

STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, June 5, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Foreign-born recruit faces deportation

BY DIANNA CAHN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Immigration authorities began deportation proceedings Monday against a foreign-born military recruit despite a statement by the defense secretary and a new law aimed at protecting foreign recruits and veterans.

Luo Shu, a Chinese citizen who graduated with a degree in data analytics from George Washington University, was recruited into the Army's delayed entry program two years ago for his language and professional skills. He was arrested at the Department of Homeland Security Investigations office in Newark, N.J., on Monday after an Army administrative error allowed his service contract to expire before he could pass the Defense Department background checks and ship off to basic training, his lawyer said.

"This is an Army screw-up resulting in him facing deportation," said Margaret Stock, a retired Army lieutenant colonel who is now an immigration lawyer and is handling Luo's case.

The case is the first to test the Pentagon's policy toward ac-

tive-duty foreign-born recruits who, despite being promised a fast track to citizenship in exchange for signing up, were left exposed to deportation. While their military progression was stalled by administrative delays, their visas expired.

Luo, who has an asylum request pending, is among thousands of recruits in the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest program who got caught in this administrative quagmire after the Defense Department instituted enhanced background checks for foreign-born recruits in 2016.

The sheer number of extensive screenings created a yearslong backlog that left recruits like Luo in limbo after they signed contracts with the military but had not shipped out to basic training. Other MAVNI soldiers, who were farther along in their military progression when the rules changed, were stuck at basic or initial job training.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis promised that servicemembers who came to the United States illegally as children would not face deportation. Mattis also told reporters that he spoke di-

rectly with Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, who assured him that immigrants serving in the military as well as all honorably discharged veterans with no criminal actions against them are still protected.

But he did not clarify whether recruits whose contract expires before they can actively serve should be protected.

Hoping to protect those recruits, Congress amended the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act late last year to allow the defense secretary to extend the military contract of a servicemember recruited before October 2017 for an additional 365 days. Before that, the defense secretary could not extend a servicemember's contract for more than 730 days — two years.

Luo should be covered by that law, Stock said.

"It's unjust to be moving to deport him when Congress passed a law last year that should have resulted in the Army extending his contract," she said. Stock was one of the creators of the MAVNI program and ran it for several years.

Late last year, ahead of the NDAA amendment, the Army

submitted a list of more than 1,000 names of MAVNI recruits to the Board for the Correction of Military Records to extend their contracts. The board approved the list, but Luo's name was erroneously left off, Stock said.

Luo's Army contract expired in January, two years after he signed up. He has been frantically seeking to get it extended or renewed since then, Stock said. He asked the Army to add his name to the list, but officials said they could not amend the list. The Army told him he must apply to the corrections board on his own, which he did. But as an individual, his petition to the corrections board can take years.

Asked about the case, a spokesman for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which includes Homeland Security Investigations, said Luo's legal student status in the U.S. ran out after Jan. 28, so he was arrested "for violating the terms of his admission to the U.S. as a nonimmigrant F-1 student."

Luo was released after his arrest and ordered to appear in immigration court at a later date.

Japan drops case of US sailor accused of drug smuggling

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A USS Ronald Reagan sailor will not be prosecuted in Japanese court after he was accused of smuggling illegal drugs into the country earlier this year.

The Yokohama District Public Prosecutors Office's Yokosuka branch dropped the 24-year-old sailor's case Friday, a spokeswoman for the

agency said Tuesday.

Kanagawa Prefectural Police submitted documents to the office last month recommending that he be prosecuted for violating Japan's Narcotics and Psychotropics Control Law, but he was never charged.

The sailor was accused of sending narcotics through international mail from Canada after Yokohama Customs found about 18 grams of synthetic drugs in a package addressed to his off-base apartment, Japan's

Kyodo News and Asahi newspaper reported last month.

The sailor remained silent throughout police questioning and denied his involvement in the crime, the reports said. He was never taken into custody, but the Navy restricted him from leaving Yokosuka Naval Base.

A Yokosuka prosecutor's office spokeswoman declined to say why the case was dropped.

The Navy started its own investigation when Japanese po-

lice began to consider the case in February. The allegation was connected to a separate probe regarding a possible drug ring involving at least 12 Yokosuka-based sailors suspected of buying, selling and using drugs such as LSD and ecstasy.

The Navy is continuing to investigate the case, according to Yokosuka spokesman Jim O'Donnell.

The sailor's name was not released because he was not charged.

Pair of Ospreys make unscheduled landing

BY AYA ICHIHASHI
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A pair of Air Force CV-22 Ospreys made an unscheduled landing on a southern Japanese island Monday after a warning light came on in one of the tilt-rotor aircraft.

The 353rd Special Operations Squadron Ospreys, which departed Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo, landed at Amami Airport in Kagoshima prefecture at about 3 p.m., a Kyushu Defense Bureau spokesman said Tuesday.

There were no injuries or

damage to the aircraft, he added.

One of the Ospreys flew on to Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, but the other was still at Amami on Tuesday, the spokesman said.

Five CV-22s arrived at Yokota — home to U.S. Forces Japan and the 5th Air Force — in early April, but departed soon after for training that officials said would last several months. They were back at the base again last week for a short break before resuming training elsewhere in the region, the service said.

