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Farm town to hold missile defense system

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea—South Korea and the United States have selected a remote, mountainous area southeast of Seoul as the location for an advanced U.S. missile defense system, a spokesman said Wednesday, stressing the need to guard against a growing threat from the North.

The Ministry of National Defense said it chose the rural county of Seongju to “more firmly protect one-half to two-thirds” of the country’s population as well as nuclear power plants, oil storage facilities and other infrastructure.

Last week’s decision to deploy the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system, known as THAAD, on the divided peninsula has angered Pyongyang and China. It also has become a political issue in the South amid

fears the system will harm the economy, the environment and nearby residents’ health.

Washington and Seoul announced the agreement on Friday but said a joint working group was still deciding where THAAD would be stationed. Talks on the issue began in February after North Korea staged its fourth nuclear test, followed by the launch of a long-range rocket.

“The increased North Korean nuclear and missile threat is an issue directly related to the survival of the nation and our people,” Yoo Jeh-Seung, the ministry’s deputy minister for policy, told reporters.

He added that the site, about 170 miles southeast of Seoul, was chosen based on comparative studies, on-site inspections and simulations in a bid to maximize military effectiveness while ensuring the safety of the

local population.

That was a nod to growing anger among South Koreans worried the system will have negative effects.

Even before the official announcement, thousands of people took to the streets in Seongju, a town of some 45,000 people that is well-known for the Asian melons grown in the area. Protesters demanded that the system not be placed in their community and burned an effigy of a North Korean Musudan rocket. Local leaders wrote letters of complaint in blood.

The chosen area is home to a South Korean air defense artillery unit at the village of Seongsan, which has an elevation of 1,312 feet and is nearly a mile from Seongju, said the South’s Yonhap news agency.

Analysts said the choice was strategic because it would provide protection for key South

Korean and U.S. bases, including Camp Humphreys, which is the site of the future new headquarters for U.S. Forces Korea after the Army shifts its operations away from the capital, Seoul.

The area also is out of reach of North Korea’s long-range, multiple-launch rocket systems.

THAAD is designed to defend against short- and medium-range ballistic missiles by intercepting them high in the atmosphere, or above it. The United States already has a THAAD system on Guam.

Yoo acknowledged that the Seongju location would not give it the reach to protect Seoul but said the military plans to increase the deployment of its own Patriot missile interceptors in the capital area, Yonhap reported.

Stavridis reported to be on Clinton VP list

Stars and Stripes

Retired Adm. James Stavridis, who commanded U.S. and NATO forces in Europe, is reportedly among the people being vetted for vice president by Hillary Clinton, putting the former four-star leader into a mix of more traditional possible running mates under review.

The New York Times reported Tuesday that Clinton was looking closely at Stavridis, who wouldn’t speak about the vetting process.

He told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday: “I respectfully decline to comment and would refer all inquiries to the Clinton campaign.”

The move adds an unconventional twist to a pool of potential Clinton running mates, which includes front-runner names

like Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren. Politicos describe Kaine, a former governor of Virginia, as a safe pick — a well-liked moderate in a key potential swing state with executive experience. Warren, a favorite of the more liberal wing of the Democratic party, is considered someone who would galvanize the base and rally supporters concerned about some of Clinton’s more moderate positions.

What would Stavridis bring to a Clinton ticket?

The Naval Academy graduate, who led U.S. European Command and served as NATO’s supreme allied commander between 2009 and 2013, was regarded as one of the military’s leading intellectuals. Upon relinquishing command of

EUCOM in 2013, then-deputy Secretary of Defense Ash Carter described Stavridis as a “renaissance admiral.”

Stavridis, a polished speaker with a global outlook, would add gravitas to any national security debate ahead of the November election, which pits Clinton against presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump.

However, during this long campaign season many political analysts have argued that foreign policy already is an area where Clinton probably holds an edge on Trump. That raises the question of what more Stavridis would add to the ticket.

Also, while Clinton touts her foreign policy bona fides, her strong backing of NATO’s military intervention in Libya — an action President Barack Obama

has called his biggest foreign policy regret — has been a political weak point. Stavridis — the overall commander of the NATO campaign in Libya — would only bring more attention to Libya’s current status as a failed state and an emerging stronghold of the Islamic State group in North Africa.

