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Tensions rise as US downs Syrian plane

The Washington Post

BEIRUT — On Sunday, a U.S. fighter jet downed a Syrian warplane for the first time in the conflict.

By Monday, a key ally of President Bashar Assad, Russia, had suspended a pact used to prevent crashes with the U.S.-led coalition in the skies over Syria and was threatening to target American jets.

Separately, Iran said that it had launched a barrage of missiles into Islamic State territory in eastern Syria.

That assault marked Tehran's first official strike against the extremist group in Syria, and it signposted the reach of its military might against foes across the region.

The incident followed a series of U.S. airstrikes against Iran-backed forces advancing on partner forces in a strategically prized swath of land along the Iraqi border.

As the major powers on the

opposite sides of Syria's war intensify operations against ISIS, the risks of an accidental conflagration appear to be growing by the day.

The United States intervened in Syria to roll back ISIS forces from a self-declared caliphate that once stretched deep into Iraq.

But the American role has unsettled Assad's allies, threatening confrontation with Russia and thrusting Iran-backed militiamen in a race with a U.S.-favored rebel force to reach ISIS' eastern strongholds.

The U.S. military confirmed late Sunday night that a U.S. F-18 Super Hornet shot down a Syrian Su-22 fighter bomber.

The confrontation took place near the one-time ISIS stronghold of Tabqa, hours after Syrian government forces attacked U.S.-backed fighters, known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF. It was the first time that the American military has shot

down a Syrian warplane during the six-year conflict.

On Monday, Russia condemned that strike as a "flagrant violation of international law" and said its forces will treat U.S.-led coalition aircraft and drones as targets if they are operating in Syrian airspace west of the Euphrates River while Russian aviation is on combat missions.

Pavel Baev, who studies the Russian military at the Peace Research Institute Oslo, called the threat "mostly a bluff" but said that "calling it is risky because there are some nervous fingers on many buttons."

In a statement Monday, the SDF warned that it would retaliate in the face of further aggression from pro-Assad forces, raising the possibility that the United States could be forced to deviate further from its stated policy in Syria, which involves targeting only ISIS militants.

The U.S.-backed military alli-

ance is making its way through the outskirts of ISIS' one-time capital of Raqqa, backed by U.S.-led coalition airstrikes.

If it again comes under attack by pro-Assad forces, Washington may be forced to defend the coalition at the risk of sparking a tinderbox of tensions with Iranian and Syrian troops in the northern province.

"The only actions that we have taken against pro-regime forces in Syria — and there have been two specific incidents — have been in self-defense. And we've communicated that clearly," said Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

But Monday, the Russian Defense Ministry said it was suspending the communication channel through which such messages had been shared in order to minimize the risk of in-flight incidents between Russian and U.S.-led coalition aircraft operating over Syria.

Navy files first charges in 'Fat Leonard' scandal

The Washington Post

The Navy has filed criminal charges against an officer in the "Fat Leonard" scandal, setting the stage for the first military trial in a corruption investigation that has consumed the service for the past four years, documents show.

Navy officials have kept the officer's name a secret since he was charged in March with conspiring with Leonard Glenn Francis, a rotund Malaysian defense contractor, to recruit and bribe other Navy officials to join a massive scheme to defraud the Navy.

On Monday, the Navy released charging documents that deleted the officer's name but listed

his rank as an active-duty commander and said he allegedly accepted prostitutes, travel and other gifts worth about \$5,000 from Francis in 2012 and 2013.

Navy officials said the commander's name would be made public at a preliminary hearing next week in Norfolk, Va. If the case proceeds to trial, it would mark the first time the Navy has court-martialed anyone in the scandal.

Francis was arrested by federal agents in 2013 in a sting operation in San Diego and has since pleaded guilty to bribing scores of Navy officials in a decadeslong scam to overcharge the Navy at least \$35 million for resupplying its ships in Asia.

Since then, the Justice De-

partment has filed federal criminal charges against 21 current and former Navy officials, as well as Francis and five of his employees.

In court filings, the federal investigation has exposed an extensive level of corruption in the Navy's 7th Fleet, which covers maritime operations throughout Asia.

Francis ingratiated himself with senior officers and contracting personnel by throwing extravagant parties with prostitutes and, in some cases, bribing Navy officials with envelopes of cash.

In addition to those facing federal criminal charges, the Justice Department has referred 200 cases involving Navy

personnel to the Pentagon for possible discipline or prosecution under military law.

The Navy, however, has been secretive about its investigations and has said little publicly about one of the most embarrassing episodes in its history.

Records show that four admirals have been reprimanded or disciplined for their ties to Francis since 2015, but Navy officials have declined to say how many other personnel have been punished or fined.

Two defense lawyers familiar with the Navy's investigations said charges have been filed against at least three other Navy officials and that more courts-martial are expected in the coming weeks.

Teen threatens Bagram bombing, arrested

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

Afghan authorities on Tuesday arrested a teenager who had threatened to blow himself up at Bagram Air Field, officials said.

"He wanted to target a foreign forces convoy," Abdul Shakoor Quddusi, governor of Bagram district in Parwan province, told Stars and Stripes.

The boy was captured on a motorcycle near the first gate of the largest U.S. military base in Afghanistan about 9 a.m. with a suicide vest and hand grenades, Quddusi said.

