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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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White House issues warning to Assad

By TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

MUNICH — The Pentagon said Tuesday that the United States has detected “active handling of chemical weapons” at Syria’s Shayrat air base, which prompted the White House to warn President Bashar Assad that he would “pay a very heavy price” if those weapons are used.

Nevertheless, Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis said Monday that the United States will avoid getting drawn deeper into the Syrian civil war.

The warning to Assad was based on aerial surveillance of the Shayrat base in the last few days, said Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman. Davis did not get into specifics

Tuesday.

On April 4, a chemical weapons attack was launched from the Shayrat base against Syrian civilians.

Officials in Damascus dismissed the U.S. accusations. Ali Haidar, the Syrian minister for national reconciliation, told The Associated Press that the charges foreshadowed a new diplomatic offensive at the United Nations against the Syrian government.

Dmitry Peskov, a spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, said, “Such threats to Syria’s legitimate leaders are unacceptable.”

The charges and countercharges came as tensions between U.S.-backed opposition forces and pro-government units have escalated in south-

ern Syria, where the United States maintains a base to train Syrian rebels to fight Islamic State. Pro-Assad forces backed by Russia and Iran also have a presence in the area, close to where Syria’s borders converge with those of Jordan and Iraq.

So far, to avoid further escalation, the United States has relied upon no-combat zones and several lines of communication with Moscow.

Still, on June 18, a U.S. Navy F/A-18E Super Hornet shot down a Syrian Sukhoi Su-22 bomber that attacked U.S.-backed rebel forces. U.S. jets in southern Syria have also downed two Iranian-made drones that appeared to pose a threat to those forces.

“How do you avoid mission creep?” Mattis said as he

traveled to Europe for meetings with defense ministers at NATO. “You stay focused on where the enemy is and you set up any number of coordination efforts if you’re getting near converging forces, either Assad regime or Russian. You have to assume there are either Iranian officered or Lebanese Hezbollah elements with them. So what we do is we keep moving against ISIS.”

Pro-Assad forces are seeking to maintain a strategic stronghold in southern Syria as they prepare for the anticipated struggle after the fall of ISIS’ capital in Raqqa — the fight to retake control of the fertile Euphrates River Valley.

Thousands pay respects to fallen sailors

By TYLER HLAVAC

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Thousands of people lined the streets of Yokosuka on Tuesday to pay their respects to the seven USS Fitzgerald sailors who died after the destroyer collided with a cargo ship off the coast of Japan on June 17.

Servicemembers, civilians and local Japanese workers saluted and waved American flags as a procession of USS Fitzgerald sailors, friends and family members traveled in a fleet of buses from the base chapel to the Fleet Theater, where a memorial service was held for the seven who died.

More than 2,000 people lined the mile-long route, a Navy statement said. The 650-seat theater was filled to capacity for the event, which was closed to the media.

Acting Secretary of the Navy Sean Stackley ordered the national ensign of the United States to be flown at half-mast from sunrise to sunset Tuesday to mourn the lost sailors.

Pacific Fleet Commander Adm. Scott Swift, who visited the Fitzgerald and its crew on Monday, said the destroyer’s sailors and the base are beginning to return to a regular routine but that scars from the incident would remain.

“We’re not going to be over this,” he told Stars and Stripes during an interview Monday. “This isn’t going to just go away. This is going to be a long-term effort. People are going to process this differently on different timelines. Someone that’s really struggling now ... another person may not hit that threshold for six months from now.”

Swift said he was proud of

how the crew responded after the collision and that he was struck by their toughness.

“We mourn the loss of the [seven sailors] but it is stunning to me we didn’t lose more,” he said. “When you look at the physical damage, the force of that impact ... it is just amazing. The crew needs to understand that their actions saved many more lives. We would’ve lost a lot more if they didn’t respond the way that they did.”

Swift said the Fitzgerald crew has, for the most, regained control of the ship. Sailors from across the 7th Fleet had taken over various duties, including standing watches, to give the Fitzgerald crew time to recover from the accident.

Organizations such as the USO, Red Cross and Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, which extended their hours and ser-

vices after the collision, have resumed normal operations.

The Fitzgerald is tentatively scheduled to enter dry dock between July 6 and 8 to receive a full damage assessment before being sent stateside for full repairs, Swift said. The assessment will determine if the ship is able to travel under its own power or will need to be towed.

The Fitzgerald is still flooded in some sections, including two berthing compartments, and has areas without power, said Swift, who added that damage below the waterline has still not been fully assessed.

“The overall focus is ... we’re gonna fix Fitz,” he said.

Swift said he looking for a ship to take over for the Fitzgerald and is considering vessels outside the 7th Fleet. He said he has two candidates in mind but declined to name them.

Marines renew old relationships in Helmand

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In Afghanistan's turbulent Helmand province, U.S. Marines are rekindling old relationships and identifying weaknesses in the Afghan forces that the Trump administration hopes to address with a new strategy and the targeted infusion of several thousand American forces.

Returning to Afghanistan's south after five years, Marine Brig. Gen. Roger Turner already knows where he could use some additional U.S. troops. And while he agrees that the fight against the Taliban in Helmand is at a difficult stalemate, he said he is seeing improvements in the local forces as his Marines settle into their roles advising the Afghan National Army's 215th Corps.

