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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Demonstration in Kabul turns violent

BY ZUBAIR BABAKARKHAIL
AND CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghan police fired warning shots and fought a running battle with angry anti-government protesters on Friday, two days after one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Afghanistan since 2001.

Hundreds of people had gathered to demand justice for the victims of the bombing, in which a sewage truck packed with explosives blew up early Wednesday on the edge of the city's heavily fortified "green zone," where diplomatic and government buildings are concentrated. The blast killed at least 90 people and injured hundreds more.

Friday's demonstration was

televised live. Riot police were seen beating and arresting protesters as they approached the site of the blast and the nearby presidential palace. Police fired shots into the air and launched tear gas grenades to disperse the crowd.

The Associated Press reported that several people were killed or injured, but this could not be independently confirmed.

Deputy Interior Minister Gen. Murad Ali Murad, said both the police and protesters suffered casualties but could not provide more details.

The demonstrators called for the resignation of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, chanting that they had failed to fulfill promises of improving securing.

The protesters also called for the execution of Haqqani network prisoners. Though no group has yet claimed credit for the attack, Afghan officials have blamed the extreme wing of the Taliban, who they claim was aided by Pakistan's intelligence agency.

In a late-night televised address after the bombing, Ghani reaffirmed his commitment to reaching a peace settlement with the Taliban, which he had made a key goal of his presidency, and called on insurgents to "end their fighting against the Afghan nation and solve disagreements through dialogue."

He also warned that Afghan forces were being given new powers to act against those who continued to fight. He said the

attack showed that terrorists could not win a conventional war and were facing increasingly strong Afghan forces.

The address seemed to echo Ghani's pledge to get tougher on Taliban insurgents after a complex attack on the National Directorate of Security that killed nearly 70 people and left about 350 wounded in April 2016.

Public outrage over that attack led to tough talk from the president, who all but abandoned efforts to bring the insurgent group to the peace table. He promised instead to beat them on the battlefield.

The latest protest comes as the war against the insurgents has stalled; the Taliban now holds or influences more territory than it has since the U.S. toppled its regime in 2001.

Mattis seeks continuity in Asia policy

Associated Press

SINGAPORE — The Trump administration is aiming for continuity in Asia policy, sticking broadly with the approach its predecessors have taken by emphasizing diplomacy and cooperation with allies, U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Friday.

Mattis outlined the Trump administration's approach in remarks to reporters traveling with him to Singapore, where he will deliver a policy speech at an international security conference Saturday and meet with several Asian counterparts.

He spoke of "reinforcing the international order" while seeking a "peaceful, prosperous and free Asia" — echoes of the traditional U.S. policy goals — without mentioning the narrower challenges of a nuclear North Korea and a rising China. He is expected to discuss North Korea and China in his Saturday speech.

Upon arriving in Singapore, Mattis scheduled meetings Friday with Singaporean and Asian officials.

President Donald Trump raised doubts in

Asia when he took office following a campaign in which he sharply criticized Japan and South Korea for not pulling their weight as treaty allies. So far, however, the administration has been more supportive.

"As a Pacific nation, we have enduring interests and commitments in the Asia-Pacific region," Mattis said aboard his aircraft, referring in part to U.S. defense treaties with Japan, South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines.

"Accordingly, we are demonstrating the priority this administration places on maintaining stability alongside our allies and partners," he added.

The Pentagon's role, he said, is to reinforce alliances, strengthen U.S. military capabilities to deter war in Asia and help enable countries to sustain their own security.

Mattis is mindful of emerging threats in Asia, starting with North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and missiles with sufficient range to deliver nuclear strikes on U.S. territory.

Trump has said he is leaning more heav-

ily on China to contain that threat. At the same time, the administration has repeated President Barack Obama's criticisms of China for reclaiming land in areas of the South China Sea that several other nations claim as their own.

Trump also has used gunboat diplomacy by speaking of a U.S. "armada" within range of North Korea and noting the presence of U.S. nuclear submarines in the region.

The U.S. Navy has two aircraft carrier strike groups in waters off the Korean Peninsula, and on Thursday, those groups — led by the USS Carl Vinson and the USS Ronald Reagan — began three days of joint exercises, the first in that area since the 1990s.

David Helvey, Mattis' senior adviser on Asia policy, told reporters on the way to Singapore that the dual carrier exercise is not intended as a provocation. He called it routine but acknowledged that it is the first of its kind in about 20 years.

The exercises are intended to reassure allies, he said, and to keep U.S. forces ready for any crisis.

Trump withdraws US from climate pact

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's supporters on Friday cast his decision to abandon the world's climate change pact as a "refreshing" stance for the U.S. that would save jobs, unburden industry and save money.

International leaders and scientists pushed back, pointing to jobs that could be created in green technology and the edge China could be given as a result. China has overtaken the U.S. in transitioning to renewable energy, generating a fifth of its electricity from renewable sources. The U.S. only sources about 13 percent of its electricity from renewables.

In interviews the morning after Trump's announcement, Vice President Mike Pence and Kellyanne Conway, a top White House aide, defended Trump's decision as a reassertion of America's sovereignty.

The Paris deal "really put an extraordinary burden on the economy while allowing some countries around the world like China and India go a decade or more without any accountabil-

ity for reducing CO2 emissions," Pence said.

