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Comey: 'I was fired because of' Russia probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former FBI Director James Comey asserted Thursday that President Donald Trump fired him to interfere with his investigation of Russia's role in the 2016 election and its ties to the Trump campaign.

"It's my judgment that I was fired because of the Russia investigation," Comey told the Senate Intelligence Committee in explosive testimony that threatened to undermine Trump's presidency.

"I was fired in some way to change, or the endeavor was to change, the way the Russia investigation was being conducted," Comey testified under oath. "That is a very big deal, and not just because it involves me."

Comey also accused the Trump administration of spreading "lies, plain and simple" about him and the FBI in

the aftermath of his firing last month, declaring that the administration "defamed him and more importantly the FBI" by claiming the bureau was in disorder under his leadership. And in testimony that exposed deep distrust between the president and the lawman, Comey described discomfort about their one-on-one conversations, saying he decided he immediately needed to document the discussions in memos.

"I was honestly concerned that he might lie about the nature of our meeting, so I thought it really important to document," Comey said. "I knew there might come a day when I might need a record of what happened not only to defend myself but to protect the FBI."

The revelations came as Comey delivered his much anticipated first public telling of his relationship with Trump,

speaking at a packed hearing that brought Washington and parts of the country to a standstill as all eyes were glued to televisions showing the testimony. The former director immediately dove into the heart of the fraught political controversy around his firing and whether Trump interfered in the bureau's Russia investigation, as he elaborated on written testimony delivered Wednesday. In that testimony he had already disclosed that Trump demanded his "loyalty" and directly pushed him to "lift the cloud" of investigation by declaring publicly the president was not the target of the FBI probe into his campaign's Russia ties.

Comey said that he declined to do so in large part because of the "duty to correct" that would be created if that situation changed. Comey also said in his written testimony that

Trump, in a strange private encounter near the grandfather clock in the Oval Office, pushed him to end his investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia asked Comey the key question: "Do you believe this arises to obstruction of justice?"

"I don't know. That's Bob Mueller's job to sort that out," Comey responded, referring to the newly appointed special counsel who has taken over the Justice Department's Russia investigation.

In a startling disclosure, Comey revealed that after his firing he had actually tried to spur the special counsel's appointment by giving one of his memos about Trump to a friend of his to leak to the press.

"My judgment was I need to get that out into the public square," Comey said.

Report: Black troops more likely to face punishment

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Black troops are significantly more likely to face military punishment than white servicemembers, according to a new report released Wednesday.

Previously undisclosed data shows vast racial disparities inside the military justice system, where black servicemembers are up to 2.6 times more likely to face court-martial or disciplinary action. Protect Our Defenders, a group that advocates for sexual assault victims in the military, received the demographic data after filing Freedom of Information Act requests to each military service branch last year.

"It's information that's not

new to the military," Col. Don Christensen, a former chief prosecutor in the U.S. Air Force and the group's president, said Wednesday. "These are their numbers, they track this information."

The Pentagon did not comment on the specifics in the report.

"It is long-standing Department of Defense policy that servicemembers must be afforded the opportunity to serve in an environment free from unlawful racial discrimination. The department will review any new information concerning implementation of and compliance with this policy once given the opportunity to review the report," said Pentagon spokes-

man Johnny Michael.

According to the report, from 2006 to 2015, black servicemembers in the Air Force were 71 percent more likely to face court-martial or other forms of military punishment than white airmen. In the Army, black soldiers are 61 percent more likely to be disciplined than white soldiers. In the Navy, which only provided data from 2014 and 2015, that number is 40 percent.

Christensen said that even as a young captain in 1995, he was aware of the significant disparity in the justice process when it came to black and white airmen. More than two decades later, the disparities have not improved, and there has not been a real effort by military

leaders to address the issue, the report stated.

Congress should demand an outside review, "not one staffed by generals who will sweep this under the rug," he said.

From 2006 to 2015, black Marines were 32 percent more likely to be found guilty in the military justice system than white Marines. However, the data show that the racial disparities grew worse for more serious proceedings. At a general court-martial, black Marines were almost three times more likely to be found guilty than white Marines, while they were only 1.3 times as likely to be found guilty when it came to nonjudicial punishment, which is limited to minor disciplinary offenses.

Helicopter squadron commander relieved

The (Jacksonville, N.C.) Daily News

A New River Air Station, N.C., aviation officer who in 2008 became the first female to command Marine One, has lost her command after an off-duty incident was not properly reported.

Lt. Col. Jennifer L. Grieves, 46, the former commander of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 464, was relieved of her command Wednesday by Maj. Gen. Matthew Glavy, commander of the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, "due to a loss of trust and confidence in her ability to continue to lead," according to a media advisory issued by II Marine Expeditionary Force Public Affairs Office. Grieves will be reassigned within II MEF.

Grieves, who assumed command of the squadron in May 2016, has been replaced by Lt. Col. Troy Callahan, formerly of Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron One, as its commander, accord-

ing to the release.

Grieves was arrested by the Onslow County Sheriff's Office on Dec. 16 and charged with simple assault, a misdemeanor. In arrest warrants on file at the Onslow County District Courthouse and reviewed by The Daily News, Grieves is accused of "scratching the victim on the chest and punching the victim on the chest."

