

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Monday, May 6, 2019

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Deployment seen as message to Iran

BY JOSHUA KARSTEN

*Stars and Stripes*

MANAMA, Bahrain — The deployment of the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group and a bomber task force to the Middle East was meant to “send a clear and unmistakable message to the Iranian regime,” but some analysts said the U.S. could be trying to frame long-planned movements as increased pressure on Tehran.

White House national security adviser John Bolton said Sunday the deployment followed a “number of troubling and escalatory indications and warnings” from Iran, adding that any attack on U.S. interests would be met with “unrelenting force.”

The announcement came after “clear indications” Iran and Iranian proxy forces were preparing to possibly attack U.S. forces at sea and on land in the region, anonymous officials told The Associated Press

on Monday, while declining to provide specifics.

But Bolton’s announcement seems to be a “clever example of reverse-engineering a message to fit the operational situation,” said Bryan Clark, a Washington-based analyst and senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. “The administration may be trying to increase pressure on Iran’s leaders by characterizing the Lincoln deployment as an action intended to deter unspecified Iranian actions,” Clark said.

Speaking to reporters on a flight to Europe, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the U.S. response had been in the works for a little while but was based on “escalatory actions from the Iranians,” the AP reported.

For months, the Trump administration has been ratcheting up pressure on Iran, often prompting threats or other responses from Tehran.

A year ago, President Donald Trump withdrew from the

Obama administration’s landmark nuclear deal with Iran, which led to punishing sanctions, the reimposition of including those targeting Iran’s oil, shipping and banking sectors.

Last month, the administration announced that the U.S. will no longer exempt any countries from U.S. sanctions if they continue to buy Iranian oil. The waivers for those sanctions expired Friday, the AP reported.

Tehran, meanwhile, has said it is poised to restart its nuclear program and, in response to the end of the waivers, has threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz — the only passage between the Persian Gulf and the ocean.

Still, the deployment of a carrier to the U.S. Central Command area isn’t unusual and was likely routine and long-planned, Ilan Goldenberg, Middle East director at the Washington-based think tank Center for a New Security, said on Twitter on Monday.

“The inflammatory language

from Bolton is unusual/provocative but my guess is just an opportunity to try to intimidate the Iranians,” Goldenberg said.

The region has been without a U.S. carrier since the USS John C. Stennis left early last month.

Though the Navy did not announce a route for the scheduled deployment of the Lincoln when it departed its homeport in Virginia last month, the ship was expected to circumnavigate the globe en route to its new homeport of San Diego, The Virginian-Pilot reported.

While it may have already had plans to transit the Middle East, that does not mean the Iranian threat is not real, Clark said by email. Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps recently changed leadership, and the successor to longtime commander Mohammad Ali Jafari, whose tenure lasted 11 years, may want to make a statement with aggressive actions against U.S. forces, Clark said.

## Report advocates forcing Russia to spend more

BY SCOTT WYLAND

*Stars and Stripes*

The United States should pull a page from the Cold War playbook and drive Russia to spend money in a tit-for-tat power game that its smaller economy can’t support, a think tank said in a recent study.

The West can exploit factors that are making Russia more vulnerable, such as economic sanctions, fuel prices falling below peak levels, an aging population and increasing authoritarianism under President Vladimir Putin, Rand Corp. said in the report. How-

ever, it also urged caution with ventures that could provoke Moscow.

The U.S. should fund operations with the secondary aim of unsettling Russia and diverting it to less-threatening pursuits that deplete its coffers, said the Rand report, titled “Overextending and Unbalancing Russia.”

“Such cost-imposing options could place new burdens on Russia — ideally heavier burdens than would be imposed on the United States for pursuing those options,” Rand said.

The U.S. outpacing Moscow

in military spending is often credited in part with causing the Soviet empire to collapse. Rand doesn’t recommend provoking Russia into a Cold War-sized arms race. Instead, the report gives a list of operations the U.S. could fund, from military to political to economic.

Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea five years ago altered how Washington and its allies view the security landscape in Europe. Since then, the U.S.-led NATO alliance has grappled with how to best counter Russia, largely focusing on putting

more troops in Eastern Europe for defensive purposes.

The report says providing more lethal aid to Ukraine could cause Russia to funnel more money to its current operations and risks escalating tensions.

Expanding U.S. energy production to nudge out Russia in global markets, on the other hand, was rated as a low-risk, high-yield pursuit. It would put stress on Russia’s economy, forcing Moscow to curtail defense spending, while benefiting the U.S. economy, Rand said.

# China tops agenda in Arctic security talks

By JOHN VANDIVER

*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — China's Arctic ambitions are expected to dominate the discussion later this week when U.S. military leaders convene with partners for security talks in Greenland, an economically vulnerable land where China is working to gain a foothold.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo set the stage for the Greenland meeting when he warned China and Russia on Monday that the U.S. will not tolerate any unilateral or aggressive moves in the Arctic region.

China's "economic charm offensive" in the high North and beyond is underway in Europe with investments in a network of ports and mines as it lays groundwork that could pose a long-term threat, U.S. military officials say.