However, Bagram police Officer Abdulsamad Zalmi said the boy, from nearby Laghman province, only threatened to

be a suicide bomber and that no explosive vest was found on him. Zalmi said an investigation had been launched to determine whether the teenager had access to more explosives in the area and whether he was working with anyone else. He said the boy was from nearby Laghman province, where the Taliban are active, but officials couldn't immediately determine if he had collaborated with anyone.

The arrest came just hours after a group of armed men killed eight Afghan security guards who manned the gates of the Bagram base.

The guards were on their way to work Monday night when their van came under fire in the Shaka area near the base, Quddusi said.

Two other Afghan guards

were wounded, he added.

The Taliban later claimed responsibility for the attack, describing the guards as spies for the United States who they had been tracking for some time.

Taliban militants, who seek to overthrow the U.S.-backed government in Kabul, see Afghan and international forces as legitimate targets and have vowed to step up attacks against both.

When asked about the teenager's arrest on Tuesday, United States Forces-Afghanistan confirmed that an Afghan civilian holding two hand grenades approached an entry point to the base. "There were no injuries during the incident, and a security sweep of the area yielded no additional explosives," USFOR-A said.

The incident comes amid growing concerns over security at Afghan bases. On Saturday, seven U.S. troops were wounded and at least one Afghan soldier was killed in an insider attack at Camp Shaheen in northern Afghanistan, the same site where about 150 Afghan soldiers were killed in April when Taliban fighters stormed the base and opened fire.

Just one week before Saturday's attack, three other U.S. soldiers were killed in eastern Nangarhar province when an Afghan soldier opened fire on them. The Taliban later said the shooter was one of their fighters who had infiltrated Afghan forces.

Zubair Babakarkhail contributed to this report.

US again shoots down Iranian-made drone over Syria

BY TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A U.S. F-15E Strike Eagle has shot down the second Iranian-made drone in two weeks that was threatening U.S.-led coalition forces in southern Syria, a Pentagon official said Tuesday.

The attack took place about 12:30 a.m. local time Tuesday after an Iranian-made Shahed 129 drone, which is similar in size to a U.S. Predator drone, exhibited "the actions and intent similar to what happened in the first" shoot-down, said a U.S. defense official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

"The F-15E intercepted the armed [drone] after it was observed advancing on the coalition position. When the armed [drone] continued to advance on the coalition position without diverting its course, it was shot down," according to a Pentagon statement released from Operation Inherent Resolve.

The pilot who fired at the drone acted within the rules of engagement, and there was no time during the developing

Australia suspends airstrikes

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Australia on Tuesday suspended its airstrikes against Islamic State targets in Syria as a precaution after a U.S. fighter jet shot down a Syrian warplane earlier this week and Russia warned the U.S.-led coalition from flying over Syrian army positions west of the Euphrates River.

The announcement from the capital, Canberra, came as a two-day truce collapsed in the southern Syrian city of Daraa and nearby areas where government forces have gained ground.

Australia is part of a U.S.-led coalition that has been waging war against ISIS in Syria and Iraq. It has six fighter jets based in the Unit-

ed Arab Emirates that strike targets in Syria and Iraq.

The U.S. military shot down the Syrian warplane on Sunday, saying it had targeted an American-allied, Kurdish-led force that is battling ISIS extremists in their de facto capital, Raqqa. That led Russia, a close ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad, to warn that it would target U.S.-led coalition planes flying west of the Euphrates River.

With the skies over Syria growing increasingly crowded, a statement from the Australian Defense Department released in Canberra said that "Australian Defense Force protection is regularly reviewed in response to a range of potential threats."

threat to work through a communication line with Russia to alert them of the strike, said

Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman.

The drone was armed with

bombs, though the Department of Defense has not identified who was controlling the aircraft, Davis told reporters Tuesday at the Pentagon.

It's the third air-to-air strike in less than two weeks as tensions continue to rise between U.S., Russian and Syrian forces.

On June 8, an F-15E Strike Eagle shot down another Shahed 129 after the drone released a munition on coalition forces patrolling near Tanf, where the United States maintains a training base for Syrian forces fighting Islamic State.

On Sunday, a U.S. F/A-18E Super Hornet shot down a Syrian Su-22 fighter bomber that had been firing on U.S. allies south of Tabqa in northern Syria after U.S. military personnel attempted to warn off the aircraft through the communication line with the Russians and through a show of force. In response, Russia announced it would no longer use the communication line and warned that it would shoot coalition aircraft in its area of operation.

B-1B Lancers, S. Korean and Japanese jets fly over peninsula

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Two U.S. supersonic bombers flew over the Korean Peninsula while a guided-missile destroyer visited a southern island Tuesday in the latest shows of force against a defiant North Korea.

The flyover comes as anger rose over the death of American university student Otto Warmbier, who died Monday after being released from 17 months in North Korean custody. President Donald Trump condemned “the brutality of the North Korean regime as we mourn its latest victim.”

The Guam-based B-1B Lancers were accompanied by South Korean and Japanese fighter jets in what Pacific Air Forces tweeted was a joint mission “ensuring solidarity/resolve amongst #allies.”

North Korea routinely objects to such flyovers and military exercises, calling them “provocations” and justification for its development of nuclear weapons for self-defense.

A South Korean air force official said earlier that the bombers would fly over the peninsula for a few hours along with two South Korean F-15K fighter jets.

The B-1Bs — assigned to the 9th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron and deployed from Dyess Air Force Base, Texas — also flew in the vicinity of Kyushu, Japan, and the East China Sea as part of the 10-hour mission, the Air Force said.