Conway made similar remarks in an interview on Fox News, citing "fairness" to American workers and businesses.

Scientists say Earth is likely to reach more dangerous levels of warming sooner as a result of the president's decision because America's pollution contributes so much to rising temperatures. Calculations suggest withdrawal from the Paris accord could result in emissions of up to 3 billion tons of additional carbon dioxide a year — enough to melt ice sheets faster, raise seas higher and trigger more extreme weather.

While Trump and Pence have suggested the possibility of renegotiating the agreement, the leaders of Italy, Germany and France have said that won't happen. Barbara Hendricks, Germany's environment minister, told reporters Friday "there will be no new deal with the United States" on climate change and predicted the movement will "survive" Trump's time in office.

Hendricks said other coun-

tries will fill the leadership void left by the United States, but none will be expected to make up the shortfall in emissions reductions caused by Washington's exit.

Meanwhile, African nations are protesting Trump's decision. South Africa's government calls the U.S. pullout "an abdication of global responsibility."

By abandoning the world's chief effort to slow the tide of planetary warming, Trump was fulfilling a campaign pledge after weeks of building up suspense over his decision.

The White House indicated it would follow the exit process outlined in the deal. That means the U.S. would remain in the agreement for another three-and-a-half years, ensuring the issue remains alive in the next presidential election.

He is breaking from many of America's staunchest allies, who have expressed alarm about the decision. Several of his top aides also opposed the action, including his daughter, Ivanka Trump.

Under former President Barack Obama, the U.S. had

agreed under the accord to reduce polluting emissions by more than a quarter below 2005 levels by 2025. But the national targets are voluntary, leaving room for the U.S. and the nearly 200 other countries in the agreement to alter their commitments.

At home, the U.S. Conference of Mayors strongly opposed the decision and said the nation's mayors will continue efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In a rare statement on his successor's policies, Obama said: "Even in the absence of American leadership; even as this administration joins a small handful of nations that reject the future, I'm confident that our states, cities, and businesses will step up and do even more to lead the way, and help protect for future generations the one planet we've got."

The decision has no direct impact on major U.S. regulations on power plants and car rules currently aimed at reducing carbon emissions, although those are currently under review by Trump as well.

DOD sees climate change as 'threat multiplier'

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement puts him at odds with the Pentagon, which has been warning for years that climate change poses a critical national security threat.

At his confirmation hearing, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis called climate change a "driver of instability" that "requires a broader, whole-of-government response."

For more than a decade, military leaders have said extreme weather patterns and rising sea levels are aggravating social tensions, destabilizing regions and feeding the rise of extremist groups like al-Qaida and Islamic State.

Closer to home, scientists estimate rising sea levels threaten at least 128 U.S. military bases, some of which are already flooding.

In 2014, the Pentagon released a Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap that declared

"climate change will affect the Department of Defense's ability to defend the nation and poses immediate risks to U.S. national security." Another DOD report in 2015 called climate change a "threat multiplier."

As politicians have squabbled over what actually causes climate change, or if China or India should be doing more, the Pentagon has been trying to map out a strategy to mitigate the risks that they not only see on the horizon, but are already experiencing.

"Climate change is already impacting the military itself, how it operates, and the countries in which we have an interest where it can result in instability, which leads to violence, which leads to conflict and where we end up moving our young men and women overseas," said retired U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Gerald Galloway, who is now a University of Maryland engineering professor.

U.S. military operations, personnel and installations are already being affected by

the increased risk of instability overseas as a result of climate change, and dealing with it will require international cooperation, he said.

Trump's decision, which he dramatically announced in the White House Rose Garden, will have "an immediate effect" on the relationship with U.S. allies, Galloway said.

"We need our allies to be dealing with this the same way we are, so the concern is that pulling out of the existing treaty sends a message that we don't really care about the issue," he said.

Military installations on waterfront properties are facing hundreds of floods a year, and in some cases could be mostly submerged by 2100, according to a report from the Union of Concerned Scientists. The report calculated a 3-foot sea level rise would threaten at least 128 U.S. military bases. Nine of those are major hubs for the U.S. Navy.

Vet found dead in car at VA center in DC

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A congressional committee and the Department of Veterans Affairs have opened an investigation into the case of a veteran who was found dead in his vehicle parked at the VA medical center in Washington.

The veteran's sister found her brother inside his vehicle at the Washington Veterans Affairs Medical Center at about 8:30 p.m. May 16. He was reported missing May 15 when he didn't return from an appointment at the facility, The Associated Press reported.

The veteran was "slumped over and unconscious," accord-

ing to a report by the Metropolitan Police Department. The VA chief of police and a VA investigator arrived at the scene, and a medic pronounced the veteran dead before police arrived at the hospital, according to the report.

A medical examiner is determining the cause of death. The name of the veteran has not been released yet.

The hospital director, retired Army Col. Lawrence Connell, told NBC Washington that he was investigating why the veteran wasn't discovered sooner after he was reported missing.

The VA central office in Washington did not immediately respond Friday to a request for comment.

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs is conducting its own investigation, said Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., chairman of the committee.

"The [committee] is conducting an independent, thorough and ongoing investigation to look at a number of issues at the DC VA Medical Center, including this death, and will continue to demand answers," Roe said.

The ranking Democrat on the committee, Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., said the hospital "did not do enough to locate this veteran and inform his family."