"China is not a military threat to Europe right now, but

if we are not careful about how we look at where and how they are investing, they become a very significant national security threat in the future that we may not be able to combat," a U.S. European Command official said on condition of anonymity ahead of the security talks in Greenland.

On Wednesday, U.S. military officials and those from 10 other countries that make up the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable will meet in Greenland for two days.

"One of our main topics this year is China's influence in the Arctic," the EUCOM official said.

For Washington, the concern is that China's push could, over time, turn into leverage against U.S. military interests.

"They can get into and influence national security in a way that doesn't appear threatening," the EUCOM official said. "They are offering obviously

economic means for infrastructure — it is expensive to build in the Arctic."

Greenland, home to the U.S.' Thule Air Force Base, is an autonomous country, but Denmark controls its defense and foreign policy. That hasn't stopped Beijing from making economic inroads. For example, China has bought rights to long out-of-use mines in the country.

"Greenland is a place that we have a pretty strong eye on," the EUCOM official said. "Why is China buying a mine that hasn't been productive in 30 years. What is the point in China purchasing that mine?"

Last year, Beijing also had its eyes on an airport expansion project in Greenland, a move that was eventually blocked by Copenhagen because of security concerns.

"This gives us great pause," EUCOM's Gen. Tod Wolters said in April regarding China's

maneuvering in Greenland.

While Russia's Arctic ambitions have long been the main area of concern among the U.S. and its allies, there are signs that China's economic heft could pose a long-term challenge. Even though it doesn't border the Arctic, China's recent military white paper outlined how Beijing sees itself as an Arctic player with ambitions for a "Polar Silk Road."

China's interest in the Arctic comes as polar ice in the region melts, potentially opening new shipping lanes for merchants in the years ahead and increasing access to natural resources.

China says it has "rights in respect of scientific research, navigation, overflight, fishing, laying of submarine cables and pipelines in the high seas and other relevant sea areas in the Arctic Ocean." It also has "rights to resource exploration and exploitation," China's 2018 Arctic policy states.

## Dems set contempt vote for Barr over Mueller report

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler on Monday scheduled a vote this week to hold Attorney General William Barr in contempt of Congress, escalating the battle between the Democrat-led House and President Donald Trump over special counsel Robert Mueller's report.

Nadler is proposing to hold Barr in contempt after the Justice Department declined to provide the committee with a full, unredacted version of special counsel Mueller's report on Trump and Russia. The committee had given Barr until 9 a.m. Monday to comply.

"Congress must see the full report and underlying evidence to determine how to best move forward with oversight, legislation, and other constitutional

responsibilities," Nadler said in a statement.

The department has provided a redacted version, which Nadler said offered "disturbing evidence and analysis that President Trump engaged in obstruction of justice at the highest levels." He said Barr's failure to comply with the subpoena for the full report "leaves us no choice but to initiate contempt proceedings."

The top Republican on the committee, Rep. Doug Collins, of Georgia, said, "Democrats have launched a proxy war smearing the attorney general when their anger actually lies with the president and the special counsel, who found neither conspiracy nor obstruction."

Collins said the upcoming vote is "illogical and disingenuous" as negotiations are underway with the Justice Department for access.

The resolution to be voted on Wednesday says, "William P. Barr, the Attorney General of the United States, shall be found to be in contempt of Congress for failure to comply with a congressional subpoena." Barr's failure to comply "has hindered the Committee's constitutional, oversight and legislative functions," it says.

Proceedings could be postponed if the attorney general makes a "good faith" effort to comply with the committee, Nadler said. But that appears unlikely.

While a contempt vote would send a message, it wouldn't force the Justice Department to hand over the report. Nor would it guarantee criminal charges against Barr.

The full House would need to approve it, which would send a criminal referral to the U.S. attorney for the District of Co-

lumbia, a Justice Department official who is likely to defend the attorney general.

Still, Democratic House leaders have signaled they will methodically take advantage of all the legal steps available. They could also file a civil lawsuit against the Justice Department — an option that could take months or even years to resolve. Some members of the committee have suggested they also could fine Barr as he withholds the information.

"The committee is prepared to make every realistic effort to reach an accommodation with the department," Nadler wrote to Barr on Friday. "But if the department persists in its baseless refusal to comply with a validly issued subpoena, the committee will move to contempt proceedings and seek further legal recourse."

## Taliban said to storm checkpoint, killing 20

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban stormed an army checkpoint in Afghanistan's western Farah province, killing 20 soldiers and abducting two, the latest in relentless attacks that the insurgents carry out even as they negotiate with the U.S. about ending the war, Afghan officials said Monday.

The attack also dashed hopes of some sort of truce during the holy month of Ramadan, which started Monday and when observant Muslims fast from dawn to dusk.

The overnight attack on the checkpoint in Farah province's Gulistan district triggered an hourlong gunbattle as Afghan troops tried to repel the attackers. The fate of the abducted soldiers was not immediately known, said provincial councilman Dadullah Qaneh.

Col. Qais Mangal, spokesman for the Afghan Ministry of Defense, later confirmed the attack but could not give precise casualty figures.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yusuf Ahmadi claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Taliban still carry out near-daily attacks on Afghan forces, even as peace efforts have accelerated to find an end to Afghanistan's nearly 17-year war.

