

STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, March 6, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Koreas agree to talks in April with US

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — In a stunning reversal, North Korea expressed a willingness to hold talks with the United States and to suspend nuclear and missile tests in the meantime, a South Korean official said Wednesday after a landmark meeting in Pyongyang.

President Donald Trump was cautiously optimistic about what he called “possible progress being made in talks with North Korea.”

“For the first time in many years, a serious effort is being made by all parties concerned,” he tweeted. “The World is watching and waiting! May be false hope, but the U.S. is ready to go hard in either direction!”

Vice President Mike Pence said the U.S. would remain “firm in our resolve” whichever direction talks with North Korea go. “All options are on the

table and our posture toward the regime will not change until we see credible, verifiable and concrete steps toward denuclearization,” Pence said in a statement.

The announcement raised hopes that a détente fostered by the recent Olympics in South Korea could blossom into broader talks over the growing threat from the North’s nuclear weapons program.

It followed a recent ebb in tensions after months of threats and saber rattling by Washington and North Korea that prompted fears of a new conflict on the divided peninsula.

At a minimum, South Korea’s national security director, Chung Eui-yong, said the North and South Korean leaders had agreed to meet in late April in a building on the South Korean side of the truce village of Panmunjom in the heavily fortified border area.

The sides also will establish a hotline to allow South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to communicate before the planned meeting, Chung said.

It would be only the third summit between the Koreas, which remain technically at war after their 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice instead of a peace treaty.

Chung made his remarks to reporters after returning from a two-day trip to Pyongyang that included dinner and a toast from Kim Jong Un. The 10-member delegation comprised the first South Korean officials to meet the 34-year-old North Korean leader since he took power after his father’s death of a heart attack in 2011.

Perhaps most surprising was Chung’s claim that North Korea had expressed an openness to holding a “candid dialogue” with the United States over nu-

clear disarmament demands.

“The North side clearly affirmed its commitment to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and said it would have no reason to possess nuclear weapons if the safety of its regime is guaranteed and military threats removed,” Chung said.

He added that North Korea had “made it clear that it won’t resume strategic provocations like additional nuclear tests or test-launches of ballistic missiles,” during talks with the United States.

“This agreement does represent a glimmer of hope. It does represent a pathway to negotiations,” said Frank Aum, a North Korea expert at the U.S. Institute of Peace. But he said it’s hard to tell whether the recent breakthroughs are due to increased sanctions and diplomatic pressure against the North or part of Kim Jong Un’s plan to solidify his hold on power.

AFRICOM seeks danger pay for troops deployed to Niger

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

U.S. Africa Command is seeking danger pay for troops deployed to Niger, a move that comes after an ambush that killed four soldiers and that likely result in greater oversight of military operations in the region.

AFRICOM chief Gen. Thomas Waldhauser said during testimony before Congress on Tuesday that his command’s investigation into the ambush has been completed and is in the hands of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis for review. Waldhauser declined to elaborate on the report until Mattis has finalized it and family members of the

fallen have been briefed on its findings.

However, when asked why some 800 troops deployed in Niger don’t get danger pay even as others in less volatile places such as Kenya do, Waldhauser said an effort is underway to remedy the situation.

“We had already submitted a packet for Niger to qualify for imminent danger pay and understand it’s at the national level now for final approval,” he said.

The Oct. 4 ambush in a remote stretch of terrain in western Niger has brought increased scrutiny to military efforts in Africa.

The Associated Press on Monday reported that AFRICOM’s investigative report would conclude that the special operations

team on the ground in Niger didn’t get required senior command approval for its mission to capture a high-level Islamic State militant.

The investigation is expected to call for a more senior level approval within AFRICOM for conducting missions deemed of higher risk.

Still, while there are scores of extremists groups in Africa, with a range of alliances and agendas, military officials acknowledge that none of them currently poses a direct threat to the United States.

“Why should we care?” Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, asked Waldhauser during the hearing. Is there anything in Africa that

“justifies sending United States men and women in there ... at risk of their lives?”

Waldhauser said the goal is to contain extremists in places such as Niger, Mali and Somalia and develop local forces to lead the fight against them.

“At the present time they do not have the capability to conduct operations in the United States, but they certainly aspire to do that,” he said. “We are trying to prevent something from happening before it does.”

During the past year, the military has stepped up missions in Africa. Troop numbers have steadily climbed in Niger and Somalia, where more than 30 airstrikes were conducted in 2017.

Senators demand answers on Russia plan

By CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Senators grilled the top intel chief Tuesday, pushing for details of a U.S. plan to stave off attempts of Russian meddling and cyberattacks.

In a tense congressional hearing examining worldwide threats, the lawmakers expressed frustration that the U.S., hampered by President Donald Trump, hasn't done enough to address past and future Russian cyberattacks.

Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee that while counterintelligence work is underway, the details of those operations are classified.

"The American people deserve to know whether or not the president directed his top intelligence officials to effectively counter this continuing act of war on our country," Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said in a sharp exchange with Coats.

The comments come a week after a hear-

ing before the same committee when U.S. Cyber Command Chief Adm. Mike Rogers said Russia has paid little for its interference in the 2016 elections, and that he hasn't been authorized by Trump to combat future attempts.

