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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

High court upholds Trump's travel ban

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld President Donald Trump's ban on travel from several mostly Muslim countries, rejecting a challenge that it discriminated against Muslims or exceeded his authority.

The 5-4 decision Tuesday is the court's first substantive ruling on a Trump administration policy.

Chief Justice John Roberts wrote the majority opinion, joined by his four conserva-

tive colleagues. Roberts wrote that presidents have substantial power to regulate immigration. He also rejected the challengers' claim of anti-Muslim bias.

But he was careful not to endorse either Trump's provocative statements about immigration in general and Muslims in particular.

"We express no view on the soundness of the policy," Roberts wrote.

The travel ban has been fully in place since the court declined to block it in December. The jus-

tices allowed the policy to take full effect even as the court fight continued and lower courts had ruled it out of bounds.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote in a dissent that based on the evidence in the case "a reasonable observer would conclude that the Proclamation was motivated by anti-Muslim animus." She said her colleagues arrived at the opposite result by "ignoring the facts, misconstruing our legal precedent, and turning a blind eye to the pain and suffering the Proclamation

inflicts upon countless families and individuals, many of whom are United States citizens."

Justices Stephen Breyer, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Elena Kagan also dissented.

The policy applies to travelers from five countries with overwhelmingly Muslim populations — Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. It also affects two non-Muslim countries, blocking travelers from North Korea and some Venezuelan government officials and their families.

Tempers flare, insults fly over immigration

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Political rancor over immigration has boiled over into increasingly personal insults, as President Donald Trump took a harsh shot at a prominent congresswoman's intellect and Democrats worried that some of their own anti-Trump rhetoric might play into his hands and backfire in November.

With language reaching belligerent levels seldom heard since the 2016 campaign, Republican tactics seemed aimed at least in part at activating loyal supporters for the midterm elections.

The issue of what passes for political civility in 2018 has been eagerly stoked by Trump, who has embraced the cultural battles playing out everywhere from restaurant tables to football fields to late-night comedy. The ejection of White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders and her family from a Virginia restaurant over the weekend symbolizes the public anger that has tied Democrats in knots, leaving them torn as to how to respond to a president who defies the norms of his

GOP struggles with bill ahead of recess

WASHINGTON — Struggling to find the votes to pass an immigration overhaul, House Republicans are focusing on a slimmed-down bill to stem the crisis of separating immigrant families at the border.

But even that more modest measure has hit uncertainty. President Donald Trump rejected the idea of adding more immigration judges, insisting it would only lead to

graft even though supporters say the step could help expedite the logjam of claims that can prolong detentions.

With Congress wavering on the next moves, it's uncertain if lawmakers will be able to swiftly act on any bills to address the border crisis despite an outpouring of public concern over reports of immigrant children being separated from their parents.

From The Associated Press

office.

Trump punched back sharply Monday after Democratic Rep. Maxine Waters, of California, told a crowd in her state over the weekend that "if you see anybody from that Cabinet in a restaurant, in a department store, at a gasoline station, you get out and you create a crowd and you push back on them!"

Trump, always eager for a foil, tweeted in retort: "Congress-

endanger Democrats' chances in the midterms that could determine the next chapter of Trump's presidency.

"In the crucial months ahead, we must strive to make America beautiful again," tweeted Pelosi, the House minority leader. "Trump's daily lack of civility has provoked responses that are predictable but unacceptable. As we go forward, we must conduct elections in a way that achieves unity from sea to shining sea."

While Trump's rough rhetoric since his campaign has given license for some of his followers to engage in inflammatory acts, the anger on the left has sparked its own set of unruly images, further amplifying the political divisions in the nation's civility war.

Sanders was shown the door at the Red Hen in Lexington, about three hours outside Washington, by the restaurant's owner on Friday. The press secretary tweeted from her government Twitter account that she was asked "to leave because I work for @POTUS and I politely left. Her actions say far more about her than about me."

Troops face mobility issues across Europe

The Washington Post

SUWALKI, Poland — U.S. commanders are worried that if they had to head off a conflict with Russia, the most powerful military in the world could get stuck in a traffic jam.

Humvees could snarl behind plodding semis on narrow roads as they made their way east across Europe. U.S. tanks could crush rusting bridges too weak to hold their weight. Troops could be held up by officious passport-checkers and stubborn railway companies.

Although many barriers would drop away if there were a declaration of war, the hazy period before a military engagement would present a major problem.

NATO has just a skeleton force deployed to its member countries that share a border with Russia. Backup forces would need to traverse hundreds of miles. And the delays — a mixture of bureaucracy, bad planning and decaying infrastructure — could enable Russia to seize NATO territory in the Baltics while U.S. Army planners were still filling out the 17 forms needed to cross Germany and into Poland.

During at least one White House exercise that gamed out a European war with Russia, the logistical stumbles contributed to a NATO loss.

That possibility is tangible for troops who have gotten stuck trying to move between training exercises in Europe — like the U.S. Army squadron that budgeted two weeks last year to get their Stryker armored vehicles back by train to Germany from the Black Sea nation of Georgia. It took four months, leaving the troops sitting in Germany without their rides or weaponry, said Lt. Col. Adam Lackey, the commander of the squadron.