From The Associated Press

# Cohen, headed to prison, says there 'remains much to be told'

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Michael Cohen, the former lawyer, media attack dog and fixer for President Donald Trump, said Monday there "remains much to be told" as he headed to prison to begin a three-year prison sentence for crimes including campaign finance violations related to hush-money payments made on Trump's behalf.

Cohen arrived at the Federal Correctional Institution in Otisville, a federal prison in the countryside 70 miles northwest of New York City, at 11:30 a.m. on Monday. A minimum security prison camp there has become a haven for white-collar criminals.

"There still remains much to be told and I look forward to the day when I can share the truth," Cohen told a crush of media outside his New York City apartment before getting into a waiting Cadillac Escalade SUV shortly before 10 a.m.

In a shot at Trump, he said he hoped when he is released, "the country will be in a place without xenophobia, injustice and lies at the helm."

Cohen appeared to read from a prepared statement and didn't answer shouted questions. He stumbled on the way to the SUV as reporters and photographers jostled around scaffolding and scuffled with his driver.

Cohen, who has been disbarred, is trading plaid blazers for khaki prison garb after trying and failing in recent weeks to get his sentence delayed or reduced.

Cohen was originally scheduled to start his sentence in March, but a judge granted a two-month delay so he could recover from surgery and get his affairs in order.

Cohen, 53, is the only person charged with a crime in connection with the hush-money payments to women who allegedly had affairs with Trump.

Federal prosecutors have said Trump directed Cohen to arrange the payments to buy the silence of porn actress Stormy Daniels and former Playboy model Karen McDougal in the run-up to the 2016 election. Trump denies that he had trysts with either woman.

Cohen also pleaded guilty

to lying to Congress about a Trump Tower project in Moscow, as well as to charges of tax evasion and bank fraud.

Once he gets to prison, Cohen will undergo medical and mental health screenings and be assigned a job, such as mowing the grounds or cleaning up the visiting room. He'll also get sets of clothing, bedding and towels.

At the prison camp, about 115 inmates sleep in bunks lined up in barrack-style halls instead of individual or two-man cells like in higher security facilities. Recreational amenities include tennis courts, horseshoes and bocce ball.

Cohen's fellow inmates include "Jersey Shore" star Mike "The Situation" Sorrentino, who wraps up an eight-month tax fraud sentence in September, and Fyre Festival fraudster Billy McFarland, who's serving a six-year sentence.

Some high-profile inmates have been known to hire other prisoners to do their laundry and heat up their meals, but that's looked at by staff as a sign of laziness and entitlement.

## Pilots made runway change before jet hit Fla. river

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Pilots of a chartered jet that ran into a river at a Florida military base made a last-minute change to the runway where they would make a landing, a federal investigator said Sunday.

The pilots on the Miami Air International plane requested the change to air traffic controllers shortly before landing at Naval Air Station Jacksonville on Friday night.

The 9,000-foot-long runway where the Boeing 737 landed was essentially limited to 7,800 feet since there was a wire barrier set up to recover Navy aircraft in instances they couldn't land on a carrier during train-

ing, said Bruce Landsberg, vice chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board.

"We don't know what they were thinking or why they made that choice," Landsberg said at a news conference. "That will be one of the things we look to find out."

Landsberg didn't elaborate on the significance of the runway change but said it would be a focus of investigation.

NTSB investigators said they hope a cockpit voice recorder helps them answer that question, but they have been unable to recover it yet since the part of the plane where it's located is still underwater in the St. Johns River. Investigators also plan to

interview the pilots, Landsberg said.

Investigators have retrieved the flight data recorder.

Landsberg said the plane recently had been in maintenance, and logs showed a left-hand thrust reverser that was inoperative. Thrust reversers are used to divert thrust from the engine, but they typically aren't used in calculating a plane's performance, he said.

There were no serious injuries on the flight from a military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, although almost two dozen of the 143 passengers and crew members sought medical attention for minor injuries.

Capt. Michael Connor, the

base's commanding officer, said all passengers had left the base Sunday on their way to their scheduled destinations.

Some aircraft will be allowed to depart the base and be relocated so pilots can continue with their training, but Naval Air Station Jacksonville will essentially be closed until the plane is removed from the river, Connor said.

Divers on Sunday were sent into the plane's cargo area to search and remove a handful of pets that had been unable to be rescued because of safety concerns. The investigators didn't say outright whether the animals were dead, but the pets would have been submerged for almost two days.

# Cause of plane crash that killed 41 sought

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russian emergency workers have recovered 41 bodies and two flight recorders from the wreckage of a plane that caught fire during an emergency landing in Moscow, officials said Monday as they sought to discover the cause of the disaster.

Transport Minister Yevgeny Dietrich gave the death toll and said six of the survivors had been hospitalized. The plane, an Aeroflot SSJ100, was car-

rying 78 people, including five crew members.

The plane caught fire Sunday evening about 6:30 p.m. as it came down hard on the runway at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport after turning back from a flight destined for Murmansk. The landing occurred about a half-hour after takeoff, indicating that the plane had little time to dump its fuel.