The charges were subsequently dropped on Dec. 22 by the complainant, who is Grieves' wife. The couple was married on Aug. 18, 2015. The couple has separated and filed for divorce on May 16, 2017, according to documents on file at the Onslow County District Courthouse Civil Division.

A message left for comment to the II MEF Public Affairs Office was not immediately returned Wednesday.

Grieves enlisted in the Marine Corps on June 4, 1990, and attained the rank of sergeant before being commissioned a Marine second lieutenant on May 15, 1998, after

graduating from the University of Maryland at College Park, according to her official Marine Corps biography.

As an officer, she became a naval aviator and trained as a helicopter pilot. As a captain, Grieves was selected on May 14, 2008, to be one of five pilots to serve as the helicopter aircraft commander to the president of the United States. Grieves was promoted to major on Aug. 1, 2008, while serving as a Marine One pilot for HMX-1, a role she would perform through August 2009. Marine One helicopters are designated as such when the president is on board.

Grieves' personal awards include three Meritorious Service Medals, two Air Medals-Individual Action, five Air Medals-Strike/Flight, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, three Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, Combat Action Ribbon, Letter of Commendation, and five Letters of Appreciation.

US jet lands at Japan air base as a precaution

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A Marine Corps F/A-18 Hornet made a precautionary landing this week at a Japanese air base, U.S. and Japanese officials said.

The jet, accompanied by two Hornets from the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, landed at Matsushima Airfield, a Japan Air Self-Defense Force base in Miyagi Prefecture, about 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, Marine 1st Lt. Karoline Foote, a wing spokeswoman, said in an email Thursday.

"After receiving a cockpit warning indication, the pilot acted in accordance with standard operating procedures to land the aircraft," she said.

There were no injuries or property damage, Foote said.

The jets were returning to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni from Alaska when one of them ran into engine trouble, said an official from Japan's Defense Ministry.

Two of the Hornets returned to Iwakuni on Wednesday.

The jet with engine trouble remained at Matsushima and was being checked by American mechanics, the official said.

From Stripes staff

Navy: T-45 woes could mean AF aircraft needed to train pilots

BY TARA COPP
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Nearly two months after the Navy grounded its fleet of T-45 trainer jets due to cockpit oxygen problems, the aircraft have still not returned to service and the Navy is exploring alternatives, the service's top aviation commander said Wednesday.

"We have considered using other aircraft, potentially Air Force," Vice Adm. Paul Grosklags, commander of Naval Air Systems Command, told members of the House Armed Services Committee.

Some T-45 trainer jets have had a malfunction with their oxygen systems, affecting oxygen levels for pilots and causing severe disorientation during flights. An increase in the number of incidents forced the Navy to announce April 5 that the service was grounding all its T-45s. The service has 197.

The grounding, which affected Navy training bases in

Some T-45 trainer jets have had a malfunction with their oxygen systems.

Kingsville, Texas, Pensacola, Fla., and Meridian, Miss., was lifted April 17, but only for instructor pilots, not students. Instructors have been allowed to fly the T-45s to maintain currency and become familiar with a modified oxygen mask that the Navy intended to use while it worked on a long-term solution to the problem.

Grosklags acknowledged Wednesday that the T-45s still cannot be used for training flights and the Navy was considering alternatives, including pushing some flight training into a later stage of the training program, such as when student pilots advance to their official training squadron, which is composed of actual fleet aircraft, such as F/A-18 jets, that students will eventually fly. But those aircraft are having their

own readiness issues and the option would be a last resort, he said.

More so, Grosklags said a request to the Air Force to use some of its trainer aircraft could also have drawbacks.

"I don't think we've talked to the Air Force about that," he said. "But one of the key things we get out of T-45s is taking our new aviators, our new student aviators to the ship, which we can only do right now in the T-45 or in their next fleet aircraft."

The service is still reviewing what went wrong with the T-45's cockpit oxygen systems, Grosklags said. Two potential solutions are installing better warning systems in the cockpit or replacing the current oxygen systems.

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School at Navy base in S. Korea to close

BY MARCUS FICHTL
Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — A school at the only Navy base on the Korean Peninsula will close its doors next week after serving students for nearly 60 years.

Low enrollment at C.T. Joy Elementary/Middle School at Chinhae Naval Base, near Busan, caused the Department of Defense Education Activity to decide in December to shutter the facility, which serves students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Only 20 to 25 students attended the school in recent years, DODEA Pacific spokesman Marc Calero told Stars and Stripes in an email.

“It is a small school and does not have all of the educational and co-curricular opportunities offered by larger schools,” he said. “Our goal is to provide the best possible educational resources available to military connected dependents in order to educate, engage and empower each student to succeed in a dynamic world.”

Starting next school year, Chinhae parents will be allowed to enroll their children in private international schools or to homeschool them through the Non-DOD Schools Program, Calero said.

“Families in the Chinhae community will now have the option of selecting one of the several international schools, all with different programming and focus areas, which is what makes the opportunity a unique one,” Lois Rapp, DODEA’s director of student excellence, told parents and students during a closing ceremony on June 2, according to a Navy statement.