Turner's report on the fight in Helmand will be part of a broader assessment that Gen. Joseph Dunford will collect this week from his senior military commanders in Afghanistan.

Dunford landed in Kabul on Monday with a mission to pull together the final elements of a military strategy that will include sending nearly 4,000 more U.S. troops into the country. He will be meeting with Afghan officials as well as U.S. and coalition military leaders and troops.

The expected deployment of more Americans will be specifically molded to bolster the

Afghan forces in critical areas so they can eventually take greater control over the security of their own nation.

The Taliban have slowly resurged, following the decision to end the combat role of U.S. and international forces at the end of 2014. The NATO coalition switched to a support and advisory role, while the U.S. has also focused on counterterrorism missions.

Recognizing the continued Taliban threat and the growing Islamic State presence in the country, the Obama administration slowed its plan to withdraw all U.S. forces from Afghanistan by the end of last year. There are now about 8,400 there.

But commanders have complained that the sharp drawdown hurt their ability to adequately train and advise the Afghans while also increasing the counterterrorism fight. As a result, the Trump administration is completing a new military, diplomatic and economic strategy for the war and is poised to send the additional U.S. troops, likely bolstered by some added international forces.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis will be in Brussels later this week and is expected to talk with allies about their ongoing support for the war.

While Turner said he has already seen improvements in Afghanistan's 215th Corps,

he said adding more advisers would allow him to pinpoint problems at the lower command levels, including more brigades.

"The level and number of advisers you have really gives you the ability to view the chain on all the functional areas. The more areas you can see — you can have a greater impact on the overall capability of the force," he told the Associated Press in an interview from Helmand province. "If we had more capacity in the force we would be able to address more problems, faster."

He said that although the Afghan forces have improved their ability to fight, they still need help at some of the key underpinnings of a combat force, such as getting spare parts to troops.

The seemingly simple task of efficiently ordering and receiving parts — something American forces do routinely — requires a working supply chain from the warehouse to the unit on the battlefield.

Turner said that's an issue that could be improved with additional advisers.

Other improvements, he said, include increasing the size of Afghanistan's special operations forces and building the capacity and capabilities of its nascent air force.

The Afghan ground forces in Helmand, he said, have been able to launch offensive op-

erations against the Taliban, including a recent battle in Marjah.

"I don't think last year they could have taken the fight to Marjah like they just did," he said. "They're in a much better position that they were a year ago."

But they are facing a resilient Taliban, whose fighters are newly financed now that the poppy harvest is over.

"Once they draw their finances, they start operations," said Turner. "What we've seen so far since the end of May, when they made that transition, is a steady grind of activity across a number of places in the province."

What has helped a lot, Turner said, is his Marines' ability to renew old relationships with Afghan tribal elders, provincial ministers and military commanders they worked with six or seven years ago.

Battalion officers they knew then are now commanders; many government leaders are still in place.

"We obviously have a long commitment here in Helmand. It's been good for the Marines to come back here," he said. "This is a really meaningful mission. I think people realize that we don't want to get into a situation where the kinds of pre-9/11 conditions exist again."

Marine Corps Installations Pacific on Okinawa has new commander

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Marine Brig. Gen. Paul Rock has taken command of Marine Corps Installations Pacific and Camp Butler, which provides installation services to forward-deployed Marines, sailors and their families in Okinawa, mainland Japan, South Korea and Hawaii.

Rock, who has a long history with the MV-22 Osprey, an aircraft that has faced intense scrutiny on Okinawa, replaced fellow naval aviator Maj. Gen. Joaquin Malavet during a ceremony Tuesday afternoon

at Camp Foster.

Rock, who previously served as director of Strategy, Policy and Plans for U.S. Southern Command, attended the U.S. Naval Academy and was commissioned in 1988, his Marine Corps biography said. Two years later, he became a naval aviator and flew the CH-46E Sea Knight during deployments around the world.

After serving as air officer for 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, Rock became a flight instructor, his biography said. For the next six years, he was an operational

tester and then an Osprey instructor.

Rock later commanded the Marines' first operational MV-22B squadron, VMM-263, his biography said.

Before serving with U.S. Southern Command, Rock was commanding general of the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, based in Cherry Point, N.C.

Malavet, who came to MCIPAC in June 2015, heads to U.S. Pacific Command, where he will serve as the director of Strategic Planning and Policy.

'Fat Leonard' bribery case in Navy court

Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. — While he was stationed in Singapore, a U.S. Navy commander ate suckling pigs worth \$400 apiece, attended a Gucci fashion show with his wife and enjoyed the services of prostitutes — all courtesy of a Malaysian defense contractor, Navy prosecutors alleged Monday.

Cmdr. David Alexander Morales is the latest Navy official to be charged in a wide-ranging bribery scandal in which officers allegedly provided ship schedules and important access to Singapore-based businessman Leonard Francis.

Nicknamed "Fat Leonard" for his large size, Francis was determined to maintain his firm's market share in servicing American warships in Asian ports, a lucrative operation that spanned 25 years and allowed him to overbill the Navy by nearly \$35 million.

The Department of Justice has already filed charges against 25 people, including Francis as well as 20 former and current officers in the Navy. Several, including a retired admiral, have pleaded guilty.