There are growing concerns that Russia will target this year's elections and that the U.S. hasn't done enough to counter that effort.

"We're taking steps, but we're probably not doing enough," Rogers told the committee last week.

Coats stopped short of contradicting Rogers. The director said he represents a much larger coalition of U.S. intelligence agencies than Rogers. Coats said Trump has given a general mandate.

"Much of what is being done ... would fall into a classified area," he said. "The president told me to do my job. My job is to oversee the 17 intelligence agencies ... that provide that intelligence information to the president and to our policymakers."

While Coats couldn't say which U.S. agen-

cy would take the lead in such an effort, he said operations to counter Russian cyberattacks continue.

Coats compared Russia to a bear coming out of hibernation, saying the U.S. remains under attack through these cyber operations.

This, as Russia continues to grow its influence through power grabs in conflicts with neighboring nations.

"Thanks to (Russian President) Vladimir Putin, we're getting a wake-up call. The Russian bear came out of hibernation," Coats said. "It was hungry and it started grabbing countries like Crimea ... now the fighting in Ukraine, issues in Georgia."

Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., countered that Rogers isn't being directed to use the tools necessary to fight that bear, thanks to Trump's indirection.

The Trump administration has declined to issue more sanctions against Russia, despite a new law directing the president to do so, she said.

AFRICOM chief: Expect China to build more bases in Africa

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The top general overseeing U.S. operations in Africa said Tuesday that he expects China's military to build more bases on the continent as it seeks to extend its influence.

Last year, China opened its first overseas base in the small, but strategic East African country of Djibouti, which also hosts the U.S. military's main operational hub.

Gen. Thomas Waldhauser predicted Tuesday that China will expand beyond Djibouti, where it now operates just "outside our gate."

"Djibouti happens to be the first. There will be more," Waldhauser told members of the House Armed Services Committee.

For more than a decade, China has been a major presence in Africa, funding massive public works projects in places such as the Democratic Republic of Congo while also investing in mineral extraction and other

business ventures.

In Djibouti, China operates a naval base, but concerns have emerged that Beijing also seeks to take control of Djibouti's commercial port. Last month, Djibouti canceled a contract with a Dubai firm that now runs the facility. During testimony Tuesday, lawmakers said the concern is Djibouti might "gift" the port to the Chinese.

Waldhauser said the United States has received assurances from Djibouti that is not the case. However, the general acknowledged China has influence and a degree of leverage as it pours millions of dollars into public works projects.

"If the Chinese took over that port, the concern could be significant if there are restrictions on our ability to use it," Waldhauser said.

The United States has a 30-year lease to conduct operations at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, which borders Somalia and serves as a logistics launching pad for eastern Africa.

US Navy leader calls for more transparency from China on military budget

By WYATT OLSON
AND TYLER HLAVAL
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — The head of the Navy's Pacific Fleet is calling for more transparency from China after the country announced its biggest jump in military spending in three years.

Beijing will increase the spending by 8.1 percent over last year, amounting to a 2018 defense budget of roughly \$175 billion, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported Monday.

Xinhua cited a budget report submitted Monday to the first session of the 13th National People's Congress now underway in Beijing.

In recent years, China has built artificial islands in the South China Sea, militarizing them with airstrips, ports, hangars and other military-related infrastructure.

During a press conference Tuesday in Tokyo, Pacific Fleet commander Adm. Scott Swift called on Beijing to explain its military spending, which he said causes anxiety in the region.

Swift also called on China to clarify its intentions in the South China Sea.

China's annual military spending runs a far second behind the United States, according to the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, which tabulates the world's defense outlays.

The U.S. defense budget in 2017 was \$602.8 billion, compared with China's \$150.5 billion, according to IISS' calculations.

Xinhua said China actually spent \$161.87 billion in national defense last year, or about 1.3 percent of its gross domestic product.

US sub might visit Vietnam

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

A submarine could be the next Navy vessel to visit Vietnam if the 7th Fleet's commander gets his way.

Vice Adm. Phillip Sawyer, who once led the Guam-based Submarine Squadron 15, suggested the submarine port call during a teleconference with reporters about the USS Carl Vinson's historic visit to Danang this week.

The ship, accompanied by the guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Champlain, the destroyer USS Wayne E. Meyer and 5,500 sailors, is the first U.S. aircraft carrier to dock in the country since the Vietnam War ended in 1975.

"I'm a career submariner (and) I would greatly like to bring one of the U.S. submarines to call at a port in Vietnam," Sawyer said.

The Navy has four Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarines — the USS Key West, USS Oklahoma City, USS Asheville and USS Topeka — forward-deployed to Guam.

The nuclear-powered subs are far more advanced than those operated by China, which has clashed with Vietnam and other neighboring countries over disputed territory in the South China Sea. Experts see the subs' survivability and firepower as a key deterrent to aggression in the region.

Asked if the Navy might conduct exercises or joint patrols with Vietnam, Sawyer said there would be discussions with the Vietnamese navy about how to build on the partnership.

"It really is kind of a two-way street," he said, adding that officials will talk about what might be of benefit to the Vietnamese navy and come up with plans for "naval engage-

ment and naval activities."