The aircraft — which can take off like helicopters, then tilt their rotors to fly long distances as fixed-wing planes

— have attracted intense interest in Japan.

Activists have focused on accidents, including an emergency landing by a Marine Corps MV-22B Osprey in waters off Okinawa in 2016. The service operates 24 MV-22Bs out of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma on the southern island prefecture.

Last week, Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera expressed concern about Osprey safety after a report blamed heavy downwash for an MV-22 crash off Australia that killed three Marines last summer.

A Special Operations squadron of 10 Ospreys was due at Yokota in 2020; however, that

schedule was adjusted and five of the aircraft arrived in April with little notice. Protesters soon gathered outside the base, calling for them to leave.

On Monday, officials from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and six cities near Yokota wrote a letter addressed to Onodera, Foreign Minister Taro Kono and 374th Airlift Wing commander Col. Kenneth Moss expressing concern about Osprey safety.

They also called on the Air Force and the Japanese government to provide more information on the deployment and to ensure that the aircraft were operated safely.

Okinawa vigil held for shooting victims at Santa Fe high school

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

The cousin of a teenager who dreamed of joining the military before he was killed in a school shooting last month organized a vigil Sunday on Okinawa to honor him and his fallen classmates.

On May 18, a 17-year-old student walked into a high school in Santa Fe, Texas, with two of his father's guns and shot at least 20 people — 10 of them fatally. Eight of the dead were students and two were teachers.

Marine spouse Kalynn Domokos lost her cousin, Christian Riley Garcia, 15, in the shooting. Domokos, a 2012 Santa Fe High School graduate, lives at Camp Courtney, Okinawa, and couldn't make it home to the teen's funeral, so she held a memorial in Japan for the victims instead.

"Being a military family, people often ask where we're from. I always get the '(Santa Fe) New Mexico?' response," Domokos said at the vigil. "But after this horrible event, our small town is now known across the world."

She and some fellow Americans placed 10 stakes in the sand at Toguchi Beach. Atop each post was the photo and name of one of the victims. Lit candles and bouquets were laid beside them.

Domokos spoke to a group of about a

dozen people who gathered to pray and reflect.

"God promises that all pain, heartache and mourning will end," she said. "I ask that you all keep these families and the Santa Fe community in your prayers as they now must begin to heal from this heartache."

Domokos also spoke about her cousin, who put himself in front of a door as a blockade so his classmates could escape. Garcia died after bullets passed through the door and hit him.

"At just 15 years old, he had plans to serve his country after graduating," Domokos said. "Riley no longer has the opportunity to wear the uniform, but I believe he served his people as any other servicemember would have."

Domokos said Garcia, who went by his middle name, was active in his church, enjoyed hunting, played football for the high school and was a "big brother and a wonderful son."

"Riley was taken too soon," she said. "But God put him on this Earth for a reason — to protect and serve his people, and he did just that."

The other victims were Glenda Ann Perkins, Chris Stone, Angelique Ramirez, Cynthia Tisdale, Jared Black, Kimberly Vaughan, Aaron Kyle McLeod, Sabika Sheikh and Shana Fisher.

74th D-Day anniversary celebrated

BY DAN STOUTAMIRE
Stars and Stripes

VIERVILLE, France — Hundreds of U.S. servicemembers and thousands of well-wishers are gathered in Normandy for the 74th anniversary of the 1944 D-Day landings along five beaches in northern France.

This year's gathering has seen a wide range of events, which have run for more than a week on both sides of the June 6 anniversary.

On Sunday, an airborne drop featuring nearly 600 soldiers from five countries marked the landings of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions near Utah Beach.

On Wednesday, nearly 300 current U.S. servicemembers from 20 units based in Europe and the United States will participate in events in 36 French communities near the landing sites, including Sainte-Mere-Eglise, Carentan and Picauville.

Soldiers from the 90th Sustainment Brigade, 4th Infantry Division and 82nd Airborne Division will mark the date in a ceremony on Utah Beach, while members of the 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions are set to take part in commemorations on and near Omaha Beach, close to their divisions' respective memorials.

DOD IG probing claims against former VA pick

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon's inspector general has opened an investigation of Navy Rear Adm. Ronny Jackson, the White House doctor whose nomination to head the Department of Veterans Affairs was derailed by allegations of misconduct, officials said Monday.

A spokesman for the IG's office, Bruce Anderson, announced the probe but said he could not comment on the specific allegations.

Jackson has denied the allegations, which surfaced during the brief period his nomination was under consideration by the Senate. After being nominated, he stepped aside from leading President Donald Trump's medical care, but he remains a member of the White House medical unit. He has been with the White House unit since 2006.

Jackson withdrew his nomination in April after allegations by current and former colleagues raised questions about his prescribing practices and leadership ability, including unsubstantiated accusations of drunkenness on the job.

The allegations were referred to the Pentagon's inspector general for evaluation. After an initial assessment and review, the IG's office decided a formal investigation was warranted, Anderson said.

In March, Trump nominated Jackson for promotion to the rank of two-star admiral. Some members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, which would vote on a promotion, had called for a Pentagon inspector general investigation.

Trump has called Jackson a "great man (who) got treated very, very unfairly" after his VA nomination.

