

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Day of mixed messages from US on Qatar

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is ramping up pressure on Qatar to stop what he calls a “high level” of financial support of terrorism, even as Secretary of State Rex Tillerson tries to calm the worst diplomatic crisis in the Persian Gulf in years.

Trump’s demand that there be “no more funding” by Qatar for extremist groups contradicted the message delivered Friday by Tillerson, who had urged Qatar’s neighbors to ease their blockade while calling for “calm and thoughtful dialogue.” Only an hour later, Tillerson sat in the front row in the Rose Garden as Trump enthusiastically

embraced the move by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and others to punish Qatar.

“The nation of Qatar, unfortunately, has historically been a funder of terrorism at a very high level,” Trump said, echoing an allegation the Saudi-led group has used to justify cutting diplomatic ties to the tiny, gas-rich country. “We have to stop the funding of terrorism.”

Despite Tillerson’s plea for “no further escalation,” Trump’s sharp comments were likely to further embolden Saudi Arabia and the others in their bid to isolate Qatar. The State Department had said the U.S. learned only at the last minute about the Arab nations’ plan to cut ties.

But Trump said that he, Tillerson and military leaders had decided during Trump’s trip to Saudi Arabia last month that a public rebuke was needed.

“The time had come to call on Qatar to end its funding — they have to end that funding — and its extremist ideology in terms of funding,” Trump said.

Though the president said others, too, were guilty of supporting terrorism, he said he would not name them.

In a day of mixed messages and chaotic diplomacy, Tillerson emphasized the economic, humanitarian and military damage he said the blockade was inflicting. He said families were being separated, children removed from school and Qa-

taris forced to deal with food shortages.

“We believe these are unintended consequences, especially during this Holy Month of Ramadan, but they can be addressed immediately,” he said.

Tillerson also said the blockade by Qatar’s neighbors was “hindering U.S. military action in the region, and the campaign against ISIS (Islamic State).”

But at the Pentagon, spokesman Navy Capt. Jeff Davis said only long-term military planning was affected. Davis said the diplomatic rift has not interrupted or curtailed operations at al-Udeid Air Base, a launching pad for U.S. military efforts in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

Trump’s military oversight more hands-off than Bush, Obama

Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — President George W. Bush spoke with his military commander in Iraq nearly every week.

President Barack Obama was so deeply involved in military operations that his first three defense secretaries all complained, sometimes bitterly, about what they considered White House micromanagement.

In nearly five months in office, President Donald Trump has yet to meet or speak with either his Iraq or Afghanistan commander, even as his administration weighs deeper and longer-term involvement in both conflicts and asks Congress for a vast increase in defense spending.

Trump’s hands-off approach to America’s longest wars demonstrates how much control his administration has entrusted to Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, a retired four-star Marine general, and commanders on

the ground.

Senior Pentagon officials and military officers who often chafed under Obama’s centralized decision-making have welcomed the shift, saying it has freed them to carry out operations based on military, not political, considerations.

But it also raises concerns that Trump has given too much latitude to the Pentagon, which already has been accused of more indiscriminate bombings than in the past, causing an increase in civilian casualties.

“The idea of the 10,000-mile screwdriver from Washington making decisions for a field commander, as has been the case over the past decade, is flawed,” said James Stavridis, a retired admiral who served as NATO supreme commander and is now dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. “We need to be cautious that we do not go so far in the other direction that we end up with rogue

commanders,” Stavridis added. “The White House needs to lay out a strategic vision but then let commanders do the tactical execution.”

The president already has granted Mattis authority to raise troop levels in the wars in Iraq and Syria, a power usually held closely by the White House.

Trump is expected to grant Mattis the same authority in Afghanistan, where civilian casualties have soared in fighting this year. The Taliban now controls or contests more than 40 percent of Afghan territory — holding more ground than at any point since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001, according to recent United Nations estimates.

The president also has authorized his commanders to move more aggressively against militants in Somalia and Yemen, where U.S. special operations forces have stepped up raids against Islamic State and other terrorist groups.

“What I do is I authorize my

military,” Trump said on April 13 after the Air Force dropped the most powerful conventional bomb in its arsenal on an Islamic State complex in eastern Afghanistan, a decision that was made without White House input.

“We have the greatest military in the world, and they’ve done the job, as usual,” Trump said. “We have given them total authorization, and that’s what they’re doing.”

A White House official, who wasn’t authorized to speak on conversations in the chain of command, said the delegation of authority has enabled commanders to take a “more aggressive approach,” in which missions are executed with “more speed and more efficiency.”

“That is in no small part due to the fact that the president is putting his trust in the generals, not tying their hands and micromanaging their ability to fight the fight they need to fight,” the official said.

Oxygen problems ground F-35s

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Air Force has ordered a stand-down of its F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft at an Arizona base after pilots there said they suffered oxygen deprivation while flying the plane built by Lockheed Martin Corp.

Since May 2, five F-35A pilots assigned to Luke Air Force Base have reported physiological incidents while flying. According to a service press release, those pilots experienced hypoxia-like symptoms. Hypoxia is a deficiency of oxygen reaching the body's tissues. It's a potentially life-threatening problem, and one the U.S. Navy has also been wrestling with on its Boeing Co.

F-18 fighters.

So far, the Air Force's F-35 problem has occurred only at Luke; other pilots flying the service's newest fighter plane haven't reported any incidents, according to the release.