The hospital has been under investigation by the VA inspector general since March. In an unprecedented move, Inspec-

tor General Michael Missal released an interim report in April revealing supply shortages and dirty conditions that posed a risk to patient safety, as well as cultural problems within the facility.

Missal plans to release a full report on the investigation in the next several months.

In response to Missal's findings, VA Secretary David Shulkin removed the former medical director from his position and sent teams to establish a new inventory system at the hospital. Connell, the new medical director, said weeks ago that many of the problems had been fixed.

Walz asked that Missal incorporate the veteran's death into the ongoing investigation.

Hero stabbed to death in Portland robbed as he lay helpless; 1 arrested

The Washington Post

Ricky Best was one of two people hailed as heroes after being stabbed to death last Friday on a Portland, Ore., light-rail train while trying to calm a man yelling anti-Muslim slurs at two teenage girls.

Portland police said that as Best lay helpless, someone apparently made off with his wedding ring and backpack. Police had posted images of the suspect on YouTube and Twitter late Thursday, along with a plea for the public's help in locating him.

"The contents of the backpack include personal items important to the Best family," said a police statement, which described the suspect as a "white male with a blonde hair mullet, wearing a black Jordan Brand baseball cap, a black T-shirt featuring an image of Marilyn Monroe and an American flag, black shorts, and black shoes."

Portland police arrested a man Friday, but did not release the man's name.

Best, 53, an Army veteran and Portland city employee, was on his way home when he

and fellow passengers, Taliesin Myrddin Namkai Meche, 23, and Micah David-Cole Fletcher, 21, intervened after a man

'The contents of the backpack include personal items important to the Best family.'

Portland police
in a statement

who tried to help, fatally stabbing Best and Meche and injuring Fletcher.

Police later arrested Jeremy Joseph Christian, 35, in connection with the killings. Christian appeared in court on Tuesday but did not enter a plea. He has a history of making bigoted comments online and in local publications. The

Southern Poverty Law Center described him as a "known white supremacist."

Tension has run high in Portland lately due to clashes between black-clad "antifa," or anti-fascist, activists and right-wing protesters with ties to white nationalist movements, The Washington Post has reported. After the commuter train killings, Mayor Ted Wheeler asked the federal government to bar rallies planned by two right-wing groups at a plaza under its jurisdiction.

The mayor and others also hailed the actions of the men who intervened on the train.

"Two men lost their lives and another was injured for doing the right thing, standing up for people they didn't know against hatred," Wheeler said in a statement. "Their actions were brave and selfless, and should serve as an example and inspiration to us all. They are heroes."

With his voice breaking, the mayor said of Best: "He was an Army veteran killed on Memorial Day weekend."

Navy: Sailors threw trash discs overboard

COROLLA, N.C. — The Navy acknowledged Thursday that two sailors from a Virginia Beach, Va.-based ship wrongly tossed dozens of smelly plastic trash discs overboard that washed ashore last month along the Outer Banks in North Carolina.

The sailors admitted disposing of the disks in violation of Navy regulations, spokesman Ted Brown said.

The trash originated from the USS Whidbey Island, a dock landing ship from Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek. Brown said punishment hadn't been determined for the sailors, who weren't identified.

The Navy later sent a notice to the fleet about proper refuse disposal, he said.

Residents in Kill Devil Hills and Corolla, N.C., reported in May finding several 20-inch disks on the beach. Embedded within the plastic pieces was Navy correspondence, including one that bore a logo for "Commander Naval Surface Force."

The Navy sent representatives to the Outer Banks on May 19 to retrieve the trash, Brown said.

From wire reports

Man sets fire to Manila casino; dozens dead

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine police say the attacker was a tall, English-speaking white man with a mustache. They say he carried an assault rifle and that he used gasoline to start a casino fire that caused clouds of smoke that left at least 36 people dead Friday morning in a sprawling entertainment complex in Manila.

But by Friday evening, police said they still didn't know the man's name or why he launched his attack at the Resorts World Manila complex, only to flee to an adjoining hotel and kill himself.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, but Philippine police said they believed it had been a robbery gone wrong.

Police told reporters the man stole more than \$2 million in gambling chips and avoided shooting people he encountered in the casino, pointing his gun upward when he fired some shots.

"He would have shot all the people gambling" if his goal was terrorism, national police chief Ronald dela Rosa said.

But hours later, ISIS claimed responsibility in a statement,

saying "Brother Abu al-Kheir al-Arkhabili was able to immerse among a gathering of Christian fighters in the Resorts World Manila in Manila where he carried out killing and hurting until he died as a martyr. About 100 Christians were killed or wounded."

Military spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla rejected the claim, saying the attack "does not have the slightest signature of terrorism whatsoever."

"As in previous incidents, this group is prone to claim and admit every criminal incident and label it as its own, clearly indicative of its pure penchant for propaganda," Padilla said.

Many in Manila feared after the attack began early Friday that it was linked to ongoing battles with Muslim militants aligned with ISIS in the southern city of Marawi. The fighting has placed much of the country on edge and raised fears that ISIS was gaining a foothold. The Philippines has faced Muslim insurgencies for decades, though much of the violence has occurred in the troubled south, where Marawi is located.