Competition heats up in race to build Navy's next warship

The Washington Post

Competition is heating up in the race to build the Navy's next warship, with foreign and U.S. manufacturers vying for a multibillion-dollar opportunity.

In February, the Navy announced it had shortlisted five shipbuilders for the FFG(X) program, which calls for a replacement for the littoral combat ship.

Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, Huntington Ingalls, Austal and Fincantieri were awarded research-and-development contracts this year, and the service expects to pick a single company to oversee the program in 2020.

Fincantieri, a Trieste, Italy, manufacturer that maintains a U.S. shipyard in Wisconsin, took the opportunity last week to showcase the ITS Alpino warship in Baltimore, while the Italian navy embarked on a tour along the U.S. Eastern Seaboard.

"What we're trying to do with this visit is show the U.S. Navy what the art of the possible is," said Richard Hunt, a retired U.S. Navy vice admiral who is Fincantieri's chief strategy officer.

The warship competition is a major long-term opportunity for whichever manufacturer becomes the primary contractor. The Navy wants to start buying the new frigates in 2020, which leaves little time for R&D.

After that, the service plans to buy 20 frigates — one or two per year — at an estimated cost of \$800 million to \$900 million each.

Companies such as Fincantieri, General Dynamics and Lockheed Martin, which specialize in massive procurements of large pieces of military hardware including ships and jets, are trying to capitalize on a broader policy shift that has moved the Pentagon's spending priorities away from counterterrorism to buying advanced weaponry designed to deter foreign aggression.

To start buying ships by 2020, the Navy is asking for something that has already been produced and demonstrated elsewhere.

Austal USA, an Alabama-based subsidiary of an Australian shipping company, is one of two manufacturers behind the Navy's littoral combat ship. It is pitching a modified version of its earlier product, something that could offer the Navy an easier transition between systems.

General Dynamics, which operates a shipyard in Bath, Maine, is pitching a 6,000-ton frigate used by the Australian, Spanish and Norwegian militaries. Lockheed Martin has sold the Saudi government on its design. And Fincantieri's FREMM model is in use by navies in Italy and France.

Trump cancels NFL Eagles ceremony, criticizes the team

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump abruptly canceled his Tuesday ceremony celebrating the Philadelphia Eagles' Super Bowl victory after many players declined to show up. The White House accused the players of abandoning their fans, and Trump quickly scheduled a "Celebration of America" with military bands as he stoked fresh controversy over players who protest racial injustice by taking a knee during the national anthem.

Fuming over the risk of a low Eagles' turnout, Trump late Monday announced the usual Super Bowl celebration was off.

Spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the team had notified the White House last Thursday that 81 members, including players, coaches and managers would be attending. But she said the team got back in touch late Friday and tried to reschedule, "citing the fact that many players would not be in attendance." They proposed a time when Trump would be overseas.

Sanders said the White House continued to work with the team over the weekend, but in the end, "the Eagles offered to send only a

tiny handful of representatives, while making clear that the great majority of players would not attend the event."

"In other words," she added, "the vast majority of the Eagles team decided to abandon their fans."

The team did not immediately respond to a request for comment. An earlier statement did not directly address the cancellation.

Trump had originally said the event had been scrapped because some Eagles players "disagree with their President because he insists that they proudly stand for the National Anthem, hand on heart, in honor of the great men and women of our military and the people of our country."

The National Football League Players Association, the union representing NFL players, said in a statement that it was disappointed by the decision to disinvite the players and said the reversal had led to the cancellation of several community service events for young people in the Washington area.

"NFL players love their country, support our troops, give back to their communities and strive to make America a better place," it said in a statement.

Only a few volcano victims ID'd following eruption in Guatemala

Associated Press

EL RODEO, Guatemala — People of the villages skirting Guatemala's Volcano of Fire have begun mourning the few dead who could be identified after an eruption killed dozens by engulfing them in floods of searing ash and mud.

Mourners cried over caskets lined up in a row in the main park of San Juan Alotenango on Monday evening before rescuers stopped their work for another night.

There was no electricity in the hardest-hit areas of Los Lotes and El Rodeo, so most searching continued only until sunset. As dawn broke Tuesday, the volcano continued to rattle with what the country's volcanology institute said were eight to 10 moderate eruptions per hour — vastly less intense than Sunday's big blasts.

Guatemalan authorities put the death toll at 69, but officials said just 17 had been identified so far because the intense heat of the volcanic debris flows left most bodies unrecognizable.

"It is very difficult for us to identify them because some of the dead lost their features or their fingerprints" from the red-hot flows, said Fanuel Garcia, director of the National Institute of Forensic Sciences. "We

are going to have to resort to other methods ... and, if possible, take DNA samples to identify them."

Sunday's eruption caught residents of remote mountain hamlets off guard, with little or no time to flee to safety.

Using shovels and backhoes, emergency workers dug through the debris and mud, perilous labor on smoldering terrain still hot enough to melt shoe soles a day after the volcano exploded in a hail of ash, smoke and molten rock.

Bodies were so thickly coated with ash that they looked like statues. Rescuers used sledgehammers to break through the roofs of houses buried in debris up to their rooflines to check for anyone trapped inside.

