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Defense spending to dominate NATO talks

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

NATO allies are expected to boost defense spending in 2017 by 4.3 percent, marking the third consecutive year expenditures will rise for an alliance under pressure from the Trump administration to invest even more in their militaries.

"This means, over the last three years, European allies and Canada spent almost \$46 billion U.S. dollars more on defense," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters at his Brussels headquarters. "So we have really shifted gears. The trend is up and we intend to keep it up."

NATO defense ministers will meet on Thursday for a day of talks that will focus on efforts to increase military expenditures and chart the alliance's future course in Afghanistan, where the Pentagon is considering a troop increase.

It was unclear whether the talks would generate new troop contributions from NATO members, but Stoltenberg said allies are looking at ways to expand NATO's training mission in Afghanistan. A return to a NATO combat mission, however, is off the table, the alliance's top official added.

On defense spending, U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis warned allies in March that failure to meet NATO's own defense spending guidelines could force the U.S. to "moderate" its support for the military pact. NATO policy calls for members to dedicate 2 percent of gross domestic product to their respective militaries, but for years almost all nations have fallen short.

Mattis commits to Europe force extension through '20

By TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

GARMISCH, Germany — The United States will extend its forward presence of forces in eastern Europe through 2020, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Wednesday, continuing a commitment to the Continent's security that was declared 70 years ago this month.

The extension of forces to train with and strengthen eastern Europe's ability to counter any further acts of Russian aggression is in line with what the then-secretary of state, former Gen. George C. Marshall, outlined June 5, 1947, in what became known as the Marshall Plan — a plan to spend billions of U.S. dollars to help Europe rebuild and rebuff the influence of the Soviet Union after World War II, Mattis said.

"We can see today in Europe the realization of a strong vision," Mattis said in a speech at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies. "A peaceful, industrious and prosperous continent, free from tyranny, possessing the military strength to defend itself from aggression."

Today, that commitment is embodied in the buildup of forces and increased U.S. spending to increase training and exercises with NATO and partner forces, he said. Some 1,000 U.S. soldiers from the 2nd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, are leading a Poland-based battle group as an enhanced forward presence in Europe.

Four multinational battle groups, totaling about 4,500 troops from 15 member nations, conduct exercises and

train to quickly mobilize.

Mattis met with his German counterpart Ursula von der Leyen at the Marshall Center to commemorate the anniversary. The two also discussed Germany's contributions to the proposed surge of forces in Afghanistan and future plans for the European enhanced forward presence, Mattis said, without providing details.

The return of U.S. forces to Europe was prompted by Russia's invasion and annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014. That support was temporarily put into question during the 2016 presidential campaign as then-candidate and now President Donald Trump questioned NATO's value and criticized alliance members that failed to meet commitments to spend 2 percent of their budgets on defense.

Mattis: No new Syria chemical activity seen

By TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

BRUSSELS — The U.S. has seen no additional activity to indicate a chemical attack is imminent in Syria since the White House threatened President Bashar Assad with retaliation if any further steps were taken, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Wednesday.

"It appears they took the warning seriously," Mattis told reporters traveling with him to a NATO defense ministerial in Brussels.

Late Monday the White House issued a warning to Assad that "he and his military (would)

pay a heavy price" after aerial surveillance of Shayrat airfield — the same base that the regime used to launch a deadly chemical attack on civilians in Idlib in April — revealed "active preparations" for another chemical attack.

Mattis would not say exactly what the U.S. saw that gave it concern or confirm whether the only activity they saw was at the Shayrat base.

Syria has denied using banned weapons in the past and that any such preparations were now taking place. In 2013 and 2014, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which had identified

about 1,300 tons of sarin and chemicals used to produce it, removed those stockpiles from Syria.

"I think that Assad's chemical program goes far beyond one air base," Mattis said, declining to give specifics.

On April 4, the Syrian regime aircraft dropped what is suspected to be sarin gas on civilians in Idlib, killing scores of women and children. Several days later the U.S. responded by firing 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles from the Mediterranean Sea-based destroyers USS Porter and USS Ross. The missiles hit aircraft, fuel facilities and storage facilities.

Shiloh sailor who spurred search released from brig

BY TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A USS Shiloh sailor who was presumed lost at sea only to be found a week later in the ship's engine room has been freed from the brig while awaiting court-martial.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Peter Mims, who served as a gas turbine systems technician on the Yokosuka-based guided-missile cruiser, was released Tuesday from the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Brig, said Lt. Paul Newell, a Navy spokesman.

Mims, who was confined on June 21, is serving in an unknown capacity with Naval Surface Force, Pacific Fleet, at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Calif., Newell told Stars and Stripes. The unit is "responsible for the training, maintenance and crews of the approximately 90 ships of the Pacific Fleet," according to its website.

Officials did not specify why Mims was initially confined and later released. According to the Manual for Courts-Martial, servicemembers facing court-martial can be placed in pretrial confinement for a number of reasons, including suspicion the servicemember may flee or engage in serious criminal misconduct while awaiting trial. Additional authority, including review by an outside party, is needed for a servicemember to be confined longer than seven days.