It was the second time in about a month that the United States has deployed the Lancers to the divided peninsula as North Korea has conducted numerous missile tests despite international condemnation and punishing economic sanctions.

The guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey also made a port visit on the southern Jeju Island, the latest in a string of U.S. warships to be deployed in the waters off the peninsula in recent months.

Russian jet flies within ‘several feet’ of US plane over Baltic Sea

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — A Russian fighter flew within “several feet” of a U.S. reconnaissance plane operating Monday over the Baltic Sea, a close military encounter that comes just one day after the U.S. Navy shot down a Syrian warplane.

“Due to the high rate of closure, speed and poor control of the (Russian) aircraft during the intercept, this interaction was determined to be unsafe,” said Capt. Joseph Alonso, a U.S. European Command spokesman.

Russian intercepts of U.S. aircraft around the Baltic Sea have become almost routine in light of increased tensions between Moscow and NATO, which also frequently scrambles fighters to monitor Russian aircraft. In most cases such incidents are deemed

business as usual, with planes keeping a safe distance from one another.

“What differentiates it is this one was determined unsafe by the aircraft commander,” Alonso said.

EUCOM said an Air Force RC-135 was flying in international airspace when a Russian Sukhoi Su-27 Flanker flew within “several feet” of the American jet. On Sunday, a U.S. Navy F/A-18E Super Hornet shot down a Syrian Su-22 that the Pentagon said posed a threat to U.S.-backed militia-men fighting against Islamic State. Moscow, a backer of the Syrian government, lashed out in response and threatened to track and potentially target U.S. aircraft operating west of the Euphrates River. It was unclear whether Russia’s maneuvers on Monday over the Baltics were a reaction to the strike a day earlier in Syria.

Moscow also has complained

about NATO planes flying close to its airspace. Earlier this month, it said a Norwegian P-3 Orion patrol plane intercepted over the Barents Sea was flying with its transponders turned off and posing a danger to civilian air traffic.

NATO, meanwhile, has accused Russian planes of often flying without their transponders turned on.

Still, intercepts are considered standard practice over international waters, and when conducted safely are regarded by some commanders as a beneficial training opportunity.

“Our air crew are trained to handle these types of intercepts, and it appears that the Russian air crew are trained to conduct them,” Lt. Gen. Richard Clark, 3rd Air Force commander, told reporters last week. “And I think as long as they remain that way, that this won’t be a problem.”

Witnesses describe 3 GIs’ deaths in Jordan

Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan — Three gate guards at a Jordanian air base told a military court Monday that they held their fire when they heard an apparent gunshot from the direction of a nearby U.S. troop convoy because they couldn’t identify the source of the sound.

Their testimony raised new questions about the possible motive of a Jordanian soldier who is on trial for murder in the November shooting deaths of three U.S. military trainers. The defendant, 1st Sgt. Marik al-Tuwayha, allegedly opened fire on the convoy as it waited to enter the base, killing the U.S. Army Green Berets.

The defendant has pleaded not guilty. On Monday he stood quietly in a cage in the courtroom, just yards from the fathers of two of the slain Americans. The judge has said the defendant is not suspected of ties to terrorist

groups.

Jordan, a close U.S. military ally, initially said the Americans triggered the shooting by disobeying orders of Jordanian troops at the al-Jafr airbase. Jordan later withdrew that claim, and King Abdullah II cleared the soldiers of any wrongdoing in a letter to the parents.

The victims were Staff Sgt. Matthew C. Lewellen, 27, of Kirksville, Mo.; Staff Sgt. Kevin J. McEnroe, 30, of Tucson, Ariz.; and Staff Sgt. James F. Moriarty, 27, of Kerrville, Texas.

Three gate guards on Monday told the court that a four-car convoy carrying the U.S. military trainers pulled up at the entrance of the air base before noon on Nov. 4. All four vehicles passed through the outer gate. The lead vehicle then passed through the inner gate, leaving three vehicles between the two gates.

At the time, the defendant

was in a guardhouse next to the inner gate, witnesses said. They heard what sounded like a shot from a pistol that seemed to be coming from the direction of the three vehicles. They said that under rules of engagement, they are allowed to return fire but that they did not do so because they could not locate the exact source of the purported gunshot. At that point, the defendant opened fire at the convoy, according to one witness. The witnesses said they then heard gunfire for several minutes.

Moriarty’s father, James, who at an FBI office in the U.S. has repeatedly watched a security camera video of the shooting, said the defendant fired from inside the guardhouse at the closest vehicle, killing McEnroe and Lewellen. He said his son and another U.S. soldier then jumped out of their vehicles and took cover behind large cement blocks and returned fire.

Policy experts urge lawmakers to drop BRAC opposition

BY DIANNA CAHN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan group of policy experts issued an open letter Monday urging members of Congress to drop their opposition to what would be the first round of base realignments and closures in more than a decade, saying it could save billions of Pentagon dollars and offset spending on other military needs.

The call comes just weeks after President Donald Trump released his 2018 proposed spending plan that called for a new round of base or facility shutdowns to trim excess overhead. The document urges congressional approval for a base realignment and closure, or BRAC, in fiscal year 2021.

No BRAC has been enacted since 2005. A new round is currently barred by law, with lawmakers fearing potential economic harm to their communities.

“It is understandable that discussions about closing military facilities can be controversial,” said the letter, signed by 45 experts from think tanks including Cato Institute, Center for American Progress, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Center for a New American Security, Brookings Institution and Concerned Veterans for America.