The current dean of the Fletcher School at Tufts University also would be scrutinized over an inspector general’s report during his time as SA-CEUR that examined the use of military aircraft for unofficial travel. He was ultimately cleared by the Navy.

Since retiring from the military in 2013, Stavridis has maintained a public profile, writing for a range of journals and commenting on news outlets.

40 GIs to aid Americans in S. Sudan

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — U.S. Africa Command has dispatched 40 troops to protect U.S. diplomatic personnel in Juba, capital of South Sudan, where the German air force has also deployed to assist in an international evacuation prompted by a recent wave of violence.

“Simply put, U.S. forces are on the ground in South Sudan to temporarily augment security at the embassy and to assist in the directed, ordered departure of nonessential embassy personnel,” Cpt. Jennifer Dyrzcz, an AFRICOM spokeswoman, said.

Government and opposition forces in South Sudan have been advised of the deployment, which is “defensive in nature and for the sole purpose to protect U.S. personnel and facilities,” Dyrzcz said.

AFRICOM did not provide details on the composition of the force, but the command has a variety of quick-response capabilities, including a special-purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force based out of Spain and an Army response force positioned in Djibouti, to the east, home to the military’s Camp Lemonnier.

Meanwhile, Germany’s air force is also responding to the crisis, assisting in the evacuation of German and other foreign citizens, The Associated Press reported, citing the German Foreign Ministry. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Sawsan Chebli wouldn’t give details about the operation because of security concerns, the AP said.

Commercial flights to and from Juba were canceled after fighting flared in the country, though charter flights have been evacuating aid workers and other foreign citizens.

Fighting in the capital over the past week between rival forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riek Machar has left hundreds of people dead, according to media reports.

Consequently, the U.S. Embassy has reduced staff in Juba and arranged flights out of the country for nonessential personnel and U.S. citizens. The embassy said in a statement that it was not evacuating personnel but carrying out an “orderly departure.”

For AFRICOM, unrest in South Sudan, a country that gained independence in 2011, has been a source of recent concern. Sudan had been roiled by

violence for decades, including the most recent civil war, which stretched from 1983 to 2005.

After South Sudan gained independence, tensions continued with its neighbor to the north, but armed militia groups and tribal conflict within its own borders also posed a security risk.

AFRICOM chief Gen. David Rodriguez, in a May interview, said South Sudan could be Africa’s next Mali — a country that faced sudden near collapse a few years ago after government coup and threats from Islamic militants.

“They are fragile countries to begin with, so when things go wrong, they could go quickly wrong,” Rodriguez said.

Violence has prompted a rapid military mobilization to South Sudan in the recent past.

In late 2013, four U.S. Navy SEALs were injured after their aircraft came under attack while conducting a rescue mission in South Sudan. In the days that followed, the U.S. Army’s East Africa Response Force based in Djibouti and Marines arrived to provide security and to evacuate U.S. personnel.

State Department spokesman John Kirby urged the factions in South Sudan to end hostilities.

What to do with Hitler’s birthplace?

The Washington Post

The three-story yellow building sits on an ordinary street in the northern Austrian city of Braunau am Inn. It is an old house and nothing in particular about it stands out.

However, upon closer examination, the building tells a different story. Outside the house rests a stone plaque that reads “For Peace, Freedom and Democracy/ Never Again Fascism/ Millions of Dead Warn.”

Its place in history is mired in infamy, in the deaths of millions. It’s the house where Adolf Hitler was born.

The building has been at the center of a long-running dispute between an elderly lady who has refused to sell the house, despite numerous offers from the Austrian government to buy it to keep it from becoming a neo-Nazi pilgrimage site.

Now Austria has announced a proposed new law that would allow the government to seize ownership of the house. The proposed expropriation needs to be approved by parliament and, according to Interior Ministry spokesman Karl-Heinz Grundboeck, a vote is likely to happen sometime this year, The Associated Press reported.

