

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

2 tankers damaged near Strait of Hormuz

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Two oil tankers near the strategic Strait of Hormuz came under a suspected attack Thursday, setting one of them ablaze in the latest mysterious assault targeting vessels in a region crucial to global energy supplies amid heightened tension between Iran and the U.S.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the U.S. believes that Iran is responsible for the attacks.

Pompeo said during a news conference Thursday in Washington that the attacks on the ships are part of a “campaign” of “escalating tension” by Iran and a threat to international peace and security.

He said the U.S. will defend its forces and interests in the region but gave no specifics about any plans and he took no questions.

The U.S. Navy, which rushed in to assist the stricken vessels

in the Gulf of Oman off the coast of Iran, and the ship’s operators offered no immediate explanation on what weapons caused the damage or who used them against the MT Front Altair and the Kokuka Courageous. Each was loaded with petroleum products, and the Front Altair burned for hours, a fire that charred half of one of the vessel’s sides and sent up a column of thick, black smoke.

Last month, the U.S. alleged that Iran used limpet mines to attack four oil tankers off the nearby Emirati port of Fujairah. Iran denied being involved then and its foreign minister called the timing of Thursday’s incidents suspicious, given that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was meeting Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran.

Iran used mines against oil tankers in 1987 and 1988 in the “Tanker War,” during which the U.S. Navy escorted ships through the region. Regardless

of who is responsible, the price of a barrel of benchmark Brent crude spiked as much as 4% immediately after the attack, showing how critical the region remains to the global economy.

“The shipping industry views this as an escalation of the situation, and we are just about as close to a conflict without there being an actual armed conflict, so the tensions are very high,” said Jakob P. Larsen, head of maritime security for BIMCO, the largest international association representing ship owners.

The suspected attacks happened at dawn Thursday about 25 miles off the southern coast of Iran. The Norwegian-owned Front Altair, loaded with naphtha from the United Arab Emirates, radioed for help as it caught fire. A short time later, the Japanese-owned Kokuka Courageous, loaded with methanol from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, also called for help.

Frontline, the firm that oper-

ates the Front Altair, told The Associated Press that an explosion was the cause of the fire. Its crew of 23 — from Russia, the Philippines and Georgia — was safely evacuated to the nearby Hyundai Dubai vessel, it said.

BSM Ship Management said the Kokuka Courageous sustained hull damage and 21 sailors had been evacuated, with one suffering minor injuries.

Iranian state television said 44 sailors from the two tankers were transferred to an Iranian port in the southern province of Hormozgan. The Japanese owners of the Kokuka Courageous said, however, that its 21 Filipino sailors were aboard a U.S. warship. The discrepancy could not be immediately reconciled.

The Front Altair had been bound for Taiwan, the Kokuka Courageous for Singapore, according to the to the data firm Refinitiv.

NATO greets Trump’s Poland troop plan warmly

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — NATO and Baltic officials welcomed a decision by President Donald Trump to boost the number of U.S. troops in Poland, but Berlin was mum in the wake of an announcement that included the possibility of pulling forces from Germany.

Trump on Wednesday differed from talking points about the plan, which a senior White House official told reporters Tuesday would involve a modest increase of 1,000 troops sent to Poland on a rotational basis to help with planning, surveillance and logistics.

Trump, during a meeting with Polish President Andrzej Duda, said the number could be as high as 2,000 and that he was

considering relocating forces from Germany to accomplish the mission.

Despite the tough talk on Germany, which Trump has repeatedly blasted for weak defense spending, allies in Europe saw the plan for more troops in Poland as a positive sign.

“This shows the strong commitment of the US to European security & the strength of the transatlantic bond,” NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said in a tweet Wednesday.

Others in the alliance had similar reactions.

Baltic nations, once part of the Soviet Union, have been particularly concerned about Russia’s intentions since the 2014 invasion and annexation of Crimea, which was also a former Soviet territory.

“This is an important step and display

of US commitment to European security and deterrence. Estonia wholeheartedly embraces this decision that goes to further strengthen the transatlantic bond and cooperation between NATO allies,” Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu said in a tweet.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius echoed the viewpoint in a tweet, saying the decision contributes to the “Alliance’s deterrence and defense posture and benefiting the security of all NATO Allies.”

However, Trump’s threat to shift forces from Germany or another country to carry out the mission was left unaddressed by allies.

In Germany, there was no official response Thursday to Trump’s comments.

Admiral defends removing head of war college

Associated Press

NEWPORT, R.I. — The Navy's top admiral said Wednesday that he felt he had enough information to warrant removing the president of the Naval War College from his post this week, days after The Associated Press reported on the investigation at the college and more than a year after the initial complaint was filed.

The AP reported last week that the college president, Rear Adm. Jeffrey Harley, was under investigation for allegedly spending excessively, abusing his hiring authority and otherwise behaving inappropriately, including keeping a margarita machine in his office. Harley was removed from his post Monday.

Adm. John Richardson, the chief of naval operations, told the AP in an interview that he received reports from investigators around the same time the article was published.

"Their investigation is not complete," he said. "But there was just enough actionable information at that point that I made the decision that I did."

A small group of longtime college employees filed an anonymous complaint about Harley in April 2018 with the Navy's office of the inspector general. The group contacted the inspector general again in January with additional allegations of Harley flouting Navy rules and norms.