“To be sure, the closing of a military base is disruptive to surrounding communities,” it said. “Evidence shows, however, that most communities recover and some do quite rapidly.”

The Pentagon has been insistent that another round of BRAC is necessary, and says it will have more than 22 percent excess infrastructure by 2019.

In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on June 13, Defense Secretary

Jim Mattis said a “properly focused base closure effort” could generate \$2 billion or more annually — enough, over a five-year period, to buy 300 Apache attack helicopters, 120 F/A-18 Super Hornets or four Virginia-class submarines.

“I recognize the careful deliberation that members must exercise in considering this,” Mattis said. “But BRAC is one of the most successful and significant efficiency programs we have.”

The letter noted that the surplus projections are not based on military personnel cuts that Trump appears to be reversing, and said that even if Trump builds up personnel to levels he stated during the campaign, the Pentagon will have more overhead than it needs “well into the 2020s.”

The biggest obstacle is political will, and the letter’s authors say they perceive a melting of hardline posture on the issue. Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Jack Reed, D-R.I., the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, respectively, said in January that they were amenable to examining the potential savings of a BRAC round.

That new will, combined with the Pentagon’s struggle to keep its forces trained and ready and its equipment well-maintained under budget shortfalls and increased global demand, gave the authors impetus to issue the call, said Chris Preble, vice president for defense and foreign policy at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank in Washington. Preble co-authored the letter with Todd Harrison, director of defense budget analysis at the centrist Center for Strategic and International Studies and Mackenzie Eaglen at the conservative American Enterprise Institute.

US student dies days after release from N. Korea while comatose

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — The college student who was held for nearly a year and a half in North Korea died Monday, shortly after he was sent home to Ohio in a coma.

A public funeral was planned for Thursday for Otto Warmbier, 22, who died in a Cincinnati hospital. Meanwhile, a spokesman for Hamilton County Coroner Dr. Lakshmi Sammaraco said the office accepted Warmbier’s case.

The coroner’s office daily report Tuesday included Warmbier in its listings with cause of death termed “pending.”

Warmbier’s parents did not cite a specific cause of death, but cited “awful, torturous mistreatment” by North Korea. Doctors had described Warm-

bier’s condition as a state of “unresponsive wakefulness” and said he suffered a “severe neurological injury” of unknown cause.

The funeral will be held at 9 a.m. at Wyoming High School, where Warmbier was an athlete and salutatorian of his 2013 class.

Warmbier was returned to Ohio on June 13 after being held for more than 17 months.

Warmbier, a University of Virginia student, was accused of trying to steal a propaganda banner while visiting with a tour group and was convicted of subversion.

He was sentenced in March 2016 to 15 years in prison with hard labor. His family said it was told he had been in a coma since soon after his sentencing.

Black bear mauls teen runner in Alaska

Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Patrick Cooper had already turned around after reaching the halfway point in a popular mountain race in Alaska when he somehow veered off the trail and became lost. That’s when the 16-year-old Anchorage boy encountered the black bear that would take his life in a rare predatory attack.

Cooper began running, and at one point he reportedly placed a frantic call to his brother, saying he was being chased by a bear Sunday in the Robert Spurr Memorial Hill Climb race south of Anchorage. The brother notified race director Brad Precosky, who alerted race crews to begin searching for Cooper.

It took a couple of hours for responders to locate the teen, whose body was found about a mile up the path, at about 1,500 vertical feet. The bear was found at the site, guarding the body, Precosky said.

A Chugach State Park ranger shot the 250-pound bear in the face, but the animal ran away.

Alaska State Troopers said the boy’s remains were airlifted from the scene on Sunday.

State park staffers were scouring the area Monday looking for the bear, state Fish and Game spokesman Ken Marsh said. Sunday’s attack was believed to have been a rare predatory move, not a defensive action such as when a female bear will protect her cubs, he said.

Later Monday, a second fatal mauling at the hands of a black bear was reported nearly 300 miles northeast of Anchorage. Officials with an underground gold mine reported a contract employee hired to take geological samples was killed and another injured in a black bear attack.

Athletes who run wilderness races in Alaska know bear encounters are always an inherent possibility.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Mic silenced when grad speech goes off script

PA WEST PITTSTON — A Pennsylvania high school valedictorian had his microphone silenced when his commencement speech went off script and criticized the district's administrators.

Wyoming Area High School grad Peter Butera, who was also class president, told The Citizens' Voice in Wilkes-Barre that he doesn't think Friday's speech "could have gone any better," adding, that "them cutting my microphone proved my point to be true."

School Superintendent Janet Serino said commencement speeches are vetted and students can't deviate from remarks they submit. Still, she said, student input is important, so she's scheduled a meeting with Butera about how things might improve in the district.

Butera's main complaint was that student government has no real voice in how the school and district are run.

Ex-VA nurse sentenced to probation for theft

DE WILMINGTON — Federal prosecutors said a former nurse at the Wilmington Veterans Affairs Medical Center was sentenced to three years' probation for stealing more than \$22,000 from a disabled veteran.

Acting U.S. Attorney for the District of Delaware David Weiss announced Saturday that Alexander Kudla was sentenced after pleading guilty to wire fraud.

Prosecutors said a disabled veteran needed help withdrawing money from an ATM and asked Kudla to assist. Prosecutors said Kudla withdrew funds for his personal use more than 40 times in 2015. He's been ordered to repay the stolen money,

\$4,000 of it immediately.

Kudla no longer works at the VA center.