Mims was reported missing the evening of

June 8 and was presumed to have fallen overboard the Shiloh, which was conducting routine operations near Okinawa.

Navy, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and Japan Coast Guard ships spent more than 50 hours searching for Mims, the Navy said. Helicopters and other aircraft from the Shiloh, USS McCampbell, USS Barry, USS John S. McCain and the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan assisted in the search before it was suspended June 11, with the presumption that he was lost at sea.

The Shiloh crew continued to search the ship after surface and air searches were canceled, and the crew was in the process of planning a memorial service for Mims when he was found in the ship's engineering room June 15, Navy statements said.

Navy officials told Stars and Stripes in an earlier email that further details will be released pending an investigation but that early indications were that Mims was actively trying to avoid sailors who were searching for him. The investigation is expected to conclude in mid-July.

Mims was presumed to have been the second sailor in a week to fall overboard from a ship. On June 6, Petty Officer Christopher Clavin, of the USS Normandy, was reported missing while the ship trained off the North Carolina coast. Navy and Coast Guard ships searched for him for more than 76 hours.

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Sub crew leader is relieved of command

(Bremerton, Wash.) Kitsap Sun

BANGOR, Maine — The blue crew commander of the Naval Base Kitsap-based sub USS Pennsylvania was relieved of command Friday after less than six months on the job, officials confirmed to the Navy Times on Monday.

Cmdr. Steven Everhart was relieved by Capt. Mark Schmall, head of Submarine Squadron 17, because of a loss of confidence in his ability to serve as commanding officer, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Corey Barker told the publication via email.

Everhart, from Great Falls, Mont., took command of the Ohio-class ballistic missile boat's blue crew on Jan. 13. He previously served as the executive officer of the Pennsylvania's blue crew from 2012 to 2014, according to the Navy.

Confidence in Everhart's leadership began to wane during an investigation that began about a month ago, according to the Navy Times. Barker wouldn't say what the investigation entails, because the probe is ongoing. Everhart has been reassigned to the staff of Submarine Group Nine, Barker said.

Capt. Chad Hennings, Submarine Squadron 17's deputy commander, has assumed command of the boat until a permanent replacement is named.

Submarine Squadron 17 and Submarine Squadron 19 are both under Submarine Group Nine, which is responsible for eight Trident ballistic-missile subs based at Bangor. Squadron 17 oversees them when they are active, Squadron 19 when they're undergoing overhaul.

The eight submarines assigned to Subgroup Nine are the Pennsylvania, USS Henry M. Jackson, USS Alabama, USS Kentucky, USS Nebraska, USS Maine and USS Louisiana and USS Nevada.

China launches new destroyer

Associated Press

BEIJING—China's increasingly powerful navy launched its most advanced domestically produced destroyer on Wednesday, at a time of rising competition with other naval powers such as the United States, Japan and India.

The first 10,000-ton Type 055 entered the water at Shanghai's Jiangnan Shipyard on Wednesday morning, China's navy said.

It said the ship is equipped with the latest air, missile,

ship and submarine defense systems. China is believed to be planning to produce four of the ships.

"The launch of this ship signifies that our nation's development of destroyers has reached a new stage," China's navy said.

A photo on the navy's website showed multicolored streamers being shot out of tubes while sailors and shipyard workers stood dockside next to a massive Chinese flag. It said the chief of the People's Liberation Army's

General Armaments Department, Zhang Youxia, presided over the ceremony.

The Type 055 is significantly larger than China's other modern destroyer, the Type 052, representing the rising sophistication of China's defense industries. Once heavily dependent on foreign technology, China in April launched its first aircraft carrier built entirely on its own, based on an earlier Ukrainian model.

In terms of displacement, it is roughly equivalent to the Arleigh Burke class of destroyer.

Raytheon: Laser-equipped helo zaps target

The Washington Post

During World War II, when British Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously said, “we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air,” he probably had no idea that his allies on the other side of the Atlantic would one day be mounting high-powered lasers onto attack helicopters and frying targets in the blink of an eye.

But the U.S. military and a leading defense contractor have apparently pulled off such a feat.

On Monday, Raytheon said that it had bolted a laser to an Apache AH-64 helicopter and zapped an unmanned target at White Sands Missile Range, N.M.

The weapons test marked the first time a “fully integrated laser system” had successfully located and shot a target from a rotary-wing aircraft “over a wide variety of flight regimes, altitudes and air speeds,” the company said in a statement.

Raytheon didn’t specify what the target was but said the helicopter’s laser “directed energy”

on it from nearly a mile away. Unlike the computer rendering of the weapon provided by the company, the laser’s beam is invisible in real life.

Video from the missile range shows the Apache flying over the New Mexico desert with the laser — a gray, torpedo-like tube with a ball on the front — attached to the vehicle’s right side. At one point the video shows black and white images of a rectangular object with a bright flash in the center of it, captioned “LASER ON TARGET.” Dramatic drum

music plays in the background. The laser’s shots were not shown in the footage.

The goal of the experiment, conducted in collaboration with U.S. Special Operations Command, was to see how well the Apache could fire the weapon given the vibration of the helicopter, the dust kicked up by the rotating blades and the vehicle’s “downwash,” or downward airflow. The information the team gleaned will be used to further develop the weapon, known as a High Energy Laser, or HEL.