"In order to synchronize operations and maintenance efforts toward safe flying operations we have canceled local F-35A flying," said Brig. Gen. Brook Leonard, commander of the 56th Fighter Wing. "The Air Force takes these physiological incidents seriously, and our focus is on the safety and well-being of our pilots."

"We are taking the necessary steps to find the root cause of these incidents."

This isn't the first time a high-

performance Air Force aircraft that flies at high altitudes has run into such episodes. In 2012, the Air Force had to track down a mystery after at least a dozen pilots flying Lockheed's F-22 Raptor fighters became dizzy and disoriented. The service eventually determined a valve that regulated oxygen flow into the Raptor pilot's pressure vest was too weak to prevent the vest from inflating unnecessarily and restricting the pilot's ability to breathe.

During the F-35 grounding, wing officials will educate pilots on the situation, increase their awareness of hypoxia symptoms, and review training to deal with reduced oxygen breathing, according to the release.

Pentagon: Missile test was most realistic yet

Bloomberg

The Pentagon's successful interception last week of a mock North Korean intercontinental ballistic missile was the most realistic test to date, according to the military's test office.

The \$244 million test of the rocket by Orbital ATK Inc. and the Raytheon Corp. "hit-to-kill" warhead it released "mimicked that of an actual operational scenario," Army Lt. Col. Roger Cabiness, a spokesman for the Defense Department testing office, said in a statement.

The testing office's assessment bolstered statements from the U.S. Missile Defense Agency that the \$36 billion system of radar, command links and ground-based interceptors can defeat any long-range threat that North Korea or Iran can develop through 2020. The interceptor, launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, crashed into the mock ICBM fired from Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands.

The test employed precision tracking "in an operationally realistic way to guide the interceptor to the target," Cabiness said, while acknowledging that the incoming missile was accompanied only by simple decoys to throw the interceptor off course.

The conclusions were reached by David Duma, a career professional who's acting director of the test office, where he's worked since 2002.

The tests have been criticized as scripted and artificial by arms-control experts.

"What I think it showed is that they're on the right track in the fixes to this kill vehicle," but it didn't prove a "realistic capability," Laura Grego, senior scientist for the Global Security Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said in an interview after the test.

Rights groups: US-backed forces may have used white phosphorous in Iraq and Syria

The Washington Post

The U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria appears to have used white phosphorous-loaded munitions on at least two occasions in densely populated areas of Mosul and in Islamic State's de facto capital of Raqqa, according to online videos and human rights groups.

The often-controversial munitions are common in western militaries and are used primarily to create smoke screens, though they can also be dropped as an incendiary weapon. When a white phosphorous shell explodes, the chemical inside reacts with the air, creating a thick white cloud. When it comes in contact with flesh, it can maim and kill by burning to the bone.

While international humanitarian law stipulates civilians must be protected from all military operations, it also says countries must take even more care when using white phosphorous. Because of the weapon's ability to cause grievous and inhumane injuries, rights groups caution against using white phosphorous to kill enemy troops

if other weapons are available.

On Thursday, footage posted by the activist group Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently showed the signature spread of airburst white phosphorous munitions — probably M825 series 155mm artillery rounds — exploding over eastern Raqqa, the same area where U.S.-backed Syrian fighters made advances earlier in the week.

U.S. Army Col. Ryan Dillon, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition fighting in Iraq and Syria, would not confirm the use of the munition but said in an email that the U.S. military uses it in "accordance with the law of armed conflict" and that white phosphorous rounds are "used for screening, obscuring, and marking in a way that fully considers the possible incidental effects on civilians and civilian structures."

The Pentagon posted photographs of Marine M777 howitzers in Syria with a pallet of white phosphorous munitions in May. The image was taken in March, and while the unit in the photograph probably has

returned to the United States, its replacement is likely using similar munitions.

Mary Wareham, the advocacy director at Human Rights Watch's arms division, said in an email that the group is still trying to determine the veracity of the videos, but the munitions look similar to the ones used Saturday in the Iraqi city of Mosul.

When M825 rounds explode, they jettison roughly 115 felt wedges that are impregnated with white phosphorous. If exploded high above the ground, the wedges can spread over a greater distance, starting fires over a wide area. In Mosul, smoke munitions were used, according to a statement by Iraqi forces, to provide cover for civilians targeted by Islamic State snipers.

While ISIS controls only a few remaining neighborhoods in the western part of Mosul, the small area is packed with tens of thousands of civilians, raising concerns among rights groups that the heavy fighting will kill hundreds of residents.

Case raises question of detainee rights

The Washington Post

Under a nearly full moon, a small boat pulled away from the Libyan coastline.

A bearded man sat on board, masked, handcuffed and gagged until out of shouting range of land. After 20 minutes, armed guards lowered him into a shallow pit in the deck of a second vessel to guard against his falling overboard on the final choppy, 100-minute sprint to their destination: a U.S. warship waiting in the Mediterranean Sea.

There, Ahmed Abu Khattala began a 13-day trip crossing the Atlantic Ocean that would end in an American courtroom.

The suspected ringleader of the Benghazi terrorist attacks was taken to a specially constructed brig aboard the USS New York on June 16, 2014, at 4:19 a.m. Libya time, according to the log for the ship's detention center.

Interrogations began four minutes later, at 4:23 a.m.

The events surrounding the capture of Abu Khattala, accused as the mastermind of the lethal attacks in Benghazi that killed a U.S. ambassador and three other Americans, are emerging with rare detail in testimony and records in an ongoing federal court case in Washington.