Naked man nabs car; trail leads cops to body

SC GREENVILLE — Greenville County deputies said they chased a car nabbed by a bloody, naked man and traced his trail back to a dead woman's body.

Deputies said the car was reported stolen from a residence in Fountain Inn on Saturday night. When they tried to stop the car, the driver refused to pull over and forced a 25-mile chase that ended in downtown Greenville. The unidentified suspect was charged with failing to stop for authorities.

Other deputies at the scene of the call spotted blood around and in the home next door to where the car was stolen. Investigators found Que T. Oliver, 70, dead inside. The coroner ruled her death a homicide because of multiple injuries caused by a sharp object.

Woman trying to escape cops climbs into ceiling

RI PAWTUCKET — Police in Rhode Island said a woman who was in custody at a hospital tried to escape by climbing up into a dropped ceiling.

WPRI-TV reported that the attempted escape happened shortly after noon Saturday at Memorial Hospital in Pawtucket.

Central Falls police Chief James Mendonca said the woman, who was allowed to use one of the hospital's bathrooms, tried to climb into the ceiling once she was inside the bathroom. Mendonca said a police officer prevented her from getting fully into the crawl space.

Police said the woman, Alyssa Maurelli, had been picked

up on a warrant for failing to appear for a court hearing and other offenses.

Video shows woman setting home on fire

WI MILWAUKEE — A woman was caught on cellphone video pouring what appears to be gasoline through the window of a Milwaukee home and setting it on fire.

Willie Greer, 72, died in the blaze Friday. Police said they are holding a 39-year-old woman and that her case will be presented to the district attorney soon. Police haven't said if the woman in the video is the one in custody.

The video shows a woman pouring the contents of a gas can through a window. Flames erupt and the woman walks away.

3 drug overdose deaths lead to murder charges

NC MANTEO — North Carolina prosecutors are joining a national trend in fighting opioid overdose deaths — charging drug dealers with murder.

The Virginian-Pilot, of Norfolk, Va., reported that two eastern North Carolina prosecutors recently decided independently to pursue murder cases after three people died of opioid overdoses. Three people have been charged in the two cases in Hyde and Dare counties.

Riding lawn mower goes over bluff; man killed

NY WEBSTER — Authorities are investigating the death of a 79-year-old western New York man whose riding lawn mower plunged off a 30-foot-high bluff overlooking Lake Ontario.

Police said the man's fam-

ily members found him Sunday evening at the bottom of the bluff along the shoreline in the town of Webster, just east of Rochester. Officers said the family last saw him earlier in the afternoon when he was mowing his lawn.

It took firefighters and a crew from the nearby U.S. Coast Guard station several hours to recover the man's body. His name hasn't been released.

Boy not shot; eczema mistaken for wound

MD BALTIMORE — Police said they've determined that a 10-year-old boy was not struck by gunfire when shots were fired in Baltimore over the weekend.

Initially, Baltimore police said the boy was shot Sunday afternoon and taken to a hospital for treatment. But police now say medical personnel concluded that what detectives thought was a graze wound on the boy's shin was actually caused by eczema.

Police said Sunday that a passenger in an SUV shot at a group of adults, and after the crowd scattered, the boy "realized" he'd been shot.

Customs agents seize invasive snail mail

PA PHILADELPHIA — Customs and Border Protection agents in Philadelphia stopped an invasive variety of snails from reaching their destination in Connecticut.

The seven pounds of chocolate-banded snails were found in a package that listed the contents as "shoes and honey."

The agency said the snails come from the Mediterranean region and pose a threat to garden plants, crops and vineyards.

From wire reports

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Lakers still high on Ball despite father

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES —By now the entire basketball world knows Lonzo Ball is a singular talent with a unique parent.

The UCLA product with preternatural court vision is among the most intriguing prospects in the NBA Draft this week. In perhaps the greatest testament to his abilities, his father LaVar Ball's bombast and \$495 shoes and racially insensitive comments don't appear to be scaring off the Los Angeles Lakers or any other team that believes Lonzo could be the next great point guard.

Because of his headline-magnet father, Ball's celebrity has already outpaced his talents before he plays his first professional game. Yet ever since his days leading the Big Ballers AAU team set up by his dad, Lonzo has shown nothing but maturity and calm in the face of LaVar's audacious approaches to hoops, parenting and the business of sports.

"I think it definitely doesn't help," Ball said of his father's notoriety. "Definitely makes it a little bit harder. But any good player is going to have attention on him at all times, and I'm pretty used to it by now."

Ball's mental steadiness is an-

other reason he's almost certain to be a top-three pick on Thursday. Ever since the Lakers got the No. 2 choice in the lottery last month, most draft observers have believed Ball will wear a gold jersey in the fall, completing a serendipitous match of player and team.

That's been the dream scenario for the entire Ball family ever since Lonzo showed the first inklings of world-class talent. He was raised in Chino Hills, a suburb about 35 miles east of Staples Center, and LaVar Ball is an ardent fan of the Lakers — and specifically Magic Johnson, the Hall of Fame point guard now running their basketball operations.

After Ball worked out for the Lakers last week, he didn't mince words about his hopes to make it permanent: "Of course. I want to stay home."

Los Angeles and its sprawling suburbs have produced an incredible portion of the NBA's top talent of recent years. All three MVP finalists this season — Russell Westbrook, James Harden and Kawhi Leonard — are from the area, as are Paul George, Klay Thompson, Tyson Chandler, DeMar DeRozan and many others.