Gerlinde Pommer inherited the house from her mother, who bought it back from a high-ranking Nazi official after World War II, according to The New York Times. In 2011, its last tenant moved out because Pommer refused to renovate it and make it accessible for the disabled.

The Austrian government and the City of Braunau have been renting the empty and somewhat run-down building from Pommer since 1972, according to The Times, and currently pays her about \$5,700 a month for it, even though she tried to cancel the government’s lease in December 2014, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Pommer has reportedly been difficult to reach and doesn’t want to discuss the house.

US to offer Russia new Syria deal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Frustrated by months of failure in Syria, the Obama administration is taking what might be its final offer to Moscow: enhanced intelligence and military cooperation against the Islamic State and other extremist groups if Syria’s Russian-backed President Bashar Assad upholds a cease-fire with U.S.-supported rebel groups and starts a political transition.

When Secretary of State John Kerry meets Russia’s top diplomat and possibly President Vladimir Putin in Moscow later this week, Syria’s civil war and

Assad’s future will top the agenda. Kerry is trying to reverse a trend in which he has hailed a series of agreements with the Russians only for them to fall short, according to officials with knowledge of internal American deliberations.

Kerry will have to thread a needle. He’s watched the Syrian military and Russian air force violate truce after truce. This time, the officials said, Kerry is dangling in front of the Kremlin Russia’s long-sought requests for intelligence sharing and targeting assistance in return for Russia using its influence to end the fighting and start ushering Assad out of power. But Kerry

will be wary about offering too much.

The talks in Moscow are scheduled fewer than three weeks before an ultimatum for diplomatic progress. All signs augur poorly for a breakthrough. Fighting is intensifying near Aleppo, Syria’s largest city. Assad has reasserted control over more areas of the country he had once lost. Humanitarian aid deliveries to besieged, rebel-held areas are sporadic and grossly insufficient.

Counterterrorism campaigns against the Islamic State and al-Qaida show no end in sight, meaning any peace would be partial.

Federal court denies Brady's appeal

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Quarterback Tom Brady's last best chance to avoid serving a four-game "Deflategate" suspension to start the new season was flatly rejected Wednesday by an appeals court.

The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan issued a one-sentence rejection of requests by the National Football League Players Association and Tom Brady to reconsider an April decision that reinstated the suspension.

"We are disappointed," the players association said in a statement. "The track record of this league office when it comes to matters of player discipline is bad for our business and bad for our game. We have a broken system that must be fixed."

It added that it will review its options carefully.

The court's action left intact a 2-to-1 ruling by a three-judge panel that found NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell acted within his powers by upholding the suspension of the star quarterback for his role in a scheme to doctor footballs used in a January 2015 playoff game.

The decision affirmed wide-ranging powers given to the commissioner by the NFL's collective bargaining agreement. It was a setback for organized labor groups arguing for due process in employee discipline.

The players association and Brady had requested that the three-judge panel

reconsider the case or that all the 2nd Circuit judges hear arguments and decide anew.

Brady's remaining hope is to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"That is an extremely long shot," said Nellie Drew, a sports law professor at the University at Buffalo. She said the 2nd Circuit acted correctly and that any changes to how the NFL handles arbitrations over player issues will have to be handled at the negotiating table.

She predicted Patriots backup quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo "will be getting a whole lot of repetitions" as the Patriots prepare for their season opener Sept. 11 at Arizona.

"It's time to put this thing to bed," Drew said. "If it was my kid, I'd say: 'Let it go.'"

Lawyers and other representatives for the NFL, the Patriots and Brady did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

Anthony Barkow, a lawyer who submitted an amicus brief on behalf of Kenneth R. Feinberg, the special master of the Sept. 11 Victim Compensation Fund and a longtime arbitrator, said: "We wish the result were otherwise, but respect and understand the decision and know that it is extremely rare for the 2nd Circuit to grant en banc review."

What began as an accusation of cheating in the 2015 AFC championship game has grown into a multimillion-dollar legal battle over three NFL seasons, involving not just an MVP quarterback but also

some of the elite lawyers and scientists in the country.