Abu Khattala's lawyers want his statements to FBI investigators thrown out, arguing that his capture and detention in a windowless room below deck were coercive and render meaningless the many waivers he signed giving up his right to an attorney and not to incriminate himself.

He has pleaded not guilty to charges including murder.

Prosecutors contend Abu Khattala never explicitly asked for a lawyer and implicated himself as a conspirator when he cooperated.

The case could mark the first time a federal judge rules on the constitutionality of interrogation practices developed in recent years for terrorism suspects captured overseas.

The judge's scrutiny will go

to the heart of a question unsettled since the rise of the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba: Can the government succeed in flipping a legal switch during interrogations and move from military tactics to the safeguards needed for a swift and fair trial in civilian court?

The case also arises as the Trump administration pledges to step up actions against foreign terrorists, including fighters with Islamic State, raising the prospect that a ruling over Abu Khattala's questioning could affect the handling of future detainee issues.

U.S. District Judge Christopher "Casey" Cooper is due to rule on Abu Khattala's statements before the Libyan's trial, scheduled for September.

Brian Egan, a White House and State Department legal adviser during the Obama administration, called Abu Khattala "a real test case" in which "the government consciously designed the capture and interrogation around being able to withstand legal challenges."

Abu Khattala, who is being held in the Alexandria, Va., city jail, has pleaded not guilty to 18 charges in the Sept. 11 and 12, 2012, attacks in Benghazi.

The capture

An eight-man, military-led team seized him at about midnight June 16 in Libya in a struggle that left him with a 2-inch cut to his head and blows around his eyes and a wrist.

About three hours later, after rides in small boats that were "special, somewhat expensive and delicate," a crane hoisted Abu Khattala onto the warship, still shackled, masked and with headphones that cut sounds.

Abu Khattala was read and shown a copy of his Geneva Conventions rights in English and Arabic and was seen by an Army doctor who was part of the mission, government witnesses said. They said he was told to report any abuse and directed to change into an orange shirt and pants and sneakers.

He was given a Koran and a blanket and could sit or sleep

on a bare floor. And he was told that a rough, hand-drawn compass on the wall pointed to Mecca for his prayers.

He was masked for any movement outside the cell, even to the latrine or an adjacent room, so he could not see guards' faces.

In his cell, the lights were on around the clock, the room was a steady 72 degrees and he was roused at least every two hours, FBI and Army witnesses testified. The detention rooms were monitored by closed-circuit television, but video was not recorded, the FBI said.

The questioning

His questioning was done in two phases, the government said in court.

For 26 hours over three days, a High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group of military, intelligence and law enforcement officials questioned him for intelligence-gathering purposes.

How that work was done was classified and discussed in a closed courtroom.

As the USS New York exited the Mediterranean Sea near the Strait of Gibraltar, the intelligence-gathering unit left the ship by plane. At about the same time, a second team of FBI investigators flew in.

The switch was meant to preserve the ability of the incoming "clean" team to collect evidence for civilian court without a taint from the intelligence unit.

The second FBI team did not meet with the first team, and a shipwide ban on Skype and video conferencing took effect, FBI counterterrorism official C. Bryan Paarmann testified. Members of the second team were directed to limit email, and they and their New York field office were cut off from email circulation of FBI intelligence reports, he said.

For two days, Abu Khattala faced no questioners, Clarke said in court, and his living conditions improved: He got a mattress, pillow, prayer rug and writing materials. He went from two meals a day to three, was allowed to shower and got a tracksuit as a change of clothes.

His interview sessions went on for another 28 hours but in

shorter installments, and he received small items: a sweatshirt on June 21 when he said he was cold, and a watch from the FBI interpreter on June 22 when he said he did not know the time of day for prayer.

Clarke testified that Abu Khattala was told of the criminal investigation into the Benghazi attacks and that he was being taken to the United States. He was told that the new FBI team was starting afresh and knew no specifics of his earlier interrogation, Clarke said. Abu Khattala signed forms waiving his constitutional rights on each day of questioning, six in all, testimony showed.

The two-step process was not done to undermine Abu Khattala's constitutional rights, Assistant U.S. Attorney John Crabb argued in court Tuesday, but instead "was employed for legal, intelligence purposes [after] one of the most infamous terrorist attacks in recent history."

Defense lawyers contend that U.S. authorities were deliberate when they planned the Abu Khattala operation as a "slow-boat" procedure to allow nearly two weeks of continuous, unrecorded interrogation.

Although Abu Khattala's captors told him he had a right to a lawyer, when he asked if one were present, he was told no, Clarke said.

"He asked, 'Is there a lawyer here?' In my mind, I thought that meant on the ship, and I replied, 'No, there was not,'" Clarke said.

For all the cost and intrigue of the operation, "the government spent no time or effort to make sure that Mr. Khattala could meaningfully exercise his right to counsel, even as it was dangled before him," defense attorney Eric Lewis said.

Government witnesses acknowledged under cross-examination that a lawyer could have been flown aboard with medics or investigators or provided by video conference. But they said Abu Khattala never specifically asked for one and that he had signed the waivers.

President: US committed to mutual support of NATO allies

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump says the United States is committed to the mutual defense of NATO members, casting aside concerns that his failure to mention the commitment last month weakened the alliance.

Trump said Friday that he was “committing the United States to Article 5.” That article in the NATO treaty says an attack on one member is an attack on all members and binds the allies to come to that country’s defense.