Inspector general investigations, across the Defense Department, routinely take

months or more than a year.

Harley announced his departure to campus in an email. He wrote that he was stepping down due to "distractions caused by the unfounded AP article."

Richardson called the AP report "responsible and balanced." He was at the college in Newport to speak to students about leadership.

The college on Monday postponed a strategy forum that was due to start Tuesday and had been expected to draw high-ranking officials, including Richardson, along with hundreds of guests. Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer is still scheduled to speak Friday at the graduation ceremony for the elite school, which grooms future admirals and generals.

Officials: US airstrike kills 6 Afghan allies

BY J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — A U.S. airstrike killed six Afghan soldiers between late Tuesday night and early Wednesday after an exchange of gunfire between allied forces, according to Afghan officials and statements by U.S. Forces-Afghanistan.

The deaths mark the third reported mistaken American bombing on Afghan troops in 92 days.

Prior to the bombing, a joint American and Afghan patrol was moving through Kunduz province late at night sometime between Tuesday and Wednesday, an Af-

ghan defense spokesman told Stars and Stripes.

Another group of Afghan National Army soldiers saw the armed men and began firing their machine guns at the joint patrol, leading them to request air support, Army Col. David Butler, a spokesman for U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, told the website Task & Purpose on Wednesday.

No U.S. troops were killed or wounded in the incident, Butler said.

Six Afghan soldiers died in the bombardment, Ministry of Defense spokesman Zubair Aref said.

A local government official in Kunduz disputed the number of casualties, saying

that four soldiers were killed and another five were wounded.

"This operation was extensively planned and coordinated with U.S. and Afghan security forces to prevent an event like this from occurring," Butler said, according to Task & Purpose. "We regret the tragic loss of our Afghan partners."

The Pentagon plans on convening a joint investigation board to determine the details of the incident, according to Task & Purpose.

The incident comes less than a month after U.S. air support killed as many as 17 Afghan policemen and wounded 14 more in an incident in Helmand province.

General: Islamic State in Afghanistan aims to attack US

Associated Press

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — Islamic State in Afghanistan is a "very worrisome" threat to the United States, and U.S. counterterrorism efforts have yet to shrink its extremist ambitions, a senior American general said Wednesday.

Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie said ISIS would be hard pressed, however, to carry out an attack on the U.S. homeland because it is under strong military pressure.

"ISIS in Afghanistan certainly has aspirations to attack the United States," McKenzie said. "It is our clear judgment that as long as we maintain pressure on them it will be hard for them to do that."

McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command with responsibility for managing American military operations across the greater Middle East, spoke in Germany with reporters returning home with him from an eight-day trip that took him to Qatar, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. He also spent two days aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier in the North Arabian Sea.

He stopped at Germany's Ramstein air base to refuel his airplane before flying to his headquarters in Florida.

Earlier this week, the Associated Press cited U.S. and Afghan security officials in reporting that Islamic State in Afghanistan is expanding its footprint, recruiting new

fighters and plotting attacks on the United States and other Western countries.

McKenzie, a veteran of combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, said he believes ISIS in Afghanistan has not expanded its capabilities but remains a big problem.

"They are very worrisome to us" in their strongholds in eastern Afghanistan, he said, adding that combat operations have failed to reduce the group's fighting ranks. Others have said they are thought to number in the thousands.

The Islamic State affiliate appeared in Afghanistan shortly after the group's core fighters swept across Syria and Iraq in the summer of 2014, carving out a self-styled Islamic empire in both countries.

Newest littoral combat ship is Navy's 2nd to honor Twin Cities

BY CHRISTIAN LOPEZ
Stars and Stripes

The Navy plans to christen its newest littoral combat ship, the USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul, during a ceremony Saturday at Fincantieri Marinette Marine in Marinette, Wis.

Jodi Greene, deputy undersecretary of the Navy, the ship's sponsor, is expected to follow tradition and shatter a bottle of sparkling wine across its bow. Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., will deliver the principal address.

"The christening of the future USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul marks an important step toward this great ship's entry into the fleet," Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer said in a Navy statement.

The Freedom-class ship built by Lockheed Martin can carry the MQ-8B Fire Scout unmanned autonomous helicopter or the MH-60R/S Seahawk helicopter. At 388-feet-long it's capable of better than 40 knots, or 46 mph, according to the Navy.

The littoral combat ships are built to be rapid, nimble and operate near the shore and in the open ocean. They are designed to deal with threats like fast surface craft, quiet diesel submarines and mines, according to the Navy statement.

"The dedication and skilled work of our industry partners have ensured this ship will represent the great city of Minneapolis-Saint Paul and serve our Navy and Marine Corps team for decades to come," Spencer

said in the statement.

The ship will be homeported at Naval Station Mayport in Jacksonville, Fla., according to a tweet posted in August by Florida Sen. Marco Rubio.

"Mayport will be the principal East Coast home for the Navy's newest class of warships, the Littoral Combat Ships," he wrote. "The Sunshine State prides itself on its long history of support for our Navy's ships and sailors, and we remain committed to that special relationship."

This will be the second naval vessel to carry the name of Minnesota's Twin Cities. The first USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul was a Los Angeles-class fast attack submarine in service from 1984 to 2008.