Hilda Lopez said her mother and sister were still missing after the slurry of hot gas, ash and rock roared into her village of San Miguel Los Lotes, just below the mountain's flanks.

"We were at a party, celebrating the birth of a baby, when one of the neighbors shouted at us to come out and see the lava that was coming," the distraught woman said. "We didn't believe it, and when we went out, the hot mud was already coming down the street."

Manafort is accused of tampering

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort made several attempts to tamper with witnesses in his ongoing criminal case, prosecutors said as they asked a federal judge to consider jailing him while he awaits trial.

In a court filing, prosecutors working for special counsel Robert Mueller wrote that Manafort and one of his associates "repeatedly" contacted two witnesses in an effort to influence their testimony. The contacts occurred earlier this year, shortly after a grand jury returned a new indictment against Manafort and while he was confined to his home.

The filing marks the second time that Mueller's team has accused Manafort of violating a judge's order in the case. Late last year, federal agents discovered that Manafort was attempting to ghostwrite an opinion piece in Ukraine even though he was under a gag order in the case.

On Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson gave Manafort until Friday to respond to the allegations of attempted witness tampering and she set a hearing for June 15 on the matter.

The allegations relate to Manafort's criminal case in Washington where he faces charges of money-laundering conspiracy, false statements and acting as an unregistered foreign agent for Ukrainian interests. He also faces bank fraud and tax evasion charges in Virginia.

The charges, which involve tens of millions of dollars routed through offshore accounts, do not relate to his work on the Trump campaign or involve allegations of Russian election interference.

In the latest court documents, prosecutors say that while he was under house arrest, Manafort and his associate attempted to get two witnesses to lie about the nature of lobbying and public relations work they carried out at Manafort's direction on behalf of Ukraine. The documents do not name Manafort's associate, but they refer to him as "Person A" and note the pseudonym is consistent with previous filings in the case. In earlier filings, Person A has referred to Konstantin Kilimnik, a longtime Manafort associate who prosecutors have said has ties to Russian intelligence.

Manafort spokesman Jason Maloni said his client and his attorneys were reviewing the filing. Kilimnik declined comment.

Apple features help limit iPhone use

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Apple will offer more ways for people to limit the time they spend on iPhones while introducing features designed to make its products even more indispensable.

The paradox emerged Monday as Apple executives previewed new versions of free software due out this fall.

The forthcoming controls are aimed at addressing criticism that devices are becoming increasingly addictive and distracting, especially for children. Experts worry that all the flashy colors and beeps give users short-term, feel-good rewards while increasing stress in the long run.

Yet Apple made it clear it also hopes to make its devices and services even more alluring — and potentially irresistible — by creating new avenues for its digital assistant, Siri, to serve as a backup brain for users. The company is also creating more entertainment options and new ways to communicate, including group video chats through FaceTime and more options for the iPhone X's animated emojis.

People have become so dependent on technology that it's unlikely any company will be able to solve the addiction prob-

lem, but they can help keep it from getting worse, Gartner analyst Brian Blau said. The best hope, he said, is for technology to help people enjoy life and then get out of the way.

"Apple at least seems to be hearing what people are saying and trying to do something about it," he said.

Apple's new controls will expand on the "Do Not Disturb" options on the iPhone and iPad. The display can also be set to dim automatically just before bedtime. Users can also block app notifications from showing up on the home screen not only based on time of day, which they can do now, but by location, such as when visiting the playground with their kids. Other features will provide weekly reports on how much time people are spending looking at their screen each month. Users will be able to set daily time limits on specific apps.

Apple also is taking a swipe at ubiquitous "share" buttons created by Facebook and others to track users' behavior online regardless of whether they click on them. The company said it's shutting down that tracking, unless the user decides to permit it, through a Safari browser update for Mac and iOS devices, including iPhones and iPads.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Teen in wheelchair walks at graduation

OH RAVENNA—An Ohio teen who has cerebral palsy and was never expected to be able to walk shocked her family by doing just that at her high school graduation.

The Kent-Ravenna Record-Courier reported Lexi Wright, 19, left her wheelchair and used a walker to cross a stage in her cap and gown to accept her diploma at the Ravenna High School ceremony last week.

Her mother, Dede, said seeing her daughter walk for the first time as the audience gave a standing ovation left her weeping so much that she couldn't even cheer.

The teen said she wanted to surprise her family and was stunned by the crowd's reaction.

Heavy rains cause sewer to overflow

MD FORT WASHINGTON — Heavy rains in the greater Washington region caused a sanitary sewer overflow at a pumping station in Fort Washington.

The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission said the overflow occurred for about two hours Saturday afternoon. The commission estimated that about 17,000 gallons of diluted wastewater went untreated as the rainfall exceeded the pumping capacity.

The commission said the overflow did not affect the drinking water supply.

Police say mother staged son's DUI

PA WILLIAMSPORT — Police said a Pennsylvania woman staged her son's DUI.

WNEP-TV reported Saturday

the West Milton woman, 38, told investigators she put her son, 20, behind the wheel in February, then called police and said he was high on synthetic marijuana and passed out in the car.

Her son was charged with driving under the influence, but he later said at his preliminary hearing that it was his mother who put him in the vehicle and started the engine.

The woman was charged with reckless endangerment and making false reports.