Morales, 49, is the first to be charged in the Navy's military court system. His journey effectively began Monday at a preliminary hearing in Norfolk, Va., as prosecutors flipped through pages of text messages between him and Francis while itemizing the various gifts Morales allegedly received.

His attorney said after the hearing that the Navy has a weak case, which federal officials had declined to prosecute.

"The leftovers are for the Navy," said Frank Spinner, a Colorado-based military defense lawyer. "The sharks have been prosecuted. Now they're going after the minnows."

Much of the hearing cen-

tered on the testimony of Janice Horst, a special agent who conducts criminal investigations for the Department of Defense Inspector General. She described a friendship between the two men in which Francis paid for expensive dinners, liquor and prostitutes when Morales' wife wasn't around. When she was, Horst said Francis bought the couple tickets to fashion shows or a Julio Iglesias concert.

Horst said Francis seemed to be grooming Morales to provide him with important information, and that Francis had asked the commander for ship schedules. Morales told Francis that he wouldn't provide any classified information.

Cmdr. Angela Tang, a Navy prosecutor, said Morales also gave Francis the email of an admiral, introduced him to other contacts and recommended others for Francis to approach.

She said Morales was "right

on the cusp of providing unclassified ship schedules" and "seemed very eager to please Mr. Francis."

Morales allegedly passed along an envelope to Francis. But Spinner, Morales' defense attorney, pointed out during cross-examination that it was never recovered and its contents remain unknown.

Spinner also said the Navy lacks hard evidence that Morales engaged with prostitutes beyond claims made by Francis, who has become a witness for prosecutors.

Spinner said Morales may have had a close relationship with Francis "but that doesn't mean it crossed the line."

A Navy captain who oversaw the preliminary hearing will decide in the coming weeks whether to recommend Morales for a court-martial. An admiral will then decide if one should proceed.

Pentagon memo targets foreign-born recruits

The Washington Post

The Pentagon is considering a plan to cancel enlistment contracts for 1,000 foreign-born recruits without legal immigration status, knowingly exposing them to deportation, a Defense Department memo shows.

The undated action memo, prepared for Defense Secretary Jim Mattis by personnel and intelligence officials at the Pentagon and obtained by The Washington Post, describes potential security threats of immigrants recruited in a program designed to award fast-tracked citizenship in exchange for urgently needed medical and language skills.

Additionally, 4,100 troops — most of whom are naturalized citizens — may face "enhanced screening," though the Pentagon voiced concern on how to navigate "significant legal constraints" of "continuous monitoring" of citizens without cause, according to the memo.

Officials have assigned threat level tiers to the nearly 10,000 Military Accessions Vital to National Interest program recruits, both in the service and waiting to serve, based on characteristics like proximity to classified information or how thoroughly they have been vetted.

The Defense Department launched the

program in 2009. Since the program's start, more than 10,400 troops, most of them with service in the Army, have filled medical billets and language specialties.

Last year, officials heightened security screenings specifically for MAVNI recruits, diverting "already constrained Army fiscal and manpower resources," the memo said.

The overtaken vetting process and heightened security risk led officials to recommend canceling enlistment contracts for all 1,800 awaiting orders for basic training and halting the program altogether, according to the memo.

Those recruits are in what the military calls the delayed-entry program, a holding pool of recruits assigned training dates in the future. About 1,000 of them have seen their visas expire while waiting for travel orders, which would put them at risk of deportation if their contracts are canceled.

Defense Department spokesman Johnny Michael said Monday that the agency is reviewing program requirements. He declined to confirm the existence of the memo or ongoing internal discussions. The copy obtained by The Post was signed off by Pentagon personnel official Tony Kurta on May 19. It is unclear when the memo was issued and its current status.

Margaret Stock, a retired Army officer

central in implementing the program in 2009, reviewed the document and called the decision a breach of contract made in bad faith.

"It's terrible. You trusted the Army, who delayed the process, and now they're going to cancel your contract and have you deported," Stock said.

Stock, now an attorney who practices immigration law in Alaska, said the Department of Homeland Security would possibly welcome the move as the Trump administration seeks to ramp up deportations.

The Pentagon is also considering ending the careers of 2,400 part-time troops in the program who have yet to attend basic training.

Stock waved off concerns of heightened risk of the MAVNI recruits cited in the memo, which says 30 percent subject to "enhanced screening" have "unmitigable derogatory information" that could bar them from service.

She pointed to a recent Army blunder — an enlistment of a U.S.-born soldier who fought alongside Russia-back separatists in Ukraine — as an example of extreme vetting that occurs for program recruits but not native-born troops.

GOP works to save health care bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate leaders scrambled Tuesday to rescue their health care bill, in deepening jeopardy as opposition from rebellious Republicans intensified. The defections proliferated after Congress' nonpartisan budget referee said the measure would leave 22 million more people uninsured by 2026 than President Barack Obama's law.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., was hoping to staunch his party's rebellion, a day after the Congressional Budget Office released its report. He's been aiming to win Senate passage this week, before a weeklong July 4 recess that leaders worry opponents will use to weaken support for the legislation.