Worldwide, about 3,600 children of military personnel attend private schools or are homeschooled through the program, she said.

Army colonel, wife face bribery, fraud charges in bid-rigging case

The Augusta (Ga.) Chronicle

An indictment returned by a federal grand jury accuses a Fort Gordon, Ga., active-duty Army colonel, his wife and a former defense contractor employee of rigging bids to defraud the government of more than \$20 million.

The indictment accuses Anthony Tyrone Roper, 55, Audra Roper, 49, and Dwayne Oswald Fulton, 58, of taking part in a bribery and kickback scheme from 2008. The Ropers and others are accused of soliciting and accepting cash bribes in exchange for rigging the award of Army contracts.

The indictment further alleges that in an attempt to hide their bribery and fraud schemes, the Ropers and Fulton attempted to obstruct an official investigation into their criminal conduct.

Anthony Roper was charged with one count of

conspiracy, three counts of bribery, four counts of false statements and one count of obstruction, with a maximum sentence of 85 years in prison and a \$1.75 million fine. His wife was charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of false statements and one count of obstruction, with a maximum sentence of 25 years in prison and a \$750,000 fine. Fulton was charged with one count of conspiracy and one count of obstruction, with a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a \$500,000 fine.

The case has been investigated by Special Agent Preston T. Johnson of the U.S. Army, Criminal Investigations Division; Special Agent Randall J. Temples, of the Department of Defense, Criminal Investigative Service; and Special Agent Bryan M. Cofer, of the U.S. Small Business Administration, Office of Inspector General. The investigation of this case is ongoing.

Think tank: Transition to renewable energy a matter of national security

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

America should lead the world in the transition from fossil fuel-based energy to advanced renewable sources because the new technologies will directly affect national security, a defense think tank said in a report released Tuesday.

Those advanced sources will play a part in shaping the roles and missions of the military, as well as affect the military’s ability to perform them, said the report published by the Washington, D.C.-based CNA and written by an advisory board of retired flag and general officers.

“In forward operations, ad-

vanced energy can reduce the logistics burden — lowering costs in lives and dollars,” the report said. “At bases and installations around the world, it can improve resilience and lower energy costs. Installations at home and abroad are increasingly dependent on energy for real-time command and control, remote operations of unmanned air and ground units, and intelligence analysis.”

Growth of advanced energy technology is also likely to pay dividends for the American military in ways that can’t be foreseen.

“Throughout history, with each significant revolution in technology, the nations that ad-

opted it most effectively have achieved profound military advantages,” the report said.

The development of the railroad and the telegraph in the 1800s revolutionized military transportation and communications, for example. The perfection of sonar by the U.S. and Great Britain turned the tide against Nazi Germany in the Atlantic during World War II, the report said.

But while China, Russia, the European Union and Middle Eastern nations have implemented national strategies to take advantage of the emerging landscape of advanced energies, the U.S. “has not taken a similar strategic approach,” the report said.

Navy secretary nominee announced

Associated Press

JACKSON, Wyo. — A Wyoming man could be the next U.S. Navy secretary.

President Donald Trump on

Tuesday nominated Richard Spencer for the job.

The Jackson Hole (Wyo.) News & Guide reported Spencer is 63 and served on the Pentagon’s Defense Business

Board from 2009 to 2015. He previously was an adviser to the chief of naval operations.

He was a pilot in the U.S. Marines from 1976 to 1981.

Air Force vet indicted in leak case, faces hearing

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — A young woman accused of leaking U.S. government secrets to a reporter was indicted by a federal grand jury as she awaited a court hearing Thursday to determine whether she must remain jailed pending a trial.

Prosecutors plan to ask a judge to deny bond for Reality Winner, 25, according to court records filed in the case. A grand jury returned an indictment Wednesday in U.S. District Court charging her with a single count of illegally retaining and transmitting national defense information.

It's the same charge federal authorities used to arrest Winner, a government contractor and former Air Force linguist, after FBI agents interviewed her and searched her Augusta home Saturday. FBI agent Justin Garrick said in an affidavit that Winner admitted she copied a classified report containing top-secret information and mailed it to an online news organization.

The charge Winner faces carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Winner's attorney, Titus Nichols, did not immediately return a call seeking comment Thursday. Her mother told The Associated Press in an interview Wednesday she fears prosecutors will try to use the case to send a tough message that "we're not going to tolerate leakers."

"I think they're going to try to make an example out of her because of the political climate right now," Billie Winner-Davis said.

Winner has been jailed in neighboring Lincoln County since her arrest, according to a booking report released by the sheriff.

"She's not a flight risk," said Gary Davis, Winner's stepfather. "Everybody in America knows what she looks like at this point. She's never run away from anything in her life. She's not a violent person. She has no record. There's no reason to hold her."

Prosecutors have not named the news outlet, but her arrest was announced Monday as the website The Intercept reported it had obtained a classified National Security Agency report suggesting Russian hackers had attacked a U.S. voting software supplier before last year's presidential election.

The Intercept said the NSA report was dated May 5 — the same date court records cited for the documents Winner is accused of leaking.