Sawyer said the Carl Vinson's port call is part of a growing relationship that included a visit by the 7th Fleet flagship, the USS Blue Ridge, in 2009.

The Navy will work to normalize ties to its Vietnamese counterpart, he said.

"I will work closely with my Vietnamese partners, and we will develop ideas and options for what makes sense for both of us," he said.

This year, Pacific Partnership, an annual exercise that deploys U.S. forces to engage with militaries and humanitarian groups in the region, will stop in Vietnam as it has in past years, he said.

A lack of transparency by China, which has been reclaiming land and building military facilities on disputed South China Sea territory, is creating "angst" in the region, Sawyer said.

WWII carrier wreck found off Australia

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

Searchers have found the wreckage of the USS Lexington, the aircraft carrier sunk 76 years ago near Australia during the world's first carrier-versus-carrier battle.

The Lexington was critically damaged by Japanese forces during the Battle of the Coral Sea on May 8, 1942, and the U.S. Navy was forced to scuttle it.

The ship's wreck was located Sunday by the research vessel Petrel, which is owned by billionaire explorer Paul Allen.

The wreck rested about 500 miles off the eastern coast of Australia and about 2 miles below the water's surface.

Images released by the searchers show a wreck with stunningly intact features, including a 5-inch gun with the rifling still visible inside the barrel. The ship's name remains visible on several areas, and a fighter plane is still emblazoned with U.S. star emblems.

"Lexington was on our priority list because she was one of the capital ships that was lost during WWII," Robert Kraft, director of subsea operations for Allen, said in a statement. "Based on geography, time of year and other factors, I work with Paul Allen to determine what missions to pursue. We've been planning to locate the Lexington for about six months, and it came together nicely."

Adm. Harry Harris, commander of U.S. Pacific Command, whose father served on the Lexington and survived the attack, heralded the find.

"As the son of a survivor of the USS Lexington, I offer my congratulations to Paul Allen and the expedition crew of Research Vessel (R/V) Petrel for locating the 'Lady Lex,' sunk nearly 76 years ago at the Battle of Coral Sea," Harris said in a statement issued from Australia, where he was meeting with that country's military leaders.

The Lexington, launched in 1925 as one of America's first carriers, went down with 35 aircraft aboard, and 216 crewmembers died in the battle.

F-35B fighters deployed on Pacific ship

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps has deployed its most advanced, multirole strike fighter aboard a Navy ship for the first time in the Pacific.

A detachment of F-35B Lightning IIs with Fighter Attack Squadron 121 — based at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan — landed aboard the amphibious-assault ship USS Wasp on Sunday and Monday.

The Navy, which did not disclose the location of the Wasp or the number of F-35B fighters landing on it, touted the event as a new era of "up-gunned" air-sea capability.

"Pairing F-35B Lightning IIs with the Wasp represents one of the most significant leaps in warfighting capability for the Navy-Marine Corps team in our lifetime," Rear Adm. Brad Cooper, Task Force 76 commander, said in a Navy statement. "This 5th-generation stealth jet is extremely versatile and will greatly enhance and expand our

operational capabilities."

The F-35Bs — capable of short takeoffs and vertical landings — are under the Okinawa-based 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, the only forward-deployed MEU in the region, the Navy said.

The stealth fighters are intended to make precision strikes inland and to support Marines inserting ashore, the Navy said. They will also provide air defense for the strike group.

The pilots of the fighter attack squadron are scheduled to conduct a series of qualification flights on the Wasp in upcoming days, the Navy said.

After those qualifications, the F-35Bs and about 2,300 Marines from the 31st MEU will deploy aboard ships of the Wasp strike group for operations in the Indo-Pacific region, the Navy said.

The F-35B further advances the Pacific Fleet's goal of an up-gunned expeditionary strike group, which aims to provide lethality and survivability to the

traditional three-ship amphibious ready group, the Navy said.

It does that by pairing troop-carrying amphibious ships with surface vessels, such as guided-missile destroyers. The strike group is intended to effectively defend against undersea, surface and air threats, with firepower still available for an offensive strike from sea, the Navy said.

The beefed-up capabilities are in part a response to the growing military dominance by China in the South China Sea, where it has built artificial islands and constructed facilities that could be used by the military, particularly by fighter jets.

The arrival of the F-35B culminates testing and shipboard structural modifications on the Wasp that began in 2013, the Navy said. The ship completed an overhaul last year and on Saturday departed Sasebo, Japan, where it is forward-deployed.

Ex-Trump aide now says he'll probably cooperate with Mueller

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A former Trump campaign aide spent much of Monday promising to defy a subpoena from special counsel Robert Mueller, even throwing down the challenge to “arrest me,” then backed off his defiance by saying he would probably cooperate in the end.

In an interview Monday night with The Associated Press, Sam Nunberg said he was angry over Mueller’s request to have him appear in front of a grand jury and turn over thousands of emails and other communications with other ex-officials, among them his mentor, Roger Stone. But he predicted that, in the end, he’d find a way to comply.

“I’m going to end up cooperating with them,” he said.

It was a reversal from his tone throughout the day, when he lashed out at President Donald Trump and his campaign and threatened to defy Mueller in a series of interviews.