The CBO analysis suggested some ammunition GOP leaders could use, saying the Senate bill would cut federal deficits by \$202 billion more over the coming decade than the version the House approved in May. Senate leaders could use some of those additional savings to attract moderate votes by making Medicaid and other provisions more generous, though conservatives

would rather use that money to reduce red ink.

"I would not bet against Mitch McConnell," his House counterpart, Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., told reporters. But the Senate was convening later than usual Tuesday with no sign that debate on the health care measure would begin as leaders had hoped, underscoring McConnell's need to focus on closed-door deal-making to rescue the bill.

The projected boost in uninsured people fed concerns by moderate Republican lawmakers that the Senate measure, annulling parts of Obama's 2010 overhaul, was too drastic. Yet conservatives were unhappy that it didn't do enough to dismantle Obama's law and lower premiums by repealing coverage requirements, leaving McConnell with little margin for error — the bill fails if three of the 52 GOP senators vote no.

The 22 million extra Americans were just 1 million fewer than the number the budget office estimated would become uninsured under the House version. President Donald Trump has called the House bill "mean" and prodded senators to produce a package with more "heart."

Minutes after the report's release, three GOP senators threatened to oppose a procedural vote to begin debate expected Wednesday — enough to derail the legislation.

Moderate Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said she would vote no. She tweeted that she favors a bipartisan effort to fix Obama's statute and added, "CBO analysis shows Senate bill won't do it."

Conservative Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., said he would oppose that motion unless the bill was changed. Fellow conservative Ron Johnson, R-Wis., said he had "a hard time believing" he'd have enough information to back the motion this week.

Moderate Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., on Friday said he'd oppose the procedural motion without alterations.

Those rebels were just part of McConnell's problem. Two other conservatives — Texas' Ted Cruz and Utah's Mike Lee — have also said they'd vote no without revisions, and several other moderates have expressed worries about the bill's Medicaid cuts and reductions in people with coverage.

Dutch held partly liable in killing of Muslims by Serbs

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — A Dutch appeals court ruled Tuesday that the government was partially liable in the deaths of more than 300 Muslim men killed by Bosnian Serb forces in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre.

The ruling formally struck down a civil court's landmark 2014 judgment that said the state was liable in the deaths of the Bosnian Muslim men and boys who were turned over by Dutch U.N. peacekeepers to Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995 and subsequently killed.

The appeals panel largely upheld the earlier case's findings while significantly cutting the amount of damages relatives of the dead could receive by assessing the victims' chances of survival had they remained in the care of the Dutch troops.

The court estimated the chances of Muslim males' survival if they had stayed in the

Dutch compound at around 30 percent.

"The state is therefore liable for 30 percent of the losses suffered by the relatives," the court said in a statement. The 2014 judgment didn't include that qualification.

In a written reaction, the Dutch Defense Ministry said the government would carefully study the latest ruling.

"The starting point is that the Bosnian Serbs were responsible," the statement said.

The appeals judgment is the latest in a string of legal cases in the Netherlands concerning the country's role in the Srebrenica massacre and whether the country's soldiers could or should have done more to prevent the mass killings.

The men were among around 8,000 Muslim men and boys killed by Bosnian Serb forces in Europe's worst massacre since World War II.

New cyberattack causes disruption around world

Associated Press

PARIS — A new and highly virulent outbreak of malicious data-scrambling software appears to be causing mass disruption across the world, hitting companies and governments in Europe especially hard.

Officials in Ukraine reported serious intrusions of the country's power grid as well as at banks and government offices, where one senior executive posted a photo of a darkened computer screen and the words, "the whole network is down." The prime minister cautioned that the country's "vital systems" hadn't been affected.

Russia's Rosneft oil company also reported falling victim to hacking and said it had narrowly avoided major damage, as did Danish shipping giant A.P. Moller-Maersk.

The attack was confirmed to have spread beyond Europe when U.S. drugmaker

Merck, based in New Jersey, said its systems had also been compromised.

The number of companies and agencies reportedly affected by the ransomware campaign was piling up fast, and the electronic rampage appeared to be rapidly snowballing into a worldwide crisis.

There's very little information about what might be behind the disruption at each specific company, but cybersecurity experts rapidly zeroed in on a form of ransomware, the name given to programs that hold data hostage by scrambling it until a payment is made.

"A massive ransomware campaign is currently unfolding worldwide," said Romanian cybersecurity company Bitdefender, where analyst Bogdan Botezatu said that it appeared to be nearly identical to GoldenEye, one of a family of hostage-taking programs that has been circulating for months.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Katherine the shark spotted off coast

VA COBB ISLAND — A huge great white shark named Katherine has been spotted 10 miles off the coast of Cobb Island.

The Virginian-Pilot reported that the 14-foot, 2,300-pound shark sent a satellite ping on Sunday afternoon, alerting scientists that she is in the area.

Katherine was originally tagged by a research group called Ocearch four years ago in Cape Cod, when she was measured and weighed.

The organization follows about 300 sharks.

Flight diverted because of disruptive passenger

TX CORPUS CHRISTI — Authorities said a Southwest Airlines flight from Los Angeles to Houston was diverted after a passenger became disruptive and attempted to open an exterior door while the plane was in the air.

Southwest Flight 4519 was diverted Sunday to the Texas Gulf coast city of Corpus Christi where the passenger was removed.