Winner grew up in Kingsville, Texas, and enlisted in the Air Force after graduating from high school. Davis said she became a linguist, speaking Arabic and Farsi, and spent four years assigned to the NSA at Fort Meade, Md. During that time, he said, Winner provided real-time translation to Americans conducting field missions.

DOD: Pro-Assad drone fires on coalition forces

BY TARA COPP
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S.-led coalition troops patrolling in southern Syria were attacked Thursday by a pro-government forces drone, marking an escalation in hostilities in the region, the Pentagon said.

Coalition troops, which included advisers, were conducting a patrol east of Tanf, near a military camp used by U.S. troops training Syrian rebels fighting Islamic State. The drone, which was similar in shape and size to an MQ-1 Predator, dropped an unidentified munition on the troops, Army Col. Ryan Dillon told reporters Thursday at the Pentagon.

"It had remaining munitions that were still on the drone when we fired, and we shot it down," said Dillon, a Baghdad-based spokesman for Operation Inherent Resolve.

The munition "hit dirt" and caused no injuries, he said.

It was the first time pro-government forces had fired directly on coalition forces, Dillon said. It was also the first time U.S. warplanes engaged in air-to-air combat to destroy a hostile air asset that was firing on coalition forces. After the drone dropped the munition, a manned U.S. jet fired at the drone and destroyed it, Dillon said.

When the patrolling coalition forces were targeted by the drone, the group was outside the 55-kilometer area around Tanf that the United States and Russia have identified as a no-conflict zone, Dillon said. The United States did

notify the Russians about the ground forces, Dillon said, though it was not known whether that information was shared by Russia with the pro-government forces who fired the drone.

Dillon would not say Thursday what the origin of the drone was, including whether it was possibly Iranian or belonged to Hezbollah. Both have forces operating in the area in support of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

U.S. forces have been training, equipping and advising Syrian Arabs and Syrian Kurds to assist them in fighting ISIS in Syria, but many of those same forces also seek the ouster of Assad. Syria has been embroiled in a civil war since 2011.

It was the second airstrike that day in southern Syria. Earlier in the day, U.S. warplanes hit "two technical vehicles" belonging to government forces that were inside the no-conflict zone near Tanf.

U.S. warplanes also conducted strikes Tuesday against pro-government forces it considered a threat to U.S. and coalition personnel at Tanf. On May 18, U.S. warplanes attacked a fighting position that was also considered a threat.

"Today was the third set of kinetic strikes the United States has conducted in response to threats posed to coalition forces and partners operating out of Tanf," Dillon said. "We're watching the situation very closely. The coalition does not seek to fight Syrian regime or pro-regime forces. However, we remain ready to defend ourselves."

USS Gabrielle Giffords to be commissioned in Texas

Associated Press

GALVESTON, Texas — The 421-foot USS Gabrielle Giffords will be commissioned this weekend in Texas.

Navy officials say ceremonies will be held Saturday in Galveston to commission the warship named for the former Arizona congresswoman, who survived a 2011 assassination attempt in Tucson, Ariz.

The \$475 million ship was constructed by Austal USA and arrived in Galveston last weekend.

Giffords helped christen the ship in 2015. It's the ninth in a series of vessels designed to navigate in shallow coastal regions.

Giffords' husband is retired astronaut Mark Kelly, a former Navy captain.

Its home port will be San Diego.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Report: More serious violations for food trucks

MA BOSTON — A review of Boston's food trucks has found that they are more likely to be temporarily shut down for serious health violations than brick-and-mortar restaurants.

The Boston Globe reports that while food trucks were less likely than restaurants to have violations, they were more likely to be suspended for serious issues that pose an "imminent public health threat." Nine of the city's 96 licensed food trucks last year were closed on the spot until violations were corrected. Just two of every 100 restaurants were suspended.

Food trucks in Boston were cited for violations 200 times in 2016. About half were serious infractions.

Most of the serious violations that led to shutdowns were related to a lack of running water with which to wash vegetables, clean cutting surfaces and wash hands.

Police: Motorcyclist died after wreck, ride home

MD MOUNT AIRY— A Maryland man rode his motorcycle home after a crash, but police say he died of his injuries before getting inside.

Howard County Police say they were called Sunday morning to a residence in Mount Airy for a report of a man found dead outside the home. Police say an investigation revealed that the man was involved in a single-vehicle motorcycle crash Saturday night a little over a mile from his home. Police say investigators found evidence linking him to the scene of the crash including his cellphone and helmet visor.

Police say they believe he

rode the motorcycle home after the crash but never made it inside.

Police identified the man as James Edward Clements, 47, and said an investigation is ongoing.

Trooper fired after his video mocked colleague

TX MINERAL WELLS — The Texas Department of Public Safety has fired a trooper who produced a video depicting another trooper looking for young girls at a high school.

Gregory "Hank" Beverage was in uniform as he pretends in the video to convince an imaginary girl that she's really 18, not 14.

DPS records obtained by the Fort Worth Star-Telegram indicate Beverage circulated the video to other troopers.

He was fired last year, appealed and his dismissal was upheld in February.