Critics: VA still lacking on ‘bad paper’ vets’ mental health care

BY NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs announced Thursday that it would begin offering emergency mental health services starting July 5 to veterans with other-than-honorable discharges — following through on a departmental change that VA Secretary David Shulkin promised in March.

The change acknowledges the population of veterans has been denied care, but it doesn’t go far enough, according to a report released last week from Brown University and a statement from Vietnam Veterans of America, which has advocated for years on behalf of “bad paper” veterans.

“I applaud the VA for saying they’re not taking care of all the veterans and denying care. It’s a great first step,” said Ali Tayyeb, a Navy veteran and co-author of Brown University’s June 20 report. “But it falls short of what the veterans community needs. It falls way short.”

Starting July 5, all VA medical centers will treat veterans who show up with an urgent need for mental health care. Veterans with other-than-honorable discharges can receive mental health care for up to 90

days, according to a VA statement. During the 90 days, the VA will determine whether the veteran’s mental health condition is the result of an injury incurred during their military service. If so, the veteran could be eligible for continued VA care.

“We want these former servicemembers to know there is someplace they can turn if they are facing a mental health emergency — whether it means urgent care at a VA emergency department, a vet center or through the Veterans Crisis Line,” Shulkin said in the statement.

During his first appearance before the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs on March 8, Shulkin promised the change as a suicide prevention effort. He also said he’d open up the Veterans Crisis Line to veterans with other-than-honorable discharges, as well as counseling at about 300 vet centers across the country.

The March announcement drew applause from the committee, and advocates said it was a step toward righting a wrong. Some lawmakers and veterans advocates have long argued servicemembers with bad paper were, in many cases, unjustly released from the military because of mental health issues.

More than 13,000 servicemembers separated for misconduct in recent years suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury or another disorder and were prevented from receiving treatment from the VA because of their discharge status, according to a Government Accountability Office report released in May. Most were given a “general” discharge, making them ineligible for some VA services. But 13,283 were given the more stringent “other-than-honorable” discharge, which disqualifies them from receiving VA health care.

“Previous VA secretaries have allowed the problem of denying health care to veterans with so-called ‘bad paper’ discharges [to] fester,” Vietnam Veterans of America President John Rowan said in a statement. “[Shulkin is] working to correct the VA’s self-imposed policies, which have denied care to our most vulnerable veterans for decades.”

The changes to provide emergency mental health care at medical centers, vet centers and through the Veterans Crisis Line could have already been in place at the VA, Tayyeb said.

ISIS counters Mosul push

Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq — Counterattacks by Islamic State militants on the western edge of Mosul have stalled Iraqi forces’ push in the Old City, the last ISIS stronghold in the battle, an Iraqi officer said Tuesday.

The attacks forced Iraqi forces and the U.S.-led coalition to pull some assets away from the Old City to again clear the Yarmouk and Tanak neighborhoods, which were declared liberated of ISIS in May.

The assaults underscore the Sunni extremist group’s resilience in the city, Iraq’s second-largest, despite months of heavy fighting with Iraqi forces backed by U.S. air power.

According to the Iraqi officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, the latest counterattacks began Sunday by scores of ISIS fighters dressed as Iraqi Shiite paramilitaries. The following day, he said, a dozen coalition airstrikes on Mosul’s western-most edge killed about 40 militants.

The territory that the militants still hold in Mosul has been reduced to an area that now amounts to about 0.8 square miles in the ancient Old City district.

Senate GOP halts vote on health care

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Republican Party's long-promised repeal of "Obamacare" stands in limbo after Senate GOP leaders, short of support, abruptly shelved a vote on legislation to fulfill the promise.

The surprise development leaves the legislation's fate uncertain while raising new doubts about whether President Donald Trump will ever make good on his many promises to erase his predecessor's signature legislative achievement.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell announced the delay Tuesday after it became clear the votes weren't there to advance the legislation past key procedural hurdles. Trump immediately invited Senate Republicans to the White House, but the message he delivered to them before reporters were ushered out of the room

was not entirely hopeful.

"This will be great if we get it done, and if we don't get it done it's just going to be something that we're not going to like, and that's OK and I understand that very well," he told the senators, who surrounded him at tables arranged in a giant square in the East Room. Most wore grim expressions.

In the private meeting that followed, said Sen. Marco Rubio, of Florida, the president spoke of "the costs of failure, what it would mean to not get it done — the view that we would wind up in a situation where the markets will collapse and Republicans will be blamed for it and then potentially have to fight off an effort to expand to single payer at some point."

The bill has many critics and few outspoken fans on Capitol Hill, and prospects for changing that are uncertain. McCon-

nell promised to revisit the legislation after Congress' July 4 recess.

But adjustments to placate conservatives, who want the legislation to be more stringent, only push away moderates who think its current limits — on Medicaid for example — are too strong.

McConnell can lose only two senators from his 52-member caucus and still pass the bill, with Vice President Mike Pence to cast a tie-breaking vote. Democrats are opposed, as are most medical groups and the AARP, though the U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the bill.