Philippines protests sunk boat in South China Sea

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines' top diplomat said Thursday he has filed a diplomatic protest after an anchored fishing boat was hit by a suspected Chinese vessel which then abandoned the 22 Filipino fishermen as the boat sank in the disputed South China Sea.

Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said he filed the protest Wednesday. He disclosed the move in a tweet in response to a suggestion by opposition Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV that an independent investigation be conducted by the International Maritime Organization, a U.N. agency.

Another opposition senator, Risa Hontiveros, called on President Rodrigo Duterte to recall the Philippine ambassador and consuls in China to pressure Beijing to identify and punish the Chinese crewmen allegedly involved in the incident.

China condemned the incident but did not immediately confirm or deny that a Chinese vessel was involved.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana disclosed on Wednesday that a boat, identified as F/B Gimver 1, was carrying 22 Filipino fishermen and sank Sunday night after being hit by the suspected Chinese vessel at Reed Bank off the western Philippine province of Palawan.

He thanked Vietnamese fishermen who rescued the Filipinos and brought them to safety.

Citing information provided by the Philippines, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang described the sinking as "an ordinary maritime traffic accident" and criticized assumptions made about it. "It is irresponsible to resort to the media to hype and politicize the incident without verification," he said, adding a Chinese investigation was underway in coordination with Philippine authorities.

Program for sex assault cases approved

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Advocates of taking the decision for prosecuting military sexual assaults — a persistent problem within the ranks — outside the chain of command scored a significant victory Wednesday when the House Armed Services Committee approved a pilot program that would do just that at the service academies.

Rep. Jackie Speier, chairwoman of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, pushed through a four-year program that would require the commandants of the service academies to follow the recommendation of an independent prosecutor in cases of sexual assault.

The language triggered familiar objections from Republicans about removing such cases from the chain of command, but ultimately prevailed on a mostly party-line vote.

Debate on Speier's language marked the beginning of the contentious portion of the marathon markup of the massive

Pentagon policy bill.

Speier's amendment would authorize a special prosecutor to handle sexual assaults at the military academies, marking her first legislative victory in her yearslong effort to take the decision for prosecuting these crimes out of the chain of command.

"The number of sexual assaults at the military service academies has more than doubled — I repeat, doubled — from 327 to 747 (from) 2013 to 2018," Speier said. "Over that time, reporting rates decreased from 16% to 12%."

Speier's proposal would require the commandants of the service academies to accept the determinations of an outside prosecutor in cases of sexual assault. But removing these cases from the chain of command has been suggested before, and the idea has proved controversial both on Capitol Hill and at the Pentagon.

Rep. Michael R. Turner, R-Ohio, countered with a substi-

tute amendment that would require a comprehensive review of the role of the chain of command in sex-related offenses.

His substitute mirrored language in the Senate's version of the National Defense Authorization Act.

Cadets and students could build a constitutional argument that they are treated differently than others in the military, he said.

Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., who was a wing and group commander in the Air Force before he was elected to Congress, also voiced reservations.

"I am very leery of undermining the court martial authority of our commandants," he said. "Chain of command involves commanders, not lawyers."

After a 27-30 vote along party lines (with Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Va., voting yes with Republicans), the panel rejected Turner's substitute and adopted Speier's amendment on a voice vote.

Trump would 'want to hear' foreign dirt on rivals

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump says that if a foreign power offered dirt on his 2020 opponent, he'd be open to accepting it and that he'd have no obligation to call in the FBI.

"I think I'd want to hear it," Trump said during an interview Wednesday with ABC News, adding, "There's nothing wrong with listening."

The role of Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., in organizing a 2016 meeting with a Russian lawyer offering negative information on Hillary Clinton was a focus of special counsel Robert Mueller's probe of Russian meddling in the last presidential campaign.

Mueller painstakingly documented Russian efforts to boost Trump's campaign and undermine that of his Democratic rival. Mueller's investigation didn't establish a criminal conspiracy between Russia and Trump's campaign, but Trump repeatedly praised WikiLeaks in 2016 and celebrated

information exposed by Russian hackers.

One of Trump's challengers, former Vice President Joe Biden, tweeted, "President Trump is once again welcoming foreign interference in our elections. This isn't about politics. It is a threat to our national security. An American President should not seek their aid and abet those who seek to undermine democracy."

Several of Trump's other Democratic opponents in the 2020 race, including Sens. Elizabeth Warren (Mass.), Bernie Sanders (Vt.) and Kirsten Gillibrand (N.Y.) and former Rep. Beto O'Rourke (Texas), repeated their calls to begin impeachment hearings in the wake of the president's latest remarks.

Trump's comments came a month after he pledged not to use information stolen by foreign adversaries in his reelection campaign.

During a question-and-answer session with reporters in the Oval Office in May, Trump said he "would certainly agree to"

that commitment.

"I don't need it," he said as he met with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. "All I need is the opponents that I'm looking at."

Trump also insisted erroneously that he "never did use, as you probably know," such information, adding: "That's what the Mueller report was all about. They said no collusion."

FBI Director Christopher Wray told lawmakers that Donald Trump Jr. should have called his agency to report the offer.