European countries and others expressed concern last month when Trump did not mention the clause in a speech at NATO headquarters in Brus-

sels. In that speech, Trump demanded that allies live up to a pledge to spend 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense by 2024. He did not specifically mention Article 5, which has only been invoked once, after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

“I’m committing the United States to Article 5,” Trump told reporters at a news conference Friday with visiting Romanian President Klaus Iohannis. “Certainly we are there to protect, and that’s one of the reasons that I want people to make sure we have a very, very strong force by paying the kind of money necessary to have that force. But yes, absolutely, I’d be committed to Article 5.”

The White House later reaffirmed the commitment in a statement announcing that Trump will visit Poland next month as part of his second foreign trip. It said that in addition to showing America’s support of Poland, the trip will also emphasize the president’s commitment to strengthening NATO’s “collective defense.”

Trump’s omission in Brussels raised concerns on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. White House aides said the president’s support was implied even though he deliberately did not utter the words.

Still, allies had questions about Trump’s belief in the value of NATO, which he had termed “obsolete” during the presidential campaign.

13 Philippine marines killed in Marawi fight

Associated Press

ILIGAN, Philippines — Thirteen Philippine marines were killed in fierce fighting with Muslim militants who have laid siege to a southern city for nearly three weeks in the biggest single-day loss for government forces, the military said Saturday.

A U.S. Navy aircraft provided surveillance for the troops as the battle raged in Marawi on Friday, confirming the involvement of the U.S. military in helping quell the urban insurrection at the request of the Philippine government, Philippine military officials said.

An Associated Press journalist and photographer saw a U.S. Navy P3 Orion plane hovering in cloudy skies above Marawi on Friday. The aircraft flew above rocket-firing Philippine helicopters that struck militant positions.

“We don’t have adequate surveillance equipment, so we asked the U.S. military for assistance. It’s noncombat assistance,” military spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said by phone.

The U.S. Embassy in Manila said U.S. special operations forces were providing help to Filipino troops in Marawi.

Philippine marines were conducting a house-to-house search for militants allied with Islamic State when the battle erupted Friday, said Lt. Col. Jorar Herrera, spokesman for the Philippine army’s 1st Infantry Division.

About 30-40 militants used civilians as human shields, making it hard for troops to operate.

Philippine military officials say the violence has left at least 138 militants and 58 government troops dead. At least 21 civilians have been killed, including a boy who was hit by suspected militant gunfire inside a Marawi mosque where his family had taken refuge, Padilla said.

Prosecution rests in Cosby’s assault trial

The Philadelphia Inquirer

PHILADELPHIA — Prosecutors in Bill Cosby’s sexual assault trial closed their case Friday with one last punch: the entertainer’s own admission that in years past, he got powerful sedatives to give to women with whom he hoped to have sexual encounters.

In a 2005 deposition, Cosby, now 79, admitted to obtaining seven prescriptions for Quaaludes, a disco-era party drug, from a Hollywood gynecologist in the ’70s. But he insisted that he had never given anyone pills without their knowledge and consent.

“Quaaludes happen to be the drug that young people were using to party with, and I wanted to have them just in case,” Cosby said then.

The excerpts read to jurors Friday were part of a prosecution bid to leave a lasting impression on the panel of seven men and five women as they absorbed a week’s worth of testimony and evidence. At its base, their task is to decide if they be-

lieve Andrea Constand’s accusation that the entertainer gave her pills one night in 2004 that left her essentially powerless, then sexually assaulted her.

Cosby’s lawyers are set to begin presenting evidence Monday after a whirlwind government case highlighted by Constand’s first public statements about the alleged attack and Cosby’s own potentially damaging words — picked from a deposition he gave for a lawsuit she filed against him in 2005.

The suit later settled for an undisclosed sum and an agreement that barred both parties from discussing the incident. But the unsealing of that deposition by a federal judge in 2015 spurred Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele to reopen the investigation that year.

Because Cosby had said he did not intend to testify in his own defense, the deposition was poised to be the only chance for jurors to hear directly from the defendant. But Cosby spokesman Andrew Wyatt hinted

Friday that his boss might be changing his mind. “Nothing is ever off the table in a trial of this magnitude,” Wyatt told reporters during a break in the proceedings in Norristown, Pa.

As Cosby walked from the courtroom at the end of the day, a woman yelled: “Bill Cosby, I love you!” He raised his walking stick in acknowledgment.

As he had a day earlier, the entertainer sat stone-faced as Montgomery County detective James Reape read back his own words to the jury.

The final government witness, toxicologist Timothy Rohrig, said the drowsiness and sedation Constand described in her testimony after accepting three blue pills from Cosby in 2004 could have been caused by a drug similar to Quaaludes — or by Benadryl, the over-the-counter allergy medicine Cosby has maintained he gave to Constand that night.

Either way, Constand claimed the pills left her powerless as Cosby molested her on the couch at his Cheltenham, Pa., home.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Duct-taped boat couldn't stay afloat

AK JUNEAU — Ducks do well in water. A duct-taped boat? Not so much.

KTOO reported the U.S. Coast Guard picked up a 32-year-old man and his dog from an inflatable, duct-taped watercraft when it started to take on water Wednesday in Gastineau Channel near Juneau, Alaska's capital city.

The Coast Guard said in a release that the duct-taped boat was homemade.

The guard said the man, who was not identified, was not wearing a life jacket.