Motorcyclist dies in crash with bear, SUV

OR WARM SPRINGS — Authorities said a 39-year-old off-duty firefighter was killed when his motorcycle struck a large bear on a central Oregon highway and he was hit by another vehicle.

Oregon State Police said Rhett Larsen, of Bend, died at the scene of Saturday night's crash on Highway 26 near Warm Springs.

Authorities said Larsen struck the bear, which also died, when it ran onto the highway. Police said Larsen was thrown from his motorcycle and was hit by an SUV, whose driver was flown to a hospital with undisclosed injuries.

Man reunited with ring 60 years later

MA WORCESTER — A Massachusetts man using a metal detector found another man's class ring more than 60 years after he gave it to a high school sweetheart.

The Worcester Telegram reported Aaron Doray met Robert Michaud, 80, in Worcester on Saturday to return his Cushing Academy class ring.

Doray said he found the ring in March in Leicester. He called Cushing Academy to locate the ring's owner.

Michaud graduated in 1954. The ring was engraved with his initials. He said he gave it away when he was 19.

Ultralight pilot hits tree, is stranded

VT NORTH SPRINGFIELD — Police in Vermont said they rescued a man who crashed his ultralight aircraft into a tree and got stuck 40 feet in the air.

The open-cockpit plane went down about 10:30 a.m. Sunday in North Springfield. Officials used a Green Mountain Power utility truck with a bucket to get the man out of the tree.

The pilot was identified as Rutland resident Mark Jacob, who was rescued about 5:30 p.m. Sunday. He was uninjured.

Police investigating theft at gravesite

ME SCARBOROUGH, — Maine police are investigating the theft of a historic war marker from a 240-year-old grave.

Scarborough police said Sunday they are looking into the theft of a brass Society of Colonial Wars cross at the headstone of veteran John Fogg at Black Point Cemetery in Scarborough. Fogg died Oct. 22, 1778, at age 49.

Trucker arrested over shattered windows

IL URBANA — A central Illinois prosecutor said a truck driver from Wisconsin used a slingshot and metal ball bearings to shatter windows in vehicles along Interstate 74.

Champaign County State's Attorney Julia Rietz said the man was arrested Friday night by Illinois State Police investigators who caught him using a slingshot to shatter a minivan's

sliding glass door window.

The man was held on \$2 million bond, facing possible charges that include criminal damage to property, aggravated battery in a public place and aggravated battery to a child. The battery charge is based on a May 8 incident that left glass embedded in a 3-year-old boy's face.

Police: Man watched woman sleep in home

SC LEXINGTON — A South Carolina man was jailed without bond after deputies alleged he entered a woman's house and watched her sleep.

The Lexington County Sheriff's Office said in a news release Sunday that Richard Travis Abbott, 28, of Irmo, entered the home through an unlocked door. Arrest warrants said he entered the home intending to watch the woman sleep.

The woman told deputies she awakened to find the man in the room staring at her. She wasn't hurt and persuaded the man to leave.

Pastor's vehicle is stolen at funeral

CO DENVER — A member of a Colorado military Honor Guard said someone stole his personal vehicle during a funeral at Fort Logan National Cemetery in Denver.

Capt. John Moreland told KUSA-TV in Denver that his 2012 Honda Pilot was stolen late Friday morning.

He said he had left his keys in the car while he participated in the service.

Moreland, who is a pastor at the Denver Christian Bible Church, said his phone, laptop, 20 years of ministry material and the church debit card were in the vehicle.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Caps on verge of claiming Stanley Cup

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Evgeny Kuznetsov smiled about getting four assists. He tried not to smile too much at the thought of being one win away from the Stanley Cup.

With Kuznetsov and goaltender Braden Holtby leading the way, the Washington Capitals are on the verge of capturing the franchise's first title in its 43rd season after routing the Vegas Golden Knights 6-2 on Monday night to take a commanding 3-1 series lead.

Alex Ovechkin and the Capitals will get their first chance to hoist the Cup in Game 5 on Thursday night in Las Vegas.

One more win.

"I've never been there," Kuznetsov said after just the fourth four-assist game in Cup Final history. "And I don't really care about that yet, so it's kind of easy for me. You know me, I always stay loose a little bit, especially off the games. I'm pretty sure when game gonna come, we're gonna a little bit think about it. It's pretty

hard to not think about that."

T.J. Oshie, Tom Wilson and Devante Smith-Pelly all scored in the first period to get the Capitals rolling against a determined Vegas team that has not found consistent answers against Holtby, who stopped 28 shots in another strong showing. The Golden Knights out-chanced the Capitals by a wide margin but fell apart after James Neal clanked a shot off the post instead of hitting a wide-open net early, and the expansion team's Cinderella run could be over in a matter of days.

"It probably changes the game," Neal said. "It's probably a different game after that. I had a wide-open net, and then I just hit the post."

John Carlson, Michal Kempny and Brett Connolly also scored as thunderous chants of "We want the Cup! We want the Cup!" rang out from the crowd. No team since the Detroit Red Wings in 1942 has blown a 3-1 lead in the Cup Final.

"It can be easy in a game where you can clinch to get a little bit ahead of ourselves," Oshie said. "But we've got a good group of leaders in the room ... and we'll be focused at the start."