The attack occurred at a sprawling mall-like complex

near the Manila airport that includes hotels, restaurants, stores and a multifloor gambling area. Police said that during the attack, the man stole more than \$2 million worth of casino chips, though he apparently abandoned them in a toilet soon after.

"Either he lost in the casino and wanted to recoup his losses or he went totally nuts," metropolitan Manila police chief Oscar Albayalde said.

As the gunman left, he exchanged shots with a building guard, who managed to shoot him in the leg after being wounded, police and casino officials said.

"Severe blood loss from the gunshot wound significantly slowed the assailant down and resulted in his holing up in a room where he took his own life," said Stephen Reilly, Resort World's chief operating officer.

Dela Rosa said security video showed the gunman earlier ignoring a guard who tried to question him at the complex's entrance. He then barged into the crowded casino carrying the gasoline and assault rifle after overcoming efforts by guards to stop him. He stuffed a backpack with the gambling

chips, fired his rifle at TV screens and set gambling tables on fire by pouring gasoline onto them from a 2-liter bottle he carried, dela Rosa said.

The gunman, whom dela Rosa described as "white, with a mustache," about 6 feet tall and English-speaking, fled the gambling area and barged into a room on the 5th floor of Maxims Hotel, which is part of the Resorts World complex. He lay down on the bed, covered himself with a blanket, doused himself with gasoline and then set himself on fire, dela Rosa said. He carried no identity documents, police said.

"I saw the gunman," said a 23-year-old casino employee who declined to give her name. "He was a tall man, he was wearing a ski mask. He was carrying an armalite (rifle). I saw him fire his gun twice, I saw him burning gaming tables. But I did not see what he did after that because I fled."

Police were examining a car that the gunman left in a complex parking garage, authorities said. Police Senior Superintendent Tomas Apolinario said the car's owner was being questioned and had denied knowing the gunman.

15 children die of botched vaccines in South Sudan

Associated Press

JUBA, South Sudan — Fifteen young children have died in a botched measles vaccination campaign that saw people as young as 12 years old administering the vaccines, South Sudan's government announced Friday.

The United Nations said the children died of "severe sepsis/toxicity" from the contaminated vaccine, and the health ministry blamed the deaths on human error. One syringe was used for all the children during the four-day campaign, and the vaccine was stored without refrigeration the entire time.

Measles is yet another challenge facing the desperately

poor East African country that already has been devastated by more than three years of civil war and a recently declared famine, as well as a cholera outbreak.

The government said all of the children who died were under the age of 5. It is setting up a commission to determine who is responsible and whether victims' families will be compensated.

The measles vaccination campaign is targeting more than 2 million children across the country. About 300 children were targeted in the area where the children's deaths occurred.

The children died in the rural town of Kapoeta in early May.

Another 32 children suffered fever, vomiting and diarrhea but recovered, a joint statement by the World Health Organization and the U.N. children's agency UNICEF said.

Abdulummini Usman, the South Sudan country director for WHO, told The Associated Press earlier this week that even after the organization became aware of the deaths, the measles campaign continued across the country, except in Kapoeta.

"This campaign is lifesaving," Usman said.

WHO provides some training to South Sudan's health officials, and the U.N. children's agency provides the vaccines to the government. It was not

immediately clear whether any U.N. officials were present at the time of the botched vaccinations.

The joint statement by WHO and UNICEF said the vaccination team involved in the deaths was "neither qualified nor trained." It called the deaths a "tragic event."

Dr. Samson Baba, an immunization official in the ministry of health, refused to comment on the deaths earlier this week, instead demanding the source of the information.

South Sudan's government on Friday also said vaccinations are not being denied to any part of the country, including those held by opposition forces.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Dancers use hula hoop to beat a performer

NY NEW YORK — A New York City subway performer said he was injured after an attack by a subway dance group that was angry they didn't receive tips for a dance routine.

Jean Loup Wolfman said he tried to calm the dancers after they started threatening an elderly couple at the Union Square station on Monday. But his attempt to intervene led to the three dancers beating him with a hula hoop Wolfman was carrying for performances.

The NYPD said they've arrested a 21-year-old man in connection with the assault. Wolfman needed stitches and staples for wounds sustained in the assault, but said he would do it again to help someone in need.

Coffee shop earns Dunkin' Donuts' ire

MA NORTH ATTLEBOROUGH — A Massachusetts coffee shop owner said he received a cease-and-desist letter from Dunkin' Donuts claiming trademark infringement for riffing on the chain's catchphrase.

Steve Copoulos told the Sun Chronicle he added window art reading "North now runs on Mike's" on his Mike's Coffee shop in North Attleborough.

While he expected a few laughs from customers, Copoulos said he was surprised to find the letter from the Canton, Mass.-based coffee shop chain claiming he was infringing on their "America Runs on Dunkin'" slogan and Copoulos' variation implied an affiliation.

Dunkin' Donuts, in a statement, said it wrote the letter, "In support of our legal rights under trademark law and in support of our franchisees."

Man arrested after calling 911 for a chat

PA ALLENTOWN — Police said a Pennsylvania man repeatedly called 911 while intoxicated because he was seeking conversation.

Pennsylvania State Police said Larry Keiser, 51, first called around 10:30 p.m. Friday because he wanted to speak with a police officer.