“We have to be able to move as fast or faster than Russia in order to be an effective deterrent,” said Ben Hodges, the U.S. Army’s former top general in Europe.

Since retiring in December, Hodges has devoted himself to raising the alarm from his perch at the Washington-based Center for European Policy Analysis, and he has successfully pushed to get troop mobility issues on the agenda of a NATO summit in Brussels next month. The United States and NATO need to be able to “mass enough capability in place so that Russia doesn’t make a terrible miscalculation,” Hodges said.

The original rationale for the NATO alliance was to defend against a potential war with Russia. Western troops regularly practiced for large-scale conflict — and the front line between East and West Germany was just miles away from where more than 200,000 U.S. troops were deployed.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Western planners cheerfully threw away the playbooks in the hope of new cooperation with Moscow. For years after NATO’s 2004 expansion into territory that had once been the Soviet Union’s, the alliance had no plans for how to defend its new members.

“We didn’t think about enlargement in those military terms,” said Douglas Lute, a retired three-star U.S. Army general and former U.S. ambassador to NATO who as a young officer patrolled the internal German border a short trip away from where he was stationed.

Russia’s 2014 seizure of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula provided a jolt. Western planners went to retrieve their Cold War-era playbooks from the dustbin. But their Russia-fighting muscles had atrophied to the point where they could barely flex, and their ability to move across Europe had decayed.

“Transportation is a problem in a very practical way. But it’s a symptom of a bigger problem,” Lute said. “We’re now confronting the image that we had for the last 25 years, of Europe whole, free and at peace. It’s not whole, it’s not free and it’s not at peace.”

In some cases, military planners in Moscow had a better picture of bridges, roads and the weak points of the new NATO territories — because they used to be the Soviet Union’s.

Whereas Russia has no challenge moving its troops inside its own territory, a thicket of peacetime rules has complicated military movements within Europe.

Germany, for instance, allows trucks loaded with tanks and other heavy equipment on highways only at night on weekdays. Sweden, which isn’t a member of NATO but works closely with the alliance, requires three weeks’ notice before most military personnel and equipment can enter. The rails on Baltic railroads are set apart wider than the Western standard, meaning that trains have to be laboriously unloaded, then reloaded near Poland’s border with Lithuania. That can add days to a major movement of troops.

“If you can get there in 45 days, you’re just late to the fight,” said Maj. Gen. Steven Shapiro, the two-star officer charged with organizing the U.S. Army’s movements in Europe. Shapiro noted he recently had to file 17 forms to get troops from the German port of Bremerhaven to their destination in Poland. “There are days where we move at the speed of war. But, generally speaking, that’s outside of the current norm.”

NATO leaders are just beginning to address the underlying issues. They have worked with the European Union in the past year to boost funding for infrastructure and reduce bureaucratic roadblocks. At the Brussels summit next month — barring surprises from President Donald Trump, who has frequently complained that other NATO nations are not spending enough on defense — they are expected to approve two new military commands that would speed transit from the East Coast of the United States all the way to NATO’s border with Russia.

US seen backing away from Syria de-escalation enforcement

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration appears to be walking away from a pledge to enforce an arrangement to stabilize southwestern Syria as the Syrian military presses ahead with an offensive in the rebel-held area despite

repeated U.S. warnings.

The offensive violates an agreement among the U.S., Russia and neighboring Jordan, whose monarch met with President Donald Trump on Monday. The nearly year-old agreement is intended to preserve the status quo in Syria’s southwest, but recent public and private

statements suggest the U.S. commitment is slipping.

Although the administration has been consistent in criticizing Russia for backing Syrian President Bashar Assad’s forces’ advance into the “de-escalation zone” in the province of Daraa, over the past two weeks U.S. officials in Washington

and in the Middle East have steadily walked back warnings of American retaliation for violations.

The quiet backtrack has occurred over the course of the last month as what started as allusions to a potential U.S. military response evolved into mere expressions of concern.

Hopes raised for missing troops' families

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Air Force pilot 2nd Lt. Jimmy Louis Escalle was making his second pass to strafe a convoy of camouflaged trucks in North Korea when he disappeared from radio contact on June 19, 1953.

It was just over a month before an armistice was signed to end the Korean War.

A search crew spotted the smoking wreckage of what was presumed to be his F-86 Sabre fighter jet but no sign of the 23-year-old pilot — one of thousands of American servicemen who remain unaccounted for.

His nephew and namesake, Jim Escalle, and other MIA families are hoping that North Korea's promise to return remains of Americans who were lost on their territory will finally bring their loved ones home.

"I was elated when I heard North Korea was going to repatriate remains," said Escalle, 58, a substitute teacher in Bakersfield, Calif. "It is a positive step in the right direction."

President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un committed during their June 12 summit in Singapore to "recovering POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified."

It would be the first such repatriation in more than a decade after a joint search effort was brought to a halt amid rising tensions over the North's nuclear weapons program.

The U.S.-led United Nations Command is on standby for the handover and sent wooden coffins and flags to the truce village in the tense border that divides the peninsula.

"They have staged appropriate logistics materials, and we simply are standing by for whenever the ... diplomatic activities are done. And we're optimistic that it will begin because that was an agreement coming out of ... Singapore," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told reporters Sunday en route to Alaska.