Videos showed desperate passengers hurrying down emergency slides deployed

from the plane's forward section as black smoke billowed.

One of the dead was flight attendant Maxim Moiseev, Dietrich said. Russian news reports, citing unnamed sources, said Moiseev was in the back part of the plane, which was engulfed in flames, and tried unsuccessfully to deploy an evacuation slide.

Russia's main investigative body said both of the plane's flight recorders — data and voice — have been recovered.

Committee spokeswoman Svetlana Petrenko was also quoted by Russian news agencies on Monday as saying that investigators were looking into three main possibilities behind the cause of the disaster: inexperienced pilots, equipment failure and bad weather.

Storms were passing through the Moscow area when the plane made its emergency landing. The reason why the pilots decided to make an emergency landing has not been announced.

# Calm takes hold as Hamas reports Gaza cease-fire

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military lifted protective restrictions on residents in the south on Monday, while Gaza's ruling Hamas militant group reported a cease-fire deal had been reached to end the deadliest fighting between the two sides since a 2014 war.

The escalation had killed 25 on the Gaza side, both militants and civilians, while on the Israeli side four civilians were killed by incoming fire.

The Islamic Jihad militant group, which Israel accused of instigating the latest violence, confirmed that a "mutual and concurrent" truce had been brokered by Egypt. Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said Egyptian mediators, along with officials from Qatar and the U.N., helped reach the deal.

He said Hamas could still use "differ-

ent pressuring tools" to get Israel to ease a crippling blockade of Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pointedly noted that "the campaign is not over and it requires patience and judgment."

The intense fighting over the past two days came to a halt early Monday, and residents on both sides went back to their daily routines. Schools and roads had been closed, and Israelis had been urged to remain indoors and near bomb shelters as intense rocket fire pounded the area.

In the latest fighting, which erupted over the weekend, Palestinian militants fired hundreds of rockets into Israel, while the Israeli military responded with airstrikes on some 350 militant targets inside Gaza, including weapons storage, attack tunnels and rocket-launching and production facilities.

It also deployed tanks and infantry

forces to the Gaza frontier and put another brigade on standby. A Hamas commander allegedly involved in transferring Iranian funds to the group was killed in an airstrike.

Palestinian medical officials reported 25 deaths, including at least 10 militants and three women, two of them pregnant, and two babies.

The four Israeli civilians killed were the first Israeli fatalities from rocket attacks since the 50-day war in 2014. One was killed when his vehicle was hit by a Kornet anti-tank missile near the Gaza border.

The Gaza public works ministry said 130 housing units were destroyed in Israeli airstrikes, including a five-story building in the northern Gaza Strip, where six people, including a 12-year-old boy and an infant, were killed.

Egyptian mediators had been working with the U.N. to broker a cease-fire.

# Ecstatic Prince Harry says Meghan has healthy baby boy

Associated Press

WINDSOR, England — A beaming Prince Harry said his wife, Meghan, gave birth to a baby boy early Monday morning.

Harry said he's "incredibly proud" of his wife and that they have a healthy baby boy who weighs 7 pounds 3 ounces. He has not yet been named.

Harry said the child was a little bit overdue and that had given them more time to con-

template names. He said he is ecstatic about the birth of their first child and said more details will be shared in the coming days.

"This little baby is absolutely to die for," he said. "I'm just over the moon."

The infant will be seventh in line to the British throne and is Queen Elizabeth II's eighth great-grandchild. Harry is the younger son of Prince Charles, the next in line to the throne,

and the late Princess Diana, who died in a Paris car crash in 1997.

The child will be eligible for dual British-U.S. citizenship if Meghan and Harry want to go through the application process.

Harry, speaking before TV cameras on Monday afternoon, was present for the birth, which he said was an amazing experience.

The couple has said they

didn't find out the baby's sex in advance.

Senior royals have been informed of the birth, as has the family of Princess Diana.

Journalists and well-wishers have camped out for days in Windsor, about 22 miles west of London, awaiting the baby's arrival.

Harry and Meghan have said they plan to keep many of the details of the birth private.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## 3 hurt, 180 hogs die in farm's 2nd fire

**OH** WASHINGTON COURT HOUSE — Authorities said a barn fire injured three construction workers and killed an estimated 180 hogs at an Ohio farm where about 5,000 pigs died in another blaze last year.

The three workers with reported burn injuries were flown to a Columbus hospital after the fire April 30 at Straathoff Swine Farm in Fayette County.

County Sheriff Vernon Stanforth said the barn was under construction. There was no immediate determination about what caused the blaze.

The Record Herald in nearby Washington Court House reported the barn that burned was a replacement on the site of one of two buildings destroyed by fire last June.

## 22 facing charges after cockfighting raid

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — Authorities said nearly two dozen people are facing charges following last month's raid on a north Philadelphia home where police said a cockfight was being held.

Officials said roughly 40 roosters and chickens, some of them dead, were found in the home. Authorities said officers chased down several suspects who tried to flee the scene on foot.

Police said 22 people were charged with criminal conspiracy and cruelty to animals.

## Baby sea lion rescued from busy highway

**CA** SAN FRANCISCO — A baby sea lion wandered onto a busy highway in South San Francisco on

April 30, stopping vehicles and alarming motorists before officials whisked it away.