And as it developed, it evolved from a silly little dispute about the air pressure in footballs into a referendum on the powers of a sport's commissioner and the right of all unionized employees to due process in a disciplinary hearing.

Joining the case along the way were longtime league adversary Jeffrey Kessler and former U.S. Solicitor General Ted Olson, who was involved in the Bush v. Gore lawsuit that settled the 2000 presidential election and the case that overturned California's ban on same-sex marriages. Piping in with friend of the court briefs were the AFL-CIO and scholars from some of the top legal and scientific institutions in the country.

At stake for the Patriots was not only the availability of their quarterback for a quarter of the season, but their legacy as an NFL dynasty. Already convicted once of cheating by Goodell — in an illegal videotaping scheme in 2007 that predictably came to be known as "SpyGate" — the Patriots saw the suspension as an attack on their legitimacy of the four Super Bowl championships earned under Brady and coach Bill Belichick.

The suspicions boiled over on Jan. 18, 2015, when the league tested — somewhat unscientifically, it would belatedly learn — the footballs provided by the home team for the AFC title game against the Indianapolis Colts and found them to be underinflated.

After three months, league investiga-

tor Ted Wells found that the Patriots intentionally used underinflated footballs in the game and that Brady was "at least generally aware" of the scheme. The NFL suspended the four-time Super Bowl champion quarterback four games and docked the team \$1 million and two draft picks.

Brady appealed — first within the league, and Goodell affirmed the decision. Brady appealed to federal court, and U.S. District Judge Richard Berman overturned the suspension. The league appealed to the 2nd Circuit, and the three-judge panel reinstated the original penalty.

That left Brady hoping for a new hearing in front of the complete circuit — called "en banc" — or an even more unlikely hearing at the Supreme Court.

"That's always an option to litigants," Olson said after joining the case. "It is not something we have resolved ourselves to doing."

New England fans rallied behind their quarterback, putting "Free Brady" on T-shirts, reciting the Ideal Gas Law from memory and giving a hero's welcome not only to the quarterback when he took the field for the 2015 regular season opener but also to Kessler and U.S. District Judge Richard Berman — whose ruling for Brady would later be overturned on appeal.

But in other NFL cities, fans were just as convinced that the Patriots and Belichick were up to no good. Added to the videotaping penalty it was seen as confirmation the team can't win without cheating.

Americans have dominated at Royal Troon

Associated Press

None in the crowd of roughly 10,000 suspected that when Bobby Locke of South Africa tapped in for a two-shot victory and a record score in the British Open, he would be the last player from outside the United States to hoist the claret jug at Royal Troon.

That was in 1950.

Since then, there have been six Opens on the Ayrshire links in Scotland, and six American winners.

Surprising?

It was to Phil Mickelson, who cupped his hand under his chin and stared in deep thought as he went down the list of champions at Royal Troon — Arnold Palmer and Tom Weiskopf, Tom Watson and Mark Calcavecchia, Justin Leonard and Todd Hamilton. The list complete, Mickelson came to a predictable conclusion.

"I would be shocked if anyone other than an American won this year," Lefty said with a laugh. "There's something to those trends."

Really, it's nothing more than a coincidence. The club motto at Royal Troon translates to "as much by skill as by strength," which goes against the American style of golf that is all about hitting it high and far and firing at flags.

"I wouldn't say it's more Americanized.

Birkdale has probably a little of that," Jim Furyk said. "We had a hell of a run there starting in the mid-'90s (10 victories by Americans in 12 years). I think it's just one of those things that happens."

Odds are it can happen again.

Royal Troon has received enough rain this spring — with more in the forecast during the Open — that it likely will play substantially softer, meaning more targets and less bounces that define the subtlety of links golf.

As for the players?

Dustin Johnson and a dozen other Americans are among the top 25 in the world. The attention has shifted away from Jordan Spieth, who a year ago came within one shot of a playoff in his quest for the Grand Slam, to the 32-year-old Johnson, who is just now starting to deliver on his awesome potential.