Mattis, who also will travel to China, South Korea and Japan, said the UNC would oversee

S. Korea also trying to find its war dead

BY KIM GAMEL

AND YOO KYONG CHANG

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — While attention is focused on North Korea's promise to return the remains of American troops believed lost in the 1950-53 war, South Korea is quietly engaged in an ongoing effort to locate war dead on its side of the border.

The search for about 124,000 South Koreans who remain missing in action has been complicated by a late start and the rapid industrialization of the Asian powerhouse.

Some 10,000 sets of remains have been unearthed since the recovery project

started in 2000, but only 128 have been identified, according to the Ministry of National Defense's Killed in Action Recovery and Identification unit, known as MAKRI.

The unit also has found 14 American remains and plans to return the final set to the U.S. military in a repatriation ceremony next month, a MAKRI official said, speaking on condition of anonymity in exchange for providing the details.

The issue has come to the fore since North Korean leader Kim Jong Un agreed during his June 12 summit with President Donald Trump to commit to returning the remains of Americans lost in his country.

the repatriation because of the multilateral nature of the war, with about 15 countries sending troops.

Identification issues

Two weeks after the summit, no date has been set for the repatriation, despite Trump's assertion Thursday that "they've already sent back or are in the process of sending back the remains of our great heroes who died in North Korea during the war."

It's also unclear exactly where the handover would occur, although the military has prepared for it to be at Panmunjom since it straddles the border.

"We are very hopeful and I certainly know the Korea families are very hopeful," Rear Adm. Jon Kreitz, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency deputy director, said in an interview weeks before the summit.

"We hope that they'll turn over some remains and, if things progress, we are ready to hold talks with them to negotiate resumption of operations in

North Korea," Kreitz told Stars and Stripes in Kaiserslautern, Germany.

More than 36,000 U.S. troops died in the war, which ended in an armistice instead of a peace treaty, leaving the peninsula divided by the Demilitarized Zone, a 2.5-mile-wide no man's land dotted with land mines and lined with barbed wire.

From 1990 to 1994, North Korea returned 208 boxes of remains that contain an estimated 400 individuals, but only 181 Americans have been accounted for from those sets, according to the DPAA.

Joint U.S.-North Korean military search teams recovered 229 sets of American remains between 1996 and 2005, with only 153 individuals identified among those, the agency says.

The United States was allowed to conduct 33 investigative and recovery operations in the country before former President George W. Bush's administration called off the search, claiming the safety of American participants was not

guaranteed.

The last repatriation was in 2007 when then-New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson traveled to Pyongyang and returned with six sets of remains.

Mattis said that if they're turned over at the border, the remains would be taken to Osan Air Base south of Seoul where they would undergo an initial examination "just to make sure that they're probably from either western countries or other countries that were sending states."

They would then be sent to the DPAA's laboratory in Hawaii for forensics testing and identification, a daunting task that can take months and often years.

The effort is complicated by the decades that have lapsed, the death of close relatives who could contribute DNA and the condition of the remains, which are sometimes mixed together. Techniques used include skeletal analyses, sampling DNA, dental and chest radiograph comparisons, and historical evidence.

Final mission

Escalle, who was deployed to South Korea's Suwon Air Base with the 36th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, known as the "Flying Fiends," was determined to fly as many missions as possible, according to an account provided by his nephew.

The pace picked up in the weeks before the truce was signed on July 27 as the Chinese, who were fighting as allies of the North, made a push to gain as much territory as possible beforehand.

"After dark you could see the tracers. It looked like a Fourth of July in the late evening," Escalle wrote in a June 16 letter to his younger brother Bob.

Three days later, the F-86 Sabre pilot disappeared while making a run against the convoy of trucks.

Escalle is listed by the DPAA as a first lieutenant because he was later promoted for length of service since he remained on active duty even while listed as MIA.

US OKs prescription drug made with pot

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. health regulators on Monday approved the first prescription drug made from marijuana, a milestone that could spur more research into a drug that remains illegal under federal law despite growing legalization for recreational and medical use.

The Food and Drug Administration approved the medication, called Epidiolex, to treat two rare forms of epilepsy in patients 2 years and older. But it's not quite medical marijuana.

The strawberry-flavored syrup is a purified form of a chemical ingredient found in

the cannabis plant — but not the one that gets users high. It's not yet clear why the ingredient, called cannabidiol, or CBD, reduces seizures in some people with epilepsy.

British drugmaker GW Pharmaceuticals studied the drug in more than 500 children and adults with hard-to-treat seizures, overcoming numerous legal hurdles that have long stymied research into cannabis.

FDA officials said the drug reduced seizures when combined with older epilepsy drugs. FDA chief Scott Gottlieb said his agency had supported research on cannabis-derived

products "for many years."

"This approval serves as a reminder that sound development programs that properly evaluate active ingredients contained in marijuana can lead to important medical therapies," Gottlieb told reporters.

The FDA has previously approved synthetic versions of another cannabis ingredient for medical use, including severe weight loss in patients with HIV.