Keiser called five more times, leading police to show up at his home in North Whitehall Township after midnight. The man told officers he drank several beers because he was upset about a family situation. Troopers told Keiser not to call 911 again unless there was an emergency, and he said he wouldn't call again. According to troopers, he called 911 the minute after officers left.

Keiser is facing charges that include intentionally calling 911 for other than emergency purposes.

Visitors greeted with 'sex' on water tower

WI SUSSEX — Thanks to an ill-timed painting break, a water tower emblazoned with the word "sex" is greeting drivers as they pass through a southeast Wisconsin town.

The gaffe turned up in Sussex.

WTMJ-TV reported that workers painting the town's name on the water tower stopped midway through to let the paint dry Wednesday.

One driver, Jessica Bruss, told the TV station she "almost drove off the road" when her 8-year-old son pointed out the word as they drove past Wednesday.

Bruss said the unfinished paint work may be funny for adults but added: "People should remember that kids are

seeing it."

Famous 'Rocky' statue off-limits for 2 weeks

PA PHILADELPHIA — Yo, posers! The Rocky statue in Philadelphia is off-limits once again.

The statue of the fictional boxer is located near the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where Sylvester Stallone runs up the steps while training for big fights in various "Rocky" movies. It was off-limits to tourists at the end of April while crews tore down a temporary stage erected for the NFL Draft. On Tuesday, the city's Department of Parks and Recreation said the statue will be closed to tourists for two weeks.

That's because improvements are being made to the site surrounding the statue at the head of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

Words With Friends adds 'covfefe' to list

NY NEW YORK — The mobile word game Words With Friends has added one of the internet's most popular typos in recent days — "covfefe."

The mysterious term President Donald Trump tweeted spread like wildfire on social media and the Scrabble-like multiplayer game has jumped aboard, defining the word as "the amount and quality of reporting when autocorrect fails you at 3am."

"Covfefe" was born on Twitter just after midnight Wednesday when the president wrote about "constant negative press covfefe," prompting jokes from Jimmy Kimmel to Hillary Clinton. Trump later poked fun at the typo: "Who can figure out the true meaning of 'covfefe' ??? Enjoy!"

Dictionary publisher Merri-

am-Webster checked in with an eye-rolling tweet, and dozens of definitions have been submitted to the Urban Dictionary website, which crowdsources slang terms.

Twitter-famous shark again near coastline

NJ ATLANTIC CITY — Scientists continue to track Twitter's favorite great white shark as she swims near the coast of New Jersey.

The shark known as Mary Lee showed up in waters near Atlantic City on Wednesday. She was detected off the coast of Cape May with a male great white Saturday.

The nonprofit group OCEARCH has actively tracked Mary Lee since they tagged the shark in 2012. Mary Lee has logged close to 40,000 miles traveling along the East Coast since then.

Driver with key fob thwarts car-jacking

SC DARLINGTON — Authorities said a quick-thinking driver thwarted a car-jacking by a jail inmate in South Carolina.

Arrest warrants said Ezekiel Stevenson, 18, yanked a driver from his car during a hospital visit on May 13. But the driver kept his key fob, shutting the engine down before the car could leave the lot. That led to a standoff with the inmate, who kept trying to lock the doors. Each time, the driver used the fob to unlock them for the officers.

Stephenson managed to flee into the woods, dodging an officer's gunshot, but he was found within the hour. He was in the Darlington County Jail on a hit-and-run charge. Now he's back, on escape, carjacking and resisting arrest charges.

From wire reports

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and Military News

Durant leads Warriors to NBA Game 1 win

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Kevin Durant drove through the lane untouched for dazzling dunks. He dished off even when he could have slammed it home, and did it all on defense.

Oh, he hit from long range, too.

What a dominant NBA Finals opener with the Warriors.

Durant finished with 38 points, eight rebounds and eight assists to lead Golden State past LeBron James and the defending champion Cleveland Cavaliers, 113-91 on Thursday night in Game 1.

As this highly anticipated rematch tipped off at last, the biggest difference from last year was clear.

“KD,” James said.

Stephen Curry did his share by scoring 28 points with six three-pointers and 10 assists as this sure-to-be thrilling trilogy began, a long-expected, spectacular grand finale envisioned ever since that July day

Durant left Oklahoma City to join the loaded Warriors.

“We could be a lot better than we were tonight but in the Finals you get a ‘W,’ we’ll take it,” Durant said.

James wound up with 28 points, 15 rebounds and eight assists a day after dealing with bigotry far away from basketball. Someone painted a racial slur on the gate of his Los Angeles home, leaving James to address racism rather than his seventh straight Finals appearance or stopping KD. James said he would do his best to be ready for the series opener when his mind was elsewhere, concerned for his wife and children back in Ohio.

“We did a great job of covering the three-point line but other than that they played a hell of a game,” James said.

Durant punished Cleveland for leaving him free, taking the ball to the hoop for emphatic dunks as a man on a mission to deliver what he came for: a championship. He had six slams in the first half alone for

the Warriors, who at 13-0 are already the first team to go this far in a postseason unblemished.

“They’re the best I’ve ever seen,” Cavs coach Tyronn Lue said. “They’re 13-0. They’re constantly breaking records every year.”

Game 2 in the series is Sunday night back at Oracle Arena with its deafening sellout crowd.

Once his night was finally done, Durant found mother Wanda at the end of the Warriors bench and held her in a warm embrace.