“Why do I have to do it?” Nunberg told CNN of the subpoena. “I’m not cooperating,” he said later as he challenged officials to charge him.

In the earlier interviews, Nunberg said he thought Mueller may already have incriminating evidence on Trump directly, although he would not say what that evidence might be.

“I think he may have done something during the election,” Nunberg told MSNBC of the president, “but I don’t know that for sure.”

Nunberg also said he thinks

former Trump foreign policy adviser Carter Page, a key figure in the Russia investigation, worked with the Kremlin. “I believe that Carter Page was colluding with the Russians,” Nunberg said on CNN. “That Carter Page is a weird dude.”

In the interviews, Nunberg said he believes the president probably knew about the June 2016 Trump Tower meeting between his eldest son, top campaign staff and a team of Russians, which Trump has denied. And he blamed Trump for the investigation into Russia meddling, telling MSNBC that he was “responsible for this investigation ... because he was so stupid.”

A spokesman for the special counsel’s office declined to comment.

New Ore. law limits ownership of guns

Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. — A bill prohibiting domestic abusers and people under restraining orders from owning firearms became America’s first new gun control law since the Feb. 14 Florida high school massacre.

“Well done, Oregon,” Democratic Gov. Kate Brown exclaimed Monday after signing the law on the steps of the state Capitol as some 200 people, including victims of domestic abuse and high school students, applauded and cheered.

State Sen. Floyd Prozanski, whose sister was fatally shot by her boyfriend, and Rep. Janeen Sollman, who fled her home as a child when her father was in a violent rage, hugged as they stood behind the governor.

The shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., that killed 17 people has created a wave of young anti-gun activists that has now reached cross-country into Oregon. Students from a high school in the Portland suburb of Lake Oswego traveled 40 miles to stage a gun control rally in the state capital, Salem, on Monday morning.

“We are empowered youth,” they chanted while holding signs that read “End gun violence, our lives matter” and “Together we can end gun violence.”

“We want to promote change. We’re tired of the massive number of school shootings and the massive lack of action,” said 15-year-old student Eli Counce.

The bill that Brown signed Monday closes a loophole in a 2015 law that excluded some abusers from the ban on buying or owning guns and ammunition, such as people who don’t live with the partner they’re abusing or threatening, and those under restraining orders.

Ex-Russian spy collapses in UK

Associated Press

SALISBURY, England — British counterterrorism specialists offered expertise to police in southern England on Tuesday as they sought to unravel the mystery of why a former Russian spy fell critically ill following exposure to an “unknown substance.”

Authorities maintained a cordon near the spot — a bench near a shopping mall — where former double agent Sergei Skripal and a woman collapsed Sunday in Salisbury, 90 miles southwest of London. British media reported that the woman was Skripal’s daughter Yulia.

Britain will respond “appropriately and robustly” if Russia’s involvement is established in the case, the U.K. foreign secretary said Tuesday.

Boris Johnson told lawmakers in the House of Commons that he wasn’t “pointing fingers” as to who might be responsible for Sergei Skripal’s collapse. But he stressed that if state involvement was proven, Britain would take

action.

Johnson said the crisis could affect British participation at the soccer World Cup in Russia this summer. He said that if Russian involvement is proved, “it will be very difficult to imagine that U.K. representation at that event will go ahead in the normal way.”

The Foreign Office clarified that the comment referred to dignitaries and officials, not the England team, which is scheduled to compete at the tournament.

Sunday’s incident drew parallels to the death of former Russian agent Alexander Litvinenko, who was poisoned with radioactive polonium 11 years ago in London.

“I think we have to remember that Russian exiles are not immortal, they do all die and there can be a tendency for some conspiracy theories,” Metropolitan Police assistant commissioner Mark Rowley told the BBC.

“But likewise we have to be alive to the fact of state threats as illustrated by the Litvinenko

case.”

Skripal, 66, was convicted in Russia on charges of spying for Britain and sentenced in 2006 to 13 years in prison. He was freed in 2010 as part of a spy swap, which followed the exposure of a ring of Russian sleeper agents in the United States.

“[Skripal and the woman] are currently being treated for suspected exposure to an unknown substance. Both are currently in a critical condition in intensive care,” police said in a statement.

Skripal served with Russia’s military intelligence, often known by its Russian-language acronym GRU, and retired in 1999. He then worked at the Foreign Ministry until 2003 and later became involved in business.

After his 2004 arrest in Moscow, he confessed to having been recruited by British intelligence in 1995 and said he provided information about GRU agents in Europe, receiving more than \$100,000 in return.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Off-duty troopers save 6 from apartment fire

NV LAS VEGAS — Six Las Vegas residents are thanking two married Nevada Highway Troopers who rushed to save them after a fire broke out at their apartment complex.

Trooper Jason Buratzuk said Joseph and Trissa DellaBalla were off work when they noticed the fire as they drove by the Cornerstone Crossing apartment complex on Sunday.

Buratzuk said the couple pulled the fire alarms, but instead of waiting for help to arrive they rushed in the building to help residents.

Joseph DellaBalla alerted residents and helped a family of three and their pets evacuate from the building. Meanwhile, Trissa DellaBalla gathered multiple fire extinguishers and alerted residents who lived behind the engulfed building.