An off-duty Coast Guard member saw the unsafe craft and called it in. The Coast Guard delivered the man, dog and boat to Douglas Harbor in Juneau.

State free college tuition program open

NY ALBANY — New York state has begun accepting applications for its new tuition-free college program.

More than 3,000 people signed up for the Excelsior scholarship Wednesday, the first day the applications were available. They'll be accepted through July 21. Applicants should know within a week whether they're eligible to receive funding.

The tuition initiative was proposed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo and approved by the Legislature. After other student aid has been applied, it covers the balance of state college or university tuition for full-time, in-state students from families earning \$100,000 or less. The income threshold will rise to \$125,000 over three years.

After graduation, students must remain in New York for

as many years as they received the benefit. If not, they'll have to repay the money as a loan.

Piano-playing bear strikes viral chord

CO VAIL — Police say it wasn't a burglary — just a black bear that stomped, briefly, on piano keys while rummaging through an apartment in Colorado.

The revelation came after Katie Hawley reported her Vail apartment had been disturbed while she was away on May 31.

She later checked security camera footage and saw the bear roaming the apartment and pouncing on piano keys.

Police Detective Sgt. Luke Causey said the bear climbed through an open window and helped itself to food from the freezer.

The video struck a viral chord last week on the internet.

Bedbugs removed from 4 fire stations

SC CHARLESTON — It took longer than expected, but the bedbugs have been driven out of four fire stations along the South Carolina coast.

Charleston Fire Department officials said they checked all 16 of their stations and they are free of the pests.

Firefighters moved from the four affected stations in recent weeks because the bedbugs were hard to eradicate.

Crews from two stations on James Island moved to air-conditioned tents. Firefighters from a station on Daniel Island and another in the city moved to other stations.

Interim Fire Chief John Tippet said large propane tanks were used to heat the inside of the affected areas for several hours.

K-9s trained to detect bedbugs have checked all the stations and are available to check firefighters' homes if requested.

Campaign asks 'The Rock' if fake photo OK

NV LAS VEGAS — A Las Vegas judge's campaign manager has reached out to Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson to ask if a fake picture of him and the judge standing together is OK to use on the campaign Facebook page.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal reported the picture with Johnson was posted on Tuesday and then removed the next day from Las Vegas Municipal Judge Heidi Almase's re-election Facebook page.

Jennifer Barrier, the campaign manager, said she knows Johnson through her late father, James "Buffalo Jim" Barrier, who was a wrestling promoter.

The doctored image combines a campaign photo of Almase with a 3-year-old picture of Johnson.

Backhoe used in attempted ATM theft

MD DISTRICT HEIGHTS — Authorities are seeking a man who used a backhoe in an attempt to steal money from an ATM at a bank outside Washington, D.C.

Local news outlets reported a surveillance video released by Prince George's County police shows that someone used the construction digger to try and pry an ATM from a bank's drive-thru in District Heights on June 1.

Investigators believe the man they're looking for stole the backhoe before driving it 5 miles to the bank and causing \$10,000 worth of damage. Police say he was unable to get any money out as the machine was too difficult to crack open.

City 'rats' on self to evict homeless

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — A Florida city called state health inspectors on itself to report rats in a downtown park so it could evict homeless people living there.

The South Florida Sun-Sentinel reported that Fort Lauderdale called the state health department last month to report rats in city-owned Stranahan Park.

A state health inspector cited the city and gave it 30 days to clean the park. Using that citation, Fort Lauderdale ordered 60 people from the park and threw away any belongings that went unclaimed.

Advocates for the homeless said one woman lost a laptop computer while others lost birth certificates, Social Security cards, identification cards and family photos.

Couple admits taking \$913K from company

NY LYNBROOK — A Las Vegas couple has admitted to embezzling more than \$900,000 from a Long Island construction company.

The Nassau County District Attorney's Office said that Linda Minervini, 53, and Thomas Cacaci Jr., 37, pleaded guilty in county court to second-degree grand larceny after prosecutors found they used stolen money to pay for a timeshare, cars and other personal items in Las Vegas.

The couple previously lived in Queens. Prosecutors say Minervini and Cacaci stole \$913,000 from 2009 to 2015, when Minervini worked as a paralegal for the Lynbrook company.

From wire reports

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Cavs cruise to win in Game 4

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Golden State's perfect post-season is over, the champagne corks still in their bottles.

The Warriors had planned to party, to pay back Cleveland.

Everything's on hold in the NBA Finals. The comeback Cavaliers are at it again.

LeBron James recorded a triple-double, Kyrie Irving scored 40 points and the Cavs, bothered by chatter from Golden State's players, broke scoring records while outperforming the NBA's most electrifying offense in a testy Game 4 filled with technical fouls Friday night, beating the Warriors 137-116 and snapping their 15-game playoff winning streak.

"We have championship DNA," said James, who broke Magic Johnson's record with his ninth triple-double in the Finals. "We showed that tonight. We just kept our composure. We shared the ball, we moved the ball and defensively we were physical. It's one game."

But it's one they had to have, and a series that wasn't living up to its hype and seemed headed for a quick conclusion is California bound for Game 5 on Monday night.

"Our mindset is to go out there and get one," James said.

The Cavs scored a Finals record 86 points in the first half and then held on during a wild third and fourth quarter that included technical fouls, James jawing with fellow superstar Kevin Durant and Cleveland's crowd roaring like a jet engine.

No team has ever come back from a 3-0 deficit in the NBA playoffs.