The Capitals seem to be getting enough bounces to make up for nine previous first- or second-round playoff exits in the Ovechkin and Nicklas Backstrom era — and plenty of disappointments in the previous decades, too.

While Vegas rang several shots off the posts, the Capitals seized just about every opportunity as they have throughout this surprising run. Kuznetsov padded his lead as the playoffs' leading scorer with primary assists on Oshie's power-play goal that made it 1-0 and Wilson's that doubled the lead.

"He just tells me to put my stick on the ice and he'll hit it," Wilson said of Kuznetsov. "It's a privilege to play with him. He's one of the best at his craft."

Smith-Pelly, who scored the insurance goal to ice Game 3,

kicked the puck from his left skate to his stick and roofed a shot on Marc-Andre Fleury with 20.5 seconds left in the first period. Fleury came into the final as the Conn Smythe front-runner for playoff MVP honors but looked human again by allowing six goals on 23 shots at a defense that has often left him vulnerable.

Fleury called the loss "frustrating and demoralizing." Coach Gerard Gallant was quick to absolve his goaltender of blame.

"At least five of the six goals were wide-open nets," Gallant said. "Nothing he could do on them."

Kuznetsov leads all playoff scorers with 31 points, Ovechkin is tied for the goal lead with 14 and Holtby showed again his ability to alter the course of a game. Holtby got some good fortune from the post on shots by Alex Tuch, Neal and Brayden McNabb, but he also had not allowed a goal in more than 62 minutes stretching back to Game 3.

Vegas squanders early opportunities in blowout loss

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — James Neal had the puck on his stick and was staring at an open net. In a can't-miss situation, that's exactly what he did.

Poised to give the Vegas Golden Knights the opening goal in Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final, the veteran leader of this upstart expansion team hit the right post. Ping! The puck skipped behind Capitals goaltender Braden Holtby and slithered harmlessly toward the back boards.

"You want those chances. Nine times out of 10 you probably put that in the back of the net," Neal said. "I had the composure to wait. And then you shoot it and you're like, 'Oh!'"

The Golden Knights, a team in desperate need of a boost of confidence, collectively shrugged as a golden opportu-

nity slipped away.

"It definitely would have changed the outcome of the game and would have given us momentum," said right wing Alex Tuch, who knows a thing or two about coming up empty on a close-in shot.

Not surprisingly, the Golden Knights sputtered the rest of the way Monday night in a 6-2 defeat that put them on the brink of elimination. Washington is up 3-1 and can win its first Stanley Cup on Thursday night in Las Vegas.

"Go home, win one game and the pressure is on them," Neal said, hopefully.

Although the Capitals have blown many a playoff series in the past, only one team, the 1942 Detroit Red Wings, has lost the Stanley Cup Final after holding a 3-1 lead.

"Not where we want to be,

that's for sure," Vegas goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury said. "But we have a good bunch of guys with a lot of character in the room. Nobody's quitting."

Barring a comeback of historic proportions — an unlikely occurrence after being outscored 12-5 over the past three games — the Golden Knights will always remember this series for "The Stick" and "The Post."

"The Stick" was wielded by Holtby, who used it late in Game 2 to snuff a seemingly sure goal by Tuch in a 3-2 Washington victory. "The Post" is a symbol of the frustration Vegas has experienced in this series after winning 12 of 15 in roaring to the Western Conference title.

Who knows if things would have been different on Monday night if Neal put the puck in the net? This much is certain:

The reeling Golden Knights were looking for something, anything, to build on when they entered Game 4, and a 1-0 lead would have been splendid.

Presented with a power play in a scoreless first period, Vegas worked the puck around smartly in the Washington zone. Then, Erik Haula whisked a cross-ice pass to Neal on the left side of the net, and Holtby was slow to react.

"We obviously got some breaks at the start of the game," the goaltender said. "Honestly, I thought it was in. Somehow, it didn't go in."

Said Neal: "It's not like anyone made a save. I shot it off the post on the far side. It's done with. It's not the first time it's happened. Probably won't be the last. But at this stage, at that moment, it changes the game."

No. 72 Cecchinato eliminates Djokovic

Associated Press

PARIS — Novak Djokovic lost in the French Open quarterfinals, beaten 6-3, 7-6 (4), 1-6, 7-6 (11) by Italian Marco Cecchinato after a battle that lasted nearly 3½ hours on Court Suzanne Lenglen and produced several scintillating rallies.

The 2016 champion saved three match points in the fourth-set tiebreaker before his 72nd-ranked rival converted his fourth with a backhand return winner.

Cecchinato became the lowest-ranked semifinalist at Roland Garros since No. 100 Andrei Medvedev advanced to the last four back in 1999.

Djokovic had his neck massaged during the opening set and called the trainer again after winning the third set, this time to receive treatment on his right leg.

Cecchinato received a penalty point immediately after Djokovic was treated, for

“unsportsmanlike conduct.” The Italian player was seen in a conversation with a tournament official but it was not clear why he was penalized.

Cecchinato will play Dominic Thiem in the semifinals.

The seventh-seeded Thiem made it to a third straight semifinal at Roland Garros after swatting aside second-seeded Alexander Zverev 6-4, 6-2, 6-1.