The president, who nominated Wray to the role in 2017, told ABC News that he disagrees. "The FBI director is wrong," Trump said. He added, "Life doesn't work like that."

Asked whether his advisers should accept information on an opponent from Russia, China or another nation or call the FBI this time, Trump said, "I think maybe you do both," expressing openness to reviewing the information.

Police, crowd face off after shooting in Tenn.

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Armed officers and an angry crowd faced off after a Tennessee man was fatally shot by U.S. Marshals in a working-class Memphis neighborhood.

People in the crowd threw rocks and bricks, with 25 officers suffering mostly minor injuries during the tense clash Wednesday night in the Frayser community in north Memphis. Officers cordoned off several blocks near the scene. By 11 p.m., officers had used tear gas and most of the crowd dispersed, police director Michael Rallings said at a Thursday morning news conference. Three people were arrested.

Officers on horseback patrolled the area, and lines of police cars with flashing blue lights were parked along the street. An ambulance could be seen at the edge of the scene. A helicopter flew overhead as police cars trickled away. Residential streets were blocked, and a heavy police presence remained in the area Thursday.

Tennessee Bureau of Investigation spokeswoman Keli McAlister said the Gulf Coast Regional Fugitive Task Force went to a Frayser home to look for a suspect with felony warrants. Marshals saw the man get into a vehicle and then proceed to ram task force vehicles several times before exiting with a weapon, McAlister said. Marshals then opened fire, killing the man who died at the scene. McAlister did not say how many marshals fired or how many times the man was shot.

One local official identified the victim as Brandon Webber and said he was shot several times in his family's front yard. Family members confirmed to the Daily Memphian that the 21-year-old Webber died.

In identifying Webber on Twitter early Thursday, Shelby County Commissioner and mayoral candidate Tami Sawyer said "Every life lost should matter ... every single one. How many times will this be ok? It cannot continue to be."

Melting snow a mixed blessing for Southwest

Associated Press

DENVER — A welcome surge of melting snow is pouring out of the Rocky Mountains and into the drought-stricken rivers of the southwestern U.S., fending off a water shortage but threatening to push rivers over their banks.

Last winter brought above-average snowfall to much of Colorado, Utah and Wyoming, so an abundance of snowmelt is rushing into the Colorado River, the Rio Grande and other waterways after a desperately dry 2018.

"It couldn't have come at a better time," said Greg Smith, a hydrologist with Colorado Basin River Forecast Center, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "There's this big sense of relief this year that we've kind of rebounded."

Colorado was blanketed by 134% of its normal snowfall last winter. Utah was even better, at 138%. Southwestern Wyoming received its average amount.

That will put so much water

into the Colorado River that Lake Powell, a giant reservoir downstream in Utah and Arizona, is expected to rise 50 feet this year, said Marlon Duke, a spokesman for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which manages Powell and dozens of other reservoirs.

The reservoir is rising so fast — 6 to 15 inches a day — that the National Park Service warned people to keep cars and boats at least 200 yards from the shoreline to keep them from being submerged overnight.

The influx into Powell will allow the Bureau of Reclamation to send enough water downstream into Lake Mead in Arizona and Nevada to avoid a possible water shortage there. Arizona, California and Nevada rely heavily on the reservoir.

Last year, the bureau predicted a better than 50% chance that Mead would fall so low that Arizona — which has the lowest-priority rights to the reservoir — would have to take a cut in its share in 2020. The shortage now might be put off until after 2021, Duke said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Drug arrest for man wearing 'COKE' shirt

FL FORT PIERCE — Authorities said a Florida man they arrested for selling crack cocaine was wearing a shirt that said "COKE" on the front of it.

A St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office report said Terry Leon Simmons, 53, was charged with two counts of selling cocaine.

Authorities said an undercover officer bought \$40 worth of crack from Simmons outside a Fort Pierce convenience store.

Two days later, detectives said they went to Simmons home to arrest him and reported finding marijuana and MDMA in the home.

Town bars flip-flops from workplace

CT GREENWICH — A Connecticut town barred municipal employees from wearing slide sandals or flip-flops to work.

Mary Pepe, director of human resources in Greenwich, told the Greenwich Time the policy that took effect June 1 was not made in response to a specific incident, but to create safer conditions and avoid accidents that can result in injuries, absences and workers' compensation claims.

Megan Damato, the town's director of risk management, said flip-flops or slide sandals can be a tripping hazard.

The policy does not apply to lifeguards, staff at town-run camps or swim instructors.

'Straight, country boy' turns pickup rainbow

OK HULBERT — Self-described "straight, country boy" Cody Barlow be-

lieves duct tape really can fix anything, including bigots.

The 28-year-old college student from Hulbert recently decorated the tailgate of his pickup like a pride flag with a bold message: "NOT ALL COUNTRY BOYS ARE BIGOTS."

Barlow's Facebook post about his truck had been shared more than 135,000 times by Tuesday.

Now, the "jacked-up" 1991 Chevrolet Silverado he uses to off-road through the woods is plastered with rainbow-colored duct tape.

"It fixes everything, even bigots," he said.

Barlow plans to drive his truck in pride parades later this month in Oklahoma City and Fayetteville, Ark.

Repaired Al Capone statue returned to bar

AR HOT SPRINGS — A dapper-dressed statue of gangster Al Capone was repaired, repainted and returned to an Arkansas bar after a failed attempt to steal the welcoming figure.