Beverage also was cited for failing to report possible child abuse when he learned in 2015 of sexual assault allegations against the second trooper in Palo Pinto County. The second trooper was fired and is awaiting trial on a sex assault charge.

Boy, 5, credited for spotting fire at store

VT BARRE — A 5-year-old Vermont boy has been credited with spotting a fire at a business before it spread to other buildings.

The boy, Gabriel DeJesus, of Barre, was in a truck with his family in Barre on Saturday evening when he saw smoke coming from the back of Bob's Camera & Video. The store was closed at the time. His father, Jaime DeJesus, says his son said, "Daddy, look, there's

smoke coming out the door, it's coming out the roof." DeJesus stopped and ran to the restaurant next door to alert staff to the fire. They also called 911.

Firefighters say a sprinkler system controlled the basement fire. The cause is under investigation.

Barre Fire Department Deputy Chief Joseph Aldsworth said he commends Gabriel, and store owner Kaitlyn Mesler says she's "super thankful" Gabriel saw the fire and told his parents.

Blind bison now pal to a 4-month-old cow

OR SCIO — The staff at an animal sanctuary in Oregon had tried all they could to find their blind bison named Helen a pasture pal.

They tried sheep, goats and a blind pig named Luke, but Helen was skittish around them all — until Oliver the cow came around.

The Statesman Journal reports Helen has found a new friend in Oliver, a 4-month-old calf. The two animals live at the Lighthouse Farm Sanctuary in Scio.

Oliver runs from the barn to join Helen in the pasture every morning, where they share meals, graze together and nap together in the sun. Sanctuary executive director Gwen Jakubisin says she catches the two animals grooming each other, which is Helen's first experience expressing natural motherly instinct.

City rejects pennies for man's \$270 fine

MI JACKSON — A man who owes \$270 for trash in his yard wants to pay with lots of pennies, but a Michigan city isn't taking the change.

Brian McGonegal has tried

to pay off his debt by making a series of \$27 payments with 2,700 pennies. The Jackson city treasurer, however, has rejected the coins, telling him to put them in rolls.

"It's not practical," Randy Wrozek said Tuesday. "This guy would come in every time at five minutes to five — we close at five — with a big sack full of change. We're not authorized for overtime down here."

McGonegal said the unusual form of payment is his way of protesting the fine. He told the Jackson Citizen Patriot that he was penalized for having trash in his yard.

"I decided I would be just penny ante as they were," said McGonegal, who accused city officials of going overboard in order to cast Jackson as an "ideal little community."

Wrozek said the bill will be sent to Jackson County and attached as a lien on McGonegal's property.

3 teens caught stealing cardboard display cake

MN EDINA — Police in a Minneapolis suburb say three teenagers trying to sneak out of a grocery store with a stolen cake got a not-so-sweet surprise.

Instead of a real cake, Edina police say the teens inadvertently grabbed a cardboard display.

Authorities say the three left a Cub Foods store early Tuesday with the fake cake, but police stopped their vehicle when they saw it matched an employee's description. KSTP-TV reports the cake was returned to the store, and managers declined to press charges. Instead the teens were given trespassing notices.

Edina police tweeted about the incident with the hashtag #nocakeforyou.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Golden St. rallies past Cavs, leads 3-0

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Kevin Durant released his deep shot, the one he always makes in his dreams.

As the ball hung in the air, his plan to win a championship, Golden State's grip on the series, Cleveland's last-gasp attempt to defend its title, all of it was on the line.

Perfect.

Durant drained the shot of his professional life — a three-pointer over LeBron James with 45.3 seconds left — and scored 31 points as the Warriors, pushed harder than they have been throughout their pristine postseason, moved within one win of a title and payback by rallying to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 118-113 on Wednesday night to take a 3-0 lead in the NBA Finals.

The Warriors trailed by six with three minutes left before Durant, criticized for leaving Oklahoma City last summer to chase a championship, brought them back, scoring 14 in the fourth.

"He took over," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "You can tell, he knows this is his moment. He's been an amazing player in this league for a long time, and he senses

this is his time, his moment, his team."

With their 15th straight win, the Warriors now have the longest postseason streak for any team in the four major professional sports.

But that means little to Golden State's players, who with a win in Game 4 on Friday night can exorcise those haunting demons from last June when the Warriors blew a 3-1 lead in the Finals to the Cavaliers.

No team has ever overcome a 3-0 deficit, and it doesn't appear any team is equipped to hang with these Warriors, who may go down as one of the best ever.

Still, Durant isn't looking too far ahead.

"I never been in this position before," said Durant, long accused of not being able to win the big game. "I don't want to relax. It's not over. This is a crazy game. Anything can happen. So I don't want to relax or feel like it's over, it's not."

Klay Thompson added 30 points and Stephen Curry had 26 for the Warriors, who are one win from their second title in three years.

If not for their meltdown last year, the

Warriors, whose record-setting 73-win season got lost in the Finals aftermath, would be looking for a third straight crown.

"We talked about it since the Finals last year that the last season was a very unique year, for a lot of different reasons, and we learned a lot," Curry said. "I think we have grown and matured just mentally of how to just pace yourself through this long year and take every day as a new experience and something that you can kind of take control of."