But until the Cavs did it last year, no team had ever rallied from a 3-1 deficit to win the Finals. Cleveland took Game 3 at home, lost Game 4 and then won the final three — Game 7 in Oakland

— to capture the city's first sports championship since 1964.

As the final seconds ticked off, Cleveland fans chanted "Cavs in 7."

"Believeland is not going to give up," Cavs coach Tyronn Lue said, "and we're going to keep fighting. We're going to keep scrapping."

The Warriors had swept their first three post-season series, dominated the Cavs for much of the first three games and were 48 minutes away from a title they've coveted for a year. Now, Golden State fans are holding their breath.

James said his teammates were upset by comments made by Warriors forward Draymond Green.

"I didn't hear it, but some of the other guys heard it and told me that they wanted to celebrate on our floor once again and they wanted to spray champagne in our locker rooms," James said. "So I just told guys, I didn't stress anything besides just live in the moment."

Durant, still one win from the coveted championship he left Oklahoma City to get, scored 35 points but got little help from Stephen Curry, who scored 14 on 4-for-13 shooting.

"Just one of those games," Curry said. "Not going to overreact to one. Obviously I can play better and want to play better and will play better."

James finished with 31 points, 10 rebounds, 11 assists and on one trip threw the ball off the backboard to himself for a dunk.

When Cleveland's locker room opened after the game, trainer Mike Mancias was stretching James over a medicine ball. After several minutes, James stopped and performed a dozen lunges before teammate Tristan Thompson came over and playfully asked, "What are you doing?"

James said, "I've got to start getting ready for the next game now. I mean it."

Briefly

Gators win men's track and field championship

EUGENE, Ore. — Florida had to battle until the final event of the meet for its repeat national championship.

With freshman Grant Holloway on the anchor leg, the Gators finished fourth in the 4x100-meter relay Friday night, giving them just enough points to win the NCAA Division I men's outdoor track and field championship at Hayward Field.

Florida finished with 61.5 points, two ahead of Texas A&M.

Bell wins under caution ahead of flipped truck

FORT WORTH, Texas — Christopher Bell won the NASCAR Truck Series race at Texas under caution, having taken the white flag side-by-side with Chase Briscoe before a wreck behind them that left a truck upside down on the front stretch.

After a restart with two laps left Friday night, Bell and Briscoe were side-by-side and stayed that way the entire way around the 1½-mile track back to the line. Bell had his No. 4 Toyota only inches and two-thousandths (0.002) of a second ahead when they got to the white flag. The yellow flag came out right after that, and NASCAR determined on video review that Bell was still ahead at that time.

In other auto racing news:

■ Kyle Busch turned a lap of 179.151 mph to win the pole at Pocono Raceway.

Busch had the fastest lap Friday to win a NASCAR Cup pole for the second straight week. Busch won the pole at Dover International Speedway.

Woods told officers he had taken Xanax

JUPITER, Fla. — Tiger Woods told officers during his DUI arrest last month that he had taken Xanax, as well as other prescription medications.

Woods' claim was revealed in an unredacted version of the Jupiter Police Department's investigation report, obtained Friday by The Golf Channel.

— Associated Press

More Finals drama for Green

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Another eventful Game 4 of the NBA Finals for Draymond Green — even after it appeared he'd been ejected in this one.

Green was allowed to stay in the game Friday night after officials said the first of two technical fouls charged to him had actually been called on coach Steve Kerr.

It didn't matter in the end, at least not this time.

Green finished with 16 points and 14 rebounds but the Warriors still lost 137-116 to the Cleveland Cavaliers. That cut Golden State's lead to 3-1, but as usual Green's stats were only a

small chapter of his story.

His technicals — one called and the one that wasn't — overshadowed everything else.

"Some things just never change, right?" Green said.

A year after his antics on this floor led to a suspension for Game 5 that began the Warriors' historic collapse, the fiery forward was again in the middle of the night's strangest scene.

Green appeared to be ejected when he was called for what the Cavs and Warriors thought was his second technical midway through the third quarter. He waved his arms in frustration at an official after being called for fouling Kevin Love and was hit with the tech, which would

have triggered an automatic ejection.

But Green didn't leave the court, and referees said the technical they called after Green's foul with 1:55 remaining in the first quarter was on Kerr — though the official box score had it listed as Green.

No announcement was ever made correcting the error, not that Green was listening.

After the game, Green took a swipe at everyone in Believeland.

"I really don't pay that much attention — I don't pay much attention to anybody in Cleveland honestly," Green said. "They don't seem to be the sharpest people around."

Latvia's Ostapenko wins French Open

Associated Press

PARIS — Unseeded Jelena Ostapenko of Latvia used bold strokes and an unbending will to come back and stun No. 3 Simona Halep 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 in an enthralling French Open final Saturday for the first title of her career.

Ostapenko, ranked only 47th and just two days past her 20th birthday, became one of the most unlikely Grand Slam champions in tennis history. She also denied Halep what would have been her first major championship and the No. 1 ranking.

Halep appeared on the way to a relative runaway, leading by a set and 3-0 in the second, then holding three break points for the chance to go ahead 4-

0. But Ostapenko would not go quietly, winning that game and the next three en route to forcing a third set.

And then, in the third, Ostapenko again summoned a veteran's resolve, taking the last five games after being down a break at 3-1. She took advantage of a bit of luck, too, holding for a 5-3 lead when she hit a backhand that clipped the top of the net, popped way up in the air, then dropped over onto Halep's side.