The Sentinel-Record reported the redone statue was returned to a seat near a bench outside

The Ohio Club in Hot Springs. Its website describes the business as the oldest bar in Arkansas, established in 1905 and Capone was a known visitor.

Investigators said two men in March tried to snatch the statue but dropped and broke it. Both were charged with public intoxication and criminal mischief.

Club owner Mike Pettey said it cost \$3,500 for repairs.

Deputies: Alligator bit off piece of patrol car

LA MOORINGSPOUR — Sheriff's deputies in Louisiana said an alligator took

a bite out of one of their patrol cars.

WBRZ-TV reported deputies were called Monday to Louisiana Highway 1 in Caddo Parish after someone spotted the gator in the middle of the road.

The sheriff's office said deputies were waiting for wildlife removal experts to arrive when the alligator chomped off a piece of the front bumper.

Deputies estimate the alligator was 8 feet long.

A photo from the Caddo Parish Sheriff's Office Facebook page shows the reptile in grass next to what appears to be the black rectangular grill of the car.

Authorities say the gator escaped before the wildlife removal experts arrived.

Poorly-made license plate leads to arrest

CA MOORPARK — A big-rig truck driver was arrested after authorities spotted a phony license plate on his rig.

How could they tell?

Well, the Ventura County Sheriff's Department said the 1960s-style yellow-on-black plate had wobbly letters and numbers. Also, instead of "CALIFORNIA," it read "CALIFAS."

The department Monday said a Moorpark motorcycle officer spotted the plate and pulled the driver over.

The driver was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence of drugs, possessing methamphetamine, being an unlicensed driver and having an active arrest warrant.

Report: Pair left child home, robbed bank

MO BELLEFONTAINE NEIGHBORS — Court documents said a cou-

ple left their child home alone while they robbed a bank in suburban St. Louis.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that Melissa Harrison, 40, and Ramon Alonzo Gregory Falls, 33, were charged with stealing or attempted stealing from a U.S. Bank in Bellefontaine Neighbors and child abuse.

Charges said Harrison handed a teller a note demanding money and that Falls drove the getaway vehicle.

But the teller inserted a tracking device into the money-filled envelope, and the couple was arrested after a chase.

Investigators later found the couple's child was home alone for more than six hours with no running water or food. Charges say the child was "covered in dirt, in soiled underwear, and extremely hungry."

Playground's metal sculpture burns kids

MA BOSTON — Boston authorities covered a new turtle sculpture at a playground after several parents complained that the bronze model was getting superheated by the sun and burning children.

One complaint included a picture of someone holding a temperature scanner over Myrtle the Turtle's shell that read 133 degrees.

The four-foot sculpture of a Kemp's ridley sea turtle at the Myrtle Street Playground in the city's Beacon Hill neighborhood is now covered by a tarp held down by rope.

Ryan Woods, a spokesman for the Parks and Recreation Department, told The Boston Globe the city is trying to determine its next move, which could mean removing the sculpture, or putting a canopy over it.

From wire reports

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and Military News

Blues top Bruins in Game 7 for first Stanley Cup title

Associated Press

BOSTON — Blues goalie Jordan Binnington was waiting patiently, as NHL rookies learn to do, while the Stanley Cup was passed from teammate to teammate across the recently conquered ice of the new Boston Garden.

Thirteen St. Louis players took their turn with the iconic trophy, raising it above their heads, lowering it for a kiss, posing for a picture.

Finally, understudy Jake Allen gave the starter a little shove, and the Game 7 star timidly skated forward to receive the Cup and cap off one of the great rookie runs in NHL history.

Binnington stopped 32 shots, and Conn Smythe Trophy winner Ryan O'Reilly scored for the fourth straight game Wednesday night to lead the Blues to a 4-1 victory over the Boston Bruins in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final and their first NHL championship.

"To bring a Cup to a city for a first time is crazy. Tough to put into words," forward Jaden Schwartz said on the ice as players and team officials took their turns caressing their new bauble. "These fans have been waiting a long time. It's exciting. We're going to have a lot of fun with it."

O'Reilly added an assist, Alex Pietrangelo had a goal and an assist and Brayden Schenn and Zach Sanford also scored for St. Louis, which had the worst record in the league in early January but won 30 of its final 49 regular-season games.

"Once we pulled it together, we were tough to beat," said coach Craig Berube, who took over when Mike Yeo was fired in November.

He is the fourth coach in the past 11 years hired in midseason to lead his team to the NHL title.

Behind Binnington, the Blues eliminated the Jets in six games, the Stars in seven and

then knocked out the Sharks in six to reach the final for the first time since 1970. That year, the Blues lost in Boston when Bobby Orr flew through the air after scoring his Cup-clincher — a goal that is commemorated in bronze outside the building.

"It's pretty crazy how things come full circle like that," Sanford said. "You know, this team deserves it more than anyone, I think. This is the best group of guys ever. We put in the work, and we earned it."

In a physical series that left Bruins captain Zdeno Chara with a broken jaw and saw two Blues suspended for head hits, the teams took turns winning the first three games, with Binnington getting pulled from a 7-2 loss in Game 3. St. Louis won the next two to move one win from the title, but Boston erupted for five goals in Game 6 on Sunday to force the series to the limit.