James shook off a knee-buckling blow to the chin while scoring 39 and Kyrie Irving added 38 for the Cavs, who took a 113-107 lead with 3:09 left on J.R. Smith's three-pointer.

Curry hit a layup and after both James and Irving missed for the Cavs, Durant dropped his three — a shot that could be the one most remembered in this magnificent run by the Warriors.

"All I was looking at was the bottom of the net," Durant said.

Warriors on brink of completing unparalleled run

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — One victory is left before the Golden State Warriors can claim another title.

Not as NBA champions, but rather as the best team ever.

Kevin Durant, Stephen Curry and the rest of the Warriors will be able to make that boast if they win Friday to complete the most impressive postseason run in major sports history.

They moved to the brink of that with a 118-113 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers on Wednesday in Game 3 of the NBA Finals. The Warriors are 15-0 and can finish off the NBA's first perfect postseason with a victory here in Game 4.

Combine that with last year's 73-win season, and a second title in three years — which could have easily been three consecutive championships — and foundation of the case has been made.

The Cavaliers are no match for these Warriors, not even with arguably the best player

on the planet in LeBron James. Golden State's only competition is with Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant, Michael Jordan and the Bulls, and other great teams from the past.

None won as dominantly as this team, which has four All-Stars — including two former league MVPs — in their prime. These aptly named Warriors spent the last two months building big leads, then Wednesday wiped out a late deficit.

Some people may argue their greatness, but James won't.

"It's probably the most, most firepower I've played in my career," James said. "I played against some great teams, but I don't think no team has had this type of firepower."

The NBA's best postseason run is the 15-1 mark of the 2001 Lakers, while the 1983 Philadelphia 76ers went 12-1. Jordan's first title team in 1991 is one of three squads that went 15-2.

The Warriors thought they were carving out their place in history when they set a record

with 73 wins last season. But history turned to infamy when they blew a 3-1 lead to the Cavaliers, the biggest collapse in NBA Finals history.

They spoke openly of their desire to beat Jordan's 72-win team in 1996, but this time have downplayed the importance of 16-0.

"We obviously know how hard it is to win a championship, what all goes into it and how important each game is. And now that you can look ahead to Friday, all our focus is on that," Curry said. "And just we obviously — we want 16 wins; it doesn't matter how we get there. But now that we're in this situation, why not take care of business and finish the job?"

They were winning by 16.9 points per game through the previous 14, which would easily be another NBA record. And when they finally got a close one, they showed why their roster is the envy of just about every other team, with the long-range shooting of Durant, Curry and Klay Thompson, and air-tight

defense of Draymond Green and 2015 NBA Finals MVP Andre Iguodala.

That roster would give these Warriors a chance against any great team from the past — and gives most of their opponents no chance against them.

"They're definitely a different team than they were last year," the Cavs' Kyrie Irving said.

That's mostly because of Durant, the former NBA MVP who signed with the Warriors in July. Curry, winner of the last two MVP awards, is fully healthy after struggling through last year's Finals.

Neither will turn 30 until next year, while Thompson and Green are only 27. Should the Warriors stay healthy and together — and it would cost them enormously in salaries and taxes — they should be a title threat every year.

"They have their youth, they have their health," ABC analyst Jeff Van Gundy said before the NBA Finals. "I see nothing preventing them from going to eight to 10 straight Finals."

Oklahoma's Stoops resigns at age 56

Associated Press

NORMAN, Okla. — Like a well-executed blitz, Bob Stoops shocked the college football world.

Oklahoma's football coach abruptly announced his retirement Wednesday after leading the Sooners to 10 conference championships and a national title in 18 seasons.

The 56-year-old Stoops was the longest-tenured active coach in major college football, taking the job at Oklahoma a day before Kirk Ferentz started at Iowa. He went 190-48 (.798) at Oklahoma in his only college head-coaching job, giving him more victories than Sooners greats Barry Switzer (157) and Bud Wilkinson (145).

With his success and the school's winning tradition came pressure. Many in the restless fan base were frustrated that the Sooners hadn't won a national title since 2000, even though Stoops' teams played for three more national titles

during his tenure.

Stoops appreciated the run, and all that came with it.

"I'm not sad at all," he said. "To everything, there is a season. It's time, and that's OK. I feel more grateful and appreciative and blessed that I had 18½ years doing this with great people, great fan base, an incredible, legendary school, that I got this opportunity. It's been a great ride. I'm happy about it. I'm more happy about that than I am sad that this day is here. It went fast."

Stoops will stay on as a special assistant to the athletic director. Aside from that, he has an open mind about his future.

"I really don't have a plan exactly what I'm going to do," he said. "It's a little bit frightening, but I'm really a spiritual person, and I believe until you open yourself up to something, you don't know what the opportunities are that can come to you. So we'll see what can flow my way."

Stoops has heart disease, and

his father, Ron, died in 1988 at age 54 of a heart attack suffered while coaching a high school game. Stoops said his health was not a factor in his decision, and reports that he was ill were false.