He had won the first battle with King James.

“Those are two big household names, so we know you guys and the fans are going to want to see that and pick up on it,” said acting Warriors coach Mike Brown, facing a Cleveland franchise that fired him not once but twice. “I’m sure LeBron probably thinks he could play better, and you tip your hat off to KD.”

Silver: Draft rules ‘not working for anyone’

Associated Press

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver wants the NBA’s draft-eligibility rules changed.

To what, he isn’t sure.

Less than a month away from a draft where about 20 players who completed just one year of college will be welcomed into the league, Silver expects the so-called “one-and-done” rule to be modified — somehow — before too long. But in saying that, Silver also acknowledged that even he isn’t certain what makes the most sense going forward.

“My sense is it’s not working for anyone,” Silver said Thursday night before Game 1 of the NBA Finals. “It’s not working for the college coaches and athletic directors I hear from. They’re not happy with the current system. And I know our teams aren’t happy either, in part because they don’t necessarily think the players who are coming into the league are getting the kind of training that they would expect to see.”

It’s been just over a decade since the NBA and the players union agreed on a rule that

says players either need to be 19 years old or be one year removed from high school before being eligible for the draft. There are arguments for raising the minimum age to 20, there are arguments for getting rid of the rule altogether.

Silver said he expects to have more talks in the coming months with the union about the topic.

“I think we all agree that we need to make a change,” Silver said. “As I’ve said before, our position, at least our formal position, going into bargaining was that we wanted to raise the minimum age from 19 to 20, and of course their formal position was they want to lower the age from 19 to 18.

“I think it’s one of those issues that we need to come together and study.”

There were six rookies this season who averaged 10 points per game or more; none were teenagers. One of the advantages that could come from raising the age minimum to 20 would be that players may be more ready for the pro game. Silver said he has talked to many veteran players, who have a sense

that the 19-year-olds “are not coming in game-ready.”

Other highlights in Silver’s annual Finals media availability included:

All-Star Game in Charlotte: Silver defended the NBA’s decision to return the All-Star Game to Charlotte in 2019, after taking it away and moving it to New Orleans this season in response to the state’s law restricting the rights and anti-discrimination protections for LGBT people.

A deal to repeal that law was struck in March, though critics have said it does not go far enough.

“We had said to the legislative leaders we will consider coming back in 2019, if you change the law,” Silver said. “The law was changed. Sufficient, is a tough ... the answer is yes. They made incremental progress. And I felt, in part, there is a role that the league can play in demonstrating what equality looks like to a community.”

Silver said taking All-Star weekend to Charlotte could serve as an example of what it looks like to be non-discriminatory, “and my hope is that

by setting that example we can unify people and that the state will follow.”

Phil Jackson: Silver said he did not consider disciplining New York Knicks President Phil Jackson for comments suggesting that Knicks star Carmelo Anthony should be traded.

Jackson’s comments raised the ire of the players’ union, which pointed out that players risk being fined if they lobby for trades publicly.

“There’s never been a history in this league of fining a team and disciplining a team executive for talking about trading a player,” Silver said.

Chinese players: Silver said it’s frustrating to him that basketball-crazed China does not have a player in the league.

“There’s probably more basketball being played in China than anywhere else in the world, and more NBA basketball is being watched in China than anywhere else in the world,” Silver said. “It’s something I’ve talked to Yao Ming a lot about. We all have to do collectively a better job training the best players in China.”

Orioles hold off BoSox

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — The Baltimore Orioles hit four home runs off Eduardo Rodriguez, and that turned out to be just enough offense to beat the Boston Red Sox.

Such is life in the hard-hitting AL East.

“There’s not a recipe every night, but you’re going to have to score runs in our division,” Orioles manager Buck Showalter said after Baltimore’s 7-5 victory on Thursday night.

The Orioles used the long ball to build a 7-1 lead in the sixth inning — then held on.

“When everyone is kind of in a good place, that’s the kind of offense you’re going to see,” said Mark Trumbo, who started the outburst with a two-run drive in the first inning.

Chris Davis and Adam Jones went deep for a second straight night and Jonathan Schoop capped the surge with a three-run drive in the sixth.

After taking two of three from the AL East-leading New York Yankees, the Orioles opened a four-game series against another division rival with a feel-good victory.

“We’ve got to win these games to play in the postseason,” Baltimore starter Wade Miley said. “These games are very important.”

Miley (2-3) gave up five hits and a walk against the team he pitched for in 2015. Seeking his first win since April 14, the lefty did not allow a runner past first base after the second inning.

Rodriguez (4-2) surrendered seven runs in 5²/₃ innings, and the four homers tied a career high. The former Orioles farmhand came in with a four-game winning streak and a career 1.34 ERA in six starts at Camden Yards.

“I just missed my pitches,” Rodriguez said. “With those guys, when you miss, that will happen. They make contact and hit homers.”

Twins rally past Angels in 9th

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Miguel Sano claims he told Minnesota teammates earlier in the day they would turn a triple play Thursday night. The only thing he failed to predict was the Twins rallying in the ninth inning to beat the Los Angeles Angels.

The Twins turned their first triple play in 11 years in the fourth and then scored three in the ninth, taking the lead on Jason Castro’s two-run single, to pull out a 4-2 win over the Angels.