Soon enough, Ostapenko was striking two more winners on the last two points to provide a fitting conclusion.

It was a match filled with wild momentum swings between two players displaying completely disparate styles: Ostapenko's grip-it-and-rip-

it approach vs. Halep's more conservative keep-the-ball-in philosophy.

By the end, the numbers were stark: Ostapenko built a 54-8 edge in winners, but she also had far more unforced errors than Halep, 54-10.

Halep, a 25-year-old from Romania, was playing in her second major final. She was the runner-up to Maria Sharapova at Roland Garros in 2014.

Ostapenko was playing in only her eighth Grand Slam tournament, never having been past the third round before. She also had never before won a tour-level title of any sort. The last woman to win her first title at a major was Barbara Jordan at the 1979 Australian Open.

Not coincidentally, that was also the last time at any Grand

Slam tournament that none of the women's quarterfinalists had previously won a major championship.

So Ostapenko stepped into the considerable opening created by the absences of Serena Williams (she's taking the rest of the season off because she is pregnant) and Sharapova (denied a wild card after coming back from a 15-month drug ban). Also missing from the tournament was two-time major champ Victoria Azarenka (slated to return soon after having a baby), while current No. 1 Angelique Kerber lost in the first round in Paris.

That all added up to an up-for-grabs feeling, and Ostapenko seized the opportunity.

Texas A&M wins first game of super regional in 15th

Associated Press

Texas A&M, Long Beach State, No. 1 national seed Oregon State and No. 7 Louisville won their openers in the NCAA baseball super regionals on Friday and moved within a victory of the College World Series.

The Aggies, who squandered a 6-0 lead against upstart Davidson, won 7-6 on George Janca's two-out bases-loaded single in the 15th inning.

Long Beach State defeated Cal State Fullerton 3-0, with Darren McCaughan pitching two-hit shutout ball for seven innings and Chris Rivera working out of trouble after the Titans loaded the bases with one out in the ninth.

KJ Harrison homered and Pac-12 player of the year Nick Madrigal hit a tiebreaking double to lead Oregon State past Vanderbilt 8-4.

Louisville's Drew Ellis hit a three-run homer and finished with four RBIs, and the host Cardinals got a solid start from Kade McClure in a 5-2 win over Kentucky.

Davidson (35-25), the surprise of the NCAA Tourna-

ment after advancing as a No. 4 regional seed, was down 6-0 after five innings in College Station, Texas. The Wildcats scored three times in the sixth and twice in the seventh before tying it in the top of the ninth on Cam Johnson's one-out base hit up the middle.

Both teams missed scoring chances in extra innings. Davidson messed up a squeeze play with runners on the corners and one out in the 13th, and the Aggies (40-21) were just 2-for-18 with runners in scoring position before Janca singled through the right side to end the longest Game 1 in a super regional.

"Really, we just need to go out and do the same thing tomorrow. We just need to try to get the bats going a little earlier. That's really it," Davidson's Cam Johnson said. "It was a good game, and it could have gone either way."

Jake Thompson pitched 7²/₃ strong innings in Oregon State's win in Corvallis. After Vanderbilt (36-24-1) tied it 3-all in the second inning, Madrigal's double in the bottom half

put the Beavers (53-4) up 5-3. Thompson and two relievers combined to allow four hits and one run the rest of the way.

In Long Beach, Calif., the Dirtbags (42-18-1) scored three runs in the first, and they went on to post their 12th shutout and beat Fullerton (37-22) for the sixth time in seven meetings this season.

In Louisville, Ellis broke out of a mini slump to lead the Cardinals (51-10) against Kentucky (43-22). Ellis, who was 1-for-11 in last week's regional, drove in a run with a groundout in the first inning and hammered a three-run homer to left in the fifth.

Game 1 means a lot: Since the current tournament format went into effect in 1999, 78.4 percent (113 of 144) of the teams that won Game 1s in super regionals have advanced to the College World Series.

Yes, he's the closer: Texas A&M's Mitchell Kilkenny threw 102 pitches and struck out a career-high nine in 5²/₃ shutout innings. Oh, and he's the Aggies' regular closer. He came on at the start of the 10th

inning and left after Max Bazin's bunt single in the 15th.

Best chant: Texas A&M fans seemed to rattle Davidson reliever Allen Barry after he intentionally walked pinch hitter Jorge Gutierrez in the bottom of the 11th inning. As per Aggie tradition, fans started chanting "Ball five, ball five, ball five..." as Walker Pennington stepped into the batter's box. The chants continued as Barry threw balls six, seven and eight to walk Pennington and loaded the bases. Closer Westin Whitmire came on, and the chants resumed with ball nine and 10 before Janca took a strike at the knees. Janca struck out to end the threat.

Lyman lays out: Louisville right fielder Colin Lyman made one of the best defensive plays of the tournament when he robbed Kentucky's Marcus Carson of extra bases to start the third inning. Lyman took off running back toward the warning track, jumped and reached high above his left shoulder to pull in Carson's liner. He held onto the ball as he landed on his chest.

Tribe top White Sox

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Cleveland Indians manager Terry Francona made a blunt assessment Friday afternoon over the way his team has played this season.

“We have not been very good to date — that’s the understatement of the year,” he said before the Indians took on the Chicago White Sox.

Coming off a 1-4 road trip, the defending AL champs finally clicked in all phases — at least for one night.