John Hyland, chief of public safety for Corpus Christi International Airport, said an off-duty officer on the flight helped to restrain the passenger.

The flight carrying more than 170 passengers and crew later continued on to Houston, about four hours behind schedule.

8 of 16 elk that fled ranch are back home

VT DERBY — Vermont Fish and Wildlife officials said eight of the 16 elk on the run since they escaped from a Derby enclosure are back home.

Seven returned and an eighth was captured. Commissioner Louis Porter told WCAX-TV that one was shot by its owner or one of his employees.

The elk had escaped on June 18.

Fish and Wildlife officials are continuing to search for the eight elk still on the loose.

Porter said the best option would be to get them back alive, but if they are posing a risk to people or a disease risk to wildlife, the department may have to take other measures.

Woman punches another in parking spot dispute

DE REHOBOTH BEACH — A Delaware woman was arrested after punching another woman in the face over a Rehoboth Beach parking spot.

The Wilmington News-Journal reported that Nakala Spencer, 20, was arrested Saturday after hitting a woman who tried to pull into a parking spot Spencer was trying to save.

A town ordinance forbids the practice of saving spaces.

Spencer was released on a \$1,000 bond.

Game turns violent as fans get into brawl

CA SANTA ANA — A friendly game in California between former players of two professional Mexican soccer clubs turned violent when dozens of fans rushed the field and began fighting.

The Orange County Register reported the “game of legends” between former Club America and Pumas players Sunday was intended to benefit Santa Ana-based United Soccer Talents Foundation, which supports soccer players.

Santa Ana police Cmdr. Jeffrey Smith said about 50 fans made their way onto the field

at halftime and began fighting. Officers shut down the game and cleared the field and stands, and five suspects were detained.

3 arrested after illegal fireworks spark blaze

NY NEW YORK — Fire marshals arrested three men who set off fireworks that sparked a huge Bronx blaze.

A 27-year-old and two 23-year-olds were charged with illegal possession of fireworks, arson and criminal mischief. Marshals said the men admitted they were having a “fireworks fight.”

The blaze started in the rear of one building but spread quickly to six other homes and vehicles parked nearby. One person was injured, and seven firefighters suffered non-life-threatening injuries, including one who was briefly hospitalized.

Fireworks are illegal in New York City.

Report says state leads in deaths by lightning

FL NAPLES — Florida is leading the nation in the number of people killed by lightning strikes.

The Naples Daily News reported Saturday that 52 people have been killed by lightning since January 2007, which is the most in the nation, according to an analysis of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather data.

The USA Today Network-Florida analysis concluded that the state with the second-highest number of fatalities was Texas, which had 21 during the same time period.

The newspaper said the 52 Florida fatalities include a woman hit by lightning while

driving in Jacksonville, a man killed while picking blueberries in Santa Rosa County and a woman taking shelter under a Sarasota park gazebo.

Dancer taking unusual dance show to Scotland

ME PORTLAND — A performance artist who flailed around and jumped on a man’s lap during a Portland City Council meeting is taking her unusual brand of interpretive dance on the road.

The Portland Press Herald reports that Sara Juli will perform a work about incontinence this summer at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland.

The piece, “Tense Vagina: an actual diagnosis,” explores the bladder-control issues she experienced following the birth of her children. The 39-year-old grabbed headlines in March when she was invited to perform at a City Council meeting as part of the mayor’s “Arts in the Chamber” series.

Driver given warning; had ‘alien’ passenger

GA ALPHARETTA — Police said a motorcycle officer who stopped a driver for speeding on a suburban highway north of Atlanta had an “extraterrestrial encounter” — sort of.

Alpharetta police spokesman George Gordon said that when the officer pulled the man over Sunday, a life-sized doll of a big-eyed, large-skulled alien was riding in the front passenger seat.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported the driver was clocked at 84 mph.

The driver got off with a verbal warning — and some laughs from the officer.

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Westbrook easily wins NBA MVP award

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Russell Westbrook moved past Oscar Robertson and kept right on going to the top of the NBA.

Westbrook was voted MVP on Monday night after setting a record with 42 triple-doubles during his historic season. He led the league with 31.6 points and added 10.7 rebounds and 10.4 assists per game, joining Robertson as the only players to average a triple-double for the season and breaking Robertson's single-season record of 41 triple-doubles in 1961-62.

"I remember growing up just being home, playing the video games and stuff with my pops, and my mom sitting there and my brother and just talking about maybe one day I could be the MVP. Obviously I was joking at the time," Westbrook said.

"But now to be standing here with this trophy next to me is a true blessing, man, and it's an unbelievable feeling, something that I can never imagine."

Westbrook's victory ended the first NBA Awards show, which included two wins apiece for the Houston Rockets and Milwaukee Bucks.

He received 69 first-place votes and 888 points from a panel of 100 media members and a fan vote to easily beat Houston's James Harden, who had 22 first-place votes and 753 points. Kawhi Leonard was third with nine first-place votes and 500 points.

Westbrook succeeded Stephen Curry, who had won the past two MVP awards. The point guard who plays with defiance

on the court got choked up during an acceptance speech in which he brought some teammates onto the stage with him.

The Thunder went 33-9 when he had a triple-double, riding Westbrook's record run into the playoffs in their first season after losing Kevin Durant to the Golden State Warriors.

