as patient as possible."

Curry's patience was tried as he missed his first six shots and was in foul trouble for the second straight game before finishing with 12 points. Andrew Bogut fouled out with 5:50 remaining in the game with eight points and 10 rebounds.

Game 5 is Wednesday in Oakland, when the two-time defending champions could close out the series.

The Warriors were 17 of 19 from the free throw line. They controlled the boards, 49-33, led by Curry and Bogut with 10 rebounds apiece.

Raptors top Magic behind 34 points from Leonard

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Kawhi Leonard missed the NBA playoffs last season, in multiple ways.

He wasn't playing the games. He wasn't feeling the games, either.

That's not a problem this season for the 2014 NBA Finals MVP. Healthy and happy, Leonard has the Toronto Raptors one win away from the second round. He scored 34 points and the Raptors beat the Orlando Magic 107-85 on Sunday night to take a 3-1 lead in their Eastern Conference first-round series.

"You just want to be out there on the floor, with your teammates and just feel that team spirit and chemistry, just trying to focus on one goal," said Leonard, who was out for almost all of last season, his last with San Antonio before an off-season trade to Toronto. "That's something I was missing, just being out, sitting out."

Pascal Siakam and Norman Powell each scored 16 for the Raptors, who can advance with a home win in Game 5 on Tuesday. Toronto has now won three consecutive postseason games, only the third time that's happened in franchise history.

Aaron Gordon scored 25 for the Magic, making his first seven shots of the second half. Evan Fournier scored 19 and Nikola Vucevic added 11 for the Magic, who committed 17 turnovers that became 21 Toronto points.

Now the Magic's season is squarely on the brink. There have been 11 teams to successfully rally from a 3-1 series deficit in a best-of-seven NBA series, and of those, only three pulled it off by winning a Game 7 on the road.

Lillard lifts Trail Blazers over Thunder

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Russell Westbrook went cold just when Dame Time hit in the third quarter again.

Now time's almost up for the Oklahoma City Thunder.

Damian Lillard scored 15 of his 24 points in the third quarter, and the Portland Trail Blazers held Westbrook without a basket in the second half in beating the Thunder 111-98 on Sunday night to take a 3-1 lead in their series.

Lillard had another big third quarter after scoring 25 points in the period in a Game 3 loss Friday. In this game, the All-Star point guard was 5-for-7 in the third to help Portland take control for good.

"I didn't feel the need to get overly aggressive in the first half, once I saw how the game was going," he said. "But then in the third, I felt like that was the time when we needed to hit the gas."

Lillard made his first basket with 1:14 left in the first half after missing his first six shots, but he had seven assists before the break.

"We've kind of come to expect it," Portland coach Terry Stotts said. "He manages the game. He senses the moment when we need him to do different things. He's an ultimate competitor. He is going to give it his all."

C.J. McCollum scored 27 points, Al-Farouq Aminu had 19 points and nine rebounds, and Maurice Harkless added 15 points and 10 rebounds for the Trail Blazers. Portland can close out the series Tuesday at home.

Paul George had 32 points and 10 rebounds for Oklahoma City. Dennis Schroder added 17 points.

Westbrook scored 14 points on 5-for-21 shooting. He missed his final 10 shots and was 0-for-7 with one point in the second half. Westbrook had nine rebounds and seven assists.

"Sometimes you have nights like that," he said. "That happens sometimes. But it just wasn't good enough for us to get the win."

Now, the Thunder will try to fight off elimination.

"Honestly, regardless of what the series is, it's always one game at a time," George said. "You play one game. You leave everything in one game and go to the next one. It makes no difference when you're down 3-1 — you've got to take it one game at a time, regardless."

Hertl, Sharks top Vegas in 2OT

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — After winning Game 5 at home to avoid elimination, Tomas Hertl vowed the San Jose Sharks would return to SAP Center for a seventh and decisive game in their opening round series with the Vegas Golden Knights.

One day later, he clarified it wasn't necessarily a guarantee, but rather a vote of confidence his team would force a Game 7.

Either way, he came through Sunday to make it happen.

Hertl scored a short-handed goal 11:17 into the second overtime to lift San Jose to a 2-1 win over the Golden Knights, forcing a deciding game in their first-round playoff series.

"At first moment when I get it, I was already a little bit tired, I was thinking maybe just dump it in and change, but I saw a little bit of space, so I just take a couple of steps and try shoot it," Hertl said. "If you don't try you never know, so I tried it and it somehow get through, and for sure huge goal."