Epidiolex is essentially a pharmaceutical-grade version of CBD oil, which some parents already use to treat children with epilepsy. CBD is one of

more than 100 chemicals found in marijuana. It doesn't contain THC, the ingredient that gives marijuana its mind-altering effect.

Physicians say it's important to have a consistent, government-regulated version.

"I'm really happy we have a product that will be much cleaner and one that I know what it is," said Dr. Ellaine Wirrell, director of the Mayo Clinic's program for childhood epilepsy. "In the artisanal products there's often a huge variation in doses from bottle to bottle depending on where you get it."

Study: Altered poliovirus fights brain tumors

Associated Press

One of the world's most dreaded viruses has been turned into a treatment to fight deadly brain tumors. Survival was better than expected for patients in a small study who were given genetically modified poliovirus, which helped their bodies attack the cancer, doctors report.

It was the first human test of this and it didn't help most patients or improve median survival. But many who did respond seemed to have long-lasting benefit. About 21 percent were alive at three years, compared with 4 percent in a comparison group of previous brain tumor patients.

Similar survival trends have been seen with some other therapies that enlist the immune system against different types of cancer. None is sold yet for brain tumors.

"This is really a first step," and doctors were excited to see any survival benefit in a study testing safety, said one researcher, Duke University's Dr. Annick Desjardins.

Preliminary results were to be discussed Tuesday at a conference in Norway and published online by the New England Journal of Medicine.

Brain tumors called glioblastomas often recur after initial

treatment and survival is usually less than a year. Immunotherapy drugs like Keytruda help fight some cancers that spread to the brain but have not worked well for ones that start there.

Polio ravaged generations until a vaccine came out in the 1950s. The virus invades the nervous system and can cause paralysis. Doctors at Duke wanted to take advantage of the strong immune system response it spurs to try to fight cancer. With the help of the National Cancer Institute, they genetically modified poliovirus so it would not harm nerves but would still infect tumor cells.

The one-time treatment is dripped directly into the brain through a thin tube. Inside the tumor, the immune system recognizes the virus as foreign and mounts an attack.

The study tested the modified poliovirus on 61 patients whose tumors had recurred after initial treatments. Median survival was about a year, roughly the same as for a small group of similar patients given other brain tumor treatments at Duke. After two years, the poliovirus group started faring better.

Follow-up is continuing, but survival is estimated at 21 percent at two years, compared with 14 percent for the com-

parison group. At three years, survival was still 21 percent for the virus group, compared with 4 percent for the others.

Eight of the 35 patients who were treated more than two years ago were alive as of March, as were five out of 22 patients treated more than three years ago.

Stephanie Hopper, 27, of Greenville, S.C., was the first patient treated in the study, in May 2012, and it allowed her to finish college and become a nurse. Scans as recent as early June show no signs that the tumor is growing back, she said.

"I believe wholeheartedly that it was the cure for me," she said. Her only lasting symptom has been seizures, which medicines help control. "Most people wouldn't guess that I had brain cancer," she said.

The treatment causes a lot of brain inflammation, and two-thirds of patients had side effects. The most common were headaches, muscle weakness, seizure, trouble swallowing and altered thinking skills. Doctors stressed that these were due to the immune response in the brain and that no one got polio as a result of treatment.

Police say gunman lured firefighters to home, killed 1

Associated Press

LONG BEACH, Calif. — A man set a fire to lure firefighters to his Southern California retirement home so he could shoot them, authorities said. The attack killed one firefighter and wounded another.

Thomas Kim, 77, was arrested Monday on suspicion of murder, attempted murder and arson, but investigators were still trying to determine a motive for the attack in the southern Los Angeles suburb, police Chief Robert Luna said.

Kim remained jailed on \$2 million bail.

Firefighters were called to the 11-story Covenant Manor about 4 a.m. Monday by reports of an explosion. They found some second-floor windows blown out, activated sprinklers, the smell of gas and a fire that they extinguished, authorities said.

Firefighters were searching the building when shots rang out, and the two firefighters were hit, fire Chief Michael DuRee said.

Fire Capt. Dave Rosa, a 17-year veteran, died at a hospital, the chief said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman admits to role in crime spree

NJ NEWARK — A New Jersey woman admitted her role in a monthlong crime spree in two states, including an attempted bank robbery in Pennsylvania where she and another woman dressed as nuns.

Melisa Aquino Arias, 23, also pleaded guilty Friday to robbing a bank in Garfield, N.J., and conspiring to steal money from an ATM at a bank in Scotrun, Pa. The Passaic woman faces up to 41 years in prison.

The pleas came just weeks after her co-defendant, Swahilys Pedraza-Rodriguez, 19, of New Haven, Conn., pleaded guilty to the same offenses.

They were arrested about two weeks after the Garfield robbery when they went to a Teaneck bank and asked about opening an account. An employee recognized them as suspects in the Garfield robbery and called police.

Police chief sued over religious counseling

LA BATON ROUGE — A federal lawsuit claims a Louisiana city's elected police chief imposed his religious beliefs on officers and reprimanded them for missing mandatory religious counseling sessions.

Former police officer Patrick Marshall sued Port Allen Police Chief Esdrón Brown on Friday, claiming the chief threatened to fire or suspend him if he didn't attend the monthly counseling sessions with a chaplain.