SFGATE reported the California Highway Patrol received the call around 8:30 a.m. Motorists had tried to shoo the sea lion to safer ground, with one man getting out of his car to herd it with a handkerchief.

Highway patrol got the animal into a patrol car, where video taken by KGO-TV shows the sea lion bobbing its head in the backseat.

It was taken to the Peninsula Humane Society.

## Woman arrested after chase through towns

**RI** PAWTUCKET—Rhode Island police said they chased a woman driving a stolen pickup truck while under the influence through several cities and towns for about 25 minutes before she crashed in a restaurant parking lot and was taken into custody.

Warwick police said they first tried to pull the woman over Friday night because they believed she was under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Authorities said she sped off and nearly hit an officer.

Officers from Warwick, Providence, Pawtucket and state police became involved in the chase, which ended in the parking lot of a restaurant in Pawtucket.

## Board OKs transgender student guidelines

**KS** MANHATTAN—The Manhattan-Ogden School Board has approved guidelines for transgender students in the school district.

The board voted 6-1 Wednesday to approve the guidelines, after discussing the issue since December.

The Manhattan Mercury re-

ported the guidelines give students the right to be addressed by the name and pronoun they choose. It also allows students to use the restroom that corresponds to their gender identity, and it allows students to play for sports teams of their gender identity.

The board heard comments from 21 people expressing support or opposition.

## State doesn't plan to ban mushroom hunts

**MO** JEFFERSON CITY — The Missouri Department of Conservation says it is not planning to ban mushroom hunting on public lands and is not considering implementing a license for the activity.

The department was responding to a social media post that includes the agency's logo. It shows a fake statement attributed to the agency that claims the state is banning mushroom hunting on public hunting grounds, including those around lakes. And it says it is legal to hunt for mushrooms on private land without a permit.

The wildlife department said the post is a hoax.

## Lighthouse goes dark after cable damaged

**ME** SEGUIN ISLAND — The loss of electricity at Maine's second-oldest lighthouse is creating a scramble to accommodate visitors this summer.

The Coast Guard installed temporary navigation lights after the 162-year-old Seguin Island Light Station went dark in November because of a failed underwater cable from the mainland.

Coast Guard Lt. Matthew Odom said the long-term plan is to restore light to the historic

Fresnel lens using solar panels and an energy-efficient LED bulb. There are no plans to repair the damaged underwater power cable because the Coast Guard no longer maintains them.

## Big Boy chugs to post-restoration debut

**WY** CHEYENNE — One of the world's biggest and most powerful steam locomotives is chugging to its big debut after five years of restoration work.

Big Boy No. 4014 rolled out of a Union Pacific restoration shop in Cheyenne on Saturday morning as hundreds of spectators looked on. From there, it goes to Ogden, Utah, to help celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad.

Big Boy engines hauled freight between Wyoming and Utah in the 1940s and 1950s. Of the 25 Big Boys built, eight remain, but only this one will be operational.

## 2 holes-in-one are scored in same round

**OH** FINDLAY — A golfer who got his first hole-in-one last week at a course in northern Ohio didn't wait long for his second, recording an ace just six holes later.

The (Findlay) Courier reported that double aces by Dale Cohen, 62, came on a raw, rainy and blustery morning that prompted most members of his league at Sycamore Springs Golf Course in Findlay to beg off.

The National Hole In One Registry says the odds of making two aces in the same round are roughly 67 million to 1.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

On a mission to provide credible reporting and daily news to America's military, wherever they serve.

Mobile apps available: [www.stripes.com/apps](http://www.stripes.com/apps).

# Air Force punter Cutting at Vikings' camp

Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — Long snappers are the afterthoughts of the NFL Draft. Players from the service academies, on track to join the military and not pro sports, are largely ignored.

Still, here was Austin Cutting, a seventh-round pick out of the Air Force Academy, sharpening his specialist skills in Friday's rookie minicamp with the Minnesota Vikings and taking the first step toward what would be an unlikely, complicated and potentially inspiring career in the league.

"It was just good to be out here for the first time," Cutting said, "so I loved it."

Continuing further into the NFL calendar will depend on a plan for fulfillment of the minimum of two years of active duty for all cadets upon graduation, which is on May 30. Two years ago, the Defense Department rescinded a policy that previously allowed service academy athletes to delay their active duty to pursue a pro sports career. That undoubtedly steered teams away from drafting Jalen Robinette, the all-time leading receiver for Air Force.

"Going to the academy, serving comes first," Cutting said.

On Monday, President Donald Trump said he is looking into offering a waiver that would allow service academy athletes to play professional sports immediately upon graduation.

Trump made the announcement Monday while presenting the Commander-

in-Chief's Trophy to the U.S. Military Academy football team during a Rose Garden ceremony.

He said that, under the plan he envisions, athletes would "serve their time after they're finished with professional sports."

Vikings general manager Rick Spielman has been speaking with academy officials about options Cutting might have to meet his requirement while simultaneously trying to make the team.

"It's not, 'OK, the Air Force was done, and now it's time for the NFL,'" Cutting said, adding: "It's decisions that are made above my pay grade, and they'll help me along the way."