Teen on horse denied service at drive-thru

AZ ANTHEM — An Arizona teen said she was denied service at a Starbucks drive-thru after she tried to order a Frappuccino while on a horse.

KNXV-TV in Phoenix reported a Starbucks in Anthem, Ariz., recently told Aspen Cline it wouldn't serve her when she and her horse, Scout, galloped to the drive-thru.

Cline said the barista didn't give a reason and only said the store couldn't take her order. The teen said she also had planned to give her horse some cream.

Starbucks told the station that drive-thru windows were only for cars out of safety reasons. However, there are a number of videos online of horse riders ordering lattes at Starbucks drive-thru windows.

Chuck E. Cheese brawl brings arrests

NJ DEPTFORD — Authorities said a large brawl that spilled out of a Chuck E. Cheese restaurant in New Jersey left two people injured, including an employee who tried to break up the fight.

Deptford police arrived at the restaurant Sunday night to find a fight involving as many as 20 people. It's unclear what sparked the massive brawl at the family restaurant chain.

A woman had a minor stab wound to the hip but declined medical treatment. The employee had a cut on his left hand.

Two women from Philadelphia were taken into custody. Authorities said Tracy Jones, 47, faces aggravated assault charges, while Stephanie Levengood, 24, is charged with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest.

Boat parade delayed due to too much water

TX GLADEWATER — A boat parade planned for this past weekend in Glade-water in East Texas had to be rescheduled because there was too much water.

Heavy rains led to flooding along the Sabine River, where a Mardi Gras boat parade regatta was planned for Saturday.

Organizers told Tyler television station KLTU the event has been reset for later this month.

Town battles growing stinky skunk crisis

NM HAGERMAN — Something stinks in one southeastern New Mexico town and residents want police on the case.

KRQE-TV in Albuquerque reported skunk smell is plaguing the town of Hagerman thanks to a mild winter that is

bringing out the smelly mammals early.

Viola Badcock, the owner of Hagerman Township Animal Shelter, said the annoying animals are hanging around town and generally are not healthy.

Hagerman Police Patrolman Adam Chavez said officers are settling up traps around town, and healthy skunks caught in traps will be relocated on the east side of town near a river.

1906 film of city after earthquake discovered

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A newspaper said a long-lost film reel with nine minutes of footage capturing San Francisco two weeks after the deadly 1906 earthquake surfaced at a flea market in the city.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported Saturday that the rare find portrays the city's post-quake devastation, including City Hall with its dome nearly destroyed.

The so called "great quake" and ensuing fire on April 18, 1906, killed thousands.

The newspaper said the nitrate film reel was shot by early filmmakers the Miles Brothers. The public will be able to view the film April 14 at the Niles Essanay Silent Film Museum in Fremont.

Girl dies after mirror falls on her in store

GA RIVERDALE — Payless Shoes is offering condolences to the family of a 2-year-old girl who died after a mirror inside one of its suburban Atlanta stores fell on top of her.

Riverdale police Lt. Nicole Rabel told news outlets that Ifrah Siddique was found severely injured Friday night.

The discount footwear company said in a statement that it

is devastated and that the company is working with authorities to understand the "nature of this accident."

Art buff says he found old Raphael print

VA MINERAL — An art history buff believes he's identified a centuries-old print of a famous painting in a small Virginia church.

The Richmond Times-Dispatch reported Saturday that the print is at Gilboa Christian Church in Mineral, Va. The mid-19th-century building is about an hour from Richmond.

Federico Colagrande believes the print is of Raphael's "Madonna di San Sisto." The 16th-century painting depicts the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus.

The original painting was sold to a ruler in Saxony in 1754. Friedrich Muller made prints from the original. Only a handful of those prints exist today.

Beach cleared after toy grenade is found

NJ SEASIDE PARK — Police in New Jersey said a toy hand grenade sparked a flood of emergency agencies responding to a Jersey shore beach.

Seaside Park Police spokesman Cpl. Steve Shadiack said police received a call about what appeared to be a grenade Sunday afternoon at a local beach. NJ.com reported officers immediately evacuated the area.

Multiple agencies were called to the scene, including the prosecutor's office's arson unit, the Ocean County Sheriff's Department's K-9 unit and the New Jersey State Police bomb squad.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

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

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Cavs' Love reveals mental health woes

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Suffering for years in silence, Kevin Love has opened up about his struggles with mental health.

The Cavaliers forward writes in an essay for the Players' Tribune that he had a panic attack during a game this season and he has spent most of his life afraid to accept there was something wrong with him.

"For 29 years, I thought about mental health as someone else's problem," he said.

Love says he was stricken with anxiety Nov. 5 during a home game against the Atlanta Hawks. Love adds that he had been under family stress and hadn't been sleeping well. After briefly being winded while playing 15 minutes in the first half, he felt his heart racing and couldn't catch his breath during a timeout in the third quarter.

"It's hard to describe, but everything was spinning, like my brain was trying to climb out of my head," said Love, a five-time All-Star now sidelined after breaking his left hand last month.

"The air felt thick and heavy. My mouth was like chalk. I remember our assistant coach yelling something about a defensive

set. I nodded, but I didn't hear much of what he said. By that point, I was freaking out."