Just 31 seconds after Barclay Goodrow was called for slashing Brayden McNabb, it was Marc-Edouard poking the puck from in front of Jones with a stretch pass down the center of the ice, where a weary Hertl was there to gather the delivery, skate past Vegas' Shea Theodore and beat Marc-Andre Fleury with a wrist shot to seal the win and force Game 7 on Tuesday at San

Jose.

"The only reason it went in because Shea Theodore slashed a stick and you tell your defensemen to play the guy's stick," Vegas coach Gerard Gallant said. "So, it's do or die in the next game for both teams."

Hertl became the first player in NHL history to score a short-handed winner in a postseason game that required multiple overtimes. Only eight other players in history have scored a short-handed goal in the first overtime of a postseason game.

Logan Couture also scored to get the Sharks on the board just before the end of the first period, when he quickly gathered the puck, maneuvered around Golden Knights defender Nate Schmidt and fired past Fleury to give San Jose a 1-0 with 6.5 seconds left.

"Obviously, it's a tough one," said Jonathan Marchessault, who scored Vegas' lone goal. "I felt like we were the better team, but sometimes these games can feel a little tricky. We definitely kept buzzing and kept going. ... Obviously disappointed, I think tonight we should have won, but who cares. Got to go Game 7 and get it done over there."

Asked if he had an assurance for Tuesday, Hertl laughed and simply guaranteed the Sharks would show up and play their best game.

"Game 7 is the most fun game you can play in the NHL," Hertl said.

Marchand, Bruins beat Leafs

Associated Press

TORONTO — Facing elimination, Boston didn't panic when it fell behind halfway through the first period. The Bruins kept their focus, quickly tied it and took the lead, and then held off the Toronto Maple Leafs to force a Game 7 in their first-round playoff series.

Brad Marchand had two goals and an assist as the Bruins beat the Maple Leafs 4-2 on Sunday.

"We just knew there was a lot of game left," Marchand said. "We've come from behind a lot this year. We weren't fazed. We came together, played very hard after that. We played a really good game."

Torey Krug and Jake DeBrusk also scored, and David Pastrnak had two assists to help Boston avoid elimination. Tuukka Rask stopped 22 shots.

"[We] gave ourselves another opportunity for another game," Marchand said. "We got to try to replicate it. They're going to come hard. They've played really well so far in our building this series."

Morgan Rielly and Auston Matthews scored for Toronto in a series neither team has managed back-to-back victories and each has won twice on the road. Frederik Andersen finished with 37 saves.

"It is what is now," Maple Leafs forward John Tavares said. "We've still got a good chance to win this series. That's what our focus is on now."

The Bruins will host the deciding game on Tuesday night.

The Maple Leafs, who lost to the Bruins in seven games in both 2013 and last spring, have not advanced to the second round of the playoffs since 2004.

"You try to forget the past, whether it's this series or last year's series," DeBrusk said, "and understand they're going to come out with everything they've got and so are we."

The winner of this series will take on the Columbus Blue Jackets, who got the Eastern Conference's last wild card and then swept a Tampa Bay Lightning team that tied an NHL record with 62 victories in the regular season.

Bellinger denies Yelich, hits home run

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Cody Bellinger saved a run with his glove and nailed down a series-clinching win for the Los Angeles Dodgers with his bat.

After the game, he focused on food.

"We are going to eat some pizza here in a minute," Bellinger said when asked what he enjoyed most about the day. "Pretty hungry, honestly."

Bellinger reached over the right field wall to rob Christian Yelich in the eighth inning of yet another home run, then hit a solo drive off Josh Hader with two outs in the ninth to lift the Dodgers over the Milwaukee Brewers 6-5 on Sunday.

"I thought he hit it well and then I got to the wall as quick as I could," Bellinger said. "It was so high in the air. You just get at the wall and read it and try to time it."

Yelich leads the majors with 13 home runs.

Bellinger connected for his 11th home run after pinch hitter Eric Thames launched a three-run homer off Dodgers closer Kenley Jansen (2-0) with two outs in the eighth that made it 5-all.

Bellinger hammered a two-strike slider from Hader.

"I just tried to put the barrel on it," Bellinger said.

On Friday night, the hard-throwing Hader (0-2) gave up a three-run homer to Enrique Hernandez in the eighth that led Los Angeles to a 5-3 win.

"It just comes down to executing your pitch," Hader said. "Bellinger is swinging a hot bat right now and he made me pay."

Joc Pederson hit two home runs on his 27th birthday, including a drive to begin the game, and tied a career high with four hits. He scored three times as the Dodgers won for the seventh time in eight games.