Boston had home-ice advantage, along with a huge edge in Stanley Cup and Game 7 experience: Five Bruins remained from the team that beat Vancouver in seven to win the franchise's sixth title in 2011, then returned to the final two years later.

But it was the rookie Binnington — not the 2014 Vezina Trophy winner Tuukka Rask — who took a shutout into the final minutes Wednesday. The Blues were never really in danger after scoring twice in the final few minutes of the first period.

"He bounced back. We knew he would," Pietrangelo said. "Unbelievable first period. His confidence, his swagger, his belief in himself — unbelievable."

Rask, who had been the favorite for the postseason MVP if the Bruins had won, stopped 16 shots. The Bruins outshot St. Louis 33-20, but Matt Grzelcyk scored Boston's only goal.

The Blues went ahead at the end of the first period on goals from O'Reilly and Pietrangelo about three minutes apart. The

second period was scoreless, then Schenn made it 3-0 with 8:35 to play and Sanford put it out of reach before the Bruins spoiled Binnington's bid for a shutout.

"I'm sure there's a bright, bright future for this team," Chara said. "I'm sure everyone pictured it differently, and we believed that it was there for us. That's sports. You've got to kind of take those and move on."

Returning to the site of their last appearance in the final, the Blues won for the third time in Boston this series and an NHL record-tying 10th time in the postseason. O'Reilly was the first player since Wayne Gretzky to score in four consecutive Stanley Cup Final games.

Not so surprising with Gretzky, who is the NHL's leading regular-season and playoff scorer. But O'Reilly had just three goals in his first 22 post-season games.

"The guy was a beast all playoffs," Schenn said. "He deserves it. He's a hell of a player. Binnington's a beast. What a team to be a part of."

Boston will have to console itself with the two major sports championships it has already won in the past year, or the dozen trophies since 2002 that have been chauffeured through Boston in a parade of the city's iconic, amphibious Duck Boats.

Three of them have come at St. Louis' expense, including the cathartic 2004 Red Sox World Series title that ended an 86-year drought.

Now it's St. Louis breaking through against an Original Six franchise with a half-dozen banners already.

"They've been a historical team. They've won so many Cups," Blues defenseman Vince Dunn said. "We came into the season with a lot of hopes, and we let each other down a bit for the start of the season. But there was no doubt in our minds that we couldn't come back and come out on top."

Cup win a dream come true for MVP O'Reilly

Associated Press

BOSTON — Ryan O'Reilly's 99-year-old grandmother watches and emails him from Seaforth, Ontario, where he grew up playing hockey. She bought him multiple pairs of skates when he was a kid and has tracked his progress very closely.

"She's obviously a big part of my career," O'Reilly said.

Congratulations from Deirdre O'Reilly are certainly in order after her grandson won the Stanley Cup and the Conn Smythe Trophy as the most valuable player in the NHL playoffs. O'Reilly scored the opening goal for the St. Louis Blues in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final to help beat Boston 4-1 and give the franchise its first title in its 51st season.

"You dream of this for so long," he said. "As a kid, that feeling comes back to you of just what it means to win this thing. I still can't believe this. I can't believe I'm here right now and a Stanley Cup champion with this group of guys."

O'Reilly made good on Doug Armstrong's blockbuster trade to acquire him last summer — and the line he told the St. Louis general manager on that initial call: "Let's go win a Cup."

O'Reilly was a major reason for that. He set a Blues record with 24 playoff points and became the first player since Wayne Gretzky in 1985 to score in four consecutive Cup Final games.

"His worth ethic and his production for us all year and then throughout the playoffs, he was just a relentless hockey player for a long time," coach Craig Berube said. "Never quits. Such a smart two-way player. He's a special player."

US under fire for celebrations

Associated Press

REIMS, France — The goals were one thing, the celebrations another.

The U.S. women's national team faced criticism following its record-breaking 13-0 rout of Thailand on Tuesday night. The win set a World Cup record for goals and margin of victory. Alex Morgan alone had five goals, matching the most in one game in tournament history.

But there were questions about whether the Americans should have celebrated goals once the game was well in hand. Were the three-time World Cup champions being unsportsman-like, or merely sending a message to the rest of the field?

Alex Morgan was asked afterward about the display of hugs, high-fives, and posturing for the many American fans at Stade Auguste-Delaune.

"I think in the moment, every time we score a goal in a World Cup — you've dreamt of

it. I dreamt of it since I was a little girl," she said. "You know, winning a World Cup and being back there for the third time, we want that fourth star. So tonight we knew that any goal could matter in this group-stage game. And when it comes to celebrations, I think this was a really good team performance and I think it was important for us to celebrate together."

Those celebrations drew ire on social media, some of it directed at veteran Megan Rapinoe for twirling and turf-sliding after her goal — which made it 9-0. A World Cup-record seven U.S. players scored in the game.

Morgan was rebuked for holding up four fingers after her fourth goal, which made it 10-0.

"A lot of this is about building momentum and so as a coach I don't find it my job to rein my players in," coach Jill Ellis said. "This is what they've dreamt about. This is for them. This is

a world championship"

Rapinoe, interviewed on FOX Sports on Wednesday, also addressed the criticism.