Marshall also claims he was passed over for promotions given to less experienced officers who attended the same church as the chief.

Marshall resigned in Novem-

ber. His suit names Brown, the police department and city as defendants.

Bobcat euthanized after attacking man

AZ BISBEE — Authorities euthanized a bobcat that attacked a Bisbee man.

The Cochise County Sheriff's Office said the attack occurred Sunday morning as the man was walking his dog and saw the bobcat in the brush. The agency said that as the bobcat started running toward the man, he let his dog go.

The bobcat lunged at the man and tore at his left arm.

The man's wife saw the dog had come home and got into her car to find her husband. The bobcat ran off when she arrived and honked her horn.

The man was treated at a hospital and was released. The bobcat was found about 12 hours after the attack and was euthanized.

Firefighters open mentoring clubhouse

IL CHICAGO — A group of black Chicago firefighters have opened a new clubhouse to mentor youth in the city.

The Black Fire Brigade is the city's first clubhouse for black firefighters. The Chicago Sun-Times reported former Chicago firefighters from around the country rallied behind the effort to buy and furnish the clubhouse. The building on the city's southwest side is meant to be a place for black firefighters within the department to find fellowship and support.

It also will be used to mentor black youths in the city and to prepare them to pass the firefighters exam.

People gathered for wedding escape fire

MD NORTH POTOMAC — Authorities said more than a dozen people who gathered for a wedding escaped from a fire that destroyed part of a Maryland home.

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service spokesman Pete Piringer told The Washington Post the fire started about 2:30 a.m. Sunday at a recycling bin near the garage of the North Potomac home.

Piringer said 15 people who were together in the house for the wedding got out safely and went to another family home.

Piringer said the wedding was scheduled for later that day and many items for it were inside the home. He said he didn't know if the wedding was delayed.

Sisters meet after DNA test's revelation

WA BREMERTON — Two long-lost sisters had no idea they share the same parents until an Ancestry.com DNA test revealed the fact six months ago.

The Kitsap Sun reported Beverly Meier, 78, flew into Seattle from Sacramento, Calif., last week to meet her sister, Joyce Risher, 83, for the first time.

Risher's granddaughter, Melissa Berry, discovered the two women had the same parents last summer after researching her family genealogy. Meier submitted her DNA to Ancestry.com about a year ago to learn where her ancestors came from.

Meier was adopted after birth, and her seven siblings had no idea she was born. The families confirmed the relation after messaging back and forth

on Facebook.

The family held a reunion Saturday in Silverdale, Wash.

Ben & Jerry's unveils civil rights display

VT WATERBURY — Ice cream maker Ben & Jerry's has unveiled a new display at its Vermont factory dedicated to civil rights.

MyChamplainValley.com reported the display revealed at the Waterbury factory Friday honors Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1968 Poor People's Campaign.

The display was made in collaboration with the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Company co-founder Jerry Greenfield said the Poor People's Campaign is "as relevant today as it was 50 years ago."

Pilot escapes injury in hot-air balloon crash

MI HOWELL — A hot-air balloon pilot escaped injury when his balloon struck power lines and fell into a southeastern Michigan lake.

WXYZ-TV reported the man was rescued Sunday morning by fishermen on Thompson Lake around the Livingston County community of Howell. The pilot was taken to rescue crews at the shore.

Dave Park, who was fishing on the lake, told the station the basket and balloon were on fire after hitting the wires.

Officials with the Michigan Challenge Balloonfest said the crash is being investigated by the Federal Aviation Administration.

From wire reports

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and Military News

Rockets' Harden selected as NBA MVP

Associated Press

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — Third time was the charm for James Harden.

The Houston Rockets star was voted the NBA's Most Valuable Player after twice being runner-up, beating out four-time winner LeBron James and Anthony Davis, of the Pelicans, at the NBA Awards on Monday night.

Harden joined Michael Jordan as the only players to average at least 20 points, eight assists, five rebounds and 1.7 steals in a season.

He led the league in scoring, three-pointers and 50-point games with four while helping the Rockets to an NBA-leading 65 wins.

"The last four years have been like knocking on the door, knocking on the door. Now the moment is finally here," Harden said backstage. "Just every single year you try to come back and be better than you were the year before, and just to be holding that trophy finally, it means a lot."

James didn't attend the show in Barker Hangar at the Santa Monica Airport amid frenzied speculation about his future.

He has until Friday to tell the Cavaliers if he will pick up his \$35.6 million option for next season or opt for free agency.

Harden, who is from Los Angeles, led his mother on stage before he accepted the trophy from Commissioner Adam Silver.

"I'm not going to get emotional," he said from behind dark sunglasses. "She's my backbone in good times and bad times."

Harden received a total of 965 points and 86 first-place votes. James finished second with 738 points and 15 first-place votes, while Davis was third with 445 points and no first-place votes.

The Rockets had another winner in Daryl Morey, who was honored as Executive of the Year.

In other awards, Ben Simmons, of the Philadelphia 76ers, won Rookie of the Year.

The guard averaged 15 points, eight rebounds and eight assists, joining Hall of Famer Oscar Robertson as the only rookies to post those numbers in a season.

Simmons helped Philadelphia to a 52-30 record, including ending the season with a

16-game winning streak.