Johnson broke through for his first major after four close calls, beating Oakmont and the USGA to win the U.S. Open by three shots. After a week off to celebrate, he chased down world No. 1 Jason Day on the back nine at Firestone to win a World Golf Championship. Johnson was the 36-hole leader at St. Andrews a year ago. He contended in the final round at Royal St. George's in 2011 until a 2-iron that sailed out-of-bounds. He can handle links golf.

This will be his first time seeing Royal

Troon, and he was intrigued about the gentle start — three par 4s under 400 yards — and the tough finish.

Troon is a tale of two nines. The wind is helping on the shorter outward nine holes. This is where players score, and it prompted Colin Montgomerie to say that "if you're not under par after nine holes at Troon, you may as well go to the clubhouse at Prestwick and have lunch." Prestwick, the first home of the British Open, is next to Troon.

The inward nine turns back into the wind and is relentless with tight fairways and prickly gorse bushes.

"Probably the toughest finishing stretch," Paul Casey of England said. "Carnoustie is tough, I think Troon is a better set of finishing holes."

Such is the stage for the 145th Open Championship, where the list of favorites keeps getting longer.

Spieth started the year at No. 1, has won twice and nearly won the Masters, and already is down to No. 3. Day remains No. 1 after the PGA champion added The Players Championship, a World Golf Championship and the Arnold Palmer Invitational to his trophy collection.

Of those 13 Americans in the top 25, seven have yet to win a major, which has a small piece historical relevance at Troon. Four of the last Open champions had never won a major until their names

were on the claret jug (and they never won another).

Branden Grace of South Africa was stunned to learn it had been 66 years since someone outside the United States had won the claret jug at Royal Troon.

"Not to be funny, but hopefully an international player can win it this year," he said.

Then he was told the last Royal Troon champion was a fellow South African.

"Now there's some motivation," Grace said. "Might have to do some history searching myself."

Here's one clue: Locke was a great putter.

That's what had been holding back Johnson, a good putter who just had not seen many disappear into the cup until recently. That's what makes Spieth and Day so dangerous. And that could decide the fortunes of Rory McIlroy, who won the claret jug at Royal Liverpool in 2014 and missed out on his title defense at St. Andrews after injuring his ankle playing soccer.

But it starts with Johnson, who will try to become only the seventh player in the last century to the U.S. Open and British Open in the same summer.

And at Royal Troon, it doesn't hurt that he's an American.

"I think there's a good chance," Casey said, "that American streak continues."



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All-Star Game becomes Royals affair

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Eric Hosmer and Salvador Perez made sure the Kansas City Royals will start at home, sweet, home if they get a chance to defend their World Series title.

The Royals duo homered off former Kansas City teammate Johnny Cueto during a six-pitch span in the second inning, Hosmer added an RBI single to become MVP of the All-Star Game, and the American League beat the Nationals 4-2 Tuesday night for its fourth straight win.

"Hopefully this is something we can all rally upon for the second half and find a way to use that home-field advantage," Hosmer said.

David Ortiz found himself in the middle of the most touching moment at Petco Park, embraced by his AL teammates near first base after exiting his final All-Star Game. The popular Big Papi plans to retire at 40 after this season with Boston.

Kris Bryant of the Cubs led the parade of sparkling young talent with a first-inning home run. Dellin Betances flashed his 100 mph heat, and Astros reliever Will Harris came on to throw a called third strike past Cardinals rookie Aledmys Diaz on a 3-2 pitch on the outside corner with the bases loaded to end the eighth.

Royals reliever Kelvin Herrera pitched

a hitless sixth for the AL, which will open the Series at home for the 11th time in 14 years since the All-Star winner was used to determine the hosts for Games 1 and 2.

Cleveland's Corey Kluber pitched a 1-2-3 second inning for the win, and Zach Britton got the save for the AL, which cut its deficit to 43-42 with two ties.

Ortiz, Boston's beloved designated hitter, wore spikes with gold-colored bottoms and matching batting gloves to mark his 10th All-Star selection and delivered the AL batting order to umpires at home plate.

He gave a pregame pep talk to his teammates, hit a smash down the first-base line that Anthony Rizzo snagged to rob him of a potential RBI double in the first and walked against Jose Fernandez in the third.