Cutting, who picked up his long snapping trade at Central High School in Keller, Texas, in the Dallas area, has been majoring in management. He's an acquisitions officer, the personnel designated to serve as the government's business managers and technical experts in buying everything from computers to helicopters for forces around the world.

"I've heard everybody who does it loves it," Cutting said.

The chosen few who make it to the NFL usually do, too. Even simply taking the call from the Vikings last weekend, at home with family and friends, was one of those moments Cutting will always remember no matter where his career winds up taking him.

"When it actually happens, you can't really describe it," Cutting said. "It's a great feeling."

The Vikings have signed nine of their draft picks, with first round center Garrett Bradbury, sixth round cornerback Kris Boyd and Cutting the only ones still without a finalized contract. Unsigned players are typically given a special injury waiver to participate in offseason workouts until their deals are done.

In addition to the 12 draft picks and 10 rookie free agents the Vikings acquired last weekend, seven other players on the 90-man roster, whether a practice squad member last season or a recent signing from the defunct Alliance of American Football, were eligible to participate in the practices at team headquarters.

Then there's a group of 37 players who were invited on a tryout basis, seeking to become the next Marcus Sherels or Adam Thielen.

Sherels became the franchise's all-time leading punt returner before signing with the New Orleans Saints this year. Thielen recently signed a \$64 million contract after a second Pro Bowl selection. Both Sherels (2010) and Thielen (2013) needed a successful rookie minicamp to even make the summer roster.

"We're looking for guys that, number one, are good people, and number two, they have to have athletic ability," coach Mike Zimmer said. "Come out and do what they're being coached to do."

Among the tryout players were former UAB safety Mar'Sean Diggs, the brother of Vikings wide receiver Stefon Diggs.

# Blues stun Bishop, Stars in Game 6

Associated Press

DALLAS — Colton Parayko was shooting to score for the St. Louis Blues, and delivered a stunning blow to the Dallas Stars even without getting the puck in the net.

Parayko's hard shot from the slot hit Ben Bishop's left shoulder, knocking the goalie onto his back and deflecting the puck to deep in the circle. Alexander Steen took a shot from there that was redirected by Jaden Schwartz over the still laid-out goalie in a 4-1 victory to force Game 7 in the second-round Western Conference semifinal series.

"That's a hard shot. A really hard shot. Shoot the puck,

right? It's a great play by [Steen] to put it right back on the net," St. Louis captain Alex Pietrangelo said. "Great job Schwartz. He's been around that all series long and keeps getting rewarded."

Schwartz's eighth goal of the playoffs with 12:23 left made it 3-1, and was the first of two goals by the Blues in a 33-second span.

Bishop was tended to by a trainer and initially stayed in the game, but a switch was made soon after when Sammy Blais, playing his first postseason game, got a slap shot past him.

"When you're right there in the slot, and you're going to

try to shoot to score," Parayko said. "Obviously I just try to get it around that first guy and find a corner. ... I'm never out there to hurt anybody."

Stars coach Jim Montgomery said Bishop was fine, pointing out that he had stayed in the game before Anton Khodobin got his first action of the postseason.

While St. Louis maintained possession of the puck while Bishop was down, Stars defenseman John Klingberg thought there should have been a whistle to stop play.

"We can't change anything right now," Klingberg said. "We didn't play good enough to win. It's not like we're focusing

on that right now."

Blues coach Craig Berube said officials "don't blow the whistle when you have possession. ... His mask was still on, so that's the reason."

Pietrangelo scored only 63 seconds into the game and David Perron also had a goal for the Blues, who will be on home ice for the deciding game Tuesday night.

The Central Division rivals also went to a Game 7 when they met in the second round three years ago. That series finale was played in Dallas, where the Blues scored three times in the first period and went on to a 6-1 win.

# Cubs sweep Cards, move atop Central

Associated Press

CHICAGO — By the time Kris Bryant's drive sailed over the wall in center field, that tough start for the Chicago Cubs was long gone.

Brushed away by one dazzling stretch.

Bryant hit his fourth career grand slam in Chicago's six-run eighth inning, and the Cubs pounded the St. Louis Cardinals 13-5 on Sunday night for their season-high seventh consecutive victory.

Willson Contreras, Anthony Rizzo and David Bote each drove in two runs, helping the Cubs leapfrog the Cardinals for first place in the NL Central. Ben Zobrist had two hits and made two nice plays in left field as Chicago completed its first three-game sweep of St. Louis since September 2017.

Since opening the season with eight losses in 11 games, the Cubs have been on a roll. They have won 16 of 20 for the first

time since they went 16-4 in August 2016.

"We've really turned it around since then," Bryant said. "Our pitchers have been great. Our at-bats have been great. Defense, everything has really been clicking for us. This is the type of baseball that's super fun to be a part of."

The crowd of 36,499 chanted "Sweep! Sweep! Sweep!" after Bryant connected with two outs in the eighth, belting a drive to center off Dominic Leone for his fourth homer.

Paul DeJong and Marcell Ozuna went deep in the ninth for St. Louis, which lost its season-high fourth straight game. Adam Wainwright (3-3) pitched five-plus innings while dropping to 11-4 in 26 career games at Wrigley Field.