He beat out finalists Donovan Mitchell, of Utah, and Jayson Tatum, of Boston.

Guard Victor Oladipo, of the Indiana Pacers, earned Most Improved Player.

He averaged 23.1 points in his first season with the Pacers while nabbing his first All-Star berth. He also led the league in steals for the first time.

The Defensive Player of the Year went to center Rudy Gobert, of the Utah Jazz.

He was the leading vote-getter for the league's All-Defensive first team while anchoring a Jazz defense that ranked second in the NBA in defensive rating.

Lou Williams, of the Los Angeles Clippers, took Sixth Man honors.

The guard became the first player to average at least 20 points for the first time in his 13th season or later. He led the league in fourth-quarter points and scoring average.

Williams kissed his two young daughters on his way to the stage after becoming the Clippers' third winner in the last five years.

Dwane Casey was chosen Coach of the Year for his work

with the Toronto Raptors, who fired him last month. He has since become coach of the Detroit Pistons.

Casey led the Raptors to the No. 1 seed in the East for the first time in franchise history after winning a team-record 59 games. Casey coached the East in the All-Star Game for the first time.

Robertson received the Lifetime Achievement Award from presenters Charles Barkley and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

After Barkley mentioned last year's recipient, Bill Russell, Boston's Hall of Fame center flipped his middle finger in Barkley's direction.

Robertson is the career leader in triple-doubles and was the first player to average one for a season. His antitrust case against the NBA also ushered in free agency for players, which Robertson said was his most important assist.

Former NBA player Dikembe Mutombo received the Sager Strong Award, named for the late Turner Sports broadcaster. He donned a garish sports coat similar to what Craig Sager always wore.

The Hustle Award went to Amir Johnson, of the 76ers.

Sports briefs

Washington State QB had brain damage linked to CTE

Associated Press

PULLMAN, Wash. — The family of the Washington State football player who died of suicide in January said the 21-year-old quarterback had extensive brain damage that's been linked to concussions from playing the sport.

Tyler Hilinski was found dead in his apartment with a gunshot wound and a suicide note on Jan. 16.

Mark and Kym Hilinski told NBC's "Today" show on Tuesday that the Mayo Clinic requested to do an autopsy of their son's brain. The interview comes alongside the debut of

a new Sports Illustrated documentary about the family's search for answers.

The family in those interviews said the autopsy results indicated that their son had signs of extensive brain damage known as chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, which has been found in hundreds of former NFL players.

Murray won't say if he'll play Wimbledon

EASTBOURNE, England — After his first win in nearly a year, Andy Murray wasn't ready to commit to playing at

Wimbledon next week.

Murray beat Stan Wawrinka 6-1, 6-3 at the Eastbourne International on Monday in the second match of his comeback from long-term hip problems.

Murray returned last week at the Queen's Club and lost to Nick Kyrgios in the first round.

He said if he believes his body can handle Grand Slam best-of-five-set matches, then he'll play at Wimbledon, where he's won twice.

Daly withdraws from US Senior Open

COLORADO SPRINGS,

Colo. — John Daly has withdrawn from the U.S. Senior Open, citing a deteriorating knee condition and blaming the USGA for not allowing him to use a golf cart.

The 52-year-old two-time major champion went on Twitter to say the USGA turned down his request to use a golf cart, which could have been allowed under rules that conform with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The USGA responded, saying it offered Daly a chance to provide additional information about his condition. Daly said he never received such a request.

Denmark, France moving on

Associated Press

MOSCOW — A game neither France nor Denmark needed to win produced the World Cup's first 0-0 draw amid boos and whistles from fans on Tuesday.

A slow-paced game — officially No. 37 in Russia — was out of step with a vibrant tournament and ensured already-qualified France won Group C and Denmark advanced as runner-up. Both came through unbeaten.

The draw ensured that outcome, though Peru's 2-0 victory over Australia playing at the same time meant the Danes would have advanced to the round of 16 even had they lost to France.

It was the longest a World Cup had gone without a goalless draw since 1954, which had none.

A French team with six starters resting barely tested Denmark goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel until substitute Nabil Fekir tried two long-range shots.

Much of a 78,011 crowd in Luzhniki Stadium whistled misplaced passes and slow play as the game progressed and Denmark protected its point — likely aware Australia had no chance of winning.

Still, thousands of Denmark fans in a stadium seemed happy enough at the final whistle.

It was a mostly forgettable first major tournament start for France goalkeeper Steve Mandanda, who has been a backup at two World Cups and three European Championships. The 33-year-old made his first and only save in the 54th minute, spilling Christian Eriksen's free-kick before pouncing on the loose ball.

France's first-choice goalkeeper and captain, Hugo Lloris, was among those rested. Midfielders Paul Pogba and Blaise Matuidi were obvious choices to sit after collecting yellow cards in a 1-0 win over Peru. A second yellow card before the semifinals triggers a

one-game ban.

The team lost rhythm inserting a different trio of attacking midfielders to support Antoine Griezmann and Olivier Giroud.

Perhaps sensing it was time to make entertainment midway through the first half, fans created a wave that made three laps of the stadium. Russian fans broke into their national chant several times to break the boredom.