"Oscar, guys like him, Magic Johnson, those guys, obviously I wasn't able to see those guys play, but just to look back at history and see the things that they did, it's something that I looked up to as a kid," Westbrook said.

"I never thought I would be able to say that I broke Oscar Robertson's record, and that's just a true blessing."

Earlier, Milwaukee's Malcolm Brogdon became the first player not picked in the first round to win NBA Rookie of the Year in the common draft era, beating out Philadelphia's Dario Saric and Joel Embiid.

Brogdon was the No. 36 overall selection out of Virginia. The common draft era began in 1966.

"I think it's an example for guys that are told they are too short, they are not athletic enough, they are not real point guards, they are not real shooting guards," Brogdon said. "I just think it's an important message for people to see, and it can be done. It just takes a lot."

Brogdon's Greek teammate, Giannis Antetokounmpo, won the Most Improved Player award.

Houston coach Mike D'Antoni won his second Coach of the Year award, and the Rockets' Eric Gordon was Sixth Man of the

Year after setting a record for most three-pointers off the bench in his first season as a reserve.

"Obviously, I'm just proud of the team and the way they responded all year. Great organization," D'Antoni said of the Rockets' 55-win season.

"This is not an individual award. This is a lot of people, a lot of hard work goes into it, and I'm the recipient of some pretty good players."

In his first season coming off the bench, Gordon set a single-season record with 206 three-pointers by a reserve. He averaged 16.2 points to help fuel the Rockets' run to the surprising No. 3 seed in the Western Conference and edged former NBA Finals MVP Andre Iguodala of Golden State by 32 points.

Golden State's Draymond Green won the Defensive Player of the Year, ending Leonard's two-year run. Leading the league in steals from his do-everything role with the NBA champions. He had a franchise-record 10 steals in a Feb. 10 game at Memphis while recording the first triple-double in NBA history without scoring in double figures, adding 11 rebounds and 10 assists.

The NBA formerly gave out its individual awards at various points throughout the postseason before switching to the awards show this season and presenting them all at once in front of the league's top players and stars from the entertainment world.

Bill Russell was presented the first Lifetime Achievement award.

Howard confident of success with Hornets

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — At 31 and entering his 14th NBA season, eight-time All-Star Dwight Howard says his best basketball is ahead of him.

Wearing a teal suit with black trim, a smiling Howard insisted Monday he can return to being a dominant center with the Charlotte Hornets, where he will be reunited with coach Steve Clifford and play for one of his childhood heroes, team owner Michael Jordan.

"A lot of people have written me off, which is great because it's going to make me work even harder," Howard said during his introductory news conference. "I'm just looking forward to this

opportunity because I have a lot left in the tank."

This will be Howard's third team in three seasons.

The Atlanta Hawks, his hometown team, traded him to Charlotte one year into a three-year, \$74 million contract. Howard said he has no hard feelings, adding that "sometimes things just don't work out."

But he's confident Charlotte is the right fit.

"I think I'm a lot healthier than I have been in the past five years and I think this is going to be my best time," Howard said. "I'm a lot wiser now, stronger mentally and physically, and I'm in the right place with a great coach, a great GM and the GOAT (greatest of all time).

So I think this is the perfect opportunity."

Much of Howard's optimism stems from being reunited with Clifford.

They worked together for seven seasons in Orlando and Los Angeles, and the 6-foot-11 three-time Defensive Player of the Year loves Clifford's defense-first mentality. He's also confident Clifford will put him in the right situations to succeed on offense.

"He understands me," Howard said. "... He was always there for me and not once did he turn his back on me or talk bad about me. He was very positive and he was somebody that I have always trusted in."

The feeling is mutual.

Clifford said he's never coached a player smarter than Howard when it comes to understanding defensive coverages. While Howard has incredible athletic ability, Clifford said, he's never been given the credit he deserves for playing a "thinking man's game."

"Smart always wins in the NBA," Clifford said.

Howard is expected to start in Charlotte alongside All-Star point guard Kemba Walker, guard Nic Batum and forwards Michael Kidd-Gilchrist and Marvin Williams. Cody Zeller, last year's starting center, is expected to come off the bench for the Hornets but still see significant minutes.

Florida prevails in opener of CWS finals

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Florida got a dominant performance from Brady Singer, a big defensive play when LSU was threatening and just enough offense.

Now, after a 4-3 win in Game 1 of the College World Series finals on Monday night, the Gators are one win from their first national championship in baseball.

But with LSU all-time wins leader Jared Poche' starting on Tuesday and first-round draft pick Alex Lange available if there's a Game 3, the Tigers believe this best-of-three series matching Southeastern Conference rivals is just getting started.

"We've got to play better if we want to win this thing," Florida coach Kevin O'Sullivan said. "It's not near over. We got six hits tonight, and Brady had to pitch his tail off. It's exciting to have Game 1 under our belt ... but we haven't crossed the line yet."

LSU's Greg Deichmann said he and his teammates haven't had their confidence dented.

Poche' (12-3) will pitch against Tyler Dyson (3-0) on Tuesday night.

"We're not hanging our heads about anything," he said. "We had a lot of great stuff we did tonight. We had a couple of tough breaks that didn't go our way. We're going to come out tomorrow with a lot of positivity, energy and get after it."