Although the Lakers have been his family's team since

before he could walk, Ball said he hasn't been to many games in person: "My dad didn't like the seats, because I guess they were too small for him."

That's understandable, since father and son are both 6-foot-6. Lonzo watched on television and then emulated the stars from Magic to Kobe Bryant while playing with his brothers at home.

"I patterned my game after [Johnson]," Ball said. "My dad asked me what position I wanted to play. I told him, 'Point guard.' He was like, 'All right, if you're going to play point guard, you've got to get the ball up.'"

That's what Ball does better than almost any guard in recent college basketball history.

He led the nation in assists (7.7) while turning the Bruins into the highest-scoring team in Division I basketball. The freshman showed astonishing passing ability while orchestrating the UCLA offense, utilizing angles and defensive creases that made him look more like an attacking soccer midfielder than a basketball player.

And if any NBA team is worried about having the ultimate sports parent in the front row,

UCLA coach Steve Alford has repeatedly said LaVar wasn't a problem for him — and Lonzo's two little brothers are both planning to play in Westwood.

Ball admits his father gives him unwanted notoriety. He also promises he can handle any distraction.

"That was said about me in college, said about me in high school," he said. "I don't think it affected me."

Just a few days away from the decision, Ball still appears to be a splendid fit with the Lakers, whose up-tempo offense under coach Luke Walton looks tailor-made for Ball's skills. The Lakers just completed the worst four-year stretch in franchise history, but their fans hope that another playmaking superstar will be their reward for the 16-time NBA champions' misery.

Ball is one of those fans.

"They need a leader," Ball said after working out for the Lakers recently. "They need a point guard, and I feel like I can fill that hole. ... They said they want me to come in — if I get picked — come in and be a leader and play with a lot of pace. So the stuff they were saying was very positive, and it kind of fits my game."

Cavs, GM part ways on anniversary of title

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — One year ago, David Griffin celebrated the biggest win in Cavaliers history.

He marked the anniversary Monday by walking away from the team.

Griffin's three-year run as general manager with Cleveland is over after one championship and three straight trips to the NBA Finals.

After guiding the team through its most successful stretch, Griffin, 47, mutually parted ways with the Cavs as owner Dan Gilbert said the GM's contract will not be extended once it expires June 30.

"On behalf of the entire organization, I would like to thank Griff for his leadership and many contributions during his time here, including most recently, his role in the franchise's first NBA Championship,"

Gilbert said in a statement. "We have no announcement at this time related to new leadership of the Cavaliers basketball operations group, but we are confident our current front office will continue to aggressively explore and pursue opportunities to improve our team in the weeks ahead."

Griffin's departure comes on the one-year anniversary of the Cavs' dramatic Game 7 win over Golden State, capping a historic comeback that gave Cleveland its first major professional sports championship since 1964.

He's also leaving three days before the draft and on the eve of free agency. Cleveland could have a busy summer as it looks to revamp its roster after losing to the Warriors in five games in this year's Finals.

With Griffin out, the Cavs enter a critical juncture without a seasoned executive making the calls. The Cavs will try to im-

prove their roster this summer as superstar LeBron James enters his final season under contract.

A team spokesman said Trent Redden, the team's senior vice president of basketball operations, is also not returning.

The Cavs have reportedly been contacted by the Indiana Pacers in a potential deal for All-Star Paul George, who will be a free agent after the 2017-18 season.

A few hours after Cleveland's summer was thrown into chaos, James offered his support to Griffin on Twitter.

"If no one appreciated you Griff I did, and hopefully all the people of Cleveland!" James wrote. "Thanks for what u did for the team for 3 yrs! We got us 1 (trophy)."

Griffin was in control during the team's return to prominence after James came back following four seasons in Miami.

Plenty of NHL talent available for Vegas

Associated Press

George McPhee can't wait to fill up the white board, the one in the Vegas Golden Knights' Expansion Draft room. On Wednesday night, the staff will start adding the names of players who will become part of the expansion team for its first NHL season.

"We're going to put our team together and we'll watch it come to life in front of us," McPhee said.

What will that team look like when it takes the ice in early October? It won't have all the top-end talent available because side deals will allow Vegas to stockpile draft picks and prospects for the future, but it will probably be the most competitive expansion team in the league's history.

Here's a projection of who the inaugural Golden Knights might snap up by Wednesday night:

Goaltenders (minimum 3)

Sure bet: Three-time Stanley Cup champion Marc-Andre Fleury seems like the most reliable pick on the board, a recognizable face of the franchise who can easily start 50-60 games and give the Golden Knights chances to win. Fleury waived his no-movement clause so the Pitts-

burgh Penguins didn't have to force another trade, and the 32-year-old can go back to being a clear No. 1 goalie.

Worth the gamble: Fleury could be joined by an established 20-something backup, like Philadelphia's Michal Neuvirth, Detroit's Petr Mrazek, Colorado's Calvin Pickard or New York's Antti Raanta.

McPhee and Vegas goaltending coach Dave Prior have connections to Neuvirth and Philipp Grubauer from drafting them with the Capitals. McPhee described Neuvirth as "almost technically perfect."

Rolling the dice: Maybe Vegas wants to groom its starter of the future, in which case Grubauer, Boston's Malcolm Subban, Detroit's Jared Coreau or Toronto's Antoine Bibeau could fit the bill.

Don't sleep on: Vegas controls the trade market and can make some extra picks to flip a goalie or two. Arizona and Philadelphia are in need of starters.