The House went through its own struggles with its version of the bill, pulling it from the floor short of votes before reviving it and narrowly passing it in May. So it's quite possible that the Senate Republicans can rise from this week's setback.

More data seized from NSA leak suspect in Ga.

Atlanta Journal-Constitution

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Authorities have gathered additional classified information in the National Security Agency leak investigation here beyond what the suspect is accused of revealing to the news media about Russia's meddling in the U.S. election system, according to federal prosecutors.

Without identifying the information or saying where they got it, the prosecutors mentioned the records in a court filing this month. They didn't say why the information is classified or whether Reality Leigh Winner was authorized to access it as part of her job.

"Classified material, including but not limited to the document which the defendant is charged with unlawfully retaining and transmitting, was collected as part of the underlying investigation," prosecutors said in the court papers.

Also, during a court hearing here Tuesday, the prosecutors disclosed they are analyzing an extensive amount of other items they have gathered, including a notebook from Winner's workspace that contains handwriting in Farsi. In addition to

translating those notes, they are examining two computers, a tablet and four phones they seized from Winner's home in Augusta. Additionally, they are studying a recorded interview the former Air Force linguist did with the FBI at her home as well as recordings of phone calls she made from the Lincoln County Jail.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Brian Epps outlined how he would handle sensitive information in the case. First, he introduced Carli Rodriguez-Feo, a "classified information security officer" who will help with any motions or orders connected to the Classified Information Procedures Act, or CIPA. That federal law is aimed at preventing "graymail," or the practice in which defendants threaten to reveal classified information in an attempt to force prosecutors to drop the charges against them. Further, Epps said federal officials are helping line up security clearances for him and the defense attorneys so they can look at the evidence. The judge added they are also searching for a secure location to safeguard those records.

US, world firms counting costs of latest cyberattack

Associated Press

The data-scrambling software epidemic that paralyzed computers globally is under control in Ukraine, where it likely originated, officials said Wednesday, as companies and governments around the world counted the cost of a crisis that is disrupting ports, hospitals and factories.

In a statement published Wednesday, the Ukrainian Cabinet said that "all strategic assets, including those involved in protecting state security, are working normally."

The same couldn't be said for India's largest container port, where one of the terminals was idled by the malicious software, which goes by a variety of names including ExPetr.

In a statement, Moller-Maersk acknowledged that its APM Terminals had been "impacted in a number of ports" and that an undisclosed number of systems were shut down "to contain the issue." The company declined to provide further detail or make an official available for an interview.

At the very least, thousands of computers worldwide have been struck by the malware,

according to preliminary accounts published by cybersecurity firms, although most of the damage remains hidden away in corporate offices.

In Pennsylvania, lab and diagnostic services were closed at the satellite offices of Pennsylvania's Heritage Valley Health System, for example. In Tasmania, an Australian official said a Cadbury chocolate factory had stopped production after computers there crashed.

Other organizations affected include U.S. drugmaker Merck, food and drinks company Mondelez International, global law firm DLA Piper and London-based advertising group WPP.

As IT security workers turned their eye toward cleaning up the mess, others wondered at the attackers' motives. Ransomware — which scrambles a computer's data until a payment is made — has grown explosively over the past couple of years, powered in part by the growing popularity of digital currencies such as Bitcoin. But some believed that this latest ransomware outbreak was less aimed at gathering money than at sending a message to Ukraine and its allies.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Altercation over dead raccoon spurs shooting

WA ALLYN — Authorities said an altercation over a dead raccoon prompted a shooting in rural Mason County.

KOMO-TV reported that the strange incident occurred as a man was walking along a Kitsap Peninsula highway, southwest of Seattle, on Sunday. Mason County sheriff's Lt. Travis Adams said the man was dragging the roadkill with a rope about 15 feet behind him; he wanted to use it as crab bait, but didn't want to have to smell it as he was walking.

Adams said two vehicles stopped, and people confronted the man because they thought he was dragging a dead dog. One person who had been in a pickup truck shot the man twice in the leg. Both vehicles then sped off.

Deputies have contacted people in the other vehicle, and authorities say they're cooperating.

No arrests have been made. The victim is expected to recover.

Market owner offended by handling of lobster

CT OLD SAYBROOK — The owner of a Connecticut fish market says she is "personally offended" after she saw a photo of a 20-pound lobster being handled by a Transportation Security Administration screener on social media.

Lisa Feinman, who owns Atlantic Seafood Market in Old Saybrook, said she packed the lobster in a cooler with other lobsters for a customer from Georgia.

TSA spokesman Michael McCarthy later shared a photo of a screener holding the lobster,

getting thousands of likes on Instagram.

In a Facebook post, Feinman says the TSA should "leave our personal property alone." She also criticized the way the agent held the lobster, saying he could have snapped off a claw by putting all of its weight on its joints.

The agency has not responded to requests for comment.

Man arrested after boat crashes onto beach

FL DAYTONA BEACH — Authorities said they arrested a man connected to a stolen boat that crashed unmanned onto a Florida beach.

The 36-foot boat was pilotless when it ran aground at full throttle on Daytona Beach on Saturday morning, scattering beachgoers.