Singer struck out a career-high 12 in seven innings before turning the game over to closer Michael Byrne, who picked up his nation-leading 19th save for the Gators (51-19). The Gators improved to 19-7 in one-run games.

Singer relied on his fastball the first time through LSU's batting order and cleverly mixed in sliders the rest of the way.

"I felt like I was landing it a lot more for strikes than I usually do," he said. "The slider did feel good."

His strikeout total was the highest by a single pitcher in a CWS finals game. Singer (9-5) limited LSU (52-19) to three singles before Antoine Duplantis homered in the sixth.

Singer, who pitched a complete game in an 8-1 win over LSU in March, turned in his second strong performance at the CWS. The sophomore struck out nine and allowed one run in seven innings against Louisville last Tuesday. Monday marked the eighth straight game that Florida pitchers struck out 11 or more.

"My feelings are that we went up against who I believe to be maybe the best pitcher I've seen in the SEC for an opponent since I've been the coach at LSU," Tigers coach Paul Mainieri said.

"I think the guy will be the first pick in the draft next year, and we were having to piece it together with our bullpen guys. It was amazing we were right there and had a chance to win."

Singer left with a 4-2 lead after Deichmann doubled leading off the eighth. With fans clad in purple and gold chanting "L-S-U, L-S-U," Josh Smith sent Byrne's pitch into the right-center gap to drive in Deichmann. But Smith was thrown out trying for second by

Nick Horvath, who entered as a pinch runner in the top of the eighth and stayed in the game as the center fielder.

"That play changed the whole complexion of the game," O'Sullivan said.

LSU — playing its fourth game in six days and with Eric Walker out with an injury — turned to the seldom-used Russell Reynolds (1-2) to start. The fifth-year senior, wearing a close-cropped Mohawk under his cap and throwing an 85 mph fastball, gave the Tigers three shutout innings in his first start since March 2015.

He got a groundout to start the fourth but then walked three straight. That's when Mainieri called on Nick Bush, who gave up Jonathan India's two-run ground-rule double for a 3-0 lead.

"If you would have told me before the game we would get three shutout innings from (Reynolds), I would have been pleased," Mainieri said. "I got a little greedy there and tried to get an extra inning out of him. I should have started the fourth with Nick."

Selanne, Kariya headline Hockey Hall of Fame class

Associated Press

Paul Kariya always felt as if he knew where Teemu Selanne was on the ice when they had spectacular chemistry together as teammates.

On Monday, Selanne pulled a new trick, telling Kariya where he was going: the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Before Kariya got the call that he was being inducted, Selanne delivered the news that the dynamic duo that thrilled hockey in Anaheim for several years was going to be inducted together this fall.

The longtime Ducks teammates headline the Hall of Fame's class of 2017, which includes the long-overdue additions of Mark Recchi, Dave Andreychuk and longtime Canadian university coach Clare Drake. Canadian star Danielle

Goyette became the fifth women's player elected, and Boston Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs got in as part of the builder category.

Selanne was the only player elected in his first year of eligibility after putting up 1,457 points in 1,451 games over 21 NHL seasons. The "Finnish Flash" was a 10-time All-Star, had 76 goals as a rookie with Winnipeg in 1992-93 that still stands as one of his 18 NHL records and won the Stanley Cup with Anaheim in 2007.

"When I look back, I shake my head and say how lucky I was in so many different ways and so thankful that I was able to play for so many years," Selanne said.

He and Kariya played together for parts of six seasons with the Ducks, helping hockey grow in Southern California

in the 1990s, and then another with Colorado. Kariya had his career cut short by concussion problems, finishing with 989 points in as many games.

"I didn't retire willingly," said Kariya, who won an Olympic gold medal with Canada at the 2002 Olympics. "I would've loved to have kept playing. If there was any way of waving a magic wand and getting the opportunity to live through my entire career, the good and the bad, I would do it again in a heartbeat."

Recchi's election in his fourth year of eligibility ended a curious omission for a player who won the Cup three times — once each with Pittsburgh (1991), Carolina (2006) and Boston (2011) — and is 12th in NHL scoring with 1,533 points. Every other retired player in

the top 28 in career scoring was already in the Hall of Fame.

"You can only do so much, and you've got to let your numbers and your play dictate where it gets you," Recchi said. "It was just something where you hope it's good enough at some point."

Andreychuk had an even longer wait, finally getting the call in his ninth chance after putting up 1,338 points in 23 seasons and serving as captain of the Tampa Bay Lightning's 2004 Cup team. His 640 goals are 14th all-time.

"The years that I have waited make no difference to me," Andreychuk said. "When I started (in Buffalo) in '82, I got the privilege of watching Gilbert Perreault score 500 goals and to think that I went by him, it's mind-boggling."

Indians rally from 7 down, beat Rangers

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The Indians trailed by seven runs and were without manager Terry Francona by the fourth inning Monday night. Coming off a disheartening sweep to a division rival, Cleveland badly needed a few runs.

It got them, and then it kept on going.

Francisco Lindor, Lonnie Chisenhall and Carlos Santana each had three RBIs to help Cleveland rally and beat the Texas Rangers 15-9 on Monday night after Francona left the game because he wasn't feeling well.