"If anyone wants to come at our team for not doing the right thing, not playing the right way, not being a good ambassador, they can come at us. It was an explosion of joy," she said. "If our crime is joy, then we will take that."

Rapinoe pointed to the team's young players who scored their first World Cup goals and said they had every right to celebrate, including Samantha Mewis, Rose Lavelle, Mallory Pugh and Lindsey Horan.

In a postgame show of sportsmanship, the U.S. team also consoled some of the emotional Thai players. Morgan offered encouragement to forward Miranda Nild, who like Morgan played college soccer at Cal.

Thailand's players were disappointed, but they have also been on the other end of blowouts.

Warriors' Durant has surgery on Achilles

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Kevin Durant confirmed what everyone most feared: He underwent surgery for a ruptured right Achilles tendon.

Durant posted on social media Wednesday the severity of his injury two days after getting hurt during Game 5 of the NBA Finals in Toronto in his return from a strained right calf that sidelined him a month.

The 30-year-old posted a photo on Instagram showing himself in a hospital bed and wrote: "I wanted to update you all: I did rupture my Achilles. Surgery was today and it was a success, EASY MONEY."

Just 15 minutes before Durant went public, Warriors coach Steve Kerr said during a finals media availability that he didn't yet have a formal update on Durant. Durant has made his own announcements before, such as writing on The Players' Tribune website about his decision to leave Oklahoma City to join Golden State in July 2016.

The Warriors said later Wednesday that Durant had the surgery at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, performed by Dr. Martin O'Malley.

Kerr said he also understands people wanting to point blame somewhere, though he noted, "Kevin checked all the boxes, and he was cleared to play by everybody involved," including doctors from within the organization and from the outside.

"I completely understand the world we live in. As (Warriors general manager Bob Meyers) mentioned the other night, there's going to be blame. There's going to be finger-pointing. We understand that and we accept that. This is kind of what you sign up for when you get into coaching," Kerr said.

Women's World Cup roundup

Penalty shot lifts France over Norway

Associated Press

NICE, France — Eugenie Le Sommer scored the winning goal from the penalty spot to lift host nation France to a 2-1 win over Norway at the Women's World Cup on Wednesday.

Then she had a special embrace for one of her teammates.

France defender Wendie Renard almost cost France the game when she turned the ball into her own net to even the match at 1-1.

Le Sommer came to the rescue and moved France to 2-0 in this tournament when she scored the winner in the 72nd minute. A relieved Renard was one of the first players to celebrate with Le Sommer.

"I knew it was hard for her," Le Sommer said. "I know Wendie well, and I know how much she can give us. She came

up to me completely naturally and thanked me and I just said 'No.'"

"In the first match she scored two goals. What's most important is the group. I'm happy also for her that her mistake was rectified."

Renard, considered one of the best defenders in the world, appeared to be in tears as she raised her face to the sky in anguish.

"I made a huge, huge mistake but we showed our character," Renard said. "Amel was speaking to me but I couldn't really understand what she was saying. So to be safe I went to put it out for a corner but it ended up in the back of the net."

"It could have ruined the night, it could have put us in difficulty mentally but we really showed that we are ready, that we are strong."

Germany 1, Spain 0: Ger-

many is finding it far from easy going at the World Cup.

Against a skillful Spain team, the two-time world champions relied on Sara Dabritz's goal in the 42nd minute for the win in Valenciennes, France.

It was second-ranked Germany's second successive 1-0 victory in Group B.

The Germans, who have always reached at least the quarterfinals at Women's World Cups, had to overcome slack defense before taking the lead.

Spain's lack of production spared Germany an upset to the 13th-ranked team that is playing in only its second World Cup.

"We were playing some great football," Spain coach Jorge Vilda said through a translator, "and in the end some mistakes cost us dearly against a strong side."

Brewers spoil Verlander's sterling night

Associated Press

HOUSTON — On a night when the Milwaukee Brewers struck out again and again, piling up a season-high 24 Ks against the Houston Astros, one big swing by Mike Moustakas made all those whiffs much easier to swallow.

Moustakas hit a two-run homer during Milwaukee's three-run 14th inning, and the Brewers struck out 15 times against Houston ace Justin Verlander before rallying for a 6-3 victory over the Astros on Wednesday.

Christian Yelich started the 14th with a single against rookie Cionel Perez (1-1) for Milwaukee's first hit since the ninth. After Ryan Braun lined out, Moustakas hit a drive to right for his 21st homer.

"Obviously, 24 punchouts isn't what we were looking for, but ... we got a W so we turned a negative into a positive and found a way to win against a great ballclub over there," Moustakas said.

Jesus Aguilar added a pinch-hit RBI single as Milwaukee won for the fifth time in six games. Ryan Braun, Yasmani Grandal and Eric Thames also went deep for the Brewers, and Adrian Houser (2-1) pitched two scoreless innings for the victory.

"I bet you there's not too many times a team struck out 24 times and won the game," Yelich said. "All those weird baseball things happen and that's another example of it. Honestly, it's just a really good win and a hard-fought win."

Verlander set a career high for Ks while allowing three runs in seven innings. The 2011 AL Cy Young Award winner led the way as Houston set a franchise record for strikeouts, surpassing its previous record of 23 during a 15-inning game on May 31, 2003, against the Chicago Cubs.