Offensive coordinator Lincoln Riley, 33, is getting a promotion, making him the youngest head coach in the FBS. Just last month, Oklahoma gave Riley a three-year contract extension worth \$1.3 million per year, making him one of the highest-paid coordinators in the country.

"The time is now because Lincoln Riley will provide a seamless transition as the new head coach, capitalizing on an excellent staff that is already in place and providing familiarity and confidence for our players," Stoops said. "Now is simply the ideal time for me and our program to make this transition."

Riley takes over a team that again will be among the favorites to win the Big 12 and reach

the College Football Playoff, with a returning Heisman Trophy finalist in quarterback Baker Mayfield. His first game will be at home against UTEP on Sept. 2. His second game will be at Ohio State.

Stoops' brother, Oklahoma defensive coordinator Mike Stoops, said Bob started talking to him about the move within the past two weeks.

"Tried to talk him out of it a little bit, but not too much. I didn't want to push too far, he yells at me enough sometimes," Mike Stoops said with a chuckle. "That wasn't going to work. He was at peace, I could tell."

Stoops was 39 when he left Florida, where he was defensive coordinator under Steve Spurrier, to take over at Oklahoma in 1999. The storied program had struggled for more than a decade to replace Switzer. Stoops quickly returned Oklahoma to national prominence, winning the 2000 national championship with a win over Florida State.

Conn Smythe race wide open in Stanley Cup Final

Associated Press

Nashville coach Peter Laviolette was so concerned that Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin would take criticism to heart that he wanted everyone to stop talking about it.

No shots for the Pittsburgh Penguins' top stars in Game 3 led to one of Crosby's best games of the playoffs in Game 4, even though the Predators won it to even the Stanley Cup Final.

Going into Game 5 on Thursday night, Crosby and Malkin were still in the wide-open Conn Smythe Trophy race — along with some less-familiar faces.

Malkin has the most points in the playoffs with 26 and Crosby is second with 24. Penguins teammate Jake Guentzel has a playoff-best 13 goals, while Predators goaltender Pekka Rinne has been their backbone,

according to Laviolette. Forward Filip Forsberg is Nashville's leading scorer.

Crosby won the Conn Smythe a year ago and Malkin did when the Penguins lifted the Cup in 2009. It wouldn't surprise anyone if either had a repeat performance.

"My sense of being around Geno is that his priorities are just trying to help this team win and trying to accomplish our team goals, which ultimately is a Stanley Cup," Pittsburgh coach Mike Sullivan said of Malkin. "I think these guys are ultimately driven to win championships. I think that's their No. 1 priority."

Rinne was a playoff MVP favorite going into the Cup Final, but allowing eight goals in the first two games put the Predators in a hole. He held Pittsburgh to a single goal in the next two games, a bounce-back effort that would likely back his

case if Nashville wins the first Cup in franchise history.

"It's a rollercoaster, it's an emotional ride," said Rinne, who has a 1.88 goals-against average and .932 save percentage in 20 postseason starts this year. "The first two games, we did a lot of good things. Personally wasn't really happy with my game. ... It's a game of confidence being a goalie."

There's no shortage of confidence for Penguins goalies Matt Murray and Marc-Andre Fleury, but they've split the duties almost evenly so far in the playoffs. The NHL said Murray and Fleury cannot be voted as a single entity for the Conn Smythe, though they could share it if the votes end up an even split.

Unlikely, especially considering that if Pittsburgh wins its second consecutive championship it will be thanks in large part to Guentzel, who is

one goal away from tying Dino Ciccarelli's rookie record that has stood for 36 years.

"He's certainly made his influence on the playoffs for our team in such a positive way," Sullivan said. "He's a great offensive player. He's got good instincts. We can play him with anybody. He just has the ability to make plays around him better. He's got a nose for the net. He can score goals."

So can Forsberg, who leads the Predators with nine. Laviolette is more concerned with the gifted Swede's all-around game than just his scoring ability.

"Just with opportunity, he's really shown himself as somebody who wants to be the guy on the front of the rope pulling it," Laviolette said. "I think with the opportunities he's gotten through the regular season and through increased playoff experiences, he's really shown he is a leader on this team."

Kershaw wins showdown with Strasburg

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Clayton Kershaw made it sound as if he had a rough day. It looked pretty good to everyone else.

Kershaw outdueled Stephen Strasburg with seven effective innings and Yasmani Grandal hit a tiebreaking RBI double, helping the Los Angeles Dodgers edge the Washington Nationals 2-1 on Wednesday.

Kershaw (8-2) allowed three hits and struck out nine in his first win since May 17. Pedro Baez got two outs before Kenley Jansen finished for his 10th save.

But Kershaw also walked three and said he was not particularly sharp.

"I didn't have much today in the tank," he said. "I felt fine, it just wasn't coming out quite the way I wanted to today. I felt like I threw a lot of off-speed pitches. That's good lineup, too. They have a really good team over there. I'm fortunate to get a win."

Strasburg (7-2) struck out eight in six innings in his first

loss since April 29. The ace right-hander was 5-0 with a 2.75 ERA in his previous six starts.

Ryan Zimmerman hit his 17th homer for Washington in the second, and Strasburg sailed into the sixth inning before running into trouble.