Love was taken to the Cleveland Clinic, but tests didn't reveal anything abnormal. He returned to playing at a high level, but was puzzled by what happened and burdened about people finding out.

Although he did not mention it in his essay, titled "Everyone Is Going Through Something," Love left a Jan. 20 game against Oklahoma City under similar circumstances. He also missed the team's practice the following day. Those absences prompted the now infamous heated team meeting in which former teammate Isaiah Thomas and others questioned why Love had been excused.

The exchange led to tense days around the Cavs, who rebuilt their roster by trading Thomas and four other players before the deadline.

Love's father, Stan, also played in the NBA. Kevin Love says he always struggled with the stigma attached to an athlete who shows weakness.

"Growing up, you figure out really quickly how a boy is supposed to act," he said. "You learn what it takes to 'be a man.' It's like a playbook: Be strong. Don't talk about your feelings. Get through it on your

own. So for 29 years of my life, I followed that playbook."

The Cavs encouraged Love to see a therapist and he gets counseling a few times a month when the team is at home.

Love said he drew courage to go public with his issues after Toronto All-Star DeMar DeRozan's recently acknowledged he has had bouts of depression.

After playing against DeRozan for years, Love said he would have never guessed one of the game's best players was having problems similar to his own.

Love's revelations promoted praise from teammate LeBron James, who posted on Twitter: "You're even more powerful now than ever before @kevinlove!!! Salute and respect brother!"

Love ended his piece by encouraging anyone dealing with inner struggle to seek help.

"So if you're reading this and you're having a hard time, no matter how big or small it seems to you, I want to remind you that you're not weird or different for sharing what you're going through," he said. "Just the opposite. It could be the most important thing you do. It was for me."

Iona wins MAAC title

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — New faces. Same old Iona.

Roland Griffin and Zach Lewis, transfers playing their first seasons with the Gaels, combined to score 49 points and Iona beat Fairfield 83-71 on Monday night to capture the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference Tournament title for the third straight time and earn the conference's automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament.

It was the fourth MAAC title for coach Tim Cluess and every bit as sweet as the others, if not moreso, because of all the doubters that surfaced when the Gaels started the season 1-4.

"I love these guys because they found a way," Cluess said. "They know that people doubted. They know that people gave up on them. I think it's even more special because they never gave up on themselves. They're just a tough, gritty group."

Iona (20-13), the fourth seed,

extended its league record to 11 tournament titles. Fairfield (17-16), the sixth seed, had won seven straight games, but the Stags were no match inside for the Gaels, who outscored them 44-22 in the paint instead of relying on the long ball. Iona averaged nearly 10 made threes per game but attempted just 13.

Griffin had a career-high 29 points, four blocks, and made all 11 free throws he attempted.

"The whole year coach said just make plays," said Griffin, who played at Illinois State and Midland College in Texas before transferring to Iona.

Lewis was named tournament MVP after scoring 20 points and nabbing a game-high four steals.

Iona's path to its sixth straight MAAC final was made easier when the top three top seeds — Rider, Canisius, and Niagara — were eliminated in the quarterfinals.

UNCG earns NCAA bid

Associated Press

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — When 6-foot-9 forward Jordy Kuiper was in high school, his coach would make him run "suicide" sprints if he took a shot outside the lane.

That changed when Kuiper arrived at UNC Greensboro, where coaches began working on his jumper.

"They told me by the time I was a senior I would be able to knock down big shots," Kuiper said.

Kuiper did just that on Monday night, scoring 11 of his 13 points in the second half to help UNC Greensboro defeat East Tennessee State 62-47 to win the Southern Conference championship and earn its first NCAA Tournament berth since 2001.

Demetrius Troy added 13 points, and James Dickey III dominated the paint in the second half. He finished with nine

points, eight rebounds and five blocks for the Spartans, who avenged last year's championship game loss to ETSU.

The Spartans broke open a tie game at halftime behind Kuiper, as the lefty knocked down a pair of three-pointers to spark a 9-0 run. The Buccaneers went nearly eight minutes without a field goal to open the second half and never recovered.

Kuiper scored off an offensive rebound with 4:40 left to give the Spartans their first double-digit lead.

UNCG held ETSU to 30.6 percent shooting.

That defense allowed UNCG (27-7) to prevail despite a poor shooting night from leading scorer and tournament MVP Francis Alonso, who was held to six points on 2-for-11 shooting.

The Spartans are dancing for the first time in 17 years and likely will be a No. 16 seed.

BYU upsets Saint Mary's in WCC semis

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Yoeli Childs and BYU saved their best game of the season for the right time.

Childs scored a career-high 33 points and the Cougars shot 61 percent from the field to beat No. 22 Saint Mary's 85-72 in Monday's West Coast Conference Tournament semifinals.

"It was a real good win for us," BYU coach Dave Rose said. "Tonight, they were on it. They shared the ball, made big shots, executed well. It was a well-played game on both sides."

The Cougars (24-9) now face No. 7 and top-seeded Gonzaga

(29-4) in the championship game Tuesday night as they go for their first WCC Tournament title.

"Our reward is Gonzaga," Rose said. "We played them a week before and we look forward to it. We'll start thinking about them when we get back to the hotel."