"You have to tip your hat to their hitters for beating me to the spot on a couple of those pitches," Wainwright said. "They're playing good ball right now."

The Cardinals got at least one hit in seven innings, but left nine runners on base. Jose Quintana (4-1) also received some help from his defense.

Contreras threw out Paul Goldschmidt attempting to steal second in the first. The versatile Zobrist cut down Matt Carpenter trying to go from first to third on Goldschmidt's one-out single in the third, then made a diving grab to rob Yadier Molina of a hit with a runner on first in the fourth.

"He's a good outfielder," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said. "He's been a good outfielder for a long time."

Contreras' ninth homer helped Chicago build a 3-0 lead. St. Louis pulled within one on Molina's two-run double in the sixth, but Kolten Wong left runners on the corners when he bounced out on Quintana's 103rd and final pitch.

The Cubs poured it on with 10 runs in their last three at-bats.

## MLB roundup

# Renfroe's grand slam walkoff lifts Padres

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — With one mighty swing against Kenley Jansen, Hunter Renfroe hit a grand slam that prevented San Diego from being swept by the Los Angeles Dodgers and finally gave Padres fans a chance to roar.

Renfroe's pinch-hit slam with two outs in the ninth inning lifted the Padres to a thrilling 8-5 victory Sunday. It was his fifth career slam and second walkoff homer.

Renfroe didn't even have to follow the flight of the ball to know it was gone, driven into the balcony on the third level of the Western Metal Supply Co. Building in the left-field corner. He raised his arms, dropped his bat, pointed to the Padres' dugout and began his trot. He was doused with two coolers of water by jubilant teammates as he crossed the plate.

"I had to go back and watch what I did, too. I didn't know where the ball went. I didn't even look at it," Renfroe said.

The Padres appeared headed for their third straight one-

run loss to the Dodgers — San Diego had an early lead in all three games — before Renfroe homered on a 93 mph cutter.

"It's incredible. You can't say how it feels unless you've done it," Renfroe said. "This is my second walkoff home run and there's nothing like it in this world. You can hit a home run in the first inning, second inning, it's nothing compared to a walkoff, in this situation against the Dodgers."

The Padres started the winning rally with three straight singles off Jansen (2-1), who was trying for his third save in three games.

**Astros 10, Angels 4:** Alex Bregman hit a grand slam, his third homer during a two-game series in Monterrey, Mexico, and Houston blew out Los Angeles for the second straight day.

**Pirates 5, Athletics 3:** Starling Marte hit a game-ending three-run homer in the 13th inning, rallying host Pittsburgh past Oakland after the Athletics scored twice in the top of the inning.

**Brewers 3, Mets 2:** Chris-

tian Yelich homered in his return to the lineup and Zach Davies pitched into the eighth inning as host Milwaukee completed a three-game sweep of New York.

Yelich, the NL MVP, was back in the starting lineup after missing five consecutive games with low back soreness. He hit a two-run, 440-foot homer off Jason Vargas (1-2) that caromed off the third deck in right and gave Milwaukee a 3-0 lead in the third inning.

**Yankees 4, Twins 1 (8, rain):** Domingo German kept delivering on a wet, raw afternoon, tying for the major league lead with his sixth win as host New York stopped Minnesota.

**Red Sox 9, White Sox 2:** Xander Bogaerts hit a grand slam in Boston's seven-run eighth inning against host Chicago.

**Tigers 5, Royals 2 (10):** Brandon Dixon hit a three-run homer in the 10th inning to lift host Detroit over Kansas City.

**Mariners 10, Indians 0:** Rookie Erik Swanson didn't give up a hit until the sixth inning and got his first win, and

Jay Bruce blasted a grand slam as visiting Seattle snapped a six-game losing streak.

**Rangers 10, Blue Jays 2:** Rougned Odor and Asdrubal Cabrera each homered and combined for seven RBIs, and host Texas rolled past Toronto.

**Phillies 7, Nationals 1:** Zach Eflin pitched seven strong innings and Rhys Hoskins drove in a pair of runs to lead host Philadelphia past Washington.

**Rockies 8, Diamondbacks 7:** Raimel Tapia hit a tying, bases-loaded triple and scored the go-ahead run during a five-run eighth inning, and host Colorado beat Arizona.

**Giants 6, Reds 5:** Brandon Crawford delivered a tiebreaking, pinch-hit homer in the ninth inning to help San Francisco erase a four-run first-inning deficit and beat host Cincinnati.

**Braves 3, Marlins 1 (10):** Ender Inciarte faked a bunt and instead slapped an opposite-field RBI double down the line to break a 10th-inning tie, and Atlanta completed a three-game sweep at Miami.

# Jokic helps Blazers get even

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — The Denver Nuggets have been good at bouncing back all season.

Not even a draining four-overtime defeat could keep this team down.

Nikola Jokic had 21 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists for his second straight triple-double and fourth of the playoffs, and the Nuggets evened their Western Conference semifinal series against the Portland Trail Blazers at 2-2 with a 116-112 victory Sunday.