Volusia County Beach Ocean Rescue officials told local news outlets that Jonathan Race, 20, of Daytona Beach was arrested Sunday. He's charged with two counts of burglary and grand theft of a vehicle less than \$100,000.

Officials said the boat's owner was located Saturday. He told investigators he had not been driving it and no one he knows had taken it out either.

Bid to name mountain ridge is turned down

AK MOOSE PASS — Two mountaineering brothers who lived in Alaska during the 1960s want a ridge and three mountain peaks named after a train because they say the formation looks like one — but their effort has run into opposition from local officials representing the small community of Moose Pass.

Winford Bludworth said he and his brother were the first people to climb the peaks in

1969 and recommended naming the ridge Locomotive Ridge and the peaks Engine, Tender and Caboose, the Peninsula-Clarion reported. The Mountaineering Club of Alaska sent Bludworth's request to state officials in March.

The effort has faced opposition from people who say residents do not recognize or use those names.

The Moose Pass Advisory Planning Commission unanimously voted against the train names.

Workers help find jewelry in hospital trash

NJ OXFORD — A New Jersey woman has been reunited with her special necklace that was thrown in the trash after she went to a hospital, thanks to a group of hard-working sanitation workers.

Samantha LaRochelle was taken to St. Luke's Hospital in Phillipsburg after falling unconscious, LehighValleyLive.com reported. Hospital staff removed LaRochelle's prized dual-pendant and accidentally threw it in the trash.

On the customized chain hangs her grandfather's pendant and a second 14-karat gold pendant containing her late mother's thumbprint. LaRochelle's wife, Audrey, got the chain specially made for her.

LaRochelle's search, with the help of a Phillipsburg police officer, led her to a Covanta Energy Plant in Oxford where workers dug through 15 tons of hospital waste to find her necklace.

Steve Acierno, a worker at the plant, came up with the necklace after a two-hour search.

"She was super-excited to have it back. Just a great start to our day. We were all really happy for her," Acierno said.

LaRochelle treated the sani-

tation workers to lunch and cake.

Kind act spreads to 167 drivers at McDonald's

IN SCOTTSBURG — A customer's act of kindness at a southern Indiana McDonald's sparked a chain reaction of niceness in its drive-thru line.

Hunter Hostetler is a cashier at a McDonald's in Scottsburg, about 50 miles north of Louisville, Ky. He said an older woman waiting in the restaurant's drive-thru Sunday decided to pay for the big order of a man with four children in a van behind her.

Hostetler said she asked him to tell the man "Happy Father's Day," then drove away. The kind gesture prompted the man to pay for two cars behind him, and that generosity eventually spread to 167 cars by closing time.

Abby Smith was in one of those cars. She tells WDRB-TV it's wonderful knowing that there's still "a lot of great people out there."

Teen arrested, charged with 11 robberies

DC WASHINGTON — District of Columbia police arrested a teenager in connection with 11 robberies in the Washington area that involved guns, knives, a baton and nunchucks.

Police said the 16-year-old suspect was arrested last weekend and is accused of taking part in many robberies with other individuals between May 6 and June 21. The attacks involved a group of assailants robbing and sometimes assaulting an individual victim.

Eight attacks took place between June 17 and 19.

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Florida tops LSU, claims 1st CWS title

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Maybe this wasn't Florida coach Kevin O'Sullivan's best team. It is, however, his first national championship team.

A year after the Gators went two games and out at the College World Series with a team seeded No. 1 and loaded with high draft picks, they won five of six in Omaha and completed a sweep of Southeastern Conference rival LSU in the finals with a 6-1 victory Tuesday night.

The Gators scored four runs in the eighth inning to pull away and now, for the first time in the program's 103-year history, the championship trophy will be with the team when it travels back to Gainesville.

"Just a gritty group, that's all I can say," said O'Sullivan, the 10th-year coach who had brought the Gators to Omaha six of the past eight years. "There are other teams that may be bigger and stronger, our starting pitching has carried us the whole year, but we got some timely hits."

Florida (52-19) posted the

eighth sweep in the 15 years of the best-of-three finals format, and first since 2013. LSU (52-20) lost for the first time in seven appearances in a championship game.

Florida was in the CWS for the 11th time and previously had made it to the finals in 2005 and 2011, getting swept each time.

"They're a very deserving national champion," LSU coach Paul Mainieri said. "I'm happy for Kevin. He works hard, and he has had several teams that maybe were even better than this team and sat up here as disappointed as I am right now. Finally got his championship."

O'Sullivan got creative for the final game, sending freshman Tyler Dyson to the mound for only his second start and calling on Jackson Kowar, who would have been the starter if a Game 3 had been necessary, to finish the game.

"Something that made this team so special was each and every game, someone new stepped up," second baseman Deacon Liput said. "You never really knew who that person was going to be."

On this night, it was Dyson (4-0), who limited the Tigers to three hits in six innings. The Gators staked Dyson to an early 2-0 lead after LSU, one of the best fielding teams in the nation, committed three errors in the first two innings.

Things got interesting after Michael Byrne relieved Dyson in the seventh. LSU pulled to 2-1 and would have tied it if not for Jake Slaughter being called for runner interference at second base for sliding into short-stop Dalton Guthrie's leg as he was throwing to first to turn a double play. Josh Smith, who had a run home, was sent back to third, and Beau Jordan flew out to end the inning.