Childs was 13-for-18 from the field, including hitting all three three-point attempts. He also had six rebounds.

"The ball was popping around for us (tonight)," Childs said. "We just gave each other energy. We had the mentality to win."

Elijah Bryant added 25 points

for the Cougars, going 8-for-13 from the field and making all eight free-throw attempts.

Jordan Ford led Saint Mary's (28-5) with 27 points and six rebounds.

No. 7 Gonzaga 88, San Francisco 60: At Las Vegas, Killian Tillie scored 26 points on 10-for-11 shooting, including connecting on all five three-pointers, to lead the Bulldogs past the Dons in a West Coast Conference Tournament semifinal game.

Tillie has made all 10 three-point attempts at the tournament and is 19-for-23 from the field.

Top-seeded Gonzaga was

going for its sixth consecutive WCC Tournament title on Tuesday night against BYU, an 85-72 upset winner over Saint Mary's.

Also for top-seeded Gonzaga (29-4), Rui Hachimura had 17 points and Zach Norvell Jr. added 14. Johnathan Williams had 10 points and 10 rebounds for the Bulldogs, who won their 13th straight, and 16th at the WCC Tournament.

Nate Renfro led the fourth-seeded Dons (18-15) with 15 points. Frankie Ferrari and Souley Boum each added nine points for San Francisco, which lost its 14th straight to Gonzaga.

NBA roundup

Lillard scores 19 points in fourth to rally Portland

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — When Damian Lillard starts knocking down shots, no deficit is insurmountable for the Portland Trail Blazers.

Down 11 to the Los Angeles Lakers with 5:26 remaining? No problem.

Lillard scored 19 of his 39 points in the fourth quarter and the Trail Blazers won their 15th consecutive game over the Lakers, 108-103 on Monday night.

"Damian Lillard is special," Portland head coach Terry Stotts said. "If it's not obvious, I'll say it."

Lillard scored 15 in a row for the Trail Blazers down the stretch, giving them a 104-103 lead with 1:08 remaining by hitting one of two free throws.

"I've seen a lot of great basketball in my life, but today I was like wow. He made it look so easy, effortless," Shabazz Napier said. "I just saw it in his eyes. He wanted the ball every single time, he wanted to take the shot. He definitely willed us today."

CJ McCollum had 22 points, and Jusuf Nurkic added 16

points and 16 rebounds. The Trail Blazers have won seven straight and nine of their past 10, climbing to third place in the Western Conference.

Julius Randle had 21 points and nine rebounds for the Lakers, who had their five-game winning streak ended. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope had 16 points, and Lonzo Ball had 10 points, two rebounds and two assists.

Isaiah Thomas had a chance to tie it in the closing seconds but was stripped by Napier, who then made two free throws. Thomas finished with 19 points.

The Lakers led 97-86 when Lillard took over. He knocked down four straight three-pointers, including a step-back to tie the game at 97 with 3:37 remaining. He was 5-for-7 from the floor and 4-for-5 from three-point range in the fourth quarter, and added a critical offensive rebound with 32.8 seconds remaining to extend a possession while up 106-103.

"I figured we had to just get really aggressive, start attacking and try to make a run for it," Lillard said.

It was a dramatic reversal

from the third quarter when Lillard had three points and was 1-for-6 from the field. Portland shot 21.7 percent in the third, making five of 23 shots, and Los Angeles led by as many as 12.

"We tried to get a blitz on him, but a lot of times he was just attacking before the screen even got there," Lakers coach Luke Walton said. "But our execution down the stretch on offense and defense, that was the frustrating part."

Cavaliers 112, Pistons 90: LeBron James scored 31 points before taking a seat on the bench, Larry Nance Jr. reached career highs with 22 points and 15 rebounds in his first start for Cleveland, and the Cavaliers closed a disappointing five-game homestand on a positive note with a win over Detroit, which hasn't won on the road in nearly two months.

With Cleveland missing three big men — All-Star Kevin Love, Tristan Thompson and Jeff Green — because of injuries, the Cavs needed someone to step up and Nance came through. Wearing the same No. 22 his father had retired

by Cleveland, the 25-year-old Nance had the best game of his young career.

Celtics 105, Bulls 89: Jaylen Brown scored 21 points and visiting Boston pounded Chicago even though Kyrie Irving sat out because of a sore left knee.

Even without their All-Star guard, the Celtics took control right from the start and led by as many as 37 en route to their fifth win in six games.

Spurs 100, Grizzlies 98: Tony Parker had 23 points, sparking San Antonio to a needed victory over Memphis before embarking on a difficult road trip.

Heat 125, Suns 103: Hassan Whiteside had 24 points and 14 rebounds, Goran Dragic scored 17 and host Miami moved into the No. 7 spot in the Eastern Conference by topping Phoenix.

Pacers 92, Bucks 89: Bojan Bogdanovic tied his season high with 29 points and grabbed a key jump ball late to lift host Indiana over Milwaukee.

Jazz 94, Magic 80: Rudy Gobert had 21 points and 17 rebounds to lead host Utah over Orlando.