Defensemen (minimum 9)

Sure bet: Assuming Anaheim has already worked out a trade to keep Vegas away from Sami Vatanen and Josh Manson — perhaps at the cost of a first-round pick — there are still plenty of young, affordable defensemen to choose from along with some veterans. Dion Phaneuf refusing to waive his no-movement clause

forced Ottawa to protect him and expose 31-year-old Marc Methot.

Minnesota's plethora of blue liners made Matt Dumba, 22, and Marco Scandella, 27, available unless the Wild are willing to fork something over, and 25-year-old right-shooting Trevor van Riemsdyk from Chicago seems ticketed for the Golden Knights.

Worth the gamble: With speed, skating and puck-moving skills a priority, Tampa Bay's Slater Koekkoek (23 years old), Detroit's Xavier Oullet (23), Washington's Nate Schmidt (25) and Montreal's Nikita Nesterov (24) all could fit well. Want some more size and physicality? Vegas could look at Boston's Colin Miller (24), Edmonton's Griffin Reinhart (23) and Buffalo's Zach Bogosian (26).

Rolling the dice: Pending free agent Kevin Shattenkirk of the Capitals wants to be a No. 1 defenseman and could get that role in Vegas.

Don't sleep on: The Golden Knights will be young, but San Jose's David Schlemko (30) and Paul Martin (36) and New Jersey's Ben Lovejoy (33) are veteran options.

Forwards (minimum 14)

Sure bet: This is where elite talent already under contract is hard to find, outside of maybe Nashville's James Neal, a 10-time 20-goal scorer, and 32-year-old Minnesota

center Eric Staal. Vegas could use free agency to stock its top forwards, as it already has by signing Vadim Shipachyov out of the KHL.

Worth the gamble: Among established NHL forwards, Vegas has the pick of two 26-year-olds from Florida: right winger Reilly Smith and center Jonathan Marchessault, who set career highs with 30 goals, 21 assists and 51 points last season and is the biggest bargain in the league at \$750,000. With so many Cup teams built down the middle, Dallas' Cody Eakin (who McPhee also drafted), Minnesota's Erik Haula and St. Louis' Jori Lehtera could help both present and future.

Rolling the dice: Vegas can build a young nucleus with some intriguing possibilities, assuming Columbus has persuaded McPhee not to take 17-goal scorer Josh Anderson and the New York Islanders have worked out a way to keep 56-point producer Josh Bailey. One-time prospects Marko Dano from Winnipeg, Mikhail Grigorenko from Colorado and Nail Yakupov from St. Louis might benefit from bigger opportunities under coach Gerard Gallant.

Don't sleep on: If Vegas is indeed getting Blackhawks center Marcus Kruger, he's a nice depth player at 27, and Montreal's Tomas Plekanec, who is 34, satisfies a veteran component and could fit perfectly as the franchise's first captain.

Harrison's slam helps Beavers extend streak to 23

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — The dominance Oregon State has shown all season was on full display Monday night.

Bryce Fehmel limited LSU to two hits in eight innings, KJ Harrison hit the first College World Series grand slam at TD Ameritrade Park, and Oregon State beat the Tigers 13-1 for its 23rd straight win.

The Beavers (56-4), who matched the school-record winning streak they set earlier this season, took control of Bracket 1. They don't play again until Friday, and need one more win to advance to next week's best-of-three final.

"We just talked before the game about this is our time, this is our opportunity," Oregon State coach Pat Casey said. "This is what we came here for. Let's not miss that moment. So the guys played great."

The matchup between the teams with the two longest active winning streaks in the country was one of the most anticipated at the CWS in years. It turned out to be a dud. The 12-run margin tied the largest in a CWS game in the seven years it's been played at TD Ameritrade.

LSU (49-18) had its 17-game winning streak end with its most lopsided loss in Omaha

since a 20-6 rout by Cal State Fullerton in 1994.

Florida State 6, Cal State Fullerton 4: At Omaha, Neb., the Seminoles converted three walks, two infield singles and a double into three runs to take the lead in the seventh inning, and knocked the Titans out of the tournament.

Fullerton (39-24) has gone two games and out in four straight CWS appearances and has lost nine games in a row in Omaha.

Florida State (46-22) went ahead against three Fullerton pitchers, with the tying and go-ahead runs scoring on back-to-back walks by Blake Workman.

Chase Haney (3-2) worked two-thirds of an inning for the win, and Drew Carlton earned his seventh save after Fullerton put two runners on base with two outs in the bottom of the ninth. Pinch hitter Hank LoForte struck out looking to end the game.

It was another heart-wrenching loss for the Titans. They blew a 5-1 lead in the sixth inning against No. 1 national seed Oregon State on Saturday, and they failed to hold a 4-3 sixth-inning lead against the Seminoles.

The Titans had gone ahead in the bottom of the sixth on Dillon Persinger's double and Timmy Richards' two-run homer.

Bellinger fastest ever to 21 home runs

Associated press

LOS ANGELES — Cody Bellinger has 21 home runs, matching his age. No hitter in history has gotten off to such a powerful start.

The rookie slugger launched two more long balls to set a major league record, and Clayton Kershaw notched his 10th win despite giving up a career-high four homers Monday night as the Los Angeles Dodgers held on for a 10-6 victory over the New York Mets.

Bellinger reached 21 home runs in 51 career games — faster than any other big league player. Despite spotting the rest of the NL three weeks before he was called up from the minors, the 21-year-old first baseman leads the league in homers.

“It’s unbelievable,” Mets manager Terry Collins said. “This guy swings a bat and he hits it on the barrel. Pretty impressive.”