The next inning LSU had runners at the corners, but JJ Schwarz threw out Kramer Robertson at the plate and Zach Watson, the Tigers' hottest hitter in the CWS, flew out to end the inning.

The Gators scored four times in the bottom of the eighth. LSU reliever Zack Hess hit a batter with the bases loaded, Liput hit a two-run single and Schwarz had a sacrifice fly.

Jared Poche' (12-4), the Ti-

gers' all-time wins leader, took the loss in his last start.

"As a pitcher, once you let go of the baseball, you can't control anything that happens after that," he said. "The guys have been making plays for me all year, my entire career. Unfortunately, (they) kicked the ball around a little bit, but these guys, I'd go to war with all these guys on this team."

Last year was supposed to be O'Sullivan's best chance to win it all, and it was crushing to go 0-2 in Omaha with a team that had eight players taken in the first 10 rounds of the 2016 Major League Baseball draft.

Florida this year brought back one of the nation's top weekend rotations in Alex Faedo, Brady Singer and Kowar and a reliever in Byrne who led the country with a school-record 19 saves. Complementing the pitching was a defense that ranked in the top 10 in the country.

All that was missing was consistent offense. The Gators came into this game with no everyday player hitting .300, and they were ranked 227th out of 300 teams with a .258 batting average.

Pacquiao's going big or going bust against Horn

Associated Press

BRISBANE, Australia — Freddie Roach is ready to narrow down Manny Pacquiao's options following the WBO welterweight championship fight against Jeff Horn: Think about another shot at Floyd Mayweather, or think about retirement.

The 11-time world champion is putting his WBO belt on the line Sunday against the 29-year-old Australian, a school teacher who is in the biggest bout of his professional career.

"Manny is in a must-win situation. He wants a rematch with Mayweather," Roach said Tuesday at a gym next door to the Suncorp Stadium, where a 50,000-plus crowd is expected for the "Battle of Brisbane."

"With Mayweather you have to look good against an opponent, you have to be impressive."

Roach has been a long-time trainer for the multiple world champion, and reckons the 38-year-old Pacquiao should have a few more big wins in him.

"If he struggles in this fight, it could be over," Roach said.

Asked specifically what the fallout would be if Horn (16-0-1, 11 knockouts) somehow won, Roach said "depending on how he lost, I would probably encourage him to retire."

Not that he's expecting Pacquiao (59-6-2, 38 knockouts) to struggle. Roach said training has consisted of 50 rounds on some days and the preparation — after a slow start — has been very intense.

"I expect Manny's best in

this fight. I am looking for a big win here," Roach said. "We want to go on to bigger and better things."

Pacquiao lost the 2015 mega fight to Mayweather but has rebounded to beat Tim Bradley and Jessie Vargas on points since then. He wants another shot at Mayweather.

"If there's a chance, why not? I'm willing," Pacquiao said of a potential rematch with Mayweather, who has visited Roach's gym a couple of times — though not to discuss business. "But let's focus first for this fight. We don't want to underestimate ... Horn, thinking about another fight. This fight is not done yet."

"I know my body. I'm ready. I'm not underestimating [Horn]. I'm not taking him lightly. I'm

working hard."

Horn turned pro in 2013, the year after reaching the Olympic quarterfinals in London, and has faced 10 top-15 rated boxers in his 17 professional bouts. He hasn't faced anyone of the caliber of Pacquiao, though.

The Pacquiao camp is expecting Horn to come out aggressively in front of his home crowd.

A world champion in eight divisions, and now a senator in the Philippines, Pacquiao can still remember the feelings he had ahead of his first big-time bout and is treading carefully because of that.

"That's why we did a lot for this training camp," Pacquiao said. "I know what he's feeling — being there, being the underdog."

Source: Paul joins Rockets

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Chris Paul is heading to Houston to join James Harden, and the Rockets will soon have two All-Stars in the backcourt to lead their chase for a championship.

The Rockets have reached an agreement to acquire Paul from the Clippers in exchange for Patrick Beverley, Lou Williams, Sam Dekker and a protected first-round pick next year, a person familiar with the deal told The Associated Press on Wednesday. The pick is only protected if Houston's pick lands in the first three of the 2018 draft, according to the person who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the teams haven't finalized the trade with free agency coming

up on Saturday.

The 32-year-old Paul opted in for the last year of his contract so L.A. could work on a deal.

The nine-time All-Star has averaged 18.7 points, 9.9 assists, 4.4 rebounds and 2.3 steals over his 12-year career, though he has been dogged with criticism in recent years for failing to help the Clippers get out of the second round of the playoffs. Los Angeles reached the postseason in each of Paul's six seasons with the team, but the Clippers were eliminated in the first round three times and in the Western Conference semifinals three other times.

Perhaps the most crushing playoff series loss of his tenure with the Clippers came to the Rockets in 2015. Los Angeles

had a 3-1 lead in the conference semifinals before Houston won the last three games of the series to send Paul and the Clippers home early yet again.