The Indians came back after trailing 9-2 in the fourth inning to avoid their first four-game losing streak since 2015.

"It's awesome," said Chisenhall, whose two-run single with the bases loaded in the sixth gave Cleveland the lead. "This is the best win of the year."

The Indians said Francona was evaluated by the team's medical staff and checked out fine. He experienced similar symptoms as when he left a game June 14, when he was taken to a hospital.

The team wouldn't say if Francona had been hospitalized again. An update was expected Tuesday.

"It's a genuine concern for not just me, but the whole staff and the team, as well," bench coach Brad Mills said. "I'm glad the doctors checked him out and we'll move down the road and hopefully we'll know something tomorrow."

Francona presented Rangers first baseman and former Indian Mike Napoli with his American League Championship ring before the game. Mills came out to fetch starter Carlos Carrasco in the fourth inning, the first sign the players had that Francona wasn't there.

"I know he's watching somehow and he's proud of what we were doing," Chisenhall said. "You always want him to feel good. His health is the most important thing."

The Indians scored a run in the fourth, four in the fifth, took the lead with five in the sixth and added three in the seventh.

Adrian Beltre, Elvis Andrus and Joey Gallo each homered off Cleveland starter

Carlos Carrasco to help build Texas' lead, but then the Indians offense finally woke up. Cleveland had been shut out twice, went 1-for-23 with runners in scoring position and got swept over three games by the Minnesota Twins in its previous series.

Cleveland set a season high in runs, matched a season best with 19 hits and was 11-for-28 with runners in scoring position. Every starter except Kipnis had at least two hits.

The comeback moved the Indians back into first place in the AL Central with a half-game lead over Minnesota.

Andrus added a solo homer off Dan Otero in the fourth after his three-run shot in the second. Beltre had a three-run homer during a four-run first, and Gallo added a solo shot for his 20th of the season.

"That's one game that absolutely doesn't feel good," Rangers manager Jeff Banister said. "There is nothing more you can say than that."

Roundup

Angels snap Dodgers' winning streak at 10

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Ricky Nolasco was pitching well while holding the big-hitting Dodgers scoreless. The only thing that stopped him was a liner that hit him in the shin and ended his night.

Still, Nolasco pitched into the seventh inning to pick up his first win in almost two months, Yunel Escobar drove in two runs and the Los Angeles Angels snapped the Dodgers' 10-game winning streak, 4-0 on Monday night.

Nolasco (3-9) gave up five hits while striking out five and walking two in 6²/₃ innings. He left the game after getting hit by a line drive by Enrique Hernandez. Nolasco was 0-7 in 10 starts since beating Oakland on April 27.

"Staying positive is the main thing," Nolasco said. "That was a bad little streak going there. I'd been feeling good in whatever games I'd been losing or whatever. Just trying to carry

that over to (Monday) and make some pitches.

"Obviously, they have a good lineup and things like that. Just trying to give us a chance to win and make a lot of good pitches."

The Dodgers also ended a streak of 17 consecutive games with at least one home run, which was tied for the longest stretch since moving to Los Angeles before the 1958 season. Their franchise record is 24 consecutive games set by Brooklyn in 1956.

Cam Bedrosian relieved Nolasco after he took the ball to the shin and faced runners on second and third with one out. He struck out pinch hitter Mike Freeman and Chase Utley to end the inning.

Cubs 5, Nationals 4: Wade Davis struck out big league batting leader Ryan Zimmerman with runners on second and third to blunt Washington's ninth-inning rally as visiting Chicago held on for a win.

In danger of being shut out

for the first time this season, the NL East-leading Nationals scored four times in the ninth. Their comeback began against Hector Rondon and continued when Davis became the Cubs' eighth pitcher of the game.

Red Sox 4, Twins 1: Chris Sale pitched 6¹/₃ overpowering innings with nine strikeouts and Mitch Moreland hit a solo homer for the third straight game as host Boston beat Minnesota in a matchup of two of the AL's top teams.

Yankees 6, White Sox 5: Jordan Montgomery matched his season high with seven solid innings and closer Aroldis Chapman shut down a ninth-inning rally just in time, lifting New York over host Chicago.

New York led 6-1 entering the ninth, but Yankees reliever Chasen Shreve gave up a three-run homer to Tim Anderson and Chapman allowed an RBI double to Jose Abreu. Chapman retired Avisail Garcia and Todd Frazier to finish his eighth save and first since returning from

the disabled list a week ago.

Diamondbacks 6, Phillies 1: Zack Greinke pitched five effective innings after a shaky start and Daniel Descalso had three RBIs as host Arizona rolled.

Cardinals 8, Reds 2: Randal Grichuk and Jedd Gyorko each homered and drove in three runs, leading host St. Louis.

Michael Wacha (4-3), who began the day with an 8.17 ERA over his last seven starts, limited the Reds to one run on five hits in six innings. He struck out five and walked one.

Giants 9, Rockies 2: Buster Posey hit an RBI double in the first and a sacrifice fly two innings later and Jeff Samardzija struck out five pitching into the seventh as San Francisco snapped a five-game losing streak by beating Colorado.

Brandon Belt and Denard Span each added run-scoring triples to back Samardzija (3-9), who lost his first three starts against the Rockies this year.