Minnesota overcame two solo home runs from Los Angeles’ Kole Calhoun, while keeping Albert Pujols stuck at career home-run No.599. Pujols had one single in four at-bats.

The Twins turned the triple play in the fourth, their first since May 27, 2006. After leadoff singles by Pujols and Yunel Escobar, Jefry Marte hit a sharp one-bouncer right to third baseman Sano. Sano stepped on third for the force, fired ahead of the sliding Escobar to Brian Dozier at second, whose relay to first easily beat Marte to complete the first triple play turned against the Angels since 2004.

“I kept thinking about it,” Sano said. “I came early this morning and practiced getting the groundballs down the line, touching third and throwing to second. Once the situation came, I just kept saying, ‘(starter Adalberto) Mejia, just give me the right pitch and I’ll get it.’”

Sano and the entire infield leapt in celebration.

“Rumor has it, he called it,” said Twins manager Paul Molitor. “I don’t know if he was excited about the play or being prophetic.”

Sano had given the Twins a 1-0 lead with his 13th home run of the season in the second off Alex Meyer. However, Calhoun tied it in the sixth with a homer off Mejia and gave the Angels the lead with his second of the game in the eighth off Taylor Rogers (3-1).

Calhoun, who hit just .158 in the month of May, now has seven home runs.

“I’ve been putting pretty good swings on the ball lately and not getting anything to fall,” Calhoun said. “Seems like I’m hitting balls right at people, so it’s nice to get a couple tonight.”

The Twins’ rally in the ninth against reliever Jose Alvarez (0-2) was aided by a miscue from Marte, who dropped a one-out popup from Jorge Polanco for an error. Eddie Rosario doubled him to third, and after an intentional walk to Byron Buxton, Castro looped his two-run single into left.

“We hung in there and got a little bit of a break on the pop-up,” Molitor said. “Jason took a couple fastballs but then dunked one out there to give us the lead.”

Bud Norris walked in a final run.

Minnesota’s Brandon Kintzler got the last three outs for his 14th save.

Sciocchia stuck with Alvarez in the ninth, even though he had Norris and his 10 saves warming up in the bullpen. Sciocchia said Norris is still recovering from a minor knee injury. “I don’t know if we’ve ordained anybody as a closer,” the manager said. “Bud has got the lion’s share of them, but with him coming off the tweak (to his knee) that he had in Miami, I think we felt very comfortable with Jose matching up in the ninth.”

Wainwright, Cardinals top Dodgers

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Adam Wainwright hit a two-run homer off Brandon McCarthy and pitched six innings of four-hit ball, leading the St. Louis Cardinals over the Los Angeles Dodgers 2-0 on Thursday for a four-game split.

Wainwright (6-3) struck out six and walked two, pitching out of two-on, one-out jams in the fourth and fifth, and extending his scoreless streak to 16¹/₃ innings. Matt Bowman, Trevor Rosenthal and Seung Hwan Oh pitched an inning each to complete a five-hitter. Oh threw a one-hit ninth for his 13th save in 15 chances.

Wainwright followed Paul Dejong’s second-inning single with a drive over the left-field bullpen for his 10th career homer. Wainwright has six hits and seven RBIs this season.

Indians 8, Athletics 0: Corey Kluber pitched six shutout innings and struck out 10 in his first start since May 2, and Cleveland scored four runs during a strange sixth inning to beat visiting Oakland.

Kluber (4-2) had been sidelined with a strained

lower back, an injury that kept Cleveland’s ace sidelined for a month. Despite the long layoff, however, Kluber looked like his dominant self, allowing just two hits and recording his 26th career double-digit strikeout game.

Diamondbacks 3, Marlins 2: Zack Greinke allowed one earned run in seven innings to earn his seventh victory as Arizona rallied to end host Miami’s four-game winning streak.

Yankees 12, Blue Jays 2: CC Sabathia won his fourth consecutive start, Aaron Hicks had a career-high six RBIs and Gary Sanchez homered twice to lead visiting New York over Toronto.

Rockies 6, Mariners 3: Mark Reynolds and Nolan Arenado homered to back Kyle Freeland, helping Colorado stop a three-game losing streak with a win over host Seattle.

Brewers 2, Mets 1: Chase Anderson pitched seven shutout innings and Milwaukee benefited — temporarily, anyway — when a Brewers bat boy bumped into Mets infielder Wilmer Flores on a foul popup in a victory over host New York.

Djokovic needs 5 sets to move on at Open

Associated Press

PARIS — From a tiff with the chair umpire to the big deficit he created and then needed to overcome in a steady rain, Novak Djokovic had an all-around difficult day at the French Open.

Rafael Nadal's journey to the fourth round, in contrast, could hardly have been easier. Indeed, his 100th best-of-five-set match on clay was also the most lopsided.

The stark numbers on the scoreboards at Court Philippe Chatrier revealed plenty about how differently things went in the back-to-back contests Friday for defending champion Djokovic and nine-time champion Nadal. First up in the main stadium at Roland Garros was Nadal, who won 82 points and conceded merely 36 in a 6-0, 6-1, 6-0 victory over 63rd-ranked Nikoloz Basilashvili.

"The score is quite embarrassing, you know," Basilashvili acknowledged, "but I have to accept it."