The Clippers were eliminated in the first round the past two seasons and are likely to look much different next season. The Paul trade comes after Blake Griffin informed the team last week that he is opting out of the last year of his contract to explore free agency. J.J. Redick is also a free agent.

In Houston, Paul joins a team led by Harden that was eliminated by the Spurs in the conference semifinals last season. With Harden's move to point guard last season, Paul's role will probably be a bit different than it has been in Los Angeles.

Ledecky, Adrian lead at nationals

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Katie Ledecky keeps making winning look easy. Nathan Adrian continues to prove experience matters when things get close.

Either way, the result was the same Tuesday night in Indianapolis: The two Olympic gold medalists qualified for another American world championship team.

Ledecky, as usual, dominated the women's 800-meter freestyle, winning by nearly 9 seconds. Adrian, meanwhile, rallied in the closing meters of the men's 100 free and out-touched Caeleb Dressel by 0.01 seconds to win the men's 100 free at the U.S. National Championships.

"That's kind of what we've built into my nervous system," Adrian said. "I've always tried to go out and bring it back in the back half. Now maybe we can figure out what to do in the front half."

Adrian doesn't have much time for fine-tuning before heading to Budapest, Hungary. The meet is scheduled for July 23-30.

After qualifying fourth in the morning prelims, Adrian charged back from the No. 6 spot at the turn and sprinted past five younger competitors to reclaim a title he first won in 2009, also in Indy. He won in 47.96 seconds. Dressel was next at 47.97.

The winners of each event qualify for the world championships. Runner-ups are also likely to join the team through a selection process.

Ledecky, as usual, provided no drama in an event she has owned for years.

The 20-year-old Stanford star took the lead in the first 50 meters and extended it by between 0.31 and 0.83 seconds on each ensuing lap through the first 600 meters.

She eventually finished in 8:11.50, beating Leah Smith to the wall by 8.96 seconds.

Knicks part ways with Jackson

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Phil Jackson wanted to trade Carmelo Anthony and wouldn't rule out dealing Kristaps Porzingis.

Turns out, Jackson is the one leaving.

Jackson is out as New York Knicks president after he oversaw one of the worst eras in team history, with the team saying in a statement Wednesday that they had "mutually agreed to part company."

Days after Jackson reiterated his desire to move Anthony and said he would listen to deals for Porzingis, Madison Square Garden chairman James Dolan reversed course and cut ties with Jackson with two years remaining on his contract.

"After careful thought and consideration, we mutually agreed that the Knicks will be going in a different direction," Dolan said. "Phil Jackson is one of the most celebrated and successful individuals in the history of the NBA. His legacy in the game of basketball is unmatched."

But his work as a first-time executive was awful. The winner of an NBA-record 11 championships as coach, Jackson couldn't engineer one playoff berth while running the Knicks. The team was 80-166 in his three full seasons, including a franchise-worst 17-65 in 2014-15.

The move comes less than a week after Jackson led the Knicks through the NBA Draft and on the eve of free agency that opens Saturday. Dolan said he would not be involved in the operation of the team, adding that general manager Steve Mills would run the day-to-day business in the short term and that former Toronto executive

Tim Leiweke would advise him and help develop a plan going forward.

Jackson was a Hall of Fame coach with the Chicago Bulls and Los Angeles Lakers, delivering titles with some of the game's biggest stars like Michael Jordan, Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant. He also played for the Knicks when they won NBA titles in 1970 and 1973.

He was welcomed back to the organization with a \$60 million contract to huge fanfare in March 2014, but it soon became clear the transition would be a poor one. His first coaching hire, Derek Fisher, lasted just 1½ seasons, and Jackson's trades and free agency moves also failed to improve the club.

"I had hoped, of course, to bring another NBA championship to the Garden. As someone who treasures winning, I am deeply disappointed that we weren't able to do that," Jackson said. "New York fans deserve nothing less. I wish them and the Knicks organization all the best — today and always."

The turbulence he created off the court may have led to his departure more than the Knicks' record on it.

Jackson publicly talked about moving without Anthony — angering the National Basketball Players Association — though the All-Star forward has two years left on the five-year, \$124 million deal that Jackson gave him shortly after taking the job. Anthony has a no-trade clause and has said he wants to stay in New York, and the stalemate that hung over the team for much of last season threatened to linger throughout the summer.

Scherzer, Nats outduel Arrieta, Cubs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Neither of the past two NL Cy Young Award winners had his best stuff, though Max Scherzer handled things much better than Jake Arrieta.

Scherzer allowed one run and two hits as the Washington Nationals knocked Arrieta out in the fifth inning on the way to a 6-1 victory Tuesday night. While Arrieta was slow to the plate and allowed seven stolen bases, Scherzer (9-5) threw a strong six innings, striking out six with no walks and retiring 16 of the final 17 batters he faced.

"I didn't really have great fastball command tonight, but I was able to use my offspeed to kind of collect outs when I needed to and I didn't walk anybody," said Scherzer, who allowed an earned run in the first inning for the first time since April but was in command the

rest of the night. "When we needed shutdown innings we got them."

Arrieta (7-6), on the other hand, struggled with his control as he issued a season-high six walks and allowed five earned runs, getting the hook two batters into the fifth inning. The 2015 Cy Young winner hadn't walked more than three batters in a game this season.