Whistles and jeers got louder after a misplaced pass in the 64th by France midfielder Thomas Lemar. The ball went off the field 10 yards behind teammate Benjamin Mendy.

Only in the final 20 minutes, when Fekir and Kylian Mbappe, came off the bench did France show more pace and direct intent. They met a solid Danish defense content with the draw.

Denmark has a tough defense anchored by veteran captain Simon Kjaer, and a high-class goalkeeper in Kasper Schmeichel.

Peru wins to oust Australia

Associated Press

SOCHI, Russia — Back at the World Cup for the first time since 1982, Peru isn't leaving Russia empty-handed.

The Peruvians failed to score a goal in their opening two matches, but the team finally gave its fans a reason to celebrate when it ended Australia's hopes of advancing to the knockout round with a 2-0 victory on Tuesday.

The Australians had to beat Peru and hope Denmark lost to France in the other Group C match, but neither result occurred. France and Denmark drew 0-0 in Moscow.

Andre Carrillo's 18th-minute goal — a half-volley from inside the area — was Peru's first in a World Cup since its last appearance 36 years ago. Peru hadn't won a World Cup match since defeating Iran in 1978.

Peru captain Paolo Guerrero, who almost missed the tournament because of a doping suspension, scored the other goal in the 50th with a left-footed strike after getting to a loose ball inside the area.

"This triumph is for our people and for Jefferson (Farfan)," Guerrero said of his teammate who missed the match after being hospitalized with a head injury sustained in practice last weekend. "We showed that Peru can play as equal to anyone."

Australia striker Tim Cahill, a 38-year-old veteran who entered the match in the 53rd minute, had a chance to become only the fifth player to score in four World Cups, joining Pele, Uwe Seeler, Miroslav Klose and Cristiano Ronaldo. But he had few chances.

Australia needed the victory to reach the round of 16 for the first time since 2006 but it had a slow start at Fisht Stadium, unable to get near the opposing area. The Peruvians, boosted by a loud crowd that heavily outnumbered the Aussies, took advantage of their chances and gave their team an honorable finish after two opening losses.

Ronaldo's miss costs Portugal top spot

Associated Press

SARANSK, Russia — Cristiano Ronaldo's missed penalty cost Portugal first place in its World Cup group.

It could have been worse if not for Ricardo Quaresma, who started for the first time in the tournament and scored his maiden World Cup goal with a shot that had about as much flair as any in the tournament.

Portugal finished second in Group B after a 1-1 draw with Iran on Monday. The 2016 European champions will next face Uruguay on Saturday in the round of 16.

"The conclusion and the most important thing is we're going to continue playing," Portugal coach Fernando Santos said. "We had a strong opponent."

Quaresma became the only player other than Ronaldo to score for the Portuguese in three games in Russia. The 34-year-old midfielder also became Portugal's oldest scorer

in World Cup play by hitting a curling shot from the edge of the penalty area that went beyond the reach of diving Iran goalkeeper Ali Beiranvand.

Ronaldo — who had scored all four Portugal goals in its first two games of Group B play — was denied on his penalty by Beiranvand's dive toward the right post in the second half.

"We were on top of the game until the penalty, and we didn't make it. It wasn't perfect, but that's football," Santos said. "We did what was expected and now we have to settle down and think about Uruguay."

Karim Ansarifard scored a late penalty for Iran, which needed to win to advance, but couldn't break through a second time despite a furious charge in the waning minutes. The Mordovia arena momentarily vibrated from the sound of Iran fans' roars when Mehdi Taremi hit the side of the net from 6 yards out.

The penalty against Portugal

was awarded after a video review showed a handball in the area. But although Iran coach Carlos Queiroz benefited from that review, he railed against the system for the second day in a row. In particular, he cited a decision to give Ronaldo a yellow card after his elbow struck Iran defender Morteza Pouraliganji in the face in the second half.

"Elbow is a red card in the rules," Queiroz asserted in English, adding that there are no written exceptions for players named Ronaldo or Lionel Messi. "The decisions, they must be clear for everybody, for the people. Everybody agrees that VAR is not going well. That's the reality. There are a lot of complaints."

Spain won Group B after its 2-2 draw with Morocco. Both Spain and Portugal had a goal difference of plus-1, but Spain scored six goals in its three group matches while Portugal had five.

Albies' walk-off HR in 11th lifts Braves

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Ozzie Albies turned to teammate Danny Santana in the dugout and told him he was about to end the game with one swing.

"It's time to go home right now," Albies said. "It's time to go deep. I went up there with one mentality, of hitting a home run."

Albies hit a tiebreaking homer in the 11th inning off Dylan Floro and the Atlanta Braves snapped the Cincinnati Reds' seven-game winning streak with a 5-4 victory on Monday night.

Albies knocked Floro's first pitch, a changeup, into the right-field seats. Albies doubled twice before hitting Atlanta's fifth game-ending homer this season. He's hitting .455 over his last seven games, and his 17 homers are tied for third-most

in the NL.

"I'm just trying to hit the ball where it's pitched," he said. "Put a good swing on it."

Rain delayed the start of the game by 1 hour, 20 minutes, the 10th delay at SunTrust Park this season and the third in the last four games.

The NL East-leading Braves have won eight of 12. They improved to 2-7 in extra innings.