When Edwin Encarnacion came out to pinch run for him, Ortiz waved to the crowd and then his AL teammates came out of the dugout to exchange hugs as the crowd of 42,386 rose in tribute.

"I was supposed to hit a home run in my second at-bat. My boy told me he was going to throw me a fastball, and the first pitch was a changeup," Ortiz said.

"Then 3-2 he threw me a slider and I'm like, 'Are you trying to break my back?' But he said it was the catcher's fault."

The All-Star Game returned to San Diego for the first time since 1992 at Jack Murphy Stadium. Just before this first pitch, commissioner Rob Manfred joined Rod Carew, his family and the family of late Padres great Tony Gwynn and named the batting titles after the two Hall of Famers, giving Gwynn the NL honor and Carew the AL championship.

Gwynn died of salivary gland cancer two years ago at age 54.

Sailors dressed in white lined the foul lines and outfield warning tracks for the national anthems. The Tenors, a British Columbia-based group, changed an "O Canada" lyric to "We're all brothers and sisters. All lives matter to the great," and one held up a sign reading "All Lives Matter."

Randy Jones threw out the ceremonial first pitch and former Padres All-Star closer Trevor Hoffman helped open, bringing the game ball to the mound from the bullpen accompanied by AC/DC's "Hell's Bells."

There was a home run on the game's fourth pitch for the second straight year; Bryant connected on a 96 mph Chris Sale fastball with two outs as hitters swung early in the count to beat the shadows creeping in from the left-field corner in the late-afternoon start.

Bryant was part of an all-Cubs infield

— the first starting infield quartet from a single team since the 1963 St. Louis Cardinals.

Mike Trout, the All-Star MVP in 2014 and '15, singled in the first for a five-All-Star Game hitting streak — only Mickey Mantle, Joe Morgan and Dave Winfield (seven each) and Stan Musial, Willie Mays and Nellie Fox (six apiece) strung together more.

The lead was short-lived, with Hosmer and Perez going deep for a 3-1 lead in the second, sandwiched around Mookie Betts' single. Cueto was hard to miss, wearing lime green and orange spikes.

"This morning I got up and didn't feel well. That is not an excuse," Cueto said. "I just left two pitches up, and that was the story."

Hosmer, the first Kansas City player to homer in an All-Star Game since Bo Jackson in 1989, made it 4-1 in the third against Fernandez with a one-hopper off Bryant's left arm that bounced into left field for an RBI single. Marcell Ozuna cut the gap with a run-scoring single off Aaron Sanchez in the fourth.

When it was over, Hosmer said he was giving the midnight black truck he earned with the MVP award to his dad, Michael.

"So he can stop stealing all my cars," Eric said.

Pacquiao plans return to the ring

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Manny Pacquiao isn't ready to give up his night job just yet.

Pacquiao, who said before his last fight in April that he would retire, now plans to return to the ring in November against an opponent who has yet to be selected.

Promoter Bob Arum said Tuesday that Pacquiao got permission to take a break from his new duties as a senator in the Philippines to take another fight. It will be held Nov. 5, likely in Las Vegas.

Pacquiao looked impressive in his last fight in April, returning from a layoff to knock down Timothy Bradley on his way to a unanimous decision. After the fight he wavered on his previous plans to retire.

"If you ask me to come back I don't know," Pacquiao said. "I may be enjoying retired life. I'm not there yet so I just don't know."

Pacquiao, who was formerly a congressman in his native country, was elected to the Senate in May and there were fears that increased duties would prevent him from fighting again. But Arum said the head of the Senate told Pacquiao he was free to fight after the country's budget is settled on Oct. 15.

"He would train in the Philippines and leave on the 16th to come to the U.S., train for two weeks and then come to Vegas," Arum said. "The only issue is getting an arena for the fight."

Arum said he is talking with MGM Resorts about an arena to host the fight. He had reserved the Mandalay Bay arena for Oct. 15, but Pacquiao can't leave his Senate duties that early.

The fight also could be at the UNLV campus arena, he said, though UNLV would have to move a scheduled basketball exhibition from the date.