It was less than 48 hours after Portland's epic 140-137 quadruple-overtime victory to take a 2-1 lead in the series. It was only the second game in playoff history that went to four OTs. The other was in 1953.

"I think it's not quitting. We have a lot of competitive guys who don't want to lose. I think we don't want to lose more than we like to win — which is weird," Jokic said. "We just didn't want to have the excuse that we lost because of four overtimes, because we were

tired."

Jamal Murray led all scorers with 34 points and made all 11 free throws for the Nuggets, who handed Portland its first postseason loss at home this season. The series now heads back to Denver for Game 5.

CJ McCollum had 29 points and Damian Lillard added 28 for the Blazers, who missed out on taking a 3-1 lead in a conference semifinals for the first time since 2000.

"Our guys are tough. We're resilient," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "I mean, to come in here and win this game 36 hours after losing in four overtimes, speaks to just how tough we are."

Malone cited regular-season statistics to back up his claims: Denver was 12-1 in the second game of back-to-backs, best in the NBA. The Nuggets were good in close games, too: 13-3 in games decided by three points or less, he said.

"We just said to ourselves, 'If we win today then the last game doesn't really matter that much,'" Jokic said. "Yes we

played a four-overtime game, it was exhausting, but we won tonight so the last game doesn't really matter." Denver outscored the Blazers 27-14 in the third quarter to take an 84-77 lead into the fourth. Malik Beasley kicked off the final period with a three-pointer for the Nuggets.

Rodney Hood's three-pointer got the Blazers within 110-107 with 52 seconds left and Lillard's layup got the Blazers even closer at 112-110 with 7.7 seconds to go.

But Murray's free throws gave Denver a four-point lead. McCollum hit a long jumper that after a video replay was ruled a two and Denver prevailed.

"It is disappointing. You go up 3-1 and you have a lot of momentum and obviously that would be a great position to be in. But they're a good team, they came out and played well," Blazers coach Terry Stotts said. "We had a bad third quarter and that kind of made the difference. We made a good comeback, but now it's a three-game series."

# Leonard, Raptors top 76ers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Kawhi Leonard got some help from his teammates to stay close and then finished it off himself.

Leonard scored 39 points, including a clutch three-pointer with 1:01 left, and the Toronto Raptors beat the Philadelphia 76ers 101-96 on Sunday to even the Eastern Conference semifinal series at 2-2.

"Just really growing up learning from great players, I was fortunate enough to be on some good teams early," Leonard said, "so I was able to see defenses and go on deep playoff runs and I feel that helped me out today."

Marc Gasol scored 16, Kyle Lowry had 14 and the Raptors rebounded after consecutive losses to reclaim home-court advantage.

Jimmy Butler scored 29 and JJ Redick had 19 for Philadelphia. The 76ers are trying to reach the conference finals for the first time since Allen Iverson led them to the NBA Finals in 2001.

Toronto, which earned the No. 2 seed after winning 58 games, has been bounced out in the semis two straight seasons.

Joel Embiid struggled after scoring 33 points in Philadelphia's 21-point victory in Game 3. The All-Star center played through an illness and only had 11. Sixers coach Brett Brown said Embiid texted him early in the morning saying he wasn't sure if he could play.

"To his credit, he willed his way through it," Brown said.

Playing before a raucous crowd, the Sixers failed to take control of the series and now must win at least one more game on the road to advance.

"We got humbled," Butler said.

# Maximum Security owner appeals DQ

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Taken down as the Kentucky Derby winner, Maximum Security is now out of the Preakness.

Maximum Security's owner said Monday he will not run the horse in the middle jewel of the Triple Crown and will appeal the disqualification as Derby winner.

Gary West told The Associated Press by phone there is "really no need, not having an opportunity to run for the Triple Crown to run a horse back in two weeks."

The 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-mile Preakness is May 18 at Pimlico Race Course. Though shorter than the Derby, the race requires a quick turnaround. West didn't want to burden his colt with the Triple Crown off the table.

"The horse will be better off

long term with the rest," West said. "He ran a really good and a really hard race on Saturday.

"Really, there are a lot of other Grade 1 races the rest of the year for 3-year-olds. So we'll let him gather himself and point to one of the other races. I don't know which one that will be, but it will definitely not be the Preakness."

Maximum Security, the first to finish the muddy race Saturday, became the first Derby winner to be disqualified for interference. After an objection by two riders, stewards ruled the colt swerved out and impeded the path of several horses between the far and final turns. Country House, a 65-1 shot, was elevated to first.

Country House's status for the Preakness is unclear. That race would mark his fourth start in eight weeks.

Trainer Bill Mott has said there's no rush to decide on whether he'll run in Baltimore. But he acknowledged the race's importance and added, "The challenge of the Triple Crown is that there's three races really close together, and it takes a champion."

The only other Derby disqualification was in 1968, and long after the race. First-place finisher Dancer's Image tested positive for a prohibited medication, and Kentucky racing officials ordered the purse money to be redistributed. Forward Pass got the winner's share. A subsequent court challenge upheld the stewards' decision.

West has said he realizes the appeals process will take "months, if not years." He remains bothered that he was denied his request to view replays with stewards after the race.