There was no stirring comeback this time for Zverev on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Heading into the match, the German had won three consecutive five-setters — trailing 2-1 in sets in each — but the rousing effort caught up to him against Thiem.

Madison Keys reached her first French Open semifinal by defeating unseeded Yulia Putintseva 7-6 (5), 6-4.

Although not known as a clay-court specialist, the 13th-seeded Keys has not lost a

set at Roland Garros.

“Today is a perfect example of what I have been trying to do, and I think it showed today,” Keys said. “Because there were times when I had to go back and hit a higher ball, where maybe before I would have tried to hit a line-drive winner.”

While Putintseva regularly lost her composure, Keys stayed calm throughout and the big-hitting American secured victory on her first match point with a powerful serve which clipped Putintseva’s racket and flew into the crowd.

Her box, including three-time major winner Lindsay Davenport, rose to acclaim Keys, who lost last year’s U.S. Open final to friend and countrywoman Sloane Stephens.

They will meet again in the semifinals after the 10th-seeded Stephens easily beat 14th-seeded Daria Kasatkina 6-3, 6-1.

NCAA Tournament roundup

Tennessee Tech, Duke reach first super regionals

Associated Press

A Tennessee Tech team that boasts the nation’s most high-powered offense relied on its pitching to earn the biggest win in program history Monday night.

The Golden Eagles of the Ohio Valley Conference knocked No. 4 national seed Mississippi out of the NCAA Tournament by beating the Rebels twice, 15-5 and 3-2, to clinch the Oxford Regional title.

Tech joins Duke, Minnesota, Stetson and Washington as teams that will make their first appearances in super regionals this week. Winners in those eight best-of-three series advance to the College World Series in Omaha, Nebraska, starting June 16.

Duke won the Athens Regional on Monday with two wins over No. 8 national seed Georgia.

No. 1 overall seed and defending national champion Florida, Mississippi State and South Carolina also advanced, giving the Southeastern Conference six teams in supers.

Eight of the 16 national seeds

were eliminated in regionals, including four of the top eight.

Tennessee Tech, a No. 2 regional seed, has put up some of the college game’s biggest offensive numbers in years this season, but it was the pitching of closer-turned-starter Ethan Roberts in the afternoon and Devin Lancaster and Nick Osborne at night that carried the Golden Eagles against Ole Miss.

“Everyone talks about our offense, but our pitchers can pitch, too,” said Trevor Putzig, whose homer tied it 2-2 in the sixth.

Lancaster went the first 5¹/₃ innings, allowing two runs on four hits. Osborne came on to start the seventh after playing the first six innings in right field and allowed two hits the rest of the way to make Kevin Strohschein’s seventh-inning sacrifice fly stand up.

In the first game, Roberts, normally the closer, made his second start in 63 appearances and went a career-long 7²/₃ innings before leaving the game with a 10-2 lead.

“Our goal from the beginning was Omaha, so we’re one

step closer,” Putzig said.

Coming through the losers’ bracket, Duke won a regional for the first time since 1961.

Duke coach Chris Pollard took over in 2012, and the Blue Devils have reached at least 30 wins five straight years. They ended a 55-year NCAA Tournament drought in 2016, and Monday they completed a difficult trek in regionals that saw them come from behind to win in three games as the No. 2 regional seed after losing 6-0 to Troy on Friday.

Duke beat Georgia 8-5 in the afternoon before locking up the regional title with an 8-4 win.

Florida lost 7-4 to Florida Atlantic in the afternoon in the Gainesville Regional, forcing a winner-take-all second game that the Gators won 5-2.

Mississippi State defeated Oklahoma for the second time in two days in Tallahassee, Florida, and is in a super regional for the third straight year. The Bulldogs are the first team since the tournament went to its current format in 1999 to win a regional in back-to-back years after losing the first game.

This year’s run has been

wild. Andy Cannizaro resigned as coach Feb. 20 for off-field conduct, and pitching coach Gary Henderson took over in an interim role. The No. 2 regional seed Bulldogs didn’t lock up an NCAA at-large bid until they swept top-ranked Florida in their final regular-season series.

They lost 20-10 to Oklahoma on Friday and, facing elimination Saturday, were down to their last strike against No. 7 national seed Florida State when Elijah MacNamee hit a three-run walk-off homer in the bottom of the ninth inning for a 3-2 win.

MSU beat the Sooners 13-5 on Sunday and 8-5 on Monday.

South Carolina opened SEC play 1-5 and dealt with a number of injuries before it got hot the second half of the season. The Gamecocks went 3-0 in the Greenville (North Carolina) Regional, coming from behind to beat Ohio State, knocking off No. 12 national seed East Carolina and beating No. 4 regional seed UNC-Wilmington 8-4 in the final Monday.

Tigers take Auburn's Mize with top pick

Associated Press

SECAUCUS, N.J. — Casey Mize went from undrafted three years ago all the way to No. 1.

The Detroit Tigers selected the Auburn right-hander with the first pick in the Major League Baseball draft Monday night. The announcement at MLB Network studios marked the second time the Tigers led off the draft, and first since they took Rice pitcher Matt Anderson in 1997.

The 6-foot-3, 220-pound Mize had long been linked to the Tigers, and this season he pitched his way to the top spot on the board. Mize wasn't chosen by any organization out of high school three years ago, but developed into a potential big league ace while in college.