Los Angeles took three of four games at Miller Park. Last year, the Dodgers won

Game 7 of the NL Championship Series in Milwaukee.

Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw allowed two hits and two runs in six effective innings in his second start of the season. The lefty opened on the injured list with left shoulder inflammation.

"At times he had every single pitch working, and there were times he really couldn't find it," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "But when he needed to make a pitch he did."

Pederson homered to straightaway center on the second pitch of the game against Brandon Woodruff. Corey Seager followed with a double and scored on Bellinger's single.

Seager's RBI double in the second extended the lead to 3-0. The cushion grew to 4-0 on Bellinger's run-scoring single.

The Dodgers tacked on another run on Pederson's second homer of the game, a leadoff shot off Woodruff in the fourth.

Roundup

Red Sox finish sweep of East-leading Rays

The Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Christian Vazquez hit a sacrifice fly in the 11th inning, and the Boston Red Sox completed an uplifting three-game sweep of the AL East-leading Tampa Bay Rays with a 4-3 victory Sunday.

Rafael Devers singled off Jose Alvarado (0-2) to start the 11th and went to second when Michael Chavis walked.

Both runners moved up a base on Jackie Bradley's sacrifice bunt and Vazquez followed with his fly that Kevin Kiermaier ran down in center field.

Marcus Walden (3-0) allowed an infield hit over two scoreless innings and Ryan Brasier worked the 11th to get his sixth save.

After starting the season by losing eight of 10, the defending World Series champions are 7-5 over the last 12 games and went from eight to five games behind the Rays.

Yankees 7, Royals 6 (10): Austin Romine drove in the winning run in the 10th inning with his third RBI single, and

host New York overcame a bullpen collapse that followed another scoreless start by James Paxton to beat Kansas City.

After adding All-Star slugger Aaron Judge to their ever-growing injury list, the Yankees escaped a couple late jams and got back over .500.

Jake Diekman (0-1) walked Mike Tauchman and Gio Urshela leading off the bottom of the 10th, and 23-year-old Thairo Estrada made his big league debut as a pinch hitter and sacrificed against Ian Kennedy.

Paxton allowed three hits and became only the second Yankees pitcher to strike out 12 or more in consecutive starts.

Braves 11, Indians 5: Josh Donaldson had two homers and four RBIs, Freddie Freeman added three hits and Atlanta pounded host Cleveland's pitching for the second straight night.

Rangers 11, Astros 10: Joey Gallo had the first sacrifice fly of his career in his 1,337th plate appearance and matched his best with five RBIs, helping Shelby Miller get his first major league victory in two years as

host Texas held on.

The Astros hit five solo home runs after falling behind 10-1.

Blue Jays 5, Athletics 4: Justin Smoak got thrown out on a wild sequence that began with another sensational play by Oakland center fielder Ramon Laureano, but wound up with four hits in visiting Toronto's victory.

Cardinals 6, Mets 4: Paul Goldschmidt drove in two runs and Noah Syndergaard had better luck at the plate than on the mound, hitting a homer with Dexter Fowler's help as host St. Louis beat New York.

Rockies 4, Phillies 1: Jon Gray pitched six scoreless innings, Tony Wolters had a two-run double and host Colorado beat Philadelphia for its sixth win in seven games.

Padres 4, Reds 3: Austin Hedges homered and Wil Myers hit a go-ahead, two-run double in the four-run third inning for host San Diego, which beat Cincinnati to snap a six-game losing streak.

Cubs 2, Diamondbacks 1: David Bote hit a game-ending RBI single in the ninth inning,

and host Chicago used a terrific performance by Tyler Chatwood to beat Arizona.

Angels 8, Mariners 6: Tommy La Stella hit two home runs and host Los Angeles held on against Seattle to end a six-game losing streak.

Twins 4, Orioles 3: Kyle Gibson pitched six sharp innings, Willians Astudillo drove in two runs and Minnesota held off host Baltimore for a three-game sweep.

Tigers 4, White Sox 3: Daniel Norris struck out six batters in five innings to earn his first win in two years and help host Detroit beat Chicago.

Nationals 5, Marlins 0: Stephen Strasburg dominated his favorite foil, striking out 11 and allowing two hits in eight innings to help visiting Washington avert a series sweep.

Giants 3, Pirates 2: Buster Posey snapped the longest homerless drought of his career with a three-run shot and tagged out host Pittsburgh's Jung Ho Kang at the plate for the final out.