NFL briefs

Cowboys put franchise tag on Lawrence

Associated Press

The Dallas Cowboys placed the franchise tag on DeMarcus Lawrence on Monday, and the Pro Bowl defensive end quickly signed the one-year contract that guarantees him \$17.1 million in 2018.

The Cowboys had until Tuesday to put the tag on Lawrence, who can still sign a long-term deal with the club that traded up to get him early in the second round in 2014. Lawrence's agent, David Canter, wrote on Twitter that his client signed the deal.

Lawrence tied All-Pro Calais Campbell of Jacksonville for

second in the NFL with 14½ sacks last season. The 25-year-old's breakout year came after he struggled with injuries most of his first three seasons. He had back surgery each of the previous two offseasons.

On the one-year contract, Lawrence's salary would be the average of the NFL's five highest-paid defensive ends.

Lawrence is an important piece with the Cowboys trying to get back to the playoffs after missing at 9-7 a year after they had an NFC-best 13 wins before losing a divisional playoff to Green Bay.

The former Boise State play-

er emerged for a Dallas defense that has lacked star power beyond 2016 All-Pro linebacker Sean Lee.

Raiders release Smith after brush with law

ALAMEDA, Calif. — The Oakland Raiders released pass rusher Aldon Smith on Monday after his latest run-in with the law.

The Raiders retained Smith's contractual rights even as he spent the past two seasons on the NFL's suspended list. But the team decided finally to cut ties one day after San Francis-

co police said authorities were searching for Smith in connection with a domestic violence allegation.

San Francisco police said Monday an arrest warrant has been obtained for Smith stemming from allegations that Smith assaulted a woman on Saturday night. Smith left before police arrived to respond to the 911 call.

Smith is facing misdemeanor charges of willful infliction of corporal injury, assault with force likely to produce great bodily injury, false imprisonment and vandalism, according to Sgt. Michael Andraychak.

NHL roundup

Penguins improve to 10-1 at home in overtime games

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Mike Sullivan would love to point to a coaching tactic or some semblance of strategy that explains why the Pittsburgh Penguins are so good in overtime.

Only Sullivan can't. He's been coaching long enough to know that when there are six just men on the ice and his team happens to have one of the most gifted offensive groups in the NHL, it's best to just get out of the way.

"For the most part, it's really just about great players making great plays and when our guys have the puck, they're dynamic," Sullivan said.

The latest proof came midway through the extra period on Monday, when Phil Kessel drew Calgary's Jon Gillies away from the net and slipped a cross-ice pass to Justin Schultz, who buried it to give the Penguins a 4-3 victory. Schultz's fourth goal of the season helped the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions improve to 10-1 at home in overtime this season.

"We've got the players that

are so good out there with that much ice, so we enjoy it," Schultz said. "We don't like to go to [overtime] that much, but it's nice to know that we can get wins."

Evgeni Malkin scored his 37th goal for the Penguins and added an assist. Kris Letang and Chad Ruhwedel also scored for Pittsburgh. Tristan Jarry finished with 35 saves as the Penguins pulled within one point of Washington for first in the crowded Metropolitan Division. Jarry's saves included a breakaway stop on Calgary star Johnny Gaudreau early in overtime.

"They got some physical guys, they have a couple bigger guys," Jarry said. "We knew it would be a tough game. I was trying to hold my ground as much as I could."

Mark Giordano, Mikael Backlund and Troy Brouwer scored for the Flames, who outplayed the Penguins for long stretches before dropping their fourth straight. Gillies stopped 28 shots but had no chance when Kessel slid a cross-ice pass to a

wide-open Schultz on the game winner.

"We go into overtime and it can be anybody's game," Calgary coach Glen Gulutzan said. "We had a 2-on-0 there that could've ended it, but when you've got that many dangerous guys on the ice with that much room, somebody's going to end it. It just happened to be them on that next chance."

The Penguins had dropped five straight to the Flames, including a 2-1 overtime loss in Calgary in November back when they played very much like a team dealing with a Stanley Cup hangover. Four months later, Pittsburgh is again looking like a threat to make a deep playoff run and wasted little time sprinting to a 2-0 lead.

Ruhwedel collected his first goal since Dec. 18 on a knuckler from the point 2:10 into the game, and Malkin doubled Pittsburgh's advantage 55 seconds later when teammate Bryan Rust forced a turnover by Gillies behind the Calgary net. Malkin collected the puck and flipped it across the goal

line before Gillies could scramble back into position.

The Flames, in the middle of their own fight to stay in the Western Conference playoff mix, tied it before the end of the first. Giordano finished off extended pressure with his 11th of the season and Backlund beautifully deked by Letang before beating Jarry with a backhand for his 13th.

Sabres 5, Maple Leafs 3: Ryan O'Reilly and Zemgus Girgenons scored 2:05 apart in the second period, and host Buffalo handed Toronto its fourth straight loss.

Oilers 4, Coyotes 3 (OT): Oscar Klefbom's first goal in 34 games came in overtime, giving host Edmonton the victory over Arizona.

Senators 3, Stars 2 (OT): Erik Karlsson scored on a breakaway with 2:19 left in overtime and visiting Ottawa beat Dallas.

Canucks 4, Islanders 3 (OT): Brendan Leipsic scored his second goal of the game 2:47 into overtime to lift host Vancouver over New York.