Djokovic followed in the main stadium and found himself in

quite a bit of trouble right away against 41st-ranked Diego Schwartzman before emerging to win 5-7, 6-3, 3-6, 6-1, 6-1.

While it took Basilashvili 12 games and 49 minutes just to claim a single game — which spectators greeted with a roar as he stood motionless and straight-faced — Schwartzman not only took the second game of his match against Djokovic, he grabbed the opening set, too. And then the third, to go up two sets to one.

Schwartzman played well during that stretch, to be sure, but the No. 2-seeded Djokovic's biggest problem was himself. He wound up with 55 unforced errors to 43 winners, and all sorts of issues on his backhand swing, which produced 33 of those miscues, all under the watchful eye of new coach Andre Agassi.

Djokovic, who completed a career Grand Slam a year ago in Paris, eventually managed to figure out how to steady his game, if not his demeanor.

As Schwartzman became less proficient and complained

about issues in his right hip area — a trainer came out and gave him a massage during a changeover late in the final set — Djokovic became more assertive and more accurate.

Still, there were distractions.

In the fourth set, with Djokovic leading 4-0 and serving at 30-all, he was given a fault by chair umpire Carlos Ramos for multiple time violations. After the ensuing point, Djokovic stared in Ramos' direction. Moments later, just about to face a break point, Djokovic yelled at himself, mostly in Serbian. Then, facing Ramos, Djokovic briefly lifted his racket overhead, before using it to flip a ball backward toward a ball boy.

That's when Ramos interrupted, announcing a code violation warning for unsportsmanlike conduct. Djokovic walked over and barked: "What's wrong with you? What did I say? What did I say? What did I say? Why did you give me warning? What, do you understand Serbian?"

When play resumed, Djokovic missed a forehand to drop that game. He would win 8 of 9

games the rest of the way.

Elsewhere on Day 6 at Roland Garros, 10th-seeded David Goffin stopped playing after turning his ankle when he tripped on a tarp at the back of the court in the first set against Horacio Zeballos; No. 5 Milos Raonic advanced when his opponent, Guillermo Garcia-Lopez, quit because of a left thigh injury; No. 20 Pablo Carreno Busta eliminated No. 11 Grigor Dimitrov 7-5, 6-3, 6-4; and No. 6 Dominic Thiem was a 6-1, 7-6 (4), 6-3 winner against No. 25 Steve Johnson, an American who generated sympathy from fans and foes as he displayed raw emotion while competing just weeks after the death of his father.

In women's play, defending champion Garbine Muguruza beat No. 27 Yulia Putintseva 7-5, 6-2, and a couple of unseeded Americans lost to seeded opponents: No. 13 Kristina Mladenovic edged Shelby Rogers 7-5, 4-6, 8-6, while No. 23 Sam Stosur eliminated qualifier Bethanie Mattek-Sands 6-2, 6-2.

OU tops Baylor in Women's College World Series opener

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma made mistakes teams normally don't get away with at the Women's College World Series. The Sooners had enough firepower to get by.

Nicole Pendley hit a three-run homer in the first inning, and Oklahoma opened defense of its national title with a 6-3 victory over Baylor on Thursday night.

The Sooners won despite committing four errors, and they got in a bit of trouble late in a game they appeared to have under control. Still, Oklahoma coach Patty Gasso knows how hard World Series wins are to come by.

"Good first win, and that's exactly what you want when you come into this tournament,

is get the first win and away you go," she said. "Just wasn't maybe the prettiest, but it's in our back pocket, and we're ready to move on."

Macey Hatfield had two hits and Fale Aviu knocked in two runs for the Sooners (57-9).

Oklahoma's Paige Parker (24-5), selected the Most Outstanding Player of last year's series, allowed one run and five hits in six innings.

Oklahoma has won three of four this season against Baylor. This one, like the others, had some difficult moments.

"It was uncomfortable," Gasso said. "It's hard to watch because I know how much better we are. But again, Baylor creates that on us. I say this over and over: Baylor makes us better. They make us play hard, and we appreciate that. We like

that."

Washington 3, Oregon 1: At Oklahoma City, Kirstyn Thomas' two-run homer in the top of the seventh inning helped the Huskies defeat the Ducks.

Taran Alvelo (33-7) pitched a complete game for the Huskies, who advanced to winners' bracket play on Friday.

Washington snapped Oregon's 15-game winning streak. It was the Huskies' third win in four tries against their Pac-12 rival this season.

LSU 2, UCLA 1: Constance Quinn scored the winning run on an obstruction call as the Tigers defeated the Bruins.

The game was tied at a run apiece in the fifth inning when Quinn scored on a single by Amber Serrett. Quinn was tagged out before the obstruction call against UCLA catcher

Paige Halstead at the plate.

Quinn had two hits and Emily Griggs scored a run for the Tigers (49-20).

Florida 8, Texas A&M 0 (5): At Oklahoma City, Kelly Barnhill gave up just three hits to help the Gators roll past the Aggies in five innings.

Barnhill (25-3), USA Softball's National Player of the Year, struck out five in four innings. She threw 30 pitches in the first and escaped trouble, then threw 46 pitches in her final three innings for top-seeded Florida (56-8).

Florida got on the board in the first when Janell Wheaton's single knocked in two. The Gators scored two more in the second on a single by Nicole DeWitt. Florida's Aleshia Ocasio hit a 3-run homer in the fourth.