Manager Joe Maddon quipped that the Cubs "let the wrong guys on base," but catcher Miguel Montero blamed Arrieta for all the steals.

"The reason why they were running left and right today because they know he was slow to the plate," a visibly frustrated Montero said. "It really sucked because the stolen bases go to me, and when you really look at it, the pitcher doesn't give me any time."

Four of the Montreal Expos/Nationals franchise record seven steals came from speedy

shortstop Trea Turner, who Arrieta called a "factor" any time he's on.

"I don't care who is behind the plate," Arrieta said. "He's a threat."

Washington manager Dusty Baker said the team knew Arrieta was a pitcher to run on, and the result was a lot of small ball for a team accustomed to driving in runs with power. Washington center fielder Michael Taylor went 2-for-4 with two RBIs, and Scherzer washed out the RBI triple he allowed to Kris Bryant in the first by driving in a run with an infield single off Arrieta's glove in the fourth.

When Scherzer was lifted after 93 pitches through six with a comfortable 6-1 lead, the Nationals' beleaguered bullpen got three clean innings of relief from Enny Romero, Blake Treinen, Oliver Perez and Matt Albers.

Turn, Turn, Turner: Turner

tied the franchise record with four steals in a game, repeating his own feat from two weeks ago. He had a chance in the eighth to break the record and move within one of the most in a game in the modern era of baseball but did not try with Bryce Harper up and a five-run lead.

"I don't think I was held, but I didn't know if I was supposed to go," said Turner, who has 32 stolen bases this season.

Cubs going to White House:

Maddon and some of the Cubs will visit the White House on Wednesday, though it's not an official visit with President Donald Trump. Maddon said he was going out of respect for the Ricketts family, which owns the Cubs and donated to Trump's campaign.

"When you get a chance as a citizen to get to go to the White House, you go," said Maddon, who called it completely voluntary for players.

Abreu's two-run single lifts White Sox over Yankees

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Jose Abreu got another chance in a key spot for the Chicago White Sox. This time, he delivered.

Abreu hit a game-ending, two-run single off Dellin Betances, and the White Sox stopped a four-game losing streak with a 4-3 victory over the New York Yankees on Tuesday night.

Abreu also had an RBI double in the third. The big first baseman batted with the bases loaded in the eighth inning and struck out.

"After that at-bat when I struck out, I was thinking, 'God, give me one more opportunity, one more opportunity to do my job,'" Abreu said through a translator. "I'm glad that I got that opportunity because I was able to help my team win the game."

Kevan Smith sparked the winning rally with a one-out walk. Betances (3-2) then

walked Alen Hanson and hit Yolmer Sanchez, loading the bases.

After Melky Cabrera fouled out, Abreu hit a grounder into left field. Brett Gardner's throw to the plate was high, and Hanson scored easily.

Diamondbacks 6, Cardinals 5: Chris Herrmann hit a game-ending RBI single in the 10th inning as host Arizona rallied to beat St. Louis.

Dodgers 4, Angels 0: Right-hander Kenta Maeda pitched four-hit ball over seven innings in a spot start, and Joc Pederson hit a three-run homer for the host Dodgers.

Rangers 2, Indians 1: Adrian Beltre hit his 450th home run, a solo drive in the ninth inning off Cody Allen that lifted Texas to the road win.

Red Sox 9, Twins 2: Chris Young hit a three-run homer, Christian Vazquez went deep for the first time in more than a year and Boston beat visiting

Minnesota in a game delayed twice by stormy weather.

Marlins 6, Mets 3: Ichiro Suzuki had a pinch-hit RBI single in the seventh inning to put host Miami ahead, and Christian Yelich collected three hits.

Orioles 3, Blue Jays 1: Kevin Gausman won for the first time in four starts, Mark Trumbo hit an RBI double and visiting Baltimore earned its third straight win.

Athletics 6, Astros 4: Ryon Healy's first career grand slam broke a tie in the sixth inning, and visiting Oakland held on for its fourth straight win.

The score was 1-1 when Matt Joyce singled to start the sixth. Yonder Alonso drew a walk with two outs to load the bases and chase Mike Fiers (5-3). He was replaced by James Hoyt, who was greeted with Healy's 18th homer — a full-count shot which landed in the second row of seats in right field.

Phillies 8, Mariners 2: Maikel Franco and Arron Altherr

homered for visiting Philadelphia, and Aaron Nola pitched seven strong innings.

Rays 4, Pirates 2 (10): David Freese misplayed a grounder at third base, allowing Steven Souza Jr. to score in the 10th inning and sending visiting Tampa Bay to the victory.

Tigers 5, Royals 3: J.D. Martinez and Miguel Cabrera homered for host Detroit, and Justin Verlander pitched seven strong innings.

Reds 8, Brewers 6: Joey Votto hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the fifth inning, helping the last-place host Reds get the win.

Braves 3, Padres 0: Left-hander Sean Newcomb struck out eight over six-plus innings for his first major league victory to help visiting Atlanta to the victory.

Giants 4, Rockies 3: Denard Span singled home Gorkys Hernandez with two outs in the 14th inning, lifting the host Giants over Colorado.