There were reports that Pacquiao might fight Adrien Broner, but Arum said he wanted the same money as Pacquiao, which was a non-starter. Another possible opponent would be Jesse Vargas, who fights for Top Rank, and holds a piece of the welterweight title.

Pacquiao was off for nearly a year after losing in May 2015 to Floyd Mayweather Jr., healing from a shoulder injury. But he seemed reinvigorated after beating Bradley in April in a performance that got good reviews from most, including trainer Freddie Roach.

"When I see Manny Pacquiao like that, this is the best Manny Pacquiao," Roach said after the fight. "He hasn't missed a beat. I would like to see him fight again."

NBA mulling NC law, but no vote yet on moving '17 All-Star Game

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — NBA owners made no decision Tuesday after a lengthy debate about moving next year's All-Star Game from Charlotte because of North Carolina's law limiting protection for LGBT people.

Commissioner Adam Silver said no vote was taken at the Board of Governors meeting, but the league realizes a decision has to come fairly quickly. He said he was personally disappointed North Carolina legislators didn't modify the law enough in recent weeks to make the discussion moot.

"We feel this law is inconsistent with the core values of the league," Silver said.

Silver said the NBA was put in a situation not entirely its own making because the law was enacted by North Carolina's legislature after the 2017 All-Star Game was already awarded to Charlotte.

He added that the game is important for the league in ways that aren't always shown on the court.

"The primary test for us is under this law whether we can successfully host our All-Star week," he said. "It is more than a game, it is a week full of activities in North Carolina. The question for us becomes in this situation, given the controversy, given the amount of discussion, given how hardened the views are, is this the place we should be in 2017, at the epicenter of global basketball where we can go celebrate our game and our values."

Silver did not say when a decision would be made on possibly moving the game, but that the clock is ticking.

"We're not trying to keep everybody in suspense," he said. "We realize this decision has to be made very quickly."

Silver's remarks come less than two weeks after North Carolina legislators revisited the law and chose to leave it largely unchanged. During their yearly work session that ended this month, the General Assembly restored the ability of workers to use state law to sue over employment discrimination on the basis of race, religion and other factors — but left gender identity and sexual orientation unprotected.

The law passed in a March special session also excludes sexual orientation and gender identity from antidiscrimination protections related to the workplace, hotels and restaurants; and overrules local antidiscrimination ordinances. Republican leaders have said the law

was passed in response to a Charlotte ordinance that would have allowed transgender people to use restrooms consistent with their gender identity.

The fate of the law is likely to be decided in federal courts where dueling lawsuits are being heard, though those results are likely to come after the NBA has to make its decision on the All-Star Game. Elsewhere, other states have filed lawsuits challenging federal guidelines on transgender bathroom access in schools.

A day before North Carolina's legislature passed the minor change related to workplace lawsuits, the NBA issued a joint statement with the Charlotte Hornets saying that it had discussed the issue "with numerous groups at the city and state levels," but it doubted proposed changes would go far enough.

Charlotte officials have said they expected the event to have an economic impact of around \$100 million, based on data from recent All-Star games in the comparable New Orleans and Orlando markets. The game could rival the \$164 million economic impact of the 2012 Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, the largest financial bump of any event for the city.

In other league business, Silver said:

■ He supported Kevin Durant's right to join a Golden State team already loaded with talent, but acknowledged there were some concerns about having a league where it seems only two teams have a chance to win the Finals. He said there have been talks with the players' union about changing some of the elements in the free-agent system, and that it will be a part of the upcoming collective bargaining negotiations.

"I don't think it's good for the league," Silver said about the possibility of uneven competitive balance.

■ There will be changes in the rules on deliberate away-from-the-play fouls to prevent more "Hack A Shaq" situations. Owners agreed to extend the prohibition on the fouls from the last two minutes of the game to the last two minutes of each period. Along with other changes, he said, officials feel that 45 percent of the calls could be eliminated.

"It's not a full step, but this is a serious half-step," he said.

■ The league has no plans to expand beyond its current 30 teams, but does find Las Vegas an attractive place to do business. The city recently got its first pro franchise, with an NHL team scheduled to begin play next year.