Luke Jackson (1-0), the seventh Atlanta pitcher, faced four batters in the 11th to earn the win. Floro (0-1) was the Reds' sixth pitcher.

Braves reliever Lucas Sims blew a two-run lead in the sixth, allowing three straight singles, issuing a bases-loaded walk and giving up an RBI groundout to pinch-hitter Adam Duvall that made it 3-all.

Scott Schebler doubled to begin the seventh, advanced to third on a sacrifice bunt and

made it 4-3 on Joey Votto's RBI groundout. The Braves tied it at 4-all in the seventh on Santana's RBI double.

Atlanta starter Mike Foltynewicz, reinstated from the disabled list with right triceps tightness, allowed one run, one hit and four walks in five innings. He struck out four while throwing 91 pitches.

Foltynewicz gave up his first hit to Schebler, whose 10th homer cut the lead to 2-1 in the fifth. Over his last eight starts, Foltynewicz has a 0.96 ERA.

"He had a really fresh arm and just pounded the zone on us and made us work," Schebler said. "We made him work as well. We weren't going down easy. We were grinding out at-bats and made him get out of the game probably a lot quicker than he wanted to."

Reds starter Tyler Mahle loaded the bases with no out in

the fifth before a groundout put the Braves up 3-1. Mahle gave up hits, three runs and four walks with five strikeouts in five innings.

Cincinnati was coming off a four-game home sweep of the Chicago Cubs and had won 10 of 12, but the Reds are still stuck in last place in the NL Central, five games out of fourth place.

"Schebler gave us a chance a couple of times," interim Reds manager Jim Riggleman said. "Tough one to lose, but we did a lot of good things again, and if we play like that we're going to win a lot of ballgames."

Moving up: Markakis, the NL hits leader, singled in the third to reach 100 hits. He leads the league in doubles and multi-hit games and ranks second to Cincinnati's Scooter Gennett in batting average. Markakis went 2-for-4.

MLB roundup

Tigers players become US citizens before loss to A's

Associated Press

DETROIT — The Detroit Tigers blew a three-run lead in the eighth inning and eventually lost on a home run in the ninth.

Still, this was a day Jose Iglesias and Leonys Martin may look back on fondly for years.

Before Monday's game against Oakland, the Tigers hosted a ceremony on the field in which a group of people were sworn in as American citizens. Iglesias and Martin, both natives of Cuba, were among them.

"I will never forget about my country, but it's amazing to be part of United States," said Martin, a 30-year-old outfielder. "Being able to do it here in the ballpark, right in front of the fans, that was really emotional."

Martin played for Cuba in the 2009 World Baseball Classic. After defecting, he received a \$15.5 million, five-year contract with the Texas Rangers

in 2011. This is his first season with the Tigers.

Iglesias, a 28-year-old shortstop, also made his big league debut in 2011 with the Boston Red Sox. He was traded to the Tigers in 2013.

Jed Lowrie hit a tiebreaking solo homer in the top of the ninth inning to lift Oakland over Detroit.

For a brief moment, it appeared Monday's game against the Athletics might unfold in storybook fashion — with Martin driving in Iglesias with the winning run. The score was tied at 1 in the seventh inning, and Martin hit a drive to center. Iglesias raced around from first, but he had to stop at third when the ball bounced over the wall for a double. He was thrown out at home when the next batter hit a grounder.

Rays 11, Nationals 0: Blake Snell took a no-hitter into the seventh inning, and Kevin Kiermaier hit a grand slam to lead host Tampa Bay's rout of

Washington.

Yankees 4, Phillies 2: Jonathan Loaisiga took a no-hitter into the sixth inning, Aaron Judge ripped his 20th homer and the visiting Yankees snapped a three-game losing streak.

Dodgers 2, Cubs 1: Kenta Maeda pitched seven scoreless innings and Enrique Hernandez homered for the third time in two games for host Los Angeles.

Cardinals 4, Indians 0: Spot starter John Gant (2-2) pitched one-hit ball for a career-high seven innings and Marcell Ozuna hit a two-run double for host St. Louis.

Blue Jays 6, Astros 3: Toronto's Curtis Granderson homered in consecutive at-bats against Justin Verlander, and Randal Grichuk added a two-run shot and a huge defensive play for the visitors.

Rangers 7, Padres 4: Shin-Soo Choo extended his career-best on-base streak to 38

games with three hits, including the tiebreaking RBI single in host Texas' strange five-run outburst.

Mariners 5, Orioles 3: Dee Gordon's slick seventh-inning bunt was the lone hit in a two-run uprising that put Seattle ahead for good, and the Mariners beat the host Orioles.

Marlins 9, Diamondbacks 5: Brian Anderson and Cameron Maybin each drove in two runs, helping host Miami spoil Shelby Miller's return to the mound after missing over a year for Tommy John surgery.

Pirates 6, Mets 4: Josh Bell hit a two-run homer, Gregory Polanco also went deep and the Pirates took advantage of some dreadful defense by the host Mets to snap a five-game losing streak.

Royals 2, Angels 0: Brad Keller pitched seven innings of two-hit ball, helping the host Royals beat the Angels in the makeup of a game that was frozen out in April.