Houston had a 3-2 lead before Thames connected in the seventh inning for Milwaukee's third homer off Verlander. It was Thames' ninth of the season.

Each team had late chances to go in front.

Jake Marisnick singled off Houser with one out in the 13th. Marisnick stole second base, but Houser retired Josh Reddick and Alex Bregman to end the threat.

Pinch hitter Myles Straw walked leading off the Houston 10th, but was caught trying to steal second base. He was initially called safe, but the Brewers challenged the call and it was overturned.

MLB roundup

Hamels, Cubs rout Rockies

Associated Press

DENVER — Cole Hamels struck out nine in seven scoreless innings, singled twice and drove in two runs to lead the Chicago Cubs past the Colorado Rockies 10-1 in a testy game on Wednesday.

Rockies All-Star third-baseman Nolan Arenado left in the fifth inning with a left forearm contusion after Hamels (6-2) hit him with a pitch in the third, and three more batters — including Hamels — were hit by pitches later in the game.

Chicago's Kris Bryant was hit by pitches three times in the first two games of the series.

Javier Baez and Kyle Schwarber homered for Chicago, which snapped a five-game road losing streak. Colorado's 10-game home winning streak ended.

Braves 8, Pirates 7 (11): Austin Riley tied the game with a solo homer in the ninth inning and scored the winning run on Ozzie Albies' double in the 11th, leading host Atlanta past Pittsburgh for its sixth straight victory.

The Braves (39-29) took over sole possession of first place in the NL East and moved 10 games over .500 for the first time this season.

Josh Bell hit a tiebreaking solo homer off Atlanta closer Luke Jackson in the top of the ninth. Riley, who had a two-run triple in the first, took Kyle Crick deep to make it 7-all in the bottom half.

After Riley was hit by a pitch in the 11th, Albies drove a gapper into right-center and Riley scored from first base, sliding head-first across the plate to end it.

Marlins 9, Cardinals 0: Jordan Yamamoto pitched seven innings to win his major league debut, Garrett Cooper hit a grand slam and host Miami blanked St. Louis to end a six-game skid.

Yamamoto, acquired last year in the Christian Yelich trade, allowed three hits and two walks and threw 95 pitches. The rookie also earned an RBI with a squeeze bunt.

Cooper finished a double shy of the cycle, and pulled a two-out inside fastball that was off the plate for a grand slam in the second inning against Miles Mikolas (4-7).

Mariners 9, Twins 6 (10): Dee Gordon scored for visiting Seattle on one of Minnesota's three errors in the 10th inning.

Gordon opened the 10th with a ground-rule double off Tyler Duffey (1-1). Shed Long walked before the runners advanced on Dylan Moore's sacrifice.

Mallex Smith followed with a grounder to first baseman C.J. Cron, who tried to get the speedy Gordon at the plate. Twins catcher Mitch Garver was given the error

when he was unable to handle the throw.

One out later, Long and Smith scored when third baseman Miguel Sano flubbed Edwin Encarnacion's grounder. The AL Central-leading Twins finished with five errors in the game.

The Mariners carried a 6-4 lead into the ninth, but Byron Buxton tied it with a two-run homer off Anthony Bass (1-1).

Diamondbacks 2, Phillies 0: Merrill Kelly tossed three-hit ball over 7²/₃ innings, and Arizona won at Philadelphia.

Kelly (7-6) struck out five before departing when Bryce Harper entered the game as a pinch-hitter. Andrew Chafin retired Harper on two pitches and Greg Holland finished the three-hitter, earning his 10th save in 11 tries.

Red Sox 4, Rangers 3: Mookie Betts drew a bases-loaded walk in the ninth inning, giving host Boston a win over Texas.

Andrew Benintendi hit a triple and two doubles, driving in two runs for the Red Sox as they ended a three-game skid and avoided falling below .500 for the first time in more than a month.

Athletics 6, Rays 2: Ramon Laureano hit his first career grand slam to break an eighth-inning tie and finished with five RBIs as Oakland won at Tampa Bay.

Oakland went 6-4, including taking two of three from the Rays, on a season-long 10-game trip that included some significant travel issues.

Reds 7, Indians 2: Rookie Nick Senzel and Joey Votto hit back-to-back home runs to open the game and Cincinnati later got deep shots from Eugenio Suarez and Curt Casali to win at Cleveland.

The quick homers by Senzel and Votto off rookie Zach Plesac (1-2) marked the first time an opposing team hit consecutive homers to start a game in Cleveland in 118 years.

Blue Jays 8, Orioles 6: Rowdy Tellez hit a grand slam to cap a six-run fifth inning, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. had three hits and Toronto won at Baltimore to end a five-game losing streak.

Lourdes Gurriel Jr. had two RBIs for the Blue Jays, who matched their run total from the previous five games combined.

Tigers 3, Royals 2: Brandon Dixon broke an eighth-inning tie with a sacrifice fly that lifted Detroit to a win at Kansas City.

Miguel Cabrera also had a sacrifice fly for the Tigers, and Ronny Rodriguez hit an RBI double.

Giants 4, Padres 2: Evan Longoria drove in the go-ahead run with an infield single in the fifth inning after San Diego made two errors, and host San Francisco held on to complete a two-game sweep.