Bellinger had his fifth multihomer game of the season, tying five others for the second-most by a rookie. Mark McGwire holds the record with seven.

“You just have a really good feeling that every time he’s up to the plate, he’s going to do some damage,” Kershaw said. “Ev-

erything he’s hitting is hit really hard. His outs are loud outs right now.”

Kershaw (10-2) struck out 10 and became the first 10-game winner in the National League despite giving up plenty of hard hits himself. The three-time Cy Young Award winner already has allowed a career-high 17 homers this year.

“I don’t know. I’m giving up a lot of home runs right now,” Kershaw said. “You hope your mistakes are hit for singles or doubles. It just so happens mine are going out of the ballpark right now. I don’t know what you do to change that, other than stop making mistakes.”

Justin Turner hit a two-run homer and Chris Taylor had a solo shot for the Dodgers, who jumped out to a 7-0 lead against struggling Mets starter Zack Wheeler (3-5) in the first two innings.

Turner had four hits and four RBIs against his former team. Bellinger also drove in four runs.

“You cannot spot Clayton Kershaw seven runs and expect to come out on top,” Collins said. “We just couldn’t stop them.”

Kershaw allowed two homers to Jose Reyes, including a two-run drive in the seventh inning. Jay Bruce also connected

and rookie Gavin Cecchini hit a two-run shot for New York.

Kershaw was charged with six runs on six hits and a walk in 6 1/3 innings. His ERA jumped from an NL-best 2.23 to 2.61.

Los Angeles’ first five batters got hits, including Bellinger’s three-run homer. Bellinger followed Turner’s home run in the second with a solo shot.

The Dodgers finished with a season-high 17 hits. They have won 10 of 11 and are a season-high 19 games over .500 at 45-26.

Wheeler gave up seven runs and eight hits in two innings. He was coming off the worst start of his career last Tuesday, when he lasted only 1 2/3 innings against the Cubs.

Derby discussion. Bellinger said he hasn’t been asked to participate in the Home Run Derby during All-Star festivities in Miami next month, but would be a willing participant. “I think it would be pretty cool,” he said. “It would be pretty special if my dad could throw to me. He’s been throwing BP to me my whole life.” Bellinger’s father, Clay, played in the majors from 1999 to 2002 with the Yankees and Angels. He hit 12 home runs in 183 career games.

Roundup

Marlins rally from 6 down to stun the Nats

Associated Press

MIAMI — The celebratory shaving cream in Marcell Ozuna’s ears provided a clue: This time it was the Miami Marlins with the walk-off hit.

After blowing leads and losing on the final pitch in back-to-back weekend games, the Marlins overcame an early six-run deficit Monday night, and Ozuna singled home the winning run with two outs in the ninth inning to beat the Washington Nationals 8-7.

Justin Bour helped reverse the script for Miami when he tied the game at 6 in the third with a grand slam, his 18th homer. Giancarlo Stanton also hit his 18th to make it 7-all in the seventh.

“That was a lot of fun,” Bour said. “It was a great ballgame to be a part of. We were down six but never really out of it.”

Miami bounced back after

losing twice in Atlanta on walk-off hits by Brandon Phillips.

“Guys have pretty short memories. You move forward all the time,” Marlins manager Don Mattingly said. “We’ve really had a lot of guys swinging the bat well, and I think it gives us confidence.”

Bryce Harper hit his 18th homer for Washington. Anthony Rendon also homered before leaving in the fifth with a neck stinger he sustained diving for a grounder. His status is day to day.

Enny Romero (2-3) retired his first two batters in the ninth but walked Dee Gordon on four pitches. Gordon stole second and went to third on a sharp infield single by Stanton before Christian Yelich walked on a 3-2 pitch to load the bases.

Ozuna badly missed a 99 mph fastball to fall behind 0-2. Romero’s next pitch was clocked at 96 mph, and Ozuna

launched it to the warning track in left-center, triggering a celebration that included a shaving cream pie to his face.

Royals 4, Red Sox 2: Whit Merrifield drove in the go-ahead run in the seventh inning, Eric Hosmer hit a two-run homer and host Kansas City topped Boston for its eighth win in nine games.

Blue Jays 7, Rangers 6: Kendrys Morales hit a go-ahead single after a tying single by Josh Donaldson in the ninth inning, and Toronto edged host Texas in a matchup of AL Division Series opponents the past two seasons.

Cubs 3, Padres 2: Willson Contreras hit a tying homer, Javier Baez scored the go-ahead run on an error and Wade Davis worked out of a ninth-inning jam for host Chicago against San Diego.

Pirates 8, Brewers 1: Andrew McCutchen hit a two-run

homer, Gerrit Cole pitched seven strong innings and Pittsburgh beat host Milwaukee.

Braves 9, Giants 0: R.A. Dickey threw seven scoreless innings, Matt Adams hit another homer and host Atlanta sent San Francisco to its seventh straight loss.

Reds 7, Rays 3: Scott Schebler and Scooter Gennett homered and Joey Votto snapped an eighth-inning tie with an RBI single, helping Cincinnati end a season-high nine-game losing streak with a victory over host Tampa Bay.

Astros 4, Athletics 1: George Springer hit his 20th home run, and Jake Marisnick and Derek Fisher also went deep in Houston’s victory over host Oakland.

Mariners 6, Tigers 2: Mike Zunino continued his torrid month with a pair of two-run homers to lead host Seattle past Detroit.