"It means a ton," he said in an interview on MLB Network's broadcast. "I can't describe this feeling right now."

Mize is 10-5 with a 2.95 ERA and 151 strikeouts with just 12 walks in 109²/₃ innings while helping the Tigers to the NCAA Tournament super regionals. He has outstanding command of four pitches, including a fastball that hovers in the mid-90s, and his wicked split changeup creates lots of swings and misses.

Mize became the seventh player to go from undrafted in high school to the No. 1 pick, and first since Stephen Strasburg went to the Washington Nationals in 2009.

In a statement, Tigers general manager Al Avila said the club is confident Mize "will become a pillar in our player de-

velopment system that's going to bring winning baseball to Detroit for seasons to come."

"Being a college pitcher — especially coming from the Southeastern Conference — we know Casey has seen elite competition before," he added.

With the second selection, San Francisco took slugging Georgia Tech catcher Joey Bart, the Atlantic Coast Conference player of the year.

Wichita State third baseman Alec Bohm was the first of six players in attendance to be drafted, going third overall to Philadelphia.

Oregon State second baseman Nick Madrigal — at 5-foot-7, 160 pounds — went fourth to the Chicago White Sox.

Rounding out the top five was Cincinnati, which took Florida third baseman Jonathan India.

Oakland created a major buzz at No. 9 and shook up some draft boards by tabbing speedy Oklahoma outfielder — and quarterback — Kyler Murray, the favorite to replace Heisman Trophy winner Baker Mayfield this season as the Sooners' starter on the gridiron.

Shortly after he was picked by Oakland, Murray said he still plans to play football for Oklahoma this year.

"Right now, I'm really not focused on the football-baseball situation," Murray said on a conference call. "I'm just soaking in the night."

But when asked again about the coming football season, Murray said he had spoken to the Athletics about it.

"I will be playing football this season," he insisted.

MLB roundup

Yanks' Judge strikes out 8 times during doubleheader

Associated Press

DETROIT — Yankees slugger Aaron Judge and Giancarlo Stanton left a doubleheader split in sour moods Monday night.

Judge became the first player ever to record eight strikeouts in a doubleheader, including five punchouts in the nightcap, and Stanton was angry after being hit by another pitch from Tigers starter Mike Fiers.

Leonys Martin had two hits and scored twice as Detroit won the second game 4-2. New York took the opener 7-4 behind Luis Severino's eight strong innings and a six-run fourth inning.

Judge struck out eight times in nine at-bats, the most in a doubleheader since strikeouts for hitters were first recorded in 1910 for the NL and 1913 in the AL, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. Judge struck out in each of his five at-bats in the late game, including with a runner aboard in the bottom of the ninth.

The five strikeouts were a career high for Judge, who led

the majors with 208 strikeouts while winning AL Rookie of the Year last season.

"That's not a rough day, that's a terrible day," Judge said. "But the beauty of baseball is that I get to wake up to fresh, new at-bats tomorrow."

In the third inning of the second game, Fiers hit Stanton on the left forearm, leading to a brief verbal exchange between the pitcher and slugger. In September 2014, Fiers was pitching for the Milwaukee Brewers when he hit Stanton in the face, causing serious injuries.

"He wasn't trying to hit me, but still, with the history, don't hit me," Stanton said Monday. "That doesn't eliminate pitching in — this is the major leagues — but either get it over the plate or make sure it doesn't hit me."

Stanton hit a 456-foot homer in the sixth, then pointed at Fiers as he crossed the plate.

"I understand the history, but I thought the way he handled it today was kind of childish,"

Fiers said. "Anyone who watches this game knows I wasn't throwing at him."

The doubleheader made up rainouts from April 14 and 15. Both teams wore No. 42 for the second game because they were making up their postponed Jackie Robinson Day showdown.

Angels 9, Royals 6: Mike Trout had three hits, including a tiebreaking RBI single in the eighth inning, and host Los Angeles beat Kansas City.

Trout scored three runs and drove in two, Justin Upton and Albert Pujols also had two RBIs, and Jefry Marte hit a solo home run to help the Angels improve to 4-0 against the Royals this season. Los Angeles has scored at least five runs in each of those wins.

Tim Hill (1-2) couldn't handle the bouncing comeback up the middle from Trout, and the ball had enough on it to carry to center field and allow Maldonado to score for the 7-6 lead. Upton and Pujols each added

run-scoring singles to add to the lead.

Giants 10, Diamondbacks 3: Andrew McCutchen and Brandon Crawford opened a seven-run fourth inning with back-to-back home runs, and host San Francisco got back to .500 on the season by beating first-place Arizona.

Pinch-hitter Alen Hanson and Buster Posey each added two-run doubles in the big inning to help the Giants win their fifth straight game to move within 1½ games of the Diamondbacks in the NL West. Pablo Sandoval and Nick Hundley also homered for the Giants.

Padres 11, Braves 4: Cory Spangenberg homered and tripled, Raffy Lopez had a homer among his career-high three hits and Eric Hosmer and Franmil Reyes also went deep to lead host San Diego.

Clayton Richard (4-6) pitched seven strong innings for the Padres, who have won six of seven and remain in last place in the NL West.