Edwin Encarnacion hit a go-ahead two-run homer, Corey Kluber won his second straight start since coming off the disabled list and the Indians beat the White Sox 7-3.

Center fielder Bradley Zimmer and second baseman Jason Kipnis made key defensive plays in the third inning after Chicago scored twice to go ahead.

Francona has met with players individually and in groups to find a solution for the team’s inconsistency.

“In the past couple of days, I’ve probably had more meetings than I’ve had in years, because we want to get it right,” he said. “Sometimes, for whatever reason, you go through periods where it just isn’t very good.”

“It’s not the worst thing in the world to get a reminder every now and again if you go out and play the right way, good things happen,” Kluber said.

Encarnacion’s drive to center field in the fifth gave Cleveland the lead and highlighted a 3-for-4 night.

Chicago slugger Jose Abreu was lifted in the seventh inning after being hit on the left leg by Andrew Miller’s pitch. Abreu fell to the ground and couldn’t put any weight on his leg while being helped to the dugout. Chicago said he has a bruised leg and will be re-evaluated Saturday.

“I’m sure he’s going to have some tightness in the morning,” manager Rick Renteria said.

Montgomery, Yanks get past O’s

Associated Press

NEW YORK — After beginning the season as a backup, Aaron Hicks has been one of the best players in the American League.

Quite a turnaround for a guy who was such a huge disappointment in his first year with the Yankees.

Hicks homered twice and rookie Jordan Montgomery pitched seven stellar innings to lead New York over the Baltimore Orioles 8-2 on Friday night.

New York (35-23) has won three straight, outscoring rivals Boston and Baltimore 25-3 over the last three nights, to equal a season high at 12 games over .500.

“I think it’s very important that we get these

wins against teams that are right behind us,” Hicks said.

Jonathan Schoop hit an early two-run homer for the third-place Orioles, who dropped 4½ games behind the Yankees. Dylan Bundy (6-5) tossed six solid innings but lost for the fourth time in his past five starts.

Bundy beat Montgomery 3-2 on May 29 in Baltimore, where the Orioles took two of three from New York. But it was a different story in the latest matchup between two promising

24-year-old pitchers.

Montgomery (4-4) set a career high with eight strikeouts in the longest of his 11 major league starts. He was coming off six innings of three-hit ball in a 7-0 win at Toronto.

‘I think it’s very important that we get these wins against teams that are right behind us.’

Aaron Hicks

Yankees CF, on beating AL East rival Baltimore in the first of a three-game series in New York

Roundup

Holland, Colorado edge Cubs

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Rockies closer Greg Holland walked the bases loaded in the ninth inning before escaping, and Colorado held off the Chicago Cubs 5-3 Friday for its season-high sixth win in a row.

After three straight one-out walks, Holland retired Ben Zobrist on a short flyball and struck out Jason Heyward for his major league-best 23rd save. The Rockies posted their NL-leading 40th win this season and have their longest winning streak since 2014.

Cubs shortstop Addison Russell returned to the team a day after the club told him not to come to Wrigley Field while Major League Baseball investigates a domestic abuse claim. Russell, who didn’t play, had been accused of hitting his wife in a social media post that has since been deleted. Russell denied the allegation.

Braves 3, Mets 2: Danby Swanson turned a normal grounder up the middle into a hustle double, then dashed home on a single by pinch-hitter Rio Ruiz in the ninth inning to lift host Atlanta over New York.

Marlins 12, Pirates 7: Giancarlo Stanton smashed a home run over the batter’s eye at PNC Park, Tyler Moore went deep twice as visiting Miami pounded reeling Pittsburgh.

Rangers 5, Nationals 2: Andrew Cashner (3-5) quieted the National League’s top-hitting lineup, Jonathan Lucroy and Rougned Odor homered, and visiting Texas topped Washington.

Cardinals 3, Phillies 2: Aledmys Diaz hit a solo home run and Michael Wacha (3-3) pitched six strong innings as host St. Louis snapped a seven-game losing streak.

Red Sox 5, Tigers 3: Jackie Bradley Jr. hit a two-run homer in the eighth inning to lift host Boston over Detroit.

Angels 9, Astros 4: Cameron Maybin starred in his return from the disabled list, finishing with three hits and a career-high four steals to help visiting Los Angeles beat Houston.

Rays 13, Athletics 4: Tampa Bay tied a season-high with five home runs and Alex Cobb (5-5) went six strong innings in a win over visiting Oakland.

Twins 4, Giants 0: Ervin

Santana (8-3) pitched a four-hitter for his third shutout of the season and hit a three-run double in another stellar bounce-back start, leading visiting Minnesota to a victory over San Francisco.

Brewers 8, Diamondbacks 6: Manny Pina had three hits — two doubles — and two RBIs and visiting Milwaukee ended Arizona’s nine-game home winning streak.

Dodgers 7, Reds 2: Justin Turner hit a two-run homer in his first at-bat off the disabled list, Enrique Hernandez added a solo shot and Rich Hill (3-2) and Kenta Maeda combined on a five-hitter to lead host Los Angeles to a victory over Cincinnati.

Mariners 4, Blue Jays 2: Danny Valencia and Jarrod Dyson had RBI singles as part of their team’s seventh-inning rally, and host Seattle beat Toronto for its 10th win in 12 games.

Padres 6, Royals 3: Pinch-hitter Matt Szczur hit a go-ahead home run in the seventh inning and host San Diego beat Kansas City to snap a five-game losing streak.