"I don't think we were giving at-bats away," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "I think Stephen was good today. He elevated his game."

Roberts said one of Kershaw's biggest contributions came at the plate when he forced Strasburg to throw nine pitches before grounding out in the sixth. Chris Taylor followed with another eight-pitch at-bat that ended with another groundout.

"That was huge," Dodgers shortstop Corey Seager said. "(Kershaw) got his pitch count up a little bit and then (Taylor) did the same thing. It's hard to throw when you have those long innings like that. Eventually you'll make a mistake."

Seager connected on one, hitting a drive to center for his

eighth homer. Strasburg came back to strike out Adrian Gonzalez, but strike three got by catcher Jose Lobaton and Gonzalez reached on the passed ball.

After Gonzalez advanced on a wild pitch, Grandal lined a double past diving left fielder Ryan Raburn for a 2-1 lead.

"When you're playing close games like that against a great pitcher — two great pitchers — there's usually a mistake here, a mistake that's the difference in the game," Nationals manager Dusty Baker said.

In a rematch of last year's NL Division Series, won by Los Angeles in five games, the NL-leading Nationals took two of three from the Dodgers.

"We feel pretty good," Baker said. "We certainly would have wanted this one. But they're tough to sweep here."

The Nationals had a chance to tie it in the eighth, but the Dodgers wiggled out of the jam.

Trea Turner led off with a triple off the center-field wall. But Rayburn struck out and

Baez snagged a hot comebacker from Bryce Harper to catch Turner in a rundown. Jansen then retired Zimmerman on another comebacker.

It was Jansen's fifth four-plus out save of the year.

"He's had three days off, this was a big game and we have a day off tomorrow," Roberts said. "It made sense."

Good trip: The Nationals went 7-2 on their nine-game West Coast trip to San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles.

"If somebody had told you when we left home, 'You'll go 7-2,' I'm sure everyone would be more than satisfied," Baker said. "But when it could have been 8-1 — not satisfying."

Stay or go: Roberts initially was going to let Kershaw pitch into the eighth, and let him hit in the seventh. Instead, he went to Baez.

"He didn't have his best stuff and those guys were taking some good swings," Roberts said. "As I thought through it, I changed my mind."

Sabathia wins 5th straight as Yankees blank Red Sox

Associated Press

NEW YORK — CC Sabathia beat Rick Porcello in a matchup of Cy Young Award winners, and Chris Carter drove in four runs to lead the New York Yankees over the Boston Red Sox 8-0 Wednesday night.

Sabathia (7-2) has won five straight starts for the first time since April 2012. He allowed five hits in eight innings in his longest outing since April 2015.

Jonathan Holder finished with a perfect ninth. Boston's final 15 hitters went down in order.

Reds 6, Athletics 4: St. Louis kept Scooter Gennett in check a day after his four-homer game, but Patrick Kivlehan had a pinch three-run shot that sparked host Cincinnati.

Royals 7, Astros 5: Jason Vargas tossed five solid in-

nings for his eighth victory and Cheslor Cuthbert drove in three runs, helping host Kansas City to the win.

The anticipated pitching duel between Vargas (8-3) and Dallas Keuchel, who have the two best ERAs in the majors, never materialized. Keuchel was scratched with an illness.

Rockies 8, Indians 1: Kyle Freeland pitched 6¹/₃ effective innings, Nolan Arenado drove in three runs and host Colorado earned its fourth straight win.

Orioles 9, Pirates 6 (11): Trey Mancini tied the game with a two-run homer in the ninth inning, and then hit a three-run drive for host Baltimore in the 11th.

Marlins 6, Cubs 5: Marcell Ozuna hit his 15th homer, J.T. Realmuto also went deep and visiting Miami avoided a

three-game series sweep.

Mets 4, Rangers 3: Jay Bruce homered twice and visiting New York scored the tiebreaking run in the ninth inning on a throwing error by second baseman Rougned Odor.

Blue Jays 7, Athletics 5 (10): At Oakland, Calif., Josh Donaldson hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the 10th inning against his former club, helping Toronto avoid a sweep.

Tigers 4, Angels 0: Buck Farmer outlasted Alex Meyer in an unexpected pitchers' duel, and Justin Upton hit a three-run homer for host Detroit in the eighth inning.

Braves 14, Phillies 1: Mike Foltynewicz pitched seven scoreless innings, Nick Markakis drove in five runs and Atlanta stopped visiting Philadelphia's four-game win-

ning streak.

Brewers 6, Giants 3: Jimmy Nelson pitched six solid innings for host Milwaukee, and Jesus Aguilar drove in the go-ahead run with a two-out double in the fifth.

Rays 3, White Sox 1: At St. Petersburg, Fla., Jacob Faria got the win in his major league debut, and Tampa Bay snapped a season-high four-game slide.

Mariners 6, Twins 5: Mike Zunino hit his second homer of the game with two outs in the ninth inning, a two-run shot that gave host Seattle a comeback victory over Minnesota.

Diamondbacks 7, Padres 4: Jake Lamb and Brandon Drury homered in a five-run third, and Arizona scored five times in an inning for the second consecutive night to beat visiting San Diego.